

## Unit 4 Authority - Religion & State

### Christianity & Islam

#### Key concepts

#### Laws

- Rules and agreed limits to behaviour and action
- Written statements that define acceptable behaviour
- Duties and expectations of people and communities

#### Community

- A company or fellowship of people
- A group of people who have something in common
- A religious 'family' or group

#### Duty

Something a person is expected to do or be because:

- It is the law or part of a contract
- Of conscience or religious beliefs
- It is the accepted pattern of behaviour or action
- It is expected as a result of one's job or responsibility

#### Conscience

- An inner voice that keeps a person on the right track
- The way a person knows right from wrong
- An innate moral sense that guides actions and responses
- Something that helps a person choose right and avoid wrong.

#### Human Rights

- The things a person should expect to be able to have or do.
- What has been agreed that everyone should be given
- Something to which a person is entitled because they are human.

## **Justice**

- Fairness
- Where everyone has equal provisions and opportunity
- Honest actions
- Freedom from oppression
- Where human rights are observed
- When people treat each other without discrimination or prejudice.

## **Laws and Rules**

### **Laws**

Laws are made by the government, in the Houses of Parliament, and are enforced by the police and Law Courts.

Some laws are made by local councils, and these too are enforced by the police and law courts.

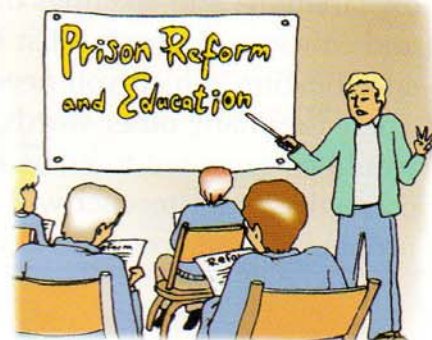
### **Rules**

Rules on the otherhand are agreements about how something is done or the actions that are allowed in a certain place or activity. E.g. sporting games, school. They are important so that everyone knows what can or cannot be done.

There are also rules about belonging to a certain group (cubs), a certain place (library), or a piece of equipment (hired machinery).

Breaking laws and rules usually result in some sort of penalty, which could be a fine, community service, being sent off from a game or being banned. It could also be a prison sentence, depending on the crime.

# How do we treat people who break the laws?



## Retribution

A form of revenge on behalf of those who were wronged or subject to attack.

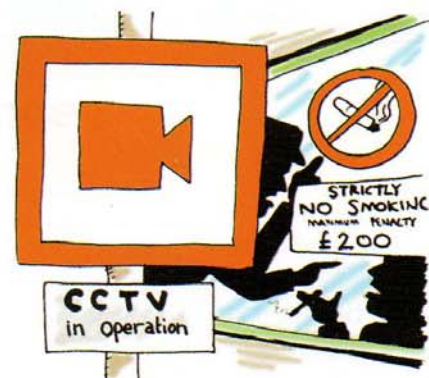
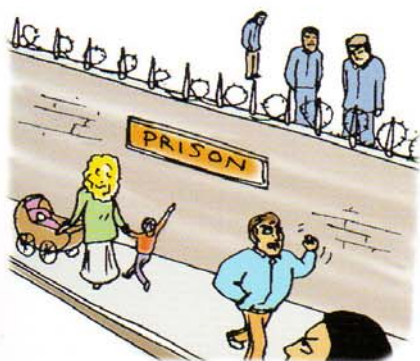
## Reparation

Criminals should have the right to 'pay' for the wrong they have done – to show they are sorry and 'repair' the damage done.

## Reform

Trying to ensure the criminal is helped to change their approach and way of life.

## Aims of Punishment



## Protection

Making sure that all people, and society itself, is kept free from possible recurring of a crime by a criminal; criminals themselves also need protection.

## Vindication

To show that the law and authority are of supreme importance; and ensure that the law is upheld, and justified.

## Deterrence

To try and deter (or discourage) people from committing crimes at all, because they know what the punishment is, and know it will be given to those caught committing a crime.

## What about Religious Laws?

When people belong to a religious community they also have special or sacred laws/duties which they follow. These often come from sacred or holy books of teachings that the whole community is expected to follow. They are seen as the ultimate form of authority as they are believed to come either from God directly, or through inspiration, or because they have deep roots in the history and tradition of the faith.

That means that they are not options to follow, but have a deeper basis, which puts a stronger requirement or sense of duty and responsibility on the part of the believer. For this reason, these act as an authority which people will often consult for guidance, for inspiration, for challenge and for comfort. Many people will consult their sacred texts when they are facing an issue or dilemma.

## CHRISTIANITY †

**B**ible is the name given to the Christian Scriptures. It is made up of two parts, the Old and the New Testaments. Altogether there are 66 different books in the Bible (written in Hebrew and Greek), covering many centuries of life and faith. The Bible has a special place in worship, and many Christians read from it every day.

**I**nspired by God. For some Christians this means it is literally 'the Word of God'; for others, it is believed that God speaks through the Bible, by inspiring Christians as they read and consider its insights and the timeless stories and messages that were written by people inspired by God.

**B**asis of faith – the Bible is the source book of the Christian faith, and it is, particularly in Protestant Churches, seen as the supreme authority in matters of doctrine and belief. This means that it needs to be read, studied and interpreted, by individuals and communities.

**L**iving Word – is the term used by Christians to describe Jesus. They believe him to be 'God made Flesh', and so the clearest way through which God and his will and purpose can be known. This is why the Gospels are so important; they tell of the life and teachings of Jesus, and were written to inspire faith in him.

**E**ssential reading. That is why the Bible has been translated into many different languages, as Christians believe people should read it for themselves and be inspired by it, and try to live according to its teachings and examples.

### *How do Christians treat people who break the laws?*

'Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'

Romans 12: 17-21

Christians would turn to the Bible for support and guidance. One passage that would be important for this issue would be:

Christianity is a religion of forgiveness. It teaches that by following the examples of Jesus people are forgiven by God, and so believers should act in a similar manner and forgive others.

This does not mean liking the person. When Pope John Paul II survived an assassination, he asked for mercy for the person who had tried to kill him.

However, some Christians would also argue that although it is good to forgive someone for a wrong they have done, and give them a new start, there is also the idea of justice, and that means that there should be a punishment. They would say that punishment and forgiveness can – and should – go together.

## ISLAM

**Q**ur'an is the collection of messages revealed by Allah to the Prophet Muhammad over a period of 23 years. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is speaking the word of Allah.

**U**ltimate guidance for Muslim life. It covers all aspects for all times – unchanging. The message and rules in the Qur'an are for all time. For this reason the Qur'an should be read in Arabic (as it was revealed). Many Muslims become hafiz (learn the Qur'an off by heart).

**R**espect is shown by the way the Qur'an is treated. When not in use it should be stored on a high shelf and wrapped in cloth. Before handling it a person should be in a state of wudu and in a suitable frame of mind. When it is being read it will often be placed on a wooden stand.

**A**khlaq (person's attitudes, conduct and ethics) are described in the Qur'an. The Islamic law (shariah) comes from the Qur'an and Sunnah as it details whether actions in life are halal or haram and how to live the way that Allah wishes.

**N**ations which have become Islamic States have adopted the shariah law as the law of the country.

### *How do Muslims treat people who break the laws?*

Within Islam forgiveness and reconciliation are very important but so also is the need to protect the whole of society.

Punishment is seen as an integral aspect of justice to stop people straying from what is good and just.

For many Muslims there are two acts which deserve capital punishment.

- Murder
- Openly attacking and threatening the Muslim way of life, having previously belonged to Islam

'The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then he who was your enemy will become like a close friend.'

Surah 41:34

'The reward for an injury is an equal injury in return, but whoever forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah.'

Surah 42:40

## What about Capital Punishment?

### **Christians**

Generally, most Christians do not agree with capital punishment.

\*They try to follow the commandment 'Thou shalt not Kill'.

\*They believe that all life is sacred

\*They try to show compassion not revenge, like Jesus.

### **Muslims**

Two crimes are seen as serious enough for execution (capital punishment). They are:

- Murder
- Openly attacking Islam

There are no other reasons which permit Capital punishment.

## What happens when Secular and Religions meet?

The term 'secular' means something that is not religious.

Most governments are secular, and many laws of the land are secular.

In some countries there is a partnership between the church or main religious group and the state authorities. For example, in Britain, the Church of England is the 'established church' and as such has a right to speak and vote in matters of government, and the queen is the head of the Church. This also means that people have a right to ceremonies.

E.g.

Christian Religious wedding ceremonies are recognised by the state as legal.

Christian Burial Services.

## Islam

Some countries are called 'Islamic states', as they exercise the Shariah laws - here the religious laws are the laws of the state, and apply to everyone, regardless of their religion. E.g. holiday makers. Shariah means 'straight path' and gives both rules and punishments. It is based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, and it is believed to be relevant for all time.

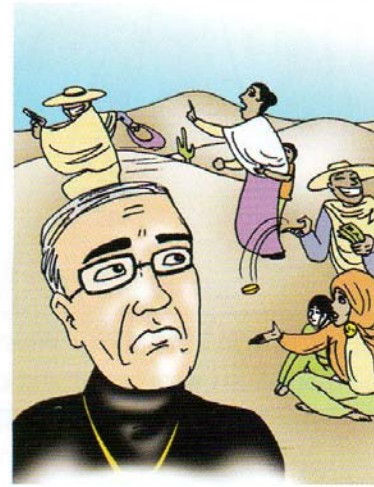
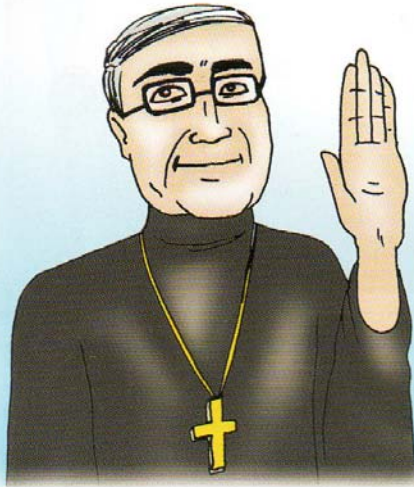
Sometimes there are times when secular laws have been wrong. E.g. when basic human rights are not met.

Sometimes secular laws and religious laws conflict and then it is left to the individual who has to think through their conscience and make a decision.

Often religious leaders have been in the front line campaigning for those who do not have the basic human rights, or who face serious discrimination and prejudice.

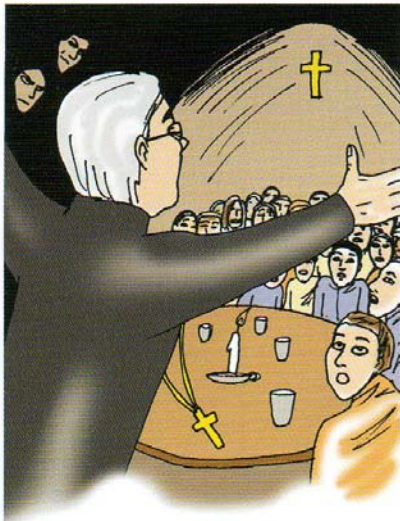
CHRISTIANITY †

OSCAR ROMERO



1. Oscar Romero was born in El Salvador in 1917. After training to be a carpenter he decided to become a priest and was ordained in 1942. He became Archbishop of El Salvador in 1977.

2. In the 1960's there was much crime and corruption in El Salvador. Some people were very wealthy, but many people were very poor. To begin with, Romero decided not to speak out against all the corruption that he saw.



3. His views changed after a close friend of his was murdered. He knew that he had to speak out against the injustices, and openly criticised the government. He held meetings which had been banned by the government.

4. Protestors in the church became targets of violence. Government slogans included 'Be a patriot – kill a priest.' After many threats, on 24 March 1980, soldiers burst into the cathedral and gunned Romero down while he was celebrating the Mass.



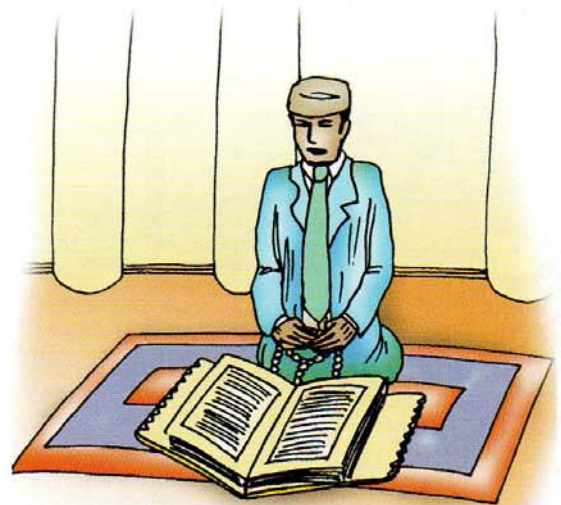
1. When the Prophet Muhammad was born about 570 CE there were many corrupt practices happening in Makkah.



2. As a young man he showed his concern for justice by becoming a member of a group to protect the safety and rights of strangers. He was called Al-Amin 'The Trustworthy'.



3. After the revelation of the Qur'an to The Prophet, there are many examples of times when he spoke out and acted against the corrupt practices of his day. He showed great respect for women, disagreed with female infanticide, and rid the Kaabah of the idols which had been placed there.



4. For many Muslims they will try to follow the examples set by The Prophet through his actions (sunnah) and sayings (hadith).