

8

Religion, human rights and social justice

8.1 Social justice and human rights

■ 'Life is unfair!'

We learn from an early age that life is unfair. Some people are born rich and others are poor. Some are attractive, others are not. Some have good health, others do not. Some people always seem to be fortunate, while for others everything seems to go wrong. Many of these situations are beyond human control but injustice occurs when people increase or cause the unfairness.

Social justice is about seeking to protect people's civil liberties, rights and opportunities, and taking care of the least advantaged members of society. There is much injustice in the world. In some countries many people are not free to express their opinion about the government or follow the religion of their choice. Societies can suffer from a breakdown in law and order, terrorism, mass unemployment or a huge gap between rich and poor. Those who believe in social justice wish to see a world where people are more equal, have human rights and are not struggling because of lack of money or facilities.



▲ In countries where people are free to express their opinion, they may campaign to see a world where people are more equal

■ Human rights

In 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which sets out the basic human rights that everyone should be entitled to, regardless of their nationality, language, religion, gender or status. In 30 articles the Declaration sets out what should be the minimum rights for human beings to enjoy freedom, justice and peace. For example, Article 1 says:

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

Objective

- Understand religious teachings, beliefs and attitudes about social justice and human rights.

Key terms

- **social justice:** ensuring that society treats people fairly whether they are poor or wealthy and protects people's human rights
- **human rights:** the basic rights and freedoms to which all human beings should be entitled

Activities

- 1 Explain what is meant by 'social justice'.
- 2 Give three reasons why it is necessary to have human rights.
- 3 Explain why The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was made.
- 4 Give three examples of what the Human Rights Act seeks to protect.
- 5 Explain what Christianity teaches about social justice and human rights.

The UK passed the Human Rights Act (HRA) in 1998. It includes the rights contained in the European Convention of Human Rights, for example the right to life, liberty, security, privacy, marriage, family life, free elections, education, and a fair trial. It specifies that torture, slavery and forced labour are not allowed.



▲ Mount Zion school in India: UDHR Article 26 says, 'Everyone has the right to education'

■ Responsibilities

Having rights also means that it is important to respect the rights of others. The right of freedom of speech could be abused by people who want to cause hatred or violence. There is the moral responsibility not to deliberately offend people and to listen to the views of others, even if those views are different from your own. If children have the right to be protected from cruelty, exploitation and neglect, they also have a responsibility not to bully or harm each other. If we expect to have a clean environment then we should not drop litter. This principle applies to all the human rights.

■ What do Christians say?

The Bible teaches that God is a God of justice: 'all his ways are just' (Deuteronomy 32:4). It is full of teachings about the importance of social justice, and the duty to care for others. The prophet Amos told the people of Israel that God was not pleased with the way they were oppressing the poor. He said, 'Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!' (Amos 5:24).

Paul in Romans told Christians that they have a responsibility to obey the law:

“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.”

Romans 13:1 [NIV]

Jesus said that the first commandment is to love God but the second one is to 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' (Mark 12:31) There are many stories that illustrate the need to help others, such as the Parable of the Good Samaritan and the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25:31–46) in which Jesus says that those who help the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the stranger, those without clothing or those in prison, help him.

James, in his letter, says that Christians have a responsibility and duty to promote social justice, as 'faith without deeds is useless' (James 2:20).

Many Christians have campaigned for social justice. In the nineteenth century, the anti-slavery campaigner, William Wilberforce, the prison reformer, Elizabeth Fry, and the politician, Lord Shaftesbury (who worked to improve factory conditions and to educate poor children), were all inspired by their faith to work to improve the lives of those less fortunate in society. In modern Britain most denominations have projects in the community to help the underprivileged.

Discussion activity

In small groups or in pairs discuss the following statement:

'People focus too much on human rights and not enough on their responsibilities.'

Extension activity

Use the Internet or a library to find out more about the UDHR and the 30 articles. Write down three that interest you in particular and explain why.

★ Study tip

It is important to know some specific examples of rights given by the UDHR and be able to explain their importance.

Summary

You should now be able to explain Christian attitudes towards social justice and human rights.

8.2 Prejudice and discrimination

Equality

Christians believe that people are special and precious because, according to Genesis 1:27, they have been created in God's image. People are born into different circumstances but all are equally valuable and can have a relationship with God, 'For God does not show favouritism' (Romans 2:11). Paul in his letter to the Galatians says:

“ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ”

Galatians 3:28 [NIV]

James warns against prejudice, discrimination and favouritism in James 2:1–13, summing up his teaching in verse 8 with 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All these teachings encourage Christians to treat everyone as having equal value.

Gender prejudice and discrimination

Prejudice means holding biased opinions – often negative – about an individual or group of people. These opinions are often based on stereotypical ideas, rather than actual experience. **Discrimination** is behaviour or actions that result from prejudice.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians appears to show gender prejudice and discrimination against women. He says that just as Christ is the head of man, so a man is the head of a woman. He states that women should wear a head covering in church (1 Corinthians 11:5) and tells the Corinthians that only men should lead worship:

“ Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak [...] for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. ”

1 Corinthians 14:34–35 [NIV]

In some Christian denominations women are not allowed to have important positions. Catholic and Orthodox Churches do not support women becoming priests. They argue that men and women are equal but have different roles. Jesus chose male disciples and the tradition of male leaders since Peter has continued in their churches. In Britain in 1993 the Church of England (Anglican Church) allowed women to be ordained as priests and in 2014 Libby Lane became the first female bishop. Some Anglicans who did not believe this was right joined the Catholic Church as a result of these decisions.



▲ Female clergy in the Anglican Church

Objectives

- Explore Christian beliefs about equality and understand the difference between prejudice and discrimination.
- Investigate Christian beliefs about prejudice and discrimination regarding the role of women in religion and sexuality.

Key terms

- **equality:** the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities
- **prejudice:** unfairly judging someone before the facts are known; holding biased opinions about an individual or group
- **discrimination:** actions or behaviour that result from prejudice
- **heterosexual:** to be sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex
- **homosexual:** to be sexually attracted to members of the same sex

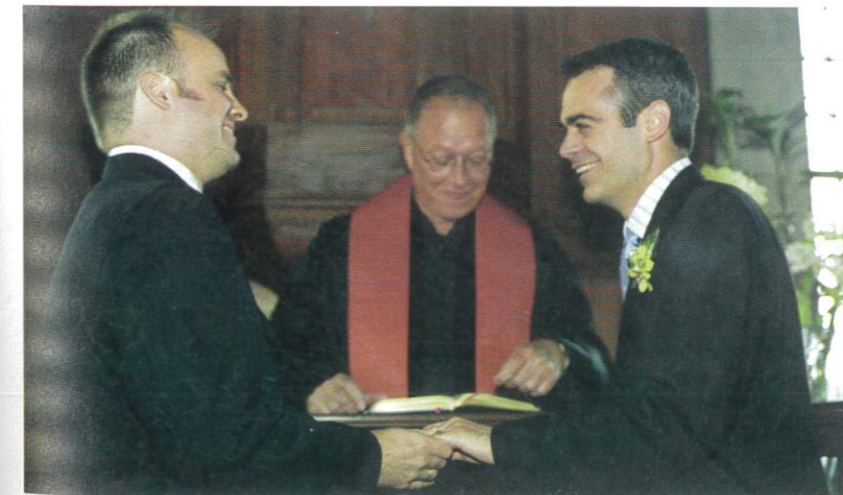
Most other denominations have no problem with women being part of the ordained clergy. Some nonconformist denominations have been ordaining women for nearly a hundred years, for example Congregationalists ordained their first woman minister in 1917. Many Christians interpret Paul's letter as applying only to the particular situation in which he was writing. At that time in Corinth, women who did not cover their hair or who pushed themselves into the limelight were regarded as immoral. Moreover, it would have been against the culture of the time for Jesus to have chosen women as his disciples. Women had a domestic or secondary role in society, although some rich women helped to fund Jesus' ministry (Luke 8: 2–3). Today, many would say that it was an age of sexism and society has now changed.

Sexuality

Adam and Eve were told in Genesis 1:28 to 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it' and Genesis 2:24 says, 'That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.' In the Bible, **heterosexual** relations are portrayed as natural and what God intended. Much more controversial are **homosexual** relations. Genesis 19 describes God as destroying Sodom and Gomorrah because of the wickedness and homosexual activity of the inhabitants.

Within Christianity there is a diversity of opinion, from condemning homosexual acts as sinful to seeing homosexuality as morally acceptable. Traditionally, the Church has opposed homosexuality with some arguing that God made Adam and Eve male and female and that the prime purpose of sex is for procreation.

Other Christians believe that it is not loving to condemn people for their sexual orientation. A central teaching of the Bible is to 'love your neighbour as yourself'. Romans 13:1 says that Christians should submit themselves to the governing authorities. Recently, the law has changed in England, Wales and Scotland to give equality to everyone, and homosexual couples can now legally get married.



▲ Same-sex marriage is now legal in England

Contrasting beliefs

Use the Internet or library to find out about a contrasting belief on the status of women in religion from a religion other than Christianity.

Link

To read more about heterosexual and homosexual relationships, turn to pages 68–69.

Activities

- 1 Explain what the Bible teaches about equality.
- 2 Write down two key verses which sum up why Christians should treat people as equals.
- 3 a Explain two examples of where there appears to be discrimination against women in some Christian denominations.
b Why do other Christians hold different views?
- 4 Explain the different views about sexuality within Christianity.

Discussion activity

In small groups or as a class discuss the following statement: 'Christian denominations who still oppose homosexuality and equality for women need to get up to date with modern Britain.'

★ Study tip

You need to be clear about the difference between prejudice and discrimination, and homosexual and heterosexual relationships.

Summary

You should now be able to discuss various Christian attitudes to equality, prejudice and discrimination with reference to gender and sexuality.

8.3 Religious freedom

■ Freedom of religion

Article 18 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights says:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

In Britain today, the official state religion is Christianity, and the Anglican Church is the established (official) Church in England. No one can be forced to join the Church. The government protects **freedom of religious expression**, that is the right of individuals to worship in whatever way they choose, or not at all, and laws forbid the persecution of members of other faiths or non-believers. Believers are free to evangelise providing that they do not preach hatred and intolerance.

Historically, Britain has not always shown such tolerance. During Elizabeth I's reign, the Act of Uniformity meant that people who regularly failed to attend their local church could be fined twelve pence and, if they failed to pay this, they risked having their property confiscated or even being put in prison. Twelve pence is the equivalent of £11 today.

A separate Church of England was created by an Act of Parliament in 1534 when Henry VIII wished to break with the Catholic Church. When Henry's daughter, Mary, became queen she restored the Catholic faith as the official faith of England. Those who objected to this faced being burned as heretics, and in all 280 people died in this way. On becoming queen, Elizabeth I, who was not a Catholic, broke with the Catholic Church again and those who showed their support for the Pope now risked persecution.

During the eighteenth century a number of different churches developed that, although Christian, did not conform to the beliefs of the Church of England. In some places, differing religious views have led to conflict, such as in Northern Ireland. Historically, conflict has arisen from differing religious beliefs, although these have often been the result of a range of other factors too. In the Middle Ages Crusades were organised by Christian kings to recapture the

Objective

- Explore issues of freedom of religion and belief, including religious expression.

Key terms

- **freedom of religion:** the right to believe or practise whatever religion one chooses
- **freedom of religious expression:** the right to worship, preach and practise one's faith in whatever way one chooses



▲ In Britain today the reigning monarch is head of the Church of England

city of Jerusalem from Muslim control. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries Christians have been persecuted by communist governments and by dictators, for example in North Korea. Christians have also experienced persecution in countries where they are a minority, for example in the Middle East and in Pakistan.

Discussion activity

With a partner, in a small group or as a class, discuss whether you agree with the following:

'People should have the freedom to say whatever they want about religion.'



▲ The 'Hands Across the Divide' in Derry, Northern Ireland, represents the differing religious and political views that have caused conflict for many years in the country, and encourages tolerance and harmony between the two sides

■ Religious teachings on freedom of religion

Christian teaching encourages tolerance and harmony. The gospel writer Mark recorded how the disciples saw a man who did not belong to their group driving out demons in Jesus' name, "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us." (Mark 9:39–40). When Christian denominations fight each other, they are not following what the Bible says. Ephesians 4:2 says, 'Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.' Romans 12:18 says, 'If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.'

“I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.”

Romans 16:17 [NIV]

No religion teaches religious intolerance. Religious freedom is encouraged by religions for different reasons. Islam teaches that religious freedom is part of God's design, and freedom of belief is taught in the Qur'an. Christians believe that Jesus taught religious freedom. The freedom to believe and worship, in public or private, to change religion or not follow any religion is regarded by most Christians as a fundamental human right.

Contrasting beliefs

Use the Internet or the library to find out what another religion says about allowing freedom of religious expression. In what ways do they contrast with Christian beliefs?

Activities

- 1 Give three examples of how different Christian denominations have shown intolerance to one another.
- 2 Why do you think that some Christians in the past fought against Christians of a different denomination?
- 3 Give three examples from the Bible that encourage tolerance and harmony, and show how this is achieved in Britain today.
- 4 Which is the established Church in England?
- 5 What does Article 18 of the UDHR say about religious freedom?

★ Study tip

It would be helpful to be able to quote Christian teachings about tolerance and freedom of choice, and try to refer to a contrasting belief on the freedom of religious expression from another religion.

Summary

You should now be able to explain why it is important to have freedom of religion and freedom of religious expression.

8.4 Prejudice and discrimination – disability and race

Disability

There are around 500 million disabled people worldwide. They include those who have visual, hearing, speech or mental impairment and those who have lost a limb or who have restricted growth or mobility. Some have had their **disability** from birth, for others it is the result of an accident or of war, others because of an illness or old age. Sometimes people do not understand these problems and either ignore people with disabilities or show prejudice towards them. The Paralympics and the publicity given to many disabled sporting stars are helping to change attitudes. UK laws have been passed to protect those with disabilities from discrimination, including the Equality Act 2010. This Act provides legal rights in employment, education, access to goods, services and facilities, buying and renting land or property. The United Nations Convention on Disability Rights 2006 also helps to enforce, protect and promote those rights.



▲ British Paralympian Josie Pearson

Christians oppose discrimination against disabled people because it does not show Christian love (agape). Jesus healed the sick and disabled and taught his followers to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12: 31). Therefore, Christians support the provision of access ramps, lifts, disabled toilets and other facilities designed to make life easier for those with disabilities. Many support the use of **positive discrimination**, for example giving wheelchair users front-row positions at a football ground so they can see the match.

Racism

Racists believe that people of some races are inferior to others. Often this prejudice is linked to skin colour and it causes great offence. For example, top football teams include players from all over the world and their ethnicities are as varied as their nationalities. Although such behaviour is illegal, some football supporters shout abuse during matches, particularly at black players. 'Show Racism the Red Card' is a campaign that uses top footballers to educate against racism.

In Britain, Acts of Parliament have been passed to make racism illegal, including the Race Relations Act of 1976, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Equality Act 2010.

Objective

- Explore Christian attitudes to disability and racial prejudice and discrimination.

Key terms

- **disability:** a physical or mental impairment which has an adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities
- **positive discrimination:** treating people more favourably because they have been discriminated against in the past or have disabilities

Activities

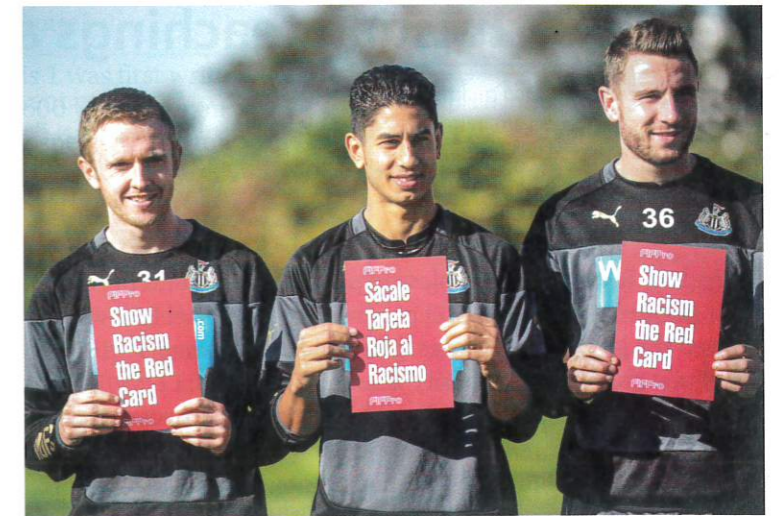
- 1 From the example of Jesus, what should a Christian attitude be towards disabled people? Include what is meant by positive discrimination.
- 2 Explain how the law tries to protect people with disabilities.
- 3 What was apartheid? Give three ways black people were discriminated against.
- 4 Describe four ways Martin Luther King Jr peacefully challenged prejudice and discrimination in the USA.
- 5 Use the Internet to find a recording of Martin Luther King Jr's 'I have a dream' speech. Explain the meaning of this speech in your own words.

Most Christians today oppose racism in all its forms, although, for example, the Dutch Reformed Church did support apartheid in South Africa during the twentieth century. Paul explained in his letter to the church at Galatia:

“ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ”

Galatians 3:28 (NIV)

The policy of apartheid in South Africa kept black and white people apart and gave all the privileges to white people. Only white people could vote and black people did not have equal access to education, housing, jobs and other public services. Archbishop Desmond Tutu was one of the leaders who led a peaceful campaign for equal civil rights and the abolition of apartheid, which ended in 1994.



▲ Newcastle United players (L–R) Shane Ferguson, Ayoze Perez and Paul Dummett supporting the 'Show Racism the Red Card' campaign

Dr Martin Luther King Jr

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, USA in 1929, Martin Luther King became a Baptist minister and fought against racism in the USA in a non-violent way. Black people were not allowed to attend white schools, sit in the same restaurants or swim in the same swimming pools as white people.



In 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, a black woman named Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white man on a bus. King organised a 'bus boycott' and black people refused to travel on the buses until the law was changed a year later. His home was bombed and he and his family received death threats but he became leader of the 'Civil Rights Movement'. He organised campaigns for black voter registration, better housing and education for black people and desegregation of public facilities. Thousands joined protest marches, including one to Washington DC in 1963. There he made a very famous speech where he declared he had a dream that all races and religions were united in freedom. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He was assassinated in 1968.

Research activity

Using the Internet or a library, find out more about what Desmond Tutu did to oppose apartheid in South Africa.

Link

You can read more about Martin Luther King Jr on pages 126–127.

★ Study tip

When describing religious attitudes, try to quote or refer to the teachings from sacred texts.

Summary

You should now be able to explain religious attitudes towards disability and race prejudice and describe how Christians have opposed racism.

8.5 Christian teachings about wealth

What does the Bible say?

The Old Testament

In the Old Testament, God blessed people with wealth in response to their faithfulness to him. God promised that if Israel followed him and obeyed the law he gave Moses, he would bless them: 'The Lord will grant you abundant prosperity' (Deuteronomy 28:11 [NIV]). For example, King Solomon became an extremely rich king: 'Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for – both wealth and honour – so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings' (1 Kings 3:13 [NIV]). King David also acknowledged that wealth comes from God: 'Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things' (1 Chronicles 29:12 [NIV]). However, Deuteronomy 8:18 makes it clear that there was a responsibility to remember it was God who had blessed them.

People thanked God by giving a **tithe**, a tenth of their earnings, as offerings: 'Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year' (Deuteronomy 14:22 [NIV]); 'A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord' (Leviticus 27:30 [NIV]). Some Christians today give a tenth of their income to the church.

The New Testament

The New Testament focuses on the dangers associated with wealth, greed and selfishness. People can become so involved with money that they forget to love God and forget to love their neighbour. Jesus told a rich young man to sell all he had, give it to the poor and follow him and then he would have treasure in heaven. The young man was unwilling to do that and Jesus said:

“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

Mark 10:25 [NIV]

Jesus was not saying that it is wrong to be wealthy. However, striving for riches brings the danger of people ignoring God, neglecting their spiritual life and even committing crimes. 'Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters [...] You cannot serve both God and money"' (Matthew 6:24 [NIV]). Jesus teaches that people should choose God and, 'seek first his kingdom and his righteousness' (Matthew 6:33 [NIV]).

Discussion activity

In small groups, in pairs or as a class, discuss the following statement from The First Letter to Timothy. Do you agree?

'For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil.' (1 Timothy 6:10 [NIV])

Objective

- Understand Christian teachings about wealth and its uses.

Key term

- **tithe**: one tenth of annual produce or earnings

“But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.”

Deuteronomy 8:18 [NIV]

Activities

- 1 Explain what the Old Testament teaches about the source of wealth.
- 2 What is a tithe and why do some Christians pay it?



▲ 'Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.' Matthew 6:20 [NIV]

Paul also emphasises this in his First Letter to Timothy:

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”

1 Timothy 6:17 [NIV]

Christians believe God's desire is for his followers to set their hearts on things above, not on things on the earth which are only temporary.

What is the use of wealth?

Everyone needs money to pay the bills. Without it, people get into debt and suffer the effects of poverty. Life can be enriched by having money for entertainment, holidays and luxuries, and the Bible does not condemn that. However, Christians believe that the wealthy have a responsibility not only to use it on themselves but also to give money to the church for its upkeep and mission.

Traditional Buddhism teaches that people create bad karma when they use money unethically. Christians do not believe in creating karma, but they do believe that wealth should be used to help people in need because to do so is to follow Jesus.

Jesus told the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31) in which the rich man ended up in hell because he had not helped the beggar at the gate. The Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25:31–46) states that those who help the disadvantaged receive the reward of eternal life in heaven, whereas those who ignore the needy are thrown into 'the eternal fire'. Christians believe that by sharing they are helping Jesus and showing agape love.



▲ The Parable of the Sheep and Goats teaches that those who help the needy will receive the reward of eternal life

Activities

- 1 Explain the dangers of being wealthy, according to Christian beliefs.
- 2 Explain what Jesus meant when he said, 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'
- 3 With wealth comes the responsibility to use it wisely. Explain how Christians should use their money.

Contrasting beliefs

Use the Internet or library to find out what another religion says about the uses of wealth. Does it offer a similar or different view to Christian teachings?

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Matthew 25:40 [NIV]

★ Study tip

'For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil' (1 Timothy 6:10) is a useful quotation to use but do not forget the first four words. Starting the quotation with 'money' gives the wrong meaning.

Summary

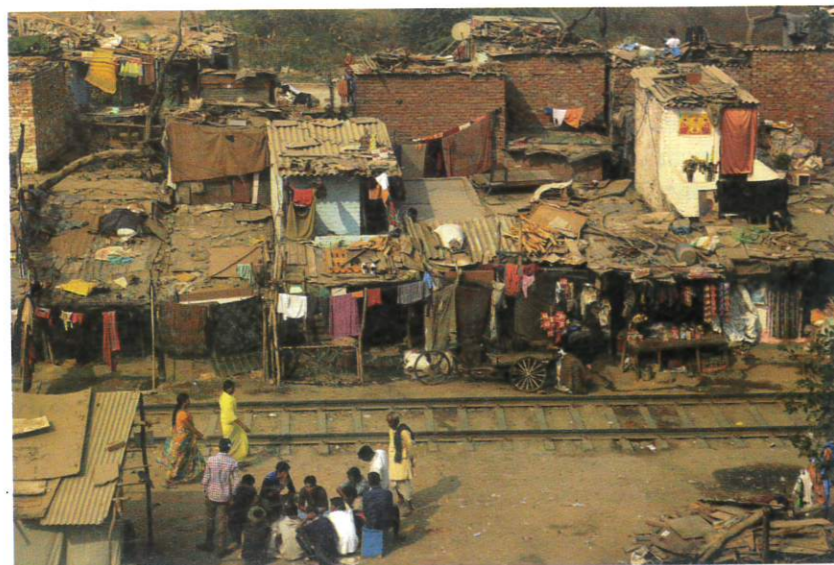
You should now be able to discuss Christian teachings and attitudes towards wealth.

8.6 Poverty and its causes

■ The problem of poverty

Everyone shares the same basic needs. Without food, we are hungry and eventually starve; we need water to drink and keep clean, and without access to clean water, people catch serious diseases. People need clothing and a place to shelter in order to keep warm and survive. Other needs include health care, education and employment, but not every person has all these things.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that one person in nine suffers from chronic hunger or undernourishment – over 800 million people in the world. Around 100 million are homeless with perhaps one billion lacking adequate shelter or housing. A total of 750 million people lack access to safe water; worldwide an average of over 2000 people die a day because of disease caught from unclean water. Possibly as many as one in four people live in conditions that harm their health, safety, prosperity and opportunities.



▲ A slum area of New Delhi, India

Most of those who are in extreme **poverty** live in less economically developed countries (LEDCs). Many of these countries have young populations which are growing. Although there is poverty in Britain as well, welfare benefits help to provide the basic necessities.

■ What are the causes of poverty?

There are many causes of poverty. On a worldwide scale, many poor countries have borrowed money at a high rate of interest to help

Objectives

- Understand the problem of poverty.
- Explore the reasons why people are poor.
- Understand the responsibilities of those living in poverty.

Key term

- **poverty:** being without money, food or other basic needs of life (being poor)

Discussion activities

In a small group, or in pairs:

- Discuss the basic needs of life, and list them in order of priority.
- Discuss the statement: 'It is impossible to get rid of all poverty.' Do you agree?

Activities

- 1 Make a diagram showing six basic needs of life. Record some details about the estimated numbers of people who do not have these basic needs.
- 2 What are the main causes of poverty in LEDCs?

to pay for health care, education and similar necessities, which has resulted in an ever-growing debt. Many countries, such as former colonies with a lot of mineral wealth, have been exploited when that wealth was taken away from them. Some other countries have had corrupt leaders who have misused their power, sometimes taking lots of money for themselves and ruining their country's economy in the process. Many multinational companies have their products made in LEDCs (Less Economically Developed Countries) and many women and children work in appalling conditions for little pay. Often governments have spent a lot on arms and war causing great devastation and suffering. Some countries are vulnerable to natural disasters, such as droughts and floods that can cause crop failure. In some countries there is massive social inequality, with the rich being extremely wealthy and the poor having very little.



▲ Gambling addicts need help to break the habit

In Britain one of the main causes of poverty is unemployment. Not everyone is able to find work or is fit to work, and the unemployed have to rely on benefits from the state. Some people are poor even though they are in work because they receive low wages, while their rent and other costs of living are high. Some get themselves into debt by unwise spending and use of a credit card. For example, debt may be the result of shopping sprees, gambling or spending a significant proportion of income on items like tobacco or alcohol. Financial mismanagement or a sudden change of circumstances, such as losing a job, may compound the problem, particularly if high rates of interest have to be paid on loans. Failure to make provision for retirement may also cause people to be poor.

■ Responsibilities of those living in poverty

Christians encourage the poor to attempt to break out of poverty if they are able. Many try very hard to do so and are simply unable to find work. Others take part in work experience or attend training courses to give themselves additional skills. Some do voluntary work in the community which will give them experience, keep them actively working and provide references.

Christians regard it as important to help those who need assistance but Proverbs 23:21 also encourages people to be self-sufficient, 'for drunks and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.' Making every effort to improve one's skills and education, obtain a good job and budget carefully can enable many to escape the poverty trap. Christians encourage those who have an addiction or other problem that is the cause of their poverty, such as gambling, to seek help, from a Christian counsellor for example.

Extension activity

Use the library or Internet to find out which countries are categorised as LEDCs.

Activities

- 1 Explain the main causes of poverty in Britain.
- 2 Explain the responsibilities of those who live in poverty.
- 3 Read Proverbs 6:6–11. What is the message of the writer?

“The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.”

2 Thessalonians 3:10 (NIV)

★ Study tip

To help you memorise the problems of poverty, it might help to create diagrams using key words showing the basic needs or the causes of poverty.

Summary

You should now be able to discuss the problem of poverty, various causes of poverty and the responsibilities of those who are poor.

8.7 Exploitation of the poor

Fair pay

Many multinational companies pay their workers in LEDCs a tiny wage in order to make large profits for their shareholders. This is particularly true in the agriculture and clothing industries. For example, around 200,000 people work in tea plantations in West Bengal, India, and are paid about £1 a day. This is about half the legal minimum an unskilled worker is supposed to be paid. Former workers sometimes migrate to look for work elsewhere, frequently becoming victims of forced labour. Cheap clothes are made in places that most people would describe as sweatshops, to be sold in countries like the UK. Workers are forced to endure poor working conditions, long hours, low wages and other violations of labour rights. Frequently, in developing countries, labour laws are not enforced. Often located in deteriorating and unsafe buildings in countries like Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia and Vietnam, employees may work fifteen or sixteen hours a day, seven days a week.

The UK Government introduced the National Minimum Wage Act in 1998. This set the lowest amount of money an employer can legally pay a worker per hour in the UK. This law was designed to protect workers at the lowest end of the pay structure from **exploitation**. Many Christians supported this introduction as they believe in a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

Rana Plaza disaster

In 2013 in Bangladesh over 1100 workers lost their lives and over 2000 were injured as the eight-storey Rana Plaza factory building near Dhaka collapsed. The clothing factory had been built over a bank, apartments and other shops. The top four floors had been built without planning permission and the structure was not strong enough to bear the additional weight and vibration of the machinery. Many of those who survived marched in Dhaka, demanding better and safer working conditions, including a minimum wage, and severe punishment for the owner of the collapsed building.



▲ The collapsed Rana Plaza factory

Research activity

Use the Internet to research if there were any positive outcomes from the outcry following the Rana Plaza disaster. Are there now safer working conditions for factory workers in Bangladesh? Has anyone been held to account for this tragedy?

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Objective

- Understand the exploitation of the poor including issues relating to fair pay, excessive interest on loans and human trafficking.

Key terms

- **exploitation:** misuse of power or money to get others to do things for little or unfair reward
- **human trafficking:** the illegal movement of people, typically for the purposes of forced labour or commercial sexual exploitation

“Do not exploit the poor because they are poor.”

Proverbs 22:22 [NIV]

Excessive interest on loans

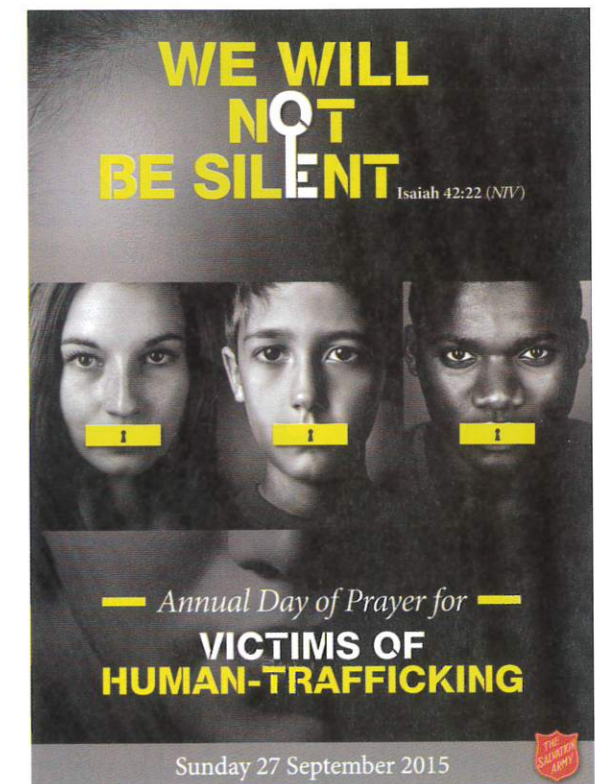
Those who are poor are vulnerable to unscrupulous moneylenders. Desperate people are sometimes lured into borrowing money at exorbitant interest rates and then find themselves unable to pay off the debt. These lenders often target low-income families. Such practices are illegal and are often linked to organised crime; serious violence may result if repayments are not made. Interest rate percentage may be in the thousands and the British Money Advice Service has reported that one woman borrowed £500 and ended up owing £88,000 in repayments. Unsecured loans such as a short-term payday loans are often attractive to people but have a very high rate of interest. People also get themselves into real problems by running up debts on credit cards.

People trafficking

Human trafficking is a multi-billion pound industry in which criminals profit from the control and exploitation of others. People wanting to get to a new and more prosperous life often pay people smugglers to get them from poverty stricken countries to developed countries. For example, there are known cases in the media of people from countries in Africa and the Middle East who want to reach EU countries and take enormous risks to do so. If they are economic migrants, rather than refugees or asylum seekers, and they are exploited, they may not dare report the traffickers to the authorities as they fear being returned to their country of origin due to their illegal status. Criminal gangs may force some migrants to work in poor conditions for little pay, or to work as prostitutes. Other victims do not intend to leave their country but are kidnapped and forced to work like slaves, or to work in the sex industry in another country.

Research activity

The Salvation Army is a Christian charity that offers help to victims of human trafficking. Using the Internet, find out about the work of this charity that is trying to put an end to trafficking, and that helps that victims recover from their experiences.



▲ Salvation Army poster promoting a day of prayer for the victims of human trafficking

Activities

- 1 Explain how some companies exploit their workers in many LEDCs.
- 2 What has been introduced into Britain to prevent workers being exploited?
- 3 Explain Christian attitudes towards fair pay.
- 4 Why do people need to be careful when borrowing money?
- 5 Explain how human trafficking exploits people.

Extension activity

- 1 Use the Internet to find out how much personal debt there is in the UK. For example, The Money Charity keeps useful statistics on their website.
- 2 Research the Palermo Protocol's definition of human trafficking.

★ Study tip

It is always useful to develop your points by giving examples. If you are writing about the effects of worker exploitation, you can mention the Rana Plaza tragedy.

Summary

You should now be able to discuss issues surrounding the exploitation of workers, excessive interest on loans and the problem of people trafficking.

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8.8 Giving money to the poor

■ Giving aid

There are times when people require immediate help with basic needs.

Emergency aid is needed after a terrible disaster such as an earthquake or flood, and charities often help by offering temporary shelter, supplies of food and water, and emergency healthcare services.

However, this is not enough to solve the long-term problem of poverty. Charities offering **long-term aid** aim to provide education, tools and skills to help people get out of poverty themselves.



▲ UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) provides a variety of relief supplies to poverty-stricken countries

Christians are guided by the key concept of justice. They believe people should be treated fairly, so many Christians buy Fairtrade products. A product can carry a Fairtrade logo if the ingredients in the product have been produced on small-scale farms that meet certain standards related to fair wages, workers' rights and the environment. Christians believe they have been given the responsibility of looking after the world (stewardship) and the poor. They also believe they have a duty to demonstrate compassion because the Bible describes how Jesus taught his followers to show Christian love; to 'love your neighbour as yourself'.

In Britain, many Christians are involved in supporting soup kitchens, food banks, and charities that provide help for those in poverty or assist them in finding work. Christians encourage everyone to use their gifts and talents (see Matthew 25:14–30), and try to balance providing help and charity with encouraging people to use their abilities to get themselves out of poverty. They also support campaigns that promote greater equality and a just society, for example the Living Wage campaign.

Objective

- Understand Christian teachings about charity and issues concerning giving money to the poor.

Key terms

- **emergency aid:** also known as short-term aid; help given to communities in a time of disaster or crisis, e.g. food during a famine, shelter after an earthquake
- **long-term aid:** assistance given to a poor country over a long period of time that has a lasting effect



▲ Some everyday items, such as food, carry the Fairtrade logo

Link

Turn to page 51 to read more about food banks.

'Send a Cow'

British Christian dairy farmers from the West Country began the charity 'Send a Cow' when the East African country of Uganda was emerging from a long civil war. Communities and their farmland had been destroyed and much of the country's livestock was wiped out. Christian farmers came up with the idea of providing a cow for a needy family. The cow would provide milk for the family and an income from selling the surplus. Once the first heifer calf was born, it was given to another poor family in the neighbourhood and they in turn did the same so that the number of people who were helped continued to grow. The scheme spread to neighbouring countries like Ethiopia, Rwanda and Kenya, and the methods for helping were increased. The charity now provides training and many other items, including tools, fruit trees, and seeds for growing vegetables, such as tomatoes, aubergines, carrots, cucumber, garlic, kale, onions, pumpkin and spinach. Other livestock is donated, for example bees, chickens, donkeys, goats and rabbits. Each family is given a package of help, which they are able to pass on to others. Over a million people have now been assisted by this scheme.

Charities like Send a Cow ensure that the money raised is turned into items that go direct to struggling families. With this method of aid,

livestock or seeds are given rather than money, and so there is less chance that the aid will be misused. Sometimes money given by governments to aid LEDCs does not get to those it was intended to help. Sometimes corrupt officials keep the money themselves or governments spend it on weapons rather than their people. To prevent this happening most Christian charities, such as Christian Aid and CAFOD, focus mostly on long-term aid and projects that will benefit the poor for years to come. Many Christians help to raise money or join a charity, and some spend time working in LEDCs on a project such as providing clean water for a village.



▲ Many Christian charities focus on long-term aid projects that will help those in need to help themselves in the future

Activities

- 1 How does the following saying relate to the idea of giving aid? 'Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.'
- 2 Give two reasons why it might not always be a good thing to give money to help the poor. Give two alternatives that could be done to help the poor.
- 3 Explain the difference between emergency aid and long-term aid. Give two reasons why short-term aid may be necessary.
- 4 Describe the work of the charity 'Send a Cow'.
- 5 Give three ways a Christian might help a charity.

Discussion activity

'Christians should always help the poor.' What do you think? Explain your answer.

Extension activity

Use the Internet or a library to find out about the work of the Disasters Emergency Committee.

Link

For details about the Christian charities CAFOD, TearFund and Christian Aid, see Chapter 2, pages 62–63.

★ Study tip

Make sure that you can support your opinions about the value of giving to the poor with reasons.

Summary

You should now be able to discuss issues related to giving money to the poor and work done by Christian charities.

Human rights – summary

You should now be able to:

- ✓ explain Christian teachings, beliefs and attitudes about social justice
- ✓ explain issues of equality and freedom of religion and belief, including freedom of religious expression
- ✓ explain what is meant by human rights and the responsibilities that come with rights, including the responsibility to respect the rights of others
- ✓ explain Christian attitudes to prejudice and discrimination in religion and belief
- ✓ explain Christian teachings, beliefs and attitudes towards the status and treatment within religion of women and homosexuals
- ✓ explain Christian teachings, beliefs and attitudes towards racial prejudice and discrimination
- ✓ Explain ethical arguments related to racial discrimination (including positive discrimination), including those based on the ideals of equality and justice.

Wealth and poverty – summary

You should now be able to:

- ✓ explain what Christians believe is the right attitude to wealth and the uses of wealth
- ✓ explain Christian teaching regarding the responsibilities of wealth, including the duty to tackle poverty and its causes
- ✓ explain problems concerning the exploitation of the poor, including issues such as fair pay, excessive interest on loans and people-trafficking
- ✓ explain the responsibilities of those living in poverty to help themselves overcome the difficulties they face
- ✓ explain Christian teachings, beliefs and attitudes towards charity and giving money to the poor
- ✓ explain contemporary British attitudes (both religious and non-religious) towards all of the above issues
- ✓ explain contrasting beliefs in contemporary British society on the three issues of the status of women in religion, the uses of wealth and freedom of religious expression, with reference to the main religious tradition in Britain (Christianity) and one or more other religious traditions.

Sample student answer – the 12 mark question

1. Write an answer to the following question.

'Racism is the worst form of prejudice.'

Evaluate this statement. In your answer, you:

- should give reasoned arguments to support this statement
- should give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- should refer to religious arguments
- may refer to non-religious arguments
- should reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]
[+ 3 SPaG marks]

2. Read the following sample student answer:

"Some people have believed in the past that some races are inferior to others. Hitler believed this and picked on the Jews and had millions of them sent to concentration camps and then to the gas chambers. He wanted to wipe out the Jewish race and the holocaust resulted. So racism can be a terrible thing. It can cause genocide where one race kills people of another race simply because they are different. But we cannot change the race that we are. We are born belonging to that race and remain part of that race all our lives.

Although the Dutch Reformed Church supported apartheid in South Africa, most Christians are opposed to racism in all its forms. Paul in his letter to the Galatians said that 'There is neither Jew nor Gentile ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus'. Christians believe that we are all equal as we were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). There is, therefore, no

excuse for racism. That is why many Christians have fought against it. Archbishop Desmond Tutu was one of the leaders against apartheid in South Africa but perhaps the most famous Christian who opposed racism was Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr was a Baptist minister who organised a 'bus boycott' when a black woman, Rosa Parks, was arrested for not giving up her seat to a white man. He became leader of the 'Civil Rights Movement' and led many marches demanding equal rights for black people. Thousands joined his campaign and in Washington DC he made a very famous speech about having a dream that one day people of all races would be able to join hands and sing, 'Free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last'.

In conclusion you can see that racism causes not only prejudice but also discrimination. People are very badly affected by racism and it should be brought to an end. That is why laws have been passed to ban racism in Britain today."

3. With a partner, discuss the sample answer. Is the focus of the answer correct? Is anything missing from the answer? How do you think it could be improved?
4. What mark (out of 12) would you give this answer? Look at the mark scheme in the Introduction (AO2). What are the reasons for the mark you have given?
5. Now swap your answer with your partner's and mark each other's responses. What mark (out of 12) would you give the response? Refer to the mark scheme and give reasons for the mark you award.

Practice questions

- 1 Which **one** of the following is the main religious tradition in Britain?
A) Buddhism B) Christianity C) Islam D) Hinduism [1 mark]
- 2 Give **two** of the causes of poverty. [2 marks]
- 3 Explain **two** contrasting beliefs in contemporary British society about what role women should be allowed in worship.
In your answer you must refer to one or more religious traditions. [4 marks]
- 4 Explain **two** religious beliefs about social justice.
Refer to sacred writings or another source of religious belief and teaching in your answer. [5 marks]
- 5 'All religious believers must give to charities that help the poor.'
Evaluate this statement. In your answer you:
 - should give reasoned arguments to support this statement
 - should give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
 - should refer to religious arguments
 - may refer to non-religious arguments
 - should reach a justified conclusion.[12 marks]
[+ 3 SPaG marks]