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Contents

TERM 1
Section 1 ........................................................................................................................................ 1

Topic 1 Variety of religions
  Unit 1 Some important concepts ............................................................................................. 3
  Unit 2 Internal differentiations within religions ..................................................................... 8
  Unit 3 Unique features of various religions ......................................................................... 24
  Formal assessment 1a – Source-based task ........................................................................... 40
  Unit 4 Inter-religious relationships past and present ............................................................ 41
  Formal assessment task 1b – Source-based task .................................................................... 58

Topic 4 Research into and across religions
  Unit 5 Researching religion in areas of conflict ................................................................. 60
  Formal assessment task 1c – Source-based task .................................................................... 70

TERM 2
Section 2 ...................................................................................................................................... 71

Topic 3 Topical issues in society
  Unit 1 How can religious people help to solve social problems? ........................................ 72
  Unit 2 How the media influences public opinion on religion .............................................. 81
  Formal assessment task 3a – Extended writing task .............................................................. 87

Topic 2 Common features of religion as a generic and unique phenomenon
  Unit 3 Religious teachings in different religions ................................................................. 88
  Unit 4 The central teachings in Taoism ............................................................................... 99
  Unit 5 Normative sources in different religions ................................................................. 112
  Formal assessment task 3b – Extended writing task ........................................................... 120

TERM 3
Section 3 ..................................................................................................................................... 121

Topic 2 Common features of religion as a generic and unique phenomenon
  Unit 1 Interpreting a normative source .................................................................................. 122
  Formal assessment task 6a – Project ..................................................................................... 135
  Unit 2 Examining secular worldviews .................................................................................... 138
  Formal assessment task 6b – Research project ...................................................................... 148

Topic 4 Research into and across religions
  Unit 3 Exploring religion and the natural sciences ................................................................. 149

Topic 3 Topical issues in society
  Unit 4 Considering religious freedom, human rights, and responsibilities ........................ 169

TERM 4
Consolidation, revision and examination practice ................................................................. 184
Glossary ....................................................................................................................................... 198
Dear Learner

Welcome to Religion Studies Grade 12.

What is the purpose of Religion Studies?
In your final year you will again learn about religions found in different cultures and countries, without favouring any one religion. Until recently only Christianity was studied in Religious Education in South African schools, but our Constitution encourages respect for all religions. This does not mean that you are discouraged from following your own religion, or even that you need to belong to a religion. Rather, we hope that through this subject others will understand you and your beliefs better, and you will understand theirs better too.

You will increase your knowledge about religions through personal reflection, research and dialogue with others, and through holding constructive debates and discussions. You will think about your values and personal choices. When you do this, you will be encouraged to show sensitivity and respect to religions and their followers.

Your rights and responsibilities
The topics that you will cover are listed at the beginning of each chapter. You have a right to know how you will be assessed on these topics and by what criteria. Your responsibility is to understand the criteria and present evidence to show you have met them.

You also have a right to be given a fair chance to understand the work and succeed. There should be no unfair barriers to prevent you from doing well.

Assessment
Assessment this year will be informal and formal. There will be many daily or informal tasks provided in this book.

Your formal assessment includes seven tasks, the marks for which make up 25% of your year mark; the balance of 75% is made up by your final external examination:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term 1</th>
<th>Term 2</th>
<th>Term 3</th>
<th>Term 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task 1 Source-based task:</td>
<td>Task 3 Open book extended writing:</td>
<td>Task 5 Test: 100 marks</td>
<td>External end-of-year examination:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 marks 1a (p40), 1b (p58),</td>
<td>100 marks 3a (p87), 3b (p120)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 two-hour papers (150+150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c (p70)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>300 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 2 Test: 100 marks</td>
<td>Task 4 Mid-year examination: 2</td>
<td>Task 6 Project: 100 marks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>two-hour papers (150+150) 300 marks</td>
<td></td>
<td>6a (p135), 6b (p148)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The following are the rating codes that will most often be used to assess your work this year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement rating codes</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Achievement rating codes</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Outstanding achievement</td>
<td>80—100</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Moderate achievement</td>
<td>40—49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Meritorious achievement</td>
<td>70—79</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Elementary achievement</td>
<td>30—39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Substantial achievement</td>
<td>60—69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not achieved</td>
<td>0—29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Adequate achievement</td>
<td>50—59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We wish you success this year!
The authors
How this book works

TERM 2 SECTION 2
Topical issues in society & Common features of religion as a generic and unique phenomenon

This section focuses on how religion relates to social policies and the way in which religions are used to solve these problems. You will also see how religion works within different situations. This section also includes a number of topics that you will be introduced to in this chapter. You will see how these topics come together in a number of religions. In particular, you will come across contemporary issues and their effect on society.

This diagram shows you what you will cover in this section.

Think about what you already know
- How are different religions used to solve social problems?
- Where do your beliefs come from?
- How do religions differ from one another?
- Why are some religions more popular than others?

New, challenging and interesting information is given here.

This book has many interesting activities that you will want to do and learn from.

The meaning of new words is given here to help you as you read.

When the unique meets the unique: Christianity and Hinduism

The unique relationship between Hindus and Christians began with the creation of India and Christianity in the late 16th century. Since then, the British have been involved in the sub-continent, and their religion has thus been a colony of British influence and therefore part of the British Empire. Today, the sub-continent numbers hundreds of millions and is one of the world's most diverse religious societies, with religions such as Islam and Hinduism being a major part of the population. The British influence on the sub-continent has had a significant impact on the sub-continent and its people. It has been a colony of British influence and therefore part of the British Empire. Today, the sub-continent numbers hundreds of millions and is one of the world's most diverse religious societies, with religions such as Islam and Hinduism being a major part of the population. The British influence on the sub-continent has had a significant impact on the sub-continent and its people.
TERM 1 SECTION 1
Variety of religions & Research into and across religions

You are embarking on your final year of study of religion at school level. Perhaps this subject has sparked your interest enough for you to consider following it through in your tertiary studies. For now, we will be consolidating and extending your knowledge about concepts and themes in this field, as well as developing your analytical and research skills to apply to topical issues in society in which religion has an important voice.

This first section covers some familiar conceptual, historical and contextual ground and also introduces you to some new ideas and developments. You will examine internal divisions that occur in different religions, from historical and current perspectives. This is followed by a study of the unique features of different religions. You will then explore in greater depth the relationships between religions – historically and in current times. And finally, you will sharpen your research skills through an analysis of conflict situations in which religions are involved.

At the end of the term you will write a test, and these marks (out of 100), plus certain tasks (also out of 100) that you will complete during the term, contribute to your year mark for Religion Studies and will be added to your final assessment.

This diagram shows you what you will cover in this section.

- What do these concepts mean: religious identity, uniqueness, unity, similarity, difference, comparability?
- How are different religions divided internally?
- What are some unique features of religions you have studied?
- How do religions relate to one another – in South Africa, Africa, and internationally?
- How do we analyse religions’ involvement in local or global conflicts?
TERM 1 SECTION 1
Variety of religions & Research into and across religions

You are embarking on your final year of study of religion at school level. Perhaps this subject has sparked your interest enough for you to consider following it through in your tertiary studies. For now, we will be consolidating and extending your knowledge about concepts and themes in this field, as well as developing your analytical and research skills to apply to topical issues in society in which religion has an important voice.

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This diagram shows you what you will cover in this section.

Can you identify the religion of the people? What gives a religion its identity, makes it unique, similar or different to another religion? These are some of the ideas you will explore and investigate this term.
THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW

Do this short activity in small groups. Then come together as a class to discuss the questions.

1. Explain what these words mean: identity, unique, unity, similar, different, comparable?

2. Can you name some divisions in religions you have already studied?

3. What can you remember about the following religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, African Traditional Religion and Judaism?

4. Which of the above religions have some similar features?

5. Do you remember the names of any organisations – in South Africa or the world – that are dedicated to building relationships across different religions?

6. Can you name any current local or global conflicts? How would you evaluate religions’ role in these conflicts – as a force for cooperation and peace; or as a contributor to the chaos and violence? Give reasons for your views.
Correct use of language and terminology is important when discussing religion. In this unit you will explore some new concepts and practise using them in situations involving different religions. These concepts will be useful as you work through the other units in this section.

**REQUINOUS IDENTITY**

When we talk about identity, we mean characteristics that give people a sense of who they are. As South Africans, for example, we have a sense of identity that is different from that of someone who is from Brazil or Germany or Nigeria. We identify ourselves with South Africa and feel we belong to the country. That is a broad identification. We can then narrow down the concept of identity to a sense of belonging to those people who live in the same area as we do, or share a culture and language.

**Activity 1.1 Define your identity**

1. Work on your own to write a short definition of your identity. For example, “I identify myself as a young mother and wife, and a person who is dedicated to helping HIV and AIDS orphans.”
2. Work in pairs. Read your definition to your partner.
   a. Is your partner surprised by the way you identified yourself?
   b. Ask your partner to explain his or her reaction to your definition.

You may have identified yourself as belonging to a particular religion. Religious identity is important. Many people feel their lives are defined by the religion they follow and they may even place this identity above their national identity. Religious identity is a form of self-identification. An exclusive religious identity is one in which you identify strongly with the beliefs and doctrines of the religion and see these as defining your life. For example, many Muslims believe that their identity as Muslims forms an essential part of their ‘being’ and is exclusive to them.

**Activity 1.2 Analyse a source and do a presentation**

Work in groups.

1. Read the text in the box on page 4.
2. Discuss these questions before writing the answers in your workbook.
   a. What do you think self-identification means? (Think back to what you did in Activity 1.1.)
b. What does self-declaration mean?

c. Which religions do you think strive “towards exclusive identity”? (Think back to what you learned in Grades 10 and 11.)

d. Do you think religions stay the same and never change? Quote from the text to support your answer.

3. Prepare a short oral presentation on religious identity to share with your class.

Religious identity involves the self-identification and self-declaration of those who believe in and follow the doctrines of a particular religion. There are two complementary tendencies that have shaped religions through the ages. The first is a tendency to form a strong religious identity with the help of an exclusive self-image that tries to promote your form of belief as unique. Usually this happens by means of clearly defined doctrines, rituals and customs, as well as clearly established criteria for drawing the boundaries that separate one community’s religion from all the others. We can regard this type of religious identity as a striving towards exclusive identity. The second is a tendency to accommodate and adapt, or even mix, the forms, beliefs and thought patterns of different traditions. This approach leans towards syncretism.

(Adapted from Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopaedia)
UNIQUENESS

Encarta Online Dictionary defines the word ‘unique’ as:

“limited to somebody or something; limited to a specific place, situation, group, person, or thing”

So how is this concept used in a religious sense? Let’s begin by looking at the term as it applies to a small group. An example might be a group of counsellors who want to help children who have been abused. The group may make a unique decision to attempt reconciliation between the abuser and the survivor in an effort to restore social harmony. This would make the group different in a unique way to other groups working in the same field, who focus only on supporting the survivors of abuse.

Similarly, each religion, no matter how closely linked to others, has unique features. Many religions are monotheistic; some are polytheistic. Many believe in life after death; some believe in reincarnation. But each one has a feature or features that distinguish it from others. Uniqueness implies more than just differences. It is the single most important feature which sets one religion apart from another (you will learn more about this in Unit 3).

Activity 1.3 Discuss what makes religions unique

1. Work in small groups. Discuss what you think is the most significant unique feature in each one of these religions: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, African Traditional Religion and Hinduism.

2. Compare your group’s answers with those of other groups. Have a class discussion about any similarities and differences in the responses.

UNITY

Unity refers to the feeling of being at one with something – a union is a joining together of two or more things. People are not isolated beings; they live in social groups and share in many group activities. Many people have a sense of unity when they belong to a group, for example, a sports club, or a group of friends who socialise together, or a book club. People have spiritual needs, and belonging to a religion can fulfil many people’s sense of unity in that regard. When we are in the company of people of our own religion, particularly when we are involved in an act of worship or a ritual, we are likely to experience a great sense of unity.

Unity is an interesting concept when applied to religions. Many religions themselves are not totally uniform or united. For example, there are often calls for Christians to unite and come together for some social cause, or for there to be greater Islamic unity in, for example, Iraq. So unity, when applied to religion, can have more than one meaning. For example, Jews may have a sense of unity when they compare themselves to Christians, but within Judaism itself there could be groupings – such as Reform and Orthodox Jews – that allow different people to experience true unity only when they worship in a particular manner.

reconciliation – when there is understanding and perhaps forgiveness between people who have had a bad relationship
monotheistic – describes a belief in one god
polytheistic – describes a belief in many gods
reincarnation – the rebirth of the soul or spirit in a new body
Orthodox Jews are those who belong to a more conservative strand of Judaism, in contrast to Reform or more liberal Jews.

There is another meaning of the word ‘unity’ when we look at it as a religious concept. Many religions believe that a sense of unity with the Supreme Being is an important part of their religious experience. This is a sense of being at one with the divine power as a defined by each religion.

**SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

The terms ‘similarities’ and ‘differences’ have fairly easy everyday definitions. When we talk about differences, we mean features that separate items or people from one another. The everyday meaning of the word ‘similarities’ refers to features which things or people have in common.

But how can these terms be applied as religious concepts? When it comes to differences between religions, these can be small or large differences. Likewise with similarities – these can be quite superficial or very deep and fundamental.

**Activity 1.4 Identify religions’ similarities and differences**

On your own, copy and complete the table at the top of the next page. Fill in the similarities and differences between these religions. Think back to what you learned in Grade 11 about the essential features of each religion.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Islam</th>
<th>African Traditional Religion</th>
<th>Hinduism</th>
<th>Christianity</th>
<th>Buddhism</th>
<th>Judaism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Islamic symbol]</td>
<td>![African symbol]</td>
<td>![Hindu symbol]</td>
<td>![Christian symbol]</td>
<td>![Buddhist symbol]</td>
<td>![Jewish symbol]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COMPARABILITY**

When we use the word ‘comparability’ in an everyday way, it means that the things being compared are similar enough for a fair comparison to be made. For example, we can compare apples and pears as they are both fruit, but we cannot compare a table and a book.

You know that religions all have certain characteristics in common. Perhaps the most common feature that underlies all religions is the search for meaning. However, what we need to consider is whether all religions have enough in common to be compared, or whether some differ so fundamentally in their central beliefs that they cannot be compared at all.

**Activity 1.5 Debate whether religions are comparable**

1. Work in groups to debate this topic: *All religions can be compared to one another.* Make notes of the points raised by your group.

2. When the debates are over, the scribe from each group reports back to the whole class on the opinions raised in your group. Identify and discuss the similarities and differences and then come to a conclusion.

**Informal peer and self-assessment**

Write one sentence using each word below. Your sentences must show clearly that you understand what the words mean as religious concepts.

- identity
- unity
- difference
- uniqueness
- similarity
- comparability

Swap sentences with a partner. Give your partner some feedback on how well she or he explained each concept.
Unit 2 Internal differentiations within religions

Every religion has some beliefs that are not negotiable, that all the religion’s followers share. However, within most religions, interpretations of beliefs may differ from one school of thought to another. Sometimes these differences are major and have even led to religious wars, and sometimes they are minor. This unit helps you to identify some differences within religions, with respect to teaching, governance and practice.

A ‘school of thought’ is like a strand or branch; for example, in Buddhism, the names of the different schools are based on where the leaders were schooled. In Christianity, there are different branches, like Roman Catholicism, Protestantism and Greek Orthodox. Within Protestantism, there are other divisions called denominations.

Activity 1.6 Discuss religious difference

Work in groups to discuss these questions. Remember to give reasons for your views.

1. Is religious difference a good thing or not? Does difference mean there can never be unity?
2. Is it easier to be tolerant of other faiths, or of different groups in your own religion?

---

Grades 10 and 11 revision

Before looking at the differences within religions, remind yourself of the major features of some religions that you learned about in Grades 10 and 11.

- Judaism has the central idea of a **covenant** between God and the Jewish people. God protects his chosen people, who in turn, carry out his rules.

- Christians believe that Jesus fulfilled the Jewish prophecy of a Messiah; that he is a universal saviour.

- Muslims believe that Allah revealed the final truth to Muhammad.

- Hindus believe there is only one ultimate reality, but many paths to reaching it. Hinduism is underpinned by the belief in reincarnation.
Confucianism teaches that the universe works according to a cosmic order and humans should live according to this cosmic order in a properly organised society.

Taoism proposes that humans live their lives effortlessly in harmony with the Tao (way) of the universe.

In the African Traditional Religion, the ancestors are the Creator’s messengers and caretakers of the physical world. They look after the welfare of the living, mainly through the elderly, who in turn, teach the youth orally through the rituals.

Buddhism does not teach about a god/gods but encourages a way of living to end suffering caused by unfulfilled human desires.

DIFERENT GROUPS IN BUDDHISM

You will remember that Buddhism began in India in the 6th century BCE with the life and teachings of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama. For the next 500 years the sangha (community) grew from small groups of wandering monks and nuns, to become a major religion on the Indian subcontinent. During the 1st century BCE, the first Buddhist scriptures were written, and later Buddhism divided into the two major schools, Theravada and Mahayana.

Theravada Buddhism

Theravada means ‘The Way of the Elders’ and began after a split at the third Buddhist Council around 250 BCE. This school claims to be based on the original beliefs and practices of the Buddha and the early monastic elders. It is found mainly in southern Asia, especially in Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Cambodia and Laos.

Think about this

Buddhism was named after Siddhartha Gautama and he is known as the historical Buddha. However, because of the Buddhist belief in reincarnation, there is a succession of Buddhas or ‘wise teachers’. So there is more than one Buddha. The name ‘Buddha’ comes from Sanskrit (an ancient language of the far East) and means ‘enlightened one’.

The Nan Hua Temple, the largest Buddhist temple and monastery in Africa, is in Bronkhorstspruit near Johannesburg. It was erected by the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist order.

The Buddhist Retreat Centre in Ixopo, KwaZulu-Natal
nirvana – a state of perfect happiness and peace in Buddhism.
compassion – a feeling for others that involves care for and sympathy with them

Its teachings are taken from the Tripitaka, which contain many of the words of the historical Buddha passed down orally by the monks, and then written down. The oldest complete form of the Tripitaka is the Pali Canon.

Theravada promotes the concept of Vibhajjavada (in the Pali language, this means ‘Teaching of analysis’), which uses critical methods of investigation as opposed to blind faith. With this method, the answer has to be discovered by the spiritual seeker – by valid thought and experience, in order to reach the first glimpse of the goal.

(www.answers.com/topic/vibhajjavada)

The Four Noble Truths form the core of Theravada Buddhism and other teachings, and they include:

- The central doctrine of anatman. It means that the ego or the self imprisons us, and once free of the ego, we can become enlightened and experience nirvana.
- Enlightenment comes about through an individual’s efforts, and not by the intervention or intercession of others, or of any gods.
- Disciplined meditation is a key practice.

**Mahayana Buddhism**

This school of Buddhism is also known as the Greater Vehicle, and first emerged in the 1st century CE. Today, this form of Buddhism is mainly found in North Asia and the Far East, including China, Japan, Korea, Tibet and Mongolia.

There are many sub-divisions of Mahayana Buddhism: some are only for those who live in monasteries, while others are for laypeople; some only use meditation practices, while others include chanting and prayer. All schools of Mahayana Buddhism claim to be based on the historical Buddha’s teachings. These are:

- Shunyata which carries the seemingly contradictory meaning of being both ‘free from permanence and non-existence’.
- There is no such thing as an individual, autonomous self – all being is connected.
- The ideal is not for individual enlightenment, but to strive for collective enlightenment.
- All Mahayanas strive to become a bodhisattva – someone who is at the service of the enlightenment of others, helping them to be free from the cycle of birth and rebirth.
- The motivation for enlightenment is compassion for all living things. One who has achieved the compassionate mind of bodhicitta is called a bodhisattva.
- In addition to drawing on the Tripitaka, Mahayana has also developed other texts.

We will examine two branches of Mahayana – Tibetan and Zen Buddhism.
**Tibetan Buddhism**

Tibetan Buddhism is the school found in Tibet, the Himalayan region, Mongolia, Buryatia, Tuva, Kalmykia (Russia) and north-eastern China. It has been called esoteric. ‘Esoteric’ means that it is quite secretive and special. Its secrets are revealed only to those who have been ‘initiated’ into the tradition. Practices used include meditation, rituals, use of objects and chanting. There is also a practice wherein lost or hidden ancient scriptures are recovered by spiritual masters, often using methods like trances to recover such wisdom. Tibetan Buddhists use ritual and chanting in addition to a systematic teaching of Buddhist doctrine and principles.

As with other schools of Mahayana, Tibetan Buddhism believes in a pantheon of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and dharma protectors. But it also has a number of unique beliefs, including:

- belief in the reincarnation of lineages of certain lamas (teachers) such as the Dalai Lama;
- belief that a Buddha can be shown in human form, such as in the person of Padmasambhava, the saint who brought Tibetan Buddhism to the Himalayan mountains in Asia.

Dharma protectors are mythic and often fearsome figures incorporated into Tibetan Buddhism from various sources including Hinduism and the Bön religion. They are pledged to protecting and upholding the dharma. A town or district may have its own dharma protector with its own local mythology. The Bön religion – the oldest spiritual tradition of Tibet – has its roots in pre-Buddhist religious practices and was partly absorbed by the Mahayana branch of Buddhism introduced in the 7th century.

---

Dorje Shugden, a dharma protector

Trance – state of altered and peaceful consciousness or mind
Pantheon – a number of gods in a particular religious tradition
Dharma – the way of Higher Truths and the teachings and doctrines of the religion
Lineage – the line of descent from an ancestor to a person or a family

---

Tibetan Buddhist monks at Doi Suthep Temple in the city of Chiang Mai
The head of Tibetan Buddhism is the Dalai Lama – this is a title that has been used in Tibet since 1391. There have been a succession of Dalai Lamas and from the 17th century until 1959, Tibet was ruled by the Dalai Lama. When the People’s Republic of China invaded Tibet in 1959 the current Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, fled Tibet and has been a spiritual leader in exile ever since. In the past, Tibetan Buddhism was referred to by some as ‘Lamaism’ because of the belief that the Lama is reincarnated as a Buddha. However, because the school comes from Tibet, a more accurate name is Tibetan Buddhism.

(Activity 1.7 Discuss Tibetan Buddhism)

Work in pairs to discuss these questions before writing the answers in your workbook.

1. Why was Tibetan Buddhism once called Lamaism?
2. “Anybody can practise Tibetan Buddhism without understanding it.” Why is this comment not true?
3. Explain the term “a pantheon of Buddhas”.
4. What similarities does Tibetan Buddhism share with the Mahayana school of Buddhism?
5. How does the use of ritual, objects, and chanting help to make meditation easier?

Vajrayana is a school of Buddhism that has all the features of Mahayana and is closely linked to Tibetan Buddhism, but also includes Hindu yoga.

Zen Buddhism

Zen is a branch of Mahayana Buddhism which emphasises meditation. It emerged as a distinct school in China between 420 and 479 BCE and spread to Vietnam, Korea, Japan and, in modern times, to the rest of the world. The common English name comes from the school’s name in Japanese, zen, which means ‘meditation’. Zen practitioners meditate in order to attain enlightenment.

In the Zen tradition, the role of the Zen teacher is very important. This is because the Zen tradition emphasises direct communication and not scriptural study, or the study of religious texts. Zen teachers are chosen to teach the dharma, guide students in meditation, and perform rituals.

An important belief of Zen Buddhism is that there is a line of authority that goes back to the Buddha. According to this belief, each master after the Buddha passed on the Buddha’s teaching to the students, some of whom became masters and passed it along once more, until today. This notion is known as dharma transmission. Ideas expressed by the Buddha are known as Bodhidharma and include:

- a special transmission outside the scriptures
- no dependence upon words and letters
The head of Tibetan Buddhism is the Dalai Lama – this is a title that has been used in Tibet since 1391. There have been a succession of Dalai Lamas and from the 17th century until 1959, Tibet was ruled by the Dalai Lama. When the People’s Republic of China invaded Tibet in 1959 the current Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, fled Tibet and has been a spiritual leader in exile ever since. In the past, Tibetan Buddhism was referred to by some as ‘Lamaism’ because of the belief that the Lama is reincarnated as a Buddha. However, because the school comes from Tibet, a more accurate name is Tibetan Buddhism.

(Adapted from www.tibet.com/Buddhism/index.html)

Activity 1.7 Discuss Tibetan Buddhism

Work in pairs to discuss these questions before writing the answers in your workbook.

1. Why was Tibetan Buddhism once called Lamaism?
2. “Anybody can practise Tibetan Buddhism without understanding it.” Why is this comment not true?
3. Explain the term “a pantheon of Buddhas”.
4. What similarities does Tibetan Buddhism share with the Mahayana school of Buddhism?
5. How does the use of ritual, objects, and chanting help to make meditation easier?

Vajrayana is a school of Buddhism that has all the features of Mahayana and is closely linked to Tibetan Buddhism, but also includes Hindu yoga.

Zen Buddhism

Zen is a branch of Mahayana Buddhism which emphasises meditation. It emerged as a distinct school in China between 420 and 479 BCE and spread to Vietnam, Korea, Japan and, in modern times, to the rest of the world. The common English name comes from the school’s name in Japanese, zen, which means ‘meditation’. Zen practitioners meditate in order to attain enlightenment.

In the Zen tradition, the role of the Zen teacher is very important. This is because the Zen tradition emphasises direct communication and not scriptural study, or the study of religious texts. Zen teachers are chosen to teach the dharma, guide students in meditation, and perform rituals.

An important belief of Zen Buddhism is that there is a line of authority that goes back to the Buddha. According to this belief, each master after the Buddha passed on the Buddha’s teaching to the students, some of whom became masters and passed it along once more, until today. This notion is known as dharma transmission. Ideas expressed by the Buddha are known as Bodhidharma and include:
- a special transmission outside the scriptures
- no dependence upon words and letters
seeing into one’s own nature and attaining Buddhahood, which is that state of being a Buddha or being ‘enlightened’.

Japanese Zen teachers have frequently made the point that Zen is a way of life and not solely a state of consciousness. David T Suzuki (1870—1966), a well-known Japanese Zen Buddhist and author who was largely responsible for bringing Zen Buddhism to the attention of the West, wrote that the aspects of his life are: a life of humility, a life of labour, a life of service, a life of prayer and gratitude, and a life of meditation. (Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopaedia)

Activity 1.8 Summarise the differences

Work in groups to discuss the main differences between Tibetan, Zen and Theravada Buddhism.

ISLAM

There are two major schools of thought in Islam:

- 85% of Muslims are Sunni.
- 15% of Muslims are Shi’a.

The Sunni–Shi’a split started after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 CE. A disagreement arose over who was the true successor to Muhammad, with the Sunnis believing that Muhammad’s father-in-law, Abu Bakr, should be the first caliph. Shi’a Muslims, on the other hand, believed that Muhammad’s son-in-law, Ali ibn abi Talib, was the true successor. Over the years disagreements have escalated over the interpretation of certain hadith and laws as well, with some groups going to war over this religious split.

Sunni Muslims

Sunni view of hadith

The Qur’an as we have it today was written down in approximately 650 CE, and is accepted by all Muslim denominations. However, there are many matters of belief and daily life that were not directly prescribed in the Qur’an, but simply the practice of the community. Later generations of scholars and teachers (imams) sought out oral traditions about the early history of Islam, and the practices of Muhammad and his first followers, and wrote them down so that they might be preserved. These recorded oral traditions are called hadith. Muslim scholars sifted through the hadith and evaluated the chain of narration of each tradition, scrutinising the trustworthiness of the narrators and judging the strength of each hadith accordingly. Most Sunni accept the hadith collections of Imam Bukhari. They believe that Bukhari spent 16 years collecting and writing down those traditions he thought trustworthy. They recount that Bukhari collected over 300 000 hadith as the most authentic (sahih, or correct), and they grant a lesser status to the collections of the other recorders.

(Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopaedia)
Activity 1.9 Read and write about *hadith*

1. Read the text on page 13 from Wikipedia, the Free Online Encyclopaedia.
2. Are these statements true or false? Give reasons for your answers.
   a. The Qur'an is accepted by all Muslims.
   b. All *hadith* are seen as equally inspired.
   c. *Hadith* follow basically an oral tradition, rather than a written one.
   d. Anybody can sift through *hadith* and decide whether or not they are trustworthy.

**Shi’a Muslims**

Shi’a Muslims are the second largest denomination of Muslims. They follow what they consider to be the true teachings of the prophet Muhammad and his Ahl al-Bayt (family of Muhammad). Most Shi’a Muslims are found in the East. In Iran about 93.4% of the Muslim population is Shi’a. Shi’as, like Sunnis, follow the Five Pillars of Islam.

**Think about this**

About 85–90% of the world’s Muslims are Sunni, 10–15% are Shi’a. One of the problems, according to Shi’a in estimating the Shi’a population, is that unless the Shi’a form a significant minority in a Muslim country, the entire population is listed as Sunni. This may contribute to imprecise estimates of each sect.

(Encyclopaedia, the Free Online Encyclopaedia)

**Grades 10 and 11 revision**

In Grades 10 and 11 you learned that the Five Pillars of Islam are the basic obligations that every Muslim must observe. They are: 1. *shahada* – witnessing to the belief that there is no god apart from God and that Muhammad is the messenger of God; 2. *salat* – saying the formal daily prayers; 3. *zakat* – paying one’s social tax; 4. *hajj* – making a pilgrimage to Mecca; 5. *sawm* – fasting during Ramadan.

Historically, Shi’as have a history of being persecuted and intimidated by Sunnis, some of whom consider Shi’as as disbelievers and have at various stages of history condemned them to death. Shi’a and Sunni disagree about the role of Ali, Muhammad’s son-in-law: according to the Shi’as he was the first imam, but the Sunnis consider him to have been the last of the four caliphs. The Sunnis considered the responsibilities of the caliph merely to administer community affairs and guard the legacy, but not to try and continue the work of the Prophet; whereas the Shi’as believe that the Islamic leader and teacher, whom they call the *imam*, was given the spiritual power and responsibility to interpret the Qur’an and to lead the Islamic community *infallibly*. There is also disagreement over the importance of others of Muhammad’s companions and family members with regard to who has the truest version of the *hadith*.

More recently, many (but not all) Sunni leaders and scholars have become more tolerant of Shi’a Muslims. They have tried to promote unity between the groups and their attitude is less confrontational. For example, the al-Azhar theological school in Egypt, one of the main centres of Sunni scholarship, announced the al-Azhar Shi’a *fatwa* in 1959. The *fatwa* is a legally binding declaration and this one said: “The Shi’a is a school of thought that is religious and correct to follow as are other Sunni schools of thought.” Today, both Shi’a
and Sunni students study alongside one another and graduate at the al-Azhar theological school.

**Sufism**

Some scholars describe Sufism as the mystical dimension of Islam rather than a sect governed by different interpretations or beliefs. It emphasises certain unique rituals for guiding spiritual seekers into a direct encounter with God.

One of the important rituals in Sufism is the *zikr* where the believer encounters God through meditation, chant, and whirling dance movement. Attributes of God are repeated and seekers may spin and whirl around for hours during this ecstatic practice until they reach a point of ecstasy, which they experience as total abandonment and self-emptying.

Rumi, a 13th century Persian Sufi, is well known in the West for his poetry. Here is an extract from one of his poems:

```
Come, come, whoever you are.
Wanderer, worshipper, lover of living, it doesn't matter
Ours is not a caravan of despair.
Come even if you have broken your vow a thousand times,
Come, yet again, come, come.
```

(Quoted in *Rumi and His Sufi Path of Love* (2007) by M Fatih Ctitak and Huseyin Bingul, p. 81)

![Sufis perform a whirling trancelike spiritual dance, like this dancer in Hamad el-Nil, Omdurman in Sudan.](image)

**Activity 1.10 Talk about divisions in Islam**

Work in pairs to discuss these questions.

1. a. Describe some of the differences between the Sunnis and the Shi‘as.
   
   b. How did the al-Azhar Shi‘a *fatwa* help to create more tolerance between Sunnis and Shi‘as?

2. Work as a class to debate this topic: *Is it ever justifiable to be dogmatic about one’s beliefs?*

3. Research other poems by Rumi and read them aloud in class.

**Islam in South Africa**

The biggest differentiation within the Muslim community seems to be in the application of the principles outlined in the Qur’an, not in the teachings or beliefs themselves. The historical context of South Africa has given birth to a new group of Muslim theologians and thinkers who promote a radical reinterpretation of Islam. This has led to serious and sometimes violent conflict between traditionalist or ultra-conservative Muslims and the young scholars labelled ‘modernists’. The term ‘modernist’ is used by the traditional Muslim establishment in South Africa against anyone calling for the reinterpretation of Islam. The influences of Latin American liberation theology (see page 74), pluralism, post-modernism, and post-colonial theory are clearly evident in the writings and theories of this new group of Muslim theorists.
Grades 10 and 11 revision

The pluralist view suggests the all the religious traditions are ‘ways’ along which people find salvation, liberation, and fulfillment. Each religion has its own rules and patterns for its followers, for example, Jesus Christ for Christians, the Torah for Jews, the Eightfold Path for Buddhists, and the Five Pillars for Muslims. They are all valid and must be respected. People have the right to express their beliefs the way they want to.

Grades 10 and 11 revision

Post-modern philosophers argue that there is no objective truth since all knowledge and culture is socially constructed. In other words, your position in society (class), your background (cultural history), and your personal goals (aspirations), all influence what you know and how you view the world. Post-modern thinkers say we develop our worldviews and explanations of reality unconsciously to support our goals and values. So we may really believe that we represent the world as it is. The post-modern task is to analyse these worldviews and explanations to make it clear what interests the holders of these views have in putting them forward.

Informal self-assessment

If you answer ‘no’ to these questions, ask your teacher to revise pages 13 to 15.

- Can I state the basic beliefs of Islam?
- Do I understand what hadith are?
- Do I understand some differences between Sunnis and Shi’as?
- Have I read at least one poem by Rumi?

CHRISTIANITY

This conversation between four young people shows that Christians can vary greatly in their practices and even their beliefs.

SHIREEN: As a baby, I was baptised into the Anglican church, and as a young adult I confirmed my belief in God. The church then made me a member. That’s what we do in our church.

THEMBA: I’m a Protestant and I go to the local Baptist church. We believe in all the things you do, Shireen, but we baptise only adult believers who have given their lives to Christ.

RACHEL: I agree with most of what you two believe, but we don’t have a church building like you do. I’m Charismatic. We have a hall, and our services aren’t from a prayer book. We sing songs – the words are put up on an overhead projector. We baptise believers in swimming pools and believe that people who believe in God and have taken Jesus as their Lord are baptised in the Holy Spirit.
TREVOR: I go to the Church of Latter Day Saints, and am called a Mormon. We believe in God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. But we don’t believe they are one God; three different Gods form the Godhead.

THEMBA: Do you believe that Jesus was God’s son?

TREVOR: Yes. We also believe that Latter Day Saints Prophets show us how to live.

SHIREEN: Do you believe the Bible is God’s word?

TREVOR: Yes, but we have other books too that show us God’s way. God revealed His purposes to our founder, Joseph Smith. In addition to the Bible, we use the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. These scriptural collections are called the Standard Works.

RACHEL: Do you believe in telling others about God?

TREVOR: Yes, all Mormon males are expected to be missionaries for a year, and tell people about the true church, our church.

Christian expansion

The term ‘Christian’ was first used in about 40 CE in Syria, to describe those who followed the teachings of Jesus Christ. Jesus was a teacher who was believed by many followers to be the ‘Christos’ or ‘Messiah’ – the saviour of the world. After his crucifixion his followers spread his teachings and by the 4th century CE, Christianity was the official religion of the Roman Empire under the emperor Constantine. By the year 1054 there was a split between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. (The word ‘catholic’ means universal, belonging to everyone.) Today the Eastern Orthodox Church continues as the Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox churches, amongst others.

The Roman Catholic Church continued to thrive in the West until the 16th century, when a number of reformers or Protestants (from the word ‘protest’) changed the future of Christianity forever. The reformers became known either as reformers or as Protestants.

In the last five centuries, the different denominations of Christianity have grown at an enormous rate. The World Christian Encyclopedia estimates that there are over 33 000 Christian denominations in the world.

Governance structures are different in Christian denominations. For example, leadership in the Catholic Church is hierarchical and centralised in the pope who is appointed by the College of Cardinals. Bishops are in control of local churches, called dioceses.

The Queen of England is the hereditary head of the Anglican Church, with bishops who control dioceses in a similar way to the Catholic Church (the Archbishop of Canterbury being the leading bishop). In the Methodist Church there is a presiding bishop and a structure called the Methodist Connexion with local ministers. Other churches, e.g. Presbyterians, are more democratically governed with elected elders.

governance – the action or way of governing and controlling
hierarchical – arranged or controlled in order of rank from highest to lowest
African Initiated Christian Churches

Christianity adapted itself to South Africa, moving from a settler religion to that of a mission religion, encouraged by the missionary movements. The African Initiated Churches (AICs) were influenced by Christianity but integrated African culture, rituals and beliefs into their religious ceremonies. There are thousands of different AICs in Africa, including Zionists, Nazarenes and Ethiopians. In these churches, bishops and prophets are central figures, and members take part actively in services. Dancing and healing are important parts of these services.

Activity 1.11 Research Christian denominations

Work in pairs.

1. Imagine that these two learners join the discussion on pages 16 and 17.
   
   Daniel says: "I believe that Jesus is good, but he is not the Son of God. I don't believe in the Holy Spirit."

   Rachelle says: "I don't know if the Earth was really created in seven days, and I don't believe in Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. But I do believe that Jesus died and rose again, and in God's will."

   Which of these two would you say is a Christian?

2. Research two Christian denominations from the list below. For each denomination, find out what specific things it believes, how members worship, and about their governance structures.
   - Brethren
   - Quakers
   - Assemblies of God
   - Apostolic
   - Amish
   - African Methodism

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

All practitioners of African religion believe in God as Creator, the ancestors and ritual performance. It is widely believed that ancestors play an intermediary role between God and the living, and that these ancestors, because they are in spirit form, are found everywhere: at home, in some rivers, forests, mountains, seas, caves and other sacred places. For example, Xhosa diviners who go into seclusion (imfukame) will experience being summoned to these areas.

It is also believed that ancestors use different animals as their messengers to communicate with the living. An example is bees. Certain behaviour of bees can be seen as a message from the spiritual world.
However, scholars hold different interpretations of the ancestors – those recently dead, and those long dead. For example, Kenyan-born John Mbiti differentiates between the two groups claiming that the long dead are no longer remembered in their human form by anybody. He uses the word ‘ghost’ to describe the long dead.

On the other hand, scholars from the Xhosa-based Icamagu Spiritual Development Centre see no differentiation between these two groups of ancestors. Those long dead are the most revered, and people still use their names as clan names. The term ‘ghost’ is never used in South Africa to refer to an ancestor, as it has negative connotations.

Icamagu also maintains that ancestors reveal themselves to the living, and that they are always with the living irrespective of where the individual is. Some groups in South Africa believe that before speaking to ancestors, one must burn incense or impepeho, a herbal medicine used by diviners and herbalists. These groups believe that impepeho calls ancestors to be with the individual. However, Icamagu suggests it is not necessary to use impepeho to call ancestors.

Researchers from Icamagu suggest that the basic structure of African Religion is the clan. The elderly, diviners and even chiefs and kings belong to their clans; the clan ancestors are their intermediaries between them and God. Other African Traditional Religion groups accept the diviners as the central structures of the religion.

Icamagu believes that African Traditional Religion is a religion on its own, independent of other religions. However, other groups trace the origin of their form of African Religion from Egypt using the Book of the Dead as their normative source.

The Icamagu Institute, which later became the Icamagu Spiritual Development Centre, was the first organisation to be formed to do research specifically on African Traditional Religion.

Situated in the Eastern Cape, the Icamagu Spiritual Development Centre was formed by Dr Nokuzola Mndende to research African Religion and promote rural development and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). The Institute consists of an academic wing and offers workshops and a diploma in African Traditional Religion. Schools visit the Institute for lessons on African culture and spirituality. The Institute also consists of a nursery, vegetable garden and a demonstration garden for indigenous trees and herbal medicines.
Activity 1.12 Compare differences in belief in African Traditional Religion

1. Draw a two-column table. In the first column, list the beliefs and practices as interpreted by the Icamag'uu Spiritual Development Centre. In the second column, list the beliefs and practices of other African Religion followers.

2. Work in pairs to discuss these questions. Give reasons for your views.
   a. Do you think the differences in belief shown in your table are fundamental, that is, do they make it impossible for the followers from different schools to come together?
   b. Do you think the differences between strands of Christianity (choose two) run deeper than those described between schools of African Traditional Religion? (Think back to your research in Activity 1.11.)

HINDUISM

Many scholars say that Hinduism is not a single religion, but is an umbrella word for a large number of beliefs and practices. There are four different streams or sects or sampradyas – the Shaiva, Vaishnava, Shakteya and Smarta.

While all sects share common beliefs, traditions, rituals and personal deities, they hold different views on how to achieve liberation, moksa, and how they speak about god (Brahman).

Grades 10 and 11 revision

Some of the main beliefs in Hinduism that you learned about in Grades 10 and 11 include:

- Karma – the belief that every action has a consequence (a result), which is either good or bad. This consequence will be experienced either in this life or in a future life. So, a person’s present life is the result of what happened in a previous life.
- Dharma – the belief in an order in the whole of existence. Each person must follow the principles set out for him or her to keep the order of the universe.
- The four classes with their duties:
  - The Brahman (priestly): to study the Hindu scriptures (Vedas).
  - The Ksatriya (ruler/ prince): to fight and rule.
  - The Vaisya (traders, businesspeople and peasant farmers): to specialise in their trade.
  - The Sudras (servants): to serve others.
The four stages (ashramas) with their duties:
- The student stage: to show respect for the teacher; to study diligently; not to have sex before marriage; not to take alcohol, drugs or tobacco.
- The married, family stage: to support one’s spouse, children, elderly parents and sick relatives; to earn money honestly and spend it wisely; to perform rituals and celebrate festivals.
- The retirement stage: to devote time to study scriptures, to pray and to train one’s grandchildren.
- The optional stage of the devout person who withdraws from society, gives up all possessions and wanders (sannyasins).

**Vaishnavism** is monotheistic and adherents worship Vishnu as the supreme deity. It is based on the religious texts of the Vedas, and the Puranas, particularly the Bhagavad Gita. Bhakti – devotion to a personal god – is a key practice in Vaishnavism.

**Shaivism** is also monotheistic, where adherents worship Shiva as the supreme deity. Shiva is associated with sexuality and birth, as well as with destruction. Shiva is often shown in statues in a meditation pose, or dancing.

**Shaktism** includes worship of the goddess Devi as Brahman or alternatively (where it is viewed as a sub-sect of Shaivism) as the energy of Shiva, the impersonal Brahman.

**Smartism** teaches that all paths lead to the source of all being, or the one god, and that there are three aspects to this god (trimurti) – Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer. The personal gods are all different aspects of this one Supreme Being. The Hindu saint, Ramakrishna (1836—1886) was a follower of Smartism and said: “Truth is one, the wise call it by different names.” His disciple, Vivekananda (1863—1902) brought Vedantic thought to the United States, founding the Ramakrishna Mission, which works internationally, sponsoring educational, medical, and welfare work.

Another modern Hindu movement, the Brahmo Samaj, was founded by Ram Mohum Roy (1774—1833). He was the first Brahmin to travel to England.

In addition to these sects, there are different schools of philosophy in Hinduism. In Unit 3 you will learn about the Advaita Vedanta school of philosophy.

Shiva, deity of the Shaivist sect of Hinduism, is often depicted meditating.
The four stages (ashramas) with their duties:

- The student stage: to show respect for the teacher; to study diligently; not to have sex before marriage; not to take alcohol, drugs or tobacco.
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Shiva, deity of the Shaivists sect of Hinduism, is often depicted meditating.
JUDAISM

The three major divisions in Judaism are different mainly in practice rather than belief.

Orthodox Jews

Orthodox Jews believe that God gave the Jews the whole Torah – in its oral and written forms – at Mount Sinai. All 613 mitzvot commandments are binding as they stand. The Jewish law halakhah must be strictly obeyed. Jews in this tradition observe the commandments to do with dress, food, sex, work, Sabbath and holy days as it was recorded by commentators in the Middle Ages.

Very orthodox Jews, which includes Hasidic Jews, try their best to avoid the influences of modern culture, dressing differently and living separately.

Hasidic Jews try to avoid the influences of modern life by removing themselves from such influences and dressing traditionally.

Hasidim (or Chasidim) was founded in Eastern Europe in the 18th century by Rabbi Baal Shem Tov. Hasidics believe that acts of kindness and prayer can be used to reach God, as opposed to an older view that one could only become a righteous Jew through rigorous learning and obeying laws. The word chasid or hasid describes a person who does chesed (good deeds for others). Hasidic Jews dress distinctively, live separately from modern society, and are dedicated to strict observance of Jewish law, halakhah.

(Adapted from http://judaism.about.com/od/orthodoxjudaism/a/orthodox.htm)

Conservative Judaism

Conservative Jews believe that the Torah was given by God through ideas that humans mediated. They accept the law, but agree that it needs to be adapted to modern times and ways.

Reform Judaism

Reform Jews accept that the Torah was written by humans over time. They want to keep the values enshrined in the law but do not accept the halakhah as binding. According to Reform ideas, all Jews are equal – male and female pray together in the synagogue and there is no separation. Many Jews in the Reform movement subscribe to the principle of Tikvun Olam – the pursuit of social justice.
There is one main branch of the Baha’i Faith and the few sects that did break away either disappeared or now have very few followers.

These Baha’i gardens in Haifa, Israel, are part of the mausoleum of Baha’u’llah, the founder of the Baha’i Faith.

Activity 1.13 Research divisions in Hinduism and Judaism

In pairs choose to further research on the following aspects of either modern-day Hinduism or Judaism:
- beliefs
- practices
- governance

Then share your findings and fill in the table.

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<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Practices</th>
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<td><strong>Hinduism</strong></td>
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In this unit you will look at what some of the world’s religions believe are their unique characteristics. These are the features that are essential to believe in if one is to describe oneself as a member of that religion. For example, a unique feature of Christianity is a belief that Jesus Christ is the son of God. Although different Christians may interpret this feature in different ways – some literally, others more metaphorically – it is still a core belief that binds all Christians.

You can listen to someone explain what is unique about their religion without necessarily believing in that religion or agreeing with them. You may identify other things that are unique to a religion and disagree with a religion’s own description of what makes it unique. Our focus is not on what an academic or religious scholar may say is unique, but on what members of that religion themselves say is unique.

**WHY IDENTIFY UNIQUENESS IN A RELIGION?**

A religion’s identification of what makes it unique fulfills a number of functions.

It helps members to identify who belongs and who doesn’t. When a person agrees to the unique elements of a religion, they are recognised as belonging to that religion and no other.

It provides believers with reasons for why their religion is ‘best’.

It helps members to explain why they have chosen that religion. If all religions were identical, then it wouldn’t matter which one a person chose.

The things that make religions unique can be socially divisive. People come to believe that those aspects are true, and that aspects of other religions not in agreement with theirs are false, and therefore that their religion is superior to other religions. In other words, it is the ‘uniqueness’ that can cause the most trouble between religions.
Activity 1.14 Give your views

1. Work in pairs to read this conversation aloud.

SPEAKER A: It is important for us to understand each religion for its own sake. In this way we can learn to appreciate each religion and perhaps there will be less conflict.

SPEAKER B: The problem is that it's the things we call unique that cause conflict. For example, Christians believe that only Jesus can save people. That is one example of a unique belief. But it causes conflict between Christians and other religions.

SPEAKER A: I still say – when you understand a religion from its own point of view, then you can better appreciate its contribution. You begin to understand its followers and what makes them tick. And usually what you find is that there are many unique and great things about religions, and then you become more tolerant of them.

SPEAKER B: Understanding and tolerance from one side doesn’t mean the other will return it. It takes two to make peace. You may feel tolerant towards people of other religions, but they may still try to convert you, discriminate against you, or present themselves as superior.

SPEAKER A: I'm more optimistic than that. When people can see that you appreciate and respect their beliefs and values, they become more willing to have a constructive discussion and to live and let live. If you show genuine interest and respect for what other people believe, then they will show the same for you.

2. Which speaker do you agree with – A or B? Give reasons for your answer.

3. Do you agree that people should live and let live? Explain your answer in a one-page essay.

As students of religion, our purpose is to learn to appreciate what someone may believe is unique in their religion, and not to judge it. It is also to understand how it is that some religious believers become convinced of their own superiority or ‘rightness’, so that we do not fall into that same trap. You will explore these issues through the lenses of four religions: African Traditional Religion, Christianity, Hinduism, and Judaism. However, you are free to select another religion for the purposes of your own research and there is also information on Buddhism and Islam.

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

In this section we have chosen to give examples mainly from the Xhosa experience of African Religion.

Role of the ancestors

African religion has no founder. It is believed that the religion was revealed to the first generation, which was created by the Supernatural Power/God. God
gave the first generation all the laws and **taboos** concerning how to live in harmony – with God, other human beings, and with nature. They were told to marry for reproductive reasons and, as parents, were asked to lead by example in a way that promotes good moral values.

When the first generation died, their spirits joined the spirit world where the Creator lives. In other words, the death of the first generation marked the beginning of ancestors. The ancestors, then, became the messengers of the Creator and also the supervisors of the physical world. The ancestors look after the welfare of the living, mainly through the elderly, who in turn teach the youth orally and through rituals. This is how the religion is transmitted from generation to generation. Sometimes the ancestors reveal themselves to the living of all ages in various ways, through visions and dreams.

**No special day of worship**

In African Religion there is no special day of worship. The Supernatural Power, the Creator, created all days. Therefore, it is regarded as disrespectful to think of one day as holier than another, implying that there are degrees of holiness from the most holy to the less holy. For communal worship, people gather together when they are performing rituals, but the day of the ritual is not taken as holier than other days. What is regarded as holy is the ritual itself.

There is no formal word in isiXhosa that refers to a regularly recurring period of days such as a week, either now or in the past. The present use of *iveki* to refer to a week is an adaptation of the Afrikaans word *week*.

AmaXhosa has a five-day sequence of days starting from *Namhlanje*, which means ‘today’, followed by *Ngemso* (tomorrow or the next day), *Ngemso omnye* (the day after tomorrow), *Isolo* (yesterday), and *Isolo elinye* (the day before yesterday).

To refer to a time further into the future or the past requires the mention of the number of days, like, *lintozuk ezingaphambili* – days before; *Emva kwentsuku ezinga* – after so many days.

**Emphasis on practice**

African Religion has, at present, no written sacred texts. It focuses on moral teachings and ritual practice within the community rather than on a text as sacred authority. It is believed that a book can be outdated, while the religion grows and changes. Moreover, in their communal life, practitioners are constantly reminded of all the aspects of their religion. Rituals, daily life and social interactions are where respect and morality are practised and reinforced.

Owing to changes over time, some African Traditional Religion practitioners are now writing down some ritual activities and teachings of the elderly so that the next generation will be able to learn about their heritage in a changing society and also be guided on how to follow the beliefs and practices.

**Communal way of life**

In African Religion individualism is discouraged; it is regarded as inhuman. The communal way of life is central and allows people to share joys, blessings, sorrows, and burdens. There is therefore a saying, ‘I am because we are, and
gave the first generation all the laws and **taboos** concerning how to live in harmony – with God, other human beings, and with nature. They were told to marry for reproductive reasons and, as parents, were asked to lead by example in a way that promotes good moral values.

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**Communal way of life**

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since we are, therefore I am’ (Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu). Harmony within oneself, and within the clan, society is key. To achieve harmony, respect is fundamental – respect for oneself, other people, the elderly and the spiritual world. What is right and wrong is assessed by its impact on the people. Disturbing harmony and showing disrespect to living beings are punishable acts. The punishment comes from the Creator and is given out by the ancestors. The elderly are expected to lead by example to be ambassadors of their religion, their clans and their parents. Young people are never addressed as individuals; they are reflections of their parents. That is why they are always referred to by their parents’ names, like Nokuzola’s son or Sakhiwo’s daughter.

The concept of ubuntu

Moral order in African Religion is characterised by the concept of ubuntu. This means showing respect and empathy for human beings and helping those who are physically, emotionally, socially or spiritually in need. One must do to others what one would want to be done to oneself. How can a rich person enjoy a happy life while his neighbours are going hungry? According to African values, a rich person should lend (njoma) some of his cattle (wealth) to a poor person so that she or he can milk the cows and use them for ploughing the fields.

A man with a span of oxen must offer them to the poor so that the animals can be used for ploughing. Everybody must reap during the harvest time. The needy should not have to ask for help – the rich should offer to help. This willingness to help others with no strings attached is what ubuntu is all about. Ubuntu should not be characterised by self-praise – it is something that is attributed to the helper by the person who is helped.

Another concept of ubuntu is the practice of ilima, whereby people come together as a group to help one another at no cost. When a poor person cannot build her house, some members of the community go to her place and help her to make bricks in order to build the cheapest kind of homestead. Or when she has no one to help her hoe the mealie fields, people either help her themselves or send their children to help her.

Punishment and reward are here and now

The belief in ancestors shows that the soul is immortal and that there is life after death. Life after death does not involve reward or punishment, as these are believed to take place in the here and now while people live. Doing well is rewarded in this world by the ancestors, who are believed to be the mouthpiece of the Creator. Disturbing the harmony either by disrespect, doing evil things to God’s creation, or ignoring one’s duties, results in punishment from misfortunes and sickness caused by other factors.

If misfortune or sickness is a result of punishment by ancestors, a ritual of appeasement is performed. Culprits publicly announce their repentance and ask for forgiveness. After this, depending on whether they are truly sorry for what they have done, the culprits are forgiven and healed.
Activity 1.15 Compare African and other religions

1. Work alone or in pairs to present the information in ‘Role of the ancestors’ on page 25 as a flow diagram, or in any other visual form.

2. In African Traditional Religion, when people gather together to perform rituals, the day of the ritual is not regarded as any holier than other days. Work in groups to discuss how this compares to at least two other religions you have learnt about.

3. Re-read the definition of ubuntu on page 27. Then find out whether other religions promote a similar moral code. Present your findings in a short report.

A clan-based religion

The clan is the basic structure in African Traditional Religion. Every person is expected to know her or his family tree, as this is their point of reference and the basis of their identity. The clan is made up of both the paternal and the maternal lineage. It is the clan that lays the foundation for how to worship and also how to relate to one another.

Leadership

Elderly people, both men and women (oogogo noomkhulu), are the major leaders in African Traditional Religion. Owing to their wisdom and life experience, they are able to see when harmony is disturbed and also if God and the ancestors are displeased. The elderly are the advisors of their respective clans and also of the community. There is no general trend of gender differentiation as that depends on the roles played in a particular ritual. Each elderly person has a role to play. Sometimes the role is determined by the person’s birthright, age and gender. Leadership is based on birthright. Some spiritual activities are performed by special people, according to their birthright.

It is believed that umntwana wesingxobo (a child born with a caul) has some special powers to foresee things. Umntwana wesingxobo has a special relationship with the spiritual world and can advise the community when things are not right with the ancestors.

The first-born male of the clan (inkulu) is the leader in ritual performances. He is expected to lead by example by keeping the clan in unity and making sure that all members of the clan are purified before any ritual performance. He is the intlabi – the one who keeps the sacred assegai and always makes himself available to any clan member when the need arises. For example, he must always avail himself whenever there is any ritual in his family as he is the one assigned to do the slaughtering. Intlabi never works alone; he must consult the clan elderly. Even within the nuclear family he must consult the first-born woman (umafungwase) before taking any decision.

During ritual practice an animal is slaughtered by the intlabi. He uses a special assegai (umkhono wekhaya) which is owned by the clan. This assegai is not used for any other purpose. Before it is used, the clan elderly talk to the ancestors and ask them for their permission to use that particular assegai to their rituals. Then the assegai is officially given to the intlabi. He is warned to respect the assegai and never to use it for fighting as it is sacred and is now an instrument that is owned by the ancestors.
Umafusingwahe, the first-born female, plays a very important role in the moral and spiritual teachings of her brother’s children. During ritual performances, umafusingwahe must be at her biological home to perform the duties assigned to her. Even if she is married, it is obligatory that she go back to her home to perform those duties.

Oodadobhawe/Rakgadi – the paternal or maternal aunts, depending on the type of society (patriarchal or matriarchal), also have special roles in the ritual performances of their clans. These aunts are also responsible for the moral teachings of the children. African Religion also believes that children must not be too open about their problems with their biological parents, as their parents may be too subjective to help them deal appropriately with the problems. There are social structures in place to help children with their problems, like uncles, older siblings and so on.

Kings and chiefs are cultural, political and religious leaders who look after the social order of the entire community. When there is a dispute within the community, these are the highest court of appeal. But when there is a clan problem, the elderly in the clan, as kinship leaders, take the lead in solving the problem. If the problem is believed to be due to an unperformed ritual, the kinship leadership takes responsibility without taking it to the king or the chief.

Sometimes harmony and balance within the society are disturbed by natural forces like drought or famine. In such cases the chief is the authority who asks the people to call on the ancestors and amagusha (agree, plead, pardon, invoke) izihlele (all ancestors collectively, irrespective of clans). Usually the whole community is involved in this activity and each one invokes his or her ancestors.

Think about this

Intlabi is the first-born male (inkulu) of the whole extended family or clan. But each nuclear family below him has its own first-born male (inkulu) and first-born daughter (umafusingwahe).

Amagqirha/izangoma (diviners) are special people who are called by their ancestors to heal the living. Diviners belong to their respective clans; their rituals are therefore performed by their clans. When people are called by the ancestors to be diviners, they undergo special training under the guidance of their clan ancestors, who show them various ways to heal the sick. Their main duty is to diagnose – they should never do harm. Any person who claims to be a diviner but is involved in evil work which involves hurting or killing other people is believed to be a fraud and is regarded as unclean. Ancestors never send anybody to kill, as killing would disturb the harmony which is the primary concern of the spiritual world.

caul – part of the amniotic membrane sometimes found on a child’s head at birth
paternal – related through the father’s side of the family
maternal – related through the mother’s side of the family
fraud – someone who is not who they say they are
invoke – to call upon
Think about this

African Traditional Religion today is under pressure to become more organised in terms of its natural structure and presentation. Today, clans are split over long distances and there has been much pressure from evangelical Christianity. During pre-colonial times, ATR was entirely a clan-based religion, but today practitioners from various clans have come together to form a national religious structure called Icamagu (see page 19). This is made up of:

- *Irifun*, who in normal circumstances is the person who gives guidance to those who dish out food to the people in a ritual. She or he must make sure that everybody has food. This position was revealed in a dream, so that the leader must make sure that everyone in the African Traditional Religion is spiritually fed. *Irifun* is therefore the head of the religion and must make sure that all African Traditional Religion practitioners nationally are taken care of.
- *Imbuse* must delegate duties to *intsha*, the pillars.
- *Intsha* must make sure that the right information goes to the people. They must strengthen the people and must always be with the people to make sure that they are free to practise their beliefs.

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**Activity 1.16 Draw up your own African Traditional Religion test**

1. Work in pairs to draw up a short test, with model answers, based on the information on pages 28 and 29. Your test could include multiple-choice questions, true/false questions, and questions requiring paragraph answers. (Don’t include essay questions or questions that have ‘yes/no’ answers.) Remember to allocate a mark for each question – ask your teacher to help you with this.

2. Work on your own or with your partner to complete another pair’s test.

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**Informal peer assessment**

Use the model answers you drew up in question 1 of Activity 1.16 as a memorandum to help you mark the work of the pair who completed your test. Discuss your memorandum with them and, if necessary, explain why you marked answers wrong or awarded a low score.

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**MODERN HINDUISM**

Traditionally, Hinduism has not been a missionary religion. Hindus therefore spend little time trying to define their religion against other religions. It was only with the pressure that Christian missionaries put on Hindus in the late 18th and early 19th centuries that Hindus began to think about what made their religion unique.

Sri Venkatesananda was a Hindu reformer from India who belonged to the Advaita Vedanta school of Hindu philosophy. In a speech to the First World Parliament of Religions (see page 50) in 1893, he laid out Hindu responses to the rest of the world's religions. Here are the core elements:

There is only one ultimate reality but many ways of seeing that reality and many paths to reaching it. Each of the world’s religions has its own way of seeing things and each sets out its own path, but they are all based on the same ultimate reality.

The reason for the differences in the world’s religions is that each one sees ultimate reality from a limited point of view. If each religion could see more deeply into ultimate reality, then they would recognise that they were all looking at the same thing, but from a limited point of view.

And what is the nature of that ultimate reality? It is a divine being that permeates the physical world. It is therefore in every human being. The purpose of life is to feel reunited with the divine being and to overcome the feeling of being trapped in the physical world with all its limitations. The ultimate method for achieving this is yoga.

---

**delegate** – to give responsibility to someone else, to hand over
**permeates** – spreads throughout; infuses
However, not all people are spiritually evolved enough to advance beyond the performance of their basic social duties and embark on the last step involving yoga. In fact, most people are so poorly evolved that they are stuck in their limited and different ways of seeing things. What happens then is that they fight with each other instead of realising that they are all talking about the same underlying reality, but from different points of view.

The solution is to allow each person to continue on their own particular religious journey, limited as it may be – for as long as they do that in a pure and committed way, they will gradually become more enlightened and ultimately discover the divine.

Given that all of this is true, the world’s religions should stop being in conflict with one another. Each one should respect the other because they are all grounded in the same ultimate reality.

Think about this

‘Advaita Vedanta’ means non-theistic orthodoxy – ‘Vedanta’ indicates that it is based on the Vedas, Hinduism’s key scriptures; ‘advaita’ means ‘not theistic’. While philosophers of this school believe that there is an absolute being, they do not believe that it is personal.

Reincarnation

At the heart of Hindu thinking is a deep belief in the possibility of both spiritual evolution and spiritual regression. In other words, the ultimate purpose of life is to rediscover the divine within oneself, but it is a process that can go backwards as well as forwards. It is underpinned by the belief in reincarnation:

- Living beings are reborn at death.
- Some are reborn into higher forms of life that can take them closer to becoming one with the divine.
- Others are reborn into lower forms of life. Those who are ‘lower down’ have a more limited view of ultimate reality.

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evolution – a process of development or growth; progression to a higher stage
regression – to return to a previous and less advanced state
In the same way, each religion has its own view of ultimate reality. But each one is a bit like a blind person. If they could become enlightened, they would see what the ultimate reality is.

In reducing all religions to a limited version of ‘the truth’, Venkatesananda was standing deeply within the Hindu tradition. Hindus have always believed that people vary in the degree of their spiritual enlightenment. Hindus have therefore tended to be tolerant of a great variety of beliefs. It is one of the reasons there are so many ‘gods’ in Hinduism. Every belief system, no matter what its content, can be seen by Hindus to be a lesser form of Hinduism.

What makes Hinduism unique, in this view, is that it is the one belief system that has an explanatory framework that harmonises all the religions. It is also the only religion that says ‘you can be god’, and which allows every person to stay committed to their religion because all religious paths are valid.

Activity 1.17 Compare Hinduism and other religions

1. Work in groups to discuss these questions.
   a. In what ways do you think Hindu and Buddhist responses to the rest of the world’s religions are similar?
   b. How do the Hindu responses compare to those of at least two other religions you’ve learned about?

2. Work as a class to debate this topic: All religious paths are valid ways of reaching the one ultimate reality.

Informal self-assessment

Copy this table into your workbook and complete it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was I able to identify similarities in Hindu responses to other religions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was I able to identify the responses of at least two other religions to the rest of the world’s religions?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Was I able to give an opinion, with reasons, on whether I think all religious paths are valid?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other comments:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The essence of Judaism lies in the conviction that there is only one God who is righteous and at work in the natural and social order. He has revealed himself and his Law to the Jews and has chosen them to be his people, not as recipients of special favours, but to serve as bearers of light – so that in their history the world can see the presence of God.


**Early Judaism**

Judaism is a monotheistic religion. This was a unique feature when Judaism began. Many religions were polytheistic and saw different aspects of God as indicating the existence of different gods. Jewish thought, however, suggested that different facets of the same God were shown, and that God was a personal God. Hinduism has a belief in many gods and has polytheistic tendencies. In Jewish thought, there was one God. God was not removed from humans: he was there to be prayed to and worshipped. Thus the idea evolved that God can be personal.

How and where gods/God is worshipped reflects humans' relationship with God/gods. Initially there were many shrines and temples where the worship took place. However, in Judaism, a temple centralised the worship of this personal God, the one God. This idea came to King David to unify Israel and show that there was one God whom the Jews believed in. The temple was eventually built in Jerusalem by King Solomon (King David’s son). Jewish people came to the temple, which was considered holy, to worship Yahweh.

The divine names of God, YHWH and Elohim, are said to proclaim that the God who is the Creator of the universe and the God who is Israel’s ruler and lawgiver are one and the same.

**Activity 1.18 Compare Judaism and Hinduism**

Work in pairs to discuss these questions.

1. What is the main way Jewish people saw their God, and how does this differ from Hinduism?
2. Suggest why the Jewish temple is so important in this regard.
Think about this

Mystics believe that one can experience God through direct experience, intuition or insight and that this direct experience gives one insight, wisdom and understanding.

The heart of Judaism is the Torah (first five books of the Hebrew Bible).

The nature of God in Judaism

There are five ways in which Jews see their God. (Remember that religion can be apparently contradictory and is not always rational.)

- He is God with human qualities (anthropomorphism): God is seen as a father, king, shepherd. He is wrathful, pleased, judging.
- In seeming contradiction to this, God is transcendent or totally ‘other’ (transcendentalism): “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My Ways higher than your ways and My Thoughts [are higher than your thoughts]” (Isaiah 55:8—9).
- God is in everything (immanence): This is a relatively new feature and is followed particularly by mystics.
- God is the God of Israel (particularism): This refers to the fact that God entered into a covenant with the people of Israel.
- Finally, God is the God of all creation (universalism).

Activity 1.19 Write about Judaism

Consider the ways in which Jews see their God. Then write a paragraph explaining which view of God you find most difficult to accept. Give reasons for your opinion.

CHRISTIANITY

At the heart of Christianity is the belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. This is a radical departure from the other Middle-Eastern (Abrahamic) religions’ ideas of ultimate reality. Both Judaism and Islam insist on the transcendence of God, and both take very seriously the commandment against having images of God. God cannot be pictured because pictures are a form of limitation, and God cannot take human form because that is also a form of limitation. Christians would argue that it is precisely because God is omnipotent that God can take human form. A number of implications flow from the Christian belief that Jesus is the Son of God:

The teachings of Jesus in the New Testament are seen as the end-point of God’s statement to humans about ultimate reality. Beyond the gospels, which are an account of the life and teachings of Jesus, the other elements of the New Testament are uniquely insightful commentaries on the implications of Jesus’ presence as the Son of God.
In the gospels, Jesus says “no man cometh unto the father but by me”. Some liberal Christians would say this is to be read symbolically. It suggests that Jesus understood his mission as giving witness to a particular path to God, and that as long as a person lives his or her life in this way, then that person will be saved. They might also have a symbolic understanding of what ‘salvation’ is, namely, that it is not so much an actual place called ‘heaven’, but rather a state of communion with God which results when one follows the teachings of Jesus.

More conservative Christians argue that Jesus’ sayings should be interpreted literally – that heaven is more than a state; it is a place to which people who are saved go when they die. To be saved you must accept Jesus as your saviour, or go to hell when you die. You will know that you have been saved when you have a ‘born-again’ experience. Being born again is a spiritual process involving a special kind of emotional experience. Your sins will then be forgiven and you will go to heaven when you die.

An important aspect of Christian teachings is the belief that people are incapable of doing the will of God on their own. People are born with a tendency to be sinful, that is, to choose to do things that separate them from God. God became incarnate in Jesus to show people how to get back on track. All that is required is that you ask to be forgiven ‘in the name of Jesus’ and your sins will be ‘washed away’ and you’ll be in communion with God.

Many Jews and Muslims criticise Christians for believing that God became limited in human form. But Christians respond by saying that God can do anything and that God could see that human beings were in trouble. God had to ‘send his Son’ to Earth to save people.

Jews and Muslims may agree that Jesus was a great teacher or even a prophet. Christians would respond that salvation requires that you believe Jesus is more than a teacher or prophet – he is actually the Son of God.

When Jesus died, he was resurrected. He is united with God and has prepared a place in heaven for all his believers, but only believers go to heaven. God remains present on Earth in the form of the Holy Spirit. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are inseparable forms of God.

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**Activity 1.20 Compare Christianity and other religions**

1. “An important aspect of Christian teachings is the belief that people ... are born with a tendency to be sinful, that is, to choose to do things that separate them from God”. Work in groups to discuss whether you agree that people are innately sinful.

2. Write a paragraph in which you compare the Christian understanding of what ‘salvation’ is with that of either Judaism or Islam.
WHEN THE UNIQUE MEETS THE UNIQUE: CHRISTIANITY AND HINDUISM

The modern relationship between Hindus and Christians began with the colonisation of India by the British in the late 18th century. So effective were the British that by the beginning of the 20th century, they were able to declare most of the sub-continent ‘a colony of Britain’ and therefore part of the British Empire.

The population of the sub-continent numbered hundreds of millions. Yet there were never more than about 100,000 British in India, including women and children. The British achieved this through policies of ‘divide and rule’ and through collaboration with members of the Indian elite – both Hindu and Muslim. For all their success at this, however, the colonial rule lasted a relatively short time. By the Second World War, the British hold on India was beginning to slip.

In 1948, India became the first of the British colonies to achieve independence. It also divided into two separate countries – India and Pakistan – as we know them today.

Missionaries were prominent in all the British colonies and therefore also in India. But they found the going particularly tough in India compared, for example, with Africa.

Think about this
The policy of ‘divide and rule’ is a strategy whereby people in a position of power maintain control over subordinates by encouraging dissent between them so that they do not unite in opposition or resistance.

collaboration – cooperation; working together
elite – a small group of privileged and powerful people
subordinates – people who is lower in rank or position
dissent – disagreement; opposition

Activity 1.21 Critically analyse religious views

1. Work on your own to read the debate between a Christian and a Hindu on pages 36 to 39. Also read questions a. to f, but do not answer them yet.

2. Now work in pairs to re-read the debate and critically analyse the views presented by answering the questions.

Imagine an evangelical Christian meeting with a Hindu philosopher. What would they say to each other? In fact, many such meetings have taken place because of Christian mission activity in India. Here is an example of the kind of discussion they might have had.

There was once a man who was God incarnate. His name was Jesus. He took human form so that humans could be saved.

I agree that it’s probably true that there was once a man who was the Son of God, but I think your view is limited. God has come to Earth to save people many times – there have been many incarnations of God. Also, everyone is divine, not just Jesus.
a. Imagine you are listening to this conversation. How would you decide which speaker you agree with? Do you think it would just depend on what religion you believe in, if any?

Well, I can see we have a serious disagreement here - Jesus is the only Son of God. No other human has been or ever will be God incarnate.

Your view is based on ignorant perspectives of God. God is in everything and everyone. You are limiting God to being in only one person, Jesus.

My view isn’t ignorant; it’s different. I believe God is absolute and transcendent. He can’t be contained in the physical world. On the one hand, there is God. On the other, there is the world. God made the world. God isn’t in the world and people therefore don’t have the divine in them.

By saying that God is in everything, we are confirming that the divine is all-powerful and everywhere. Divinity doesn’t have to be transcendent in order to be absolute. But let’s agree to disagree on this. What else do you believe?

b. The Hindu philosopher says the Christian missionary is ignorant. Why does he say this? Is this a fair comment?

If you believe in Jesus as the Son of God, your sins will be forgiven and you’ll go to heaven when you die. If you don’t believe in Jesus as the Son of God, you’ll go to hell when you die.

Who wants to go to heaven? Humans aren’t reunited with God in heaven. They become one with God when they achieve enlightenment. All it means is that you haven’t attained perfection, and you’ll eventually die and be reborn again.
a. Imagine you are listening to this conversation. How would you decide which speaker you agree with? Do you think it would just depend on what religion you believe in, if any?

Well, I can see we have a serious disagreement here – Jesus is the only Son of God. No other human has been or ever will be God incarnate.

Your view is based on ignorant perspectives of God. God is in everything and everyone. You are limiting God to being in only one person, Jesus.

My view isn’t ignorant; it’s different. I believe God is absolute and transcendent. He can’t be contained in the physical world. On the one hand, there is God. On the other, there is the world. God made the world. God isn’t in the world and people therefore don’t have the divine in them.

By saying that God is in everything, we are confirming that the divine is all-powerful and everywhere. Divinity doesn’t have to be transcendent in order to be absolute. But let’s agree to disagree on this. What else do you believe?

b. The Hindu philosopher says the Christian missionary is ignorant. Why does he say this? Is this a fair comment?

If you believe in Jesus as the Son of God, your sins will be forgiven and you’ll go to heaven when you die. If you don’t believe in Jesus as the Son of God, you’ll go to hell when you die.

Who wants to go to heaven? Humans aren’t reunited with God in heaven. They become one with God when they achieve enlightenment. All it means is that you haven’t attained perfection, and you’ll eventually die and be reborn again.
c. What does the Hindu philosopher mean when he says that he agrees people can go to heaven, but it isn’t something you should want to do?

I don’t fear death. I fear rebirth. It means I’ll continue to be reborn into this physical world with all its limitations.

But you’ve been taken in by the promise of heaven. Heaven sounds perfect, so it’s not surprising you want to go there. Heaven isn’t the ultimate, though. The ultimate goal is to become one with God.

d. What are some of the main differences between the Hindu and Christian views of heaven? Why do Christians want to go to heaven, but not the Hindu?

It’s blasphemous to believe that you can become one with God, or that the divine is in you. Humans should never claim to be God. Only God is God.

It’s ignorant to believe that humans aren’t divine. It shows that you still have a long way to go in terms of your spiritual evolution.

Let’s agree to disagree again. Let’s talk instead about how to be a good person. When I look around here in India, there’s a lot happening that I think is wrong. You discriminate against people based on who their parents are, and you have a rigid caste system. People who are born into a low caste have very hard lives. A loving God wouldn’t allow these things to happen.
Haven’t you met people who do wrong and yet seem to get away with it? How do you explain that? Why would an all-powerful God allow an evil person to live a wonderful life? And yet it happens. As Hindus, we believe that you’ll be punished in the next life if you’re a bad person in this life. The level at which you’re born reflects the way you lived in your previous lives – it’s the punishment or reward for the way you lived then.

Think about this

What can you remember about the caste system from your Grade 10 and 11 work and earlier in this book (pages 20 to 21)? In Hinduism, the caste system is the pattern of social classes, with different levels: Brahman (priests, teachers); Ksatriya (warriors, rulers, landowners); Vaisya (farmers, merchants, artisans); Sudra (labourers, servants); and Harijans (‘outside’ the caste system, once known as ‘untouchables’).

e. What are the duties linked to each caste?

So how does a person have to live in order to be reborn into a higher caste?

They must do their duties according to the caste into which they’ve been born.

f. Is it possible for the Hindu idea of social duty dependent on your caste to be reconciled to a Christian view of social concern? Explain your answer.

As a decent human being, how can you stand by and allow people to be treated in such unfair ways? I believe my message of love and salvation has a very good chance of succeeding.

That’s right. But if they do their duty they’ll be reborn higher up. Then they’ll be able to achieve enlightenment and become one with God.

I think your ideas are much less just. In your religion, people can be as bad as they like. All they have to do is ask forgiveness and then they’ll be forgiven and go to this place you call ‘heaven’. Where’s the justice in that?

Unit 3 Unique features of various religions
BUDDHISM

Followers of Buddhism proclaim these unique features of their religion:

The Buddha was human not God

Buddhism teaches that every person in the universe controls his or her own destiny, and is not controlled by any other person or any superior being like God. A person’s luck or misfortune, success or failure is determined by that person’s deeds – good or bad – and his or her efforts at enlightenment. The Buddha can only show the way.

Buddhahood is attained not inborn

Enlightenment is attained through a lifetime of wisdom and practice, not through inherent belief or faith. Any person can follow the Buddha’s path and attain Buddhahood.

Buddhism does not reject other religions

Buddhism teaches that among all religions in the world, there is only difference in the complexity of the teachings, with very little difference in good or bad, right or wrong.

ISLAM

Among a number of unique features that followers of Islam claim for their religion, three stand out consistently.

No monopoly on the truth

Islam is perhaps the only religion that rejects the notion that truth is the monopoly of any single faith, race or people. The Qur’an specifically states that there is no people in any part of the world who have not been blessed by God, no matter which prophets they recognise as messengers of God. While Islam recognises Muhammad as its true Prophet, it allows that Christian and Jewish prophets like Jesus Christ and Abraham are also messengers of God.

Safeguarding the Qur’an

The Qur’an exists today exactly as in the time of the Prophet Muhammad and is believed to be the literal, exact word of God. The Qur’an has also remained pure and authentic because unlike other scriptures, it was written down and memorised in the lifetime of the Prophet that it was revealed to. The Qur’an is a unique scripture that has come down to all Muslims through the ages, unchanged and in its original language. Although translations of the Qur’an exist, Muslims always read and memorise it in its original Arabic.

A way of life as much as a religion

The teachings of Islam cover religious rituals and morality and also encompass all other aspects of life. The Prophet Muhammad’s mission was not only spiritual and religious teachings, but also included guidance for social reform, economics, politics, warfare and family life.
Unit 4 Inter-religious relationships past and present
(Week 7)

In this unit you will recall what you learned previously about relationships between different religions. Using sources, literature and information gathered from an interview, you will update your knowledge of current developments in South Africa, Africa, and internationally, and about the organisations promoting inter-religious dialogue.

As you study the dynamics of inter-religious relationships, remember how concepts like exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism and syncretism can help to define the nature and extent of these relationships, and explain why there is sometimes conflict and sometimes cooperation between religions. Conflict might occur, for example, between religious organisations that follow the exclusivist position, but would not be experienced by pluralists in relation to other religions.

Grades 10 and 11 revision

**Exclusivism:** This is where an adherent believes that only their view of divinity is true and that other religions are false.

**Inclusivism:** According to this view, the adherent believes that other religions are valid, but the full truth can only be found in his or her own religion.

**Pluralism:** All religions are paths towards the truth; they are equally true.

**Syncretism:** Believers create a new form of religion by combining the teachings, beliefs and practices of different religions.

In South Africa

Let’s recall the inter-religious relationships in South Africa from historical and current perspectives.

**Historical perspectives**

As you learned in Grades 10 and 11, Christianity was brought to Africa as a by-product of colonial expansion. South Africa was colonised in the 17th century, first by the Dutch, and then from the early 19th century by the British. Can you remember from your studies in Grades 10 and 11, how Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism came to South Africa?

1804 was an important date for religious freedom in the religious history of South Africa, when the Dutch government granted religious freedom. It was particularly significant for Christians of denominations other than...
Dutch Reformed, as well as for Muslims. It also paved the way for concerted missionary endeavours of different Christian denominations in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Many missionaries dismissed the religious beliefs of indigenous and African people as ‘primitive’ and ‘superstitious’. In critiquing the role of missionaries, post-colonial feminist theologian, Musa Dube quotes the following story:

“When the white man came to our country, he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said to us, ‘Let us pray’. After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible.” (Dube, MW (2000) Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible, St Louis: Chalice Press.)

While there is strong criticism of the destructive effects of missionary activity on indigenous knowledge and religion, there is another view that focuses on missionaries’ work in education, health provision and developing infrastructure – these are considered positive contributions to the African continent. What is your view?

What is certainly true is that the different groups mutually influenced one another. Some missionaries became fascinated by African languages and began translating the Bible into different African languages, which was the first time these languages were written down. Others became interested in local culture and allowed more song and movement into their church services.

Many African people, on the other hand, adopted aspects of Christianity, at times combining them with their own traditions. This led to the establishment of African Initiated Churches (AICs), which some scholars regard as syncretic. Others adopted the ‘new’ ways in appearance only and continued to follow their own belief systems, ensuring that African Traditional Religion is still alive to this day.

Activity 1.22 Talk and write about missionaries

1. Work in pairs or groups to discuss these questions.
   a. Why do you think the oral story that Dube quotes would be popular in southern Africa? What point is she making?
   b. Do you think there are good reasons to criticise the role missionaries played in South Africa? Give reasons for your opinion.
   c. What might supporters of colonialism say were the positive aspects of the missionaries’ presence in South Africa?

2. Write a dialogue between an early missionary and a follower of African Traditional Religion. You can start it like this:
   
   ATR: We approach the Creator through our ancestors, but don’t insist that you do so! How dare you call us primitive sinners?

3. Do research to find out why AICs could be regarded as syncretic. Report your findings to the class.
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Relationships between religions since democracy

Since the adoption of the democratic Constitution in 1994, when religious equality was guaranteed, there have been many attempts at the level of religious leadership to develop cordial relationships among different religions. This, however, is not always replicated by the grassroots membership where degrees of religious exclusivism make it difficult for some adherents to be tolerant towards those who hold different religious perspectives. However, very often when humanitarian crises erupt, religious adherents set aside their differences and find one another in a common response.

People of various faiths in South Africa have come together in the following situations:

- AIDS help line: AIDS patients are cared for and supported, often in prayer, by members representing all faiths.
- Anti-pornography march: Representatives from South African religions and their followers march to Parliament to deliver a scathing attack on pornography, believing this to be their moral duty.
- B’nai B’rith: This Hebrew term means ‘Children of the Covenant’. It is a Jewish human rights, philanthropic, and community action organisation.
- LifeLine: This organisation is involved in counselling those in need and it “invites caring and courageous individuals to start a dialogue in every community.” Volunteer counsellors commit their shifts to their ‘Supreme Being’.
- Multi-faith services: For example, services held in a local church and inviting all faiths to join in celebrating an aspect of human rights.
- The opening of Parliament: When Parliament is opened, various political and religious leaders ‘commit’ themselves to a ‘Greater Deity’.
- Public holiday celebrations: for example, a rally on Freedom Day addressed by an imam, a guru and a priest.

Activity 1.23 Find out about inter-religious relief efforts

Work in groups.

1. Do research to find out about two recent humanitarian crises in South Africa where different religions have come together.
2. Answer these questions about each crisis you researched.
   a. What happened during this crisis?
   b. What contribution did the different religions make to ease the situation?
   c. Would you consider the work they did to be secular or religious work? Why do you say this?
   d. Would you consider this form of cooperation to be inter-religious cooperation?
3. Report your findings to the class. Explain how you went about this task, what you did, and what you found out.

**CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN AFRICA**

During the 20th and 21st centuries both Christianity and Islam expanded their membership in African countries. It is suggested that some of the current tensions between these two faith communities has to do with there being fewer potential converts – a saturation point has been reached.

North African countries were traditionally Christian, but were gradually converted to Islam. Many of these countries insist that citizens are Muslim by law. The exception is the Coptic Christian church in Egypt, which has survived for more than 2000 years.

In south Saharan African countries people either converted to Christianity or to Islam, while often holding simultaneously onto their African Traditional Religious beliefs and practices. Similar to South Africa, African Initiated Christian churches developed on the rest of the continent to reflect a greater African identity. More recently, there has been growth in the number of Pentecostal churches in Africa, many of which have links with American churches.

**THE GLOBAL PICTURE**

Historically, relationships between different religions have often been conflictual. Many wars have been waged over religious differences and in some parts of the world this is still happening (you will find out more about this in Unit 5). While there have been periods of intense conflict, there have also been periods of religious cooperation. For example, in the 16th and 17th centuries there was cooperation in India between Hinduism and Sikhism; in medieval China, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism cooperated; and in medieval Spain, Judaism, Christianity and Islam cooperated.

**Grades 10 and 11 revision**

Sikhism is a religion that began in the 15th century CE in the Punjab district of what is now India and Pakistan. It was founded by Guru Nanak and is a monotheistic religion.

Cohabitation of the three Abrahamic faiths was found throughout the Iberian Peninsula (modern-day Portugal and Spain) during the 782 years of Muslim-Christian rivalry on its soil. Although Christians waged a military struggle ... to regain control, Muslims continued for generations to reside in areas the Christians retook, Christians lived largely unmolested in the shrinking Muslim zone, and Jews flourished on both sides of the divide.
Some global dynamics between religions today

In 2000 Pope John Paul II – the then pope of the Roman Catholic Church who died in 2005 – spoke of the need to persist in efforts to bring peace to the Middle East, and emphasised the importance of inter-religious harmony. In a symbolic gesture he visited the Western Wall, which is a sacred place for Jewish people, in Jerusalem. He made a speech to all the people of the Middle East – Jews, Christians and Muslims – on the need for inter-religious cooperation.

In another symbolic act in the Millennium year, John Paul II issued an unprecedented apology for the past sins of the Roman Catholic Church. He divided the sins of the past 2,000 years of church history into seven categories: general sins; sins in the service of truth (including the violence of the Crusades and the Inquisition); sins against Christian unity; sins against the Jews; sins against respect for love, peace and culture; sins against the dignity of women and minorities; and sins against human rights.

(Encarta © 1993 – 2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.)
Activity 1.24 Discuss the contributions of two popes

1. Work in groups to discuss these questions.
   a. What religious attitude best describes Pope John Paul’s approach in the extract from his speech on page 45 – exclusive or inclusive?
   b. Do you agree that “closer ties among all believers are a necessary and urgent condition for securing a more just and peaceful world”? Explain your answer.
   c. Why do you think Pope John Paul apologised for sins committed?

2. Conduct research and find out why Jerusalem is a sacred place to Muslims, Jews and Christians. What are the historical reasons for this? Report your findings to the class.

In 2006, the then pope, Benedict XVI, in an academic address on faith and reason quoted remarks by the Byzantine emperor Manuel II in the 15th century that denounced Muhammad and Islam for violence and forced conversion. This was interpreted as a criticism by the pope of radical Islamic violence and sparked an international outcry from Muslims, leading to a personal apology from the pope, who said the address had been intended as an invitation to dialogue.

(Benedict XVI — Infoplease.com http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/people/A0931363.html#ixzz1zkhlIDF4M)

3. In the same groups discuss these questions.
   a. What effect do you think Pope Benedict’s speech had on relationships between Christians and Muslims?
   b. In your view what should he have said in his apology that might have helped to restore the relationship with the Muslim community?

Effects of humanitarian crises on global relationships between religions

It is quite easy to be dogmatic and to state that the religion we follow is right and is the only true religion. But sometimes it is important to come together for the sake of another cause or the common good.

After the tsunamis struck in regions of Indonesia where the dominant religion is Islam, helpers from all religions banded together. This is what some people said:

“We will not be starting livelihoods again until these people are allowed to grieve and recover.”

Ken Hackett, Catholic Relief Services
“Certainly, this crisis is bringing people together. Those who are hanging on to their caste, religion, politics, race, language – they have forgotten all that, and everybody, as people, they have come together.”

Dr AT Ariyaratne, founder of Sarvodaya, a community development group based on Buddhist principles – much of its support has come from American Buddhists and Christians.

“Our people have no faith in you. Yet, through this nightmarish experience our people have gone through in broad daylight, we will rise again because you are there.”

A prayer by Catholic Father Joseph Mary, who lost 130 of his parishioners.

Activity 1.25 Discuss religions’ responses

Discuss these questions in pairs or groups.
1. Why do you think Ken Hackett believes that people must grieve?
2. Which two world religions cooperate in Sarvodaya?
3. Do you think Sarvodaya has achieved anything? Explain your answer.
4. How do you think Father Joseph Mary feels about the tsunami and about God?
5. Do you think it helps, in a time of desperation, to share your feelings with a member of another religion? Give reasons for your response.

ORGANISATIONS PROMOTING INTER-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS

In South Africa, one example of an organisation promoting interfaith dialogue is the Cape Town Interfaith Initiative (CTII). Its vision is to work for unified interreligious and spiritual understanding and respect in South Africa. To achieve this, the CTII arranges events where people from different faith can dialogue, attend rituals, and celebrate moments in the political and social life of South Africa together.

“The Mission of the Cape Town Interfaith Initiative is to celebrate and share the richness of the religious and spiritual diversity in the Western Cape, and to promote community interfaith understanding, harmony and cooperation, through both an awareness of universal spirituality and an honouring of the dignity of difference.”

(http://capeinterfaith.org/interfaith-2011-youth-exchange.html)

Three organisations have been established to try and develop cordial relationships between different religions in Africa – PROCMURA, IFAPA and ACRL.
The **Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA)** is the oldest and pioneer interfaith organisation on the continent of Africa, with a specific focus on Christians’ relations with Muslims. Founded in 1959, PROCMURA tries to promote the following within the churches in Africa:

- witness to the gospel within an interfaith environment
- constructive engagement with Muslims for peace

Among the programmes that it runs are those directed at women, youth, education, and peace and reconciliation.

(Source: http://procmura-prica.org/en)

Participants in the 2012 Procmura conference in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia came together to discuss peace and development.

The **Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA)** is a pan-African non-profit based organisation that was founded in 2002 to unite religious communities across Africa to cooperate and work together for peace on the continent. It includes representatives from the African Traditional Religions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and the Baha’i Faith.

To date, it has established chapters in more than 30 African countries and commits itself to working for unity, peace, democracy, non-racialism, equality irrespective of gender, and a decent life for all. Some of its achievements include:

- bringing together religious communities, civil society, private sector and governments (parliamentarians)
- commissioning meeting of religious leaders who take the IFAPA decisions
- sub regional summits
- establishing and registering national chapters
• sending interfaith delegations to conflict risk areas
• participating in the legislative election in Togo
• organising exchange visits between landmine victims and survivors from Ethiopia, South Sudan and Uganda
• participating in the World Social Forum held in Kenya (2007)
• sending a women’s delegation to Nordic countries
• forming the IFAPA Women Network
• organising the Nakanyonyi Youth Peace Camp
• holding the first continental interfaith youth consultation
• establishing regional Youth Networks
• inaugurating the Rural Water Project in Rwanda
• inaugurating the Mbagani Water project in the Kwale-cost district of Kenya
• launching the Mother’s Cry for a Healthy Africa.

(Source: http://ifapa-africa.org)

The **African Council of Religious Leaders — Religions for Peace (ACRL—RIP)** was also founded in 2002 and is the largest and most representative multi-religious platform in Africa. Its vision is to bring together religious leaders and their communities in a common commitment to peace.

Its guiding principles are stated as follows:

1. Respecting religious differences; acting on deeply held and widely shared moral concerns and values
2. Preserving the identity of each religious community
3. Honouring the different ways religious communities are organised in Africa
4. Supporting locally led multi-religious structures within RIP networks in the continent
5. Upholding the principles of representivity, **subsidiarity** and solidarity.

**Activity 1.26 Discuss religious cooperation in Africa**

Work in groups to discuss what kinds of events on the African continent might cause religious people to work together and ‘forget’ about their beliefs while they cooperate with others. Report your ideas to the class.

**Organisations promoting inter-religious dialogue globally**

**World Conference of Religions for Peace**

The World Conference of Religions for Peace convened for the first time in Kyoto, Japan, in October 1970. However, the origins of Religions for Peace date to 1961, when a handful of senior leaders from the world’s major faith traditions began exploring the possibilities of organising a ‘religious summit’ to address the need for believers around the world to take action towards achieving peace.
The vision of a world congress of religious leaders for peace goes back even further, at least to the late 19th century, when a World Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago in 1893. Building on a long-held hope for multi-religious dialogue, various religious leaders arranged two conferences in the United States.

The success of these events encouraged an exploration of possibilities for a worldwide conference of religious leaders, culminating in the conference in Kyoto in 1970. More than 1 000 religious leaders from every continent gathered in Kyoto, including Baha’i; Mahayana and Theravada Buddhists; Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Orthodox Christians; Confucianists; representatives of several streams of Hinduism; a number of communities of indigenous faith; Shi’a and Sunni Muslims; Jainists; Reform Jews; Shintos; Sikhs; and Zoroastrians.

The meeting concluded with the resolution that “the work initiated by Kyoto should be continued in the form of an inter-religious body called the World Conference of Religions for Peace”. This body continues to be active today.

**World Parliament of Religions**

The first Parliament of the World’s Religions was held in 1893 in Chicago in the United States with the aim of creating a global dialogue of faiths. Since that event there have been several further Parliaments.
• In 1993, the Parliament was again held in Chicago where members explored ways for different religions to work together on world issues as well as creating a declaration entitled: ‘Towards a Global Ethic’.

• In 1999, the Parliament was held in Cape Town, where the issue of HIV and AIDS was highlighted.

• In 2004, the Parliament met in Barcelona, Spain, and focused on religious violence, safe water, refugees, and eliminating external debt in developing countries.

• In 2007, the focus of the religious gathering was on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) for eradicating poverty.

• In 2009, the Parliament met in Melbourne, Australia and dealt with aboriginal reconciliation as well as sustainability and global climate change as understood by indigenous religions.

**Activity 1.27 Discuss the Parliaments of the World’s Religions**

1. Read the extract below from the Summary Report of the Council for a World Parliament of Religions, which was held in Cape Town in December 1999. Then discuss these questions in groups.

2. Answer these questions:
   a. In what ways was this Parliament meeting unique?
   b. What issues did the participants discuss?
   c. What hope did this meeting give to others?

3. Find evidence in the extract to support these statements.
   a. Participants followed their own faith and were not expected to ‘change’ or subscribe to something ‘new’.
   b. Participants showed that it was possible to understand and respect one another.

Cape Town is home to many races, religious traditions, and cultural varieties. Religious, spiritual, cultural, and civic leaders, groups, and communities there worked enthusiastically in partnership with the World Parliament of Religions to make the 1999 Parliament an unforgettable gift to the world.

Over 7 000 people from around the world came together to experience astonishing spiritual and cultural variety, to exchange insights, to share wisdom to celebrate their unique religious identities; in short to be amazed, delighted, and inspired. At the same time, participants wrestled with the critical issues facing the global community, learning about the world situation, and seeking the moral and ethical convergence that leads to shared commitment and action.

**convergence** – when ideas come together

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**Think about this**

In 2014, the World Parliament of Religions will meet in Brussels, Belgium. Find out for yourself about the programme and agenda.
The 1999 Parliament was a celebration of hope and a vision of possible futures. It also gave powerful testimony to the good hearts and goodwill of the many thousands of people – from every part of the world, and from almost every religious and spiritual tradition – who believed that this gathering could indeed be the harbinger of a new day dawning.

Delegates from around the world, and from different religions, march through Cape Town as part of the opening of the meeting of the World Parliament of Religions in 1999.

It was not the intention of those who gathered in Cape Town to create a new religion, or to diminish in any way the precious uniqueness of any path. Instead, they came together to demonstrate that the religious and spiritual traditions and communities of Cape Town, of South Africa, and of the larger world can and should encounter one another in a spirit of respect, and with an openness to new understanding.

The Charter for Compassion

The Charter for Compassion is a global network initiated by world religion scholar Karen Armstrong, in collaboration with the Council of Conscience, a multi-faith, multi-national group of religious thinkers and leaders. Its goal is to mobilise local and national initiatives around the principle of compassion – a principle that is common across all religions – ‘in order to create a just economy and a peaceful global community’. By 2012, thousands of people from all over the world have signed their agreement to implement the principles of the Charter.

“The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable
sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others – even our enemies – is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women • to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion • to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate • to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures • to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity • to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings – even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community."

(http://charterforcompassion.org/the-charter)

⭐ Activity 1.28 Discuss the Charter for Compassion

Individually, read the information above and then discuss these questions as a group.

1. What are the core principles of the Charter for Compassion?

2. In what ways do you think such a global instrument could advance the aims of inter-religious dialogue?

3. Ursula King (guest professor at the Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo) has observed that in interfaith dialogue, women are often invisible, and gender issues are seldom focused upon.

   a. Would you agree with Professor King, from your knowledge of the different organisations involved in interfaith dialogue? Give examples to support your answer.

   b. Does the Charter for Compassion take a different approach to gender? Give examples from the text.
Informal group and self-assessment

Use this rubric to assess your group’s performances in the previous two activities. For each activity, put a tick in the row that most accurately reflects how your group did. Then write answers to the final four questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Activity 1.27</th>
<th>Activity 1.28</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 = outstanding – we worked very well together and more than did justice to this topic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6 = very good – we worked well together and did justice to the topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 = good – on the whole we worked well together, and covered the topic well</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 = adequate – we worked quite well as a group, but were not really united; we covered the topic well enough</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 = basic – we didn’t really come to terms with the topic, and did not work well as a group</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 = inadequate – there was no evidence that we worked in a group; we covered the topic poorly and incompletely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = not achieved at all – because we could not work as a group or address the topic</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What did we do well?
What didn’t we do so well?
What can we do differently next time?
How did I work, individually and in the group?

AN INTERVIEW ON INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Activity 1.29 Write a report based on an interview

1. Read the following interview which was conducted with former Catholic priest and anti-apartheid activist, Cosmas Desmond in 2006. He was one of the first to document the plight of people who were victims of forced removals under apartheid. He died in March, 2012.

**Question 1: Do you think inter-religious cooperation is a positive thing? Please give reasons to support your response.**

Interfaith cooperation can be, should be, has been and – in some instances – still is a positive thing. Most of the world’s population follow some faith or religion that has a significant influence on, and even a degree of control over, their behaviour – not only their personal or ‘religious’ behaviour but also in areas that overlap with the political, economic, social and other areas of life. Most faiths tend to share some basic values, though they can be subjected to very different interpretations and can be used to divide and to oppress rather than to unite and to encourage cooperation. More often than not, however, religious differences are used to ‘justify’ or to rationalise violence and
oppression rather than being the cause of it. Much more so now than in the past, the problems and concerns that arise in these areas cannot be dealt with by any one national or religious group. Tsunamis and HIV and AIDS do not discriminate between Jews, Muslims, Christians or anyone else. The need for cooperative efforts is therefore clearly more necessary than ever.

**Question 2: What role do you think inter-religious cooperation plays in South Africa?**

There was much more interfaith cooperation during the apartheid years – particularly during the later years of the struggle – than there is today. This is probably because we then had a common enemy. If an imam was killed in detention, Jews, Christians, Hindus and others joined in the protest, just as they would for their ‘own’. The South African branch of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) – led by people like Frank Chikane and Desmond Tutu – played a significant role in the 1980s and 1990s but it seems to have collapsed, mainly from lack of funding I believe, except in KwaZulu-Natal. There they held a briefing for the elections in March of 2006 because they believed that, “We as religious people have an obligation to uphold our moral responsibility in guiding our communities and we therefore ask you to assist in encouraging your congregations and communities to vote in the forthcoming municipal and provincial elections.” They also hold briefings on major national and international issues. They have also, together with the Health Education and AIDS Research Division at the University of KwaZulu-Natal formed an HIV and AIDS Inter-religious Forum.

**Question 3: Can you give any examples when inter-religious cooperation has worked well in South Africa?**

Rabbi Harris [then chief rabbi of South Africa’s Jewish community] believed that South Africa had a particular role to play. As he said in the Desmond Tutu lecture [an annual peace lecture] in 2000, “Because of our collective belief that we do not live in a spiritual vacuum sealed off from the world around us, because of our belief that while our specific religion can be given priority, it must never be given exclusivity, because uniquely among the interfaith movements of the world we in South Africa have proved our ability to overcome separateness in a loving affirmation of the blessings harmony can achieve, because we all know that religion is more than principle, ritual and ceremony but carries the potential of touching the daily lives of human beings with dignity and goodness – for all these reasons our branch of the WRCP is playing an important role at present in the reconstruction of our country.”

**Question 4: Can you comment on inter-religious relationships in Africa? Please give us some details if possible.**

There are active interfaith groups working for peace in Sierra Leone and in Somalia, but I do not have any details. The WCRP formed an Inter-religious Council in Sierra Leone in 1998 to look into the issue of child soldiers, which was a major concern at the time. It has also founded the
Think about this

Somalia in East Africa has been in a state of war and political instability for many years. Currently there is conflict between an Islamic political force and local warlords. Many people have been forced to flee their homeland. Sierra Leone in West Africa experienced a devastating civil war, which was eventually stopped by international peacekeeping forces in 2000.

**affiliates** - people associated with something or someone
**abyss** - a huge gap or deep chasm
**conciliatory** - behaving in a peacemaking way; pacifying

African Council of Religious Leaders to respond to the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

**Question 5: Can you comment on inter-religious dynamics internationally? Please give some examples if possible.**

The WCRP and its **affiliates** are very active in Europe in relation to international issues. For example, the general secretary issued a statement on the present conflict in Israel, Lebanon, noting that “Acts of violence are pushing the people of Israel, Lebanon, Palestine and neighbouring states towards an abyss of destruction. Innocent people are being killed, civilian infrastructure is being destroyed and the fires of hatred are being fanned. Today’s acts of violence must stop. Violence kills the innocent, inflicts profound suffering and causes vast damage. It strengthens extremists and weakens moderates. Violence will neither provide real security nor lead to a lasting peace.” The statement concluded that, “Religious leaders need to take action. They need to stand together to reject the misuse of religion whenever it is hijacked in support of violence and suffering. They need to continue to encourage their faithful – millions of sincere Jews, Muslims and Christians – to not lose heart, but to remain steadfast in prayer. Religions for Peace will ... support religious leaders in the region to work together to stop violence and build peace.”

There was also a strong interfaith response to the publication of cartoons considered by Muslims to be offensive. [You will learn more about this in Section 2, Unit 2.] The European Council of Religious Leaders – which includes senior religious leaders from Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism - wrote, “We strongly appeal to responsible leaders of all faiths to reject and do their best to stop the ongoing acts of violence and terror, which are carried out in the name of God. We condemn the misuse of freedom of expression to blaspheme that which is holy for believers. All religions hold certain symbols and realities of faith to be holy, and feel particularly strongly about these. These feelings should be respected by all people, regardless of faith. The deeply offensive cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad are a grievous insult to most of the world’s 1.3 billion Muslims. As such, they are also deeply offensive to members of other religious communities. We join the appeal to Muslims from the European Islamic Conference not to be carried away by anger, and not to react with violence. We also welcome and affirm the conciliatory message of the Muslim Council of Britain.”

The youth are also involved. At the Western European Regional Youth Preparatory Meeting: Confronting violence and advancing shared security, this declaration was made: "Being representatives of Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Zoroastrian and other related youth organisations and active participants in interfaith dialogue, having discussed issues of violence and shared security, we would like to conclude the Western European Interfaith Youth Meeting hosted by the Religions for Peace in Geneva, Switzerland, in July 2006, by declaring the following: "We believe that every human being,
regardless of faith, gender or ethnicity, has the right to live in peace, harmony and with dignity in all spheres of life. This includes freedom from all forms of violence in Western Europe including amongst others, physical, psychological, socio-economic, legal and political.

We are increasingly concerned by the lack of mutual respect and understanding which is contributing to these forms of violence. This is reinforced by continued misinformation, incorrect or deficient knowledge, and claims of superiority. In this respect we highlight the role played by individuals and institutions, such as certain media and political parties, in fuelling prejudice and stereotypes, thus encouraging violence and the violation of human rights.

May we, the youth of an increasingly diverse and multicultural Europe, through the development of this interfaith network, achieve our goals and play an active role in the progression towards world peace."

**Question 6: What do you see as the future dynamic of inter-religious cooperation in South Africa and Africa?**

At present it seems that interfaith dialogue and cooperation has largely fallen off the agenda. There seems to be a general acceptance among religious groups that it is a good idea and there is probably more tolerance than there used to be, but not very much action. The Department of Education’s introduction of teaching on all religions, and children of different faiths learning together, might ignite a spark in the coming generation.

**Question 7: Christianity is described by some as an exclusivist religion. What impact has (or might that have had) on inter-religious cooperation?**

I think that all religions are to some extent exclusivist, though historically Christianity, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, has been the worst. There was a time in the not too distant past when the latter forbade any cooperation with other faiths or even with other Christian denominations. This is no longer the official position but there is still perhaps a bit of a superiority complex that inhibits meaningful cooperation. There are of course, exceptions. Archbishop Denis Hurley [a leading anti-apartheid religious leader who died in 2004 after spending his life working for justice], for example, was completely comfortable with interfaith cooperation. Now even the Pope is making overtures to people of other faiths, particularly the Jewish faith.

**Question 8: Can you comment specifically on the role that African Religions have played in inter-religious relations in South Africa?**

I don’t think African Religions have yet played much of a formal role in interfaith relations but it is becoming quite common practice to invite representatives to take part in workshops, conferences, etc., particularly on issues such as HIV and AIDS.
Question 9: What three social issues confronting South Africa do you think would benefit from inter-religious cooperation?

Three social issues: poverty, HIV and AIDS, and corruption, by which I mean the betrayal of the values on which the struggle against apartheid was based – concern for justice, the poor, a spirit of service to others, and many others. The increasing preoccupation with the selfish pursuit of individual wealth cannot be the basis for any religious action, let alone interfaith cooperation.

2. Work in pairs to respond to the following questions:
   a. What does the respondent feel about inter-religious dialogue?
   b. According to the respondent, what role did inter-religious dialogue play in South Africa, particularly during the apartheid years?
   c. Does the respondent believe that inter-religious dialogue has a place in South Africa, Africa and the world today?
   d. What role can the youth play, as described by the respondent’s sources?
   e. What social issues should inter-religious dialogue address?

Formal assessment task 1b – Source-based task (40 marks)

On your own, write a report in which you analyse critically the findings from the interview with Cosmas Desmond that you have just read. You may need to read the section on report writing (on page 59) first. This report will be assessed by your teacher according to the rubric below. The mark out of 40 will go towards your year mark.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Mark /40</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>80%—100% Outstanding achievement</td>
<td>32–40</td>
<td>Report is outstanding in all respects. It is excellently written, clearly expressed, contains all the main points and is a pleasure to read. It includes full and accurate references.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>70%—79% Meritorious achievement</td>
<td>28–31</td>
<td>Report is very good in all respects. It is very well written, well expressed, contains virtually all the main points and reads extremely well. It includes accurate references.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>60%—69% Substantial achievement</td>
<td>24–27</td>
<td>Report is good in all respects. It is well written, well and clearly expressed, and contains most of the main points. It is easy to read and follow. It includes references.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%—59% Adequate achievement</td>
<td>20–23</td>
<td>Report is fairly good in places. It is mostly well written, and for the most part well and clearly expressed although the style is not perfect. Generally it is easy to follow but at times loses the thread. It includes some references.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>40%—49% Moderate achievement</td>
<td>16–19</td>
<td>Report is adequate. It covers most of the required criteria but in a rather dull manner. Parts are fairly well written although style and language usage are not very good. It is not particularly easy to read as it is at times somewhat muddled and unclear. It does not include references or they are inaccurate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>30%—39% Elementary achievement</td>
<td>12–15</td>
<td>Report is less than adequate. Few if any of the required criteria are covered. Most of the report is poorly expressed. It is difficult to read as it is muddled and confusing. It does not include references.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%—29% Not achieved</td>
<td>0–11</td>
<td>The task has either been misunderstood or not completed. It does not include references.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE FOUR STAGES OF REPORT WRITING

1. Frame the issues and plan
2. Gather information
3. Analyse the information
4. Write the report

Parts of a report

1. Aims and purpose/objectives: Why did you do the work? What issue did you investigate? What were you trying to find out?

2. Literature review: This puts your research into a context and explains its importance. Include books, journals and articles (including internet articles) that relate directly to your topic. Remember that you need to be analytical and critical and not just describe the works you have read.

3. Methodology: Explain the method/s you used for the research. For example, you may have found and analysed data from written sources, or you may have collected data through interviews. Explain the methods of data collection, materials used, subjects interviewed, or places you visited. Explain how, why and when you carried out your research and why you used the methods you did.

4. Results/findings: What did you find out? Give a clear presentation of your results. You may want to include tables, graphs and figures.

5. Analysis and discussion: Interpret your results. How do they compare with those of others who have done research in this area? Discuss the accuracy of your results and mention any weaknesses in your research.

6. Conclusions: Briefly summarise the main conclusions which you discussed under ‘Results’. Were you able to answer some or all of the questions you raised in your aims? Do not draw conclusions which are not backed up by evidence. If you did not achieve your aims, say so and suggest why.

7. Recommendations: Make recommendations if required – positive or negative suggestions for action or further research.

8. Appendix: You may not need an appendix, or you may need several. If you have used questionnaires, it is usual to include a blank copy of the questionnaire in the appendix. There may be maps, drawings, photographs or plans that you want to include. If you used special equipment, you may want to include information about it. Each item in your appendix needs a title and number, or letter.

9. Bibliography: You will always need to list all the sources to which you refer in the report. You must acknowledge where your information came from. This includes full references of the book, journal, article – including any information you found on the internet.

(Adapted from Alison Britton, Study Resources Coordinator, South Bank University, March 1996)
Religions are supposed to represent our highest ideals and hopes. You would think, therefore, that religions would inspire us to seek peace and to live in harmony with others. But the record of religions, like everything that involves humans, is mixed. Sometimes they inspire us to reach great heights of creativity and social sacrifice. At other times they drive people to truly despicable behaviour. Sometimes religion is part of the problem; sometimes it is part of the solution.

In Northern Ireland, there has been conflict between Catholic and Protestant Christians, in other words, between two groups within the religion. This is known as an intra-religious conflict. Similarly in Iraq, there is conflict within Islam and so this is also an intra-religious conflict. Whereas in Palestine, the conflict there has been between Jews and Muslims – two different religions – and so is considered an inter-religious conflict.

In this unit you will read about examples of different conflicts involving religion – some intra-religious and others inter-religious. Finally, you will study in some depth the conflict situation in the Darfur region of western Sudan and the role that religions are playing there.

**SPOTLIGHT ON CONFLICTS INVOLVING RELIGION**

**Northern Ireland** is constitutionally part of the United Kingdom. Its population is religiously split between Protestants and Catholics. For decades, some Catholics in Northern Ireland have fought for independence from the UK and for union with the Republic of Ireland (Eire). Protestants have resisted. The result has been a long, slow civil war that has only recently begun to be resolved.

After World War II, it was determined that Jews should have a country of their own. Land was bought up and then conquered until a piece of the Middle East, which became known as Israel was acquired. Israeli independence in 1948 was marked by massive migrations of Jews from both Europe and the Islamic world to Israel, and of Arabs from Israel. Through a number of wars, mostly started by surrounding Arabic states, Jews extended the boundaries of what they call Israel, though to many Muslims the whole area should still be called Palestine. More recently, Jews simply occupied and settled on new land, forcing the original mostly Muslim Palestinian inhabitants off their land into smaller territories and refugee settlements. A battle for land and control continues to rage in the area.
The three major population groups in **Iraq** are the **Kurds** in the north, the Sunni Muslims in the centre, and the Shi’a Muslims in the south. All are Muslims, but for a long time the Kurds have fought for independence, both within Iraq and in neighbouring Turkey. In central and southern Iraq, Sunni Muslims take their lead from Saudi Arabia, while Shi’as look more to Iran. Saddam Hussein was a Sunni, but he created a fairly secular and very oppressive regime in Iraq. The United States invasion in 2003 overthrew Saddam Hussein, but weakened the Iraqi state so much that underlying divisions in the society have erupted. There are fears that Iraq will sink into civil war between Sunni and Shi’a Muslims.

For most of the 20th century the **Balkans** was a trouble spot. On the break-up of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, the Balkans fell into civil war with mostly Christian Serbs against mostly Muslim Croats, and Christian and Muslim Bosnians against each other. The conflict was partly based on ancient religious rivalries, which go back to the first conflicts between Christians and Muslims.

**Sri Lanka** is a mainly Buddhist country. But most northern Sri Lankans identify themselves as Tamil, who are more like South Indians than Sri Lankans in belief and custom. For decades a movement called the Tamil Tigers has fought what they call a war of liberation against the Buddhist-dominated south.

In many ways, **Uganda** has started to become an African success story. It has turned the corner in the fight against HIV and AIDS, and has a growing economy. However, it suffers a battle on its borders with Kenya and Sudan against a terror group calling itself the Lord’s Resistance Army. This group attacks civilians and kidnaps children to serve in its forces. It is led by Joseph Kony, who sees himself as a Christian visionary and wants to establish a state according to his beliefs.
In all these conflict situations it is important to analyse the role of religions very carefully, and to ask questions like these:

To what extent, if at all, is religion used as an excuse by some people in the conflict who really have other reasons for wanting to go to war? To what extent has institutional religion played a positive role in trying to prevent war or encourage peace?

South Africa is fortunate in not having problems like these. Social conflict in South Africa revolves more around issues like poverty, unemployment, or the battle over HIV and AIDS and medical provision.

Activity 1.30 Write about conflict areas

1. Work on your own to copy and complete this table, using the information on pages 60 and 61.
2. Choose one of these sites of conflict and do some further research. Is this an example of:
   a. religion being used as an excuse to hide the other reasons or interests for war?
   b. religion playing a positive role in trying to prevent war or encourage peace?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Is the conflict intra-religious or inter-religious?</th>
<th>Who is the conflict between?</th>
<th>Reason for conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balkans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Palestine/Israel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Informal peer assessment

Swap tables with a partner and mark each other’s work. If there are mistakes in your partner’s table, point them out to her or him and explain why they are wrong. Correct your own table if you need to.

CONFLICT IN DARFUR IN SUDAN

In 2002 the world became aware of a tragedy unfolding in western Sudan on the border with Chad in an area called Darfur. In this section you will analyse the role of religion in this conflict situation.

Historical context

Social and political analysis should always begin by placing the current situation in its historical context, but how far back should you go? Fault lines in Darfur society can be traced back well over 100 years. The two main fault lines are ethnic and cultural:

- Two broad groupings are found in Darfur: Arab tribes called ‘Baggara’ and a number of African tribes. The settlement of these peoples in the area dates back to the 13th century.
- The Africans are subdivided into a number of tribal groupings including the Fur, the Masalit, and the Zaghawa. This forms a second set of divisions.
- A third set of divisions has to do with culture: the Fur and the Masalit are mostly farmers, while the Arabs and Zaghawa are mostly nomads.

Religion itself does not appear to be a radical source of division. Most people in the area are Sunni Muslims, although there are a number who are African traditionalists and, in the south, there are those who are Christian.

Through the centuries, nomads and farmers worked out a way to coexist. Nomads were frequently allowed to graze their animals on farmland once crops had been harvested. This arrangement worked quite well unless there was a drought. When food became scarce, then competition for scarce resources would lead to conflict. Conflicts were generally sorted out by a system of multi-ethnic tribal elders.

Layered on top of the nomad-farmer split was slavery. Before the 20th century and some way into it, Darfur was a centre of the slave trade in northeast Africa. The Fur and the Baggara competed with each other to raid surrounding tribes and provide slaves for the coastal regions.

While religion has not on its own contributed to the humanitarian crisis of these refugees in Darfur, it is still a part of the long history of conflict in the area.
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**Tracking the present conflict**

First Sudanese civil war broke out between the emerging Muslim-dominated central government and non-Muslims living in the south.

- Sudan became independent from Britain.  
  1955

- The military took over but the civil war continued.  
  1956 1958–72

- A brief period of peace. The south gained significant self-rule.  
  1972–82

- Civil war broke out again when the central government tried to impose Islamic Shari’a law on the south.  
  1983

**Analysing the conflict**

The trigger for the conflict in 1983 was the central government’s attempt to force a system of law on an area of the country that was not Islamic. In other words, you could say that religion was part of the problem. However, it is important to distinguish the trigger or excuse for an event from the underlying and more permanent causes. The area had been subject to a 15-year civil war and peace was still fragile. The imposition of Shari’a law would therefore have worsened what was already a fragile situation.

One of the problems with the Darfur conflict is that it does not follow the classic civil war lines of government versus rebels. Armed militia like the Janjaweed have little respect for law. They targeted civilians and destroyed villages throughout the region. But they focused their attacks on non-Arab villages. Most international agencies and media believe that the well-armed Janjaweed have been supported and armed by the central government. They quickly gained control in the region.

By late 2005 more than a million people had fled from their homes and set up refugee camps. More than 100 000 crossed the border into Chad, only to be followed by the Janjaweed. The Chadian forces hit back and the conflict threatened to become international. There were mass killings, looting, and mass rapes of civilians by both the Janjaweed and the Darfur liberation groups. Some agencies are calling it genocide because of the scale of death, particularly among Africans.
Lawless groups called ‘murahilin’ started raiding Darfur villages, stealing property and abducting people into virtual slavery.

Two armed groupings emerged in Darfur in self-defence, called the Sudan Liberation Movement (associated mainly with the Fur) and the Justice Equality Movement (mainly Masalit). They began attacking government property as a way to drive the central government out of the region. The government responded by bombing Darfur villages.

“A new Arab militia, Janjaweed, emerged.

“The 23 Fur villages in the Shattaya Administrative Unit have been completely depopulated, looted, and burnt to the ground. Meanwhile, dotted alongside these charred locations are unharmed, populated, and functioning Arab settlements. In some locations, the distance between a destroyed Fur village and an Arab village is less than 500 metres.”

Response of the international community

The African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN), and many international aid agencies have tried to protect and support civilians. Diplomatic pressure has been applied from all sides on the central government in Khartoum.

In 2004, the AU sent 7,000 troops into the region to try to monitor ceasefire agreements. They were joined in 2006 by a combined United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force authorised by the UN Security Council.

In March 2009, the International Criminal Court issued a warrant for the arrest of Sudan’s president Omar Hassan al-Bashir and other leaders of the feared militia for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. The Sudanese government responded by expelling 13 international agencies from Sudan and three local agencies from Darfur. As a result there is limited access by the international community to news of developments in the region. Fighting escalated again in 2010 and 2011 forcing tens of thousands more people to flee their homes.

Organisations like the Islamic Relief Agency and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development focus on practical support. They supply building materials and medical supplies, drill wells, build and repair clinics and schools, and supply food and training to locals. This photo shows a woman carrying a box of food provided by an aid agency.
The role of religion

Most people on both sides of the conflict are Sunni Muslims. The Darfur conflict therefore does not have religious origins, although it can be said that religion played an indirect role through the 1983 civil war, which was partly a religious conflict. The main role that religions have played has been in attempting to help.

The work of religious agencies is charitable rather than political, in other words, they help people rebuild their lives. But they are not able to play a role in stopping the conflict. Although some degree of co-ordination must have taken place between these agencies, they do not present themselves as part of a broader international effort.

Activity 1.31 Discuss whether religions can help create political peace

Religions are playing a very constructive role in Darfur by giving aid. But can they help to create political peace?

1. Work in groups to discuss what factors you think make it difficult for religions to play a role in creating political peace.

2. Choose a spokesperson to report your group’s ideas to the class. Your teacher will summarise all the ideas on the chalkboard.

3. Have a class discussion about what religious organisations could do to overcome some of the factors listed on the chalkboard.

HOW TO ANALYSE SITUATIONS OF CONFLICT AND THE ROLE OF RELIGIONS

In the formal assessment activity on page 69 you will choose an area of conflict and then research and write about the role of religion in that situation. This section gives you an action plan that will help you with this task.

Step 1: Analyse the historical context

Always begin with an analysis of the historical context, as we did for Darfur. These are some of the questions you should answer when you fill in the historical background:

- How long ago did the conflict begin? What are its historical roots?
- Write out the history of events that make up the conflict. Put down dates, and who was involved.
- Write down all the fault lines involved in the conflict. In other words, make a note of all the things that could have caused social division. Your list should give details about things like:
  - Ethnic divisions: Whether we like it or not, many conflicts still involve racism.
- Cultural divisions: In Darfur, a major source of conflict is between nomads and farmers.
- Religious divisions: In many regions – for example, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, the Balkans – religion is part of the problem.

In tracing the historical context, pay attention to the role of religions and religious leaders in either making the situation worse, or trying to improve it.

**Step 2: Analyse the current situation**

Once you have filled in the historical context, you can move to a critical analysis of the current situation. You will find that filling in the historical context already helps you to understand a lot of the problem. So this section should focus on questions like these:

- To what extent are the reasons that leaders give for their actions merely a cover-up for other factors? For example, people may give a religious reason for the conflict whereas a proper analysis shows that it actually has to do with a clash of culture or lifestyle.
- To what extent are the reasons merely a cover-up for human selfishness and greed? For example, the leaders of lawless militia throughout history in all religions of the world have allowed their soldiers to rape women, steal property, and participate in destructive behaviour.

The point about critical analysis is that it tries to go deeper than the obvious. For example, pay attention to the difference between why people say they are doing something and the other reasons why they may be doing it. Sometimes, religion is used as an excuse to cover up for the sheer desire to grab land and property from other people, or to have power over them.

**Step 3: Analyse the role of religions**

Now you are ready to focus on a more detailed analysis of the current role of religions in the situation.

- Make a list of all the religious organisations currently involved in the conflict.
- Make a list of what they are actually doing: are they trying to organise inter-religious dialogue? Are they doing charitable work? Are they trying to put pressure on the main actors, or are they supporting one another of the actors?
- Analyse what the religious leaders say about the conflict. Are they choosing sides? If so, why do they choose one side rather than another? Are they suggesting ways to overcome the conflict? If so, what are they suggesting?
- Analyse the impact that religions are having. To what extent do they improve the situation for ordinary people? To what extent do they make it worse?
Pay particular attention to what people say they are doing, and what they are actually doing. Also pay attention to the difference between what religious leaders think are the effects of their activity, versus the actual effects. For example, after the destruction of the World Trade Towers in New York in 2001, then President George Bush declared what he called a ‘war on terror’. Many conservative Christians in the United States supported him. In doing so, they thought they were helping to get rid of terrorism. But in fact, Bush’s strategies caused so much anger in the Muslim community that one could say they made things worse, not better.

**Step 4: Summarise your findings**

Conclude your analysis with a brief summary of your main findings about the role of religion.

---

**Activity 1.32 Research the role of religion in a conflict situation**

Before starting this activity, read the assessment information below so that you know what is expected of you. Then work on your own to complete these tasks:

1. Choose one of the conflict situations mentioned on pages 60 to 61, or any other recent conflict of your choice (you may need to conduct research to find out about other current conflicts).
2. Do research into the conflict you have chosen and the role of religion in the situation. Follow the four steps outlined earlier in this section.
3. You can present your findings in any medium, for example, as an essay, a detailed poster, or a speech. If you choose to present a speech, make sure that you have a written or printed copy of it. Your teacher will review your first draft and give you feedback.

---

**Formal assessment task 1c – Source-based task (40 marks)**

Use your teacher’s feedback to edit and rework your essay/poster/speech into a final presentation. Your teacher will mark it according to the following rubric and rating scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did the learner</th>
<th>Mark breakdown</th>
<th>Mark obtained</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>successfully identify an area of recent conflict by</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• identifying all the religious organisations currently involved in the conflict?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• critically analysing the current situation?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>demonstrate and apply research skills by</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• identifying the historic roles of religions and religious leaders in either making the situation worse or trying to improve it?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• finding out what these organisations are doing?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Continued overleaf)
Here is a study map to help you understand what you have covered in this section. One unit has been started for you. Copy the map into your workbook and complete it for the other units.

**Did the learner**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identify ways in which religion is part of the problem by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>analysing what the religious leaders say about the conflict?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analysing the impact that these religious organisations are having on ordinary people's lives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concluding the analysis with a brief summary of the main findings about the role of religion?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identify ways in which religion is part of the solution by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>analysing what the religious leaders say about the conflict?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analysing the impact that these religious organisations are having on ordinary people's lives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concluding the analysis with a brief summary of the main findings about the role of religion?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 10

**Total mark**

- 40

**7 Outstanding (32–40)**

**6 Meritorious (28–31)**

**5 Substantial (24–27)**

**4 Adequate (20–23)**

**3 Moderate (16–19)**

**2 Elementary (12–15)**

**1 Not achieved (0–11)**

---

**VARiETY OF RELIGIONS and RESEARCH INTO AND ACROSS RELIGIONS**

**Unit 1** What do these concepts mean: religious identity, uniqueness, unity, similarity, difference, comparability?

**Unit 2** How are different religions divided internally?

**Unit 3** What are some unique features of religions you have studied?

**Unit 4** How do religions relate to one another – in South Africa, Africa and globally?

**Unit 5** How do we research religions' involvement in local and global conflicts?

- Determine whether this is a political or a religious conflict.
- If religious, decide whether it is an intra-religious or an inter-religious conflict.
- Ascertain who the parties are in the conflict.
- Find out reasons for conflict.
- Examine what religious leaders and organisations are doing: whether they are contributing further to the conflict, or to peace efforts.
TERM 2 SECTION 2
Topical issues in society & Common features of religion as a generic and unique phenomenon

This second section focuses your attention on the relationship between religions and social problems; and the way in which religions and the media interact. You will also revisit religious teachings in different religions, and devote a fair amount of time exploring the particular teachings of Taoism. You will also be introduced to the term ‘normative sources’ by looking at different sources in a number of religions. In particular, you will examine contemporary inspiration, oral tradition and sacred books.

This diagram shows what you will cover in Section 2.

How do religious people help to solve social problems?

How does the media influence public opinion on religion?

What are the different forms of teachings in religions?

What are the central teachings in one religion – Taoism?

What are the normative sources in different religions?

Before you start this unit, spend a few minutes in pairs brainstorming what you might already know about these topics.

Think about what you already know

1. How are different religions engaged in solving social problems? Give some examples from your knowledge of local or global situations.

2. When we use the term ‘media’ what does this mean? From your own knowledge and experience of the media, how do they cover religious affairs? Think of some recent examples.

3. What can you remember about Taoism – how and where did it originate? Do any words or concepts come to mind?

4. Name any sacred texts you remember from different religions. Are religious sources always written down? If not, give examples of other ways they are communicated.
Unit 1 How can religious people help to solve social problems? (Weeks 1–2)

In this unit, you will continue to think about religions’ roles in responding to local and global issues that you began in the previous section. Now you will focus your attention on a more careful examination of a particular situation. Firstly, you will identify and analyse a problem; then you will consider religious sources that can be drawn on to deal with the problem; and finally you will suggest practical steps to be taken by religions to reach a solution.

It’s all very well to talk about inter-religious cooperation, but how does it help anyone?

I believe you can use inter-religious cooperation to confront challenging problems in the world, such as poverty and HIV and AIDS.

But what can we learners do to make a difference – we’re still at school?

I believe we can. Think about 16 June when we celebrate Youth Day – remember how those learners made a difference and caused change.

Activity 2.1 Think about how you can help

What can you do to make a difference? Read the speech bubbles; then write down three ideas of your own.

I can help the sick by visiting them in hospital.

I can make sandwiches for the hungry.

I can teach ball skills to children who don’t have older people to be with after school.

In his short life, Nkosi Johnson (1989—2001) was an AIDS activist who helped to change many people’s perceptions about AIDS.
IDENTIFYING AND ANALYSING THE PROBLEM

Before one can address a problem, one has to think carefully about what the problem is: in other words, we ask questions like, What makes this a problem? Why is this a problem? For whom is this a problem? Then we can proceed to deciding how to help.

Activity 2.2 Analyse a social problem

1. Work in groups. Choose one of the social problems mentioned in question 9 of the interview with Cosmas Desmond on page 58.

2. Discuss these questions about the issue you have chosen:
   a. Why should the issue concern everyone?
   b. Who is most affected by the issue?
   c. Are there any religious or other organisations or people doing something about it?

3. Brainstorm and list some things you can do to make people aware of the issue.

4. a. List at least four things or actions that would help those affected by this issue.
   b. Find out about any religious teachings or theories that would support these actions.

OUTLINING AND CONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS SOURCES AVAILABLE

The quotes below show that many religions believe it is important to be socially involved and to care for one another.

- "Where there is no vision the people perish."  
  Proverbs 29:18

- "A person is a person through other people."  
  Ubuntu maxim, Ndaba

- "The leader sacrifices his life for the well-being of his people."  
  Rigveda 66/2

- "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends … this I command you, 'Love one another'."  
  John 15:13, 17

- "By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give freely from that which you love. And whatever you give, Allah knows it well."  
  Qur'an 3:92

- "Everythings the person does shall be auspicious, his or her words shall gain the trust and the acceptance of others."  
  Maha-Candi Dharani Suti (Triptiaka No. 1077)

attain - to reach; to get
auspicious - lucky; favourable
When identifying and analysing a social problem that you believe can benefit from religious input, it is important to understand what religions can offer. For example, consider the issue of children in prison. There is no doubt that it is a real social problem in South Africa, but how much can religious bodies offer by way of solutions? Besides offering inter-religious and multi-faith religious services and counselling to children in prison, there is not actually anything that religions can do to solve the problem.

If you view it as a human rights issue, various faiths could come together to put pressure on the government to offer a solution, but they could not, for example, offer alternative accommodation or justice systems. This is especially true of religions in a secular state like South Africa. In such states, religious laws and justice systems do not apply, so there can be a contradiction between religious laws and the laws of a country. For example, Muslims in South Africa work with secular financial laws around usury. These laws are not the same as Islamic laws on usury. Where Islamic law is also the law of the state, as in some Middle-Eastern countries, religious justice systems and laws do apply. These provide an alternative to secular systems, which are often based on specific ideas around democracy and human rights.

So, although some religions like Islam and forms of Christian liberation theology (see below) include firm ideas about how society should be run, usually they cannot change society fundamentally, and can only offer help such as putting pressure on those in power, counselling, community building, works of charity, helping to negotiate peace and so on.

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**Grades 10 and 11 revision**

Liberation theology is a form of Christian teaching that focuses on social and political injustice. It started as an influential Roman Catholic movement in Latin America in the 1970s. Liberation theologians believe Christians should actively struggle to bring about social transformation and get rid of oppression and exploitation. Liberation theology has helped many people in oppressive situations, including women and African Americans, to express the need for justice through their churches.

In South Africa, religion has played an extremely important role in social transformation. Christian churches played a central role in the struggle against apartheid. Many of the people in leadership positions in the liberation movements were Christian ministers. An important strand in liberatory thinking was the idea that people must also be liberated from feelings of inferiority and from feeling that they had to be like the Europeans. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, liberation theology was having a significant impact on Christian thought in South Africa. The South African Council of Churches became part of the struggle and was active in encouraging the World Council of Churches to declare apartheid a sin against humanity in the 1980s.
The World Council of Churches (WCC)

The WCC was founded in Amsterdam in 1948 and consists of 120 countries. It includes the following Christian denominations: Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Lutheran, Methodist, Moravian, Old Catholic, Orthodox, Presbyterian, Reformed, and Society of Friends (Quakers). The Council promotes ecumenical fellowship, service, and study. It is defined in its constitution as a “fellowship of Churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their communion calling to the glory of the one God, Son and Holy Spirit”.

Activity 2.3a Discuss religions' contribution to solving social problems

Work as a class to discuss these questions:

1. Should religions have a role to play in solving social problems? (Give reasons to support your opinions.)

2. If so, what contribution do you think religions can make?

Make notes of the ideas raised in the discussion. You will refer to them again in Activity 2.3b on page 79.

OUTLINING PRACTICAL STEPS TO BE TAKEN TO REACH A SOLUTION

A major issue today is the plight of women and children in the world. Women and children are relatively powerless to impact on events such as wars, yet they are the most affected groups. Children’s rights are often neglected especially in those areas of the world affected by civil wars. Child labour is still widespread in many parts of the world and child trafficking is common in some areas. The HIV and AIDS pandemic also affects women and children most. Children may be orphaned and left defenceless and unable to care for themselves and for younger siblings. The figures are frightening: Statistics SA said that in 2010 about 62% of the country’s 18.5 million children lived in households with a per capita income of less than R370 a month (Mail & Guardian, 27 July 2012).

Girl children are amongst the most vulnerable groups in the world.
Activity 2.4 Read a text about vulnerable children

1. Work in pairs to read and discuss the information below and on pages 76 and 77.

2. On your own, write answers to the questions a. to i. in your workbook.

Around the world, children are under siege. More than 11 million will die this year from preventable diseases; 200 million are malnourished. Another million are living with HIV, and in sub-Saharan Africa alone more than 13 million have been orphaned in the AIDS pandemic. More than 60 million will be forced into abusive and dangerous forms of labour; several million others will be sexually abused and exploited.

a. Why are children described as being “under siege”?

In dozens of nations, children are targeted as victims of armed conflict, are forced into killing as child soldiers, or fall victim to land mines. They are more than half of the world’s refugee population, and they suffer grievously from economic sanctions. As the world’s nations unite in the struggle against terrorism, more child refugees, more orphans, and more young victims of violence seem inevitable.

b. In what ways are children victims of war?

Every religious tradition emphasises the beauty, sanctity and value of the child, and religious people around the world have recognised the need to take immediate action in response to these great challenges. Together with governments, charities, and others, they are working to make a safer place for all our children.

c. Describe any religious-based project you know of that helps children. If you do not know of any, think about what local religious group in your area could do to help.

The international community has offered many affirmations of children’s rights, culminating in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has become the most widely ratified human rights agreement in history. Religious communities are uniquely equipped to bring about the changes in attitude and behaviour mandated in the Convention. Religions for Peace, working closely with the United Nations, is helping religious communities to create the spiritual and political will necessary to translate the Convention’s goals into effective actions.
Religions for Peace is the largest international partnership of representatives from the world’s main religions. It is active on every continent, creating multi-religious bodies to address shared problems and to achieve peace. Some of Religions for Peace’s recent successes include mediating dialogue among warring groups in Sierra Leone; helping to build reconciliation in Bosnia and Kosovo; and organising an international network of religious women’s organisations.

d. List some positive contributions made by Religions for Peace in conflict situations.

e. How do you think these efforts will help the children in these situations?

Religions for Peace has joined a group of organisations in an initiative that will provide help to millions of African children orphaned by AIDS. The Hope for African Children Initiative is confronting challenges such as the increased risk of malnutrition, illness, abuse and sexual exploitation faced by orphans; the high costs of caring for sick family members that often fall upon children, who are left impoverished or forced to work rather than attend school; the stigma and discrimination often associated with HIV and AIDS, which often deprives children of basic social services and even the support of their extended families; the lack of home-based care for sick parents; insufficient medical responses to the opportunistic infections that follow the onset of AIDS; and the high percentage of babies who contract HIV from their mothers.

f. In your own words, write down five things that the Hope for African Children Initiative is doing for children in Africa.

Responding to a crisis of such enormous scale, the initiative allows each of the partner organisations – Religions for Peace, as well as CARE, Network of African People Living with HIV/AIDS, PLAN International, Save the Children, World Vision, and the Society for Women and AIDS in Africa – to achieve far more than any one of them could on its own.

Read more...

g. Why do you think this group effort is able to achieve results that individual organisations could not achieve on their own?

The overall goal of Religions for Peace’s involvement is to address the needs of orphans and vulnerable children in Africa. To do this, the Action & Advocacy for Children Programme (one of the groups set up by Religions for Peace) is committed to working through its national inter-religious bodies and helping them to build mechanisms that can channel resources to local religious organisations that are helping children.

(Summarised from http://wcrp.org/RfP/CHILDREN-MAIN.html)
h. Sum up the main goal of Religions for Peace.

i. List the ways they hope to achieve this goal.

3. Work in groups to discuss what you think Religions for Peace could do in South Africa to help vulnerable children. Each group should have a turn to present their ideas to the class.

---

**Activity 2.5 Discuss religions' role in a particular situation**

1. Read this newspaper article.

---

**Children must bury their mother**

by Thamsanqa Ngubane

Two Inanda children have been saddled with the awesome responsibility of burying their mother because they have no relatives to help them.

Pamela Msindwana died at Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Phoenix, Durban, on Sunday after a short illness, leaving Andiswa, 14, and Mthokozisi, 5. Both the children’s fathers have also died. The children said they were aware of only one relative, but did not know where he was. Andiswa, who is now looking after her brother, has to find the means to bury her mother, who was **destitute** at the time of her death.

_The Mercury_ visited the children at their one-room shack on Thursday. The children had not been attending school because their mother could not afford to pay school fees. The Department of Social Welfare has said that it is unable to help the children with their mother’s burial but can offer aid after the funeral.
2. Work in small groups to discuss these questions.
   a. What is your response to this article?
   b. What underlying social problems do you think helped create this situation?
   c. How do you think religious people could respond to this kind of situation? Explain your answer.
   d. Do research to find at least two quotes from the sacred books of different religions which show that people of faith should help in this kind of situation.

3. Work in pairs. Imagine you have been asked to represent your local community at a Religions for Peace conference on vulnerable children.
   a. With your partner, discuss and decide:
      - where you could find out about the needs of children in your area;
      - how you would do this research;
      - what recommendations you would make to the conference;
      - what three projects you would like to establish in your community;
      - what religious leaders or bodies you could contact in your area for help.
   b. Write a short report outlining the issues you discussed in question a.
   c. Make a poster to visually demonstrate some of the points in your report (see page 78 for an idea of how you can create a poster).

⭐ Activity 2.3b Write about religions’ role in society

On your own, write at least two paragraphs in which you discuss whether you think religions should be involved in community work, or whether their task should only be one of spreading religious hope. Reflect back on your notes in Activity 2.3a on page 75 – have your views altered in any way?
**Informal self-assessment**

Copy this table into your workbook and complete it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Am I able to identify a social problem?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I able to analyse a social problem?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I outline and consider the religious sources available for the solution of a social problem?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I outline practical steps to be taken towards a solution?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I found most interesting in this section is:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I would like to know more about is:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other comments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Modern media carry information to people about events around the world as they happen. People look at this information and form opinions about what is happening. The opinions they form may then affect how they react and behave.

No matter how hard the media try to be objective, they communicate a point of view when they communicate news. They do this, for example, by being selective about what they show, as well as by commenting directly on what they show. For this reason it is important to be critical when following a news broadcast, especially if it is about something important.

In this unit, you will think about the way the media inform people’s views and behaviour about religion. You will also acquire some of the critical tools you need to approach the media.

**RELIGIOUS ISSUES REPORTED ON IN THE MEDIA**

Here is an example of a religious issue that was reported by the media. We will use it as a way of understanding the relationship between the media and public opinion about religion. Then you will consider other examples.

**Publication of cartoons of Mohammad**

In September 2005, a Danish newspaper called *Jyllands-Posten* ran a competition asking cartoonists “to draw Muhammad as you see him”. The cartoons were published and led immediately to extensive public discussion in Denmark, but went unnoticed by the rest of the world for some months. In February 2006, a group of Danish imams toured the Middle East to gather support against the newspaper and the Danish government. They were unhappy that the Danish government refused to take action against the newspaper. The tour sparked the first demonstrations.

The demonstrations rapidly spread throughout the Muslim world and into non-Muslim countries. Danish embassies were attacked and Western businesses were boycotted. A number of European newspapers responded to this by republishing the cartoons. People were killed in the demonstrations.

selective – choosing what to show and what not to show
imam – a Muslim religious leader and teacher
boycott – to stop buying the products of a certain group, or trading with them

Muslims protested the publication of offensive cartoons in France.
Activity 2.6 Identify other issues raised about religions

Work in pairs to note down any other religious issues that you are aware of, as they have appeared in the media. Share your ideas in a class discussion.

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE

You should begin an analysis of something like this by trying to understand the issues. Why, for example, did the editor of the Danish newspaper publish the cartoons? Here, in his own words, are his reasons:

“I commissioned the cartoons in response to several incidents of self-censorship in Europe caused by widening fears and feelings of intimidation in dealing with issues related to Islam. The idea wasn’t to provoke – and we certainly didn’t intend to trigger violent demonstrations throughout the Muslim world. Our goal was simply to push back self-imposed limits on expression that seemed to be closing in tighter.”

(Quoted in ContraCosta Times.com, 26 February 2006)

Here we see one side of the issue: it is about freedom of expression and about not being censored or censoring oneself. Freedom of expression is a fundamental principle of modern democracies and is enshrined in South Africa’s Constitution. It is therefore an important issue. But it is not the only issue. Here is what a Muslim reader has to say:

“We condemn the publication of Prophet Muhammad’s (peace be on Him) caricatures in the European newspapers and magazines, which are a clear and deliberate insult to the religion of Islam and its followers... We respect...the freedom of speech, and...the ‘Press’ has a right to exercise its ‘freedom of expression’, but we know that the freedom of expression comes with responsibility and no one should exercise any ‘malign’ conduct in the name of ‘freedom of expression’ to deliberately hurt the emotion and feeling of billions of people believing in a particular faith.”

(From a letter to the editor, The Daily Star, 22 February 2006)

The writer of the letter recognises freedom of expression as a right, but also highlights these two issues:

- the issue of deliberately insulting or harming people of a particular religious faith, in this case Islam;
- the need to be responsible when exercising freedom of expression.
Different perspectives on the issue

When events like this take place, almost all news media carry the story, but very often they do so from different perspectives. You can understand these perspectives by:

- listing the different media that are carrying the story, for example, internet or social media like Facebook, TV, print, radio, etc.;
- trying to identify what the particular bias of each one might be.

Activity 2.7 Analyse news reports

Work in pairs to read what various newspapers wrote about the issue described on page 81. As you read each report, note down answers to these questions:

1. What aspects of the story is this report highlighting? For example, does it focus on what is actually happening, is it an emotional reaction, or does it state a point of view?
2. Is this report biased? If so, what view do they want you to take?
3. How do you think people of different faiths would react to this report? How would Christians react to it? How would Muslims react to it? What about people of other faiths?

Al-Shihan, a weekly newspaper in Jordan, published three of the cartoons and said: "... be reasonable. People are attacking drawings that they have not even seen."

Al-Ahram, a semi-official newspaper in Egypt said: "The anti-Danish campaign will widen a chasm separating both worlds, bolstering the Arabs' reputation of being intolerant while providing an unimportant cartoonist with the opportunity of a lifetime."

Al-Qabas, an independent newspaper in Kuwait (from an advert from the union of oil workers) said: "If we fail to tell the truth and defend the Prophet of truth we would rather be [buried] in the earth than living on its surface."

Al-Gomhuria, a government-owned newspaper in Egypt said: "It is not a question of freedom of opinion or belief. It is a conspiracy against Islam and Muslims which has been in the works for years. The international community should understand that any attack against our Prophet will not go unpunished."

Gulf News, an independent newspaper from the United Arab Emirates said: "The anger over the cartoon portrayals of Muhammad is understandable. However, the burning of Danish embassies in Syria and Lebanon is unacceptable. We cannot defend the Prophet by such violence. The Syrian and Lebanese governments must fulfil their obligations to protect the rights of foreigners."

The Hindu, a left-leaning, independent newspaper in India said: "Denmark warned its citizens against non-urgent travel to Saudi Arabia ... A similar warning was issued to Scandinavians travelling to Gaza and the West Bank after the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades demanded that all Swedes and Danes leave the territories."

Die Welt, a conservative newspaper in Germany wrote: "Islam will only become an accepted religion when there are as many jokes about Muhammad as there are about Jesus, Moses and the Buddha."
ANALYSING THE MESSAGES CONVEYED ABOUT A RELIGION

The media may convey particular messages about a religion. Using the same example, examine what message about Islam is being conveyed.

⭐ Activity 2.8 Give your views on media reports

1. Work on your own to re-read the extracts from Al-Gamhuria and Die Welt.
   a. Describe the views of each newspaper towards Islam.
   b. Identify how each newspaper presents this message – note words and phrases that project this view.

2. Work on your own to re-read the extracts from the Morocco Times and The Times.
   a. Can the views of the Muslim organisation and the editor of the Jyllands-Posten be reconciled? Give reasons for your answer.
   b. From the reporting, who comes across as most reasonable – the secretary-general of the OIC or the editor of the Jyllands-Posten? Give reasons for your answer.

3. Research a recent media report on a religion.
   a. Identify what aspect of the religion is being described.
   b. Analyse how the report presents a negative or positive view about that religion.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA ANALYSIS

When we come across issues like this, our natural response is to ask: What view do I take? Which side am I on, if any? In other words, we immediately become involved in the issue. But the purpose of a media analysis is to understand in what ways the media may be influencing us to take a view. There are also other
factors that may affect our conclusions. Let’s look at some other factors you could investigate if you were analysing this issue and the way it is reported in the media:

- In what way does the reporting in each newspaper reflect the ideology of its editors? To what extent is the reporting selective, for example, by focusing only on the violence, or by representing only one side of the issue?

- What affected the social reactions? For example, in the previous example, who demonstrated and who didn’t? What were the motives of those who stayed at home? What were the motives of those who demonstrated?

- There was a long period between the initial publication of the cartoons in Denmark (September 2005) and the first demonstrations which happened in Indonesia (February 2006). Why was that? There is a strong Muslim community in Denmark. How did they react?

- What will the social and political outcomes be? How will they affect relations between Arabs and Europeans, and between Muslims and people of other faiths? In what way does the reporting itself make things worse or better?

- Remember that most people do not look at all the media. They tend to look only at the media with which they agree. In other words, most people do not try to get all sides of the story. What are the effects of that? Should we try to do anything about it?

To illustrate the importance of these questions, look at this report that appeared in the New York Times on 24 February 2006 about demonstrations in Nigeria.

**Onitsha, Nigeria**

Dozens of charred, smouldering bodies littered the streets of this bustling commercial capital after three days of rioting in which Christian mobs wielding machetes, clubs, and knives set upon their Muslim neighbours. Rioters have killed scores of people here, mostly Muslims, after burning their homes, businesses, and mosques in the worst violence yet linked to the caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad, first published in a Danish newspaper. The tumult erupted here after attacks on Christians in northern Nigeria last week by Muslims infuriated over the cartoons.

What will people think when they read this report? One conclusion you might come to is that there must already have been tension between Christians and Muslims in order for some cartoons in a Danish newspaper to have started this violence. In other ways, some Muslims may have used the cartoons as an excuse to express their anger about other things. Similarly, when the Christians responded, they went completely overboard in terms of the violence and destruction they unleashed.

Who is to blame: the Danish editor who published the cartoons in the first place, the Muslim clerics who publicised the cartoons with the intention of causing an angry reaction, or extremists in local Muslim and Christian communities in Nigeria?
What is the most appropriate way to respond? Should we ban the cartoons? Should we do something about the social extremists who take advantage of such situations?

The news media focused mostly on Muslim demonstrations around the world and on politicians’ responses to the issue. Western politicians tended to express sympathy for the fact that the cartoons were offensive to many Muslims, but condemned the violence and lawlessness of many demonstrations. Middle-Eastern politicians tended to take a similar line, but laid more emphasis on the unacceptability of the cartoons.

By March 2006, the demonstrations had subsided and the news media of the world had moved on. Yet the issues raised by the cartoons have not been resolved.

A court order was obtained to prevent newspapers in South Africa from publishing the cartoons. President Thabo Mbeki reacted to the granting of the court order by saying that the courts had spoken and that anyone who objected could pursue the matter as allowed by the law. He went on to say that the courts had an obligation to balance the rights of citizens to freedom of speech with those of others to be protected from harm or insult. On 3 February the Mail & Guardian printed the cartoons.

**Links between media and different religions**

In September 2012, a notoriously amateurish 13-minute ‘movie’ called *Innocence of Muslims*, which defamed the Prophet Muhammad, was posted on YouTube. It sparked protests at US embassies in Egypt and Libya, and may have been linked to a rocket attack that killed four people including an American ambassador.

Initially, it was reported that the offending movie was the work of someone called ‘Sam Bacile’, an ‘Israeli Jew’, and had been funded by ‘100 Jewish donors’. It turned out later that the movie was in fact the work of Nakoula Bassely Nakoula, an Egyptian-born Coptic Christian **conman** living in California. The movie was funded by a company called Media for Christ and used anti-Islamist activists as consultants.

*The Atlantic*’s Jeffrey Goldberg summed up the whole affair in this way: “A group of Christians, smearing Muslims, libels Jews.” (Quoted by John Avlon in ‘Video defaming Prophet Mohammad is a con job that pits fundamentalist Christians and Muslims against freedom’, The Telegraph, 15 September 2012)
Activity 2.9 Research media in two religions

1. Choose an important public issue in which different religions have been engaging in the media.
   a. Research the different media that are covering the issue from the perspectives of two different religions. (Find out what magazines, newspapers, radio channels, internet sites are carrying the issue for these two religions.)
   b. Examine the way the issue is presented by these different media for each religion.
   c. Look out for similarities and differences between the media coverage across the two religions.

2. Present your findings in an essay. You should show critical insight in your essay. This means you should show that you are not selective about the evidence and that you are able to look at all sides of an argument. Critical insight also means being able to express your own conclusions, with reasons.

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Informal self-assessment

Copy and complete this table. Use the national seven-point assessment scale on page iv to give yourself a mark for each activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Where do I still need help?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Formal assessment task 3a – Extended writing task

(50 marks)

The writing activity – and essay that you complete as part of Activity 2.9 – will be assessed by your teacher using a rubric and rating scale below. The mark out of 50 will go towards your year mark.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Mark /50</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>(40–50)</td>
<td>Written work is extremely clear and relevant. Points are exceptionally well argued in a well balanced way, and show maturity and insight of an exceptional nature. Style of writing and language usage are extremely good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>(35–39.5)</td>
<td>Written work is very clear and relevant. Points are generally balanced and are well argued. Points raised show good examples of insight and maturity. Style of writing and language usage are very good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(30–34.5)</td>
<td>Work is clear and relevant. Points have some balance, are almost without exception well argued and show insight and maturity. Style of writing and language usage are good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>(25–29.5)</td>
<td>Work is sometimes clear and relevant, but at times learner seems a bit unsure. Balance of argument a problem. Style of writing and language usage are sometimes problematic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>(20–24.5)</td>
<td>Work is often unclear, irrelevant, unbalanced and poorly argued or fails to make a point. Language usage and style are weak and not yet up to the standard required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(15–19.5)</td>
<td>Little care appears to have been taken in terms of content. No balance, week argument or very unclear. Too many errors of language and style. Little mastery/understanding evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(0–14.5)</td>
<td>Task not completed, done half-heartedly, with no mastery of content/understanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unit 3 Religious teachings in different religions
(Week 4)

All religions have a set of beliefs about the nature of humanity, the world, the
divine, creation and other parts of our lives. Such broad beliefs are referred
to as religious teachings. In this unit, you will look at a number of different
categories that all relate to religious teachings. Myths, beliefs, doctrine, dogma
and ideology are all aspects of religious teachings that mean slightly different
things. They all refer to the intellectual, rational or philosophical part of religion
and to the coding and conveying of religious meanings and truths.

- **Myths** often contain historical and metaphorical material. This means
  that they are not always literally true; in other words, they are not factual
  accounts, but are intended to convey spiritual truths. Myths are used to
  explain, for example, the birth and death of Jesus, Muhammad, and
  Siddhartha Gautama. They often look at how the world was created, how
  sin and evil emerged, and what happens at the end of the world.

- **Beliefs** are what adherents claim to be true. These bind particular
  religious communities and are closely connected to ritual. For example,
  in Christianity the belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus and the
  events of his last hours are built into the ritual of the Eucharist. In African
  Traditional Religion, belief in the ancestors and their ongoing role in the
  lives of people is built on their revelation to the living.

- **Doctrine** (and dogma) refers more to the role of intellectuals in religious
  communities in finding and organising religious beliefs into coherent
  philosophical patterns. There is a sense of argument and negotiation as
  doctrines are constructed in relation to philosophical worldviews. For
  example, early Christian doctrines developed in relation to the Greek
  philosophy of the time: the doctrine of Christ as both God and ‘man’
  developed in relation to the Greek understanding of nature and essence.
  Doctrines are often contested.

In Christianity there are doctrines of salvation (called ‘soteriology’), of
the holy spirit (‘pneumatology’), of the end (‘eschatology’), etc. There
are similar doctrines in Islam around similar themes: the oneness of
Allah, sin, mercy, death and judgement. Hindu doctrines include those
around the soul, atman, Brahma, karma, dharma, moksha, and so on.

- **Dogma** has to do with the claim to absolute authority of certain teachings.
  Many religions claim authority to declare certain truths to be foundational
  and fundamental. They are binding on the adherents if they want to claim
  membership of the religion.

- **Ideology** has to do with the prevailing, overarching worldviews that
  shape meaning and overall patterns of existence. They are asserted by those
  dominant groups who hold power. Ideologies are also always contested.
Religious teachings can be in the form of written or oral texts and, as you have learned, they are the broadest category used to describe what adherents of a religion believe.

**Activity 2.10 Understand the terms**

Work in groups to discuss these questions.

1. Christianity teaches that God created the universe.
   a. Briefly recount the Christian story of creation.
   b. Can it be categorised as a myth? Why?

2. Christianity teaches that there is only one God. Would you categorise this teaching as a doctrine or an ideology? Explain your answer.

3. Islam teaches that it is wrong to believe that Allah could be human and it is wrong to make an image of Allah. How would you categorise this teaching? Give reasons for your answer.

4. Many believers of various faiths say that governments should not enforce religious laws and should not endorse a particular religion (secularism). Others prefer the dominant religion’s laws to govern the state and its people. How would you categorise these kinds of teachings?

5. Think of examples of myth, belief, doctrine, dogma and ideology from any religion and worldview. Discuss these, making sure that you understand each of the terms.

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**Grades 10 and 11 revision**

- A state religion is a religious organisation officially supported by the state. A theocracy takes this further – here, the Supreme Being is recognised as the head of the state.

- In a secular state the government and morality are not based on religion, and religious laws are not part of the state’s laws.

---

**BELIEF**

What does the word ‘belief’ mean? We often use the word when we discuss religions. We say, for example, that Buddhists believe that all life is sacred, or that Christians believe in life after death, or that Muslims believe Jesus was only one of many prophets. Beliefs are an essential part of African Traditional Religion. As with all religions, they form the foundation that brings people together for a common cause and helps create a shared identity. In African Traditional Religion these beliefs are handed down orally from generation to generation, sometimes with modifications. It’s important to understand people’s beliefs, because their beliefs influence their behaviour.
Activity 2.11 Define ‘belief’

1. Work in pairs to write a definition for the word ‘belief’ as it is used in a religious sense.

2. Work on your own.
   a. Write two sentences about religious beliefs that you are familiar with.
   b. Compare the way you used the word in your sentences with your definition in question 1. Does your definition fit the way you used the word?

3. With your partner, read this definition of religious belief. How close is it to yours? Do you think it is a good definition? Why or why not?

---

**Religious belief**

Religious belief refers to a faith or **creed** concerning the supernatural, sacred, or divine. It may concern the existence, nature and worship of a deity or deities and divine involvement in the universe and human life. It may also relate to the values and practices based on the teachings of a spiritual leader.

(Wikipedia Online Free Encyclopaedia)

The Nicene Creed is the most widely accepted statement of beliefs in Christianity. Here is the beginning of the creed: “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.”

**DOCTRINE**

Doctrines are the beliefs that provide the central frame of reference for a religion. Sometimes the word ‘doctrine’ is used to refer to the entire set of beliefs in a religion, for example, the Buddhist doctrine. More commonly, however, it is used to refer to particular parts of the belief system, for example, the Islamic doctrine of creation or the Hindu doctrine of reincarnation.

Doctrine is a statement of essential beliefs, and its function is to safeguard what is essential to the religion. For example, even in mainly oral traditions like African Traditional Religion, certain beliefs are held firmly and these are handed down from one generation to the next. They are its doctrine, the essential pillars of the religion.

The word ‘doctrine’ comes from the Latin word *doctrina*, which means teaching, so doctrine is closely connected to the notion of religious teachings. Some believers feel that doctrines are **static**, while others believe that doctrines should be dynamic and capable of change.
Activity 2.12 Discuss the concept of ‘doctrine’

1. Read this text about religious doctrines.

“Although religious doctrines have sometimes been regarded as unchanging truths, today it is generally recognised that even if a doctrine contains some permanent core of truth, its expression will always reflect the relativities of a particular age and culture, so that new expressions are constantly needed if doctrines are to remain intelligible and persuasive. Although in some religions doctrines have not been precisely formulated, in many others they have been the subject of controversy, even to the point of disrupting the community of believers.”

(Encarta Online Encyclopedia)

2. Work in small groups to discuss these questions. Make notes of your group’s ideas.
   a. What is meant by “the relativities of a particular age and culture”?
   b. Do you agree that doctrines need to be adapted in order “to remain intelligible and persuasive”? Give reasons for your answer.
   c. Do you think the Catholic Church’s teaching prohibiting contraception is a doctrine? What effect does the threat of overpopulation have on this teaching? Explain your answer.
   d. Discuss how doctrinal difference could lead to conflict within a religion.

**DOGMA**

Closely linked to doctrine is the notion of dogma. Dogma refers to a set of beliefs that is taken to be absolutely true and fixed. These are not beliefs that are up for discussion; they are beliefs that have to be absolutely believed. If you do not accept the dogma of a religion, you cannot be seen to belong to that religion. In order for a belief to be seen as dogma it needs to be backed up and supported by a recognised authority within the religion. Dogmas are often formulated by religious bodies at times of doctrinal controversy, in the face of what are seen as heretical challenges.

Some religions have statements of faith in which the dogmas relating to their particular religion are set out. In Islam, for example, the dogmatic principles are contained in the aqidah.
One well-known dogma of the Roman Catholic Church is the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which holds as true that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a virgin when she fell pregnant with Jesus. This was adopted as dogma as late as 1854.

**PARABLES**

A parable is a story that has a deeper meaning than the obvious surface one, or a story which demonstrates a moral point. For example, in the New Testament it refers to a story designed to teach a spiritual truth.

What role do parables play in relation to religious teachings? Most religions have their own parables, which are used as powerful teaching tools. They provide us with a rich source of wisdom. They contain religious beliefs, ideas, morals, and warnings. They speak about God, the world, human relationships, the nature of things and so on.

Parables are set within the cultural and social environments of the people who produce them. Since parables are easily passed on from one person to another, we find that many of them go back several generations.

Many parables exist in Africa. Often, telling stories with hidden meanings was a way for Africans to communicate when they were being oppressed by slavery or by colonialism and racism. Some of these parables still exist today and are passed on by oral tradition. Increasingly, however, people are writing down these parables so that they can be recorded for all time and for all people.
Activity 2.13 Talk and write about parables

1. Work in small groups to identify and discuss two parables that you know.
2. On your own, write a summary of each parable you discussed in question 1 and identify the moral or spiritual lesson in it. For example:

   'The Prodigal Son' is a well-known Christian parable. A son who has left his home and family to lead a wild and wicked life, eventually returns home sick and penniless and is joyously welcomed by his family, especially his father. The point of this parable is that God rejoices in the return of a sinner.

On the next few pages you will read parables from four different religions: Buddhism, African Traditional Religion, Hinduism and Islam.

Buddhist parable

This parable comes from the third book of the Khuddaka Nikaya, the Udana. The Khuddaka Nikaya is a collection of sayings and stories of Buddhist origin.

The blind men and the elephant

A number of disciples went to the Buddha and said, "Sir, there are living here in Savatthi many wandering hermits and scholars who indulge in constant dispute, some saying that the world is infinite and eternal and others that it is finite and not eternal, some saying that the soul dies with the body and others that it lives on forever, and so forth. What, Sir, would you say about them?"

The Buddha answered, "Once upon a time there was a certain raja who called to his servant and said, 'Come, good fellow, go and gather together in one place all the men of Savatthi who were born blind ... and show them an elephant.'

'Very good, sire,' replied the servant, and he did as he was told. He said to the blind men assembled there, 'Here is an elephant,' and to one man he presented the head of the elephant, to another its ears, to another a tusk, to another the trunk, the foot, back, tail, and tuft of the tail, saying to each one that that was the elephant.

"When the blind men had felt the elephant, the raja went to each of them and said to each, 'Well, blind man, have you seen the elephant? Tell me, what sort of thing is an elephant?"

'Thereupon the men who were presented with the head answered, 'Sire, an elephant is like a pot.' And the men who had observed the ear replied, 'An elephant is like a winnowing basket.' Those who had been presented with a tusk said it was a ploughshare. Those who knew only the trunk said it was a plough; others said the body was a granary; the foot, a pillar; the back, a mortar; the tail, a pestle; the tuft of the tail, a brush.

raja – Indian king or prince
winnowing basket – basket for carrying grain that has been reaped
ploughshare – blade of a plough
granary – place where grain is stored
Then they began to quarrel, shouting, 'Yes it is!' 'No, it is not!' 'An elephant is not that!' 'Yes, it's like that!' and so on, till they came to blows over the matter.

"Brethren, the raja was delighted with the scene.

"Just so are these preachers and scholars holding various views blind and unseeing... In their ignorance they are by nature quarrelsome, wrangling, and disputatious, each maintaining reality is thus and thus."

Then the Buddha rendered this meaning by uttering this verse of uplift, O how they cling and wrangle, some who claim For preacher and monk the honoured name! For, quarrelling, each to his view they cling. Such folk see only one side of a thing.

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**African Traditional Religion parable**

A young man was sent by his parents to fetch some goats from a king far away from his home. These goats were a gift from the king for a good job the father had done for the king's family. The young man's parents told him not to forget his weapons, as he was to pass through a thick forest where there were many dangerous animals.

As he was about to leave he was given blessings and was told never to disgrace his clan, as people in the king's place would see him as the reflection of his parents and their teachings. He was reminded to always give help where he could and to be humble but firm. He was given food for two days, as the journey was long. His parents told him to remember that he would not be alone on the road, and that they would always be with him in spirit. Then he left.

On the road he met his friends who advised him not to hurry. They said the king's place was not that far and that his parents, because of old age, had exaggerated the distance. He stayed with his friends until they were hungry and then he took some of his food and shared it with them. Then they separated and he proceeded with his journey.

On the way he met an old woman with tattered clothes sitting next to the road. She said: "My child, this is the third day that I have not put anything into my mouth. Please give me something to eat and you will be blessed." He said, "No, I can't. If I do that I will finish it before I get to the king's place. If you were able to bless other people you would not be sitting here on this road at this time of the day. You are lying." Then she said, "Can you clean my eyes, my hands are freezing and shaking?" He said, "No! No! No! You are so filthy; if I do that I will not be able to eat anything for days. Where are your children?" Then he left. The woman said, "If only you knew who you were talking to."
Suddenly, there was a mist and the young man could not see the way. Without knowing it, instead of going forward, he went back home. He saw a kraal and went in and slept there, hoping to proceed with his journey the following day. In the morning he was woken up by his father when he came to milk the cows. The young man realised he was at his home. When he went to the house, he saw the old woman that he had not helped the previous day and he collapsed. The old woman who had eaten and was now clean, told the story and then left.

The young man’s parents were so disappointed. They reminded him that when they had told him he would not be alone on his journey, they meant that any individual is monitored by God and by the ancestors.

(Source: Matiphakule, see page 115)

Hindu parable

**Lord Krishna and the kings**

Lord Krishna wanted to test the wisdom of his kings. One day he summoned Duryodhana, the King of Hastinapur. Duryodhana was well known throughout the land for his cruelty and meanness.

Lord Krishna said to Duryodhana, “I want you to go and travel the world over and find for me one truly good man.”

Duryodhana replied, “Yes, Lord,” and began his search.

He met and spoke with many people, and after much time had passed he returned to Lord Krishna saying, “Lord, I have done as you ordered and searched the world over for one truly good man. He is not to be found. All of them are selfish and wicked. Nowhere is there to be found this good man you seek!”

Lord Krishna sent him away and called Dhammaraja, the eldest of the Pandava brothers. He was a king well known for his generosity and benevolence and well loved by all his people.

Krishna said to him, “King Dhammaraja, I wish for you to travel the world over and bring to me one truly wicked man.” Dhammaraja also obeyed, and on his travels met and spoke with many people.

After much time had passed he returned to Krishna and reported, “Lord, I have failed you. There are people who are misguided, people who are misled, people who act in blindness but nowhere could I find one truly evil man. They are all good at heart despite their failings!”

(Source: The Church Within, a website dedicated to information about Hinduism)
Activity 2.14 Analyse parables

Work in pairs.

1. Discuss the moral or spiritual lesson in each of the three parables. In each case, say whether you agree with it. Give reasons to support your answer.

2. Make up a parable that demonstrates the wisdom of helping those in need.

3. a. Read the Muslim parable below and draw some of the things it describes.

   b. Discuss what you think is the lesson or spiritual truth in this parable.

---

Muslim parable

Parable of His Light

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The Parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a Lamp: the Lamp enclosed in Glass: the glass as it were a brilliant star: Lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it: Light upon Light! Allah doth guide whom He will to His Light: Allah doth set forth Parables for men: and Allah doth know all things.

(Source: Qur’an, Al-Nour, Surah 24:35)

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Informal peer assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Was my partner able to:</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify and discuss the moral or spiritual lesson in:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the Buddhist parable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the African Traditional Religion parable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the Hindu parable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain, with reasons, why she/he did or did not agree with the point being made in each parable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute to making up a parable to demonstrate the points that it is good to help others?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw elements described in the Muslim parable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give an opinion on what the lesson or spiritual truth is?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:
MYTHS

A myth is a story that is created to explain the invisible through the visible, and to give life to people’s faith through symbols. Religion deals with a reality greater than and beyond the human realm of the visible, the tangible, and the cognitive, and myths are one way to communicate these things. Like parables, myths are often used to teach lessons to believers. Myths are also used to teach people about their culture.

Myths are generally narratives or stories about divine or heroic beings – they often use supernatural events or characters to explain the nature of the universe and humanity. However, not every religious narrative is a myth. Unless it is deeply rooted in tradition, it may simply be a story with a message. Myths are symbolic ways of explaining how the world began (creation myths), natural phenomena, inexplicable cultural events, and anything else for which no simple explanation exists. Creation myths are an important clue as to how cultures view themselves and their relationship to a Divine Being.

Activity 2.15 Research myths

1. Work in groups to find out at least two creation myths or two myths about death and dying from different cultures or religions. Tell the myths to your class.
2. Work as a class. Based on the myths you have heard, create a flowchart on creation myths and another on myths about death and dying. Model your charts on this example:

   1. The Divine Being is angry with humans and threatens to destroy them.
   2. There are signs in the heavens, like unusual stars.
   4. He does this and is mocked by the others.
   3. An important leader or ancestor is warned about the disaster to come and advised to flee to a safe place or build a ship.
   5. The disasters begin: cyclones, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, huge fires and floods.
   6. The water eventually subsides and the ancestor founds a new race.

IDEOLOGY

The word 'ideology' has a complex meaning. Although it has a neutral dictionary meaning – a system or set of beliefs, values and opinions that determine the way a person or a group behaves and thinks – it has come to have somewhat negative connotations. It literally means the ‘science of ideas’. An ideology can be thought of as a comprehensive vision, a way of looking at things.
The modern concept of ideology originated in the writings of Karl Marx (see page 146), who believed that ideologies were false systems preserved by ruling classes out of self-interest. He believed, for example, that religious hierarchies backed up by religious ideology perpetuate systems of faith, or ideologies, that protect the economic well-being of those in power.

Ideological differences in terms of religion generally refer to the type of difference of opinion that can lead to extreme reactions, including violence. Here is an example of the use of the term in a religious context: “Due to the ideological differences between Shi’a and Sunni Muslims, civil war is a possibility in Iraq” (see pages 13 and 14 for more information about this).

Although the term ‘ideology’ would not generally be linked to the teachings of a religion, members of a religion do sometimes use the term to refer to others within their religion who they believe interpret the religious teachings too strictly – these are ideological differences between liberals and fundamentalists. More often, though, it is a term used by outsiders to describe a religion other than their own.

An ideologue is someone who pushes their beliefs to the exclusion of all others. Were these people great teachers or powerful ideologues? Are they the same thing?
In this unit you will explore the teachings, in depth, in one religion, Taoism. We have chosen Taoism because it allows you to compare it to quite different Middle-Eastern religions that dominate South Africa, and that you may already be familiar with.

Taoism developed in China about 500 BCE. Its main scripture is the Tao-te-Ching, said to have been written in a night by its legendary founder Lao-tzu. (Some legends say he was born with white hair, and had spent eight or 80 years in his mother’s womb.) Taoism is still practised in China and Taiwan and the influence of its thinking is found in forms of Buddhism and Confucianism.

**Grades 10 and 11 revision**

Confucianism is a system of philosophical and ethical teaching founded by the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551—478 BCE).

**WHAT IS THE NATURE OF DIVINITY IN TAOISM?**

Taoists have a very sophisticated idea about the nature of what we might call ‘divinity’.

*The Tao that can be told of is not the eternal Tao.*

Opening words of the Tao-te-ching

The quote means that it is impossible to describe divinity completely. ‘Tao’ means path. It first meant path as in ‘a path in a field’. Then it came to mean ‘the path travelled by the stars’, and finally, ‘the path of the universe’. That is the Tao – it is the majestic way in which the universe works. In that sense, all there is, is the universe – and so, all there is, is divine. The workings of the universe are divine.

Like many of the world’s great religions, the Taoists suggest that the Tao cannot be described. But again, like most religions, that does not stop them from trying.
The divine is great; creation happens in it

"All things come from being, and being comes from non-being."

Tao-te-Ching

What does this quote mean? ‘Things’ (stuff that is seen and touched) is ‘being’. And all things come from being. There is no mystery in this: most created things involve the transformation of matter or energy from one form into another.

But what does “being comes from non-being”, mean? To the Taoist, one of the characteristics of things that can be touched (being), is that you can see where they start and end; they are limited. Being is limited. So, if you want to talk about the unlimited divine, then a better word is ‘non-being’. If you want to include everything, which is what you must do when talking about the divine, then you must include the spaces between being.

Then Taoism goes a step further. It tells us that non-being is the ultimate or the starting point of everything – it is bigger, in a sense, than being. And if you use your imagination you can understand why they would say this: emptiness has no beginning or end, it has no boundaries, it just goes on and on forever. So all created stuff is held in a vast ‘bowl’ of emptiness. The divine is huge and spacious. Creation happens in it and pours forth from it.

Everything consists of two forces: yin and yang

"The Tao produces the One. The One produces the Two. The Two produces the Three. And the Three produces the ten thousand things."

Tao-te-Ching

The phrase “ten thousand things” was the common Chinese way of referring to everything in creation: birds, trees, people, mountains, rivers, rocks, stars, and so on. The phrase means ‘lots of things’. The “ten thousand things” are produced by the Three and the Three are produced by the Two. The Two are the yang and the yin.

According to the Taoists, everything in creation consists of two kinds of forces: the yang is active, light, forceful, male; and the yin is passive, dark, yielding, female.

wax – to grow, especially bigger
wane – to decline; in the process of disappearing
oscillation – swinging from one side to the other, back and forth

All the world’s processes are made up of a combination of the two forces. Night and day, summer and winter, joy and sadness, birth and death – the universe rocks endlessly between opposites like these. War follows peace, and peace follows war. Empires wax and wane. To the Taoists, what you see when you stand back and look at the creative process is this endless oscillation between poles – the waxing and waning of things.
The combination of the Two produces something new. Light and dark, day and night are two things but by alternating they produce a third, i.e. the cycle of a full 24-hour day. With this cycle goes the cycle of wakefulness and sleep, which is also a third; and so too is rest and action, and so on. The new whole, the third, is greater than the sum of its parts. It is the combination of the Two, acting together.

Now, we understand the ten thousand things and how they come from the Three, which is the union of the Two (the yang and the yin). But the Two, in turn, come from the One. The Two are different forms that ‘being’ takes. And the One comes from the Tao which, as you know, is best described as ‘non-being’.

It is important to distinguish this view of the relationship between the divine and creation from perspectives of the Abrahamic faiths.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, Islam)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the beginning there was God and nothing. God makes creation out of nothing (ex nihilo).</td>
<td>All is Tao – the ‘path’ of the universe. ‘Nothing’ is also the start of everything. Inside it, things happen. And both the ‘nothing’ and the ‘happening’ are the divine. Everything comes from nothing.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Activity 2.16 Talk and write about concepts in Taoism

1. Write answers to these questions. Remember to use your own words.
   a. What are the evolving meanings of the word ‘Tao’ (path)?
   b. How do Taoists understand the concepts ‘being’ and ‘non-being’?
   c. Briefly explain what is meant by the terms yang and yin. Give at least two examples of your own in your explanation.
2. Work in pairs.
   a. Take turns to explain the meaning of the quote on page 100 which starts with the words: “The Tao produces the One .... “.
   b. Discuss what you understand this to mean: “Everything comes from nothing.”

How the Tao does things

What’s the plan or purpose of the Tao? Why is creation happening?

There is no plan or purpose – creation doesn’t need a reason.

“Great Tao flows everywhere, it may go left or right.” In another translation: “Great Tao drifts about, it may go this way or that.” (Tao-te-Ching)

In other words, ‘the path’ constantly oscillates between poles – sometimes it goes in one direction, then it changes and goes in the other. One direction is yang, the other is yin. It is like a pendulum or the tides. Through all of it there is absolutely no intention or plan. It has no goal at which it is aiming. It is not trying to achieve something. For example, it is not, as in many other religions, trying to make creation perfect or save people. It simply goes ‘this way’ and ‘that’ forever.

What makes the Tao decide to change direction? Why does it go ‘this way’ at one moment and ‘that’ at the next?

There is no reason. Nothing makes it decide. It changes spontaneously when it feels like it, and so its movement is unpredictable. But we know that all processes will swing back and forth.
Although the Tao is not intentionally kind or unkind, it is fantastically bountiful in the way that creation just pours out of its activity. So, although it has no plan, it is a process that stays in balance because it constantly ‘corrects’ itself. It maintains a balance by swinging back and forth between opposites. According to the Taoists, it never reaches the extreme of a pole. They use the words “it never falls over”. So although the Tao is not intentionally kind, the universe maintains a constant balance. And it is so prolific in its creativity that all things find what they need.

The Tao (or the universe) makes itself up as it goes along. It is a spontaneous, massively powerful force that constitutes creation as it unfolds. Its basic pattern is to swing back and forth between opposites, but in an unpredictable way. Yet it is not an unpleasant process.

Taoism is unique in its concept of the divine because it finds a way to argue that creation is harmonious despite the fact that there is no plan or pattern behind it.

**THE NATURE OF THE WORLD**

The Taoist concept of the world is in line with its concept of the divine or the universe as a whole. The world and everything in it comes into being automatically as part of the activity of the Tao. It is not planned, but it is also...
not unplanned. The Tao did not intend the world to exist, but nor did it not want the world to exist.

Along with everything else, the world simply emerged – as a tiny speck – in the enormous ‘bowl’ of creation as the Tao continued on its path. Like the universe as a whole, the world consists of processes of creation and destruction, or oscillation between the yang and the yin. In fact the Taoist view of the universe is based very much on their observation of the natural and human world.

To the Taoist, the truest description of the observable world is that it seems to consist of opposites that alternate between each other, and this is the nature of the universe. Because it is incredibly difficult to pinpoint when processes change direction, Taoists say that this unpredictability is what is fundamentally true of the Tao.

**THE NATURE OF HUMANITY: THE COMMUNITY AND THE INDIVIDUAL**

The Tao-te-Ching has little to say about community, but a lot to say about how individuals should direct their lives.

What is the purpose of life? It is true that the Tao does not have a plan, and if it is true that the Tao is massively powerful and that the earth and people are just a tiny speck in the midst of this, then an important question is: what is the purpose of human life? The answer is: the Tao has given life no purpose or plan. But that does not mean that life is pointless, horrible or not worth living.

What do we need to do to ensure that we live a worthwhile life? To the Taoist, it is common sense that you should live in harmony with the Tao. If you do, then you will discover
that life is its own reward – because the Tao is an immensely complex and enriching process. It only crushes you when you try to stop the path it is following. The Tao does not care whether you live in harmony with it or not.

What must you do to live in harmony? The Tao makes itself up as it goes along. You cannot know what it is going to do next because even it does not know. So, how do you live in harmony with it? The answer is in the clue: “all things … are tender and supple when alive”. You must be flexible. When you experience resistance to your desires or plans, then it is a sign that you are pushing against the Tao. To the extent that you experience resistance, you are setting yourself up for failure or to be crushed.

**Activity 2.17 Tabulate information about Taoism and the Abrahamic faiths**

Copy the table into your workbook. Then put each of these points in the correct column. In each case, choose either ‘God’ or ‘the Tao’, whichever is correct.

- There is nothing that God/the Tao specifically wants. So be prepared to be flexible – don’t try to push and control.
- God/the Tao is the master whose commandments we obey.
- God/the Tao punishes the wicked.
- If you live in harmony you will be fine. If you don’t, you will find that life crushes you, because there is nothing more powerful that God/the Tao.
- You must find out what God/the Tao wants and then do it.
- Follow God/the Tao’s commandments or laws.
- There are no laws, only a method of living flexibly.
- God/the Tao doesn’t command you to live in harmony – the choice is yours.

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<tr>
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**Informal peer assessment**

Swap tables with a partner and mark each other’s work. If there are mistakes, point them out to your partner and explain why you think they are wrong. Correct your own table if necessary.
Activity 2.18 Discuss Taoist views of harmony and power

Work in groups. Re-read the information in the previous table, as well as what two Taoists might say, below. Then discuss what you know about the Taoist view of harmony and power.

There is nothing more powerful than water, says the Tao-te-Ching: even the hardest rock eventually gives in to it.

Yet there is nothing softer and more yielding than water. Stick your hand into it, and it parts; take your hand away, and it flows back. To the Taoist, water illustrates the principle of soft power.

Community and government in Taoism

Although the Tao-te-Ching has little to say about how people should relate to one another, it has a lot to say about how to govern. This is probably because the historical context in which the Tao-te-Ching was written was chaotic and dominated by warring groups, all fighting for land and control – making it difficult for ordinary people to live together peacefully.

About 2 500 years ago China was divided into many small kingdoms, ruled mostly by warlords. Lao-tzu, the legendary founder of Taoism was believed to be a librarian in one of the kingdoms. He was known as a wise person. Eventually, however, he despaired of the chaotic situation and one day climbed onto the back of a water buffalo (the Chinese equivalent of a donkey), planning to leave the kingdom. On his way out a border guard asked him to leave some of his wisdom behind. So Lao-tzu spent the night writing the Tao-te-Ching and then left. He was never heard of again.

So how should one govern? Taoists believe that the best way to lead is to do so by example, rather than by force.

"The best rulers are those whose existence is merely known by the people. The next best are those who are loved and praised. The next are those who are feared. And the next are those who are despised. Great rulers accomplish their task; they complete their work. Yet their people say that they are simply following nature."

(Tao-te-Ching)
Activity 2.19  Discuss Taoist views about government

In pairs, read the text above and then answer the questions.

1. Make a list of the different kinds of leaders – starting with the best kind of leader and ending with the worst.

2. a. What do you think the Tao-te-Ching means by a ruler “whose existence is merely known”?

   b. Read the quote and the explanation below and then modify your answer.

Therefore the sage says: “I take no action and the people themselves are transformed. I love tranquillity and the people themselves become correct. I engage in no activity and the people of themselves become prosperous. I have no desires and the people of themselves become simple.”

Flexibility and spontaneity are the characteristics of the path that the universe travels. The Tao is not pushy and does not try to act as a master. So the more forceful you are, the more out of tune you are with the Tao. If you find yourself having to be forceful, it is a sign that you are pushing against the stream of creation. In their essence, all things prefer flexibility to force because that is their nature. They are, after all, in the Tao and that is the Tao’s nature. Great leaders should therefore behave in a way that awakens people’s sense of this inner calm:

- By setting a clear example, they help people to recognise their true natures.
- A great ruler’s touch is so light that it is not felt at all. People don’t feel as if they are being told what to do; they just find themselves doing the right thing.
- The best kind of government reflects the action of the Tao. It sets an example of simplicity, flexibility, and constant adjustments to avoid the need to use force – it is never extreme.

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<tr>
<th>Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, Islam)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People have free will and are constantly caught between doing good and evil. Therefore social governance tends to be based on coercion – a system of rewards and threats.</td>
<td>Humans can cause suffering, but essentially they are good and prefer to be in harmony – with things, other people, and within themselves. The best way to encourage harmony is by setting an example. In the long run, a gentle touch in leadership will prove to be more powerful than force.</td>
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3. If a ruler’s ‘touch is so light’ what effect do you think that will have on the relationships between the people over whom s/he rules?
4. In groups discuss these questions. Give reasons for your answers.
   a. What kind of rulers do you think ran the government during apartheid in South Africa?
   b. What kind of rulers do you think are ruling South Africa today?

**THE PLACE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF HUMANITY IN THE WORLD**

According to the Taoists, whatever humans get up to, whether we destroy the world for ourselves or not, the world will continue exactly according to the **whims** of the Tao, because the Tao is an infinitely more powerful force than humans. Even if the world becomes a desert in which only insects survive, Taoists would say, “That’s just exactly the way things are going.” It is all still ‘the path’ or the Tao. For the Taoist, whether or not we destroy ourselves and our environment is something that we should worry about, not because the Tao cares or would get upset, but because it would not be very good for us.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humans have a special place in creation. They are the <strong>pinnacle</strong> and God puts them in charge.</td>
<td>Humans are just a tiny, microcosmic by-product of the Tao’s creative activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The world has been <strong>at the disposal of</strong> humanity and it is up to humanity to take care of it.</td>
<td>Humans are not special or in charge of the world; we are not needed to look after it. The world and the universe will continue, whether humans continue or not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We should take care not to destroy the world as it is now, with all its beauty and diversity.</td>
<td>The world will take whatever shape the Tao gives it. Humans have the potential to destroy only a very small part of creation and even if that part gets destroyed, the incredible and bountiful creative activity of the Tao will continue.</td>
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**ORIGIN AND ROLE OF EVIL AND HOW TO OVERCOME IT**

Middle-Eastern (Abrahamic) religions tend to define evil as ‘the absence of the divine’, but for the Taoist there is no such thing as evil. This is because everything is the Tao: everything is as it should be. However, that does not mean there is no human suffering. The Tao-te-Ching has little to say about the existence of evil or about the fight against it, but it has a lot to say about human suffering and how life can be lived in a way that minimises suffering.

Human suffering arises when human desires are **thwarted**. In Taoism, ‘thwarting’ means ‘running up against the Tao’. When thinking about the Taoist view, it is important to remember the basic idea: the Tao is everything and it is massive and powerful. Another way to think of it is like a giant rock that is moving along very slowly. Because its movement (the ‘path’ it traces) is slow and unavoidable, there is plenty of opportunity for humans to ‘get out of the way’.
The point the Taoists are trying to make is that there is no reason for us to be in conflict with things. The Tao is slow, huge and spacious. There is plenty of room within it for humans to live perfectly contented lives. If we find our desires being thwarted, then we should examine our desires. Rather than continue ‘pushing’, we should recognise that we are getting into trouble and change what we want. This ‘giving way’ is the recipe for coping with suffering or disappointment.

From one point of view, ‘giving way’ can be seen as a kind of trick. If your problem is that things are happening that you don’t want to happen, then just change what you want. The reason you are unhappy is not that certain things are happening. It takes two to cause suffering: what is happening on the one hand, and what you want on the other. Give up the ‘want’ and what is happening will no longer have the power to make you suffer.

Rather than continue to push, Taoists believe it is far better to ‘give way’.

For Taoists it is not just a matter of changing your desires so that suffering is removed. In changing your desires you align yourself with the true nature of the Tao, and then a kind of miracle happens – you discover that life has an almost miraculous power to be engaging and enriching because that is its nature. So it is more than a trick. You discover that when you become less grasping, your experience of life changes. Life becomes more rewarding and less painful.

But think about this: if everything is supposed to happen at the whim of the Tao, then surely this also applies to our desire to push for things that are difficult to achieve. Is this something contradictory at the heart of Taoism?
You say that all desire comes from the Tao. So how can you talk about ‘being out of step’ with the Tao? What is the source of desires, if not the Tao?

Also, not all suffering is due to human desire being thwarted by human beings. What about suffering that is caused by catastrophes, like earthquakes or famines?

It still is the Tao. That’s just the way it is. One day the Sun will explode, and then what? Why should we think we are special? We’ve been given life. It’s immensely enriching. It’s a wonderful gift. But it’s not ours to own. And that’s all there is to it.

From the Taoist point of view, it is as if life is a wonderful accident. The Tao owes us nothing and, in a very important sense, it is not really concerned about what happens to us.

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evil is the absence of the divine.</td>
<td>Everything is the Tao, so there is no such thing as evil, only human suffering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The divine is understood to be intimately involved in human affairs.</td>
<td>The Tao is not understood to be engaged with human affairs.</td>
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**Activity 2.20 Discuss Taoist views of evil and suffering**

1. Say whether the following statements are true or false, according to a Taoist viewpoint. Write T or F next to each letter in your workbook.
   - a. Evil exists. **T**
   - b. There is no such thing as human suffering. **T**
   - c. Humans can live contented lives. **T**
   - d. Humans suffer when they do not get what they desire. **F**
   - e. There is nothing humans can do about their suffering. **F**
   - f. It is unavoidable that people will be in conflict with things. **F**
   - g. The Tao does not care about what happens to people. **F**

2. Work in groups to discuss these questions.
   - a. How do Taoists believe that humans can minimise their suffering?
   - b. What may seem to be contradictory at the heart of Taoism?
Informal peer and self-assessment

Swap question 1 answers with a partner and mark each other’s work. If your partner has made mistakes, point them out and explain why they are wrong. Correct your own work.

For question 2, did your group mention the following points in the discussion? If not, revise the information in this section or ask your teacher to explain it again.

- Suffering is caused by two things: what is happening and what you desire/want.
- If you change what you want, what is happening will no longer have the power to make you suffer.
- By changing what you want, you align yourself better with the true nature of the Tao.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

After Lao-tzu, the most important Taoist writer is Chuang-tzu. He lived between 399 and 295 BCE and his collection of writings is known as the Chuang-tzu. The first sentence (on the right) from these writings, sums up the Taoist attitude to death.

In other words, we do not mind death when we have learned to appreciate life. When we understand that what makes life wonderful is its cyclical processes, then we appreciate that it is proper that life should end – and we do not mind death. So what happens after we die, according to the Taoists?

This quote (lower right) communicates two ideas:

- Death is simply a process of transformation in which you go from one form to another. The fact that you have been part of the universe from the start and will continue to be is a cause for joy, and sadness.
- Do not be afraid of death. Make fun of it. While we may not want it, it is merely a stage in the ongoing process of transformation which characterises the universe as a whole.

In the Taoist view you need nothing more than one wonderful life to feel that life is worth living. You do not need a life after death in some kind of heaven, or the kind of life after death that is found in Hinduism (the endless passing on of the soul from one body to another). All that happens is that the stuff that is you gets transformed and ends up elsewhere. And that is that.

Activity 2.21 Explore different views on death

1. On your own, write a paragraph in which you compare the Taoist and any one other religious tradition’s view on death.

2. Write a poem or draw a picture to show what you personally believe happens after we die.
In this unit you are introduced to the term ‘normative sources’, and will look at how these sources occur in some religions. In particular, you will examine contemporary inspiration, oral tradition and sacred books, and how these developed in different religions.

**How do you know how to lead your life as a Muslim? In my religion, elders pass down teachings through the oral tradition.**

**In my religion, we have a sacred text as a normative source, so we know what is right and wrong.**

**WHAT ARE NORMATIVE SOURCES?**

The word ‘norm’ means a standard pattern of behaviour that is considered normal in a particular society. The word can have both a religious and a secular meaning. For example, in African culture it is the norm to show respect towards older people; in Jewish culture it is the norm to celebrate Shabbat on Friday nights; in Muslim culture it is the norm to attend mosque on Friday afternoons.

Religious norms are those patterns of behaviour that followers of certain religions take for granted as being part of what it means to belong to that religion. Where do we get these ideas about religious norms? Who tells us that Christians must attend church on Easter Sunday or that Muslims must pray five times a day?

The word ‘normative’ can be defined as ‘creating standards; tending to create or lay down standards’. In the way it is used here, we can contrast it with descriptive statements, theories or beliefs. For example:

- **Descriptive statement**: “Christians like to participate in rituals.”
  Descriptive statements can be proven true or false by observation. For example, can we observe that Christians like to participate in rituals?
- **Normative statements**: "Muslims must eat only halaal food." "Jews must observe the Sabbath." A normative statement tries to affirm how things should be. All Jews should observe the Sabbath (we are not interested here in proving whether this statement is true or false) – it simply should be so. Normative statements also tell us how to value things, which things are good or bad, and which actions are right or wrong.

Normative religious sources (origins of religious teachings) have come mostly from the oral tradition. In some religions, the oral traditions have been written down and there is an accepted **canon** of sacred texts or books. Some religions also believe that God ‘talks to’ followers who then write down the text. For example, Moses was ‘told’ the Ten Commandments by God. People like Moses are understood to be inspired by God.

The Torah is a sacred text for Jews.

The Bible is a sacred text for Christians.

canon - a collection of sacred books

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**Activity 2.22 Talk about normative sources**

1. Work in groups to discuss these statements.

   - I have problems with somebody saying he is a prophet chosen by God, today, in the 21st century! God has already revealed all the truths and ‘told’ us what He wants us to do.
   - I don’t believe that truth, and behaviours that were fixed ages ago, still apply today.

2. Imagine a younger learner asked you the question below. Write down three to five ideas of how you would respond.

   Can I trust normative sources? How can I be sure?
THE ORAL TRADITION

Before the development of written language, and before the beginning of widespread literacy, the oral tradition was much more of a daily presence in people's lives than it is in our world today.

Nowadays, popular forms of 'storytelling' include movies and television, as well as written texts. Remember that many written sources were based on oral stories handed down through generations.

Activity 2.23 Give and compare oral accounts

1. As a class, think of something that you all did together, for example, the last lesson, or assembly, or perhaps a class outing.

2. In pairs, discuss the event and note down the main points of your discussion. Use these questions to guide your discussion:
   - Who was at the event?
   - Where and when did it take place?
   - What was the purpose of the event?
   - What was the most important part of the event?

3. Work in small groups to discuss and compare your accounts of the event. Use these questions to guide you:
   - Are all the accounts identical?
   - Are the differences large or small?
   - Is the essential message about the event the same?

4. As a class, talk about what the differences in the accounts tell you about the oral tradition. Do you think if one version was agreed upon and told over and over again, it would become established as the only 'true' version of events?
Christianity and the oral tradition

The New Testament, the second part of the Bible, provides some details of Jesus’ life and teachings. But when we read the different accounts we must remember that the evangelists (the authors of the four gospels) were not eyewitnesses at these events. They were writing from the stories that had been passed down from those who had perhaps been present.

It’s rather clear from the way that the stories develop in the gospels that the Christians who are writing the gospels a generation after the death of Jesus are doing so from a stock of oral memory, that is, stories that had been passed down to them probably by followers. But if we think about the death of Jesus and remember a group of people who would have still been attached to him and to his memory after his death, it must have been a rather ... traumatic period of time. Many of their initial hopes and expectations had been dashed. All of this talk of the kingdom of God arriving soon seemed to be disconfirmed with his death.

And yet there’s that story of his resurrection, of his coming back to life. And it’s around that memory, around that set of concerns that a lot of the earliest oral stories about Jesus must have been circulated and must have been built.

(I. Michael White, Professor of Classics and Director of the Religious Studies Programme at the University of Texas)

African Traditional Religion and the oral tradition

African Religion is defined as the indigenous religion of Africans. It has been handed down from generation to generation by the forebears. It is not only a religion of the past, but a religion that Africans today have made theirs by living it and practising it. African Religion is a ‘revealed’ religion and has no founder.

African Religion is a religion that originated from the people’s environment and on their soil. It is neither preached to them nor imported by them. Africans are not converted into it. Each person is born into it, lives it, practises it, and makes it their own.

African Religion is an essentially oral tradition. This is reflected through myths, legends, stories, folktales, songs and dances, liturgies and rituals, proverbs, sayings, and riddles. Some of the oral traditions are preserved in arts and crafts, symbols and emblems, shrines and sacred places.

(Dr Nokuzola Nndende, founder of the congregation for African Religion)

Although African Traditional Religion has been an oral tradition, some scholars have started to write down some basic beliefs of the religion. One of these – still a work in progress – is a book called Masiphakule. It includes the basic
beliefs, rites of passage, the history of the religion under colonial and apartheid oppression, poetry of resistance, letters to the African leadership resisting oppression after liberation, and the moral teachings of African Religion.

The title *Masiphakule* comes from the verb *ukuphakula*, an isiXhosa word used when people collect honey from beehives. Honey is used for medicinal, nutritional and spiritual purposes. Bees are on many occasions understood as the messengers for ancestors. For example, bees from the forest visiting the homestead and staying in specific places – like the cattle kraal entrance, or at the window or door, or even inside the cupboard of the homestead head – are believed to be carrying a message from the ancestors, and are personified and treated accordingly. With such bees no one is allowed to *phakula* them, but the homestead head performs the ritual that is owed. As messengers, such bees will go back to their original habitat, that is, they will carry the messages back or rather go back to report on what has been accomplished.

Before people think of *ukuphakula* they first undergo *ukusinga*, which means to search using the mind, skill, eyes, and experience of where one could locate the bees; in other words, there is a search for knowledge and practice. The book *Masiphakule* is a result of *ukusinga*, where people have been searching for the knowledge of African Traditional Religion. The use of the word *masiphakule* symbolises the communal way of life, spiritual and mental nourishment and growth, healing and interfaith participation. The book also promotes social cohesion among the people of South Africa and abroad, as it will help them to learn more about others and about themselves.

The oral tradition, in passing on normative sources, has played a very important role in all major religions through the ages. Few beliefs, creeds, or dogmas were written down immediately. Most began as oral sources passed on to future generations and were at some stage recorded in what became sacred texts.

**Activity 2.24 Consider the implications of receiving texts orally**

Work in groups.

1. Re-read the first source on page 115. Then discuss these questions.
   a. What difference might it make to a believer to realise that a normative source has been through a stage of oral tradition before becoming part of a sacred text?
   b. How does the fact that Jesus' followers would have been upset by his death affect their recollection of the stories surrounding that event?

2. Re-read the quote from Dr Mndende on page 115. Then discuss whether you think African Traditional Religion's living oral tradition of passing down the teachings and knowledge makes a difference to its authenticity. In other words, does the fact that it is today still being passed along mostly orally make the beliefs and values more or less immediate, flexible or relevant?
3. Think about the implications of writing down a set of beliefs and values and religious teachings. Consider what you learned about the belief, doctrine and dogma and their relationships to religious teachings in Unit 3, then answer these questions. (Note that there are no right or wrong answers – you need to give your opinions with supporting reasons.)

a. Do you think followers of African Traditional Religion will benefit from or lose anything by having their beliefs written down and published in a book?

b. Do you think it would be a good thing if such a book became a sacred text, like the Bible or the Qur’an?

Normative sources do not always come to followers in a very direct way. Few of the originators of religions sat and wrote down the normative statements that they believed all adherents should follow. Many societies in which major religions originated were not particularly literate. Think of how different it is today – now when people have ideas they want others to follow they can record them directly and transmit them through mass media.

**SACRED TEXTS**

Most religions which began in pre-modern times have their roots in oral tradition. When writing began, these teachings were written down and form part of the canon of each religion’s sacred texts.

**The Vedas**

The Vedas are an extremely large body of literature originating from Ancient India. They form one of the main scriptural sources for Hindus. Many Hindus believe that the Vedas were not actually written by anyone, including Ishvara (the Hindi term for God), but that they exist eternally. Historians, however, estimate that they were written down between 2 500 and 500 BCE (see page 118).

Read what some scholars say about the Vedas:

“(T)he Vedas literally refer to sacred knowledge. One could therefore say that the Vedas are collections of knowledge – knowledge in the sense of all the phases of the human search for meaning ... The beginnings of Vedic knowledge are veiled in the mists of time, so that it is impossible to establish the authorship of these scriptures. The Vedas are said to be non-personal and without beginning or end. This means that the Hindus believe that the truths embodied in the Vedas are eternal and that they are not creations of the human mind.”

Activity 2.25 Answer questions about a source

1. Work in pairs to read and discuss the previous text.
2. On your own, write answers to these questions in your workbook.
   a. What would you say are some phases of the ‘human search for meaning’?
   b. Which two statements support the claim that authorship of the Vedas cannot be determined?
   c. What does this statement mean: “The Vedas are said to be non-personal”?
   d. Rewrite the last sentence in your own words.

While it might surprise people that a book can have no beginning or end, the ancient Rishis – wise men who transmitted the Vedas orally before 3 BCE – accepted that the complete knowledge of the universe could never fit in any book, so there would always be new things to discover. This philosophy makes Hinduism a very tolerant religion, always ready to accept new ideas from other cultures.

The Vedas were compiled by the great sage or wise man, Krishna Dvipayana. His goal was to put together a standardised version of Hindu teaching for all Hindu followers. He gathered together all the oral teachings passed on by the Rishis, and by teachers and students, and compiled them into four standard collections or books: the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and the Atharvaveda. After completing this great feat, devout Hindus gave him the title ‘Veda Vyasa’, which means ‘Compiler of the Vedas.’

The Pali Canon

The Pali Canon refers to the sacred literature of Buddhism. Originally passed along by the oral tradition, it was finally written down in Prakrit, which is a form of Sanskrit, an ancient Indian written language still used today.

The Pali Canon is particularly important to Theravada Buddhists, one of the chief schools of Buddhism which you learned about in Section 1. They place more emphasis on the teaching of the Pali Canon than do other Buddhist schools.

There are many English translations of the Pali Canon and various books interpreting it for Western followers. It is generally considered poetic and beautifully written and seen as containing many truths that people from various religions can appreciate.
“The overall effect of the Dhammapada [verses from the Pali Canon], however, is undoubtedly of high moral and spiritual earnestness, and a typically Buddhist gentle persuasiveness. It would be hard to point to a poetic book of a similar length in world religious literature of a correspondingly sustained level.”

(John Richards, a Buddhist scholar)

The Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon is a sacred text containing the normative sources for one religious sect which did not start with an oral tradition.

“The Book of Mormon is one of the sacred texts of the Latter Day Saints movement, named after the prophet Mormon. Published by the founder of the Mormon movement, Joseph Smith Junior, in March 1830 in New York, the belief in the truthfulness of this book stands as the central dividing doctrine of the denominations in the Latter Day Saints movement from the traditional Christian faiths. Adherents to its teachings are commonly referred to as Mormons or Latter Day Saints. The book declares that its purpose is to testify of Jesus through the writings of ancient prophets of the western hemisphere who travelled there from ancient Israel, probably between 625 – 575 BCE. It asserts that it was abridged and compiled by the prophet/historian Mormon and his son Moroni in the 5th century, for ‘the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God’. Joseph Smith is said to have translated the record by divine inspiration.”

(Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopaedia)

Normative sources are found both in the oral tradition of a religion and in its sacred texts. Many religious people nowadays believe that their sacred texts are open to more than one interpretation. For example, many sacred texts contain stories that some believers do not take literally. Many Christians, for instance, do not believe that God literally created the world in six days. Normative sources, however, are those aspects which are part of the dogma of a religion. They are generally found in sacred texts that have been passed on from the oral tradition.

Activity 2.26 Give your views on interpreting texts

Write two paragraphs giving your views on one of these topics:

- Sacred texts should be interpreted literally.
- Sacred texts are open to more than one interpretation.
**Formal assessment task 3b – Extended writing task**
(50 marks)
This writing activity in Activity 2.26 will be assessed by your teacher and the mark out of 50 will go towards your year mark. Your teacher will give you a rubric.

**Informal assessment**
Work on your own to write answers to these questions. Your teacher will assess your work.

1. Describe what a normative source is.
2. Explain the difference between a normative source and a descriptive statement.
3. Explain how the oral tradition contains some normative sources.
4. Explain how sacred texts become the vehicle for normative sources.

Here is a study map to help you understand what you have covered in this section. One unit has been started for you. Copy the map into your workbook and complete it for the other units.
TERM 3 SECTION 3
Common features of religion as a generic and unique phenomenon, Research into and across religion & Topical issues in society

In this third section you will learn some principles of interpreting sources in various religions.

You will think about what ‘secularism’ is and analyse a secular worldview. Then you will explore the relationship between religion and the natural sciences. And finally, you will consider topics like religious freedom, human rights and responsibilities.

This section concludes the new material for this course, and you will then be guided through some preparation for your final exam.

This diagram shows you what you will cover.

Children like these in Darfur are vulnerable to manipulation in conflict situations. In this section you will look at issues of religious freedom, human rights and responsibilities.

Think about what you already know

1. What does the word ‘norm’ mean? Can you take a guess at what the term ‘normative sources’ might mean in religions?
2. Can you remember what ‘secularism’ means? And if so, can you think of any examples of secular worldviews?
3. How do you understand the universe came into being? What do you know about evolution? What is your view?
4. How does the South African Constitution protect the religious freedom of its citizens? Can you think of any global situations where religious freedom is under threat?
Unit 1 Interpreting a normative source
(Weeks 1–2)

detractor – a critic; one who is against something
advocate – a supporter; one who is in favour of something
liberal – respecting and accepting opinions different from one’s own; not strictly literal
conservative – holding on to traditional, conventional values; against change
literalist – one who understands something exactly as it is written, without being open to interpretation

In this unit you will be introduced to the term ‘hermeneutics’ which deals with principles of interpreting normative sources. You will apply these principles to a number of sources in different religions. For the purposes of the exams you are only required to be able to interpret an important normative source in any one of the religions. However, we have given you several from which to select.

WHAT IS HERMENEUTICS?
The word ‘hermeneutics’ comes from the Greek word *hermeneuein* meaning ‘interpret’. In Religion Studies, it means the interpretation of sacred texts. Hermeneutics involves looking at a spiritual text in its context and considering all these factors:

- What type of writing is it (parable, allegory, fable, fact, etc.)?
- When was it written?
- Who wrote it?
- Who was it written for?
- What were the circumstances at the time it was written?

As with all religious concepts, hermeneutics has its detractors as well as its advocates.

🌟 Activity 3.1 Read, talk and write about hermeneutics

1. Work in pairs to read and discuss the article about hermeneutics on the next page. It was adapted from a website called the Study Board, which provides definitions of complex terms.

2. On your own, write answers to these questions in your workbook. Where possible, quote from the article to support your answers.
   a. Do you think the writer is a liberal or a conservative theologian?
   b. Does the writer support interpretations of the Bible or is s/he a literalist?

3. Work in groups to discuss these questions. In each case, you must give reasons for your answers.
   a. Do you think the writer thinks it is a good thing that people have used personal bias to interpret scriptures?
   b. Do you think that the writer thinks it is a good thing to interpret scriptures in a literary as opposed to a literal way?
c. Do you think the scriptural passage quoted supports the point being made in the article?

d. Should sacred texts be interpreted as independent entities, or should we see them within their historical context?

4. On your own, write a paragraph in answer to question 3. d.

---

**Hermeneutics: a definition**

Taken in its traditional context, hermeneutics has meant the attempt by men and women of either secular or religious viewpoint or bias to interpret scripture primarily in the light of their own beliefs (or lack of belief), and secondly in its historical context.

Secular and religious bias often dictates that scriptures that do not agree with one's personal beliefs, biases or prejudices are interpreted as being primarily ‘literary’ (i.e. ‘poetic’, ‘allegorical’ or ‘symbolic’), rather than literal or factual.

True hermeneutics is the interpretation of scripture according to its own context, according to the inspiration of those who originally wrote it, i.e. “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came through any private interpretation. For prophecy never originates in the will of people, but it originates with the Sacred Spirit, and is spoken by Sacred men of Yahweh” (II Peter 1: 20 – 1).

(Adapted from http://users.htcnon.net/apt/Contents/Lexicon/Hermeneutics.htm)

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**Informal peer assessment**

Swap question 2 answers with a partner and assess each other’s work. If you disagree with your partner’s answers, explain why and suggest alternative answers. Correct your own work if you agree with your partner’s suggestions.

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**Some principles of hermeneutic interpretation**

We should all use the same principles when interpreting texts, no matter what our normative source is. But what are the principles we should apply?

The information on pages 123–125 is based on an extract from a book called *Authority of Scripture* by Leland M Haines. The information is about how to apply some principles of hermeneutical interpretation.

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**1. Grammar and historical context**

The grammatical-historical principle means you must use the rules of grammar and the historical facts to interpret sacred texts. The rules of grammar imply that you must look at the exact meanings of the words used in their most ordinary sense. Using the facts of history means that you must understand the writing in the context of the time and circumstances in which the text was written. For example, if you wanted to interpret this Buddhist text, you would need to find out what was happening in the world at the time it was produced:

“A flower falls, even though we love it; and a weed grows even though we do not love it.”

(Dogen, a Japanese Buddhist monk and philosopher, 1200—1253)
2. **Clearest meaning**

People write to communicate thoughts and ideas and the writer generally aims to do this as clearly as possible. Therefore, when interpreting a sacred text or any normative religious source, you should take the meaning that is clearest to you. For example, say you wanted to find the meaning of this Qur'anic sura (chapter or section):

You will probably read it as having a straightforward meaning – people will regret their sins on the day they go to hell.

3. **Plan, purpose and context**

You need to view a piece of writing as a whole.

What is the writing plan or structure underlying it? For example, is it a piece of prose or poetry? Is it in verse form? Is it in the form of a letter? Does it have an introduction, a body of content and a conclusion?

What was the author's purpose in writing the text?

What is the context of the passage being looked at? Often, if we take a piece of sacred text out of context, it will no longer make real sense – it must be seen as part of the overall picture of what the author is trying to put across. Look at this example:

To interpret this you would need to know what the author was trying to explain. What was the purpose of these words? Note that an agricultural example has been used to make a religious point. This is because many people at the time were involved in farming and this language would have been easy for them to identify with.

4. **Meanings of words**

The meanings of words change over time and in different places. Try to find out what the meanings of the words were when they were originally used in the normative source. For example, in biblical times the word ‘knew’, when it was used in contexts like “Adam knew Eve”, meant that he had sexual intercourse with her. Today, of course, it has a different meaning.

5. **Figurative language**

Some sacred texts use highly figurative, non-literal language and this needs to be taken into account when interpreting such a text. For example the Book of Revelations in the Bible. Jesus often used parables in his teaching, as did the Buddha. Look at this example of a Hindu text that uses figurative language:

---

**That day Hell is produced, that day man will remember; but how will the remembrance help him? He will say, ‘Oh! If only I had prepared in advance for this life of mine!’**

(Surah Al-Fajr 23:4)

---

**A wise King winnows the wicked, and drives the wheel over them.**

(Hebrew Bible, Proverbs 20:26)

---

**Life without goodness, good thoughts, good actions and good words is like the sky in the night without the moon or stars. It is like a wheel without a hub or spokes.**

(Atharva Veda)
6. Other sacred texts

Sacred texts themselves may be used to interpret other sacred texts. If the meaning of a particular text is difficult to understand, try comparing it to other texts on the same topic for further explanation.

🌟 Activity 3.2 Discuss the hermeneutical principles

Work as a class to discuss whether you think principles can be applied to normative sources in the oral tradition.

MAKING SENSE OF RELIGIOUS SOURCES

Interpreting Christian sources

Here is an example of a Christian parable and how Christ explained the way it should be interpreted.

Jesus spoke to His disciples and a crowd about how “the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat” (Matthew 13:24—9).

Jesus’ disciples did not understand this parable, and after the crowds left they asked him to explain it. He said: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world, and the good seed means the sons of the kingdom; the weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels.”

What is the main point of this parable? Jesus explained, “The Son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evil-doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father. He who has ears, let him hear” (Matthew 13: 36—42).

(Adapted from Authority of Scripture by Leland M Haines)

🌟 Activity 3.3 Interpret Christian sources

1. Work in groups to read the following case study. Then answer the questions that follow.

After 1994, the Comrades Marathon used to be run on 16 June every year. However, because Youth Day falls on 16 June, various youth organisations asked for the date of the event to be changed. So, in 2007, the Comrades Marathon was run on the first Sunday following 16 June (which happened to be 17 June). Although the decision to hold the
marathon on a Sunday was reviewed after three years it was decided that it would continue on this day. The decision has angered some Christian bodies and individual Christians, who believe that Sunday is a holy day of rest. They cite biblical verses like this one to support their view:

“Work for six days, and rest on the seventh. This will give your ox and your donkey a chance to rest. It will also allow people of your household, including your slaves and visitors, to be refreshed.”

(Exodus 23:12).

a. Is the biblical verse open to interpretation? Explain your answer.

b. What other biblical verses might the Christian bodies quote to support their view? Conduct research if you need to.

c. Some people will not run the Comrades Marathon on a Sunday because of their beliefs. Do you think they are rigid and conservative, or do you support and respect their stand?

2. Read this quote from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Then discuss whether Jesus really meant you should cut off your hand if it offends you.

\[And\ \text{if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast in hell.}\]

(Matthew 5:30 – King James Version)

3. Question 2 was posted on a website. Discuss the following responses that were posted. What sense do you make of them?

You don’t think Jesus might have been speaking figuratively? Perhaps the meaning is that if you have something in your life that is causing you to stray from God, that maybe it is better to be rid of it than cost you your eternal soul! Kind of like “a stitch in time saves nine” isn’t really talking about sewing!

***

Hell will not be full of handless, legless, mouthless beings. Jesus used such things figuratively.

***

That is the funny thing about English translations of ancient Greek and Hebrew – no appreciation of metaphors. This is symbolic language and certainly taken out of context if you think it is referring to a physical body of a single person. Think of a body of people, or an organisation.

***

Christians will tell you that this is just a metaphor and they will be correct. However, many of these same Christians will also tell you that Noah literally packed every single species of animal into a giant boat amongst other fantastic stories!

(www.answers.yahoo.com)
Interpreting African Traditional Religion

African Traditional Religion is part of the ordinary life and events of followers. It is not separated as a practice that is focused on only, or mostly, on a particular holy day. For example, morally correct behaviour, such as helping the poor, is captured in practice and in proverbs and metaphors. A traditional practice that assists those who are poor is *ilima*.

When a poor family does not have oxen to plough their land, or a person does not have the strength or energy to build his own huts, people from the community gather to help. Some men in the community will send their boys to take the span of oxen and plough for the family, especially widows, without any strings attached. If it is helping to build a home, the men will go to the forest to cut wood and build the structure, and women will help fill the spaces with soil and smear the hut with mud made of soil and cow dung. Later on, the men will make the roof and the women will thatch it. This help from the community, or *ilima*, is always free of any charge.

The concept of *ilima* involves a whole community — showing that in African Traditional Religion, religion is simply practised in everyday behaviour and actions.

Proverbs and metaphors

Proverbs and metaphors are used as an everyday form of teaching in the community. These provide ethical and moral guidelines for correct behaviour, as well as warnings about immoral behaviour.

*Induku ayinamzi.* This proverb is especially applied to wife-beaters. Literally, it means that the stick has no kraal.

The figurative meaning is that the abuse of authority or power destroys home life, and thus breaks up the family.

*Akukho Ndlolu isindwa ngumboko wayo.* Literal meaning: no elephant is overburdened by its own trunk.

The figurative meaning is that a man should be capable of bearing his own troubles and carrying his own burdens.
Isisu somhambi asingakanani singaphambili, kodwa ngemva ngumhlonz. Literal meaning: a traveller’s stomach is but small, and in front, but behind is only spine.

Figurative meaning: this is a warning to the inhospitable person that hospitality to a traveller is but a small matter, demanding little sacrifice, as his requirements are limited to the stomach in front, and do not go even as far as his spine.

Activity 3.4 Interpret African proverbs

1. Work in groups to discuss what you think the figurative meaning is of the proverb below. The literal meaning is explained, but what message is it trying to convey? Is there a moral message implied in this proverb?

**Inkomo yenqoma yintsengw’ebheka.** The literal translation of this proverb is that when you milk a borrowed cow, you must always look around in case the owner comes to take it back (inkomo – cow; yenqoma – borrowed; yintsengw’ebheka – derived from ukusenga, which means to milk; ebheka – to look around).

Traditionally, when one of the AmaXhosa has many livestock, they take a cow and give it to someone who does not have any cows. The idea is to help this person to provide milk for the children. The cow stays with the new owner for a long time until it grows old. The offspring of the cow will be divided into two and the poor person will begin to have his own livestock. Then the old cow will be returned to the original owner. The proverb came from this practice.

2. On your own or in pairs, work out the figurative meaning of this proverb and describe its lesson or teaching. (The answer is at the bottom of this page.)

**Kungafa intaka enkulu amaqanda ayabola.**

The literal meaning is: If the old bird dies, the eggs are addled.

Songs and poetry

Songs and poetry form part of many African Traditional Religion rituals and gatherings. Here is an English interpretation of a poem (opposite) that expresses the love of God. Remember, those who practise African religion believe in the existence of a supernatural power that created life and earth. Neither science nor humans can explain the power of the Creator. The Creator is spirit and neither male nor female. Although the supernatural power is believed to be everywhere in creation, it is also believed that creation began in the spirit world. The spirit world is holy and it is where the laws, rituals and taboos that control the welfare of the physical world originated. The Creator made all the laws that regulate life. This poem captures some of these beliefs.
Qamata, I love you

Qamata*, I love you
Qamata, I love you
Qamata, you love us all
Your love is everlasting and unconditional
Through your love you created us all equal
Who then has got the power to judge?
You are everywhere
You are beyond imagination of the brain that you gave me
I therefore cannot make any images of yourself
Who then told your creatures that you are male?
Who then has got the powers to limit your highness to that of man?
Qamata, I love you
You talk to me every day
You talk to me any time
You talk to my ancestors
You talk to all humanity
If the manner I worship pleases you
Who else has got the power to demonise me?
Who else thinks he is your only spokesperson?
My oppressors use your name for their selfish interests
Thank you for the courage you are giving me
Qamata, I love you

*Qamata is a personal name for God Creator.

(Source: Maiiphakale (see page 115))

Activity 3.5 Interpret religious songs and poems

1. Work in pairs.
   a. Take it in turns to read aloud the poem "Qamata, I love you".
   b. Does it remind you of the words or songs of any other religions? Which one/s?
   c. According to the poem, what are the characteristics of the Creator?

2. Work on your own to write answers to these questions.
   a. How do you think the speaker feels?
   b. What do you think his or her relationship is with Qamata?
   c. Is this similar to the relationship between worshippers in other religions and their god/s? In what ways?

3. a. With your partner, read this Gikuyu description of God. The Gikuyu of Kenya believe that God has:

   *No father nor mother, no wife nor child*
   *He is all alone*
   *He is neither a child nor an old man*
   *He is the same today, as he was yesterday*
b. Compare “Qamata, I love you” and the Gikuyu description. What is similar about the description of the nature of God?

4. Try to find an example of a song or a poem that expresses the love of God (or another Supreme Being) from two other religions. Compare these to “Qamata, I love you”. What is similar or different about:
   - the emotions expressed
   - the words used
   - the nature of God/Supreme Being
   - the speaker’s relationship with God/Supreme Being?

Africa is made up of many nations and each nation has a name or name for the Creator. Although some groups share a common name, the creator is understood in diverse ways. These are some of the names and their meanings:

- Mdalii (isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu); Musiki (chiShona): The Supernatural Power is the Creator.
- Zimu (isiNdebele): The greatest of all.
- Modimo (Setswana, Sesotho); Mulungu (Chewa); Mvelingqangi/ Mvelatanci (isiZulu/isiSwati): These names suggest that the Creator existed before the Creation.
- Qamata (isiXhosa): Personal name for the Creator.

Stories

This religious story is told by people from Isiala Ngwa, the South Igbo area in Nigeria. It explains the presence of death in the world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The presence of death in the world</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Chukwu wanted to introduce death to the world to control the population numbers. Everyone in the world became afraid. An emergency meeting was summoned. Chukwu himself was present. That was before he left humans alone here. One group of people did not want God to introduce death at all. Another group said it was okay provided not all humans died at the same time.
| They could not reach agreement in the presence of God, so God left them alone to decide and send a message across to Him. Each group decided to send their own messenger to present their case. Those who did not want death at all sent a fast dog to reach God first. The other group sent the slow tortoise to tell God that he could introduce death as a means of population control.
| The animals set off early. On their long journey, they would have to cross seven deserts and seven seas. The dog sped off. Unfortunately, it stopped on the way to eat human faeces, and then fell asleep. The tortoise went on slowly and steadily and got to the palace of God first. It delivered its message and God made the decision that life would be |
terminated by death in order to control the population size. The dog arrived then, but it was too late. Chukwu would not change his mind. Humans became sad.

Death came to get its victims, and went straight to the young people. They pleaded that they were young and asked to be allowed more time to enjoy themselves on earth. They referred Death to the old people.

The old people tried to convince Death that it was not the right time to die. They argued that they had suffered a long time and should be allowed more time to enjoy their children and grandchildren. They referred death to the little children.

The little children argued that they had not done anything to deserve death. They referred Death to the infants whose presence in the world had not been confirmed or regularised. They had not been initiated into any important secrets of the community.

The infants humbly asked Death to leave them alone as they were innocent of corruption and evil.

Death then went to the poor. They pleaded for time to find money to leave for their children and complained they had suffered enough and not enjoyed their lives. They referred Death to the rich.

The rich argued for a time to organise their business properly and to complete their projects before dying. They offered Death money to leave them alone.

Death thought all the arguments were reasonable and went back to Chukwu to explain the situation to him. Chukwu became annoyed with Death and blamed him for being stupid enough to seek people's opinions in an urgent matter. Consequently, the eyes of Death were plucked out and his ears were sealed. He was sent down again to earth with a heavy iron rod to hit whoever he met. He was blind and deaf so could not see who was old or young, nor could he hear the pleadings and arguments from anyone.

That is why Death makes no distinction today and hears no appeal before he kills any person.

(Summarised from African Spirituality: An Anthology of Igbo Religious myths, collected and interpreted by Udobata Onwuma, 1992, Germany: Thesen Verlag Darmstadt)

Activity 3.6 Interpret a story about death

Work on your own to write answers to these questions.


2. What is the nature of God described in one other religion that you know of?

3. a. How, according to this story, do people communicate with God?
b. How does this compare to other religions? Think about which religions have direct access to God and which have intermediaries, and what these are.

4. What is the explanation for the fact of death in another two religions that you know of?

Informal self-assessment

Use this checklist and the national seven-point assessment scale on page iv to assess your work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am able to:</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>analyse the meaning of proverbs from African Traditional Religion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand a poem of worship from African Traditional Religion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analyse the meaning of a story from African Traditional Religion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compare sources and their meanings from two religions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What I found most interesting in this section is:

What I would like to know more about is:

Other comments:

Interpreting Muslim sources

Read how Muslim scholar MA Malek, in his book A Restoration of Faith, explains three verses from Sura 1 – al fatiha (‘The Opening’) – of the Qur’an.

Let us see why this first sura, containing only seven verses, is the key to the Qur’an. The first verse is usually translated as:

(1:1) In the name of Allah, the Beneficent (Rahman), the Merciful (Raheem).

The first verse begins with the name of Allah, Who is One and Unique. Here we cannot use ‘God’ for ‘Allah’, as the word ‘God’ means different things to different faiths. Allah is followed by two main attributes: Rahman and Raheem. The word Rahman in Arabic implies giver of benefits which are freely given – such as air, water, energy from the sun in the form of heat and light – and without which sustenance is impossible. The word Raheem implies the bestower of mercy or benefits which can only be acquired by hard work and good deeds. Simply praying for Allah’s mercy will not give these benefits.
(1.2) Praise (hamd) be to Allah, the Sustainer (Rabb) of the whole universe (alamin).

The word *hamd* means 'absolute praise' and 'absolute feeling of amazement', all directed towards Allah. Praise usually involves spontaneous appreciation of something which can be perceived through our senses. As far as Allah is concerned we can only appreciate the feeling of *hamd* by reflecting on the marvels of His Creation. The word *rabb* cannot be translated as 'Lord' as this word does not convey the full concept. It should be translated as 'the Nourisher and the Sustainer'. Thus the full translation should be: "Absolute praise, absolute feeling of amazement all directed towards Allah, who is the Nourisher and Sustainer of the entire Universe."

(1.3) The Beneficent (Rahman), the Merciful (Raheem).

The third verse is a repetition of part of the first verse, reminding us once again of the glorification of the two very important attributes of Allah. It is one of the characteristics of the Qur'an to repeat and reinforce our understanding so that we do not forget.

⭐ Activity 3.7 Interpret a Muslim source

Work in groups to decide whether these statements are true or false.

1. God and Allah mean essentially the same thing.
2. Praise is spontaneous, and the believer reflects on the wonders of Creation.
3. Allah sustains only Muslims.
4. The Qur'an repeats verses so that we do not forget what has been said.
5. *Rahman* and *Raheem* are mantras which Muslims use when praying to Allah.

Misinterpreting sacred texts

As you know, hermeneutics is the interpretation of sacred texts. You have explored some scholarly principles underlying the interpretation of normative sources. However, in the wrong hands, sacred texts can be used to justify oppression and cruelty. For example, during the apartheid era, the Nationalist government, supported by the Dutch Reformed Church, took the terms 'hewers of wood' and 'drawers of water' (meaning manual labourers) from the Hebrew Scriptures (see Joshua 9:20—7) and decided that they applied to the black people in our country. In other words, black people were seen as inferior to white people, and fit only to be labourers. This was used to justify the position of white people in apartheid South Africa. In context, however, these terms had nothing to do with black people! This shows how dangerous a misinterpretation of sacred texts can be.
**Activity 3.8 Read about the result of a biblical misinterpretation**

1. Read this article. It was summarised from the website of Ekklesia, a UK-based think tank and news service that promotes radical theological ideas in public life.

**Death penalty decision overturned after jurors misinterpret Bible texts**

A divided Supreme Court in the US has thrown out the death penalty for a convicted murderer after jurors discussed verses from the Bible during their deliberations, and reached conclusions that many Christians would disagree with.

Robert Harlan was sentenced to death in 1995 for the murder of Rhonda Maloney, but defence lawyers learned that five jurors had looked up and discussed such Bible verses as “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” in their attempt to reach a verdict.

Defence attorney Kathleen Lord, arguing before the state Supreme Court, said the jurors had gone outside the law. Prosecutors countered that jurors should be allowed to refer to the Bible or other religious texts during deliberations.

Many Christians will point out that if the jurors were influenced by their readings of such verses, they misinterpreted them. The idea of “an eye for an eye” is seen by many scholars as a limitation on the escalation of violence – in other words – “an eye for an eye but no more” – rather than a command for people to be punished in the same way that they offended. Jesus Christ is also quoted in the gospels as referring to the Hebrew verses which refer to an “eye for an eye”, but then commanding forgiveness rather than vengeance.

But Monday’s ruling said such verses and other religious writings, often selectively quoted, are considered “codes of law by many”. But noting that it takes a unanimous jury to impose a death sentence, the court said: “At least one juror in this case could have been influenced by these authoritative passages ... when he or she may otherwise have voted for a life sentence.”

Jay Horowitz, a former lawyer professional, noted it was unreasonable to expect jurors to set aside moral standards when they step into a jury room, though there must be limits. “People do bring their backgrounds and thoughts and impressions, and you can’t separate from that, and shouldn’t try to,” he said.

The conservative Christian group, Focus on the Family, has sharp criticism for the court: “Today’s ruling further confirms that the judicial branch of our government is nearly bereft of any moral foundation.” Many other Christians in the US, however, are opposed to the death penalty on their understanding of the Bible.

(http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/)

2. Work in pairs to discuss these questions before writing the answers in your workbook.

   a. What two interpretations of “an eye for an eye” are mentioned in the article?

   b. Rewrite this sentence in your own words: “... such verses and other religious writings, often selectively quoted, are considered ‘codes of law by many’.”

   c. Do you agree or disagree with Jay Horowitz’s view? Give reasons for your answer.

   d. What is Focus on the Family’s view on the death penalty?
3. Conduct research to find out about one of these topics:
   - any one religion's views on the death penalty (not Christianity);
   - other examples of instances where sacred texts have been misinterpret, leading to dire social or other consequences.

Report your findings to the class.

**Formal assessment task 6a – Project (50 marks)**

1. Find two normative sources from religions other than Christianity, or choose from the sources on pages 136 and 137.
2. Discuss them with a partner.
3. On your own, prepare an essay or speech in which you interpret the normative sources. For each source, apply at least three hermeneutical principles (see pages 123–125) to help you interpret the meaning.
4. Present your work as an essay or speech. If you choose to present a speech, make sure that you have a written copy of it.

Make sure that you write as many drafts of your essay or speech as you need to. Keep correcting and improving your work until you are satisfied. Your teacher will mark your work out of 50 using the rubric based on the national seven-point assessment scale (see page iv), below. This task contributes to your year mark for Religion Studies.

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1. A.L.M.

2. This is the book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah.

3. Who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them.

4. And who believe in the Revelation sent to thee, and sent before thy time, and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter.

5. They are on (true) guidance, from their lord, and it is these who will prosper.

6. As to those who reject Faith, it is the same to them whether thou warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe.

7. Allah hath set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil; great is the penalty they (incur).

8. Of the people there are some who say: "We believe in Allah and the Last Day"; but they do not (really) believe.

9. Fain would they deceive Allah and those who believe, but they only deceive themselves, and realise (it) not!

10. In their hearts is a disease; and Allah has increased their disease: And grievous is the penalty they (incur), because they are false (to themselves).

11. When it is said to them: "Make not mischief on the earth," they say: "Why, we only Want to make peace!"

12. Of a surety, they are the ones who make mischief, but they realise (it) not.

(Qur'an, Sura 2, The cow: 1—10)

High Truth, unyielding Order, Consecration, Ardour and Prayer and Holy Ritual uphold the Earth, may she, the ruling Mistress of what has been and what will come to be, for us spread wide a limitless domain.

Untrammelled in the midst of men, the Earth adorned with heights and gentle slopes and plains, bears plants and herbs of various healing powers. May she spread wide for us, afford us joy!

On whom are ocean, river, and all waters, on whom have sprung up food and plowman's crops, on whom moves all that breathes and stirs abroad -- Earth, may she grant to us the long first draught!

To Earth belong the four directions of space. On her grows food; on her the plowman toils.

She carries likewise all that breathes and stirs. Earth, may she grant us cattle and food in plenty! On whom the men of the olden days roamed far, on whom the conquering Gods smote the demons, the home of cattle, horses, and of birds, may Earth vouchsafe to us good fortune and glory!

Bearer of all things, hoard of treasures rare, sustaining mother, Earth the golden-breasted who bears the Sacred Universal Fire, whose spouse is Indra -- may she grant us wealth!

Limitless Earth, whom the Gods, never sleeping, protect forever with unflagging care, may she exude for us the well-loved honey, shed upon us her splendour copiously!
Earth, who of yore was Water in the oceans, discerned by the Sages’ secret powers, whose immortal heart, enwrapped in Truth, abides aloft in the highest firmament, may she procure for us splendour and power, according to her highest royal state!

(Extract from Hymn to the Earth in the Atharaveda)

Mind precedes its objects. They are mind-governed and mind-made. To speak or act with a defiled mind is to draw pain after oneself, like a wheel behind the feet of the animal drawing it. 1

Mind precedes its objects. They are mind-governed and mind-made. To speak or act with a peaceful mind, is to draw happiness after oneself, like an inseparable shadow. 2

I have been insulted! I have been hurt! I have been beaten! I have been robbed! Anger does not cease in those who harbour this sort of thought. 3

I have been insulted! I have been hurt! I have been beaten! I have been robbed! Anger ceases in those who do not harbour this sort of thought. 4

Occasions of hatred are certainly never settled by hatred. They are settled by freedom from hatred. This is the internal law. 5

Others may not understand that we must practise self-control, but quarrelling dies away in those who understand this fact. 6

The Tempter masters the lazy and irresolute man who dwells on the attractive side of things ungoverned in his senses, and unrestrained in his food, like the wind overcomes a rotten tree. 7

But the Tempter cannot master a man who dwells on the distasteful side of things, self-controlled in his senses, moderate in eating, resolute and full of faith, like the wind cannot move a mountain crag. 8

The man who wears the yellow-dyed robe but is not free from stains himself, without self-restraint and integrity, is unworthy of the robe. 9

But the man who has freed himself of stains and has found peace of mind in an upright life, possessing self-restraint and integrity, he is indeed worthy of the dyed robe. 10

(Pali Canon, extract from the first section known as The Twins or The Pairs)
Unit 2 Examining secular worldviews
(Weeks 1–2)

In this unit you will think about what ‘secularism’ is and how it manifests in different forms as humanism, materialism, agnosticism or atheism. For the purposes of the exams, learners are required to specialise in at least two worldviews – with reference to their origins, purpose and what has influenced them. As some of this information may be new to learners, we provide historical background to the rise of secularism in order to contextualise these worldviews.

WHAT IS SECULARISM?
Secularism is the belief that government and morality should not be based on religion. This does not mean they cannot be influenced by religion; it just means that religion should not have the final say. Most modern western democracies are secular states, that is, they believe in the separation of church and state. In the United States, for example, there is no official religion and religious institutions have no constitutional right to play a direct role in the development of civic law.

In the United Kingdom, the Church of England is the official religion of the state, and the queen is both the head of the church and the constitutional head of the state. Yet it would be unthinkable for the church to have a say in whether or not laws created by the houses of Parliament are adopted or rejected. Quite simply, the church has no legal say.

This does not mean that the church cannot have an influence in Western democracies. Western democracies are supposed to cherish freedom of speech and association, which means that all religious institutions should be free to express their views about laws and to mobilise support for or against the laws. In the United States, for example, conservative Christian churches will often tell their followers which election candidates to vote for, based on whether or not they agree with the candidate’s religious views. In this way, churches try to influence who is elected to Parliament. But they cannot interfere with or even overturn laws passed by Parliament.

Secularism in personal life is similar to secularism in the state. It involves a commitment to:

- an ethic based on reasoning about human nature without reference to god(s); and
- understanding the universe without appealing to religious explanations.

Whether personal or political, western secularism has to do with adopting a foundation for life and law which excludes conventional religion. In the west, it tends to go with democratic forms of government, freedom of religion within the bounds of the secular law of the land, support for human rights, and non-discrimination on the basis of religious belief.
Activity 3.9 Talk and write about secularism

1. Work in groups to discuss whether you think South Africa is a secular state. (Hint: You will find it helpful if you think about what you know about our Constitution and Bill of Rights.)

2. On your own, write an essay (1–2 pages) giving your view on whether South Africa is a secular state. Remember to give reasons for your opinion.

The historical origins of Western secular thinking

To understand the development of secular thinking, we need to go back to the Protestant split with the Catholic Church.

Martin Luther (1483—1546) set in motion an irrevocable process which led to the splintering of Christianity. This unleashed decades of religious war in Europe as various Christian groups fought for dominance. We need to understand this violence in terms of how people at the time thought about religion, society, and government. Apart from small areas like Switzerland, Europe was not democratic. Most areas were ruled by emperors, kings, queens, or other nobility. People took it for granted that human rulers should be subject to God. Since the church represented God, it was therefore very influential both politically and socially. Most people thought that a society would only be peaceful if everyone believed in the same religion. And so, many Protestant reformers, including Luther and Calvin, were not tolerant of religious diversity. Early Protestants simply replaced Catholic intolerance with their own. The result is that Europeans fought themselves to a standstill, trying to impose on each other one or other form of Christianity.

Martin Luther pinned his 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenburg, Germany, in 1517. This event is usually identified as the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.
John Calvin (1509—1564) was an important French Christian theologian during the Protestant Reformation. The system of Christian theology called Calvinism was named after him. Calvinism emphasises the rule of God over all things, as reflected in its understanding of Scripture, God, humanity, salvation and the church.

Activity 3.10 Debate religious diversity

Work as a class to debate this topic: A society can only be peaceful if everyone follows the same religion.

The modern country of the Netherlands had its origins in an 80-year war of independence started by the first William of Orange in 1568. The war of independence was part of the series of religious wars that had broken out all over Europe. William of Orange was Protestant, and he was fighting for independence from Catholic Spain. After his assassination in 1584, his son, William of Orange II, continued the fight.
Independence eventually came in 1648 when the Treaty of Westphalia was signed, settling most of the European conflict. As part of the treaty, the provinces of the Netherlands were recognised as an independent state, and the Netherlands became a country in its own right. The treaty is important from the point of view of Western political and religious history, because it was the first time that nation states were recognised independently of religion. It marked the end of the domination of the Catholic Church in the social and political life of Europe.

The Dutch were important because it was William of Orange who first put forward the idea that social and political peace would only be established if the foundation of the state was free from a particular religion. What drove him to this view was the sheer exhaustion from endless fighting. But his timing was good. Throughout Europe, leading intellectuals had arrived at the view that religion was socially divisive rather than uniting. Ordinary people had also had enough of religious war. When William announced that the Netherlands would allow freedom of religion, his people welcomed the idea.

With a particular set of religious beliefs and values no longer at the core of society, an alternative was needed. The more religiously-minded political reformers found that core in the teachings of Jesus, in other words, in their understanding of the Christian ethic. To them, the Christian ethic favoured tolerance and non-violence. There was therefore a fairly smooth transition from the idea that every society needed to be founded on a religion, to the view that a concern for human rights and religious freedom should be at the heart of society – and that that was the Christian thing to do. But it was not long before leading intellectuals started to suggest a basis for social harmony and governance which was based purely on reasoning and on an understanding of human nature that did not take its lead from religious principles.

Activity 3.11. Talk and write about religion and values

1. a. Rewrite this sentence in your own words: “Many had arrived at the view that religion was socially divisive rather than uniting.”

   b. Write a few lines saying whether or not you agree with this view, and why.

2. If a society does not have a particular set of religious beliefs and values at its core, what kinds of values do you think could act as the basis for social harmony?

   Discuss this in groups.
**Informal self-assessment**

Copy and complete this table. Use the national seven-point assessment scale on page iv to give yourself a mark for each activity.

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<th>Activity</th>
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In 1651, Thomas Hobbes (1588—1679) in his book *Leviathan*, used the metaphor of a human being to describe the modern state of the time. Each of the elements of the state is like a part of a giant *leviathan* or being. This state has far more power than any individual person. It therefore acts as the check on the power of individual people, and as the guarantor of social peace. In this way it replaced ‘god’ as the binding force in society.

“...For by Art is created that great Leviathan called a Commonwealth or State which is but an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended ... the magistrates and other officers of the judicature (are the) joints, reward and punishment are the nerves...”

(From the opening words of *Leviathan*, written by Thomas Hobbes in 1651)

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECULARISM AND THE RELIGIOUS RESPONSE**

- 1517  Luther’s 95 theses
- 1648  The Treaty of Westphalia
- 1651  Hobbes publishes *Leviathan*
- 1787  the Constitution of the United States published

The 1787 Constitution of the United States of America set out, for the first time in the West, the constitutional *doctrines* of the separation of the church and state. Religion had come to be seen as socially divisive and *exploitative*, and mass education – something which the development of printing had made more widespread than before – created a class of educated people who had the self-confidence in their own powers of reasoning to ‘throw off’ religious authority.
Freedom of conscience and religion may have started in the Netherlands in the early 1600s, but by the end of the 1700s it was becoming a definitive characteristic of the modern western state. Secular law became the highest law of the land.

One example of this was the first amendment to the 1787 United States Constitution, adopted in 1791:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peacefully to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Christianity adapted quickly to the new situation. Most thoughtful Christians saw no conflict between Christian teaching and the secular state. Many justified the separation by referring to the saying of Jesus, “Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s, and unto God what is God’s.”

⭐ Activity 3.12 Discuss a Christian text

In pairs, discuss what you think Jesus meant when he said, “Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s, and unto God what is God’s.” Report your ideas to the class.

UNDERSTANDING SECULAR HUMANISM

Under the influence of Enlightenment philosophers, e.g. Hobbes and Hume, secular humanism spread through Europe and America, although there is also evidence of its presence in Indian and Chinese thought.

There are different forms of humanism all having in common a belief that attaches prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters. Secular humanism developed in the direction of a liberal view of human rights and was not particularly anti-religion but based on the principle that people’s spiritual and emotional needs can be fulfilled without following a religion. For many it replaces religion and provides a framework of principles and ethical guidelines for life and making a constructive contribution to society.

The Council for Secular Humanism (United States) describes the following elements and principles:

- **Need to test beliefs** – A conviction that dogmas, ideologies and traditions, whether religious, political or social, must be weighed and tested by each individual and not simply accepted by faith.
- **Reason, evidence, scientific method** – A commitment to the use of critical reason, factual evidence and scientific method of inquiry in seeking solutions to human problems and answers to important human questions.
• **Fulfilment, growth, creativity** – A primary concern with fulfilment, growth and creativity for both the individual and humankind in general.

• **Search for truth** – A constant search for objective truth, with the understanding that new knowledge and experience constantly alter our imperfect perception of it.

• **This life** – A concern for this life (as opposed to an afterlife) and a commitment to making it meaningful through better understanding of ourselves, our history, our intellectual and artistic achievements, and the outlooks of those who differ from us.

• **Ethics** – A search for viable individual, social and political principles of ethical conduct, judging them on their ability to enhance human well-being and individual responsibility.

• **Justice and fairness** – an interest in securing justice and fairness in society and in eliminating discrimination and intolerance.

• **Building a better world** – A conviction that with reason, an open exchange of ideas, good will, and tolerance, progress can be made in building a better world for ourselves and our children.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secular_humanism#History)

**UNDERSTANDING AGNOSTICISM**

Agnosticism is the belief that it is not possible to prove either way – the existence or non-existence of a God. It is derived from the Greek words: *a* meaning ‘without’ and *gnosis* which means ‘knowledge’. Thus it carries the meaning that it is uncertain about God-knowledge and therefore does not attach importance to religious ideas. The term was introduced by Thomas Huxley (1825—1895), who was a philosopher and a colleague and friend of Charles Darwin (1809—1882), in 1869.

In a letter that Huxley wrote in 1860 he says:

“*I neither affirm nor deny the immortality of man. I see no reason for believing it, but, on the other hand, I have no means of disproving it. I have no a priori objections to the doctrine. No man who has to deal daily and hourly with nature can trouble himself about a priori difficulties. Give me such evidence as would justify me in believing in anything else, and I will believe that. Why should I not? It is not half so wonderful as the conservation of force or the indestructibility of matter...”*

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agnosticism#Etymology)

Agnostic ideas pre-date the use of the term agnosticism. For example, the Enlightenment philosopher David Hume said that there is always some uncertainty and doubt when talking about the universe – humans do not know everything there is to know and so it is not useful to try and prove the existence or non-existence of God.
The sacred text in Hinduism, the *Rig Veda* also presents an agnostic perspective on the existence of God and the creation.

*Who really knows?*
*Who will here proclaim it?*
*Whence was it produced? Whence is this creation?*
*The gods came afterwards, with the creation of this universe.*
*Who then knows whence it has arisen?*

(Nasadiya Sukta Creation Hymn tenth chapter of the *Rig Veda*)

Darwin’s theory of evolution challenged the Christian churches’ ideas about creation and the nature of God – doctrines that had shaped Christian thinking for centuries.

**UNDERSTANDING ATHEISM**

Atheism refers to the belief that there is no divine reality/God. There are different degrees of atheism: some atheists simply doubt the existence of any divine reality but are not concerned with disproving its existence; while others actively seek to disprove supernatural explanations for reality.

In his book *The God Delusion* (2006), Oxford scholar and biologist Richard Dawkins states that scientific theories including evolution and natural selection have far greater explanatory power than religion and a ‘God hypothesis’. He goes further in judging religion as a bad thing which breeds narrow-minded views and incites conflict. He asserts that atheists can be ethical and well-balanced people who make positive contributions to society.

Many modern atheists base their position on the following claims:

- Evil and suffering in the world refute a God who is all-powerful, all-loving, and all-knowing;
- It is impossible to prove that God exists;
- Belief in God or a supernatural realm is unscientific; explanations for the world and creation are to be found in science.

Certain strands within Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism are atheistic, believing that notions of God must be left behind for transformation to occur.

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804—1872) who was both an atheist and a materialist believed that God was something that humans have constructed. In his book *The Essence of Christianity* he described religion as “the outward projection of man’s inward nature”. God is a projection of whatever qualities are admired in a particular society. This view was to be a significant influence on Karl Marx and his views on religion.
Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) was an influential German philosopher, political economist, and revolutionary. He is most famous for his analysis of history in terms of class struggles. He claimed that religion was used to oppress people and maintain inequalities that were a source of conflict between the different classes in society. Marx believed that the downfall of capitalism was inevitable, and that it would be replaced by communism.

In 1848 Karl Marx (left) and his colleague Friedrich Engels produced The Communist Manifesto (above right), which suggested a source of action for a people’s revolution to overthrow capitalism and, eventually, to bring about a classless society.

Capitalism is an economic, political and social system based on private ownership of property, business and industry, and directed towards making profits for successful organisations and people. Communism is a political system in which individuals are not allowed to own property. The idea is that everything belongs to everybody.

The system that Marx and Engels suggested in The Communist Manifesto aimed to end existing political structures, and was against organised religion.
Activity 3.13 Think about Marx’s ideas

1. Marx said, “Religion is the opiate of the people.” Work in groups to discuss what he meant by that.

2. On your own, write a one-page essay in which you:
   • say whether or not you agree with Marx,
   • explain why you hold that view.

Informal peer assessment

Work in groups of four. Take turns to read your essay aloud to the group. Discuss these questions after each reading:

- Did the learner start by correctly explaining what Marx meant when he said “Religion is the opiate of the people”?
- Did the learner clearly state their own view on the matter?
- Did the learner support their view with convincing reasons? If not, suggest how they could improve this section of the essay.

Use your group’s feedback to improve your essay.

UNDERSTANDING MATERIALISM

Materialism is a worldview that believes that matter is the only reality and denies the existence of a spiritual, or a supernatural realm. As such, it is incompatible with religious worldviews which are rooted in belief in either a deity, or some kind of spiritual reality.

Materialism developed in different areas in Europe and Asia during what is known as the Axial Age (800—200 BCE) and there are expressions of this philosophy to be found in Ancient Indian philosophy, in Buddhism and Confucianism.

In the West, it was first developed by the Greek philosophers, the Atomists, and was revived in the 18th century, gaining ground during the Enlightenment era.

There exists nothing but nature, and all beings, which are supposed to be beyond nature, are creatures of the imagination.

(Baron d’Holbach 1723—1789)

During the 19th century, Karl Marx elaborated the concept of materialism to describe human history and economic activity, using the following terms:

- dialectical materialism – matter as the fundamental cause of everything;
- historical materialism – economics and relationships between workers and owners as the fundamental structure in society.
While materialism (also known as physicalism) has had support in the scientific community, some modern-day scientists argue that developments in theories about matter present serious challenges to materialism.

Some contemporary physicists and neuroscientists are challenging materialist explanations of reality. They say that materialism cannot explain subjective experiences or ‘first-person experiences’, which would include religious or spiritual experiences.

In the past few decades, however, many neurophysiologists have concluded that we can infer that any organism with sufficient neural complexity has some measure of consciousness. Many researchers now believe that no account of human ‘mind’ could be complete without explaining the nature and possibility of first-person experience. This re-awakened interest in consciousness occurred in the context of narratives about cosmic evolution from its birth in the Big Bang.... More than a few respected scientists and philosophers maintain that perhaps it is no accident that self-conscious life evolved; indeed, perhaps the universe has become conscious of itself through humankind.

("Integral Thinking in Cutting-Edge Neurophysiology" by Michael Zimmerman)

**Formal assessment task 6b – Research project (50 marks)**

1. a. Choose one of these well-known secular thinkers, or any other of your choice:
   - David Hume
   - The drafters of the American Constitution
   - Karl Marx

   b. Conduct research to find out answers to these questions
   - What are the main ideas put forward by that person?
   - What is their attitude to traditional religion?
   - What do they recommend as the basis for being a good person?
   - On what do they base their ideas about good government?

2. Conduct research into any one of the world’s traditional religions. What do you think the leaders of this religion would say about the ideas of the secular thinker you chose? Base your answer on what you know about the central teachings of that religion. If possible, support your answer with quotes from that religion’s sacred text/s.

3. Use the information you found out in points 1 and 2 to write a two- or three-page report of your findings and conclusions.

Make sure that you write as many drafts of your report as you need to. Keep correcting and improving your report until you are completely satisfied. Your teacher will then mark your work out of 50 using a rubric based on the national seven-point assessment scale (see page iv), which your teacher will share with you. This task contributes to your year mark for Religion Studies.
Unit 3 Exploring religion and the natural sciences
(Weeks 3–5)

In this unit you will explore the historical developments of scientific ideas about the universe. You will look at the different views that natural scientists and religious leaders have of creation and the theory of evolution.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCIENCES

Many people mistakenly believe that the natural sciences are mostly a Western invention. But science in places like India, China, and Greece preceded scientific development in Europe by centuries. It was only in the 14th and 15th centuries, when Europeans rediscovered the Greek classics and first discovered Arabic mathematics, that science began to flower in Europe. Then, in the 16th century and with the invention of printing, ‘modern’ science took off.

Long before printing was ‘invented’ in Europe, it had been known in China. By the 10th century, parts of the Qur’an were being printed in Cairo using methods learned from the Chinese. The first printed item for sale in Europe were playing cards, which appeared in 1377 CE in Germany. That is almost 300 years after the invention of printing in China. Johann Gutenberg developed movable type in Europe in the 1450s CE. This was an improvement on the block printing already in use. You could argue that the Europeans were slow learners!

Printing made it easier and cheaper to produce an spread knowledge.

Grades 10 and 11 revision

The Common Era (CE) starts at year 1 on the Western calendar. BCE stands for ‘Before the Common Era’. We count backwards from year 1 for BCE. For example, something that happened seven years before year 1 is written as 7 BCE.

precede – to go or happen before

BEGINNINGS OF THE CLASH BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION IN THE WEST

When considering the relationship between religion and the natural sciences, it is important to remember that science is something human beings have done in all cultures for centuries; and so is religion. It is therefore an old relationship. In fact, astronomy – or the ability to predict the movement of the stars and the planets, and to relate those motions to events on Earth – was a science in which religion and daily human needs were almost impossible to tell apart. From earliest times, human beings needed to have a good sense of the seasons
for agriculture. The most reliable indicators of the seasons were the stars and the planets. Religious festivals celebrated the summer and winter solstices in many cultures.

So when did the clash between science and religion begin, and what was it about?

16\textsuperscript{th} century church and astronomy – it is the Earth that moves

Four people stand out in early modern astronomy:

- Niklas Kopernigk (Copernicus, born in 1473 in Poland).
- Tycho Brahe (born in 1546 in Denmark).
- Galileo Galilei (born in 1564 in Italy)
- Johannes Kepler (born in 1571 in Germany).

When Copernicus was born, the dominant theory of the universe was the so-called geocentric theory. It combined the ideas of the Greek-Roman astronomer Ptolemy (90—168 CE) and the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384—322 BCE) and gave them a Christian twist.

There were two key elements to the geocentric theory: the Earth is at the centre of the universe and everything revolves around it; and the universe is fixed and perfect as it is.
To the Christian leadership of the time, both Protestant and Catholic, these ideas fitted perfectly with the Christian view of creation. The idea that the Earth was at the centre of the universe went well with the Christian belief that God had put human beings at the centre of His creation. And the idea that the universe was unchanging went well with the idea that God – who was perfect – had created a perfect (by which they meant 'unchanging') universe.

Activity 3.14 Debate the concept of ‘perfection’

Read the information in 'Think about this'. Then work as a class to debate this topic: Can two (or more) states, each different from the other, be perfect?

By the time Copernicus was born, astronomers were having problems with the geocentric and Christian view. In particular, the existing theory could not accurately explain the movement of the planets. So the tension between religion and science in our era began with Copernicus' attempts to produce a theory of the solar system that would more accurately predict the movements of the planets. He experimented with the idea that it is not the Earth that is motionless at the centre of the universe, but the Sun. This is known as the heliocentric theory of the solar system and it was aimed at replacing the geocentric theory.

Think about this

The idea that being ‘perfect’ goes with 'not changing' may seem strange to us now, but it is found in many cultures. The reasoning goes like this: if something changes, then it exists in two states, a 'before' and an 'after'. If it was perfect before, then it should not change. But if it was not perfect before, then it was not perfect when it was created. So, if anything has to change, then either it was not perfect before, or it is no longer perfect after. 'Perfection' implies one state; so two states, each different from the other, cannot be perfect. It did not occur to people that a process can be perfect and therefore the states do not matter.

According to the heliocentric theory, the planets – including Earth – move around the Sun.
It is hard for us to appreciate what a leap of the imagination this was. Remember, at the time there were no telescopes or spacecraft. From the everyday point of view, the Earth did not seem to move. Most people still thought that the Earth was flat (even though the Greeks had proved that it was round). So it seemed obvious that the Earth was motionless and everything revolved around it. All that this new theory seemed to offer was the possibility of a better explanation.

Copernicus was so nervous about his ideas that he delayed publication of his book *De Revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (The Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres), until shortly before his death. He dedicated the book to the current pope, Pope Paul III. Lutheran priest Osiander wrote a preface to the book. He, in turn, was so nervous about the whole idea that he wrote the preface anonymously. In it, Osiander argued that Copernicus’ theory need not be true in order to be useful. He argued that the new heliocentric theory could be used as a way to ‘calculate’ the movements of the planets, even though one need not believe in it.

**Activity 3.15 Write about the heliocentric and geocentric theories**

In your own words, write two paragraphs in which you:

a. outline the differences between the heliocentric and the geocentric theories of the universe,

b. explain why people may have found the heliocentric theory alarming.

The Catholic Church did not have much to say about *De Revolutionibus*, but Martin Luther was not impressed when he heard about the heliocentric theory.
Luther’s objection was that the new theory went against a part of the Bible. It was unthinkable to Luther that God would let Joshua make a mistake when speaking for Him. If the new theory were correct, then Joshua would have commanded ‘the Earth’ to stop. But he had commanded the sun to stop, which proves that it is the sun that moves. In a battle between the literal word of the Bible and a scientist there could only be one winner in those days – the literal word of the Bible.

Although the Catholic Church was relatively silent about the new theory at first, trouble began as evidence grew against the old theories.

- Tycho Brahe was born shortly after Copernicus’ death. Although he never agreed with the heliocentric theory, more than anyone he was responsible for gathering the evidence that would disprove the theories of Ptolemy and Aristotle. He established the most advanced observatory in the world and collected a lot of data on the movements of the planets and the stars. While he was actually trying to disprove Copernicus, Brahe collected data that indicated that the universe was not constant. Thus he went against the orthodox theory!

- Johannes Kepler was a mathematician and an assistant to Brahe. He and Brahe had been working on the planetary motion of Mars when Brahe died. Brahe left his data to Kepler, asking him to use it to disprove Copernicus. What Kepler showed instead was that there was only one way to describe the motion of Mars and that was by having Mars revolve around the Sun. This disproved the view of the Earth at the centre. Kepler then used Brahe’s observations to demonstrate that all the planets orbited around the Sun in an **elliptical**, rather than a circular, movement.

- At about the same time, Galileo was peering through his newly-invented telescopes in Italy and discovering new stars, mountains on the Moon, spots on the Sun, phases of the planet Venus, and moons orbiting Jupiter. To these observations he added a series of experiments with moving objects, which demolished Aristotelian physics. In 1623 he published his attack on conventional physics and astronomy in a book called The Assayer. The Catholic Church had begun to feel that the new sciences could be a threat to orthodoxy, so it condemned the heliocentric theory as false. In 1632 Galileo published his Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems – Ptolemaic and Copernican. The Catholic Church put him on trial as a **heretic** and told him to **recant** his ideas.
Why all the fuss?

From our view almost 400 years later, the church may have seemed foolish to challenge the astronomers. These men were not trying to create a religious revolution. Both Copernicus and Galileo dedicated their books to the pope at the time. Kepler was a deeply religious man who had studied theology as well as astronomy. And Brahe did not even believe in the heliocentric theory. Yet the church tried to block their ideas. In doing so, it alienated thinking people, especially young intellectuals, throughout Europe. The church appeared to be opposed to ‘truth’. It appeared to insist on holding to theories that could not support observations. It was the beginning of a long downward trend in the influence of Christianity in Europe. Many would argue that that trend has continued to this day.

By taking the Earth from the centre of things, the new astronomy appeared to take human beings from the centre. Orthodox church people could not believe that God would have put people (for whom everything had been created) on a planet that was not at the centre of the universe. Also, the new view of the universe had planets behaving in ways that were not thought to be ‘perfect’—they travelled in elliptical paths, not circles; and their speed varied instead of being constant. The universe itself was apparently not ‘perfect’. The surface of the Moon was cratered. The Sun had dark spots. Stars came and went. Why would an all-powerful and perfect God make something with so many apparent blemishes?

The new ideas seemed to challenge the Christian view of God’s perfection and his reasons for creating. And finally, the new views went against the literal words in the Bible. In the Bible, it was the Sun that moved, not the Earth.

The church lost the battle in Europe. It is ironic that the church damaged itself by insisting on supporting the ideas of the two Greeks who had probably never heard of Christianity (Ptolemy and Aristotle), against four Europeans who were Christians.

Activity 3.16 Write about the conflict between Christianity and science

Write a one-page essay in which you discuss the reasons for the conflict between Christianity and the early modern Western astronomers. Here are some ideas to help you get started:

- Earth removed from the centre of things
- astronomers appeared to contradict the literal word of the Bible
- the orthodox Christian view of the ‘perfect’ universe vs data revealed by the astronomers’ observations.

Write only the first draft of your essay. You will complete the essay in the next activity and add another page to it.
Activity 3.17 Research a Christian thinker

1. Do research to find out about one of these Christian thinkers, or any other who was not against the new views proposed by the astronomers:
   - Osiander (who wrote the original preface to Copernicus’ book)
   - Pope Urban VIII (at first he supported Galileo)
   - Pope Benedict XIV (who reinstated the works of Galileo in 1741)

   Find out how they managed to reconcile the apparent contradiction between astronomy and Christianity.

2. Add this information to your Activity 3.16 essay by writing:
   - one or two paragraphs summarising your research findings
   - a paragraph explaining your view of the reconciliation. Do you agree or disagree with it? Explain why.

Informal peer assessment

Work in groups of four. Take turns to read your essay aloud to the group. Discuss these questions after each reading:

- Did the learner identify and state the reasons for the conflict between Christianity and the early modern Western astronomers?
- Did the learner’s discussion of these reasons show that s/he understands why the conflict happened? If not, give suggestions for improvements.
- Did the learner conduct research and include a summary of their findings?
- Did the learner explain their view of the reconciliation? Did s/he support their view with convincing reasons? If not, explain why the argument is not convincing.

Use your group’s feedback to improve your essay.

RELIGIOUS AND SCIENTIFIC ACCOUNTS OF CREATION

In this section you will explore dominant views of the world’s religions about creation, and compare these views with modern scientific views. You will also think about this question: does it matter that religious views may not be in agreement with current science?

The scriptures of the Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – are said to be inspired by God or to be the direct word of God. They share a similar view of creation:

- There is one omnipotent, omniscient, perfect Creator.
- God created human beings as the centrepiece of creation.
undifferentiated – without difference

- There are other details according to some versions of the scriptures: creation took six days; it started by separating light from dark; it was made from nothing; and there were only two humans to start with (Adam and Eve), who were made from clay.

Did creation start as the scriptures say it did? Were Adam and Eve the first humans? Did it all happen in six days?

What if scientists disagree with the scriptures as to how it all happened?

Why would God allow his messengers, the people who wrote the scriptures, to write something that wasn’t true?

These questions highlight the problem. The theories in the scriptures are important because they convey ideas about the purpose of life. Religious adherents suppose that the theories were written by those in touch with ultimate reality. It is unthinkable that the divine would allow people to be mistaken. When science comes into conflict with these ideas, it may seem to many people that their religion is being threatened.

**Religious ‘theories’ of creation**

In this section the term ‘the Creator’ is used to refer to the different ideas that religions have about the origin of the universe.

**The Hindu view**

To Hindus, the universe is the Creator. The Creator has existed and will exist for all time. The Creator has no limitations and therefore is not a ‘he’, a ‘she’ or anything else. The Creator is simply the Creator. The Creator exists in either an active or a passive state:

- The passive state is a state of rest when nothing happens. At rest, the universe has no form, is undifferentiated, and is sort of ‘flat’ all over.
- After a very long time, the Creator stirs and becomes active. This is when parts of the universe look and are different from other parts and ‘creation’ begins.

Hindus often show creation as a dance. So the changing universe is the Creator dancing.
Like everything else, humans are a by-product of the dance. We are in it just because we are. We cannot escape it. The soul of the Creator spreads through everything and therefore also us: each of us is (part of) God.

The dance continues for an extremely long time until the Creator is tired. The Creator then stops and the visible universe collapses along with everything in it. The Creator still exists but nothing is happening because the Creator is at rest. After being at rest for a long time, the Creator starts ‘dancing’ again and the whole cycle repeats itself – and so on, forever.

Hindu scriptures explain how humans can go about purifying themselves so that they will eventually recognise the ‘God’ within themselves. This process starts by fulfilling one’s social duty and ends with a focus on yoga or meditation.

**The Abrahamic religions’ view**

The ideas of the Abrahamic religions are fundamentally different from those of Hinduism:

- The Creator is spoken about as male.
- At first, only the Creator exists. The Creator then makes the universe from nothing.
- The universe is a separate thing. It can go back to being nothing if the Creator wants.
- The process of creation took six days. Humans were made on the sixth day. The first two humans were Adam and Eve.
- They lived in a perfect garden. They had free will and could choose to do good (i.e. to obey the Creator) or bad (i.e. to disobey the Creator). The Creator told them not to eat from the tree of knowledge. When they disobeyed, they were punished and exiled from the garden.

In the Abrahamic religions’ view, human history is about trying to reconnect with the will of the Creator so that life can be lived in line with the Creator’s laws. Each Abrahamic religion has different views on what happens at the end of life. The main strands in both Christianity and Islam propose that people who live according to the Creator’s will are ‘saved’ and have eternal life. Judaism is not clear on this issue. But whatever the details, all three traditions believe that the purpose of life is for humans to strive to get back to a perfect relationship with the Creator. At the end of time, the universe that we see will be replaced by something perfect.

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**Terms:**

- **yoga** – a spiritual discipline including breath control, simple meditation, and specific body postures
- **meditation** – the act of stilling the mind as a spiritual exercise
- **free will** – the ability to decide what to do without any outside influence
The Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – all started in the Near East. They are called Abrahamic because they all regard Abraham as an important founder. The oldest of the three is Judaism, which started about 2 000 BCE; then Christianity, which started about 30 CE; then Islam, which started about 600 CE.

Activity 3.18 Compare different views

Copy this table into your workbook. Complete columns 2 and 3 by answering the questions in column 1 about each tradition’s ‘theory’ of creation. You will fill in column 4 (Taoist view) in the next activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Hindu view</th>
<th>Abrahamic view</th>
<th>Taoist view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who or what is the Creator?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the place of human beings in creation?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the purpose of life or what makes life meaningful?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Add one relevant question of your own here.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Taoist view

Not all religions have complicated theories of creation. This is probably the shortest account of creation in all religions.

The Tao produces the One. The One produces the Two. The Two produces the Three. And the Three produces the ten thousand things.

Tao-te-Ching

As far as the Chinese were concerned “ten thousand things” was enough. If anything could produce ten thousand things, then it could produce everything. But what is the mysterious ‘Three’ that produces the ten thousand things? Can you remember learning this on page 100? It is the combination of the Two. The two are the yang and the yin, the two basic forces of nature – one active, one passive; one representing light, the other dark; one positive, one negative; one male, one female. When they combine you get the third. Sometimes the third is something new that comes from the Two, like a child comes from its parents. But sometimes the third is simply the combination of the Two in the same way that a year is a combination of the two seasons, summer and winter, with transitions between. According to Taoists, everything in the universe is a combination of the Two, yang and yin.
The *yang* and the *yin* (the Two) are present as soon as One is present, because if there is One, then there is also its opposite ‘not One’. And One and ‘not One’ are Two. The One comes from the Tao, which means ‘path’. In other words, ‘Tao’ does not stand for ‘creator’ in a Western or even a Hindu sense. It stands simply for the ‘pattern of the universe’. There is nothing about “in the beginning” and “at the end”. Unlike the Hindu or the Abrahamic religions’ account, the Taoist account simply talks about how things get made and does not speculate as to when it started, whether there was a time before it, or whether it will ever stop.

As in Hinduism, there is nothing special about humans in the Taoist view. We are a by-product of the ongoing interaction of *yang* and *yin*. And we can choose to live in harmony with it, or fight it. If we choose the former, we will discover that life is its own reward. If we choose the latter, we will constantly be frustrated by the way the world limits our ability to have what we want.

### Activity 3.19 Talk and write about Taoism

1. Work in pairs. Take turns to explain how, with just two forces (*yang* and *yin*), Taoists try to explain the process of the universe and everything in it.
2. Work on your own to complete column 4 of the table in the previous activity.

### Informal peer assessment

Swap tables with a partner. Then use this checklist and the national seven-point assessment scale on page iv to assess your partner’s work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Was my partner able to summarise the three different views about creation by:</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saying in each case who or what the Creator is?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying the place of human beings in creation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explaining what the purpose of life is OR saying what makes life meaningful?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did my partner add (and answer) one relevant question of their own?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cosmology: how science approaches ‘creation’

Scientists refer to the attempt to understand the evolution of the universe as ‘cosmology’. Currently, the most popular scientific theory of the universe is the so-called ‘Big Bang’ theory. According to this theory, we don’t know what existed before the Big Bang. But there was an enormous explosion and, within seconds, the universe had appeared and filled out to an enormous size. This happened about 13.7 billion years ago. Notice that there is no mention of a ‘creator’ in this view. Notice also that the current universe has a beginning (a massive explosion) and a size (it is huge but it has an edge or limit).

Small temperature differences in the initial explosion led to varying *densities* throughout the universe. These eventually formed into clusters of matter and
Think about this

In Natural Sciences you may have learned about the scientific estimates of how long there has been life on Earth, and how long there have been human forms of life. To grasp the great depth of time, try to imagine the 4.5 billion years of the Earth's existence as a 24-hour day. Humans (or anatomically modern humans as we are known) have only been around for the last 200,000 years, which is like the last few seconds before midnight!

density – mass; compactness
condense – to make denser or more concentrated
asteroid – a chunk of rock floating in space that circles the Sun
comet – a mixture of explosive substances which turns to gas as it nears the Sun
expand – to enlarge; get bigger
equilibrium – perfect balance
contract – to decrease in size; get smaller

cataclysm – a catastrophe; a disaster

energy. In the modern scientific view, matter and energy are the same thing. Huge spaces separated these clusters.

The clusters continued to condense in a lumpy way and eventually formed the vast collections of stars we called galaxies. What we see as the Milky Way in our night sky is the edge of the galaxy we are in.

Some of the lumps in galaxies condensed into a combination of stars and planets. We call such groupings 'solar systems'. Our Earth is in a solar system. Scientists think that our solar system is about two-thirds of the way from the centre of our galaxy. Some of the planets, like Earth, Jupiter and Saturn, have moons. Wandering through the solar systems are other objects like asteroids and comets.

Earth formed about 4.5 billion years ago and some time after that life started. In early times, life forms were very basic. Over time they became more complex and eventually human beings evolved.
The ultimate destiny of the universe is a matter of much debate. Scientists believe that it is expanding at the moment, but they are unsure whether it will expand forever, or reach a kind of equilibrium and stop, or eventually run out of energy for expansion and begin contracting. If it continues to expand, then everything will fall into itself and the universe will disappear in a giant cataclysm. Long before that, our Sun will explode. If people are still living on Earth, they will be swallowed up by the huge fireball that the Sun will become.

Contradictions between religious and scientific accounts

There are contradictions between current scientific theories and what scientists have observed. In other words, even the most comprehensive scientific accounts do not explain everything we see. There are also obvious differences between these theories and what we see in the religious accounts of creation. And even though they do not have certainty about the current scientific accounts, most scientists would argue that the current theories of science give a better account of what we actually see when we look at the universe, than the original religious accounts.

It is not hard to find contradictions between the scientific and the religious accounts of creation. For example:

- In the scientific account, it took a lot longer for people to appear than six days (as the Abrahamic traditions claim).
- There are many more forces of nature than just two (as the Taoists claim).
- It is not clear that the universe oscillates between an active and a passive state (as the Hindus claim).

Some religious adherents have difficulty reconciling the scientific explanation of the origins of the universe and humankind with their beliefs. But others do not find it a problem. They argue that science and religion are answering different questions and using different methods and language to explain things.

🌟 Activity 3.20 Compare religious and scientific accounts of creation

Work in groups of four.

1. a. Choose any one of the world’s religions and find out its account of creation.

   b. Find out about any modern scientific theory of creation. If you don’t have the resources to do this, use the information about the Big Bang theory.

   c. Compare the religious and scientific accounts from the point of view of a believer of the religion you chose in 1.a.
2. Present a speech to the class in which you give:
   - a description of the religious creation account,
   - a summary of the modern scientific view,
   - a comparison between the two views,
   - an opinion on what a believer of that religion would say.

Informal peer assessment

Use this checklist and the national seven-point assessment scale on page iv to assess another group’s speech:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did the group:</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly summarise both viewpoints (religious and scientific)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(If relevant) highlight any similarities between the accounts?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify and explain differences between the accounts?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give an opinion on what a believer’s response would be?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**RELIGION AND THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION**

By the 19th century, most Christians probably accepted the heliocentric view of the universe. In other words, science and religion were at peace, at least in the Christian world. But that did not prevent scientists from continuing to ask questions that could create problems for believers. And one of the most important questions was about how life forms come to be the way they are.

**Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution**

Charles Darwin (1809—1882) was born into a large, wealthy family in England. As a youngster, he was a very sensitive person who loved nature. His father wanted him to be a doctor, but Charles could not stand the sight of blood. So his father suggested he should study theology at Cambridge University. However, he did not last long as a theology student, as he did not like the extent to which theology was about dogmas.

In 1831, when he was 22 years old, he was given the opportunity to take part in a scientific expedition on the **HMS Beagle**, which was sailing around the world. The voyage lasted until 1836, and during that time Darwin collected many natural specimens and fossils. As with many great scientific advances, the theory of evolution started with this kind of painstaking gathering of data.

Darwin was a very organised and disciplined observer of nature; for example, he spent eight years studying the **barnacles** he had collected when he returned from the voyage. In this process, he gradually came to the conclusion that his observations could only be explained if one assumed that **species** became modified over time - in other words, all living beings change. This contradicted the scriptural account. The follow-up question – how does change happen? –
created an even bigger problem. It took Darwin 14 years before he felt prepared to answer the question of how species change in his book, *On the Origin of Species* (1859).

Darwin's theory of evolution consists of four ideas:

- Species contain a great variety of minor differences.
- Both the world (natural environment) and species change over time.
- In the fight for survival, better-adapted variations will be favoured while those that are not ‘fit’ will struggle to survive.
- In this way, a species may gradually change its form and become more complex – by developing along a path of successful variations.

Think about this

The theory of evolution asserts that humans have evolved from a common primate ancestor with apes (which evolved in another direction). The theory proposes that all life evolved from primitive forms and continues to adapt and evolve. While evolution does not directly refute religious ideas about creation, it is clear that it offers no explanation of creation as part of a divine plan.

You will have come across this representation of human development before. It is a way of showing change and adaptation over time. But how much time is involved? This is important to remember first. Next, how well do you think it explains human origins?

Activity 3.21 Find out about the theory of natural selection

1. Do research to find out about the theory of natural selection. Report your findings to the class.

2. Work in groups. Discuss what you think the term “survival of the fittest” means. How would you explain this term to help someone understand how natural selection works?

The first battle with the church

From the start, Darwin's work was very controversial. The popular account of the first great battle between a scientist (Thomas Huxley) and a theologian (Samuel Wilberforce, the Bishop of Oxford) over Darwin’s theory is based on a debate which took place at Oxford in 1860. Emotions ran so high that a woman is said to have fainted!

"I am not ashamed to have a monkey as my ancestor; but I would be ashamed to be connected to a man who used his great gifts to obscure the truth!"  
Huxley to Wilberforce
But the popular account of the battle is not what actually happened. According to more sober accounts, Wilberforce began his speech by criticising Darwin on purely scientific grounds. He had three objections to Darwin’s ideas:

- first, that there was no evidence in human history of the development of a new species;
- second, that there was no evidence of one species having developed from another; and
- third, that attempts to create a new species by cross-breeding tend to be unsuccessful because the hybrids cannot breed.

Wilberforce’s main point was that the facts (as far as were known at the time) did not seem to support Darwin’s theory. These facts are important because the popular impression may be that the church was irrational in its attack on Darwin. While it is true that Wilberforce went on to ridicule Darwin’s ideas, even Darwin recognised the scientific force of Wilberforce’s critique – he had correctly identified the parts of Darwin’s theory for which the evidence was weak.

The broader relationship between the theory of evolution and the church

It is helpful to examine the religious context into which Darwin launched his ideas. Among the most influential religious works in England at the time were those of William Paley, who had died in 1805. Paley is responsible for the famous analogy of a watch and creation.
Now think about nature – consider, for example, the eye. It is far more complex than a watch. It is almost miraculous in the way in which its parts have been put together to enable people and animals to see. If it is not logical to suppose that a watch could have happened by chance, then how less logical is it to suppose that an eye could have happened by chance? It may therefore be just as reasonable to posit that a superior intelligence (God) created the eye as to suppose that it happened by chance.

One of the reasons Darwin’s ideas had such an impact on the church is that they appeared to provide an alternative explanation – which did not need the idea of an intelligent designer – for how complex natural phenomena had come to be. Natural selection is a mechanism that can lead to things changing their form over time. We do not need to suppose that an intelligent designer made them.

Activity 3.22 Write about the theory of evolution vs a ‘god’

Read this conversation between two friends. Then write at least two paragraphs in which you summarise the strengths and the weaknesses of both points of view.

Charles Darwin proved that the world today could have developed all by itself. You don’t need a god to explain how we came into existence.

Actually, that’s not true. There are problems with the theory of evolution. There are aspects of creation that are just so complex that they couldn’t have happened by chance.

That’s true, but if you look at the history of the theory of evolution you’ll see that it’s slowly becoming more complete as scientists fill in all the pieces. The more they do that, the less space there is for your view – that it’s a god that created the bits that science can’t explain.

Even scientists admit that they’ll never be able to explain everything. So there’s always a place for a god.
The broader relationship between the theory of evolution and religion

The world’s religions have a variety of responses to the theory of evolution. This section highlights some strands in the responses of some of the world’s main religions.

**Buddhism**

Many Buddhists argue that the theory of evolution and Buddhism are in agreement. This is because of three important characteristics of Buddhism:

- First, it does not have an account of creation (as the Abrahamic religions do). Therefore, Buddhists do not mind what scientists say about how the universe and people came into being.

- Second, Buddhists believe that all life involves constant transformation and evolution. Buddhists therefore believed in evolution long before Western scientists did.

- And finally, Buddhists believe in the continuity of all living beings. They therefore have no problem with the idea that human beings may have evolved from more primitive, primate forms.

**Hinduism**

Hindus have no problem with evolution because they believe that the universe is based on evolution. However, Hindus believe that they have a more advanced theory of evolution than the scientific theory, which is limited because it only sees as far as the physical. Hindus believe that Hinduism provides a more comprehensive and ‘truer’ view of evolution because it includes the spiritual. And whereas scientists see evolution as a process that happens by chance, Hindus believe that you have control over both your spiritual and physical evolution. If you live a good life, you will gradually evolve through many rebirths until you are physically and spiritually advanced. Ultimately, you will achieve liberation from the physical and become one with God.

**Grades 10 and 11 revision**

Hinduism teaches that the human soul (atman) is reborn many times in a different body. If someone has performed good actions, they will be reborn in a better life. If they have performed bad actions, they will be reborn in a lower form of life. This teaching is called reincarnation (samsara).

The Abrahamic religions are divided on the issue of evolution. On the one hand, there are strands within all of them that argue that there is no contradiction between what they believe and evolution. On the other hand, there are strands that reject evolution completely.
Judaism

The great Jewish rabbi of the Middle Ages, Maimonides, argued that biblical texts should be seen as symbolic and not merely literal. He also argued that contradictions between proven science and Judaism could only happen by misinterpreting the biblical texts, in other words, taking them too literally. There are two strands of thought within Judaism:

- A strand that sees no contradiction between Judaism and evolution. In this strand, *Genesis* is treated as a symbolic account of creation and interpreted in the light of evolution. God is still the creator, but evolution uncovers some of the laws that govern the creation.

- Orthodox Jews (see page 22) reject evolution, as they believe it contradicts the literal word of the scriptures. The Orthodox Jewish rejection of evolution is similar to the conservative or fundamentalist Christians' rejection of it.

Islam

Islam also contains strands that range from rejection to acceptance of the theory of evolution:

- One strand completely rejects the theory on the grounds that it contradicts the scriptures, which should be read literally.

- Another strand accepts parts of the theory, as long as it is understood that the theory is limited and that Islam completes the picture. In other words, evolution tells us how creation works, but not why we have creation or who created the laws of the universe. These believers interpret the scriptures less literally.

Christianity

There are three strands of thought in Christianity:

- Like Orthodox Jews, conservative or fundamentalist Christians interpret the Bible quite literally. They reject the ideas that the world might have come into existence over billions of years, and that humans might have evolved from ape-like forms. They believe that there was a single great flood and that humanity had to restart after the flood, whereas scientists believe there may have been localised floods but no great flood. This brings them into conflict with scientists.

- Many Christians resolve the conflict by suggesting that the Bible should be interpreted symbolically and not literally. They say there is no conflict between science and religion as long as one sees science to be uncovering the laws that God set in motion to create the universe.

- Some Christians argue that certain aspects of creation are too complex to have happened by natural selection. Only God could have created these things. In the United States there is a strong lobby aiming to introduce this view into school curricula under the terms ‘creation science’ or ‘intelligent design’.

*Genesis* – the first book of the Bible (Old Testament), which includes the story of the creation of the world

“If one teaches that the human being is just an evolved ape, and that our consciences and sense that we have a soul and free will are just phantasm – that road leads to amorality.”

Rabbi Shafraan, a prominent Orthodox Jewish leader in the USA.
Activity 3.23 Give your views in an essay

Write a two-page essay in which you discuss and give your views on one of these topics:

- Science is about facts; religion is about values. Science is about how things happen; religion is about why things happen.
- When you understand that the scriptures are not the literal word of God, then you see that there is no contradiction between religion and science.
- If you start to question the scriptures by saying that this bit or that bit is only symbolically true, then where will it stop? Eventually you will say that all of the scriptures are only symbolic and not really true.

Informal self-assessment

Copy and complete this table. Use the national seven-point assessment scale on page iv to give yourself a mark for each activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>What do I still need help with?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.21</td>
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<td>Activity 3.22</td>
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In Grades 10 and 11 you learned about the moral teachings in different religions and how they applied to different social issues in society. In this unit you will explore the involvement of different religions in promoting religious freedom, human rights and responsibilities.

Begin the unit by considering different views on religions’ influence on people’s behaviour in society.

**Activity 3.24 Discuss religion’s influence on people’s behaviour**

Read the conversation between Tasneem and Bongani below and on page 170. Then discuss these questions in small groups.

1. Identify what you think are the strong and the weak points of each person’s argument.
2. Bongani says that the problem is not with religion but with people. He says that society would be far worse if there was no religion. Now think of the people you know.
   a. Is it true that people need religion to help them behave decently? Do you know good people who have no religion?
   b. Is Bongani saying that people can only be good if they have religion? Or is he saying that religion helps people to be good?
3. Tasneem says that the problem is religion itself, not just the people. She gives reasons, using three religions to illustrate her point.
   a. Re-read the three examples Tasneem gives. Do you think she is giving fair illustrations or is she misrepresenting the religions?
   b. Tasneem suggests that religious people believe their religion is absolute and this causes them to be intolerant. Do you agree or disagree with her?

TASNEEM: I sometimes think religion should be banned. It causes social division and arguments. So much conflict involves religion. Religion has done more harm than good.

BONGANI: Without religion, society would be worse. Throughout history religion has given us guidance on how to treat one another decently. The problem is not religion; it’s people who pervert the original teachings.

TASNEEM: Disgraceful things are done in the name of religion. Christian history is a history of blood: the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, and the political and religious wars that followed the Protestant Reformation. Thousands of people had to flee Europe to escape religious persecution.
The problem is that Christians believe you have to be a Christian. In India, millions of people are discriminated against as ‘untouchable’ because of the Hindu religion. In many parts of the Muslim world, girls are not allowed to be educated. The problem isn’t only with people. It is with religious teachings too.

BONGANI: Yes, the world’s religions have sometimes gone off track, but I still say religion’s not the problem. Do you think Jesus would have approved of the way Christians have sometimes behaved? Of course not! If you look objectively at history, you will see that Islam actually reformed and improved the lives and status of women. Gandhi, a Hindu, spoke out against discrimination against untouchables. As I say, the problem isn’t with religious teachings – it’s with people.

The Crusades were the holy wars fought by the Christians against the Muslims in the 11th, 12th, 13th and 17th centuries in the Holy Land. (See also page 178.)

The Spanish Inquisition was a law court which came into being in Spain in 1478. It was linked with a branch of the Catholic Church called ‘The Holy Office of the Inquisition against Heretical Depravity’. The purpose of the Holy Office was to try to keep Catholic beliefs and practices pure by prosecuting people who did not follow an orthodox path. The court was established partly to ensure that converts to Catholicism from Judaism and Islam were genuine, and not still practising their true religion behind the scenes. If they were found doing so, they were tried by the Spanish Inquisition. An interesting aspect of the Inquisition was ‘trial by fire’ – the idea that, if you were innocent, you could be put through a deadly experience (such as being burned at the stake) and God would save you. If you died, that was proof that you were guilty.
Informal peer assessment

Use the checklist to assess your Activity 3.24 discussion. Did your group:

- compare and contrast the two arguments?
- give opinions on whether people need religion to help them behave decently?
- give opinions on Tasneem’s argument that much conflict involves religion?

Did you think about these points in your discussion?

- Does our sense of human rights come from the world’s religions, even among non-religious people?
- Or is something else involved in creating a sense of human rights, in other words, would people be kind and unselfish even if there had never been any religion? If so, what could that ‘something else’ be?

WHERE DO NOTIONS OF ‘HUMAN RIGHTS’ COME FROM?

In 1948, the United Nations unanimously adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Here are some keys articles in that declaration.

**Article 1**: 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.

**Article 2**: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, or political opinion.

**Article 3**: Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person.

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

**Article 5**: No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

**Article 7**: All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.

**Article 9**: No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

**Article 18**: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to change their religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest their religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.
inaugurable = cannot be taken away
non-theistic = an approach that does not reject God’s existence, but simply ignores it
atheist = someone who does not believe that God exists
impose = to make something happen usually by force

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness ... that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it.”

From the United States Declaration of Independence

Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

About 150 years earlier, the founders of the United States declared independence from Great Britain, using similar words (see box on the left).

The Universal Declaration is quite strongly influenced by a western view. At the heart of this view is a focus on the individual. That is why it used the phrase, “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. This phrase is very similar to one in the United States Declaration of Independence, which was the first document to put these ideas into words. In that document the phrase is “all men are created equal (and) they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights”.

The main differences between Article 18 and the Declaration of Independence are that there is no reference to gender or a ‘creator’ in the former. This is because people were more sensitive to gender discrimination by the time the Universal Declaration was being written, and because they realised that the concept of religious freedom should include non-theistic religions (including atheists) and should therefore not mention a ‘creator’.

What is meant by religious freedom?

Arvind Sharma, a professor of comparative religion, made this comment in 2000 about difficulties with the concept of ‘religious freedom’ in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration:

“The concept of religious freedom articulated in article 18 presupposes a certain concept of religion itself, a concept associated with Western religion and culture. A different concept of religion, associated with Eastern and especially Hindu religion and culture, leads to a different concept of religious freedom. Unless human rights discourse is able to harmonize these two concepts of religious freedom, ironically, the clash of the two concepts might ultimately result in the abridgement of religious freedom.”

Sharma is saying that the Universal Declaration is based on a Western concept of ‘religion’ and ideas of religious freedom, and that this is a mistake. It is culturally too narrow. At the heart of the view in the Universal Declaration is a focus on the individual and his/her right to choose freely one’s religion or non-religion.

For Hinduism on the other hand, religious freedom means the freedom not to be forced to have only one religion. Thus Sharma is saying that it is a bad thing to impose the Western view of religious freedom as it could lead to less religious freedom in the world, not more.
Activity 3.25 Discuss an objection to the Universal Declaration

The Universal Declaration is based on the idea that every person should feel free to choose their way of life and to hold any view they want to, as long as in doing so they do not harm other people. Work in groups to discuss these questions:

- Why do you think Professor Sharma, who is a Hindu, objects to this view?
- Why does he say that if you try to enforce this view too strictly, you will cause situations where people have less freedom than before, not more?

Make notes of your group’s ideas – you will refer to them again in a later activity.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Religious tolerance emerges in most of the world’s religions – sometimes articulated in different ways as you will discover in this section.

Western ideas of religious tolerance

As you learned in Unit 2, modern human rights evolved in Europe as a response to the conflict across Europe caused by the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Thoughtful Europeans, including many deeply religious people, concluded that society would only be peaceful if people and their leaders adopted the principle of religious tolerance. That led to the idea that every person should be free to believe what they want to and to express their views openly without having to worry about being persecuted.

This was not an overnight process. So while many people in Europe were learning to be more tolerant, others fled Europe to escape persecution. They ended up in the United States and in the then British colonies of South Africa, Canada, and Australia. Particularly in the United States, the new colonists set about establishing a society based on more religious tolerance than they had experienced in Europe. We can conclude from this that there were two forces that pushed Europeans to propose the idea of religious tolerance:

- When you are part of a persecuted minority, then you will tend to support the idea of freedom of religious choice and tolerance.
- When you experience serious religious conflict with no winner, then you will tend to support the idea of religious tolerance and freedom of choice.
Some places in Europe became more tolerant than others. For example, the Netherlands in general, and Amsterdam in particular, have been tolerant of all kinds of belief and behaviour for centuries. But in other places what developed was more like a pact between Christians of different denominations that they would tolerate each other, and be fairly tolerant of humanists – but they continued to discriminate against Jews, for example. They allowed each other to choose freely and they were quite tolerant of secularism, but in many places they continued to persecute others. It took the lessons of the two world wars before Europe became more tolerant of Jewish people. But even today, Europeans still tend to discriminate, for example, against Muslims.

**Activity 3.26 Debate freedom of speech and belief**

Work as a class to debate this topic: ‘It is only when there is a balance in society between different denominations and ideologies that you will get real freedom of speech and belief. This means that minorities will always be under threat in a society.’

We have seen from Europe’s history that the foundation of the Western idea of human rights was laid by the people trying to create peaceful societies in conflict-ridden and discriminatory Europe.

The conclusion the West reached was: we need to focus on the individual and give them the freedom to choose their belief, express their ideas, and form groups of believers without fear of discrimination, as long as they do this without impinging on the freedom and rights of others.
The problem is: no person is unconnected and truly individual. Every person's life is interconnected with the lives of others. It therefore becomes tricky giving people free choices when, quite often, the choices interconnected people make do harm to others – perhaps not physically, but certainly emotionally.

**Eastern ideas of religious tolerance**

In Japan, 95 per cent of people say they are Shinto, and 76 per cent say they are Buddhists, which means many people claim to be both at the same time. In South Africa a similar situation prevails where many African people are both Christian but also follow African traditional religious practices.

**Grades 10 and 11 revision**

Shintoism is the indigenous religion of Japan. It has roots in the same religious beliefs and practices found in all early religions. In other words, there is a strong sense that nature is full of spiritual beings. In Shinto they are called Kami and there are so many that they are not organised into a systematic belief system. For example, there is no supreme being in Shinto although Amaterasu, the sun goddess, is probably the most widely worshipped deity. People relate to the spirits through ritual worship and prayer. Shinto is an important part of the religious practice of ordinary Japanese people. People still visit Shinto shrines as a way to express their appreciation for the richness and beauty of natural life.

But this can’t be. A person can have only one religion at a time.

Why? I think you can have as many as you like.

I agree. Why can’t you be a Christian and a Hindu at the same time? Surely it would be a better example of religious tolerance if Christians taught people all the good things you can find in Christianity, without then causing social harm and distress by insisting that people convert and believe only one thing?
This is what Professor Sharma (on page 172) means when he says that Eastern ideas of religious freedom and tolerance are different from those in the West. In this view of religious tolerance and freedom, tolerance means not trying to force people to have only one religion.

Why does Sharma say that adopting the Western view would cause less freedom instead of more? The reason is that people in India have been so put off by how Christians approach conversion that they have passed laws to stop it. Christians can still preach, but people are not allowed to convert in a Christian way. The West gets upset because it interprets the law to mean ‘forcing people not to convert’. And the East gets upset because it really believes its approach is more tolerant and involves less coercion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Christians</th>
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<tr>
<td>We need religious tolerance to have peace.</td>
<td>We need religious tolerance to have peace.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tolerance means not forcing people to convert.</td>
<td>Tolerance means allowing people to convert.</td>
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“We believe we are actually here to serve human rights, but there is a slight difference in the definition of those rights. We believe in rights according to Islam, and if anybody is trying to impose their definition of human rights on us, they will be badly mistaken because this world is not a world of one culture or one religion.”

(The Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, under the Taliban)

These are some of the challenging questions that face us:

- How do we establish a culture of tolerance and an understanding of universal human rights, and also recognise and respect that cultures differ? One person’s understanding of ‘rights’ is not necessarily the same as another’s.

- Can we agree on where to draw the line? At what point does one say, “I’m sorry, but I don’t care if that’s your culture. I know that I should respect your culture, but on this point I am in such serious disagreement with you, that I will fight to stop you from doing what you are doing.”?

🌟 Activity 3.27 Look again at objections to the Universal Declaration

Re-read Activity 3.25 and look at the notes you made of your group discussion. Now work in groups to answer the two questions again, based on what you have learned since then. In what ways have your answers changed or stayed the same?
Informal peer and self-assessment

Did your group mention these points in the discussion?

- It is not always easy for people to be free to choose and cause no divisions or harm to others, because we are interconnected and in choosing we may hurt others and do very intolerant things.

- The Eastern idea of religious tolerance means not trying to force people to have only one religion.

If you do not understand these points, ask your teacher to revise the information on pages 171 to 176 with you.

Activity 3.28 Debate human rights

Work in groups. Choose one of these statements to debate:

- The idea of human rights contained in the South African Constitution is basically a western idea. As such, it cannot serve the basis for agreement as to what constitutes human rights.

- Because the modern idea of human rights is basically Western and not religious, it is necessary to create a new foundation for human rights in which each religion identifies its foundation for human rights – and then to reach new agreement on what human rights are.

THE RELIGIOUS BASIS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, TOLERANCE, AND RESPECT

When people believe something very strongly, it is hard to get them to agree to a set of rules and principles that are not based on their personal beliefs. The Western approach to human rights, religious freedom, and tolerance was quite strongly driven by public sentiments that arose out of experiences of religious conflict and persecution. To reduce the effect of religious beliefs on social interactions, Western philosophers like John Locke (1632—1704) developed a humanist basis for human rights, which does not include religion. (Refer back to pages 143 and 144 for information on the origins of humanism.)

Many religious people are comfortable with the humanist approach to human rights, where freedom of conscience and belief is a dominant value without reference to any religion. But only up to a point! Laws that are supposed to protect religious freedom and prevent conflict can become part of the problem.

In the early 2000s there was an uproar in France when young Muslim girls tried to attend schools wearing traditional Muslim dress. The French say you are free to practise your religion in religious or private buildings, but not on government property. Yet this very law is forcing traditional Muslims to ‘sin’ against their religion, in France.
In our multi-cultural and multi-religious societies of today, we clearly need to create space for religious tolerance and freedom. If you look at the history of religion you will find that most of the world's religions have gone through periods of tolerance and intolerance.

**Religious tolerance in Islam**

Within the first century of its existence (the 7th to 8th centuries CE), Islam spread into India, across North Africa and into Spain. For many centuries, it was dominant across the Middle East and in the southern part of eastern Europe. In that time Islam was a tolerant religion – both Christians and Jews were able to practise their religions fairly freely.

Where conflict between Islam and Christianity occurred, for example, was on the borders between Spain and France when the military advance of the Muslims was stopped by an equally powerful French empire. It was made much worse by the Crusades in the Middle Ages – a series of popes, backed by political leaders throughout Europe, encouraged Christians to form armies whose aim was to conquer Jerusalem and ‘take back the Holy Land’ for Christianity. (See page 170 for more information about the Crusades.)

The history of the Crusades is not impressive. Crusaders did not behave in a very Christian way as they made their way towards Jerusalem, nor were their motives entirely inspired by religious zeal.
The basis for Islam’s tolerance was — and still is — Muslim scriptures. Like strong believers in all religions, Muslims today have a choice. They can try to impose their religion on everyone, or they can find a basis in the teachings of their religion for living in harmony with everyone, while at the same time expressing their views and trying to win converts. Here is what some modern, thoughtful Muslims say:

- All are created equal by Allah. We are therefore all part of the same family, no matter what we believe, and should treat one another as brothers and sisters.
- There must be equality before the law, and no discrimination on the basis of race, belief, or nationality.
- Islamic tolerance extends to all sincere believers in all religions. As long as people are truthful, patient, humble, and practise chastity, charity, kindness and justice, Allah will be forgiving and rewarding.
- Islam rejects conversion by force or by compulsion.
- When there are differences, people should interact on a basis of mutual respect and goodwill.
- If people react to Islam in a hostile way, do not react back with hostility. (This point is very similar to the Christian teaching of ‘turn the other cheek’.)

There are many historical examples of religious tolerance towards minorities in Islam. When Muslim scholars want to make the point that Islam contains within itself the basis for tolerance and freedom of belief, they point to these examples.

**Religious tolerance in Buddhism**

Buddhism was the first missionary religion to come out of Asia. An important part of the Buddhist ethic is to do no harm to living creatures, including humans. Therefore Buddhism has never used war to spread its message. It rather uses the power of logic to persuade people that its analysis of reality and the human condition is correct. And it uses the power of example to show people that they can live socially harmonious lives in which they are at peace with themselves.

You know that there is a big difference between what Abrahamic traditions mean by ‘conversion’ and what the Asian religions mean. In China it is perfectly possible for people to be Confucian with respect to their social relationships and understanding of family, but Buddhist with respect to their ideas about ultimate personal destiny. In Japan, many people are both Shinto and Buddhist. So it is throughout Asia — many people are influenced by more than one religion, whether Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, or Confucianist.
Buddhist social life is built around the third (right speech), fourth (right action), and fifth (right livelihood) elements of the Eightfold Path. The purpose of the Eightfold Path is to lead a person from life experienced as painful to an experience of the absence of this pain. The way to do this is to get rid of desire. What does the Buddha mean by ‘right speech’? We find the answer by remembering the purpose. The purpose is to get rid of desire, which goes with becoming completely unselfish. So ‘right speech’ means to speak in ways that do not enflame your desires and that encourage you to become less selfish. Similarly, choose actions that do not enflame selfish passions, and a way to make a living that does not enflame your desires. This automatically translates into generally not lying or, for example, stealing. But it should also translate into a life lived making space for everything and everyone else, rather than trying to take their space.

Buddhists argue that tolerance and acceptance of people just as they are, is fundamental to Buddhism. You have no right to want them to be something else. It is up to them to decide if they want to change. You can tell them what you believe, and you can set an example that they may choose to follow, but that is as far as it goes.

Does Buddhism provide a basis for social activism? Buddhists have been social activists against injustice. They tend – like Gandhi (who was a Hindu) – to confront injustice with truth force, not with physical force.

The basis of religious tolerance, and therefore for creating a society in which people of different faiths can live harmoniously, is quite different in Buddhism and in Islam. But the end result would be the same: a society in which religious differences were respected rather than fought over, and in which religious people would engage each other in discussion rather than attack.

**Activity 3.29 Research a religion’s attitude to mutual tolerance**

1. Choose one religion or religious denomination. Find out about its teachings to see in what way it would support a society based on mutual respect and tolerance, rather than trying to create a society in which all people believed the same thing.

2. Present your findings in a report. Read the assessment information on the next page before you start.
Informal peer assessment

Work in groups of four. Take turns to read your report aloud to the group. Discuss these questions after each reading:

- Did the learner give a list of the sources used to find out about what created a foundation for tolerance in the religion?
- Did the learner give quotes from the religion’s leaders or from its writings to support the idea of tolerance and freedom of belief?
- Did the learner comment on whether or not there are contradictions in the attitude of that religion to tolerance and freedom of belief?
- Did the learner discuss how the people who believe in that religion or denomination actually behave?
- What could the learner do to improve the report?

Use your group’s feedback to improve your report.

The difference between teaching and reality

Every year the State Department of the United States publishes a document in which it summarises the state of religious freedom in countries around the world. The document is biased, though, as it takes a Western point of view on religion and religious freedom.

- Western point of view: Everyone should have only one religion. Religious tolerance means allowing people to convert from one religion to another.
- Asian (or Eastern) point of view: People can have more than one religion. Tolerance means allowing people to take what is best from a variety of different sources and apply them at the same time.

As long as you bear this bias in mind, the document produced by the US State Department provides a useful reality check on the difference between what religions preach and what they practise.

In this section you will look at two countries: Thailand and Sri Lanka. Both claim to be highly influenced by Buddhism. However, whereas tolerance largely exists in the one, fairly intolerant government policies are in place in the other.

Thailand

In Thailand, about 94 per cent of people say they are Buddhists. The government practises freedom of religion and the Constitution requires the government to “patronise and protect Buddhist and other religions”. The law therefore recognises freedom of religion for existing world religions.

The law does not recognise new religious movements. However, that does not matter because the government allows them to practise freely anyway. This freedom is

At the entrance to the Doi Suthep Temple in Chiang Mai, Thailand, the dragons on either side of the steps are for protection.
backed up by the population, which is tolerant of religious diversity. There are many minority religions in Thailand – Islam, Hindu, Christian, Taoist – and some people claim to have more than one religion. Generally, although the people who believe in these religions are in the minority, they do not experience discrimination. The government also gives all religions money to do charitable work.

**Sri Lanka**

In Sri Lanka the Constitution recognises Buddhism as the primary religion but endorses the right to other religions to practise freely. Buddhism is not the state religion. In practice, however, there are problems.

- Extremist Buddhists sometimes attack Christian property and the government does not do much about it.
- The attacks are partly in response to Christian missionary activity. Buddhists accuse Christians of engaging in forced conversion or conversion through bribery.
- While the government continues officially to support freedom of religion, Bills are being tabled in Parliament that would ban conversion activity.
- By 2012 there had been more than 300 attacks on Christian churches, missions, pastors, and followers. Important political and religious leaders do speak out against these attacks and there have been some arrests and prosecutions. But the majority of attacks go unpunished.
- The picture is not dire though: most people of different faiths get on quite well with one another. However, inter-religious violence is increasing in places.

Notice that Sri Lanka appears to be a good example of what Professor Sharma was talking about on page 172. Christian missionary activity has led to a very negative reaction from some Buddhists, who have become violent in response. The social disharmony caused by missionary activity is pushing the government to ban that activity.

⭐ **Activity 3.30 Discuss how you would resolve social disarray**

Work in groups to discuss what you would do if you were the government in Sri Lanka. Prepare your answer in the form of a short speech to present to the class. Make sure you include this information in your speech:

- a brief summary of the situation in Sri Lanka, including what the government is doing about it
- suggestions for what you would do to resolve the situation peacefully and fairly if you were the government.

Before you start, read the assessment information on the next page so that you know what else is expected of you.
Informal peer assessment

Use this checklist to assess another group’s speech. Then discuss your evaluation with them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did the group discuss these points?</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Christian conversion is a fundamentally different process to the way Asian religions believe you should spread your message.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The government is reacting by taking away the freedom of Christians to practise religion the way they believe they should.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The conflict between the Christian way and the Asian way is leading to social conflict.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did the group suggest a different way to respond to the Christian activity and still have social peace?

General comments:

Here is a study map to help you understand what you have covered in this section. One unit has been started for you. Copy the map into your workbook and complete it for the other units.

Unit 1 Interpreting a normative source

Hermeneutics – the interpretation of sacred texts

Questions: type of writing, when it was written, author, purpose, social context

Process:
Grammar and historical context,
Clarest meaning
Plan, purpose and context
Meanings of words
Figurative language

COMMON FEATURES OF RELIGION, RESEARCH INTO AND ACROSS RELIGIONS & TOPICAL ISSUES IN SOCIETY

Unit 2 Examining secular worldviews

Unit 3 Exploring religion and the natural sciences

Unit 4 Considering religious freedom, human rights, and responsibilities
Your final term of Grade 12 will be taken up with consolidating the work you have done this year, helping you revise and preparing for the final examinations.

**CONSOLIDATION**

During this term, your teacher will set up a consolidation and revision schedule for Religion Studies with you. Follow this carefully and you will have no problem preparing for your exam.

On your own, go back to the study maps you completed at the end of each term (pages 70, 120 and 183). These are your framework and plan of the content you need to revise for the exams. Use them to draw up your own revision timetable (see below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Learner’s Book pages</th>
<th>Teacher’s Guide pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic 1: Variety of religions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 4 hours</td>
<td>Consolidation of work: Conceptual distinctions Internal differentiations Unique features of various religions History and present dynamics of inter-religious relationships in South Africa, Africa and the world</td>
<td>3—7 8—23 24—39 41—58</td>
<td>2—8 9—15 16—23 24—31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic 3: Topical issues in society</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2 4 hours</td>
<td>Consolidation of work: Religious freedom, human rights and responsibilities Social problems in South Africa and the world Media coverage on issues with religious relevance</td>
<td>169—182 72—79 81—87</td>
<td>125—133 45—49 50—54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic 4: Research into and across religions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3 4 hours</td>
<td>Consolidation of work: Religion in areas of recent conflict in South Africa and the world Religion and the natural sciences</td>
<td>60—69 149—168</td>
<td>33—39 113—124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic 2: Common features of religion as a generic and unique phenomenon</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4 4 hours</td>
<td>Consolidation of work: Normative sources in different religions The role of teachings in a variety of religions Interpreting normative sources The central teachings of one religion</td>
<td>112—119 88—98 122—137 99—111</td>
<td>72—77 55—61 98—104 62—71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examinations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REVISION

Your teacher will give you further guidelines on revising and preparing for exams. You may also find the following top tips for learners helpful (and a little surprising). Try them.

**TOP 10 TIPS FOR REVISION**

**1 Tell everyone**

Make a detailed revision timetable on a large piece of paper (A3 at least) and post it up where everyone in your household can see it. That way, everyone knows what you are meant to be studying and when. Letting other people know your plans actually lightens the load because then it’s not just up to you to motivate yourself. The more people who know, the more committed you will feel to this undertaking which now involves all of you.

**2 Bright and early**

You’ve heard this before, but learning really is best done early in the day when you are fresh. Start first thing and you can get the bulk of your revision done early, so you don’t spend the rest of the day feeling crushed under the weight of the work you still have to do.

**3 Ask yourself questions**

Facts are flat, passive things that pile up inside your head, without giving off any signs of life. Awaken them through the power of questions. Don’t just write notes like ‘The main divisions in schools of thought in Islam are Sunni (85%) and Shi’a (15%)’; instead, write ‘What are the main divisions in schools of thought in Islam?’ in one column, and write ‘Sunni (85%) and Shi’a (15%)’ in the opposite column. Cover up the answer column when you revise and each time you get it right, you’ll feel like you are making progress.

**4 Unplug**

Turn off your cellphone and don’t be tempted to go browsing on the internet if you are lucky enough to have access on a computer. Stay focused on the work before you and don’t be distracted by all the electronic devices that usually entertain you.

**5 Make up mnemonics**

Mnemonics are a way of taking the first letter of something to be learned and making a quirky sentence or rhyme out of it because this is easier to remember. Two common mnemonics are: My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nine Pizzas as a way of remembering the nine planets in order of distance from the Sun (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto); and Keep Calm At All Sporting Events as a way of remembering Bloom’s Taxonomy (Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation). Try making up some of your own for Religion Studies.

**6 Get it together**

Ask classmates over for a revision session. With things like sequences involving events and dates, names and vocabulary, it’s always better if someone else is testing you, rather than you testing yourself (and skipping to the answers!).

**7 Go bananas**

Top tennis players know that bananas are a potassium-rich performance-enhancer that raise your energy levels. So don’t reach for the coffee when you need a boost, but rather eat a banana.

**8 Act out**

Make your studies come alive by re-enacting them at home. Take the discussion between a Hindu and a Christian about fundamental beliefs (pages 36—40). Get together with one or two classmates, share out the parts – one person can play the Christian, one person can be the Hindu. You may even decide to add another view, say
an African Traditional Religion perspective, or a Muslim perspective. Work your way through the questions and arguments. You will remember better and make so much more sense by taking a part and acting it out with others than by memorising information on your own.

9 Make travel time work for you
Travelling from home to school in a taxi, bus or train is pretty much dead time. Make those travel minutes and multiple stops work for you by using revision cards. Try revising the section of work on the card between one stop and the next. Setting yourself a mini-target, like, ‘By the next stop, I’ll have covered the main branches of Buddhism’, can be much more motivating than just memorising information on a card.

10 Treat yourself to television
No, this does not mean you can watch TV while revising. However, you can record a favourite programme and watch it as a reward when you’ve completed a big chunk of revision.

EXAMINATION PRACTICE
By now you will have written your trial exam in Religion Studies and know how ready you are for the final exam.

For additional practice, we have included another full practice trial examination (consisting of two papers) on the following pages. Use this to understand how the final exam is structured, what kinds of questions are asked, what kind of marks are allocated and how much time is allowed. Try to write the exam under exam conditions. Then ask your teacher for the exam marking memorandum to check your answers and assess how you have done. By honestly assessing how you did, you will know how much work you still have to do for the final exam.
Revision and examination practice

TRIAL EXAMINATION PAPER 1
Religion Studies

Grade 12
Exemplar Examination Paper
Paper 1: 150 marks
Time: 2 hours

This paper consists of 6 pages

Instructions and information
1. This question paper consists of TWO sections: SECTION A and SECTION B.
2. SECTION A is compulsory (that is, you must answer ALL the questions).
3. SECTION B consists of THREE questions of which TWO must be answered.
4. Read ALL the questions carefully before making your choice.
5. Number the answers correctly according to the numbering system used in this question paper.
6. Write neatly and clearly.
7. Note the mark allocations and use them as a guide to how much to write for each question.
SECTION A

Answer all the questions in this section.

QUESTION 1 (COMPULSORY)

1.1 Choose an item from COLUMN B that matches a word/description in COLUMN A. Write only the letter (A – E) next to the question number (1.1.1 –1.1.5) in the ANSWER BOOK, for example 1.1.6 F.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLUMN A</th>
<th>COLUMN B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1 Pali Canon</td>
<td>A Judaism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2 Gospel of John</td>
<td>B Hinduism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3 Qur’an</td>
<td>C Buddhism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.4 Bhagavad Gita</td>
<td>D Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.5 Talmud</td>
<td>E Islam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5 x 2)(10)

1.2 Indicate whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE. Choose the answer and write only ‘true’ or ‘false’ next to the question number (1.1.2 – 1.2.5) in the ANSWER BOOK.

1.2.1 Modimo is the word for God in Baha’i. (2)
1.2.2 An imam is a religious leader in Islam. (2)
1.2.3 Ahimsa is the principle of non-violence in Hinduism. (2)
1.2.4 Dharma means ‘to follow’ the Tao. (2)
1.2.5 Christianity has one sacred text – the New Testament. (2)

1.3

1.3.1 In TWO SENTENCES explain what is meant by ‘belief’ in the religious context. (3)
1.3.2 Describe ONE core belief in Judaism? (3)
1.3.3 Name FOUR important beliefs of followers of Islam. (4)
1.4

1.4.1 What is the difference between a descriptive statement and a normative source? (4)

1.4.2 Identify TWO normative sources, each from a different religion. (2)

1.4.3 Explain the relationship between an oral tradition and normative sources. (4)

1.5

1.5.1 Name the TWO major divisions in Buddhism. (2)

1.5.2 Why are there two different schools in Islam? (5)

1.5.3 Name three divisions in Judaism. (3)

TOTAL SECTION A 50 marks
SECTION B
Answer any TWO of the three questions in this section.

QUESTION 2

2.1 Read the text below and answer the questions that follow.

Modern-day fundamentalists are people who reject alternative interpretations of reality by appealing to some higher authority, whether real or assumed. They interpret most things in terms of ‘sacred’ writing or an interpretation of that ‘sacred’ writing, or in terms of a ‘basic assumption’ that overrules all else.


2.1.1 Describe two different approaches to the interpretation of religious texts with reference to any religion you have studied. (10)

2.1.2 Explain what is meant by the word ‘metaphor’ and its significance in religious writing. (5)

2.1.3 Comment on the view presented by Jarvis about ‘modern-day fundamentalists’ with reference to your study of different religions. (10)

2.2

2.2.1 Summarise the hermeneutical principles that you have studied. (12)

2.2.2 The verses below from the Christian scriptures are frequently quoted to justify the subordination of women in the home and the church community, and even to rationalise domestic violence. Explain how you would apply the hermeneutical principles summarised above to challenge this interpretation of the text. (13)

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Saviour of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

(Revised Standard Version, Ephesians 5: 22—24)
QUESTION 3

3.1 Read the following quotation from Ramon Pannikar, a well-known scholar of world religions, and answer BOTH the questions that follow:

'Religions may be **incommensurable** with each other despite some possible common traits. Each religion is unique with the uniqueness of every real being ... This very incommensurability, like that of the radius with the circumference, does not preclude the fact that each religion may be a dimension of the other... Each one represents the whole of the human experience in a concrete way.'

(Ramon Pannikar, *The Jordan, the Tiber and the Ganges*, page 114)

*incommensurable* – impossible to compare

3.1.1 Pannikar concedes that there are ‘some common traits’ among different religions. Describe FIVE such common traits and name the religions in which they are present. (10)

3.1.2 ‘Each one represents the whole of the human experience in a concrete way.’ What is your opinion of this statement? Give reasons. (5)

3.2 Choose ONE religion or worldview you have studied and discuss its uniqueness with reference to each of the following aspects: (20)

3.2.1 The nature of divinity
3.2.2 The nature of the world
3.2.3 The place and responsibility of humanity in the world
3.2.4 The origin and the role of evil
3.2.5 Life after death

3.3 Answer ALL the following questions.

3.3.1 Define what is meant by religious identity. (5)

3.3.2 Describe the factors shaping the religious identity of people. (5)

3.3.3 In your view, is a person’s religious identity fixed and static, or does it change and evolve? (5)

[50]
QUESTION 4

Call for calm in film ‘fury’ – ‘Respect all religions’

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 13 2012: Several Muslim and Christian religious figures have called for rational reaction against the movie defaming Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), reports Al-Watan Arabic daily.

The religious figures stressed that people should avoid irrational reaction, so as to send a civilised message of religious harmony.

The movie was produced in commemoration of the 9/11 attack. American pastor Terry Jones burnt a copy of the Holy Qur’an last year to mark the 9/11 attack.

Reverend Emmanuel Ghareeb of the Anglican Church in Kuwait has condemned the acts disgracing religious symbols. He required all religious symbols must be respected and noted those behind such activities dishonour Christianity, as the religion calls for respect for other religions.

Muslim cleric Dr Khalid Shuja’ Al-Otaibi said many people throughout history have tried to disgrace Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He added respect and reverence of the Prophet (PBUH) must be instilled in people by telling them about his virtues. He is sad many Muslim youths do not know the status of their Prophet (PBUH), which Almighty God even explains in the Holy Qur’an. He is of the view that shameful events of this nature must be an opportunity for non-Muslims to know about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and by the grace of God, embrace Islam.

Meanwhile, Acting Pope of Egypt’s Coptic Church Pope Bakhomious strongly condemned the movie saying the act dishonours Islam with the aim of stirring conflict among people in the same nation. He reiterated the Coptic Orthodox respects Islam and Muslims.

For his part, Secretary General of the Salafist Movement Bader Al-Shihab said every reaction to events that dishonor religious figures must be rational, stressing events of this nature are generally backed by organizations and not individuals.


4.1 Briefly sum up the background to this conflict. (5)

4.2 Evaluate the different roles that religious communities played in this controversy. Comment on the religious and ethical values underpinning their responses. (15)

4.3

4.3.1 Discuss the role of the media in the subsequent coverage of the conflict. (5)

4.3.2 If you were a religious reporter, what approach would you adopt to diffuse the tension? (5)

4.4 Discuss the role of different organisations in promoting religious relations in the world. (20)

TOTAL SECTION B 50 marks
TRIAL EXAMINATION PAPER 2
Religion Studies

Grade 12
Exemplar Examination Paper
Paper 2: 150 marks
Time: 2 hours

This paper consists of 6 pages

Instructions and information
1. Answer any THREE questions.
2. Read ALL the questions carefully.
3. Number the answers correctly according to the numbering system used in this question paper.
4. Write neatly and legibly.

Total marks 150 (3 x 50)
QUESTION 1

15. Freedom of religion, belief and opinion

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion.

2. Religious observances may be conducted at state or state-aided institutions, provided that
   a. those observances follow rules made by the appropriate public authorities;
   b. they are conducted on an equitable basis; and
   c. attendance at them is free and voluntary.

(The South African Bill of Rights)

1.1 Explain the South African Constitution's position on religious freedom and how it introduced a radical shift from the approach during the apartheid era. (10)

1.2 Choose ONE religion you have studied and discuss how it is involved in promoting human rights and responsibilities, and religious freedom. (10)

1.3 Discuss a global conflict involving religion/s that you have studied and consider the following aspects:
   1.3.1 A brief description of the conflict and its causes. (10)
   1.3.2 An analysis of the role of religion in the conflict. (10)

1.4
   1.4.1 What do you understand by the terms human rights and responsibilities? (4)
   1.4.2 If you were a union leader what code of conduct would you adopt during strike action and how would you motivate this to your union followers? (6)
QUESTION 2

2.1 Consider this statement and then answer BOTH questions that follow:

‘Myths, beliefs, doctrine, dogma and ideology are all aspects of religious teachings. They all refer to the intellectual, rational or philosophical dimension of religion and to the coding and conveying of religious meaning and truth.’

2.1.1 Explain what is meant by the ‘intellectual, rational or philosophical dimension of religion’? (5)

2.1.2 How is this different to the experiential or ritual dimensions of a religion? (5)

2.2 Define each of the following and give examples from one religion you have studied: (20)

2.2.1 doctrine
2.2.2 myth
2.2.3 ethical code
2.2.4 belief

2.3

2.3.1 Explain what is meant by oral tradition. (4)

2.3.2 Describe some of the forms of oral tradition in African Traditional Religion. (6)

2.4 Explain what is meant by inspiration and its relationship to sacred books in any one religion you have studied. (10)

[50]
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2.4 Explain what is meant by inspiration and its relationship to sacred books in any one religion you have studied. (10)

[50]
QUESTION 3

Read the following extract and then answer the questions that follow.

‘Within the Christian faith we find those who have one dogmatic and narrow interpretation of the Bible, and who fail to integrate new discoveries into their fundamentalist world view. These conservative fundamentalists reject evolution and the great age of the Earth. On the other extreme we have liberal fundamentalists who place human reason above all else. Furthermore, many of these ‘liberals’ have made dogmatic assumptions and anything that does not fit into these assumptions is rejected. Within the scientific community we find a significant and vocal group of practising scientists who speak and write in a way that clearly reveals their fundamentalist attitude towards truth. They rule out all truth that cannot be subjected to the scientific method, or to scientific examination. These scientists sometimes go further and make it clear that, when investigating origins and processes within the Universe, one basic assumption must be made, namely that there is no God. The God option is not even considered and anyone who suggests that Intelligent Design could be a factor in the totality of reality is scoffed at and labelled as, “falling back on intellectually lazy and scientifically invalid beliefs”.


3.1 ‘We live in an evolutionary Universe.’
   Explain this statement with reference to the Big Bang theory and the evolution of human origins. (10)

3.2 How would the ‘conservative fundamentalists’ that Jarvis refers to explain their opposition to evolution? (10)

3.3
   3.3.1 According to Jarvis, what are some of the limitations of science in relation to religious questions? (5)

   3.3.2 Give examples of the views of at least ONE thinker in the scientific community ‘who speaks and writes in a way that clearly reveals their fundamentalist attitude towards truth’. (5)

3.4 Discuss ONE thinker in history who believed that human reason provided the answers to ultimate questions. What is/was their view on religion? (10)

3.5 In your view, can one be both a believer in God, and in evolution? Give reasons for your response, and refer to different perspectives in any ONE religion. (10)

[50]
QUESTION 4

Read this extract from an article by Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, from The Sunday Independent (11 November 2012, page 17):

Why the churches must not keep quiet

The silence of civil society, including faith communities, has been complicit in the extent to which so much has gone wrong, writes Archbishop Thabo Makgoba.

After the dawn of democracy, civil society including the faith communities have been rather muted but also somewhat confused about the extent to which they need to be critical of a government some of them helped to bring about.

Recently the faith communities, in recognition of the centenary of the ruling party, issued a document in which they underlined the key concerns of their very crucial constituency about what has become of our country and the desired future that all of us seek. The document highlights a few crucial things that I implore the ruling party to heed as they go to Mangaung:

- It is clear that there is a strong disapproval and condemnation by the faith community of scandalous examples such as the disenabling of the Dalai Lama to enter the country and the snubbing of Archbishop Tutu […]
- The faith leaders have strongly and unambiguously condemned the advancing of factionalism, corruption and the ‘American dream lifestyle’. There is a very strong call for respecting the Constitution and solidarity with the oppressed across the world.
- This initiative of faith leaders to speak directly to the ruling party in its centenary pricks the conscience of the masses to watch over those in government supportively while confronting them critically and unapologetically over their shortcomings. This way they remind them of their responsibilities to govern with integrity […]
- This is a call for action for all of us to rise up and make a difference in every corner where we can. The determination of policies to shape the future is one such moment where all must play their part.

4.1

4.1.1 List the issues which Makgoba raises in the article as cause for concern by the faith communities. (5)

4.1.2 Choose ONE of these issues and examine its negative consequences for society. (5)

4.2

4.2.1 Discuss the relationship between religion and the state under apartheid. (5)

4.2.2 In your view, what role could religions play in South Africa under democracy, to address social and political issues? (5)
4.3 Evaluate the work of one inter-religious organisation in South Africa in mobilising religious adherents around ONE social issue that you have studied. (10)

4.4 This newspaper article appeared in the Sunday press a month before the ANC leadership elections in Mangaung in 2012. What effect do you think having a religious leader writing in the media could have on the views of religious readers about the elections, and their role in politics? (10)

4.5 In general, what role do you think the media play should play in reporting on religion or religious affairs? (10) [50]

TOTAL: 3 x 50 = 150 marks
a priori – based on something already known
abridged – shortened
abyss – a huge gap or deep chasm
addled – have become rotten
adherent – someone who belongs or follows, in this case, a particular religion
advocate – a supporter; one who is in favour of an issue, view or policy
affiliates – people associated with something or someone
ambassadors – representatives or messengers
analogy – a comparison between things for the purpose of explaining or making clear
appeasement – reconciliation; making peace
asteroid – a chunk of rock floating in space that circles the Sun
at the disposal of – available for humans to use however they want
atheist – someone who does not believe that God exists
attain – to reach; to get
attribute – a quality; characteristic
auspicious – lucky; favourable
authenticity – the quality of being utterly genuine and original
baptised – to go through a religious ceremony in which you are made a member of that church community; water is used during the ceremony as a sign of purification and new life
barnacle – a crustacean (sea creature with an outer shell)
beneficent – doing good or resulting in good; being generous
bestower – one who gives
boycott – to stop buying the products of a certain group, or trading with them
caliph – a Muslim religious leader whose authority is believed to be derived from Muhammad
canon – a collection of sacred books or texts
cataclysm – a catastrophe; a disaster
caul – part of the amniotic membrane sometimes found on a child's head at birth
ceasefire – a truce; an end of hostilities
charred – badly burned
chastity – refraining from sex
civic – public, to do with citizenship
coherent – logical; rational
collaboration – cooperation; working together
comet – a mixture of explosive substances which turns gas as it nears the Sun
communion – a feeling of connection to the divine
compassion – a feeling for others that involves care for and sympathy with them
compiled – produced by putting together material from other sources
complementary – combining to form a complete whole or to enhance one another
comprehensive – complete; inclusive
compulsion – force; obligation
conciliatory – behaving in a peacemaking way; pacify
condense – to make denser or more concentrated
confirmed – to go through a religious ceremony that marks your formal acceptance into a Christian church
confrontational – challenging and argumentative
conjectural – surmised; hypothetical
conman – a trickster; a person who cheats others by using criminal fraud and deception
conservative – holding on to traditional, conventional values; against change
conspiracy – a plan, usually secret, to do something harmful
constitutes – makes up; forms a part of
contest – to challenge; to dispute
continuity – connection through time
course – to decrease in size; get smaller
convergence – when ideas come together
convey – communicate
conviction – a strongly held opinion, a belief
cordial – polite and friendly
covenant – a deep and solemn pledge; a promise
creed – statements or set of religious beliefs
critique – an assessment or evaluation usually from an informed or analytical perspective
deficient – lacking; not sufficient
delegate – to give responsibility to someone else, to hand over
deliberations – discussions that result in making a decision
denomination – a group or church, usually within the Christian religion (e.g. Baptist, Methodist)
density – mass; compactness
despicable – shameful; disgraceful
destitute – very poor, with no means of support at all
detractor – a critic; one who is against something
devout – to show deep religious commitment
dharma – the way of Higher Truths, and the teachings and doctrines of the Buddhist religion
dire – terrible; dismal
dissent – disagreement; opposition
doctrine – set of beliefs or principles
dogmas – beliefs that people are expected to accept without any doubts
economic sanctions – when richer countries decide to withhold financial assistance from poorer countries
elite – a small group of privileged and powerful people
elliptical – oval-shaped
endowed – provided; given
enriching – improving the quality or value of something
equilibrium – perfect balance
ethic – moral principle

Eucharist – ceremony based on Jesus’ last meal with his disciples
evolution – a process of development or growth; progression to a higher stage
evolving – developing into something else
expand – to enlarge; get bigger
exploitative – taking advantage of in an unfair way
fault line – a weakness, division or disagreement within a society that divides it into different groups
figurative – metaphorical; symbolic
forebears – people who lived before
free will – the ability to decide what to do without any outside influence
Gentile – any person who is not Jewish or Mormon
governance – the action or way of governing and controlling
granary – place where grain is stored
harbinger – something or somebody that anticipates a future event or development
heretic – someone whose opinions are against orthodox religious beliefs
heretical – describes beliefs that are against orthodox religious teaching and beliefs
hierarchical – arranged or controlled in order of rank from highest to lowest
hybrid – the offspring of two plants or animals of different species
idolatry – worshipping something which is not God
imam – a Muslim religious leader and teacher
immortal – living forever; eternal; everlasting
impinging – intruding on
impose – to make something happen usually by force
inalienable – cannot be taken away
incarnate – in human or bodily form
infallibly – incapable of making a mistake or being wrong
influential – having great influence; important
inhospitable – unfriendly; unwelcoming
initiative – a new plan or programme
innately – naturally; that which is inborn
intermediary – a go-between; mediator
irrational – unreasonable; not logical or sensible
irrevocable – not able to be changed or reversed
judicature – the judiciary; courts
juror – a member of a jury
leviathan – a giant sea-monster
liberal – respecting and accepting opinions different from one’s own; not strictly literal
lineage – the line of descent from an ancestor to a person or a family
literalist – one who understands something exactly as it is written, without being open to interpretation
literally – to understand something according to its actual or basic meaning
liturgy – the words, music and actions used in ceremonies in some religions
live and let live – an expression that means accept the way others live and behave, even though it may be different from your way
luminous – glowing; bright
malnourished – ill and unable to develop properly as a result of being poorly fed
mandated – when one has been given instructions to do something
manifest – to demonstrate
mantra – a verse, syllable or phrase believed to be of divine origin and which is used in ritual or meditation in different religions
maternal – related through the mother’s side of the family
maternal – related through the mother’s side of the family
mediate – to act between two things or parties in order to bring about understanding
metaphorical – symbolic; not literal
modifications – changes, adjustments
monotheistic – describes a belief in one god
nation state – a self-rulled grouping of cities and villages united by culture, religion and government
neural – to do with processes in the brain
New Testament – the second part of the Christian Bible
niche – a shallow space or recess in a wall to display an ornament
nirvana – a state of perfect happiness and peace in Buddhism
nomads – people who move from one place to another, often to find fresh grazing land for their cattle, rather than living in the same place all the time
non-theistic – an approach that does not reject God’s existence, but simply ignores it
omnipotent – all powerful
opportunistic infections – infections like TB that take advantage of the body’s lowered immune system
orthodoxy – the accepted view
oscillate – move back and forth
oscillation – swinging from one side to the other, back and forth
overtures – approaches indicating that communication is desired
pact – an agreement
painstaking – extremely thorough; careful
pantheon – a number of gods in a particular religious tradition
paternal – related through the father’s side of the family
patronise – to support
pendulum – a weight hung from a fixed point so that it can swing freely
permeates – spreads throughout; infuses
perpetuate – to continue; to maintain
persecute – to victimise; harass
philanthropic – charitable; humanitarian
pinnacle – highest point, peak
plight – desperate or risky situation
ploughshare – blade of a plough
polytheistic – describes a belief in many gods
posit – to put forward as a fact or as the basis for an argument
precede – to go or happen before
prevailing – current; established
prodigal – wasteful and extravagant
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prolific – productive, abundant
proverb – a story saying or stating a general truth or piece of advice
raja – Indian king or prince
ratified – confirmed, made official
recant – to take back; to renounce
recipients – those who receive
reconcile – to resolve
reconciliation – when there is understanding and perhaps forgiveness between people who have had a bad relationship
regression – to return to a previous and less advanced state
reincarnation – the rebirth of the soul or spirit in a new body
relativities – seeing a thing in a particular context; historically determined; not absolute;
intelligible – one can make sense of it
repel – to resist; to keep away
replicated – copied exactly
resurrected – brought back to life
sanctity – sacredness
saturation point – a stage at which no more can be absorbed or accepted
sect – a small religious group regarded as deviating from orthodox tradition
selective – choosing what to show and what not to show
sentiment – feeling, in this case, public opinion
siege – attack
solstice – mid-summer and mid-winter
species – a collection of different but related living beings, for example, primates (apes, chimpanzees, gorillas, etc.) are a species
spontaneously – in an unplanned way; impulsively
static – not changing
stature – height
strings attached – with obligations
subordinates – people who are lower in rank or position
subsidarity – a principle saying that an issue ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest, or least centralised authority that is able to deal with the matter effectively
successor – a person who comes after someone else, usually a leader, and is given the same status
sustenance – something which keeps you alive
syncretism – two different belief systems combined to form a new one
taboo – something that is forbidden through a social or religious custom
tendency – the way that someone or something typically behaves
think tank – a group of experts who give advice and ideas on specific issues
thwarted – prevented from accomplishing something
trance – state of altered and peaceful consciousness or mind
transcendence – going beyond or above
transformation – change from one state to another
treaty – an agreement that usually ends a conflict; a settlement
tumult – commotion, disorder
undifferentiated – without difference
usury – lending money at high interest rate
wane – to decline; in the process of disappearing
warlord – a military commander
wax – to grow, especially bigger; to expand
well-nigh – nearly; almost
whim – a sudden impulse or change of mind
widow – a woman whose husband has died
winnowing basket – basket for carrying grain that has been reaped
wrangle – to argue
Yahweh – a form of the Hebrew name of God used in the Bible
yoga – a spiritual discipline including breath control, simple meditation, and specific body postures
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