

UNITS 1–4 FOR VCE

Religion and Society

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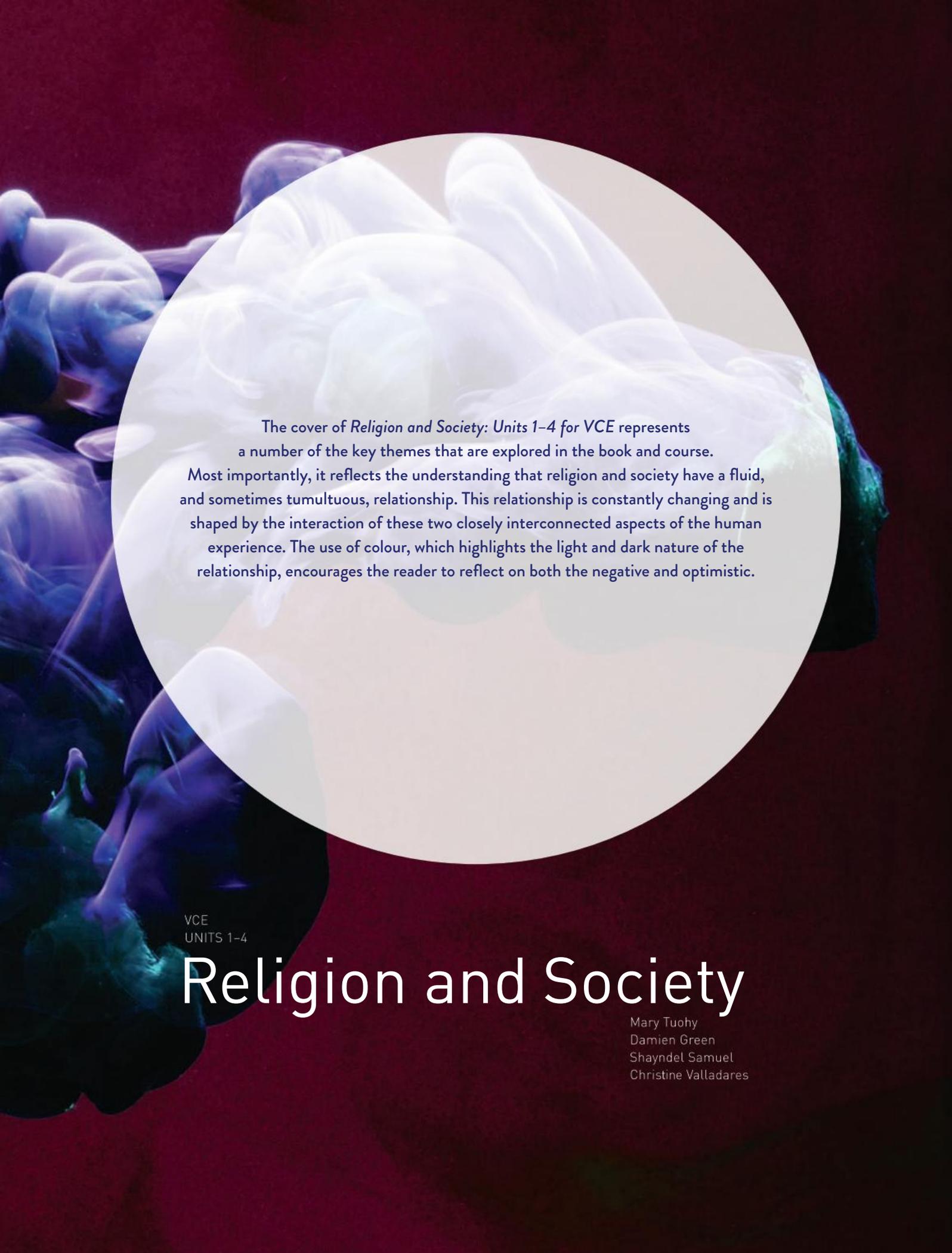
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Religion and Society: Units 1–4 for VCE

1st Edition

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Quotations from sacred texts, including the Bible, the Qur'an, the Torah, and religious leaders provide students with examples of relevant materials from a range of religious traditions.

farm was attacked by thieves who killed many of his servants and stole all his cattle. Ayyub thanked Allah. Later, the roof of the house fell down and many members of his family were crushed. Ayyub held fast to his faith in Allah. He prayed, overgrieving that possessions and children were gifts from Allah. Then his body was covered in sores. His wife struck him and his children to his side. They ridiculed and looked down upon him. Eventually even his wife perished by his death. Ayyub prayed:

Great harm has afflicted me, and you are the Most Merciful of the merciful. *Source: Qur'an 21:83*

Allah in mercy accepted his prayer.

So We answered him, (filled his suffering, and restored his family to him, and cured the sores there) - a mercy from Us, and a reminder for the worshipping. *Source: Qur'an 21:84*

Allah commanded the prophet to strike the earth with his foot and water from the spring gushed forth. He bathed in the water and was cured. Allah gave him back all that had been lost. Ayyub praised Allah for his goodness and mercy.

We will certainly test you with some fear and hunger, and some loss of possessions and love and strain. But give good news to the steadfast. Those who, when a calamity afflicts them, say, 'To Allah we belong, and to Him we will return.'

Upon them are blessings and mercy from their Lord. These are the guided ones. *Source: Qur'an 21:85-137*

FIGURE 6-4 Image of the Prophet Ayyub from an 18th-century illuminated Arabic manuscript. Which part of the story is illustrated here?

Skills: summarise, interpret, research

- 1 List the applications provided in the extracts from the Qur'an for the assistance of suffering in the world.
- 2 Research the Prophet Ayyub in the Qur'an and outline the central message of the story for those who are suffering.
- 3 Research an individual in Islam who applied this message to their life as they suffered.

JEWISH VIEWS ON SUFFERING

There is a range of explanation for suffering to be found in the Jewish Bible and in rabbinic texts such as the Talmud. No single explanation is widely accepted. In every era, Jewish scholars have devised ways to respond to tragedy and pain. The Book of Job in the Bible questions the usefulness of enduring suffering and tries to defend traditional beliefs about God with a theology that allows adherents to continue to believe in a just omnipotent God. Job's friends all try to convince him that he has sinned in some way to deserve his suffering but Job finally concludes that humans can never really understand their omnipotent creator.

The notion of divine reward and punishment to account for suffering is found frequently in Jewish literature. Suffering can be seen as retribution (even when you do not deserve it) or as a consequence

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Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget that national disaster which defined me, for all eternity of the hours to come. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself.

Source: Elie Wiesel, Night, Penguin Books, 1961, p. 45

Skills: research, identify, explain, draw conclusions, interpret, synthesise

Research

Conduct further research to answer the following questions. Make sure you include the views of various Jewish denominations in your answers.

- 1 What are the various causes of suffering according to biblical texts?
- 2 What further explanations are given for suffering in the rabbinic period?
- 3 To what extent has the Holocaust caused people to re-examine their traditional beliefs about God and the cause of suffering?
- 4 Investigate how post-Holocaust theologians explain the cause of the unexplainable suffering of that period.
- 5 Has the Holocaust caused any shift in theological thinking in the modern era?
- 6 What affects has the Holocaust experience had on Wiesel's life and beliefs?
- 7 How has the Holocaust impacted on the aspects in Judaism?

Sara Esther Crispe

The following extract is a story from Sara Esther Crispe, a Jewish woman who recounts her voluntary experience of preparing a body for burial.

Miriam Rivlin has Yeshiva was born in 1915. She lived a full 90 years. I know nothing else about her other than the never had children. I don't know how she lived and don't know how she died. All I know is that I was blessed with the opportunity of preparing her body to leave this world, and that my hand on hers was the last human touch she would receive in this world.

I had never before done a shabbah (significantly, the burial preparations done to every Jewish man, woman or child before the funeral). When we entered the room I was terrified. I remember thinking that I could only read Psalm which my friend and another woman would prepare the body. But they needed a third person and I felt I couldn't, nor did I want to, refuse.

We sat and custom prepare us on our knees, asking for forgiveness on her behalf, and asking her to well forgive us as we would her any harm or discomfort. Every step of the process was filled with meaning and depth. And every moment was intended to respect her life while preparing her for death.

After she was thoroughly washed, she then underwent a mikvah process, a spiritual and physical immersion in which the body remains from a state of impurity to that of total purity. The Hebrew word for 'impure', *tamah*, comes from the same root as *tamut*, a state of destruction, of being blocked. Now, as

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VCE Skills are clearly identified for all activities

Regularly placed activities aid revision, consolidate learning and support exam preparation.

FIGURE 3-16 Representation of various groups within Judaism gather to debate their ethical perspectives. Such a gathering is a traditional method in Judaism to form ethical perspectives. What advantages would Judaism see in this method?

... have been challenged by Holocaust theology as being no longer a valid belief or understanding for many who either experienced the tragedy or try to understand it.

Inside, the Jewish people, who had an alternative ethical perspective and separate law courts to the culture in which they found themselves, had to deal with ethical perspectives that had a higher status than their own. To prevent a conflict between ethical perspectives, and with Jewish Law, a law called *Dina de Malkuta dina* ('the law of the land is the law') was endorsed. This meant that there could be no confusion between Jewish Law (Halakha) and the laws of the country in which they resided. It was an expedient measure in accordance with the ethical principle of *ahavat*.

From the late 19th century, when Jewish people were increasingly accepted into the societies of Western Europe, there have developed four different movements of Judaism: Ultra-Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, Conservative and Progressive. These different movements mean that the interpretation of Halakha ceased to be normative, and Judaism has since had no unified or template voice with which to comment on the ethical dilemmas of wide society. Instead, each movement has its own authority and interpretation of the ethical teachings of Judaism, just like the different denominations of Christianity and schools of Islam. This makes it difficult to generalise about a unified system of Jewish ethics that would encompass all of the differences in religious practice, shogran and even some of the major beliefs of Judaism. An example of this is the decision of Progressive Judaism, also called Reform and Liberal, to ordain women. In 1975, in Berlin Regina Jonas was ordained the first female rabbi. It is only in recent times that other movements in Judaism have considered the possibility. But while there is a growing elite group of ordained Orthodox female clergy, recently two Orthodox umbrella organisations, the Rabbinical Council of America and Agudath Israel of America, officially decided the practice and forbade them from being listed as ordained rabbis. Whether these decisions have a practical impact or not, they have provided a fresh debate on the issue of the role of women.

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for reflection on the teachings about the relationship between humans, animals and nature. Ethics often is decision making as individuals and communities act themselves. What is the right way to act? Ethics often provide a link between this world and the afterlife.

FIGURE 3-8 Pope Francis I speaks during a meeting with children from nearby Palestinian refugee camps on 25 May 2014 during a visit to the Church camp in the suburbs of the biblical city of Bethlehem. Pope Francis I made an impassioned plea for the protection of children: in what way has Pope Francis I modelled care for religion?

SPiritual EXPERIENCE

Spiritual experiences touch the heart and mind of the adherent and lead them to the mystery of ultimate reality. Such experiences may be the wonders of nature, the joy of a birth, content in a time of distress, personal revelation through sacred texts, or communal experiences of spiritual ecstasy.

Skills: personal reflection, description, analysis

- 1 Write a brief paragraph about each of the aspects, contrasting a time when you have seen them express a religious belief. In your paragraph identify the belief that was expressed.
- 2 Choose a secular ritual or symbol and compare the way it transmits meaning to that of a particular religious ritual or symbol.
- 3 Create a section in the back of your notebook in which to record your personal reflections on the aspects as expressions of beliefs in your community as you encounter them throughout the year.

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ARTIFACTS: ALL THINGS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

In Tibetan Buddhism, prayer flags (the Chinese often prayers for happiness and good fortune). They bring together the natural forces of wind and the spiritual energy of the individual to bring harmony. The colours are symbolic: blue represents space, white represents air, red is for fire, green for water, and yellow for earth. Printed on the flags are mantras, such as the mantras for compassion. On some prayer flags, there are also animals such as the Wind Horse, symbolising the wish for enlightenment; the Garuda, the Sky Dragon, the Horse Lion and the Tiger (the Four Guardians), symbolising awareness, vast vision, confidence, joy, humility and power - the qualities needed to achieve enlightenment. The flags are also a reminder that all things are impermanent as they fade in the harsh conditions of Tibet and need to be returned fully to the elements through burning. They provide symbols of compassion and hope while recalling the fragility of the human condition.

FIGURE 3-15 Prayer flag of Tibetan Buddhism. What is the symbolism of the colours of the flag?

TEXTS: THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

An Buddhism grew out of Hinduism, it abandoned the sacred texts of the past and moved towards what could be called a philosophy of life, based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, enriched and given meaning through modification. These teachings formed an oral tradition that was handed down from generation to generation. The first written text of these teachings, the Tripitaka or Pali Canon, appeared in about the 1st century BCE. There are now additional sacred texts that interpret the Buddha's teachings, such as the Mahayana Sutra and the Tibetan Book of the Dead.

RITUALS: ALL IS IMPERMANENT

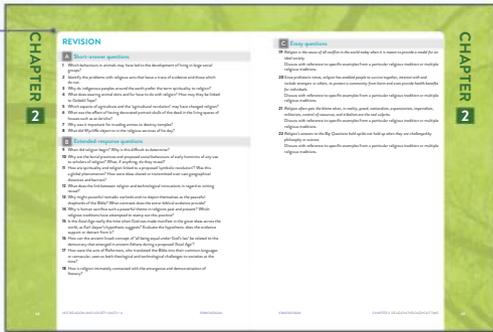
The monks of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition use a visual method of meditation, creating mandala painted with coloured sands pressed from traditional mineral powders, called *shab-pur*, onto a mat that has been prepared with a drawing of the outline of the mandala's geometric shape.

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Images and artworks are colourfully reproduced throughout the text. Each image builds and expands on the text and includes contemporary and historical examples from a wide variety of religious traditions.

Real-world examples highlight the lived experience of religion in Australia and globally.

Captions regularly include questions to encourage students to work with the image so that the picture becomes a meaningful and relevant text.



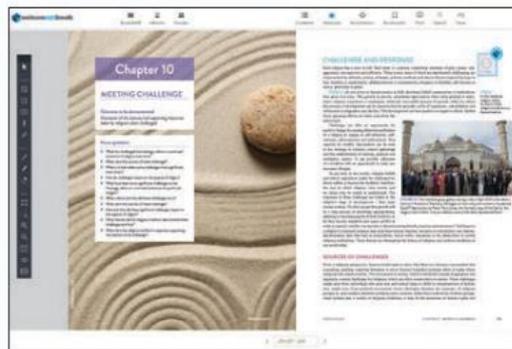
Revision: At the end of each chapter there is a series of revision questions. These activities review and consolidate student content knowledge.



Extension: Each chapter closes with a series of extension tasks that provide students with the opportunity to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the topic and build on their skills through research and collaboration.

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Christine Valladares



GLOSSARY

Aboriginal Customary Law (ACL) an ethical and legal system that has operated in Australia for over 40 000 years and is ruled upon by elders and initiated men and women

absolute perfect, complete, not depending on anything else

adherent a follower or believer in a leader or a cause

admonitions warnings given by religious authorities

agnostic a person who is sceptical about 'truth claims' of religions that cannot be 'proven' but has not definitely decided that such things could never turn out to be true

allegorical stories in which symbolic characters and events stand for ideas, truths or generalisations about human existence

Anglican preferred name for the Church of England in Australia; originated in 1246 from the Latin *ecclesia anglicana*, meaning 'Church of England'

anthropologist a person who studies humanity's past and present within a cultural context

apartheid the political system enforced in South Africa from 1948 to 1994, under which only white people had political rights and power; the official policy was to segregate black people from white people in all areas of society, leading to many inhuman acts

apologist a defender of an idea or religion

apostacy total renunciation or desertion of one's religion

apostles the intimate group who were followers of Jesus during his three years of ministry

artifact a source of identity or focus for prayer including ancient stones or more recent plaster statues, articles of clothing or paint used for ceremonies, beads used for prayer, mats, scrolls or icons

ascetic person who separates him or herself from society and undertakes extreme religious practices in order to achieve spiritual insights and visions

aspects features that are common to the majority of religions – beliefs; stories; spaces, places, artifacts and times; texts; rituals; symbols; social structures; ethics; and spiritual experience

assimilate becoming like, or blending into, wider society

atheist a person who believes God does not exist

atonement making amends between God and people, repentance

authoritative someone or something that has the right to determine, command advise, or judge. They have been confirmed as dependable, learned, righteous, factual, authentic, proven and authenticated.

Axial Age an era from 800–200 BCE which, according to Karl Theodor Jaspers (1949), was when great ideas in mathematics, science and philosophy emerged across the world in human thought: from mathematicians and natural philosophers (scientists) in ancient Greece in the West, across the ancient world, to Buddha and other thinkers in the East. Much of the philosophical and scientific thought, political systems and religions that developed at this time are still with us.

Aztec a member of an empire of Indigenous people who were the original inhabitants of the regions around Mexico

baptism a sacred rite of applying water to the head or immersing a person in water to symbolise purification before admission into the Christian community

Bar Mitzvah a ceremony marking the beginning of religious responsibility for Jewish boys

Bat Mitzvah a ceremony marking the beginning of religious responsibility for Jewish girls

beliefs religious ideas thought to be true by adherents

bipartisan involving two parties or groups equally

bishop from the Greek word *episkopos*, meaning supervisor. The bishop is a high-ranking priest who is ordained to teach, lead and care for the spiritual needs of a diocese of a Christian church.

Black Death the bubonic plague, an infectious disease that caused an epidemic that killed millions of Europeans and Asians in the 14th century

blood libel during the Middle Ages in Europe, a false claim that Christian children were murdered for Jewish rituals

Bodhisattva a person who has earned enlightenment and nirvana but instead chooses to be reborn to guide others

Buddhahood in Buddhism, the achievement of enlightenment by an individual

caliph the chief Muslim civil and religious leader of Islam claiming succession from Muhammad

canons of conduct officially approved codes of behaviour mandated by religious traditions

cardinal the highest-ranking office in the hierarchical structures of the Catholic Church after the Pope. The College of Cardinals assists the Pope and elects him.

Carmelite Catholic religious order of priests and nuns that pursues a life of poverty, work and prayer in order to follow Christ

caste hereditary social group determined by rank, occupation and wealth in Hindism

catechism a collection of the essential teachings of a Christian tradition

catharsis purifying emotional release that restores the spirit; a release of strong repressed emotions

catholic universal

Catholic shortened term used to refer to Roman Catholic Christians or members of the Latin rite

chakra in Hindu thought, one of the seven centres of significance in the body that control wellbeing

Christ from the Greek word *Christos* meaning 'anointed one'. The word is a translation of the Hebrew word *Messiah* and is translated also as 'Saviour'.

the Church the first Christian communities were called gatherings – *ekklesia*. A church came to be a gathering of those who were baptised.

cinnabar a bright red mineral used as a red pigment in rock art, funerals and body paint

civilisation a society that has reached an apex of cultural advancement, encompassing administration, art, philosophy, religion, diverse social structures, technology and food and resource security

conquistadors Spanish conquerors of Latin America in the 16th century CE

consensus decision arrived at by common agreement and not by a majority vote

conservative one who wishes to preserve institutions or traditions; dislikes change

Conservative Judaism a form of Judaism that follows traditional Jewish Law but is adaptable to progress

constitution statement of ethical principles, laws and a structure for the system of government of the state or an organisation; also the name of the most important documents at an Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church

corroboree an Australian Aboriginal gathering of people involving body art, music, chanting, songs, stories, lore, initiations engaging with the Creation Time, sacred spaces and time

cosmogony a theory regarding the origin of the universe

cosmology study of the origin and nature of the universe

Council of Nicaea the first ecumenical council of the church held in 325 CE. It was called by the Emperor Constantine with the hope of bringing about unity in the church through an agreement over the teaching about the relationship between Christ and God the Father. The Council decreed that God the Father and the Son are one in being but separate in person. Jesus is, therefore, not a creature.

Council of Vatican II the Second Vatican Council was the 21st ecumenical council. It was called by Pope John XXIII to bring the church up-to-date with a modern world. It produced four Constitutions, nine Decrees and three Declarations.

counterculture a community whose world view deviates from mainstream society

covenant agreement between two or more parties to do or not to do something; biblical covenants are binding agreements between God and God's people

Creationism the belief that God literally created the world in six days and rested on the seventh in order to fulfil a divine plan. God's creation is seen as evidence of a divine cosmic design (intelligent design) that can be explored through 'creation science'.

creation myth sacred story told in ancient times to explain religious belief about the origins of the universe

Creation Time the Indigenous Australian understanding of the creation period as a beginning that continues today and for all time. All existence, as it is today, can be traced to the great Creation spirit ancestors.

creed accepted system of religious belief or clear expression of beliefs; statement of the chief articles of religious belief that has been accepted as authoritative



Crusades a series of wars 1096–1270 CE in which the Catholic Church sought to reclaim the Holy Land and its holy sites from Islamic control and stem the progress of Islam.

cultural heritage features of a culture that are connected to historical events and origins

cuneiform the earliest translated form of writing, created by the Sumerians, which began as a system of pictographs drawn on clay tablets. The symbols were drawn with a blunt reed, called a stylus, that which left wedge-shaped impressions in the clay.

Darwin's theory of evolution the scientific theory that species evolve through natural selection – sometimes falsely believed to mean 'survival of the fittest'

deicide the killing of a god/God

deity divine or supernatural being

denomination branch of an established religion that may have variant beliefs, ritual expressions, and liturgies

deontological *deon* means duty and *logos* means science or study; decisions are made based on doing the right thing regardless of consequences

diaspora usually refers to the spread of Jewish people living outside Israel, but can describe the spread of any people away from their original homeland; from a Greek word meaning 'scatter'

diocese region under the control of a bishop

Discalced Carmelite Catholic order that pursues a life of Gospel poverty, penance and prayer as a way of following Christ. They seek holiness, apostolic simplicity and a relationship of intimacy with God. Their commitment to poverty was shown by being barefooted or wearing sandals (discalced).

distinctive belief a belief that is found only in that religious tradition or is interpreted in a unique way in that tradition

doctrine basic belief or principle that is taught; a body of teachings

dogma articles of faith that are definitive and authoritative

Druids members of the religious order of priests of Celtic religions of Britain, Ireland and Gaul

dua an Islamic prayer of supplication

Easter major Christian feast celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His promise of eternal life.

ecumenical movement towards religious unity

encyclical formal document, usually in the form of a letter, from a Pope to teach the faithful

enlightenment awakening an understanding that transcends desire and suffering

ephemeral lasting only a short time, transitory

eschatology beliefs and prophecies about the end of the world, the judgement of humanity, heaven and hell

ethical authority any person or thing that is used to support an ethical viewpoint

ethics the study of how and why people make decisions about human behaviour

Eucharist the Christian ceremony of thanksgiving commemorating the Last Supper, in which bread and wine are consecrated to become the body and blood of Christ and consumed by adherents in Holy Communion

evangelical from the Greek word for gospel or 'good news', a movement within Christianity that attempts to mediate between separatist fundamentalist Christianity and more moderate forms

existential to be concerned with the existence of something or someone existentialism is a philosophy that argues the individual is free and is solely responsible for their actions

existential questions enquiries into the nature and meaning of life

faith an internalisation of the religious beliefs by an individual to accept their truth

feudal relating to the feudal system in Europe during the Middle Ages. Based on a rigid hierarchical structure in society

foundational belief a belief that existed at the beginning of the religious tradition and is essential to the tradition

free will the ability to take independent action and make independent choices and to take responsibility for such actions

fundamental belief a belief upon which other beliefs have been built that, if removed, would cause the collapse of the tradition

fundamentalist supporter of a religious movement, within a tradition, that insists that the sacred texts must be understood literally – without interpretation

genogram a diagram of a family structure including medical conditions, repetitive behaviour patterns, causes of death

gentile non-Jewish person

geocentrism belief that the Earth is the centre of the universe

ghetto a walled area in a city in medieval Europe where Jews were segregated and confined in poor, overcrowded conditions

gnosticism a heretical Christian movement whose members claim to have superior knowledge of spiritual things that would bring them salvation. They did not believe that Jesus' body was real, and they believed that the physical world was corrupted.

grave good an object placed with the dead for use in the afterlife

guru a great thinker and mentor who may guide disciples in a specific branch of knowledge in Hinduism and Sikhism

grace a gift God gives to people that enables them to live good lives; linked to the presence of the Holy Spirit in Christianity

Hadith a record of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad from which Islamic laws and ethics are derived

hajj annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia

halal that which is permitted in Islamic law. It is commonly used to describe foods that a Muslim is permitted to eat.

heathen a person who does not acknowledge God or the Bible

Hellenism Greek culture and civilisation before the Roman period

heretic person who preaches heresy – a false teaching

hierarchy a structure that is based on elements being at different levels of primacy, authority or power

hieroglyph type of ancient Egyptian writing or mark that conveys meaning

holy war a war fought for religious reasons, justified by the claim that the fighting is for God

hominin the group of animals that includes modern humans, their ancestors and genetically related primates, specifically chimpanzees (including Bonobos) and gorillas

host a wafer of bread used in Christian liturgy. It represents the body of Jesus Christ.

Humanism a philosophy based on the belief that fulfilment comes from the application of reason, science and nature without reference to God or the spiritual

Imam Muslim religious leader

immanent existing in and extending into all parts of the created universe

incarnation a belief of Christianity that God took on human nature and became a man in the person of Jesus Christ

Industrial Revolution a period in Western history when there was a shift from agriculture to manufacturing; from rural life to urban life. It began in England in about 1760 and continued through to the mid 19th century.

ineffable indescribable, overwhelming

infidel an unbeliever in the dominant religion

inquisition process of questioning; a method used by Roman Catholic Church tribunals from the 13th to 18th centuries to combat or suppress people holding heretical beliefs

interrelated having a relationship in which one of the variables affects the other

ironist person who consistently uses words to give a meaning opposite to the literal meaning of the word

Jesus Army evangelical Christian movement based in the United Kingdom

just war warfare waged with the authority of God meeting specific moral criteria

karma the total effect of a person's actions and conduct in the cycle of life and afterlife

karmic debt the concept that a person's future is determined by their behaviour in this and previous lives

Kiddushin a volume in the Jewish Talmud; the tractate Kiddushin addresses the laws concerning women and family life.

Kingdom of God a key element of the Christian belief that God reigns over all creation. Linked to eschatology as God's reign will be complete at the end of time in Christian theology



kosher food fit for Jewish dietary requirements; includes particular slaughtering requirements, the prohibition of certain categories of animals and shellfish, and mixing dairy and milk products

lay people (laity) people who are untrained or not qualified in any specific discipline, profession or trade

liturgy customary prayers and services arranged for public worship and prescribed by a religious tradition

lore wisdom, stories and traditions maintained by oral transmission

Magisterium the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church

mandala sacred picture organised around a square motif depicting central ideas, beliefs, sacred stories and myths of various eastern religions; used to assist adherents' concentration during meditation

mantra words or formulae chanted or sung as an incantation or prayer

marginalise to reduce in importance; to place in a position of limited influence or power

martyrdom to witness one's beliefs, which may include choosing to suffer or even die rather than deny them

metanarrative an overarching story that gives meaning and purpose

Midrash a collection of rabbinic interpretations and expositions based upon biblical texts

Mishnah a first- to third-century collection of rabbinic teachings interpreting the Bible and Jewish law

monotheism the belief in one God

moral values ideas that are accepted cultural standards used to discern what is right and wrong in human behaviour

morality relates to human behaviour, the actions of a person, for good or right

mores (pronounced 'morays') the customs and conventions of society, groups and individuals that are important for acceptability but not usually enforced by law

myth a traditional story of unknown origin that aims to tell a believed truth about some important questions of existence and the origin of things through imaginative detail

New Age a movement that incorporates and adapts a wide range of theories, philosophies and practices

non-episcopal not containing bishops (of a Church)

norm behaviour that is sanctioned or approved by a particular culture, community or group

objective a process of thinking that tries to remove personal emotions, interpretations and bias in order to make unbiased decisions based on facts

omnipotence the quality of being all powerful

omniscience the quality of being all knowing

original sin Christian concept developed by St Augustine to explain the human tendency to make poor moral choices; held to be transmitted from Adam and thus inherent in humankind

orthodox conforming to the established beliefs or doctrines of a religion

pagan a religion or belief system that is not Jewish, Christian or Islamic

paradox a statement that seems contradictory, unbelievable or absurd but is, in fact, true

parish local church community in the Christian tradition

penance practice of undertaking some form of action that will atone for sins

Paschal mystery the whole redemptive (saving) work of Jesus Christ, particularly the events of the Last Supper, the Passion and death

Pentecostal a movement within Christianity that emphasises direct personal experience of God

philosophy a study of the laws that govern: thought, the universe, knowledge and reality. It is a love of wisdom.

pictograph pictorial sign or symbol, such as a prehistoric cave drawing with symbolic figures

places particular sites such as mountains, rivers shrines, buildings that represent the presence of the sacred

pluralist society a society in which many different world views coexist within the dominant society while retaining their differences

pogrom a deliberate campaign of persecution, violence and killing of a group (usually Jews) because of their race or religion

polytheistic a religion with many gods

posthumous occurring after death

primal religions spiritual practices of the Indigenous peoples of the world; traditions of tribal peoples organised in small groups that live a traditional lifestyle

primeval the earliest of times

prophecy a divinely inspired prediction, instruction or urgent advice

protoculture passing on learnt behaviours from one generation to another in non-human primates

providence divine care and guidance

psalm a sacred song or poetic verse from the Book of Psalms in the Bible, sung or chanted as part of Christian and Jewish services

psychopathy mental disorder manifested by antisocial, extreme egocentricity, amoral behaviour

rabbinic of or relating to rabbis and their writings and teachings

Rabbinic period the era of development of the Talmud (70–500 CE)

rationalism the use of reason as the ultimate truth on all matters

reason the capacity to think and make logical decisions through the intellect

redemption the action of God in saving the Hebrew people from their enemies; may be both spiritual and physical salvation; the action of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus which ransoms humanity from sin into the grace of God. Redemption is a gift from God by which adherents have been saved.

reincarnation the belief that after death the soul is reborn in another physical form

relative comparative; something having value in relation to something else

religiosity obvious shows of devotion

religious tradition a belief and practice that comes from, and leads to, a human recognition of an ultimate reality and which is perpetuated (handed on), interpreted and communicated by an organised believing community

resurrection coming back to life after death; a belief found in several religious traditions. In Christianity, Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead and so won victory over evil and death. Those who believe in Jesus Christ believe they will also be raised from the dead, and will live forever.

rite of passage a ceremony involving certain rituals that marks movement from one life stage to another

ritual a prescribed set of actions that has symbolic meaning and is considered sacred

sacrament in Christianity a visible sign of God's presence in the world. The seven sacraments celebrate the new life that Jesus brings. There are three sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. There are two sacraments of healing: Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick, and two sacraments of vocation: Marriage and Holy Orders.

sacred something that belongs to God; holy, sanctified

sacrifice (from the Latin *sacrificare*, to make sacred) the offering of something to God/the gods in order to please

salvation to be saved from danger and enemies. In a religious sense, being saved by being fully united with God and one another

scriptures the sacred writings of a religious tradition

sectarianism adherence to a particular religious group or sect, often used to describe conflict between sects or denominations.

sect breakaway group from a religious tradition, which may have different interpretations and expressions of beliefs

secularism the removal of religious institutions from the mainstream of public life

sentient having sense perception and consciousness (awareness of self, others and environment)

shaman a person with the authority to heal through their relationship with the spirit world

sharia law Islamic legal code

Shinto 'The Way of the Gods' is the Indigenous Japanese spirituality where devotees worship and make offerings to numerous gods, ancestors and spirits associated with the natural world.

sin an action that breaks the right relationship between an individual or community and their God and each other

social structure an established social model to which society conforms, which often places religious leadership at or near the top of society. The way a religious tradition is organised; established social model for the religious community



sociologist a person who conducts the scientific study of the organisation of communities and features that define them

soul the life spirit of a person, the spark of life that makes the person an individual in relationship with God

spaces designated areas within a place where the sacred may be experienced and commitment demonstrated, such as altars, home shrines, prayer spaces

spiritual experience when a powerful emotion is stirred by an encounter affecting one's beliefs, emotions and other aspects

spirituality the act of being open to the perception and experience of everything being interconnected through an ultimate reality; primal traditions prefer this term over the concept of 'religion'

stakeholder someone who has an interest in or will be affected by a decision

stance an overall position or attitude towards something

stem cell a cell that can divide and replace itself and can also change into other specialised types of cells

stories comprise various literary forms such as legends, myths, parables, folklore, that through imaginative detail relate a believed truth

stupa a bell-like structure that contains Buddhist relics

subjective a process in which decision making is made on a personal basis

subsequent belief belief that is not integral to a religious tradition but that helps to shape the character of a religious tradition

subsidiarity the principle that social problems should be dealt with at the level most immediately able to bring a solution

sura a chapter or section of the Qur'an

sutras sayings and statements by founders, scriptures, and prayers in a particular poetic format that can be easily memorised (in Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism and Buddhism)

symbolic revolution an explosion of creativity and abstract thought that appeared 50 000 years before the present time, seen in rock art, sculpture, glyphs and painting

symbol sign, object, person, action, or place that represents a special religious meaning or power

syncretism when two or more opposing religious belief systems are blended or one is incorporated into the other

tabernacle dwelling place of God; the place where the consecrated bread and wine is placed, Roman Catholicism; the portable sanctuary used by the Israelites during and after their wandering in the wilderness

taboo to be proscribed by society as unacceptable or improper; a tradition that prohibits or restricts a certain practice or forbids association with a specific thing, place or person

Talmud interpretations of the Torah that were passed on orally, and eventually compiled and written down

texts oral and written literature that record the essential parts of a religious tradition including beliefs, stories, creeds, prayers, history, laws and 'truths'

theocracy a religiously ruled society

theistic relates to theism, the belief in the existence of a god or gods

theodicy the vindication of divine attributes, and God's goodness and justice in respect to the existence of evil

theologian expert in religion such as a university scholar who studies God, gods and divine principles

theology the study of ideas about God

times the organisation of daily, weekly, monthly and annual ceremonies, prayers, festivals and rituals that form the rhythm of life for adherents and communities of a religious tradition

Torah all of the Jewish written law (the Five Books of Moses, Prophets and Writings) and the oral law (Mishnah, Talmud, Rabbinic responses)

totem an animal, object or natural occurrence to which a family, clan or group believes itself to be closely related; a representation of such an object that serves as the emblem of the family, clan or group

totemic religious system prescribes which members of a clan or nation can interact with each other; this was enforced by strict rules and arranged marriages in Aboriginal Australian societies

transcendent, transcendental beyond the limits of the human world; other-worldly

Trinity one of the principal doctrines of the Christian tradition that expresses belief in one

God as three distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit – a triune God.

truth claim statement on which an entire theory depends

ultimate reality a term that denotes the underlying cause of all existence, foundation of reality, supreme being or even an ideal state of existence; refers to God as the principal or sole deity in many religions and other belief systems that worship one god or Divine Principle

Ultra-Orthodox groups of Jews who follow the laws of Judaism in the strictest manner, maintaining traditions from centuries ago and mostly not engaging with the outside world

unleavened usually refers to bread made without yeast; it does not rise and is quite brittle

utilitarian decisions are made on the basis of choosing the best outcome to achieve the greatest happiness

venerated profoundly respected

Vedas four ancient Indian Hindu texts written in Sanskrit. One of these is the Rig Veda (1700–1100 BCE), which contains sacred hymns and stories.

vernacular common language of the people

wisdom accumulated knowledge and understanding, decision making and judgment

world view the way in which an individual, group or society interprets the totality of existence and world history or civilisation and how they choose to act based on this interpretation

yogi a male who practises and studies yoga; through years of training they may become a master teacher (in Hinduism and Buddhism)

Zionism a nationalist movement supporting the return of Jews to their ancestral homeland (Zion is another name for the biblical land of Israel) spurred on by anti-Semitism in the diaspora



UNIT 1

The role of religion
in society

The background of the page is an abstract, fluid composition of teal, cyan, and purple ink-like swirls and patterns. The colors are layered and blended, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is ethereal and artistic, typical of a watercolor or ink wash style.

Area of Study 1.1: The nature and purpose of religion

Area of Study 1.2: Religion through the ages

Area of Study 1.3: Religion in Australia



Chapter 1

BIG QUESTIONS AND SOME BIG ANSWERS

Outcome to be demonstrated

Explanation of what religion is and does

Focus questions

- ▶ What is religion?
- ▶ How and to what extent does religion offer answers to the questions raised by existence and life experiences?
- ▶ How has religion contributed, both positively and negatively, to the development of human society?
- ▶ What aspects are common to all religions?
- ▶ What is the purpose of each of these aspects?
- ▶ What is the relationship of these aspects to each other?
- ▶ What is the importance of these aspects in different religions?

THE NATURE OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

There is a range of understandings of the nature of **religion** and **spirituality**. Every religion and spirituality expresses itself in a unique way that can be profoundly personal. Religion and spirituality can also play important roles in society.

Some definitions of religion can be overly complex, while others may seem too simple. This is due partly to the wide variance in the features of world religions, but also to the difficulties of translation and interpretation. The attempt to define religion from a discipline outside it may be at odds with the manner in which the religion perceives itself (e.g. Buddhists may view Buddhism as a **philosophy**; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may view their **beliefs** as spirituality rather than a religion). However, a definition can be critically important legally, and in terms of funding, as exemplified in the following case study.

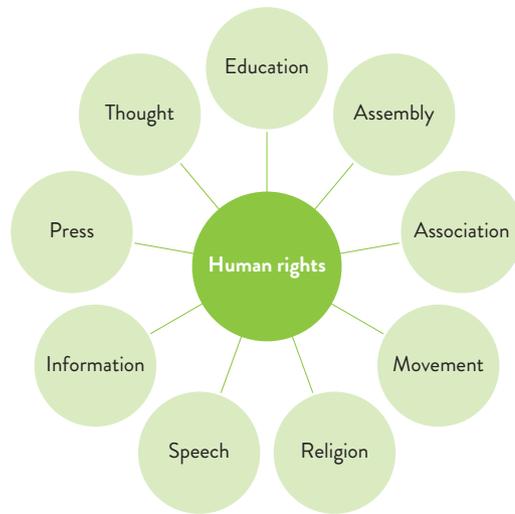


FIGURE 1.1 The United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights defines a range of basic rights for all people that include education, thought, movement and information. Why is religion included in this diagram of human rights?

religion

In this textbook, religion refers to one or more religious traditions or denominations

spirituality

The act of being open to the perception and experience of everything being interconnected through an ultimate reality

philosophy

Study of the laws that govern thought, the universe, knowledge and reality. It is a love of wisdom.

beliefs

Religious ideas thought to be true by adherents

theistic

Relates to theism, the belief in the existence of a god or gods

canons of conduct

Officially approved codes of behaviour mandated by religious traditions

adherent

A follower of, or believer in, a leader or a cause

Skills: identify, interpret, explain

- 1 Search online for a meme about religion. Explain what the meme is saying about religion.
- 2 Create your own meme about religion.

THE LEGAL DEFINITION OF RELIGION IN A PLURALIST SOCIETY

In 1983 the High Court of Australia ruled on the case *Church of the New Faith v Commissioner for Pay-roll Tax (Vic)*. The outcome of the case, also known as the Scientology Case, determined that the Church of the New Faith (Scientology) was a religion and so exempt from payroll tax. The five judges in the case were divided in their definition of religion but collectively were of the opinion that 'the test of religion should not be confined to **theistic** religions'. Among the different understandings of religion reached was that of Judges Mason and Brennan, who argued that:

For the purposes of the law, the criteria of religion are twofold: first, belief in a Supernatural Being, Thing or Principle; and second, the acceptance of **canons of conduct** in order to give effect to that belief, though canons of conduct which offend against the ordinary laws are outside the area of any immunity, privilege or right conferred on the grounds of religion.

Church of the New Faith v Commissioner for Pay-roll Tax (Vic), 1983

Note the way in which the High Court ruling pre-empts any potential conflict of laws between a religious moral code and Australian civil laws. In other words, an **adherent** of a religion cannot break Australian laws and justify their actions with the claim that they were following religious laws

instead. Another definition of religion is this one from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), which partially derives from the legal definition:

A religion is regarded as a set of beliefs and practices, usually involving acknowledgment of a divine or higher being or power, by which people order the conduct of their lives both practically and in a moral sense.

Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011

The social impact of the High Court of Australia and ABS definitions cited above has implications for all religions, and further consequences in the form of funding and tax considerations. The definition also means that adhering to religious morality is not a defence for carrying out offences against Australian civil law. The definition provided by the ABS can determine the precise calculation of census survey data that directs the Australian Government's investment in community projects. Both definitions try to reduce religion to four main parts: beliefs, **rituals**, **ultimate reality**, and ethics and morality. They indicate some connection between religions and society.



Terminology

ritual

A prescribed set of actions that has symbolic meaning and is considered sacred

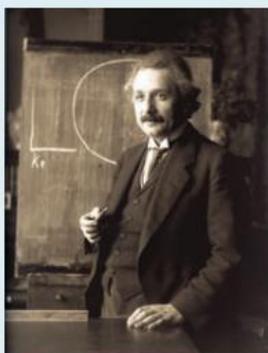
ultimate reality

A term that denotes the underlying cause of all existence, foundation of reality, supreme being or even an ideal state of existence; refers to God as the ultimate or sole deity in many religions

Skills: describe, define, identify, interpret, synthesise, research

- 1 According to the High Court ruling quoted on page 6, what are the two main features of a religion?
- 2 What features of a religion are ignored by the High Court's definition?
- 3 a Working on your own or in pairs, create a 'word cloud' by brainstorming key words linked to religion and showing their relative importance.
b Use this word cloud to write your own definition of religion.
- 4 As a class, brainstorm a final definition of religion.
- 5 Research examples of religions that would meet each criterion in the High Court's definition of religion; that is:
 - a religions with a 'belief in a Supernatural Being, Thing or Principle' (those with a single god, gods, spirits or ancestors)
 - b a religion with canons of conduct (ethics) that have offended the ordinary laws.

Defining religion



Alamy Stock Photo/GL Archive

FIGURE 1.2 Albert Einstein

My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble mind.

Albert Einstein (1879–1955), theoretical physicist

A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite, into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.

Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), French sociologist





The elected Christian is in the world only to increase this glory of God by fulfilling His commandments to the best of his ability ... This makes labour in the service of impersonal social usefulness appear to promote the glory of God and hence to be willed by him.

Max Weber (1864–1920), German sociologist

Religion is about turning untested belief into unshakable truth through the power of institutions and the passage of time.

Richard Dawkins (1941–), atheist and evolutionary biologist

When I use the word spirituality, I don't necessarily mean religion; I mean whatever it is that helps you feel connected to something that is larger than yourself.

Dean Ornish (1953–), doctor specialising in preventative medicine

It is sometimes said that we drink our religion with our mother's milk.

Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058–1111), Islamic theologian

When you have succeeded in enshrining God within your heart, you will see Him everywhere.

Swami Sivananda (1887–1963), Hindu spiritual teacher

I believe that a worthwhile life is defined by a kind of spiritual journey and a sense of obligation.

Hillary Rodham Clinton (1947–), American politician

The very purpose of religion is to control yourself, not to criticize others. Rather, we must criticize ourselves. How much am I doing about my anger? About my attachment, about my hatred, about my pride, my jealousy? These are the things which we must check in daily life.

Dalai Lama (1935–), head of the Dge-lugs-pa order of Tibetan Buddhists

There are ... components to that purpose, one is to find out who you really are, to discover God, the second is to serve other human beings.

Deepak Chopra (1947–), Indian-born writer on spirituality who is also a spiritual adviser to Hollywood stars

Religion is excellent stuff for keeping common people quiet.

Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), Emperor of France

What are religion and spirituality? When love overflows and is expressed through every word and deed, we call it Compassion. That is the goal of religion.

Mata Amritanandamayi Devi (Amma) (1953–), Hindu spiritual guru

Alamy Stock Photo/GL Portrait



FIGURE 1.3 Richard Dawkins

Alamy Stock Photo/World History Archive



FIGURE 1.4 Hillary Rodham Clinton

amanaimages/Marc Dozier/Corbis



FIGURE 1.5 Napoleon Bonaparte

Getty Images/Adam Berry



FIGURE 1.6 Amma

guru

A great thinker and mentor who may guide disciples in a specific branch of knowledge in Hinduism and Sikhism

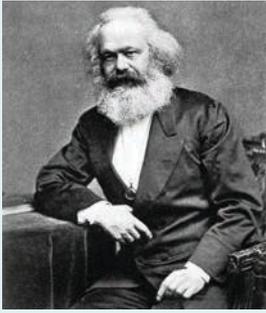


FIGURE 1.7 Karl Marx



FIGURE 1.8 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opiate of the people.

Karl Marx (1818–1883), economist and political philosopher

Self-realisation is, in fact, the only religion. For it is the true purpose of religion, no matter how people define their beliefs.

Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952), Hindu **yogi** who strived to share the wisdom of Hindu scriptures with western nations

Religion is an important institution. A nation without religion cannot survive.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938), Turkish Muslim leader, became president of modern democratic Turkey in 1923

Science investigates, religion interprets. Science gives man knowledge which is power, religion gives man wisdom which is control.

Martin Luther King Jr (1929–1968), US Baptist minister and civil rights leader

yogi

A male who practises and studies yoga; through years of training he may become a master teacher (in Hinduism and Buddhism)

Skills: identify, define, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Discuss the quotations on pages 7–9 as a class. What different purposes of religion do they reveal?
- 2 Draw a mind map of one quotation and extend it out to other related ideas.
- 3 Which is your favourite quotation? Why does this one appeal to you?

OR

- 4 Make copies of each quotation from pages 7–9 and place them around the room. Select three that appeal to you. Discuss with the class why you chose them.
- 5 Working as a group, in the centre of a large piece of paper, draw a picture of a religious building within an oval shape and caption it 'The purposes of religion'.
 - a Using arrows from the centre, brainstorm as many purposes of religion as you can. Represent these purposes graphically with symbols and signs, as well as labelling them.
 - b After 10–15 minutes each group should share their findings with the class. You may wish to decorate the classroom with your posters.

religious tradition

Belief and practice that comes from, and leads to, a human recognition of an ultimate reality and which is perpetuated (handed on), interpreted and communicated by an organised believing community

Alamy Stock Photo/ClassicStock



FIGURE 1.9 Painting of Confucius. Some **religious traditions**, such as Confucianism, label themselves as philosophies. According to the High Court definition (page 6), why would they do this?

RELIGION OR PHILOSOPHY?

Confucius was an ancient Chinese philosopher. He taught an ethical way of life, emphasising the importance of learning and practices that developed self-discipline. Although he did not believe in a god, there are temples where followers of the Confucian way practise what Confucius taught.

Skills: research, identify, define, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Research Confucianism and then write a definition of it for a dictionary of religion.
- 2 What are those practices in Confucianism that are similar to those of religious traditions with a god?
- 3 How does the absence of a divine being make classifying a system of thought as a 'religion' difficult?
- 4 Discuss the difference between a philosophy such as Confucianism, a path to spiritual fulfilment such as Taoism, and a religion.

truth claim

Statement on which an entire theory depends

sacred

Something that belongs to God; holy, sanctified

Talmud

Interpretations of the Torah that were passed on orally, and eventually compiled and written down

Kiddushin

A volume in the Jewish Talmud; the Kiddushin addresses the laws concerning women and family life

WHAT ARE RELIGIOUS TRUTHS?

Religions of the world may not meet the criteria of truth used in other disciplines (branches of learning), such as science, but religions do provide certainty for their adherents in their search for 'truth'.

Each branch of learning has its own **truth claims** that contain knowledge that is essential to it. Some truth claims are merely theories and some theories seem to be the truth because they have stood the test of time, while others may over time be replaced by another, more plausible, theory.

The 'truth' within religions has been internally and externally debated since ancient times. The claim that one religion has more truth than another has caused conflict between religions and even inspired the establishment of new religious movements and denominations.

The moral and universal truths of religious stories inspired scribes to commit the oral histories of their ancestors into **sacred** texts, such as the Bible. Within the moral lessons of each story the reader can see the 'truth'. This leads to the conclusion that there are universal truths that are relevant to all people in all times. This is explained in a passage from the **Talmud** in the following way:

An individual must imagine that he [or she] is alone in the world with the Creator. The various characters and stories in the Bible signify the different qualities of one person and of all people and the different stages of this person's spiritual path.

Talmud, **Kiddushin** 30

Skills: identify, describe, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 There are many ways of knowing and many types of truth. Consider what is meant by the following statements and summarise how 'know' is being used differently in the statements:
 - a 'I know that we breathe air'
 - b 'I know that I am happy'
 - c 'I know that I like ...'
 - d 'I know that today is ...'
 - e 'I know that I love ...'
 - f 'I know that there is a god'.
- 2 What is the difference between religious or spiritual truth and scientific truth?
- 3 Provide a personal definition of truth.
- 4 Using the text you are studying in English, is there a theme/message in a novel, play or poem that you would say is a universal message; one that is of value to all humans?

Getty Images/Ann Ronan Pictures/Print Collector



FIGURE 1.10 In 1882 *Punch* magazine published this cartoon making fun of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, from his book *On the Origin of Species* published in 1859. The cartoon gives an indication of the hostile views of society at the time over the 'truth' of the theory of evolution.

Darwin's theory of evolution

The scientific theory that species evolve through natural selection – sometimes falsely believed to mean 'survival of the fittest'

Skills: research, summarise, analyse

- 1 Research Darwin's theory of evolution.
- 2 Divide your page into squares (or frames).
 - a Briefly illustrate Darwin's theory of evolution in four to seven frames.
 - b Briefly illustrate creation as set out in Genesis 1 in four to seven frames.
- 3 Use your depictions to explain the central cause of conflict between late-19th-century Christians and those promoting Darwin's theory.

THE PURPOSES OF RELIGION

People trying to make sense of their existence and their world, to find a purpose for living and appropriate ways to live safely and comfortably, may have developed religion as a source of social cohesion.

In its long and chequered history, religion has initiated and supported, as well as resisted, social changes, and has inspired individuals to change the direction of their lives. For the adherents of a religion, it may also provide a source of happiness and a comfort during tragedy. For some, religion is a central element of their identity, while for others it offers little. Religion can give faith to those living in poverty when they have nothing, and it has assisted empires to rule the world. The continued influence of religion on different societies across time and cultures prompts the question: Why do so many people in the world today continue to find meaning in religion?

Religion can be about one god, many gods, spirits, **totems**, magic or no god at all. However, at the heart of every religion is its ability to provide answers to life's 'big questions':

- Who am I?
- How did I, and the world, come to be here?
- Why am I here?
- Who or what made the world?
- Does evil mean that the ultimate reality is cruel or impotent?
- Is there someone or something responsible for all that exists?
- Is there something beyond this level of reality?
- Does the ultimate reality of my religious tradition or spirituality exist?
- Is there an afterlife? What sort of afterlife is there?
- What determines the sort of afterlife to which one goes?
- How does my religious tradition or spirituality answer these questions?

The answers that religions provide to these **existential questions** must be comprehensive in order to be helpful and relevant to adherents. These questions and their answers provide the impetus for the development of religious traditions.

totem

An animal, object or natural occurrence to which a family, clan or group believes itself to be closely related; a representation of such an object that serves as the emblem of the family, clan or group

existential questions

Enquiries into the nature and meaning of life



FIGURE 1.11 What does this woman's body language say about the act of contemplation?

Skills: research, identify, describe, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Draw a table with four columns. Head the columns as follows:
 - A 'big question'
 - My answer
 - One religion's answer
 - A scientific or philosophical answer.
 - a Use the list of fundamental questions above as a guide to form your own fundamental questions. Insert your list of fundamental questions into the first column of the table.
 - b Undertake research in order to complete the remaining columns of the table. Where you are unable to find an answer, leave this blank.
 - c Participate in a class discussion filling in any gaps in your table.

- 2 Review the information in your completed table and discuss the following.
 - a How do your answers compare with those in the other columns?
 - b Which answers from other columns may have influenced, or resemble, your own answers?
 - c Discuss what you discovered as a class, then decide which answers appealed to you the most.
 - d What does this indicate about your thinking?
 - e Have your thoughts changed over the course of this activity?
- 3 Select one religious tradition and research the answers it provides to the ‘big questions’ on page 12.

Religious socialisation for the children of religious adherents begins almost immediately after birth. The first religious ritual that an individual experiences is their first **rite of passage**, which marks their identity as belonging to a particular religion. Examples of such rites of passage are baptism in Christianity and the circumcision of baby boys in Judaism. Afterwards, an adherent may internalise religious beliefs, values and ethics, undergo other rites of passage and rituals and have spiritual experiences doing so. Religion’s ability to convey an identity to a community of followers is one of its main purposes in society and it can do this simultaneously on communal and individual levels. It can be so interwoven in a culture that it is seen by many as a ‘way of life’ and part of their national character and ethnic identity.

ROLE OF RELIGION IN SOCIETY

Scholars have claimed that religions have sustained society over millennia in multiple ways. Two of those ways are through providing principles and teachings to promote justice and by defining and protecting the sacred (see Figure 1.13).

Early humans discovered that the best survival method was to live in groups, which may have provided them with protection from fierce animals and certainly offered support when they became old or were sick. During the late Pleistocene Era (approximately 2 million–12 000 years ago) in Australia, the kangaroo became such an important food source for the Aboriginal people that it became sacred. Religious prohibitions regulated human activities so that the kangaroo was not hunted to extinction. Such knowledge was safeguarded by elders and custodianship of this knowledge was further regulated by religious authority. It was passed from one generation to the next through a series of religious rituals and rites of passage.



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rite of passage
A ceremony involving certain rituals that marks movement from one life stage to another

FIGURE 1.12
A kangaroo (white) and hunter (red) represented in a rock painting in Kakadu National Park. What does this ‘x-ray style’ painting of a kangaroo reveal about the artist’s knowledge of the animal? What technology is in the hunter’s hand to assist him? On an island with a harsh environment, why was it important to regulate food sources and how much could be hunted? Is this agriculture or herding? What is the connection to deliberately lit fires? What does this reveal about the sensitivity of Australian Aboriginal societies to the environment?



FIGURE 1.13 Roles of religion in society

Skills: explain, summarise

- 1 In your own words, but using the concepts in Figure 1.13, explain how Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spirituality helped them to survive.

The Ten Commandments (in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5) of the Jewish and Christian traditions provide a framework for appropriate behaviour towards God and in human interactions. Some of the commandments are specifically about adherents' correct relationship to God and others are about direct human social behaviour. These laws underpin many aspects of Western legal systems.



Alamy Stock Photo/Israel Images

FIGURE 1.14 Replica of the Ten Commandments in Hebrew (Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 5:4–21). Why was having 10 laws such a great innovation as opposed to having 9 or 11? How could people of all ages and education remember the 10? Do you know the 10?

Skills: research, identify, analyse

- 1 List the Ten Commandments.
- 2
 - a Identify the commandments that outline an individual's relationship with God.
 - b Identify the commandments that outline an individual's relationship with one's fellow humans.
- 3 Explore the parallels between Australia's legal code and the Ten Commandments.

INTERPLAY BETWEEN SOCIETY AND RELIGION

Religion has inspired both positive and negative world events. It is a topic on which everyone seems to have an opinion and one that engenders robust discussion and debate. Sometimes a religion is blamed or given credit for a situation when the real catalyst is something else, such as an abundance or lack of land or resources; claims of ethnic or cultural superiority or inferiority; or the use or abuse of power.

This interplay between religion and society also impacts on individuals within a tradition; society produces the environment that challenges individuals' beliefs, thrusting them into the public arena in defence. The religious person may then shape the views of society, be dismissed as irrelevant, or be condemned or restricted as harmful. In the interplay between religion and society, religion responds to many needs in society at the national, communal, group and individual levels.

Some of the needs that religion responds to are outlined in the following pages.

Social stability

Some argue that religion promotes social stability by providing ethical principles, such as the 'Golden Rule' ('Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'), which underpin charitable works and actions that create a more compassionate society. This is evidenced in Australia through the reliance of the government on religious institutions for much of the provision of health services; educational institutions; services for the homeless, drug addicted and disenfranchised; and even overseas aid.



FIGURE 1.15 Homeless people sleeping beside St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. What does it mean to say that the homeless are quarantined from society? How are friends important for our mental health?

Cultural benefits

Religion is one of the major vehicles by which a culture passes values, knowledge and skills from generation to generation. For the individual this occurs through a person's socialisation by family, community of religious affiliation, school, clubs and the media.

Health

Studies show that religious people live longer than non-religious people. This could be due to religious prohibitions on the consumption of certain foods and alcohol or the reduction of stress and loneliness as a result of belonging to a community.

Political influence

When British people sing 'God save the Queen', they are expressing the belief that God has brought certain individuals and societies into a position of prominence and power as a 'divine right'. The sessions of Australian parliaments, at federal and state levels, open with the Lord's Prayer. Historically, Christianity was a tool of the Roman Empire under Emperors Constantine and Theodosius I to consolidate the empire at a critical point (the 4th century CE) when it was in decline. Christianity substantially benefited from its central role in Roman society.

War

Religion is seen currently as a major factor in conflicts in the Middle East, India, Ukraine, Chechnya and Africa; and historically in countries such as Ireland, where two denominations of Christianity fought for generations. It is difficult to separate religious antagonisms from cultural, political and economic interests.

Extremism

Martyrdom has a powerful psychological effect, which may promote religion to non-believers and reaffirm the beliefs of adherents for generations. This can be seen in the deaths of Samson, of the entrapped Jews at Masada in 73 CE, of the early Christian saints such as Justin Martyr (165 CE), and of Sumayya bint Khubbat, who was the first Islamic martyr (615 CE). The negative impact of extreme vows may isolate the religion, community or cult from the mainstream community. Forced conversion – for example, seeking to wipe out a culture or spirituality, as was inflicted by Australia’s colonial government on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – is another expression of extremism.

martyrdom

To witness one’s beliefs, which may include choosing to suffer or even die rather than deny them

Secularisation

Rates of membership of the majority of religious traditions in many countries show that religion does not have the same influence as it once did. The Australian Bureau of Statistics’ census figures show regular increases in participants identifying themselves as having ‘no religion’. However, it is not clear from this response whether this means that they are anti-religion, **atheist** or **agnostic**, began life within a particular religion that has become dormant in terms of the influence it has on their lives, or simply did not wish to answer that question. Despite this secular trend in Australia and other developed countries, the religious membership of people in developing countries is much higher and, through high birth rates, is increasing.

atheist

A person who believes God does not exist

agnostic

A person who is sceptical about truth claims of religions that cannot be proven but has not definitely decided that such things could never turn out to be true

Skills: research, identify, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Make a list of dot points describing the criteria for martyrdom.
- 2 Socrates has been described as a martyr for philosophy. Does he meet the criteria?
- 3 Select a historical figure from one of the religious traditions who is described in official texts as a martyr.
Do they meet the criteria from question 1? Or do the criteria need to be amended?
- 4 In common speech, what does it mean to tell someone to ‘Stop being a martyr!?’

CULTS

The ancient world was filled with cults, some that were local and related to the land of a particular town, and others that were imported from foreign cultures. The word ‘cult’ was originally used to refer to ritual actions that were carried out as part of worshipping different gods. These groups were all part of a larger framework of religion but were followed in varying degrees by individuals who found meaning in particular gods. Today, the word ‘cult’ has a different meaning – it refers to a charismatic leader who has a group of followers who assign near total responsibility for themselves



FIGURE 1.16 Wicca is a neo-pagan religion that uses magic and nature in its teachings. In modern society, why would people, seeking spiritual alternatives to traditional religion, revive parts of ancient paganism?

to that leader. Some extremely negative events in modern times have given cults a bad name. These include the Jonestown massacre in Guyana in 1978 and the Waco siege in the USA in 1993, both of which ended with the mass deaths of cult members.

Skills: identify, describe, explain

- 1 What is the difference between ancient and modern cults?

THE ASPECTS OF RELIGION

All religions share certain features, or **aspects**. Although religions can have many different aspects, there are those that are common to the majority of religions. These aspects are: beliefs; sacred stories; spaces, places, times and artifacts; texts; rituals; symbols; social structures; ethics; and spiritual experience.

creed

An accepted system of religious belief or clear expression of beliefs; statement of the chief articles of religious belief that have been accepted as authoritative

dogma

Articles of faith that are authoritative and definitive

BELIEFS

Beliefs are ideas that are thought and felt by their adherents to be true. For some religions there may be a particular set of beliefs, which could be expressed in an authoritative list (either **creeds** or **dogma**). In other religions, the beliefs may be selectively revealed to founding members. The beliefs of most religions develop as the writings of their founders are reflected upon and applied to contemporary contexts. Without beliefs, a religion would have no internal structure and it would disintegrate, as adherents would not know what to follow or what differentiated it from other religions. Beliefs give a religion its identity. Denominations within a religious tradition interpret and emphasise specific beliefs and practices differently.

SACRED STORIES

Religious **myths** and stories relate in imaginative detail a believed truth, such as that conveyed by historiography, legends, edifying parables and folklore. They transmit knowledge to adherents of all ages and levels of education and initiation. Many religions in the world developed from oral cultures in which the telling of sacred stories orally or through song and dance was a ritual. During services, some religions read the sacred stories from their sacred texts. Some sacred stories are myths and tell the origins of the universe and people. All forms of sacred stories are learnt, retold, sung or danced. At times there are strong **taboos** surrounding the telling of these stories to ensure that they are performed correctly by adherents. Sacred stories often play a role in rituals. Sacred stories can be taught and understood at many different levels.

myth

A traditional story of unknown origin that aims to tell a believed truth about some important questions of existence and the origin of things through imaginative detail

taboo

Proscription by society as unacceptable or improper; a tradition that prohibits or restricts a certain practice or forbids association with a specific thing, place or person

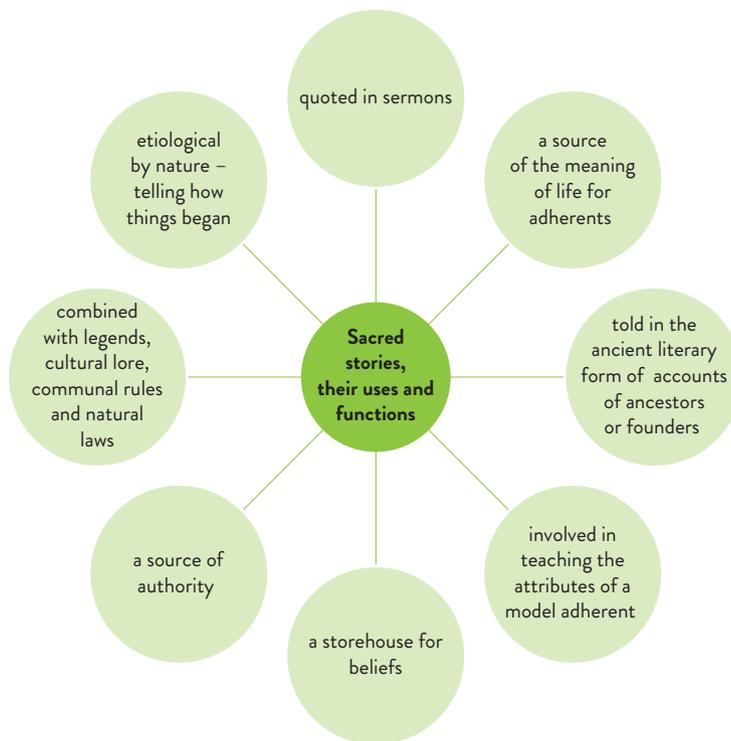


FIGURE 1.17 The uses and functions of sacred stories

Skills: identify, explain, interpret, synthesise

Working in groups:

- 1
 - a Select a sacred story that is part of a religious tradition.
 - b Read the story, then:
 - briefly summarise the story and its origins if possible
 - discuss the messages contained in the story that are 'universally true'
 - discuss how contemporary audiences can relate to it
 - share the stories and what was researched with the class.
- 2 What are the similarities between the stories being told?

Siddhartha (the Buddha)

Siddhartha (or Siddhattha; later the Buddha or 'Enlightened One') passed on his way and entered the city along with the herd of animals that were going to be killed, and still went with them right up to the palace where the sacrifice was to be made. Here the King was standing with the priests all round him chanting their hymns to the gods; and soon the altar fires were lit and the priests made ready to kill the animals that had now arrived. But just as the chief priest was about to plunge his knife into the throat of the first goat that had been picked for the sacrifice, Siddhartha stepped forward and stopped him. 'No, Maharaja,' he said to King Bimbisara, 'do not let the priest strike that poor goat.' And before anyone knew what he was going to do, he untied the rope of grass with which it was fastened, and let it go back to its mates. And no one, not even the King nor the chief

priest, thought of trying to stop him from doing it, so great and noble did he look as he set the goat free and allowed it to run back to the rest of its fellows.

Then the Prince-beggar began to speak to the King and the priests and all who had gathered there to see the great sacrifice of blood, about what a wonderful thing life is; how anybody can destroy it, but how impossible it is for anyone to restore it once it has been destroyed. Every creature that lives, so he told those around him, is fond of its life, fears to die, just as much as men do.



FIGURE 1.18 King Bimbisara is offering his kingdom, Majadaha, to the Buddha, who refuses as he does not desire worldly enjoyment. What does this painting say about the nature of enlightenment?

Why then should men use their power over these poor brothers of theirs only to rob them of what man himself is most fond of – the wonderful thing, life. If men wish to receive mercy, he said, they ought to show mercy. If men kill, then according to the law that rules in the world, they will be killed. And what kind of gods, he asked them, can they be who are pleased with and take delight in blood? Certainly not good gods, he said. Rather they must be demons to take pleasure in suffering and death. No, he ended, if men wish to taste happiness themselves in the hereafter, they must not cause unhappiness to any living creature, even the meanest, here in this world. Those who sow the seed of unhappiness, of pain and suffering, will certainly have to reap a full-grown crop of the same in the future.

In this way did Siddhartha speak to the King and the priests and people of Rajagaha, and did it so gently and kindly, and yet so powerfully, that the minds and hearts of the King and the priests were quite changed. There and then the King issued an order that henceforth throughout the whole of his Kingdom there were to be no more sacrifices in which living creatures were deprived of life. After this day, everybody in his realm, King and priests and people alike, were to offer to the gods only such gifts as did not involve the taking of any living creature's life. They were only to offer as sacrifices to gods, flowers and fruits and cakes, and other similarly bloodless offerings.

Bhikkhu Silacara, *A Young People's Life of the Buddha* Copyright © 1995 Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre Access to Insight edition © 2005 For free distribution

Skills: identify, define, explain, interpret

- 1 Which universal truth is contained within this sacred story of Siddhartha?
- 2 Which morals does Siddhartha teach verbally?
- 3 Which does he teach by his personal example?
- 4 Do you personally agree with Siddhartha?
- 5 What signs were there of what Siddhartha would later become?
- 6 Which beliefs are exemplified in this story?

Religion in popular culture

Religion can be so embedded in culture that it becomes a dominant theme in the way we tell stories that shape society's values. Below is a story of a hero. Try inserting the name of a number of heroes in popular culture from computer games, films, books, comics, or ancient texts.

A summary of the narrative:

_____ was born of mysterious parentage and spent time in an alien environment. Over time, the parentage of this hero became known and that the hero's father had/had special powers. Now this hero began to see a clear role in this world. In the course of implementing this role the hero learns how to use the special inherited powers. This hero is often confronted by the forces of evil, which must be fought against. In the finale of the story, this hero is victorious although sacrifice was necessary. Love is the value that underpins this hero's success.



FIGURE 1.19 Harry Potter, played by actor Daniel Radcliffe, on a US postage stamp. How is Harry Potter a hero? Why is the act depicted, offensive to some religious traditions? Which ancient religions might it connect to? What does putting him on a stamp reveal about attitudes to Harry Potter? How is the image charged with emotional intensity?

Alamy Stock Photo/StampCollection

SPACES, PLACES, TIMES AND ARTIFACTS

The encounter with ultimate reality in ancient times came from human interaction with the natural world and its environments, places and seasons – these became sacred sites and sacred times. As people became inhabitants of cities, the worship of the **transcendent** moved into more complex, constructed spaces – from stone circles and caves to temples, mosques, synagogues and cathedrals. The times of celebrations remained linked to seasons but also to the memory of great events in the history of the religious tradition. Sacred spaces can literally be anywhere and can be accessed during everyday activities, but what sets them apart are strenuous bans and sacred laws. A spiritual authority or ritual may regulate them and may restrict access to them at certain times and to certain people. At significant times in the development of many communities, artifacts have appeared that have come to be venerated by members of the community. These spaces, places, times and artifacts are to be treated with profound respect.

transcendent
Beyond the limits
of the human world;
other-worldly

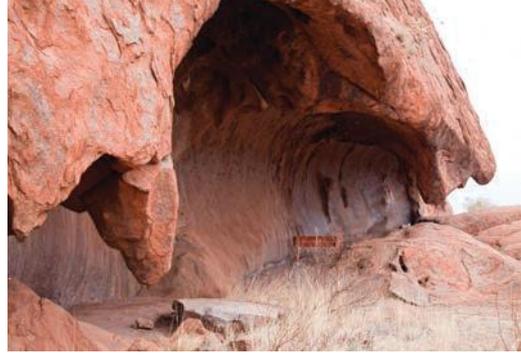


FIGURE 1.20 The photo on the left shows a thunderstorm over Uluru. How might rain enhance the symbolic meaning of Uluru? The place shown on the right is where the Mala people, the ancestors of the Anangu people, the traditional owners of Uluru, prepared for ceremony and took shelter when it was needed. What is it about this site that would make it sacred? What reasons can you suggest for why the Anangu people (the traditional custodians) do not climb Uluru themselves, nor want other people to climb it?

Spaces and places

syncretism

The attempt to blend two or more opposing religious belief systems or incorporate one into another; adherents from one tradition may take up some of the aspects of another tradition

In places where the sacred may be experienced, adherents demonstrate commitment to unseen forces by acknowledging spirits or ancestors. This may require them to go through some sort of initiation process. In Hinduism, and other religious traditions, space or the void is the fifth element in which the elemental forces air/wind, fire, water and earth exist and combine. Sacred places tend to be demarcated by some sort of human representation of the sacred or its symbolism through rock art, carvings, buildings, artifacts, ruins and the resting places of bodies of spiritual leaders. Often, sacred places remain sacred even after conquest by an opposing group, who may appropriate the sanctity of the site for their own god or gods. This process is called religious **syncretism**.

Aztec

Member of an empire of indigenous people who were the original inhabitants of Mexico and neighbouring regions

conquistadors

Spanish conquerors of Latin America in the 16th century CE



FIGURE 1.21 Virgin of the Remedies, Cholula, Mexico. The church was built on top of the Great **Aztec** Pyramid of Cholula, the largest pyramid in the world, originally named Tepanapa. Why would the **conquistadors** build a church on one of the most important religious sites of a previous culture?

Defining the holy

According to Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer in *Defining the Holy: the Delineation of Sacred Space* (2005), the Latin origin of the word 'sacred' is *sacer*, which refers to both places and artifacts. The Latin word *profanus* referred to the area outside the inner sanctum of a temple or church, and has come down to English as 'profane', meaning unholy, or the opposite of sacred. Its meaning was once spatial, but now is spiritual.

Skills: research, summarise, interpret

- 1 Sketch or locate the layout of a sacred place or space of worship in a religious tradition or denomination you have been studying.
 - a Identify what can be seen in this space or place that demonstrates it is sacred.
 - b Locate spaces and places within the space or place that have specific functions for rituals, and label them.
 - c Research any religious laws or rules that apply to the use of these spaces and places.

Times

Every religious tradition organises daily, weekly, monthly and annual ceremonies and rituals that form the rhythm of life for adherents and communities of that religious tradition. These moments shape the rites of passage of adherents' lives from birth to death. These sacred times may be on a daily basis, such as morning and evening prayers or grace before and after meals; a weekly basis, such as the Sabbath, the Sunday Eucharist, Friday Call to Prayer; a monthly basis, such as prayers for the new moon, First Friday celebrations; or annually, such as Rosh Hashana, Christmas, Ramadan and Maja Puja Day.

Festivals are often based on the agricultural cycle and link the successes or failures of crops with the relationship with the transcendent. In many traditions there are rituals for the changes of season; prayers for rain; acknowledgement of the gift of food through rituals of thanksgiving. Some modern religious feasts are adaptations of ancient agricultural festivities and are coloured by local traditional practices.

Religious traditions have specific ways of defining time; for example, in Judaism the day is not a 24-hour day but rather starts at sunset when the first stars appear in the night sky and finishes when the first stars appear the following evening. The calendar months may be determined by the moon rather than the sun, as in Islam, while in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture there is not the understanding of months but rather of seasons determined by the changes in the natural environment. The numbering of years in many societies is determined by religious ordinances; for example, in Christianity the year is linked to the life of Jesus Christ, in Judaism it is linked to creation, and in Islam the dates are linked to the al-Hijra – the emigration of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina.



FIGURE 1.22 From the 5th century BCE, a number of cultures in ancient Latin America calculated time using three interrelated systems: a 365-day calendar, a religious calendar based on a 260-day cycle and a universal or 'long count' of 2 880 000 days. The calendar has outlived the people who carved it and was supposed to predict the end of time in 2012.

Sacred time

The concept of time being sacred is central to sociologist Emile Durkheim's thesis. Durkheim (1858–1917) studied the Arrernte people of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, who appeared in anthropological studies available to him. Durkheim argues that society, rather than individuals, would have defined time, and that a break from the pursuits of hunting and gathering food required a ritualised declaration. This marked the difference between everyday pursuits and special events, which allowed all to participate in sacred dances, stories and collective memories of ancestors. In actual fact, the Creation Time for Australian Aboriginal peoples encompasses time in the distant past simultaneously with the present and future.

Skills: research, identify, summarise, interpret

- 1 Where does religion figure in the multiple ancient Latin American cultures that followed the calendar shown in Figure 1.22? Why has this calendar been used by people who claim that the end of the world is coming? What happens when the end of the world doesn't come?
- 2 Research the origins of a festival from two different religious traditions or denominations.
 - a Name the place and time of origin of each festival, locating the place on a world map.
 - b What was the original purpose behind each festival?
 - c What were the original ritual practices and how were they linked to time, space and place?
 - d What elements of the original rite are echoed in the current practice?

Artifacts



FIGURE 1.23 Sacred artifact: altar cloth, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Melbourne. Which symbols do you recognise on this altar cloth? What is an altar? What is the cloth used for? In addition to the symbols that you recognise, what else can you see? How does this artifact represent hybridisation or a blend of spiritual and religious beliefs?

Sacred artifacts and stories about them have a special meaning in the spirituality of religious traditions. These artifacts may be ancient stone or more recent plaster statues; articles of clothing or paint used for ceremony; beads used for prayer; mats, scrolls or icons. They can be a source of identity, a focus for prayer, or a way for the individual to make a public affirmation of their beliefs. There may be strenuous prohibitions on a sacred artifact: who may access it, hold it, see it, touch it, play it (if it is an instrument), listen to it being played or dance to it; how it may be used; what may

adorn it in decorations. Many artifacts are a focal point of religious belief and are linked to the contemporary practice of adherents.

Skills: research, identify, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Identify four key artifacts in each of the two religious traditions or denominations that you are studying.
- 2 Identify two occasions in two different religious traditions or denominations when the seasons determine the spaces, places, artifacts and times of a religious event.
- 3 Research the Australian community's response to Anzac Day or the Bali bombings and outline how this memory is preserved through spaces, places, artifacts and times in secular society.
- 4 Are secular memorials such as these linked to a communal spirituality? Discuss in groups and report back to the class.

TEXTS

Sacred texts and religious writings are compilations of oral and written literature in which the essential parts of a religious tradition are recorded. Included in these are a religion's beliefs, stories, ethical principles and moral codes of behaviour, creeds, prescribed prayers, history, literature and 'truths'. Sacred texts can be scrolls, books, **mantras**, **sutras**, oral texts, songs, ballads, dances, chants, **mandalas**, **hieroglyphs**, pottery decoration, papyrus, **pictographs**, icons, devotional aids, body decoration or rock art that is used by a religion. Respect for these texts is exercised, including the use of taboos on their use.

Religious leaders and scholars use texts to ascertain the will of the ultimate reality. Texts are interpreted to explain to modern adherents the historical context in which they were written. Texts are often part of rituals and **liturgies**; being read or spoken at specific times. They may contain a list of rules for the community that are quoted to provide authority in arguments and policy and are referred to as evidence for adherents in debates and discussions.

Skills: research, identify, explain, interpret

- 1 Select a theme and transcribe a passage of at least 50 words from the sacred texts of two of the following: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
 - a Compare and contrast the imagery, analogies, parables or other literary features of the selected passages.
 - b Choose one of the texts you have researched and conduct further research to find two commentaries on that text. In what ways do these commentaries differ in the interpretation of the passage?
 - c Consider your answer to question b. Is this a strength or weakness in the tradition?

mantra

Words or formulas chanted or sung as an incantation or prayer

sutras

Sayings and statements by founders, scriptures, and prayers in a particular poetic format that can be easily memorised (in Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism and Buddhism)

mandala

Sacred picture organised around a square motif depicting central ideas, beliefs, sacred stories and myths of various eastern religions; used to assist adherents' concentration during meditation

hieroglyph

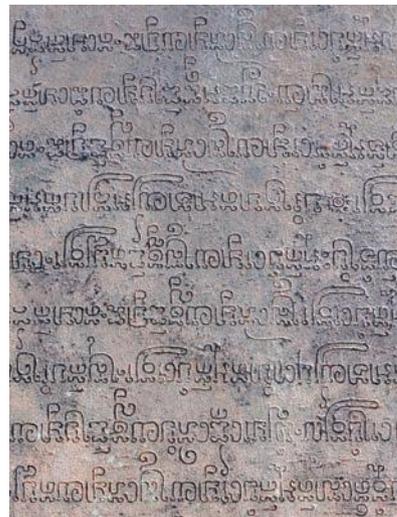
A type of ancient Egyptian writing or mark that conveys meaning

pictograph

A pictorial sign or symbol, such as a prehistoric cave drawing with symbolic figures

liturgy

Customary prayers and services arranged for public worship and prescribed by a religious tradition



Shutterstock.com/marchkimoo

FIGURE 1.24 Prayer from Angkor Wat, Cambodia. Why are some sacred texts deliberately put on different media – for example, carved on stone, pressed into clay, copied by hand or printed? Do some media have more cultural status than others?

RITUALS

Rituals are a prescribed set of actions that have a symbolic meaning and are considered to be sacred. Performing rituals expresses the beliefs of the religion for those involved and any witnesses. There is usually a set procedure or liturgy that has been passed down by socialisation and there are often strong cultural rules that sanction only initiated members to perform the ritual. Rituals require an adherent to publicly demonstrate a strong commitment to the religion. Members who do not perform rituals may be denied certain membership rights and privileges.

Rites of passage are rituals that mark a person's passing from one stage of life to another in relation to the religious tradition; for example, commemorating birth, coming of age, marriage or death. Adherents of a religion may not completely follow all the rituals; however, rites of passage are often seen as minimum requirements and may be fundamental to an adherent's identity. After performing such rituals they are considered to be a fully initiated member of the religious tradition to which they belong and may feel more connected to that tradition. Sometimes a religion may change a belief or the interpretation of a belief, which can lead to changes to the ritual expression of the belief.

Alamy Stock Photo/MediaServices/AP



FIGURE 1.25 A smoking ceremony performed by a representative of the land's traditional owners. What actions are occurring in this image? What can you suggest may be the symbolism of the adornment and actions?

Skills: research, identify, explain, interpret

- 1 In what ways do rituals help religious traditions to remain strong?
- 2 Illustrate your answer to question 1 by referring to how this can be seen in a specific ritual from a tradition or denomination you have been studying.

The Maha Kumbh Mela Festival

The Maha Kumbh Mela is a largely Hindu festival that occurs at the end of a 12-year cycle in Allahabad in India. Faithful Hindus believe that sins from past lives are washed away in the various bathing rituals of the festival and by listening to the holy men, or Nagas, and gurus who share their spiritual insights. The gathering was measured in 2013 to include 100 million people in the one place at one time! Search for this festival on YouTube to see some amazing sights.



FIGURE 1.26 Pilgrims participating in the Maha Kumbh Mela festival

Shutterstock.com/Madimir Melnik

Skills: identify, describe, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Read the information about the festival of Maha Kumbh Mela and look carefully at the image. As a class, discuss which other religions use water in their rituals.
 - a Outline these rituals and their symbolic meaning.
 - b What role does religion play in creating large gatherings of people?
 - c What feelings are generated at such gatherings?
 - d Which of these gatherings have you ever been part of?

SYMBOLS

Symbols are used to stand for or represent something else, and often a material object is used to represent something immaterial. They are often signs, objects, people, actions or places that acquire a special meaning or power, and can sometimes be held to be sacred. The symbolic function is a key element of religious tradition, as symbols can express significant beliefs, be part of rituals and have specific religious meanings. Symbols can express the significant beliefs and ethics of a particular religion, and they can even identify an adherent as a member of a particular religion.

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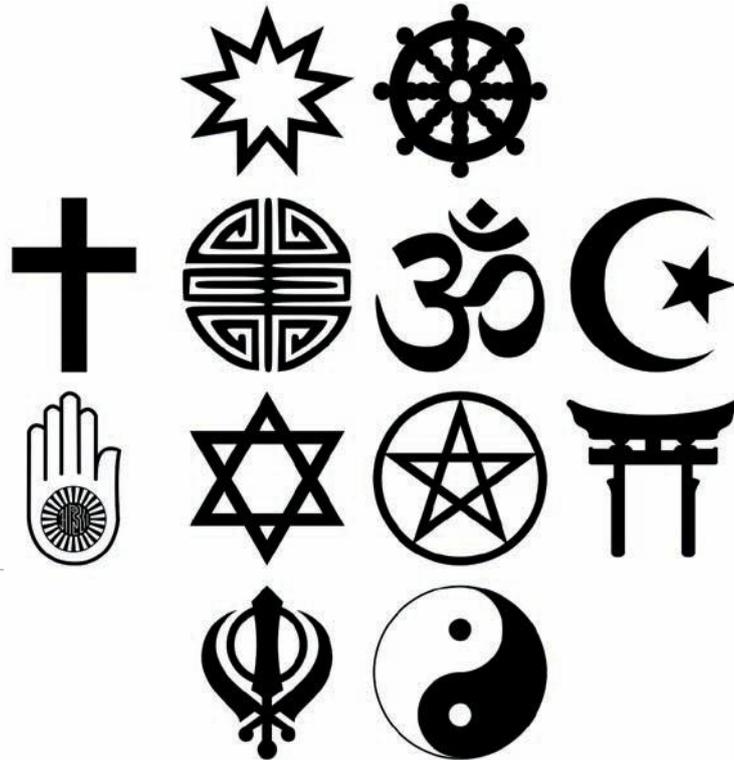


FIGURE 1.27 Symbols of religious traditions. How many of these religious symbols can you identify?

Skills: research, identify, define, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Construct a Venn diagram showing five symbols that have religious, cultural and social meaning.

SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Many religious traditions have established social models to which society conforms, and which often place the religious leadership at or near the top of society. However, this is not true in religions in which there is a democratic value system. Sometimes a religious tradition has an extra religious level for adherents who wish to become more spiritually focused, such as monastic orders for Buddhist monks and nuns. They may be attached to leadership or may simply be separate from the general community, as is the case with **ascetics**, but not directly connected to leadership in the religion. Religion can also be an intrinsic part of society, supporting its structures, nobility, kings, queens and chiefs. Even in secular societies, such as Australia, scripture lessons in schools and school chaplains play a vital role in transmitting the religious message to a wide audience. From the level of the everyday Australian all the way to celebrities, politicians and judges, religion can influence society in a number of direct and indirect ways.

ascetic

A person who separates him- or herself from society and undertakes extreme religious practices in order to achieve spiritual insights and visions

Ordination of women



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Getty Images/Patrick Bernard/AFP

FIGURE 1.28 In 1935, Regina Jonas (left) became the first woman to be ordained as a rabbi in the Reform Movement of Judaism. Her **rabbinic** thesis argued the case for the ordination of women from a Jewish law perspective. She taught and officiated at rituals throughout her imprisonment in Theresienstadt during the Holocaust. She was killed in Auschwitz in October 1944. A female Anglican priest today (right). What does the adornment and dress of both women indicate about the religious traditions to which they belong? What does the complete ordination (where women perform the same functions as men) of women show about Reform Judaism and denominations of Christianity such as the Quakers (1800s), most Protestant denominations and the Anglican Church?

rabbinic

Of or relating to rabbis and their writings and teachings

Skills: identify, define, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Identify one religious tradition that has a hierarchical social structure and provide four implications of that structure for the tradition.
- 2 Identify one religious tradition that does not have a hierarchical structure and provide four implications of this for the tradition.

ETHICS

Ethics is the study of decision making about right and wrong in a culture. Ethical principles are ideals that each theory, perspective, maxim or statement about ethics seeks to achieve. Visionary ideals offer a picture of a perfect world from which all morality, laws and duties about what adherents ought to do can be derived. The model citizen is one who possesses desired qualities or values or follows laws that would bring about the ideal. The authority of ethical principles in a religious tradition comes from its god or gods, spirits, ancestors, elemental forces or divine principles. This divine authority also supports all rule systems, from the level of ethical principles to social etiquette, **norms**, customs and rules relating to the sacred. It should be noted that the terms 'moral' and 'immoral' are adjectives that are applied to delineate whether something is right or wrong, or what ought or ought not be done.

Religious ethical principles and codes of behaviour often dictate the precise details of an adherent's expression of beliefs through rituals, diet, the calendar, personal decoration or clothing, use of sacred texts, use of sacred space, their thoughts and many other parts of the religion in their daily lives. Sometimes there is a disparity between the theory and practice of ethical principles and

norm

Behaviour that is sanctioned or approved by a particular culture, community or group

codes of behaviour; what a religion insists on and what actually happens in a community or society are often two quite different things. The performance of ethical principles and religious morality are often additionally supported by an afterlife structure of reward and punishment, a perfect world to come, a better reincarnation, joining totem spirits, material rewards in this life, or any similar enticement.

Skills: research, identify, define, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Using the current media, identify two public debates in which a religious tradition or denomination has expressed a view.
 - a What was the ethical stance that the religious tradition adopted?
 - b Which values underpin this stance?
 - c Which aspect, other than ethics, would be linked to the tradition's position?

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Spiritual experiences can be had in a religious or a non-religious context. Both participants and witnesses may find meaning in them. A person's religious identity is the sum total of all their religious and spiritual experiences. A positive experience may lead them to want more participation and membership, just as a negative experience can do the opposite. Cultural influences can define spiritual experiences. When a powerful emotion is stirred by an experience, beliefs, emotions and other aspects may combine together to induce spirituality. Not all religious experiences are spiritually authentic but this is certainly the goal of the rituals and other facets of a religion. Spirituality can also require things from an individual, hence the saying, 'sincerity is the most important part of any prayer'.



FIGURE 1.29 Women in meditative prayer during an Allawiyya Sufi Tariqa gathering (left) and whirling dervishes (right). Describe the actions of these adherents of the Sufi sect of Islam. What makes this spiritual?

Skills: identify, define, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Have you ever had a spiritual moment? Was it as part of a religious experience?
 - a In groups, discuss and share your personal sacred stories or a moment in which you felt or glimpsed spirituality, had a spiritual experience or had an insight.
 - b If you haven't had such an experience, tell a story of someone you know (do not name them) that addresses this topic.

- 2 Short answer question: ‘Replicating the practices of significant figures can connect adherents to their religious tradition.’ Discuss this statement with regard to the religious tradition you have been studying.
- 3 Write a report on a religious tradition. Using each of the aspects from the table below as headings, compare that religion:
 - a to another religion in its entirety
 - b to a number of different religions, addressing each aspect.

The table is an example of how your answer to this question could be presented; however, it is by no means prescriptive.

ASPECT	EXAMPLES FROM CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY	EXAMPLES FROM OTHER RELIGION/S
Beliefs	Monotheism	Monotheism in Zoroastrian religion in Iran today
Sacred stories	The story of Noah	Gilgamesh meets Utnapishtim/Ziusudra in the ancient Sumerian religion
Spaces, places, times and artifacts	An enactment of the Stations of the Cross, Via Dolorosa, Israel	Feast of Tabernacles/Jewish New Year celebrations
Texts	The New Testament	The stories of Guru Nanak in Sikhism
Rituals	The Eucharist	The Feast of the Dead in the Indigenous North American Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) religion (900 CE)
Symbols	The priestly vestments	Mud masks and headdresses in Papua New Guinean tribal religions
Social structures	The Catholic priesthood, monastic orders and lay people	The caste system, priests, and ascetic holy men and women in Hinduism in India
Ethics	The Ten Commandments	The Noble Eightfold Path in Buddhism
Spiritual experience	Pilgrimage to Lourdes	The Hajj in Islam

monotheism
The belief in one God

Eucharist
The Christian ceremony of thanksgiving commemorating the Last Supper, in which bread and wine are consecrated to become the body and blood of Christ and are consumed by adherents in Holy Communion

THE ASPECTS OF RELIGION ARE INTERRELATED

In reality, a religion may have more aspects than those identified so far and these aspects could be combined together, whereas here they have been separated for the purposes of explanation. The difficulty scholars have in defining a religion is due to diversity, and this extends to whether or not all of the aspects are present in every religion in the world; some may have them in varying degrees. The aspects of a religion are all **interrelated** and can strongly impact on each other. For example, the nucleus of a religion is its beliefs. If the beliefs and spiritual experiences in the stories of a founder of a religious tradition are held to be true by the adherents, they may have spiritual experiences when performing the rituals and hearing the stories as well. For example, a sacred story can be read from a sacred text by a religious leader as part of a ritual in a place, space or time using a religious artifact. This interrelationship of the aspects in this moment might inspire a spiritual experience for an adherent. Furthermore, the approach of a religious tradition towards ethical decision making and in forming moral judgements will depend upon the authority of its beliefs, which are further supported by its sacred stories, texts and social structure.

interrelated
Having a relationship in which each of the variables affects the other



FIGURE 1.30 The relationship between the aspects of religion

Skills: research, identify, define, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1
 - a Using a ritual of initiation in a religious tradition or denomination, construct a flowchart or diagram that shows the relationship between the aspects in the celebration.
 - b Write a paragraph outlining the relationship between the various aspects that are represented in the initiation ceremony.
- 2 Make your own diagram of the 'Aspects of Religion' and insert arrows in the diagram to show the relationship between the aspects. Use the information in Figure 1.30 to help you identify the relationship between the aspects.

Is sport a religion?

Poets, artists and media commentators have asked the question: 'Is sport a religion in Australia?' In the poem 'Life Cycle', by Bruce Dawe, for example, football is explicitly related to aspects of religion in an intuitive and playful manner. There have even been 'great debates' on the topic.

The line and the link between religion ... is expressed in those very extraordinary congregational gatherings that we have not only on Saturday afternoons ... it's more than a link, it's an identity. I can tell you that about four weeks ago the whole of Geelong were on their knees because Geelong were four points down against Hawthorn. Tom Hawkins took a magnificent mark just seconds before the final siren and, of course, you know the result – such is, of course, the power of prayer! ... The way in which religion and football come together is extraordinary and one of the elements is the sense of binding together in a community ... Football expresses the three themes of religion – faith, hope and charity ... but football is a religion most of all because it brings hope ...

Father Kevin Dillon, Catholic priest at
St Mary's Geelong, 2012



Getty Images/Paul Kane

FIGURE 1.31 Young West Coast Eagles fans watch a cinema screen of the AFL final against the Hawthorn Hawks in 2015. Which aspects of a religion apply to the children and actions in this image?

It is preposterous to say that football is a religion ... football doesn't deliver any of them (faith, hope or charity) ... on a football field there is no place for charity ... I feel for Footscray supporters because if there is a God I think he looked at the world and saw there were people who had been through life and knew not to hope for too much ... and he or she created the Footscray Football Club. Religion means believing in something that can never be proven ... in football the scoreboard is there ... faith doesn't get you anywhere in football ... no umpire is going to reverse a decision ... One thing football does have ... is a founding myth ...

Geoff Richardson, football commentator

>

Skills: explain, interpret, analyse, synthesise

Find and read the Bruce Dawe poem 'Life Cycle', then answer the following questions:

- 1 Why do some people claim in jest or in earnest that football is their religion?
- 2 Concepts of religion permeate society's discussion of sport. Discuss the concepts of faith, hope and charity and see if they support football as a religion or establish that it is not.
- 3 Is loyalty to a football club indoctrinated in the same way as religion might be?
- 4 What does attending a football game have in common with going to a religious service?
- 5 To what extent does football inspire strong emotions that cannot be felt in any other context?
- 6 Why would a comparison between football and religion be seen as offensive by some people?

Skills: identify, synthesise, explain, create

- 1 Imagine you are the founder of a new religious movement. It is a totally original religion of your own creation. You must:
 - name it
 - provide a list of beliefs and short explanations for each
 - write the story of the mythical origin of the religion
 - identify and explain spaces, places, times and artifacts of the religion
 - name the sacred stories of the religion and explain briefly what they tell about the religion
 - develop religious symbols, such as ritual objects, religious clothing and the symbol of the religion
 - provide a **hierarchy** of religious leadership as an annotated diagram
 - identify who the adherents are
 - write a prayer and devise a ritual that it relates to
 - describe any sacred food or drink and explain how it connects to the religion's myths and rituals
 - develop one rite of passage and briefly explain the stage of life that it marks
 - provide a system of laws, a moral code and a textual foundation
 - provide an afterlife structure and explain how it connects to a moral code
 - develop a practice of spirituality for the religion.
- 2 Present all of this information in a portfolio.

hierarchy

A structure that is based on elements being at different levels of primacy, authority or power



Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://religionsocvce.nelsonnet.com.au>.

REVISION

A Short-answer questions

- 1 Define religion.
- 2 What purposes does religion serve?
- 3 What is the relationship between religion and society?
- 4 List the aspects of religion and, in your own words, briefly explain each aspect.

B Extended-response questions

- 5 Which is more important in the tradition you are studying – the role of religion in the life of the individual or the role of religion in society?
- 6 ‘Religious syncretism is evident in Australian society today.’ Discuss the truth of this statement.
- 7 Which principles could form the basis for dialogue between different religious traditions?
- 8 Select one ritual from a religion you are studying.
 - a Identify the religion and the ritual.
 - b Describe the ritual.
 - c Which beliefs of the religion are demonstrated in the ritual?
 - d How might this ritual enhance an adherent’s spiritual experience?

C Essay questions

- 9 *The true nature of religion and spirituality cannot be limited by singular definition.*
Discuss this statement according to the quotations from great thinkers on pages 7–9.
- 10 *How has religion supported the development of society? Has it detracted from society?*
Provide examples and evidence to inform your discussion.
- 11 How do the aspects of a religion apply when the entity itself claims to be a philosophy?
Discuss the ways in which philosophies (Asian or other philosophies) both satisfy and reject an analysis that applies the aspects of religion.
- 12 Some religions and spiritualities are about doing and others are more cerebral. Use the aspects to compare examples from two or more religious traditions that fit these criteria.
How are the aspects of religion interrelated in each case or example?

EXTENSION

Aspects analysis

Use the aspects of religion to analyse a religious or spiritual event that you have observed or can observe by researching on the Internet. Remember to check the definitions of the aspects in Chapter 1. Answer the following questions in a summarised form.



- 1 What **beliefs** were referred to directly, implicitly or symbolically in the event?
- 2 Which **sacred stories** were mentioned in the prayers or, by tradition, are associated with the event?
- 3 What **spaces, places, times** and **artifacts** were required in order for the event to occur?
- 4 Which **texts** were used for the prayers, blessings, readings and explanations during the event?
- 5 What **rituals** occurred at the event?
- 6 Which **symbols** were incorporated into the event and how were they used?
- 7 What evidence of the **social structure** of the religion were present in the event?
- 8 Explain how the **ethics** of the religion, shown in the associated rules, obligations, rewards and/or punishments, are part of this event.
- 9 In what way was the event a **spiritual experience**? Did being part of this event change participants' lives? Are they more involved or less involved in their religion as a result of participating in the event?

Aspects research

- 1 In your own words, define the following terms as they relate to aspects of religion:

spaces	places	times	artifacts
---------------	---------------	--------------	------------------
- 2 Research the following festivals and collect images relating to them. Use the terms 'spaces', 'places' and 'times' to structure your research.
 - a Indigenous peoples: the annual Gathering of Nations (New Mexico, USA)
 - b Buddhism: Waisak day at Borobudur (Indonesia); Bliss Dharma Assembly at Seda (Tibet); or a mass ordination at the Dhammakaya Foundation (Thailand)
 - c Christianity: Christmas or Easter at the Vatican (Rome), or at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Jerusalem)
 - d Hinduism: The Maha Kumbh Mela at Ujjain, Allahabad, Haridwar and Nashik (India)
 - e Islam: Eid al-Adha (Mecca)
 - f Judaism: Yom Kippur at the Kotel Maaravi (Western Wall, Jerusalem)
 - g Sikhism: Baisakhi at Amritsar (India)



Consider why the events occur at specific places or times and why a space becomes designated as sacred.

3 Research the following artifacts:

- a** A tjuringa from a central Australian Aboriginal community
- b** The descendant trees of the original Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya (India) and Sri Lanka, which are sacred to Buddhism
- c** The Holy Grail, Shroud of Turin, True Cross, Crown of Thorns, Lance of Longinus or any of the relics of Christianity
- d** The Shiva Linga of Hinduism
- e** The Ka'aba at Mecca, an artifact of Islam
- f** The Menorah of ancient Judaism on the Arch of Titus in Rome or the Dead Sea Scroll, Tanakh or Ner Tamid
- g** The Kara, Kirpan, Kesh, Kangha and Kachera of Sikhism

Consider the point of having such an artifact; how it was or is used; what it symbolised or still symbolises.

Consider whether the absence of it would be significant for the religion.

How does the artifact assist adherents to find meaning in life?





Chapter 2

RELIGION THROUGHOUT TIME

Outcome to be demonstrated

Discussion of the interplay between spirituality, religion and society in the past and present

Focus questions

- ▶ What role did spirituality and religious ideas have in the origins of society?
- ▶ What roles have spirituality and religion played in societies in different times and civilisations?
- ▶ What has been the impact of the engagement of religions with philosophy, science, politics and technology over time?
- ▶ Which beliefs and related aspects of religions in the past have been retained, lost or syncretised in some form?



IN THE BEGINNING

From the start, humanity seems to have sensed and interacted with a spiritual dimension beyond human reality. Both spirituality and religion have continuously drawn on this other dimension and they have played significant roles in the development of human societies throughout history. The diverse roles of spirituality and religion reflect the complexity of societies at various stages in history. Evidence indicates that religion emerged and developed during the historical evolutions and revolutions. One of the major roles of spirituality and religion has been to develop a 'literacy of the sacred'. This has included oral traditions; sacred dances and music; decorations on cave walls; carved stone; writing on clay tablets and papyrus; printing on paper and typing on a computer. Whether it was done with clay that people chewed and spat over their hands, with fingers or a chewed stick dipped in ochre, in dances, with a stylus on clay tablets, a feather on paper, a printing press, a ballpoint pen or a keypad; the birth and development of civilisation came from the records of the sacred collective memories of a culture. Some memories are still being sung and danced as they have been for thousands of years, others are being excavated by archaeologists after disappearing, and other memories have been through several text forms but are still current today.

SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION IN HISTORY

Religion's early origins lie in spirituality, which played various roles in the evolution of **hominin** societies. Spirituality then developed into religion during an explosion of human creativity known as the symbolic revolution (around 50 000–40 000 BCE). A period of drastic environmental changes (12 500–11 500 BCE) produced anxieties over food. The result was the gradual shift from hunter-gather to agricultural societies (10 500–9500 BCE). The irregularity of food production brought development of granaries and non-utilitarian structures with standing stones and carved images – religious sites to appease the gods and bring fertility to the land. Religion accompanied the growth of city-states such as the Sumerian Empire and religion was the first thing to be written about in the oldest system of writing to be translated (3000 BCE). In the **Axial Age** (800–200 BCE) religions, philosophies, mathematics and science began to take shape across the world and frame answers to the 'big questions' of life. With the democratisation of knowledge (1380–1646 CE), religion was behind the first translations of the Bible, early dictionaries and printing presses to distribute Bible translations. These led to increases in the literacy of the common person, enabling a more personalised internalisation of religious beliefs and practices. What accompanied these dramatic shifts in human societies,

hominin

The group of animals that includes modern humans, their ancestors and genetically related primates, specifically chimpanzees (including Bonobos) and gorillas

Axial Age

An era from 800 to 200 BCE which, according to Karl Theodor Jaspers (1949 CE), was when great ideas in mathematics, science and philosophy emerged across the world in human thought: from mathematicians and natural philosophers (scientists) in ancient Greece in the West, across the ancient world, to Buddha and other thinkers in the East. Much of the philosophical and scientific thought, and many of the political systems and religions that developed at this time are still with us.

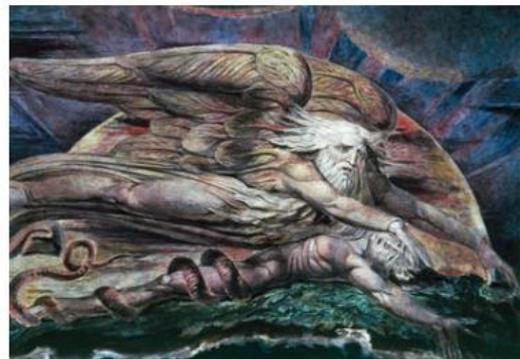


FIGURE 2.1 *The Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo (1508–1512) at the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican (left). *Elohim Creating Adam* by William Blake (1795–1805) (right). In a table, note the differences and similarities between these depictions of the creation of the first human beings.

spirituality and religion were technological advances that allowed people to share ideas and produce food more abundantly, securely, stably and efficiently. What follows is a timeline of these developments.

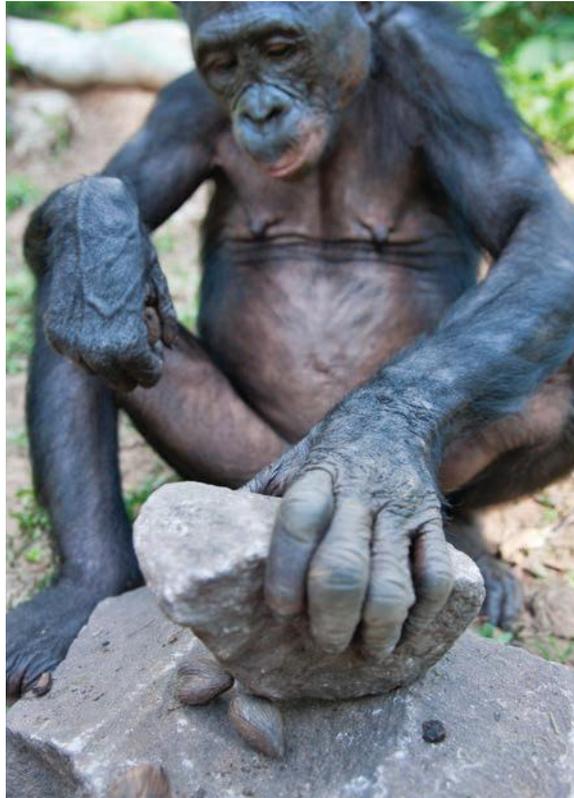
SOCIETY'S ORIGINS

The search for the beginnings of human engagement with community and shared spiritual ideas has led to new research that indicates that chimpanzees, bonobos and humans branched from the same genetic ancestor, known as CHLCA, between 13 and 6 million years ago. Academics agree that primates exhibit **protocultural** behaviours such as teaching their young survival skills, foraging in groups and bonding, demonstrating respect for a dominant individual and sharing. The ability to form political alliances and allow certain dominant individuals special privileges is important for group harmony. Such social behaviours may explain their unusually large and complex brains and reliance on nurture rather than nature. A number of experts have even suggested that language (hand signs, facial expressions and sounds) developed in early hominin societies to reduce the hours of grooming each other needed to produce the same social cohesion, political movement and asylum from attack.

SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION'S POSSIBLE ORIGINS

Much of what people do to enact spiritual beliefs within a religious space or place, while using a sacred **artifact**, and during sacred time leaves few traces; however, **stories** of these moments do survive through an oral tradition – for example, the biblical Ark of the Covenant is recalled in the Bible. Saying a prayer, looking upon a magnificent sunset, pondering the meaning of the 'big questions' about life and having a discussion with people from other religious traditions can all be documented today but could not, and thus left no trace, in the distant past.

Studies of spirituality and religion in the prehistoric period focus on activities that did leave a trace; however, evidence often poses more questions than it answers. This approach focuses on burials; **grave goods**; cave artwork; artifact artwork and adornment; defleshed skulls; potential shrines; temple complexes and non-utilitarian buildings in the first agricultural settlements. From 13 million years ago, when humans and primates diverged genetically, hominin society was on a trajectory to becoming capable of experiencing spirituality and religious actions. This would become a defining characteristic of the hominins that led to *Homo sapiens* – us.



Getty Images/Martin Harvey

FIGURE 2.2 What is the bonobo chimpanzee using in this image? What would require such effort to extract?

protoculture

The passing on of learnt behaviours from one generation to another in non-human primates

artifact

A source of identity or focus for prayer, including ancient stones or more recent plaster statues, articles of clothing or paint used for ceremonies, beads used for prayer, mats, scrolls or icons

stories

Literary forms such as legends, myths, parables and folklore, that through imaginative detail relate a believed truth

grave good

An object placed with the dead for use in the afterlife

Skills: explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 What is similar about primate social behaviours and our own?
- 2 Why is it accurate to compare early hominin societies to primate social behaviours?
- 3 What do you think is the origin of society?
- 4 Why did language develop, according to studies of primates?
- 5 Imagine that this classroom and class were buried in volcanic ash for thousands of years. Which aspects of religion would leave a trace for the archaeologists of the future? What would they say about you given the artifacts that you have in your possession today? Write a mock archaeological study and hypothesise what could be said about our society based only on what is found in the classroom, without what you currently know.



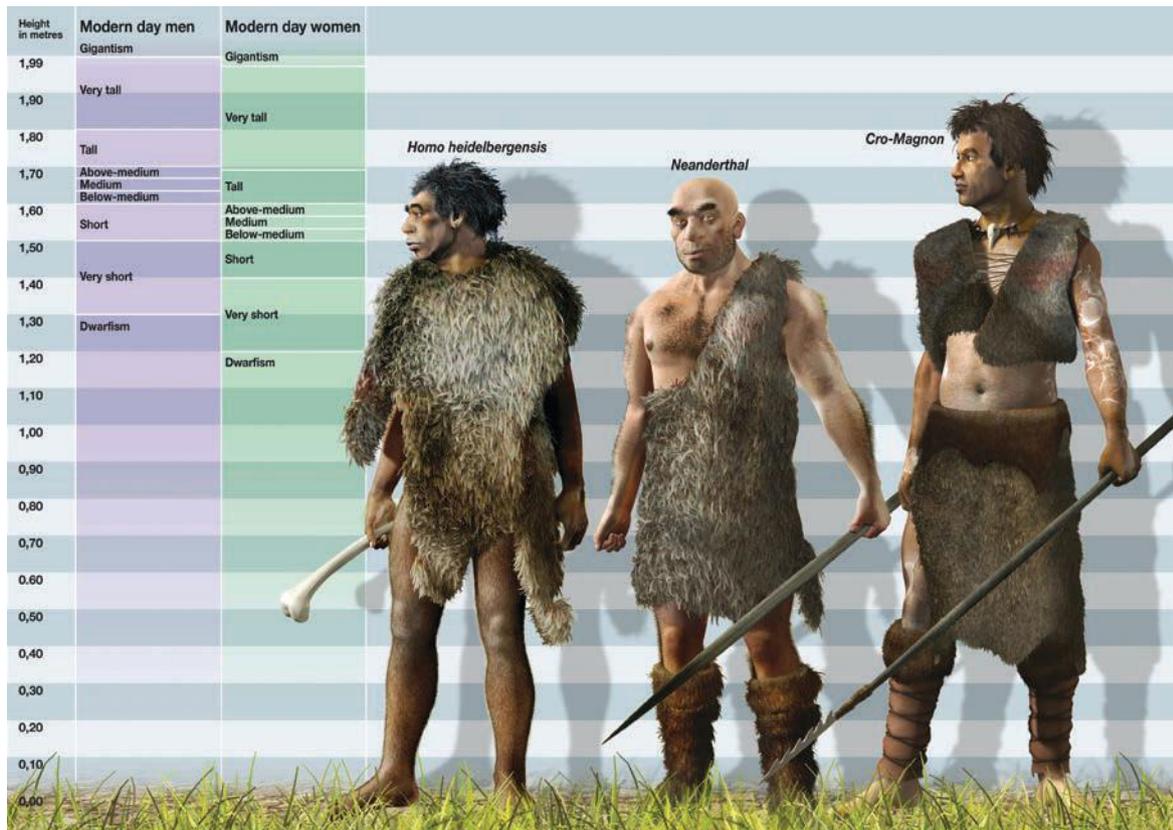
Getty Images/Javier Trueba

FIGURE 2.3 This hand axe, called Excalibur, is the only stone tool to be found at Sima de los Huesos (Pit of Bones). It is carved in red quartz, a rock that is not often found in the region. It is the world's oldest ritual artifact or grave good designed for use in an 'afterlife'.

EARLY HOMININ IDEAS 3–2 MILLION YEARS AGO

One of the most exciting finds in recent years is of the possible ancestor for the genus *Homo* itself, that of *Homo naledi* in South Africa. Another discovery, this time in Sima de los Huesos, Spain, revealed a mass grave of 40 or more *Homo heidelbergensis* individuals who had been intentionally buried. Bodies were placed in an almost inaccessible part of the cave in which they were found. There is no evidence that the cave was flooded or ever inhabited by them – it was used specifically for burial thousands of years ago. The grave contained a 'hand axe' of red granite (a stone that is not from the area). This tool was valuable and rare. It places at 400 000 years ago a belief that the dead needed goods in the afterlife.

In *Homo neanderthalensis* burials, bodies were often placed in the foetal position and left with flowers and grave goods. In some burials the skull has been found cracked open to remove the brain, and symmetrical cut marks have been found at sites of muscle attachment. DNA sequencing has confirmed that the brain and other flesh were eaten by the group. It may be that this was seen as a way to keep the 'part' of the individual alive, to beat scavenger animals or simply to provide an effortless meal.



Getty Images/Jose Antonio Peñas/SPL

FIGURE 2.4 Height variation in Pleistocene hominins. Which hominin was most like us? Why do *Homo sapiens* from Europe have *Homo neanderthalensis* DNA in their genome? What sort of interaction between those two groups of hominin might have achieved this?

Skill: discuss, describe, explain

- 1 Did hominins have religion and proto-spiritual ideas, or were they just sentimental and protective when loved ones died?
- 2 Describe the evidence that early hominins had burial rites. What beliefs may have accompanied them according to the evidence?
- 3 Write a 150-word story describing a hominin burial.

SOCIETY AS A GROUP ADAPTATION 1.8 MILLION YEARS AGO

Judging by its continuation today, society was a successful group adaptation. The ability to live in large groups enabled role division and social orders, which enabled leaders to govern and enforce codes of behaviour. Other individuals may have had special abilities to commune with a ‘parallel dimension’ to this world. According to the increasing sizes and complexity of folds of the brains indicated in fossilised hominin skulls, it is probable that early hominins lived in sizeable social groups and that language began to develop as a method for forming and maintaining social cohesion. Within the societies of *Homo erectus* and *Homo neanderthalensis*, there is evidence that individuals with disabilities and infirmities of old age were fed, protected and buried with ceremony, indicating that their societies were compassionate.

Values in hominin society

The skull of a *Homo erectus* man from Dmanisi (Georgia, Eastern Europe) showed he had only one tooth for a number of years before he died at the age of 40, which was then considered 'old age'. His food was hunted and pulverised by stone or chewed for him. This suggests social values, such as care for the elderly. Over many years he may have possessed knowledge that was of value to the group; for example, where water, caves or food could be found. It is possible that he took care of the young while the others hunted, or even that he kept sacred knowledge.

Members of the group who had congenital diseases and disabilities were cared for by these first societies. Remains found at Shanidar Cave, in Northern Iraq, showed care for an individual who was kept alive and lived out his life after having broken bones and while suffering from major deformities and arthritis. In spite of having a withered arm and being blind in one eye, he was buried with goods (indicative of rituals).

A wolf cult 150 000 years ago

Lazaret Cave (France) accommodated a small village of a number of leather or skin tents. At the entrance of each tent, according to the floor plans, was a wolf skull. The skulls may be evidence that *Homo erectus* had a 'wolf cult'. Questions posed:

- Are the skulls magical or spiritual guardians?
- Are they totems that represent the clan?
- Are they evidence that the clan used spirits to underpin the foundations of their homes?

symbolic revolution

An explosion of creativity and abstract thought that appeared 50 000 years before the present time, seen in rock art, sculpture, glyphs and painting

cinnabar

A bright red mineral used as a red pigment in rock art, funerals and body paint

Burial with ceremony and religion 100 000 years ago

One of the earliest and less-contested origins of religion involves the burial practices of a group of archaic *Homo sapiens* in a cave in Qafzeh, Israel. The bones of 15 individuals have either been painted red with ochre or buried with pieces of ochre, which may have infused the bones with the colour, and ochre-painted tools. These intentional burial practices are seen by scholars as showing the importance of bodily decoration in life and death, and of religious ideas and rituals. This burial practice would seem to have spread worldwide by 50 000 years ago (Australian Aboriginal people did it) in what has become known as the **symbolic revolution**. Where ochre was unavailable, **cinnabar** or rocks containing iron oxide were used instead. Some scholars, however, have argued that such burials and their rituals connote a primarily sentimental rather than religious purpose.

Skills: analyse, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 What do you think was the origin of religion – values, speech, art, ritual objects, skulls, funerals, music, hunting, agricultural sacrifices or something else?
- 2 Examine two examples of evidence mentioned above (or research other examples) of possible religious thought by addressing the following questions:
 - What do these pieces of evidence indicate about early society at the time?
 - What roles may religion have played at that time, according to your selection?
 - To which aspects of religion do your selections belong?
 - Nominate one idea or practice associated with your selection that is still with us today.
 - Outline the current practice.

>

- > 3 How accurate is the hypothesis that the pieces of evidence (used for question 2) are connected to spirituality, religion or society?

Research

- 4 Debate: In teams of three speakers for the affirmative and three speakers for the negative, debate one of these topics: 'Hominin societies were patriarchal', 'Hominin societies were matriarchal' or 'Hominin societies are where religion originates'.
To start, do some research to gather material for your arguments.

THE SYMBOLIC REVOLUTION 200 000–40 000 YEARS AGO

Academics argue that archaic *Homo sapiens* appeared 200 000 years ago and that 50 000–40 000 years ago an 'explosion' of art, technology and symbolic ideas accompanied a highly developed form of language. Bodily adornment, dances and songs accompanied this 'symbolic revolution', which spread throughout societies across the globe via language. Theorists hypothesise that the religious belief in a self-regulating world and a central role for humanity developed at this time. Others believe that religion emerged when language moved beyond the literal and what can be observed, to describe invisible things such as gods, ancestor spirits, right, wrong, social norms, social hierarchies, taboos and oaths. It is the development of sign systems in a language that is believed to have allowed people who had language to transcend kin relationships and develop mutually beneficial interactions. The development of speech biologically is credited with generating religion, art, myth and symbolic culture.

Skills: explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 When is it suggested that a symbolic revolution took place?
- 2 Summarise the evidence for this symbolic revolution.
- 3 What was symbolic about it?
- 4 What roles may religion and spirituality have played in the symbolic revolution?
- 5 How does the potential in *Homo sapiens* for symbolic thought relate to religion?
- 6 What physiological developments led to the symbolic revolution?

Mungo Woman – the oldest cremation 42 000 years ago

Since evidence of burials is such a good indicator of spiritual ideas, the presence in the historical record of cremation is highly significant. At Lake Mungo, Australia, approximately 42 000 years ago, an Australian Aboriginal woman died and was cremated twice. This could represent similar traditions to those that are present today in various language groups of Australian Aboriginal people. The purpose of burial practices in Australian Aboriginal language groups is to respect the person's contribution to the society and to prevent them from posthumously interfering in the affairs of the living language group. Today, numerous language groups of Australian Aboriginal people place bark or sticks between the remains of the person, their belongings and the living relatives. Close relatives are unable to speak of the ceremonies held in honour of the person or may not be able to speak at all during the mourning period. People with the same name as the deceased may have their names changed for the period of mourning.

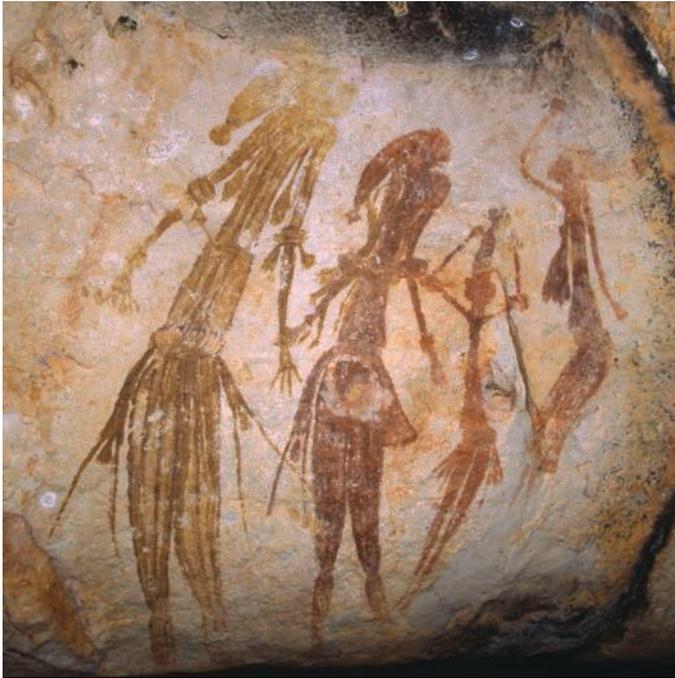


FIGURE 2.5 Gwion Gwion/Giro Giro rock paintings in the Kimberley region of Western Australia

Rock art and spirituality from 42 000 years ago to the present

The oldest examples of animal paintings in Australian Aboriginal rock art are animal paintings from around the time of the Mungo cremation (approximately 42 000 years ago). Distinct styles of rock art can be discerned such as the Wanjina and 'X-ray' styles, and the Gwion Gwion/Giro Giro or Bradshaw paintings. The ornately decorated figures in the Gwion Gwion paintings seem to represent feminine religious figures, who are dressed in tassels, wear particular hairstyles and dance with smouldering eucalypt branches in apparent trances.

The Gwion Gwion/Giro Giro paintings, according to a Creation story, were made by a bird, Kujon, who pierced the rock with his beak and painted the human-spirit figures, called D'imispirits in one local language group. Australian Aboriginal rock art represents a continuous tradition stretching back thousands of years to the distant past and has been continually practised throughout this time. Some of the paintings refer to ceremonies and spiritual education; others are menus of what

can be caught in the area. The latter purpose has allowed scientists to date geological events and weather patterns based on the animals depicted in the artworks that are no longer found living in that region.

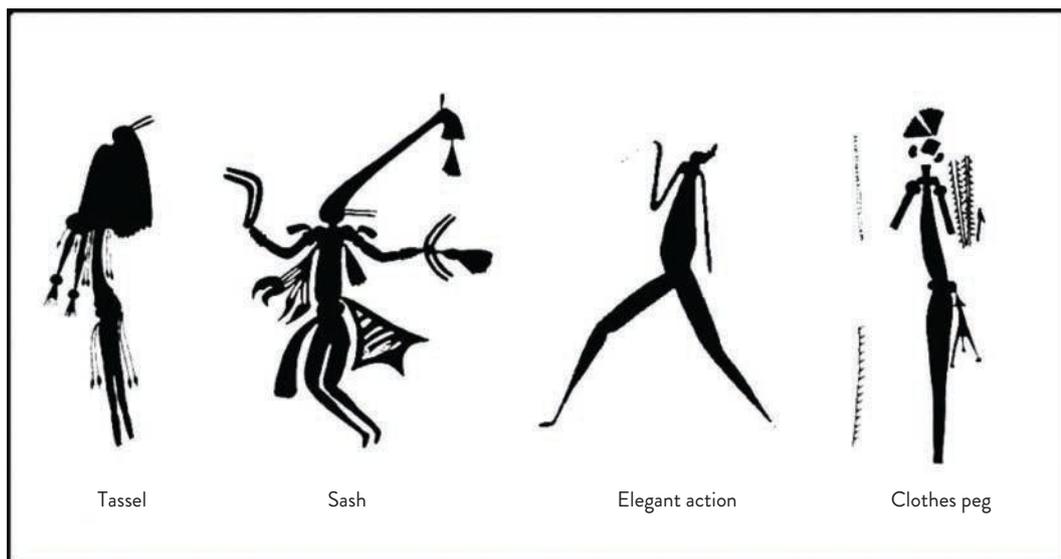


FIGURE 2.6 Major styles of the Gwion Gwion paintings from the Kimberley region, Western Australia. What is significant and unique about the adornment and style of these paintings? What do the accessories and adornment of the figures show about the development of culture?



FIGURE 2.7 Namondjok, a Creation ancestor, with his wife Barrginj below, and the Lightning Man Namarrgon to the right (note the stone axes on the Lightning Man's head and knees). How does this image differ from the Gwion Gwion paintings in the style of what is depicted? What connection is being made between tools and symbolism and style?

Skills: analyse, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 What evidence is there that the symbolic revolution and spirituality reached Australia over 40 000 years ago?
- 2 Why was Mungo woman cremated twice before burial?
- 3 Why would it be necessary to change a living person's name if it was the same as that of the deceased person?

Shamanism and the spirit world

A **shaman** is a religious figure who works with spirits and other dimensions. Evidence of the development of spirituality is seen in the beliefs of indigenous peoples who practise shamanism, in which an individual with authority becomes an intermediary between this and other worlds to seek answers to questions; to heal people; and to ascertain the will of the ancestors. The central belief underlying this is 'sympathetic magic' or the idea that human thoughts and actions can influence the ancestors, spirits or gods who control natural forces. Societies that still observe shamanism in some form include the numerous indigenous peoples of northern Asia, Africa and the Americas. Cave art and religious sculptures found in Europe are believed to show a number of depictions of shamans and shamanic figures.

shaman

A person with the authority to heal through their relationship with the spirit world



FIGURE 2.8 Drawing of a shaman in Siberia, made by explorer Nicolaes Witsen (Holland) in the late 17th century. Witsen's journal made the word 'shaman' popular. What is the shaman doing in this image? What in the image indicates the artist's opinion about the religious figure (note the talons for feet)? What does this adornment reveal about religious beliefs?

Skills: describe, explain, research, analyse

- 1 What is the central belief of shamanism?
- 2 What roles did shamans fulfil?
- 3 Research and write an outline of 300 words describing a shamanic tradition from around the world today or from earlier times.
- 4 Apply the aspects of religion (from Chapter 1) to the tradition of shamanism.
- 5 Locate a shaman from a scene in a film or television series or famous time in history. Share the research with the class in a visual form (e.g. poster or multimedia presentation).

Aurignacian flutes and the didgeridoo

In Germany, a number of bones from mammoths and vultures from the Aurignacian period (42 000–35 000 years ago) have been found bearing clear evidence of drilling, and could have been played like a modern flute. The didgeridoos of the Australian Aboriginal people of northern Australia are thought to date from the same period. Since they appear at the time of the symbolic revolution, it is probable that they accompanied multiple social events and occasions, some of which would have been spiritual in nature. Today, there are strict laws about who is permitted to play the didgeridoo during ceremonies. Sacred time allows only initiated men to attend, to listen and to view the artwork adorning the instrument and to see and participate in sacred dances to the music. Women and children are allowed to play the didgeridoo outside of the rituals of sacred time.



Getty Images/AFP/Mark Graham

FIGURE 2.9 Commemoration ceremony of the centenary of the Gallipoli landings, Anzac Day 2015, at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. What indicates the significance of Gunggandji man (from Yarrabah, Queensland) Able Seaman Alan Patterson playing the didgeridoo? How is this an example of syncretism of a secular and an ancient ritual?

Skills: explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 How was/is the combination of art, body paint, songs, music, artifacts, dances, storytelling and initiation part of spirituality?
- 2 Why would someone need to undergo painful initiations to witness and participate in sacred events such as those described above?
- 3 How long has music been associated with the sacred?

The combination of art, dance and music

What Australian Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander peoples' rituals represent is a continuous tradition combining sacred spaces, places and **times**, artifacts, stories, artwork, music and dances. In David Attenborough's *Quest Under Capricorn* (BBC series and book, 1963) the artwork of a rock face was reproduced on the sacred artifact of a didgeridoo and in paint on the participants' bodies, enacted in dances, and the stories inspired by the artwork were sung. A sacred place may be the one used continually for the purpose since time immemorial or a space designated by the elders. Sacred time is declared by the elders and strong prohibitions are in place to regulate who may participate in, or even see, the rituals and ceremonies taking place. This may be enforced by sacred laws, which may include spearing as punishment. The dances themselves are enactments of stories from the Creation Time, which are thought to occur simultaneously in the present and in the distant past. There are rules of behaviour regulating the exact manner in which these must be done.

A similar point about the exactness of retelling and dancing stories is made about Native American spirituality in the film *Dreamkeeper* (2003). Although the film is a fictionalisation framing some actual sacred stories of different nations, they are told by a respected elder who says that he has

times

The organisation of daily, weekly, monthly and annual ceremonies, prayers, festivals and rituals that form the rhythm of life for adherents and communities of a religious tradition

told the story the way that it was told to him by his grandfather, and his grandfather ... all the way to Black Elk himself (a heroic ancestor), and that it must be told the same way each time or it will lose its power. The film makes the point that, for the youth of Native American people, contemporary society and its values can clash with their ancestral spirituality. Elders are having a hard time attempting to transmit sacred knowledge to a partially assimilated generation of youth who seem unwilling to undergo trying and sometimes painful initiations in order to receive the sacred knowledge.

corroboree

An Australian Aboriginal gathering of people involving body art, music, chanting, songs, stories, lore and initiations engaging with the Creation Time, sacred spaces and time

The art used in spiritual rituals and ceremonies of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may indicate the continuously important role of artwork during the symbolic revolution in spiritual experiences. Studies of the Arrernte people in central Australia noted that for people who usually hunted in groups of up to 15 people, a gathering such as a **corroboree** of 50 individuals induces a special sense of belonging, of power and the sacred. In secular society, similar vestiges of this sacred feeling can probably be felt in large spiritual events such as Carols by Candlelight, held each year in cities around Australia, World Youth Day (see Chapter 3) or the largest gathering of people in the world, the Maha Kumbh Mela (see Chapter 1).

Getty Images/Print Collector

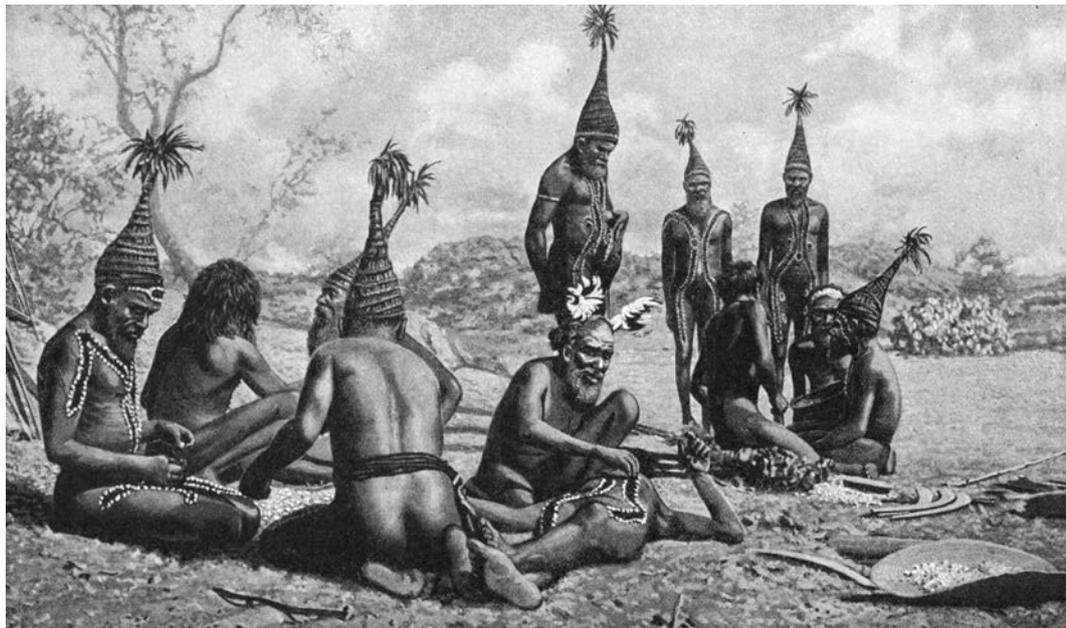


FIGURE 2.10 Arrernte tribesmen of central Australia preparing for a corroboree, 1922. What actions are occurring? Which stage of the process is depicted? How is the sacred being manifested in artifacts, rituals and in the people themselves?

Skills: explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 How can stories have spiritual power?
- 2 Why are mythical and actual ancestors and their spirits important in the telling of stories?
- 3 How do large groups experience the sacred? Have you been part of a mass of people celebrating or commemorating an event? Describe the feeling.
- 4 Do ancestors and their spirits have a role in our contemporary society?
- 5 Do we have fears that those dead and buried may interfere in our lives? Consider our ghost stories.
- 6 What role do grandparents and the elderly have in our society? Compare and contrast it with role played by the elders of Australian Aboriginal peoples.

Skills: research, summarise, explain, analyse

Watch David Attenborough's *Quest Under Capricorn* (BBC, 1963).

- 1 Summarise the Australian Aboriginal peoples' explanation of their spirituality in the documentary using the aspects of religion.
- 2 What facts have changed according to recent scholarship? Select one and analyse.
- 3 How do the present and past connect in the perspective of the artist and the artworks?
- 4 What assumptions were made at the time about cultural change and the spirituality of Australian Aboriginal people? Is this true according to scholars today?
- 5 What did Attenborough notice about the didgeridoo and artwork?

ART, ANIMAL SPIRITS, TOTEMS AND TEMPLES 40 000 YEARS AGO

Portable artwork such as small figurines enabled religious leaders in hunter-gatherer societies more mobility to 'pray on the run' if needed. A rock painting from a cave called the Sanctuary at Trois-Freres, France, depicts a 'sorcerer', a human torso with a stag head. The suggested interpretation of this painting and others like it has been that it is of an animal god, a shaman or even a hunter donning an animal skin as part of a ritual for a hunting cult. Hunters have donned animal skins for thousands of years for the purposes of camouflage, to learn from a high-order predator how to stalk prey and to 'become' the animal in a trance or frenzy in order to think its thoughts and thus be able to track and kill it. A more pragmatic purpose is that skins were worn to keep warm in winter. It has been theorised that wearing animal skins allowed the wearer to access the spiritual dimension and obtain answers. Such individuals may have held spiritual office. This practice has continued in some form throughout the ages. Examples include:

- primal tribes – some indigenous people today wear the skins and feathers of animals
- Romans wore wolf skins over their armour as the founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus, were allegedly suckled by a wolf
- Samson, Hercules and Alexander the Great wore lion skins
- the *kami* in the Shinto religion of Japan are animal and nature spirits who may be communed with to elicit divine answers or to request favours.

Another theory links the tradition of werewolves to hunting rituals in which hunters dressed in animal skins and participated in ritualised frenzies in order to generate the savagery required to kill. Mystery cults associated with the worship of Dionysus or Bacchus involved women who dressed in deer skins and were driven mad by their sacred rites. In ancient Macedonia, women who lived in the mountains and worshipped Dionysus won battles – attesting to the nature of the rites and the purpose of the frenzy in generating violent behaviour.



FIGURE 2.11 Traditional Roman military legion standard bearer, trumpeter and horn player. Why were the standard bearer, trumpeter and horn player wearing lion heads and skins? How would an enemy view an army adorned in this way?

TRANSITION FROM HUNTER-GATHERER TO AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES

At Gobekli Tepe ('Potbelly Hill') in Turkey, a number of stone circles have been detected over a large area punctuated by large, carved T-shaped pillars enclosing two 5.5-metre stone rectangles and a fire pit in the centre. One theory is that the pillars supported roofs, making a dark interior with fire pits. Another is that the T-shaped pillars carved with loincloths and animal guardians are faceless gods of their makers. The flames from torches would have made the sculptures on the large stones seem to come alive. Other theories note that the presence of vultures makes it likely this was a site where bodies were prepared for sky burial.

At about the time of its construction, 12 000–11 000 years ago, hunter-gatherers began to live in larger numbers in settlements, rather than in nomadic groups (see below). Scholars suggest that this was to concentrate important sacred and survival knowledge, and pass it on to each other.

What makes the Gobekli Tepe site so complex and impressive is its large scale, and that it was produced by stone tools. The site was not inhabited (there is no water nearby) and its role may have been for religious ceremonies and tribal totems related to the fiercest creatures in their environs; for example, snakes, scorpions, boars, lions, spiders and foxes. Of note is that mere kilometres from the site, the genome for domesticated wheat has been traced. The number of wild animal bones found at Gobekli Tepe indicates that this was definitely a hunter-gatherer site, but gathered seeds may have been planted to feed its builders.



FIGURE 2.12 Circle of stone pillars, Gobekli Tepe archaeological site, Anatolia, Turkey



FIGURE 2.13 Pillar with carving of a fox, Gobekli Tepe. What would have inspired the building of such a monument for hunter-gatherer society in Turkey 13 000 years ago? Why were ferocious animals depicted on the stones? Without animals to drag the stones and metal tools, how did they make this incredible monument? What was it used for? What does it indicate about their religion?

Agriculture and the birth of civilisations 12 500–11 500 years ago

Twelve and a half thousand years ago there was a refreezing of ice caps, which produced a colder, drier climate. The forests in the region of the modern-day Middle East disappeared, as did the game that was hunted in them. For a thousand years there was a drought, which was catastrophic for hunter-gatherer societies. Along the seasonal migration routes of herds of animals, sea shores, bird migration routes, and always near fresh water, small settlements appeared. By 11 500 years ago a new type of building known as a granary appeared in these pre-agricultural settlements. This indicates that they collected wild grains. The herding of goats and sheep began in earnest in this period as some of the hunted animals had temperaments suited to domestication. The

domestication of the cat is believed to have accompanied the presence of rodents that ate the grain in these buildings. Cats later became so important to protecting the granaries of Ancient Egypt that they would be deified as the goddess Bast, be mummified on a massive scale and have an entire city dedicated to Bubastis, or cat worship.

There is even a theory that this agricultural revolution may have begun as a fertility ritual involving seed planting. A mutation enabled Einkorn wheat to retain its seeds rather than disperse them on the wind, thus enabling the first crops. As crops grew, plants with larger seed arrays were collected and planted together. Neither these features had any value in the wild but to domestication these were critical characteristics. The same can be said of the early animals to be domesticated: unlike the temperament of other animals, sheep and goats had passive enough natures to accept human interaction.

Studies of the bones and teeth of hunter-gatherers show that they were fitter and healthier than the early agriculturalists, but their subsistence way of life did not support large groups of people. The final lament of Genesis (3:17), in which Adam is cursed to leave the Garden of Eden and till the soil with 'back breaking' labour, may refer to environmental changes. Food production and failure saw another type of uninhabited building appear in the centre of settlements. This building appears to have had a religious purpose, judging by carvings and standing stones that show scenes not dissimilar to the practice Jacob enacts after his dream (Gen. 28:10–22).

After the thousand-year drought (12 500–11 500 years ago) these new techniques were continued and produced grain surpluses. This developed into an agricultural revolution around the world with different crops: yams in Africa and the Pacific, rice in Asia and corn in the Americas. Surpluses eventually facilitated the rise of massive cities and **civilisations**. According to Professor Jared Diamond (1998) this was when social inequality, within societies and more broadly, first began. People living with these food crops were geographically 'lucky'. There were also numerous animals at these latitudes that were suited to domestication.

During the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A period (10 000–8500 years ago) settlements included mud brick houses, grain storage silos and social groups of around 90 people. In the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period, social groups had expanded tenfold, approximately 900 individuals in the first cities. Houses became multistorey and there is evidence of bull worship and religion. Skulls of ancestors are displayed and even decorated with plaster or clay to resemble the dead relative when they lived. One hypothesis put forward by scholars is that the presence of the decorated skulls of ancestors had the effect of making a society **conservative**, since the dead were exerting a controlling influence on the society from beyond the grave. The establishment of the cemetery outside cities in Sumeria is thought to have removed the conservative influence of the ancestors and enabled technological innovation to flourish.

Nearly all successful settlements appeared on or near sources of fresh water such as rivers or springs, and settlements that later became large cities and civilisations were often situated on flood plains, or were near the ocean. The annual flooding brought nutrients in the silt, which made the banks of the river fertile and produced high crop yields and large surpluses of food. In ancient Egypt, one of the pharaoh's symbolic duties was to bless and 'set' the annual Nile flood, and Jacob blesses the pharaoh when he is introduced to him by Joseph (Gen. 47:7) in a similar fashion.

civilisation

A society that has reached an apex of cultural advancement, encompassing administration, art, philosophy, religion, diverse social structures, technology and food and resource security

conservative

One who wishes to preserve institutions or traditions, and who dislikes change

Skills: explain, analyse, interpret, synthesise

- 1 What environmental reasons may have started this agricultural revolution?
- 2 How may religion have been involved in starting this agricultural revolution?
- 3 What happened within society that may have started this agricultural revolution?

>

- > 4 What was/is the evidence for an agricultural revolution?
- 5 Was it really a 'revolution' or simply, as John Green suggests, a way to get more energy from food per kilojoule expended? List in a table your arguments for both sides (for and against) of a hypothetical debate.
- 6 What qualities of wheat and animals would make their survival in the wild difficult but were useful to early agriculturalists and animal herders?
- 7 Why were springs, rivers and flood plains important?
- 8 What would be the effect of removing the dead from houses to a cemetery? How often do we visit cemeteries? What does this indicate about our society and our relationship with the dead?
- 9 How might settlements lead to empires according to the trends indicated above?

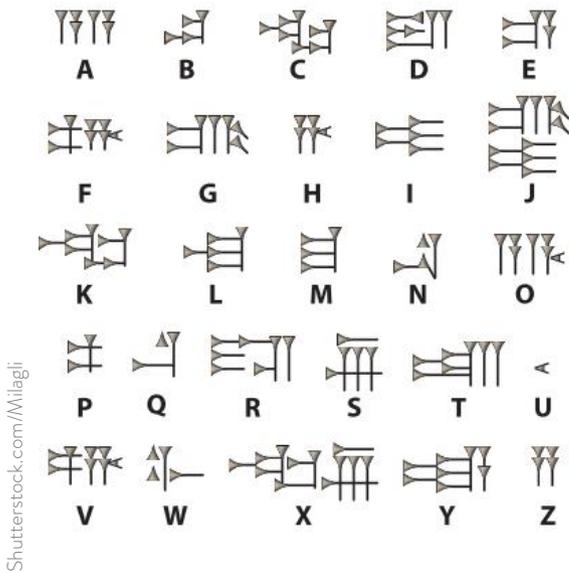
The advent of writing and religion in Sumeria

cuneiform

The earliest translated form of writing, created by the Sumerians, which began as a system of pictographs drawn on clay tablets. The symbols were drawn with a blunt reed, called a stylus, which left wedge-shaped impressions in the clay.

Unlike hunter-gatherer and shepherd societies, which moved nomadically to follow game or greener pastures via seasonal rainfall, agricultural societies became obsessed with food security. The rise and fall of empires became contingent on the amount of food that they produced themselves or were able to purchase by trading or take by warfare. When **cuneiform** was developed (in Sumeria around 3000 BCE), religion's role in the production of food emerges in the writings of the scribes, professional writers who read and reported to rulers and kept records of:

- tithes (portions of produce or taxes) to temples
- contracts between farmers, herders and craftspeople in the earliest futures markets
- sacred propaganda declaring the relationship of the ruling class of society on Earth to the heavenly rulers of the elements, natural forces and technology.



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FIGURE 2.14 The cuneiform alphabet (left) and using a pointed reed stylus to write cuneiform script on a clay tablet (right). What evidence is there in cuneiform script that the stylus was pressed into clay rather than dragged across a line on a page? Write your name in cuneiform script.

Skills: analyse, explain, interpret, research

- 1 Research the following stories. What similarities and differences can be seen between those in cuneiform literature and those in the Bible and in texts from other civilisations? What does this show about ancient attitudes to the sacred knowledge of earlier civilisations and their religions?
 - a the character of Noah in the Bible, Ziusudra in the Atrahasis epic, and Utnapishtim in the Epic of Gilgamesh
 - b the Enuma Elish texts
 - c Hammurabi's law code
 - d King Sargon's birth, Karna (Mahabharata), Oedipus (ancient Greece), Moses and Nimrod.
- 2 Refer to appropriate texts, websites and researched information to respond to these questions.
 - a Describe the pantheon of gods in the Sumerian religion. Who was the head god? Who were the gods of each city-state?
 - b What did the gods do for each city? Which technological and natural phenomena did they represent?
 - c What obligations did human beings have to the gods?
 - d Can any rituals relating to the Sumerian religion be discerned?
 - e Cite an example of a Sumerian prayer.
 - f What additional roles did religion play in Sumerian society?
 - g Which structures, features or stories have been retained by later religions?
 - h What has been rejected by later religions?
 - i Which biblical figure is supposed to have lived in this culture and have repelled a king from this empire?
 - j In what other ways does the Bible connect to Sumerian religion and culture?

In the society of ancient Sumeria, 5000 years ago, religion supported the idea that the king was divine and had absolute power over those that he ruled. The afterlife was ruled by judges, called the Annunaki, and one of the Sumerians' most famous kings, Gilgamesh, became one of these judges. Gilgamesh has been proposed as a candidate for the identity of the biblical Nimrod (Gen. 10:10; Chron. 1:10 and Mic. 5:6), and he was certainly a popular figure, as later kings – for example, Ashurbanipal (ancient Assyria, 7th century BCE) – modelled themselves on him. The famous ziggurats (holy mountain temples) of the Sumerian religion had four terraced levels and were a hive of activity. Temples housed priests and multiple layers of officialdom, they stored clay tablets and grain, had artisan workshops for pottery and jewellery, had classes of scribes and schools for children and housed flocks for **sacrifices**. The temples provide an insight into the central role that religion played in the society as the hub of social infrastructure. In Sumerian society, religion was clearly connected with three values that are important in any socio-economically complex society: power, wealth and status.



Getty Images/DeAgostini

FIGURE 2.15 An illustration of a ziggurat. How does this temple resemble a holy mountain? Why would this be compared to the story of the Tower of Babel in the Bible (Gen. 11:1–9)? Which critique is offered in Genesis about the tower and what occurred there? What does it mean to 'babble on' about something?

sacrifice
(from the Latin *sacrificare*, to make sacred) the offering of something to God/the gods in order to please

Temples became intrinsically connected to societal values. Invading armies would ransack and destroy them and steal the statues in order to symbolically undermine the god or gods of the culture they were attacking and demonstrate their dominance. Few religions survived such assaults. Ancient Israel is a noted exception; it survived by adapting to changing circumstances, living in different lands and responding to currents in history (see Chapters 10 and 11). The Bible depicts adapted versions of a number of Sumerian myths including the Great Flood of Noah and Nimrod (Gilgamesh or Sargon).

Technological advances surged during the Sumerian Empire and continued afterwards. The invention of the double-chambered kiln enabled pottery, cuneiform tablets and bricks to be fired. According to archaeologists, small rocks melted in the kilns, and metallurgy began. Initially its products were beads and trinkets but they developed into gold decorations, such as those on Queen Pu-abi's jewellery (see Figure 2.17), and eventually copper implements, bronze weapons and armour. During this age of empires, multiple layers of society developed, as did the inequality that comes with them. Writing and libraries flourished and preserved cultural memories. Many such libraries were linked to 'divine' kings, and temples became great centres of learning, trade and legal proceedings.



Alamy Stock Photo/The Art Archive

Getty Images/Joe & Clair Carnegie/Libyan Soup

FIGURE 2.16 Traditional depiction of Gilgamesh wrestling and subduing a lion (right) and a wall frieze of Ashurbanipal depicted in the likeness of Gilgamesh (left). Why did Ashurbanipal depict himself fighting lions? What does this show about the popularity of the story of Gilgamesh in the ancient world? What evidence is there of the relationship of lions to kings and queens today?

FIGURE 2.17 Sumerian jewellery from the tomb of Queen Pu-abi at the royal cemetery at Ur, circa 2600 BCE



amanaimages/Werner Forman/Corbis

Skills: explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 What does the adornment of Queen Pu-abi (Figure 2.17) show about her status in the religion and society of Sumeria?
- 2 What technologies were available to the Sumerians, as evidenced by her adornment?
- 3 Are such items worn by women today?
- 4 If so, what does this indicate about their status in society?
- 5 Pu-abi is not, according to her seal, mentioned as 'wife of' but is believed to have reigned in her own right as a queen or as a high priestess (scholars are divided). Why do you think she was buried with her attendants, six armoured

men and 68 females with similar adornment to hers? What does this indicate about life and the afterlife in Sumeria?

- 6 What reasons can you suggest for her burial tomb being next to her husband's?
- 7 Which aspects of her burial have been discontinued and which are still with us?

SHEPHERDS, EGYPT AND THE BIBLE 1900–800 BCE

A traditional rivalry between early agriculturalists, nomadic herders and settlement-building crop growers is shown in the Bible. Scholars see this as being depicted in the story of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4; also Qur'an 5:26–32) and the later discourse between the idyllic pastoralists, who are amongst God's chosen shepherds (1 Chron. 29:15, Ps. 39.12; Phil. 3.20; Heb. 11.13; 1 Pet. 2.11), and corrupt city-dwellers. Evidence of the origins of herding can be traced to Zawi Chemi, Iraq, where bones of sheep and goats can be dated to 11 000 years ago, and Abel (Gen. 4) is such a shepherd. A number of other biblical figures are also nomadic shepherds:

- Abraham – with a large flock and a standing army
- Isaac – who digs new wells and re-digs the wells of his father
- Jacob – whose tenure as Laban's shepherd lasts for 14 years and earns him two of Laban's daughters in marriage
- Rachel – whose tending of sheep leads to her meeting with Jacob at the well
- Moses – whose actions at the well impress both Zipporah and her father, Jethro
- David – who is out shepherding when the prophet Samuel comes to find the future king of Israel and all are surprised to find that this simple shepherd boy, David, is chosen by God.

Shepherding is praised as a quality of leadership, so much so that one of the pharaoh's symbols of power in ancient Egypt is the shepherd's crook (the other is the slave driver's flail). One of God's roles is as a shepherd in many psalms and hymns, and the term for shepherd appears nearly 200 times in the Bible. For a substantial two centuries (1700–1500 BCE) ancient Egypt was overtaken and ruled by shepherd kings (the Hyksos) whose capital city was Avaris (the Northern Kingdom).

The Israelite people portrayed themselves living the idyllic pastoral life of the shepherd in oral traditions and stories that later became the Bible. In the Amarna Letters – clay tablets, primarily consisting of diplomatic correspondence between the Egyptian administration and its representatives in Canaan and Amurru – the 'Habiru' (believed by some commentators to be the Hebrews) are a social class of nomadic shepherds who were also day-labourers, escaped slaves, mercenaries and brigands and were an 'underclass' to the city dwellers. The letter from King Abdu-Heba of the city of 'Urusalim' to Pharaoh Akhenaton, among other letters, depicts these 'shepherds' as ferocious warlords capable of besieging cities and holding them to ransom. Within Genesis, Abraham raised an army of 318 men from his household alone (Gen. 14:14) to repel the Sumerian king and his army's attacks. Abraham also was wealthy enough to buy a cave in which to bury Sarah for 400 shekels of silver (Gen. 23:15). Both actions hint at the wealth and military prowess of these nomadic 'shepherds'.

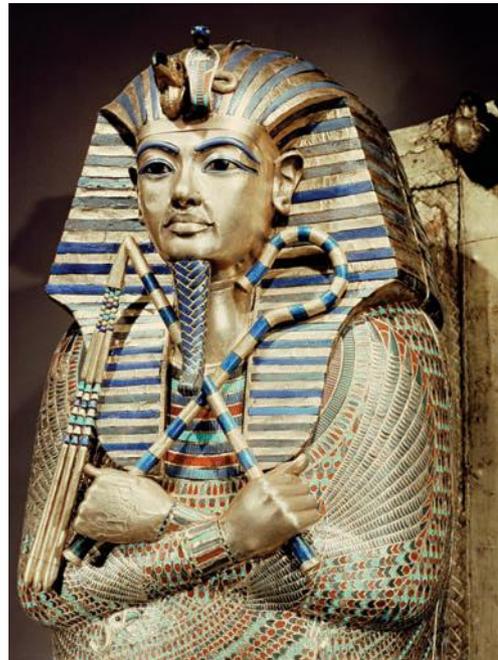


FIGURE 2.18 A traditional depiction of an ancient pharaoh. What does the inclusion of the shepherd's crook in traditional artwork of pharaohs from different historical periods show about the importance of shepherding and leadership? How would the duties of a leader be similar to those of an ancient shepherd?

amanaimages/robertharding/Corbis

Skills: analyse, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 How important are shepherds according to the ancient societies described above?
- 2 What evidence is there to support the importance of shepherding in the ancient world?
- 3 Brainstorm the different functions or parts of the job of shepherding.
- 4 Why does God select shepherds to be his major kings and prophets?
- 5 Why is one of the pharaoh's roles to be a shepherd?
- 6 In what ways is the Israelite God a shepherd?
- 7 What other products did animals provide for the ancient economy and marketplace?
- 8 Why does the image of shepherd remain after the technology and political power of the ancient world has moved on?
- 9 How is the word 'shepherd' used today in discussions of authority?
- 10 What do the Amarna Letters possibly reveal about the realities of the 'Habiru' and shepherds?
- 11 What does the expulsion of the ancient Egyptians by the Hyksos and the installation of their own pharaohs reveal about the importance of the flood plain of the Northern Kingdom of Egypt?
- 12 What evidence is there within the Bible of the military prowess of the shepherds?
- 13 Create a Venn diagram that shows the development from spirituality in the hominin period to a formalised religion in the Biblical period. Your diagram should reveal what attributes have remained the same over this period.

The gods demand the blood of humans

Petitioning the gods from the other side and paying a debt for life with human sacrifice appear to have permeated religions throughout time from early hominin society onwards. The Phoenician Empire had a religion that practised child sacrifice and temple prostitution, boasting an all-male temple for males to attend. The gruesome details were recorded by Roman historians at the time, but their accounts should be viewed critically and contain a strong element of propaganda. According to sources, children were 'passed over the fire' as a purification, or actually placed inside a bronze statue of Moloch that was able to have a burning fire blazing in order to consume the sacrifice. Genesis 22 portrays the Bible's critique of this: God refuses to accept Abraham's offering of Isaac (Ishmael in the Qur'an 37:99–109) on a mountaintop altar, preferring a ram or another animal instead. The places of these (almost) sacrifices are Mount Moriah in Jerusalem for Isaac in Judaism and Christianity, and the Ka'ba in Mecca for Ishmael in Islam.

Human sacrifice was similarly displaced in Central and South America by the Spanish conquistadors and the Catholicism that they brought with them. On Hernan Cortes's journey to the heart of the Aztec Empire, enemy groups such as the Tlaxcalans formed pacts with him in order to end the widespread practice of human sacrifice by their rivals, the Aztecs. Unfortunately, the practice of killing people for spiritual purposes continues today; however, the reasons and beliefs associated with it may be different. It has been practised:

- by the ancient Phoenicians and Canaanites, to attain ongoing wealth and prosperity for the family
- in ancient Mesoamerican cultures, to repay the gods for their sacrifice of themselves and the debt of life
- in parts of modern Africa, where body parts of albinos are used in *muti* (magic).

THE AXIAL AGE: DEMOCRACY, MATHEMATICS, PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE, 800–200 BCE

A 'golden age' of religion emerged between the 8th and the 3rd century BCE in multiple civilisations across the world from Asia to Europe. In some cultures, religious leaders such as shamans, prophets, priests and oracles gave way to philosophers, the first scientists (natural philosophers) and gurus. Examples of such leaders include:

- Confucius in China
- Buddha in India
- Zarathustra in Iran
- Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah in Israel and Judah.

Religious figures and philosophers explored 'big questions' across the world. They began to provide answers that adherents at the time and since have viewed as authoritative.

This development had been enabled by the security of increasing, large and relatively stable surpluses in the age of early empires. Farmers and herders were so productive that societies could afford to have social classes of people who were not engaged in farming, such as artisans, rulers and standing armies. There was usually a group of wealthy and powerful families vying with each other to rule. The governing **constitutions** of many cities of the ancient empires, which ruled themselves as separate nations, allowed a tyrant, dictator or emperor to assume power in a time of uncertainty or war.

constitution
Statement of ethical principles, laws and a structure for the system of government of the state or an organisation; also the name of the most important documents at an Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church

Skills: analyse, explain, interpret

Research

- 1 Select one personality or text from: Mo-Tzu; Lao Tzu; Confucius; the Upanishads; Buddha; Biblical prophets: Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah; Deutero-Isaiah; Zarathustra; Homer; Menander; Euripides; Aeschylus; Aristophanes; Thales; Pythagoras; Democritus; Parmenides; Socrates; Plato; Aristotle; Xenon; Epicurus; Hippocrates and Galen.
- 2 Provide some biographical or historical detail about your selected subject.
- 3 Summarise their contribution to world thought – what are the big questions that they asked and how did they answer them?
- 4 Which ideas have been discarded today? Which ideas have been retained today?

You can present your answers to the class in a variety of ways: as a PowerPoint presentation, speech or news broadcast.

Important legal and political developments in the Axial Age

The Athenian Empire flourished during the Axial Age. In the year 594 BCE, during a food crisis in Athens, the ruler, Solon, legislated to remove debt slavery (where a person puts themselves and their family as collateral on a loan) for the poor; establish social classes based on wealth rather than on inheritance; create a judicial system to restrain the powerful families; and forbid the total export of food. Under Solon's new system, the top three classes could hold government positions and all citizens were equal under the law. Within half a decade Solon's reforms had been eroded by the aristocracy. However, the resulting uncertainty and oppression in Athens, and an endless cycle of powerful families assassinating each other to take power, led to a revolt in 510 BCE and a new ruler, Cleisthenes, was called upon to reform society in Solon's vein.

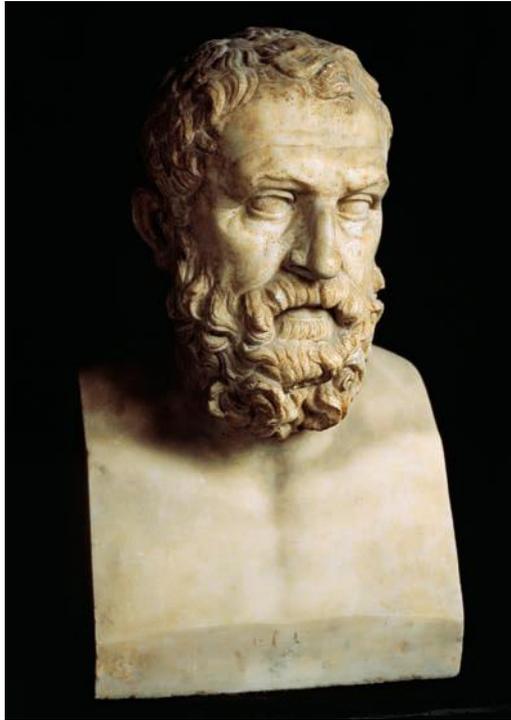


FIGURE 2.19 Solon, Athenian law-maker and poet (c. 640–561 BCE). This bust of Solon is a Roman copy of a Greek original. Why would the Romans copy a sculpture? What does this suggest about the significance of Solon’s reforms to Rome’s government?

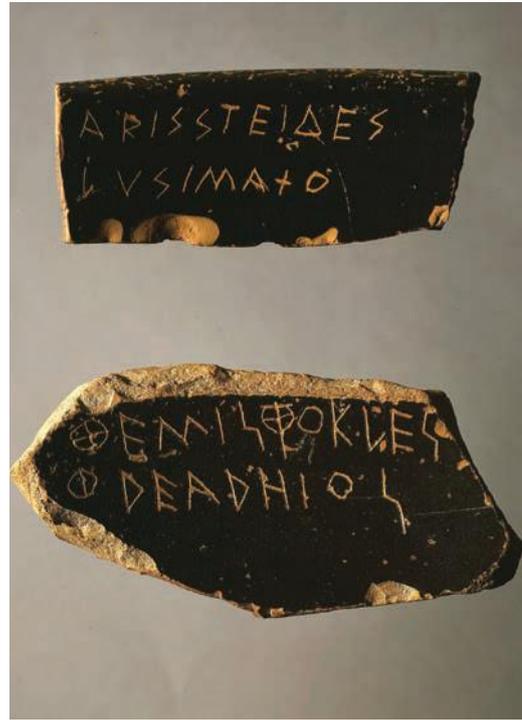


FIGURE 2.20 Potsherds (voting tokens) from Athens bearing the names of Athenian statesmen Aristeides the Just, c. 530–468 BCE (top) and Themistocles, c. 514–449 BCE (bottom). What does the use of potsherds (*ostraka*) reveal about the status of pottery? Why were tokens named? Is this process still around today?

In Cleisthenes’ system all people had a civic duty to sit in government or court and vote on every issue. Issues ranging from where public drains would go (town planning) to whether they would go to war (international relations) received votes. Certain numbers of sitting members were required (always odd numbers) and people used black or white pebbles or potsherds to vote, which were placed into pots and then counted. Jury duty was financed so that citizens were paid 3 obols a day, when a family could be fed on 2.5 obols a day. These reforms changed government and courts thereafter and were extremely threatening to the aristocrats in city-states around Athens that were still ruled by tyrants.



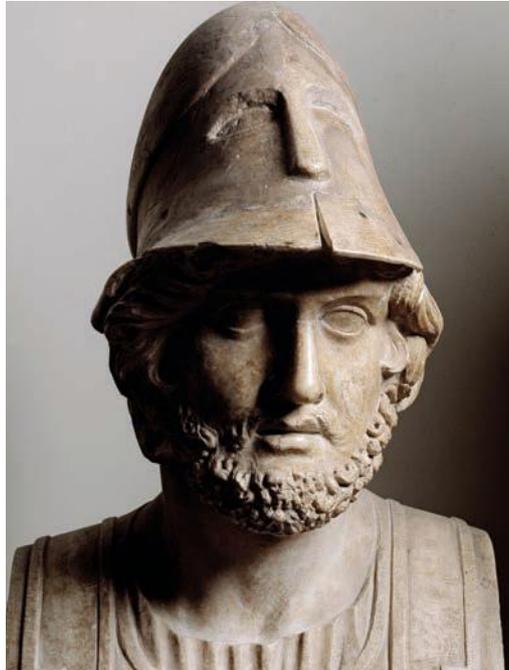
FIGURE 2.21 The meeting place for the Ekklesia (Assembly), Athens. The speaker would stand on the stepped structure shown on the right of the photograph. How does the space Cleisthenes chose suit the purposes of assembling and voting on all legal and political matters? Why do you think churches were called ecclesia? What is the connection to a chapter of the Bible called Ecclesiastes?

The stability these reforms brought enabled economic success as Athenian-produced olive oil and Attic pottery became known and sold across the ancient world. The system was tested when the Persian Empire invaded Greece on two occasions between 492 and 449 BCE. Themistocles (a commoner) was promoted to military commander and convinced the state to create a navy of hundreds of triremes (battleships), which were strategically deployed and proved victorious against the invaders. This was also the first time that the separate city-states of Greece had fought together, and the victory at Marathon led Athens to earn its place as one of the great empires of the world.

After victory in the second Persian war under Themistocles' strategic plan, the navy attacked and defeated the Persian Empire. Naval strength became a mainstay of the Athenian Empire as it rose to eminence. The military and economic success of Athens laid the foundations for the 'Golden Age of Greece' and Greek philosophy, mathematics, science and technology, as well as tragic and comic plays. It is important to note that the first democracy only allowed male Athenian citizens to vote. This right was denied to female citizens, foreigners and slaves. Democracy eroded the authority of priests and the power of the aristocracy and tyrants who had traditionally held the highest positions in society, going back to the chiefs, headmen and shamans of hunter-gatherer societies. This threat is probably why Athens was attacked by Persians and Greeks alike, and why democracy was undermined for thousands of years as an idea after the decline of the Athenian Empire.

Vestiges of democracy returned during specific events in which noxious leaders and unpopular decisions inspired masses of people to rise up:

- when Julius Caesar was stabbed by Senate members in Rome
- when Gaius 'Caligula' and other disliked emperors were executed by the Praetorian Guards (Emperor's guards) in Rome
- against King John in England, which led to the Magna Carta and the undermining of the divine right of kings
- against the Catholic Church and Holy Roman Emperor during the Protestant Reformation where power was removed from the Church and returned to monarchies across Europe through the divine right of kings and the Elizabethan Religious Settlement law
- when thousands of the aristocracy were executed during the French Revolution
- during the American War of Independence, which restored voting rights to the people (except slaves) and legally protected rights denied by the British Empire
- to install the jury system to decide on cases in court as opposed to the inquisitorial judicial system



Getty Images/Leemage/UIG

FIGURE 2.22 Bust of Greek general and politician, Themistocles (525–460 BCE). What is the significance of Themistocles' adornment?

- to form unions and use collective bargaining and insurrections to remove the horrendous exploitation of people during the Industrial and Russian revolutions
- in the Eureka Rebellion, which was defeated on the battlefield and in court but won voting rights for miners in Victoria, Australia
- when, inspired by events in America, the Australian people held multiple referendums to establish Australia's own constitutional monarchy, which was voted into existence during Federation
- when civil rights groups campaigned for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have the right to vote (1962–65) and to be counted in the national census in 1971.

Skills: explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 What is dangerous about democracy? For whom is it dangerous?
- 2 The meritocratic advancement of commoners such as Themistocles to become leading generals only returned much later with the rise of the Mongol leader Genghis Khan; during the French Revolution; and in the First World War (Australian General Sir John Monash) and in the Second World War. Why did the upper classes seek to inherit positions in the army rather than promote people of ability? Why is this potentially a bad idea in war?
- 3 What are the values of democracy?
- 4 What does democracy remove from the roles of religion?
- 5 How is democracy a flawed system?
- 6 How is democracy better or worse than other judicial and political systems?
- 7 Analyse the pros and cons of democracy, looking at your school captaincy system.
- 8 Are Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples fully included in our society? Give evidence from this textbook or your own knowledge to support your answer.
- 9 How does Australian democracy differ from ancient Athenian democracy?

Skills: analyse, explain, research

Select one of: Themistocles, the Maccabees, Hannibal Barca, Saladin, Subotai, Sun Tzu, Tran Hung Dao, Lian Po, William Wallace, Napoleon Bonaparte, Horatio Nelson, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Leon Trotsky, Erwin Rommel, John Monash, George S. Patton, Dwight Eisenhower, George Marshall, Che Guevara or another person who did not inherit their position (in other words, was not an aristocrat or from a wealthy background) but rose to prominence through ability rather than inheritance.

- 1 How did they rise to prominence?
- 2 How many battles did they fight and how many did they win?
- 3 What was their greatest battle, in which they 'turned the tide of the war' or fought against the greatest odds?
- 4 Which strategies did they use in battle?
- 5 Why were their strategies successful?
- 6 Which rulers or political systems did they fight for or install?
- 7 Are they studied in military academies and by others today? Why or why not?

The Axial Age in ancient Israel

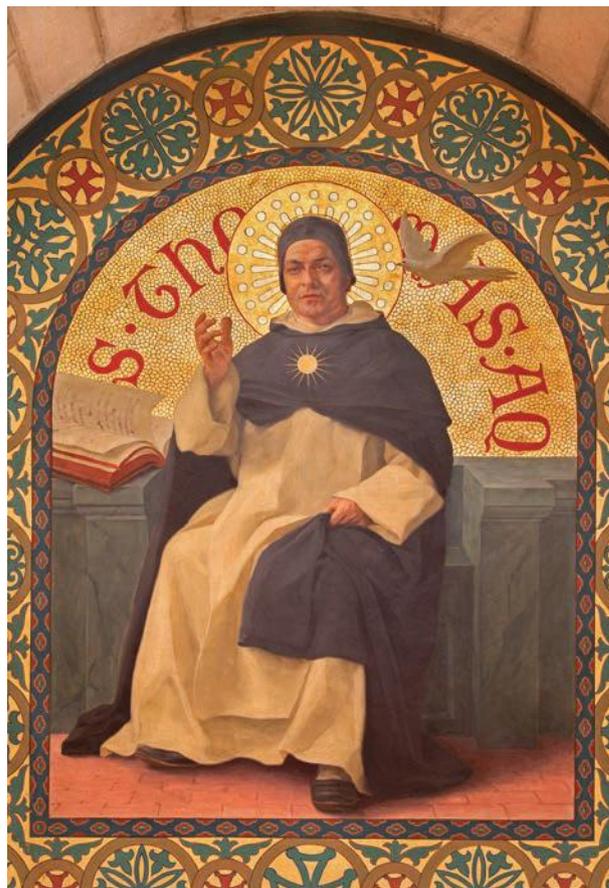
Between 597 and 581 BCE the people of Judah were carried off into exile in Babylon. Psalm 137 captures the fears and expectations of the People of Judah, such as a loss of identity. They were no longer standing on the soil of Israel and were not sure if the Lord's song could be sung there. A radical shift occurred as the Israelite scribes began to record and organise their oral histories and other literature. They developed **theology** about why they were in exile and how to return to the Land of Israel. Ezekiel had prophecies and visions of God in Babylon, and became one of the central mystics in Kabbalah. He analysed God's glory, and had visions of Jerusalem and the Jewish people being restored. This reassured the Jews that, wherever they were in exile, God was with them. Within 60 years a new Emperor of Babylon, Cyrus, had a vision of the Israelite God who compelled him to return the Jews to Israel. Later, they were accompanied by the scribe Ezra. He was shocked by intermarriage occurring between the men of Judah and pagan women. Ezra insisted that Israelites divorce their non-Israelite partners. He devised a number of laws and instituted the first regular readings of the Torah (the Teaching) to the people. They then had to pledge that they would affirm the statutes of the Torah.

Everyone, especially the Kings of Israel, was subject to God's law and, in this way, all were considered equal under God. Other ancient kings and emperors ruled as gods and could amend laws at their whim; however, the Israelites were bound across all levels of society. The role of God in ancient Israelite society was to mete out divine justice in a culture in which the people were conscripted into the army and there was no police force; God was on call every hour of each day.

The Greeks, or Hellenes, as they called themselves, developed a number of theories and philosophies in the Axial Age, some of which led the way to the disciplines of mathematics and science. Alexander the Great, who was educated by Aristotle and was a great military leader, led a conquest of the world in 336–323 BCE, spreading **Hellenism's** ideas. They used diplomacy in the nations they invaded and were known to spare cities who surrendered. They built libraries and shared their gods. However, the new value system was definitely at odds with the people of Israel. The Maccabean Revolt indicated the dual problem that ancient Israelite culture (Judaism) had with Hellenism's values and culture itself.

theology

The study of ideas about God



Dreamstime.com/Jozef Sedmak

Hellenism

Greek culture and civilisation before the Roman period

FIGURE 2.23 Painting of theologian Thomas Aquinas in St Stephen's Church, Jerusalem. He incorporated Aristotle's philosophy into Christian theology. How does this representation show the significance of Aquinas as one of the foremost Catholic scholars?

There was an attempt to integrate some ideas from Hellenism into Judaism, as in the Wisdom of Ben Sirach, written at the end of the 3rd century BCE, and Sirach is alleged to have created a school in Alexandria on the model of Plato's Academia. This book was not included in the Hebrew Bible but is part of the Canon of the Christian Bible. The Greek challenge was one of ideas as much as military force. It posed a challenge to the ethics of the community and to their sacred places and symbols. The attractiveness of Greek culture posed a more serious threat to religious beliefs than did Greek military might. Greek thought remains a challenge today as it underpinned many of the heresies that faced Christianity and Islam – for example,

Gnosticism

A heretical movement whose members claimed to have superior knowledge of spiritual things that would bring them salvation. They did not believe that Jesus's body was real, and they believed that the physical world was corrupted.

Gnosticism.

On the other hand, during the Middle Ages, ancient Greek philosophical and scientific ideas enriched the work of Muslim, Jewish and Christian scholars and influenced the Neo-Platonism of Rambam's multiple texts, including the *Guide for the Perplexed*, and St Thomas Aquinas's work *Summa Theologiae*. The Jewish mystical book of Kabbalah, the *Sefer Yetzirah*, has been noted for its integration of Pythagoras and other mathematical ideas.

The concept of the Axial Age is helpful in explaining the similar waves of deep thought and consciousness that were happening globally at this time, and which established the foundations of the multiple religions and philosophies as we understand them today. It extended the roles religion played in society beyond ritual and authority for government and made it a true contributor to the academic world of its time. If Western civilisation is said to be constituted by ancient Greek culture and thought, Roman law and Judeo-Christian ethics and morality, then the Axial Age is a crucial foundation stone. In Asia, Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Jainism emerged in the same period, as great thinkers examined the big questions of existence and formed answers to them. Communities who followed the thinkers became established and developed their ideas further. Like the symbolic revolution, the agricultural revolution and the time of empires that preceded it, the Axial Age was critical for the development of religious traditions across the world.

THE DEMOCRATISATION OF KNOWLEDGE 1380–1646 CE

When John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English in 1384, he began a literary and literacy revolution, in which religion contributed to an amazing transformation of society: the democratisation of religion and language itself. Wycliffe's translation of the Bible defined and tested the expressive qualities of language and defined the national identity of England; similar works would follow in Germany (where Martin Luther continued Wycliffe's reforms) and Switzerland (under Calvin and Zwingli). The Catholic Church's monopoly over the Bible and its meaning was challenged. The reason Wycliffe caused so much ire was that he was a respected Oxford scholar, the King's Chaplain and a vociferous critic of the Catholic Church. He publicly rebuked corrupt officialdom and had the academic authority to support his critique, as he could read the Vulgate Bible in Latin and say definitively what was and wasn't in the Bible. His great innovation was to share this insight with ordinary people in a small Bible that was written in the English language, was mass produced and only required the ability to read. He infused into this achievement his own studies of logic and rationalism, blended with interpretation of Scripture. This blend of Scripture, reason and conscience eventually led to the development of the Protestant churches and the Church of England.

It was such a radical development, greatly upsetting the Catholic Church, that later reformers had to remain hidden; for example, William Tyndale led a 'cloak and dagger' existence to get his Bible published using the first printing presses in 1526. These were smuggled to England from

Antwerp in cloth, and ownership of a small copy was likely to see a person denounced as a heretic, severely punished and possibly even killed. This further led to Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer* (1549), which became the prayer book for the **Anglican** Church for nearly four centuries.

Church services were held in the Latin language and many rituals took place behind the rood (a partition), hidden from adherents. The mystery surrounding the rituals, while intended to generate a sense of awe, also had the effect of keeping the people ignorant and obedient. Stained glass windows came to be known as 'the Bible of the poor and illiterate' and mystery plays staged in churches were designed to reinforce the ethical teachings of the Church. Wycliffe could not find the Church of his day in the sacred text that provided its very authority. The momentous gravity of Wycliffe's work is revealed in the reaction of the Catholic Church and Pope Gregory XI, who had Wycliffe's remains exhumed and burnt and his ashes tossed into a tributary of the Avon River.



Portrait of John Wycliffe (oil on canvas), English School, (16th century)/(Private Collection/Photo © Philip Mould Ltd, London/Bridgeman Images)

FIGURE 2.24 English theologian and early reformer John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English in 1382. What do the artist's portrayal of Wycliffe's facial expression and adornment reveal about him?

Anglican
Preferred name for the Church of England in Australia; originated in 1246 from the Latin *ecclesia anglicana* meaning 'Church of England'

ABRIDGED TIMELINE OF REFORMS

1380–82	John Wycliffe supervises the translation of the English Bible
1456	The Gutenberg Press produces the first printed Bible
1517	Martin Luther's <i>Ninety-five Theses</i> is translated, printed and distributed
1525	William Tyndale's <i>New Testament</i> is translated, printed and distributed – it is small enough to be handheld and hidden in clothes
1536	Jean Calvin writes the <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i>
1549–62	Thomas Cranmer's <i>Book of Common Prayer for the Church of England</i>
1559	Queen Elizabeth I's Religious Settlement law
1560	John Knox writes <i>The Scots Confession</i> and establishes the Scottish Presbyterian Church
1611	<i>The King James Bible</i> is printed, infusing translations of the Bible with a 'Shakespearean style' of English
1612	The first edition of the <i>Christian Dictionarie</i> by Thomas Wilson
1646	<i>The Westminster Confession of Faith</i> is drafted and adopted

During the Reformation, from the 16th century on, the Church began to be seen as ostentatiously displaying wealth beyond anything those in attendance could hope to attain: priests wore vestments decorated in gold leaf, statues gilded in gold decorated churches, gold ritual artifacts were used, and art from the greatest known painters was commissioned for chapels.

Governments and social hierarchies, which were supported by and supportive of such churches, came to be viewed with contempt by the common people. There were public executions of heretics to reinforce power; however, the common people often saw themselves in these martyrs, who were burnt at the stake for their ideas.

Wycliffe and other reformers sought to redress the ignorance of the people and the wealth imbalance by returning spiritual wealth to the people. In contrast to established churches, those that emerged during the Reformation were austere: adherents adopted plainer black and white clothing (a uniform of sorts); stained glass windows (and their purpose) were gradually replaced by quotations of text from the Bible; statues of **Christ** were removed from the crucifix; selected passages from the Bible were read by adherents in their own **vernacular** language; the meaning of the Eucharist (a centrepiece of the Catholic Mass) was changed from transubstantiation to consubstantiation (the bread and wine became symbolic of Christ, rather than actual) and many other significant changes occurred. For the upper class, the Reformation enabled the removal of the Papal granting of their titles and peerage. Key figures of the Reformation were even protected by nobles; Luther, for example, was protected by the Duke of Saxony. The social impacts of the Reformation led to the formation of both the Protestant and Anglican denominations. It also led to the consolidation of the English language itself, as King Henry VIII and King James I would commission Bibles to be written in English and read in services.

It is difficult to imagine the impact of being able to read the Holy Scriptures of the Bible on the average person living in England at that time. It is not surprising that a revolution occurred within the power structure of the Church, radically altering it forever. This impact was extended significantly by the development of the Gutenberg printing press. The ability to mass-produce texts, which had previously been handwritten by monks, scribes and prophets, had profound effects. Great works of philosophy, mathematics, science and religion (some from the Axial Age) could be printed and distributed.

Ripples were even felt by Jewish communities living within the Christian empire at the time, with printed *siddurim* (prayer books). The Torah was also translated and printed in an authoritative manner by the Soncino Press in 1484. The Qur'an was translated from Arabic into Farsi (Persian) early in the 7th century, which established a long tradition of its translation spanning centuries. One of the first printed versions of the Qur'an for a Western European audience was a translation into French in 1647 by Andre du Ryer, *L'alcoran de Mahomet*, and an English translation was printed about two years later. Some of the earliest dictionaries were developed in order to explain words that readers would encounter in the texts. The kings and scholars of England and other kingdoms used the Bible as a medium to change the language itself, influence public opinion and define the national characters of their societies. This revolution of literacy would have an extraordinary impact on religious education, which can still be felt today – even in this very textbook.

Christ

From the Greek word *Christos*, meaning 'anointed one'. The word is a translation of the Hebrew word *Messiah* and is translated also as 'Saviour'.

vernacular

Common language of the people

Skills: explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 What are the connections between the Axial Age and the Reformation?
- 2 Why was translating the Bible into English and German seen as terrible by some?
- 3 Which item did the Bible lead to, which can still be found in English and foreign language classrooms today?
- 4 How do the act in question 2 and the item in question 3 represent the democratisation of knowledge?

- 5 What evidence is there of the social impact of the democratisation of knowledge?
- 6 How did the roles of religion change?
- 7 What did the printing revolution achieve?
- 8 What were the effects of the actions occurring in Christianity on other religious traditions?
- 9 How did religion create a national identity?

Skills: research, analyse, explain, interpret

Write a research report or an essay examining the following statement:

‘Religion has played a dual role throughout history and continues to do so today. It has been part of the establishment of key institutions of government and law. It has also been a source of revolutionary power for changing established institutions. It has both taken knowledge and power from the people, and given knowledge and power to the people.’

In your research report or essay include discussion of:

- the roles religion has played in society
- the ideas, beliefs and practices that have been discarded
- the ideas, beliefs and practices that have been retained in some form.

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://religionsocvce.nelsonnet.com.au>.



REVISION

A Short-answer questions

- 1 Which behaviours in animals may have led to the development of living in large social groups?
- 2 Identify the problems with ancient religious acts that leave a trace of evidence and those that do not.
- 3 Why do Indigenous peoples around the world prefer the term 'spirituality' to 'religion'?
- 4 What does wearing animal skins and fur have to do with religion?
- 5 Which aspects of agriculture and the 'agricultural revolution' may have changed religion?
- 6 What was the effect of having decorated portrait skulls of the dead in the living spaces of houses such as at Jericho?
- 7 Why was it important for invading armies to destroy temples?
- 8 What did Wycliffe object to in the religious services of his day?

B Extended-response questions

- 9 When did religion begin? Why is this difficult to determine?
- 10 Why are the burial practices and proposed social behaviours of early hominins of any use to scholars of religion? What, if anything, do they reveal?
- 11 How are spirituality and religion linked to a proposed 'symbolic revolution'? Was this a global phenomenon? How were ideas shared or transmitted over vast geographical distances and barriers?
- 12 What does the link between religion and technological innovations in regard to writing reveal?
- 13 Why might powerful nomadic warlords wish to depict themselves as the peaceful shepherds of the Bible? What contrasts does the extra-biblical evidence provide?
- 14 Why is human sacrifice such a powerful theme in religions past and present? Which religious traditions have attempted to stamp out this practice?
- 15 Is the Axial Age really the time when God was made manifest in the great ideas across the world, as Karl Jasper's hypothesis suggests? Evaluate the hypothesis. Does the evidence support or detract from it?
- 16 How can the ancient Hebrew concept of 'all being equal under God's law' be related to the democracy that emerged in ancient Athens during a proposed 'Axial Age'?
- 17 How were the acts of Reformers, who translated the Bible into their common languages or vernacular, seen as both theological and technological challenges to societies at the time?
- 18 How is religion intimately connected with the emergence and democratisation of literacy?

C Essay questions

- 19** *History shows that religious reform is necessary for civilisations to develop.*
Discuss with reference to specific examples from a particular religious tradition or multiple religious traditions.
- 20** *Since prehistoric times, religion has enabled people to survive together, interact with and include strangers or others, to protect a community from harm and even provide health benefits for individuals.*
Discuss with reference to specific examples from a particular religious tradition or multiple religious traditions.
- 21** *The interplay between religion and society throughout time has strengthened both.*
Discuss with reference to specific examples from a particular religious tradition or multiple religious traditions.
- 22** *Religion's answers to the 'big questions' hold up/do not hold up when they are challenged by philosophy or science.*
Discuss with reference to specific examples from a particular religious tradition or multiple religious traditions.

EXTENSION

Timeline

Task

Research and plot the history of society, spirituality and religion.



Timeline

Method

- 1 Place the following items, events, places and people in order on the timeline.
- 2 Identify any items, events, places or people that are controversial in terms of adequately determining dates.
- 3 Include a couple of dot points to summarise the significance of each date, item, event, place and person.

<i>Homo heidelbergensis</i>	Solon	Lazaret Cave
Middle Ages	Sumerian Empire	Pre-Pottery Neolithic B Period
Persian Wars (against the ancient Greeks)	Cleisthenes	Bodo cranium
Amarna Letters	Aurignacian flutes	Axial Age
Gilgamesh	Gutenberg printing press	Dmanisi skull
Qur'an	Cortes	Gwion Gwion/Giro Giro
Agricultural revolution	Elizabethan Religious Settlement law	Shaman
Cuneiform	French Revolution	Symbolic Revolution
Athenian Empire	Gaius 'Caligula'	Sima de los Huesos
Pharaoh Akhenaton	Magna Carta	Archaic <i>Homo sapiens</i>
Julius Caesar	Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob	<i>Homo naledi</i>
Cult of Dionysus	American Revolution	Shanidar cave
Conquistadors	Ancient Israelite Commonwealth, starting with Kings Saul and David	CHLCA
Queen Pu-abi		<i>Homo neanderthalensis</i>
Babylonian exile		Qafseh
Pre-Pottery Neolithic A Period	Gobekli Tepe	Mungo Woman
Ishmael	Thousand-year drought	Didgeridoo
Sargon	Ashurbanipal	Trois-Freres Cave

Interview

Task

In pairs, choose one period of time and write and perform a script about the spirituality and religion of the human ancestors of that time, using the information in this chapter.

You may wish to use the following model as a start.

INTERVIEWER

Good evening. Tonight we will use a time machine to skype with the distant ancestors of humanity in order to discern the origins of society, spirituality and religion. My interview subjects lived from 13 million years ago until the Reformation in the 16th century. The producers and I have made the selection based on current theories concerning the origins of religion and what religion has done for society. Let's assume that we have a translator inbuilt so that we can understand the interviewees and they can understand us.

Research

Discuss the following questions, using points raised in your textbook and from other sources, to support your arguments.



Research

- 1
 - a Why is it that, until the invention of writing, the origins of religion are difficult to determine?
 - b Outline and discuss the evidence for the most likely origin of religion.
 - c How reliable is the evidence?
 - d What other interpretations of the same evidence are possible?
- 2 In the long history of religion, elements have been discarded and others retained.
 - a What things that we do today are similar to the earliest evidence of religion?
 - b Why have these elements of religion survived?
- 3
 - a What happened to religious thought during the Axial Age?
 - b How did religious and non-religious ideas change society?
 - c What evidence is there in society today of the thought that developed during the Axial Age?
- 4 What role did religion play in the crucial developments in human society, such as the symbolic, agricultural and literacy revolutions?
- 5
 - a What is meant by the democratisation of the Bible?
 - b Why was this democratisation of the Bible so radical?
 - c How did it undermine power structures at the time and how does it do so today?
- 6 Explain how and why, throughout history, religion has been actively engaged in the authority structures of society.





Chapter 3

RELIGION: THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

Outcome to be demonstrated

Discussion of the presence of religion in Australia, past and present

Focus questions

- ▶ How and why has the religious composition of Australia changed over time?
- ▶ How have religions in Australia expressed themselves through the aspects of religion?
- ▶ How has their religion helped members to develop personal meaning and identity?
- ▶ What sort of things may cause tension between members and their religion?
- ▶ How have religions interacted in Australian society?
- ▶ What has been the Australian experience of ecumenical and interfaith interaction?

AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL IDENTITY



Terminology

What being an Australian means is extraordinarily difficult to characterise as cultural background heavily influences the way a person describes themselves. For example, there are cultural influences on how Australians (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) use the English language that differ from other former colonies of the British Empire such as South Africa and parts of North America. Our collective identity is often difficult to perceive because we are living in it and it is hard to be objective about it.

Skills: explain, outline, interpret, synthesise

- 1 What does it mean to you to be an Australian? Discuss answers with the class.
- 2 What is unique about Australian culture?
- 3 Survey the class. Has anyone migrated here from another country, or come from the country to the city or vice versa. Ask if they can make observations about what Australian urban culture is. Dot point their answers and discuss as a class.

Skills: explain, outline, interpret, synthesise

Research

- 1 Using a search engine, find the lyrics of 'We are Australian' by the Seekers and then answer these questions.
 - a How do the songwriters describe the actual land of Australia?
 - b What different perspectives of Australian society are portrayed in the verses?
 - c How are the different stages of immigration to Australia shown?
 - d Choose three verses and describe the significant historical moment each one symbolically refers to.

- 2 Research another iconic song about Australia. Present the song to the class, explaining its message and what it demonstrates about Australian culture. Some songs you might like to choose from are:

'Up there Cazaly'

'Treaty'

'Bapa'

'My island home'

'And the band played Waltzing Matilda'

'I was only 19'

'Beds are burning'

'Down Under'

'I still call Australia home'

'Great southern land'

'Botany Bay'

'Waltzing Matilda'

'Advance Australia fair'

'With my swag upon my shoulder'

'Click go the shears'

'Wild colonial boy'

'Road to Gundagai'

'Pub with no beer'

'Sounds of then'

'Flame trees'

'It's time'

'Four seasons in one day'

'To her door'

'Took the children away'

'From little things big things grow'

'Taba Naba'

- What does the song (and video clip) say about Australia as a land or a people?
- Discuss specific lines of the song and what they indicate about Australian culture.
- What are any issues or challenges that are dealt with in the song?
- How do the images depict Australia?
- What is Australia's collective identity as shown in the song?
- Is religion represented in any way in the song?

- 3 According to iconic songs, what does it mean to be an Australian?

A UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN SOLEMN DAY

One of Australia's most solemn days is Anzac Day. Prayers are said and hymns sung during dawn services. The Anzac history has become legend and a defining moment for Australian collective identity. Many Australians from a range of religions – and even those who identify as having 'no religion' – mark Anzac Day as a sacred occasion. Each year, the ceremonies performed on 25 April at shrines across the country include many liturgical features, such as prayer, symbol and ritual. Religious leaders often officiate at dawn services on Anzac Day, and the site in Turkey has become a place of pilgrimage for many young Australians. Nearly every Australian city and country town has a monument or shrine of remembrance to soldiers who lost their lives at Gallipoli and in later conflicts. Many Australians attend who are not members of religions.



Fairfax Syndication/Paul Jeffers

FIGURE 3.1 The Service Band Choir performs at the dawn service at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne, 25 April 2015. What aspects of religion and symbols of Australian culture can be seen in this image?

Secular pilgrimage

For a number of years, thousands of Australians have attended the dawn service at Anzac Cove on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey. The focus is on the solemnity of the experience, with a night-time vigil held on Anzac Day eve as a period of reflection rather than celebration. Similar pilgrimages are made to significant sites in the First and Second World Wars, such as Villers-Bretonneux in France, and to walk the Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea.

Skills: explain, outline, interpret

- 1 In what ways does Anzac Day fulfil the aspects of religion as listed in Chapter 1?
- 2 What authority does Anzac Day hold for the collective identity of being an Australian?
- 3 Why do people make pilgrimages, such as to Anzac Cove?

>

- > 4 Describe your experience of seeing any sacred art, visiting a site of cultural significance, participating in acknowledging traditional owners of the land or engaging with some part of Aboriginal Australian culture and spirituality.
- 5 Do Australians respect the country's Aboriginal past and religious beliefs? Explain why or why not.
- 6 Due to diversity in Australia we are exposed to other religions through friendship, school, our communities and acquaintances with other people. List the religions that are different to your own which you have experienced in some way. Describe the experience. Did it engender spirituality in you?
- 7 A recent religious phenomenon is the construction of roadside shrines for accident victims. In what ways could this be seen as a religious ritual or symbol?

THE DISTRIBUTION OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION IN AUSTRALIA TODAY

Australia is a diverse nation in terms of spirituality and religion. The increasing diversity of Australia's population is revealed in the census undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics every five years. The information in Table 3.1 and Figures 3.3 and 3.4 below shows current trends in Australia according to recent census figures.

TABLE 3.1 Comparison of the census figures on religious affiliations, 2001 and 2011

	2001		2011		PERCENTAGE CHANGE
	'000	%	'000	%	%
Christianity	12764.3	67.9	13150.6	61.1	-6.8
Anglican	3881.2	21.7	3680.0	17.1	-4.6
Baptist	309.2	1.6	352.5	1.6	0
Catholic	5001.6	26.6	5439.2	25.3	-1.3
Lutheran	250.4	1.3	251.9	1.2	-0.1
Eastern Orthodox	529.4	2.8	563.1	2.6	-0.2
Pentecostal	194.6	1	238	1.1	0.1
Presbyterian and Reformed	637.5	3.4	599.5	2.8	-0.6
Uniting Church	1334.9	6.7	1065.8	5.0	-1.7
Other Christian	569.3	3.8	960.7	4.5	1.8
Other religions	911.3	0.5	1546.3	7.2	6.7
Buddhism	357.8	1.9	529	2.5	0.6
Hinduism	95.5	0.5	275.5	1.3	0.8
Islam	281.6	1.5	476.3	2.2	0.7
Judaism	84	0.4	97.3	0.5	0.1
Other non-Christian	92.4	0.5	168.2	0.8	0.3
No religion/not stated	5093.7	27.2	4796.8	31.5	6.8
Total population	18769.2		21507.7		

Census of Population and Housing 2001 & 2011, Australian Bureau of Statistics

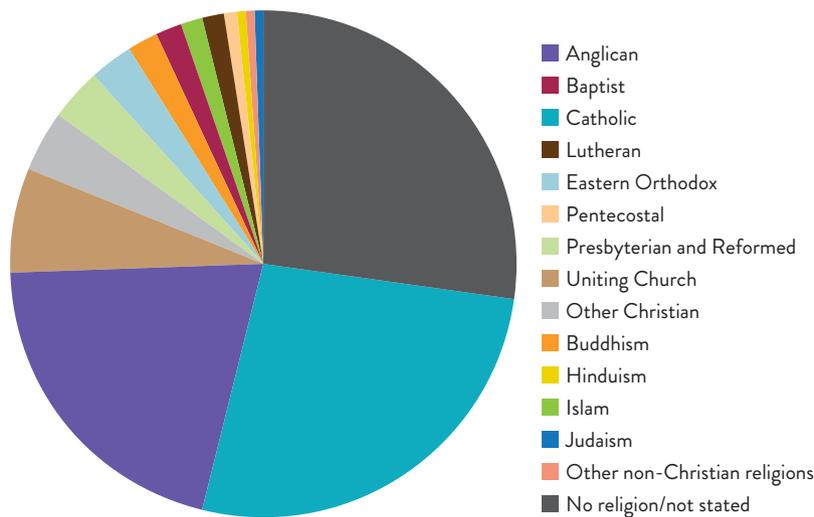


FIGURE 3.2 2001 Australian census figures on religious affiliation

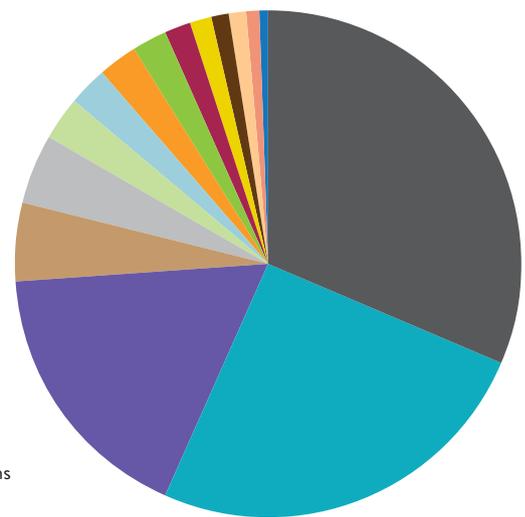


FIGURE 3.3 2011 Australian census figures on religious affiliation

Skills: describe, interpret, synthesise

- 1 According to Table 3.1 and these charts, which religions are the most numerically prominent in Australia?
- 2 Which religious group/s experienced the greatest increase, and which religious groups declined, between 2001 and 2011? Suggest or research reasons for the increases and declines.
- 3 Following the trends identified here, make a prediction about how these trends might be continued in the next census.
- 4 Compare and contrast this information with census information from a century earlier using the Australian Bureau of Statistics website and with global studies of religion (e.g. the Pew Research Center).

A SNAPSHOT OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIONS PAST AND PRESENT

Some of the key trends are:

- Australian Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander peoples stated in the 2011 census that they may be Christian but that their traditional identity, spirituality and beliefs come first.
- Church of England, Catholicism, **Evangelical** Methodism and Judaism came to Australia in 1788 with the First Fleet.
- Immigration brings new religions to Australia, as well as replenishing established religions.
- At Federation, in 1901, Christians comprised more than 96 per cent of the population surveyed; however, Indigenous Australians were not counted in census figures.
- In the 1950s, immigration was primarily from Christian countries in Europe.
- Since 1971, 20 per cent of Australia's population has been born overseas.
- In 2011, 22 per cent of Australians identified as following 'no religion'.
- Nearly 25 per cent of Australians were Catholic and nearly 17 per cent were Anglican in 2011.
- **Pentecostal** and Evangelical denominations are increasing steadily in Australia.
- Newly arrived communities are experiencing natural growth (from births).

evangelical

From the Greek word for gospel or 'good news', a movement within Christianity that attempts to mediate between separatist fundamentalist Christianity and more moderate forms

Pentecostal

A movement within Christianity that emphasises direct personal experience of God

humanism

A philosophy based on the belief that fulfilment comes from the application of reason, science and nature without reference to God or the spiritual

New Age

A movement that incorporates and adapts a wide range of theories, philosophies and practices

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics number over 120 000 and are the youngest and fastest growing group within the Catholic Church in Australia.
- Compared to a 2008 US study of young people's attitudes to spirituality in eight countries, 28 per cent of young Australians (four times the global average) did not place any value on having a spiritual or religious dimension in life. This finding is disputed.
- A religious and spiritual 'marketplace' concept means that people 'shop around' for a church, mosque or temple that appeals to them.
- Movements such as **humanism** and **New Age** may eclectically adopt individual spiritual practices from Indigenous spirituality and other religions to create meaning for themselves.

Skills: interpret, synthesise

- 1 Which of these findings surprises you?
- 2 Why would Australian youth be described as more secular than youth in other countries?
- 3 How do the last two dot points in the list help develop personal meaning?

GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND THE FORMATION OF AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

Australia was colonised as part of British colonial policy. While the colonies that became the different states of Australia varied in their development, the policies of each colony in the 19th century had considerable influence on Australian society in the longer term. The selection below includes policies that affected Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and South Pacific Islanders, and immigration restrictions on certain people and flows.

INDENTURED SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS, QUEENSLAND, 1863

A number of people from the South Sea Islands (of Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands), historically known as 'Kanakas', were contracted to work for three years on plantations in the sugar industry in Queensland. They would have brought with them their beliefs, practices and spirituality. Although they were contracted and paid, the justice of this system of 'blackbirding' labour was highly questionable. With the introduction of the White Australia Policy in 1901, all but 2000 of these labourers were forcefully deported.

ABORIGINAL PROTECTION ACTS

First enacted in the colony of Victoria in 1869, the Aboriginal Protection Acts regulated every aspect of an Aboriginal person's life. The governments of other colonies followed the Victorian initiative. The acts sought to regulate and control the lives of Aboriginal Australians by restricting their rights to travel, residency, employment, marriage and parenting. Concern over the fate of children became a pretext for the wholesale removal of Aboriginal children from their parents. They were then raised within Christian institutions and Anglo-Australian families in order to **assimilate** or integrate them into wider Australian society. This caused a devastating loss of family, language, community and identity. The effects of this policy have been felt through subsequent generations of Indigenous Australians with mass psychological distress and social problems associated with it.

assimilate

To become like, or blend into, wider society



FIGURE 3.4 (Left) Bonita Mabo (wife of Eddie Mabo, shown here, centre, with Australian Aboriginal actors Jimi Bani and Deborah Mailman) is a descendant of the Bidjara people (Aboriginal and Maori). Deborah Mailman won a Silver Logie for her portrayal of Bonita in the film *Mabo*. (Right) Johnathan Thurston (at right), an Australian Aboriginal person, is the co-captain of the North Queensland Cowboys NRL team and is considered to be one of the best-ever rugby league players in Australia. How have Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people contributed to Australian society? Even in these areas, what barriers to their success might they have faced?



FIGURE 3.5 Launa Cubillo (left) and Irene McLennan (right), members of the Stolen Generations, read through a book during commemorations to mark National Sorry Day in 2006 in Darwin.

Accounts tell of widespread cruelty and sexual and physical abuse. There was exploitation of thousands of children, some of whom were only babies when they were literally taken from their mother's arms. Often, children were later told that their families were dead or didn't want them.

Parents who tried to make contact were lied to about their children's location. These children became known as the Stolen Generations.

In 2008 Prime Minister Kevin Rudd issued a public apology to the Stolen Generations, acknowledging the cruelty caused by this policy. Many Australian churches, such as the Uniting Church, have also apologised to Indigenous Australians for the far-reaching and devastating harm that has been caused by these policies. As yet, none of the victims have received adequate compensation.

National Sorry Day, now held annually in Australia on 26 May, was one of the recommendations of the *Bringing them Home* report (1997). The report was part of a Commonwealth Government inquiry into the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families during more than 150 years – up until the 1980s. The report highlighted the absolute failure of this policy, and the immense psychological distress and shattering long-term effects that it has had on families and individuals – at the time and still today.

Skills: describe, explain, outline, interpret

- 1 In one account from the report, a victim states: 'We had religion rammed down our throats from hypocrites who didn't know the meaning of the word.' What do you think is meant by this statement?
- 2 How did the events above cause tensions in people's spirituality and religion and their collective and individual identity?
- 3 How did the events above change the religious composition of Australian society?
- 4 List the abuses suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples because of this policy.
- 5 How was the authority of the Church and government exercised?
- 6 How do later generations of Australians (including yourself) judge the government and Churches by this policy?
- 7 Is a report and inquiry enough to say sorry?
- 8 Does your community acknowledge Sorry Day in some form? Why or why not?

Skills: research, describe, explain, interpret

- 1 Research, read or listen to accounts of some of the Stolen Generations and describe their experiences of religion.
- 2 Watch the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002).
 - a What were the justifications for removing the children?
 - b Describe Australian society as it is depicted in the film.
 - c How was religion part of the process of assimilation?
 - d Find out what happened to the real people behind the characters in the film.

IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION ACT OR 'WHITE AUSTRALIA' POLICY 1901–66

Riots on the Victorian and NSW goldfields in the middle of the 19th century against Chinese miners caused both colonies to introduce restrictive and racist immigration laws. In 1901 the Immigration Restriction Act was enacted by the newly formed federal government. This

resulted in the immediate deportation of tens of thousands of South Sea Islander indentured workers. Additionally, the new Australian Constitution did not recognise the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The White Australia policy favoured European or ‘white’ immigration and limited immigration from Asia. It introduced a number of tests, including a dictation test that could be given in any language at the discretion of the tester. During this time, many immigrants came from Britain, Ireland and northern Europe. At the conclusion of Second World War, a large number of postwar immigrants, refugees and Jews from all over Europe were given entry to Australia. The large number of people arriving in Australia from Italy accounts for the large numbers of Catholic adherents today.

By 1965, the major political parties had removed immigration restrictions from their approaches to immigration. With the *Migration Act (1966)*, the Liberal and Country Party government of Harold Holt restored immigration equality, basing criteria on skills rather than race. The immigration of non-Europeans began to increase and now immigrants to Australia come from many different countries. As in Australia’s past, these immigrants brought their religions with them. While the largest religion in Australia remains Christianity, other religions continue to grow.

Australia is often described as ‘the lucky country’ because of resources but also because of immigration. Australian society is devoid of an entrenched feudal upper-class because 19th-century migration brought with it revolutionary democratic ideals and world views from Europe. Immigrants may have come from societies with a class structure but when attempts were made to create one here, they were mocked as the ‘bunyip aristocracy’ and the ‘squattocracy’. Newly arrived refugees and migrants found considerable social mobility within Australian society.

On any given day in contemporary Australia, people of different religions all over the nation attend their local cathedrals, synagogues, temples, mosques, churches, secular spaces of meaning and sacred sites, and celebrate important festivals and religious occasions in their homes or neighbourhoods. Some Australians attend their place of worship regularly, while others only attend on particular occasions. One Christian may attend church twice a week, while another will only go once or twice a year, if at all. Almost 1 million young people attend religious schools in Australia – including Christian, Islamic and Jewish schools – a trend that is increasing. Although there are still some in the broader community who remain resistant to multicultural values and the principle of religious freedom, there have been few barriers to non-Christian people, with the exception of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, attaining high positions in government, the law, the army and other professions of respect.

Skills: describe, explain, outline interpret

- 1 Outline some of the major ways in which the White Australia policy affected Australian society. Who was mostly affected by it? What changed after its removal?
- 2 Describe the relationship between the government policies cited and the religious composition of Australia at the time.
- 3 How have the restriction and relaxation of immigration laws in the past influenced the religious composition of Australian society today?
- 4 What are some things that you enjoy doing that were brought here by a particular ethnic group?

Skills: research, describe, explain, outline interpret

View the series *Immigration Nation* (2011) by SBS. Watch the whole series if possible, but at least the first episode.

- 1 What impression of Australian society can be attained from this series?
- 2 What was the historical context of the White Australia policy?
- 3 How did this policy 'socially engineer' Australian society? How can this engineering be seen today?

CASE STUDIES OF EXPRESSIONS OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

In this section, the collective and individual identities created by spirituality and religion are presented. A brief history of spirituality, religion and community is provided along with selected aspects. Further research options expand the studies to include films and documentaries in order to contextualise the information presented.

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL SOCIETIES AND SPIRITUALITIES

Australia is home to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Both exhibit enormous diversity within their beliefs and it is inaccurate to speak of one religion for the multiple nations, regions, sacred sites, islands and language groups. These are beliefs connecting the people to the land or the sea, and everything in them, and these are inextricably linked to a person's identity. Prior to colonisation, there were an estimated 500 different nations of Aboriginal people with unique languages and beliefs. The 700 language groups and dialects are spiritually connected to specific regions of land, sacred sites, islands and social groups. Indigenous people speak and teach their beliefs through sacred oral texts or stories, body art, artifacts, ceremonial dances and art at sacred sites and at specific times.

The **Creation Time** stories contain beliefs regarding the origin of the world, the land, nature, and the meaning and purpose of human life in the past, present and future. They define laws governing the relationships between the land, people and spirits. Traditional Aboriginal youth undergo ritual initiations in order to learn them and eventually become custodians of the stories. Levels of initiation may be marked on the body (as sacred texts and symbols) until an individual becomes an elder, when they form part of the court system and governing body of elders. In modern times, this role has evolved to include: writing pre-sentence reports for courts; charity and social work; welcoming sports fans to country at the Melbourne Cricket Ground before a match; advising the government and reporting to the Human Rights Commission. For individuals who choose to be part of the existing traditional society, the process of becoming an elder continues today.

Creation Time

The Indigenous Australian understanding of the creation period as a beginning that continues today and for all time. All existence, as it is today, can be traced to the great Creation spirit ancestors.

Skills: explain, outline, interpret

- 1 In the harsh environment of Australia, with its catastrophic droughts, fires and floods, what role do beliefs about the connections of people to the environment play in terms of survival?
- 2 In what ways do the religions you are studying connect to sacred places?
- 3 How does the spiritual role of elders complement their civil and legal duties and expectations?

Skills: research, explain, outline, interpret, synthesise

Conduct further research to compare Australian Aboriginal beliefs about the land with the beliefs of other spiritual and religious traditions about sacred sites and land; for example, beliefs in Tibetan Buddhism, Judaism, Native American or African **primal religions**. Create a comparative table or Venn diagram to display your findings, or write three separate paragraphs under their own headings.

primal religions
Spiritual practices of the indigenous peoples of the world; traditions of tribal peoples organised in small groups who live a traditional lifestyle

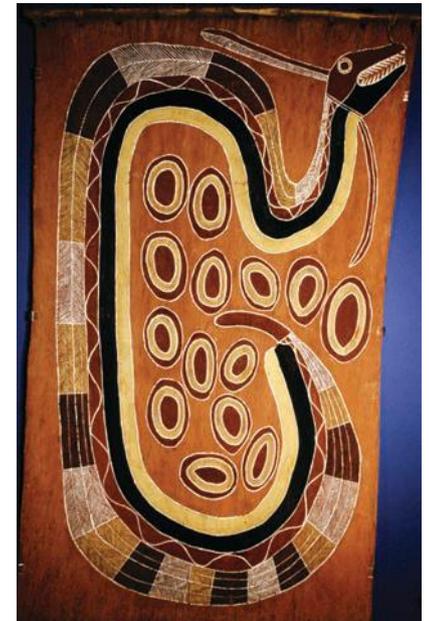
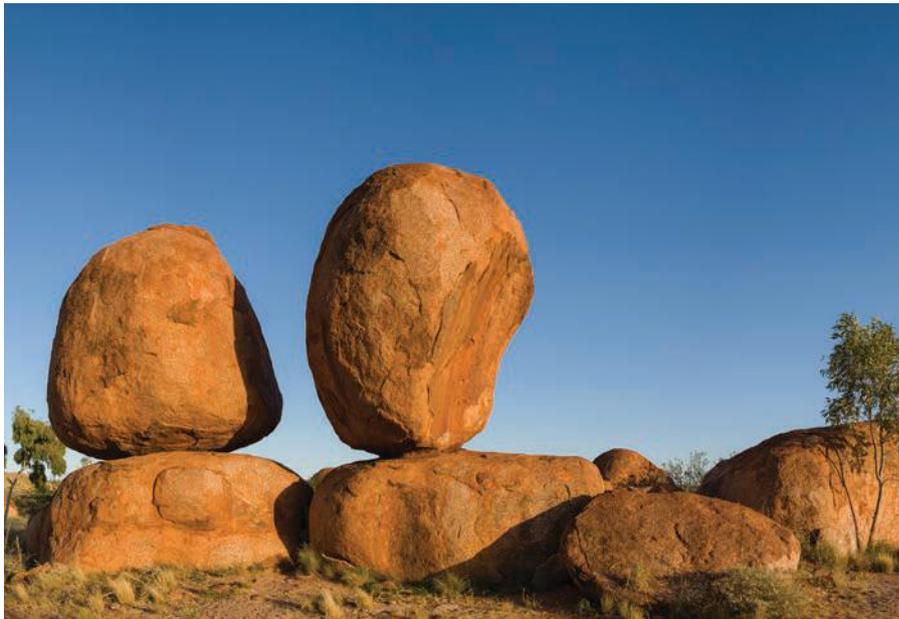


FIGURE 3.6 The eggs of the Rainbow Serpent (Karlukarluk), also called the Devil's Marbles by Europeans, Northern Territory (left). The Rainbow Serpent and eggs as represented in an Aboriginal bark painting (right). In what way do the stones resemble a reptile's eggs? What do both names reveal about religion and the way in which human beings label their environment? What does the artwork reveal about the stones, the Creation spirit and the land itself?

The Creation Time has been enacted in ceremonies, danced in mime with chants to the accompaniment of instruments such as the didgeridoo or 'clapsticks', from thousands of years ago to today. Although details vary between the different nations and language groups, many believe that the ancestral beings emerged from the sky, from the sea or from within the earth at the time of creation. They formed the land and moved on or became part of it. One common set of sacred stories are those of the Rainbow Serpent, an awe-inspiring Creation spirit capable of shaping the land and creating waterways. This indicates that a spiritual connection was made to describe the sacred relationships between the community and the environment.

The Rainbow Serpent

A belief among Australian Aboriginal people, particularly those originating from Arnhem Land (in the north-eastern corner of the Northern Territory) is that the world was created by a Creation spirit called the Rainbow Serpent. The Rainbow Serpent features regularly in rituals practised throughout Arnhem Land. According to some archaeologists, the story relates to the shifting

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sea levels that wiped out significant amounts of land as different ice ages ended, pushing coastal groups further inland. In other traditions, the Rainbow Serpent appears in a storm or sleeps in certain water forms such as in creeks and rivers.

Skills: explain, interpret

- 1 What does the Rainbow Serpent remind Aboriginal people about their origin and land?
- 2 How could rising sea levels, flash flooding and tsunamis be as fearful as the Rainbow Serpent?

lore

Wisdom, stories and traditions maintained by oral transmission

In traditional society, adherence to spiritual traditions was not really negotiable in a modern sense as all people were required to attend events and spirituality infused nearly every aspect of life. Each cultural group has its own stories, dances, songs and way of naming this relationship to the Creation Time. The Pitjantjatjara people (Central Australian desert) speak of *Tjurkurrpa* while the Arrernte people (Central Desert, encompassing Alice Springs) use the term *Alcheringa*. These words express the living contact with the ancestral spirits through the law and **lore**, which are linked. Each group has its own Creation spirits, with an overlap of beliefs between them. The Creation spirits have many roles but can be divided into three main categories: creation beings, who were involved with the creation of people, the landscape and aspects of the environment; ancestral beings, who are regarded as the direct ancestors of the people living today; and totemic beings, who represent the original form of an animal, plant or other object (a totem) as it was in the creation period to which all Australia's Aboriginal peoples today are connected.

Skills: research, explain, outline, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Research Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples' Creation stories. Which parts of the country are the stories connected to by Indigenous peoples' lore and law?
- 2 What is the mythological and etiological (origin of things) purpose of the Creation stories?
- 3 Compare and contrast the meaning of the rainbow in the Bible (in the story of Noah, Genesis 9) and the story of the Rainbow Serpent.

The beliefs of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are based on their sense of oneness and connectedness with the natural world. Because of this, their understanding of the world moves beyond a relationship in which two separate identities act from opposing positions to one that is more inclusive and integrated; the earth is their mother and they are of the earth.

The relationship with the ancestral spirits is always linked to place and leads to the notion of sacred sites that must be protected from access by the uninitiated. These sites were significant during the creation process at the time when ancestors roamed the land, shaping it, becoming part of it and making it sacred. The spirits of the ancestors, handed down from generation to generation, are accessed by people through their totems. The spirits left a complex system

of relationships between the land, the animals and the people, which is governed by the living relationship the people have with the spirits and the Creation Time. Evidence of this relationship can be seen in the significance of these sacred sites; the ritual life of the clans; and the storytelling of the communities. Some artifacts may be painted on the site, symbolise the site, be hidden at the site and be decorated on the dancers at the site when a ceremony such as a corroboree is in action. Participants in a corroboree believe that they are directly experiencing the Creation Time as they dance, chant, play music or inhale fumes from certain trees, generating a feeling of the sacred. Other ceremonies may be solitary.

In the traditional societies of Australian Aboriginal people, good and evil are equally present in the world. When evil enters people's lives, a balance is put out of equilibrium. There is collective responsibility whereby, if an individual commits a wrong, an entire social group is accountable until the wrongdoer or another member is brought to justice. Conflict resolution in **Aboriginal Customary Law** involves the family Head Men of the perpetrator and victim agreeing on a punishment (payback), sometimes in consultation with an adjudicating elder. Particularly heinous crimes may require a perpetrator to be hunted and executed. Good and evil also relate to people's actions towards the land. People must maintain the eternal Creation Time laws related to the land; if they do not respect the land, they may be punished by the ancestral spirits – an example of this would be Bunjil flooding Port Phillip Bay – or by lesser spirits. Lesser evil spirits, such as the Goonges (South-east coast of NSW) are unforgiving and terrifying. Warnings such as 'Don't go there because the Goonges will get you' were often used by parents to encourage good behaviour.

Aboriginal Customary Law (ACL)

An ethical and legal system that has operated in Australia for more than 40 000 years and is ruled upon by elders and initiated men and women



Ramingining artists, Ramingining, Northern Territory, Australia. The Aboriginal Memorial 1987-88, natural earth pigments on hollow logs, height (irregular) 327 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. Purchased with the assistance of funds from National Gallery admission charges and commissioned in 1987.

FIGURE 3.7 Aboriginal hollow log tombs/coffins. How would the remains be able to fit in the logs? Describe what you see depicted on the logs.

Australian Aboriginal people believe in multiple human souls – one is a self-created ego that accompanies the body and is a part of an individual's identity; the other emerges from revered ancestral sites and enters people at various initiation stages of their lives. At death, the soul initially becomes a dangerous ghost that remains near the deceased's body and property,

eventually dissolving or travelling to a distant place where it cannot affect the living. Its absence is often marked by destruction or neglect of the deceased's property and a ban on the use of the deceased person's name, instead it is customary to use a traditional name that shows respect and mourning for a person once they have passed away. Ancestral souls are eternal, returning to the environment, sites and ritual belongings associated with specific totemic beings. In order to avoid offence, Australian publications and television programs concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples often contain a warning that deceased people may be depicted in the program or publication.

TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIETY

The people throughout 20 of the 100 small islands in the Torres Strait are united by their connection to the Tagai – stories that contain their central spiritual beliefs. These stories focus on the stars and identify Torres Strait Islanders as sea people who share a common way of life. The instructions of the Tagai provide order in the world.

One Tagai story depicts the Tagai as a man standing in a canoe. In his left hand, he holds a fishing spear, representing the Southern Cross. In his right hand, he holds a *sorbi* (a red fruit). In this story, the Tagai and his crew of 12 are preparing for a journey. But before the journey begins, the crew consumes all the food and drink they planned to take. So the Tagai strung the crew together in two groups of six and cast them into the sea, where their images became star patterns in the sky. These patterns can be seen in the star constellations of Pleiades and Orion.

Stories of the Stars and Sky, Commonwealth of Australia, Anzac Day, Australian Stories, www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/anzac-day, viewed 10 May 2016.

Torres Strait Islanders do not regard land and sea as separate. Their personal and cultural identities are dependent on the sea while the local economy is based on marine hunting and fishing. For the people of Mabuig Island, heaven is on Kibu, an island to the north-west. When Islanders die, their spirits sail to Kibu at sundown with the prevailing winds.

Skills: explain, outline, interpret

- 1 Why are stars important to Torres Strait Islander people?
- 2 What rule had been broken by the men in the Tagai story?
- 3 How were they punished?
- 4 What does the sea mean to the Torres Strait Islander people?

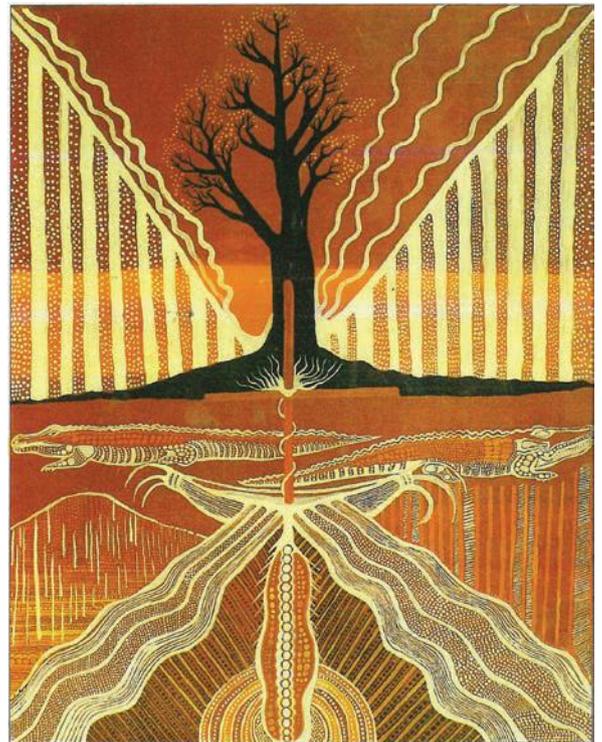
Before missionaries brought Christianity to the Torres Strait, European explorers and pearl-shell traders observed a number of burial practices. A section of the island would be set aside for sacred feasts and for preserving the dead by suspending them in the sun. Records reveal that other traditions included removing and displaying skulls. According to late-19th-century reports, Christian missionaries achieved success in converting the Torres Strait Islander people.

Torres Strait Islanders had some leadership structures and practices that were recognisable to European traders and colonial authorities, such as the agricultural cultivation of yams, coconuts, bananas and tobacco plants. This use of farming also depended upon land allotments, which were again recognisable to the Europeans.

Syncretism

The combination of both Indigenous spirituality and Christian beliefs and their expressions has led to a hybrid religious identity for people who experienced Christian missions directly or are the descendants of those who did.

It is generally accepted that there were approximately 775 000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when Europeans arrived to colonise the land and establish a settlement and penal colony in Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788. This date is considered by a significant number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Invasion Day or Survival Day. These events are commemorated on Australia Day, the official public holiday marking the foundation of the modern nation of Australia. This was when the original Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' societies, which had been in place for tens of thousands of years, were changed irrevocably.



Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann

FIGURE 3.8 *Tree of Life* by Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann in St Mary of the Sea Cathedral, Darwin. How does this image represent both spirituality and religions? What shared symbol is the image celebrating? Does the location of the church have anything to do with why this image adorns it?

Skills: research, describe, explain, interpret

- 1 How would changing the name of Australia Day to 'Invasion Day' or 'Survival Day' be considered offensive by some people? Who would find it offensive?
- 2 What are the differences between saying Australia was settled and saying Australia was invaded?
- 3 Apply the aspects of religion to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spirituality.
- 4 Research the Cargo Cults of the Pacific Islander peoples. How is Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, a key figure in one of them?

BUDDHISM, CONFUCIANISM AND TAOISM

One theory claims that Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Islam (see 'Islam' later in this chapter) reached in Australia as early as the 1400s. Chinese explorer Admiral Zheng He's navy stayed in Australia for some time, maybe to grow rice.

It is more commonly accepted that Asian religions came to Australia after the discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria in 1851. This caused a flood of immigration to Australia from all parts of the world. In one decade alone, 500 000 people came to the Victorian goldfields and Chinese people comprised 7 per cent of that population.



FIGURE 3.9 Statue in Nanjing (the ancient capital city of Jiangsu Province, China) of Admiral Zheng He (pronounced ‘Zong Hoo’), whose legendary flotilla of 300 ships navigated the north of Australia and travelled to the west coast of Africa 600 years ago. How does this evidence of early Chinese explorers counter what has been taught in school history books about the discovery of Australia?

known about them nor understood them, and European miners made use of this to throw Chinese miners off their claims.

Many of the miners returned to China; however, some remained. The Chinese brought to the Australian goldfields an array of Eastern religions. Temples were built in Australia to attract the blessings of the gods and ancestors for the adherents’ pursuit of gold and luck in gambling. Initially Buddhism made very little impact on Australian society and had few followers.

Today, the Dalai Lama (Buddhist leader of the Dge-lugs-pa order) is the *tulku* (reincarnation) of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. A bodhisattva is a saint who remains on the highest level before **nirvana** in order to guide others towards enlightenment and nirvana. Since 1982 the Dalai Lama has visited Australia 10 times and many hundreds of thousands of Australians from multiple religious backgrounds have turned up to hear him. He inspires them to adopt certain values and attitudes in their life. According to the 2011 census, Buddhism is currently the second most popular religion in Australia after Christianity.

nirvana

The end of suffering in this lifetime and all future lifetimes



FIGURE 3.10 Sun Loong is a World Heritage listed dragon. It participated in the celebrations for Australia’s Federation in 1901 and is still used in the Bendigo Easter festival today. What does the preservation and continued use of the Sun Loong dragon indicate about the Chinese participation in Australian society?

Lack of success, taxes and expensive licences caused conflict between the Anglo and Chinese miners and prospectors on the Australian goldfields. Race riots against the Chinese broke out at Buckland River, Bendigo and Ararat in Victoria and Lambing Flat in New South Wales. The riots were organised by European miners and were extremely violent. Some helped the Chinese miners; for example, James Roberts and his family, who had a farm near Lambing Flat, assisted 1200 injured Chinese miners, risking injury and boycotts of their produce to do so. Following these incidents, laws required Chinese miners to obtain residence tickets. Many may not have



Getty Images/AFP/Saeed Khan

FIGURE 3.11 The Dalai Lama addresses Australian crowds at Katoomba Public School, NSW, 2015. What does the willingness of people to sit in the cold to watch the Dalai Lama on a screen show about the importance of his messages?

Skills: research, describe, explain, outline, interpret, synthesise

- 1 When did Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism properly arrive in Australia?
- 2 How were Asian communities and their religions received by Australian society during the gold rush? Are they treated differently today?
- 3 Did the Asian religions introduced during the gold rush influence wider Australian society at the time?
- 4 How were actions of the Roberts family seen at the time and how would they be seen today?
- 5 Who is the Dalai Lama, according to Buddhist theology?
- 6 How does the Dalai Lama stay relevant to contemporary generations?
- 7 Complete some research to find out why so many Australians from diverse religions are converting to Buddhism. What is it about Buddhism that is so appealing? Does Buddhism agree with Australian cultural values such as individualism?

CHRISTIANITY

Captain James Cook charted the east coast of 'New Holland' and claimed it for the British Crown in 1770. The legal doctrine that made this possible considered New Holland to be *terra nullius*, a land belonging to no one. This understanding enabled the new continent to be claimed for Britain and laid the legal foundation for the exclusion and marginalisation of the original inhabitants of Australia. The First Fleet of settlers, aboard 11 ships, sailed from Great Britain and arrived at Botany Bay in January 1788. The fleet brought around 1500 people, more than half of whom were convicts, to build a colony. The convicts were mostly Christian; however, there were between eight and 14 Jews. On later fleets, Muslims were also among the convicts who served their sentences in Australia.

On 26 January 1788, Governor Phillip and a landing party arrived, raised the British flag and claimed Australia as part of the British Empire. Traditional Aboriginal society underwent massive changes very quickly as diseases carried by the colonists decimated their population. Within months, Aboriginal people were burying their dead from these diseases in large numbers.



FIGURE 3.12 A re-enactment of the First Fleet, the ‘Parade of Sails’, staged in 1988 to mark 200 years since the founding of the colonies that became Australia. What does the Parade of Sails indicate about the official ‘founding of Australia’?

totemic religious system

A system that prescribes which members of a clan or nation can interact with each other; this was enforced by strict rules and arranged marriages in Aboriginal Australian societies.

For the first European arrivals to Australia, the religious systems and beliefs of the Aboriginal people were unrecognisable. The elders of Australian Aboriginal societies governed their social and religious structure but their leadership was collective and high status was given to female, as well as male, elders. In Australian Aboriginal societies, women determine kinship relationships in line with the **totemic religious system**. By contrast, the Torres Strait Islanders had structures that were recognisable to Europeans, such as Island Councils headed by a *mamoose* (head councillor). The Torres Strait Islanders also quickly adopted Christianity, which allowed them to have some autonomy from colonial administration.

Many early European settlers considered the Australian Aboriginal people to be primitive and godless. Christianity became a tool for the ‘moral education’ and ‘civilisation’ of Aboriginal people. The combination of both Indigenous spirituality and Christian religion has led to a distinct religious identity for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Graeme Mundine is Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in the Sydney Archdiocese. He has described how Aboriginal spirituality comes before Christianity in his own identity. He has described the Creation Time beliefs and stories as being remarkably similar to the Book of Genesis in the Bible, in particular. Mundine has also said that the first missions to be established in a traditional Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community often determined the denomination that the Indigenous people would adopt.

Academics have identified the developments that emerged in society and influenced spirituality and religion after colonisation:

- the transplanting of faith from the source countries and the initial difficulties of implanting it on Australian soil
- the positioning and repositioning of the relationship between religion and state
- the establishment of organisational and leadership structures
- the continuance of transnational links with the religious source centres overseas
- the interreligious tensions and squabbings
- the interface of the faith communities with the Aboriginal population
- faith communities and the impact of migration and
- religiosity and popular religion.

Source: D Cahill, G Bouma, H Dellal & M Leahy 2004, *Religion, Cultural Diversity and Safeguarding Australia*

Aboriginal population in Australia

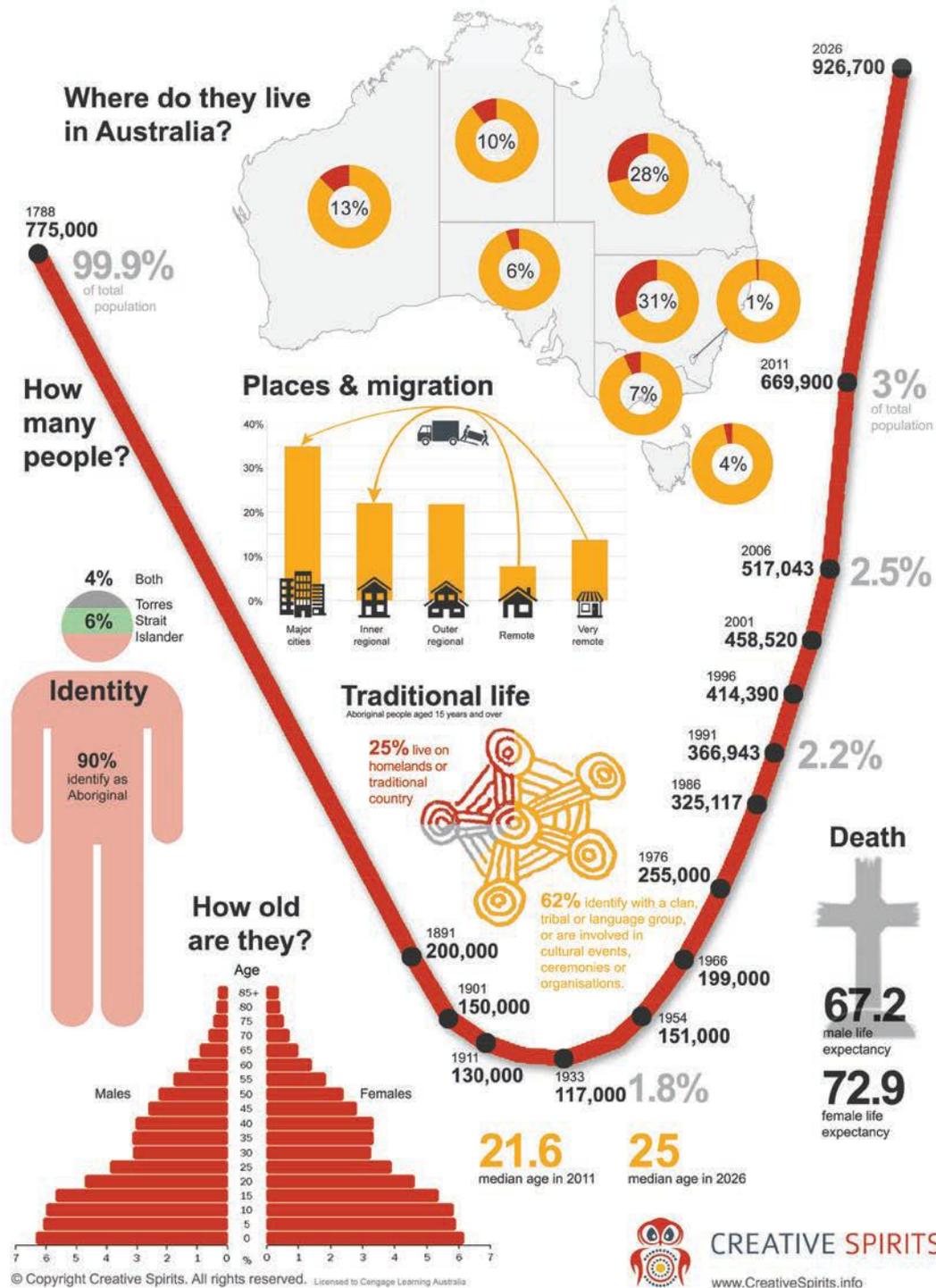


FIGURE 3.13 The impact of more than two centuries of colonisation on the population of Australian Aboriginal people. What does this source say about the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies? How do population figures indicate adherence rates? When was the Aboriginal population at its lowest in terms of numbers? When was it at its lowest as a percentage of overall population? How might an individual's identification influence these figures?

Skills: research, explain, outline, interpret, synthesise

Apply the eight themes listed in the extract on page 90 to a religion you are studying. Use the themes as headings for your researched and summarised information. Are they accurate for your chosen religion?

The first Christian leader to work in Australia was Richard Johnson, who acted as chaplain to the First Fleet. To sail to what was the end of the Earth and minister to a large number of convicts while they developed the country with their bare hands was a mission that required a unique individual. There was debate over whether a religious figure was even needed since secular Enlightenment ideas were prevalent at the time. Johnson ran services on the decks of ships in the First Fleet. The first Australian church service was held in Farm Cove, Port Jackson, now Sydney.

The first Bible verse to be read aloud in Johnson's first sermon on Australian soil was **Psalms** 116:12:

What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty to me?

This verse is part of a psalm in which the key theme is thanks for God's salvation, spiritually and in this life. There is a certain irony to Johnson's selection, considering that the First Fleet's purpose was to build a prison, but it reflects the optimism and seriousness with which Johnson took his difficult mission as the colony's first minister. In addition to the usual duties of any minister in officiating over the religious life of the colony – its births, marriages and deaths – Johnson had to offer the last rites to the numerous prisoners being executed, even to those who were not Christian.

Some of Johnson's actions and achievements included: ministering to all people, including convicts, as he believed all had a right to salvation; conducting services in the open air or in large shops before any churches were built; building a church by hand; and establishing the colony's first schools. He showed genuine concern and understanding for the plight of the Aboriginal people, and convicts described him as a doctor of the body and spirit. Recent Australian history has revised Johnson's previous status as a 'quaint preacher' to acknowledge his remarkable achievements in light of the brutal colonial society in which he ministered.

Skills: describe, explain, interpret

- 1 What connection was Johnson deliberately making with his choice of the first Bible verse to be read in his first sermon on Australian soil?
- 2 Which religious beliefs can be discerned from Johnson's actions?
- 3 Which tensions did Johnson face over and above those experienced by ministers elsewhere?
- 4 What evidence is there of Johnson's popularity, influence and legacy?

The Church of England 'whether you like it or not!'

British colonial authorities knew that most convicts were not Church of England, as they had been taken from the urban areas, hulks and prisons of Britain, rather than from rural areas. Most convicts therefore could not worship in their actual denomination or religion but were forced to attend Church

psalm

A sacred song or poetic verse from the Book of Psalms in the Bible, sung or chanted as part of Christian and Jewish services

of England services. Early churches in Australia contained pews and stalls for convicts to be locked into. At Port Arthur prison in Tasmania, convicts were placed by themselves in separate stalls with only a small opening in front of them to allow them to see the proceedings. Not surprisingly, the convicts usually did not like being made to attend church and did not generally take well to the Christian faith. However, after their release, attending church often became an important means of establishing respectability in order to present themselves as people who were free citizens and members of an emerging 'middle class'. Churches were also the social centres of the community. For one day of the week, the community was brought together to attend church and Sunday school.

In rural Australia, where isolated farming families lived long distances apart, attending church services on Sunday was the only way to mingle. It was originally hoped that Anglicanism would become the established church of Australia, as it was in England; however, during the 1820s in Australia, the Anglican Church faced competition. Free settlers to Australia brought their own religious beliefs and culture with them. While it appeared at first that the Church of England would be the established denomination of Christianity – and it was the largest denomination until 1986 – vast numbers of people arriving from Catholic Ireland and Presbyterian Scotland challenged the entrenchment of the Anglican Church of England in colonial society.



FIGURE 3.14 St James Anglican Church in approximately 1890. Established in 1824, this is the oldest surviving church in Sydney. What does the continuous use of the church indicate about its cultural significance and relevance?

Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney, Tyrrell Collection, Photograph by Henry King

Ecumenical experiment in colonial times

Fathers James Harold, Peter O'Neill and James Dixon were the first Catholic priests to arrive in the colony. They were transported for their alleged roles in fomenting a rebellion in Ireland in 1789. Father Dixon impressed Governor Phillip Gidley King and, on 15 May 1803, celebrated the first Catholic mass in Sydney. To quieten Catholic resistance to the forced attendance at Anglican services, Dixon held alternative church services each successive Sunday at Sydney, Parramatta and the Hawkesbury River. Dixon became Prefect Apostolic of New Holland, the first Catholic Church appointment in Australia. After receiving praise for the initial success of this **ecumenical** experiment, a convict uprising at Castle Hill confirmed the fears that the governor held about mass being an avenue for plotting rebellion. After his conditional emancipation was revoked, Dixon continued to perform mass, baptise infants and marry Catholics privately; his work was even supported by the Protestants in the colony. When he returned to Ireland in 1808, the colony was left without an official Catholic leader until 1818.

Eventually, Roman Catholic priests entered Australia as free men between 1817 and 1820. Fathers Jeremiah O'Flynn, John Joseph Therry and Philip Connolly were to be the priests for the Catholic community. Their arrival is generally considered to be the foundation of the Catholic Church in Australia. At the time, it was thought by many that all churches should be treated equally; consequently, Governor Bourke enacted an important law in 1836, known as the Church Act. This law ensured that financial aid would be made available not only to the Anglicans, but the Presbyterians, Catholics and eventually Methodists and Baptists. This aid allowed all of these

ecumenical
Promoting the movement towards religious unity

denomination

A branch of an established religion that may have variant beliefs, ritual expressions and liturgies

denominations to grow and a complex system of interdenominational conflict, competition and cooperation to develop.

Skills: describe, explain, interpret

- 1 Describe and discuss the tensions faced by non-Anglican individuals in the colonies.
- 2 How was the tension faced, individually and collectively, by leaders and adherents of the Catholic community?
- 3 How would you cope with being forced to attend church in chains? Or with being forced to attend a service conducted by a denomination or religion other than your own because there was no other choice?

CHANGING TIMES

Up until the 1960s, church attendance in Australia remained high and the church was still the social hub of networking and community. Everyone wore their 'Sunday best' to church, business deals were done after the service and everyone knew the people in their community. Sunday schools across the country were full and there were Church youth movements, Church-endorsed sporting associations and even special religious groups catering for different groups within the community, such as the Catholic groups the Children of Mary for young girls, the Legion of Mary for women and the Sacred Heart Sodality (Brotherhood) for men. Job applicants were required to state their religion when applying for jobs.

Young people became restless with the restrictions of society; they were dissatisfied with the ethical systems espoused by religions that appeared to support unethical gender-biased social norms, the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam and the Cold War. As a result, there was an explosive shift away from mainstream religions during the 1960s. Young men chose to wear their hair long and the contraceptive pill gave women control over reproduction and enabled the sexual revolution.

A secular **counterculture** emerged in which people in the developed world protested what they saw as religion-endorsed hypocrisy. During this time, conventional religion became less popular in most Western societies, including Australia. In some cases, traditional religion was replaced by an individualised mixture of Eastern religions and philosophies, indigenous beliefs and mystical traditions. Some people totally rejected their Christian origins and passed their scepticism on to their children. Others sought to change the system from within and made, for example, their church youth group alive with the 'spirit of the times'. Such religious movements embraced the changes in society and reflected on how their religious beliefs could be truly lived in the modern society. From the 1970s onwards it became increasingly commonplace for Australians to identify themselves as not having a formal religion.

counterculture

A community whose world view deviates from that of mainstream society

Skills: describe, explain, outline, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Why do some people identify with a religion but do not attend services or demonstrate much in the way of adherence?
- 2 Until the 1950s and 1960s, what roles did religion play in society?
- 3 What happened to the Church's authority after the 1960s?
- 4 Which events caused tensions between adherents and religion?
- 5 How did the counterculture change mainstream religions?

Skills: research, explain, outline, interpret, synthesise

Look at a calendar in your school diary or another source, such as a wall calendar, and answer the questions that follow.

- 1 List the religious days and religions represented in the calendar.
- 2 How do the days reflect Australian religious cultural identity?
- 3 Research and list all of the religious events and celebrations you know of that are celebrated in Australia. Are all of these represented on most calendars? Make an ideal multifaith, multicultural calendar.
- 4 According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, religion is becoming less relevant to an increasing number of Australians. Should we remove the public holidays associated with religion from the calendar year? Explain why or why not.
- 5 Should we include the festivals of all religions as public holidays? Discuss why or why not.
- 6 Research some initiatives taken by religions to engage youth.

Another attempt at ecumenism in Australia

Historically, ecumenism specifically refers to the councils of the various **dioceses** of Catholic and **Orthodox** Churches in which the Holy Spirit is present. Recently, the term has come to have the added meaning of representing attempts to unify movements within Christianity. Since 1946 and earlier, Australian Christian Churches have attempted to engage with each other across the different denominations. In the 1960s and 1970s, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches joined the initiative. The Catholic Church became a full member in 1994. The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) is an interdenominational council that represents 19 Churches. Through dialogue, conferences and joint ventures, the NCCA seeks to further understanding about the points of difference in the ways in which Churches deal with the issues facing the Christian faith and Australian society. One of the main motivations for the creation of the NCCA was the effect of declining membership on the smaller denominations, apart from the Pentecostal Church.

diocese

A region under the control of a bishop

orthodox

Conforming to the established beliefs or doctrines of a religion

Skills: interpret, synthesise

- 1 How does ecumenism enable members to find personal meaning?
- 2 Why would denominations of Christianity that have previously conducted wars against each other be working together under ecumenism?

Skills: describe, explain, interpret, synthesise

Interview

Find someone who lived through the great religious questioning of the 1960s – for example, a family member, family friend, teacher or commentator – and interview them.

- 1 Were they part of the 1960s counterculture? Why or why not?
- 2 How do they feel that religion in Australia was challenged in the 1960s?

>

- > 3 How do they think their religion or denomination dealt with such significant challenges?
- 4 What do they think 1960s counterculture achieved? Which parts of society do they think it affected, and how?
- 5 Do they believe that the answers the 1960s counterculture offered to society and religion failed or succeeded? Why?
- 6 What were the tensions they experienced with their religion?
- 7 Did they gain personal meaning from what they changed or added to their lives?

Pentecostalism in Australia

The Pentecostal Church is made up of a number of different churches that place an emphasis on experiencing the Holy Spirit in their services through music, dance, trances and speaking in tongues. Pentecostalism emerged from the Protestant (non-Catholic) tradition. It is unique in Australia in that it has not grown and developed as a result of patterns of migration but has emerged from members' dissatisfaction with other Christian movements. The first Pentecostal Church was founded in Australia, in 1909, by Sarah Jane Lancaster, a former Methodist from Williamstown, in Melbourne. In the last two decades, the Pentecostal Church has expanded rapidly, and its adherents attend regularly; however, they do not always attend the same community but tend to 'congregation hop'.

Skills: research, outline, interpret, synthesise

Study Figures 3.15 and 3.16 and answer the questions that follow.



Alamy Stock Photo/robertharding

FIGURE 3.15 In the Catholic mass, the priest gives a communicant the body of Christ and the blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine.



Fairfax Syndication/SMH/Wolter Peeters

FIGURE 3.16 Hillsong services at the Sydney Entertainment Centre. How do these large services appeal to adherents? What do the actions of the participants reveal?

- 1 List some reasons why the Pentecostal Church might be growing in Australia.
- 2 Research three differences between the Catholic, Anglican and Pentecostal Churches.
- 3 Research three similarities between the Catholic and Pentecostal Churches.
- 4 What conclusions can you draw regarding the differences between Catholics and Pentecostals in terms of the aspects of beliefs, rituals and leadership, and any other relevant aspects?



Getty Images/Kristian Dowling

FIGURE 3.17 A pilgrim receives communion at the opening of World Youth Day, 15 July 2008. On this day, 24 people performed the Ritual of Confirmation and 1300 religious leaders from multiple levels of Church hierarchy gave Holy Communion. Why would so many people desire to celebrate life events in this way? What about this event appeals to Catholic youth? What did it achieve for the Pope?

The largest gathering of people in Australian history

In 2008, Pope Benedict XVI visited Australia for World Youth Day. This week-long celebration of Catholicism, which focuses on youth, is celebrated every two to three years in different locations around the world. The Sydney festival was attended by 26 cardinals, 420 bishops and thousands of priests and approximately 500 000 young people from around the world. The Final Mass in Sydney was the largest gathering of people in Australia's history with attendance numbers estimated at 300 000 to 400 000 people. The Final Mass is the final event in World Youth Day (WYD) celebrations.

HINDUISM AND SIKHISM

In addition to the Indians who may have arrived in New South Wales on convict fleets, a group of domestic servants arrived from Calcutta in 1810. Up until 1850, groups were hired from India and Sri Lanka to work as labourers. Assorted merchants, 200 printer's apprentices and domestic workers were also contracted to work in the early colony. A number of Hindu and Sikh 'camelmen' were hired to help build the infrastructure of the country's interior (see also 'Islam' on pages 98–9 regarding the 'Ghans'). The seasonal nature of agricultural work meant that these labourers travelled the eastern coast of Australia.

Immigration quotas restricted the numbers of Hindu women entering the country so these men often married local women, and many assimilated. In 1850, an immigration quota was imposed on men due to fears they would 'steal white settlers' jobs' – an argument that would still be applied to migrant groups many years later. There was mistrust and suspicion about their practising what was called a 'heathen' religion. Fear of 'infidel ways' was given as one of the reasons. Following the European settlement of Australia's interior, Hindu and Sikh Indian hawkers (travelling merchants) became a lifeline to rural towns, selling silk, utensils and other items. Many did return home to their countries, while others, who had established businesses or shops, intermarried and stayed in small communities on the east coast of Australia.

Hindu and Sikh communities at this time cremated their dead on fires of eucalyptus logs, with the accompanying traditional rituals of any Hindu and Sikh burial. With a decrease in their population due to the White Australia policy, many Hindus and Sikhs began to intermarry. Since the removal of the White Australia policy, Indian and Hindu immigration and populations in Australia have increased significantly, and religious trends in Australia have followed this pattern.

heathen

A person who does not acknowledge God or the Bible

infidel

An unbeliever in the dominant religion



FIGURE 3.18 Indian hawkers with their mobile home and shop, c. 1901–1909 What do the carriage and clothes indicate about these men?

Skills: research, identify, explain, interpret

- 1 Using the Internet, enter the search term ‘Sikhs in contemporary Australian society’ and select the website ABC Splash, then view at least three of the videos on Sikhism to answer the following:
 - a How have Sikhs been influenced by Australian society?
 - b How have Sikhs influenced Australian society?
- 2 Using the Internet, enter the search term ‘Hindus in contemporary Australian society’ and select the website Religions for Peace Australia. Find the article ‘Being religious and interreligious in multicultural Australia’. Then scroll down to the subheading ‘The challenges for the Australian Hindu communities’. Explain in your words what the challenges are for Australian Hindu communities.

ISLAM

Islam is the fourth largest religion in Australia. Before European settlement, in the 16th century, there was significant interaction between Muslim Macassan fishermen from Indonesia and Aboriginal people. The trade of objects, ideas, beliefs and even dances indicate that this contact was sustained over many years.

After colonisation, Muslims accompanied Hindus and Sikhs as cameleers, to transport materials and build some substantial capital works and infrastructure linking the Northern Territory and

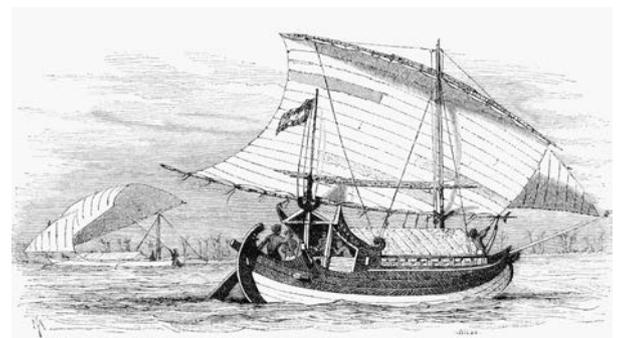
Queensland. The 'Afghan' or 'Ghan' cameleers were forced to live in fenced 'Ghan towns' to prevent them from mixing with European settlers. A few prominent 'Ghans' assisted in the establishment of Australia's first mosques.

Since a decline in numbers in colonial times, the Islamic community now boasts over 60 different ethnic backgrounds. Large numbers of Muslims have arrived in Australia since 1966 from countries such as Turkey and Lebanon. Most recent arrivals include those from Africa, Malaysia, India, Afghanistan and Iraq. The divisions within Islam, along with people's ethnic origins, distinguish the different Muslim communities in contemporary Australian society. There are many Islamic councils and a Grand Mufti (supreme leader). Recently, in Melbourne, the Islamic Museum of Australia opened to present the Muslim contribution to Australian society and nation building.



Griffith University, Wikimedia/Google Cultural Institute

FIGURE 3.19 A rock art image of an Indonesian *prau* carrying Macassan *trepung* (sea cucumber) fishermen in white. What does this representation of Indonesian fishing boats indicate about the contact between them and the Aboriginal people of Arnhem land? What does the fact that it has been painted over indicate about Australian Aboriginal rock art?



Getty Images/Universal History Archive/UiG

FIGURE 3.20 A 19th-century drawing of a *prau*, or Macassan fishing boat. What does the size of the vessel indicate about the skill of Indonesian fishermen to traverse the distance from Indonesia to Australia?



AAP Image/Paul Benjafield

FIGURE 3.21 The modern train *The Ghan* travels a similar route to the cameleers who built the infrastructure of Australia's interior. How does the train explicitly and symbolically refer to the Muslims (and Hindus and Sikhs) from India, Afghanistan and Pakistan from colonial times?

Bachar Houli

Bachar Houli is a devout Muslim from a Lebanese background, who plays for Richmond in the Australian Football League. Houli has commented on the difficulty of balancing religious demands and those of football. His determination to be an AFL player was supported by family and religious leaders. He also works at the club as a cultural ambassador.



AAP Image/Joe Castro

FIGURE 3.22 Bachar Houli, playing for the Richmond Tigers. How is he a role model for young people in the Islamic community?

Skills: describe, explain, outline, interpret, synthesise

- 1 How have Muslims contributed to nation building?
- 2 How has the reaction to Muslims in Australian society changed over time?
- 3 How does Bachar Houli represent Islam in Australia?
- 4 Which other good role models for Islam in Australia can you think of?



FIGURE 3.23 Convict-carved menorah (candelabrum), on a brick, Sydney. What does this image reveal about the origins of the Jewish community in Australia? Which colonial-era symbol is used for Judaism?

JUDAISM

The Jewish community arrived in Australia with eight to 14 Jews on the First Fleet. Some of the more famous colonial Jews include Esther Abrahams (the colony's 'first lady', married to Lieutenant-Governor George Johnston), the colony's first policeman, John Harris, and the infamous Isaac 'Ikey' Solomon (who was apparently the inspiration for the character of Fagin in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*). The first Jew to be buried in the colony was Joseph Levy, in 1788. Levy and other Jews were buried by the Christian chaplains in what can arguably be described as the earliest interfaith events in Australia.

In the early days of the colony, it would seem that the Jewish convicts were not particularly religious (nor educated in Judaism) and they would have shared the animosity of other convicts towards clergy who were part of the government. Religious services

were eventually held in people's homes by committed Jews such as Joseph Marcus and Philip Joseph Cohen, who had brought siddurim (prayer books) with them. Other priorities for the community included the establishment of a Jewish section of the cemetery, a *shochet* (kosher



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FIGURE 3.24 Hobart synagogue, built in 1845, with the Hebrew text over the entrance: ‘In every place where I cause MY name to be mentioned I will come to you and bless you’ (Exod. 20:21). What do the text, symbols and style of this synagogue reflect about the community’s interpretation of their identity?

slaughterer), a Torah scroll and a rabbi. The oldest and largest Jewish community in the early days of colonisation was in Sydney but communities emerged in settlements in South Australia and Western Australia. A community was even established in Tasmania and enjoyed its heyday in 1845, when it erected a synagogue in an unusual Egyptian architectural style, with prominent columns (see Figure 3.24). Today, this is Australia’s oldest surviving synagogue. The community prospered for five years, until the discovery of gold in NSW and Victoria drew Jews from all over Australia, including Tasmania. Today, the Jewish community of Tasmania faces some challenges in common with other small communities: they do not have a rabbi for weekly services or for minor Jewish holidays, so they have to do everything for themselves. For the major festivals and High Holy Days (Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur) a rabbi is flown in to conduct services.

The Jewish convicts and free settlers (who arrived from 1821) were British and, because they could easily blend into society, they were able to achieve positions of authority and power. Anti-Semitism existed but it was not a prevalent force, nor was it as institutionalised or entrenched as it was in European society. The first rabbi to arrive was Aaron Levy, who came to Australia in 1831 to arrange the divorce of a convict husband, who was serving his sentence here, and his wife, who was in London. Levy arrived with a Torah scroll and, in the year he arrived, completed Australia’s first ketubah (Jewish wedding contract). All the synagogues that were established in the colonies and during the gold rush days were under the authority of the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom.

The gold rush in Victoria, in 1851, significantly increased numbers of the Jewish community. Australian Jews fought in all the wars in which Australia has been engaged, and many prominent Jews, including General Sir John Monash and Governor-General Sir Zelman Cowen, have made a significant contribution to Australia. After the Second World War, a vital influx of Jewish survivors

secularism

The removal of religious institutions from the mainstream of public life

of the Holocaust brought a different culture, religiousness and **secularism** to the Australian Jewish community. The new arrivals established Jewish day schools. These schools have been essential in maintaining the Jewish religion and ethnic identity in a society that has been highly tolerant and open to them.

Other migrations that increased the community include those from South Africa during the apartheid era, from Russia when the former Soviet government allowed them to leave, and, most recently, from Israel. This diversity is complemented by religious affiliations of Ultra-Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Progressive (or Reform), Cultural and Secular movements. From 5000 during the goldrush period, the Jewish community now numbers over 100 000 members.

Skills: describe, explain, interpret

- 1 What challenges did colonial Jewish communities face?
- 2 What was the impact of immigration waves on the Jewish community?
- 3 What does the experience of the Jewish community indicate about the values of Australian society?
- 4 In what ways is the experience of the Tasmanian synagogue typical of other religions?

RELIGIONS INTERACTING WITH EACH OTHER AND SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA TODAY

CHARITY IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

One of the major ways in which religions interact in Australian society is through providing charity. Many religions heed their own teachings on values and ethics, and provide charity for all – including non-believers – at the lowest socio-economic end of society. Many charities have a religious background, including the Salvation Army, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the St Vincent de Paul Society, Jewish Care, Muslim Aid and Mission Australia. They bridge the gap between social security payments and the actual cost of living. All perform a large range of activities in this effort to assist those living in poverty in Australia. According to a Brotherhood of St Laurence report on poverty in Australian society, a mere 10 per cent of families own 45 per cent of household wealth, while middle-class families own 48 per cent and 50 per cent of families own 7 per cent of household wealth.

Religions address inequality by providing accommodation, women's refuges, opportunity shops and soup kitchens. A number of charities, including Uniting Care (an agency of the Uniting Church), also run houses for troubled youth and the elderly who cannot afford help privately. There is also an emergency relief service for drug and alcohol users, which links the services of many religious charities together.

Skills: research, explain, interpret

- 1 In a country where there is government assistance, why is it necessary for religious charities to assist poor people?
- 2 Examine a charitable activity by a religion in detail. Outline the teachings on charity by the religion. What specific actions is the religious charity doing to enact those teachings?

INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES

Religions can have an important and beneficial effect on a society. Not only can they offer a society the opportunity to celebrate, commemorate or grieve, they can also contribute to a society's richness and identity. Unfortunately, however, the interactions of different religions in Australian society have not always been positive and beneficial. There are sometimes differences and conflicts between the values and beliefs of different members of society.

Australia is a multicultural, secular country where religious tolerance is promoted by the federal government, which channels funding into interfaith initiatives, indicating a positive attitude to religious freedom in contemporary Australian society. There are a number of organisations and events (many of which have existed for decades) that are trying to foster these connections, such as:

- the interfaith Building Bridges program for senior school students
- Harmony Day
- Jewish Christian Muslim Association of Australia (JCMA)
- Council of Christians and Jews
- Australian Intercultural Society
- Women's Interfaith Network
- Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission
- Kingston Interfaith Network
- Centre of Melbourne Multi-Faith and Others Network
- Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews
- Interfaith Network of the City of Greater Dandenong
- Interfaith Centre Melbourne
- Regional Interfaith Dialogue
- World Conference of Religions for Peace
- Parliament of the World's Religions.

Skills: research, explain, outline, interpret

- 1 Research one interfaith organisation or initiative from the list above and answer the following questions:
 - a What does the organisation or initiative offer and what purpose does it serve?
 - b Who is its target audience?
 - c What has it achieved, according to those who organise and participate in it?
 - d Should such organisations have government support?

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://religionsocvce.nelsonnet.com.au>.



REVISION

A Short-answer questions

- 1 If 'no religion' is not a religion, why is it included in statistics on religions?
- 2 Why has it become usual for people who are not Aboriginal to begin speeches with acknowledgement of the traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owners of the land?
- 3 What is hybridisation in terms of a person's religious identity? Are you, or is someone you know, from a 'mixed religion' family? How do you/they identify in terms of religious adherence?
- 4 Why are Asian religious and philosophical traditions appealing to Australians?
- 5 What changed the central position of religion in Australian society?

B Extended-response questions

- 6 Attempt to define what it means to be an Australian. What evidence, events or literature do you draw on to substantiate your analysis? Is religion part of the Australian identity? Why? Why not?
- 7 In what ways are Anzac Day 'pilgrimages' to Turkey and battle sites in Europe similar to, and different from, religious pilgrimages?
- 8 How have government policies affected Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spiritualities?
- 9 How is adherence to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spiritualities similar to, and different from, adherence by members of a religious tradition?
- 10 What is the connection between immigration policies and religious composition?
- 11 How did a convict's emancipation change their religious adherence? What role did churches play in colonial Australian society?
- 12 If Australia truly has a separation between Church and state, why is marriage equality an issue?
- 13 Why is 'Ghan' an inaccurate term to describe the people labelled that way? In reality, which nationalities and religions comprised the 'Ghans'?
- 14 What positive interactions have religious traditions and denominations had with each other and with wider society?

C Essay questions

- 15 *Australia has its own form of secularism, which is not necessarily irreligious.*
Discuss this statement in relation to any points raised in this chapter, and related material from wider research.
- 16 *The fact that there are multiple other religions in Australia makes a difference to harmonious interactions between religions.*
Discuss this statement in reference to any points raised in this chapter and material related to it.

- 17** Discuss the powerful impact that government policies regarding immigration had on the religious composition of Australia. In your discussion, use any points raised in this chapter and related material from wider research.
- 18** Discuss what has happened to the spiritualities of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a result of their experiences of colonisation. In your discussion refer to multiple sources, including this book and related materials as well as the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- 19** *The interactions of different religions in Australian society has not always been positive and beneficial.*

Discuss this statement in reference to any points raised in this chapter and the material related to it.

Note: Remember to examine different ways of thinking about the statement and to consider the positives and negatives of the various viewpoints.

EXTENSION

Timeline

Task

Research and plot the spiritual and religious history of Australia.



Method

- 1 Place the following people or events in order on the timeline.
- 2 Identify any items that are controversial in terms of adequately determining dates.
- 3 Include a couple of dot points to summarise the significance of each date, event or person.

World Youth Day	Mungo Man and Mungo Woman	Laws mandating secular education
The counterculture	Dirk Hartog	The first adherents of Confucianism in Australia
The inclusion of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in census gathering and elections	Willem Janszoon	Fathers James Dixon, Peter O'Neill and James Harold
Sarah Jane Lancaster	Abel Tasman	The appearance of the 'Order of the Jedi' in census figures
Section 116 of the Australian Constitution	Captain James Cook	The first religion census
Macassan fishermen	Federation	The first Pastafarian to wear a colander in their driver's licence photo
Hadji Mullah Merban	Sheik Taj El-Din Hilaly	The National School Chaplaincy Program
The first Taoists in Australia	Hong Bao	Include any other events or people considered to have been significant for spirituality and religion in Australia.
Zhou Man	Jean-Francois de Galaup La Perouse	
Van Diemen	A group of domestic servants from Calcutta	
Rabbi Aaron Levy	Ecumenism	
Captain Arthur Phillip	First Buddhists in Australia	
Richard Johnson	Interfaith	
	The 'Ghan cameleers'	

Interview

Interview a person, at school or from the wider community, who has participated in a religious charity, volunteered at an opportunity shop or done mission work.

Some suggested questions

- Why do you donate your time (or money) to a religious charity?
- How much time (or money) have you donated to the religious charity?
- What inspired you to donate your time (or raise money)?
- What has kept you donating time (or money)?
- Why do you think that charities are needed in Australian society?
- Who are the customers/recipients? What are they like?
- Are they grateful for what you do or does their gratitude not matter?
- Why work for a religious charity?
- Are you a member of a religious tradition?
- How does charity fit in with your personal belief system?

Task

- Write a 300-word summation of the person's answers.
- Write a 200-word reflection (what and why) on your own experiences with charities.

Remember to practise good interview etiquette. This includes sending the questions to the interviewee in advance; listening attentively to the responses so you can ask follow-up questions that may not be on your list; and sending a thank you note.



Interview

UNIT 2

Religion
and ethics

**Area of Study 2.1: Ethical decision making
and moral judgement**

Area of Study 2.2: Religion and ethics

Area of Study 2.3: Ethical issues in society



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Chapter 4

THINKING AND DECIDING

Outcome to be demonstrated

Explanation of the various influences on ethical decision making and moral judgement in pluralist societies

Focus questions

- ▶ What are ethics and morality?
- ▶ What has been the influence of philosophy on ethics and morality?
- ▶ What are some different methods of ethical decision making?
- ▶ What are the roles of concepts and principles in the different methods of ethical decision making?
- ▶ What role do laws, obligations, duty, norms, values, codes and mores have in different methods of ethical decision-making?
- ▶ What role does authority play in different methods of ethical decision-making?
- ▶ How do reason, intuition and conscience interact with different methods of ethical decision making?
- ▶ What is an ethical issue?
- ▶ How is an ethical issue analysed?



Terminology

WHAT IS ETHICS?

Ethics is the analytical study of how and why people make ethical decisions. It involves consideration of a number of concepts and methods of ethical decision making to achieve the good.

Ethics involves an investigation of what is presently occurring in a society, what could happen in the future or in an ideal social context and what should be occurring in both the real and ideal situations. It can also investigate the past in a similar way.

People who study ethics look at the way in which human beings struggle to discover their culture's ideals and how they apply them in their everyday lives to ensure moral behaviour from themselves or others.

In a **pluralist society** where a separation exists between religion and the state, there are additional issues to consider for ethical decision making. There are many different religious traditions with different ethical perspectives. There are competing ethical perspectives of secular lobby groups (including atheist and humanist groups). There are the ethical perspectives of various branches of knowledge represented by university academics, research scientists and the legal system. There is the diversity of ethical perspectives represented in voter referendums and elected governments. There may be a bill of rights or constitution that declares all ethical perspectives to be equally valid and part of the consultation process of a government's ethical decision-making process.



FIGURE 4.1 What is this image suggesting about ethics?

Yin and Yang describes the relationship between opposing forces in nature, such as negative and positive energies; male and female; good and bad. The interconnectedness of the opposing forces produces some interesting ideas, such as 'one cannot have good without bad'. Some philosophies do not see opposites but prefer a harmony between the forces (such as the Middle Way of Buddhism) and others (such as Confucianism) attach it to morality.

In Western thought, one side is said to be dominant over the other – the 'good' side is usually given precedence, and this can also be seen in other examples, such as mind and body, light and dark. It can even be argued that evil is not the opposite of good but the absence of it. Whichever way one argues, 'good' and 'right' usually suggest behaviour and ideas that are approved of by society, while 'bad' and 'wrong' indicate actions or ideas that are disapproved of. The concept of good may be universal but the ideas that the term relates to can vary depending on the history of a culture.

In ethics studies, the concepts of good and bad, and right and wrong, are critical markers of what a particular society and culture prescribes as good and right obligations and proscribes as bad and wrong actions for its citizens.

In religion, good and bad, and right and wrong, are ways of describing actions and ideas that bring human beings closer to or take them further away from the divine or ideal human characteristics. Good and bad, and right and wrong, being the opposite of each other but remaining interdependent, mean that it is hard to understand one without the other.

In some cultures and religions, these opposites are not polar but more of a ratio that is not entirely one or the other. For example, in Taoism, and many other Asian philosophies, a concept called

ethics

The study of how and why people make decisions about human behaviour

pluralist society

A society in which many different world views coexist within the dominant society while retaining their differences

morality

Relates to human behaviour, the actions of a person for good or right

WHAT IS MORALITY?

Morality is about actual human behaviour – what a person does according to what they think is right and appropriate. What they think is right is influenced by the various elements of their culture, the individual's experiences and the development of the individual's thinking and reasoning capacity.

Morality relates to the behaviour of individuals, groups, institutions, businesses, governments and international bodies.

Laws, secular and religious, can form the basis of morality, or it may exist as an alternative rule system that is socially enforced because it is followed by the majority of people. In Australian newspapers in the 1950s, it was socially acceptable for job advertisements to specify which religious tradition or denomination applicants applying for a job should belong to. The implication was that applicants who were not of the specified religion need not apply. Although today such advertisements would generally not be permitted due to their discriminatory nature, it is an example of the social enforcement of an alternative system of rules.

In addition to a country's laws, an individual may undertake to follow the moral code of their religion or the social norms of their ethnic culture of origin. Morality goes further than laws and can be highly effective in maintaining social relationships. A community may place sanctions or punishments (such as exile or expulsion) on an individual for infringing the community's morality.

A large number of moral rules originated in religions, and religious morality still retains a strong connection to divine authority through beliefs in divine favour, divine wrath and divine justice. Morality is part of a religion in its teachings, stories, mythology, sacred texts, role models and beliefs. Nevertheless, religions are only one starting point from which major questions about how one should behave can be approached.

Individuals can also derive their understanding of morality from other sources, such as philosophy and political ideology, which may or may not overlap with some religious perspectives. Basically, each person has a 'moral compass' to indicate the right thing to do in any given situation. However, a person's thinking and justifications for their behaviour can sometimes be misinformed and misguided.

There has to be some uniformity or commonality of morality in a society, for if individuals were all given different ideas and directions, the society of which they are a part might flounder. For the overall security and functioning of a society, all members of a society have a responsibility to inform and nurture themselves and others in knowledge and understanding of what is right. Immorality



Michael Leunig

FIGURE 4.2 Reflections on human behaviour. What is Leunig suggesting is wrong with human behaviour? What is he suggesting should be human behaviour?



FIGURE 4.3 How do people in complex societies such as Australia make ethical decisions? How do you make ethical decisions?

and a faulty moral compass indicate a failure of society to raise the individual into knowing the difference between what their culture, philosophy and religion define as ‘right’ and as ‘wrong’, as well as a failure on the part of the individual, who may know what is right, to act accordingly. However, a particular culture’s definition of right and wrong does not necessarily relate to those of another culture, though the various bodies of the United Nations have developed universal principles of right and wrong that would apply across cultural differences.

INFLUENCES ON ETHICAL THINKING

Ethical statements about what is the right way to act in an ideal world are known as ethical principles. For example, an ethical principle such as ‘the sanctity of life’ is a reasonably unanimous ethical perspective. But through using various methods of decision making and differing moral values or codes of behaviour, the principle can translate into very different actions. These variables raise questions such as whether the principle should be applied at all costs and in all circumstances; or whether all life, including plant and animal life, is sacred; or whether the principle applies only to human life, or to only some humans.

Ethical principles focus on the highest good. Many professions and organisations whose work enables the provision of some benefit to society or moral good have established their ethical perspectives, which includes statements of ideals, ethical principles and sets of related rules and regulations intended to carry out the principles.

As new areas of knowledge develop, there is the potential for problems to arise in the ethical use of the knowledge. The answers to these ethical problems also need to be innovative. Ethical principles are the foundation of ethics – they are what the rules, values, goals and approved ways of behaving are organised around. Any ethical theory, philosophy, religion, committee or individual needs to ascertain what the ethical principles are before they can begin to think about what is the right policy or behaviour.

MORAL VALUES

Moral values are the universal or cultural ideas that have an importance attached to them such that people work towards attaining them. To say that something is valuable means that there is an intrinsic quality to it, that it is rare and exceptional. In ethical thinking and decision making, values are very important. Values work together with principles to determine the behaviour of an individual and a society, and there are usually socially approved means by which to live the ethical perspective. Values play an important role as the basis of an action in ethical decision making.

There are many differing moral values represented in a pluralist society. In theory, however, such a society, if democratic, functions under a principle of equality and equity for all in which the needs of all are acknowledged and potentially provided for. But everyone’s needs cannot be fulfilled at all times. In the process of trying to cater for the needs of all, the particular needs of minority groups and their cultural values can be overtaken by those of the majority. This may lead to a conflict of values, which can occur for a number of reasons and at different levels, such as between an individual and society, between family members, between communities and wider society, within the workforce, between states, between nations, or on a global level.

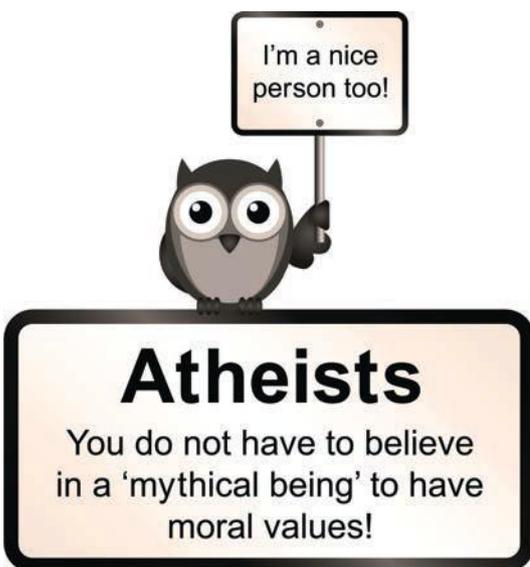


FIGURE 4.4 Sources of moral values. What are the ideas suggested in this cartoon?

Skills: define, explain, outline, interpret, synthesise

Read the Australian Government's 'Australian values statement' below and answer the questions following.

Australian values statement

You must sign this statement if you are aged 18 years or over.

I confirm that I have read, or had explained to me, information provided by the Australian Government on Australian society and values.

I understand:

- Australian society values respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, freedom of religion, commitment to the rule of law, Parliamentary democracy, equality of men and women and a spirit of egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need and pursuit of the public good
- Australian society values equality of opportunity for individuals, regardless of their race, religion or ethnic background
- the English language, as the national language, is an important unifying element of Australian society.

I undertake to respect these values of Australian society during my stay in Australia and to obey the laws of Australia.

I understand that, if I should seek to become an Australian citizen:

- Australian citizenship is a shared identity, a common bond which unites all Australians while respecting their diversity
- Australian citizenship involves reciprocal rights and responsibilities. The responsibilities of Australian citizenship include obeying Australian laws, including those relating to voting at elections and serving on a jury.

If I meet the legal qualifications for becoming an Australian citizen and my application is approved I understand that I would have to pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people.

Signature of Applicant

Australian Values Statement, Form 1281, Department of Immigration and Border Protection © Commonwealth of Australia

- 1 What does this statement reveal about the importance of values? What are Australian values?
- 2 To what extent is it reasonable for the Australian Government to expect those who visit, move here or become citizens to sign this document?
- 3 Should all Australians sign this document as well? Why or why not?
- 4 Choose one of the values listed in the statement and explain it, giving an example of a situation in which it applies.
- 5 Which Australian values are not listed? Choose one with which you identify and give an example of a situation or context in which it applies.
- 6 Refer to your school's website or handbook to find your school's values, then answer these questions.
 - a Which of the values listed in the Australian Government's statement are similar to the values of your school?
 - b Do any of your school's values specifically refer to religion?
 - c Which rules and responsibilities of your school, and which values outlined in the 'Australian values statement', correspond with religious values?

NORMATIVE STANDARDS

Normative standards describe actions and inactions of which a culture approves and disapproves. These may or may not be codified in rules or laws. For example, infidelity in a relationship, which goes against the ethical principle of monogamy in marriage and committed relationships, is immoral but it is not illegal. The principle may be socially enforced by family and friends or members of a religious community who choose not to associate with the ‘cheating’ partner.

SOCIAL NORMS

Social norms of behaviour are ‘rules’ that are created by what everyone does, whether it follows or goes against the law. The fact that they are norms does not make them moral. For example, the speed limit around school zones may be 40 kilometres per hour but many people drive at 60 kilometres per hour. In this example the norm goes against the law. It is hoped that norms of social behaviour will correspond with laws and morality, although this is not always the case.

MORES

Mores (pronounced ‘morays’) are the customs and conventions of society, groups and individuals that are important for acceptability but that are not usually enforced by law. This includes the expectations associated with the membership of groups, clubs, organisations and religious communities, social conduct, social etiquette and even deportment and grooming. For example, when greeting another person in Australia, it is customary to shake hands, while in Japan a person bows to accompany a greeting. Peer pressure is a strong example of social coercion and the power that a group can have in determining its own mores, and enforcing them. This is especially seen when individuals adopt different behaviour, or wear certain items of clothing, because the group expects it. When these group mores are put into practice, often without question, they become the norm at least for that group, which may be small or represent large numbers in society. The mores associated with common decency are time bound and culturally and socially specific. Some examples of common decency that are still in effect include:

- getting off your seat on public transport for an elderly or disabled person, a mother with small children or a pregnant woman, or for a full fare-paying ticket holder if you are a student with a concession ticket
- helping another passenger to lift a pram onto or off public transport
- offering change to a person who does not have the correct coins for their parking meter
- giving back, rather than keeping, the incorrect change that a shop assistant gives you
- returning someone’s lost wallet with all of its contents
- helping someone less able to cross the road.

Moral values, normative standards, social norms and mores are intended to influence the behaviour of a society and deter ‘abnormal’ behaviour. Since a wide variety of behaviour is tolerated as ‘normal’, there are certain behaviours outside of this definition that are labelled ‘abnormal’. Society manages behaviour that is abnormal through the criminal justice system, the mental health system or by declaring a member an outcast or exile from the community or group. Abnormality is important in ethics because everything from Supreme Court judgments to disapproving words from a peer is based on what a ‘normal’ person would do in a particular situation. Deeming a person ‘abnormal’ and trying to determine what is ‘right’ and ‘just’ is more difficult to do. Abnormality is an important concept because it provides a society or group with anti-role models, the treatment of whom transmits a powerful message to ‘normal’ people to conform to social and cultural expectations.

Skills: define, outline, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 There are student norms in the culture of any school. They may be actions that are consistent with the school rules or they may be against school rules or even against the law. Create a table with the following four headings: 'Common decency', 'Follows school rules and responsibilities', 'Breaks school rules' and 'Breaks laws'. Fill it with examples that you have brainstormed with the class.
- 2 As a class, in pairs or individually, brainstorm some examples of common decency that you have performed or witnessed.
- 3 How is common decency an important part of the ethics in a society?
- 4 Discuss whether these countless rules of common decency should be enforced by laws.
- 5 Give an example of a norm that people follow, which is against a school rule or against a law.
- 6 Identify a famous or infamous person who has been labelled 'abnormal' in some way by the media or wider society. Which actions of the person's behaviour are regarded as abnormal?
- 7 Draw a diagram of an Australian more, illustrating the way in which it connects to norms, values, common decency, morality and abnormality.

CONSCIENCE

Conscience is the developed ability of a human being to know right and wrong, and to make decisions and carry out actions based on this. Conscience is more than just knowledge, as it encompasses intuition and strong emotions. Conscience is formed by the many influences encountered in life and its formation goes through stages of development as people gain knowledge and wisdom.

INTUITION

Intuition is a feeling based on emotional intelligence, natural law and life experience. Wisdom could be said to be the accumulation of intuition and reflection upon experience and observation.

WORLD VIEW

A world view is the way in which an individual, group or society interprets the totality of existence and world history or civilisation and how they choose to act based on this interpretation – for example, rather than thinking in terms of nation states, believing that we are all one people on one Earth.

ASSUMPTIONS

Assumptions are statements or ideas that are believed to be true without any supportive evidence, and which are used as part of reasoning and as a basis for decision making. Assumptions are an



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FIGURE 4.5 Influences on conscience. Why is this image not an adequate depiction of conscience?

objective

Describes thinking that tries to remove personal emotions, interpretations and bias in order to make unbiased decisions based on facts

ethical authority

Any person or thing that is used to support an ethical viewpoint

authoritative

Someone or something that has the right to determine, command, advise or judge. They have been confirmed as dependable, learned, righteous, factual, authentic, proven and authenticated.

important starting point for developing a reasoned argument or viewpoint on an ethical issue, but when false assumptions are drawn on, other parts of the decision-making process become questionable, too.

REASONING

An ethical decision can occur in a split second and be justified in a simple manner: 'It felt like the right thing to do.' This feeling may have involved a person's conscience, intuition, personal or religious morality and an assumption – all of which may not have been consciously considered at the time of the decision. But for an **objective** analysis of an ethical issue, a person needs to be aware of these various factors and consider them in a reasoned manner.

ETHICAL AUTHORITY

An **ethical authority** can be any person, thing or idea that is used to support an ethical perspective. A supposed ethical authority may not be convincing, reliable, acceptable or valid as a source of authority to back up an argument even though the person using it as the authority behind their viewpoint may be totally convinced. Not all claimed ethical authorities are **authoritative**. Also, it is possible to misuse authoritative ethical authorities. Determining the ethical authority being used can assist people to organise and inform the thinking behind an ethical decision.

Skills: define, outline, explain

- 1 Compile a list of 10 authoritative ethical authorities.
- 2 Compile a list of 10 unreliable ethical authorities.
- 3 Find examples of misused authoritative ethical authorities and explain how they are misused. (The documentary, *America's Most Hated Family* by Louis Theroux, has numerous examples.)

WHAT IS AN ETHICAL ISSUE?

Ethical issues are matters about which there is disagreement over what is the related morally right and appropriate behaviour for human beings. There will be at least two conflicting viewpoints, often

many more, making resolution of the matter more complex, perhaps even impossible. The varying viewpoints will be expressed using moral language such as right, good, just, worthy, moral or as wrong, bad, unjust, unworthy and immoral. All ethical issues exist in specific locations, cultures, times and places, and these contexts will influence the knowledge and thinking about the issue and determine the methods for decision making used by different **stakeholders**. There is often some confusion about whether a matter is an ethical issue or simply something about which



iStockphoto/muldoon

FIGURE 4.6 Extreme body piercing. Is this example of body piercing an ethical issue?

stakeholder

Someone who has an interest in, or will be affected by, a decision

there is a disagreement. A group of friends disagreeing over which film to watch are not debating an ethical issue. Yet a disagreement between parents and children over the right to watch a particular film may be an ethical issue, as the parents may regard the film as promoting unacceptable, even immoral, values and standards of behaviour.

Skills: select, identify, evaluate

- 1 Which of the following statements would or could be ethical issues?
 - a Murder is wrong.
 - b I love chocolate.
 - c The bust of Queen Nefertiti shows the ancient ideal of beauty.
 - d Students should follow the school rules at all times.
 - e The design brief is that every aspect of the building must reflect an advanced use of green technologies and design ideas.
 - f Truth must always be told.

Skills: select, identify, explain, analyse

According to a legend, there once were four ethical fools.

The first fool was right for the right reasons.

The second was wrong for the right reasons.

The third was right for the wrong reasons.

The fourth was wrong for the wrong reasons.

The fools symbolise the different ethical compositions of an individual in a given situation. They can be useful for analysing people's ethical decisions.

- 1 Brainstorm four examples from the media or popular culture to match the fools.
- 2 Is one type of fool better than any other? Why or why not?

METHODS OF ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

There are many methods used to apply ethical decision making, coming from philosophy, sociology, psychology, jurisprudence, critical theory and religion. The overall methods explored here are **deontological** (Ought ethics) and **utilitarian** (Outcome ethics). Both have variations of emphasis within them and some of these variations will be discussed below.

DEONTOLOGICAL: OUGHT ETHICS DECISION-MAKING METHOD

This method for ethical decision making is based on considering what should be done to achieve the good. People who use Ought ethics as their method for making ethical decisions may vary in the way they apply the method. For some there are actions and behaviours that are always good and therefore should be done in all circumstances because they are good and therefore the right thing to

deontological

Deon means duty and *logos* means science or study. Decisions are made based on doing the right thing regardless of consequences.

utilitarian

Decisions are made on the basis of choosing the best outcome to achieve the greatest happiness.



FIGURE 4.7 Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was the originator of deontological theory.

Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end.

Explain in your own words what Kant means. Which ethical principle common to many religions does his statement echo?

competing goods as well as the consequences of possible decisions. They are also guided by virtues, principles, rules, codes, obligations, duties and norms but are aware that to achieve the good may be complicated and far from straightforward. This may mean that they refrain from doing one action they know to be ‘the good’ because it may have negative or harmful consequences. Instead they may make a decision to act in a way that has more favourable consequences, or at least has results that are less harmful, yet is still good.

UTILITARIAN: OUTCOME ETHICS DECISION-MAKING METHOD

Utilitarianism, also called consequentialism, is concerned with consequences of actions, not the actions themselves. Those who apply this method to ethical decision making start with what things are good and then move to consider which actions will achieve that good to the greatest degree. This may involve actions that are questionable, even immoral, yet good is the outcome.

This is applying the principle that the end justifies the means – a principle that is unacceptable to deontologists.

Some who apply Outcome ethics argue that there is nothing that is always right or always wrong. For them, rightness and wrongness are relative to the situation, the person and the culture. Therefore no person or group or society can judge another from a position of moral superiority.

This particular form of Outcome ethics is called relativism and, sometimes, cultural relativism.

This is the opposite of absolutism, which holds that there are truths, values, rules or principles that are unchangeable and can be applied objectively by any person, group or society. In ethics, this means that a person, group or society can judge another from a position of superiority.

do. Conversely, they would regard some actions and behaviours as always bad and wrong and therefore to should be avoided in every circumstance.

This total and consistent application of Ought ethics is known as absolutism. But how do these absolutists determine what is always good and what is always bad?

Absolutists base their decision making on what they have been taught or shown or have learnt to be unquestionably good and right by their family, education, religion and society. They follow virtues, principles, rules, codes, obligations, duties and norms. They may make their decisions considering only what should be done because it is good and right in itself, without considering the consequences of the decision. Ought ethics does not allow for a wrong action to be justified on the basis of having achieved good.

Others who use Ought ethics to help them decide what to do in an ethical situation may consider



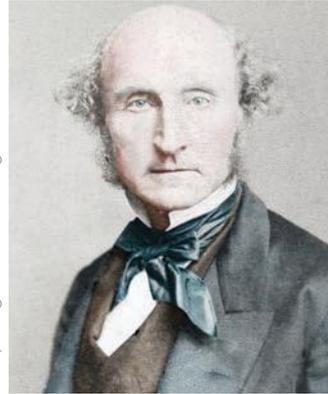
David Hume (1711–1776)

In all determinations of morality, this circumstance of public utility is ever principally in view; and wherever disputes arise, either in philosophy or common life, concerning the bounds of duty, the question cannot, by any means, be decided with greater certainty, than by ascertaining, on any side, the true interests of mankind.



Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832)

Create all the happiness you are able to create; remove all the misery you are able to remove. And for every grain of enjoyment you sow in the bosom of another, you shall find a harvest in your own bosom, – while every sorrow which you pluck out from the thoughts and feelings of a fellow creature shall be replaced by beautiful flowers of peace and joy in the sanctuary of your soul.



John Stuart Mill (1806–1873)

To do as one would be done by, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, constitutes the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality.

FIGURE 4.8 How do each of these philosophers explain what is good, and therefore moral?

Applying a single principle

If an ethical principle of maximising environmental protection and conservation was to be applied to the construction of a town, every decision – from the economy, laws, town planning, community groups, and education to people's behaviour – would need to reflect this principle. The government could insist on carbon taxes and offsets for heavy industry. It might also establish business grants to encourage the development of 'green' businesses and to adapt existing businesses to the new model. All local council decisions would need to reflect environmental protection and conservation concerns, and laws would need to codify all the minimum requirements to enact the principle right down to environmental considerations of rubbish collection.

According to such an environmental ethical principle, it would be moral to recycle and immoral to dump unsorted waste or litter. It might even filter down to neighbours reporting on each other for violations, such as wasting water, cutting down a tree or having a 'burn off' to reduce flammable fuel around a house. An individual could feel guilty for not applying the ethical principle as severely as others, who may be fanatical about it and feel superior because they live to a greater extent by an environmental code and hence believe they are more 'ethical'. The benefits of having a natural environment could even come at the expense of other principles, such as those of private property and people's safety.

The conflict between the environment, people's safety and private property was highlighted in the aftermath of the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria in 2009. A person who removed the trees from around their house and property against the council regulations on removing trees was rewarded by the fact that their house did not burn down. For years, the 'green' values of the council strictly regulated which trees could be chopped down, and it meant that the council fought this particular landowner. The person was cited as being at fault numerous times in tribunals, only to be vindicated when the fires hit. This is an example of a person who did the 'wrong thing' according

> to the environmental ethical principles of the time and place, and according to local council laws, but their actions resulted in saving lives and property. The success of this strategy may have been what led the then premier, John Brumby, to attempt to ease local council laws about clearing land.

One of the consultants, Mayor Bo Bendtsen from Nillumbik Council, claimed that clearing properties for safety needed to be balanced against arguments that the bush gave the town its character and that some people would use a relaxing of laws to clear everything from their land. From a viewpoint that considers only safety, it may seem acceptable to clear all land of flammable fuel; if that were to occur, however, then environmental issues – such as a loss of habitat for native animals – would be raised and the natural beauty of the country would be lost. Property values could also decline and the mayor’s point about the character of some towns depending on the natural beauty of the bush is pertinent. Furthermore, if the government and the world are moving to an environmental model of carbon taxes and credits, the trees could form a carbon ‘sink’ for factory pollution. Clearing the land might be detrimental to a future carbon scheme that could earn the town lots of money. It also presents environmental concerns for ecosystems, as fallen trees provide food and shelter to a number of animals and clearing their habitat might result in the entire ecosystem collapsing.



Getty Images/Mark Dadswell

FIGURE 4.9 The destruction caused by the Black Saturday bushfires in the Kinglake region of Victoria in 2009

Skills: outline, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Draw a Venn or tree diagram of the ethical dilemma described above in the discussion about Victoria’s Black Saturday bushfires. Put the highest ethical principle in the centre. Is it difficult to determine which principle should go in the centre? If so, why?
- 2 As a class, discuss the various points and issues everyone has identified. Consider the different opinions and update your diagram, adding any points that were raised with which you agree but which you hadn’t considered.

- 3 What do you think 'ought' to be done? Should people be restricted from clearing their land? Consider the environment, land values, future use of the land, the safety of people and their private property, the value of ecosystems and the rights of animals.
- 4 How might your perspective of this ethical issue, and what 'ought' to be done, change if you were:
 - a the Minister for the Environment?
 - b a supporter of the Greens political party?
 - c a person who lives in the city but wants a holiday house?
 - d a farmer who wants more farmland?
 - e a victim of bushfires?
 - f a religious fanatic who sees the fires as a divine punishment?

Skills: research, define, explain, outline, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Choose three approaches to ethical decision making from the following list. Research and summarise the ethical theory, ensuring that you describe the ethical principles that underpin the theory.
 - Natural law
 - Moral relativism
 - Aristotle and Plato on virtues
 - Ethical hedonism of Epicurus
 - Stoicism
 - Bentham's utilitarianism
 - Machiavelli's utilitarianism
 - Kant's categorical imperative
 - Deontological ethics
 - Descartes' varying degrees of beliefs
 - Absolutist ethics
- 2 Apply the three methods for ethical decision making that you researched to an ethical issue. What do the different methods suggest about what should be done with regard to the ethical issue?
- 3 Research a philosopher who has made a statement about ethics. In your research, focus only on their statements about how to make a decision about good and evil, or right and wrong. Write your summary on palm cards or a summary sheet. Each member of the class should now stand in a different part of the classroom and present and defend 'their' ideas in a symposium (a philosophical exhibition of ideas).

Suttee in Colonial India

After originally tolerating it, in the early days of Colonial India, the British East India Company (the colonial government) banned the traditional practice of suttee, in which a wife would throw herself on the funeral fire of her dead husband.

The British East India Company banned the practice after consulting with some prominent Hindu authorities, such as Sahajanand Swami, who claimed that it had no ethical authority



from sacred texts. However, a number of Hindu sacred stories relating to suttee do exist, such as that which concerns the goddess Sati (from whose name the term suttee is derived), who creates a fire from her own powers and throws herself upon her husband's fire to avenge her father's insult of her partner. Other sacred texts detail the obligations of wives to husbands. The law code of Vishnu Smriti, for example, states that a woman should perform suttee: 'After the death of her husband, to preserve her chastity, or to ascend the pile after him' (Article 14, Vishnu Smriti).



FIGURE 4.10 A 19th-century representation of suttee showing a Hindu woman about to throw herself into the flames of her husband's funeral pyre.

This sentiment is also echoed by ancient Bengali law (the Dayabhaga), which gave inheritance to widows. There are discrepancies over whether the women 'volunteered' for the practice, however, because if a widow jumped into the flames or was pushed onto her husband's funeral pyre, the inheritance went to the relatives. A suttee occurred as recently as 1987, which led to the introduction of a harsher law, and penalties for bystanders and those who encourage the practice.

Skills: outline, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Apply the methods of ethical decision making of relativism and absolutism to the British East India Company's initial decision to allow suttee and their later decision to ban it.
 - a How does each method justify whether they were wrong or right?
 - b From whose perspectives were they wrong and right?
- 2 Determine where you would position yourself regarding this issue. Do you agree with allowing the practice to continue or with the decision to ban the practice? Why or why not?

Skills: Identify, describe, explain, interpret, synthesise

Referring to at least *three* ethical issues and the various *methods* of ethical decision making you have studied, *discuss* the following statement: 'There is no right or wrong in human behaviour. It's all just a matter of doing what is necessary or preferable at that time in the particular situation.'

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://religionsocvce.nelsonnet.com.au>.



REVISION

Short-answer questions

Answer the following questions in your own words. In your responses, remember to use synonyms for the term you are explaining. That way you build your vocabulary and show that you clearly understand the terms in the questions.

- 1 What are ethics?
- 2 What is morality?
- 3 What is immorality?
- 4 What is amorality?
- 5 What is human conscience?
- 6 Define what it is that makes something an issue.
- 7 What makes an issue become an ethical issue?
- 8 What are ethical or moral codes?
- 9 What are moral values?
- 10 What role do moral values have in ethical decision making?
- 11 What is the difference between idealised and practised values?
- 12 What does the term 'normative' mean when applied to ethics and morality?
- 13 What is intuition?
- 14 What is the role of reasoning in ethical decision making?
- 15 Define the term 'ethical authority'.
- 16 Define the term 'ethical principles'.
- 17 Identify a major ethical principle that influences Australians in their moral behaviour.
- 18 Identify a major ethical authority in Australia.
- 19 Identify a major ethical code that guides Australians in ethical thinking and moral behaviour.
- 20 Why should a person be moral?

EXTENSION

Methods of ethical decision making

Answer these questions in your own words. In your responses remember to use synonyms for the term you are explaining. That way you build your vocabulary and show that you clearly understand the terms in the questions.

- 1 Explain the following approaches to ethical decision making, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

Ought ethics**Utilitarianism****Natural law****Outcome ethics****Subjectivism****Relativism****Absolutism**

- 2 What would a **utilitarian** decide about whether a school counsellor should disclose confidential information about a student? How would they arrive at the decision? What values, principles and ethical authorities would they consider?
- 3 What would a **subjectivist** decide is the first and most important thing to consider in responding to any ethical issue? How would they arrive at the decision? What values, principles and ethical authorities would they consider?
- 4 What would be the ethical perspective of a **relativist** towards the use of flogging as a punishment in some countries? What would be the reasoning behind their perspective? What values, principles and ethical authorities would they consider?
- 5 What would be the ethical perspective of an **objectivist** towards abortion? What would be the reasoning behind their perspective? What values, principles and ethical authorities would form their perspective?
- 6 What would proponents of the **natural law** say about euthanasia? What would be the reasoning behind their perspective? What values and principles would form their perspective? What ethical authorities would be used in their decision making?



Methods of
ethical
decision
making





Chapter 5

RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINTS

Outcome to be demonstrated

Explanation of the ways religious traditions form their ethical perspectives and make moral judgements in pluralist societies

Focus questions

- ▶ What are the ethical perspectives of religious traditions represented in pluralist societies?
- ▶ What factors influence the development of these ethical perspectives of religious traditions in pluralist societies?
- ▶ What decision-making methods are used by religious traditions in pluralist societies?
- ▶ How do the ethical perspectives of religious traditions inform the moral judgements of their members?

RELIGIOUS ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES WITHIN PLURALIST SOCIETY



Terminology

Are ethical principles grounded in divine commands? Many believe so. Some believe that without divine authority for ethics, there would be no organised ethical thinking, that anything would be acceptable. Yet there have been and still are many prominent thinkers who have sought and seek a non-divine, non-religious basis for ethics.

The ethical perspectives of religious traditions are usually about ideal visions for society, and what 'ought' to happen but may not be happening now or in the foreseeable future. In the past, religions had great influence over the secular authorities. Often, religious leaders were also high-ranking members of the ruling group, and participated directly in regulating morality. Such an influential position still may happen in contemporary societies where there is a dominant religion. But today in pluralist societies, religions often have a contributory or advisory position, being one voice among the many world views represented in the society. They may have no overt political power and their ability to influence a secular and pluralist society is more limited, perhaps only affecting a religious community rather than the wider society. Regardless of this **marginalisation**, the government, court system and various ethical committees in a pluralist society may still draw on ethical perspectives from religion to inform public debates and contribute to decision making on ethical issues affecting society.

marginalise

To reduce in importance, to place in a position of limited influence or power

Ethics are part of the High Court of Australia's definition of religion (see Chapter 1, page 6), except when a person cites religious ethics as the reason for violating Australian laws. On other occasions, however, it is the pluralist society that has to make a concession to the morality of a religious community.

In some instances, certain policies and laws could create the situation where people may make a moral judgement to choose against their personal religious ethical perspective and comply with a conflicting law or policy. Or they may choose to act in accordance with their religious ethical perspective, which may mean acting against the law or defying a particular policy, perhaps thereby denying another citizen the rights provided by that policy.

In recent times in Australia, decisions and discussions about issues such as the censorship of computer games, euthanasia, the RU486 'abortion pill', other legalisation related to abortion, treatment of refugees, gun control, drug education, sexual impropriety, gender equality, gay rights, treatment of animals, corrupt or unjust business practices and environmental preservation have divided individuals within all groups, communities and institutions over the ethical consequences of different choices and the impact of their implementation. Religious traditions inform these issues and debates because they are part of the **cultural heritage** and current culture of a pluralist society. Many of these religious traditions have highly evolved ethical structures due to the long period of their development. Each religious tradition has a unique ethical perspective or emphasis, despite the fact that they have a large number of ethical principles and moral values in common, such as the 'Golden Rule'.

cultural heritage

Features of a culture that are connected to historical events and origins

Many religious traditions teach that human persons have dignity or worth because they are made in the image and likeness of a god. This means that all people, regardless of age, gender, ability, physical appearance, intelligence, race, strength, health or morality, are creatures of a god and have human dignity. This value cannot be taken away or lost. This makes all people by their very nature equal and precious.

Skills: describe, explain, interpret

- 1 Describe a situation involving the use of social media in which it is difficult to apply the 'Golden Rule' teaching. The situation could be from personal experience or observations you have made.

- 2 Using the situation you have described, outline:
 - a the effects or consequences of not applying the 'Golden Rule'
 - b the effects or consequences of applying the 'Golden Rule'.

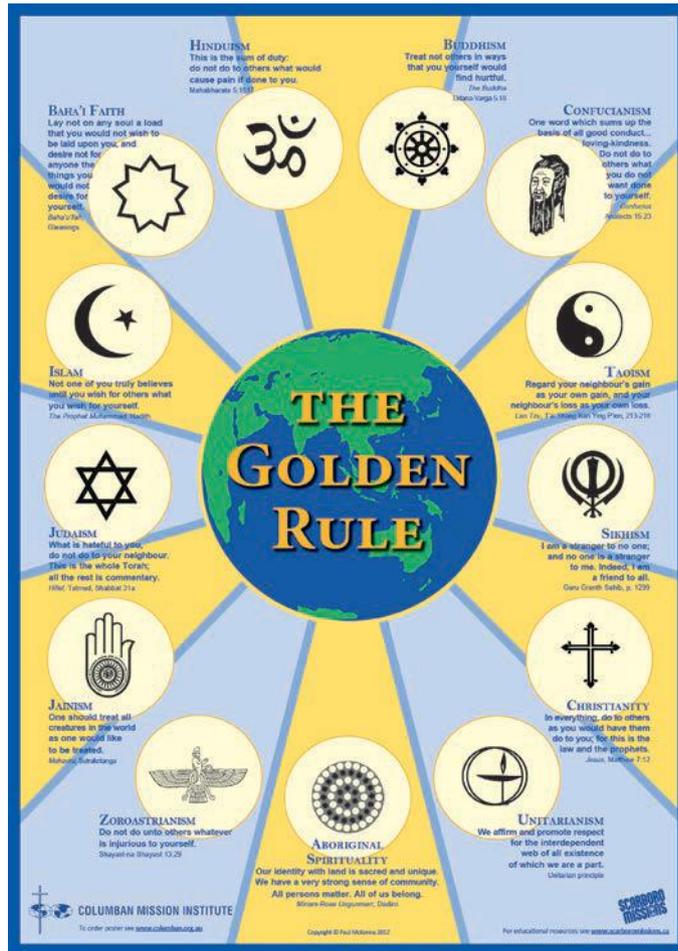


FIGURE 5.1 One of the most basic rules for moral behaviour is known as the 'Golden Rule'. In slightly different words, this rule is found in all of the major world religions and in many ancient religions. Why is this rule 'golden'?

Skills: research, identify, explain, interpret, synthesise

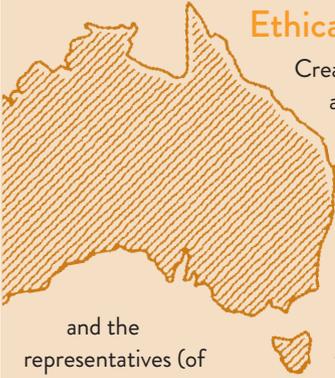
Research the ethical teachings based on the ethical principle of 'the sanctity of human life' from two religious traditions in a pluralist society.

- 1 Which moral values do they promote?
- 2 What ethical authorities do they use to support their viewpoint?
- 3 Which passages of their sacred texts are drawn on to form or support the ethical perspectives?
- 4 Which ethical perspectives from other religious traditions, philosophers or other thinkers could be drawn on to support their ethical perspectives?
- 5 What does this research reveal about the method of ethical decision making used by the two religions?

ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

Each religious tradition has a distinct set of structures and characteristics that shape its ethical frameworks. The Figures 5.2 to 5.7 summarise the nature of ethical authority, ethical concepts and principles, and systems of reward and punishment within Australian Aboriginal spiritual traditions, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism.

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITIES



Ethical authority

Creation occurs in both the present and the past and connects to the people through law and lore. Relationship with the land and natural law underpins the ethical perspective that connects the land, the Creation Time, Creation spirits and the people who are present-day representatives (of specific tribal beliefs and practices and their moral code).

Law is linked to the sacred dimension, particular sites and totems.

The authority of elders is undisputed and comes from their initiation into sacred knowledge and mutual respect by the various parties in a dispute. There are separate ethical perspectives for men and women, which are ruled upon by their respective genders. The elders are involved in solemn cases when sacred prohibitions have been violated. They also make rulings on public and private wrongs. They can officiate in kinship disputes (especially when it concerns a family member).

An informal council of initiated men and women can call public meetings to resolve matters by consensus.

Reward and punishment

Natural disasters and natural events and processes can be seen as signs of the spirits' disapproval and approval.

Social disharmony can be seen as a breakdown of Aboriginal Customary Law and can also be understood in cosmic terms.

Gender equality exists even to the extent of being custodians of sacred knowledge and executing punishments.

Families (immediate, extended and tribe) of both victim and perpetrator come to agreement on the type of punishment and who is to perform it. This consensus has to be arrived at before punishment is determined and carried out. Punishments can be physical or by sorcery as part of Aboriginal Customary Law and can be in the form of public shaming, corporal punishment or even execution.

Ethical concepts and principles

Ethical concepts include kinship, consensus, harmony, obligation, duty, sharing, peace, responsibility, survival and self-determination.

Consequences, good or bad, of an action are more important than the intention behind the action.

Maintaining Oneness with the land and all that exists on it is of primary importance. This is the way to ensure that peace and social harmony are maintained. Responsibilities to the land include physical and sacred maintenance of the land and the traditional culture.

Other principles include sharing with the collective and communal moral values.

FIGURE 5.2 Australian Aboriginal spiritualities

BUDDHISM

Ethical authority



There is no concept of a personal or creator God as the source for ethical authority. Buddhists believe that suffering is the nature of existence and that escape from suffering comes from following the eightfold path and the ethical teachings of Buddhism. Nirvana is the end of suffering in the current lifetime and all future lifetimes. Enlightenment is the ultimate reality that brings one to nirvana. Enlightenment is the wisdom of emptiness that comes from the direct experience of all phenomena being illusory existence (samsara). All samsaric existence is therefore unsatisfactory because its nature is suffering (dukkha), impermanent (*annica*) and non-self (*anatta*). Enlightenment comes from realising that upon extinction all things are of one essence.

In **Theravada** Buddhism one achieves enlightenment in a number of ways:

- By becoming a fully Enlightened Buddha (like Siddhartha Gautama), which means one is enlightened and can teach others the path to enlightenment through example and writings.
- By becoming a Silent Buddha, which means one is enlightened but has no capacity to teach the way to others.
- By becoming an arhat, which means one who is liberated from all cycles of birth and death. Theravada Buddhism focuses on personal salvation through becoming an arhat as fast as possible.

In **Mahayana** Buddhism, one can postpone final liberation to nirvana and choose to remain an Enlightened One in order to help all other sentient beings to attain liberation.

For both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism the source of ethical authority is the Tripitaka, the earliest collection of Buddhist teachings. It has been added to over the centuries

and the whole vast collection is also known as the Pali Canon. It is the only text accepted by Theravada Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism also accepts later sutras (teaching threads).

Reward and punishment

In Buddhism, there is no God to direct karma to reward some people and punish others. There is no reward or punishment, only cause and effect.

All humans and animals are subject to the law of cause and effect (karma) and they will decline, die and re-enter the stream of rebirth. All things exist because of other things.

Individuals create karma by the intentional acts of body, speech and mind. Only acts without desire, hate and delusion do not produce karma.

There is no independent moral standard. The degree of greed or selflessness, indifference or devotion in any action sets the consequence in motion. The consequence is the fulfilment of the act, neither punishment nor reward.

Ignorance rather than sin is the source of problems.

Ethical concepts and principles

Ethical concepts such as righteousness, free will, humility, courage, respect, trust, diligence, justice, generosity, compassion, mercy, self-discipline, forgiveness and harmony inform ethical perspectives and decision making.

Buddhism teaches that moral behaviour flows naturally from mastering one's ego and desires and cultivating loving kindness and compassion. There are no moral absolutes in Buddhism and it is recognised that ethical decision making involves a complex connection of causes and conditions. But there is an underpinning principle of intentionality. Individuals are advised to examine their motivation and to evaluate the consequences of their actions in light of the Buddha's teachings.

FIGURE 5.3 Ethical snapshot of Buddhism

CHRISTIANITY

Ethical authority

Ethical monotheism – one God, in three coequal ‘persons’ – the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit – is the source of love in the ethical perspective. Love is the basis of ethical relationships – love of each part of the Trinity for the other, love of one’s neighbour. Beliefs have divine authority.

Also each denomination has its own ethical authority structures through Church leadership. World movements and denominations formulate stances on ethical issues and advise individual religious leaders as to their rulings on ethics.

Catholicism Based in Apostolic succession, represented in the Pope and the Magisterium in Rome. Conscience, intuition and reason are informed by Church teachings. Faith in the Church and its power to intercede, interpret scripture and direct the religion are emphasised. Rules are made through universal church councils and supplemented by papal encyclicals. Saints, the Pope and priesthood can intercede for adherents. On certain limited occasions since 1870, the Pope has claimed ‘infallibility’ on matters of dogma. The Church has the ethical authority to interpret scripture.

Orthodox The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople is the highest governing body of the Orthodox churches, the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Church has apostolic succession; the Holy Spirit is believed to guide Synod decisions. Patriarchs can interpret scripture and there is the tradition in which liturgy has the power to manifest ultimate reality.

Protestantism Ethical authority derives from faith, prayer and the scriptures as well as the accepted sacraments. Christ has already suffered for everyone’s sins so salvation comes through faith in him. The Five Solas of Protestantism emphasise that faith and scripture are all that are needed. Religious leaders cannot intercede but they can write important theological theses. There is a focus on individual petition and redemption. A number of world movements exist such as the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Geneva). Through sharing ideas and approaches that are in keeping with the principles of Protestantism, ethical stances are formed.

Church of England The Monarch of England holds the title of Supreme Governor of the Church of England. The Primate of All England and Metropolitan, the Archbishop of Canterbury,

the Primate of England, the Archbishop of York and the General Synod of the Church can make legal measures that are ratified by the Houses of Parliament – the laws of the land. Royal approval is required to ratify canons, which are more spiritual laws in terms of the Church. The Episcopate (bishops), prayer and conscience are important for guidance on ethical matters. Parts of the Church of England are more aligned with the Catholic Church and others are more aligned with Protestantism.

Pentecostal The ethical authority of scripture, the preacher or minister and the Holy Spirit is believed to be intimately involved in worship and the direction of adherents.

Reward and punishment

Belief in the validity of the afterlife can motivate ethical behaviour. Through faith, acts and the grace of God one can attain redemption. Evil can come from being led by the devil or from the poor exercise of free will, worldly authority and religious leadership.

On Judgement Day the eternal dimension of human beings (the soul) will be judged according to the actions of their life and their faith in salvation offered through the Saviour Jesus Christ. The righteous will live with God and the wicked will be sent to Hell. Heaven is a state of living with God. Anyone who depends on God will be redeemed or renewed and is fit to enter. Hell is a dimension of complete separation from God, where the wicked are punished. Purgatory is a state of purification of the consequences of actions prior to living with God. Saints can intercede for those in purgatory and ease transition through purgatory (Catholicism). This idea was removed by Protestantism as it was seen as a challenge to Christ saving all humanity through his death on the cross.

Ethical concepts and principles

Ethical concepts such as righteousness, free will, faith, grace, humility, courage, respect, trust, diligence, justice, generosity, compassion, mercy, self-discipline, forgiveness, community and charity inform ethical perspectives and decision making.

Human life is sacred.

Treat others as you would want to be treated.

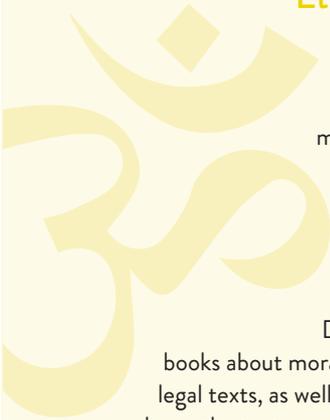
Forgive your enemies and pray for them.

Correct faith is rather more important than actions.

FIGURE 5.4 Ethical snapshot of Christianity

HINDUISM

Ethical authority



The dominant philosophy (Smarta) in Hinduism regards the many gods as various manifestations of Brahman (the One God) who is infinite and without form. Sacred texts are the foundational authority for the Hindu ethical perspective. The Dharma Shastras are Hindu law books about morality and religious duty. These legal texts, as well as the norms of the people who knew the texts, are sacred. They provide guiding rules and principles for the order and regularity of society and righteous conduct. A person is born with their *dharma*, a result of their previous lives. It refers to the law of inner growth that supports them in the present and shows the way to their future development. Dharma determines a person's proper attitude towards the outer world and governs their mental and physical reactions.

The sects within Hinduism are not denominational in the same way that other religions are. Each is merely a different relationship to God but leads to the same ethical goal. In each sect there are Brahmin priests and holy men and women who establish themselves by their knowledge of Hindu texts and spiritual practices. This establishes them as ethical authorities who are consulted for spiritual guidance.

Reward and punishment

Karma is a fundamental law of nature. It is not imposed by god(s) as a system of punishment or reward, nor can the gods interfere. Bad karma is accumulated as a result of wrong actions. It binds a person's soul (atman) to the cycle of rebirth (samsara) and leads to misfortune in this life and poor conditions in the next. The moral energy of a particular moral act bears fruit automatically in the next life, manifested in one's social caste and character.

Hindu texts offer ways, such as pilgrimages to holy places and acts of devotion and asceticism, to wipe out the effects of bad karma. Some versions of the theory of karma also say that morally good acts have positive consequences (as opposed to simply neutral). Moksha is the spiritual goal of ceasing the karmic cycle and achieving salvation by eliminating good and bad karma.

Ethical concepts and principles

Ethical concepts such as righteousness, free will, faith, grace, humility, courage, respect, trust, diligence, justice, generosity, compassion, mercy, self-discipline, forgiveness and community inform ethical perspectives and decision making.

Hindu ethics focus on the training of the mind to develop a disciplined spiritual life for the individual, to remove greed and egoism to attain the highest good.

The same objective of achieving the highest good is also the individual's duty (dharma) to society by helping others to rid themselves of self-centredness, cruelty, greed and other vices.

There is no absolute good or evil.

Wisdom is valued over knowledge.

There is acceptance of one's place in society.

The life of every living thing is valued.

Collective family structure is encouraged, where everyone works towards the betterment of the family as a whole. Everyone who has developed a social consciousness has a threefold duty: the duty to the gods for the benefits of the natural world is honoured through worship and prayer; the duty to the *Rishis*, the sages and saints who formed the spiritual culture, is fulfilled through study of the scriptures; the duty to the ancestors, providers of physical heritage, is honoured through procreation to preserve the lineage.

FIGURE 5.5 Ethical snapshot of Hinduism

Ethical authority

Ethical monotheism – One God, Allah, omnipotent, indivisible and personal, is revealed through the Qur'an (sacred text). Islam means submission to the will of Allah.

Allah revealed the true nature of God to a series of prophets, of whom Muhammad was the last and most significant for Islam. One cannot know Allah except through the words of the prophet and other prophets in the Qur'an.

God's decree is the source of moral authority.

World movements and denominations formulate stances on ethical issues and advise individual religious leaders as to their rulings on ethics.

Sharia law comprises two main sources of law: the Qur'an and Sunnah (or Hadith) as the primary sources, and *ijma'* and *qiyas* are the secondary sources. *Ijma'* refers to the consensus of opinion of Islamic legal scholars of a given generation; Muslims are bound by it unless a new *ijma'* emerges. *Qiyas* refers to analogical deduction based on provisions in the Qur'an and Hadith. It is administered differently across the varieties of Islam and their respective ruling bodies and across different Islamic countries, with some countries banning it from secular society. Other countries adopt a 'middle' path and use sharia law as a model but ultimately defer to the constitution of their countries and law courts. There are also differences of interpretation and in what is included in sharia law within the schools of Islam.

Sunni ethics relate to the example and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad continued by the first four caliphs and initially by the election of subsequent caliphs. The largest school of Islam, it draws on agreements from *ijma'* (agreements of Muhammad's companions) and *ulama* (jurists). A process of *qiyas* (reasoning by analogy) is used to derive laws from the laws of Allah. Also, when possible, community support for a decision is assessed. This is consistent with the ethical principle of meritocracy that values individuals on their merit and gives leadership to the most talented individuals.

Shi'a believes that Muhammad's relatives and descendants (imams) inherited the tradition and are the spiritual and political leadership. They reject *ijma'* and *qiyas* as a basis for interpretation. Instead they draw on *maniq* (logic) as a way to interpret laws from the Qur'an, the stories of Muhammad and the Dozen Imams.

Reward and punishment

Good comes from God.

Evil can come from being led by the devil or from the poor exercise of free will.

Belief in the validity of the afterlife can motivate ethical behaviour.

There will be a day of resurrection in which all human beings will be called to account.

Those who have done good will enter *al-Janna* (eternal Paradise). There are different levels in Heaven representing the person's closeness to God. *Jahannam* (eternal Hell) is also a many-levelled place in which there are various tortures and punishments. Some believe that *Jahannam* is where souls can be purified and ultimately redeemed by God, and others believe that this is only afforded to Muslims.

Ethical concepts and principles

Ethical concepts such as righteousness, free will, faith, grace, humility, courage, respect, trust, diligence, justice, generosity, compassion, mercy, self-discipline, forgiveness, community, harmony, modesty and charity inform ethical perspectives and decision making.

Many verses of the Qur'an emphasise the ethical relationship with the world.

The five pillars are the essential obligations of the ethical perspective.

Sharia law will create an ideal society.

Humans have a special role on Earth as representatives of Allah.

All that exists may be used by human beings.

Allah's requests of human beings are within their power to do.

All commandments are to be heeded and prohibitions are to be avoided.

The highest duty of human beings is to God.

God is all-knowing but has given humans the freedom to choose between right and wrong.

The revelation of God's will guides the intellect, will and reason (an important faculty for ethics).

FIGURE 5.6 Ethical snapshot of Islam

JUDAISM

Ethical authority



Ethical monotheism – One God, omnipotent, immanent, indivisible and personal, is revealed through the words of the prophets that are recorded in the Torah (sacred texts).

Universal moral truths are contained in sacred texts, stories and history. The laws are from God and no person is higher than the laws.

World movements and denominations formulate stances on ethical issues and advise religious leaders as to their rulings on ethics. A specific world movement and its related rabbinic council interprets ethics and regulates itself. Synagogues represent the world movement on a local level. The rabbi can be mediator in disputes and make rulings.

Ultra-Orthodox Various Rebbes and Ravs lead their respective groups. Their interpretations of Halakhah tend to be strict and traditional.

Modern Orthodox Led by Councils of Rabbis such as the Rabbinic Fellowship.

Conservative Led by the World Council of Conservative Masorti Synagogues.

Progressive Led by the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

In Israel The ethical perspective of Orthodox Judaism informs many levels of society such as sections of Israeli law to do with education, citizenship, marriage and rule in Jewish law courts. Judaism infuses many levels of society, including the Israel Defence Force code of ethics, a religious unit of the army (the Nahal Haredi), religious law courts (beth dins), religious bodies supervising religious food regulations (kashrut) and religious burial societies.

Reward and punishment

Judaism is focused on making God's kingdom here on Earth.

It is believed God rewards those who follow the *mitzvot* (commandments) and punishes those who ignore them. The good will be reunited with their loved ones in the afterlife but

the wicked will not. There is a belief in the resurrection of the dead and that all good souls will make their way to Jerusalem. The righteous will be resurrected when the messiah comes and inaugurates a perfect world, *Olam Haba*. The way to *Olam Haba* is through studying the Torah and good actions. The extremely righteous will go straight to *Gan Eden*, a Garden of Eden.

Some world movements do not have a belief in physical resurrection (e.g. Progressive Judaism) and have reinterpreted resurrection in a spiritual way.

Ethical concepts and principles

Ethical concepts such as righteousness, free will, faith, grace, humility, courage, respect, trust, diligence, justice, generosity, compassion, mercy, self-discipline, forgiveness, community and charity inform ethical perspectives and decision making.

God is the source of ethics and morality for all human beings.

Being good to fellow human beings is the way to worship God.

Human beings have a special relationship to the divine, they are an image of God.

Every human being (Jew and non-Jew) will be judged according to their behaviour. Non-Jews will be rewarded for righteous behaviour just as Jews will.

Ethical behaviour is part of ritual, worship and everyday life.

The central ethical principle is 'do not do to others what is hateful to you'. The rest of Judaism is commentary, framing this ethical principle.

Every human being's role is to do their part to perfect the world to bring about the kingdom of the Almighty. The ethical role in the world of Jews is to lead by example, to be a nation of priests and an ethical model society.

Life is sacred and the soul is eternal.

Each person is responsible for acknowledging wrongs and making recompense before God, who will forgive them. Once a year, during the 10-day period of Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, all people need to acknowledge sins to others, renew their vows and try to incorporate more ethical principles into their lives.

FIGURE 5.7 Ethical snapshot of Judaism

Skills: identify, interpret, synthesise, explain

Use the information provided in the ethical perspectives snapshots to answer these questions.

- 1 Choose one religious tradition and draw a flow diagram on a poster to illustrate its levels of authority, from the highest source to the local level.
Compare with the flow diagrams of other religions done by students in your class. How do the religions differ in terms of their ethical authorities?
- 2 Which elements of their ethical perspectives are similar?
- 3 If there is so much in common between the ethical perspectives of the different denominations and different religions, why have these religions experienced conflict with each other, historically and recently?
- 4 Does ethical authority need to come from a divine source? Explain why or why not.
- 5 Why is the ethical perspective shared by monotheistic religions one of the most dominant in the world today?

Skills: research, identify, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Create a diagram to track a particular ethical ruling by a world movement or an international body of a religion all the way down to the local level.
 - What happened to the ruling along the way?
 - What were the reasons for any changes?
 - How did the rulings of the religion's authoritative institution influence the moral judgements of the local communities of their religion?
- 2 Use Figures 5.2 to 5.7 as a starting point for a researched oral presentation on the ethics of two great religious thinkers on ethics (from different religions or denominations). What did they have to say on how to define good and bad, right and wrong, just and unjust, an ideal society, the ethical purpose of humanity and the right method for making ethical decisions?

APPLYING RELIGIOUS ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES AND METHODS OF DECISION MAKING

As demonstrated in Figures 5.2 to 5.7, in the pluralist society of Australia, religious traditions all have their own methods for regulating disputes between community members, the wider society and the tradition's ethical perspective on an issue. When a dispute involves contradiction or conflict between the religion and the government, the religious tradition is in a difficult position. It has to affirm the aspects that define its identity and the identity of adherents, as well as respond to the social issue and honour the law of Australia. What follows is an examination of three religious ethical perspectives that are engaged in a dialogue with mainstream Australian society. Each of these case studies examines the process by which the religious traditions develop and enact their ethical perspectives in a pluralist society, and advise their religious communities on how to apply them in their own lives.

ABORIGINAL SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

For more than 40 000 years, Australia's Aboriginal communities were extremely diverse, with each having its own languages, religions, myths and unique ethical structures. In Australian Aboriginal religion, spirituality and culture, the law is sacred, just as it is in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Today, a number of different Aboriginal groups still follow traditional culture, and there are also Aboriginal people who do not live traditionally and who have assimilated ethical structures of other religious traditions. An Aboriginal person might also identify with their traditional culture but be part of a different religion, such as Christianity in the case of Pastor Sir Douglas Nicholls and Islam for boxer Anthony Mundine. A person in this position may see their religious tradition's ethical perspective as more binding to them, or they may follow parts of both their religion and Aboriginal spirituality equally, or they may abide by Aboriginal Customary law and lore. An individual who represents this dichotomy of identity is Pastor Sir Douglas Nicholls. In one of his sermons, Nicholls – a respected elder and preacher – made a poignant remark about Aboriginal peoples' identity, which is also appropriate to ethics:

And I want to suggest three things why you should bother about the Aborigines. Firstly, we belong to great family of God and He had made out of one blood all nations of men. Secondly, why you should bother about the Aborigines, we're a part of the great British Commonwealth of nations. And thirdly, we want to walk with you, we don't wish to walk alone.

Pastor Sir Douglas Nicholls, Sermon

This statement clearly outlines that there should be no conflict of laws and that Aboriginal people are equal in the eyes of God and should be equal participants in Australian society. In terms of ethics, this statement clearly defines the multiple layers of an ethical relationship about all human beings being related to one another. All Australians live under Commonwealth law and the destiny of all peoples should be side by side as equals, which is still an ideal at the current time. In his statement the ethical principles of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures are clearly united, as is Nicholls' acknowledgement of Australian law.

Sir Douglas Nicholls

Pastor Sir Douglas (Doug) Nicholls (1906–1988) was a Yorta Yorta man and Aboriginal activist who became pastor of the first Aboriginal Church of Christ in Australia at a time when discrimination against Aboriginal people was built into state laws. He advocated for human dignity to be allowed for all Aboriginal people.

As a young man, Doug Nicholls was a talented Australian Rules footballer and trained with the Carlton Football Club but the players refused to have him on the team because of his race. He moved on to Northcote, where he played for five years, being part of their 1929 premiership team, and then played for Fitzroy. In 1935, he was selected for the Victorian interstate team. He stopped playing football because of injury but continued as a coach and was also a distinguished boxer and sprinter, winning important races. Towards the end of his football career, he became active in religion and activism.

The paternalism and arrogance of the Church prevented Nicholls and other Indigenous people from attaining the more important positions. Nicholls said that nothing would change until 'white people learn to



Fairfax Syndication/The Age/Argus Archives

FIGURE 5.8 Pastor Sir Doug Nicholls. In what ways is he a role model to Australians today?

think black'. He was the first in calling to dispel notions that the Bible could be used to justify the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Nicholls, the first Aboriginal person to hold a vice-regal office as Governor of South Australia in 1976, was awarded a Member of the British Empire (MBE) in 1957, an Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1968 and was knighted in 1972. In 1962 he was named Father of the Year by the Victorian Father's Day Council for 'outstanding leadership in youth and welfare work and for the inspired example he set the community in his unfailing efforts to further the cause of the Australian Aborigine'. Nicholls reaffirmed the teachings of Jesus to 'love one another' (John 13:34–5), despite the reality of Church practice towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in his day.

Skills: identify, interpret, explain, research

- 1 What was Pastor Sir Doug Nicholls' ethical vision for Australian society?
- 2 How did Nicholls define Australian Aboriginal identity?
- 3 What was his view on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australian society and religion?
- 4 Research the interaction between Christianity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in contemporary Australian society.
 - In what ways have the ethical perspectives of Christianity changed?
 - Is there consistency in the ethical perspectives of the different denominations of Christianity?

FIGURE 5.9 *Bunjil* (1999) by Bruce Armstrong. What is the possible symbolism of the eagle form adopted by Bunjil?

Here is my country?

This is a version of an ancient and local Creation story from the traditional Kulin population; a story still told by local Kulin elders today. It is a story of lost country, of lost respect and the wrath of the Kulin's all-powerful Great Creator, Bunjil. It is the drowning of the ancestral lands of the Boonwurrung, a place that we today call Port Phillip Bay.

The bay, known traditionally as 'Nerm', was for millennia once the very best of hunting grounds for the Boonwurrung and Kulin people. However, at some point in the distant past, the population had become complacent and arrogant to the seemingly boundless gifts of the land.

They fought among themselves and, more and more, they began to over-exploit, to waste and deeply disrespect their precious country, their home – they believed that the land and Bunjil would always provide.

Bunjil's anger swelled and surged, until in retribution to such disrespect, he called the sea and allowed the waters to engulf the land and threatened to drown all the people in a great flood.

The Kulin cried out, realising too late their profound mistakes. Bunjil, however, heeding their desperation, strode out into the churning inundation and told the waters to stop. With two rocks, Bunjil made the Port Phillip Bay heads and told the water to run out and reunite with the sea.

Bunjil's rage and pain was quenched but for the survivors, Bunjil's retribution was remembered, and grave lessons learnt. The Kulin people



returned to their old values, to respect the law and lore of Bunjil, and to always honour and never harm the land, or its children; for both are our future, as they are our past.

Source: Dean Stewart (Wemba/Wergaia), Director, Aboriginal Tours and Education Melbourne

This story is still told today in local Melbourne schools by the living descendants of both the Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung, the ancient first peoples of this land. However, when modern geologists did core-drilling samples of Port Phillip Bay, they found this piece of land had not been filled by the sea until almost 9000 years ago.

So there is a local Melbourne Aboriginal story that is almost 4000 years older than the beginnings of the ancient Egyptian empire – a story older than the Qur’an, the Old Testament and any religion we know today by millennia!

Always honour and never harm the land, or its children; for both are our future, as they are our past!

Skills: identify, interpret, explain, synthesise

Read the Creation story above and answer the following questions.

- 1 What reasons are given in the story for Bunjil’s flooding of the bay?
- 2 How do the people stop the flooding?
- 3 Which ethical principles are referred to?
- 4 Which moral codes had the people violated?
- 5 Which environmental event provided the **existential** dilemma in the story?
- 6 Which traditional Aboriginal beliefs support the ethical interpretation of this event?
- 7 What are the origins of the Aboriginal Customary Laws?
- 8 How would this story apply to the ethical decision making of Aboriginal people today?
- 9 Do people today still view natural disasters as a punishment from God, the gods and/or Creation spirits? Find an example of a testimonial of a person who has interpreted an environmental disaster – such as a tsunami, devastating fires or a volcanic eruption – as a divine punishment. What are the positive and negative elements of such interpretations?

existential

Concerned with the existence of something or someone; existentialism is a philosophy that argues the individual is free and is solely responsible for their actions

CHRISTIANITY

The message in Jesus’ teachings emphasised the ideals of human behaviour and society, based on selflessness. Within Christianity the ideal ethical relationship to God is through love. Sending Jesus into the world was an **incarnation** of God’s love. The ethical relationship between people, and with the world, is based on this selfless love.

The life of Jesus depicted within the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John varies in detail and emphasis, with some parts historical and others **allegorical**, but they are all essentially didactic (for teaching). The variances and differences between the four gospels are significant in terms of ethical authority. Because of these different emphases on the life of Jesus, the scriptures become a source of interpretation about what constitutes moral living for Christians. However, as Jesus later came to be recognised as the Son of God, his teachings became imbued with the authority of God. Using scriptures and sacred writings as the source of ethical authority is fraught with difficulties because there are different thoughts about how literally the message of the text should be interpreted. In Christianity, each denomination makes a claim on being faithful to the ethical authority of the early church. The ways in which different denominations of Christianity have interpreted the scriptures have led to various ethical perspectives that define what is acceptable and unacceptable in the various denominations.

incarnation

The act of taking human form; a belief of Christianity that God took on human nature and became a man in the person of Jesus Christ

allegorical

Stories in which symbolic characters and events stand for ideas, truths or generalisations about human existence

Engaging with philosophy: Augustine of Hippo

During the 5th century CE, St Augustine began to develop Christian ethical thinking into a coherent philosophy. In his famous work *The City of God*, he describes an ideal city made up of righteous individuals (using ideas from Plato and Cicero). Augustine's premise was that ethical and unethical people would be mixed together in society until the end of time. He argued that human beings are responsible for immorality and wrote that they commit acts of evil because of their incorrect perception and deliberate turning away from God. His analysis of human sinfulness and godliness concluded that those in power needed to accept the ethical authority of **the Church** and behave accordingly.

the Church

The first Christian communities were called gatherings – *ekklesia*. A church came to be a gathering of those who were baptised.

just war

Warfare waged with the authority of God and meeting specific moral criteria

St Augustine also developed the **just war** theory, a framework that justified Christian engagement in war. The basis of just war, he argued was the idea that violent conflict could be justified in certain circumstances. Under this system, there were limits to what a nation could do in order to defend itself and clear distinctions between killing armed soldiers and killing civilians. There is a moderating ethical principle of proportionality, which means that when pursuing a military objective, the objective itself and damage to non-combatants and buildings should be minimised where possible. This means that if a city can be captured by assassinating a few key people, then that is preferable to a siege in which an entire city starves to death or are killed. In modern times, the principle of separating non-combatants from soldiers is extremely difficult in certain types of warfare.

St Augustine was highly sceptical of world politics, although his ideas were a utilitarian turning point for Christian communities and justified them arming and protecting themselves. Just war theory is still raised to debate the ethical nature of military conflicts today.

Getty Images/Ann Roman Pictures/Print Collector



FIGURE 5.10 St Augustine of Hippo. What does he think makes an ideal city?



FIGURE 5.11 What does this image suggest about the concept of a just war?

Stockphoto/Grafissimo

Skills: research, identify, explain, interpret, synthesise

Apply the above information about the thinking of St Augustine to a modern conflict of your choosing. Research the idea of a 'just war' or find an article that applies this idea to a modern conflict. Then answer these questions.

- 1 List the possible justifications for going to war.
- 2 Which actions are prohibited, or is any action permitted if 'God is on our side'?
- 3 Which side of the modern conflict claims to have a just cause for their actions? Are they right in determining this or are they applying the idea of a 'just war' in a biased way?
- 4 Research the lyrics for 'With God on our side' by Bob Dylan. What immoral acts could be justified by the ethical perspective in the lyrics?

Engaging with philosophy: Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas sought to integrate the ethical perspective of Aristotle, an ancient Greek philosopher, into the Christian canon of thought. Aquinas looked to Aristotle to draw answers to major ethical questions of his day. He borrowed from the ancient Greek philosopher's ethical ideal of 'the good life' and recast this idea in his major book, the *Summa Theologiae* (1265–74 CE).

God became the ethical ideal of Aquinas' version of the good life, which also implies that Heaven or living with God will be the fulfilment of a moral life. Aquinas' system allows an individual to examine the context of their entire life as a series of opportunities to make moral or immoral choices in order to achieve the good life at the end of their time on Earth. This system of practical moral judgement extends from the everyday person all the way to a number of different theoretical political models. His approach to ethically ideal worlds and the actual world of politics can be summarised in the following way:

- Define the ethical principles, morals and concepts at the heart of the issue or political system.
- Discuss the justifications and counter-arguments for a particular course of action.
- The action taken should comprise, or be possible to attain through, the exercise of moral virtues (a scheme adapted from Aristotle's ethics).

This scheme of ethical thinking is underpinned by both Aquinas' and Augustine's definitions of reason – thought and will should be exercised to moral ends. It is related to the fundamental elements of the good life. Aquinas argued that to determine whether something is good requires a comparison with something that is better. The highest good with which to compare something is God.



FIGURE 5.12 Thomas Aquinas. How does he define the 'good life'? How does his definition relate to ethical principles?

Getty Images/DEA/Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana/De Agostini

rationalism

The use of reason as the ultimate truth on all matters

pagan

A religion or belief system that is not Jewish, Christian or Islamic

doctrine

Basic belief or principle that is taught; a body of teachings

salvation

To be saved from danger and enemies; in a religious sense, being saved by being fully united with God and one another

heretic

A person who preaches heresy – a false teaching

bishop

From the Greek word *episkopos*, meaning supervisor. The bishop is a priest who is ordained to teach, lead and care for the spiritual needs of a diocese.

Aquinas' scheme still stands as a system of ethical thought that integrated **rationalism** from Aristotle and faith from the Christian religion. This relationship between thought and religion was not unlike those set out by St Augustine and Plato in that it melded the highest **pagan** thought on ethics with Christian **doctrine**. It also laid the foundations for what would become known as Western European culture, comprising the intellectual tradition of the ancient Greeks, the legal tradition of the Romans and the monotheism and ethical perspectives of Judeo-Christian religious traditions.

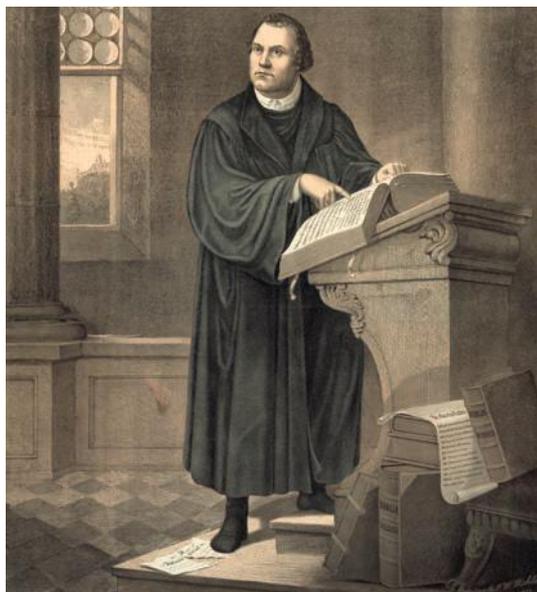
The Protestant traditions

From a Protestant perspective, one of the most profound interpretations of the ethical perspective of Christianity came about during the Protestant Reformation. In the two centuries preceding the Reformation, a Papal decree had been issued declaring that **salvation**, ultimate truth and political power came only through the Pope, as Christ's representative on Earth, and the Church's teachings.

Critics of the Church usually had to endure commissions of inquiry, in which the Church would send an envoy to investigate the claims, argue the case for Church doctrine and exert pressure on the individual or group to recant or risk being labelled **heretic**. This was often the prelude to a more serious trial, which could result in people being burned at the stake, and if such individuals still refused to recant, they were deemed to have lost eternal salvation. Several high profile critics had been through this process, so it was clear to people that criticism would not be tolerated. Yet valid reasons for criticism remained. For example, at the upper levels of society a number of European rulers were seeking to escape the Papal taxation of their nations, especially when they could see little benefit for them in their taxes financing the construction of St Peter's Basilica in Rome. Another reason for criticism was the practice of the Church granting indulgences, which allowed people to 'work off' the punishment in purgatory for their sins already forgiven by priests. Initially indulgences were attained through doing pilgrimages and penance but by the time of the emergence of Protestantism, indulgences were acquired in a financial rather than spiritual manner.

The ethical authority of **bishops** was also being undermined, as the position of bishop could be purchased rather than earned.

In this religious and cultural context, Martin Luther, a professor of scripture and theology, chose the eve of All Saints Day (31 October), in 1517, to nail a copy of his Ninety-five Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. At least, that is the legend, but researchers generally accept now that this did not happen. Luther certainly wrote a letter to his superiors condemning the sale of indulgences and requested that the theology behind the practice be corrected. This letter included the 95 Theses. When a copy of the theses was translated from Latin to German and printed using the then innovative printing press, it was distributed across Germany. An envoy from the Pope was sent to force Luther to withdraw his statement, to which he replied



amanaimages/Corbis

FIGURE 5.13 Martin Luther protested that he could not recant as it would be dishonest to act against his conscience. How does Luther's understanding of conscience differ from what the Catholic Church taught at that time?

that he could not and he burnt the Pope's letter commanding his obedience. Although forbidden to do so, Luther continued to write, print and distribute papers condemning various practices of the Church.

Luther's actions also alienated the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, who sought to punish Luther in front of a diet, or gathering nobles from across the German states. The trial, held in 1521, became known as the Diet of Worms after the town of Worms, where it took place. During the trial, Luther again refused to recant because of reason and conscience, and because he did not believe the scriptures proved him wrong. The Church pronounced him a heretic, although he did not suffer the same tragic fate as other decreed heretics, such as William Tyndale, an English scholar who translated the New Testament into English (in 1525–31), or the **posthumous** violation of John Wycliffe of England (died 1384), who translated the Bible into English, denounced all three Popes and is regarded as one of the earliest reformers. Luther was kidnapped and hidden away by a powerful noble, Frederick of Saxony. When in hiding, Luther began to translate the Bible into German, while the Holy Roman Emperor issued the Edict of Worms, which called on all to give up Luther to his fate as a heretic and oppress his followers.

posthumous
Occurring after death

This edict went largely unheeded and eventually Luther's Church became the official Church of many German states. Many kings and princes rushed to embrace the new Church for many reasons, including being freed from taxation and allegiance to the Pope.

The tide began to turn against the Catholic Church in favour of Protestant reforms. By 1550 there were a number of different Protestant Churches, such as Calvin's Church in Geneva and Knox's in Scotland, each with different liturgical practices, interpretations of the scriptures, ethical perspectives and moral practices.

For the Protestants the papacy was removed from a central position of authority. By returning to the gospels and early Christianity, Luther and subsequent reformers defined an ethical perspective based on scripture, faith and the exercise of personal conscience that was to occupy a central position in Protestantism.

An English Reformation

In England, during King Henry VIII's reign (1491–1547 CE) and that of Edward VI (1547–53 CE), the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, oscillated between the Protestant reformers' position and that of the Catholic Church. He assisted in developing the supreme ethical principle of the divine right of kings, meaning that the king's right to rule was ordained by God. Changes he participated in made the English monarchy the highest position of governance and ethical authority. Still today the Queen of England is the head of the Church of England and the prime minister, as her representative, has a role in officiating and appointing certain positions in the clergy. Archbishop Cranmer created the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549–1662), which was written in English as opposed to Latin. He also revised a number of doctrines, liturgies and other aspects,



Henry VIII (1491–1547), Cleve, Joos van (c. 1485–1541)/Borghley House Collection, Lincolnshire, UK/Bridgeman Images

FIGURE 5.14 King Henry VIII of England. Why did he enact the divine right of kings?

and composed a number of texts (including the 39–42 Articles, which became central to the development of the Church of England). Henry VIII managed to remove Rome’s authority, which gave him the opportunity to expand his wealth and kingdom by sacking the Catholic churches and monasteries of England and assuming their extensive land holdings for himself and supportive nobles. It also enabled him to marry and divorce his wives. Although Henry VIII persecuted ‘Papists’ and Protestants alike, he retained an allegiance to Catholicism in the way in which he practiced Christianity. When Edward VI came to power in 1547, the process of reform really began to take shape and Cranmer was able to accomplish most of his reforms.

In 1553, when Mary I, who was strongly Catholic, came to power she made Cranmer recant his former positions. Although he did recant and restored his relationship with the Catholic Church, on the day of his execution he chose to assume his former positions and in so doing, became a martyr for the reformers. Mary I published his recanting and ordered that a different, more Catholic, version of the *Book of Common Prayer* be produced in order to stem the tide of public opinion in favour of the reformers. This return to Catholicism was short-lived, however, because Elizabeth I assumed power in 1558 and, in 1559, issued the Elizabethan Religious Settlement Law, which returned England’s independence from the Pope, restored the 39 articles (in 1571) and became the major creed of the Church of England.

This law of religious tolerance enabled the establishment of the Church of England, and allowed reformers such as John Knox to return from exile and establish churches. The Church of England includes both ‘High Church’, which retains a number of elements of Catholicism, and ‘Low Church’, which emphasises participation and evangelism rather than ceremony and structure.

The Reformation created a number of different variants of Christianity, each with their own interpretation of ethical authority and their own Church hierarchies. But from a Catholic point of view, the Reformation was an assault on the Pope’s authority to govern Western Christianity, which the Catholic Church fought on doctrinal, ritual, sacred textual and ethical grounds through the Counter-Reformation (1545–63) and through warfare between Catholics and Protestants around Europe for hundreds of years.

Skills: research, identify, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Which ‘higher’ ethical authority did Luther draw on?
- 2 What was Luther reacting to in Catholicism?
- 3 How can the Church of England be said to have not fully embraced Protestant reform nor fully rejected Catholicism?
- 4 What was so significant about the translation of the Bible into German and English? How did this affect society?
- 5 Research one of following: Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, Cranmer or another reformer. Outline their specific ethical perspective and method of decision making.

Diversity of ethical perspectives of Christianity in Australian society

From the beginnings of European settlement in Australia, the Christian tradition has been embedded in the ethical development of society. Although it was complicated by historical animosity between Protestants and Catholics, what evolved was a secularism that began to clearly delineate Church and state within Australia. The interaction between the world authorities for Christianity and the national representatives for Australia has been dynamic, as changes in legislation have required world religious authorities to act in a timely manner to deal with issues that have arisen. For example, in 1872, in Victoria, the passing of an education act to provide



Uniting Church WA

FIGURE 5.15 Leaders of the different Christian Churches at the National Council of Churches in Australia Forum. What does this image demonstrate about Christianity in Australia?

‘free, secular and compulsory’ education posed a threat to religious education as government funding was withdrawn. This was seen by Australian Catholic communities as disastrous for the continuation of their membership because it threatened teaching in the religious tradition and its ethical perspective. Letters were sent to the Pope and Catholic communities everywhere, asking them to send members of religious orders to Australia, and they were encouraged to work without pay as part of their vows. This action allowed Australia’s independent Catholic education system to be established, which went on to become a strong and successful model of religious education. Other variants of Christianity established day schools as well. Teaching the ethical perspective of the religion is one of the major focuses of Christian religious education.

In the early days of the colony, the Church of England played a major role in society, determining the methods of punishment for the prison system (from flogging to solitary confinement to reflect upon their sins); working closely with the colonial governors to improve the moral standards of society; building churches and communities across the cities and towns of the country; and establishing an administration (under the bishops) for the networks of dioceses. The dominant ethical perspective of the time was that those who found themselves in poverty or crime deserved to be there and were only in that position because they had failed to work their way up in society. This perspective was based on the idea that ‘the worth of a man is determined by how industrious they are before their God and fellow man’. Society valued individuals who accepted their lot in life and worked hard to change it – it was believed that God would reward people materially in their lifetime with opportunities for improvement. This view was all-encompassing in colonial Australian society, and certainly was held by those in positions of authority.

The Christian ethical perspective has changed dramatically since colonial times. It is now far more understanding of inequality in society and has adopted a kinder stance towards society’s weakest members, which was always part of Christ’s teaching. There are many high-profile

pro bono

Performed free of charge for those who cannot afford to pay

Christian charitable organisations, such as the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the St Vincent de Paul Society, the Salvation Army, the Wesley Mission, World Vision and Uniting Care. The Salvation Army even offers a law firm that provides **pro bono** legal representation for those in need, which is subsidised by other clients who use the firm for paid legal work. Christianity has also kept up with modern times by offering Internet church services that can be attended online, and Christian radio stations and television programs exist to provide alternatives to secular broadcasts, to support isolated or incapacitated Christians and to redirect ‘lost’ or potential members to Christian communities and the Christian way of life.

Christian religious leaders can regulate their local communities to varying degrees. They are often called upon to mediate according to a prescribed set of rules or guidelines, in order that the rulings issued are in accordance with the particular ethical authorities and ethical stance of the denomination. Some adherents place more credence on church resolution methods than those under Australian common law, which is why the High Court ruling defining a religion serves as a caution against elevating religious ethical doctrines above the law (see Chapter 1, page 6).

The ethical perspectives and moral codes of Christianity have influenced Australian society in a number of ways, including:

- the religious backgrounds of politicians affecting how they vote on particular policies, often recognised as a conscience vote
- religious political parties sometimes having the deciding vote in the Senate, the Upper House or in a minority government – in order to see a proposed legislation or vote succeed, the government may need to grant concessions to these parties on ethical issues
- in the censorship of material including films, the Internet and computer games, and in ratings committees
- in ethics committees requiring experts to interpret doctrine, scripture and church teachings as they apply to new technologies, and to advise the government
- the codification as laws of some Christian religious principles
- the acceptance as norms of some religious principles, which are then enacted by a majority of people
- public holidays on Christian festivals.

JUDAISM

The ethical structure of Judaism around the world and in Israel, where parts of it are law, has been adapted to facilitate its operation in societies where different ethical perspectives are in place, such as in Australia. For many years of Jewish exile, Jewish communities were left to their own devices to rule themselves, and between the 6th and 5th centuries BCE they drafted their oral history, myths, legends and lore into what would later become the Torah. An ethical pattern emerged from the Israelite scribal process of writing down their collective history. It prompted the following major ethical questions:

- Why were they in exile in foreign lands?
- Had God abandoned them?
- How could they return to their homeland?

These existential questions have informed the Jewish ethical perspective, allowed the Jewish people to interpret later experiences of exile, and sustained them for thousands of years. The answers provided the ethical idea that they are in exile because of their sins and that sincere reflection and repentance would allow a return to the land of Israel, as promised in the **covenants** to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their families. The covenantal relationship is recalled each day in the ritual chanting of the Amidah Prayer for those who say it. In recent times, the covenant and the ethical perspective of bad things that have happened in Jewish history (as seen as consequences of

covenant

Agreement between two or more parties to do or not to do something; biblical covenants are binding agreements between God and God’s people



Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies

FIGURE 5.16 Representatives of various groups within Judaism gather to debate their ethical perspectives. Such a gathering is a traditional method in Judaism to form ethical perspectives. What advantages would Judaism see in this method?

sins) have been challenged by Holocaust theology as being no longer a valid belief or understanding for many who either experienced the tragedy or try to understand it.

In exile, the Jewish people, who had an alternative ethical perspective and separate law courts to the cultures in which they found themselves, had to deal with ethical perspectives that had a higher status than their own. To prevent a conflict between ethical perspectives, and with Jewish Law, a law called *Dina d'malkhuta dina* ('the law of the land is the law') was endorsed. This means that there could be no confusion between Jewish Law (Halakhah) and the laws of the country in which they resided. It was an expedient measure in accordance with the ethical principle of survival.

From the late 18th century, when Jewish people were increasingly accepted into the societies of Western Europe, there have developed four different movements of Judaism: **Ultra-Orthodox**, Modern Orthodox, Conservative and Progressive. These different movements meant that the interpretation of Halakhah ceased to be normative, and Judaism has since had no unified or singular voice with which to comment on the ethical dialogues of wider society. Instead, each movement has its own authority and interpretation of the ethical structure of Judaism, just like the different denominations of Christianity and schools of Islam. This makes it difficult to generalise about a unified system of Jewish ethics that would encompass all of the differences in religious practices, ideologies and even some of the major beliefs of Judaism. An example of this is the decision of Progressive Judaism, also called Reform and Liberal, to ordain women. In 1935, in Berlin Regina Jonas was ordained the first female rabbi. It is only in recent times that other movements in Judaism have considered the possibility. But while there is a growing elite group of ordained Orthodox female clergy, recently two Orthodox umbrella organisations, the Rabbinical Council of America and Agudath Israel of America, officially decried the practice and forbade them from being hired to lead congregations. Whether these decisions have a practical impact or not, they have provoked a fresh debate on the issue of the role of women.

Ultra-Orthodox
Groups of Jews who follow the laws of Judaism in the strictest manner, maintaining traditions from centuries ago and mostly not engaging with the outside world

Skills: identify, interpret, explain

- 1 Which ethical perspective did the scribes of the Torah develop from writing down all of the stories of their ancestors, and the oral history and legends of their people?
- 2 What had happened to prompt Jewish communities to write the Torah in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE?
- 3 Which Jewish law has been put in place to minimise a conflict of Jewish law with the laws of the countries in which the Jews lived?
- 4 How was being isolated from the outside world an advantage for the Jews?
- 5 What does the appointment of female rabbis say about the interpretation of Jewish ethics and Halakhah by Progressive Judaism?
- 6 What does the decision to ban the employment of female rabbis say about the interpretation of Jewish ethics and Halakhah by Ultra-Orthodox Judaism?

Despite differences in ritual practices and interpretation of beliefs, an overwhelming majority of Jewish movements follow rabbinic Judaism, the Torah (written and oral) and an interpretive process of the ethical and legal structure of Halakhah. The major differences between the movements occur depending on how literally the above are interpreted and how the community behaves in response; that is, whether a majority in the community see them as binding. This point can be a source of contention between the movements of Judaism, in which the Ultra-Orthodox, on one side, claim Halakhah to be strictly legally binding, while Progressive Jews, on the other side, may agree or may see it as less of a dictate and more of a guide to the laws that they enact. If a person or a community in a particular world Jewish movement had an ethical issue and was seeking an answer from their religious tradition, they would consult their scriptures and rabbinical rulings; however, the four major world movements of Judaism would each attach different emphases. If the individual or community does not like the answer they receive from their own movement, they might prefer the response of a more or less traditional movement. At each level of the process of applying Jewish ethics, the individual, rabbi, council of rabbis or world movement may consult the multitude of Jewish sacred texts, rabbinic councils past and present, law codes and commentaries.

Each of the world movements has its own interpretation of the ethical structure of Judaism, and in all movements there is a local *beth din* (a court) in which religious matters and even social disputes can be settled. The rulings of this court have the legal status of mediations in the Australian legal system.

Skills: identify, research, explain

Research the ethical perspectives, on the same issue, of two different world movements of Judaism and answer the following questions.

- 1 What differences are there in terms of the interpretation and application of Halakhah?
- 2 Which ethical principles, laws, moral values and obligations relate to non-Jews?
- 3 How do they enable Halakhah to operate in a society that already has its own legal system?
- 4 Are there any overriding ethical principles? Under which exceptional circumstances would they be applied? When can they not be applied?

- 5 What do the acknowledgement of righteousness in non-Jews and the allowance for them to have a share in the Jewish afterlife say about the ethical perspective of Judaism?
- 6 If the written Torah cannot be changed, how do the other parts of the ethical perspective assist and allow it to react to new technologies and ethical issues?

Skills: identify, explain, interpret, synthesise

Research option 1

Use the headings listed below as a model to construct a report on the way in which the ethical perspectives and methods of decision making of religious traditions are part of a pluralist society. You may wish to add further headings you feel are relevant. The study can be applied to one or more religious traditions or denominations.

- Summary of the ethical perspective of the religious tradition, including its authority
- Denominational overview in Australian society, past and present
- Presence in popular culture
- Ethical stance on an issue
- Religious education in ethics
- Political influence
- Internal mediation structures – international, national and local
- Charity work
- Involvement in interfaith or ecumenism activities.

Skills: identify, explain, interpret, synthesise

Research option 2

Research the following ethical perspective statement using the questions below:

‘Self-immolation by Buddhists is a violation of all the Buddhist beliefs about the meaning and purpose of human existence.’

- 1 Define the act of self-immolation.
- 2 What are the Buddhist beliefs about the meaning and purpose of human existence? (Cite references.)
- 3 Identify the ethical authority used to support these Buddhist beliefs.
- 4
 - a Find appropriate sites that explain the understanding of Buddhist beliefs about the meaning and purpose of human existence held by Buddhists who have self-immolated.
 - b Summarise these understandings. (Cite references.)
 - c Identify which method of ethical decision making is used by these individual Buddhists.
- 5
 - a Find appropriate sites that explain the responses of Buddhist leaders to those Buddhists who have self-immolated.
 - b Summarise these responses. (Cite references.)
 - c Identify which method of ethical decision making is used by these Buddhist leaders.
- 6 Return to the ethical perspective statement and explain why you agree or disagree with it.
- 7 What is the ethical authority you are using to support your ethical perspective?
- 8 Identify which method of ethical decision making you are using.

Skills: identify, explain, interpret, synthesise

Research option 3

If a religious tradition holds that human life is sacred and should be protected, how do hospitals, hospices and counselling services run by that religion deal with the ethical issues of abortion and euthanasia?

Skills: identify, explain, interpret, synthesise

Research option 4

THE GOOD LIFE		
Aristotle	Aquinas	Modern secular Australia
<p>The good life involves living well or 'flourishing'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• birth into the 'right' family and class• being 30–40 years old (to have accumulated wisdom)• being healthy, surrounded by community and inexperienced in death and mourning• applying moral virtues consciously in a decision• evaluating an ethical decision on its own merits• making the eventual choice based on moral nature; an accumulation of knowledge, practical wisdom and habitual application• luck• being self-sufficient• living according to the will of the 'highest' being (God) <p>The ultimate ethical goal or way to attain the good life is when a person chooses to do what they 'should' do according to virtue.</p>	<p>The good life involves God and happiness – in this life and the afterlife.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• belief in God through the 'five proofs' for God• living• love within a marriage that creates life• seeking knowledge• participating in communal life• exercising rational thought, moral judgement and understanding God – the source of all that exists, all ethical principles, morality and actions that occasion it• living according to God's moral code• seeing God as the source of salvation <p>The four laws: Eternal – physics, morality and revelation Natural law (moral law) – in which human beings apply reason to make ethical decisions Civil law – enacts natural law in society Divine law (revealed Law in the Bible) – which directs humans to eternal salvation and immortal happiness.</p> <p>The ultimate ethical goal is to do all that will allow one to encounter God upon the conclusion of leading a moral life.</p>	<p>To 'live life to the fullest' and make the most of every opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• material and deferred gains for industrious and purposeful work• a well-paid occupation• a good-looking and capable spouse• two or three children• two cars• a large family home• a boat and a holiday house or timeshare• a property portfolio/share portfolio• to pass on an inheritance to the children• to do service for one's nation (in community service, charity, the army or politics)• to donate money to charity or grand public works <p>The ultimate ethical goal is to uphold the moral values of Australian society for the good of all citizens and to prosper.</p>

- 1 Do you agree with the comparison in the table above, particularly what constitutes the good life in Australia today? What is missing?
- 2 Research and interpret this question: What are the limitations of both Aristotle's and Aquinas' systems of thought?

- 3 Why do Aristotle and Aquinas connect virtues and morality to God and the soul?
- 4 Research the different ways in which Aristotle and Aquinas define God. How do their different concepts of God affect ethical perspectives?

Skills: identify, explain, interpret, synthesise

Research option 5

- 1 There is a saying that the tongue kills more than the sword; how would you explain this?
- 2 Research how two religions would respond to this saying.
- 3 Identify and explain an example in recent Australian media that demonstrates this saying.
- 4 Apply the ethical perspectives and the methods of ethical decision making of the two religious traditions to the example.

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://religionsocvce.nelsonnet.com.au>.



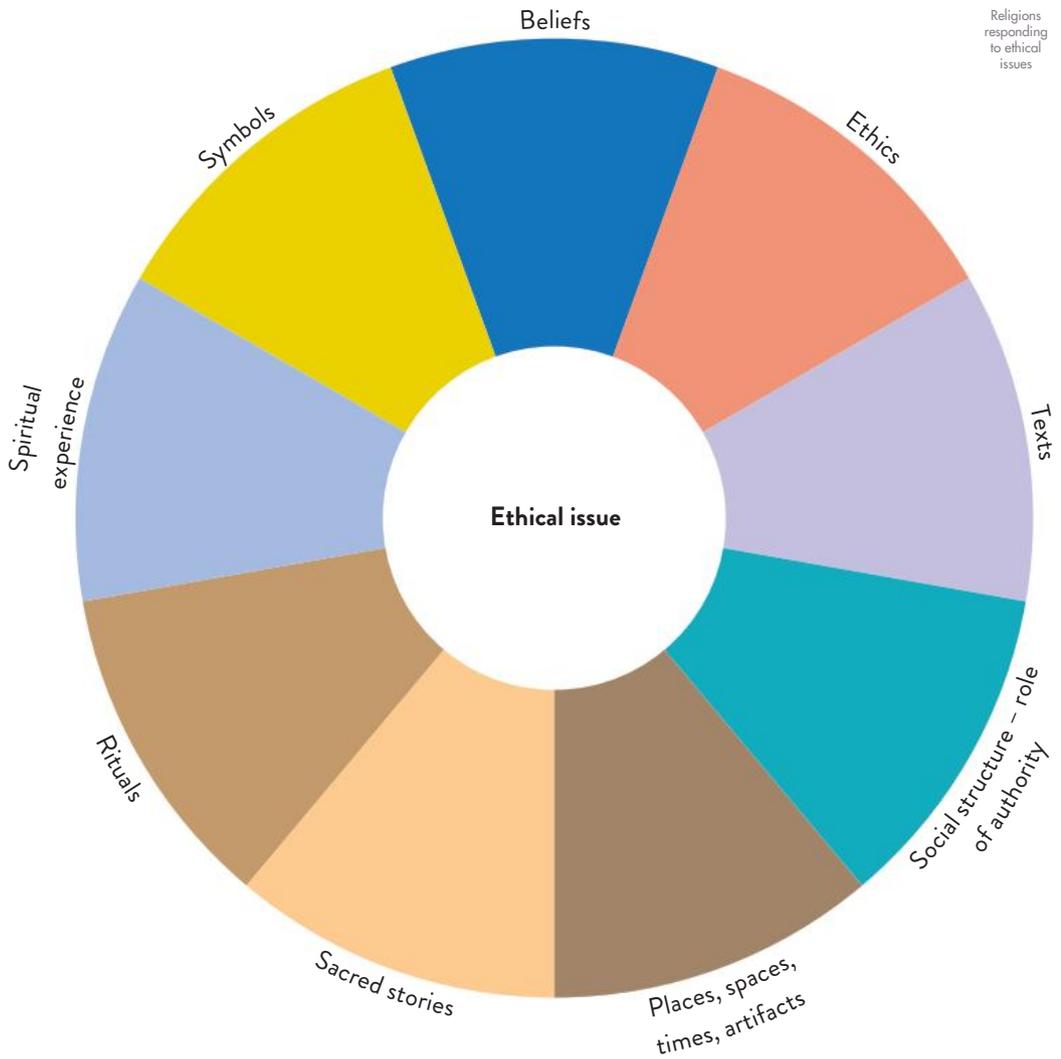
REVISION

Religions responding to ethical issues

Using examples, explain how a religious tradition uses different aspects of religion in communicating its ethical position on a particular ethical issue to its believers.



Religions responding to ethical issues



EXTENSION

Social teachings of religious traditions

- 1 Choose an ethical issue. Use the ethical perspectives represented in the principles of modern Catholic social teaching shown below to explain how Catholic Christianity would make an ethical decision on the selected issue.



Social
teachings of
religious
traditions

Life and dignity of the human person

Catholics believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

The dignity and rights of workers

If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected – the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organise and join unions, to private property and to ethical economic initiative.

Call to family, community and participation

Catholics believe that people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and wellbeing of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Solidarity

We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. Learning to practise the virtues of solidarity means learning that loving our neighbour has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

Rights and responsibilities

Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities – to one another, to our families and to the larger society.

Care of God's creation

We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

Option for the poor and vulnerable

In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, the Catholic tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgement and instructs Catholics to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

- 2 Research the ethical perspectives of another religious tradition and analyse how that tradition would make an ethical decision for the ethical issue you chose in question 1.

Religion and conscience

Conscience is the ability to use reason to understand right from wrong in human behaviour. This ability has to be formed and developed throughout an individual's life.

Select two religious traditions or two denominations of a tradition and explain:

- what they teach about conscience
- how they assist adherents to develop their conscience
- what they teach about the relationship between individual conscience and the ethical authority of the religious tradition.

Religion and euthanasia

Euthanasia perspectives from Judaism

Euthanasia is not suicide but the assisted ending of someone's life who is suffering. A person's decision to take their own life is known as suicide.

Euthanasia is illegal in Australia and most countries, but it was legalised in certain circumstances in the Netherlands in 2002 and assisted suicide was legalised in the state of Oregon (USA) in 1997.

Two principal types of euthanasia

Voluntary euthanasia: this is where a person asks someone to help them die, perhaps by asking for help to take an overdose of painkillers.

Involuntary euthanasia: euthanasia is carried out without the patient's consent, for example, if they are in a persistent vegetative state and no longer able to live without a life-support machine, which is then switched off.

Perspective of Judaism

Judaism teaches that all life comes from God:

Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

Source: Genesis 1:26–28

You shall not murder.

Source: Exodus 20:13

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted.

Source: Ecclesiastes 3:1–4

Although Judaism is opposed to euthanasia, sometimes the teachings of Rabbi Moses Isserles (a 16th-century Ashkenazi Rabbi renowned for his work on Jewish Law) have been used to support the view that people should not be kept on life-support machines if there is no real chance of them recovering: If there is anything which causes a hindrance to the departure of the soul then it is permissible to remove it.

Use the above information to answer the following questions.

- 1 True or false?
 - a Euthanasia is illegal throughout the European Union.
 - b In Judaism, euthanasia goes against the idea of the 'sanctity of life'.
 - c The Jewish scriptures teach that suicide is acceptable.
 - d In Judaism, God decides when a person will die.
 - e Voluntary euthanasia is an accepted practice in Israel.
- 2 Which of the following statements is true?
 - A Euthanasia is the termination of a foetus.
 - B Euthanasia is the act of bringing about an easy and gentle death.
 - C Euthanasia is a curable disease.
 - D Euthanasia is the unintentional taking of a person's life.
- 3 The act of a person taking their own life is known as:
 - A Passive euthanasia
 - B Suicide
 - C Manslaughter
 - D Fratricide
- 4 In relation to prolonging life by life support machines, Rabbi Moses Isserles teaches that:
 - A People should not be kept alive by machine if there is no chance of recovery.
 - B Only God is capable of ending suffering.
 - C Life has been given by God and only God can take it away.
 - D People should be kept alive by machine if there is no chance of recovery.
- 5 Most religions offer teaching on euthanasia and the end of life. Select another religious tradition and research its perspective, and the underpinning teachings, on euthanasia.



A photograph of a large crowd of people at what appears to be a protest or public demonstration. Many individuals have their hands raised in the air, some holding signs. The scene is outdoors and brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. The focus is on the raised hands in the foreground, with the rest of the crowd and background slightly blurred.

Chapter 6

ENGAGING IN AN ETHICAL SOCIETY

Outcome to be demonstrated

Explanation of at least two debates on ethical issues in pluralist societies

Focus questions

- ▶ Why is the issue an ethical issue?
- ▶ Who are the contributors to the debate on the ethical issue?
- ▶ Who else should contribute to the debate on the ethical issue?
- ▶ What are the different ethical perspectives of the contributors to the debate?
- ▶ What are the ethical perspectives of religions on the ethical issue?
- ▶ How do the various ethical perspectives draw on authority?
- ▶ What are the strengths and weaknesses of the methods of ethical decision making involved in the decision?
- ▶ Who and what will the decision affect and are the consequences ethical?

ETHICAL ISSUES IN A PLURALIST SOCIETY

FIGURE 6.1 More than 40 000 people attended a Walk Against Warming rally in Melbourne in 2007. What does this image suggest about the society in which these people live?

Fairfax Syndication/The Age/Arsineh Houspian



Terminology

Ethical decision making in a pluralist society is complicated by factors that are not part of other societies where there are commonly held values and the socialisation structure merely needs to ensure compliance from defiant individuals.

In the public debates of a pluralist society, people contribute various opinions – from religious to non-religious – and may form lobby groups to assert a stance and influence political policy. The diversity of opinion on an ethical issue is such that two individuals from the same religious tradition, who are interpreting the same ethical principle, may approach the issue from different motives or priorities, make different decisions and reach different conclusions. The characteristics common to pluralist societies include:

- These are societies where multiple world views exist.
- An ethical issue for one group may not be so for another.
- There can be a lack of agreement on the cultural values that provide the foundation of the concepts of good and bad, right and wrong, just and unjust
- It can be difficult to ensure agreement from individuals who have totally different world views.
- There are different understandings of ethical principles and moral codes.
- Equal status for all is implied by the ethical principles of a democratic, multifaith, multicultural society, yet equality sometimes requires quotas and discrimination.
- Compromises are often reached in decisions in which no one is fully content with the outcome.
- Some religious traditions are unable to compromise on certain principles that society requires of them, which can lead to conflict.
- The wants of the majority in a pluralist, democratic society are not always ethical.

All of these factors have a bearing on people's ability to recognise an ethical issue or situation. To do so requires a person to draw on competing systems of thought and rules to determine which are the most appropriate to the issue or what ought to happen to bring about an ideal situation.

The study of ethical issues in this chapter applies the ethical factors and methods of Chapters 4 and 5.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Australia is part of a global context in which international alliances of a cultural, linguistic, historical and ethical nature abound. Ethical issues can occur on a global scale and different countries can observe how each nation resolves or achieves a stance or compromise on an issue and use it to guide their own ethical debates and dialogue on the same issue. Technological advances can create paradigm shifts in which a technological innovation radically alters the way in which people do things – to the extent that returning to the ‘old way’ is virtually impossible. The key to success is to be ahead of other nations and at the forefront of technological innovation. This is the current Australian approach to **stem cell** research and the methods employed to facilitate research on the one hand while dealing with the serious ethical considerations of human experimentation on the other.

stem cell

A cell that can divide and replace itself and can also change into other, specialised types of cells

Ethical questions raised by stem cell research



- What should be the source of embryonic stem cells? Aborted foetuses, umbilical cord blood or cells that have been specifically engineered for the purpose?
- Should potential lives be created solely for the purpose of experimentation and never be allowed to grow to a full-term?
- How can embryos ‘volunteer’ to be part of trials in which they may be destroyed? What rights do embryos have?
- Are embryonic stem cells the only useful stem cells? Can the same results be gained from adult stem cells or animal stem cells?

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEES (HRECs)

For several decades, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons have had committees for the evaluation of research that includes stem cells and voluntary experimentation on human beings, such as in clinical trials. The mission of these committees, known collectively as the National Research and Evaluation Ethics Committees (NREEC), was to define ethical principles that were relevant to research and to ensure that any approved research was of benefit to the patient, the community and humanity. Australia has been a world leader in terms of creating new legislation to provide guidelines and safeguards for new scientific research.

The composition of the Melbourne Health HREC is in accordance with National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) specifications:

The Melbourne Health Human Research Ethics Committee (Melbourne Health HREC) will have at least eight (8) members, both men and women, namely: a. a chairperson, with suitable experience, whose other responsibilities will not impair the HREC’s capacity to carry out its obligations under the National Statement; b. at least two members who are **lay people**, one man and one woman, who have no affiliation with the institution and do not currently engage in medical, scientific, legal or academic work, and who are preferably from the community

lay people

People who are untrained or not qualified in any specific discipline, profession or trade (related to the focus of the committee)

in which the institution is located; c. at least one member with knowledge of, and current experience in, the professional care, counselling or treatment of people; for example a nurse, medical practitioner, or allied health professional; d. at least one member who performs a pastoral care role in a community, for example, an Aboriginal elder or a minister of religion; e. at least one member who is a practising lawyer, but where possible one who is not engaged to advise the institution; f. at least two members with current research experience that is relevant to research proposals to be considered at the meetings they attend; and g. additional members as required from time to time to assist with scientific review and ethical decision making. Wherever possible, the CEO of Melbourne Health will ensure that one or more of the appointed members are experienced in reflecting on and analysing ethical decision making.

Source: Melbourne Health HREC, *Terms of Reference*.
Thanks to the Melbourne Health Office for Research

It is interesting to note that such committees were not required to include as a stakeholder a person suffering from a disease or trauma that the research is intended to assist.

That the inclusion of a minister of religion or equivalent is required in the pluralist and secular society of Australia is interesting for two reasons. It openly acknowledges the influence of various religious traditions in important decisions on ethical issues in a pluralist society. It also acknowledges that religious ministers from different religions are respected contributors to discussions, based on the rigorous training they have received on ethics and morality. As clergy, they represent the world authorities of their movements and the interpretation of an entire religious tradition's ethical system.

A research proposal can be accepted or rejected as a result of the arguments of those sitting on a NREEC (including the lay people and religious ministers) or because of a lack of integrity of the research proposal. The role of a NREECs is also balanced against the fact that Australia is one of the world leaders in the field of stem cell research, and stalling on allowing researchers to explore the potential of stem cells could cause Australia to lose its leading position in the world, which would likely result in a mass exodus of research, grants and personnel. So Australia has a vested interest in maintaining a high standard of ethical research in the field of stem cell research.

A defining characteristic of the research is that it must conform to national and state laws. Then there are the ethical principles by which any proposed research that is accepted by an NREEC must abide. These are clearly delineated in a workshop training resource called *Research Ethics Workshop: a Practical Workshop on How to Complete a Human Research Ethics Application*, developed by Professor Nick Zwar of Fairfield Hospital. It has been created to assist researchers in preparing research applications to show the factors required for approval of stem cell research. The application must show that integrity is the guiding value for conducting the research and circulation of results. The research must be undertaken with respectful regard for the personal, religious, social and cultural circumstances of the participants. The research must aim for maximum benefits and minimum risk to participants, and the distribution of the benefits and burdens of the research should be conducted equitably.

The ethics of the proposed research are evaluated against the decisions of other relevant ethics committees. The NREEC requires that decisions of other ethics committees be part of submissions to them, as well as receiving regular progress reports throughout, which must include challenges and failures. The NREEC will then determine the provision and authorisation of clinical trials.

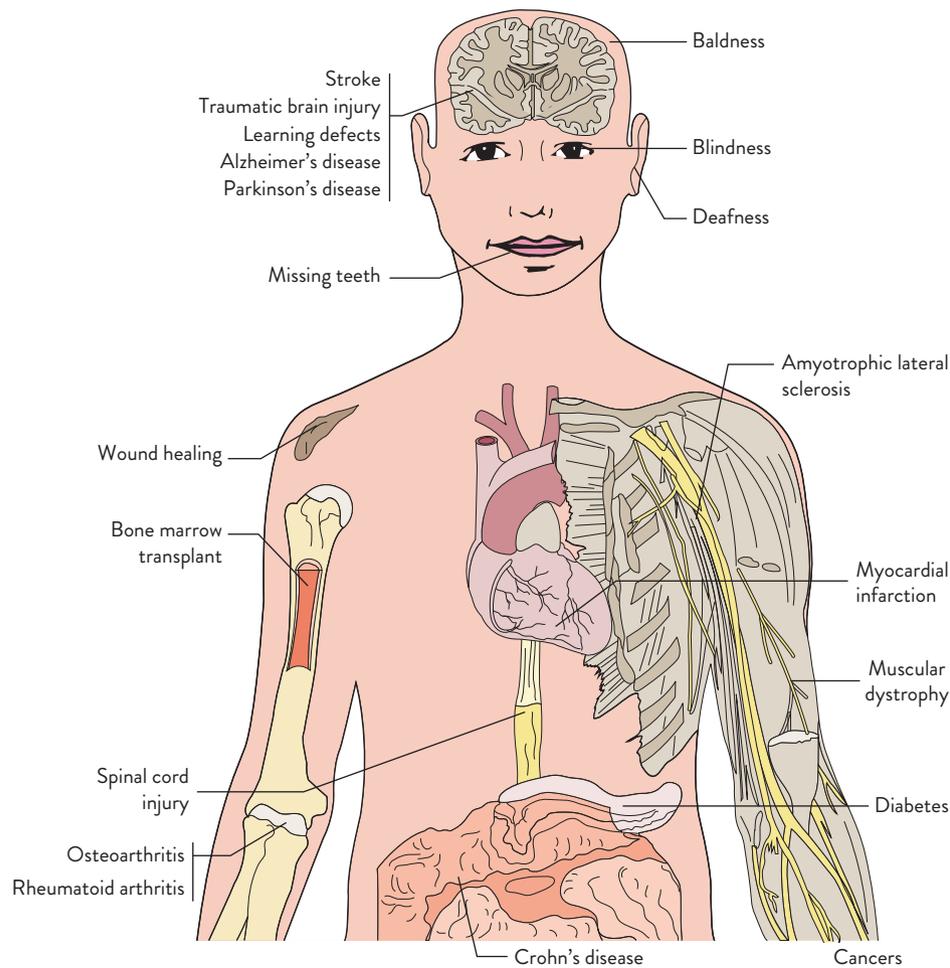
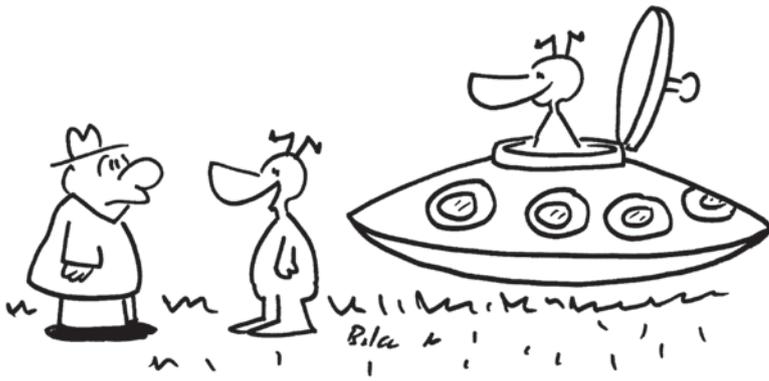


FIGURE 6.2 Potential uses of stem cells. Given the multiple potential uses for stem cells, what are the reasons for arguing against this research?

The elements of ethics in research into stem cells are heavily scrutinised and subject to legal oversight for many valid reasons. As an emerging technology, the ethics of researching stem cells and utilising the research for treatment have not been fully elaborated. This is because stem cell research is in its infancy and its potential has not yet been developed. As a consequence, it cannot be fully understood from ethical perspectives. It is an ideal example to analyse because much of the discussion has been influenced by predictions of the potential of its uses. It shows how ethics does not just analyse what ought to happen in the world that exists but also in a future world that does not yet exist. In this way, ethics investigates issues that might arise from proposed future courses of action and the authorities that would relate to them. The ethical perspectives of religious traditions and Aboriginal elders and religious ministers are prominent in the public debates related to stem cell research. Ethics regulates what is happening in a pluralist society and what ought to be happening in a society that claims to uphold certain ethical principles.

Criticism of the slow process of determining and allowing pre-clinical trials has been made by sufferers of spinal cord trauma and diseases for which embryonic stem cells are proving to be quite effective in treatment. It is argued by some that while healthy and able-bodied people discuss the theoretical issues, there are people who are actually suffering and whose lives could be made substantially better, and they are missing out on treatment or needing to go overseas to countries with less regulation to get it. Because stem cell treatment is not allowed in Australia,



'Now, don't panic – we're just here
to do a little stem-cell research.'

FIGURE 6.3 What new questions does this cartoon raise about stem cell research?

medical tourism occurs and sufferers of disease and trauma go overseas for treatment to clinics where standards of medical procedures may be less than ideal compared to Australia. The risks of stem cell applications have already been demonstrated – an Israeli boy receiving treatment in Russia developed tumours at the points where the stem cells were injected. There is no way to be sure that cells being used are not carrying other infectious agents, such as HIV, hepatitis and even Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease from the animal products used in their cultivation.

There appear to have been unsubstantiated and unethical claims by overseas teams who use stem cells to lure people into engaging their

services. There are fears that allowing the use of stem cells will result in human cloning, which is why all of the countries of the world that allow stem cell research (except the USA) have signed a ban on developing cloning technology in human cells.

Skills: identify, evaluate, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Which ethical principles are at stake in stem cell research?
- 2 What are the dangers of not pursuing research into stem cells?
- 3 What are the risks associated with medical tourism?
- 4 How are ethics and morality part of the public debate in Australia on the issue of stem cell research?
- 5 How does the structure of a NREEC reflect the religious ethical heritage of a pluralist society?
- 6 How do you determine the harm done to an embryo and compare it with the harm suffered by a fully grown sufferer of a spinal injury or muscular disease?
- 7 How do vested interests of stakeholders influence their ethical decision making?

Embryonic stem cell research in the USA

The Obama Administration in the USA lifted the previous Bush Administration's ban on embryonic stem cell research in 2009. This was done after considering religious objections (which were substantial) and scientific opinion. President Barack Obama declared that there was a 'consensus' emerging on both sides of politics and across American society on this issue. As elected leader of a multifaith community, he believed that there was an overriding ethical principle to ease people's suffering. He outlined conditions under which research could be ethically conducted, which included that it must have scientific integrity and be 'responsibly conducted'. It is important to note that while Obama's executive order increases government funding of embryonic stem cells developed by the processes of fertility clinics, it does not overturn the 1996 law banning the creation of embryos for experimentation purposes only.

In his speech announcing the changes to the law, Obama also sternly declared that strict guidelines would be developed and that cloning for human reproduction would not be pursued due to it being 'dangerous, profoundly wrong and [having] no place in this society or any society'. He also affirmed that there would be no restrictions on information that is developed from such research and that it would be free from 'coercion', 'manipulation', 'distortion' and 'concealment', and that ultimately the scientific facts are the basis of decisions rather than ideology.

The stated goal of this decision by President Obama and his advisors is to restore the USA to a position of leading the world in scientific development and technological advancement, which will benefit the USA economically. It is also believed that the research will be conducted for the benefit of humanity.

Skills: identify, analyse, evaluate, interpret, synthesise

Read the case study titled 'Embryonic stem cell research in the USA' (above) and then answer these questions.

- 1 To which ultimate source of ethical authority is President Obama appealing?
- 2 What do the conditions under which ethical research must be conducted reveal about the ethics of scientific research?
- 3 Which law was not repealed? Why?
- 4 What evidence is there that Obama's executive order is a compromise position?
- 5 Which assertions are subtly being made about the previous administration's approach to scientific matters?
- 6 What is the great risk in allowing stem cell research to include embryonic stem cells? Why are people against taking such a risk?
- 7 What does Obama's presidential memorandum reveal about ethical debates in a pluralist society?
- 8 Which economic motivations are at stake?
- 9 How does President Obama's executive order improve global research into stem cells?

Skills: research, identify, analyse, synthesise

- 1 Create a diagram of the multiple ethical and moral components of this issue according to both the Obama and previous Bush administrations.
- 2 Research which different religious traditions were consulted to form the stances of the previous Bush Administration and the Obama Administration. Which religions support and which oppose the research into embryonic stem cells? What is their justification? What does this show about the power of religious traditions and their influence in a pluralist society?
- 3 Conduct further research to compare and contrast the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) of the Australian Government with similar government bodies and documents of the US Government. What major differences can be found?
- 4 Conduct further research to compare and contrast the ethical considerations of Obama and the NREECs on scientific research on human beings and human life with the experiments of Nazi doctors on concentration camp prisoners and the activities of Japanese Unit 731 on prisoners of war during the Second World War. (Note the

>

- > ethical differences between the participation of human beings in medical research today and in the scientific nature of the research conducted by in the Japanese and German armies.)
 - a What has happened to the 'data' from these experiments?
 - b Are there still ethical issues about using the data today?
- 5 What significant ethical developments in research involving human beings (including their embryos and cells) have there been over the last 70 years?
- 6 Choose one of the ethical issues arising from such research developments and write a detailed report that includes a diagram of your choice and the application of ethical perspectives, moral values and ethical methods of decision making.



Shutterstock.com/bluedogroom

FIGURE 6.4 In 2012 a marmoset gave birth to three babies in a German zoo. The mother was unable to feed all her young so zoo keepers hand fed the babies. Should we close zoos, wildlife parks and sanctuaries?

ANIMAL RIGHTS AND ETHICS

Zoos began as a form of entertainment – the animals were put into garden settings to enhance the experience of visitors. During the 20th century there were a number of developments in the role of zoos and, by the 1970s, zoos were moving towards becoming places for conservation and the preservation of endangered species. They are also places loved by children and are a feature of children’s education about animals and their environments, and about human responsibility towards animals. However, there has been a growing awareness of the ethics of animal rights. The line between human rights and the rights of animals has become blurred. For many it is a matter of respecting all living creatures, and that means that housing animals in any form of confined space is unethical.

ARGUING FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS

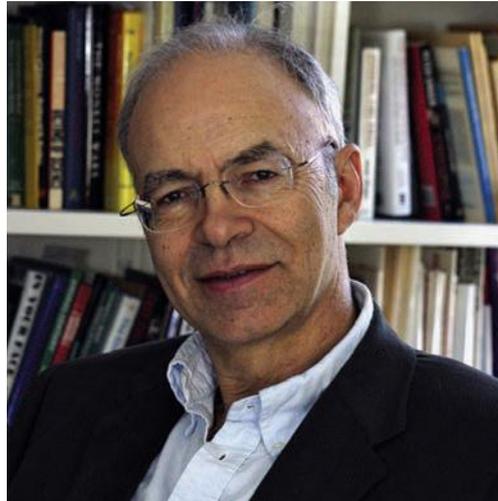
Those who call for the closure of any facility that encloses animals argue that it is now accepted that there are higher order animals, from monkeys to dolphins, that are able to problem-solve and use language and tools; are **sentient** and so can experience pain in the same way as humans do; and have emotional responses such as loneliness, grief and shame. These characteristics demonstrate a high degree of intelligence, perhaps beyond that of a human baby or young child. Apart from imprisonment imposed by the legal system, any imprisoning of a human being is a grave offence, and it is argued it should be the same for animals.

Peter Singer, a contemporary Australian philosopher, has a special interest in the area of animal rights. He is a utilitarian in his ethical decision making. He argues that we live in a secular society and all creatures are part of the web of life. None should have a privileged place over any other and a human does not logically have a ‘special’ place and so should not have rights that are not afforded to other sentient beings.

sentient

Having sense perception and consciousness (awareness of self, others and environment)

Humans and higher order animals are both biologically complex and have self-awareness. Both make complex choices and do not act only on instinct. They both have shown that they have an awareness of the value of life and sorrow at its loss. Therefore, an animal's life is significant and should be treasured and protected – just as we would treasure and protect the life of a human – and so locking these animals in enclosures is unethical. All creatures should have the freedom to live a natural life, free from human exploitation, unnecessary pain and suffering and premature death. It is already recognised in state laws that animals must be protected from cruelty. What is needed now is legislation that forces the closure of zoos and sanctuaries.



AAP Image/Text Publishing

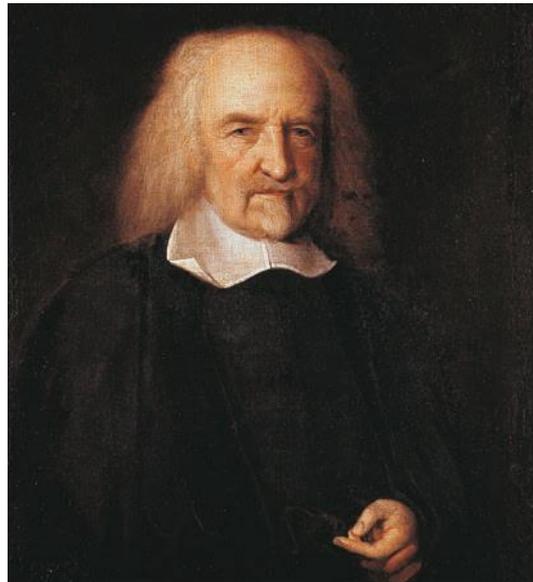
FIGURE 6.5 Peter Singer. How is his view of animal rights utilitarian?

Skills: identify, explain, analyse, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Why do we have human rights? Should those reasons apply to any animals?
- 2 Why do we punish people for hurting other human beings? Do any of those reasons for punishment apply to hurting higher order animals?
- 3 What would be the benefits to animals of closing zoos and sanctuaries?
- 4 In what ways are zoos different from circuses?

ARGUING AGAINST ANIMAL RIGHTS

Those opposed to arguments for animal rights, including the closure of zoos, argue that closing zoos and sanctuaries would be based on a view that higher order animals deserve limited human rights. This position is unviable. Ethically, it would mean that humans should not use animals for any activity they wouldn't use humans for: the world would need to become vegetarian; it would not be permissible to perform medical tests on animals for developing new drugs; we would not be able to have pets; we would need to end the use of animals in the workplace and in sport. It would also mean that the criminal code would need to expand to encompass any mistreatment of animals by humans and punish people accordingly.



Getty Images/DeAgostini

FIGURE 6.6 Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). Hobbes was concerned with material things (which developed into material philosophy) and had a bleak view of human nature. How is some of this viewpoint shown in his thinking about animals? (See page 168.)

The tendency to attribute human-like qualities to animals is pervasive in many cultures. An example of this in the modern world is the anthropomorphised Disney characters, such as Mickey Mouse, which take on many human-like attributes. The conclusions that are being drawn about animals are often shaped by assumptions that cannot be proven as we cannot have meaningful communication with animals.

According to the 17th-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes, 'rights' must be earned or demanded. Because animals aren't able to have 'sit-ins' in their cages, protest by closing the zoos or go on hunger strikes, they cannot be seen to be entitled to rights. Rights, by definition, belong to citizens of a state, and because animals do not play a part in the running of society, they do not have rights in the society. It is this view that underpins all laws in a democratic society, which is based on the contract between the citizen and the state, so 'animal rights' cannot be discussed as if they are the same as 'human rights'. Therefore, there are decisions that can be made on behalf of animals, such as the decision to keep animals in enclosures.

If the claim is that animals need freedom, does that mean all animals have freedom to inhabit anywhere? Kangaroos that are damaging properties on the borders of our cities – should they have a 'right' to roam free in suburbia? Would the same be said of snakes, crocodiles and cane toads?

On a more fundamental level, some argue that it must be recognised that humans are superior creatures to animals. There is no evidence that animals understand a discussion of ethics; there is no evidence that they can enter into dialogue and negotiate or understand compromise. Animals do not have the same capacity for empathy or wisdom, they don't write poetry or create lasting works of art. There is no evidence that they understand concepts such as forgiveness, equality or justice. It is therefore clear that animals ought not to be given rights that are equivalent to human rights and so it is not ethically unsound to enclose animals in zoos as long as their conditions are humane.

Zoos now perform a positive role in conservation. Animals that are endangered in the wild are having their populations supplemented or preserved through the breeding programs in zoos and sanctuaries. Finally, many of the animals in these environments have been there all their lives – they could not survive in the wild and so their release would be cruel.



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FIGURE 6.7 Do animals such as these feral cats have rights? Do humans have responsibilities to these animals?

Skills: identify, research, explain, analyse, interpret

- 1 What are the inherent differences between humans and animals? Do those differences exist even in intelligent animals, such as chimpanzees?
- 2 In a world in which we eat meat, wear animal skin, keep pets and use animal labour, would it be hypocritical to give some animals limited human rights?
- 3 What would be lost if we gave such animals limited human rights? Who might be affected?
- 4 What is the attitude to animal rights of a religion you have studied? Upon which beliefs of that religion is this attitude based?

WHISTLEBLOWERS

Whistleblowers perform a fundamental ethical function in society by bringing public attention to unethical behaviour by an organisation or within it. They are the people who have disclosed, for example, that tobacco companies were aware of the dangers of smoking long before smoking became public as a health issue; that toxic waste has been dumped into the environment; that there is corruption in police forces and that government cover-ups have occurred. Usually, whistleblowers are concerned employees who have observed something wrong or inappropriate in their work situation. Operating on an assumption that their employer would wish to be told of this, they report the matter to someone whom they expect to be an ethical authority in that environment. They operate on a basis of trust that others will want to know the truth and act to right a wrong. Often this is a big mistake.

Whistleblowers can be devastated by the responses they receive. They can be victimised in many ways: emotionally, physically, financially, and with verbal abuse and character assassination. Their health can suffer and existing close relationships can be put under stress. Depression is a very real result of their treatment for attempting to do the right thing. It may not stop at them, either, but may also include their family and supportive friends and associates.

The ethics of whistleblowing has developed as a major debate globally due to the publication of cases on the Internet. Julian Assange, through WikiLeaks, and Edward Snowden, who leaked classified information from the US National Security Agency, have both demonstrated the power an individual can have in exposing state or corporate interests. At the heart of the issue is the right of the public to know and the freedom of the individual to speak out versus the argument that there must be limits put on these freedoms in order to protect the reputation of individuals, people's privacy, the commercial interests of companies and the nation's security. Most recently, the community's fear of the growing terror threat posed by extremists has provided governments with opportunities to restrict the freedom of their citizens without any widespread protest. The following are some of the cases linked to whistleblowing that have been prominent in the media.

ANDREW WILKIE

Just a week before the United States Government launched its invasion of Iraq, in March 2003, Andrew Wilkie, an analyst in the Australian Office of National Assessments, resigned from his position and challenged the Australian Government's reasons for joining the invasion. Wilkie, a key figure in the military intelligence organisation, took a principled stand against the Howard Government's claim that the main reason for going to war in Iraq was that the country had weapons of mass destruction. Wilkie undermined the Howard Government's depiction of this intelligence and caused significant damage to the prime minister's standing.



FIGURE 6.8 Andrew Wilkie addressing a meeting in defence of WikiLeaks. What ethical issues did Wilkie address in his criticism of the Howard Government?

to his boss, he contacted veteran journalist Laurie Oakes, who made Wilkie's resignation and revelations into a top news story. Wilkie stuck with this approach, doing numerous interviews and giving many talks in the following months. His approach was the antithesis of cover-up; however, for some in the military establishment, this behaviour was unethical as it breached the commitment an individual makes as a member of the armed forces when they sign up. For Wilkie, though, he faced conflicting ethical demands.

In 2010, the then Liberal Party leader, Tony Abbott, apologised to Wilkie on behalf of the Howard Government for its attempts to discredit him during the 2003 debate.

Skills: research, analysis, drawing conclusions

- 1 Analyse Andrew Wilkie's ethical thinking and methods of ethical decision making.
- 2 Which source of ethical authority enabled Wilkie to challenge the ethical authority of the government of the time?
- 3 How was he, as an individual, able to cause major changes to make his society more ethical?
- 4 How can his decision and the subsequent consequences be considered ethical?
- 5 How has this decision changed Andrew Wilkie's life?

JULIAN ASSANGE AND WIKILEAKS

Julian Assange grew up in Melbourne. He had a talent for computer programming and hacking and in 1991 pleaded guilty to a number of hacking charges made by the Australian Federal Police. In 2006 he began a website, called WikiLeaks, where people could share whistleblowing material on behaviour deemed immoral. In 2010 sensitive classified United States military material was leaked to the site by Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning, a disaffected intelligence officer with the United States military, who leaked the material because, as she said after her arrest, she wanted to make the world a better place. The prosecutors claimed, however, that her intentions were never altruistic.



AAAP/EPAP/Facundo Arrizabalaga

FIGURE 6.9 Julian Assange, WikiLeaks founder, releasing a statement after former contract worker for the National Security Agency and whistleblower Edward Snowden was charged with espionage by US prosecutors. Snowden released documents showing that the US Government was collecting and storing personal communications without authority to do so.

Some of the information that Manning released that captured the media's attention related to an attack by US forces during which two employees of the Reuters news agency were accidentally shot and killed; and footage of the bombing of a village in Afghanistan, in which up to 140 civilians died. From the US Government's point of view, Manning's release of diplomatic cables was extremely embarrassing and threatened its international relationships. President Obama stated that Manning's actions had put the lives of US soldiers at risk.

Manning was found guilty of possessing and leaking unapproved military material and was sentenced to 35 years in jail. She has since been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize with Julian Assange, who became *Time* magazine's Person of the Year in 2010. In order to avoid arrest and extradition to the USA, where he could face execution, Assange has been given asylum in the Ecuadorean Embassy in London since 2012. WikiLeaks continues to operate, arguing that it releases material that the community has a right to know.

Wikileaks shows the complexity of ethical issues in the digital age. In 2015, Justice Elizabeth Hollingworth of the Victorian Supreme Court claimed that WikiLeaks was undermining the integrity of her court by ignoring a suppression order in Australia's largest bribery case. The federal government argued that this action by WikiLeaks had interfered with Australia's diplomatic relationships with some of its major trading partners as leading government members of other nations were implicated in the claims of corruption that were being made in the case. This raises questions of whether there should be limits to public revelations for the common good and in the national interest. Others have argued that WikiLeaks is leading the world to greater transparency and honesty. Assange argued that any protests represented the government trying to limit the freedom of the press.

Skills: identify, research, explain, analyse, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Analyse Julian Assange's ethical thinking and methods of ethical decision making.
- 2 Which source of ethical authority enabled Julian Assange to challenge the ethical authority of the government of the time?
- 3 How was Assange, as an individual, able to cause major changes that made his society more ethical?
- 4 How can Assange's decision and the subsequent consequences be considered ethical?
- 5 How has this decision changed Julian Assange's life?
- 6 Research either Edward Snowden or Peter Greste and answer questions 1–5 for them as well.
- 7 An Algerian/French philosopher, Albert Camus, once said, 'A free press, of course, can be both good and bad, but a press that is not free can never be anything but bad'. To what extent do you agree? Hold a class debate on this.

Trevor Haken

In 1994, reluctant whistleblower Trevor Haken was faced with the decision to go to gaol for corruption, with fellow corrupt police officers, or go against the culture of the 'police brotherhood' and assist the Wood Royal Commission (1995). His decision had serious detrimental consequences for a number of people, including himself. Read the text below, which is part of a transcript of an interview with Haken, and answer the questions that follow.

TREVOR HAKEN: When I joined the police force, I found it to be a place where you could bond with other men and where there were a number of people who you considered as role models. It was a brotherhood where you fitted in completely, or you didn't fit in at all, and there were very few people in the police force who didn't want to fit in and be part of that brotherhood ... One of the first sayings I can recall being told in the police was that you never trust a man who doesn't drink. And those who didn't drink were virtually ostracised. It wasn't long after I joined the traffic police that I was introduced to the tow truck rackets where tow truck operators would pay kickbacks for being notified of accidents, and it didn't seem so wrong, really, so I just followed the lead. When you start off into corrupt practice, it doesn't take very much to go up the ladder, and the further you go up the ladder the more acceptable things become, until you reach a point where there's nothing that isn't acceptable. The cost of the lifestyle was astronomical. I suppose the truth of it is the worst thing I ever did was accept money from drug dealers. I think I regret every situation that I was involved in. But you can't absolve yourself from the sins that you've committed, can you?

PAUL WHELAN, FORMER NSW POLICE MINISTER: Haken, in fact, was under surveillance by the Crime Commission of NSW prior to the royal commission. I'd describe him as a scoundrel who got caught. He was a dead man walking. The royal commission needed Trevor Haken to roll over. My view is he made that choice because ultimately he had no choice. The evidence was overwhelmingly against him within the Crime Commission and later in the royal commission and he would have served a long period in gaol.

TREVOR HAKEN: I worked for the royal commission for nine months in an undercover capacity and obtained evidence ... Once my cover was blown and because

of the gravity of the information I was about to give to the royal commission, both my family and I were moved into witness protection.

PAUL WHELAN, FORMER NSW POLICE MINISTER: Haken's public acknowledgement as a police informer sent shock waves to those who he had been working with. It came as a bomb. Haken exposed a large number of corrupt police, all the way up to chief superintendent, to assistant commissioner. I would have to say that it was Haken's evidence that was crucial for the success of the royal commission.

TREVOR HAKEN: I was the target of every smear campaign that the New South Wales police could put together. Even my bank accounts with the Police Credit Union were frozen ... My wife decided that the ramifications of the undercover work, the uncertainty for the future, and perhaps other matters, were too much and she decided to divorce me ... I would have been far better off not going on side with the Royal Commission and holding the line with other members of the New South Wales police force.

'Dead Man Talking', *Australian Story*, ABC TV, 10 October 2005. Reproduced by permission of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation – Library Sales © 2016 ABC

Skills: identify, summarise, explain, evaluate, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Offer four reasons why an ethical police force is vital to a pluralist society.
- 2 How did Haken first become corrupt?
- 3 What are the principles and values behind the actions and norms of the 'brotherhood'?
- 4 In what ways was Haken trying to rectify his past by becoming a whistleblower?
- 5 What did Haken (and his family) learn about being a whistleblower?
- 6 What did Haken's actions achieve? Were the consequences of his actions ethical? For whom were they ethical?

Skills: research, select, identify, explain, analyse

- 1 Research an individual who challenged unethical thinking and immoral behaviour. Some examples are provided in the list below. Write a report using the four dot points in question 2.
Lyn White, Karen Silkwood, Michael Gallagher, Erin Brockovich, Frank Serpico, Phil Saviano, Cheryl Eckard, Marc Hodler, Coleen Rowley, Peter Buxtun, Mark Whitacre, Daniel Ellsberg, W Mark Felt, Aaron Swartz, Malala Yousafzai.
- 2 Research an Australian case in which a former member of Christian Assemblies International (CAI) became an informant to expose the abuses of the group's leader, and write a report using the dot points below. See 'Cult of Horrors', July 2014, by Caro Meldrum-Hanna and Janine Cohen on the ABC *Four Corners* website.
 - Analyse their ethical thinking and methods of ethical decision making.
 - Which source of ethical authority enabled them to challenge the ethical authority of others?
 - How were they, as individuals, able to cause major changes that made their societies more ethical?
 - How can their decisions and the subsequent consequences be considered ethical?

PRIVACY VERSUS THE COMMON GOOD

The 21st century is the age of information technology, and with the opportunities, excitement, entertainment and progress that accompany it, there are also profound ethical questions being raised. In particular, there is the tension between the individual's right to privacy and the common good of the community. One technological development is facial recognition technology. Once material found in science-fiction dramas, it is now on the verge of becoming a mainstream tool for security agencies, police forces, armed forces and even the retail industry. Leading the development of this technology are corporate entities such as Google and Facebook. Google claim that they can identify faces with nearly 100 per cent accuracy and that they almost have the capacity to link names with the faces. Facebook has said that it can actually identify people 83 per cent of the time even when their faces aren't visible.

There are those who argue that this technology is ethically sound as it supports the protection of life and the good it will produce will far outweigh any evil.

They argue that it will:

- give police forces concrete evidence that will link criminals to a crime and, in so doing, deter people from committing crimes.
- provide border protection agencies with a tool that will facilitate airport security checks and may more efficiently and reliably stop terrorist attacks, as the computer will be able to match those in the queues with those on alert lists.
- replace the need for ID checks, passports and most passwords.
- make shopping easy as signs will recognise the client and direct them to appropriate shops.

Their view is that privacy is not an absolute right and that the security of the nation and the community is more important.

Those who argue against the technology say:

- it is surveillance without permission and a major breach of privacy – it is a civil liberties issue.
- our face is profoundly our own and that facial recognition technology makes our faces public property.

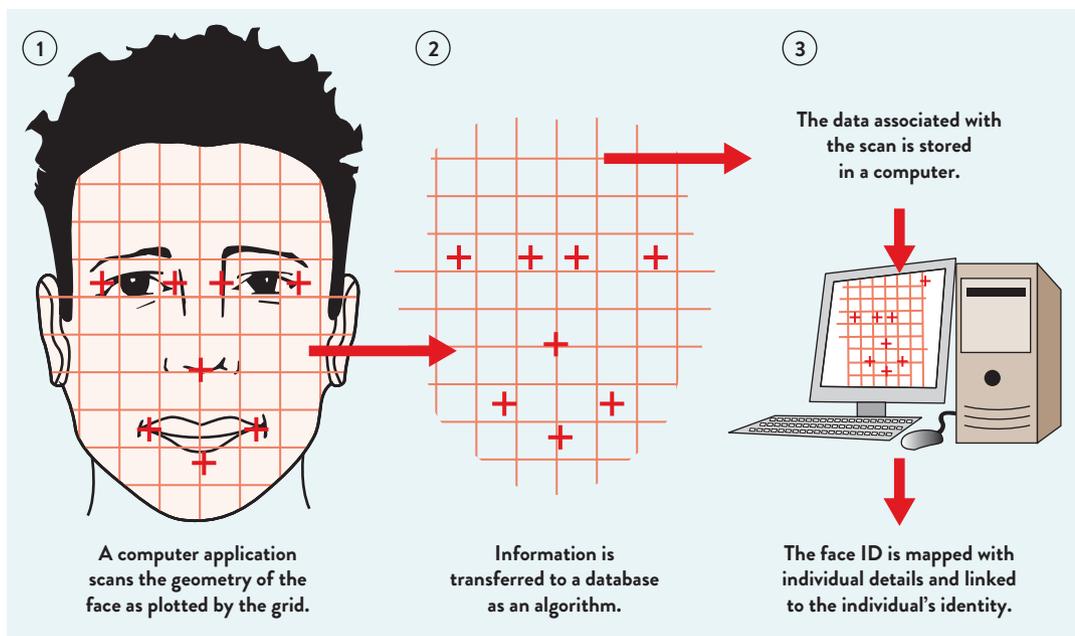


FIGURE 6.10 The processes of facial recognition. What ethical concerns does this technology raise?

- there will be errors and these will be difficult to disprove.
- this technology in the hands of criminals is very dangerous as social media will link faces, names and addresses (through tracking of mobile phones), allowing criminals to have information that will assist them in robberies, assaults, kidnapping and identity theft.
- it will encourage hacking and theft of people's personal images.

They argue that privacy is essential for the integrity of the individual.

Skills: identify, analyse, evaluate, research, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Name some of the TV shows, movies or novels that explore people losing their right to privacy.
- 2 What might be three consequences of an invasion of privacy? Be specific in your outline of the consequence.
- 3 Have a class discussion about the benefits of social media versus the need for personal privacy.
- 4 Why is facial recognition different from putting your image on a social media site?
- 5 Throughout history there have been times when the government has misused its power and invaded the privacy of individuals. Research invasions of privacy by the state and see what factors they have in common.
- 6 Think of three different ways in which a criminal might use facial recognition technology.
- 7 How do you make decisions when there is no clear-cut good?

Skills: identify, analyse, evaluate, interpret

- 1 List the reasons why people should value their privacy.
- 2 Go through the list, putting a tick next to those reasons you think are important and a cross next to those you think are exaggerated or unimportant.
- 3 You are put in a position where you have to choose between privacy and security. Which would you choose? Write 150 words explaining your choice.
- 4 What methods of ethical decision making underpin government decisions?
- 5 How might commercial interests such as Google, Facebook, Instagram or retailers impact on the development and use of this technology?

LIFE AS A MINORITY

It has been said that the measure of how ethical a society is can be seen in the way in which it treats its minorities, its underprivileged and those without a voice or who are unable to access their voice in a pluralist society.

The following extract from Theodore Dalrymple (a pseudonym for Anthony Daniels, a psychologist who worked in a hospital and prison in Birmingham, England) is polemical, which means that it is 'attacking' in tone in order to provoke discussion. It discusses religious currents within the culture



Fairfax Syndication/The Age/John Donegan

FIGURE 6.11 A member of a numerous minority. What does this image show about the society of these people?

of the underclass in England, and the way in which they can give a voice to the culture and world of the housing estates. The book from which the extract comes asserts that years of negating people's responsibility for their actions only leads to bigger issues and harsher consequences. Accordingly, the negation of personal responsibility by government agencies has destroyed the mores of the underclass living in the developed world and made them more violent and predatory than those of the underclass who live in developing countries.

ironist

A person who consistently uses words to give a meaning opposite to the literal meaning of the word

Life at the bottom

... overlooking the church – towering above it, in fact – is a 20-storey block of public housing, to which the **ironists** of the Housing Department have assigned a name full of rural connotations (the more rural the name given to such blocks, I have discovered, the larger the surrounding area of concrete). I know this particular block quite well, having paid two house calls as a doctor there – accompanied by the riot police to protect me, a very necessary precaution as it transpired.

Another of my patients who lives there has repeatedly stabbed herself in the abdomen (five times so far) in an attempt, so far unavailing, to get the Housing Department – whose concern for its tenants makes the average aristocratic landlord of the 18th century look positively sentimental – to move her somewhere less violent. The department has so far stuck to its opinion that she is adequately housed, by which it means that she has four walls and a roof that is impermeable to water, if not to noise or intruders.

So I think I know what Marx meant when he wrote that religion is the sigh of the oppressed, the heart of a heartless world, the opium of the people. Of course, he misidentified the oppressor: in present-day England it is not the bloated plutocrat; it is your drug-dealing, rock-music-playing, baseball bat wielding neighbour ... Inside

Alamy Stock Photo/Matthew Chattlie



FIGURE 6.12 The Jesus Army on the march in London in 2014. What does this image suggest about some of the activities of the Jesus Army?

the [local] Pentecostal church the pastor addresses a large congregation that knows only too well what it is to live in the shadow of lawlessness, where **psychopathy** rules. He quotes the case of a seven-year-old girl, placed on a table in a pub by her mother and sold to the highest bidder to abuse as he liked for the night – a story I should be inclined to dismiss as apocryphal were I not to hear equivalently dreadful tales every day in my hospital.

This congregation has one striking feature: it is half black and half white. This is all the more remarkable because, within a few hundred yards, there are pubs that are racially segregated, where a man of the wrong race is as welcome as a blasphemer in Iran. But in the church the races are united by their mutual experience of the moral squalor that surrounds them and by the failure of the public authorities to tackle it in any way, or even to acknowledge its existence.

Once more they seek assurance that their suffering is not without meaning. Congregant after congregant speaks of delinquency and drug taking, of illegitimacy and domestic violence, of criminality and cruelty. They all pray for the conversion of the world and, exulting in its imminent prospect, speak in tongues. This paralinguistic gibberish is uttered with the deepest feeling: it is a **catharsis**, a release.

The desperate search for order in the midst of anarchy often renders people vulnerable to self-proclaimed authorities who rush in to fill the moral vacuum. A patient of mine recently revealed to me the world of religious cults that flourishes, anonymously and unseen by the rest of us, in the modern city. ...

Despite its appearance of religious indifference, then, our city has an unexpectedly intense religious life. In an age of relativism, people seek certainty; when violence strikes randomly, they seek transcendent meaning; when crime goes unpunished by the secular power, they seek refuge in divine law; when indifference to others reigns, they seek community. Everyone to whom I spoke thought there was some kind of subterranean religious revival in our slums. And as far as The 'Jesus Army' is concerned, the more degraded the World, the richer the harvest for the Kingdom. Like Lenin and Mao, it knows the contradictions should be heightened. As Lenin so charmingly put it, the worse, the better.

Theodore Dalrymple, *Life at the Bottom: The Worldview that Makes the Underclass*, Ivan R Dee, 2003 (first published 2001), pp. 97–8

psychopathy

A mental disorder manifested by antisocial, extreme egocentricity, amoral behaviour

catharsis

Purifying emotional release that restores the spirit; a release of strong repressed emotions

Jesus Army

Evangelical Christian movement based in the UK

Skills: summarise, explain, analyse, evaluate, interpret, synthesise

Read the extract from *Life at the Bottom*, then answer the following questions.

- 1 How do you react to the life of the underclass that is portrayed in this extract?
- 2 What are the ethical perspectives and moral values in the underclass world Dalrymple describes?
- 3 What role does religion play in the life of the underclass that is described by Dalrymple?
- 4 Why are religious ethical ideals so important for Dalrymple's patients?
- 5 Draw a mind map of an ethical issue related to the underclass in this extract.
- 6 What should society do to address the issues discussed above, according to an ethical perspective from a particular religious or philosophical tradition?
- 7 Research the 'Jesus Army'. Is its approach to the underclass ethical?

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY INTERVENTION

The central ethical issue that underpins this case study affects minority groups everywhere. Ought a government, especially in a democracy, take actions that discriminate against minority groups? The following extract is from the introduction to a report, prepared by the group Concerned Australians, entitled *This Is What We Said*. The report focuses on the period after the NT Government put in place an inquiry into the protection of Aboriginal children from sexual abuse, which was reported on by Pat Anderson and Rex Wild QC in *Little Children Are Sacred*, released on 15 June 2007.

The report brought attention to alleged serious problems of sexual abuse, and other abuse, of Aboriginal children and highlighted the failure of governments over decades to provide basic services and address the growing problems in the areas of health, rehabilitation, education and housing. The Anderson and Wild report offered 97 recommendations focused on the areas of education, alcohol reduction and rehabilitation, family support services, empowerment of Aboriginal communities and the appointment of a commissioner for children and young people.

In the light of what was to follow, the recommendation to empower communities was significant. In the summary of the report it states, 'Communities can take more control and make decisions about the future. The Inquiry's report suggests ways in which this can happen including the role men and women can play, the introduction of community justice groups and better dialogue between mainstream society and Aboriginal communities.'

Before due consideration could be given to the report, the Federal Government announced its plan to introduce the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), or the Intervention as it is more commonly called. This happened on the 21 June 2007, just six days after the release of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report and during the lead up to the 2007 federal election.

The Intervention required the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act in the Northern Territory and the imposition of 'special measures' on 73 prescribed Aboriginal communities. The Intervention was rolled out by the Australian Defence Force under the leadership of Major General Chalmers.

The 'special measures' introduced were:

- income management whereby 50% of welfare monies are quarantined and controlled through the use of a 'basics' card
- five-year leases whereby the government compulsorily takes over people's land on leases
- alcohol restrictions imposing large fines for possessing alcohol in restricted areas
- licensing of community stores
- establishment of Government Business Managers in each community
- pornography restrictions
- control over publicly funded computers
- law enforcement measures.

Source: Concerned Australians, *This Is What We Said*

Over the years, the special measures have been adjusted and reinterpreted; however, the intervention remains and is having an impact on remote Aboriginal communities. The Rudd/Gillard governments decided to apply income-management measures to other areas of Australia with high welfare dependence and, by doing so, they argued, reinstated the Racial Discrimination

Act. Aboriginal elder Rosalie Kunoth Monks has argued that the Intervention and its consequences have presented the Aboriginal people with a threat to the existence of communities in the Northern Territory. It has led to a more focused debate on empowering Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, either through recognition in the Constitution or with a treaty.

Skills: select, explain, analyse, evaluate, research, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Write a brief outline of the Racial Discrimination Act.
- 2 Why did the Northern Territory Emergency Response require the setting aside of this act?
- 3 Examine the 'special measures' and discuss how each of the measures would help address the concerns of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report.
- 4 The Intervention was introduced just before a federal election. Prior to this, before another federal election, the same government had initiated a major policy response to a ship named *MV Tampa*. Research the *Tampa* and write a paragraph discussing the link between political and ethical issues.



FIGURE 6.13 Still from the video of the speech by Kevin Andrews, MP, on the Stronger Futures legislation (the Gillard Government's changes to the intervention) in the House of Representatives, Parliament of Australia, on 27 February 2012. What does this image say about the democratic political process? Are there ethical implications of this?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYw3BKOTXqw&feature=youtu.be&a=>

Professor Larissa Behrendt outlined the problem with the government's approach.

In many ways, the Intervention in the Northern Territory is a textbook example of why government policies continue to fail Aboriginal people:

- the policy approach was ideologically led rather than making any reference to the research or understandings about what actually works on the ground
- in fact, the policy approach contained in the Intervention actually lies in direct contradiction of what the research shows us works and what experts recommend as appropriate action
- the rhetoric of doing what is in the best interests of Aboriginal people, or children, masked a list of other policy agendas – private ownership of land and welfare reform in particular – that were unrelated to effective approaches to dealing with systemic problems of violence and abuse and instead sought to undermine community control over their land and resources, and
- the approach is paternalistic and top-down rather than a collaborative approach that seeks to include Aboriginal people in the outcomes.

Source: Professor Larissa Behrendt, 2009 Juanita Nielsen Memorial Lecture, *Indigenous people and human rights: a litmus test for social policy*



FIGURE 6.14 An Amnesty International report in 2011 found that about 500 homeland communities are being left to wither as the government starves them of essential services. This is an image of a young mother with her daughter in a community named Utopia, in the Northern Territory. Can you identify any aspects in the photo that you would call utopian (the ideal vision for a community)?



FIGURE 6.15 There are now whole communities at risk of displacement from their traditional lands. What ethical issues can you discern from this image?

Skills: explain, analyse, evaluate

- 1 Examine each of the dot points in Larissa Behrendt's outline and evaluate whether they are identifying an ethical problem. Explain why or why not.
- 2 Using the points above, create a step-by-step plan of action for the government to enable it to introduce policies that are ethical.
- 3 Aboriginal elder Rosalie Kunoth Monks says that Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory are facing their greatest challenge, another Stolen Generation, as schools from major cities come in and take their children away to be assimilated into mainstream culture. What ethical responsibilities do schools have who offer education to Aboriginal students who are boarding away from their communities?

Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as an ethical issue

There is debate about whether recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would help to resolve the problem of discrimination. This is why some people argue for recognition:

I hope that future generations of Australians will grow up learning about the rich and impressive first cultures of our country – and constitutional recognition is part of achieving that.

Adam Goodes, Australian of the Year 2014

This is much more than a question of symbolism, this is a question of national wellbeing and national identity. It's about coming to terms with who we are as a nation and deciding who we want to be in the future.

Noel Pearson, Cape York Institute

I think if we get recognition we can move forward in leaps and bounds. I believe it will heal a lot of wounds and say to First Australians that we are an important part of this country. If we get recognition in my lifetime, I would die a happy woman.

Jill Gallagher, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
Chief Executive Officer

Righting the historical wrong that has seen Indigenous Australians wilfully left out of Australian's Constitution will be a powerful step towards true inclusion for Indigenous Australians.

Gail Kelly, former Westpac Chief Executive Officer

Skills: explain, analyse, research, evaluate

- 1 Using the quotations above, write a paragraph explaining why recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the constitution is or is not an ethical decision.
- 2 Research why some people think we need a treaty.
- 3 Which, in your opinion, is the more ethical way to move forward in the relationship with Australia's First People: no change; recognition in the constitution; or a treaty?

Communication, consultation, cooperation – the only way!

The Northern Territory Emergency Response was one way in which wider Australian society has regulated the Aboriginal community, largely without input from elders and without drawing on the ethical systems within their communities. In contrast to this approach, the Victorian Government program Sharing Messages did just the opposite.

The Victorian Government's Sharing Messages initiative highlights a different approach to intervening in Indigenous families. It includes the proper training of elders and convenors to make ethical decisions regarding the removal of children from families and their relocation with other family members. Sharing Messages encourages consideration of Indigenous themes, creating a **genogram** of the family stakeholders to strengthen family identity, and a process known as the Muthi Miah Aboriginal Family Preservation Program. This process was developed by the Office

genogram

A diagram of a family structure including medical conditions, repetitive behaviour patterns, causes of death

for Children, Child Protection and Family Services Branch, Victorian Government Department of Human Services, in 2005. This four-part process involves ‘Sitting and Talking; Hunting and Gathering – Casework with Family; Song and Dance as well as Movement between the Message Sticks’. It also incorporates sacred artwork and beliefs that are sacred to the Wattie Wattie people of the Mallee region.

This initiative includes a fully supported training program, facilitators and a training video of a hypothetical family that has dysfunctional elements as well as family members who are responsible (such as heads of families) and can assist children as part of the solution. The ethical approach taken in the program acknowledges Indigenous ethical systems.

The participation of the elders in collaboration with the state government has provided an ethical framework that supports existing Indigenous community structures. It is interesting to note that Pastor Doug Nicholls (see Chapter 5, page 139) and his wife Gladys Nicholls supported the use of the customary message sticks to be adapted for the purposes of the program. It also represents the best practice according to Mick Gooda, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, who claimed in a speech to the United Nations:

Much of the failure of service delivery to Indigenous people and communities, and the lack of sustainable outcomes, is a direct result of the failure to effectively engage with Indigenous people and of the failure to invest in building the capacity of Indigenous communities to participate.

For the Northern Territory Emergency Response to move forward, and become ethical and effective, it needs to be more **bipartisan** in its approach and involve collaboration in a way that is similar to the Victorian Government’s Sharing Messages program.

bipartisan

Involving two parties or groups equally

AAPI/AP Photo/Kristen Geineau



FIGURE 6.16 This was compulsory signage outside the communities affected by the Intervention. The elders in the communities expressed great concern about these signs. Why might they have taken this view?

Skills: explain, analyse, evaluate, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Compare the approach of the Victorian Government to that of the federal government on the issue of family interventions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- 2 Who is involved in determining what the 'proper' training for elders and convenors is?
- 3 How can the Muthi Miah program be seen as ethical?
- 4 Which aspects of Indigenous spirituality and community are used in the development of the Muthi Miah training package and resources?

Research

- 5 Research what Marion Scrymgour calls the 'first intervention' (the Stolen Generations). Compare and contrast the 'first intervention' with the Northern Territory Emergency Response, which began in 2007. According to which ethical perspective are both interventions ethical?
- 6 Research the statistics on life expectancy and incidents of curable diseases in Indigenous communities compared to the national average. What do these statistics reveal about the ethical nature of Australian society?

Skills: identify, analyse, evaluate

Research

Choose an ethical issue of concern to Australia today. Write a detailed report using the following headings:

The issue

Describe the issue, establishing why it is an ethical issue and why it is of concern to Australia.

Ethical perceptions and methods

Outline the various arguments of the different individuals, groups, organisations or institutions involved in the debate about the ethical issue.

In this you should clearly identify the principles, values, assumptions and methods of ethical decision making used in their arguments.

Ethical authorities

Identify who or what is being used to give credibility to the various arguments. Evaluate whether these authorities are appropriate and reliable for the issue under debate.

Evaluate whether these authorities are being used correctly in the debate.

Conclusion

Identify any major change or result of the debate on this ethical issue.

Explain whether such change or result is an ethical solution to the issue.

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://religionsocvce.nelsonnet.com.au>



REVISION

A Short-answer questions

- 1 Explain the difference between ethics and morality.
- 2 What makes an issue an ethical issue?
- 3 What are moral values?
- 4 What is the conscience?
- 5 What are ethical authorities?
- 6 What are ethical codes?
- 7 What is normative behaviour?
- 8 What is reasoning?
- 9 Explain what it means to make a moral decision based on the ontological approach to ethical thinking.
- 10 Explain what it means to make a moral decision based on the deontological approach to ethical thinking.
- 11 Explain what it means to make a moral decision based on the relativist approach to ethical thinking.
- 12 Explain what it means to make a moral decision based on the absolutist approach to ethical thinking.

B Extended-response questions

Develop a clearly reasoned response of 300 words for each of the following questions.

- 13 Can we say anything we want to, or are there limitations?
- 14 Does social media allow too much freedom of speech?
- 15 Is capital punishment ever ethical?
- 16 What is wrong with materialism?

EXTENSION

Researching ethical issues

- 1 Choose two ethical issues being debated in a contemporary pluralist society.
- 2 Clearly state in what way the two issues you have chosen are ethical issues.
- 3 Write up as much as you can about each of your ethical issues, referring to the worksheet, *Process for analysing ethical issues*.
- 4 Now you need to find some background information:
 - a from at least one religious tradition that engaged with each of the issues
 - b from individuals and groups in the wider society that engaged with the issues.
- 5 Find out what each of your selected participants contributed to the debate on the ethical issue.
- 6 Explain the ethical decision-making method used by each of the participants in the debate.
- 7 Write 200 words explaining which of the participants in the debate on the ethical issue behaved ethically.



Researching ethical issues



Process for analysing ethical issues

The theory of natural law

In the development of Christian teaching, the natural philosopher Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) outlined a theory of natural law. Research his expression of this theory to answer the following questions.

- 1 State clearly in your own words at least two main contentions of the natural law theory as developed by Aquinas.
- 2 Explain what each of the contentions would mean when applied to making ethical decisions.
- 3 Apply Aquinas' theory of natural law to **one** of these persistent ethical issues:
 - abortion
 - euthanasia
 - capital punishment.
- 4 Explain how Aquinas' theory of natural law is involved in the ethical discussions about stem cell research.

UNIT 3

The search for meaning



Area of Study 3.1: Responding to the search for meaning

Area of Study 3.2: Expressing meaning

**Area of Study 3.3: Significant life experience, religious beliefs
and faith**



Chapter 7

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND POSSIBILITIES

Outcome to be demonstrated

Discussion of the analysed nature and purpose of religion and religious beliefs

Focus questions

- ▶ Is there a transcendent power or principle?
- ▶ What is the meaning and purpose of life?
- ▶ Why is there suffering?
- ▶ Is there life after death?
- ▶ How should humans relate to each other?
- ▶ What is the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation?
- ▶ What is the connection between the beliefs related to these questions?



Terminology

THE NATURE AND PURPOSES OF RELIGION

From the earliest of times, people have found themselves in communities sharing stories; asking the ‘big questions’ of life; grappling with moral problems; and looking for inspiration. The Roman armies, as they marched and conquered, noticed this pattern of human behaviour. It was familiar to them from their own experience and, out of this recognition, came a word. The Romans came to use the term *religio* for this social movement. The Roman philosopher Cicero (107 BCE–47 BCE) linked *religio* to the verb *relegere*, meaning to re-read, to illustrate the need for communities to go over texts, eventually providing a collection of customs and laws to be handed onto future generations.

A later writer, Lactantius (240–320 CE), argued the word came from *religare*, meaning to fasten or bind. This definition allowed for the development of a view that religion’s purpose is to bind the individual with the transcendent; and the individual with others in the community who shared the same world view.

As the purpose of religion became important for the political administration of societies, a definition was necessary. Religion came to be seen as a system for organising and expressing respect in ‘the worship of the gods’ (in the words of Cicero, *cultus deorum*).

Modern **sociologists** have suggested that the purpose of religion is to help shape society through providing ideas that support progress, such as the Protestant work ethic. **Anthropologists** have argued that religion expresses what the whole community believes to be the meaning and purpose of life. This is done through ceremony or ritual and in this way religion stabilises and unifies a society by giving an identity to its members. A more recent view is that religion’s purpose is to provide a way of belonging – for both the community and the individual.

One way of clarifying the purpose of religion is to look at what religious traditions commonly offer the societies in which they operate. Often their purpose is to provide society with:

- a belief in a transcendent authority that provides the society with common values
- a **metanarrative**, or truth narrative, that provides a way of making sense of ‘the world’, including its origins and end
- a symbolic understanding of mystery or that which remains inexplicable
- rituals and symbols that designate significant moments in the life of the individual or the community

- ethical principles and moral values that guide human behaviour
- objects that are sacred and inspire the community through their beauty, either as ideas or as art
- a way of expressing individual or communal emotions
- a world view that gives an individual’s life meaning and purpose.

These purposes are also part of the nature of religion. While there are many viewpoints about what religion is, it is agreed they share some common features, called the aspects of religion. There is difference of opinion about these, too, but generally the following are recognised as relevant to all religions though with different emphases: beliefs; sacred stories;

sociologist

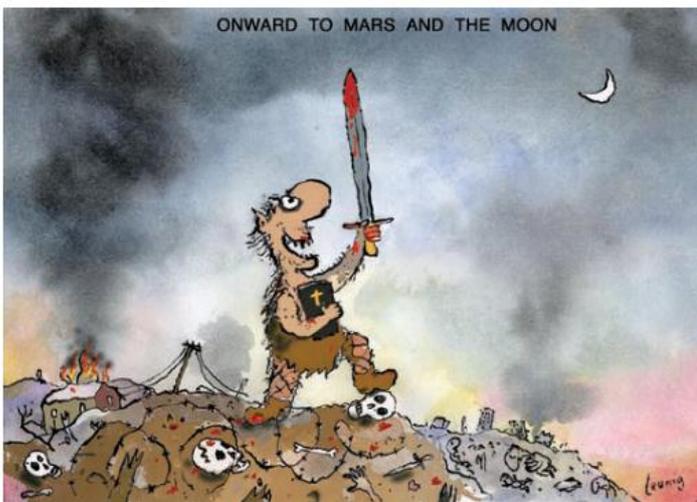
A person who conducts the scientific study of the organisation of communities and features that define them

anthropologist

A person who studies humanity’s past and present within a cultural context

metanarrative

An overarching story that gives meaning and purpose



Michael Leunig

FIGURE 7.1 ‘Onward to Mars and the Moon’, a cartoon by Michael Leunig. How would religions approach the content of this cartoon?

spaces, places, times and artifacts that have become sacred to a religion; texts, both sacred and in other forms composed over time; rituals; symbols; ethics; social structures of the religion; and the spiritual experience that is nurtured and facilitated by the other aspects. These aspects of religion are explained in detail in Chapter 1, pages 18–31.

Skills: explain, interpret

- 1 Explain in your own words the purposes of religion.
- 2 What do the quotation marks around 'the world' in the second dot point imply?

In a world that is becoming increasingly pluralist and multicultural, societies are being faced with difficult tensions, even conflicts. Some of these are grounded in differing perceptions of religion and its purpose in society. Examples can be seen in the economic arena in discussions of materialism, state support of education and taxation of religions. In the social dimension there are debates about gender and social responsibilities. There are discussions about the state handing over responsibility for social welfare to religious denominations. Also, there are political discussions concerning secularism and political bias.

Skills: define, interpret, research

- 1 Which areas of society are influenced by religions?
- 2 Define materialism and then explore different religious traditions' attitudes to materialism.
- 3 Report on an example of the influence of a religious tradition in social welfare by using the White Pages to find the data for that tradition's work in society.

Today the definition and purpose of religion are under stress because there is so much fluctuation. Some traditional mainstream religions are declining while others are maintaining or increasing their influence, there are new religious movements arising, and the influence of Eastern religions is growing (refer to Chapter 3).

- There has been a shift towards spirituality for those who are not comfortable with the extremes of either mainstream religions or atheism. Religious communities in these groups focus more on providing symbolic outlets and an experiential community.
- There are **sects**, some cults, and new religious movements that mix Eastern and Western ideas. Though small in number, these offer sociologists a way of exploring the needs of contemporary society and the influence of syncretism as West and East meet.
- Some of these groups have developed religions around the integration of body, mind and **soul** with holistic health becoming the purpose of religious membership.
- There has been an increase in political religious adherence, where people are linking religious beliefs with political ideology, leading to a rise in more **fundamentalist** groups.

So even with such diversification in religions it seems that religion as a concept will endure as it performs a necessary function in society. However, the definition of religion will differ over time, place and cultural group as society's needs evolve.

sect

Breakaway group from a religious tradition that may have different interpretations and expressions of beliefs

soul

The life spirit of a person, the spark of life that makes the person an individual in relationship with God

fundamentalist

Belonging to a religious movement, within a tradition, that insists that the sacred texts must be understood literally – without interpretation

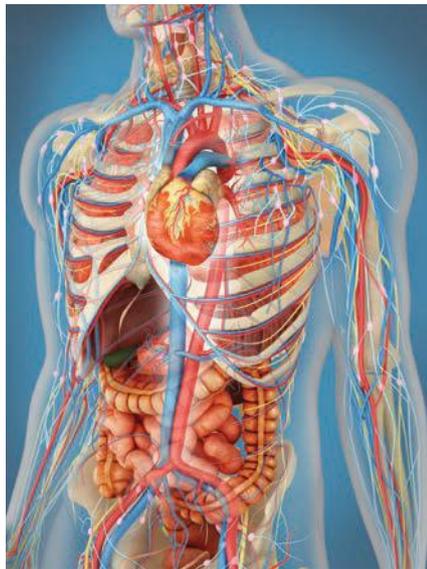
Skills: interpret, analyse, research

- 1 Discuss each of the following stresses on religion:
 - decline in membership
 - maintaining influence
 - being a new and developing religious movement
 - engaging with political or legal requirements
 - engaging with intellectual and scientific developments.
- 2 How might meditation practices be seen as an example of religious syncretism?
- 3 List five other examples of religious syncretism in Australian society.
- 4 Find the website of an Australian political group whose goals are based on religious beliefs. Outline the influence of religion on this group.



Newspix/Peter Clark

FIGURE 7.2 Many churches, notably the Anglican Church in Gosford, NSW, feature billboards that reflect on contemporary political and social issues. Which of the stresses in question 1, above, is represented in this image?



Getty Images/Stocktrek Images

FIGURE 7.3 What questions arise from looking at the human body in its extraordinary complexity and harmony?

have enabled humans to propose many answers to these questions of ‘how’ and to propose explanations for the ‘why’.

Philosophers, **theologians**, scientists, artists, musicians and writers have all contributed to this ongoing search for the meaning of existence. Some explanations endure, standing the tests of time and culture. Other explanations that once satisfied are later disproved or rejected because of apparent or real failure to give meaning.

THE GENERAL NATURE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

The search for meaning is a fundamental human response to life, which is both universal and personal. Individuals experience moments when they have been amazed or overwhelmed by the vast quantity of detail and diversity in the world around them. What questions come to mind? How does one deal with them? What questions arise from looking at the human body in its extraordinary complexity and harmony? How do we make sense of the mystery and complexity of life?

Humans across time and place have similarly pondered the wonders of nature and life, and have reflected on the mysteries of how and why it all came to be, and how and why some things keep going while others cease to exist. Gradually, over millennia of human existence, the combination of keen observation, creative imagination and insightful and logical thinking

theologian

Expert in religion; university scholar who studies God, gods and divine principles

Don Quixote and the Prayer of the Workers' Struggle

An example of the way in which the search for meaning in life is both universal and personal is found in Cervantes's character of Don Quixote in his novel of the same name. In the musical version, *Man of La Mancha*, in the song 'The Impossible Dream', Quixote, who believes he is a knight, sings of his chivalrous duty and honour. Although deluded about his identity, Quixote is totally committed to what he believes is the ultimate human endeavour.

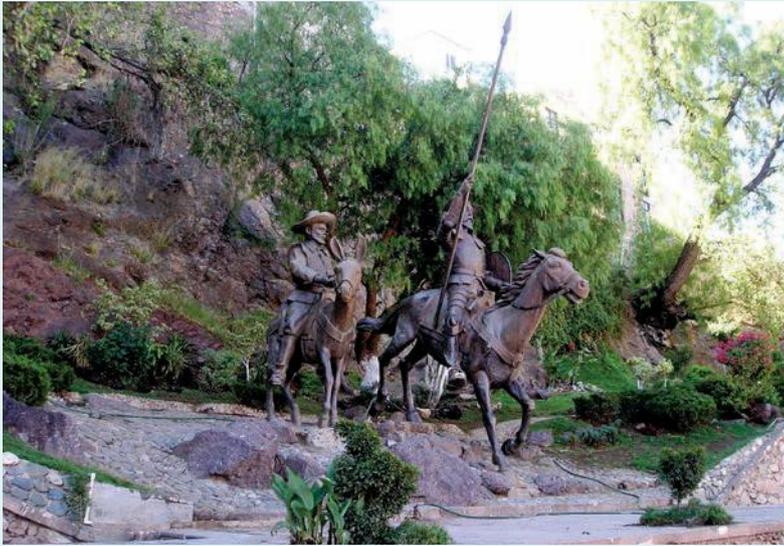


FIGURE 7.4 Statue of Don Quixote and his servant Sancho Panza in Guanajuato, Mexico. Is Don Quixote's dream impossible?

Arizona-born farm worker and civil rights activist Cesar Chavez (1927–1993) found meaning by dedicating his life to improving the rights of Latin American workers in the USA.

Read Cesar Chavez' 'Prayer of the Farm Workers' Struggle' online and answer the questions that follow.

Skills: summarise, research, interpret

- 1 Outline what Chavez is saying is the meaning and purpose of life.
- 2 Research the lyrics to the song 'The Impossible Dream' from *Man of La Mancha*. What does the character Don Quixote consider to be the meaning of life?
- 3 To what extent would Cesar Chavez agree with Don Quixote's vision and where would he differ?

The beliefs expressed by Chavez and Cervantes come from their engagement with life and their testing of teachings that have been handed down to them from generation to generation through family, culture and religious teaching. The impetus for their beliefs was their personal experience, which they went on to interpret through an objective set of beliefs. This raises the question of the relationship between experience, religious beliefs and **reason**. This is an important relationship as some traditions claim that both **faith** and reason must be respected; however, there are other traditions that accept that beliefs can never be proven by reason. Both Chavez's and Cervantes's beliefs seem to be strongly religious and firmly grounded in the Christian belief in sacrifice, **redemption**, liberation

reason

The capacity to think and make logical decisions through the intellect

faith

An internalisation of religious beliefs by an individual to accept their truth

redemption

The action of God in saving the Hebrew people from their enemies; may be both spiritual and physical salvation; the action of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, which ransoms humanity from sin into the grace of God. Redemption is a gift from God by which adherents have been saved.

and salvation – but they also illustrate the power of religious beliefs to shape a world view, to provide answers to questions of meaning and purpose. The same approach could be applied to the words and actions of individuals in other religious traditions.

Within religious traditions there are beliefs that give the tradition their unique identity. Some of these are **foundational beliefs** that emerged at the inception of the tradition and helped to define the tradition from other groups at the time. These beliefs shape the tradition's world view; the beliefs that underpin this world view are the **fundamental beliefs** of the tradition. Over time, further religious beliefs will develop that are not integral to the tradition's survival but which shape the character of the tradition; these beliefs are sometimes referred to as **subsequent beliefs**. It is often these beliefs that help to distinguish between denominations and schools of a religious tradition.

foundational belief

A belief that existed at the beginning of the religious tradition and is essential to the tradition

fundamental belief

A belief upon which other beliefs have been built that, if removed, would cause the collapse of the tradition

subsequent belief

A belief that is not integral to a religious tradition but that helps to shape the character of a religious tradition

Skills: define, research, explain, identify

- 1 Define faith in your own words.
- 2 What are existential questions?
- 3 Research a poem, short story or novel that tells the story of a person in a religious tradition other than the one you have been studying. Outline their story and explain what answers they have to existential questions.
- 4 Identify a foundational, a fundamental and a subsequent belief in the tradition you have been studying.
- 5 Outline the relationship between faith and reason in the religious tradition you have been studying.

WHAT MAKES BELIEFS DISTINCTIVE?



Trinity

One of the principal doctrines of the Christian tradition that expresses belief in one God as three distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit – a triune God

FIGURE 7.5 Painting of the Holy Trinity, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. What understanding of the Trinity does this image convey?

Alamy Stock Photo/JTB MEDIA CREATION, Inc.

Some religions share beliefs with other religions, particularly if they were inspired or originated from one another. What is distinctive can be a difficult question; for example, in the Christian tradition, Roman Catholicism shares beliefs with other world religions and with other denominations within Christianity. A foundational and fundamental belief in Judaism, Christianity and Islam is **monotheism**. So it is a foundational and fundamental belief, but not a **distinctive belief**; it is their particular interpretation that is distinctive for those traditions. In a similar manner, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism share common foundational beliefs such as the law of **karma** and **reincarnation**.

Most religions experience diversity among their members, which can lead to **sectarianism** and the establishment of new denominations within the tradition.

The **Catechism** of the Catholic Church (CCC) identifies the Trinity as the central mystery of Christian tradition and ‘the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light which illumines them’. The belief in the Trinity is a distinctive belief in Christianity as it is not found in other world faiths – however, it is not distinctive to Roman Catholicism as the Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant traditions share this belief.

Consequently, the individual identity of a religious tradition can often be found in the subsequent, derivative or subordinate beliefs related to foundational or fundamental beliefs.

What distinguishes each as separate religious traditions are the:

- different emphases on a certain belief
- different interpretations
- abandonment or rejection of elements of the belief
- development of subsequent, subordinate beliefs that are derivative from the belief
- variations in the expression of the belief.

A CASE STUDY OF DISTINCTIVE BELIEF: BUDDHISM

Buddhism has such a strong academic approach and tradition that it has often been called a philosophy rather than a religion. The Buddha is not a god, although Buddhism does acknowledge gods as part of the cultural heritage of humanity. The lack of a god has enabled Buddhism to attract adherents and to coexist peacefully with other religious traditions in societies across the world, but most notably in Asia. Buddhists are required to ‘test’ the truths of everything, including Buddhism itself. The rigor of the process requires hours of meditation over teachings and big questions such as ‘Who am I?’ In pondering and meditating on such deep questions the path to **enlightenment** may be revealed to adherents. Buddha’s own path to enlightenment involved his penetrating insights into spiritual practices of his time and culture. It led him to leave the path of the Hindu ascetics and form the Middle Path.

While meditating near a river he overheard a music lesson being taught on a



FIGURE 7.6 How is the act of fasting represented in this image? Are there clues as to why the Buddha did not achieve enlightenment this way?

monotheism
The belief in one God

distinctive belief
A belief that is found only in that religious tradition or is interpreted in a unique way in that tradition

karma
The total effect of a person’s actions and conduct in the cycle of life and afterlife

reincarnation
The belief that after death the soul is reborn in another physical form

sectarianism
Adherence to a particular religious group or sect, often used to describe conflict between sects or denominations

catechism
A collection of the essential teachings of a Christian tradition

enlightenment
The awakening of an understanding that transcends desire and suffering

boat. The teacher said to the student when tuning their instrument words to the effect that if the string is too slack it will not play, and if it is too taut it will break; it needs a combination of both states to be in tune. This message resonated with Buddha and he related it to his extreme attempts to reach enlightenment through a punishing regime of eating very little. After several years he had not achieved enlightenment via any of the means practised by the holy men. His questioning of their extreme spiritual practices led him to develop the Middle Path, the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path of Buddhism.

Skills: explain, describe, interpret

- 1 What does the act of questioning mean in your religion, society and culture?
- 2 Have you pondered the meaning of a big question such as 'Who am I?' What is your answer?

A CASE STUDY OF DISTINCTIVE BELIEF: CHRISTIANITY

Roman Catholics belong to communities of people who share beliefs. The gatherings usually happen in **parishes** where the belief in God is the focus of their prayers and liturgies – and leads them to live out this belief in their daily lives.

They believe in one God, who is Trinitarian in nature. The first person of the Trinity the Almighty Father, the Creator; the second person Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer of humankind; and the third person the Holy Spirit, who is active in the world, transforming it into societies of peace, love and justice.

The main liturgical celebration for Roman Catholics is Easter, which celebrates the **Paschal mystery**. However, the Eucharist is the celebration that nourishes the community in its day-to-day challenges in the world. In the Eucharist, Catholics believe they are nourished by the bread and wine – the Body and the Blood of Jesus Christ.

Roman Catholics believe that God has given the Church a structure to assist them as they work to create God's reign on Earth. They believe that the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, has a special role as the 'visible source of unity' for all Catholics (CCC 880).

Catholics believe that in seeking God they must use both faith and reason, as faith and reason interplay to reveal God revealing God's self. Catholics believe that God's revelation is given through both **scripture** and through the tradition of the Church. They believe that salvation comes through both faith and good works – that both are fed by the other. Catholics believe that there is unity in diversity – that God is inviting all to the table. That is why Catholicism is 'catholic' (meaning universal).

Skills: summarise, define, explain, interpret, research

- 1 Use the above explanation of Roman Catholicism to identify:
 - a Which of the statements are foundational, fundamental and subsequent to Roman Catholicism?
 - b Which of the statements are distinctive to the tradition – that is, they are not found in any other Christian tradition?
- 2 Research another Christian denomination's view on one of the beliefs mentioned in the case study above.

parish

A local church community in the Christian tradition

Paschal mystery

The whole redemptive (saving) work of Jesus Christ, particularly the events of the Last Supper, the Passion and death

scriptures

The sacred writings of a religious tradition

A CASE STUDY OF DISTINCTIVE BELIEF: HINDUISM

Due to its timelessness and vastness, scholars have defined multiple creeds or sets of beliefs for Hinduism. Hindus believe there are three distinct worlds of existence – physical, astral and causal – and that the universe undergoes endless cycles of creation, preservation and dissolution.

The causal world is inhabited by divine beings and advanced souls. The material world is ruled by the Trimurti of the Hindu Pantheon, comprising Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver) and Shiva (the Destroyer).



FIGURE 7.7 Brahma, whose four faces look in the four directions (left), Vishnu (centre), and Shiva (right). What do the size, expression, accessories and postures of these depictions of the Trimurti suggest about the different characteristics of the gods?

Of the three, Vishnu (the Preserver) comes to the material or physical world in various incarnations or avatars; as Rama, Krishna and even the Buddha, who is considered by Hindus to be an incarnation of Vishnu. These incarnations restore order and balance in the world but even this order degrades over time. Shiva's role is to destroy what is corrupted. While Shiva is the destroyer god of the Trimurti, he is joined by Shakti (his female counterpart) who represents creative energy, and thus the cycle begins anew.

A CASE STUDY OF DISTINCTIVE BELIEF: ISLAM

Belief in the Oneness of God (Tawhid) leads to the subsequent belief that Allah (God) has no partners and, therefore, the belief that *shirk* (Arabic word for sinful practice of idolatry or pantheism – in general, the worship of objects) is forbidden.

Belief in the prophets of God results in a subsequent belief in divine revelation because the prophets of God are sent to provide guidance to humanity. Another subsequent belief is reverence for the prophets because they occupy a high position as messengers from God, and also not discriminating among the prophets but believing and loving all prophets sent to humankind, with the Prophet Muhammad being the final one. However, the reverence for prophets is not to be corrupted with worship because that would contradict the belief that God is One, since in Islam, prophets are humans and not divine.



FIGURE 7.8 Kufic square: calligraphy being used to illustrate a verse from the Qur'an. Which concept of Islam is being illustrated?

The Six Articles of Faith are the foundational beliefs of Islam:

- 1 belief in the Oneness of God
- 2 belief in the Angels of God
- 3 belief in the Books of God
- 4 belief in the Prophets of God
- 5 belief in the Day of Judgment
- 6 belief in Divine Decree.

Skills: summarise, explain, interpret

- 1 Write a detailed definition of the foundational beliefs of Islam.

Alamy Stock Photo/Eddie Gerald



FIGURE 7.9 Jewish scholar Moses Maimonides. What does Maimonides' appearance indicate about his status and the culture in which he lived?

omniscience

The quality of being all knowing

providence

Divine care and guidance

omnipotence

The quality of being all powerful

prophecy

A divinely inspired prediction, instruction or urgent advice

A CASE STUDY OF DISTINCTIVE BELIEF: JUDAISM

Jewish lists of fundamental beliefs were largely a product of attempts to justify the truths of Judaism against Islamic and Christian attacks in the Middle Ages on the validity of Jewish beliefs.

Maimonides (1135–1204), also known as Rambam (short for Rabbi Moses ben Maimon), was one of the first Jewish scholars to try to list the fundamental beliefs of Judaism. He was responding to challenges that arose in his time about the differences between Jewish beliefs and those of Christianity and Islam. Influenced by Aristotelian philosophy, Maimonides listed 13 Principles of Faith in his *Commentary on the Mishnah* (Sanhedrin 10):

- The existence of God alone as the Creator;
- God is unique and one;
- God is incorporeal and incomparable;
- God is first and last;
- Pray to God alone;
- The words of the Hebrew prophets are true;
- Moses is the Chief Prophet;
- The Torah is divinely revealed;
- The Torah cannot be changed;
- God knows all things;
- God rewards the righteous;
- The Messiah will come;
- The dead will be resurrected.

Another Jewish scholar, Hasdai Crescas (1340–1411), from Barcelona, emphasised revealed faith. In the second division of his work *Or Adonai* (*The Light of the Lord*), Crescas listed only six basic principles of Judaism. The first three were the principles of God's **omniscience**, **providence** and **omnipotence**. Then came the principles of belief in **prophecy** and free will and finally that the world was created purposefully.

Spanish Rabbi Joseph Albo (1380–1444) wrote about the central principles of Judaism in his *Sefer ha-Ikkarim* (Book of Principles), positing that there are only three basic principles (*ikkarim*) that are necessary to Jewish belief. These are the principles that God exists; that God has revealed God's self; and that reward and punishment are by God.

There are also Jewish scholars who have denied that there is any such list of definitive beliefs, since all beliefs are equally important. These include Isaac Abravanel (15th century), who took a critical approach, and the kabbalist Isaac Luria (16th century), whose spiritual outlook was that right actions were more important than creeds.

Skills: identify, summarise

- 1 Compare Joseph Albo's list of Jewish principles and derivative principles with the Principles of Faith of Hasdai Crescas and Maimonides. Where do they overlap? Where do they differ?

THE PURPOSE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Extremes of emotion often lead humans to a religious response. This can be the joy of birth or the sorrow at death. Pain and suffering are often the impetus for asking the 'big questions' and seeking answers from religious beliefs.

Viktor Frankl (1905– 1997)

The Second World War and the Holocaust remain historic events that challenge Western civilisation to explore the meaning and purpose of life. Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist, used his experience as a Holocaust survivor to ask the questions that he felt all humans ask when faced with suffering: Why do I suffer and not others? What is the purpose of my suffering? Why do I want to live in the face of suffering?

In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, he provides the story of his journey to understanding. He discovers that the philosopher Nietzsche was right when he wrote, 'He who has a why to live, can bear almost any how' and 'when we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves'.

Frankl says that the gift of our humanity is that 'everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way' and that 'the highest and greatest of these ways was found in love: Love is the ultimate



FIGURE 7.10 Viktor Frankl. What symbols of Judaism is Frankl wearing?

Getty Images/Imagno

>

and highest goal to which man can aspire'. Frankl concludes, 'Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love.'

Skills: explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 What is happening in current society that could prompt individuals to ask the 'big questions', as Frankl did about his experiences?

ADDRESSING THE 'BIG QUESTIONS'

Religions assist in the universal quest to find meaning in human existence, especially to the fundamental questions in life, such as:

- Who am I?
- Why am I here?
- Is there a power greater than us in the universe?
- What is good and what is evil?
- Is there life after death?

These are deep-seated existential questions that most people ask themselves at some time in their lives. For many, their religious tradition offers positive, life-affirming answers that give meaning to human existence. Religious traditions offer a variety of answers to these 'big questions' in many distinctive ways, but the starting point for many religious traditions is their belief in an ultimate reality. An understanding of this belief becomes the focal point as the individual or the community explores: the relationship between humankind and the ultimate reality; the nature and purpose of human life; the meaning of suffering and death; questions about life after death; the relationship between humans; and the relationship between humans and the natural world. It is through these foundational beliefs concerning ultimate reality that other fundamental beliefs are connected to each other.

Skills: explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 What other 'big questions' does your generation want answered that religious traditions might or should address?

cosmology

Study of the origin and nature of the universe

wisdom

Accumulated knowledge and understanding, decision making and judgement

moral values

Ideas that are accepted cultural standards used to discern what is right and wrong in human behaviour

BELIEFS ABOUT ULTIMATE REALITY

In order to establish meaning for all existence, religious traditions explain, in their own way, their ultimate reality's relationship with human life and with every plant, animal, the Earth and the universe. These belief systems affect how people think and behave and therefore have an impact upon the way people lead their lives.

The ultimate reality is one way to name that cosmic force beyond human understanding, perceived by believers in some religions to be the dynamic power that creates and controls the universe. In the **cosmology** of many religions, there is a god figure, spirit, force or divine principle that is considered the supreme power and in whom resides **wisdom**, enlightenment, omnipotence and **moral values**. Yet the world's religions hold very different, even irreconcilable, views on

ultimate reality. The lack of any transcendental being in Buddhism and Taoism lies in stark contrast to the personal God of monotheistic religions. The monotheistic religions of the world hold diverse positions concerning the nature of the personal God. Even within the many branches of Eastern religions, there are vast differences in the understanding of ultimate reality.

Skills: define, interpret

- 1 Generally, what is a major difference between the understanding of ultimate reality in Eastern and Western religions?

ULTIMATE REALITY IN BUDDHISM

There are three main forms of Buddhism: Mahayana (including Zen) in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam; Theravada in India, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos; and Vajrayana in Tibet. Within each of these traditions, many different varieties of Buddhist practice have developed. For example, Zen Buddhism observes rituals and festivals associated with the Japanese **Shinto** religion, while Tibetan Buddhism acknowledges the presence of local deities. These are both examples of syncretism.

In Zen Buddhism, Dhammakaya (Truth Body) is the formless, eternal element of ultimate reality in the universe that is the non-manifested, inconceivable, unknowable aspect, out of which **Buddhahood** and all phenomena arise. In other varieties of Buddhism, the Sambhogakaya (the Enlightened Being's mind's receptiveness and ability to communicate) and Nirmanakaya (the Enlightened Being's ability to physically manifest) are interrelated. It is believed that the Buddha has lived, and will always live, to guide beings to enlightenment. In some traditions a Bodhisattva,

Shinto

'The Way of the Gods' is the Indigenous Japanese spirituality in which devotees worship and make offerings to numerous gods, ancestors and spirits associated with the natural world.

Buddhahood

In Buddhism, the achievement of enlightenment by an individual.



FIGURE 7.11 The Hoa Nghiem Buddhist temple in Springvale, Melbourne. What does its presence suggest about what it is to be Australian?



FIGURE 7.12 Statue of Buddha. What is the relationship between ultimate reality and Buddha?

deity

A divine or supernatural being

paradox

A statement that seems contradictory, unbelievable or absurd but is, in fact, true.

a person who has earned enlightenment and nirvana but instead chooses to be reborn to guide others, serves a similar role. For example, the current Dalai Lama is the 14th incarnation of Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig, Bodhisattva of Compassion and the Tibetan patron saint.

Buddhism teaches that there is no personal god, nor a primordial, spiritual or material basis to ultimate reality. The Buddhist's goal in life is to achieve enlightenment or reach nirvana, a state that is freedom from existence, which is experienced in the cycle of birth–suffering–death–rebirth. Buddha insisted that nirvana was inconceivable and unutterable; he consistently resisted requests to define nirvana, except to say that it is bliss and to argue for its existence. Zen Buddhists understand nirvana as the transcendent truth that governs the universe and human life; it is beyond comprehension and description. Yet those who study Buddhism have over time developed terms that attempt to describe the characteristics of nirvana as liberation from attachments and all there is.

Skills: summarise, explain

- 1 In your own words, state what is understood as ultimate reality in Buddhism.
- 2 Compare and contrast understandings of ultimate reality in Buddhism with religious traditions in which ultimate reality is a supreme being or **deity**.

ULTIMATE REALITY IN CHRISTIANITY

Christians believe that the one God is triune, there is a relationship between three 'persons': Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The mystery at the heart of this **paradox** calls for the response of faith. St Augustine said, 'Seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand'.

Christians, however, believe that God reveals God's self and this revelation is expressed in the scriptural texts, the creeds and prayers of the tradition.

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen

Source: Catechism of the Catholic Church 194



FIGURE 7.13 Fifteenth-century German painting depicting the Holy Trinity. What do the symbols used reveal about the Trinity?

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.

Amen

Source: *The Anglican Prayerbook*

Skills: summarise, define, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 List the beliefs about the ultimate reality that are described in the 'Apostle's Creed' and 'The Lord's Prayer'. Explain those elements in your own words, quoting the relevant phrases.
- 2 What other beliefs about the ultimate reality are held in Christianity?
- 3 What differences, if any, exist in the understandings of the ultimate reality within the various Christian denominations?

So the LORD God cast a deep sleep upon the man; and while, he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that spot. And the LORD God fashioned the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman; and He brought her to the man. Then the man said, This one at last is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called Woman, for from man was she taken.

Source: Genesis 2:21–23

They heard the sound of the LORD God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of day; and the man and his wife hid from the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Source: Genesis 3:8

And the LORD God said: 'Now that the man has become like one of us, knowing good and bad, what if he should stretch out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live for ever! So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden, to till the soil from which he was taken. He drove the man out, and stationed east of the Garden of Eden the cherubim, and the fiery ever-turning sword, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Source: Genesis 3:22–24

Skills: identify, interpret, analyse

Read the extracts from Genesis above and then answer the questions that follow.

- 1 Identify the specific beliefs about God contained in these biblical extracts.
- 2 Discuss how these beliefs are developed within a particular religious tradition you are studying.
- 3 To what extent do the sacred texts and stories of a religious tradition you are studying reveal the nature of ultimate reality?

ULTIMATE REALITY IN HINDUISM

Vedas

Four ancient Indian Hindu texts written in Sanskrit. One of these is the Rig Veda, (1700–1100 BCE), which contains sacred hymns and stories.

The Hindu (meaning ‘of the Indus Valley’ or ‘Indian’) tradition is one of the most ancient of contemporary religions. Its main texts are the **Vedas**, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Sutras. Ultimate reality in Hinduism is called Brahman, which is the infinite, uncreated source of all reality and existence in the universe. It is the ultimate cause and goal of all that exists. Since all beings emanate from Brahman, they will return to the same source. Brahman is the source of existence that is deep within every soul, which is the true self (atman) of all beings.

He is the Supreme Brahman, the Self of all, the chief foundation of this world, subtler than the subtle, eternal. That thou art; thou art That.

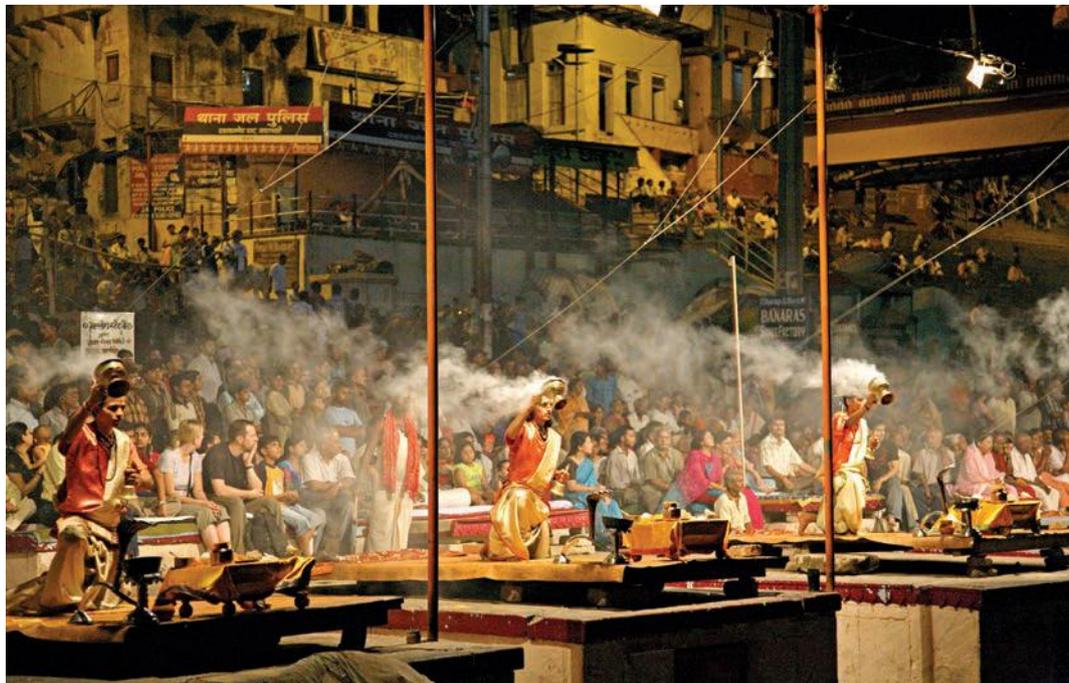
Source: Atharva Veda

Skills: summarise, explain

- 1 In your own words, state what or who is understood as ultimate reality in this extract from ancient Hindu scriptures.
- 2 Is Hinduism’s understanding of ultimate reality **polytheistic** or monotheistic? Explain your reasoning.

polytheistic

A religion with many gods



Alamy Stock Photo/Pep Roig

FIGURE 7.14 Brahmin, the Hindu priestly caste (not to be confused with Brahman, the ultimate reality), conducting a puja. What are the three individuals at the front of the image doing? What does this suggest about their social status?

ULTIMATE REALITY IN ISLAM

In Islam the word ‘Allah’ is the personal name of God, though there are many titles for Allah, such as Lord of the Worlds, the Creator, the Almighty, the King, the Compassionate, the Merciful and Master of the Day of Judgement. There is only one god and Allah is God. There is nothing

comparable to Allah, who has power over all that is. The Prophet Muhammad answered questions about Allah with an answer directly from God:

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. Say, 'He is Allah, the One. Allah, the Absolute. He begets not, nor was He begotten. And there is nothing comparable to Him.'

Source: Qur'an, al-Ikhlās (Monotheism) 112

Humanity and the universe were created by Allah for a reason, which is to worship and serve Allah, as only Allah is worthy of worship. Everything that happens is permitted or caused by Allah. Allah is the source of all knowledge, and it is to Allah that all must pray and serve with reverence.

The Qur'an is the main textual source for an understanding of ultimate reality for Muslims, but there are also many scholars over the centuries who have recorded words of wisdom to explain the will of Allah to adherents of Islam. The concept of Tawhid (divine unity) is strongly professed in the **suras** and texts below.

There is no god but I, so worship Me.

Source: Qur'an, al-Anbiya (The Prophets) 21:25

He is Allah. There is no god but He, the Knower of secrets and declarations. He is the Compassionate, the Merciful.

He is Allah; besides Whom there is no god; the Sovereign, the Holy, the Peace-Giver, the Faith-Giver, the Overseer, the Almighty, the Omnipotent, the Overwhelming. Glory be to Allah, beyond what they associate.

He is Allah; the Creator, the Maker, the Designer. His are the Most Beautiful Names. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. He is the Majestic, the Wise.

Source: Qur'an, al-Ĥashr (The Mobilisation) 59:22-4



Getty Images/Stephen Dunn

FIGURE 7.15 Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, NBA basketball player (original name Ferdinand Lewis Alcindor Jr), took one of the names of Allah when he converted to Islam after winning his first NBA championship. Kareem won six championships. Why might Kareem take a new name at this point in his life?

sura

A chapter or section of the Qur'an



Shutterstock.com/Vladimir Melnik

FIGURE 7.16 Muslims at prayer. What is the symbolic meaning of their prayer posture?

Hadith

A record of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, from which Islamic law and ethics are derived

Skills: summarise, explain, research

- 1 Choose four of the attributes of Allah, quoting the relevant phrases in the Qur'an, and explain them in your own words.
- 2 Research the Qur'an and the **Hadith** to create a list of Allah's qualities under the headings 'Transcendent' and 'Immanent'.

ineffable

Indescribable, overwhelming

immanent

Existing in and extending into all parts of the created universe

ULTIMATE REALITY IN JUDAISM

In Judaism, God is understood as both an **ineffable**, omnipotent Creator and transcendent force in the universe, and an **immanent** spiritual guide who cares for each and every person. The 'Adon Olam' hymn, composed in the 11th century by Solomon ibn Gabirol, is sung at the end of the Jewish morning prayer service to praise the Creator, not only as the Almighty God of all creation, but also as the dependable rock upon whom humans can rely to care for them personally in their hour of need.

Adon Olam – Lord of the Universe

Lord of the Universe who reigned before anything was created.
When all was made by his will He was acknowledged as King.
And when all shall end He still all alone shall reign.
He was, He is, and He shall be in glory.
And He is one, and there is no other, to compare or join Him.
Without beginning, without end to Him belongs dominion and power.
And He is my God, my living God to Him I flee in time of grief,
And He is my miracle and my refuge, who answers me the day I shall call.
To Him I commit my spirit, at the time of sleep and awakening,
even if my spirit leaves, God is with me, I shall not fear.

Source: N Scherman (ed.), *The Complete Artscroll Siddur*, 1990, Mesorah Publications, p. 294

Skills: summarise, research, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 List the beliefs about ultimate reality that are described in this Jewish hymn. Explain the concepts in your own words, quoting the relevant phrases.
- 2 How does this description of the nature of ultimate reality change in the last part of this hymn?
- 3 Which of these beliefs resonate in the tradition/s you have studied?
- 4 What other beliefs about ultimate reality can be found elsewhere in Judaism?
- 5 Which of the Christian beliefs about the nature of the ultimate reality also resonate in the extracts from Judaism and Islam.

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF HUMAN LIFE

Religious traditions offer a framework to help understand human existence. These frameworks developed from religious world views that ascribe human existence to purposeful creation and design; or to accident; or as part of a process of violence – emerging from a pre-existing entity or by transformation from one form to another. Religious world views variously describe the nature of humans as both good and evil; infinite (soul, divine spark) and finite; free and predestined; sharing divinity, or creative and destructive. Depending on how a religious world view depicts the nature of humans, the purpose of human existence may be identified as: procreation, acting responsibly, being compassionate, attaining salvation, removing attachments to this life and the next, accepting inevitable suffering, submitting to servitude or various combinations of these.

Within the religious tradition there may be **primeval** myths about human origins, beliefs on the relative importance and role of humanity on Earth and teachings that express values. All of these assist people in finding positive meaning in their lives and provide an understanding that there are tasks or goals they are born to complete.

primeval
From the earliest of times

A BUDDHIST VIEW

In Buddhism, a person must deeply and critically examine the operations of karma in their actions in their current and previous lives. The examination involves applying the Buddhist teachings (dharma) to their lives in order to ascertain the desires and actions that cause attachment to this world, to remove them and not to come back. This can be confronting and the ego may create a number of illusions to keep a person attached, with some attachments even being personified as demons. The objective of human existence is to take the necessary steps to recognise these illusions for what they are. It is also to undergo practices to remove any suffering caused by the attachments through acknowledging the Four Noble Truths, the last of which is the Eightfold Path. This process can take a

lifetime; it is difficult to do given the distractions of everyday life, so many Buddhists go on retreats and live in communities in order to participate and live and learn together.

Life, death, rebirth and removal from these three things are visually represented as the *Bhavacakra* or 'Wheel of Life'. This is a famous mandala, which is believed to have been drawn by Gautama Buddha, himself, when explaining the above ideas (in greater detail and authority) to King Rudrayana. The wheel contains six parts of a cycle known as 'dependent origination' in which karmic actions, which may have led to a particular path in one life, carry over into the next life. In returning to this world, a person replays the karmic actions over and over thousands of times, until they choose to break the cycle and dramatically change. Achieving dramatic changes is the purpose of a Buddhist's life. This can take the form of:

- removing the karma from past and present actions to avoid rebirth
- creating good karmic actions and being reborn into a better or higher next life

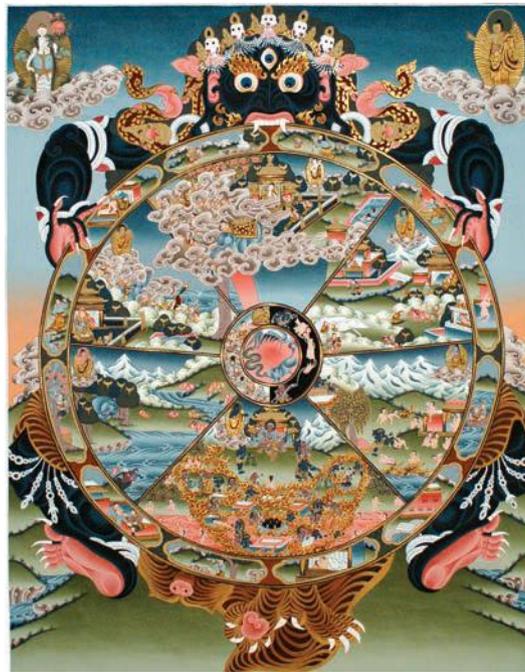


FIGURE 7.17 The *Bhavacakra* or 'Wheel of Life'

Alamy Stock Photo/Art Directors & TRIP

- simply following the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path (page 221)
- realising ultimate existence as impermanent and becoming enlightened as a Buddha
- not transcending to nirvana in order to guide others as a Bodhisattva.

Skills: identify, explain, synthesise

- 1 Have you felt compelled to do certain activities in your life but not known why you do them? Are they helpful, healthy or the opposite?
- 2 If they are unhelpful or unhealthy, why do you do these things?
- 3 What has stopped you from rejecting these actions?
- 4 How would you remove the barrier/s identified in question 3?

A CHRISTIAN VIEW

From its origins in ancient Judaism, Christianity has developed its own understanding of the nature and purpose of human life that is founded on the profound love that God has for humans in that God sent Jesus, the Son, to save humanity. The following extracts make this clear.

Deep within their consciences men and women discover a law which they have not laid upon themselves and which they must obey. Its voice, ever calling them to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, tells them inwardly at the right moment: do this, shun that. For they have in their hearts, a law inscribed by God. Their dignity rests in observing this law, and by it they will be judged. Their conscience is people's most secret core, and their sanctuary. There they are alone with God whose voice echoes in their depths. By conscience, in a wonderful way, that law is made known which is fulfilled in the love of God and of one's neighbour.

Source: Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* n. 16, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, on 7 December 1965



FIGURE 7.18 Archbishop Desmond Tutu joins award winners before the 2008 Freedom Awards ceremony at the University of Southern California. What is Tutu's connection to freedom?

(The poor) give you the opportunity of being good, to show that we are family and the whole world is our home. We're in trouble. If you ask for the Holy Spirit of God, you're in trouble. Much, much better if you didn't ask for it, but you see the Holy Spirit of God puts us into trouble, for it is that spirit that says we are family, and let the ethics of family operate. In family you don't say, 'This baby is a nuisance' and making no contribution to the welfare or the family. She doesn't bring anything in, all she does, well actually I mean she does, is eat and eat and eat, sleep, sleep at the most awkward moments, awake at even more awkward moments, and sometimes is smelly. But which one of us would ever have said, 'So this child must not be loved, this child must not be fed, this baby must not be clothed, this baby must not – ' No, no, we don't say that. We pour out extravagantly on a child who brings in nothing ... No, no. In a healthy family we say to each according to their need, and from each according to their ability. Now apply that in the world; could we, with clear conscience, spend the amount of money we spend on defence, instruments of destruction and death, when we could have used a tiny fraction of that and you would ensure in Australia, all your Indigenous people would have nice houses. They would have running water, they would have electricity ... Not because we are doing them a favour, because they are family, and God says, 'I have only you to tell the world that they are all my children, that they all must recognise they belong.' God says, 'I invite you, can you be those who invite on my behalf. I want to embrace all, all, all, so that there are no outsiders, all are insiders. There are no aliens, all belong, black, white, yellow, red, tall, short, beautiful, not so beautiful, rich, poor, lesbian, gay, all, all, belong.' And God says, 'please can you help me ...'

Source: Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu, *Who is my Neighbour*, 'The Religion Report', ABC Radio National, 1 December 1999, Reproduced by permission of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation – Library Sales © 2016 ABC

Skills: define, explain, analyse

Referring to the extracts from *Gaudium et Spes* and from Bishop Tutu:

- 1 Define conscience.
- 2 What is the relationship between God and the human person in both of these pieces?
- 3 Identify four key words in the pieces that explain the nature and purpose of the human person and explain the significance of each.
- 4 What does the religious tradition/s that you have been studying say about the role of conscience in life? If there is no teaching on conscience, why might this be the case?

A HINDU VIEW

In the sacred text of the Upanishads the human person is described as having three parts: a physical body; thoughts and feelings; and an eternal self, called the atman, that links humans to Brahman, the supreme creator god – all of creation came from Brahman's body and man was his first creation. Hindus believe that this atman is reborn through successive lives until moksha, the release from the cycle of birth and rebirth.

In Hinduism, there is a cosmic order that humans have a role in maintaining by making sacrifices to the gods and learning the individual's place in a belief system in which people's lives are defined by their *varna* (caste) according to the dharma (law). Although the individual may

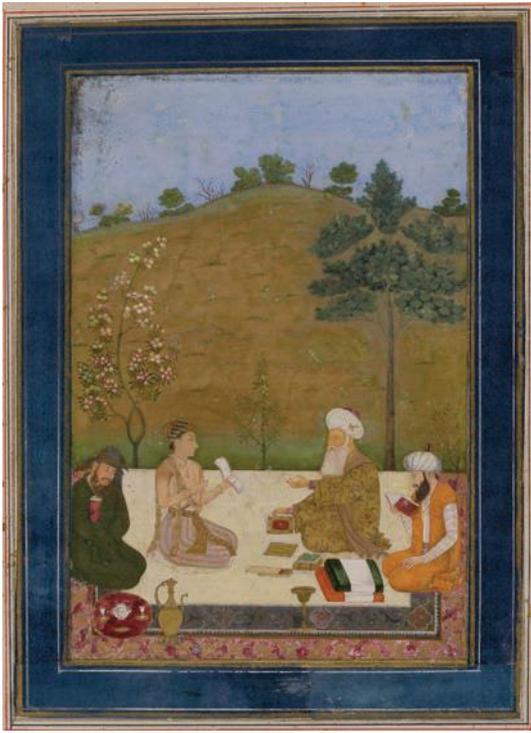


FIGURE 7.19 Uddalaka and Svetaketu. What is shown in the image about the relationship between master and pupil?

be insignificant and vulnerable, their atman, or true self, is one with the ultimate reality, Brahman. This belief is illustrated in the story of Uddalaka and Svetaketu, from the Chandogya Upanishad:

‘O Blessed One, instruct me further.’

‘Certainly, dear boy,’ he replied.

‘Bring a fig from over there.’

‘Here it is, sir.’

‘Divide it.’

‘It is divided, sir.’

‘What do you see there?’

‘These rather small seeds, sir.’

‘Divide one.’

‘It is divided, sir.’

‘What do you see?’

‘Nothing, sir.’

‘Dear boy,’ he said to him, ‘that finest essence which you do not perceive, from this very essence, dear boy, that great fig tree arises.

Believe me, dear boy, that which is the finest essence, the whole universe has That as its soul. That is Reality,

That is the Self, and That is you, Svetaketu!’

Hymns of the Atharva-veda: Together with Extracts from the Ritual Books and the Commentaries (Vol. 1), M Bloomfield, (ed.), Clarendon Press, 1897

Skills: research, summarise, interpret, analyse

- 1 Use the story above to create a storyboard. Then use a highlighter to indicate the three places Brahman is present in the final frame.
- 2 What does Hinduism say determines the individual’s purpose in life?
- 3 Research the role of sacrifice in Hinduism.

AN ISLAMIC VIEW

In Islam, humankind are separated from the rest of creation because Allah has given them three divine gifts: intelligence to distinguish the true from the false; a will that can freely choose between them; and the power of speech to worship. Humans therefore have a special place in creation.

Your Lord said to the angels, ‘I am creating a human being from clay, from moulded mud.’

Source: Qur’an Surah 15:28

When I have formed him and breathed into him of My spirit, fall prostrate before him.

Source: Qur’an Surah 38:72

Allah is the Provider, the One with Power, the Strong.

Source: Qur'an Surah 51:58

We created man in the best design.

Source: Qur'an Surah 95:4

Do not corrupt on earth, after its reformation,
and pray to Him with fear and hope.

Allah's mercy is close to the doers of good.

Source: Qur'an Surah 07:56

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Master of the Day of Judgment.

It is You we worship, and upon You we call for help.

Guide us to the straight path.

The path of those You have blessed, not of those against whom there is anger, nor
of those who are misguided.

Source: Qur'an Surah 1:1-7

Skills: analyse, explain, interpret

Read the above selections from the Qur'an.

- 1 Identify the purpose of the human person that is repeated.
- 2 What is the relationship between Allah and his creation?

A JEWISH VIEW

Judaism understands the role of human beings to be that of co-creators with God and to responsibly manage the rest of creation. Judaism understands the world as a garden; it needs tending and nurturing by human beings.

And God created man in His image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth.' God said, 'See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, I give all the green plants for food.' And it was so.

Source: Genesis 1:27-30

The LORD God formed man from the dust of the earth. He blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and he placed there the man whom He had formed.

Source: Genesis 2:7-8

The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, to till it and tend it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; but as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it, for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die.'

The LORD God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a fitting helper for him.' And the LORD God formed out of the earth all the wild beasts and all the birds of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that would be its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky and to all the wild beasts.

Source: Genesis 2:15–20

Skills: define, summarise, interpret, analyse, research

- 1 Read Genesis Chapters 1 and 2 and identify the beliefs about the nature and purpose of human life.
- 2 Discuss whether these beliefs are sufficient for a modern, environmentally conscious audience.

RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON GOOD AND EVIL

'Good' can be seen as the essence of the divine nature or those actions a human being carries out that are virtuous, worthy and beneficial to themselves and others. The nature of good and evil is

central to many religious traditions' understanding of the world and the character of humans. Some see the traits of good and evil as inherent to the ultimate reality or intrinsically part of the created world and in nature. Others recognise good and evil as products of human choice, made by following or ignoring divine commands. The term 'evil' is used to describe something that is profoundly immoral, wrong or negative. It may be perceived as an internal force or an external one that exists outside human nature and the natural environment. Some religions connect evil with:

- the will within a person to do bad things
- evil spirits
- revenants, the souls of the dead who haunt the living unless they are appeased
- alternate creations
- an action that destroys an individual's relationship with God.



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FIGURE 7.20 A gargoyle on a church. A stone gargoyle was both an architectural symbol of evil and a means of preventing evil spirits entering a church. Gargoyles also had a practical function as a water spout to stop erosion of the stone buildings. What does this image suggest about the source of evil?

Evil leads to bad consequences, usually from a deliberate choice to ignore the gods or God; disobey religious prohibitions; or cause harm to the environment or misfortune to people.

If the tradition teaches that humans have **free will**, the cause of human evil is understood to stem from people choosing to act in a way that is considered morally wrong; for example, through actions such as bullying, stealing or committing murder. Some think of evil as a psychological or emotional problem – they believe that no-one is inherently evil but that circumstances can lead them to become so. Other religions believe that gods/God already knows who will be saved and that there are limitations to free will. In this situation, all a believer can do is pray for Divine Grace to deliver them and hope to be saved.

Religious traditions' leaders and sacred texts encourage believers to live 'good' lives but their understanding of what this entails varies considerably. 'Good' can be seen as **absolute** – only to exist in the deity or ultimate reality – or as a **relative** state, such as in the biblical description of Noah as 'righteous in his generation' (Gen. 6:9) – where goodness can be discerned by judging one person with another. Religions enforce these concepts of good and evil with their notions of sin, angering the spirits or totems, incurring **karmic debt**, eternal reward and punishment, or as a cause of suffering that must be removed.

free will

The ability to take independent action and make independent choices, and to take responsibility for such actions

absolute

Perfect, complete, not depending on anything else

relative

Comparative; having value in relation to something else

karmic debt

The concept that a person's future is determined by their behaviour in this and previous lives

Skills: define, explain

- 1 How might 'good' and 'evil' be seen as relative terms, rather than absolute? Give an example from everyday experience.
- 2 How does wider society allow individuals to acknowledge their failings and wrongdoings and make recompense or restitution?

A BUDDHIST VIEW

Buddhism views good and evil according to consequences of it on the self and others, not by abstract rules or ideas. Good and evil are both an intrinsic part of a person. In a selfish, ego-driven world



amanaimages/Jack Kurtz/ZUMA Wire

FIGURE 7.21 Buddhist monks. What does this picture show about the life of a Buddhist monk?

view permeates a person's actions, then it can cause suffering to them and to others around them. Belief in an individual soul is viewed as an ego-attachment to the individual in the physical world and thus Buddha taught followers to remove this idea. Such views and the actions that ensue from them can prevent the attainment of enlightenment, or ultimate reality in Buddhism.

Good and evil are not social values in the Buddhist belief. In Pali language 'good' is termed *kusala*, which literally means skilful, and *akusala* means unskilful. As opposed to the dualism of Western thinking such as good and bad, or mind and body, in Eastern thought nothing is entirely good or bad but, rather, is on a continuum. Based on the teachings of the Dhammapada, or early Buddhist scriptures, karma (action) is directly concerned with good and evil: 'Better to do nothing than to do what is wrong' (The Dhammapada 314).

Negative thinking, laziness and unintelligent ideas are labelled *akusala*. This is not considered evil, rather the source of one's wrong actions. For example, the smoker who knows that what he or she is doing is harmful but doesn't stop smoking is displaying *akusala*. *Kusala* is active, positive thinking that reflects intelligence and contentment or represents an idea that removes suffering, producing an untroubled mind. Hence meditation is an important part of attaining *kusala*.

Do not what is evil. Do what is good. Keep your mind pure. This is the teaching of Buddha.

Source: The Dhammapada 183

sin

An action that breaks the right relationship between an individual or community and their God and each other

original sin

A Christian concept developed by St Augustine to explain the human tendency to make poor moral choices; held to be transmitted from Adam and thus inherent in humankind

grace

A gift God gives to people that enables them to live good lives; linked to the presence of the Holy Spirit in Christianity



Getty Images/Leemage

FIGURE 7.22 Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden and being expelled from the garden. What is the understanding of good and evil expressed in this image?

A CHRISTIAN VIEW

According to Christian beliefs, goodness is bestowed upon humanity by God because humans are made in the image and likeness of God, who is all good. They are social beings who are co-creators of the world and its history. However, God blessed them with free will and so they have the capacity to reject God's love. The Christian tradition teaches that people can only be fully human by following God's teachings; by adhering to His commandments (Matthew 19:17); and by recognising God's will through the human conscience (*Dignitatis Humanae*).

The tendency to **sin** is explained in some Christian denominations by what St Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE) called **original sin**. St Augustine suggested that evil is an absence of good and not an actual evil being, saying: 'Evil has no positive nature; but the loss of good has received the name "evil"' (Augustine, *The City of God*, XI, chapter 9). He believed that if enough people

did good, evil would be removed. However, as a consequence of the first sin of pride by Adam and Eve, they fell from **grace**. This is depicted in Genesis 2 – the couple attempted to be creators rather than accepting their creaturehood; their pride and greed fractured their relationship with God, thus separating all humans from God and rendering all humanity in need of salvation. It is this wilful damage to the relationship with God that is the definition of sin.

It is through **baptism** that Christians are united with God and original sin is washed away; it is in the Sacrament of Reconciliation in some denominations that the relationship is again made new. In the Gospels, Jesus teaches that all are in need of conversion, that all need a change of heart – ‘repent, and believe in the good news’ (Mark 1:15).

Sin is forgiven in Christianity. Jesus teaches that forgiveness is an essential aspect of the Christian response to sin. ‘Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned’ (Luke 6:37). The goodness of God is revealed as being particularly redemptive as God sent his Son Jesus Christ to atone for the sins of humankind so that they might have salvation.

Faith likewise offers the possibility of forgiveness, which so often demands time and effort, patience and commitment. Forgiveness is possible once we discover that goodness is always prior to and more powerful than evil, and that the word with which God affirms our life is deeper than our every denial.

Source: Pope Francis I, *Lumen Fidei*

In some Christian traditions the authority of the omnipotent God is emphasised, recognising God’s authority in predestining who will be saved and who will be damned. In this understanding it is God’s grace that saves humans who are frail and subject to sin. This was part of the teachings of Jean Calvin, a Protestant reformer in 16th-century Europe.

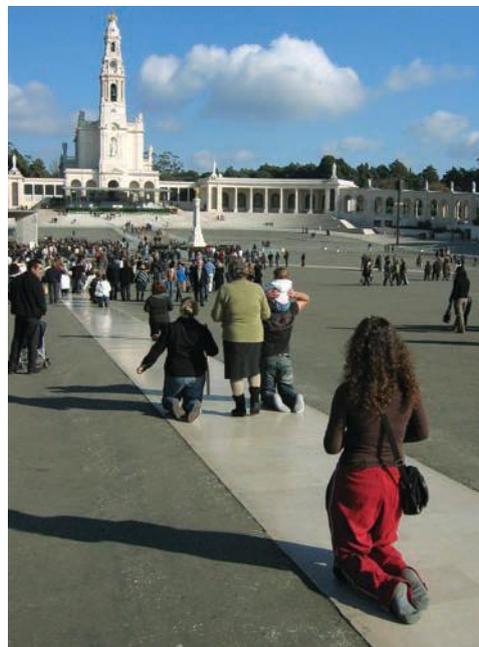
Another Christian view was expressed by Protestant Lutheran Paul Tillich (1886–1965). He argued that evil is not a ‘fall from grace’ but a realisation of one potential direction that humans take to fulfil their destiny. According to Tillich, creation and the fall are not part of a utopian vision in the past or future but rather a human ‘state of estrangement’ from their existence.

Evil has been explained in a variety of ways, such as its personification as Satan in some Christian sources. Satan is described as a power for evil and was one of the archangels who disobeyed God and was thrown out of heaven (Luke 10:18). Satan also tested Job (Job 1) and tempted Jesus to give up his ministry (Matthew 4:1–11)



Getty Images/PHAS/UiG

FIGURE 7.23 Saint Augustine of Hippo. What do the features in this picture suggest to you about Augustine?



amanaimages/Rolf Haid/dpa/Corbis

FIGURE 7.24 Pilgrims on their knees approach the epiphany chapel of the Holy Mary in front of the old pilgrimage church in Fatima, Portugal. Why are they on their knees? What image of God does this suggest?

baptism

A sacred rite of applying water to the head or immersing a person in water to symbolise purification before admission into the Christian community

penance

The practice of undertaking some form of action that will atone for sins

Easter

A major Christian feast celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His promise of eternal life

resurrection

Coming back to life after death; a belief found in several religious traditions. In Christianity, Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead and so won victory over evil and death. Those who believe in Jesus Christ believe they will also be raised from the dead, and will live forever.

Lent is the preparatory period when Christians reflect on their lives and reject those things within themselves that inhibit them from being Christ-like – they are called to have a change of heart and turn back to God. It is a period of **penance** and self-denial in preparation for **Easter** and entering fully into Christ's passion, death and **resurrection**.

Influential English poet and essayist John Milton (1608– 1674) was a Protestant Christian whose epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667) was inspired by the biblical stories of creation; the fall of Adam and Eve; the rebellion of Satan against God and Satan's expulsion from heaven. In his poetry Milton attempted to convey insights into God's wisdom and influence over humankind. Milton shifts the moral responsibility from man to God, asking why God is so cruel as to allow suffering that God knows will happen. He asks, what is the point of it all?

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me Man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me, or here place
In this delicious garden?

Source: John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 10

The Seventh-day Adventist view on the nature of good and evil is that:

God cleans away all our sins and replaces them with His goodness. We don't have to be 'good' for Him to accept us. Nevertheless, we must accept His promise and allow Him to clean out everything the enemy has left in us. Then we begin to experience the transforming power of His love. It's like a giant war: one side pulling us toward empty pleasure and destruction, and God urging us to accept His offer of peace and purpose. All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the worldwide flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation.

Source: Seventh-day Adventist Church, *Fundamental Beliefs* 8

Skills: summarise, research

- 1 Research a range of theological interpretations of original sin in Christian writings.

Skills: summarise, explain, interpret, analyse, compare, contrast

- 1 List the understandings of good that are found or implied in the Christian quotes throughout this section.
- 2 List the understandings of evil that are found or implied in these quotes.
- 3 Compare and contrast differences in emphases between Christian denominations in their theology of good and evil.

A HINDU VIEW

The hymns of the Vedas are addressed to Varuna, the Hindu god considered to be the personification of ultimate reality, and state that evil is a matter of humans not fulfilling Varuna's laws or not performing the rituals properly. Evil is often attributed to people being evil-minded or committing adultery (Rig-Veda 4,5; 10,10). Evil is personified by a range of demons including: spirits in conflict with devas (divine beings); souls of people who died tragically or by suicide; man-eaters; carnivorous demons; vampires; obstacle creators; giants; people governed by asuras (demons). There is perpetual combat between good and evil forces (Rig Veda 5,85).

Hindus do not believe in angels but in devas, entities that are less powerful than the gods and who are at war with the asuras (demons). Various groups of spirits are categorised as demons, but they can be good or bad. Unlike the medieval understanding of Christian demons (fallen angels), asuras are not the cause of evil and unhappiness in the world since human suffering is perceived to be due to an individual's own karma or their continuing ignorance of Brahman (the ultimate reality). It is believed that humans who have committed exceedingly wrong deeds are condemned to haunt the living as evil spirits before being reborn. Shiva is the one who can destroy evil and ignorance in the world.

Skills: summarise, explain, interpret

- 1 What understandings of good are found or implied in this overview of Hinduism?
- 2 What understandings of evil are found or implied in this overview of Hinduism?



FIGURE 7.25 Shiva, a Hindu god. Which objects in this image indicate the paradoxical roles Shiva fulfils?

AN ISLAMIC VIEW

According to Islamic tradition, humans are the creation of an all-wise and most merciful creator. Allah gave humans life and, with that, also gave them the freedom and authority to do good or to indulge in evil for the basic purpose of testing humans (*Surah Al-Shams* 91:7–10). During this testing time, Allah also gave *Iblis* or *al-Shaytan* (the Devil) and the jinn (demons) a chance to lure humans into evil deeds (*Sa'd* 38:41). The biblical book of Job is cited in the Qur'an, which understands that Iblis/al-Shaytan inflicted these sufferings on Job with God's permission (similar to the Jewish view of Satan). The Qur'an thus states that God created humanity on the path of good, and evil came into existence only because of humanity's deviation from that correct path. Human deviation was the result of the free will God bestowed upon humanity (*Yunus* 10:19).

Sura An-Nahl (the Bees) is a section of the Qur'an with the purpose of challenging pagan gods and praising Allah for the bounty He offers to human beings.

Whoever works righteousness – whether male or female – while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islamic monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter).

Source: Interpretation of *An-Nahl* 16:97

In Islam, *nafs* is variously translated as anger, lust or all the evil attributes of a person; passions that can disrupt a person's life. *Jihad al-nafs* is the struggle against evil ideas, desires and anger. Islamic beliefs instruct Muslims to resist these and instead follow the dictates of reason and faith in obedience to Allah's commands, purging all satanic influences from one's soul. When asked, 'What is the major jihad?' the Prophet(s) replied: 'The jihad of the self (struggle against oneself)' (Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Hadith no. 31).

Skills: summarise, explain, interpret

- 1 What understandings of good are found or implied in the Islamic religious tradition in this section?
- 2 What understandings of evil are found or implied in the Islamic religious tradition?

Sephira Tree of Life, 1617 (engraving), Fludd (Fluctibus), Robert (1574-1637)/Private Collection/© Leemage/Bridgeman Images

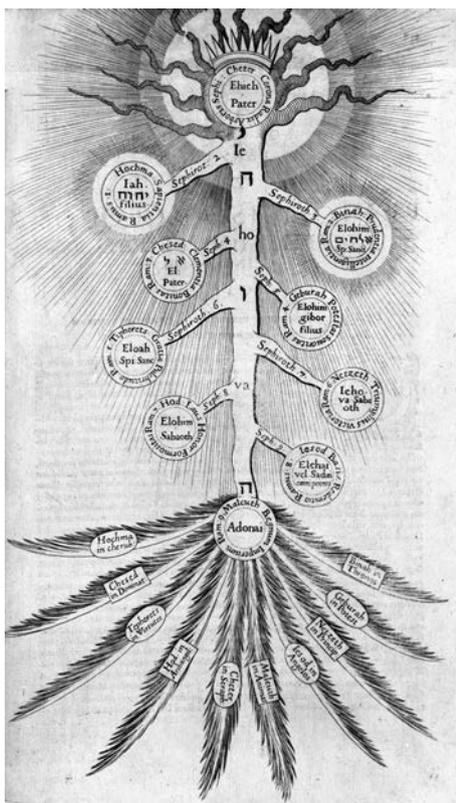


FIGURE 7.26 The Tree of the Sephiroth – an inverted tree in which the roots reach to heaven and the divine spark. What understanding of humanity does this image suggest?

Mishnah

A 1st- to 3rd-century collection of rabbinic teachings interpreting the Bible and Jewish law

No-one is perfectly good and no-one is perfectly evil. 'For there is not one good man on earth who does what is best and doesn't err' (Eccles. 7:20).

It is believed that if one does wrong in the eyes of God, then sincere repentance and an attempt to right the wrongdoing can avert God's decree of punishment or even death. The prophet Ezekiel reminds those who doubt God's justice that everyone shall be put to death for his own sin (see Ezek. 3:18–20).

A JEWISH VIEW

According to Jewish beliefs, all of creation was created 'good' (Gen. 1). Evil is not a separate force in the universe but part of God's created world. 'I form light, and create darkness, I make weal (peace), and create woe (evil): I, the LORD do all these things' (Isa. 45:7). In the Jewish tradition, good is defined as acting righteously and following the divine teachings and obligations set out in the holy Torah. Evil is seen as a product of humans choosing to do wrong by ignoring or deliberately disobeying God's teachings (as in the sin stories, Gen. 3–10), or by the absence of godliness in a world that allows evil to flourish. The Kabbalah (Jewish mystical tradition) uses the term *sitra achra*, meaning the other side, to refer to the forces of evil that underlie all of reality.

All humans are understood to possess two inclinations: *yetser tov*, a good inclination, and *yetser ra*, a bad inclination. In Judaism the concept of free will is central, thus people may freely choose which path in life to follow. 'See, I have set before you this day life and prosperity, death and adversity' (Deut. 30:15).

It is the task of every individual to wrestle with these inclinations throughout life. 'Who is strong? He who conquers his (evil) impulse' (Mishnah Avot 4:1).

Jews do not go through an intercessor (mediator) to confess their sins but do so directly to God. During the 10 days of awe from Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) until Yom Kippur (the Day of **Atonement**), it is common to participate in the ritual of *tashlich*, in which believers symbolically cast their sins into the flowing waters of a river or sea since ‘the gates of repentance are always open’ (**Midrash** Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:12).

Prior soul searching is expected during the preceding lunar month of Elul, when followers are obliged to ask people they have wronged to forgive them. The customary greeting at this time is ‘May you be sealed in the book of life’ or ‘May you be sealed for good’, reflecting the tradition that at the end of every year God decides who shall live and who shall die. On Yom Kippur, Jews confess their sins and renounce all vows that they did not fulfil in the hope they will be written in the book of life.

In some traditions, evil comes from Satan and influences the individual. In Jewish texts Satan is God’s testing angel, rather than a separate force for evil. The story of Job reflects this understanding.

The LORD said to the Adversary [Satan], ‘Have you noticed My servant Job? There is no one like him on earth, a blameless and upright, man who fears God and shuns evil!’ ... The Adversary answered the LORD ... ‘You have blessed his efforts so that his possessions spread out in the land. But lay Your hand upon all that he has, and he will surely blaspheme You to Your face.’ The LORD replied to the Adversary, ‘See, all that he has is in your power.’

Source: Job 1:8–12

[God will] visit the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me.

Source: Exodus 20:5 (also in other places in the Pentateuch)

atonement

Making amends between God and people, repentance

Midrash

Collection of rabbinic interpretations and expositions based upon biblical texts

Skills: summarise, explain, interpret, research

- 1 What understandings of good are found or implied in the Jewish quotations throughout this section?
- 2 What understandings of evil are found or implied in these quotations?
- 3 Research other Jewish understandings of good and evil in the Bible and in rabbinic texts.

Skills: summarise, define, explain, interpret

- 1 Create a table with three columns labelled ‘Religious tradition’, ‘Good’, and ‘Evil’. Complete the table using the information provided in this section about different religious beliefs regarding good and evil as your starting point. You can add further points from the religious tradition/s you are studying.
- 2 Explore the strengths and weaknesses of the varying understandings of good and evil across the traditions discussed in this section.
- 3 In each of the traditions discussed, what is the intended nature of humanity? Justify your view.
- 4 How do these understandings of good and evil relate to the relationship between ultimate reality and human beings, and between fellow human beings?

THE MEANING OF LIFE

The unimaginable complexity, power and beauty of the universe, nature and life on Earth can fill us with amazement. In their own unique ways, many religious traditions describe these inexplicable phenomena not as an accident of fate but as the purposeful act of a supreme being. Science has not been able to answer this existential dilemma. To religious traditions, the complex laws of physics



FIGURE 7.27 Blaise Pascal. What questions would a scientist have that science may not be able to answer?

and mathematics are not mere scientific principles but indicative of a higher purpose to everything in existence.

If humans are here just because they merely exist, then life has little meaning. This belief implies that humans survive on pure animal instinct alone. In such a situation, it would seem to many that there would be no reason to get out of bed in the morning, form relationships, work in community, have families or have hope. Religious beliefs help people to find meaning in their everyday lives, in both the good and the bad.

Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) was a brilliant French scientist, mathematician and philosopher who, after a religious conversion in the 1650s, applied himself to religion instead of science.

When I consider the short duration of my life, swallowed up in the eternity that lies before and after it, when I consider the little space I fill and I see, engulfed in the infinite immensity of spaces of which I am ignorant, and which know me not, I rest frightened, and astonished, for there is no reason why I should be here rather than there. Why now rather than then? Who has put me here? By whose order and direction have this place and time been ascribed to me?"

Source: Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, translated by AJ Krailsheimer, Penguin, 1995

A BUDDHIST VIEW

In Buddhism, there are moments of happiness, friendship, love and success that give great joy but can also lead people to become attached to them; and their loss, due to impermanence, can

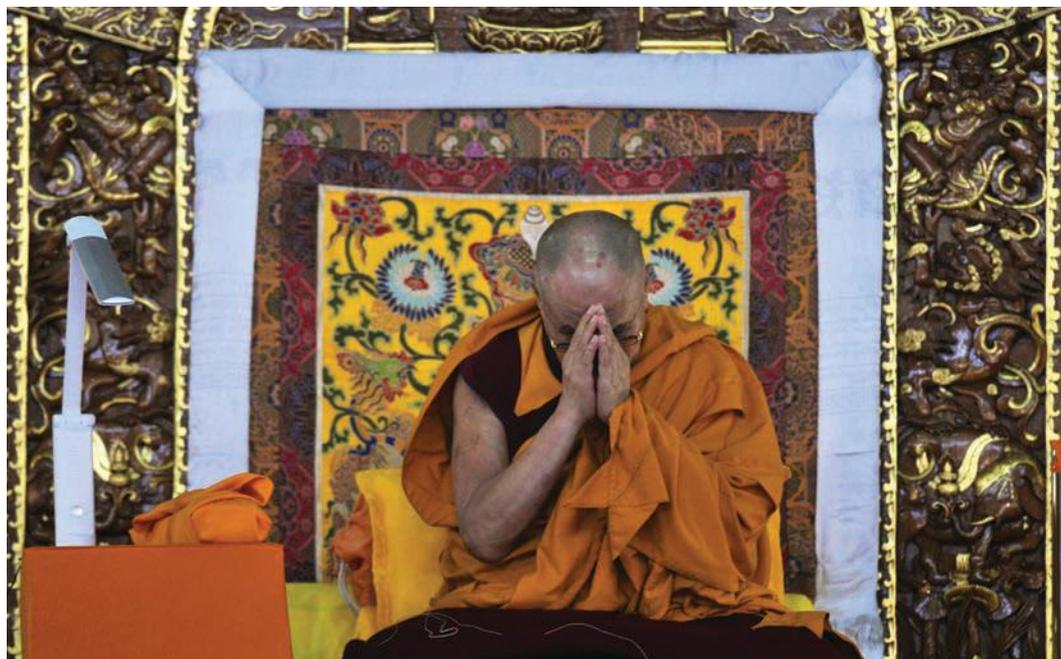


FIGURE 7.28 The Dalai Lama. Compare and contrast the features in this image with the posture of the Dalai Lama.

then cause suffering. Suffering can also derive from unfulfilled desires. The meaning of life is to develop a deep understanding of the nature of these attachments and through the realisation of their potential to cause suffering, remove them and, in so doing, end the cycle of birth and rebirth. All forms of Buddhism summarise this process in the Four Noble Truths; that suffering is a part of life, suffering is caused by attachments and that suffering can end via adherence to the Eightfold Path. Following this path encompasses the purpose of life in Buddhism, which is to practise or develop the appropriate knowledge; intention; speech; action; livelihood; effort; mindfulness and concentration to enable the removal of attachments and hence suffering from an individual's life. Even Buddha acknowledged that this was difficult to do unless an individual joins a religious community dedicated to this goal. The various branches of monastic orders in Buddhism – Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana – all advocate doing this.

One should become the master of one's mind rather than let one's mind master him.

Source: Nichiren Daishonin

The number of those endowed with human life is as small as the amount of earth one can place on a fingernail. Life as a human being is hard to sustain – as hard as it is for the dew to remain on the grass. But it is better to live a single day with honour than to live to 120 and die in disgrace.

Nichiren Daishonin 1277, *The Three Kinds of Treasure*

Skills: summarise, define, explain, interpret

- 1 Create a list of the 'reasons for getting out of bed' provided in these passages on Buddhism.
- 2 Divide the list into two categories: personal goals and social goals.

A CHRISTIAN VIEW

For the Christian the meaning of life is found in the person of Jesus Christ. His life, death and resurrection provide the framework for answering the existential questions about the nature and purpose of life. It is, ultimately, the Christian goal to become another Christ in the world.

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

Source: Philippians 2:1–5

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. And during supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to

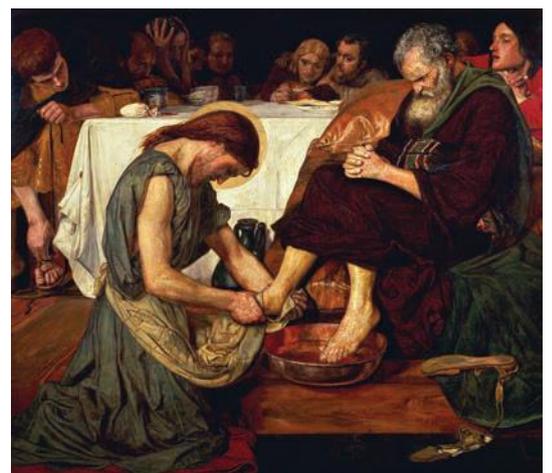


FIGURE 7.29 *Jesus washing Peter's feet*, by Ford Madox Brown (1821–1893). What is the significance of washing feet?

God, rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said to him, 'Lord, do you wash my feet?'

Jesus answered him, 'What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand.'

Peter said to him, 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part in me.'

Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!'

Jesus said to him, 'He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over; and you are clean, but not every one of you.'

For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, 'You are not all clean.'

When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.'

Source: John 13:1–17

In recent years Bishop Rowan Williams, of the Anglican Tradition, has expressed the Christian imperative to follow Christ this way:

Christian life is lived in relationship with God through Jesus Christ and, in common with other Christians, seeking to deepen that relationship and to follow the way that Jesus taught. Central to that relationship is knowing we can trust God. Saint Paul says at the end of the eighth chapter of his letter to the Church in Rome, 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' And this is the heart of faith. How do we know that 'God is for us'? Because Jesus Christ, the one human being who is completely in tune with God – with what God wants and what God is doing – has carried the burden of our human betrayals of God and running away from goodness. He has let himself be betrayed and rejected, executed in a humiliating and agonising way, and yet has not turned his back on us. Death did not succeed in silencing him or removing him from the world. He is alive; and that means that his love is alive, having survived the worst we can do. Nothing – says St Paul in the same passage – can separate us from this love. But this isn't an excuse for doing what we like, knowing we can get away with it. Once we know that God is 'for us', we open up to the gift that God wants to give us – which is a share in his own love and freedom and mercy. We breathe with his breath – that's part of what it means to say that we receive God's 'Spirit', which makes us live like Jesus 'in tune' with God. If we have really taken the message in, we shall live lives of selfless generosity, always asking how the gifts given us – material or imaginative or spiritual or whatever – can be shared in a way that brings other people more fully alive. And we shall be able to trust the generosity of others and be free to receive what they have to give us. Generosity, gratitude, confidence that when we fail we are still loved – all of this focused on Jesus' life and death and resurrection. That's where we start in the lifelong job of being a Christian.

Source: Rowan Williams, 104th Archbishop of Canterbury

In the Roman Catholic tradition, it is expressed this way in the **catechism**:

- 1 God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Saviour. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.
- 2 So that this call should resound throughout the world, Christ sent forth the apostles he had chosen, commissioning them to proclaim the gospel: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.' Strengthened by this mission, the apostles 'went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it.'
- 3 Those, who, with God's help have welcomed Christ's call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world. This treasure, received from the apostles, has been faithfully guarded by their successors. All Christ's faithful are called to hand it on from generation to generation, by professing the faith, by living it in fraternal sharing, and by celebrating it in liturgy and prayer.

Source: Catechism of the Catholic Church, Prologue © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

catechism

A collection of the essential teachings of a Christian tradition

Skills: summarise, define, explain, interpret

- 1 Create a list of the 'reasons for getting out of bed' provided in these passages on Christianity.
- 2 Divide the list into two categories: personal goals and social goals.

A HINDU VIEW

In standard forms of Hinduism, the meaning of life is structured around two major directions: the *purusharthas*, encompassing moral obligations, achievements and pleasures, and moksha, or enlightenment. Mastery over desires in life can lead to moksha. The way to achieve moksha is through paths that can be used singularly or in combination.

An individual attains spiritual understanding via learning about the connection between a person's atman (soul) and Brahman (the supreme god of Hinduism).

Spiritual practices such as meditation assist an adherent in realising a connection to Brahman. Types of yoga help an adherent to express their individual relationship to Brahman, by selecting a god or goddess, such as Shiva (Father), Parvati (Mother) or Krishna (Lover), to whom to devote the spiritual efforts of their life.

Adherents are to perform their obligations in the appropriate manner throughout their lives.

Each of us is here to discover our true Self ...

that essentially we are spiritual beings who have taken manifestation in physical form ...

that we are not human beings that have occasional spiritual experiences but we are spiritual beings that have occasional human experiences.

Source: Deepak Chopra

The Vedas teach that the soul is divine, only held in the bondage of matter; perfection will be reached when this bond will burst, and the word they use for it is, therefore, Mukti – freedom, freedom from the bonds of imperfection, freedom from death and misery.

Source: Swami Vivekananda

... if there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will hold no location in place or time; which will be infinite, like the God it will preach; whose Son shines upon the followers of Krishna or Christ, saints or sinners, alike; which will not be the Brahman or Buddhist, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms and find a place for every human being ...

Source: Swami Vivekananda of India, 'Hinduism as a Religion', 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions

Skills: summarise, define, explain, interpret

1 What are the important values in life according to Hindu teachings?

AN ISLAMIC VIEW

In Islam, according to the Prophet Muhammad, Allah created the world and human beings with a purpose. Part of the purpose of life is to learn to view the world as a deception or an illusion and worldly pleasures as part of the illusion. There is an idea that within the illusion Allah tests his worldly



Alamy Stock Photo/ZUMA Press, Inc.

FIGURE 7.30 Muslims awaiting zakat. What type of zakat is being distributed in this image?

adherents, challenging them to worship Him unopposed and without equal. Absolute obedience to Allah is shown by adherents when they perform the Five Pillars and other duties. This includes:

- devoutly saying from memory the main statement of faith in Islam (shahada)
- enacting prayers in the prescribed way, which is required five times daily (salat)
- sharing their wealth with the poor (zakat)
- observing the ritual fast for a month during Ramadan (sawm)
- Making a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime (hajj)

The purpose of life in Islam is to live according to the Five Pillars. That is, for Muslims to frame their faith with the way they live their lives, in line with the particular legal interpretation of the Qur'an, Hadith and other sacred religious writings such as Sufi texts. According to scholars, different legal interpretations define the schools of Islam, and there may be some distinct explanations or emphases of the meaning of life. In the Shi'a interpretation (after **Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq**) jihad means to overcome base human instincts and desires through performing the Five Pillars and living by various legal duties (shari'a), some of which relate to jihad, such as honouring parents, working hard in a legitimate occupation and being a good person. An adherent whose deeds are in accordance with the teachings and laws of Islam can become an example and thus promote the religion of Islam to others.

Imam
A Muslim religious leader

Skills: summarise, define, interpret

- 1 Create a list of the 'reasons for getting out of bed' provided in the passages on Islam.
- 2 Divide the list into two categories: personal goals and social goals.

A JEWISH VIEW

Jews look to the **Torah** – which literally means 'instruction' or 'guidance' – as their guide in life. It makes them aware of their duties, gives purpose and shows the ways of attaining a meaningful and

Torah
All of the Jewish written law (the Five Books of Moses, Prophets and Writings) and the oral law (Mishnah, Talmud, Rabbinic responses)



Shutterstock.com/George Muresan

FIGURE 7.31 Reading the Torah

fulfilling life. According to Kabbalah (Jewish mystical tradition), Jews are in this world to elevate the entire creation. Every physical object possesses sparks of holiness, so by using an object in the way ordained by the Torah, the sparks are released and can ascend.

In Jewish law, the high value of human life is expressed in the notion of *pikuach nefesh* (saving life), where one must do everything possible to save a human life; most Jewish laws can be set aside to avoid endangering a person's health or safety (Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 85b). However, when helping another, it is forbidden to place one's own life at more risk than the other person is in already.

The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: Revere God and observe His commandments! For this applies to all mankind.

Source: Ecclesiastes 12:13

I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: I have put before you, life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life – if you and your offspring would live – by loving the LORD your God, heeding His commands, and holding fast to Him.

Source: Deuteronomy 30:19–20

For this reason was man created alone: to teach you that whoever destroys a single soul ... Scripture says he is as guilty as though he had destroyed a complete world; and whoever saves a single soul ... scripture praises him as though he had saved an entire world.

Source: Talmud, Sanhedrin 37a

The foundation of Judaism and the basis of all true religion is the realization that existence is purposeful, and that man has a purpose in life. Both man and nature have meaning because they were created by a purposeful Being.

Source: Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *Handbook of Jewish Thought*, 1:1 and 1:2

Skills: summarise, define, explain, interpret

- 1 Create a list of the 'reasons for getting out of bed' provided in these passages on Judaism.
- 2 Divide the list into two categories: personal goals and social goals.

Skills: summarise, explain, interpret, synthesise

Using the material on the five traditions, complete the following:

- 1 Explain any differences in the understanding of the importance of human life in each of these religious traditions.
- 2 Which of these views would help make your life meaningful? How and why?

theodicy

Vindication of divine attributes, and God's goodness and justice with respect to the existence of evil

eschatology

Beliefs and prophecies about the end of the world, the judgement of humanity, Heaven and Hell

DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE

Just as meaning can be found in life, it can also be found in death. Religious traditions since time immemorial have constructed beliefs, rituals, codes of behaviour and prayers to mark the death of a human being. These assist not only in overcoming the loss of a loved one but also in justifying the death in theological terms. Most traditions have developed a **theodicy** and an **eschatology** to explain death and the afterlife to their adherents. Related beliefs refer to the mystical union of reality with the divine, the ultimate destiny of humanity, including the end of time.

A BUDDHIST VIEW

In the Buddhist tradition, samsara is the journey through birth, life, death and rebirth. Nirvana is the state of bliss or peace that can be experienced in life or death, and it is the concept closest to that of Heaven in Buddhism. Nirvana is 'the state beyond sorrows' and 'a state of freedom from cyclic existence'. It is the state of fulfilment of one's existence after having achieved enlightenment; that is, it is the release from repeated life cycles. In Mahayana (the Great Vehicle) Buddhism, nirvana and samsara are connected. An individual can attain nirvana by following the Buddhist path.

He who says what is not goes down the path of hell; and he who says he has not done what he knows well he has done. Both in the end suffer, because both sinned against truth.

Source: The Dhammapada 306

He who knows the river of past lives and is free from life that ends in death, who knows the joys of heaven and the sorrows of hell, for he is a seer whose vision is pure, who in perfection is one with the Supreme perfection – him I call a Brahman.

Source: The Dhammapada 423

Some people are born on this earth; those who do evil are reborn in hell; the righteous go to heaven; but those who are pure reach Nirvana.

Source: The Dhammapada 126



FIGURE 7.32 The Buddhist wheel of rebirth. What is the belief represented by this image?

Skills: define, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 How does focusing on life as a journey influence one's interpretation of samsara?
- 2 Define nirvana.
- 3 How are nirvana and samsara connected?
- 4 Which concepts from the Dhammapada are similar to or different from those of the religious tradition or denomination you are studying?

A CHRISTIAN VIEW

In the Roman Catholic tradition, there is the belief that death is not the end but that a new stage of life is entered. The Roman Catholic makes sense of death by looking at the example of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection. The Catholic Church sees death as mystery but believes that there is life after death – the promise of eternal life. Jesus Christ's saving act blessed humanity with the gift of eternal life.

The meaning of death is to restore the relationship between God and humanity. Death was not a part of God's original intention for humanity. It was a tragic consequence of sin. But this was changed through Jesus Christ's resurrection.

Because of Christ, Christian death has a positive meaning: 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' The saying is sure: if we have died with him, we will also live with him. What is essentially new about Christian death is this: through Baptism, the Christian has already 'died with Christ' sacramentally, in order to live

a new life; and if we die in Christ's grace, physical death completes this 'dying with Christ' and so completes our incorporation into him in his redeeming act.

Source: Catechism of the Catholic Church 1010, © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

The belief that Christ has died, has risen and will come again is embedded in the liturgies of the Roman Catholic tradition. Even though death is an inevitable part of the human condition, Jesus's death by crucifixion is not meaningless as it is believed he died for the atonement of sins and the redemption of humanity.

The current theology in the Roman Catholic tradition is that eternal life has two final destinations – Heaven and Hell. Heaven is the eternal presence of God and Hell is the eternal separation from the presence of God. The Catholic Church teaches entry into Heaven is by living a moral life and bringing the Reign of God on Earth through the values of peace, love, harmony and justice. In the tradition, there are different opinions as to whether all human beings will go to Heaven or not. Pope Benedict XVI, when he was **Cardinal** Ratzinger, argued that humanity has free will and that there must be the possibility of rejecting God. God allows humanity to choose. However, Swiss theologian Urs von Balthasar disagreed and argued that, because God is merciful and Christ saves, it is possible that all will go to Heaven regardless of choices made during life.

Death can be made sense of through understanding the existence of sin in the world; Christ's role as Redeemer; and his resurrection that brought eternal life for those who live a moral and just life. But ultimately death and what follows is veiled in mystery.

cardinal

The highest-ranking office in the hierarchical church under the Pope. The College of Cardinals assists the Pope and elects him.

amanaimages/Darren Martin
Photography/Corbis



FIGURE 7.33 Gravestones of Australian First World War soldiers at a cemetery in Gallipoli, Turkey. What do the graves say about the Christian understanding of the afterlife?

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'...

He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

Source: Matthew 25:31–46

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Source: John 3:16

I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

Source: John 11:25–6

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

Source: John 14:1–3

And I heard a voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them: they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.

Source: Revelation 21: 3–4

Skills: summarise, explain, interpret, research

1 From the passages quoted above, describe Christian beliefs about death and the afterlife that are stated or implied.

Conduct further research on Christian beliefs regarding death and the afterlife to answer the following questions.

- 2 What other beliefs about death and the afterlife are held by adherents of the Christian tradition?
- 3 How are Christian beliefs about death and the afterlife expressed in other religious aspects, such as rituals, symbols, codes of behaviour, religious experience, sacred stories and the **social structure** of the tradition?
- 4 What implications do these beliefs have for the way in which members lead their lives?
- 5 Describe any significant differences between Christian denominations in their expression of beliefs about death and the afterlife.

social structure

The way a religious tradition is organised; established social model for the religious community

A HINDU VIEW

Hinduism views life as a series of actions, some of which produce karma. Ultimately the goal is to act without producing karma and achieve moksha. The attainment of moksha releases a person upon their death from rebirth. This can take thousands of years and lifetimes. Karmic actions can put a person's atman, or soul, through multiple beings, both animal and human. This means that animals deserve respect as they may be the reincarnation of a relative. The reason why souls produce karma is because of their ignorance of the true state of being, which means samsara, the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, is ongoing until consciously stopped. The only escape is to reach moksha, which is to be unified with Brahman and realise the ultimate truth of the interconnectedness of all things.

Skills: explain, interpret, research, synthesise

- 1 What has karma come to mean in non-Hindu culture?
- 2 What is the difference between the Hindu conception of karma and karma as represented in popular culture?
- 3 How should we treat animals according to karma?
- 4 On the Internet find a meme related to karma. Paste the meme into your notes and explain the joke being made in the meme.
- 5 Locate a story of karma being served to a person, such as one from the Darwin Awards. Did the person at the centre of the story deserve what happened to them? Give reasons for your answer.

AN ISLAMIC VIEW

As with the other monotheistic traditions, Islam also places importance on the afterlife. Death is seen as the will of Allah. According to the Islamic tradition, good deeds are rewarded both in this life and in the hereafter. To receive such rewards, Muslims demonstrate their belief in *Tawhid* (oneness of Allah) and *al-Ikhlās* (sincerity) to Allah by doing good deeds. These deeds should be purely for the pleasure of Allah and not out of self-conceit or to seek appreciation or praise from people. All deeds must be in accordance with the Qur'an.

We shall set up scales of justice for the Day of Judgement, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least, and if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it (to account): and enough are We to take account.

Source: Qur'an Surah 21 Verse 47

Skills: summarise, explain, interpret, research

- 1 Describe Islamic beliefs about death and the afterlife that are stated or implied in the above quoted passages.
Conduct further research on Islamic beliefs regarding death and the afterlife to answer the following questions.
- 2 What other beliefs about death and the afterlife are held by adherents of the Muslim tradition?
- 3 How are Muslim beliefs about death and the afterlife expressed in other religious aspects, such as rituals, symbols, codes of behaviour, religious experience, sacred stories and the social structure of the tradition?
- 4 What implications do these beliefs have for the way in which members lead their lives?
- 5 Describe any significant differences between Muslim denominations in their expression of beliefs about death and the afterlife.

A JEWISH VIEW

There is no single theodicy to explain death in the Jewish tradition; rather, there is a range of explanations to find meaning in the demise of a human life. The afterlife is also acknowledged and expressed in a variety of ways, rather than one belief dominating the Jewish imagination. The deep

respect for every human being is reflected in the codes of behaviour stipulated for the treatment of the body from the time of death until its burial.

In the Jewish tradition, *ha'olam hazeh* (this world) comprises earthly existence with all its limits, and *ha'olam haba* (the world to come) is where the soul goes when a person dies, with the potential for union with *Shekinah* (the divine presence). Heaven is a spiritual garden of Eden, where the soul experiences the greatest closeness to God.

The existence of the afterlife is not stated explicitly in the Torah, but angels – God's intermediaries, who act as functionaries to carry out God's will – are found in many Bible sources. Biblical angelology includes: cherubim holding flaming swords to guard the gates of Eden after Adam and Eve are banished (Gen. 3); an angel who tells Abraham that he and Sarah will have a child (Gen. 18); an angel that prevents Abraham killing Isaac when he is about to sacrifice his son (Gen. 22); Satan (God's testing angel) who puts Job's faith on trial with a series of tragedies and afflictions (Job 1); angels in the vision of the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 1); and the many angels that appear in the stories of the post-biblical rabbinic tradition.

Judaism has a strong concept of reward and punishment in the afterlife. *Gehinnom* (hell) or *sheol* (the pit, the depths) is where the soul is cleansed of its impurities. The soul is in a kind of limbo if it is not suitably enhanced in life by the performance of good deeds and observing the teachings of the Torah. Reincarnation of the soul is a necessary step in its perfection on the journey towards its Eternal Source. These beliefs are reflected in Jewish funeral and mourning rituals and liturgies. Even the Kaddish mourner's prayer, instead of expressing sorrow, praises God in the face of death, starting with the words 'May His great Name grow exalted'. The following quotations show a range of thoughts about why people die, from it being part of the natural life cycle to it being punishment for sin.

A time for being born, and a time for dying.

Source: Ecclesiastes 3:2

May my death be an atonement for all the sins, iniquities and transgressions of which I have been guilty against You.

Source: From the *Viddui*, Deathbed Confession

We know, O Lord, that Your judgement is righteous ... and it is not for us to murmur at the method of judging.

Source: From *Tsidduk Vadin*, Burial Service

This world is like an anteroom [entrance area] to the world to come.

Source: Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:21

The pious ones of the nations of the world, they have a share in the World to Come.

Source: Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Repentance 3:5

Skills: summarise, explain, interpret, research

- 1 Describe Jewish beliefs about death and the afterlife that are stated or implied in the passages quoted above.
- 2 Conduct further research on Jewish beliefs regarding death and the afterlife to answer the following questions.
 - a What other beliefs about death and the afterlife are held by adherents of the Jewish tradition?

>

- > b How are Jewish beliefs about death and afterlife expressed in other religious aspects, such as rituals, symbols, codes of behaviour, religious experience, sacred stories and the social structure of the tradition?
- c What implications do these beliefs have for the way in which members lead their lives?
- d Describe any significant differences between Jewish denominations in their expression of beliefs about death and the afterlife.

Skills: summarise, explain, interpret, research

- 1 Construct a table with two columns. In one column list the various beliefs about death in the religious tradition/s you are studying and in the second column briefly describe how the beliefs are expressed using a range of other aspects of religion.
- 2 Write a dictionary-style entry that describes and explains the concept of death and the afterlife from the viewpoint of the tradition/s you are studying.
- 3 What is the relationship between belief and ritual? Give an example from the religious tradition/s you are studying in respect to death.
- 4 To what extent does a person's understanding of the afterlife affect their acts in this life? For example, does their belief in the afterlife become the reason for doing good? For which religious traditions might this be an important feature?
- 5 Create a graphic or diagram which illustrates the purpose of life in a religious tradition you have been studying.
- 6 Explain the death and burial rituals in a religious tradition you have been studying, exploring the ways in which the community demonstrate their beliefs about the meaning of death.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ULTIMATE REALITY AND HUMANITY

The supreme being, or ultimate reality, is often seen as being in a relationship with humans, though usually not on an equal footing. This relationship may be both immanent and personal at times, and elsewhere distant and transcendent. Metaphors can be used to describe this relationship in various ways, such as parent–child, master–servant or spiritual guide–faithful follower. In Buddhism, for example, ultimate reality is not perceived as a personal being. In some faiths, as in Judaism and Christianity, the ultimate reality may be seen as both immanent and transcendent at the same time. In Hinduism, the various gods and goddesses offer multiple ways of interacting with the ultimate reality or one supreme god; hence Hinduism is not polytheistic but **henotheistic**, which is the worship of one deity while acknowledging the existence of other gods.

henotheistic

Belief in one out of a number of gods

A BUDDHIST VIEW

The various schools of Buddhism depict multiple ideas and differing emphases in their beliefs about ultimate reality, as is the case in many religions.

Ultimate reality has been described as *samsara*, a state of infinite change and impermanence in which forms are simultaneously formless. Other schools describe ultimate reality in the location of Mount Meru, which is surrounded by various lands, seas, continents and gods in heavens. In artistic representations, the *Bhavacakra* (wheel of life) may be represented with various levels of heavens, hells, kingdoms and the demon Mara (the Lord of Death) overseeing the interaction.

In practice, adherents express their beliefs in ultimate reality in a number of ways, most notably by attempting the Vipassana, which is an ancient meditation technique, first taught more than 2500 years ago. The observance of the breath in Vipassana is meant to guide an adherent towards realising the interconnectedness of all phenomena and towards understanding in a deep way the impermanence of everything.

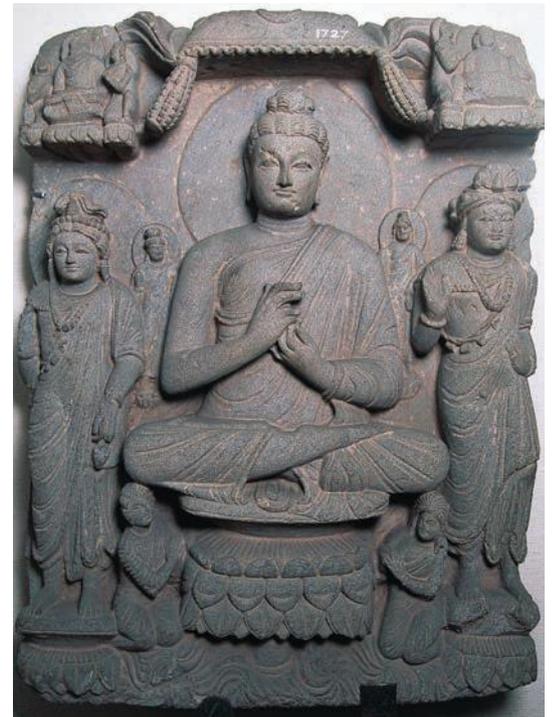
In Buddhism, as there is no personal god, the Buddhist must instead develop a way of relating to life that allows them to overcome suffering in order to be released from the suffering of the cycle of rebirth and death.

If we are selfish, we should be 'wise' selfish rather than 'foolish' selfish. I feel that the moment you take a sense of caring for others, that brings inner strength.

Source: His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

Skills: summarise, synthesise

- 1 Use the material provided to write a 200-word outline of the relationship between the human person and ultimate reality in the Buddhist tradition.



Getty Images/DeAgostini

FIGURE 7.34 Stone relief carving of a seated Buddha from Peshawar, Pakistan. What attitude does this pose depict?

A CHRISTIAN VIEW

The relationship between ultimate reality (God) and humanity in the Christian tradition has been explored through the interpretation of belief in the covenantal relationship between God and humankind. **Covenant** theology has given both Protestantism and Catholicism a key for interpreting the scriptures in order to understand the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the history of redemption and salvation. The covenant forms a binding relationship between God and God's people. The interpretation of the covenant in the scriptures varies in the differing Christian denominations but, in general, the covenants made by God and the Hebrew people are recognised as leading to the new covenant made through Jesus Christ. Some Protestant denominations discuss the covenantal relationship by focusing on the 'covenant of redemption', the 'covenant of works' and the 'covenant of grace'. In Roman Catholic Christianity the emphasis is on salvation history. The covenant becomes an exploration of the relationship between God and humankind throughout the Judeo-Christian narrative.

An Anglican perspective:

- I. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which He has been pleased to express by way of covenant.
- II. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.
- III. Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them

covenant

An agreement between two or more parties to do or not to do something; biblical covenants are binding agreements between God and God's people

faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe. This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in scripture by the name of a testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the Testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed.

Source: The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) w. Scripture Proofs, Chapter VII Of God's Covenant with Man, Reformed.org

'The days are surely coming,' says the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband,' says the Lord. 'But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after these days,' says the Lord. 'I will put my Law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people.'

Source: Jeremiah 31:31–33

A Roman Catholic perspective:

On the night he was betrayed, he took bread and gave you thanks and praise. He broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:

Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you.

When supper was ended, he took the cup. Again he gave you thanks and praise, gave the cup to his disciples, and said:

Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.

Source: Eucharistic Prayer (Roman Catholic Rite). Excerpts from the English translation of The Roman Missal © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation. All rights reserved.

142 By his Revelation, 'the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends, and moves among them, in order to invite and receive them into his own company.' The adequate response to this invitation is faith.

143 By faith, man completely submits his intellect and his will to God. With his whole being man gives his assent to God the revealer. Sacred Scripture calls this human response to God, the author of revelation, 'the obedience of faith'.

Source: Catechism of the Catholic Church, Chapter 3, 'Man's response to God', © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Christian prayer is a covenant relationship between God and man in Christ. It is the action of God and of man, springing forth from both the Holy Spirit and ourselves, wholly directed to the Father, in union with the human will of the Son of God made man.

Source: Catechism of the Catholic Church 2564, © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Skills: summarise, synthesise

- 1 Use the material provided to write a 200-word outline of the relationship between the human person and God in the Christian tradition.

A HINDU VIEW

Hinduism is noted for its diversity of thought but, for many, the central focus of their faith is Brahman – the universal soul with whom the individual soul endeavours to be united. The relationship between the individual and Brahman is developed through the teachings in the sacred scriptures, the Upanishads, and through worshipping one of the three gods who, for some Hindus, are different faces of the one god, Brahman. These gods are Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver) and Shiva (the Destroyer).

The tradition allows for a relationship that is personal and present at all times in the life of the devotee through the presence of the divine within and around themselves; this mystical presence is a god with whom the relationship is marked by love. However, the ultimate reality may be *saguna* (possessing identifiable attributes) or *nirguna* (attributeless). The devotee encounters the personal ultimate reality in their inner experience. At the same time, Brahman is transcendent, all-powerful and supreme. God is present in the earth and the skies beyond.

For Hindus the relationship with the ultimate reality is profoundly intimate and awe inspiring.

Those who say He resides up in the sky, say so;

Those who say the Lord of divines residing down in the world beneath, say so.

I would say, the Lord of wisdom, Who got His throat brightly adorned with the stain of poison, is residing in my heart!

Source: Gayatri Mantra 2

Skills: summarise, synthesise

- 1 Use the material provided to write a 200-word outline of the relationship between the human person and ultimate reality in the Hindu tradition.

AN ISLAMIC VIEW

The basic Islamic principle is that people should do their best to act in line with divine attributes. Since God is generous, people should devote all of their energy to behaving as His most grateful servants.

He initiated you from the earth and settled you in it.

Source: Qur'an 11:61

And He placed at your service whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth – all is from Him. In that are signs for a people who think.

Source: Qur'an 45:13

When My servants ask you about Me, I am near: I answer the call of the caller when he calls on Me. So let them answer Me and have faith in Me that they may be rightly guided.

Source: Qur'an 2:186

Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves.

Source: Qur'an 13:11

Skills: summarise, synthesise

- 1 Use the material provided to write a 200-word outline of the relationship between the human person and Allah in the Islamic tradition.

A JEWISH VIEW

Judaism teaches that God relates to people in as many ways as people choose to relate to God (Rabbi Howard Greenstein). In Jewish belief, God is distant and formidable yet loving and approachable. The Jew's relationship with God is both a formal legal one, bound in mutual covenant stipulations, and a personal one of faith in the righteous Judge of all the Earth. The following excerpts from the Torah and the prayer book reflect the Jewish view of God. God is not only the unknowable transcendent sovereign over humanity but also the immanent parental figure rewarding good and punishing those who are disobedient to God's will. God is also the healer of the sick and personal saviour and redeemer of the nation in times of distress.

The covenant relationship begins when God says to Abraham, 'Go forth from your native land, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and curse him that curses you, and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves through you' (Gen. 12:1–3). God's protection of the Hebrews is assured when God tells him in a vision: 'Fear not, Abram. I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great' (Gen. 15:1). The covenant specifies the mutual obligations. In exchange for the many good deeds that God continues to do for the Jewish people, they must keep God's laws and try to bring holiness into every aspect of their lives.

Centuries later, the prophet Isaiah sets out God's plans for the people of Israel:

I, the LORD, in My grace have summoned you and I have grasped you by the hand. I created you and appointed you a covenant people, a light of nations, opening eyes deprived of light, rescuing prisoners from confinement, from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

Source: Isaiah 42:6–7

The prophet eloquently expresses the belief that God chose the Jewish people for this special mission, but history affirms that Israel chose God.

On the most holy day of the Jewish year, the fast of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, Jews who view themselves during the High Holy Day season as both dependent on God and also unworthy of favour pray all day for forgiveness for their sins from their stern yet merciful God. The central prayer, Avinu Malkeinu, pleads, 'Our Father, our King, treat us generously, even though we have little merit'. The Yom Kippur prayers plead, 'O God of mercy, forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement!', as the long list of national, communal and personal sins are recited. God on this day is the righteous Judge of all humanity.

Skills: summarise, synthesise

- 1 Use the material provided to write a 200-word outline of the relationship between humans and God in the Jewish tradition.

Skills: summarise, explain, interpret

- 1 What do the religious traditions explored in this chapter share in their understanding about the relationship between the ultimate reality and humankind?
- 2 Identify any differences of emphasis in the traditions' interpretations of the relationship between the ultimate reality and humankind.
- 3 'The relationship with the ultimate reality is the most important relationship.' Discuss this statement by referring to the beliefs in a tradition you have been studying.
- 4 Explore the range of images, texts or descriptions used to reveal the relationship between humankind and the ultimate reality in the sacred texts and stories of the tradition you have been studying.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS

Religious traditions serve as a guide to the correct relationship between human beings and the degree of responsibility people have to their fellow humans. Some traditions focus on individual responsibility, while others emphasise a strong collective accountability or stress the need for both in human society. A number of religions are exclusive in nature and clearly decree that only members of that religion have a right to salvation, and not members of other faiths. Therefore, in the history of some religious traditions there has been much effort put into converting members of other faiths so that they might be saved.

All religious traditions include guidelines for peaceful and moral coexistence in human society.

A BUDDHIST VIEW

There is debate over the historical details of the life of Siddhartha Gautama, who became the Buddha. He is said to have been born in 623 or 624 BCE. Although there have been a number of Buddhas preceding and after him, Siddhartha is the most famous and is commonly referred to as the Shakyamuni Buddha. Although he was from the Kshatriya **caste** and heir to the kingdom of Kosala (which he renounced), he criticised the Hindu caste system (see 'A Hindu view', page 240), claiming that an individual's behaviour, rather than their birth inheritance, should enable them to become the highest or the lowest caste. In the Buddhist religion, which later developed from his inspiration and teaching, people who were previously from the Sudra and Dalit (Untouchable) castes (the two lowest castes) have been able to rise to the highest ranks within the religious leadership. Buddhists are seen as separate from the caste system of Hinduism but equal – as can be seen in the symbols on the Nepalese flag.

In Buddhism, the law of karma (the moral consequences of past actions) can also be seen to operate, being one of the 24 conditions. Buddha argues against the idea that karma is predetermining and fatalistic. He argues that, although humans inherit (genetically and culturally) their initial karmic state upon birth, they are not to view karma as the 'be all and end all' of existence. He proposed that each person has a role to play in removing their attachments

caste

Hereditary social group determined by rank, occupation, and wealth in Hinduism



Shutterstock.com/steveallenphoto

FIGURE 7.35 The national flag of Nepal symbolises its geographic location, with the triangles representing the Himalayas. The two religions of Hinduism and Buddhism are represented by their different symbols.

to the world (desires which cause suffering), and promised liberation from the cycle of reincarnation through the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path and the teachings, or dharma, of Buddhism.

For Dalits, who have faced harsh discrimination under the caste system, conversion to Buddhism often meant literally changing one's identity; that is, their surname and other social symbols of the caste system, such as the profession of their father. The reason often cited for doing this was that they would rather be distinct from the caste system than be at the bottom of it. Somewhat paradoxically, new 'castes' have developed and are now present in Buddhist societies. So it is fair to say that the relationship between humans is complex and nuanced in Hindu and Buddhist societies. Added to this is the fact that Buddhists and Hindus may attend and worship at each other's rituals and festivals as part of syncretism. The Buddha is seen by some Hindu traditions as being the ninth avatar of Vishnu. Being incorporated into Hinduism in this manner allows Buddhism to be integrated into the scheme of Hindu society.

Skills: summarise, explain, synthesise

- 1 Provide four key words that would be essential in discussing the Buddhist understanding of the relationship between humans, and discuss the significance of each.

A CHRISTIAN VIEW

Christians emphasise the role of Jesus Christ as teacher. In the Gospels, he often gathered his disciples to teach them through parables about love of neighbour and responsibility for the poor and oppressed; for example, 'The Good Samaritan' (Luke 10) and 'The Rich Man and Lazarus' (Luke 16). On other occasions he taught them very directly through actions – a clear example of this was the defence of the woman caught in adultery (John 8). In Jesus Christ's teachings and actions, Christians have spelt out for them the relationship of love and forgiveness that should exist between humans. This relationship will bring about the establishment of God's reign and a society marked by peace.

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Source: John 15:13

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.'

Source: Luke 10:25–28

St Paul, in a letter to the people of Corinth, explored the importance of love in the early Church community:

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part,

and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now, we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Source: 1 Corinthians 13: 4–13

For the Christian, the relationship between humans is not only aspirational but also profoundly practical and, at times, political. The teachings of Jesus Christ in the Gospels have as their central motif the instruction to establish God's reign, the **Kingdom of God**. This teaching has implications for the relationship of followers of Christ with others in the communities in which they live. It was a feature of the early Church communities, which were known for the radical sharing of their property (Acts 2:44). Christianity encourages a Gospel interpretation focused on social justice.

This emphasis has been particularly strong in some Christian denominations and some groups within Christian denominations, such as members of the Brotherhood of St Laurence in the Anglican tradition. The emphasis in this work for social change is underpinned by the Christian view that Christ has passed to them the responsibility of working with the Holy Spirit in their times to create peace, justice, harmony and love.

The Uniting Church of Australia, for example, takes a particularly strong stand on issues of social justice. Below are the key elements of its vision statement:

- to bear witness to the unity of faith and life in Christ, rising above cultural, economic, national and racial boundaries
- to engage in fearless prophetic ministry in relation to social evils which deny God's active will for justice and peace
- to act with God alongside the oppressed, the hurt and the poor
- to accept responsibility for the wise use and conservation of the finite resources of this earth for the benefit of all.

Source: Uniting Church in Australia, June 1977

In the Roman Catholic tradition, Pope Francis I has also taken on the role of advocate for those who are voiceless in the community. He declared 2015 as the year in which the Church would give a voice to those who were victims of human trafficking.

Let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish ... Let us pray for peace in the whole world, still divided by greed looking for easy gain, wounded by selfishness which threatens human life and the family, selfishness that continues in human trafficking, the most extensive form of slavery in this 21st century ... Easter is the exodus, the passage of human beings from slavery to sin and evil to the freedom of love and goodness ... But that passage must be renewed in every age and in every human heart.

How many deserts, even today, do humans beings need to cross – above all, the desert within, when we have no love for God or neighbour, when we fail to realise that we are guardians of all that the Creator has given us and continues to give us.

Source: Pope Francis I, Easter Message, 2015

Kingdom of God

A key element of the Christian belief that God reigns over all creation. Linked to eschatology as God's reign will be complete at the end of time in Christian theology



FIGURE 7.36 Pope Francis I. How have his actions demonstrated the Catholic teachings on love?

Skills: summarise, explain, synthesise

- 1 Provide four key words that would be essential in discussing the Christian understanding of the relationship between humans, and discuss the significance of each.

A HINDU VIEW

In Hinduism, actions related to karma can result in a person being a human in one life and an animal in the next life due to the moral consequences of their actions. In this manner, a soul (atman) can ascend or descend through various life forms and castes. Human to human relations are defined by castes, which proceed from the gods in the following order: Brahmin (priests, teachers), Kshatriya (kings, warriors), Vaishya (landowners, merchants), Sudras (common people, servants, peasants) and Dalits (Untouchables; outside the caste system, they work as latrine cleaners or prepare bodies for funeral pyres).

According to the Rig Veda, the first man, Purush, destroyed himself, and from parts of his body came the four castes: Brahmin from his head, Kshatriya from his hands, Vaishya from his thighs and Sudra from his feet. The Untouchables are conspicuously absent from this scheme but perform a vital role in it.

Historically, the caste system arrived and evolved during the Indo-Aryan invasion in 1500 BCE and the professions and castes related to the invaders came to be inherited. There are a number of prescribed relationships within and between the castes. A dichotomous relationship exists. As Hindus, a certain respect is to be observed between all human beings, and between human beings and all creation, including animals (due to reincarnation). Simultaneously, Hindus should accept the caste into which they have been born because this may be due to their karmic actions in a previous life. There are prescribed relationships and taboos on relationships between the castes and the professions in which castes are allowed to participate. The system is relatively stable and there is very little historical movement between the castes.

Despite the rigidity of Hindus marrying within their own caste, which was enforced by strong taboos, some intermarriages have been known to exist. Historically, Brahmin males have been known to marry women from each of the other castes, a situation known as *anuloma*. This allowed for the integration of the Aryans with the other peoples of India. On the other hand, the marriage of a woman of a high caste such as Brahmin or Kshatriya with a man from another caste is known as *pratiloma* and it has been seen in a less positive light historically, culturally and legally. Despite this, a law permitting inter-caste marriage was passed in 1955 and the number of inter-caste marriages, while still relatively low, has increased. Reasons suggested include some relaxation of the cultural taboos on caste and the effects of India becoming a modern, industrialised participant in the global economy, which has been accompanied by increases in levels of education, social mobility and, some commentators argue, secularisation.

Skills: summarise, explain, synthesise

- 1 Provide four key words that would be essential in discussing the Hindu understanding of the relationship between humans, and discuss the significance of each.

AN ISLAMIC VIEW

Islam teaches that salvation for its followers is found in living a life that is pleasing to Allah. This requires followers to be respectful of other religions because religious freedom is embedded in the texts of Islam. The Qur'an teaches a doctrine of compassion for others, with devotees ridding themselves of emotions, such as anger, that are destructive. The followers of Allah must make room for those who suffer and reach out to bring justice. As a result, interest charges on loans (*riba*), is forbidden under **sharia law**, because it interferes with the natural bonds between humans, allowing selfishness and the rich to dominate the poor.

The servants of the Merciful are those who walk the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, say, 'Peace'.

Source: Qur'an 25:63

Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you for your religion nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loves those who are just.

Source: Qur'an 60:8



sharia law
Islamic legal code

FIGURE 7.37 Reading the Qur'an. What is hoped to be gained by repeatedly reading and reflecting on the Qur'an?

Skills: summarise, explain, synthesise

- 1 Provide four key words that would be essential in discussing the Islamic understanding of the relationship between humans, and discuss the significance of each.

A JEWISH VIEW

Within the various historical contexts of Judaism's development is the central idea that to worship God, Jews have to treat their fellow people ethically. This is extended beyond fellow Jews, to include all humankind (see below). To earn God's favour on Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, Jews must present themselves in synagogues after completing the obligation to acknowledge wrongs they have committed to people directly. Only then can they ask for forgiveness from God. The sanctity of treating others ethically echoes resoundingly throughout Jewish sacred texts. Even the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20) encapsulate this idea, with a significant number of them concerning relations between humans rather than those between humans and God. The highest commandment for which a number of others may be broken is *pikuach nefesh* (to redeem a soul); in other words, 'to save a life is to save the world'.

There are four character types among people. One who says, 'What's mine is mine and what's yours is yours' is of average character, and some say, this is the character of Sodom. [One who says] 'What's mine is yours and what's yours is mine' is unlearned (lit., [of] the people of the land). [One who says] 'What's mine is yours and what's yours is yours' is pious. [One who says] 'What's yours is mine and what's mine is mine' is wicked.

Source: Pirkei Avot, Chapter 5, Mishnah 13

What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbour: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof; go and learn it.

Source: Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 31a

Therefore the man was created singly, to teach that he who destroys one soul of a human being, the Scripture considers him as if he should destroy a whole world, and him who saves one soul of Israel, the Scripture considers him as if he should save a whole world.

Source: Babylonian Talmud, Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:9

These are the obligations without measure which enhance our world whilst building credit in the world to come. They are: honouring one's father and mother, engaging in deeds of compassion, arriving early for study, morning and evening, dealing graciously with guests, visiting the sick, providing for the wedding couple, accompanying the dead for burial, being devoted in prayer, and making peace among people – and the study of Torah encompasses them all.

Source: Mishkan T'filah prayer book

Skills: summarise, explain, synthesise

- 1 Provide four key words that would be essential in discussing the Jewish understanding of the relationship between humans, and discuss the significance of each.

Skills: research, explain, interpret, analyse

- 1 Research a major story in this week's news media and critique the politicians' responses in the light of the religious teachings you have studied in this section.
- 2 Identify and discuss in detail a key belief in the religious tradition you have been studying that informs adherents' view of the relationship between humans.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN LIFE AND THE REST OF THE NATURAL WORLD

Different faiths have a variety of views on the relationship between human life and the rest of the natural world. Cultures whose survival depends on the land, and that derive their existence from hunting and agriculture, have developed complex belief systems in regard to the relationship between human beings and the natural world. Often this relationship is based on the interpretation of the sacred texts of the religious traditions. Developments in agriculture and then industry in Western civilisation have been based on an interpretation of the Bible, Genesis 1 in particular. A very literal understanding of the terms ‘dominion’ and ‘subdue’ (Gen. 1:26–28) has been used to justify the exploitation and destruction of the environment. Since the last decades of the 20th century, the growing awareness of environmental degradation and climate change has challenged religious traditions to explore their teachings on the relationship of humankind with the rest of creation.

Religious traditions, in their sacred texts and, in particular, their **creation myths**, explore the relationship between humankind and the natural world in which they live and upon which they rely. This relationship raises questions concerning the role of humans as fellow creatures, protectors, sustainers or exploiters of the gifts of nature.

creation myth
A sacred story told in ancient times to explain religious belief about the origins of the universe

A BUDDHIST VIEW

In Buddhism, there are numerous stories demonstrating beliefs that relate to nature. Karma is a part of nature and operates in a similar way to natural law and elemental forces. Over time, the sacred literature of Buddhism came to include stories involving animals that would explain, via analogy, important principles. In one such story a goat is being prepared for sacrifice when it laughs and then cries, and, upon request, the attendants take the goat to the priest:

The goat, remembering his past lives, said, ‘A long time ago, I too was a priest who, like you, was well educated in the sacred religious rites. I thought that to sacrifice a goat was a necessary offering to my god, which would benefit others, as well as myself in future rebirths. However, the true result of my actions was that in my next 499 lives I myself have been beheaded!

While being prepared for the sacrifice, I realised that today I will definitely lose my head for the 500th time. Then I will finally be free of all the results of my unwholesome deeds of so long ago. The joy of this made me laugh uncontrollably.

Then I suddenly realised that you, the priest, were about to repeat the same unwholesome action, and would be doomed to the same result of having your head chopped off in your next 500 lives! So, out of compassion and sympathy, my laughter turned to tears.

Source: ‘The Goat Who Saved the Priest’, *Animal Tales For Young and Old*

This excerpt illustrates the operation of karma according to Buddhism. The principle of life permeates throughout Buddhism to the point where vegetarianism is mandatory for monks and nuns and is promoted for adherents. The Dalai Lama and some of those in other Buddhist schools are heavily involved in the promotion, protection and conservation of the environment.

Since I deeply believe that basically human beings are of a gentle nature so I think the human attitude towards our environment should be gentle. Therefore I believe that not only should we keep our relationship with our other fellow human beings very gentle and non-violent, but it is also very important to extend that kind of

attitude to the natural environment. I think morally speaking we can think like that and we should all be concerned for our environment.

Source: His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

Skills: interpret, explain

- 1 In no more than 50 words, explain the meaning of the Buddhist story of the goat who saved a priest.
- 2 Compare and contrast the Buddhist relationship with the natural world with that found in consumerist societies in the West today. Draw conclusions about the valuable lessons that can be learnt from Buddhism for a world facing an environmental crisis.



AAP/AP Photo/Mark Pardew, File

FIGURE 7.38 During horrific bushfires in Victoria in 2009, a koala was saved by a firefighter. What would be the Buddhist interpretation of this action?

A CHRISTIAN VIEW

The Christian appreciation of the natural world is evident throughout history in the theologians of the tradition. As with most religious traditions, the liturgical calendar followed the rhythms of the natural world. This awareness of nature became particularly evident in the Middle Ages when the already established view that the natural world was a source of God's revelation developed. St Bonaventure, a contemplative medieval scholar, wrote that the natural world was God's book through which God is revealed. Hildegard of Bingen, a Benedictine abbess who lived in the Rhine Valley, wrote and painted using the natural world as the inspiration for her theology. Her knowledge of the natural world and its capacity to heal is still a reference point for scholars today. However, it was St Francis of Assisi who still inspires those who work for the protection of the environment.



Shutterstock.com/Andrea Danti

FIGURE 7.39 St Francis of Assisi. What evidence is there in this image of St Francis' attitude to the natural world?

St Francis of Assisi

St Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) was the founder of the Franciscan order. He rejected wealth and status and adopted a simple life, developing a profound understanding of the beauty of nature. There are many stories told from the period that illustrate his special care of animals.

One story tells how he left his companions in the road and ran eagerly toward the birds. He 'humbly begged them to listen to the word of God. He is recorded as saying: "My brothers, birds, you should praise your Creator very much and always love him; he gave you feathers to clothe you, wings so that you can fly, and whatever else was necessary for you. God made you noble among his creatures, and he gave you a home in the purity of the air; though you neither sow nor reap, he nevertheless protects and governs you without any solicitude on your part."

Pope John Paul II proclaimed St Francis of Assisi the patron of ecology in 1979. The pope cited him for being 'an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation ... St Francis invited all creation – animals, plants, natural forces, even Brother Sun and Sister Moon – to give honour and praise to the Lord' (© Libreria Editrice Vaticana). St Francis became the inspiration for Pope Francis I's **encyclical** on the environment, *Laudato Si*.

encyclical

A formal document, usually in the form of a letter, from a Pope to teach the faithful

Industrial Revolution

A period in Western history when there was a shift from agriculture to manufacturing; from rural life to urban life. It began in England in about 1760 and continued through to the middle of the 19th century.

However, Christianity, as the religious tradition that supported the ruling governments at the time of the **Industrial Revolution**, must carry some of the burden for the damage that was done to the environment during that period. The introduction of mechanisation and factories saw progress wreak havoc on the land and waters of the Earth, and was supported by a theology that recognised the God-given right for humans to 'subdue' the Earth.

In recent years, in most Christian denominations, there has been renewed study of Genesis that has developed into an eco-theology that speaks of stewardship of the Earth with care and respect for all creatures. Genesis 1 is seen to be religious myth that speaks religious truths, and the validity of science, including evolution, has been recognised.

God is not a divine being or a magician, but the Creator who brought everything to life ... Evolution in nature is not inconsistent with the notion of creation, because evolution requires the creation of beings that evolve.

Source: Pope Francis I, 2015

When man turns his back on the Creator's plan, he provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of the created order. If man is not at peace with God, then earth itself cannot be at peace: 'Therefore the land mourns and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and even the fish of the sea are taken away' (Hosea 4:3).

[...]The profound sense that the earth is 'suffering' is also shared by those who do not profess our faith in God. Indeed, the increasing devastation of the world of nature is apparent to all ... I should like to address directly my brothers and sisters in the Catholic Church, in order to remind them of their serious obligation to care for all creation. The commitment of believers to a healthy environment for everyone stems directly from their belief in God the Creator, from their recognition of the effects of original and personal sin, and from the certainty of having been redeemed by Christ. Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God (cf. Psalm 148:96).

Source: Pope John Paul II, 1990, © Libreria Editrice Vaticana



FIGURE 7.40 The Industrial Revolution transformed the English landscape during the 18th and 19th centuries. What evidence is there in this image of environmental damage?

We invite all people of goodwill to journey with us in the most critical and urgent of tasks – of safeguarding the integrity of Creation, acting on climate change, protecting Earth’s fragile ecosystems and providing a voice for the victims of environmental degradation, injustice and pollution.

Source: Catholic Earthcare

The natural environment is, however, not merely a resource for the benefit of human beings but has intrinsic value as part of God’s good creation. In 1991 the Uniting Church declared that, ‘Nature has a right to the protection of its ecosystems, species, and populations in their interconnectedness’.

The Uniting Church’s commitment to the environment arises out of the Christian belief that God, as the Creator of the universe, calls us into a special relationship with the creation – a relationship of mutuality and interdependence. We believe that God’s will for the earth is renewal and reconciliation, not destruction by human beings.

Source: Uniting Justice Australia

The Christian faith is certainly about personal salvation. But it is more than that: Christianity is first and foremost a concern for the whole created order – biodiversity and business; politics and pollution; rivers, religion and rainforests. The coming of Jesus brought everything of God into the sphere of time and space, and everything of time and space into the sphere of God. All things meet together in him: Jesus is the point of reconciliation. Therefore, if Christians believe in Jesus they must recognise that concern for climate change is not an optional extra but a core matter of faith.

Source: The Australian Anglican Environment Network

The Earth, with its impoverished sons and daughters, needs liberation. We all live oppressed under a paradigm of civilisation that has exiled us from the community of life, which is related to violence against Nature and which makes us lose the reverence for the sacredness and majesty of the Universe. We have forgotten that we are only a link in the immense current of life and that we are co-responsible for the common destiny of mankind and Earth.

Source: Leonardo Boff

Leonardo Boff is a Brazilian theologian who established the Base Christian Communities movement among the impoverished of Latin America, establishing the link between the degradation of the Earth and injustices to the poorest of the poor.

There are, however, members of the Christian tradition who hold the belief that Genesis 1 is literally accurate and so do not accept the teachings of science on evolution, in particular. For some of these groups the theology of creation (**Creationism**) has become a definitive feature of their beliefs.

Creationism

The belief that God literally created the world in six days and rested on the seventh in order to fulfil a divine plan. God’s creation is seen as evidence of a divine cosmic design (intelligent design) that can be explored through ‘creation science’.

Skills: summarise, explain

1 What are the consequences of the Creationists’ interpretation of Genesis 1?

Skills: analyse, research, compare and contrast

- 1 Research the Industrial Revolution and outline the theological justification for ‘progress’.
- 2 Research a current debate concerning the development of mining and list the arguments used for and against the mine.
- 3 Use the Catholic Earthcare website to list the theological arguments for protecting the Earth.

A HINDU VIEW

The following is an explanation of the understandings in Hinduism of how humanity and nature are interconnected, by His Excellency Dr Karan Singh, President, HinduVirat Samaj.

The Hindu Declaration on Nature

In the ancient spiritual traditions man was looked upon as part of nature, linked by indissoluble spiritual and psychological bonds with the elements around him. This is very much marked in the Hindu tradition, probably the oldest living religious tradition in the world. The Vedas, those collections of hymns composed by great spiritual seers and thinkers which are the repository of Hindu wisdom, reflect the vibrance of an encompassing worldview which looks upon all objects in the universe, living or non-living, as being pervaded by the same spiritual power.

Hinduism believes in the all encompassing sovereignty of the divine, manifesting itself in a graded scale of evolution. The human race, though at the top of the evolutionary pyramid at present is not seen as something apart from the earth and its multitudinous life forms. The Atharva Veda has the magnificent hymn to the Earth which is redolent with ecological and environmental values. The following verses are taken from this extraordinary hymn:

‘Earth, in which lies the seam the river and other waters in which food and cornfields have come to be, in which lives all that breathes and that moves,
May she confer on us the finest of her yield

Earth in which the waters, common to all, moving on all sides, flow unflinching, day and night,

May she pour on us milk in many streams, and endow us with lustre,

May those born of thee, O Earth be for our welfare, free from sickness and waste.

Wakeful though a long life we shall become bearers of tribute to thee,

Earth, my mother, set me securely with bliss in full accord with heaven,

O wise one, uphold me in grace and splendour.’

Not only in the Vedas, but also in later scriptures such as the Upanishads, the Puranas and subsequent texts, the Hindu viewpoint on nature has been clearly enunciated. It is permeated by a reverence for life and an awareness that the great forces of nature, the earth, the sky, the air, the water and fire as well as various orders of life including plants, trees, forests and all animals, are all bound to each other within the great rhythms of nature. The divine is not exterior to creation but expresses itself through natural phenomena. Thus in the Mundaka Upanishad the divine is described as follows:

‘Fire is his head, his eyes are the moon and the sun; the regions of space are his ears, his voice the revealed Veda; the wind is his breath, his heart is the entire universe; the earth is his footstool, truly he is the inner soul of all.’

Turning to the animal world, we find that animals have always received special care and consideration. Numerous Hindu texts advise that all species should be treated as children. In Hindu mythology and iconography there is a close relationship



FIGURE 7.41 An open cut mine at Mt Whaleback in Western Australia. Given this used to be a mountain, how is this caring for the Earth?

Getty Images/Peter Hendrie

between the various deities, who are all different aspects of the same divine power, and their animal or bird, and this lends a special dimension to the animal kingdom.

In addition, according to the Vaishnava tradition, the evolution of life on this planet is symbolised by a series of divine incarnations beginning with fish, moving through amphibious forms and mammals, and then on into human incarnations. This view clearly holds that man did not spring fully formed to dominate the lesser life forms, but rather evolved out of these forms itself, and is therefore integrally linked to the whole of creation. This leads necessarily to a reverence for animal life.

Source: Dr Karan Singh

Skills: summarise, explain, research, synthesise

- 1 How does the Hindu view of seeing human beings as part of nature differ from a view of human beings as distinct from nature?
- 2 Why should humans show respect to animals, according to Hinduism?
- 3 Certain branches of Hinduism are completely vegetarian. How does this practice express Hindu beliefs about the natural world?
- 4 Could you ever kill an animal? If you have done so, how did it feel to take the life of another being? What would be the consequences in Hinduism of your actions?
- 5 On the Internet find a picture of animals in India disrupting modern life; for example, a Brahman bull sitting down on a highway. Why would the cars swerve to avoid hitting the animal even if it causes massive delays to traffic?

AN ISLAMIC VIEW

In the Qur'an, Muslims are instructed to look after the environment and not to damage it:

So devote yourself to the religion of monotheism – the natural instinct Allah has instilled in mankind. There is no altering Allah's creation. This is the true religion, but most people do not know.

Source: Qur'an Surah 30:30

Muslims have to look after the Earth because it is all Allah's creation and it is part of a person's duty to Allah:

And it is He who spread the earth, and placed in it mountains and rivers. And He placed in it two kinds of every fruit. He causes the night to overlap the day. In that are signs for people who reflect. On earth are adjacent terrains, and gardens of vines, and crops, and date-palms, from the same root or from distinct roots, irrigated with the same water. We make some taste better than others. In that are proofs for people who reason.

Source: Qur'an Surah 13:3–4

Because of this passage, Muslims see themselves as being responsible for the world that Allah created and they have to make their own ethical decisions about how to do this.

The Assisi Declarations on Nature, 1986

In 1986, the Italian town of Assisi, birthplace of St Francis, the patron saint for ecology, was the meeting place for five major world religions – Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and

Judaism – to ponder and develop a joint policy for their faiths focused on nurturing right relationships between humanity and the natural world. Following is part of the declaration of the Islamic religion.

- The central concept of Islam is *Tawhid* or the Unity of God. Allah is Unity; and His Unity is also reflected in the unity of mankind, and the unity of man and nature. His trustees are responsible for maintaining the unity of His creation, the integrity of the Earth, its flora and fauna, its wildlife and natural environment. Unity cannot be had by discord, by setting one need against another or letting one end predominate over another; it is maintained by balance and harmony. There Muslims say that Islam is the middle path and we will be answerable for how we have walked this path, how we have maintained balance and harmony in the whole of creation around us.
- So unity, trusteeship and accountability, that is *Tawhid*, *Khalifah* and *Akhirah*, the three central concepts of Islam, are also the pillars of the environmental ethics of Islam. They constitute the basic values taught by the Qur'an. It is these values which led Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, to say: 'Whoever plants a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruit is rewarded.'
- For all these reasons Muslims see themselves as having a responsibility towards the world and the environment, all of which are the creations of Allah.
- Unlike many other religions, Muslims do not have any specific festivals in which they give thanks for the harvest or the world. Instead they give thanks to Allah regularly for his creation.
- In order to separate Islam from other religions, the Islamic year is only 354 days, this means that the months and festivals happen at a different time each year and so there is no particular festival which falls during a period of harvest.

The Assisi Declarations, WWF International Conference, September 1986,
Muslim declaration by Dr Abdullah Omar Nassef, Secretary General, Muslim World League

Skills: interpret, analyse, research

- 1 After reading the declaration above, list the values that shape the Islamic response to environmental issues.
- 2 Research an Islamic environmental organisation and the work it is doing.

A JEWISH VIEW

There is no single source on Jewish attitudes to nature but there are many references scattered throughout the tradition's sacred texts covering laws about trees and plants, the treatment of animals and caring for the local environment. The liturgy also includes many prayers thanking God for food and other benefits from the land. The Jewish calendar refers explicitly to the agricultural seasons and their links to religious celebrations, especially the festivals of Pesach (Passover), Sukkot (Tabernacles), Shavu'ot (Feast of Weeks) and Tu Bishvat (the New Year for Trees, when it is customary to plant saplings). The following passages demonstrate the Jewish attitude to the natural world.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and tend it.

Source: Genesis 2:15

So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that would be its name.

Source: Genesis 2:19

When God created the first human beings, God led them around the Garden of Eden and said, 'Look at my works! See how beautiful they are, how excellent! For your sake I created them all. Take care not to spoil or destroy My world, for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you'.

Source: Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13

Honi the circle-drawer was walking down the road, when he saw a man planting a carob tree. Honi asked, 'How many years will it take for this tree to bear fruit?' The man answered that it would take 70 years. Honi said, 'Are you so healthy that you expect to live that long to enjoy its fruit?' The man answered, 'I found a fruitful world, because my forebears planted for me. Thus I shall do for my children and their children'.

Source: Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 23a

Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai taught the priority of planting:

If you should be holding a sapling in your hand when they tell you the Messiah has arrived, first plant the sapling, then go out and greet him.

Source: Avot d'Rabbi Nathan 31

Jewish responses to looking after the world can be noted also in the Kabbalistic notion of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) and in the modern eco-kashrut movement that combines following Jewish dietary laws with vegetarianism and ecological responsibility in the way that food is grown, manufactured, packaged and sold.

Skills: summarise, explain, interpret

- 1 According to Genesis 1 and 2, what is the relationship between humans and the animal kingdom?
- 2 What is the difference between the biblical understanding of humanity's relationship to plants and of that to animals?



Shutterstock.com/Daniel Prudek

FIGURE 7.42 A bee pollinating a flower. 'Look at My works! See how beautiful they are, how excellent!' (Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13). What does this say about the Jewish understanding of the relationship between all living things?

Judaism has always been pro-science, allowing current scientific knowledge to be an element considered in making Halachic (legal) decisions. The Big Bang points to scientific evidence that the world had a beginning, implying that it emerged in a creation, which is consistent with the Jewish belief that everything is ultimately one unity. Einstein's theory that matter is energy facilitates belief in spirituality; while the probability theory, which provides mathematical insight into random phenomena, allows for God's providence, that God intervenes in the human world. Thus, in Jewish theology, God is seen as the best explanation for the facts of the world.

Skills: define, summarise, explain, interpret, research, synthesise

- 1 To what extent are the Big Bang theory and Darwin's theory of evolution compatible with beliefs of the origins of the universe and human life in the religious tradition/s you are studying?
- 2 Describe and explain the beliefs about the creation of the universe and the beginning of life on Earth in the tradition/s you are studying. Make sure you cite your sources.
- 3 The debate between groups over the religious truth contained in the biblical account of creation and those who favour a more rational evolutionary explanation has raged for over a century. Referring to the arguments given by the religious tradition/s you are studying, list points for evolution and/or against it as a means of understanding the world. Make sure you cite your sources.
- 4 Find out about the creation issues debated at the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925.

Skills: interpret, summarise, analyse

- 1 Outline the relationship between humankind and creation as expressed in the sacred texts of a tradition you have been studying.

- 2 Essay topic:

There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all (behind creation) ... It seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature's numbers to make the Universe ... The impression of design is overwhelming.

Paul Davies (scientist)

To what extent is this view consistent with the understanding of the relationship between humanity and creation in a religious tradition you have been studying? Discuss.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

The beliefs explored in this chapter have been categorised to look at the wisdom provided by them in the traditions' relationships with the ultimate reality, each other and with creation. The beliefs have been chosen to illustrate the way in which they can provide answers to the 'big questions' in life. However, it can suggest that the beliefs are not interdependent. This would be a false assumption as these fundamental beliefs are part of an integrated system of beliefs that provides a cohesive, overarching narrative to the adherents of a tradition.

Skills: identify, explain, interpret

- 1 Use the blank template in the online resources to complete charts on two of the central beliefs in the religious tradition you have been studying. In each, show the relationship between each of the beliefs and the aspects of religion.

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://religionsocvce.nelsonnet.com.au>.



REVISION

A Short-answer questions

These questions are not specific to a religious tradition or denomination.

- 1 What are the 'existential questions' from which religious beliefs have developed?
- 2 What is the purpose of religion for the individual?
- 3 What does religion offer society?
- 4 What is the nature of religious beliefs?
- 5 What makes a belief 'distinctive' to a religious tradition?

B Extended-response questions

Some of these questions relate to a specific religious tradition or denomination.

- 6 Identify the religious tradition or denomination and refer to its beliefs to answer the following questions.
 - a What is good?
 - b What is evil?
 - c What is the path to true happiness?
 - d What beliefs are held about life after death?
- 7 Identify the religious tradition or denomination and refer to its beliefs to answer the following questions.
 - a Why do humans exist?
 - b Where did the universe come from?
 - c What is the relationship between human beings and a higher being?
 - d What is the relationship between human beings and the natural world?
- 8 Identify the religious tradition or denomination and refer to its beliefs to answer the following questions.
 - a What should be the relationship between human beings?
 - b In what way is this connected to the belief in an ultimate reality?
- 9 Identify the religious tradition or denomination and refer to its beliefs to answer the following questions.
 - a Identify and explain three beliefs related to the nature and purpose of human life.
 - b Name the ways in which one of these beliefs is expressed in the tradition you have studied.
 - c What role does this belief have in the way people lead their lives?
- 10 *The Creation of Adam* is a painting by Michelangelo (an Italian Renaissance painter, sculptor, poet, architect and engineer) that is part of a section of a ceiling fresco in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City. It was painted in about 1511. It is an interpretation of the sacred story in Genesis 1 and 2, of the relationship between humanity and God. View this image on the Internet, and answer the following questions.
 - a Describe the view of the creation of humanity that is depicted in this painting.
 - b Discuss the relationship between the ultimate reality and humanity as stated in the beliefs of the religious tradition or denomination you have studied.

- c Discuss the nature of humanity as it is described in the religious tradition or denomination you have studied.
Make sure you cite your sources and provide examples.
 - d List the similarities and differences between the understandings you identified in questions 7 and 8 and those depicted in Michelangelo's painting.
- 11 Identify the religious tradition or denomination and explain how:
- a the concepts of good and evil relate to the ethical structure of the religious tradition or denomination you are studying.
 - b the understanding of good and evil of the religious tradition or denomination influences the way in which adherents should lead their lives.

C Essay questions

You may use one or more religious traditions or denominations in your response. In each essay remember to demonstrate which aspects illustrate the beliefs. Use primary sources and quotations to support your answers.

- 12 *How does the belief in a supreme being or some ultimate reality influence the way followers of a religious tradition or denomination understand questions about the origin, nature, and the meaning and purpose of human life?*
- 13 *What makes religious traditions distinctive is a series of fundamental and interconnected beliefs that give meaning and purpose to life.*
Demonstrate how this statement is expressed in at least one religious tradition or denomination you have been studying.
- 14 *Religion is the universal tool for explaining things we do not understand.*
Discuss this statement, referring to the beliefs of at least one religious tradition or denomination you have studied.
- 15 *How would a religious tradition or denomination you have studied understand the relationship of humans to the natural world?*
Explain how this influences adherents' approach to living their lives.
- 16 *Religious traditions shape their world view through their central beliefs and this world view assists believers to have a distinctive identity in societies where multiple world views exist.*
Discuss this statement by exploring beliefs in at least one religious tradition or denomination you have been studying.
- 17 *How has a religious tradition or denomination you have been studying provided a response to the human search for meaning in the face of suffering and death?*

EXTENSION

Beliefs in prayer

Prayers are an expression of the important, significant, distinctive, fundamental and foundational beliefs of religious traditions.

They are a way of bringing together the aspects of beliefs, texts, sacred stories, rituals and spiritual experience.

One way of identifying the beliefs that underpin a religious tradition or denomination is to explore in-depth the words of their most important prayers.



Beliefs in prayer

Task

- 1 Identify three prayers that are a prominent part of the religious tradition or denomination you are studying.
- 2 Annotate each prayer, identifying the beliefs that underpin the prayer.
- 3 Write 300 words exploring the interpretation of the beliefs in these prayers. Use quotations from the prayers to support your statements.
- 4 Extend your discussion by exploring the context in which these prayers are used and their role in providing meaning in the life of members of the religious tradition or denomination.

Relationship

So, 'they're in a relationship'!

The word 'relationship' is a much-used term with many possible interpretations of its meaning.

Therefore, when there is discussion about the relationship between beliefs and the other aspects of religion, there needs to be some specific description of the relationship.

Define the relationships listed below and find four other words that describe relationships in this subject.



Relationship

TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP	DEFINITION
A close relationship	
A stable relationship	
A synchronistic relationship	
A dependent relationship	
A mutually dependent relationship	
A supportive relationship	
A relationship that involves an interplay ...	
A relationship that enables ...	

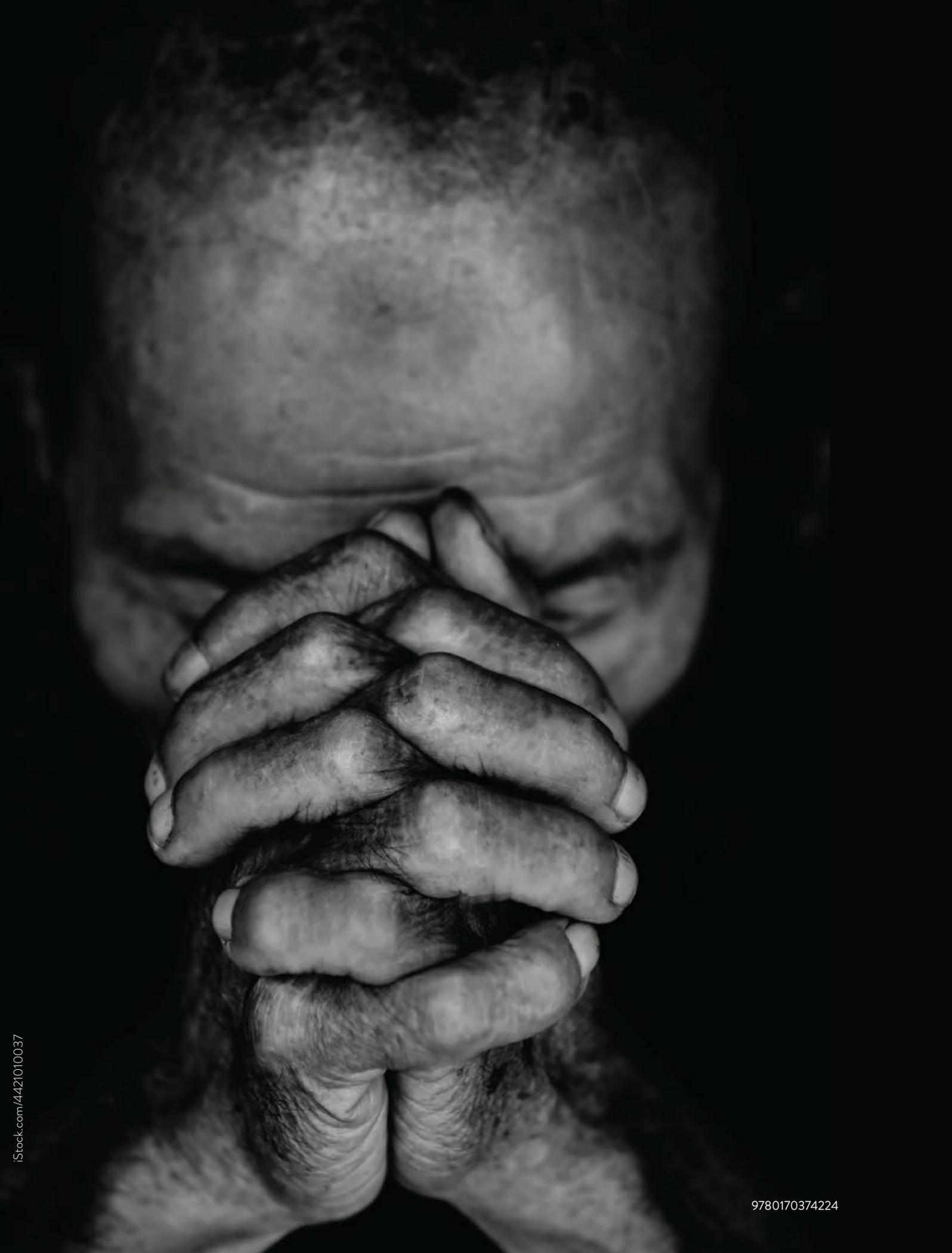
Aspects of religion

Select one religious tradition or denomination and complete the table below, listing eight aspects, a definition of each aspect and an example of the aspect.



Aspects of religion

NAME OF THE ASPECT	GENERIC DEFINITION OF THE ASPECT	AN EXAMPLE OF THE ASPECT EXPRESSING A BELIEF, WITHIN THE SELECTED RELIGIOUS TRADITION OR DENOMINATION



Chapter 8

DYNAMIC ASPECTS

Outcome to be demonstrated

Explanation of how the expression of beliefs through other aspects of a religion is intended to foster meaning for adherents

Focus questions

- ▶ How do the aspects of religion relate to each other?
- ▶ What is the role of the aspects in responding to the search for meaning?
- ▶ How are beliefs of a particular religious tradition or denomination expressed through each of the other aspects?
- ▶ What connections are there between the aspects in their expression of the beliefs of a particular religious tradition or denomination?
- ▶ How are the beliefs and their expressions intended by religion to develop meaning for communities and individuals?

ASPECTS OF RELIGION



Have you noticed how the tone of the community changes at times of major religious celebrations when the streets are filled with colour and the community has an expectation that the world can be a better place? One explanation for these emotional responses is that religious aspects, which operate together to support and strengthen each other, are expressing messages that the community yearns to hear and were initiated in religious traditions. The interrelationship of the aspects is complex and complementary. They have a transformative power witnessed in the enthusiasm of adherents at

religious festivals, the courageous commitment of followers and the strength of adherents as they deal with personal hardship.

Aspects are the framework that supports individuals and groups to live their faith. They are the concrete expression of faith that gives meaning and purpose to individual lives. The spiritual experiences that arise from them build a collective memory that gives meaning to experiences in the contemporary world. They are the means for developing charismatic figures within the community who act as prophets and role models. They are mechanisms by which a believing community introduces their children and new believers to the teachings and practices that will shape their world view. The aspects provide a focus for the individual's engagement with their



FIGURE 8.1 The aspects of religion. Construct a diagram to show the interconnections between these aspects of religion. On the diagram briefly explain the different ways they interconnect, using a variety of verbs.

Alamy Stock Photo/Michael Scheer



FIGURE 8.2 A Protestant congregation at a Sunday service. What aspects of this image show that these people see themselves as a community?

beliefs on a rhythmic basis, leading them to engage with an ultimate reality. They are sources of a communal experience that strengthens the faith of the individual and the community by reinforcing the religious identity of the group. Aspects are the means through which authority in the religious tradition operates in order to give guidance to adherents in their search for meaning. The interrelationship between the beliefs and the other aspects has developed over time to assist humans to answer the 'big questions', and also to experience the sacred in their lives.



Getty Images/AFP/William West

FIGURE 8.3 Crowds at World Youth Day, Sydney, 2008, holding candles as Pope Benedict XVI leads a service. Why have so many young people gathered to celebrate a ritual?

Aspects become integrated into the search for meaning. Rituals and **symbols** are tangible reminders of the metanarrative that gives purpose to the community and its members, connecting them to the sacred dimension. These ritual actions may be found in structured religious experiences, such as liturgies or rites, which include the formalised process of storytelling, interpretation, prayer, music or dancing to recall or re-enact significant beliefs. Sacred stories, as well as other oral and written texts of the tradition, enable the teaching and passing on of a religious community's important beliefs, values and heritage. The social structure of religious traditions includes the use of sacred space and time, as well as the various roles of members. Spiritual experiences are a deep engagement with a sense of ultimate reality through feelings or intellect, sometimes both. (See Chapter 1, pp. 18–31 for a detailed explanation of the aspects.)

symbol

A sign, object, person, action or place that represents a special religious meaning or power

Skills: summarise, explain

- 1 Write a brief definition in your own words of each aspect shown in Figure 8.1.
- 2 Write an extended paragraph describing a time when you attended a ritual.
- 3 Outline an example of each aspect showing its relationship to a belief in the tradition you are studying. Use a wide range of words to show the relationships.

space

Designated area within a place where the sacred may be experienced and commitment demonstrated. Examples include altars, home shrines and prayer spaces.

place

Particular site such as a mountain, river shrine or building that represents the presence of the sacred

SACRED STORIES

Religious stories may be oral or written. There are several different genres of stories, including origin myths, epic poems and morality tales – stories that teach a moral lesson. They pass on communal knowledge and values in an accessible way for young and old. For young children, these stories provide the introduction to the beliefs of their tradition, whereas for those who have gained wisdom, the same story may have layers of meaning.

SPACES, PLACES, TIMES AND ARTIFACTS

Adherents more easily relate to physical representations of the spiritual when they are seen in the particular such as spaces, places, times or artifacts. The experience of being in a **space** or **place** aligned to the transcendent can engender a religious experience and make real the tradition and values that have been handed down from generation to generation.

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness, English School, (19th century)/Private Collection/© Look and Learn/Bridgeman Images

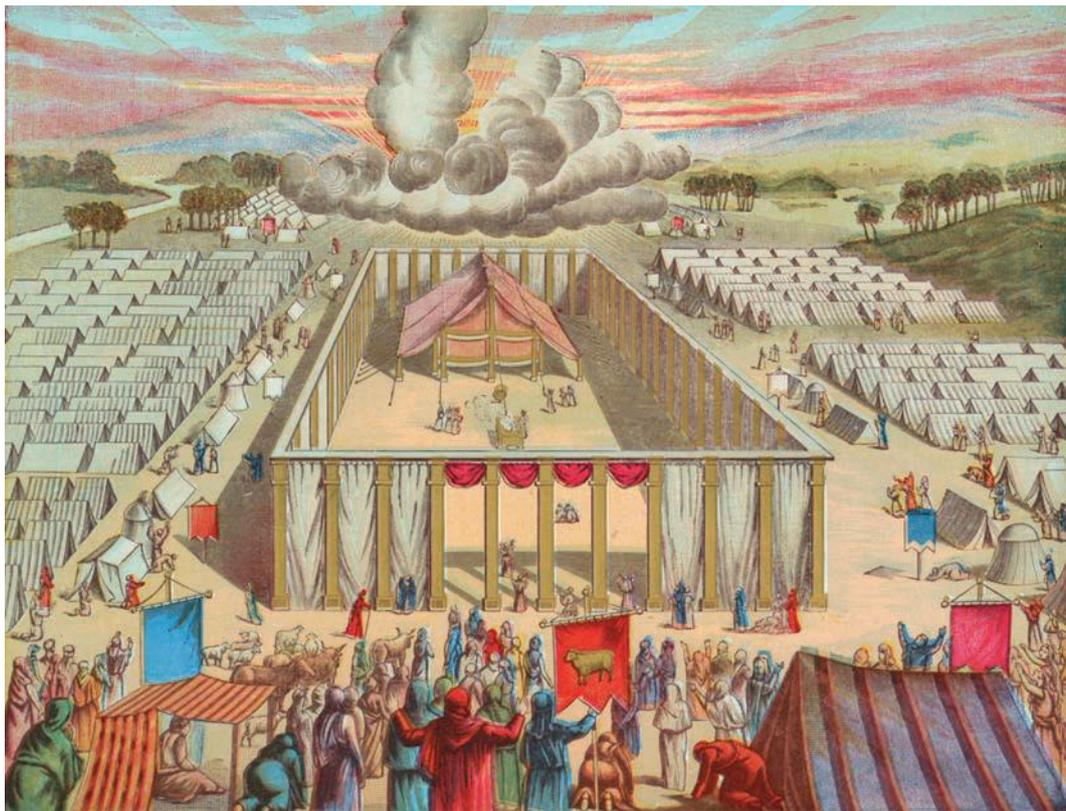


FIGURE 8.4 The Second Passover in the wilderness as recorded in Exodus. Which features in the image indicate the deity's presence in the tabernacle as a holy space?

TEXTS

The sacred texts, which may be written or oral, contain the revelation that underpins the religion's beliefs. These texts may be found in prayer books that give meaning to day-to-day existence through daily prayer or in codes of law that guide adherents in their decision making. At formal rituals that mark important parts of the life cycle, the texts provide the language for expressing powerful emotions such as love, sorrow and hope and the meaning of these moments in the context of the individual, their place in the family, community and the cosmos.

RITUALS

Rituals provide both the individual and the community with the opportunity to enact their beliefs in a concrete way that enriches their faith by strengthening their beliefs and allowing them to share their beliefs with a community that is supportive of their world view.

SYMBOLS

Believers in a religious tradition wear symbols, carry symbols, kiss symbols and treat them with reverence. They are the tangible expression of an abstract belief in ultimate reality; for example, the mezuzah on the doorpost of a Jewish home as a symbol of God's omnipresence; the cross worn by Christians as a constant reminder of Christ's saving love; and the Tibetan Buddhist prayer flags representing peace and compassion.

SOCIAL STRUCTURES

The social structure is marked by diversity but all social structures provide roles and functions for believers in the community. For some, the structure emphasises a patriarchal or matriarchal family model; for others, it may be hierarchical and authoritarian; and for others, more egalitarian. Social structures provide a sense of permanence and security for adherents as well as a mechanism for providing guidance and direction for both the community and individuals.



AAP/EPA/Pete Souza/The White House/Handout

FIGURE 8.5 US President Barack Obama (right), first lady Michelle Obama (centre left) and their daughter Malia Obama (left) meet with Malala Yousafzai in the Oval Office, 11 October 2013. In what way is Malala Yousafzai a religious leader?

ETHICS

Religious traditions provide both an individual ethic for adherents to follow as well as communal laws and codes of behaviour. Ethics can be both formal and informal and provide a constant cause

for reflection on the teachings about the relationship between ultimate reality and humans. Ethics assist in decision making as individuals and communities ask themselves, 'What is the right way to act?' Ethics often provide a link between this world and the afterlife.



Getty Images/AFP/Pool/Menahem Kahana

FIGURE 8.6 Pope Francis I speaks during a meeting with children from nearby Palestinian refugee camps on 25 May 2014 during a visit to the Dheisheh camp, on the outskirts of the biblical city of Bethlehem. Pope Francis I made an impassioned plea for the protection of children. In what way has Pope Francis I modelled care for refugees?

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

spiritual experience

When a powerful emotion is stirred by an encounter affecting one's beliefs, emotions and other aspects

Spiritual experiences touch the heart and mind of the adherent and bond them to the mystery of ultimate reality. Such experiences may be the wonders of nature; the joy of a birth; comfort in a time of distress; personal revelation through sacred texts; or communal experiences of spiritual ecstasy.

Skills: personal reflection, description, analysis

- 1 Write a brief paragraph about each of the aspects, nominating a time when you have seen them express a religious belief. In your paragraph identify the belief that was expressed.
- 2 Choose a secular ritual or symbol and compare the way it transmits meaning to that of a parallel religious ritual or symbol.
- 3 Create a section in the back of your workbook in which to record your personal reflections on the aspects as expressions of beliefs in your community as you encounter them throughout the year.



© Reuters/Picture Media

FIGURE 8.7 A mass laying of flowers outside Kensington Palace in London after the death of Princess Diana. What beliefs are being expressed by the community in this image?

BUDDHISM

SACRED STORIES: RESPECTING LIFE

Stories in Buddhism are often short and symbolic and provide a way to happiness. They were used by Buddha himself. He recognised that stories were a powerful way of handing on the dharma (Buddha’s teachings). The following adaptation of part of the ‘Story of the Ruru Deer’, about the preciousness of life, is an example of such stories.

Once the Bodhisattva was born as a deer, every animal in the forest admired his handsome looks. One day, a prince came to hunt in the forest. ‘The forest is a good hunting ground,’ remarked the prince when he saw many birds chirping overhead and a variety of animals running around. The prince in his chariot saw the deer and aimed his bow and arrow. He drove the chariot at a breakneck speed but the deer ran even faster. Suddenly one of the wheels of the chariot came off and the prince fell into the river. ‘Help ... I’ll drown,’ shouted the frightened prince. The deer heard the prince’s cries and saved him. The prince felt ashamed and vowed never again to hunt animals.

Source: Ven. Ariyaratne, *Jatakamala or Garland of Birth Stories*, translated by JS Speyer, 1895

SPACES: THE AUTHORITY OF THE BUDDHAS

Buddhist homes often have a shrine that is used as a focal point for meditation. It is usually placed at a height and location that allow it to be easily seen. Features of a shrine may include: an image or statue of Buddha, which is placed centrally and is the highest object; an image of a respected Buddhist teacher; a selection of dharma text; a small **stupa** – to represent the mind of Buddha; candles; flowers symbolising impermanence; bowls of clear water symbolising clarity of the mind; bells and sticks and perfume. Usually there are seven bowls on the shrine. In some areas fresh

stupa
A bell-like structure that contains Buddhist relics



FIGURE 8.8 A Buddhist shrine in a home

food is also placed on the shrine to represent a spiritual feast. These offerings are made with humility.

The daily ritual of altar care (*puja*) ensures the devotee is being reminded of the Buddha. This practice brings blessings to both the devotee and their household and an understanding of themselves as people who are seeking the wisdom of the Buddha.

PLACES: THE WISDOM OF THE BUDDHA

Both Gaya, India, is the most sacred place for Buddhists. It is the place where Buddha became enlightened and the Mahabodhi Temple has been built there to mark this event. Many Buddhists make a pilgrimage

to this place in order to become closer to Buddha. It is believed that the prayers of pilgrims make the place sacred and are transformative for the worshipper, assisting them along the Eightfold Path to their own enlightenment.

TIMES: BELIEF IN BUDDHA

In Buddhism, there is no set time for daily or weekly worship; however, Wesak (Buddha Day), the day of Siddhartha Gautama's birth in about 563 BCE, is a central time for celebration. Since 1950, Wesak has generally been celebrated on the first full moon in May. On this day, monks and followers arrive at the temple before dawn and participate in a raising of the Buddhist flag and in singing praises to the dharma and the Sangha (Buddha's followers). This celebration exhorts adherents to follow the Buddha who, on his deathbed, taught that those who were to come after him were not to worship him but to honour him by living a life following the dharma. On this day, Buddhists reach out to the poor, reminding them that meaning and purpose are found in compassion.



amanaimages/Alison Wright/Corbis

FIGURE 8.9 The Bodhi Tree – tree of awakening – at Bodhi Gaya, is descended from the original ficus tree under which Lord Buddha achieved enlightenment. Would this place lose its religious significance if the tree died?

ARTIFACTS: ALL THINGS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

In Tibetan Buddhism, prayer flags (Dar Cho) are flown as prayers for happiness and good fortune. They bring together the natural forces of wind and the spiritual energy of the individual to bring harmony. The colours are symbolic: blue represents space, white represents air, red is for fire, green for water, and yellow for earth. Printed on the flags are mantras, such as the mantra for compassion: *Om mani padme hum*. There are also animals such as the Wind Horse, symbolising the wish for enlightenment; the Garuda, the Sky Dragon, the Snow Lion and the Tiger (the Four Dignities), symbolising awareness, vast vision, confidence, joy, humility and power – the qualities needed to achieve enlightenment. The flags are also a reminder that all things are impermanent as they fade in the harsh conditions of Tibet and need to be returned fully to the elements through burning. They provide symbols of compassion and hope while recalling the fragility of the human condition.



FIGURE 8.10 Prayer flags of Tibetan Buddhists. What is the symbolism of the colours of the flags?

TEXTS: THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

As Buddhism grew out of Hinduism, it abandoned the sacred texts of the past and moved towards what could imperfectly be called a philosophy of life, based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, enriched and given meaning through meditation. These teachings formed an oral tradition that was handed down from generation to generation. The first written text of these teachings, the Tripitaka or Pali Canon, appeared in about the 1st century BCE. There are now additional sacred texts that interpret the Buddha's teachings, such as the Mahayana Sutras and the Tibetan Book of the Dead.

RITUALS: ALL IS IMPERMANENT

The monks of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition use a visual method of meditation, creating mandalas painted with coloured sands poured from traditional metal funnels, called *chak-pur*, onto a mat that has been prepared with a drawing of the outline of the mandala's geometric shape.



FIGURE 8.11 Tibetan Buddhist monk preparing a sand mandala. What is the religious purpose of destroying the completed mandala?

ephemeral

Lasting only a short time, transitory

The monks need to learn the correct breathing technique so they have optimum control over the *chak-pur*. This requires discipline, patience, cooperation, mindfulness and mutual understanding. The beautiful, complex mandalas depict the deities.

The destruction of a sand mandala is very ritualistic: the deities are destroyed in a predetermined order. When the piece has been removed, the sand is collected in a jar, which is wrapped in silk and then returned to the elements by distributing it in flowing water. This is a powerful way to teach that life is **ephemeral**.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE: THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

Buddhism developed partly as a reaction to the social structure of Hinduism, which did not seem to provide answers to the 'big questions' of those who suffered through illness or poverty. Buddhism does not have a hierarchical structure and the social structure varies with the streams of Buddhism. The facet of Buddhism that shows a religious social structure are the monasteries (Sanghas), with the significance they have in the lives of all Buddhists. This means the monks have an important role to play as being responsible for the teachings of the Buddha. The ability of



FIGURE 8.12 Paying tribute to Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar on the anniversary of his birth. Why would the Dalits pay tribute to Ambedkar?

Buddhism's social structure to provide meaning to the lives of the poorest of India's community was shown in 1946 when Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar led a mass conversion of 100 000 Dalits (Untouchables) to Buddhism. His example was all the more conspicuous as he was the first Dalit to hold public office and, in 1950, he penned the Constitution of Modern India. In 2006, on the anniversary of Ambedkar's renunciation of Hinduism, another mass conversion to Buddhism by tens of thousands of Dalits took place.

ETHICS: ENLIGHTENMENT

The Buddhist ethic for living is based on the interplay between the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. Following the Buddhist ethical path is not easy and needs commitment and prolonged effort. The Four Noble Truths provide the doctrines, while ethical guidelines are found in the Eightfold Path. There are three goals in the Eightfold Path: an understanding of ethics (*sila*); the mental discipline to achieve enlightenment (*samdhi*); and the capacity to find wisdom that will reveal the true nature of reality (*panna*).

There are three moral factors to achieving an ethical life:

- 1 *Noble speech* – the Buddhist must never use words as a way of harming others. Speech must always be truthful and take into account the impact of the words on others.
- 2 *Noble action* – the Buddhist should always act with generosity and never destroy life.
- 3 *Noble livelihood* – the Buddhist should never earn a living in a way that causes harm to others.

This path gives direction to the individual by providing an ultimate goal. A person who follows these precepts will flourish. By living this life the individual will be guided to actions that will enrich the world and lead them towards righteousness, perfection and enlightenment. These three moral factors, supported by the other elements of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, protect the individual from the temptation to make poor moral choices. Ethics underpins the Buddhist journey.



Shutterstock.com/Nicola Messana Photos

FIGURE 8.13 Buddhist monks at prayer. How does this image of Buddhist monks praying show the importance of self-discipline in living the ethical life in Buddhism?

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE: NIRVANA

In all Buddhist traditions, meditation is a central practice that eventually leads to a direct awakening to the ultimate reality. It does this by releasing the mind to allow enlightenment to occur and therefore reach nirvana. Through meditation, Buddhists attempt to understand the meaning and purpose of life without being misled by logical debate or texts. The aim of the practice is to have a 'Buddha mind', which leads to self-discovery.



Shutterstock.com/Chantal de Bruijne

FIGURE 8.14 A Buddhist monk meditating. Compare Figures 8.29 and 8.35 with this image. Make three observations.

Skills: identify, explain, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Create a chart that outlines the central beliefs in Buddhist teachings.
- 2 Write a paragraph exploring the importance of the Buddha in the Buddhist tradition.
- 3 Create a diagram that demonstrates the relationship between the aspects in Buddhism. In the diagram, the name of each aspect must be accompanied by a picture showing how it is used in Buddhism.
- 4 Write 300 words exploring the relationship between the aspects in Buddhism.

CHRISTIANITY

SACRED STORIES: CHRIST SAVES

The Story of St Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland

The folk story says that St Patrick was born in Britain but was captured as a young man by raiders and taken as a slave to Ireland (405 CE). His faith grew in Ireland, and after a vision from God in a dream he escaped and returned home, converting followers along the way through the intervention of God. However, God called him back to Ireland to preach of Christ. After preparation in France he returned to Ireland and, with shows of authority over the elements, defeated the **Druids** and converted the nation.

Druids

Members of the religious order of priests of Celtic religions of Britain, Ireland and Gaul

According to legend, when his life was under threat this prayer was his only defence:

Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me, Christ in me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.
I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.

Source: The Lorica of St Patrick, c. 377, <https://www.ewtn.com>

The story of St Patrick has given meaning to individual Catholics because it has been linked strongly to a specific understanding of Catholicism that comes from Ireland's monastic roots. Theirs is a faith that is fervent and political.

SPACES: KINGDOM OF GOD

From the house churches of the Apostolic period (approximately 33–100 CE), to the glory of Gothic architecture in the Middle Ages, to the communitarian architecture of contemporary churches – there have always been sacred spaces. Often these churches were built on places that were sacred to the groups of non-Christians who had worshipped other gods there before the arrival of Christian



Getty Images/Goodong

FIGURE 8.15 A sanctuary in an Anglican church. Why might there be restrictions placed on entry to this space?

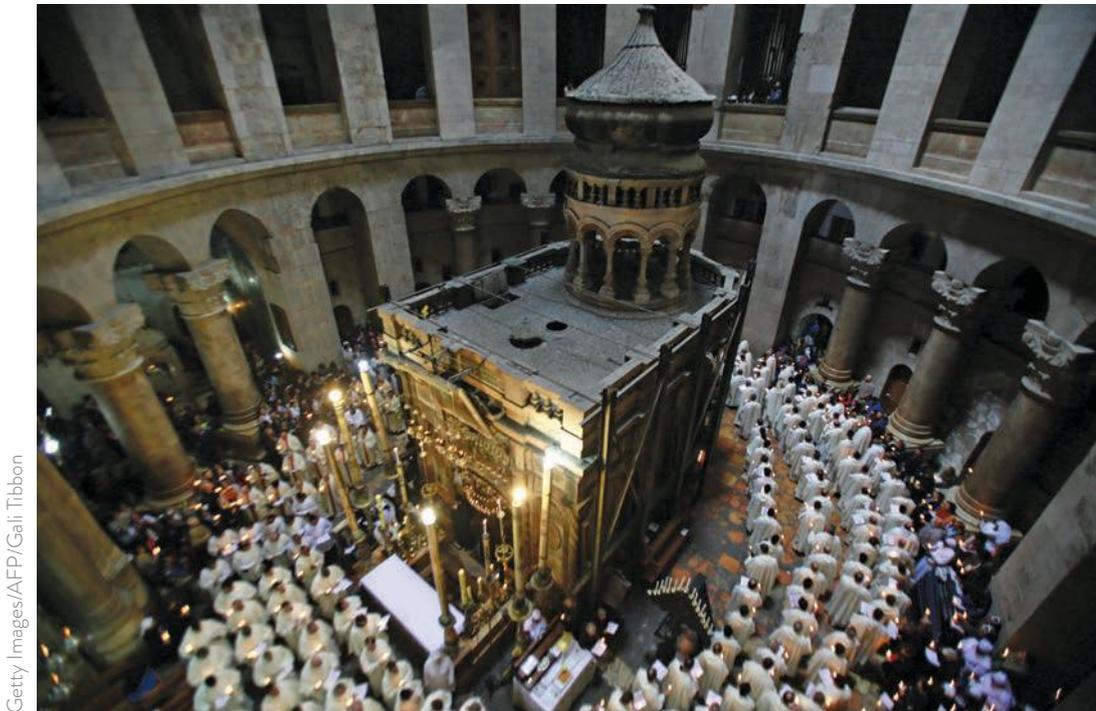
tabernacle

The dwelling place of God, the place where the consecrated bread and wine is placed in Roman Catholicism; the portable sanctuary used by the Israelites during and after their wandering in the wilderness

missionaries. For some denominations the altar space with the **tabernacle** is named ‘the sanctuary’ – it is God’s space and gained its name from the ‘Holy of Holies’ in the Jewish Temple. This area is treated with respect: in some traditions it is protected by an iconostasis (a wall of religious icons), and in other denominations by rules about its use.

PLACES: THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

In Christianity the most sacred places are found in the Holy Land (Israel). It is the place where Christ was born, walked, taught, suffered, died, rose and ascended to heaven. It is a place of pilgrimage for members of all Christian denominations. There is a church within the Christian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem that is called the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by members associated with the Latin rite, or the Church of the Resurrection by members of the Eastern Orthodox traditions. Tradition teaches that this was the site of Calvary, the place where Jesus was crucified, buried and rose from the dead. Pilgrims who make their way to Jerusalem will often follow the Via Dolorosa, the way of the cross. This ritual is called the Stations of the Cross, and the final stations are in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



Getty Images/AFP/Gali Tibbon

FIGURE 8.16 The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem. What festival is being celebrated in the photo?

TIMES: RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

Christianity inherited the command to keep the Sabbath day holy from Judaism. The first followers of ‘The Way’ were both followers of Judaism and believers in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. In the 1st century there were those who followed the Jewish Sabbath prescriptions, and so worshipped on Friday night and kept Saturday holy, and then worshipped again on Sunday, the Lord’s Day, which came to incorporate the Eucharist. By the 4th century, under the Emperor Constantine, it had become a Roman practice to give the community a day of rest on Sunday, the day of the Sun, which allowed Christians to worship freely on this day and recognised it as a day to remember the resurrection of



Alamy Stock Photo/Friedrich Stark

FIGURE 8.17 A Seventh-day Adventist congregation who meet together every Saturday (Sabbath) morning. What message about the meaning of the Sabbath for Adventists is shown in this picture?

Jesus Christ. Today, most Christian denominations strictly adhere to Sunday worship; while others make the Sunday observance non-binding; and others adopt the Saturday Sabbath. The largest group adopting the Saturday Sabbath are the Seventh-day Adventists, whose 18 million members worldwide place a theological emphasis on keeping Sabbath, from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday, as a time for restoring the people's relationship with God.

TEXTS: THE TRINITY, THE REIGN OF GOD

Christians also see themselves as 'people of the Book' as they are the inheritors of the wisdom of the Hebrew scriptures, which Christians believe were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Messiah revealed in the New Testament. The Bible is the central sacred text upon which all teachings are based, divinely inspired to reveal the knowledge of God to humanity.

In all Christian denominations, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have a special capacity to strengthen adherents' beliefs.

The continuing authority of the sacred text was seen in El Salvador, in 1977, when the poor were starving and being threatened by the ruling junta. Father Rutilio Grande, a parish priest, said the following in a sermon.

I am fully aware that very soon the Bible and the Gospels will not be allowed to cross the border. All that will reach us will be the covers, since all the pages are subversive – against sin, it is said. So that if Jesus crosses the border ... They would accuse him ... of being an agitator, of being a Jewish foreigner, who confuses the people with exotic and foreign ideas, anti-democratic ideas, and i.e., against the minorities ... they would undoubtedly crucify him again. And they have said so.

Source: Quoted at Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, OEA/Ser.L/V/II.46, doc. 23 rev. 1, 17 November 1978, Report on the situation of human rights in El Salvador

Not long after this sermon, Grande was shot dead.

ARTIFACTS: JESUS CHRIST

sacrament

In Christianity, a visible sign of God's presence in the world

In the Orthodox traditions, icons are sacred artifacts that reveal God. These are the often stunning works of art painted in prayer as a means of revealing God and God's kingdom. Many icons depict Christ. The icon is **sacramental**: it makes God's presence real and is used for finding a window into God's world. The icons are used for prayer and to teach theology to the community. They are produced through a method that symbolically shows the movement from darkness to light; from chaos to order. Icons are not simply there to decorate the church or home; their beauty is a gift from God to the devotees. They are a reminder of God's power and glory, especially in the form of the Pantocrator – the image of Christ as judge and Lord of Heaven and Earth. (See Figure 8.18, p. 272)

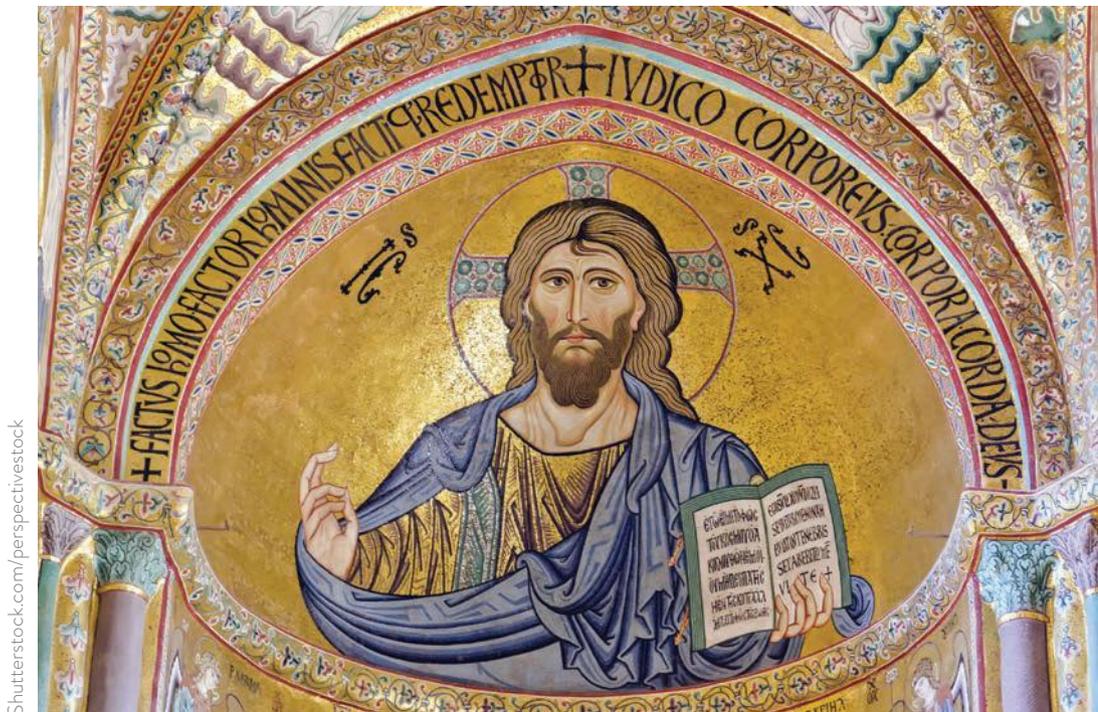


FIGURE 8.18 A depiction of Christ in the Orthodox tradition of Christianity. Why would this image be placed on the highest point of the ceiling of an Orthodox church?

RITUALS: ETERNAL LIFE

In the Roman Catholic tradition, dying and death are sacred moments. A ritual, named the Anointing of the Sick, is performed to prepare the dying for the transition from one life to the next, revealing God's love to the believer. When asked by the dying or gravely ill person, or the family if the individual cannot give assent, a priest will anoint the person with oil. The ritual asks for the recovery of their health and for spiritual strength. It is a ritual of healing appropriate not only for physical but also for mental and spiritual sickness. This ritual is believed to strengthen the soul and often the body. The ritual heals by offering hope of eternal life and inner peace and an assurance that God loves them.



Getty Images/Godong/UIG

FIGURE 8.19 A Catholic priest anointing a sick man. What comfort would a sick person find from such an anointing?

SYMBOLS: THE LIFE, DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

The most powerful Christian symbol is the crucifix or the cross (the crucifix without the body of Jesus Christ). It was not used in the early Christian period as it was a reminder of Christ's violent and horrific death, the theology of which was a source of debate within the community. However, since the 6th century the crucifix has represented Jesus's unconditional and sacrificial love for humankind. The crucifix can represent a belief in a risen Christ who is transcendent and omnipotent through the depiction of Christ on the cross in his glory; or it can represent a very human Jesus, suffering in agony as he dies the criminal's death. The empty cross draws attention to Christ's resurrection.



Getty Images/Leemage/UIG

FIGURE 8.20 Twelfth-century carving depicting Christ crucified. What beliefs about Jesus are emphasised in this crucifix?

SOCIAL STRUCTURE: REVELATION OF GOD, REIGN OF GOD



amanaimages/David Lees/Corbis

FIGURE 8.21 In 1962, all the Cardinals of the Catholic Church gathered at the Vatican. What does this image show about the structure of the Catholic Church?

The Anglican tradition is hierarchical and has a focus on unity, expressed in the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury; however, its structure is less rigid than the Roman Catholic hierarchical structure, and gives local churches more authority. The image of a family of churches is more often used in Anglicanism with, and each national or provincial church remains self-governing.

The structure within Protestant traditions is much more focused on the authority of scripture and the revelation empowering individuals within a proclaiming church. The structures are often not hierarchical, with individual churches being self-governing but operating together for the purpose of spreading the Gospel.

One of the distinguishing features of Christian denominations is their different social structures. Underpinning all Christian authority is the word of God – the sacred texts. Flowing from that, the Eastern Orthodox Churches are a fellowship of autonomous churches, with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople being the only head who holds the title of ‘first among equals’. The bishops through synods have authority to make decisions for the areas they govern.

The structure of the Roman Catholic Church is similar, but in practice more strongly hierarchical. The Pope is the symbol of unity for the Church and he rules through the principles of collegiality and subsidiarity; but he has the authority to make infallible statements to which Catholics must assent (an authority that has been used very infrequently and upon which there are theological constraints). The local bishop has authority in his area to rule as a steward to the people.

ETHICS: KINGDOM OF GOD

Within Christianity, an understanding of ethics was taught through its Jewish heritage in the Hebrew scriptures such as the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) and the prophetic literature. This was the foundation for the Good News of Jesus Christ, whose Beatitudes, parables and lived example became clear examples of the ethics of a people who were to immerse themselves in the struggle to build the Kingdom of God. Christ’s message of the ethical life of loving God and loving neighbours as oneself became a focus in the Apostolic Church. Catechisms provide a summary of the beliefs, teachings and ethical principles of the Catholic tradition.

Alamy Stock Photo/Stephen Barnes Photography

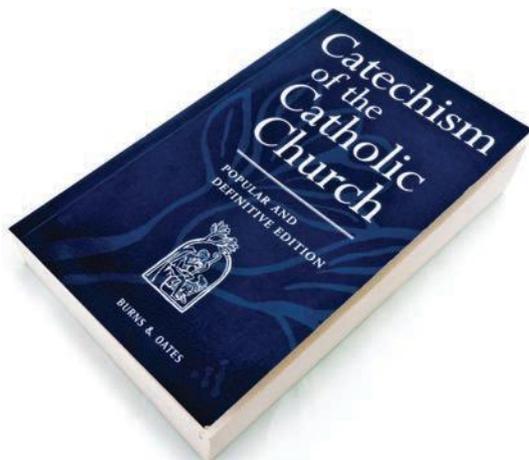


FIGURE 8.22 The Catechism of the Catholic Church. Is there an equivalent text to the Catechism in the religion you have been studying?

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE: GOD

Christianity has a long history of mystics whose lives were profoundly changed by an encounter with God. For contemporary Christians seeking spiritual experience, meditation is providing a way to find God. For some the approach is walking the labyrinth, a path of prayer that, unlike a maze where an individual can lose their way, centres the walker. For others there is pilgrimage, a challenging physical experience that forces an individual to encounter pain, loneliness and the natural elements to be transformed. The mystical practice of chanting in the form of prayer brings together people, religious and lay, in a believing community. Traditionally, adopting a disciplined life of work, reflection and prayer becomes a life-shaping spiritual experience.

Gradually the conviction took shape in me that it was essential to create a community with men determined to give their whole life and who would always try to understand one another and be reconciled, a community where kindness of heart and simplicity would be at the centre of everything.

Source: Brother Roger, 'God is love alone', Ateliers et Presses de Taizé



amanaimages/Tim Farrell/Star Ledger/Corbis

FIGURE 8.23 A labyrinth. What is the purpose of the labyrinth?

Skills: reflect, summarise, explain, analyse, synthesise

- Write a 250-word summary of your favourite sacred story in Christianity.
 - Nominate the central character in the story and explore how the story develops a parallel between this character and the person of Christ.
 - What is the message of the story?
 - How does this story reflect an episode in a sacred text?
- Nominate a festival in Christianity and create a poster that will go around Melbourne on the side of a tram advertising the festivities. Your graphic must make use of all of the aspects.

>

- 3 Create a table with 'The structure of (name of Christian school or organisation)' as your title. The table needs four columns, with the following headings: 'School authorities'; 'Role'; 'Position in the hierarchy'; 'Relationship to the mission statement of the school or organisation'.
- 4 Using the information in the table, write 250 words exploring the strengths and weaknesses of this structure in terms of its role in expressing Christian beliefs.
- 5 Write 300 words exploring how the aspects are used to express a major belief in the Christian denomination you have been studying.
- 6 Create a spiritual journal for the year, writing briefly of an encounter with God that you have had each day. (This is a personal activity and is not to be assessed.)

HINDUISM

SACRED STORIES: GANESHA AS THE BRINGER OF GOOD FORTUNE

Hinduism evolved out of many different religious practices of the peoples of the Indian subcontinent. It could therefore be considered a community of religions. Stories in Hinduism are often from an ancient oral tradition. The purpose of the stories is to provide an understanding of the relationship between the gods, and between the gods and humanity. Some folkloric tales explain why people in a local area adopt a religious practice that is distinctive to them, or why a ritual occurs at a specific time or place such as a local temple. They are often tales with heroes and villains and with links to the

animal kingdom. These stories provide an identity to the Hindu communities in the area and, in so doing, give people meaning and purpose.

The story of Ganesha, the elephant-headed god of good luck, is an example of such stories. Ganesha was created from dirt by the goddess Parvati to guard her bathroom. Her husband, Shiva, cut off the boy's head when he denied him entrance. When Shiva learnt that the boy was his son, he sent to followers to find the head of the nearest animal, which happened to be an elephant. Shiva attached this head to the body of the boy and restored him to life. Shiva then made Ganesha the leader of his army and declared that those who prayed to Ganesha first would enjoy good luck.



FIGURE 8.24 Devotees celebrating the Ganesha Festival. How does this image demonstrate the importance of Ganesha in Hinduism?

SPACES: THE ULTIMATE REALITY IS OMNIPRESENT

The temple is the sacred space in which Hindus can experience the presence of the divinity. In the temple worshippers find statues of gods (*murti*) that make present the sacred. They have been built by people who dedicate their lives to designing sacred spaces (*sthapatis*) by following the teachings found in the sacred texts. A ritual performed by many priests makes the temple holy (*kumbhabhishekam*). Temples are special because they have become so through the daily worship (*puja*) of the priests and those who come to worship.

Puja at a Hindu temple gives meaning and purpose to the lives of adherents as they are blessed through being in the presence of the gods.



FIGURE 8.25 A Hindu temple. Name two things in the picture that indicate this is a sacred space.

PLACES: THE OMNIPOTENCE OF LORD SHIVA

There are 12 important shrines to Lord Shiva that form a traditional pilgrimage for his devotees. These sites are believed to be the places where Shiva appeared as a pillar of fire and so are symbolic sources of light. The pilgrimage gives meaning to believers. They gain a higher level of spirituality by encountering the divine, which took on the form of shivalinga (a column of light) and became tangible. For the believer there is power in the sacred symbols at these sites that focuses the mind on the teachings of Hinduism.



FIGURE 8.26 Somnath Temple in Gujarat. Somnath Temple is the first of the 12 Jyotirlingas (shrines) of Shiva in India and an important pilgrimage centre. Why would pilgrimage to different shrines be important for adherents and for the shrines?

TIMES: BELIEF IN FORGIVENESS

There is an ancient prayer that is said to the divinity by many Hindus at the sacred times of day – the *sandhya*, or transitional or junction times. These times occur at dawn (when night becomes morning), midday (when morning becomes afternoon) and dusk (day becomes night). The prayer involves purification rites, supplication for atonement, offerings, meditation and mantras. Praying at these times provides the adherent with an opportunity to reflect on their actions at regular intervals during the day, and to frequently seek forgiveness and be forgiven.



FIGURE 8.27 The lettering of Om. In the religious tradition you have been studying, what sound might be considered an artifact?

ARTIFACT: AN OMNIPOTENT GOD

The central artifact for many Hindus is ‘Om’ (or ‘Aum’), the mantra that produces the most sacred sound – the sound of God that encompasses all things past, present and future. The sound, which is the first sound in the sacred Sanskrit alphabet, is deep and resonant and believed to be the sound through which the universe was created. It is thought to contain all things and is the first principle of the universe. It has three so-called syllables – a-u-m – which symbolise the three states of consciousness – waking, dreaming and deep sleep; the entire symbol represents the fourth state, which is the awareness of one’s own spiritual identity. The three syllables bring to life the three worlds – the first is the Earth, atmosphere and heavens; the second embodies the three great gods – Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, the third represents the three sacred Vedic texts, Rig, Yajur and Sama. Om begins prayers and it is often the first

(and last) letter of sacred texts as a way of purifying the worshipper’s thoughts and making them one with the transcendent.

TEXTS: SAMSARA AND MOKSHA

In Hinduism the four Vedas (1200– 900 BCE) are the primary sacred texts. They include hymns of praise (the Samhitas); rituals and prayers (the Brahmanas); instructions on worship and meditation (the Aranyakas); and the mystical and philosophical teachings of Hinduism (the Upanishads). Other key texts include Mahabharata (the world's longest poem) and the Ramayana. These provide an understanding of the history and mythology of the tradition in epic poems. The Bhagavad Gita, or 'Song of the Lord', is part of the sixth book of the Mahabharata.

A story that provides guidance and gives hope to the individual is the Ramayana, with the message that good always triumphs over evil. It tells the story of Rama, who is the hero of the story and the model human being. He is perfect in his dealings with all people and carries out all of his responsibilities. In the story he is forced to confront evil in the form of a demon that kidnaps his wife, Sita. Ultimately, Rama is able to rescue his wife and so evil is defeated by good.



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FIGURE 8.28 A painting depicting an episode of the Ramayana. Can you identify any of the characters in the story?

RITUALS: PURITY

The ritual of prayer (puja) is performed more than once daily and is an important way of strengthening beliefs. The prayer takes place at a shrine and follows a specific pattern that is handed down from the old to the young. The steps are:

- 1 purification of the one who is about to pray
- 2 chanting in Sanskrit, identifying the time, place and nature of the prayer
- 3 using mudras (hand gestures) or mantras so that the god will come
- 4 ringing a bell and chanting vedas
- 5 offering sacrifices to the deity

- 6 for some feasts and festivals, bathing the statue of the god (*abhishekam*)
- 7 offering incense, candles, flowers and food while chanting
- 8 meditating on the blessing of puja (prayer).

Getty Images/Saikat Paul/Pacific Press/LightRocket



FIGURE 8.29 Hindu women praying in water. What is the significance of water in this ritual? How is water used in the religious tradition you have been studying?

SYMBOLS: INNER WISDOM

Hindu women, in particular, use the symbol of a dot on their forehead (bindi) to identify their religious tradition. The placement of the bindi is a reminder of their time in meditation at morning puja – it is also the location of the sixth **chakra**, the seat of concealed wisdom. This bindi represents the concept of divine sight. It is a third eye that sees the spiritual world. It is a constant reminder of the need to look beyond the here and now, the physical, to the profound mysteries of existence. The shape of the bindi and the colour are, in some regions, an indication of the Hindu group to which the individual belongs or their place in the social structure; for example, a red bindi can indicate the individual is married.

SOCIAL STRUCTURES: CASTES

Hinduism emphasises an order in its social structures whereby society is divided into four social groups (*varnas* – meaning colour). These are the Brahmin – a priestly caste whose role is to maintain order; Kshatriya – military or administrative caste; Vaishya – the merchant caste; and the Shudra – the working caste. All of these caste groupings are essential for the good order of the world. Outside the four-caste structure of Hindu society is the important mixed grouping traditionally called ‘Untouchables’ because their occupations made them ritually polluted. Generally today they are referred to as ‘Dalits’, meaning ‘oppressed’. The principles of purity and pollution dictate what Dalits are allowed to do, including where they can live and with whom they can associate. These principles control every aspect of their lives and mean they are constantly subject to human rights

Shutterstock.com/paul_prescott



FIGURE 8.30 A Hindu woman. What is the symbolic meaning of this woman’s bindi?

chakra

In Hindu thought, one of the seven centres of significance in the body that control wellbeing

abuses. Since 1948 discrimination according to caste has been illegal, and some Dalits have been appointed to high offices in the government of India, but the majority remain oppressed. This hierarchical social structure gives a clear understanding of the individual's role in society.



Shutterstock.com/Natalia Davidovich

FIGURE 8.31 Indian boys carrying bags of rubbish they have collected in a city in northern India. In what ways are privilege and disadvantage hereditary in the religious tradition you have been studying?

ETHICS: KARMA, SAMSARA AND PURUSHARTHA

The ethical life in Hinduism is guided by a belief in karma (that actions produce consequences) and samsara (the continuous cycle of rebirth according to the law of action and reaction). The aim of life is to be freed from this cycle (moksha) and this determines the need for ethical action. Good actions, actions in harmony with dharma, will have good reactions or responses and bad actions, actions against dharma, will have the opposite effect. Hindus believe rewards for virtuous actions in this life may be given in future lives or in a Heaven- or Hell-like realm in which the self is reborn for a period of time.

The belief in a set of goals for life (purushartha) has ethical implications. These goals are linked to the stage of life of the individual. Stage one is *brahmacharya*, a stage of learning about life, dharma and the concept of right living. This is a stage where respect for parents, teachers and elders is important. Then stage two, *grihastha*, when there is the obligation to marry and support the family and parents, when the creation of wealth is important. Stage three, *vanaprastha*, is the time for retirement and handing over responsibility to the next generation who are ready to support the family. Stage four is the time to prepare for moksha, the life of meditation (yoga) and asceticism (self-sacrifice and setting aside all worldly goods). Most people do not reach this stage as the demands – especially the ethical demands – are great.

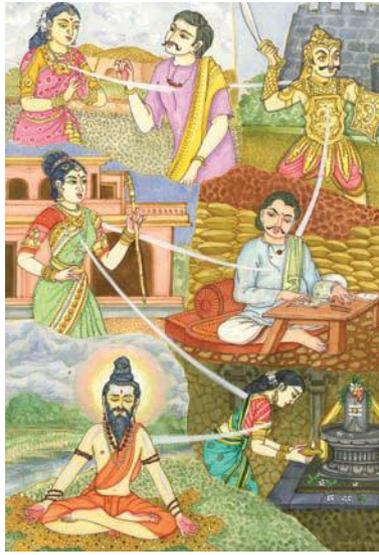


FIGURE 8.32 A Hindu perception of the stages of a life. What feature in this image shows the connectedness of the stages of life?

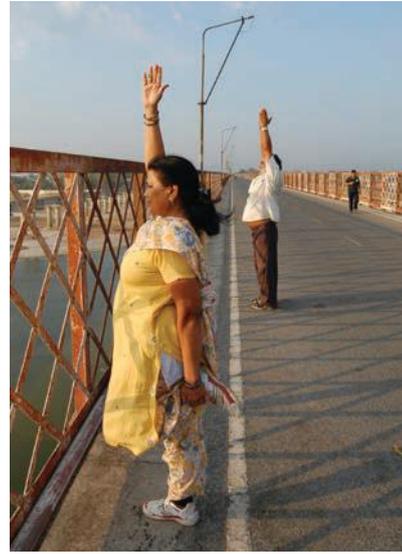


FIGURE 8.33 Hindu couple performing yoga. How does their posture symbolise what they are hoping to achieve through yoga?

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE: DHARMA

A way to spiritual experience in Hinduism is through yoga. Yoga is a discipline of physical and mental practices that leads to insights into the ultimate reality and an escape from the limitations of the physical body to achieve an inner freedom through release from greed, anger and delusion. The goal of yoga is to achieve the ultimate freedom.

Skills: reflect, describe, analyse, synthesise

- 1 Use a photo of the interior of a Hindu temple. Annotate it, identifying and naming all of the aspects that are visible and their purpose in the temple.
- 2 Choose three of the aspects identified in your photo and write 150 words on each, exploring how they express a belief.
- 3 What is the social structure of Hinduism in your experience? Write 150 words describing it.
- 4 Imagine you are to teach a non-Hindu class about a deity in the Hindu tradition. Write a plan for your lesson.
- 5 Choose one of the beliefs that you mentioned in the previous lesson and write 250 words outlining a range of ways in which this belief is expressed in Hinduism.

ISLAM

SACRED STORIES: ALLAH IS COMPASSIONATE

Stories in Islam give meaning and purpose to the lives of adherents by presenting the community with models of devout living. They demonstrate that all of life should be directed towards achieving eternity in heaven and that suffering on Earth will end and rewards will be found in the afterlife. As Muhammad said:

If adversity befalls him he patiently accepts it and is rewarded for it. If prosperity happens ... he shows gratitude to his Lord and is rewarded for it.

Source: Hadith 40

SPACES: WORSHIP

The building in which Muslims worship is called a mosque. It is believed that Muhammad built the first mosque, and later mosques have been designed to maintain the architectural features of the original – there is a ritual bath for purification before entering the mosque; a large open space covered in carpet and used for prayer; a mihrab to show the direction of Mecca; and the minbar, a raised area used by the Imam to deliver his message. Women and men are segregated. There are no pictures or statues but there are mosaics with verses from the Qur’an written in calligraphy, adding beauty to the sacred space. The mosque is also a place where beliefs are strengthened through worshipping with people of shared values and beliefs.

PLACES: ALLAH’S COVENANT WITH ISLAM

One of the Five Pillars of Faith in Islam requires that once in a lifetime every adult Muslim who is physically able to do so must undertake the Hajj – a pilgrimage to Mecca, the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad.

As pilgrims arrive at the city they call out, ‘Allah, I am here.’ The central moment of the pilgrimage occurs after purification. Dressed in white robes, the pilgrims walk around the Ka’ba (a cube-shaped building within the grounds of the mosque) in an anticlockwise direction seven times (*tawaf*). The pilgrimage ends with a feast to celebrate Ibrahim (a great Islamic prophet). Before leaving Mecca, the pilgrims throw stones at three pillars that symbolise the devil. They then go to Medina, the burial place of Muhammad.

The Hajj gives Muslims a powerful sense of their global identity through the vast numbers of cultures represented. The ritual reinforces that all Muslims are equal, unified and must be pure before Allah.

TIMES: THE OMNIPOTENCE OF ALLAH

In Islam time revolves around the five sacred times for prayer (*salat*). The prayers are to demonstrate adherents’ total surrender to Allah. These prayers are a sacred duty spelt out in the Five Pillars of Faith. The prayer times are: *fajr* (before sunrise), *dhuhr* (noon), *asr* (afternoon), *maghrib* (sunset) and *isha* (evening). The prayer mat is oriented towards Mecca. The community may be called to prayer by a cantor (*mu’adhdhin*)

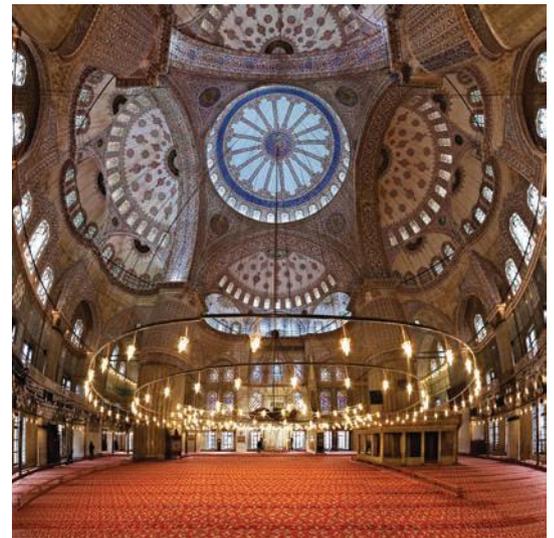


FIGURE 8.34 Interior of the Blue Mosque, Istanbul. What does this space say about the nature of the ultimate reality as understood in Islam?



FIGURE 8.35 Crowd of pilgrims as the Ka’ba, Mecca, during the Hajj. How does the requirement to complete the Hajj pose difficulties for Islam?



FIGURE 8.36 A Muslim man at prayer. Find the meaning of the word ‘Islam’ and see how it applies to this picture.

chanting the shahada – a creed proclaiming the oneness of Allah and the belief that Muhammad was his prophet. Before prayer there must be a purification ritual in which hands, mouth and nostrils are washed; then the face and forearms; the head; and then the feet and ankles. The prayer then begins with the worshipper prostrating themselves before Allah.

The prayers give life a rhythm and remind the individual that they are never alone as across the world millions of Muslims are doing the same.

ARTIFACTS: THE OMNIPOTENCE OF ALLAH

Prayer and meditation in Islam are assisted by prayer beads (*subha*, meaning ‘Glory to Allah’). *Subha* consist of 99 round beads separated by flat disks, making three groups of 33. The prayers are often the *dhikr* – the remembrance of Allah and the 99 qualities attributed to Allah. The tradition comes from the Hadith, which tells the story of the Prophet Muhammad teaching his daughter to remember Allah by saying: ‘Subhannallah’ (‘Glory to Allah’) 33 times; ‘Alhamdilillah’ (‘Praise be to Allah’) 33 times; and ‘Allahu Akbar’ (‘Allah is most great’) 33 times.

In the Hadith it says that those who pray using this instruction will have all sins forgiven, regardless of how great in number or seriousness.

TEXTS: ALLAH AND MUHAMMAD IS HIS PROPHET

Historically, Islam is the final tradition in which the adherents see themselves as ‘People of the Book’. Their sacred text, the Qur’an, is the revealed word of Allah, which was given to Muhammad through the angel Jibril between the years 610 CE and 632 CE. Muslims believe Muhammad is the final messenger from the ultimate reality. For orthodox Muslims the Qur’an is the literal word of Allah. Muhammad could not read or write and learnt Allah’s words through recitation (‘Qur’an’ means to recite). It was written by followers within a short period of time, becoming the perfect expression of Allah’s revelation. The other sacred text in Islam is the Hadith – a commentary on the Qur’an.

The capacity of the Qur’an to give meaning was demonstrated in the experience of Yusuf Islam, who was previously a popular performer of Orthodox Christian background. His brother transformed his life by buying him a copy of the Qur’an.

In 1977, about one and a half years after I received the Qur’an ... I realized that I must get rid of my pride ... I went to the Imam and declared my faith (the Kalimah) at his hands. You have before you someone who had achieved fame and fortune. But guidance was something that eluded me, no matter how hard I tried, until I was shown the Qur’an ... I would like to stress that I did not come into contact with any Muslim before I embraced Islam. I read the Qur’an first and realized that no person is perfect. Islam is perfect, and if we imitate the conduct of the Holy we will be successful. May Allah give us guidance.

Source: Yusuf Islam, ‘How I came to Islam’, *From Musician to Muslim by Allah’s Will*, Islam Tomorrow website



FIGURE 8.37 Islamic prayer beads. What would be the equivalent of these prayer beads in the religious tradition you have been studying?



FIGURE 8.38 Yusuf Islam (formerly Cat Stevens) with his wife and daughters

RITUALS: SUBMISSION TO ALLAH

Eid al-Adha (the Festival of Sacrifice), which lasts for four days, is celebrated to mark the occasion when Allah appeared to Ibrahim in a dream and asked him to sacrifice his son, Isma'il, to demonstrate his faithfulness; however, Allah intervened and, through a visit from the angel Jibril, gave Ibrahim a lamb to kill instead. To remember this, an animal, usually a sheep, is ritually sacrificed on Eid. Muslims sacrifice their best **halal** domestic animals as a symbol of Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his only son. The meat from the sacrificed animal is divided into three parts, with the family keeping one third; another third given to relatives and friends; and the remainder to the poor.

halal

That which is permitted in Islamic law. It is commonly used to describe foods that a Muslim is permitted to eat.



Getty Images/AFP/Adek Berry

FIGURE 8.39 Meat to be given to the poor at Eid. What is the importance of sacrifice in the religious tradition you have been studying?

SYMBOLS: THE COVENANT BETWEEN ALLAH AND MUSLIMS

Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, is thought to be the place where Isma'il and his mother, Hagar, were provided with a spring of water in the desert. It is here that the Ka'ba is located. It is a cube-shaped black building at the Grand Mosque and the most sacred place in Islam; every pious act, particularly prayer, is directed toward it. Muslims believe it was built by Ibrahim (Abraham in the Jewish and Christian traditions) and his son Isma'il to house a black stone given to Ibrahim by the angel Jibril (Gabriel). This is the cornerstone of the Ka'ba, a symbol of the children of Abraham who were rejected but became the foundation of Allah's people. The stone symbolises Allah's covenant with Isma'il, whose descendants become the people of Islam. Kissing or touching the black stone is a reverential act of acknowledgement that Allah's hand directed its placement and construction.



FIGURE 8.40 Muslim pilgrims touching the Ka'ba during Hajj. Why do people want to touch the Ka'ba?

only on moral conduct, piety and righteousness. Theologically, this is derived from the belief that Allah created the first people and all humans are descendants of those first parents and so have equal right to dignity. In most Islamic communities the scholar holds a privileged place. The relationship between the individual and Allah is a direct one. In Islam there is no formal clergy. Muslims select one individual to lead prayer so that all might pray in unity and harmony. This person, in the Sunni tradition, is called an imam, which literally means 'the one who is leading'.

The family is the most important institution in Islam as it is the basis of a healthy society. The correct relationship between man and woman is marriage, accepting social responsibilities resulting in the emergence of a family. The man has authority to order and discipline as the head of the household. Islam expects the wife to obey her husband and look after his wellbeing; and children to behave respectfully. Women are respected in Islam as they are loved by Allah equally with men, but their roles are different. A woman's right to own property is just as absolute as a man's. Male family members cannot control a woman's financial interests without her permission. A woman must consent to marriage. In cases of divorce, most women have exclusive guardianship rights over children up until early puberty. Although a husband has the right to divorce his wife unilaterally – a right not shared by women – a wife can divorce her husband on specific legal grounds by court order.

ETHICS: GIVING THANKS TO ALLAH

Islam commands that Allah's will must be done on Earth. It is a Muslim's duty to act in defence of what is right and to oppose wrong. Muhammad taught that the notions of brotherhood and solidarity not only impose upon the community the duty to care for its members but also require each person to use his or her initiative to carry out individual and social responsibilities according to ability.

SOCIAL STRUCTURES: ALL HUMANS ARE EQUAL

Islam does not have a universal social structure because of the historic divisions between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims over leadership. This has resulted in the social structure of Islam varying in different geographic locations. Sunnis believe that the Muslim people are to be governed by consensus (*ijma'*) through an elected head of state, the *khalifa*, according to democratic principles. The Shi'a, however, believe that the leader of Islam, the imam rather than the *khalifa*, must be a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. This is the basis for the hereditary hierarchy in countries such as Iran.

Nevertheless, there are common threads throughout all streams of Islam. An Islamic society follows the Five Pillars of Islam and practises brotherhood and equality. Merit is not judged on wealth or family heritage but

This broad sense of social responsibility is found in zakat – the third pillar of Islam. This is the mandatory giving of, usually, 2.5 per cent of the adherent’s income to charity to assist the poor. This practice is beneficial in a number of ways. It is a way to meet the demands of the Pillars of Faith and thus obey Allah. It helps the believer to see all that they have as a gift from Allah. It requires them to acknowledge that whether someone is rich or poor is Allah’s choice. It promotes self-discipline and it frees the individual from materialism, narcissism and dishonesty.



FIGURE 8.41 Members of the Red Crescent organisation delivering aid. Which pillar of Islam would this support?

RITUAL: REACHING ALLAH THROUGH MYSTICISM

In Islam there are those who look for a more direct path to Allah, which is lived out in the simplicity found in Sufism – the mystic tradition of Islam. Sufis often live in monastic communities so that they can move away from the world and move towards Allah. They live together in order to study; practise the self-discipline of poverty, fasting and silence; and find Allah within themselves. To achieve their goal of wisdom, they must first deny the world, then be purified. Their meditation is often based on the repetition of a quality of Allah, such as ‘Allah is merciful’ or ‘Allah is great’, leading to a spiritual encounter with the ultimate reality.



FIGURE 8.42 Sufi dervishes dancing. What is the purpose of the dancing?

Skills: describe, analyse, research, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Choose three Islamic symbols. Outline the belief that is symbolised in each of them in approximately 50 words for each.
- 2 Nominate a contemporary Muslim whom you admire and is in the public sphere at the moment. Write a 150-word biography of the person and then do some research to find evidence of five things they have said or done that show they are living out the teachings of the Qur'an. Present your work on a poster.
- 3 Create a table with four columns, titled 'Islam – the aspects'. Your columns will have the following headings: 'Aspect'; 'Example of the aspect'; 'Beliefs expressed by the aspect'; 'Relationship between this aspect and other aspects'. Complete this table for all of the aspects.

JUDAISM

SACRED STORIES: GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE AND JUSTICE

Judaism teaches that stories, whether in the Bible or rabbinic texts and sermons, have layers of understanding that may be accessed by anyone from their simple, literal connotation through to their symbolic and deeper nuances and moral teachings.

The story of God's testing of Abraham in Genesis 22 tells of God asking the impossible of Abraham – to sacrifice his only son, the one whom he had longed for all his life. At the last moment, God's angel prevents this tragedy.

Rabbinic sources see lessons to be learnt: God put Abraham through that trial to test his loyalty, and for that he is rewarded liberally; the omniscient God already knew the outcome but Abraham himself did not realise the depth of his own strength and faith until this test; God only sends such extreme challenges to those He knows are capable of dealing with them (Talmud). All the interpretations make it clear that human sacrifice is not what God wants.



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FIGURE 8.43 Abraham being prevented from sacrificing Isaac by an angel. How does this image show both God's omnipotence and God's justice?

Conservative
A form of Judaism that follows traditional Jewish Law but is adaptable to progress

Conservative Rabbi Harold Kushner, in his book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (1981), seeks guidance from the Bible to try to understand why his beloved son Aaron was afflicted with progeria, a rare genetic disorder causing suffering and early death. His personal tragedy led Kushner to explore the lessons of the biblical story of the binding of Isaac (Gen. 22) to help him discover answers to the theological dilemma, 'Why do the righteous suffer?'

SPACES: GOD'S HOLINESS, TORAH AS GOD'S REVELATION

Synagogues have been a communal gathering place for prayer and study for two millennia. The most sacred space is the Holy Ark, which contains the precious Torah scrolls of the congregation, who face the ark to recite their prayers and stand up whenever its door or curtain is opened to reveal the scrolls within. It is considered an honour to be called up to open the ark or carry the Torah before the community as this symbolic action expresses the importance of the community's relationship with God.

PLACES: THE CENTRALITY OF ISRAEL

For many Jews, a visit to the Holy Land is in itself an important pilgrimage that they attempt to fulfil; the spiritual highlight is to touch the ancient stones of the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Originally part of a retaining wall of the Mt Zion plateau, upon which Herod erected the



FIGURE 8.44 The curtain is embroidered with the Hebrew letters of the Shema prayer and at its base it declares, 'This is the gate of Adonai (God)'. The sacred Torah scrolls are placed inside this ark. Why is the ark called 'the gate of God'?

venerated
Profoundly respected

magnificent temple to God, the ancient stones are all that remains of that **venerated** sacred space since the Roman destruction in 70 CE. Over the centuries Jews have prayed at the ‘wailing wall’, squeezing little notes with their prayers to God into its cracked mortar and thus giving meaning to their belief in the centrality of Jerusalem and Israel to God’s eternal covenant relationship with the Jewish people.



Getty Images/AFP/Thomas Coeux

FIGURE 8.45 Children praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Why would the children feel the need to touch the wall?



FIGURE 8.46 Torah scrolls with all their ornaments. Why would these beautiful artifacts be hidden by a curtain?

TIMES: THE TORAH AS GOD’S REVELATION

The Jewish lunar calendar is adjusted to include leap years to ensure the seasons and their festivals remain in alignment. Each day starts at sunset and ends at sunset 24 hours later, based on the Genesis 1 creation story. Many of the festivals are aligned with the agricultural seasons in Israel, such as Shavu’ot, the harvest festival celebrated around May. Over centuries in exile, this annual celebration lost much of its agricultural relevance and instead developed into a special time to remember Moses receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. On this festival the Torah scroll is joyfully paraded around the synagogue with song and dance, giving meaning to the belief in God’s revelation and its continued relevance for Jewish life.

ARTIFACTS: THE TORAH AS GOD’S REVELATION

The Torah scroll, which contains the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch) painstakingly inscribed by hand according to traditional rules, is venerated as a physical symbol of God’s revelation at

Mount Sinai. Consequently, it is treated with utmost respect – its covering cloth beautifully embroidered, its handles topped with decorative ornaments and a breastplate hanging on its cover, recalling that worn by the high priest in the Jerusalem Temple. The whole congregation stands up when the Torah is removed from its resting place and paraded around the synagogue, giving meaning to their understanding of the Torah as the divine word of God.

TEXTS: ETHICAL MONOTHEISM

Jews have been called the ‘people of the Book’ for their reliance on their sacred texts to inform them about how to behave in the world while following the divine imperative. The Bible, Mishnah, Talmud, Maimonides’ Mishneh Torah, Joseph Karo’s Shulchan Aruch and many other rabbinic texts over the ages teach Jews about the ultimate reality, their covenant relationship with God, their history from ancient beginnings and the right way to conduct themselves. These texts use various literary styles, such as *aggadah* (narratives), *halakhah* (law), midrash (biblical commentary and interpretation), poetry, epigrams (words of wisdom), kabbalah (mystical insights) and prayers.

In the Progressive morning service is a prayer based on Talmudic sources that expresses the importance of text to the Jewish way of life.

These are the obligations without measure ...
Honouring one’s father and mother,
engaging in deeds of compassion,
arriving early for study, morning and evening ...
being devoted in prayer,
making peace among people –
and the study of Torah encompasses them all.

Source: Mishkan T’filah prayer book

The study of sacred texts not only brings meaning to life, it also brings purpose and encouragement for adherents to stay steadfast in their beliefs and actions.



FIGURE 8.47 A Jewish person reading from a Torah scroll. Why is the reader using a pointer called a *yad* (meaning ‘hand’)?

RITUALS: COVENANT

Judaism is a faith that emphasises deed, not creed, so the many rituals involved with daily activities, events in the life cycle and special occasions are a central component of the tradition. The ritual of circumcision, known as *brit milah* (literally meaning ‘the covenant of circumcision’), is performed in the morning on the eighth day after a Jewish boy is born. Its purpose is to show one’s belonging to the proud, long, continuing history of the Jewish people. Circumcision is so important that it may be performed on the Sabbath or any of the Jewish holidays. Every generation finds meaning and purpose in this ritual, aligning the physical act with the spiritual connection to God’s covenant, just as Abraham did (Genesis 17).

SYMBOLS: GOD’S OMNIPRESENCE, GOD IS ONE, COVENANT

The mezuzah is an ornamental case, containing a parchment inscribed with religious texts, that is placed on the doorpost of Jewish homes and public buildings as a sign of faith. It contains the words of Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and 11:13–21, which urge Jews to ‘love God with all your heart and all your soul’ and to place signs on ‘your doorposts and [city] gates’. The mezuzah symbolises that God is



FIGURE 8.48

Touching the mezuzah. What is the symbolic meaning of placing the mezuzah on the doorpost of an adherent's home?

with them everywhere, whether at home or outside in the wider world. Many Jews will touch the mezuzah then kiss their fingers when entering and leaving a place that has one on its doorpost. The mezuzah is usually displayed in a prominent position on the outside doorpost, indicating that this is a Jewish household and representing the family's or congregation's faith in a single, omnipresent God who has a special covenant relationship with the Jewish people.

SOCIAL STRUCTURES: GOD'S PROVIDENCE, TORAH AS GOD'S REVELATION, CENTRALITY OF ISRAEL

In ancient times, the Hebrews were divided according to their tribal group based upon the families of the patriarch Jacob. Each group was allocated an area of the promised land except the tribe of Levi, which was given the task of administering the cultic practices, priestly duties and, later, the temple. The *kohanim* (priests) in the temple recited the blessing twice daily.

After the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and centuries of exile, tribal membership was no longer relevant. Only the priestly ancestry has survived to this day and is reflected in Orthodoxy, where the priestly blessing is recited by male descendants of the tribe of Levi. (This social structure is not seen in Progressive congregations, where the priestly blessing may be recited by the rabbi or service leader, male or female.)

Social structure expresses the importance of God's providence in looking after the Jewish community and reflects the importance of Torah in everyday life. The Jewish tradition today does not have a formal social hierarchical structure although scholarship and wisdom are valued. The office of Chief Rabbi, found in some Orthodox communities, is a political appointment that changes regularly, and is not inherited. Ultra-Orthodoxy puts much store in the authority of its rabbinic leadership but each sub-group will have its own rebbe (inspirational rabbinic leader and teacher). Conservative and Progressive denominations do not acknowledge the position of Chief Rabbi as authoritative over their adherents and have their own conference structure to elect their leadership.



FIGURE 8.49 A rabbi, with congregants, wearing *tallit* (prayer shawl), *kippah* (head covering) and *tefillin* (phylacteries) on left arm and forehead. What might the rabbi (right) be doing in this picture?

Other social structures evident in the Jewish tradition include: Jewish schools and congregational supplementary Hebrew school classes; a wide variety of congregations, from informal and lay-led to very formal services; communal charities, homes for the elderly, hospitals, social services; and youth groups from a variety of denominations, many with strong links to Israel and **Zionism**, who meet weekly and conduct popular holiday camps. Thus social structure is a concrete way of expressing the importance of God's teachings and the centrality of Israel in communal life, even in the **diaspora**.

Zionism

A nationalist movement supporting the return of Jews to their ancestral homeland (Zion is another name for the biblical land of Israel) spurred on by anti-Semitism in the diaspora

diaspora

Usually refers to the spread of Jewish people living outside Israel, but can describe the spread of any people away from their original homeland; from a Greek word meaning 'scatter'

ETHICS: ETHICAL MONOTHEISM, GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Ethical values are at the heart of Judaism, stemming from the belief in a God who is just, rewarding good and punishing evil, but who is also merciful, forgiving sin. Jews are exhorted (strongly urged) to emulate godliness in every aspect of their lives by demonstrating righteousness, integrity, compassion, justice and goodness, not only to other humans but in their dealings with the natural world. The ethical teachings of Judaism emphasise that humans are to appreciate that everything in this world ultimately comes from God and therefore nothing should be recklessly destroyed. Humans are expected to emulate the Creator in their behaviour.

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE: GOD'S JUSTICE, COVENANT

In Judaism, fasting is one form of admitting one's own sins and acknowledging God as the True Judge. Fasting is giving up all food and drink for a day to show sincere contrition for one's sins. By not spending time on worldly matters such as food or donning make-up or perfume, the person fasting is able to concentrate on spiritual matters through prayer and meditation. Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the lunar month of Av (around July), is the date commemorating the anniversary of a number of disasters in Jewish history, primarily the destruction of both the first and second temples in Jerusalem. These two major devastating events still reverberate today. The first temple



Getty Images/AFP/Menahem Kahana

FIGURE 8.50 Jewish men in the Ultra-Orthodox neighbourhood of Mea Shearim, in Jerusalem, use candlelight to read from the book of Eicha (Lamentations) during the annual Tisha B'Av (Ninth of Av) fasting and memorial day, commemorating the destruction of the ancient Jerusalem temples. How does fasting reinforce religious identity?

in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE and, on the same date in 70 CE, the Romans completely destroyed Jerusalem and the second temple. On both occasions the Jews were exiled to lands far away, leaving a ravaged and ruined Israel. The biblical and later rabbinic sources make it clear this loss was due to baseless internal hatred within Jewish society and abandonment of the covenant. Fasting on this date became fixed in the Jewish calendar to replicate to some degree the feelings of abandonment and despair that exiled Jews have felt in foreign lands for so many centuries since then. The melancholy biblical Book of Lamentations is read in a darkened synagogue and often participants will sit on the floor to express humility, enhancing the experience and emphasising the meaning of their prayers asking God to restore Israel – the land and its people – to its former glory.

Skills: describe, summarise, analyse, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Create a Venn diagram that shows the relationship between beliefs and the other aspects in Judaism by focusing on one fundamental belief.
- 2 All of the following are to be used to create poster displays for your classroom.
 - Describe a specific ritual you have attended in 200 words.
 - Summarise the sacred texts that were used.
 - Show the social structure of the tradition as demonstrated by the roles and participation of those involved in the ritual.
 - Draw the symbols that were present and annotate, exploring their purpose.
- 3 Use three of the aspects to write 300 words on the following: 'The aspects can never adequately express the ultimate reality.' Discuss.
- 4 Write a 500-word critique of a Jewish novel and its presentation of Jewish cultural life.

Skills: research, interpret, analyse

Research option 1

- 1 For each of the aspects in the religious tradition you have been studying, outline the following:
 - the expression of the beliefs related to ultimate reality
 - the expression of beliefs related to the meaning and purpose of human life
 - the expression of beliefs related to the meaning of suffering and death
 - the expression of beliefs related to life after death
 - the expression of the beliefs in the relationship between ultimate reality and humanity
 - the expression of the beliefs related to the relationship between humans
 - the expression of beliefs related to the relationship between humankind and the natural world.
- 2 Discuss how these expressions of beliefs through the aspects engender and nurture meaning and purpose in life.
- 3 Identify any discrepancy between what the tradition intended to achieve through the expression of these beliefs and how they may be experienced by adherents.

Skills: summarise, explain, interpret, synthesise

Research option 2

- 1 Imagine you are contributing to a dictionary of religious concepts. Write an entry that describes and explains, with an example other than the ones explored in this chapter, each of the aspects from the viewpoint of a religious tradition you are studying.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ASPECTS

Having studied the fundamental beliefs (Chapter 7) and the ways in which beliefs can be expressed through the aspects, it is important to recognise their interrelatedness. The aspects act together to reaffirm and strengthen the beliefs and make them real in the lives of adherents, while shaping the believing community. Religious beliefs and their expression through the other aspects engender and nurture meaning for members of religious traditions. Some beliefs clearly find expression in all the other aspects, but some beliefs may be demonstrated only in some of the aspects. In selecting a belief to explore you need to determine that it can be expressed in all the other aspects of religion listed in the Study Design (page 9). The interaction of the aspects is a dynamic process that can be understood by exploring major festivals or rituals. You will need to use the overviews of aspects in different religions to complete the activities below.



Aspects: festivals and sacraments



Aspects: meaning and purpose

Skills: describe, explain, analyse, research, synthesise

Research

- 1 Analyse how aspects of the religious tradition you are studying express and communicate beliefs.
 - Describe a religious experience.
 - Explain the key beliefs expressed in the religious experience.
 - Describe and explain the aspects that express those beliefs.
 - Research the extent to which these beliefs and their expression have been subject to change over the centuries.
 - Use supporting evidence and quotations to substantiate key points.
- 2 Using the example provided for the religious tradition you have been studying, write four sentences that describe the relationship between the aspects in this celebration.
- 3 Using the rituals and festival in this section as an example, research at least two other central rituals or festivals in the tradition you are studying, constructing a poster about it for your classroom.
- 4 Using the rituals and festivals in this section from a religious tradition you have not been studying, research your own tradition to explore whether there are parallel rituals and festivals in your own tradition.
- 5 Rank the aspects according to which of them is most important in giving meaning to life and which is least important. Justify your ranking.
- 6
 - a Research two people in a religion that you are studying and identify how they have used the aspects to give meaning and purpose to their life. Provide concise examples (100–150 words) to support your claims.
 - b Choose one event in the life of one of these people and analyse how the decisions they made were informed by one of the aspects other than beliefs.
- 7 Write a feature article for a national newspaper establishing the positive impact that the religious tradition that you have been studying has had on the ways individuals within the religious tradition express their adherence to their beliefs.
- 8 ‘Life doesn’t give us meaning – we must give meaning to life.’ In an essay, discuss how the aspects facilitate ‘the giving of meaning’ for people in a tradition that you have been studying.

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://religionsocvce.nelsonnet.com.au>.



REVISION

A Short-answer questions

These questions are not specific to a religious tradition or denomination.

- 1 What is the relationship between beliefs and rituals?
- 2 How do symbols relate to religious beliefs?
- 3 Explain how the aspects of religion may help people to find meaning and purpose in life.

B Extended-response questions

Some of these questions relate to a specific religious tradition or denomination.

- 4
 - a Describe a specific religious festival, ritual or spiritual experience in a tradition you are studying.
 - b Which aspects, other than beliefs, that are present in that festival, ritual or spiritual experience may strongly influence an adherent of that tradition? How? Why?
 - c What are the religious beliefs expressed through those aspects selected in question 4b?
- 5
 - a Describe a particular belief that is central to a religious tradition or denomination you are studying.
 - b How is that particular religious belief expressed through the texts and sacred stories of the religious tradition? Give details.
 - c To what extent may spiritual experience influence the understanding of this selected belief?

C Essay questions

You may use one or more religious traditions or denominations in your response.

- 6 *Human beings need to express their beliefs and, in so doing, they create meaning for themselves and the people around them. Their beliefs about themselves, God and the world are expressed in a variety of ways.*
Explain how one or more of these beliefs is expressed in at least one religious tradition or denomination you have studied.
- 7 *Beliefs provide foundational teachings through which one can appreciate the nature and function of other aspects of a religious tradition.*
Discuss the above statement in relation to at least one religious tradition or denomination you have studied.
- 8 *Religions have assisted humanity to understand itself and to know a greater spiritual reality.*
Discuss this statement, referring to the aspects of religion from the perspective of at least one religious tradition or denomination you have studied.

EXTENSION

Expression of belief in other aspects

Outlined below is a model for exploring the expression of a belief through the other aspects of religion.

- 1 Find other examples to show how this belief is expressed in Judaism or in a religious tradition or denomination you have been studying.
- 2 Use the sub-headings below as a guide to explore another belief from the religious tradition or denomination you have studied in Area of Study 3.1.

JUDAISM: GOD THE CREATOR

Beliefs

One of the most fundamental beliefs about ultimate reality is that God is Creator. Stemming from this are other precepts about God, such as: God is the transcendent Creator of Heaven and Earth; God is immanent and personal in human life; and Shabbat (the Sabbath), the day of rest, is holy as it was purposefully created by God (Gen. 2: 1–4).

These beliefs are reflected in other aspects of the religion.

Sacred stories

The creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2 demonstrate God as Creator while many psalms in the scriptures reflect the immanence and holiness of God in Jewish life.

Spaces, places, times and artifacts

PLACES

The synagogue and the home are the key places where these beliefs are enacted, recited and taught. Jewish schools, supplementary classes, youth groups and camps are also important spaces for learning about, and enacting, beliefs about God. Synagogue architecture can enhance this further.

SPACES

Sabbath is especially celebrated in the home, around the dinner table, where family and friends acknowledge God the Creator. The holy ark, containing the Torah scrolls, dominates the synagogue space and celebrates the Creator and God's immanence in life.

TIMES

Jews understand that God is present in their lives at all times and in all places. However, certain times of the day, month and year particularly celebrate God's immanence and role as Creator. The Sabbath celebrates God's role in creation, separating the sacred from the profane.

ARTIFACTS

The Sabbath candlesticks, wine goblet and decorated cover for the challah (plaited bread) all serve to honour the belief in God's role in creating the holy Sabbath and separating it from the mundane working week.

Texts

The Bible, in particular the Genesis creation stories, teach that God is the Creator.

The Siddur (prayer book) contains prayers such as Grace, which is said before and after meals, acknowledging God as Creator of our food and God's immanence in every part of one's life. The Mishnah, Talmud and other codes of Jewish law set out the details of how to live appropriately to acknowledge the Creator God, who is immanent in their lives.

Rituals

Friday night Sabbath dinner rituals include prayers: before starting the meal, lighting and blessing the candles, washing hands, blessing wine, blessing the challah and blessing the children. These all praise the Creator and acknowledge that God is present always and everywhere. After the Sabbath meals, the reciting of *Birkat hamazon* (Grace after meals) with singing and gusto physically acknowledges the belief in God's role in providing the food eaten.

Symbols

Two candles are lit to welcome in the Sabbath. They represent the two mitzvot (commandments) to 'remember' (Ex. 20:8) and 'observe' (Deut. 5: 15) the Sabbath day. These indicate the great importance of God the Creator in the Jewish faith and acknowledging God's caring for the ancient Hebrew people during their years of wandering in the wilderness.

In nature, Jews celebrate God's role in creation – for example, when admiring a rainbow, which has its own special blessing.

Social structures

The social structure reinforces the memory and understanding of Jews as the chosen people of God the Creator. The belief in God as Creator is primarily celebrated in everyday life with family and friends in one's home and community.

Jews may attend some or all synagogue services on Friday evening, Saturday morning or afternoon and Saturday evening. These services include many references to God's role in creation and God's personal connection to the Jewish people in the wording of the hymns and prayers.

Ethics

Inviting others to share in one's Shabbat meal is seen as a mitzvah (religious obligation), enabling others to participate in celebrating God's creation of the Sabbath. There are many laws and customs surrounding the Sabbath, detailing when and how to observe and celebrate God's creation. The Jewish code of ethics stipulates the importance of caring for those less fortunate in society, and that even animals deserve a day of rest because they, too, are part of God's creation. The biblical injunction not to work on the Sabbath is expounded in great detail in the Talmud and later rabbinic works, including which activities are considered work, and exactly when the Sabbath begins and ends.

Spiritual experience

To fully observe the Sabbath and festivals is an opportunity to free oneself of everyday concerns and enjoy a special connection with God and the created world. For many, this day of peace allows them to recover from the stress of the working week and to re-establish a balance in their lives.

The peaceful environment in homes and Jewish public areas nurtures a harmonious atmosphere, aided by closed shops and the absence of traffic on the roads. Visiting friends in the neighbourhood, joining extended family and friends, attending the synagogue, joining in services and other get-togethers all promote friendship, community and joy.



Chapter 9

REDISCOVERING MEANING

Outcome to be demonstrated

Discussion of the analysed interrelationship between significant life experiences and religious beliefs and their expression through the aspects of religion

Focus questions

- ▶ What makes an experience significant for one's life?
- ▶ What is the relationship between religious beliefs and significant life experiences?
- ▶ What types of significant life experiences impact on which types of religious beliefs?
- ▶ What might be the impact on religious beliefs of a significant life experience?
- ▶ How might a religious belief help the individual to interpret their significant life experiences?
- ▶ How might a significant life experience lead to a shift in the adherence to, and expression of, an individual's beliefs?

SIGNIFICANT LIFE EXPERIENCES

subjective

Particular to an individual thinking person; of decisions, made on a personal basis



Terminology

Part of the joy and pain of being human is that there are significant experiences that mean something to us. They may touch emotions, impact on the imagination, inspire or lead to despair. Things happen, and these experiences are sometimes wonderful and uplifting, sometimes heartbreaking and difficult; the interpretation of these experiences is very **subjective**. For some, new beliefs are formed as a result of the event; for others, convictions can be strengthened or returned to after a period of lapse; while for others, beliefs may be abandoned. An individual's faith may guide them in the journey through life's unexpected changes of fortune, furnishing them with joy, comfort or a reason for the experience. Others may question or even reject prior religious understandings and seek new insights from a different stream or denomination in their religious tradition.

Experiences that are common to all humanity, and which by their very nature are significant, include:

- the birth of a child
- finding a life partner
- the death of a loved one
- the loss of friendship
- the reassessing of an individual's direction in life
- the loss of employment
- loss of confidence in the leadership of a religious group
- the experience of disaster or tragedy
- experiences of wonder
- serious illness
- unexpected recovery from illness
- declining physical ability
- coming to terms with mortality.

The significance of such events is difficult to determine, partly because significance is a relative term. While for one individual an experience may seem mundane, unexceptional and not worthy of recalling or learning from, for another the same experience can be important, affecting them deeply and causing great joy, wonder, new commitment or perhaps sorrow, anger or even depression.



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FIGURE 9.1 What in this image is showing an experience of joy?

Such significant experiences can force major life choices that an individual would not have made otherwise. Some form of personal development will occur but, depending on the individual, the response to the significant experience will vary in intensity and the degree of change to beliefs.

JOY

Joy means the delight, pleasure, happiness and even elation that can be found in an experience or a relationship. Pure joy is an inexplicable, intense gratitude for life that can catch us off guard. Life-cycle milestones, such as birth, baptism, **Bar Mitzvah** or **Bat Mitzvah**, first Holy Communion, graduation and marriage, can bring much happiness to people's lives. Joy can give purpose to life. Joy may emerge from difficult situations, demonstrating the resilience of the human spirit despite the harshest of circumstances. Some people find fulfilment in bringing joy to others and so bring joy to themselves. Religious acts of devotion, such as personal prayer and participating in communal rituals and festivals, assist adherents to experience joy in a more structured and communal manner through their faith. The experience of joy can strengthen a person's beliefs by providing evidence of transcendence; it may take a person back to their religious tradition after a lapse in practice; it may provide evidence of an ultimate reality that speaks to them on a profoundly personal level.

Bar Mitzvah

Ceremony marking the beginning of religious responsibility for Jewish boys

Bat Mitzvah

Ceremony marking the beginning of religious responsibility for Jewish girls

CS LEWIS: ENCOUNTERING A GOOD AND LOVING GOD

Clive Staples Lewis (1898–1963), also called 'Jack' by family and friends, wrote extensively about Christian theology. Though raised an Anglican, he became an atheist for many years, before gaining much insight and joy from a return to Christianity. He refused to identify with any one denomination. Lewis is best remembered for writing the *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which includes the enduring children's classic *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, in which his protagonist, Aslan, allegorically depicts the story of Christ; however, his enduring legacy has been the many other works he produced as a Christian **apologist**.

apologist

A defender of an idea or religion

When I'd finished my scripts I sent them round to various people who were professionals: to one Church of England theologian, one Roman Catholic, one Presbyterian, and one Methodist. The Church of England man and the Presbyterian agreed with the whole thing. The Roman Catholic and the Methodist agreed in the main, but would have liked one or two places altered. So there you've got all the cards on the table. What I'm going to say isn't exactly what all these people would say; but the greater part of it is what all Christians agree on ... One thing I can promise you.

In spite of all the unfortunate differences between Christians, what they agree on is still something pretty big and pretty solid: big enough to blow any of us sky-high if it happens to be true.

Source: CS Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

The book *Mere Christianity*, from which the quote above is drawn, explores Lewis's overwhelming feelings of joy in Christianity, and the way it came as a surprising realisation at unexpected moments while walking, reading or listening to music. Such joy comes from



FIGURE 9.2 CS Lewis with Joy Gresham. What did the experience of marriage bring to Lewis?

Used by permission of The Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL

forgetting the self. Lewis interpreted these moments as confirmation of the existence of the Holy Spirit in a later work *The Problem of Pain*.

The great master Himself leads to revelry, giving himself eternally to His creatures in the generation, and back to Himself in the sacrifice, of the Word, then indeed the eternal dance ‘makes heaven drowsy with harmony’ ... There is joy in the dance, but it does not exist for the sake of joy ... It is Love Himself, and God Himself, and therefore happy. It does not exist for us, but we for it.

Source: CS Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

Lewis was in his fifties when he, ironically, married joy, in Joy Gresham. After his wife went into remission with cancer, in July 1958, Lewis and Joy went to Ireland for a holiday. On their return, he recorded a series of talks on ‘the four loves’ – familial or affectionate love (storge), friendship (philia), romantic love (eros) and spiritual love (agape). Two years later, when his wife became ill again, Lewis wrote of the experience:

You would not believe how many joys have been experienced amid these troubles. And what wonder? For has He not promised to comfort those who mourn? ... I am in much trouble. Nevertheless let us lift up our hearts: for Christ is risen.

However, after Joy’s death Lewis went through a period of profound grief, which he recorded in his book *A Grief Observed*. This series of jottings of his feelings reveal his intense pain and provide an account of the struggle he had in maintaining his belief in a good and loving God. He accused God of being brutal and sadistic but, ultimately, through a mystical experience that he could not explain except in a metaphor, his belief in a good and loving God was restored and strengthened. He found God had not abandoned him and peace was possible.

God has not been trying an experiment on my faith or love in order to find out their quality. He knew it already. It was I who didn’t. In this trial He makes us occupy the dock, the witness box, and the bench all at once. He always knew that my temple was a house of cards. His only way of making me realise the fact was to knock it down.

Skills: summarise, explain, draw conclusions, research

- 1 What experiences led to Lewis’ joyful moments?
- 2 What ‘types’ of joy did Lewis experience?
- 3 From these extracts of Lewis’ writings, what can be supposed or imagined about the extent to which his previous beliefs were changed by these experiences of joy?
- 4 How can one experience joy in the midst of the suffering of a loved one, as Lewis did?
- 5 Have you, or has someone you know, ever been in the position of CS Lewis and experienced joy amid bitterness? To what extent did it affect your or their faith?
- 6 Conduct your own research into CS Lewis to answer to the following questions.
 - a What religious beliefs did Lewis hold before meeting his wife?
 - b How did finding love affect Lewis’ his religious beliefs?
 - c How did Joy Gresham’s illness affect Lewis’ beliefs?
 - d What changes were brought to Lewis’ life and beliefs as a result of his wife’s death?
 - e How did Gresham’s death affect Lewis’ adherence to the beliefs of Christianity?
- 7 Topic for class discussion: Is it fair to blame God when loved ones pass away?

WONDER

When an individual experiences wonder, they are struck with astonishment, awe and admiration. For example, one may marvel at the birth of a new life. Wonder can be derived from a discovery from within oneself or through a new understanding resulting from a significant life experience. This feeling cannot be easily fabricated but arises from experiences that have an anticipated or unexpected impact on a person's feelings, beliefs and spirituality. The feeling of wonder at the beauty, majesty, power or mystery of the cosmos or the natural world can lead the individual to encounter a strengthened understanding of a Creator in their religious tradition. Religious traditions also provide adherents with many structured opportunities to experience wonder through rituals, worship, music, festivals and community.

HANNAH SZENES: ENCOUNTERING A CREATOR GOD

Hannah Szenes (pronounced 'Senesh') was born in Hungary in 1921, and is known both for her heroism and her poetry. After her education in a Hungarian school that was open to Protestants and Jews, she moved to Palestine, and during the Second World War she joined the British army's Special Operations Unit. She later volunteered to be parachuted into Nazi Europe to save Jewish lives.

Szenes was captured, tortured and eventually executed by the Nazis in 1944. In her poem 'Walk to Caesarea', Szenes wrote about the natural beauty of the Holy Land that she felt reflects God's wondrous power in nature and in the life of humans. The following poem, translated from Hebrew, now has musical accompaniment added and has found a special place in modern Jewish liturgy.

My God – may there be no end
To sea, to sand,
Water's splash,
Lightning's flash,
The prayer of man.

Scientists and scholars have commented with awe upon the marvels of our universe. The greater their knowledge of their scientific and mathematical disciplines, the more their wonder at the source of life. Over the centuries, it often has been scholars who have devoted their lives to scientific study of the world who have given voice to the mysteries of God's creation and the wonders of nature that are so far beyond human understanding. The following example by Paul Davies is just a sample of this form of literature.

PAUL DAVIES

Paul Davies is a renowned scientist and philosopher whose work has had a transformative influence on his thinking about God and religion.

It may seem bizarre, but in my opinion science offers a surer path to God than religion ... I am convinced there is more to the world than meets the eye.

Source: Paul Davies 1990, *God and the New Physics*, Penguin Books, pp. 24–5



FIGURE 9.3 Hannah Szenes, photographed in about 1943. What was the source of her inspiration?



FIGURE 9.4 The Helix Nebula, also known as the 'Eye of God'. What would this image say to Paul Davies?

Skills: explain, interpret

- 1 What sorts of experiences or thoughts cause people to wonder?
- 2 Which other scientists, besides Paul Davies, accept that there is some great force beyond human understanding?
- 3 How might his scientific knowledge help or hinder Davies' religious understanding?

SUFFERING

In the religious journey, the emotion that most confronts beliefs is often suffering; the experience of physical, mental, emotional or spiritual anguish. Suffering can be inflicted by external forces beyond an individual's control; for example, a natural disaster such as an earthquake, or an individual or loved one contracting an incurable illness.

Suffering can also be inflicted by people upon each other, either individually or communally – as in wars, political suppression, economic deprivation, neglect, ridicule, bullying, ostracism, hatred or lack of care for one's fellow human beings.

Distressing life events can lead some to question religious beliefs, and experience a weakening of them or even a loss of faith. Other people can find affirmation and a strengthening of their beliefs as a result of their suffering, leading to a renewed spirituality and greater commitment to their faith.



amanaimages/Gavin Gough/NurPhoto/Corbis

FIGURE 9.5 In 2015, an earthquake in Nepal killed more than 9000 people and destroyed towns, villages and infrastructure. How might one understand the suffering caused by natural disasters?

THE PROPHET AYYUB

The Qur'an recounts the story of Ayyub (Job), which is also found in the Hebrew scriptures, to explore the question of theodicy. The Prophet Ayyub was a model of humility and faith in Allah. He was very patient. He suffered from a number of calamities but did not utter a single word of complaint. His

farm was attacked by thieves who killed many of his servants and stole all his cattle. Ayyub thanked Allah. Later, the roof of the house fell down and many members of his family were crushed. Ayyub held fast to his faith in Allah. He prayed, recognising that possessions and children were gifts from Allah. Then his body was covered in sores. His false friends attributed his calamities to his sins. They ridiculed and looked down upon him.

Eventually even his wife prayed for his death. Ayyub prayed:

Great harm has afflicted me, and you are the Most Merciful of the merciful.

Source: Qur'an 21:83

Allah in mercy accepted his prayer.

So We answered him, lifted his suffering, and restored his family to him, and their like with them – a mercy from Us, and a reminder for the worshippers.

Source: Qur'an 21:84

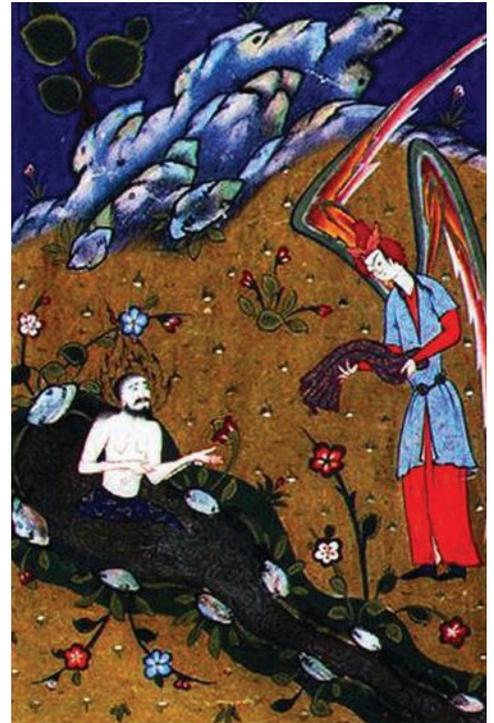
Allah commanded the prophet to strike the earth with his foot and water from the spring gushed forth. He bathed in the water and was cured. Allah gave him back all that had been lost. Ayyub praised Allah for his goodness and mercy.

We will certainly test you with some fear and hunger, and some loss of possessions and lives and crops. But give good news to the steadfast.

Those who, when a calamity afflicts them, say, 'To Allah we belong, and to Him we will return.'

Upon these are blessings and mercy from their Lord. These are the guided ones.

Source: Qur'an 2:155–157



Pictures from History/Bridgeman Images

FIGURE 9.6 Image of the Prophet Ayyub from an 11th-century illuminated Arabic manuscript. Which part of the story is illustrated here?

Skills: summarise, interpret, research

- 1 List the explanations provided in the extracts from the Qur'an for the existence of suffering in the world.
- 2 Research the Prophet Ayyub in the Qur'an and outline the central message of the story for those who are suffering.
- 3 Research an individual in Islam who applied this message to their life as they suffered.

JEWISH VIEWS ON SUFFERING

There is a range of explanations for suffering to be found in the Jewish Bible and in rabbinic texts such as the Talmud. No single explanation is solely accepted. In every era, Jewish scholars have devised ways to respond to tragedy and pain. The Book of Job in the Bible questions the unfairness of undeserved suffering and tries to defend traditional beliefs about God with a theodicy that allows adherents to continue to believe in a just, omnipotent deity. Job's friends all try to convince him that he has sinned in some way to deserve his suffering, but he finally concludes that humans can never really understand their mysterious creator.

The notion of divine reward and punishment to account for suffering is found frequently in Jewish literature. Suffering can be seen as retributive (you get what you deserve) as a consequence

of sin (Deut.11:16, 17). It can be understood as disciplinary and educative (to teach a lesson) as in Job 5:17. Suffering can be probationary, a test (of faith), as in the story of the binding of Isaac (Gen. 22:1). It can be understood as vicarious (acting or done for another) and sacrificial, such as in Isaiah's suffering servant (Isa. 53:6, 11).



Alamy Stock Photo/classicpaintings

FIGURE 9.7 William Blake's *Satan Smiting Job with Sore Boils*, 1826. Why might Judaism, Christianity and Islam share the same story?

Suffering due to evil is also seen as a consequence of human freedom in the biblical sin stories of Adam and Eve, Cain murdering his brother Abel, the tower of Babel and many others. Another explanation from the rabbinic sages suggests people should look at their own actions, not God, to find a reason for suffering (Talmud Berachot 5a). Affliction can be spiritually ennobling and make one a better person (Ps. 94:12). They may be sufferings of love sent by God and good things may come from them (Talmud Berachot 5a:24). Suffering may enhance rewards in the world to come (Talmud Kiddushin 39b). It can also be revelational when one encounters God through suffering (Job 42:5). Suffering can also be seen as messianic, leading to redemption at the end of days (Ezek. 37). The following account of an Orthodox rabbi's reply to a distraught mother refers to some of these understandings.

Rabbi Moss

Rabbi Aron Moss, Sydney-born and-bred, is a prolific writer on a broad range of topics, including Kabbalah and relationships. He writes for Bina Jewish Wisdom for Life – a Jewish education website. He receives many pleas for help on the Internet, such as this from a mother whose nine-year-old daughter was diagnosed with leukaemia. While she knew that every mother would say the same, she wanted to emphasise that her daughter was truly as perfect as a human being could be. She described her daughter as sweet, kind, generous, caring and compassionate. She had always



123RF.com/Igor Strukov

FIGURE 9.8 How is a parent's suffering different from that of the child?

wanted to work at NASA when she grew up so that she could save the environment, humankind and the world. But after a year of chemotherapy and radiation, she had suffered some very dangerous and rare side-effects. Though she had not let the drugs cripple her spirit, every organ in her body has been weakened. She was not quite so able to help others now.

So the mother had these questions: Why would God hurt such a perfect child? Wouldn't He want her to save the world? Why must she suffer and never be able to fulfil her dream to help humanity?

Rabbi Moss replied:

My heart reaches out to you in what must be a most painful and heart wrenching time. There are no words that can take away the pain and no explanations that can satisfy a heart grieving for the life that could have been for your daughter. I join you in protesting your daughter's undeserved suffering, together with the suffering of all innocent people. I do not believe that God wants us to defend the suffering of innocents. He may have His reasons, but that is His business. Our business is to oppose and relieve the suffering of innocent people wherever we can.

God is ultimately responsible for allowing undeserved pain to exist. But we must also recognise that God is the source of life itself, and life is also undeserved. Nobody earned the right to live, and nobody gained life on their own. God is responsible for suffering, but He is also responsible for life in the first place.

So just as we can ask, 'What did this girl do to deserve so much suffering?', we can also ask, 'What did we do to deserve such a beautiful soul as this girl?' The very fact that such a shining soul came down to this world is a gift. For whatever reason, this soul had to go through the darkest of journeys, and yet her soul is the brightest of souls. Just as we are pained by her suffering, we must also be thankful for her goodness. God caused that too.

Every life has to be seen as a whole, a package. The good and the bad, the painful and the beautiful, these things cannot be separated. They are all intrinsic to the soul's identity, and to its journey in this lifetime. You can't have the talents without the challenges, and you can't have the beauty without the pain. Your daughter's fine qualities and her terrible suffering – this is her soul.

Why is this so? Why can't it be different? Only God knows. And the truth is, we don't want to know the answer to that. We don't want an explanation for pain, we just want an end to it. In the meantime, all we can do is be thankful for life. And be thankful for the gift that we have been given, the soul of your daughter, who has and will continue to bring goodness and light to the world.

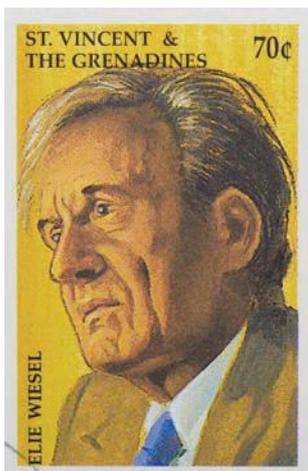
At NASA they will tell you how small and insignificant our planet earth is in the whole scheme of the universe. But there are some things that they will never discover anywhere else in the universe: the unconditional love of a mother for her child, the indomitable spirit of the human being to stand up to adversity, and the simple yet infinite power that humans have to give, to care, to love and to do good for each other. NASA can achieve a lot for our planet. But a little girl who faces adversity with dignity, and counters pain with goodness, and fights hopelessness with hope, can achieve infinitely more.

I wish you, your daughter and all your loved ones strength and courage to face the challenges ahead, and we pray for her complete recovery.

Source: The Algemeiner

Skills: summarise, explain, analyse

- 1 Explain the nature of the experience this mother is undergoing.
- 2 In your own words, explain what beliefs the mother is questioning.
- 3 What answers does Rabbi Moss offer? To which of the aspects does he appeal?
- 4 Would you find these answers comforting? Explain your reasons.
- 5 What else might a leader of a religious tradition that you have studied have told this mother?



Elie Wiesel

Noted writer and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel (1928–2016) dedicated much of his life to trying to understand what can be learnt from the massive suffering of so many millions during the Holocaust. In his many writings, he questioned God's apparent absence or lack of intervention in that 'long night' of human history (unlike the Passover story, where God's intercession in history is celebrated).

Wiesel wrote 57 books dealing with Judaism, the Holocaust and the moral responsibility of all people to fight hatred, racism and genocide. His life's work was recognised when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. His anguish is conveyed in his book, *Night*.

Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky.

FIGURE 9.9 Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor. Why would Elie Wiesel's image be on a postage stamp?

Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever.
Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself.
Never.

Source: Elie Wiesel 1981, *Night*, Penguin Books, p. 45

Skills: research, identify, explain, draw conclusions, interpret, synthesise

Conduct further research to answer the following questions. Make sure you include the views of various Jewish denominations in your answers.

- 1 What are the various causes of suffering, according to biblical texts?
- 2 What further explanations are given for suffering in the **rabbinic period**?
- 3 To what extent has the Holocaust caused people to re-examine those traditional beliefs about God and the causes of suffering?
- 4 Investigate how post-Holocaust theologians explain the causes of the unimaginable suffering of that period.
- 5 Has the Holocaust caused any shift in theological thinking in the modern era?
- 6 What effect did his Holocaust experience have on Wiesel's life and beliefs?
- 7 How has the Holocaust impacted on the aspects in Judaism?

rabbinic period
The era of development of the Talmud (70–500 CE)

Sara Esther Crispe

The following extract is a story from Sara Esther Crispe, a Jewish woman who recounts here her voluntary experience of preparing a body for burial.

Miriam Rivkah bas Yitzchak was born in 1915. She lived a full 90 years. I know nothing else about her other than that she never had children. I don't know how she lived and I don't know how she died. All I know is that I was blessed with the opportunity of preparing her body to leave this world, and that my hand on hers was the last human touch she would receive in this world.

I had never before done a *taharah* ('purification'), the burial preparations done to every Jewish man, woman or child before their funeral. When we entered the room I was petrified. I came thinking that I would only read Psalms while my friend and another woman would prepare the body. But they needed a third person and I felt I couldn't, nor did I want to, refuse ...

We said certain prayers as we worked, asking for forgiveness on her behalf, and asking her as well to forgive us if we caused her any harm or discomfort. Every step of the process was filled with meaning and depth. And every motion was intended to respect her life while preparing her for death.

After she was thoroughly washed, she then underwent a *mikvah* process, a spiritual and physical immersion in which the body transfers from a state of impurity to that of total purity. The Hebrew word for 'impure', *tameh*, comes from the same root as *timtum*, a state of constriction, of being blocked. Now, as she is prepared

for leaving this world, she leaves all constrictions, all boundaries behind. She is finally to be freed, to be open and to understand what has until now made no sense.

Her final clothing is symbolic of the priestly garments, with white pants, a long shirt, a top coat, belt, apron, head and face covering. The face is covered like that of a bride under the canopy, hidden from the outside world in order to connect with G-d Above and oneself below. And to symbolise the purity and innocence, the deceased, like the bride, is dressed completely in white.

Each tie that is made in her clothing, from the belt to the cloth around her feet and that around her neck, is knotted in the form of letters that spell the name of G-d. These garments are hand-sewn and have no pockets, to remind us that the deceased has no need nor care for material goods for money and jewels carry no meaning in the World of Truth.

Sand from Israel is placed on her heart and below, to help her body and soul understand that its mission in this world is now over ... Upon her closed eyelids pieces of clay rest, a reminder that she no longer needs her physical eyes to see ...

Leaving the building ... I wondered: How often do I take the time to bathe my own children and dress them so caringly? And how often do I pray with such intensity and emotion when I ask G-d or others for forgiveness? And I questioned: why we are so quick to drop everything to attend a funeral, but so reluctant and busy when it comes to a wedding or other joyous occasion?

Through Miriam, I was reminded of what it means to be alive and of what really matters when we are no longer ... For this is our time to prepare for what really matters and what really counts, and we have no idea how much time we have to achieve that goal.

Source: Sara Esther Crispe, 'From One World to the Next', www.chabad.org, reprinted with the permission of the author and chabad.org

Skills: summarise, outline, explain

Read the extract 'From One World to the Next' and answer these questions.

- 1 Why do you think the author put a hyphen in the word 'G-d'? Why have Jews traditionally not written God's name?
- 2 Briefly explain the beliefs about the afterlife referred to in this account.
- 3 How did this experience affect the author's understanding of life?
- 4 To what extent were the author's beliefs changed by this experience? Justify your view by using quotations from the story.
- 5 How was this experience significant for Crispe?
- 6 What beliefs and aspects can be discerned from the text?

MAJOR LIFE CHOICES

Throughout our lives we make daily choices that may seem insignificant in the scheme of things but which can have far-reaching implications for our future relationships, faith, career or life story. Sometimes they are only revealed in hindsight. At other times we are forced to make difficult decisions that cause us much heartache and soul-searching. For some people, their religious beliefs

will offer them guidance and strength in making their major life choices. Others will find that testing occasions make them question their faith, sometimes judging it inadequate. They may seek to understand further how their religious tradition can assist them in making these life choices. Having made their decision, faith can be a guiding spirit giving individuals courage to continue in their chosen path.

PASTOR DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Protestant Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) was a German who resisted Nazism during the Third Reich. He was born in Germany and studied theology in Berlin and New York. Bonhoeffer returned to Germany in 1931 but, as a strong opponent of fascism, he left Germany when Adolf Hitler gained power in 1933 and went to London to work as a pastor. In 1935 he returned to Berlin to establish a seminary to coach theologians to speak out against the Nazis. The Nazi secret police, the Gestapo, closed down Bonhoeffer's seminary in 1937 and banned him from preaching. Over the next few years he worked closely with other opponents of the Nazi regime, including military officers who opposed Hitler and were plotting to murder him. Bonhoeffer was eventually arrested in 1943, accused of scheming against Hitler. He was held in prison and then sent to Buchenwald concentration camp. He was later moved to Flossenbürg concentration camp, where he was executed in April 1945. His thinking and martyrdom influenced a range of subsequent movements responding to oppression, including the Civil Rights movement in the United States and the South African Anti-Apartheid movement.

Bonhoeffer was faced with two significant life choices. The first was whether to support resistance to Nazism and the plot to kill Adolf Hitler. He decided to violate the sanctity of human life, believing that it was necessary to kill Hitler in order to prevent a greater evil and so save other human lives. The second major turning point in his life was his willing acceptance of martyrdom when he was executed, only 23 days before the Nazis surrendered.

Some God deems worthy of great suffering and grants them the grace of martyrdom, while others are not tempted beyond their strength. But in every case it is one's cross. It is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering that everyone has to experience is the call which summons us away from our attachments to this world. It is the death of the old self in the encounter with Jesus Christ. Those who enter into discipleship enter into Jesus' death.

The cross is not the terrible end of a pious happy life. Instead, it stands at the beginning of community with Jesus Christ. Every call of Christ leads into death.

Jesus' call to bear the cross places all who follow him in the community of the forgiveness of sins. Forgiving sins is the Christ-suffering required of his disciples. It is required of all Christians.

The right way to requite (avenge) evil, according to Jesus, is not to resist it. This saying of Christ removes the Church from the sphere of politics and law. The Church is not to be a national community like the old Israel, but a community of believers without political or national ties.



FIGURE 9.10 Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, photographed in 1939. How does Bonhoeffer suggest evil can be overcome?

Getty Images/Julstein bild

The only way to overcome evil is to let it run itself to a stand-still because it does not find the resistance it is looking for. Resistance merely creates further evil and adds fuel to the flames. But when evil meets no opposition and encounters no obstacle but only patient endurance, its sting is drawn ... Then evil cannot find its mark, it can breed no further evil, and is left barren.

Suffering willingly endured is stronger than evil, it spells death to evil.

Source: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Fortress Press, 1937, translated by Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss 2001

The letters and papers from which the following extracts are taken were hidden by Bonhoeffer's family in the roof of his parents' home and published after his death.

The great masquerade of evil has played havoc with all our ethical concepts. For evil to appear disguised as light, charity, historical necessity or social justice is quite bewildering to anyone brought up on our traditional ethical concepts, while for the Christian who bases his life on the Bible, it merely confirms the fundamental wickedness of evil. The 'reasonable' people's failure is obvious ... Disappointed by the world's unreasonableness, they see themselves condemned to ineffectiveness; they step aside in resignation or collapse before the stronger party.

Who stands fast? Only the man whose final standard is not his reason, his principles, his conscience, his freedom, or his virtue, but who is ready to sacrifice all this when he is called to obedient and responsible action in faith and in exclusive allegiance to God – the responsible man, who tries to make his whole life an answer to the question and call of God. Where are these responsible people?

What lies behind the complaint about the dearth of civil courage? In recent years we have seen a great deal of bravery and self sacrifice, but civil courage hardly anywhere, even among ourselves ... In a long history, we Germans have had to learn the need for and the strength of obedience. In the subordination of all personal wishes and ideas to the tasks to which we have been called, we have seen the meaning and greatness of our lives. We have looked upwards, not in servile fear, but in free trust, seeing in our tasks a call, and in our call a vocation. This readiness to follow a command from 'above' rather than our own private opinions and wishes was a sign of legitimate self-distrust ... He [the German citizen] did not realize that his submissiveness and self-sacrifice could be exploited for evil ends. When that happened, the exercise of the calling itself became questionable, and all the moral principles of the German were bound to totter.

Source: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Touchstone Edition 1997, pp. 4–5

From a letter sent out to Bonhoeffer's closest friends for New Year's Day, 1943:

We have been silent witnesses of evil deeds: we have been drenched by many storms; we have learnt the arts of equivocation and pretence; experience has made us suspicious of others and kept us from being truthful and open; intolerable conflicts have worn us down and even made us cynical. Are we still of any use? What we shall need is not geniuses, or cynics, or misanthropes, or clever tacticians, but plain, honest, straightforward men. Will our inward power of resistance be strong enough, and our honesty with ourselves remorseless enough, for us to find our way back to simplicity and straightforwardness?

Mere waiting and looking on is not Christian behaviour. Christians are called to compassion and to action.

Source: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Touchstone Edition, 1997, p. 4

Skills: explain, draw conclusions, research, synthesise

Read the extracts from Bonhoeffer's writings and answer the following questions.

- 1 What sort of God does Bonhoeffer envisage?
- 2 How does he explain why human law is of less value than God's law?
- 3 What does he note about the character of Germans in his day?
- 4 According to Bonhoeffer, how should one deal with evil?
- 5 What changes in Bonhoeffer's attitude can you see in his later writings?
- 6 As a class, discuss the following topic: 'Is it ever justifiable to violate the sanctity of human life in order to prevent a greater evil?' Give some examples to demonstrate your opinion.
- 7 Conduct further research to answer the following questions. Make sure you quote Bonhoeffer's own words about his beliefs, experiences and God in your answers.
 - a What beliefs did Bonhoeffer hold before the war? Do you think he was influenced by his work and study in New York and London?
 - b How and why did Bonhoeffer become involved in the opposition to Hitler?
 - c How did he justify supporting the plot to kill Hitler?
 - d To what extent did Bonhoeffer's beliefs undergo any changes as a result of his experiences?

SHIRIN EBADI

The Nobel Peace Prize 2003 was awarded to Shirin Ebadi, lawyer, author and teacher, for her work to further the recognition and practice of the human rights of women and children. She faced persecution in her home country of Iran for the decisions she made in defending human rights. She has become an admired figure in the Islamic world. This is a selection from her acceptance speech for the Nobel prize.

This selection will make women in Iran, and much further afield, believe in themselves. Women constitute half of the population of every country. To disregard women and bar them from active participation in political, social, economic and cultural life would in fact be tantamount to depriving the entire population of every society of half its capability. Allow me to say a little about my country, region, culture and faith ...

I am an Iranian. A descendent of Cyrus The Great. The very emperor who proclaimed at the pinnacle of power 2500 years ago that '... he would not reign over the people if they did not wish it.' And [he] promised not to force any person to change his religion and faith and guaranteed freedom for all. The Charter of Cyrus The Great is one of the most important documents that should be studied in the history of human rights.

I am a Muslim. In the Koran the Prophet of Islam has been cited as saying: 'Thou shalt believe in thine faith and I in my religion'. That same divine book sees the mission of all prophets as that of inviting all human beings to uphold justice. Since the advent of Islam, too, Iran's civilisation and culture has become imbued and infused with humanitarianism, respect for the life, belief and faith of others, propagation of tolerance and compromise and avoidance of violence, bloodshed

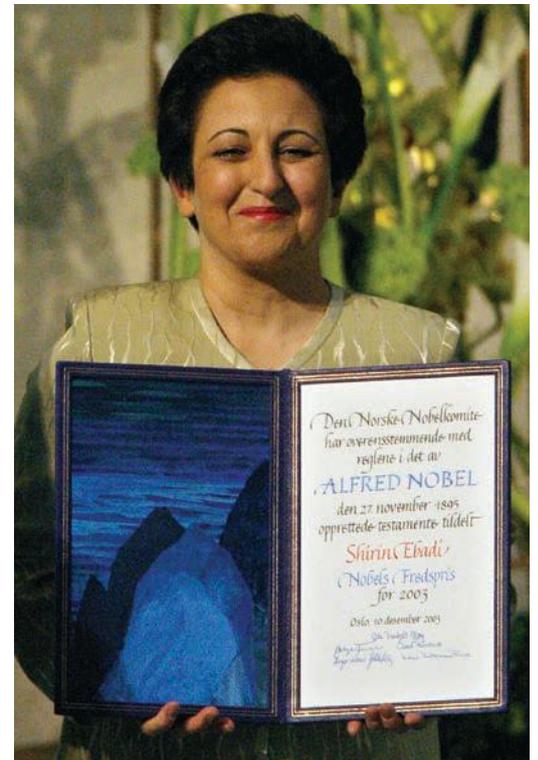


FIGURE 9.11 Shirin Ebadi received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003. What do you think motivated Shirin Ebadi?

and war. The luminaries of Iranian literature, in particular our Gnostic literature, from Hafiz, Mowlavi [better known in the West as Rumi] and Attar to Saadi, Sanaei, Naser Khosrow and Nezami, are emissaries of this humanitarian culture.

The people of Iran have been battling against consecutive conflicts between tradition and modernity for over 100 years. By resorting to ancient traditions, some have tried and are trying to see the world through the eyes of their predecessors and to deal with the problems and difficulties of the existing world by virtue of the values of the ancients. But, many others, while respecting their historical and cultural past and their religion and faith, seek to go forth in step with world developments and not lag behind the caravan of civilisation, development and progress. The people of Iran, particularly in the recent years, have shown that they deem participation in public affairs to be their right, and that they want to be masters of their own destiny.

This conflict is observed not merely in Iran, but also in many Muslim states. Some Muslims, under the pretext that democracy and human rights are not compatible with Islamic teachings and the traditional structure of Islamic societies, have justified despotic governments, and continue to do so. In fact, it is not so easy to rule over a people who are aware of their rights, using traditional, patriarchal and paternalistic methods ...

The discriminatory plight of women in Islamic states, too, whether in the sphere of civil law or in the realm of social, political and cultural justice, has its roots in the patriarchal and male-dominated culture prevailing in these societies, not in Islam ...

If the 21st century wishes to free itself from the cycle of violence, acts of terror and war, and avoid repetition of the experience of the 20th century – that most disaster-ridden century of humankind, there is no other way except by understanding and putting into practice every human right for all mankind, irrespective of race, gender, faith, nationality or social status.

In anticipation of that day.

Source: 'Shirin Ebadi – Nobel Lecture Nobel Prizes 2003'. From Les Prix Nobel, Tore Frangsmyr (2004), Almqvist & Wiksell International Copyright © The Nobel Foundation 2003

Skills: explain, research, draw conclusions

- 1 Why was Shirin Ebadi pleased to receive her award?
- 2 Research Cyrus the Great. Why is he an effective example for her to use in her speech?
- 3 What qualities has Islam brought to Iranian culture?
- 4 What does Shirin Ebadi identify as the challenge to her beliefs?
- 5 Which sentence identifies the belief that was tested?
- 6 At this time, was her belief weakened, strengthened or was there no change in her beliefs?

LOVE

Love is feeling affection, displaying passion and adoration, or being devoted to another. Ideally, this devotion is returned, but love is something a person gives even if it is not reciprocated. The capacity to love brings people closer to one another, physically and emotionally.

In religious traditions, love also extends to our relationship with the ultimate reality. The Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions place much importance upon the need to 'love your neighbour as yourself', 'love one another' and 'love God'. In Buddhism and Hinduism, this emphasis is called

compassion. For adherents of many religious traditions, their love of God or their ethical values distinctly direct them to show love for all humanity, even the least lovable.



AAPI/EPA/Claudio Perri

FIGURE 9.12 Pope Francis I caresses a sick person in Saint Peter’s Square at the end of his General Audience in Vatican City, 6 November 2013. What does this action of Pope Francis demonstrate about his understanding of love?

ANURADHA KOIRALA

Human relationships that are oppressive can cause the individual to confront their beliefs and question their interpretation of their religious duty. This was the case for Anuradha Koirala, a Hindu woman who has gone from being a teacher in a Nepalese school to a leading anti-sex-trafficking activist and educator.

It was the experience of her own abuse at the hands of a violent husband that led her to question her beliefs about her role as a woman in Hindu society and her social responsibility to assist in ending violence against women. She said she wanted to ensure that no woman went through the abuse she had experienced.

It was at this time that she became aware of the trafficking of girls from Nepal and set up an organisation, Maiti Nepal, to offer women sanctuary, educate the public about trafficking and help prosecute those who traffic vulnerable girls. Since 1993, she has helped rescue and rehabilitate more than 12 000 Nepali girls and helped to prevent 45 000 children and women from being trafficked at the Indian–Nepal border. Hundreds of offenders have been sentenced to prison terms through the joint efforts of Maiti Nepal and the police.



Getty Images/Gregg DeGuire

FIGURE 9.13 Nepalese activist Anuradha Koirala. What sort of human relationships is Anuradha Koirala hoping to build?

Skills: research, identify, analyse

- 1 Research Hinduism to find which beliefs would have been used by Anuradha Koirala in her decision to undertake her work to stop human trafficking.
- 2 Watch film clips of Anuradha Koirala and list the ways in which her Hinduism is demonstrated.
- 3 How has the interplay between her beliefs and her significant life experience affected her life?



FIGURE 9.14 Portrait of St Teresa of Avila. In the image, the artist has included clues about what was significant in St Teresa's life. Identify two things he is highlighting and then read on to see if they are mentioned in the text quoted here.

Carmelite

A Catholic religious order of priests and nuns that pursues a life of poverty, work and prayer in order to follow Christ

Discalced Carmelite

A Catholic order that pursues a life of Gospel poverty, penance and prayer as a way of following Christ. They seek holiness, apostolic simplicity and a relationship of intimacy with God. Their commitment to poverty was shown by being barefooted (discalced) or wearing sandals.

TERESA OF AVILA

Shortly after becoming a **Carmelite** religious sister, Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) experienced a severe illness that left her in great pain for a long period; it was feared that she would not recover. However, during this period she began to increasingly experience divine visions that enabled her to transcend the intense physical pain of her body. She suffered great illness and yet did great work. She was contemplative and loved her time of quiet prayer and yet she was called on to constantly travel and set up communities throughout Spain. She was a complicated woman who led a very complex life. She described her state of mind during her trials and tribulations as follows:

I bore these sufferings with great composure, in fact with joy, except at first when the pain was too severe. What followed seemed to hurt less. I was completely surrendered to the will of God even if he intended to burden me like this forever ... The other sisters wondered at my God-given patience. Without him I truly could not have borne so much with so much joy.

Her spiritual energy and inner serenity attracted and inspired many. At the age of 43, Teresa founded a new religious order, recommitting to the values of poverty and simplicity. She was an influential leader who guided the sisters, not just through strict discipline, but also through the power of love and common sense. Although she underwent many tribulations herself, to others she stressed the importance of experiencing God's love.

You know, I no longer govern in the way I used to. Love does everything.

The important thing is not to think much but to love much and so do that which best stirs you to love. Love is not great delight but desire to please God in everything.

Each day I am more amazed at the little talent I have for anything. And don't think that what I'm saying comes from humility, for each day I see it more clearly. It seems our Lord desires me and all others to know that it is only His Majesty who does these works, and that as He gave sight to the blind man, He wants someone as blind as I to do something worth more than mud. Certainly, in this whole matter there were things ... involving great blindness, and each time I recall it, I would like to praise our Lord again for it.

Thanks to her commitment, by the time of her death there were 17 reformed convents and a similar number of reformed communities for **Discalced Carmelite** monks. She had transformed the Church in Spain, making it a more humble, faithful and servant Church. In recognition of her work, she was the first woman to be named a Doctor of the Church.

Skills: identify, interpret, analyse

- 1 Teresa of Avila was a mystic. After reading her story, what do you think that meant in her case?
- 2 What can be implied about the Church and Christianity in the 16th century from the stance taken by Teresa of Avila?

ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU

South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a Nobel Peace Laureate, was a prophetic voice in the wilderness. During the **apartheid** era in South Africa, Tutu kept hope alive in the hearts and minds of millions of South Africans with his powerful vision that justice would come and racial segregation would be eradicated from their country. He was a seminal figure in the operation of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is credited with averting bloodshed in South Africa at the end of apartheid. He became a role model for people in similar situations throughout the world.

We may be surprised at the people we find in heaven. God has a soft spot for sinners. His standards are quite low.



amanaimages/David Turnley/Corbis

apartheid

The political system enforced in South Africa from 1948 to 1994, under which only white people had political rights and power; the official policy was to segregate black people from white people in all areas of society, leading to many inhuman acts.

FIGURE 9.15 Archbishop Desmond Tutu addresses a rally against apartheid in 1986. Give an argument for religious leaders taking part in political action and an argument against this.

Skills: identify, explain, research, analyse

- 1 What beliefs did Desmond Tutu use to keep hope alive for his people at a time of terrible oppression? Explain why these beliefs would give hope.
- 2 Research the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and identify which Christian beliefs underpinned it.

Skills: identify, analyse, explain, synthesise

Overview

- 1 In the short biographies above, what types of significant life experiences have been explored?
- 2 How does the type of experience influence the impact of the experience on an individual's beliefs?
- 3 Explain how the aspects of religion influenced the individual's understanding of their beliefs and their response to the significant experience.

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://religionsocvce.nelsonnet.com.au>.



REVISION

A Short-answer questions

These questions are not specific to a religious tradition or denomination.

- 1 What makes a life experience significant?
- 2 What types of significant life experiences have an impact on a range of religious beliefs?
- 3 What connections exist between significant life experiences and religious beliefs?
- 4 In what ways might a significant life experience influence a person's expression of their belief?

B Extended-response questions

Some of these questions relate to a specific religious tradition or denomination.

- 5
 - a Describe a significant joyful life experience.
 - b In a religious tradition or denomination you have studied, what beliefs might support such joy?
 - c What other aspects of religion add depth of meaning to this significant experience?
- 6
 - a Identify an experience that caused suffering.
 - b In a religious tradition or denomination you have studied, what beliefs might explain that suffering?
 - c What other aspects of religion add meaning to this experience?
- 7 Identify a person from a religious tradition or denomination you have studied whose religious beliefs were affected by a significant life experience. Use supportive quotations in your answers.
 - a Identify the person and the religious tradition or denomination and briefly state the significant life experience.
 - b How did this person understand and express the related beliefs before the significant life experience?
 - c What happened to those beliefs and their expression during the significant life experience?
 - d After the significant life experience, what was the person's understanding and expression of those beliefs?

C Essay questions

You may use one or more religious traditions or denominations in your response.

- 8 *Discuss the interplay between significant life experiences and religious beliefs and their expression through aspects of religion.*
Refer to a particular adherent of a religious tradition you have studied.
- 9 *When confronted with a difficult situation or major life choice, to what extent are a person's actions and attitude influenced by his or her religious beliefs?*
Refer to the particular experience of an adherent in a religious tradition you have studied.
- 10 *Referring to a particular adherent of a religious tradition or denomination you have studied, analyse the difference that religious beliefs can make when people confront a significant life experience. Comment on the shifts in the individual's expression of their beliefs and whether they showed that beliefs were maintained, strengthened or weakened by such an experience.*

EXTENSION

Research: Abu Hamid al-Ghazali

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111) is regarded as one of the greatest thinkers to shape Sunni Islam. The originality and depth of understanding of his teaching and writings were profoundly influenced by both his intelligence and his historical context. The time in which he lived was one of conflict and for him, these conflicts posed major life choices about what he believed and how he should live his life.

Al-Ghazali lived in Baghdad, the centre of the Islamic world of the Seljuk Empire. It was a cosmopolitan city characterised by lively political and religious debate, but unfortunately this often involved aggression, fanaticism and what today might be called terrorism. In this context al-Ghazali was a respected authority as head of the central theological college of Baghdad.

He found himself unable to really enjoy his situation as he became torn between his pleasure in having political power, fame and wealth, and his desire to fully live out his Islamic beliefs. The pressure of these tensions caused him to collapse, both physically and spiritually.

This crisis lasted for about six months, during which he was literally silent, unable to speak. He struggled to find a truth that would resolve the tension between his commitment to revelation and his commitment to his position in society. (See his reflections in *The Confessions of al-Ghazali*.)

Ultimately he realised the only way through his crisis was to transform himself, develop his spirituality and so join Allah in Paradise. This was his original goal in life and through his crisis, al-Ghazali reclaimed it as his primary goal. Indeed, it is the goal of all Muslims. He came to see God as immanent and accessible through mystical experience. This was markedly different from his pre-crisis perception of God as distant, omnipotent and omnipresent.

Use the above text and your own research to answer the following questions.

- 1 Briefly describe al-Ghazali's life before and after his crisis.
- 2 Give a detailed explanation of the major life choices al-Ghazali faced.
- 3 What were the incidents of political violence that led to the crisis in al-Ghazali's life?
- 4 Explain how Greek philosophy and modernism created tensions with Islam for al-Ghazali.
- 5 How did al-Ghazali deal with his crisis?
- 6 What choice did al-Ghazali make?
- 7 How did al-Ghazali's view of God change?
- 8 Explain the impact of the choice made by al-Ghazali on:
 - a his personal life
 - b the Islamic world of his time
 - c the Islamic world since.

UNIT 4

Religion, challenge
and change



Area of Study 4.1: Challenge and response

Area of Study 4.2: Interaction of religion and society



Chapter 10

MEETING CHALLENGE

Outcome to be demonstrated

Discussion of the analysed and compared stances and supporting responses taken by religions when challenged

Focus questions

- ▶ What have been the challenges to the theology, ethics or continued existence of religions over time?
- ▶ What were the sources of these challenges?
- ▶ What is it that makes some challenges more significant than others?
- ▶ How do challenges impact on the aspects of religion?
- ▶ What have been some significant challenges to the theology, ethics or continued existence of a particular religion?
- ▶ When, where and why did these challenges occur?
- ▶ How and why did these significant challenges affect the aspects of religion?
- ▶ What stances did the religious tradition take towards these challenges and why?
- ▶ What were the religious tradition's responses supporting the stances to the challenges?

CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

Each religion has a story to tell. Each story is a journey comprising moments of glory, peace, war, aggression, introspection and reflection. These events, some of which are significantly challenging, are characterised by attitudes, actions, strategies, policies, methods and stances that are inspired by hope or fear; hostility or amelioration; disillusionment or commitment; arrogance or humility; self-interest or mercy; generosity or greed.

Religions do not arrive in human society as fully developed belief communities or institutions; they grow over time. This growth is uneven, sometimes rapid and at other times gradual or static. Some religions experience a continuous, balanced, uneventful process of growth, while for others the process of development can be characterised by sporadic cycles of expansion, consolidation and refinement or stagnation and decline. This development can have positive or negative effects. Indeed, these opposing effects can often come from the same event.

Challenges can offer an opportunity for positive change, by causing adherents and leaders of a religion to engage in self-reflection, self-criticism, self-evaluation and self-renewal. This capacity for healthy rejuvenation can be seen in the writings of scholars, council gatherings and the establishment of learning, pastoral and meditative centres. It can provide adherents of a tradition with an opportunity to make any necessary changes.

At any time, in any society, religious beliefs and ethical aspirations might be challenged by forces within or beyond the tradition; therefore, the way in which religions view society and its values may be tested or undermined. The responses to these challenges are linked to the religion's stage of development – the religion must choose a stance. Does it accept that growth will be a long process of absorbing, appropriating, adapting or rejecting aspects of its tradition; or does it become impatient and cause conflict in order to expand, redefine, incorporate or discard existing beliefs, practices and structures? Challenges to a religion's continued existence may arise from natural disasters, invasion or colonisation, war, famine, discriminatory laws that lead to persecutions,



Terminology

amanaimages/Jim West



FIGURE 10.1 An interfaith group gathers during a rally in April 2011 at the Islamic Centre of America in Dearborn, Michigan, to show unity and condemn the planned Good Friday protest by Pastor Terry Jones, who burned a copy of the Qur'an, the religious text of Islam. Identify some of the faiths represented here.

forced exiles, massacres or the destruction of central religious institutions. These themes run throughout the history of religions and confront traditions in our world today.

SOURCES OF CHALLENGES

From a religious perspective, history would seem to show that there is a dynamic momentum that is pushing, guiding and inspiring humanity to move forward towards a moment, or a physical realm, in which temporal time meets eternity. This movement in society, which is fuelled by human imagination and ingenuity, creates challenges for religions, which are often conservative in nature. These challenges might arise from individuals who pose new and radical ideas or shifts in interpretations of beliefs. They might arise from political movements whose ideologies threaten the existence of religious groups. In modern, pluralist and democratic societies, with a diversity of ethnic groups and value systems and a variety of religious traditions, challenges may arise from many directions. They may come from different understandings of human rights. Also, the pervasiveness of the media may present standards and attitudes that challenge many aspects of religious traditions.

CHALLENGES THAT ARE SIGNIFICANT

There are degrees of challenge. A quick comparison of challenges may make it immediately obvious that one is a major challenge and the others are minor challenges; however, when dealing with challenges that are linked to theological or ethical questions, or the ongoing survival of the religious tradition, the conversation about their comparative significance needs to be more subtle. One factor may be more important in one way and another factor more important in a different way. There may be two or more goods or evils. It is in the breadth of the discussion that one can come to terms with the significance of a challenge. Questions that need to be considered are:

- Is the challenge likely to be transient, manageable, resolvable or chronic?
- Is there a balance between the positives and the negatives – or does one override the other?
- How many people are affected?
- How many aspects are affected?
- How much pain and suffering is involved?
- Does the challenge threaten the existence of the tradition?

A broad conversation that shows the complexity of the challenge would include these questions.



AAP Image/NEWZULU/Andrew Stevenson

FIGURE 10.2 What challenges is this woman, who is part of a counter-protest at a Reclaim Australia rally, concerned about?

STANCES AND RESPONSES

All religious traditions struggle with the ongoing challenge of guiding their adherents in how to live according to the beliefs and ethical systems of the tradition. For some religions this involves adherents giving public witness of their faith. This may include taking a public stand in support of, or in opposition to, particular views about a moral or social issue in their local, national or international community. Such a **stance** might be led by the official leadership of the religion, or by prominent groups or individuals within the religion, either alone or as informal groups united by their view on a particular issue.

stance

An overall position or attitude towards something

The interconnectedness of the aspects of religion means that there are many ways in which a religious tradition might respond to challenges, and numerous ways that the tradition can experience the consequences of those responses. Religions operate on a number of levels: official, community, family and individual. At an official level, the beliefs, teachings, ethical standards, ritual practice and regulatory requirements of the tradition are developed, reconsidered, adapted or reinterpreted to address advances in human knowledge and newly arisen pastoral needs. These then need to be communicated to the wider membership of the tradition. This may be done by an overarching, worldwide official body, or it might be carried out by numerous affiliated or independent groups, depending on the structure of the religion and where the religion has communities of believers.



Picture: Media/Reuters/Larry Downing

FIGURE 10.3 A group of protesters pray at the steps of the US Supreme Court in March 2014 as part of the campaign against the Affordable Care Act's requirement that employers provide coverage for contraception as part of an employee's health care. For which rights are the protesters arguing? What ethical principles are they arguing have priority over the claims in the Affordable Care Act?

CHALLENGES TO ASPECTS OF RELIGION

All challenges to religion affect, in various ways, some of the aspects of that religious tradition. There may be one aspect that is the main focus or target of a challenge but, because the aspects are interconnected, what affects one will inevitably bring questioning, tensions or enthusiastic support for and increased participation in others. For example, the nature of the religious

experience, the historical and social context, and the way individuals or groups deal with it in the light of their beliefs will have an impact on the way religious traditions and their adherents express their beliefs and, sometimes, shape their responses.

The following examples, drawn from the Christian, Jewish and Islamic experiences, highlight some of the types of historical and contemporary challenges faced by religions, and their relationship to the aspects of religion.

CHRISTIANITY: FORMATION OF THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Challenge: theology, continued existence of the religious tradition

There are times in history when values shift and a hope-filled period follows. The challenge of these periods is that they call for courage and vision by leaders to take advantage of opportunities for strengthening and growth.

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) was a community facing this type of challenge. It was formed in 1977 by uniting three Christian denominations – the Congregational Church, the Methodist Church and most of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. A willingness to implement change meant the existing structures of the three denominations needed to be reviewed as they came together as one. Before uniting, the churches had mutually found a desire to be an Australian church. They wanted to be a church focused on Christian unity rather than antagonism and competition; and they wanted a vision that was focused on addressing questions of social justice in Australia. They finally agreed on a structure; the Uniting Church is non-hierarchical and **non-episcopal**. A number of interrelated councils have particular areas of responsibility and can make decisions in those areas. These four independent, yet interconnected, councils are: the Congregation (local), the Presbytery (regional), the Synods (state) and the Assembly (national).

Each council has a chairperson but he or she does not have controlling authority. All members of the Uniting Church – male, female, ordained or lay – can be a part of these councils. Decision making in these councils is by **consensus**.

When the three Churches combined into a new entity called the Uniting Church, they felt the need for a new symbol to represent their creed. The following text discusses the meaning of the Uniting Church of Australia's logo.



Uniting Church in Australia

FIGURE 10.4 The emblem of the Uniting Church in Australia. Which of the symbols used in the logo is dominant? Why was this symbol emphasised?

non-episcopal
Not containing bishops (of a Church)

consensus
A state of common agreement, rather than one reached by majority vote

The Uniting Church in Australia emblem

The logo of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) shows the cross of Jesus Christ, in its light and love, standing over a darkened world – redeeming it through grace and truth. By that cross people are bound to Christ and each other. The Holy Spirit, symbolised by the dove with the wings of flame, empowers and guides us to be witnesses to Jesus Christ. The wide U at the bottom points to the fact that we are uniting; as a semicircle it also reminds us that the renewing of both church and world are as yet incomplete.

Source: Uniting Church in Australia

Skills: identify, interpret, explain, synthesise

- 1 Australia is the only country using the name 'Uniting Church' – everywhere else it is called the United Church. What reasons might there be for Australia to use the term 'uniting'?
- 2 What are the implications of the structure of authority of the Uniting Church for the way in which members of the tradition are able to participate in the tradition?
- 3 What issues relating to social structure and other aspects would this 1977 challenge to unite the denominations have presented to the members of the participating churches?
- 4 Focus on the aspect of the social structure of a religion and create a diagram to show the way in which a religious tradition you are studying organises itself. When developing the diagram, consider the following questions.
 - a Is there a person or group that has overall authority in the religious tradition?
 - b Which individuals or groups are consulted over important decisions in the religion?
 - c What systems, processes or structures are in place to convey important decisions to the various communities of believers?
 - d What individuals or groups are responsible for working with the communities of believers, taking care of their pastoral needs, rituals, festivals, the development of their religious knowledge and understanding, and the formation of their morality?
 - e Who has power in the religious tradition? Why? How is this power exercised?
- 5 As a class or in groups, discuss the following topic: 'If the structure of authority in a religious tradition does not have its origins in the sacred texts of that tradition, then what is the basis for the tradition's authority structure?'

CHRISTIANITY AND THE HOLOCAUST

Challenge: theology, ethics

As recognised by Pope Francis I, the Holocaust was a challenge that demanded of the Roman Catholic Church a stance and a response. The ability of Pope Pius XII to provide these two things in

the 1930s and 1940s is still being evaluated. On the one hand, he is accused of failing to speak out publicly against the mass murder of Jews. On the other, he sheltered Jews in the convents of Rome and other Italian cities, as well as in the Pope's summer residence in Castel Gandolfo, and he worked to depose Hitler.

Tension had existed between the Roman Catholic and Jewish traditions since Apostolic times. Pope John XXIII, who became Pope in 1958 and who had saved thousands of Jewish lives during the Second World War, courageously came to the view that the challenge of this tension in the Jewish–Christian dialogue needed to be addressed. The relationship between the two traditions was put on the agenda for the Second Vatican Council (known as **Vatican II**, 1962–65). It was time for the Church to take a firm stance on this.

Vatican II

The Second Vatican Council was the 21st ecumenical council of the Catholic Church. It was called by Pope John XXIII to bring the Church up to date with a modern world. It produced four Constitutions, nine Decrees and three Declarations.

American Jewish Committee Archives



FIGURE 10.5 Jewish and Catholic leaders at Vatican II discussing *Nostra Aetate* (In Our Time), which is the Declaration on the Relationship between the Church and Non-Christian Religions. It established a new rapport between Jews and Catholics. The two leaders in the photo are wearing similar head covering – why would this be so? Research what the head covering means.

The resulting stance of the Church reinterpreted historic interpretations of scripture to recognise the shared spiritual 'blood line' of the Christian and Jewish traditions. This was revolutionary for the relationship. The Church's revised stance was detailed in the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate*:

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: 'He who does not love does not know God' (1 John 4:8).

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.

Source: © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, who was Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth from 1991 until 2013, has said this about the Church's stance and response in the Vatican document *Nostra Aetate*:

It was, on the face of it, a minor theological gesture, yet it brought about one of the greatest revolutions in religious history ... it declared that 'the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from Holy Scripture.' Today as a result, Jews and Catholics meet not as enemies but as cherished and respected friends.

Source: Jonathan Sacks, 28 October 2015, 'Nostra Aetate Fifty Years On', www.firstthings.com

Before Vatican II, the stance had been to see the Jews as guilty of **deicide** due to the literal reading of John's Gospel, in particular, which had led to this view. Rabbi Sacks has reminded Catholics that this:

... led to a painful history during which Jews were at times massacred, expelled, publicly humiliated, forcibly converted, accused of poisoning wells, spreading the plague and killing Christian children for religious purposes, the so-called Blood Libel. Though such behaviour was often condemned by popes, and in some cases in violation of Christian doctrine, it left a legacy of suspicion, fear and hate.

Source: Jonathan Sacks, 28 October 2015, 'Nostra Aetate Fifty Years On', www.firstthings.com

The revised theology and interpretation of history led to events such as Pope John Paul II's 1986 visit to the synagogue in Rome where he spoke of the Jewish people 'with profound fraternal respect and even love', and his prayer in 2000 at the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

deicide

The killing of a god or of God

Referring to Vatican II, Pope Francis I has written that:

God has never neglected his faithfulness to the covenant with Israel, and that, through the awful trials of these last centuries, the Jews have preserved their faith in God. And for this, we, the Church and the whole human family, can never be sufficiently grateful to them.

The Holy See, 'Letter to a non-believer', Pope Francis responds to Dr Eugenio Scalfari, journalist of the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, the Vatican, 4 September 2013, © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Skills: research, analyse, interpret, synthesise, evaluate

- 1 Explain in your own words why the Holocaust was a challenge to Christians.
- 2 Research what the stance of the Roman Catholic Church towards Judaism was before Vatican II.
- 3 Research why Lent and Easter were, at times, terrible periods for Jews in Medieval Europe.
- 4 Research the nature of the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and Judaism today.
- 5 Research the state of the relationship between other Christian denominations and Judaism today.

Timeline of Christianity

gentile

A non-Jewish person

apostles

The intimate group who were followers of Jesus during his three years of ministry

Council of Nicaea

The first ecumenical council of the Church, held in 325 CE. It was called by the Emperor Constantine with the hope of bringing about unity in the Church through an agreement over the teaching about the relationship between Christ and God the Father. The Council decreed that God the Father and the Son are one in being but separate in person. Jesus is, therefore, not a creature.

DATE	NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE	RELEVANT FACTS
49 CE	Continued existence Theological	Council of Jerusalem Circumcision and dietary laws Peter/Paul/James Gentile Christians accepted alongside those in the Jewish tradition
44–68 CE	Crisis of leadership Theological	Death of the apostles who were witnesses to the teachings of Jesus Christ (only John remained)
70 CE	Continued existence Theological	Destruction of the temple in Jerusalem
30s–400s CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	The Great Heresies Gnosticism, Montanism, Arianism, Pelagianism, Nestorianism, Docetism
c. 36–313 CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	Martyrdom of St Stephen and St James and persecution from sections of the Jewish leadership. After 64 CE, intermittent persecution by Roman authorities – St Peter and St Paul martyred
313–380s CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	Christian decision making comes under the influence of the state through Constantine, the Edict of Milan, and is played out in the Council of Nicaea . By 380 CE, Christianity is the official religion of the Roman Empire.

DATE	NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE	RELEVANT FACTS
400s CE	Continued existence Theological	The Fall of Rome The last Roman Emperor is deposed and the Church no longer has a privileged or secure place.
Late 700s–1000 CE	Continued existence Theological	Charlemagne becomes Holy Roman Emperor – rise of Christendom. Beginning of a period of growth and power. Social structure is the feudal system.
1054 CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	The Great Schism – the tradition formally divides into Eastern Orthodox denominations and Roman Catholicism.
1095–1291 CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	The rise of Islam and the Crusades Christian Europe confronts the rising authority of Islam and the East, with the catalyst being control of sacred sites in the Holy Land.
1182 CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	Massacre of Roman Catholic inhabitants by the Eastern Orthodox inhabitants of Constantinople
1204 CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	Sacking of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade
1266–1273 CE	Theological	Thomas Aquinas writes his great work of systematic theology: <i>Summa Theologiae</i> .
1305 CE	Continued existence Theological	A second papacy is established in France.
1370s CE	Theological Ethical	John Wycliffe writes ‘Civil Dominion’, arguing for reform of the church. Translates the Bible into Middle English
1453 CE	Continued existence	Constantinople falls to the Ottoman Turks.
1517 CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	Martin Luther makes his criticisms of practices in the Catholic Church leading to the Reformation and the wars that are to follow.
1525 CE	Theological	William Tyndale completes his translation of the Bible into English.
1534 CE	Theological	Act of Supremacy passed – Henry VIII becomes supreme head of the English Church.
1536 CE	Theological	Jean Calvin publishes his <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> .
1549 CE	Theological	Thomas Cranmer publishes the <i>Book of Common Prayer</i> in England.
1600s–1900s CE	Continued existence Theological	The rise of Modernist thought; democratic movements; capitalism; the discovery of the New World
1618–1648 CE	Continued existence Theological	Protestant–Catholic conflict in Germany (Thirty Years’ War)
1633 CE	Theological	Galileo Galileo publishes <i>Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems</i> , which contradicts the church’s teaching on geocentrism .

feudal

Relating to the feudal system in Europe during the Middle Ages. Based on a rigid hierarchical structure in society

Crusades

A series of wars (1096–1270) in which the Catholic Church sought to reclaim the Holy Land and its holy sites from Islamic control and stem the progress of Islam

geocentrism

The belief that the Earth is the centre of the universe

DATE	NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE	RELEVANT FACTS
1907–1943 CE	Theological	Catholic Modernist Movement Scripture interpretation and Biblical studies
1939–1945 CE	Theological Ethical	The Second World War and the Holocaust
1948 CE	Theological	Formation of the World Council of Churches
1976–2000s CE	Theological Ethical	Asylum seekers and refugees
1986–2000s CE	Theological Ethical	Global warming
2000s CE–present	Theological Ethical	The trafficking of people into slavery

Nur ad-Din Abd al-Rahman Jami, al Sabah Collection, Kuwait, Wikimedia/Google Cultural Institute

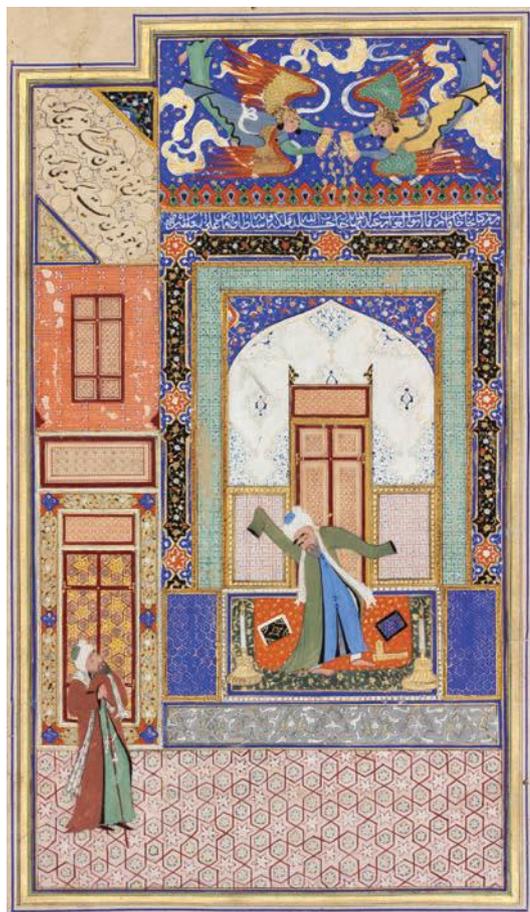


FIGURE 10.6 A portrait of Nureddin. What features in the painting show Nureddin is an Islamic leader?

ISLAM: THE CRUSADES

Challenge: theology, ethics

When the Western Christian Crusaders first arrived in Jerusalem (in 1095) Muslim forces lacked unity and, although history suggests the Egyptians and Turks fought very hard to keep their holy sites, they fell and came under the rule of the Crusaders. The devastation and sorrow at the fall of Jerusalem was reflected in the reports of refugees who fled to cities such as Damascus and Aleppo.

Some Islamic scholars interpreted the First Crusade as a divine punishment for neglecting their religious duties, and for failing to defend the territories God had entrusted to them. Hence, when their counter crusade was begun, it was a defensive war. Saladin (or Salah al-Din; 1137/38–1193) led Islam’s military forces to reclaim Jerusalem. He is believed to have said:

Jerusalem is to us as it is to you. It is even more important for us, since it is the site of our Prophet’s nocturnal journey and the place where the people will assemble on the Day of Judgement. Do not imagine therefore that we can waver in this regard.

He did not waver and the land was reconquered.

A charismatic local Islamic ruler, Nureddin (or Nur al-Din; 1118–1174) respected the local people’s traditions and social organisation and encouraged cooperation. He brought about a significant change of perception by reinterpreting the concept of war. They had seen war in their territories as wars of expansion – gaining, defending or reclaiming territories. Nureddin added an

ideological dimension to war against the Crusaders. He emphasised that the belief systems of the Franks (Christians) and Muslims were radically separated – he believed that this conflict was

religious. The Crusaders were hostile to Islam and threatened its existence. Thus, Nureddin called Muslims to undertake a war in defence of Islam, a lesser **jihad**, which Westerners have identified as a form of **holy war**.

The importance of the Crusades in Islamic history is debated. Some argue that they were of marginal significance and others argue that they left a deep scar that is yet to be healed. The records show that the Crusades led to debates about the ethics of war and the nature of jihad due to Saladin's willingness to continue fighting over a prolonged period. The leadership was torn between two religious imperatives: to continue fighting to protect the important religious sites, or to stop fighting as it was seen to be unethical in Islam to continue war indefinitely. Ibn Qudama, one of Saladin's advisers, argued that a leader should make a truce if he considered that it was of general benefit to Islam. However, to Saladin this was impossible.

Skills: research, analyse, interpret, synthesise

- 1 What was the religious interpretation of the Crusades from an Islamic point of view?
- 2 Explain the word 'jihad' in the context of the Crusades.
- 3 Do some research to discern whether Nureddin was an effective leader.
- 4 Complete some research to discover whether Saladin was an effective leader.
- 5 Overall, what conflicting stances existed in the Islamic community during the Crusades?

jihad

Arabic, meaning to strive or struggle in the way of Allah. Within Islam the meaning is generally associated with the personal and spiritual struggle against evils such as greed, envy, laziness or lust. Lesser jihad is usually used to describe a war fought in self-defence or to protect Muslims against persecution. Since the time of the Crusades the term has been simplistically interpreted as 'holy war'.

holy war

A war fought for religious reasons, justified by the claim that the fighting is for God

ISLAM: ASSIMILATION

Challenge: theology, continued existence of the religious tradition

In post-modern societies, as a result of conflict or a desire to improve their economic status, people move from nation to nation. This has had an impact on Islam as Muslims have migrated to many Western nations, particularly Europe. This poses a challenge to the members of the religious tradition: should they assimilate into their adopted societies or staunchly push for social change to accommodate sharia law? Some voices on this issue follow.

Tariq Ramadan, Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies in the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford and teacher at the Oxford Faculty of Theology, has observed:

It is really important not to accept this simplistic division, where the Muslims who are saying what we want them to say are the moderates and all the others are the fundamentalists. The Muslim community is as complex as, say, the Christian community and we have different voices. The very moment that you accept and recognise that the 'other' is as complex as you, it means that you are respecting him or her.

Oscar Reyes, 'Living together: an interview with Tariq Ramadan', Red Pepper, September 2005

Similarly, Mohamad Abdalla, founding director of the Griffith University Islamic Research Unit and director of the Queensland node of the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies, has observed:

Whether in Australia or Saudi Arabia, the Shari'a helps Muslims live their lives in ways that are deemed legal, fulfilling and pleasing to their Maker. Contrary to the fear mongering discourse propagated by media and politicians alike, the application of Islamic law in Australia is limited to personal status law only. Given the nature of Australia's constitution and the absence of a plural legal system,

aspects of Islamic law beyond personal status law are exempted, because ‘God does not burden a soul with more than it can bear’ (Qur’an 2:286).

Source: Mohamad Abdalla, ‘Islamic Australia? What place is there for sacred law in a secular land?’, www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/05/10/3756163.htm

Ann Black, Associate Professor at the TC Beirne School of Law, University of Queensland, also notes:

Diversity across the Muslim world is in part due to Islam’s adaptability to the culture, time and place in which it is located. As large numbers of Muslims now reside in non-Muslim lands, this inherent adaptability remains important. Researchers in Britain are noting the emergence of an *angrezi shariat* (English Shari’a), which is a reconstruction of Muslim laws in the English socio-legal context (Yilmaz, 2005). German Muslims have adapted to allow state law to govern family and inheritance matters. In Australia, there are Muslims – including Keysar Trad, spokesperson for the Islamic Friendship Association and the Australian Federation of Islamic Council – who feel our system should be more inclusive and champion the case for legal recognition of aspects of Sharia law, including legalisation of polygamy for Muslim men ... In essence, Australian values and Islamic teachings on the question of freedom are not so vastly different. Both are based on ideas such as human dignity, justice, equality and egalitarianism.

A Black, 2010, ‘Legal recognition of Sharia law: Is this the right direction for Australian family matters?’ *Family Matters*, 84, Australian Institute of Family Studies, pp. 64–7



Getty Images/Luis Ascui

FIGURE 10.7 Muslim girls attending a mosque open day in Hoppers Crossing in 2014. How have young Muslims adapted to Australian life?

Skills: research, analyse, interpret, synthesise, evaluate

- 1 What religious problems might be faced by a new religious tradition when moving into a pluralist society such as Australia?
- 2 Research protests that have happened concerning the construction of mosques in parts of Australia and identify the main reasons for these protests, outlining the stances taken by opposing groups.

- 3 Research a range of stances taken by Islamic leaders in Australia to the challenges posed by moving to Australia.
- 4 Research Islam in the USA and in Britain and examine the different stances taken by Islam in each of those nations.
- 5 Why is sharia law so important to Muslims?
- 6 Can a nation accommodate more than one legal code? Do some research to find out if other nations have accommodated sharia law into their statutes.

Timeline of Islam

DATE	NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE	RELEVANT FACTS
622 CE	Continued existence Theological	After persecution in Mecca, Muhammad migrates to Medina. The migration — Hijrah — marks the beginning of the Islamic era.
629–631 CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	The capture of Mecca. A constitution is established.
632 CE	Theological	Muhammad dies. Abu Bakr chosen as first caliph
c. 650 CE	Theological	Caliph Uthman, Muhammad's son-in-law, has the Qur'an written down.
656–750 CE	Theological	Uthman is murdered; Ali becomes fourth caliph. Ali is murdered; Muawiyah, Governor of Syria, declares himself the 'first king in Islam' in defiance of Caliph Ali. Death of Husayn, Caliph Ali's son, marks beginning of the Shiat Ali Division between Sunni and Shi'a.
750 CE	Theological Ethical	The Abbasid Dynasty and the Golden Age of Islam Hadith published
765 CE	Continued existence Theological	Division within Shi'ites – majority are the modern Imamiyya (Twelvers) who co-exist with Abbasid caliphs; minority are more extreme Isma'ilis (Seveners)
1000s CE	Theological	Intellectual conflict between theologians, philosophers and Sufis Al-Ghazali attacks Greek philosophy whereas Ibn Rushd stages a defence of philosophy, <i>The Incoherence of the Incoherence</i> . Ibn Sina accommodates classical philosophy with the Qur'an.
900s–1250s CE	Theological	Decline of absolute monarchy in Islam and the rise of independent Islamic states
1095–1291 CE	Continued existence Theological	The Crusades
1200–1250 CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	Ibn Saad (Spain) publishes his ideas on the mixing of cultures in his book, <i>The Introduction to the Classes of Nations</i> . Moorish Spain operates as a multicultural society.

caliph

The chief Muslim civil and religious leader of Islam claiming succession from Muhammad

DATE	NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE	RELEVANT FACTS
1200s CE	Continued existence Theological	Invasion by Genghis Khan End of the Golden Age The religious scholars close the 'gates of <i>ijtihad</i> ' ('reasoned struggle'); and establish <i>taqlid</i> (blind imitation) as the dominant mode of thought, leading to decline in science, learning and innovation.
1453 CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	Ottoman Empire under Mehmed II – Constantinople under Islam
1526 CE	Theological	Mughal Empire established in India
1700– 1800 CE	Continued existence Theological	European powers begin to colonise the Muslim world. Restrictions are imposed on education for Muslims.
1703– 1792 CE	Continued existence Theological	Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab establishes a perspective that becomes known as Wahhabism, the adoption of a literalist interpretation of the Qur'an aimed at unifying Muslims.
1923 CE	Continued existence	Kemal Ataturk leads the establishment of the Republic of Turkey.
1945 CE– present	Continued existence	Islam spreads to the West with mass migrations from Asia, Africa and India.
1947 CE	Continued existence Ethical Theological	Pakistan founded as an Islamic nation. Islam becomes a minority religion in India.
1957 CE	Continued existence Theological Ethics	Independent Malayan state established with Islam as the official religion but guaranteed tolerance
1979 CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	Iranian Revolution Russia invades Afghanistan.
1990s CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	Taliban come to power in Afghanistan.
2011 CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	In Egypt, the Arab Spring – protests brought moves towards democracy, only to be later suppressed.

JUDAISM: BLACK DEATH POGROMS

Challenge: theology, continued existence of the religious tradition

The experience of the **Black Death** not only had an impact on Christianity, but also on the way in which Christianity related to another religious tradition, Judaism. The Black Death, a bubonic plague spread by fleas on rats, caused at least 25 million deaths across Europe over five years during the mid-14th century. It was a challenge to Jewish survival, not only from the physical illness and death but also because of anti-Jewish discrimination in laws and the many restrictions placed on adherents' lives, professions and movements by Christian rulers.

Black Death

The bubonic plague, an infectious disease that caused an epidemic that killed millions of Europeans and Asians in the 14th century

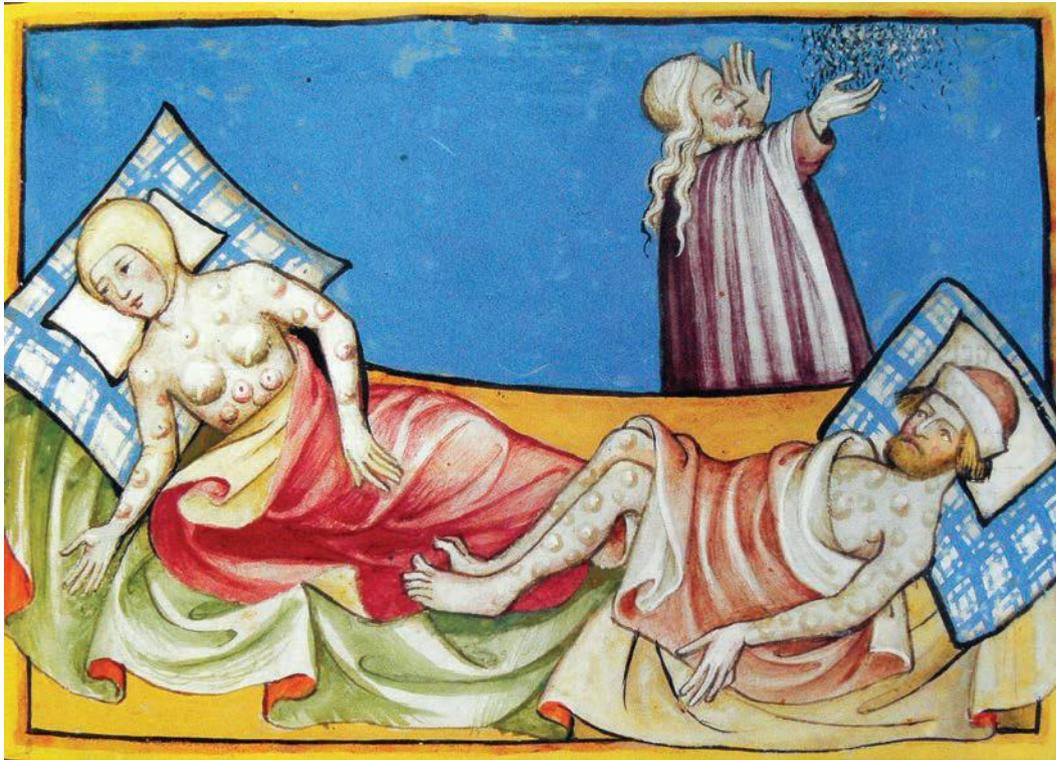


FIGURE 10.8 Illustration of a couple suffering from the Black Death, from the Toggenburg Bible, 1411. Why did the Black Death lead to the questioning of theology?

In the late Middle Ages, damaging lies arose about the Jews, who were already despised for their lack of acceptance of the legitimacy of Jesus as the Christ. From the 12th century on, the false accusation that Jews desecrated the **host** and killed Christian children to use their blood to make **unleavened** bread for Passover aroused riots and persecutions every Easter against European Jews. Jews were also accused of poisoning wells. Medieval Europeans believed that whenever bad things happened to Christians, the Jews were to blame, and these suspicions increased with the Black Death. The first **pogrom** of the Black Death, on 13 April 1348, was a traditional act of Holy Week violence aggravated by the pestilence.

There was a need for rabbinic interpretations to address the crises. One of the responses of the Jewish communities to their persecution was to withdraw from interaction with wider society. This, in turn, exacerbated suspicions against the motives and practices of the Jewish tradition, leading to later **inquisitions**, **blood libels**, 'Jew badges' and expulsions from many countries.

Many Jews died from the plague but their survival rate was better than that of their Christian neighbours. Perhaps it was Halakhah, Jewish law, that preserved them through this harrowing period as it imposed a sanitary standard on Jews that was far above the typical hygienic standards of medieval

host

A wafer of bread used in Christian liturgy. It represents the body of Jesus Christ.

unleavened

Usually refers to bread made without yeast; it does not rise and is quite brittle

pogrom

A deliberate campaign of persecution, violence and killing of a group (usually Jews) because of their race or religion

inquisition

Process of questioning; a method used by Roman Catholic Church tribunals from the 13th to the 18th century to combat or suppress people holding heretical beliefs

blood libel

During the Middle Ages in Europe, a false claim that Christian children were murdered for Jewish rituals. The belief was denounced by both Pope Innocent IV in 1247 and Pope Gregory X in 1272, but to no avail.



FIGURE 10.9 Woodcut created in 1493, depicting events in Cologne in 1349, when Jews were blamed for the outbreak of the plague and burnt alive. Why were the Jews scapegoats for the Black Death?



Image analysis



Analysis

Getty Images/DeAgostini



FIGURE 10.10 *The Triumph of Death*, painted by Flemish artist Pieter Bruegel in the mid-16th century, presents a nightmarish hell on Earth. It reflects the social upheaval and terror that followed the plague, which had devastated medieval Europe. Thought by most to be a scourge of the past, the bacterium of the plague still appears from time to time and has even been researched as a biological weapon by some countries. What is the message of this painting about humanity's attempts to fight the plague?

Europe. For instance, in the general medieval world a person could spend most of their life without ever washing their hands. In contrast, according to Jewish law, a person could not eat food without washing their hands, and also must wash them after leaving the bathroom and any sort of intimate human contact. At least once a week, a Jew bathed for the Sabbath. Furthermore, Jewish law prevented Jews from reciting blessings and saying prayers by an open pit at latrines and at places with a foul odour. The sanitary conditions in the Jewish neighbourhood, primitive though they may have been by today's standards, were always far superior to those found elsewhere.

Jewish law also prescribed certain sanitary conditions related to burial of the dead. Leaving corpses unburied not only promoted the spread of the bubonic plague, but typhus and other diseases as well. The Jews, on the other hand, valued their responsibility to attend to the sick and dying. A formal burial society (*chevrah kadisha*) was maintained in every community to ensure that any Jew who died was treated according to Jewish law, including washing the body before it was buried. Nevertheless, even if the death rate from the plague among Jews was significantly less, it was still terrible. The impact of the Black Death accelerated the movement of Jews from Western Europe to the East, especially Poland, which was free from the plague. Western Europe would never again be the centre of Jewish life that it had been for almost four centuries.

JUDAISM: KOSHER SLAUGHTERING OF ANIMALS

Challenge: theology, continued existence of the religious tradition

Religious traditions consider the concepts of religious belief and observance as necessary for a spiritual life. However, the declining active participation of many individuals in their religion of birth affiliation indicates that they no longer find the answers to their questions about life's meaning and purpose within that religion as they have experienced it (see Chapter 3, pages 76–78 for current trends in religion). This is exacerbated by the growing divide between traditional religious values and customs and those of modern secular society. Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Switzerland and some other Western countries mandate that animals slaughtered for food must first be stunned unconscious. This compromises the ability of some religious traditions to obtain meat acceptable for consumption.



amanaimages/Richard T Nowitz/Corbis

FIGURE 10.11 Kosher meat at the supermarket, clearly labelled with the round kosher stamp in Hebrew. What makes meat **kosher**?

Kosher and halal slaughter bans

When the Dutch Parliament in 2011 planned to amend its Commercial Slaughter Code to ensure humane preparation of all animals for consumption by stunning (rendering them unconscious) before their slaughter, the leaders of the Dutch and wider European Jewish communities argued that not only is stunning forbidden in *shechitah*, or kosher slaughter, but it contravenes human rights with regard to freedom of religious practice. A long history of persecution and prejudice against Jews in Europe has made the community very sensitive to this perceived discrimination.

>

kosher

Food fit for Jewish dietary requirements; includes particular slaughtering requirements, and the prohibition of certain categories of animals and shellfish and of mixing dairy and meat products

> Denmark banned halal and kosher slaughter in 2014, contravening both Jewish and Muslim ritual slaughter practice. Stunning cattle and sheep before slaughter is contrary to both Muslim and Jewish law, which require animals to be flawless and undamaged. The Qur'an calls for food to be *tayyib*, or pure, while in Judaism it is called kosher, or fit for consumption. In Jewish law, animals must be slaughtered by a specially trained rabbi in a kosher abattoir. Islam requires a God believer to slaughter and say blessings. Eating animal meat is seen as part of God's plans for humans (see Deuteronomy 12:21, for example) but the wellbeing of the animal is also seen as important in Jewish and Muslim law. In order that the animal feels the least pain, a very sharp knife must be used to cut the oesophagus, trachea, carotid arteries and jugular veins in one swift action. Without these specific ritual requirements, the meat is considered non-kosher or not halal.

Religious leaders are also concerned that countries including New Zealand and institutions such as the Council of the European Union have also put forward similar proposals. Poland's High Court overturned previously legislated bans in 2014, citing religious freedom as the priority. The Australian national standard for meat production is that all animals must be stunned before slaughter, but as long as humane treatment of the animals can be demonstrated, kosher and halal slaughter is legally permitted. Some modern rabbinic interpretations allow for stunning as long as the animal is unblemished.

Skills: describe, explain, analyse, research

- 1 What method of slaughter is currently employed by the Jewish and Muslim communities?
- 2 What reasons do politicians offer for banning Jewish and Muslim ritual slaughtering?
- 3 Is this a social or an ethical issue? Explain your reasoning.
- 4 What impact does this issue have on the Jewish and Muslim communities and on the wider community?
- 5 How does this issue relate to the live export debate?

Timeline of Judaism

DATE	NATURE OF CHALLENGE	RELEVANT FACTS
722–586 BCE	Continued existence Theological	Assyrian and Babylonian conquests Exile and beginning of diaspora
165–63 BCE	Theological Continued existence	Hasmonean Jewish kingdom Unstable leadership by kings and high priests Assimilation into popular Hellenistic culture
110 BCE–70 CE	Theological	Sadducees (elite priestly ruling class based around the Temple cult) versus the Pharisees (emphasis on study and interpretation of Torah) and the Essenes (a monastic sect, opposed to mainstream practices, who abandoned the turmoil of Jerusalem for the desert)



DATE	NATURE OF CHALLENGE	RELEVANT FACTS
66–135 CE	Continued existence	Revolt of the Zealots Unsuccessful Jewish uprisings against the Romans
400–1816 CE	Theological	False messiahs: In times of persecution and uncertainty, Jews turned to false prophets who offered them hope of imminent messianic salvation.
750–1900 CE	Theological	Jews living under Muslim rule; restrictions and persecution at times
800–1200 CE	Theological	The Karaite revolt against Rabbinic Judaism
800–1700 CE	Theological Continued existence	Forced disputations (debates) between Christians and Jews in the Middle Ages, often with dire results for the Jews; persecutions; blood libels
1000–1500 CE	Continued existence	Expulsions of Jews from Spain and Portugal; Marranos – secret Jews
1095–1291 CE	Continued existence	Crusades led to persecution of Jews throughout Christendom
1215–1870 CE	Continued existence	Jewish ghettos; persecutions Poll taxes and restrictions on trades and locations
1648–1656 CE	Continued existence	The Chmielnicki Massacres in Ukraine Pogroms against Polish Jews More than 100 000 Jews killed, many tortured, forced to flee
1772–1906 CE	Continued existence	Russian Jews in the Pale of Settlement were restricted in where they could live and professions they could practise, with much poverty and anti-Jewish laws, restrictions and persecution; pogroms encouraged by the government
1789–1918 CE	Theological Continued existence	New ideas of the European Enlightenment and the emancipation of Jewry from the ghettos led to mass assimilation and the formation of new divisions in Judaism Issue – how to be a Jew in the new society?
1845–1914 CE	Continued existence	European anti-Semitism The defamatory ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion’ widely distributed; the Dreyfus Affair in France
1882–1945 CE	Continued existence	Early Jewish settlements in Palestine battling nature and failed agricultural initiatives Arab–Jewish conflicts under Turkish then British rule; immigration restrictions by foreign rulers
1876–1970s CE	Theological	Literary criticism by German scholars to reconcile anomalies in the Biblical texts by attributing them to four authors/editors, not God, overriding centuries of rabbinic scholarship
1933–1945 CE	Continued existence Theological Ethical	The Nazi Holocaust and the attempted extermination of the Jews of Europe. Questioning God’s presence or absence in such suffering.



ghetto

A walled area in a city in medieval Europe where Jews were segregated and confined in poor, overcrowded conditions



theocracy
A religiously ruled society

DATE	NATURE OF CHALLENGE	RELEVANT FACTS
1948 CE–present	Theological	The return of Jews to Zion What sort of state – a theocracy or democracy? Who is a Jew? Which rabbinic authority do Jews follow?
1960s CE–present	Continued existence Theological	Assimilation and intermarriage causing diminishing Jewish numbers Secularisation Jewish unity threatened by new diversity and individualism
	Ethical	Gender issues: feminism, gay rights Ecological issues Asylum seekers Medical technologies: end of life, abortion, surrogacy

Skills: explain, analyse

Overview

- 1 What makes a challenge significant for a religious tradition?
- 2 Identify *one* aspect of religious traditions that is most likely to be challenged. Give a reason.
- 3 Which stances have been effective for religions when challenged?
- 4 Which stances were ineffective or counterproductive for religions facing a challenge?
- 5 Explain *at least three* different types of responses that religions use to support their various stances to challenges. Use examples in your answer. Consider how the aspects are used in responses.
 - a Which responses are least effective? Why?
 - b Which responses have the most impact upon the tradition and the tradition's relationship to wider society? Why?

Skills: summarise, interpret, analyse, create, research

Overview

- 1 Using the timeline for the religious tradition you have been studying, find and list a range of challenges. Refer to other timelines for that religious tradition and identify five more significant challenges.
 - a Identify whether these challenges are theological, ethical or a matter of continued existence.
 - b Create a poster or multimedia display that looks at each of these challenges in chronological order, highlighting and discussing the following where applicable:
 - origins and founders of movements within the tradition
 - influential writings related to the challenge
 - councils and gatherings of religious leadership that defined the stance of a tradition
 - controversy over leadership that affected the social structure of the tradition
 - changes of direction that became a response



- revisions and printing of sacred texts
 - major expansions of the tradition into new territories
 - innovations of science and society
 - plagues and other disasters
 - exiles – forced and voluntary
 - persecutions
 - invasions and wars.
- 2 Find a map that covers the geographical areas mentioned in your timeline and complete the following:
 - Locate on the map the places of the various events on your timeline.
 - Show on your map the various expansions, migrations and travels of the tradition and its influential people.
 - What further information or insights can you discern from the information you now have on your map?
 - 3 Find examples of six different types of provocations to religions and briefly explain the nature of the dissatisfaction that led to the challenge.
 - 4 What trends or patterns are apparent in the type of challenges experienced by the religious tradition you have selected?
 - 5 Are the challenges you identified in question 3 mainly internal or external? What might be the reasons for this?
 - 6 Identify which aspects of the religion you have selected were most often challenged.
 - 7 Which type of challenge has been the most useful to the religious tradition you have selected? Support your contention with reasons and evidence.
 - 8 Which type of challenge has been the most harmful to the religious tradition you have selected? Support your contention with reasons and evidence.
 - 9 Identify the various ways in which the religious tradition you have selected has responded to the challenges faced during its historical development.
 - a Which type of response has been positive in its results? For whom? Why?
 - b Which type of response has been negative in its results? For whom? Why?
 - c Which type of response has been both positive and negative in its results? Who gained? Who lost? Why?

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://religionsocvce.nelsonnet.com.au>.



REVISION

A Short-answer questions

These questions are not specific to a religious tradition or denomination.

- 1 Where do challenges for religious traditions come from?
- 2 What makes a challenge significant for a religious tradition?
- 3 Identify one aspect of religious traditions that is most likely to be challenged. Give a reason.
- 4 Explain at least three different stances religious traditions take in responding to challenges.

B Extended-response questions

Some of these questions relate to a specific religious tradition or denomination.

- 5 Explore a moment in the timeline when a religious tradition you have been studying has made a positive contribution to society. Your response must include the who, what, when, where, why and how of the event.
- 6 Explore a moment in the timeline when a religious tradition you have been studying has made a negative contribution to society. Your response must include the who, what, when, where, why and how of the event.
- 7 Which responses have had the most impact upon the tradition you have been studying? Why?
- 8 a Create a two-column table. The left column is headed 'Stance' and the right column is headed 'Evaluation of the stance'. Name a religious tradition you have been studying and a challenge it faces. Complete the table by outlining three different stances to the challenge. Evaluate the effectiveness of each stance.

b Explain how each stance affected an aspect of the religious tradition.

C Essay questions

You may use one or more religious traditions or denominations in your response.

- 9 *Religions are levers for change, embracing or resisting dynamic forces within society.*
To what extent does this statement apply to the experiences of at least one religious tradition or denomination that you have been studying?
- 10 *Challenges to religious traditions may be theological, ethical, or a threat to their survival. In times of substantial pressure, all three of these are evident.*
To what extent is this statement valid throughout the existence of at least one religious tradition or denomination that you have been studying?
- 11 *New ideas and influences may not always be welcome and may be strongly resisted.*
Discuss the extent to which this statement describes the stances of at least one religious tradition or denomination that you are studying when it has been confronted by challenges to its existence.

EXTENSION

1 Christianity and the Crusades

Challenge category: Continued existence, theological, ethical

Religious tradition: Christianity

Event: The Crusades

Read the following text and identify general conclusions that could be drawn about religion, challenge and change.

The Medieval period seemed a glorious moment in history, with Christendom controlling Europe. The belief that God's Kingdom had been established and that the sacred sites of the Holy Land were not incorporated into that vision was an affront. To resolve this challenge, and to respond to pleas from the Byzantine Church, which was under threat from the rise of Islam, Pope Urban II initiated a series of religious military campaigns, called Crusades, with the first beginning in 1095 and the last ending in 1291.

Kings and nobles across Europe volunteered to fight the Muslims to regain Christian control of Christian holy sites in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. After the capture of Jerusalem in 1099, the invading Christians set up several Latin Christian states. Despite the guilt, regret and doubt that beset many of the returned Crusaders, enthusiasm in Europe to support the western invasions continued for more than two centuries, fuelled by the political machinations of their rulers. Deteriorating relations between the Crusaders and their Christian allies in the Byzantine Empire resulted in the overthrow of Constantinople in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade.

Participation in the Crusades was encouraged by the belief that worshipping in Jerusalem brought Christians closer to God and that a person's sins would be forgiven if they undertook a pilgrimage to the sacred sites. It was also believed that dying in the Holy Land brought the blessing of being closer to God at the Last Judgment. This religious experience was a tragic enterprise. As many as three million people died over the two centuries of bloody warfare.

In the Crusades, Christian authorities led the conflict and in so doing challenged the existence of other religions in the countries being invaded. This aggression resulted in the Christian authorities being challenged by ethical questions as a consequence of their engagement in violence and bloodshed, as their religion preached peace and harmony. This forced Christianity to grapple with the notion of a just war.

Questions

- 1 What does this case study suggest about what might be the general nature of a threat to the continued existence of a religious tradition?
- 2 What does this case study suggest are the general causes of a challenge?
- 3 What does this case study suggest are some of the general stances that a tradition might take towards the challenge?
- 4 What does this case study suggest might be the general responses and actions taken by a religious tradition to a challenge?



Drawing general conclusions: Christianity and the Crusades

2 Modern biblical criticism

Challenge category: Theological

Religious traditions: Judaism and Christianity

Event: Modern biblical criticism – truth in the Bible

Read the following text and identify general conclusions that could be drawn about religion, challenge and change.

In the early 20th century, German Protestant theologians used linguistic and archaeological evidence to challenge the authenticity of traditional dating and authorship of scripture. This was a major challenge to both Christian and Jewish traditional teachings about scriptural authenticity.

The documentary hypothesis, also sometimes called the Wellhausen theory, asserts that the Torah (the primary document of Judaism) is composed of four main strands of literary traditions, dating from different centuries and areas of ancient Israel: the Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomist and Priestly authors or redactors (editors). This theory states that their work can be distinguished by their use of different names for God, places and repeated versions of stories. This type of interpretation is known as hermeneutics, the study of principles of textual interpretation. This theory discredits the Bible as the literal inspired word of God and so is rejected by many Jewish and some Christian traditionalists. For many others within these traditions, the documentary hypothesis has led to the rich enterprise that is Biblical interpretation.

Not all challenges to the sacred texts of religious traditions resulted in negative responses. For example, the discovery in 1947 of the Qumran Scrolls (Dead Sea Scrolls) in 11 caves in the Israeli desert, not far from Jerusalem, led, in Judaism, to a re-examination of their ancient teachings. This resulted in a deepening of scholarly understanding of the context of biblical texts and ancient Judaism, rather than causing the questioning of traditional teachings or causing theological controversy. The Dead Sea Scrolls have also presented a challenge to the long-standing reluctance in some parts of Christianity to acknowledge Jesus's Jewish origins.

The Dead Sea Scrolls also present some alternative wording to the accepted version of Jewish scripture known as the Masoretic text (from the Hebrew *masoret*, 'tradition'), the authoritative Hebrew and Aramaic text of the Tanakh for Rabbinic Judaism. Talmudic academies in Babylonia and Palestine between the 6th and the 10th century gathered the many manuscripts and oral traditions to compile the authentic word of God to transmit to future generations. The Dead Sea Scrolls, found in caves that contained the remnants of hundreds of books from the late Temple period (1st century BCE to 1st century CE), contained all the books of the Jewish Bible (except the book of Esther, which was not written in ancient Israel but was a product of the exile). Their discovery has changed the study of the Bible for Jews and Christians. Dating from the Roman occupation, the writings of the Qumran sect (probably Essenes) reveal a great emphasis on a messianic leader known as the 'teacher of righteousness'. Many of the rules of this monastic-style sect were to prepare themselves for the messianic redemption, which they saw as imminent. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls meant Christian theologians had to re-examine traditional interpretations of scripture, resulting in a richer and fuller analysis of their own New Testament religious texts.

Many modern scholars have questioned the historical accuracy and factual validity of the biblical narratives. This is because many features of the ancient stories lack sound historical and scientific factual data. The stories of creation, Adam and Eve, Noah's Ark and the Tower of Babel, and the historical authenticity of biblical figures such as Abraham, Jacob and Moses among many others, have been held up to scrutiny. But the Bible was not written to be read literally.

The figurative and metaphorical teachings of biblical stories were intended to show their readers the spiritual truth about humans and their universe. Jewish philosophers, such as Saadia Gaon (882–942) and Maimonides (1135–1204) stated that the truth of the Bible does not require a denial of reason or logic. When there is apparent conflict, they implied that questions of science should be left to scientists. They believed that it is the intentions of the biblical stories that should be emphasised and interpreted. What really matters in the biblical narratives is the divine plan for humanity and how people can help achieve this through their behaviour.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, historical biblical criticism was dominated by Protestant scholars such as German philosophers Hermann Reimarus and Albert Schweitzer, who led the search for the historical Jesus. They were followed in the 20th century by important scholars such as Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann. It was not until 1943, under Pope Pius XII, that the Catholic Church officially entered this field of modern biblical criticism.

Questions

- 1 To what extent has the religious tradition you are studying been affected in the understandings of its sacred texts and stories by new ideas and interpretations that challenge them?
- 2 Is the lesson the text teaches more important than the factual validity of the story in the religious tradition you are studying? Why? Why not?
- 3 Research how the scholars of the religious tradition you are studying reconcile their understanding of religious literature with modern secular scholarship.
- 4 Create a timeline showing the leading thinkers in understanding the sacred texts in the religious tradition you have been studying. Note the key contribution that each has made to the area.
- 5 What conclusions can you draw about the importance of the aspects to a religious tradition?
- 6 Did this challenge threaten the survival of either Judaism or Christianity? Why or why not?
- 7 What range of stances has been demonstrated by religious traditions in the face of this challenge?
- 8 What types of responses have been taken by traditions to support their stances in dealing with this type of challenge?
- 9 How has this challenge affected the relationship between different religious traditions or denominations?



Drawing general conclusions: Modern Biblical criticism

3 The death of the Prophet Muhammad

Challenge category: Theological, Continued existence

Religious tradition: Islam

Event: The death of the Prophet Muhammad

Read the following text, and identify general conclusions that could be drawn about religion, challenge and change.

In Islam, Muhammad was God's final messenger and the Qur'an was the final revelation. Within his lifetime Muhammad founded Islam and established its authority over the Arabian Peninsula, uniting Bedouin tribes and establishing a theocratic system of government in the process. It was believed that he had a divine right to guide Islam through the establishment phase of the tradition, but because he had no sons, there was no clear path for succession, and on his death in 632 CE, the community became divided. This posed a significant challenge to Islam that has led to the two main sects of Islam today – the Sunni and the Shi'a.

Muhammad's death, because it was unexpected and because he had not formally named a successor, caused confusion. Some groups abandoned Islam; others refused to pay taxes; and there were individuals who rose up and claimed that they were prophets. It was a time of confusion, tension and conflict.

Theologically, this required the establishment of a system of government that would be consistent with the teachings left by Muhammad, a theocracy named the caliphate. The next four leaders, the caliphs Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman and Ali, had all been companions of Muhammad and provided some continuity and development of the beliefs of the tradition through the Qur'an. Within the next three decades, the reach of Islam was extended by four times what Muhammad had left. However, the challenge of who should lead intensified as two schools of thought about leadership became evident: one favouring leadership by election, the other by inheritance. One group, the Sunnis, considered themselves the people of the Sunnah (followers of the Prophet's example) while the other group, the Shi'a, defined themselves as followers of Muhammad's descendants through his son-in-law Ali. This division became a major challenge when, in 656, the Caliph Ali's supporters (Shi'ites) killed the third caliph, and the Sunnis responded by killing Ali's son, al-Husayn. This led to open conflict between the two sects. Tensions have continued sporadically since then.

The Sunnis adopted both a political and a religious position articulated by scholars who developed a theology as a response to disputes over the definition of 'true' belief; the status of those who profess Islam but commit a great sin; and opinions on freedom and determinism. Sunnis tended to reject excessive rationalism or intellectualism and focused instead on the spirit and intent of the Qur'an. This led to the view that electing a leader is consistent with the Sunna and, therefore, the leader must be chosen through a consensus.

On the other hand, Shi'a Muslims emphasised a theological position. They argued that Muhammad's religious leadership, spiritual authority and divine guidance were passed onto his descendants by Allah. They believed there was a rightful line of succession within the family of the Prophet that was guided by the will of Allah. The leader became the imam of the community. This definition of the religious structure has developed into a sect that has different doctrines, rituals, laws and theology. They believe that there is an imam who will return to bring peace and justice to the Earth.

This challenge over authentic authority in leadership, at a pragmatic level, has had a significant impact on the social structure of Islam, with the two groups each possessing Islamic identities that are distinctive and affecting the way in which both communities' beliefs interplay with the other aspects of religion. For example, there are rituals in the Shi'a tradition that directly developed as a way to distinguish it from Sunni Islam: the remembrance of the martyrdom of al-Husayn on the 10th day of al-Muharram and the festival of Ghadir al-Khumm, commemorating the Prophet's nomination of Ali as his successor, on the 18th day of Dhu al-Hijjah. Shrines have been built for imams, and there are pilgrimages to these shrines.

Over time, these two schools have each needed to develop their scholarship of the sacred text, the Qur'an, in order to give their own community's beliefs continuing strength in the face of the alternative interpretations. For example, the revival of Qur'anic studies in the 19th and 20th centuries by Sunni scholars led to renewed commitment to science and education as the path to independence and development within the context of Islamic values and identity.

In Shi'a, there have been developments such as the rise of charismatic leaders such as Imam Musa al-Sadr (d. 1978), who encouraged the Shi'a of Lebanon to take an activist role in struggling for better socioeconomic conditions and political representation.

Questions

- 1 What does this case study suggest about what might be the **general nature** of a threat to the continued existence of a religious tradition?
- 2 What does this case study suggest are the **general causes** of a challenge?
- 3 What does this case study suggest are some of the **general stances** that a tradition might take towards the challenge?
- 4 What does this case study suggest might be the **general responses and actions** taken by a religious tradition to a challenge?



Drawing general conclusions: The death of the Prophet Muhammad





Chapter 11

STIMULUS, RESPONSE, IMPACT

Outcome to be demonstrated

Disussion of the analysed interactions within a religion and between a religion and society in dealing with a significant challenge to a particular religion

Focus questions

- ▶ What is the historic, political, social and geographic context of the selected challenge?
- ▶ What have been the sources of this challenge?
- ▶ Which aspects have been involved in the challenge?
- ▶ What stances have been adopted by the religion in the face of these challenges and why?
- ▶ What have been the responses supporting the stances to the challenges?
- ▶ What have been the reasons for and intentions of the stances and responses?
- ▶ What has been the impact of the religion's stances and responses on the challenge itself?
- ▶ What has been the impact of the stances and responses on the religion?
- ▶ What has been the impact of the responses on wider society?

EXPLORING CHALLENGES

In Chapter 10 it became apparent that dealing with challenges is an inevitable part of the history of religious traditions. These challenges each emerge in specific social, political, economic and religious contexts. The discussion of these challenges and the responses to them often led to a recognition that there was a tension between the view that history is composed of patterns that have few new or remarkable developments and the view that history is in fact complex and that each challenge is unique as the players have different motives, skills and technology to empower them. An ability to identify both the patterns and the distinctiveness of the challenge helps to establish a comprehensive and analytical exploration of a challenge and response. An awareness of the context, the sources, the stances, the responses and the role of the aspects in a discussion of a challenge will give it depth. The conclusions that are drawn will inform the discussion of the effects of the stances and responses on the challenge, on the religious tradition and on the wider society. In this chapter we explore model challenges in some depth to illustrate the need for comprehensive research, and offer sample pieces of writing to give you some idea of how to apply the key terms in the Study Design in a manner that analyses and synthesises material.

SEEKING REFUGE: CHALLENGING THE CATHOLIC TRADITION



Shutterstock.com/Attila Jandi

FIGURE 11.1 Syrian refugees unable to leave the central railway station in Budapest, 2015. Name three emotions that are felt when viewing this image. How do these emotions shape a response to the plight of these people?

CONTEXT

A significant challenge for these early years of the 21st century is the massive numbers of displaced people who are searching for asylum. The unprecedented numbers of asylum seekers and refugees pose an ethical challenge to Christians, whose beliefs are underpinned by Jesus Christ's teaching to 'love your neighbour' (Mark 12:31). The extent of the challenge was spelt out when the United

Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) released a global snapshot on refugees and asylum seekers in 2014–15. The figures were staggering: 59.5 million forcibly displaced persons, 19.5 million of whom were refugees; half of the refugees were children; 1.7 million applied for refugee status in 2014 but only 105 000 refugees were resettled in other countries; 86 per cent of refugees were hosted in developing nations; Nauru was the third largest host of refugees per capita. In the Asia–Pacific region there are more than 3.8 million people who are refugees or in refugee-like situations. The UNHCR has reported that, in 2014, about 53 000 people attempted boat journeys from the Bay of Bengal to Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Those fleeing their nations included Rohingyas, Syrians, Hazaras, Somalis and Sudanese. They are people who are facing systematic oppression.

We live in a world at war – Pope Francis has called it a Third World War in pieces. The Rohingyas from Myanmar are subject to what has been called an attempted genocide; Syrians are faced with oppression and bombing by the Assad regime or attacks by ISIS; Hazaras are a persecuted minority in Afghanistan; Somalis are continuing to flee the violence of a chaotic country; and conflict has returned to South Sudan. At the end of December 2015, there were 4.2 million Syrians registered with the UNHCR who were struggling to survive in refugee camps throughout the Middle East and Turkey. Nearly 60 million people are displaced – the largest number since the Second World War.



Getty Images/Ulet Ifansasti

FIGURE 11.2 A young Rohingya refugee sits with her newborn baby in a hospital in Aceh, Indonesia. Research the persecution of the Rohingya and identify why this is a religious issue.

Australia and offshore detention

Since 1992, Australia has increasingly become reliant on mandatory detention of people who arrive by boat without a valid entry visa, claiming asylum. As numbers of detainees increased, the detention centres were moved offshore, making access to their inmates by media, legal aid and



> activists nearly impossible. The conditions in these centres have been condemned by the United Nations. The construction and maintenance of these centres poses a significant cost to Australians. In 2014, nearly \$3 billion was spent on detaining asylum seekers, both onshore and offshore.



Fairfax Syndication/SWH/Andrew Meares

FIGURE 11.3 In 2015, about 500 asylum seekers on Manus Island protested by going on a hunger strike. Locate Manus Island on a map. Is this an ideal location for Australia to detain asylum seekers? Explain why or why not.

subsidiarity

The principle that social problems should be dealt with at the level most immediately able to bring a solution



Getty Images/Pool

FIGURE 11.4 Pope Francis I at the Lampedusa wreath-laying ceremony to honour the refugees who died after their boat sank as they tried to make their way to Italy seeking asylum. How does the Pope's presence affect the authority of his stance on the issue of refugees?

For the Roman Catholic Church, this is not a challenge that will threaten its existence as a religious institution globally, but it is an issue that encompasses a threat to the survival of Christianity in the Middle East. Many of those who are fleeing are Christians abandoning land their families have worked for thousands of years. In 2014, thousands of Christians in Mosul and the Ninevah Plain, in Iraq, including nearly 40 000 Syriac Catholics, were driven out by ISIS militants. The ISIS threat is also forcing the migration of Chaldeans, Assyrians, Maronites, Melkites and Armenians. The Pope has called on the world to address this problem as Christians are disappearing from the region that was the birthplace of Christianity.

STANCES AND SUPPORTING RESPONSES

The hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church facilitates the official response, as does the Church's teaching on **subsidiarity**. At a global level Pope Francis I, as head of the Catholic Church, has made an impassioned plea to Catholics, and to all nations, to show compassion. He has called on nation states to accept responsibility for people fleeing oppression. He has gone on to model his message by being present to offer compassion himself to those who are victims of violence, and he has taken up opportunities to meet with world leaders to discuss the humanitarian challenge.

In 2013, after 114 asylum seekers died off the coast of Italy when their boat sank, the Pope made a speech in Lampedusa, the place where most asylum seekers coming by boat first arrive in Italy.

Immigrants are dying at sea, in boats which were vehicles of hope but have become vehicles of death. That is how the headlines put it. When I first heard of this tragedy a few weeks ago, and realised that it happens all too frequently, it has constantly come back to me like a painful thorn in my heart ... These brothers and sisters of ours were trying to escape difficult situations to find some serenity and peace; they were looking for a better place for themselves and their families, but instead they found death. How often do such people fail to find understanding, fail to find acceptance, fail to find solidarity. And their cry rises up to God! ...

Has any one of us wept for these persons who were on the boat? For the young mothers carrying their babies? For these men who were looking for a means of supporting their families? We are a society which has forgotten how to weep, how to experience compassion – ‘suffering with’ others: the globalisation of indifference has taken from us the ability to weep!

Source: Pope Francis I, speech at Lampedusa, 2013, © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

As thousands entered Europe in September 2015, the Pope called on every parish, religious community, monastery and sanctuary to take in one refugee family, and he led by example, with the Vatican taking in a Syrian family. The stance taken by Pope Francis I on behalf of the Catholic Church has been one of compassion and welcome, which is consistent with the Gospel message of love of neighbour and hospitality.

At a national level, the Australian bishops dedicated their Social Justice Sunday message to addressing the government’s treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. They argued that the community should not listen to the rhetoric depicting the boat arrivals as illegal and a burden on the taxpayer; instead, the bishops asked that people look at:

... the reasons behind people’s flight from persecution, focusing on the dignity of every person, and asking that we return to our once proud tradition of protecting and supporting victims of war and violence.

Source: Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, *For Those Who’ve Come Across the Seas: Justice for Refugees and Asylum Seekers*, Social Justice Statement 2015–16

In opposition to the Catholic Church’s stance, the Australian Government has been using asylum seekers and refugees to serve political ends. Instead of informing the public more broadly about the global scale of the issue, it has kept the media focused on the small numbers who are arriving by boat. Australia’s refugee and humanitarian program of 13 750 places annually was the extent of the nation’s generosity, until



FIGURE 11.5 Why are these refugees risking their lives on unsafe boats, crossing the Mediterranean Sea in order to reach Italy?

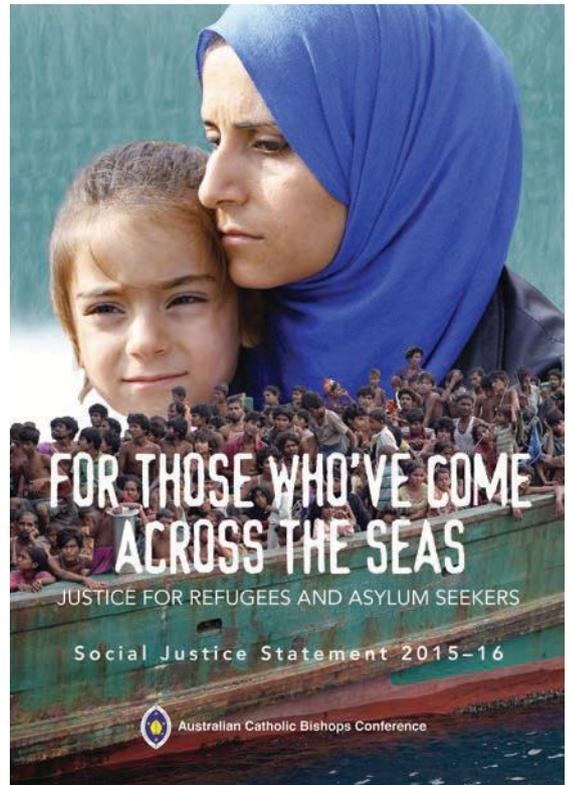


FIGURE 11.6 In 2015 the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council published the report *For those who’ve come across the seas: Justice for Refugees and Asylum Seekers*. Discuss the effectiveness of the title and the image for developing empathy.

there was outrage at our refusal to take Syrian refugees and numbers were marginally increased. The government's stance is that it must continue to deter people smugglers so that asylum seekers do not drown at sea. It does this by turning boats back to ensure they do not reach Australia. Evidence would suggest that, while this sounds compassionate, people are instead taking greater risks in boats and dying at sea on their way to other destinations. History proves that, ethically, the end does not justify the means.



Getty Images/Luis Ascui

FIGURE 11.7 Protesters in Melbourne demanding an increased refugee intake at the time of the Syrian crisis in 2015. What ethical principles are being explored in this woman's placard?

Part of the government's response is detention, either onshore or offshore. The government has also restricted the information that gets out about the detention centres through its border protection legislation, which means that workers who make public any material from the centres can be jailed. However, reports have told of one man being killed on Manus Island, that there have been numerous sexual assaults and rapes, that the centres are overcrowded, poorly serviced and isolated so that legal assistance is unavailable, and that individuals are self-harming and attempting suicide due to the slow pace and uncertainty of the processing regime. The conditions have been criticised by the United Nations and Amnesty International.

At a local level, the Church is responding through the work of religious orders and parishes who have social justice groups. The Brigidine Sisters' Asylum Seeker Project and the Edmund Rice Centre are two religious groups that have both taken a strong stance, demanding a closure of detention centres and more compassionate border protection policies. Parishes throughout Australia are consistently pressuring their local members of parliament to address the issue by using policies that show respect of the human person; they are fundraising; writing letters and petitions; and housing asylum seekers and refugees who have been released into the community.

Overall, the stances have been consistent across the hierarchical Church; and the responses have been broad and have operated in a way that allows them to address all levels of government in a meaningful way.

ROLE OF THE ASPECTS

Other than the social structure, the primary aspect that has an important role in dealing with this challenge is the sacred texts. The scriptures have provided the wisdom for the Roman Catholic Church's approach to this challenge. They have looked to both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. The Hebrew Scriptures remind the Hebrew people that they should have empathy as they were once in the same position as these people. The Book of Leviticus instructs that:

... when an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Source: Leviticus 19:33–34

Jesus in the New Testament teaches that all human beings are precious and should not be used as commodities. People are sacred and deserve respect because they are loved by God; not because they are deserving of it or because they live righteous lives, but because they were created by God in God's 'image and likeness' (Gen. 1:26). In Matthew's gospel Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs' (Matthew 9:13–14).

In the Catholic tradition, God's revelation is found in both scripture and the tradition – and so there is God's wisdom in the teachings of the **Magisterium** of the Church. The sacred writings that give a framework for responding to ethical challenges are the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

The principle of the preferential option for the poor is important in this issue. It offers very practical teaching that Catholics should respond to all who are poor – that they should be given priority over other needs. The people who are arriving as asylum seekers and refugees have lost the most important possessions a person can have – their family, their friends, their land, their nationality – they come often with virtually nothing and must start again. They are the poor in 'our midst'.

This is linked to the principle of the common good. This emphasises the need for a communal attitude, to recognise that all people were created to live in community, in relationship with others, and that all are responsible for each other's wellbeing. In caring for each other, Catholics believe they are creating a society that reflects the qualities of heaven – they believe they are constructing God's reign on Earth and this will benefit all of society.



Getty Images/Asanka Brendon Ratnayake/Anadolu Agency

FIGURE 11.8 A man at a rally organised on Human Rights Day by the Refugee Action Collective in Melbourne. What quote from the Gospel could have been on this T-shirt to give the same message?



Getty Images/Fine Art Images/Heritage Images

FIGURE 11.9 *Let the little children come to me*, by Werner Jacobsz van den Valckert (c. 1585–after 1635). What attitudes do the onlookers in this photo display towards Jesus's actions? What message is being given here?

Magisterium
The teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church

THE EFFECTS OF THE STANCES AND SUPPORTING RESPONSES

The challenge

Although the Catholic tradition's response has been consistent in its stance against the detaining of asylum seekers and refugees, and in the call for a compassionate and welcoming Australia, the Church has had little significant impact on the policies of federal governments. Ironically, what this issue has shown is the limited authority of religious leaders in the Australian democracy. The Church's ineffectiveness has been caused partly by the bipartisan approach of the Liberal and Labor parties with regard to this issue, even though both parties have had many ministers who are very happy to proclaim their Christian, even Catholic, beliefs. Whereas the Greens, whose policies are most aligned with the Roman Catholic Church's position, do not advertise their membership of religious traditions. This ineffectiveness was highlighted when former prime minister Tony Abbott, a confessing Catholic, spoke in Britain in 2015 and said, 'The imperative to "love your neighbour as you love yourself" is at the heart of every Western polity ... but – right now – this wholesome instinct is leading much of Europe into catastrophic error'.



Getty Images/AFP/Muhammad Farooq

FIGURE 11.10 People attend a candlelight vigil in Sydney in support of asylum seekers on 23 February 2014. The vigil was organised in response to the death of 23-year-old Iranian man Reza Berati, who died in a detention centre on Manus Island. Using this image, explore why religions in a democracy need to involve themselves in political action in order to establish their vision for society.

The evidence for the lack of success of the Catholic Church in specific campaigns is apparent in the failure of their demands, such as that the government should substantially increase Australia's humanitarian intake. The only significant increase in the humanitarian intake came through public pressure after an image of the body of a young boy washed up on a Turkish beach went viral on social media – showing that the media has more success in shaping the government's response than the Catholic Church.

Another demand that was not met was for the closing of offshore detention centres. The government had resisted all plans to close these detention facilities even though they are costing taxpayers about \$1 billion a year. However, recent changes have resulted in the release of detainees into the Nauru community and the PNG Government's closure of Manus. These changes have made the whole situation even more complex.

A third unsuccessful demand was that all children should be removed from detention.

There has been some reduction to the number of children in detention but this has been linked to lobbying by the Human Rights Commission and its president, Gillian Triggs, more than to the work of the Catholic Church. Professor Triggs has pointed out that Australia is the only nation that detains children for more than initial checks.

The religious tradition

The impact of this challenge on the religious tradition is that it has focused the bishops on social justice, leading them to confront a lay church that remains seemingly apathetic on the issue. For example, the launch of the Social Justice Statement in Melbourne was broadly advertised in the community, yet the majority of those present were school children. The Catholic Community on the whole is reluctant to involve itself politically. Yet the existence of social justice groups in parishes, made up of small numbers of passionate individuals, would suggest that parishes are willing to recognise the rights of refugees. This goodwill towards those who fight for social justice with regard to refugees can be seen most obviously in the support given to advocates from the religious orders.

The religious orders have been greatly influenced by the call to be Christ to refugees. For example, the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project is a group set up to support asylum seekers in detention, providing services and education. Its founder, Sister Brigid Arthur, has made her way into the media spotlight through her firm stance and hospitality. She tests the patience of politicians thanks to the goodwill she has established through her principled stand in supporting the Bakhtiari brothers, two children who escaped from a detention centre in 2002.

Another group is the Christian Brothers' Edmund Rice Centre. This group has been an effective advocate for refugees through research and data collection on asylum seekers and refugees. This data has been used to undermine the rhetoric of government by proving that it is unsafe for asylum seekers to be returned to their place of origin. The centre's director and spokesperson, Phil Glendenning, said:

Our research has uncovered at least two cases where asylum seekers returned (to Afghanistan) to be killed. They were not killed in the cross fire. They were killed by precisely the same threat they identified on Nauru. They were killed because they were genuine refugees and the determination process on Nauru failed.

The Jesuits are another religious order that has focused on the need to care for asylum seekers with the Jesuit Refugee Service. Part of their role is to care for those who are being housed in the community by providing accommodation and a range of other services to ensure their wellbeing.

Although the service of these groups is invaluable to the individuals they help, their effect on the challenge as a whole is small and does not seem to be contributing to a change of government policy. Nor do they seem to be engaging the interest and commitment of other members of the Catholic community in any substantial way.



FIGURE 11.11 Sister Brigid Arthur has irritated governments because of her stance. Research what controversial actions she has taken in the name of her beliefs.

Fairfax-Syndication/The Age/Simon Schluter

The wider society

Internationally, the media are looking to Pope Francis I to take the moral high ground on global ethical issues, and the Pope is accommodating them by providing commentary on issues concerning asylum seekers as they arise. The Pope's general popularity beyond Roman Catholicism has given his views some credibility in the broader community.

However, at the national and local level, there is little evidence that the Catholic Church has had a substantial effect on the issue. The impact the Church is having is largely through its work providing emergency assistance in housing and education, which benefits the community by helping new arrivals to move more easily into society.

Skills: research, analysis, synthesis

- 1 Do some research to answer the following questions.
 - a What is the difference between an asylum seeker and a refugee?
 - b Who are the Rohingyas, Syrians, Hazaras, Somalis and Sudanese? Where do they come from? What is their religion?
 - c What rights do people have to claim asylum under the United Nations Convention?
- 2 Find three statements made in the media about asylum seekers and refugees, and explore how language is used to sway the community's opinion.
- 3 Use the material provided in the text and updated information from your research to construct notes on each of the following:
 - a What is the nature of this challenge to the Roman Catholic tradition?
 - b What is the broad context of this challenge and how does this affect the challenge?
 - c Who are the key people presenting a stance and what is their stance?
 - d What response have they made to resolve the challenge?
 - e What aspects have informed their response?
 - f How effective has the response been?
- 4 Go through the notes you have taken and use a highlighter to identify the key ideas in each section.
- 5 Find evidence in the form of quotations or statistics to support the key ideas. This may require further research.
- 6 If you are studying another religious tradition, discuss whether asylum seekers and refugees are a challenge to that tradition and, if so, identify the stance and explain the related responses of that tradition to the challenge.
- 7 Use the material you now have to construct an essay on the following topic: 'The goal of all social change is to protect the dignity and freedom of the individual person.' Explore this statement in the light of a challenge to a religious tradition you have been studying.



Extended case study 3:
Trafficking of women into Australia for the sex industry

RESTRICTIONS ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: CHALLENGING ISLAM

CONTEXT

As Western nations such as those in the European Community, Canada, the USA and Australia have experienced increased migration from Islamic countries, some have imposed restrictions on Islamic religious and cultural practices because of conflicting values and laws and in response to a perceived threat of terrorism. This is challenging Muslims who live in these communities. They are responding to these restrictions in a range of ways; for example, complying with the status quo with



Getty Images/Recep Sakar/Anadolu Agency

FIGURE 11.12 Muslims perform Eid al-Fitr prayer at a mosque in Melbourne. Using this image, provide five phrases to describe what you see. Use this information to compose a sentence describing the Muslim community in Melbourne.

the intent of assimilating; taking political action by starting Muslim political parties; or responding with anger at what they perceive to be an injustice. In summary, there is an external challenge being imposed on Muslims in Western nations – the restriction on the right to religious freedom, a right recognised in Article 18 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.



Getty Images/Mark Kolbe

FIGURE 11.13 This photograph shows people staging a counter-demonstration to the call by the ‘Party for Freedom’ for the destruction of the Parramatta mosque in October 2015. At first glance, the poster held by a number of the protesters seems to be demanding more mosques, sharia law, halal certification and Muslim refugees. However, the poster is a parody of a Pauline Hanson political poster. Who is Pauline Hanson? Why might her image have been included on the poster?

Evidence of this challenge has been outlined in *Religious Freedom in the World Report 2014* by Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need, which identified the persecution of Muslims in countries where they were the minority; however, it also provided evidence that in majority Muslim nations there are severe restrictions on the religious freedom of other religious traditions who are minorities. Muslims in the West are coming to recognise that there is tension between the Qur’anic and Hadith teachings about religious tolerance in their tradition. This is making it difficult for them to take the moral high ground when confronting the challenge of limits on their own religious freedom.

The difficulty is that the sacred texts support both religious tolerance and intolerance. The question of how to respond to the challenge of limits on the religious freedom of Muslims in Western nations has become a challenge for Islam. Muslims are claiming the right to religious freedom, but they are not being heard because of the religious intolerance that is being shown in the name of Islam in Muslim majority countries.

Therefore, the challenge has shifted to become an internal one for Islam – Islamic authorities and leaders in the West are being impelled to speak out against their Muslim brothers and sisters by political figures such as former prime minister Tony Abbott. A response is needed if Islam is to fully engage in a multicultural and pluralist world.

Fairfax Syndication/SMH/Chris Lane



FIGURE 11.14 The Islamic legal system is derived from the Qur’an and a ruling of Islamic scholars is known as a fatwa. There are several sharia councils in Australia at state and federal level giving Islamic divorce certificates, halal accreditation and advice on all aspects of religious law. What aspects of life in Australia might need the guidance of the Islamic Council?

that supported the building of a mosque in the area were pitched against those who were vehemently opposed to its construction.

Some cases of restrictions on religious freedom that demonstrate this challenge are:

- the ban on minarets in Switzerland
- the ban on headscarves in France
- bans on circumcision and Islamic methods of slaughter in Denmark
- persecution of Muslims in Myanmar
- protests over the building of a mosque in New York and in Australia
- debates about the acceptance of sharia law by Australian authorities
- verbal vilification by media personalities and politicians
- anti-Islamic protest marches organised by groups such as Reclaim Australia.

SOURCES

The source of the challenge is intolerance to Islam in Western nations, especially since 11 September 2001. The issues causing this are different in each nation and depend on the country’s response to the tension between those who have a commitment to human rights and those who apply political pressure on leaders to produce stringent national security legislation; for example, France’s response has been different to Sweden’s response. In Australia this division was witnessed in Bendigo, in 2015, with demonstrations that divided the community. Groups

The Human Rights Law Resource Centre, in conjunction with the Islamic Council of Victoria, has noted that these restrictions are having an effect on the quality of life of Muslims in Australia. Their report said:

The discriminatory impact of laws aimed at counter-terrorism measures in fact limits the ability of Muslim people to enjoy their rights to freedom of religion, opinion and association. Australia's Muslim and Arab populations have reported an increase in anti-Muslim and anti-Arab prejudice since September 2001. The negative public attitudes towards these communities raises concerns about the ability of Muslim Australians to publicly manifest their religion.

STANCES AND SUPPORTING RESPONSES

The response of Islam to restrictions on the religious freedom of Muslims has been stymied by the lack of a unified, dogmatic position on religious freedom from within Islam. This in turn is due the lack of a centralised hierarchical structure. As the debate continues, it has become increasingly clear that there are two predominant stances being taken within Islam, one conservative and aggressive; the other progressive and accommodating. Both find support in the sacred texts of the tradition.



Getty Images/AFP/Stringer

FIGURE 11.15 Members of the UK Muslim Action Forum deliver a petition to 10 Downing Street in protest over offensive cartoons of Muhammad in the French magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Which human rights are the Muslim community exercising and appealing to?

The conservative stance

This group argues that there is no instruction in favour of religious freedom within Islam – in fact, there is the opposite. There is the death penalty for **apostasy** and **admonitions** for other offenses by non-Muslims in sharia law. They refer to the following Hadiths.

Whoever changes his religion, kill him

Source: Bukhari, Sahih, 9, 84, Hadith

apostasy

Total renunciation or desertion of one's religion

admonitions

Warnings given by religious authorities



Getty Images/AFP/Matthieu Alexandre

FIGURE 11.17 A makeshift memorial outside Le Bataclan concert hall in Paris after an ISIS attack in 2015 killed 129 people. Research the policy of ISIS on religious freedom and how it justifies this position. What aspects in Islam could be used to counter its position?

A consequence of possessing free will is that the person understands right and wrong and is responsible for their ethical decision making.

However, in the Hadith, which collects the sayings of Muhammad, there is also a discussion of religious freedom, but these sayings suggest that violence is acceptable in situations of apostasy and conversion. Some of the sayings do suggest that the punishment for rejecting Islam should be death. In practice, there is evidence that the Prophet did both resist the use of violence in the case of apostasy and also impose the death penalty at times.

A man who leaves Islam and engages in fighting against God and His Prophet shall be executed, crucified, or exiled.

Source: Abu Duwad, Sunan, 33, Hadith 4339

THE EFFECTS OF THE STANCES AND SUPPORTING RESPONSES

The challenge

The effects of the stances and responses have seen the debate over religious freedom intensify. Reactionary and progressive stances and responses present very different ways of practising Islamic beliefs and contrasting views of adherents' relationship with non-Muslim societies. The use of the Internet and social media as a way of communicating ideas has allowed proponents of both stances on religious freedom to advocate for their position. This has also led to a fatwa being placed on some scholars who promote religious freedom and engagement with the West.

The religious tradition

There has been an increase in academic discussion on the historical context of the Qur'an and Hadith. This has allowed some scholars to argue that Islam, democracy and modernity are able

to work together to enrich both society and the religious tradition. Some within Islam argue that, if Islam is to engage with the Western world, there will need to be dialogue within the tradition about how to accommodate religious tolerance. Using the history of the tradition as a resource, it is possible to explore periods of peace and harmony between the religions of the Book and thus to gain insights into the tradition.

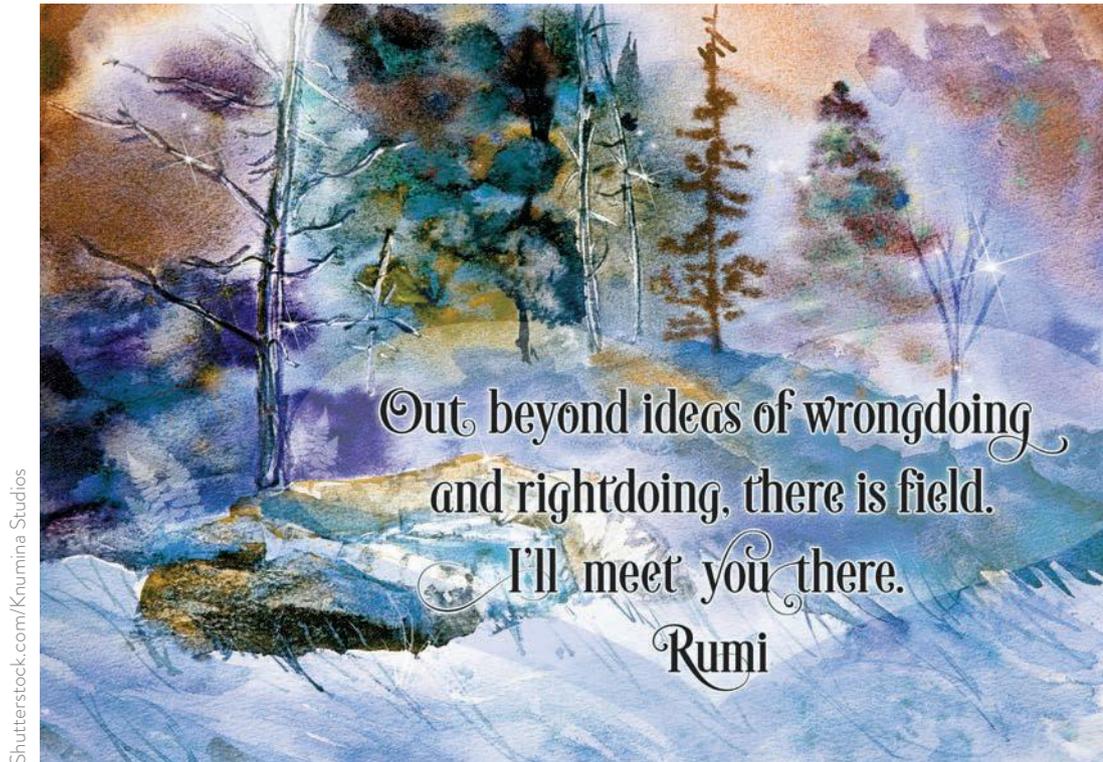


FIGURE 11.18 Words of wisdom by the Muslim poet Rumi. Express this saying in your own words.

Effect on the wider society

The lack of consensus on this issue from within Islam, and the extreme punitive approach taken in some nations to the practice of other religions, with even the death penalty being imposed in some cases, have resulted in a stereotypical portrayal of Islam that focuses on an intolerance of religious difference. This portrayal engenders fear. However, this is challenged by countries whose populations are largely Muslim and which have ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states:

Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

This indicates that, at national governmental levels, Islamic nations are engaging with a world that speaks the language of religious freedom – even if it is not always practised.

In the meantime, the tradition's mixed response has allowed the rise in the West of extremist groups who have taken an 'anti-Muslim' stance. These are attracting media attention, resulting in subsequent problems for Muslims in their communities. Significantly, the lack of resolution of this internal challenge has led to the continuing persecution of Muslims.



Getty Images/Quinn Rooney

FIGURE 11.19 Protestors demonstrate against the building of a mosque in Bendigo in 2015. Why has this group chosen the Australian flag to be a symbol for their protest? What does this say about their understanding of Australia? Are they right?

Skills: define, research, analyse, interpret, synthesise

- 1 Define religious freedom.
- 2 Find the names of people and organisations who are taking a range of stances on the issue of religious freedom and gather quotes from each of them.
- 3 Which Muslim practices and beliefs may be seen to conflict with democratic values?
- 4 What misunderstandings about Islam may lead to intolerance in the community?
- 5
 - a Explain at least three different ways in which religious traditions respond to challenging issues today. You should use examples in your answer.
 - b Which responses are least effective? Why?
 - c Which responses have the most impact on Muslims and why?
 - d Which responses have the most impact on Islam's relationship to wider society? Why?
- 6 Research three Muslim majority countries and identify:
 - a their system of government
 - b whether they have ratified the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights
 - c what restrictions, if any, there are on religious freedom.
- 7 To what extent does the social structure in Islam facilitate, or act as an impediment to, resolving issues of religious freedom?
- 8 Research another tradition of the Book to establish how it has reconciled seeming contradictions in sacred texts with regard to a challenge.
- 9 If you are studying another religious tradition or denomination, discuss whether and how its religious freedom has been challenged.
- 10 Use the material you now have to construct an essay on the following topic: 'In times of challenge, religious traditions must take a stance.' Discuss in relation to a challenge to Islam.



Extended case study 1: The impact of colonialism

STATUS OF WOMEN IN JUDAISM

Getty Images/Cyrus McCrimmon/The Denver Post



FIGURE 11.20 Reform Rabbi Alysia Stanton, the first African-American to be ordained, in 2009. What hurdles do you think Rabbi Stanton would have needed to overcome to attain her status as rabbi?

CONTEXT

The role of women in Judaism has always been central and it is important to note that women have largely been treated with respect and dignity, both in Jewish religious law and Jewish communal life. Yet while women's roles were valued, and even at times exalted, they were limited and the traditional roles of wife and mother were the dominant frameworks within which female Jewish identity was expressed. Yet the last century has witnessed profound change in the traditional roles of women throughout the Western world. Suffrage in the first half of the 20th century, followed by the wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, ushered in far-reaching changes in women's roles and identities in the personal and public spheres.

Feminists advocated that social, political and other rights for women be equal to those of men. Since then, enormous economic and legal advances have ensured women better conditions in the workforce, in marriage and in divorce. Thanks to modern technology, women no longer have to toil at home cooking and cleaning all day, and they now have more leisure time. More than ever before, they are participating in business, professions and communal activities. While change comes slowly to established religions, the influence of the feminist movement has made inroads into the practice of all world religions. This influence is apparent in the practice of Judaism, in all its diversity throughout the last century and into the present. It has challenged the traditional social structure and practice, and been seen by some as threatening the theology and continuity of the Jewish tradition.

SOURCES

Judaism has been a patriarchal religion, with clearly defined roles for men and women, since its earliest days. Men were the heads of the family, community counsellors, rabbinic advisors, prayer

leaders and held roles in the public domain. Women were seen as important in the domestic realm, caring for and teaching children, ensuring a well-run kosher household and even conducting the family business while their husbands studied the Torah and Halakhah (Jewish law). This ideal is seen in the words of Proverbs (31:10–31) that praise the wife as ‘a woman of valour whose price is beyond rubies’. With their emphasis on child rearing and ensuring domestic bliss, women were exempt from some commandments, and therefore were not expected to take an active part in worship. Further observances in the tradition were to ensure women and men were kept separated. Orthodoxy to this day places restrictions on women: for example, they cannot touch the Torah while menstruating (and as a precaution are not invited to read from the holy Torah scroll).

Decline in observance of tradition in the second half of the 20th century, combined with changing attitudes about women’s position in society, has profoundly affected the Jewish community. As women became more highly educated in both secular and Jewish areas, they began to challenge traditional roles and the source of women’s apparent inequality within Judaism. It is argued by feminists that societal, organisational and communal frameworks prevent women from achieving full equality within the Jewish world. However, Jewish belief itself – its theological foundations, textual canons, religious law and rituals – may also be seen to need scrutiny.

ROLE OF THE ASPECTS

Impressive changes have occurred in the social structure of Progressive and Conservative communities, where women are now able to be rabbis and cantors. Even in Modern-Orthodox congregations, women can be observed as presidents of synagogues. In the strictly observant Ultra-Orthodox community none of these changes can be seen, although Ultra-Orthodox women now have a far higher level of Jewish learning than at any time in Jewish history.



FIGURE 11.21 Women carrying Torah scrolls are trying to gain admittance to the Western Wall precinct to pray. The Ultra-Orthodox authorities who are guardians of the precinct will not allow the women to pray as a group there. What is the stance of Orthodoxy to women taking on formerly male-only sacred rituals? Do you think the women’s aggressive attitude will change the minds of the Orthodox rabbinic authorities?

Even though social justice is an important value in the Bible and rabbinic texts, somehow that has not been applied specifically to the role of women in Jewish society until recently. Traditional roles that were available only to men in the past, such as leading prayer services, wearing a *kippah* and *tallit*, reciting prayers such as the Mourner's Kaddish, are now frequently challenged to end their exclusion of women, especially if these roles do not interfere with women's family life. In contrast to civil law, Halakhah only allows males to be legal witnesses – one reason given by traditionalists for prohibiting women from becoming rabbis.

These male-only rituals associated with prayer services and festival activities appear hard to justify in this day and age when women are in occupations formerly deemed only suitable for men. The Progressive and Conservative movements readily involve and encourage both men and women in all ritual activities, from lighting the Sabbath candles to reciting the Mourner's Kaddish.

THE STANCES AND SUPPORTING RESPONSES

How Jewish feminists have responded to these issues has rested largely upon their view of Judaism itself, based on their interpretation of the binding (or not) nature of Halakhah. The changes that have taken place regarding the role and participation of Jewish women in Jewish life over the past century have been primarily within the boundaries of the various streams of Judaism. Sociological changes came first to movements such as the Progressive (also known as Reform or Liberal) movement. Social justice and Jewish ethical values are of the highest priority for Progressive Judaism, but in its understanding of Halakhah as a historically developed source to guide modern living, the Progressive movement rejected those aspects of Jewish law that, for example, precluded women from undertaking leadership roles such as those of the rabbinate. This was the first movement to ordain women as rabbis and now has many females in leadership, educational and social justice roles worldwide. In Australia, most Progressive communities have a female rabbi in a leadership position, and women regularly serve as congregation presidents and communal leaders.

Within the Orthodox movement, changes in women's roles have been slower, largely due to the Orthodox understanding of Halakhah as divinely revealed, and therefore immutable. This is not to suggest that changes in Halakhah are not evident in Orthodox practice; however, the process of change is much slower and is subject to traditional rules of interpretation and implementation. The Modern-Orthodox movement has produced many outstanding female scholars and activists. These include Nehama Leibowitz and Blu Greenberg, whose commitment both to the practice of Halakhah and to full equality for women have led to innovations with regard to women's participation in ritual practice and communal leadership within the Orthodox world.

EFFECTS OF THE STANCES AND SUPPORTING RESPONSES

The challenge

Despite the amount of change that feminism has wrought in the Jewish world, its effects are really only beginning to be felt. The strictly Orthodox have met this challenge by ignoring it. Reform is concerned more with moral issues than religious issues, though they strongly support complete equality of the sexes. Among highly educated women, late marriage and no more than two children is now the norm. Many choose never to marry and find no appeal in such a family-oriented system as Judaism.

The religious tradition

Within the Jewish academic world, interest in feminism has flourished. Scholars have researched the roles of women throughout Jewish history, uncovering little-known episodes of Jewish history

and practice such as the creation of 'women's prayers' in the Yiddish-speaking communities of Eastern Europe; and the remarkable lives of Jewish women such as Bruriah, a 2nd-century Talmudic scholar, and Gluckel of Hameln, a 17th-century German Jewish wife, mother of 12, business woman and diarist. There are now more Orthodox women undertaking traditional forms of Jewish study. This has led to the creation of women-only *tefilla* (prayer) groups, in which women are encouraged to lead and read from the Torah, and modified Bat Mitzvah services that allow girls to read Torah in all-female services. These developments have occurred despite little rabbinic encouragement, indicating that the push for women's rights in Orthodox Judaism, while remaining within the boundaries of Halakhah, is coming from the women themselves.

While once 'radical' changes such as the implementation of Bat Mitzvah ceremonies (the equivalent of the male ritual of Bar Mitzvah) are now commonplace, other issues such as the inequalities in Jewish divorce law remain unresolved to the detriment of women. Yet even with regard to this vexed issue some positive change is apparent, with women learned in Jewish law now acting as advisors to rabbinical judges in Israel. More recently, a handful of Orthodox female scholars have been ordained but the Orthodox establishment will not appoint them to congregations or allow them to be called 'rabbi'. Some have taken the title 'rabbah' or 'maharat' instead. The Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America, in November 2015, reacted to this development by acknowledging that although women can be leaders, teachers and Torah scholars, they may not be called 'rabbi' or lead congregations.



Nishmat

FIGURE 11.22 These women have completed a two-year course in New York run by Nishmat, a Jerusalem-based women's yeshiva, training them to advise others on all aspects of observing Jewish laws, especially in the area of family purity. It is a role usually played by male rabbis. Is this all that male rabbis can advise on?

Within Progressive and Conservative communities, feminist concerns have contributed to the development of more gender-inclusive language in prayer, the creation of new women's rituals and the revival of ancient women's celebrations such as Rosh Chodesh (New Moon) ceremonies.

Feminism has exacerbated the schism between Orthodox and non-Orthodox streams of Judaism. At the root of their differences is the attitude to the Divinity, Halakha and 2000 years of rabbinic interpretation. Judaism has always adapted itself to changing times and circumstances – maintaining key beliefs and practices through the mechanism of debate and scholarship. The Progressive and Conservative acceptance of the need to maintain continuity while ensuring survival in changing circumstances has led to their willingness to modernise. Feminism is just one symptom of the widening gap between Jews of different streams today.

Theological issues pertaining to the characterisation and roles of women in traditional texts continue to be the subject of feminist scholarship. Yet, while the issues are many and the process of change is slow, one may posit that in the 21st century, the role of women in the Jewish world is perhaps at its most vibrant and diverse. Women are assuming leadership roles, in both religious and communal structures, at unprecedented levels in all streams of Judaism.

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FIGURE 11.23 Members of feminist group, Women of the Wall, meet regularly for prayer at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, despite much opposition from Orthodox rabbinic authorities. Note they are wearing *tallit* (prayer shawls) and *tefillin* (phylacteries) traditionally worn only by men. Why do you think there is so much joy on the faces of these women?



Extended case study 2: The environmental challenge

The wider society

Internal Jewish social structure tends to reflect wider society's values rather than influence other groups, although the American Reform movement's early ordination of females as rabbis was newsworthy in the 1970s, when most Christian denominations were yet to place women in leading religious roles. In Australia, the first female Progressive rabbi, American-born Karen Soria, was appointed assistant minister at Temple Beth Israel in Melbourne in 1981. Since then, a number of female rabbis have been active in Jewish communal life in Australia. Rabbi Soria later became the first female rabbi ever to serve in the United States Marines.

Skills: research, describe, explain, evaluate

- 1 What Jewish laws and values are challenged by feminism?
- 2 To what extent have Jewish women's lives changed in the modern era?
- 3 What innovations have been developed for the participation of Jewish females in their religious tradition?
- 4 If you are studying another religious tradition or denomination, discuss whether it has been challenged by feminism and, if so, the stance it has taken and the related responses.
- 5 Use the material you now have to construct an essay on the following topic: 'Religions in the modern world will inevitably be challenged. The answer to the challenges is always to be found in the sacred texts.' Discuss this statement by referring to a challenge being faced by the religious tradition you have been studying.

Skills: research, describe, explain, interpret, evaluate, synthesise

- 1 Examine a particular challenge faced by a religious tradition you have studied. Use the following questions as a guide to your investigation. Remember to cite facts, quote sources and texts, and substantiate your assertions and conclusions with evidence and examples.
 - What is the nature of the challenge?
 - In what context is the challenge occurring?
 - What are the sources of this challenge?
 - What role do the aspects play in the challenge?
 - What are the various stances and responses of the tradition to the challenge?
 - What are the effects of the religious stances and responses:
 - on the challenge itself?
 - on the tradition and/or on different groups within the tradition?
 - on the wider society?
- 2
 - a To what extent does the image of a tug of war reflect the relationship between religion and society in general?
 - b What alternative methods might religions use to deal with challenges from society?
 - c To what extent does the image of a tug of war reflect the relationship between society and a religious tradition you have studied over a particular challenge or issue? (Name the challenge and explain the stances and responses of the tradition.)
 - d What are/were the effects of these stances and responses on the challenge itself, on the tradition and on the wider society?



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Essay planning process



Planning an essay



Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://religionsocvce.nelsonnet.com.au>.

REVISION

A Short-answer questions

These questions are not specific to a religious tradition or denomination.

- 1 What may be the sources of challenges to religious traditions?
- 2 Which aspects are most likely to be affected by a challenge?
- 3 Why would a religious tradition take a stance on a challenge?
- 4 Outline a range of possible effects that a challenge may have on a religious tradition's relationship with society.

B Extended-response questions

Some of these questions relate to a specific religious tradition or denomination.

- 5
 - a Describe the various ways in which religion and society interrelate.
 - b What different ways might religions use to deal with challenges?
 - c Explain in detail one challenge to a religious tradition where the relationship between the religious tradition and society was challenged.
 - d What stances did the religious tradition take to the challenge and were they effective?
- 6 Name a challenge to a religious tradition you have been studying.
 - a Outline the social, geographic and political context of the challenge.
 - b Which aspect was most affected by the challenge? Why?
 - c What response/s were taken to support one particular stance to the challenge?
 - d Explore the impact of the response/s on the religious tradition.

C Essay questions

You may use one or more religious traditions or denominations in your response.

- 7 *Religion is a telescope; it is not to look at, but to look through.*
Consider a challenge through the lens of at least one religious tradition or denomination you have studied. Discuss the tradition's stance and the impact of the challenge upon the religious tradition.
- 8 *Challenge is an inevitable part of growth and religious development.*
To what extent is this statement true with regard to how at least one religious tradition or denomination you have studied deals with challenges? Give at least one particular example to support your discussion.
- 9 *Challenges always have a historical context and so do the religious institution's responses.*
Discuss this statement in the light of a major challenge to at least one religious tradition or denomination you have been studying.

EXTENSION

Select a challenge – past, present or recurring – to a religious tradition or denomination you have been studying.

Develop a detailed discussion of the challenge in an essay or report of at least 1000 words.

Use the following points as a guide.

- a** Identify: the religious tradition or denomination, the challenge, the period of time of the challenge and the location where the challenge occurs.
- b** Describe the challenge, including its context.
- c** Identify which aspects were involved in the challenge and precisely how they were challenged.
- d** What stances to the challenge were taken by the religious tradition?
- e** What responses were made by the tradition to support their stances?
- f** In what way was the social structure of the religious tradition evident in the tradition's stances and responses?
- g** What were the effects, positive and negative, of the responses upon the religious tradition or denomination?
- h** How did the challenge affect the interaction between the religious tradition and the wider society?

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Written by an experienced and authoritative Victorian author team, *Religion and Society: Units 1–4 for VCE* has been developed for the new VCE Study Design for Religion and Society, with each chapter addressing a specific Area of Study. Focusing on the way in which the beliefs and practices of religion provide answers to questions such as the meaning of life, *Religion and Society* enables students to examine the role of religious traditions and institutions from the ancient past to the modern world, their impact on individuals, and the ways in which faith systems provide meaning.

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