

Religion &
Contemporary
Society
AS Revision Guide

Euthanasia

SANCTITY OF LIFE = All life is sacred a unique a gift from God. All life is worthy of respect to disrespect life is to disrespect God. Only God has the right to decide when a person dies

Euthanasia = Mercy killing or Gentle death

Euthanasia applies only to people with a terminal illness that is an illness that they are never going to recover from and will eventually die.

Voluntary Euthanasia = Helping someone to dies when they have asked for help with this to avoid any more suffering

Passive Euthanasia = When medical treatment, keeping someone alive, is withdrawn i.e. life support machine is switched off when someone is thought to be brain dead

Active euthanasia = to take action to deliberately end a patient's life i.e. giving someone a lethal injection or, in time of war, a mortally wounded soldier in great pain, asking his comrade to 'finish him off' in order to shorten his suffering

Non voluntary euthanasia = killing of a patient who is not able to express

his/her wishes about whether they should be able to die (for example newborn babies or a person severely brain-damaged and in a long term coma (PVS) Permanent Vegative State. He issue here is 'Personhood' - at what point does someone cease to be a person and die?

Compulsory Euthanasia - Ending the life of someone who has not asked for it i.e. Ethnic Cleansing - Holocaust when old, disabled, sick or people considered racially inferior were put to death.

Important issues to consider

Final stage of life important to the individual & family (although many would see it as acceptable to control or ease pain)

Motives of relatives - are they doing this for the right reasons

Hospice Movement, care of the dying and their families is preferred by many as an alternative

Allowing death to occur, or switching of a life support machine when no possibility of independent life, is not the same as deliberately causing death

Preserving life at all costs is not always appropriate - withdrawing treatment is an option in some circumstances and this is not the same as deliberately taking a life.

Should medical teams be allowed to play God? Might they have conflicts of interests i.e. they may want to divert the drugs, treatment etc which may be very expensive to someone else that they feel will gain the greater benefit, i.e. someone young, or someone who will definitely recover.

Legal position on euthanasia in the UK

Deliberate or active euthanasia will leave people open to the charge of murder. Euthanasia is outlawed by The Murder Act of 1965 and by The Suicide Act of 1971. The Law states that killing a person with the person's consent for compassionate reasons is still a crime. The House of Lords in 1994 ruled there should be no change in the law to permit euthanasia.

However, in a number of European countries such as Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium, and in 2008 Luxemburg. Euthanasia has been decriminalised.

Arguments for legalising voluntary euthanasia

Personal autonomy - individual in control of their own decisions. Basic human right to respect patient's own choice.

Quality of Life principle - When the quality of a person's life is diminishing, preventing them from leading a good life i.e. may lose ability to walk, do things for themselves, and lose their dignity

Euthanasia will end person's suffering - will end suffering. Is it more humane to end that suffering, does it not show love and compassion, and could be said, the most loving thing to do.

Not allowing euthanasia will put extra pressure on society - breakdown of traditional family units mean people have no one to care for them. Some argue euthanasia preferable to being left to die alone. Not enough Hospice places therefore puts pressure on Health Service. Need for organ transplants, could help others live. Some people say they would rather die than face Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

Shortens suffering caused to patient's family - Terminal illness can have immense effect emotionally, physically and psychologically for patient's wife/husband/partner, family. Euthanasia would reduce the length of suffering they endure.

Allowing euthanasia would allow us to legalise and regulate what already happens - Drs. can give patients morphine but side effect is it can hasten patient's death - known as the 'Principle of Double Effect. It is unintentional - primary effect is to reduce patient's pain - secondary and unintended consequence is that you shorten the patient's life.

Arguments against euthanasia.

Sanctity of Life - Used by religious believers based on belief that human life is sacred and created by him. Only God has the right to choose who lives or dies. Euthanasia challenges God's will

People suffering from terminal illness are vulnerable - judgement might be clouded. Might not want to impose on family therefore feel pressurised into ending their life.

Making drs or nurses perform euthanasia will undermine confidence in the profession - 'Dignity in Dying' claim there is no evidence that patients confidence in drs and nurses will be damaged

Mistaken diagnosis could lead to a request for euthanasia - Mistakes are made if someone is given a wrong diagnosis that is considered to be terminal this could result in the patient requesting euthanasia

Motive for euthanasia could be questionable - Does the patient understand all the facts, is it just a cry for help, how can we be sure? Ulterior motives of relatives, don't want to have to care for someone, could be some sort of financial benefit if the patient was no longer here.

Death does not have to be painful - the Hospice Movement - A hospice is a house or home dedicated to the care of the terminally ill which takes a holistic approach in that it helps the whole family not just the parents to cope with preparing for death and coming to terms with bereavement. Effective Palliative care means that terminal patients do not always face a painful, undignified death. They can go to the hospice for respite care, to give families a well earned rest. Not always in the hospice all the time some of their care will be at home, via McMillan Nurses or in a day care. Going to the hospice in the final stages of their illness. The hospice movement specialises in pain control and aims to give people with painful terminal diseases, the best quality care and quality of life.

Christianity - Arguments against euthanasia

- Sanctity of Life Issue - Genesis 1.v28 Humans made in God's image - life a gift from God. All life sacred and worthy of respect.
- God gave humans dominion (control) over all things - so have responsibility to use God's gift to the full including the gift of life
- The Ten Commandments clearly state 'Thou shalt not kill'
- Although Job suffered horrendously he refused to take his own life arguing that we must accept suffering just as we accept happiness & joy.
- Some Christians believe that suffering provides opportunities for spiritual growth
- 1995 the Pope John Paul II confirmed the position of the Roman Catholic Church - Euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God.
- Some Christians work in the Hospice Movement following the example of Jesus who said 'We should show compassion to others, 'Love one another as I have loved you (John 13.34)

Christianity - Arguments in favour of euthanasia

- Some Christians believe people should be allowed to die with dignity. They argue Jesus commanded us to show compassion 'Love one another as I have loved you (John 13.) If this includes helping someone to die so be it
- Some believe they are fulfilling their religious duty in the Ten Commandments to 'Honour your father and mother (Exodus.20.12) by respecting their wish to die

Animal Rights

Aristotle said that animals did not have the ability to reason and so therefore had no moral status. This meant they had no value in themselves and didn't deserve any rights.

Today there is much concern in Western society about the suffering inflicted on animals by humans. Knowledge and understanding of animals has increased significantly over the centuries. Darwin's theory of Evolution has caused people to rethink the gap between humans & animals. **Recent research has shown that apes share almost 99% of their functional genes with humans and even when differences in less significant DNA are taken into account they are still 96% identical.**

Some think animals have instrumental value only because they are useful to humans...e. to provide food. They have no moral status. They do not have a conscience, or the ability to act morally they act instinctively. Therefore they do not have rights, arguing that only a social system and self awareness, and the ability to express their needs & desires can be held accountable for their actions. Animals cannot.

Some believe animals have an intrinsic value - they are worthy in themselves of a moral status. Some argue that as humans are the superior species we have a responsibility to care for other species. Another argument is that if animals can experience pain and suffering, then should they have rights. Do they not deserve to be treated with respect? If we deliberately mistreat animals how can we then claim, to have greater moral worth than animals?

Others claim animals have equal intrinsic value - all beings have equal value in themselves for what they are. We are wrong to view animals as just a resource to be killed for sport, experimented on, or used for fashion. The idea that animals have moral status has been developed by philosophers such as Richard Ryder & Peter Singer. Ryder uses the term '**speciesism**' to describe unjust belief that one species is superior to another. Singer believes that just like racism this is wrong. He believes that if animals have rights then this must include the right to be regarded as valuable as any other species even humans.

Issues involving the use of animals

Food - It is estimated 90/95% of animals suffer because of the demand for food. Genetic modification of animals gives more meat yield, meaning more m money, but what are the side effects for the animals. How might eating such food affect humans in the long run?

Factory Farming - where as many animals as possible are put in the smallest legally available space to give mass production and make as much money as possible, i.e.

battery hens where 5 hens are packed into a cage that does not allow them to spread their wings, perch, nest, or even walk or run. Hens are placed in these cages about 18 weeks old and are not removed until they are 18 months old when they are killed. In 1999 the European Union passed a law banning battery cages from 2012 after which hens will have to be housed in bigger cages with nests and perches.

Artificial Insemination - when dairy cows are routinely made pregnant to increase the majority of milk they produce. Calves are removed from their mothers within 24hrs of birth, after suckling their mother's first antibody rich milk known as colostrums.

Separation of mother and infant causes anxiety and suffering for both animals. In the summer months they are kept out on pasture but in the winter in small concrete cubicle houses where they can only stand or lie. The design of these cubicles has been the same for years and have become too small for the modern larger animal. Often the cows are left standing in their own dung.

As a result of this and other animal rights issues some people choose to become vegetarians. They believe for religious or other reasons that it is unethical to kill animals for food. Others go further becoming vegans not drinking or eating any food from animals such as milk, fish meat, eggs, cheese.

Arguments in favour of using animals for food

- ✓ As superior species the right to do what we like with animals
- ✓ Using animals is necessary - we need animals for food
- ✓ Humans killing for food is part of the natural order
- ✓ If we didn't produce animals for food - they would not exist

Arguments against killing animals for food

- ✓ If animals have rights do they not deserve the most basic right - the right to live
- ✓ Humans do not need to eat meat to survive
- ✓ Many of the animals reared by factory farming are kept in poor conditions
- ✓ Animals killed for food are killed in brutal ways

Animals in medical and non-medical experimentation

- ✓ Animals are used in medical experiments to help with research testing cures for serious diseases. Some argue that experimenting on animals to save human life is a justified reason. Others would argue that testing on animals for make up or a shampoo that makes your hair shine is unethical.

What animals are used?

- ✓ People tend to oppose experiments on animals to which we have the greatest emotional attachment i.e. primates or popular pets such as dogs, cats and rabbits. Majority of tests carried out on rats/mice. This raises the question - should one animal receive a higher moral status than others?
- ✓ How much pain is caused to the animal - animals clearly experience pain & suffering?

Arguments in favour of animal experiments include:

- Human life has great intrinsic value than animal life
- Information gained from experiments could not be gained in other ways
- Pain inflicted on animals is controlled and minimised by legislation
- Medicines have been developed as a result of animal experimentation such as vaccines against rabies, polio, TB etc.

Arguments against animal experimentation include:

- Animals have as much right to life as human beings
- Benefits if any - can be gained in other ways
- Causing unnecessary suffering to animals degrades us as human beings
- The stress endured by animals can render the results useless

Blood Sports

Arguments in favour:

- Some animals are a nuisance to other animals - hunted to prevent a loss of stock
- Hunting is a tradition an ancient sport so should be maintained
- Skilled hunters ensure animals do not suffer unnecessarily
- People need to eat - in some parts of the world hunting is the main source of food

Arguments in favour of hunting

- Must be more humane ways of killing animals
- Hunting can disrupt the food chain for other species
- 'Tradition' argument is a poor one
- Organised hunts can do more damage to the countryside than the animal being hunted

Culling – killing_ to control the animal population. Killing to reduce the spread of disease.

In 2008 the South African Government announced it was going to authorise an elephant cull for the first time in 13 years. People living close to the elephants complained they were dangerous, ate crops and competed with the people for water.

In April 2008, the Welsh Assembly Government announced a cull of badgers to stop the spread of TB - farmers blamed badgers for spreading bovine TB

Arguments in favour of culling:

- Prevents potential damage to livestock or infections
- Restores balance if one species is killing off another species
- Prevents loss of food sources for other humans and animals
- Removes animals that pose a threat to human life

Animals as pets or entertainment

Arguments in favour of keeping animals as pets:

- ❖ Many animals receive better treatment as pets than in the wild
- ❖ We can learn about animal behaviour spending time with pets
- ❖ Having pets may encourage responsible behaviour towards animals
- ❖ Relationships with pets allow expressions of emotion, companionship and hared enjoyment

Arguments against keeping animals as pets:

- ❖ We have no right to keep animals in captivity to learn from it
- ❖ We often abandon pets when we can't afford them or they are no longer cute or fashionable
- ❖ The animal is not in its natural environment so lives in a false way
- ❖ If animals have rights should they not have the right to freedom

You need to look up in your text book the arguments for and against using animals in circuses and keeping animals in zoos

Christianity

Arguments against the use of animals

- Stewardship - humans were given dominion (control) over animals and responsibility to care for them
- Although there is no evidence in the Gospels to support the idea Jesus was a vegetarian, some Christians claim the creation story implies they should be vegetarian or even vegan in response to modern factory farming methods
- St Francis of Assisi was famous for his love of animals and is the patron saint of animals. A number of Christians have campaigned for animal rights
- Other passages in the Bible suggest that God values animal life - 'Are not five sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God' (Luke 16.6)
- Albert Schweitzer argued all life is sacred. All living things were created by God to kill a living thing on purpose is to harm God's creation

Arguments in favour of the use of animals

- St Augustine argued animals don't have ability to reason so are under the control of humans
- Thomas Aquinas argued animals exist simply for humans to use as they see fit. Cruel treatment of animals is only wrong because it can lead us to treat other humans badly as well.
- Karl Barth (German philosopher argued as God became man in human form of Jesus, humans are superior to animals and cannot be equal to humans

Look up and consider Buddhist arguments for and against use of animals.

Religion-specific Broadcasting

"Television is the most powerful communication ever devised by man"

(Billy Graham, one of the best known Christian evangelists of the 20th Century)

Millions of people across the world watch television. For the housebound, it is sometimes their only link to the outside world. In today's modern society there are thousands of networks operating across the world. In Britain there are now 5 terrestrial channels and since the introduction of satellite and cable TV people now have access to hundreds of channels daily.

Many of these channels are specialist channels including news, music, sport religion etc. However, the 5 terrestrial channels are expected to provide a minimum content of religion specific broadcasts.

Programmes such as 'Songs of Praise' 'The Heaven & Earth Show'. In recent times there has been a conscious effort to promote a wider understanding by reflecting a multi-faith Britain. Many people seem to be aware and recognise that religious programming is devoted to specific periods within the religious calendar (festivals) which seem to be well promoted and reflected not just Christmas & Easter but also the Sikh Festival of Divali, and the Muslim Festival of Ramadan.

Within radio programmes such as 'Thought for the Day (Radio 4) and 'Pause for Thought' (Radio 2) attract a large number of listeners and appear to be well received. They use a variety of speakers from the multi-faith community.

You need to read over your notes from Mr Molyneux on Ofcom and the guidelines that need to be followed.

Examples of religion-specific broadcasting

Songs of Praise is perhaps the most well known example of religion specific broadcasting to be shown at peak viewing time on a non-subscription channel. It has an audience of on average 4 million viewers a week, although it can fluctuate, due to seasonal influences. Christmas - (Carols from kings' College, Cambridge) and Easter. Also, at times, when there is a major focal point for the nation as a whole; usually bereavement; such as, the death of Winston Churchill and Princess Diana. At times such as these viewing figures can rise to nearly 12 million.

Heaven & Earth Show

The show was broadcast on Sunday mornings for 9 years. It had a magazine style format, was much more relaxed in its presentation than other religious specific programmes. It also had a variety of multi-faith guests, as well as agnostics, atheists and celebrities, thus presenting a wide variety of beliefs and opinions within the debates. This was unique at the time and a departure from the usual style of religious programmes on TV in Britain.

Celebrities would join in to express their views on religion or ethical issues - John Barrowman, Pierce Brosnan, Lionel Richie, and Dolly Parton all took part in these interviews. There was also the opportunity for views to phone into the show, later phone texts and e-mails were also included, adding another dimension to the show.

Heaven & Earth was replaced in 2007 by '*The Big Questions*', which adopted a panel based approach to religious & ethical dilemmas and ultimate questions, similar to the political programme 'Question Time'. Again celebrities also feature in this, partly to encourage viewers to identify aspects of beliefs with celebrities who would not appear to have any religious or ethical viewpoint because of their role in the world of entertainment.

Highway:

ITV's answer to Songs of Praise. The presenter was the late Sir Harry Secombe and it was aired from 1983 to 1993. It travelled around Britain meeting people of different faiths. The show also included hymns sung by soloists, groups as well as interviews with faith believers. Originally it had an early evening Sunday slot but towards the end of its run it moved to a Sunday afternoon.

Documentaries:

In an attempt to attract wider audiences to religion style broadcasting various approaches have been tried. One of these has been a documentary type approach from straightforward factual reporting to fly on the wall. Topics covered have ranged from '**conversion, marriage in Judaism, Toronto Blessing, the birth & death of Jesus of Nazareth, the Mormons; gay Christians in the 21st Century.**'

Other programmes such as 'Everyman, Despatches, & Witness,' have all presented religious & moral themed programmes. Audience figures have shown there to be interest from the wider TV viewing public. Therefore these programmes will continue to be made to meet this demand.

We also need to consider the fact that channels such as 'The History Channel, Discovery & National Geographic increasingly broadcast religion specific documentaries on a regular basis. Other popular 'reality' religious programmes, i.e. 'The Monastery, An island Parish, and Extreme Pilgrim, has attracted a wide audience.

This would appear to support the view that whilst traditional church attendance may be declining, there is obviously still a healthy interest within society as a whole in religion and in its diversity within a multi-cultural society.

Again with the arrival of satellite TV, there are many channels to suit all interests and religion is no exception. British digital channel has a number of religion specific channels of which **Christian channels** take up the **largest percentage**. This also applies to **religious specific radio channels**. There are currently 17 Christian channels available at the moment from a variety of denominations. Other religious traditions are also represented and are also growing in number; e.g. Muslim channel, Punjab; Islam etc/ An interesting feature for many of these is that the religion is closely tied into the language of that community and by its nature therefore, tends to be exclusive to that particular community. This is especially true for Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities. Although English subtitles are a common feature reflecting the fact that younger members of the community English is their first language.

Possible future for religion-specific broadcasting in the UK

Whilst Songs of Praise continues in popularity, this cannot be said for other religion-specific programmes. Research carried out has shown that whilst the viewing public do not want religion as a specific feature of their television diet, they are in favour of religions content. The viewers want a much broader view of religion which includes taking a more informative and investigative approach to religion.

Religion- specific programming within non-religion-specific broadcasts

Over the past few years programme makers have been particularly creative and innovative in the way in which they have presented religion to its viewers. For instance children's TV such as the *Fimbles*, *Tweenies*, *Teletubbies* have included a variety of faith communities, religious festivals, practices to promote an understanding of different belief systems and cultures. These have been welcomed by leaders of the faith communities as being positive examples of religion on television.

Comedy programmes such as; *Vicar of Dibley* have taken a light hearted look at various religious issues. In particular the issue of female ordination which for Anglicans was very difficult when it was first aired. Other programmes such as *Goodness Gracious Me* and *The Kumars* have addressed issues relating to the Asian faith, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism.

In 2007 a Canadian network produced *Little Mosque on the Prairie* (a play on the original American version 'Little House on the Prairie'). It's about a small community of Muslims and the ups and downs of life they face, both within their own community as well as the wider community of the town in which they live. Using a mixture of gentle comedy, and self critical humour the show tackles some of the issues which have caused huge problems for the Muslim community in the West, and presents them in a way to dismiss the myths that have caused social & political tension since 9/11.

Religion & TV

Television is an important part of people's lives. There are many programmes that contain either religious or moral issues. It could be asked whether or not this is a suitable way to portray religion. The variety of programmes will each deal with these topics in their very different and very own styles of broadcasting. For instance within the soaps there are many religious and moral issues which can either be part of a main story line, or part of an ongoing storyline that has not reached its climax. Soaps such as *Coronation Street*, *Hollyoaks*, *Emmerdale*, *Eastenders*, *Vicar of Dibley*, have all had a variety of moral issues such as murder, euthanasia, adultery, teenage pregnancies, abortion, domestic violence, marriage etc.

More people watch soaps than any other type of entertainment, therefore it could be argued that they have significance within the lives of its audience. Their influence on society should not be taken lightly. **In *Coronation Street*, remember when Deidre was imprisoned for murder, the press, ordinary people and even the Prime Minister all got involved in the campaign 'Free the Weatherfield One'.**

Soaps generally are a way of conveying important moral messages particularly about religion. Whilst they provide the viewers with an overview of religious, spiritual as well as moral issues. Some might argue that they teach people about religion; whilst others might also argue that they do not teach but rather present views that represent the realities of life as well as confronting social problems. They do not offer single solutions to the problems they portray, but explore the relevant possibilities. They do not seek to present permanent solutions, answers, or truths, but rather emphasise the fact that these genres reflect the ups and downs and uncertainties of life.

The role of religion within the soaps is often discreet (cautious) because the programme makers are careful of offending faith communities either by distorting a particular faith or not portraying it in comparison to other religions. However, there are universal themes that soaps use in the moral and spiritual backdrop to their character's storylines. Such as community, commitment, friendship love, relationships, family, faithfulness, forgiveness, reconciliation, authority, responsibility and death.

The soaps are usually based on the inter-relationship of a group of characters, who usually share the same social setting i.e. working class background; where the pub is usually at the centre of the social interaction. The soap usually tries to include a variety of social classes, ages, culture and religion in its storylines.

Eastenders from its start has included specifically religious characters, the most famous being Dot Cotton (Christian), who is seen quoting endlessly from passages from the Bible and often suffers conflict of conscience between her faith and situations. It has to be asked whether or not this is a true representation of a religious person, or an over exaggeration. Dot is certainly religious and her faith is obviously very important to her. If you examine her background, a husband who has mistreated her and had lots of illicit affairs; a son who has caused her endless serious problems, blackmailing her, being cruel & manipulative with her and actually abusing her both mentally and physically. Her religion is the one constant thing in her life that gives her some form of stability.

However most of the latter is not emphasised and therefore she is seen as somewhat of a 'religious eccentric' by a lot of the viewing audience. Some would even go so far as to think that this is a true representation of all religious people, especially if you look at York on a Saturday afternoon, where you frequently find groups of fundamentalist (extreme) Christians evangelising from a literalist (interprets the Bible literally, everything in it is true because it is the Word of God) perspective.

Criticisms

'The Sikh Messenger's editor, Dr. Indarjit Sing, accused the BBC of anti-religious bias, and specifically cited the soap. Dr. Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Lancaster has stated that: '...soaps tend to use stereo-types - the Christians are mad fundamentalists, the Hindus are in arranged marriages,'

These criticisms were also raised by the 'House of Lords' select committee (set up to report on the future of the BBC), who saw a number of examples within the show of religion being deliberately damaged because of its stereo-typing and inaccurate portrayal of people of faith communities. It was also stated that the BBC had poor knowledge of religion and that ignorance filtered through all of its programming - often with a detrimental effect on its audience as a whole.

However when we come to soaps taking on moral issues, particularly in the case of Eastenders, they have never been afraid to take on these controversial storylines. It has helped to raise public awareness and often the soap will publish a national helpline number relating to that specific issue both before and after the programme is aired. Charities associated with these issues have praised the soaps again Eastenders in particular; for educating the public about these complex and difficult issues. For some people this is the only way that they learn about these issues. However schools tackle these issues in R.E. and also within PSHCE. It also needs to be said that many of the issues are dealt with before the 9.00pm watershed; many feel that this is too early and should definitely be after the watershed.

Identifying religious themes within a soap opera

It is not always easy to identify religious themes within soaps. However, major themes such as beliefs, practices and ethical issues are more obvious. You need to make specific reference to

the religious context of the theme. It is essential that you do not use the theme in a generic way for instance themes such as forgiveness and marriage are both a religious and non-religious concepts. Whatever theme you choose it will only be acceptable if its religious context is stated.

For instance, if a particular character is acting in such a way to avoid harming others or animals, reference could be made to the Hindu concept of Ahimsa (non-violence towards all living things). This way you are clearly relating the actions of the soap to a specific theme from religion.

Study of religious themes

The Prime objective of the soap is to tell a story. Within soaps religion is not usually explored for its own sake, it is usually part of the storyline; and is used to add another aspect - or explain the motivations of a particular character. It is very common to see a caricature of religious figures within soaps, which is why people like 'Dot Cotton' are seen as a stereo-typical church going person who is portrayed as a busy-body, who is judgemental because of her faith. Emily Bishop from Coronation Street is also stereotyped as a 'Bible Basher' a 'do-gooder' and someone who is quite opinionated because of her religious faith. (This unfair image has brought about much criticism of their portrayal from Christian groups.

In Emmerdale the vicar Ashley was originally portrayed as a weak and effeminate character with a shallow faith whose quotes from the Bible and Church doctrine were out of date with modern society. However due to many complaints from Christian groups the portrayal of Ashley has been adapted and re-shaped to present a much more compassionate, believable and sympathetic figure reflecting more accurately the typical rural Anglican vicar.

Whilst Christian characters within the soaps have not been dealt with fairly, people from other faiths, such as Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs etc have fared even worse. For example Dev in Coronation Street:

Hindu row over Coronation Street

Hindu leaders have rejected an apology from Coronation Street after a scene showed a Hindu statue used as a weapon. Viewers saw Maya threaten Sunita with a statue of Hindu god Lord Ganesh as part of a long running plot line.



The scene showed Maya ordering Sunita to be submissive or her husband would come home to find Sunita had been "beaten to death by Ganesh, the God of good fortune". Maya (foreground) attacked Sunita in her flat

ITV apologised for any offence caused but said it was clear "Maya's actions were that of a deranged woman". Ramesh Kallidai,

secretary of The Hindu Forum of Britain said: "it makes a justification for the behaviour." He added: "This is not acceptable to us."

Coronation Street: - Forgiveness a conflict of faith!

In early 2006, Emily befriended Ed Jackson, a new member of the congregation at her church. He soon became a regular visitor to her house, doing odd jobs and the like, and they remained friends after he confessed that he had recently been released from prison. However, Emily was devastated when Ed admitted why he had been in prison - he was the man who had shot and killed Ernest in 1978. He told her that, after finding God while in prison, he had come looking for her, attempting to atone for his misdemeanors. Enraged, Emily threw him out, and went on to question her faith. Eventually, on 10 March 2006, Emily forgave Ed as he contemplated suicide.

Criticism of Christianity

ITV has received dozens of complaints after Coronation Street character Ken Barlow criticised Christianity and claimed that his grandson Simon's school was indoctrinating him. Barlow, played by Bill Roach, said in the show, "He [Simon] is already being indoctrinated. I went to his assembly last week and they had paintings on the wall depicting creation. He is being taught creationism." He also said he would tell Simon "the truth" about religion.

Since the Easter special was aired, ITV has been inundated with complaints from viewers. One of those complaining, identified only as Johnandy, said, "It was utterly outrageous that Ken should make the outright attacks on the Christian faith which he did on **Easter Sunday** the **most important Christian Festival**."

An ITV spokesman responded by saying, "Coronation Street is a soap opera set in modern society and therefore represents views from all side of the religious spectrum."

Whilst these events could be said to portray issues that are part of everyday life within our society, they are obviously offensive to faith adherents and would seem to highlight that it is the plot of the storyline that is important rather than an accurate portrayal of the part religion plays in the lives of its believers.

Portraying religious characters seems to be difficult one for the soaps in general. Whilst there are positive representations of multi-faiths; sensitivity to people from faith backgrounds seem to have been largely ignored in general; as the means to drive the plot is seen to be the most important factor. We have to ask ourselves therefore, that if religion in this instance is distorted for the purpose of a particular storyline; might such incidences mislead the audience as to the actual beliefs, practices and teachings of religion?

The Simpsons!

Religious beliefs & practices in The Simpsons

"The show is always kind to people of true faith, but people who build their religion on words and not feelings are treated less kindly" (Jeff Shalda, Religion in the Simpsons,)

Its characters range from committed believers i.e. Marvge, Ned Flanders & Apu, to those who appear to use religion as a kind of support to get them through difficult times in their lives i.e. Homer, Bart, Krusty, who otherwise have little interest in following a religious lifestyle. Religion itself has never been mocked within the show. Whilst it is satirical, and might give the sense of mocking; the use of cartoon images provides a simple but deceptive way of portraying all aspects of life in a contemporary society. The format of the show is down to the brilliance of its creator. The writers themselves come from a diversity of backgrounds, from atheist, to agnostic to theist as well as representatives from a variety of mainly Christian and Jewish traditions. They strive to deal fairly with all aspects of human life and faith communities are occasionally consulted, to ensure details of religious belief and practice are accurately portrayed.

Mark Pinsky in the *Gospel according to The Simpsons* (2nd edition 2007) states:

"Rabbi Schulweis said he was surprised to find how genuine (The Father like Clown episode) was. He thought it had a Jewish quality and he was impressed by its moral seriousness"

Within the Anglican community, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, has said:

"The Simpsons is one of the most subtle pieces of propaganda around in the cause of sense, humility and virtue."

The initial reaction from conservative Americans was less favourable. However, Davis Landry, the Roman Catholic theologian and biblical scholar is quoted as saying:

"This is not the be all and end all of theology on TV, but the most consistent and intelligent treatment of religion on TV is The Simpsons"

As the series grows in popularity, so too does the episodes that include religious & moral teaching. When the actors who portray the characters were asked if they believed the show was trying to specifically teach religious values, they were adamant it was not. This view was

supported by some religious groups in America who view the show with suspicion and mistrust; seeing it as a discreet attack on their beliefs & practices..

Atheists (those who do not believe in God) have accused the show of being more like a Sunday School lesson than a sitcom. (Pinsky) argues that some have claimed the show to be the most religious, non-evangelical show on TV. Whilst **John Sohn of Simpson Ethics** argues, "While other programmes avoid religion, the Simpsons, take religions place in society seriously enough to do it the honour of making fun of it."

Meet the Family

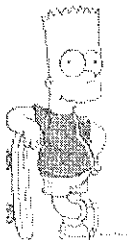
Marge - The mother of the family who holds the family together. Her selfless commitment and sense of morality is the thing that keeps the family from falling apart. She is a devout Christian who looks to God to give her the strength to keep her family going. Her prayers often take the form of bargains, i.e. when the town is facing a nuclear meltdown; she prays that if God spares the town she will try to be a better Christian. She sees the church as the only place to keep Homer & Bart's wayward & dominant personalities in check.

Lisa - She is the most intelligent member of the family. She views religion as a set of morals and traditions, rather than pure faith. She believes in the idea of cause and effect. If she does something wrong, such as cheating (Lisa gets an A) or stealing (Lisa v Homer and the 8th Commandment) she will go to hell. Although incapable of taking leaps of faith, her strong sense of morality means that she lives a good life and tries her best to influence other family members to do the same. She chooses Buddhism as a means of expressing her spiritual nature.

Bart - is the 10 year old anarchist who seems to want to rebel against any form of authority he can find, parents, teachers, towns people and ultimately God. Bart seeks to control the thing that he is rebelling against. That is why most of his pranks are thwarted and turn to good. He is the stereo-typical prodigal son, whose antics allow the good nature of the others go shine through. For example when he ruins Christmas for his family and lies about it, losing everything to the townsfolk. They learn to appreciate each other and that there is more to Christmas than just about material possessions.

Homer - He is the patriarch of the family. He is dim-witted and he needs them more than they need him. His views on religion are confusing to say the least. He is always **misinterpreting** the Bible and thinks that Homer & the Lion is a Bible story. This results in Homer constantly falling into sin. 'Catholics' however, would say that his sins are superficial rather than mortal sin. He does wrong, but never rejects God or the idea of divine justice. He is just simply weak. Although he is a sinner, his loyalty and commitment to his family means that he always ends up choosing good over evil.

Scripture (Biblical text) is often used mainly from the Bible. It is not used in either a disrespectful way or a mocking way. However, it is often used to make a point either about **ignorance**, **hypocrisy** or some type of **negative behaviour**.





Reverend Lovejoy often uses scripture to **emphasise a point**, either in conversation or when he is preaching. The way he uses scripture in itself is revealing. He often chooses the **very strict and harsh quotes** of the Old Testament in his sermons whilst tending to ignore the New Testament **teachings of love, peace & reconciliation**. This would seem to indicate that the producers of the show seem to be **exaggerating** the idea of preachers preferring the **Hell & damnation** style of preaching, rather than a more softer, gentle approach; which allows them to have **control over** their congregation, in other words it gives **them power over** them. Also it supports the **fear of punishment** and of **authority figures** within religion, thus ultimately encourages **obedience** from the **congregation**.

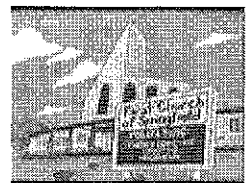


Also Reverend Lovejoy is not above changing the quotes for his own purpose. These actions **undermine** people in this position, we think of vicars and priests as someone we can **trust, rely on and who are responsible**. They are expected to provide a **true and accurate description** of the scriptures and of its **authority** within the faith community. This portrayal allows some leeway to the shows' writers to either make a point or include some sort of social comment that they feel is important.

If we examine the character of Reverend Lovejoy we can see that he is sometimes **hypocritical and shallow**. He was once filled with **dreams and hopes**, but after years in the ministry he is **unfilled and burnt out**. His sermons are boring and he knows it, so **adding** to his **sense of inadequacy**. However, he is not immoral, he is not evil, this portrayal of the Reverend Lovejoy provides us with the picture of **someone who is human**, and who just like the **rest of us** has faults. He provides us with a good example of what a minister should **not** be.

Worship

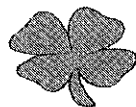
Usually centres around the local Springfield Community Church - often referred to as the First Church of Springfield. Other places of worship that are mentioned within the show and sometimes shown are the **Episcopalian Church**, (often spoken of with **envy** by Lovejoy and his supporters). **The Catholic Church** and the **local Synagogue**.



Worship in the Simpsons - it doesn't seem to matter if they participate or not except when something unusual happens such as Reverend Lovejoy telling the congregation how he rescued Ned Flanders from the baboons at the local zoo (In Marg we ~Trust). The congregation's enthusiastic singing of Bart's hymn version of Iron Butterfly (Bart sells his Soul) and Grandpa Simpson's religious experience in (The Simpsons the Movie) a take on Toronto Blessing.

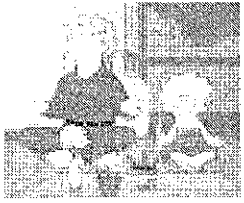


Other religious traditions

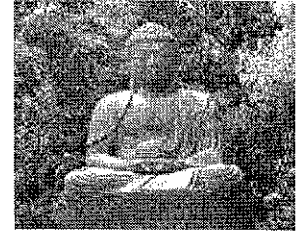


Springfield occasionally shows other religious traditions and their forms of worship with certain episodes. In 'Father, The Son and the Holy guest Star. **The Roman Catholic Church** is given a satirical look at **Irish Catholicism**. The **Jewish tradition** is represented by **Krusty the Clown** and his dad **Rabbi Krustofski**. (Like Father, like Clown) shows, **Jewish prayers, practices, rituals and philosophies within the episode**.





Buddhists



Lisa has represented the Buddhist tradition over the last few years. Partly due to the hypocrisy and shortcomings of her family she has rejected Christianity. After journeying through a number of religious places of worship, she finally comes across a Buddhist Temple. This episode stars Richard Gere, one of Americas best known Buddhists. (He is a devout follower of Tibetan Buddhism; he adds weight to Buddhist teachings which Lisa embraces in the pursuit of enlightenment. Meditation, concept of impermanence, four noble truths and noble eightfold path are all illustrated in this episode.



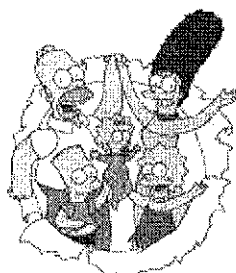
Hinduism

The religion is in the main represented by Apu, although there have been other Hindu characters in the show, including a priest and Apu's own family. Hinduism is probably one of the lesser known religions in America and therefore he is unquestionably stereo-typed i.e. owner of the convenience store. He worships Ganesha the god of good fortune, although he does refer to other deities (gods), Shiva and Vishnu.

Issues that have been dealt with in the show are arranged marriage, vegetarianism, reincarnation, meditation, pluralism (the idea that there are many paths that lead to God) and cultural assimilation (when an individual or group becomes part of another culture and adopts it, whilst still retaining their own culture.



The Simpsons is now the subject of many academic studies. It is watched by millions of people across the world. It portrays human nature and human condition - within which religious belief and practice has its own place. It is the only show on television that does this. It is not afraid to mirror society and within its characters reveal not only human nature but also ourselves. The relationship that the Simpsons has with religion is one that is relevant and topical in an ever changing world and one that will almost certainly continue but also continue to develop.



Vicar of Dibley

Marriage!

The Vicar of Dibley was the most successful sit com on television and attracted huge audiences. At the time of its airing it was ground breaking stuff in that it was controversial. For the first time we were presented with a female vicar. This came at a time when the Church of England was split over the ordination of women and many vicars and church members actually left the church because of the decision by the General Synod (the church's organising body) to allow women to be ordained.

The success of the programme would depend on how the writer dealt with this whole issue and how the character was portrayed. **As a comedy it was important that it didn't undermine or disrespect the issue of women priests or the religious & moral issues within the programme.** The writer believed this to be an important point, he also believed that the programme could educate, highlight, and raise awareness of social issues within society.

The character of Geraldine and the interpretation of her role was therefore very important. As the qualities and character of Geraldine begin to be revealed we see someone with a **sense of humour, who does not take herself seriously, she often makes fun of herself which makes her more approachable to her parishioners.** We see this in the way that they feel able to discuss their problems with her. In the past religious characters had tended to be stereo-typed, but in Geraldine the mould is somewhat broken when we are presented with a woman who is both knowledgeable and worldly wise. Because this is a comedy, there is an **element of satire within the show,** she is disrespectful, up to a point, but there is no malice and she is basically good person. The show tries to give her faults; she is vain, self doubting and a bit lonely, which only emphasises her humanity. She displays a deeply sensitive, warm, kind and caring nature, who manages to maintain a sense of humour despite the attitudes of the parishioners towards her.

This allows the audience to consider and reflect on the value that both women and male vicars can bring to their role; and perhaps begin to think about this issue from a different perspective. In another episode it deals with world poverty. In essence it indirectly educates and provides audiences with a balanced view of topical issues within society.

Within Christianity marriage is a sacrament (God is present during the ceremony). Marriage mirrors the relationship between God, Church and the Church community. Christians believe that marriage is holy and sacred, a sacrament. They make promises (vows) to each other in the presence of God - the most sacred part of the service, the thing that actually marries you. They believe God is present at the service and therefore blesses the marriage

The vicar's sermon, readings enhance the union by an explanation of what is Christian love.

Christians would choose to marry in Church, which is seen as a welcoming, sharing event with the Church community and the family & friends of the Bride & Groom. The ceremony is witnessed by the faithful (the Church community). We clearly see this in the marriage of Geraldine & Tom. She wants to share her happiness and love and declare her commitment before her parishioners who are all invited to the ceremony.

Christians believe that the purpose of marriage is:

P: procreation

U: union

R: rear children

P: pattern for society

O: one flesh

S: sacred

E: endless

Christians believe that marriage is special and unique; they stress the importance of family life. Within marriage couples are expected to have children, to bring them up in the Christian faith and so **perpetuate** the religion (keep it strong). Family life also benefits society as a whole as it provides stability. We see the importance of these teachings when David Houghton tries to stop Hugo from marrying Alice by threatening him with cutting him off and out of his will. We see the **Christian values of love, loyalty, and commitment** when Hugo stands up to his father for the first time and tells him that he will have all he needs in Alice.

By marrying in church, and incorporating the rituals & traditions of a Christian marriage, the show is emphasising the Christian belief in the importance of marriage. It also allows people to look beyond the box and recognise that there is more to a wedding than just a posh frock.

In Geraldine's own marriage, when despite wanting to plan her own wedding, we see the Christian teachings shine through in her **selflessness, love, trust & loyalty** when she reluctantly agrees to let her parishioners plan her wedding for her. She puts her own wishes aside, because she accepts that it is important for them, that this is something they want to do for her, to thank her for all the help & support she has given to them.

This allows us to see the responsibility she places on her role, one which she sees as loving them and taking care of them, she is on this earth to console, & support her special people. Again the Christian concepts of responsibility, conscience, love, compassion and empathy can be clearly seen in this selfless act.

The programme confronts both topical & controversial issues. Through the medium of comedy it is able to reflect on life in a modern society and the issues that this raises. It provides the audience with **food for thought**, perhaps thinking about issues that they might not have done, if it not been put before them. In doing so it allows people to consider their own views and opinions and look at things from a different perspective. It is able to educate and raise awareness of social & political issues without being ridiculous. It carries a message for all of us,

REMEMBER – when discussing the wedding in the Vicar of Dibley you must refer to the Christian concepts and teachings about marriage and link it in to your work.

SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION!

Key Words:

Secular = anything not religious

Secularisation – religion & religious ideas are becoming less important to people

How sociologists define secularisation:

BRYAN WILSON = the process by which religious thinking, practices and institutions lose their social significance

Peter Berger = The process by which parts of the society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols

SECULARISATION THEREFORE IS A PROCESS WHEREBY RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY IN ANY SOCIETY CONTINUES TO DECLINE OVER TIME

How can we measure (test) whether or not secularisation is happening?

- Must be able to compare religious activity in the past and the present
- Develop a set of indicators by which we can measure religious activity
- Indicators usually are: attendance at religious services, membership of a religious organisation, time spent carrying out religious activities, number of people marrying in Church

However, as these indicators are open to a variety of interpretations, this is one reason why sociologists have found it difficult to agree on the importance of different indicators.

Religious Practice:

- How many people actually become church members, even though they may attend church regularly
- Attendance at church services – if they go twice a day is this counted as one or two separate events (in the case of Fiona)

If they do not attend church service does this mean that people are not religious or that they have found alternative ways of sharing and expressing their beliefs(i.e. **AI and the pub/gym church**)

Religious Organisation

How much religious organisations , or the established church i.e. in this country, the Church of England are able to influence and control society (Although no longer actively involved in day to day politics the Church certainly acts as a moral conscience to the Government and will speak out

against policies that it sees as unfair - (could quote newspaper examples)

Religious Thought

The awareness and extent to which people believe in ideas of **God, good and evil, sin etc.** This may be significant in terms of secularisation since religious activity itself may possibly show evidence of decline in terms of practice and organisation; but may still exert powerful influences in people's lives in terms of their personal beliefs. In other words, just because they do not go to church regularly, does not necessarily mean that they do not believe in *God* or other religious concepts.

POTENTIAL COMPLICATIONS in the secularisation debate

- Our knowledge of religious activity in the past is limited
- Accurate records of attendance, membership & religious participation is often incomplete or non-existent
- We don't know if people attended church voluntarily
- How important religious activity was in people's lives
- What religion meant to people (**Remember in the past when people who worked in service had no choice but to go to church. In Victorian times when attendance at church was seen as a social status**)

AND

- Just because people went to Church is not necessarily an indicator that they held any strong religious beliefs
- People may attend Church for a **variety of reasons, friendship, companionship and social status** without holding strong religious beliefs

It is these three areas of **religious practice, organisation and thought** that will guide and shape our investigation

RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION

We need to consider whether the Church in the past was more involved in the political and economic governing of society than they are now? So - has there been a significant **change in the historical role and influence** of religion?

Secondly, how should we **interpret** the evidence we discover? Can we **assume** that **evidence** of a **decline** in the organisational **influence** of religion can be taken as **evidence** for **secularisation**

Feudal Britain (pre 17th Century)

The **Church** were able to influence and control how people viewed the social & natural world. They were responsible for educating the people and were able to spread and control **what** and **how** they told the masses about the world in which they lived

They had a close relationship with both the State (The Monarch, Parliament and also secular powers (the aristocracy, the Barons, Lords etc) The Church was involved in all aspects of government. Feudal Britain was a political dictatorship organised around **religious principles**. Had **powerful social controls** over individuals (such as confession, excommunication and so forth (even the King was not above this) The Church was generally involved in economic, political, military and cultural aspects of life.

The Bible was written in Latin and only the Church leaders and those who were educated could read the Bible. This gave the Church complete dominance and authority over the people. The ordinary people could not

challenge or question it. The Church controlled what the people were told. This was a universal situation and why Bible Translators risked being put to death in trying to bring the Bible in English to the common man. Anne Boleyn was a devout Christian, she eventually married Henry VII. After studying the English translation of the Bible she informed Henry of passages within the Bible that he could draw to the attention of the Pope to support his application for his divorce from Katherine of Aragon (the fact that she had been married to Henry's brother first, he died shortly after the marriage, the marriage was claimed not to have been consummated; she was then married to Henry) to allow him to marry Anne. Henry himself recognised the authority of the Pope and waited in vain for 7 years awaiting the Pope's agreement to the divorce. He was a devout Catholic himself and did not want to stop being a Catholic, but he was excommunicated by the Pope after his marriage to Anne.

Cardinal Wolsey Henry's Chancellor virtually run the country for a long time when Henry was young and spent much of his time away from court, hunting, playing sport etc.

By contrast, if we look at modern Britain, the picture is very different

The Church is no longer closely associated with the Church and government. The role of the Church has changed. It no longer has power in the running of the country, instead political parties have developed with professional politicians, who are responsible to the electorate (the people that vote for them)

The growth and development of scientific theories means that the Church **no longer** has a monopoly of knowledge. Society is now educated and encouraged to question and challenge ideas. The Church cannot spread and sustain unique and plausible ideas.

People are now educated, the Church can no longer control how people see and think about the world in which they live. One of the key features of modern religion is its **fragmentation (break-up) into smaller less politically influential organisations.**

Although it still has some moral influence in society, religious institutions appear to have lost many of their former social functions. The Church no longer has an **education function**, just as it long ago lost its **judicial function**, (the ability to

judge and punish deviants, for example). Politically it could be argued that the Church has been relegated to the role of a **pressure group**- occasionally consulted by governments in relation to matters seen to be religious, but no longer at the heart of government.

However, it could also be argued that the Church still has a voice and is not afraid to speak out against injustice, oppression, and other social issues. It seeks to raise awareness and the profile of a variety of worthy causes. (For example - the Archbishop of York spoke out against the BA debacle of sacking one of its workers for wearing a cross. You could site other examples such as the Dalai Lama travelling the world to speak out against the Chinese oppression of Tibet and Archbishop Tutu pulling out of the Nobel Peace Winners Conference in South Africa because the Dalai Lama was banned from attending, and some of the other examples.

The **anti-secularisation group** can be summed up as such:

- Did religious organisations in the past maintain a strong grip on the lives of **all** individuals in society
- Religious organisations in modern society, do **have a role to play** within our society, however, the **crucial point** here is that it is **very different** to their role in the past.
- The anti-secularisation argument doesn't dispute the fact that the relationship between Church, government and society may be different in modern society. There clearly is a separation from secular affairs over the past few hundred years. However, the anti-secularisation argument does question the extent to which this is evidence of secularisation, as opposed to evidence of a transformation in the role played by the church in modern societies. It is possible for the role of the Church to change without it necessarily losing its influence in relation to religious behaviour & beliefs.

(You could bring in here about how the Church is adapting itself to a changing society and to the needs of its people. You could give examples of the work and participation of Yo Yo Christian Charity working in partnership with schools, educating young people about the Christian Faith. You could also mention the

work of St. Oswald's, remember Mari, the Youth worker. They have lots of Youth groups, have a Christian Union meeting in Fulford every Friday, have their own rock group etc. Also the diversity of worship these days again you could talk about Al and his church where some have the opportunity to attend traditional worship at St Mikes, whilst others prefer more quirky and up beat styles of meetings, very different from worship in the past i.e. gym church, café church, pub church, rock church etc. Also Fiona's experiences of St. Mikes and then the episcopalian or evangelical style of church she also attends.

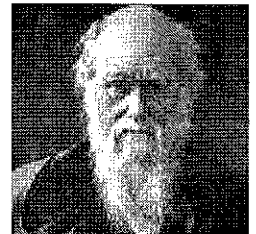
You could also mention about how many churches in the inner cities use their church as a community centre, offering job clubs, computer clubs, advocacy groups. They also run luncheon clubs, play groups etc. Some work with the homeless and drug addicts and go out on the soup runs to take food and hot drinks to the homeless and those in need. The fact that children are openly welcome now and they often have a corner with lots of resources for them to play during the service. No longer is it the old statement of Children should be seen and not heard. The vicar and congregation do not seem to get stressed if children are talking or crying. Indeed often parts of the service are geared to them and the vicar will often direct certain questions at them. One vicar I knew used to hide things around the church linked to his sermon for them to go off and find.

Talcott Parsons (Sociology Structure & Personality 1970) argues that whilst the Church is no longer directly involved in education and politics, it still has a strong influence on '**norms, values and moral guidelines**'.

He goes on to argue that although the Church has lost some of its roles, this actually **strengthens** the place of religion in people's lives because it has had to become more concerned with religious matters than at any time in the past. Because the Church was so closely involved in political life, it neglected its religious role. **Parsons** argues that modern religious institutions, having been stripped of their political function, are forced to turn to spiritual matters. The **Church** as an **institution** becomes more **specialised** in its functions; its role becomes **less political** and more **ideological** - rather than through direct involvement in the affairs of the State, religious institutions exert influence through the norms and values they put forward. **You could explain here how the role of the Church today has changed, it has responded and adapted**

itself to the needs of an ever changing society and with all the many social problems, such as poverty, loneliness, etc. It is very much now a Church in Action especially in the deprived inner city areas. Thus for Parsons the role of the Church is transformed in modern society; it performs a **different role**, but one that is no less important.

Peter Berger has argued that as the level of **knowledge and understanding** develops in any society, a natural consequence will be a **decline** in the **organisation** role of religious institutions. If the role of the Church is one of providing **knowledge** about the world; it is clear that this role must be damaged by the development of scientific ideas that **challenge** religious explanations of the natural and social world. In the **past**, people's desire for understanding the world around them is satisfied by the only form of **plausible explanation** that exists = **religion**.



However, once scientific ideas begin to develop i.e. Darwin's Theory of Evolution - the Church's role as **sole interpreter** of the world declines, and with this will come political decline. Religious explanations lose their **relevance, plausibility** and their **influence**.

Berger sees this **not as evidence for secularisation**, but merely evidence of a **changing role** for religious institutions. While **scientific ideas** have succeeded over religion in some areas, religious values, ideas, norms and so forth still provide people with moral guidelines by which to live their lives.

You could also support this idea by developing the point that whilst traditional styles of worship and Churches appear to be declining. There is much evidence to show that other religious groups are growing and flourishing such as the 'Black Gospel Church', Western Buddhism, House Church, Rock Church etc. The decline of traditional Church organisations, is not necessarily evidence of secularisation, just religion adapting itself to meet the needs of today's modern society. More than ever in the climate of war, & terrorism, people see the relevance & need for the philosophy of religion. You could mention here how R.E. is now one of the fastest growing and most popular subjects in schools above psychology. Also the fact that at Open Evenings and Parent's Evenings how parent's have

expressed their views on the relevance and importance of RE in today's world. Also some have even gone so far as to say that they see it as more important than maths!



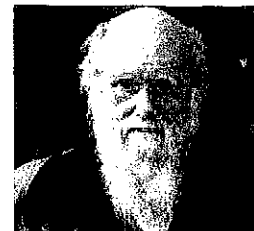
Sociology of Religion

Continued!

Within sociology there are broad levels of **agreement** that **modern religious organisations** have detached themselves in some way from their **obvious political role** in the **past**. However, as you might expect, such broad agreement rapidly gives way to specific **disagreement** about the meaning and significance of this detachment.

Talcott Parsons ("Sociology Structure & Personality", 1970) has argued that while **religious institutions** no longer have a **direct influence** over things like education and politics, their **indirect influence** is still **relatively strong** in terms of such things as **norms, values and moral guidelines**. He goes on to argue that although the Church has lost some of its roles, this actually **strengthens** the place of religion in people's lives because it has had to become more concerned with religious matters than at any time in the past. Because the Church was so closely involved in political life, it neglected its religious role. **Parsons** argues that modern religious institutions, having been stripped of their political function, are forced to turn to spiritual matters. The **Church** as an **institution** becomes more **specialised** in its functions; its role becomes **less political** and more **ideological** - rather than through direct involvement in the affairs of the State, religious institutions exert influence through the norms and values they put forward. Thus for Parsons the role of the Church is **transformed** in modern society; it performs a **different role**, but one that is no less important.

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We may simply be witnessing a reversal of ideological dominance, rather than a replacement of one by the other. Religion & scientific ideas may always have **co-existed**, the difference, in modern societies is that **scientific ideas** are **more plausible** in some areas of life than in the past. Thus the **role of religion** may have shifted from a focus on the explanation of everyday meanings (something that is taken over by scientific explanations to an explanation of '**deeper meanings**' - such as those of life and more importantly **death**).

Religious Practice

We will now go on to think about the extent to which people practice their religious beliefs.

Membership & Attendance:

This could give us a more reliable and valid picture of both current levels of religious practice in our society and enable us to compare these levels historically.

From a **pro-secularisation** point, the most notable features of statistics on Christian Church membership this century is the **remorseless decline in religious participation**

Christianity:

A 50% decline in membership. All Church membership declined from 30% to 12% of the adult population. Church of England membership declined from 13.5% to 4% of the adult population.



Pro-secularisation

Church statistics show two things:-

- The percentage of Christian Church members (Church of England and Roman Catholic - Trinitarian Churches) is quite small in terms of the population as a whole (15% in 1992)
- Although we must treat these figures with care. It is safe to assume that membership of religious organisations is not only in general decline; but that the decline is progressive- this could be that as older members die they are not being replaced.

Religious Participation - Attendance at religious services.



Historically we can use the **English Church Census** to track Church attendances over the past 150 years. Brierly argues there has been a decline in attendance over this period from a high of **50%** of the adult population in the **1850's** to a low of **10%** in **1989**

Finally the overall **decline** in religious practice is most **noticeable** in the larger Churches (Anglican, and Roman Catholic) where attendance has declined consistently. Among smaller **denominations** the picture is more patchy; with some showing a decline but others showing an increase.

- In the past 20 years there has been a steady **decline** in church attendance's generally
- Most **denominations** are so small that any slight changes tend to translate into large percentage fluctuations
- The methods of counting attendance at these denominations are highly **unreliable** - often little than guess work



more

Among **non-Christian denominations** in our society over the past 25 years. Brierly notes there has been a general increase in religious participation, as measured by **raw numbers of those attending services**

However, we need to be careful not to assume that this represents a change in the **pattern of religious association** from Christian to non-Christian religious affiliation and practice. Most evidence suggests that **non-Christian religious practice is limited** to particular cultural groups i.e. Hindus, Jews etc rather than conversions from Christianity.

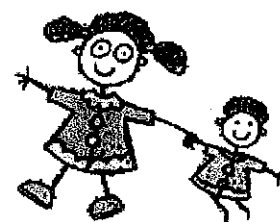
Immigrants to Britain, bringing their own religious practices, tend to have **higher levels of religious practice** (reflecting feelings of persecution common cultural identity etc. One of the functions of religion among such groups might be as a focus for the retention of some form of common identity and values rather than it being an indication of greater religiosity. As **first generation immigrants** settle and start families, their number **increase**. Meaning there are **more people in the religious participation age-bracket**, rather than an increase in religious practice.



The cultural group that has shown the **greatest decline** in religious participation over the past 25 years is the **Jews**; it is also the group that has been resident in our society the longest.

Among **sects and cults**, it does seem evident that there has been growth in participation over the past 25 years and this may well reflect a growing interest in these types of religions. **Scientology, Transcendental Meditation, the Moonies** and so forth. These sects and cults are proportionally very small in number, must number a few hundred members.

It is very **difficult** to establish **membership numbers** and **participation rates** because not only are these difficult to measure, but the sects themselves tend to **inflate their membership numbers** to present themselves as more established religious groups than their size would normally warrant.



From a **pro-secularisation** point-of-view, the **growth** in the number of different **sects and cults** is interpreted as evidence of **secularisation**, because of the **fragmentation** of religious practice. Sects and cults appear and disappear with great regularity and this type of **religious participation** is interpreted as a **general institutional weakening** of the role of religion because people seem to have an overall commitment to these types of religious organisation.



Nevertheless, the available evidence (given the **problems of reliability and validity**) indicates there has been a **general decline** in religious participation in Britain over the last 150 years. This decline also seems to be growing - it has, for example, increased over the past 25 years.

Church attendance's have generally **fallen** (although some smaller churches have seen an **increase** in membership).

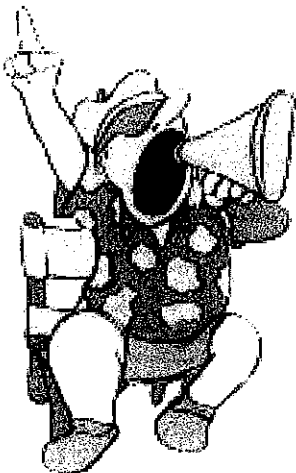
Protestant and Catholic Church attendance has fallen.

Church of England membership (measured in terms of **baptisms, confirmations** and so forth) has shown a **consistent decline**.

Acquavita ("The Decline of the Sacred in Industrial Society", 1979) has claimed that Britain is not alone (although the claim is made that Britain has become "the most secular nation in Europe")

Wilson ("How Religious Are We?") has further suggested that the influence of religious institutions has declined to such an extent in Britain that:

"Religion is no longer news, except when a clergyman commits a moral misdemeanour."
In short, the **pro-secularisation argument**, based on the analysis of **religious participation**, is that secularisation is indeed taking place.



However, from an anti-secularisation viewpoint, different interpretations have been placed upon the same figures. The concept of secularisation means a decline in the influence of the religious in everyday life, anti-secularisation theorists argue this is unproven by secularisation theorists. This is mainly because the religious participation of people in the past has been grossly overestimated.

David Martin ("Sociology of English Religion", 1967), for example, points out that questions relating to the reliability and validity of religious statistics are of fundamental importance in relation to the secularisation debate.

The demographic content of such statistics may not be valid. For example, religious practice is related to such demographic factors as age and class (different age groups and social classes have different levels of religious practice). Therefore, when looking at such statistics we need to be sure that demographic changes in society do not account for apparent rises and falls in religious practice.

The statistics are collected by We have little knowledge about whether they are systematically "educated guesses", whether attends a religious service, for a particular service (such as at



the organisations themselves. the accuracy of such figures - collected or simply based upon they include everyone who example, or only those who attend Easter or Christmas

The figures for "total attendance" don't distinguish between those who attend Church services 50 times a year and those who attend only once (the former, for example, may be counted as 50 different people). This is particularly important when looking at statistics of 19th century attendance, since some people attended Church services two or three times a day, rather than the single attendance that is the most common form of participation in our society.

If people don't go to Church regularly, the pro-secularisation interpretation tends to be religious belief has declined (that is, people are simply less religious). However, a different interpretation might be that people simply do not attend Church regularly. Martin's point here is that we cannot reliably infer the extent of people's religious belief from statistics about religious practice. People may still be religious; they may simply choose to express their beliefs in different ways.

As Martin notes - "In Victorian Britain, the emergent middle classes tended to use Church attendance as a means of 'creating and maintaining' a sense of **respectability**. regular Church attendance, for this class, was more a means of being seen, by others as 'pious', devout' and 'respectable' than as necessarily being indicative of strong religious beliefs..."

Demaroth and Hammond ("Religion in Social Context", 1969) note:

"We should avoid the quick assumption that Church members are always highly religious in their personal beliefs and activities, or that Church non-members are otherwise non-religious".

Martin's observations that, if it is true that **may have been inflated for social** - rather than questionable as to interpret declining progressive loss of



also raise the interesting point Church attendance's in the past by people using their attendance religious - reasons, then it is whether or not it is **valid** to attendance's as evidence of a religious faith in our society (we

are, of course, assuming that people nowadays attend Church for purely religious reasons - which may not be a valid assumption).

We should not neglect the idea that, for an unknown number of people, Church attendance serves a **social function**, at various times in their life. People may practice religion because it provides a source of **warmth, friendship and belonging**, rather than because they hold stronger religious beliefs than non-attenders.

The Church as a focus for **political dissent** in societies that do not allow freedom of political expression and assembly.

In **totalitarian** societies (for example, Eastern Europe under communism, some South American countries) where the **State** has a **monopoly of political organisation and expression**, the channels for political dissent that are open in democratic societies are closed. Dissatisfaction can't find its expression in "normal" political activity and the role of the Church may be one of a "focus of dissent", in that the Church may be the only "legitimate" way through which people can express their economic and political dissatisfaction...



Religious Thought...

If the evidence we have looked at so far (both for or against secularisation) is not particularly conclusive, we can look finally at a third possible measure of secularisation, that of **individual beliefs**. As we do this, it is important to keep the following in mind:

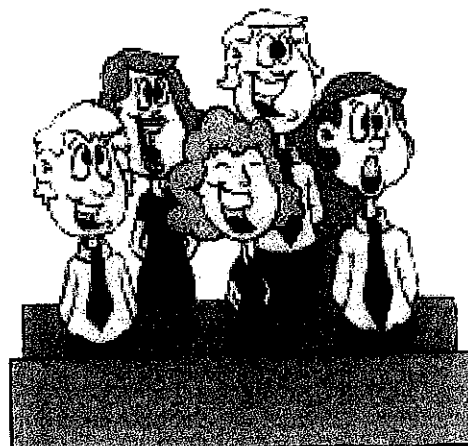
Anti-secularisation theorists are **not** necessary "**pro-religion**" (that is, such theorists do not necessarily set out to argue that religion is "alive and well" in our society). The anti-secularisation camp can, therefore, be divided into two basic positions:

1. Those who claim religion has **always** been important in our society and that it continues to be so up to and including the present day. This position is probably most closely identified with **Functionalist sociology**.
2. Those who argue religion has only ever been important to a relatively **small number** of people in our society. In this respect, **religious activity and belief** has stayed fairly **constant** and there is little evidence to support either the secularisation debate or the claim that religion is a fundamental human need.

Although there are huge **problems** involved in the **measurement** of religious beliefs, in general they are measured simply by **asking** people about their beliefs... There are few, if any, ways of **objectively verifying** the subjective responses to such questions...

The **hypothetical** nature of the questions (to **profess** a belief in something is not necessarily to **act** on that belief at all times) tends to make the answers less **reliable** and **valid**.

Also, in terms of the secularisation debate, there is **no comparable data** for religious **belief** in the recent **past**, let alone individual beliefs held one or two centuries ago...



Probably the best we can do is present evidence of religious beliefs drawn from **opinion polling** over the past few years and then interpret the evidence in relation to the pro-and-anti secularisation positions...



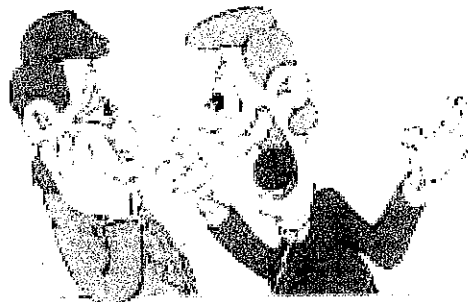
Opinion Polling evidence from 1991 suggests that a high proportion of people (approximately 75%) profess some kind of **belief in a "god" or supernatural power.**

However, when we look at the **strength** of these beliefs, only 23% of the population have "no doubts" about the existence of God.

When we look at various beliefs associated with religion and the supernatural (1957 - 1991) we find:

Substantial numbers of people have little or no belief in such things (less than 50% of the population believe in Heaven and less than 25% believe in Hell, for

The number of people in these ideas has over the last 20 - 40



who do profess a belief progressively declined years.

In terms of the **morality**

beliefs, considered in terms, for example, of people's belief in the **10 Commandments**, the extent to which people believe selected Commandments apply to themselves and whether or not they think others believe it, the evidence is again **mixed**.

surrounding religious

The overtly religious Commandments (1, 2 and 3) command considerably less support than the overtly moral Commandments (the Commandments that an individual could happily hold without necessarily having any religious belief).

Many people feel that Commandments apply to themselves, but are not obeyed by others - which suggests that people are less certain when judging other people's beliefs than when assessing their own.



Freud's Theory of Religion

- Religion is an illusion based on wish fulfilment
- Religion created by mind to help us overcome – inner psychological conflict, stress from structure of society, fear of dangers of natural world.
- Freud saw religion as answering people's inner needs.

Religion as an Aid to overcome Inner Psychological Conflict

- Religion form of neurotic illness
- Stems from unconscious mind
- Results from repressed traumatic memories
- Trauma usually sexual in nature
- Religion illusion resulting from sexual difficulties
- Mind's solution is to lock it away deep in the unconscious mind
- Reemerges later in form of religion
- His study on dreams led him to realise the unconscious mind contains vast stores of information we consider long forgotten

Criticisms

- Research shown religious people less neurotic than others
- If religion is universal than it cannot be abnormal
- Most people define the norm
- Reduces religion to ritual – more to it than ritual observance.
- Primal Hordes theory repudiated
- Oedipus Complex still highly controversial
- Reversal
- Criticised for very male orientated view of society
- Wish fulfilment – religion as comfort blanket not the reason for being religious
- Illusion – might be an illusion or story but might be a good story for culture to have.

- Scientific world view – moves towards this means society becomes health – no evidence i.e. Communist States no evidence to support any healthier than those with religion. Some evidence that the opposite is true
- Negative and atheist views – reductionist i.e. attempts to explain away religion.

Unconscious Mind

Freud's ideas about the mind, what it was like, where certain kinds of behaviour came from

- Projection of God the Father
- Religion is neurosis
- Wish fulfilment
- Oceanic Feeling
- Maturity
- Repression of unacceptable material into unconscious
- Projection of God the Father
- Oedipus complex
- Regression to the womb

Religion as Neurosis

- Religious activities bear resemblance to neurotic activities - i.e. repetitive actions (OCD) washing hands/switching off lights, locking doors.
- Deviation from this results in guilt and anxieties.
- Actions become 'sacred acts'
- No interruption tolerated often performed in private
- Similarity for Freud between religious acts & obsessive behaviour overwhelming. A
- Actions not based on logic
- Ritual hand washing not required to protect body from germs
- Germs become focus for neurotic fear
- Religious rituals repeated in relation to God who has no basis in fact
- Someone prevented from performing religious rituals becomes tormented by guilt, sense of own sin and fear of impending retribution

Maturity

- Psychological health would come when people stopped neurotic behaviour and faced up to realities of life and adapting to scientific world view.

Religion as an illusion to overcome the conflict between our Natures and Civilisation:

Freud shows how the nature of society and our most basic desires are at conflict with each other. Were conflicts such as the Oedipus Conflict left unchecked, society would not be able to function, and would probably result in anarchy and chaos. Society relies upon some sort of structure and order to function effectively. Those in government must have authority which will ultimately bring it into conflict with the desires of each individual. Religion provides a reason to submit to authority. It explains our suffering in terms of the need to obey an omnipotent God. It promises reward for suffering in the afterlife and thus makes society bearable. Religion therefore provides the necessary motivation for sublimation to occur. The most natural outlet being forbidden – it forces our libido into other areas.

Sublimation: - the process where the sexual instinct is redirected into other activities such as culture and art i.e. music or charity work

Religion as an illusion to help us overcome our fear of natural forces:

The most natural human response at being confronted by natural forces including death is one of panic and helplessness at our defencelessness and solitude. Religion helps this by creating the belief that we are not powerless, through religious devotion, we believe we can control them: religion offers hope and comfort. Religious belief then provides the adult with a 'Father Figure', who can protect him; he creates for himself the gods'.

Freud's Conclusion Regarding Religion:

We need to consider that whilst Freud argues that 'religion is an illusion, he does not offer any logical proof against the possibility of religion. He admitted that his arguments prove nothing, since God could exist objectively anyway. In practice, however, he pointed out that beliefs that are created in response to basic psychological needs turn out to be false. The beliefs of obsessional neurotics have no grounding in fact. Freud went on to argue that in the absence then of any other evidence for religion, we are justified in concluding that it is false. He goes on to completely reject all things religious.

Freud does however say **depriving people of religion seems needlessly cruel, 'countless people find their one consolation in religious doctrine and can only bear life with their help'.**

Freud admitted that religion has performed 'great services for civilisation. He also accepted that if religion were entirely positive, it would indeed be cruel to deprive people of it, even though it might be an illusion. He went on to argue that religion was not beneficial. It does not prevent people rebelling against the restrictions of society. Many believers abuse religion for their own purpose to justify social immoralities. He gave example of penance, the idea that if one sinned and then made a sacrifice to ask for forgiveness, then one was free to sin again. Religion has all too often been used as a tool against the oppressed to keep them oppressed. Freud believed that its necessity for mankind was over-rated.

Freud suggested that an alternative to replace religion was with a scientific, rational understanding of the world. This, he argued, would make people more willing to obey the demands of civilisation because they would see them as being for their own personal good.

The trauma behind the neurotic behaviour results from problems in the sexual development of the child. Freud refers to this as the 'Oedipus complex'. When child is used to having all the attention of its mother. When the libido is transferred to the sexual organ, there is already a rival for its affection in the form of the 'father'. The acute feelings of jealousy and hatred combine with the respect and fear previously felt for the father. Thus the father is viewed with ambivalence.

If its wishes thwarted, the child represses the conflict deep into the unconscious mind.

Even though the repressed event or desire may appear to be long forgotten, the mind continues to struggle to prevent it from re-emerging into the conscious. The result of this conflict is neurotic symptoms. One of these symptoms is religion, which Freud called the 'universal obsessional neurosis of mankind'

Support for Freud's Theory of Religion

Freud's arguments have caused much controversy when they become known. Some found them deeply offensive, others found them bizarre. However, as the Father of psychoanalysis, Freud was a much respected figure in various branches of psychology.

If we are to accept Freud's theories then two things at least must be established:-

- ✓ That the Oedipus complex is a universal sexual trauma
- ✓ That buried trauma can reappear in the form of religion

Support for the Oedipus complex

Freud used the work of Charles Darwin to speculate that in primitive societies, the social unit was the **primal horde**. Hordes were groups of people arranged around a single dominant male who had total authority over the group and held claim over all the females. Over time the resentment of the younger males grew until they joined together to kill the dominant male. This resulted in ambivalent feelings towards him; hatred on one hand, combined with veneration on the other. The strength of these feelings was so great that he became idolised and transformed into the totem of the group.

This shows that the Oedipus complex is not simply a personal trauma, but one that has affected all society at a historical level. It helps to explain why religion is universal, and why the concept of God is such a powerful one, because it stems also from historical experience that still affects us. Freud believed in some kind of psychological mechanism, whereby guilt for the original crimes is passed on genetically.

Freud saw this act as the beginning of religion. It explains the fact that in all humans (men) there is an Oedipus complex that must be controlled, and that there is a symbolic figure that induces guilt and fear, but is also sacred, revered, respected i.e. God who in monotheistic religion is thought of as Father.

PROJECTION;

God for Freud then was nothing more than projected contents of the unconscious mind. For Freud this projection explained many emotional and psychological disturbances that could be cured by seeing their unconscious cause and talking about it. And could also explain what occurred in dreams. Figures and events in dreams according to Freud were projections and could give clues if interpreted properly to the contents of the unconscious mind. For Freud figures and stories from religion particularly the figure of God were projections from the

unconscious mind, as a result of a repressed Oedipus complex suffered by the whole of humanity since the beginning of history.

Criticisms of Freud

Strengths

Religion is a cultural product. Religion was produced by society to explain the world in which they lived and provide answers. Provided society with a set of values and rules to build their lives on. Offers protection and reward defends society from nature and also itself. Helps people to live both as an individual but also as a community - thus strengthening society.

Weakness

Religion as Universal Neurosis

Research shown religious people are less neurotic than others. Less likely to suffer with mental illness, depression or be suicidal (Psychology of Religious Behaviour, Belief and Experience (1997) = Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi & Michael Argyle)

If religion is universal then cannot be deviant or abnormal - most people must surely conform to the 'norm'

Freud criticised for reducing religion to ritual. So much more to religion than ritual observance, the idea that continual following of these rituals alone will protect from damnation has been strongly criticised by religion itself.

Oedipus Complex & Primal Horde Theory

Whilst there is some research that supports the idea of repression, Freud's Oedipus Complex is still highly controversial. The Primal Horde theory has been totally repudiated. His theory depends on the idea that characteristics are inherited from one generation to the next. This was theory of evolutionary scientist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. Whose work, even during Freud's time was widely discredited. Freud held to this view not because of any scientific reasons but it supported the foundation of psychoanalysis. No evidence for primal horde patricide or genetic inheritance of guilt and fear. Some evidence for totemism, but not universal. Difficult to claim that repressed Oedipus Complex behind religion that is based on a matriarcal society of female deities. Oedipus Complex can only account for male God

Religion as Wish Fulfilment

Freud argued religion is a sort of comfort blanket. Religious people would argue that whilst religion itself can be a source of comfort, it is not the sole reason for being religious. Being religious can make people vulnerable i.e. persecution, bullying. Religion also requires facing up to ultimate questions,

who we are what happens when we die. It could be argued it is those who bury their head in the sand that are the ones in need of the comfort blanket.

Religion as illusion#

The question of whether religion has any basis in fact has been argued down the centuries. Freud may be right - religion may be an illusion. However the idea that illusion is bad can be criticised, i.e. illusion in the form of art, imagination and creativity is positive e. Religion might just be a story but it is a good story for culture to have.

Scientific worldview is progress

Freud argued when society moved away from religion & superstition and towards a scientific world view it would become healthy. History has seen this in the move to communism in Soviet Union & China. There is no evidence to suggest these society have been any healthier than ones that have retained religion, No evidence scientific outlook might be healthier than a religion one in fact there is some evidence the opposite is true.

Carl Gustav Jung

Whilst studying his 15yr old cousin, who claimed to be controlled by spirits, who changed her accent whilst in a trance, this fascinated Jung. This marked the beginning of Jung's interest in the supernatural which would remain with him for the rest of his life. He eventually became a lecturer in Psychiatry at the University of Zurich and it was here he met Sigmund Freud, and became his disciple.

Freud became the father-figure Jung had needed. However, because of Freud's views about the Oedipus complex, the relationship was problematic for Freud. He craved Jung's respect but at the same time he felt threatened by him. Eventually Jung could not accept Freud's negative view of religion and how he reduced all human behaviour to sexuality. As Jung began to publish his own ideas, a great rift developed between the two men, in 1913 Jung resigned from the Psychoanalytic Association founded by Freud and the two men had no further contact.

Jung's explanation of religion:

- Religion stems from **archetypes**
- These are situated in the collective unconscious mind
- An archetype is part of the structure of the mind which innately generates certain kinds of images
- **God-images** are generated by **God-archetype**
- We can never prove, whether or not God exists, *objectively*, outside the mind

Jung's view of the value of religion

- Religion is a positive force because it helps the individual to maintain mental health through the process of individuation
- Individuation is the innate drive, which integrates and harmonises all the elements of the **psyche**. It results in a mentally balanced individual, thereby preventing neurotic illness

Links between religion and individuation

- Individuation is governed by the self-archetype
- Any **archetypal** experience can be termed **religious**, since Jung's definition of a religious experience is one which **alters consciousness** and derives from **outside the conscious mind**
- The images produced by the self-archetype and which lead to individuation are the same **images of God** that are generated by the *God-archetype*
- Therefore Jung can affirm that religion is central to individuation

Criticisms:

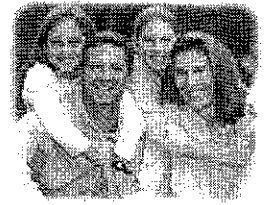
- Jung's methodology is flawed because he discounts the possibility of there being any empirical evidence to support a religious experience
- Jung's theory of the archetypes has been attacked
- Jung's theory of individuation fails to explain the uniqueness of religious experience and the importance of the God-images in their own right
- Atheists may cite Freud & Jung in their favour on the grounds that they offer comprehensive non-religious explanations for religious belief

Strengths:

- Religious believers could argue that psychological theories do not tell us anything about God's objective existence.
- Might argue that Freud & Jung reveal something about the way in which God makes his presence known to humans.
- Jung's theory for example might demonstrate that God made humankind in his image by placing blueprint of himself in our minds
- Regarding Freud **John Hick** suggests that 'in his work on the father figure, he may have uncovered one of the mechanisms by which God creates an idea of the deity in the human mind'.
- Hick's conclusion regarding Freud could apply equally effectively to Jung
-



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

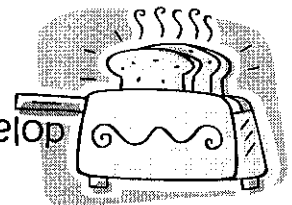


When looking at the question of human development we must give some consideration to the **humanistic** view of human nature. Abraham Maslow's theory is central to understanding human need, particularly in a caring context.

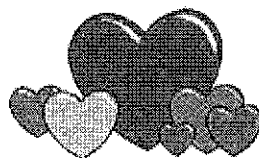
Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) believed that humans have an inbuilt framework of needs. We have a range of deficit needs which have to be satisfied before we can truly develop and achieve our full potential.

We have:-

- Psychological needs – for food, warmth, shelter, sex, etc needs – to feel physically and emotionally free from threat
- A need to belong – a need for social inclusion and attachment to others
- Self esteem needs – a need for respect and to develop a secure sense of self/self concept



If any of these needs are not met, then the individual will put time and energy into trying to meet these needs instead of progressing to the higher levels of development.



In an ideal world everyone's physical; safety and belongings needs would be met from birth. Everyone would grow up in a safe, secure, loving network of carers. The task of childhood and adolescence would be to develop a secure sense of self-esteem. Once self esteem is established, adulthood could focus on the development of a person's potential. Full development would include in depth intellectual and artistic skills. In a perfect world each person would be 'free' to **self-actualise**. Self actualisation means **'becoming everything one is capable of becoming'**. People who achieve self actualisation might have special qualities including:

- A more accurate perception of reality
- Greater acceptance of self and others
- Greater self knowledge
- Greater involvement with major projects in life
- Greater independence
- Creativity
- Spiritual and artistic abilities



People who self actualise achieve a high degree of satisfaction from life.





Maslow believed that only a few people have the chance to achieve self actualisation in North American or European culture. The majority of people spend most of their life struggling with deficit needs, feeling stressed and worrying about issues such as money or self esteem.



'The Paradox of Prosperity) (1999), a paper prepared for the **Salvation Army** by the Henley Centre, argues that although material prosperity is increasing in western society, the chances of fulfilling life are decreasing. By 2010 more people will experience life stress; fewer people will find satisfying relationships. Fewer people will feel safe and secure and fewer people will be able to meet the conditions for self actualisation.

FUNDAMENTALISTS

Fundamentalism is to be found within every major religion. It holds a conservative world view and looks to highlight the truths of a traditional faith. It seeks to promote and sometimes impose what they regard as the truth in a complex and pluralistic world. Over the past 30 yrs the emergence of a militant form of fundamentalism has caused alarm specially when linked to such events as 9/11, attack k on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001 and 7/11 the London bombings in 2005.

It is not a new concept and goes back to the 18th Century when Christian British & American preachers delivered powerful sermons describing the horrors of hell and damnation in great detail. However, the term fundamentalism only surfaced in 1920 when British & American theologians published religious pamphlets that promoted the essential basic beliefs of Christianity. They were called 'The Fundamentals, A Testimony of Truth'

Causes of Fundamentalism

- Emerged as a response to a perceived threat against religious beliefs
- 19th Century - Jews, Christians & Muslims believed their faith was under attack
- 20th Century - became more widespread and extended to other world religions
- 1970's term generally confined to Christianity
- As things changed, it became easier to travel around the world, communications system meant that people could discover religious, cultural and social differences - the idea that your own faith was the 'norm' began to be challenged

Threat to religious belief was threefold

- Textual criticism of sacred writings
- General acceptance of scientific explanation of life
- Increasing influence of secular society

As sacred writings began to be analysed - doubts began to be expressed about authorship i.e. was Moses really the author of the Pentateuch - the first 5 books of the Old Testament. Did some of the events actually happen? The New Testament was also challenged, questioning its traditional authorship and historical accuracy. Many Christians found this hard to accept.

What made it worse was that some Christians seemed willing to accept some of these criticisms so the threat was coming from both inside and outside of their religion. This resulted in them rejecting all criticisms of the Bible. Jewish fundamentalists similarly began to observe the Mitzvot (613 laws) in the Torah more strictly than ever before. Criticism of the Qur'an is forbidden, so Islam has been relatively untouched by textual analysis.

Scientific Explanations

One of the major threats to religious belief began with Charles Darwin's and the publication of 'The Origin of the Species' that undermined the belief in a 6,000 year world and a six day creation. By the end of the 19th century as the concept of evolution became more widely accepted and explained social behaviour and religious belief. The reaction of fundamentalists was to totally reject any scientific views which conflicted with their own stories in the Book of Genesis. In America in 1925 in what was known as 'Monkey Trial' as a result of pressure from American fundamentalists. A secondary school science teacher called John Scopes was prosecuted and fined in Tennessee for teaching evolution.

Secular authority

As the role of the church has significantly changed over the last 150 years resulting in its losing its political power and as scientific thought and rational thinking became more widespread it lost influence over society in general. This worried many religious believers. Jews & Muslims were particularly worried about secular values rather than religious truths. Fundamentalism is a response to anxieties that society tolerates beliefs and practices that radically differ from those understood by religious believers to be God given. The Arab Israeli conflict Ultra Orthodox Jews wants Israel to be a Jewish state, and see the conflict in terms of defending God's land against God's enemies. Many Muslim fundamentalists regard Western Imperialism (European occupation of non-European land) and modernity, as undermining Islamic traditions. Some calling for a Holy War against non-Muslims as an expression of Jihad, but also want countries to be governed by God given Shari'a law.

There have been Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist & even Confucian fundamentalists. More recently Buddhist fundamentalist fought against Hindu Tamils.

Characteristics of Fundamentalism - 9 characteristics have been identified but the nature of fundamentalism varies from one religion to another and not all nine characteristics are to be found in any one group.

- ✓ Reaction to marginalisation of religion
- ✓ Selectivity
- ✓ Moral dualism
- ✓ Absolution and inerrancy
- ✓ Millennialism & messianism
- ✓ Elect membership
- ✓ Sharp boundaries
- ✓ Authoritarian leadership
- ✓ Behavioural requirements

YOU NEED TO READ AND MAKE NOTES ON THE ABOVE FROM YOUR TEXT BOOK

Strengths

Most fundamentalist are law abiding and peaceful people

Militant extremists are small minority

Those who hold fundamentalist views have strong convictions, unshakeable faith and often great courage. They are sincere and have a strong sense of community

It is a protest against selfish values & ways of life. It is a wakeup call to society to take life seriously

Weakness

Some are arrogant, intolerant and lacking warmth and compassion for anyone who does not share their beliefs

This intolerance may be expressed verbally but also can result in violent action in order to defend what they see as the truth

Many see things as black or white and do not accept there are grey areas. They sometimes take religious texts out of context to justify a predetermined attitude or course of action

There is evidence that fundamentalism in Britain is growing, in churches and mosques, publication of literature, TV and the internet. Whilst most are peaceful and law abiding, some are more militant and have expressed their beliefs through terrorism.

NRM New Religious Movements

Religion like most other things is constantly changing. New groups and breakaway groups from traditional religion are part of the process of keeping religion relevant and alive in an ever changing society. Over the last 150 yrs there has been an unprecedented increase in these movements especially from 1950's onwards.

Nature of New Religious Movements

- ✓ Can be essentially different from one another
- ✓ Many variations of an established religion - some opposing change some supporting particular teachings that are now no longer used. Others looking to incorporate new ideas into the religion. Other movements are a mix of religious traditions whilst others attempt to find a new sense of the Divine
- ✓ Emergence of a new religious movement vary from movement to movement similarly, the elements of what comprises a NRM differ enormously
- ✓ Some exist for a short time whilst others exist for centuries and become part of the established religion. (Methodism is a good example of this - whilst others are regarded as a fringe religion such as Jehovah's witnesses)

Causes of NRM

- ❖ Disillusionment with established religion
- ❖ Sense of disadvantage or deprivation
- ❖ Social change
- ❖ Reaction to secular society
- ❖ Contemporary emphasis on self
- ❖ Emergence of charismatic leadership

Disillusionment with established religion:

Well established religions lose their spark and vitality after a while. Beliefs & attitudes are compromised to fit in with an ever changing society. Followers feel it is no longer being faithful to the original views and values so breakaway and form their own organisation.

Example of Kimbanguism in Africa and the Jewish Havurot movement. However some NRM are created by those outside established religion, such as Scientology and Eckankar.

Sense of disadvantage & deprivation

- Some sociologists suggest NRM likely to emerge from those in lower social groups in society. Weber for example argued people need an explanation of why they are in their social position. NRM offer what he calls a 'theodicy of disprivilege' (religious explanation for why some people are socially disadvantaged) by declaring the world as corrupt and affirming members as an elite.

- Niebuhr & Treoltsch believed NRM arise out of poverty. Glock & Stark pointed out that deprivation may be other than economic, i.e. lack of status, chronic ill health, no prospects. People join NRM to alleviate their deprivation.
- This seems to be an important element in the origins of some NRM such as Rastafarian & Black Muslim movements. Many who joined the Branch Davidians and Peoples Temple were black and working class. However, many more who join NRM are clearly not deprived i.e. Scientology appears to attract prosperous, confident people including celebrities

Social Change

- Wilson believed NRM develop out of radical social change that disrupts normal life. Methodism in 18th Century England & Wales is seen as a response by workers to the disruption & uncertainty of life in new industrial areas. The changes in contemporary society over past 50yrs are seen as ideal conditions for the found of NRM - offering a sense of community & belonging and providing support & stability when everything else seems uncertain and unreliable.
- Mass media inform & promote diversity of belief
- Multi-cultural societies bring different traditions, ideas & beliefs and NRM fit in with the concept of alternative forms of religion and spirituality within society.

Reaction to secular society

- Another sociologist Sorokin saw NRM as a response to a world dominated by technical, scientific, rational & impersonal and saw society as a form of pendulum which swung between extremes of materialism & spirituality
- 1960's a time of affluence in Britain & USA many NRM began.
- Counter culture began including hippies, 'flower people', and soft drugs. Western Zen groups, Hindu movements such as Divine Light Mission emerged following a simple and ascetic life-style attracting young and affluent.

Contemporary emphasis on self

- In contemporary society emphasis on personal happiness & fulfilment, developing own moral values fits in well with the ideal of contemporary society
- People experiment with different forms of spirituality, in same way people move from job to job - individuals can choose their own spiritual path and decide what is true & best for them. NRM fit into this way of thinking.

Emergence of charismatic leadership

- Founder who has extraordinary powers or gifts.
- Majority founded by individuals who have attractive personalities, dynamic energy and exceptional powers of persuasion i.e. Moonies formed by Sun Myung Moon and ISKCON - Hare Krishna movement formed by the Indian guru Swami Prabhupada

Types of NRM

- ✓ It is difficult to generalise but perhaps the distinction between NRM is based on their general attitude to the world around them.
- ✓ Some are world rejecting, (separate themselves from society, they consider the world an evil place, the only way to honour God is to remove themselves from society, either by living in a community with mothers of the same mind or devoting their life to worshipping, evangelising and working for the movement. Leader's teachings and instructions are obeyed without question. Commitment and loyalty to the movement is paramount are accepted
- ✓ Some are WorldAffirming - accept most of values & goals of contemporary society. Society has lots of good points and society benefits when people are encouraged to achieve their full potential. More emphasis on achievement as a way of achieving happiness than on dogmatic beliefs
- ✓ World-accommodating
- ✓ Neither fully accepts nor totally rejects values of contemporary society. World in general moved away from life God ordained and believe society need religious revival to experience spiritual renewal.
- ✓ Leadership tends to be shared - co-operate with other religious groups
- ✓ Religious Movements change over time and move away to another form i.e. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) ISKCON - Family Federation for World Peace & Unification were originally in world rejecting category but are now more world accommodating. Even some of the Amish now have some interaction with their local communities and sell goods directly to tourists. What is important is the category type determines which characteristics are paramount in a movement.

Characteristics of NRM

- ❖ Protest group
- ❖ Many of its beliefs practices & values rejected by society
- ❖ Claims to have a monopoly of the truth or exclusive insight into some aspects of life
- ❖ Some beliefs & teachings never publicly proclaimed or discussed
- ❖ Founded & led by charismatic individuals who are regarded in special way
- ❖ Differs from traditional religions by recruiting member mainly by conversion
- ❖ Movement exercise strict control over its members

Future of NRM

- NRM will continue to develop in future
- Factors that have led to their emergence in the past, likely to continue
- Causes are unlikely to disappear
- Needs of different groups, i.e. ethnic minority socially disadvantaged disillusionment with established religion likely to remain catalyst for emergence of NRM.
- Individuals search for meaning & purpose of life and charismatic individual's part of human nature.
- Over time NRM change, diversify; become less hostile, until cease to exist. Some modify to fit in with society or replaced by other movements that fit in better at that time

- NRM are likely to persist as a form of religious express for the foreseeable future.