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Clare Lloyd and Idris Morar
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AQA GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES **ESSAY SKILLS GUIDE**

Themes, Christianity & Islam

Peter Cole, Richard Gray, Clare Lloyd and Idris Morar

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Key areas of study

- Beliefs and teachings about sin and salvation
- Sin, including original sin
- The means of salvation, including law, grace and Spirit
- The role of Christ in salvation, including the idea of atonement

Key examples

Original sin: *The traditional belief that because of the original sin by Adam, human beings have inherited Adam's nature of rebellion against God.*

God's law: *The Maker's instructions of how we should live, such as the Ten Commandments and teachings of the Old Testament prophets and Jesus.*

Atonement: *The teaching about the reconciliation between God and human beings, accomplished through the death of Jesus.*

Key facts and discussion points

- Surely the account of Adam and Eve and the garden of Eden is not literally true?

This question is very much like the question about Genesis 1 and the creation of the Universe. Christians are divided. Some Christians believe that the accounts in Genesis of Adam and Eve and the garden of Eden are literal. Adam's disobedience has meant that this disobedience and rejection of God's authority and rule is inherited by every human being. Those Christians who take the story as non-literal believe that once sin entered the world, people have a bias towards rebelling against God's authority and rule.

- Why can't God just forgive sin without going through the costly death?

Surely, if he is all-loving and all-powerful, he could forgive us? However, God is also perfectly just and there is something about the nature of sin that means that God cannot ignore or overlook sin. At the Last Supper, Jesus made it clear that he was dying in order to save us from the consequences of our sin. It is a mystery, but the New Testament suggests that in some way Jesus died



Key thinkers/beliefs

Christians believe that God created the world and humankind.

Sin entered the world when Adam disobeyed God – either literally or figuratively.

After sin entered the world, human beings were biased to be self-centred rather than God-centred.

The consequences of this rejection of God, of not following the Maker's instructions, meant that there was separation between God and human beings, both now and after death.

God in his love and grace took the initiative to make it possible to restore this broken relationship.

The means by which the consequences of sin were removed and forgiveness received, was through the death of Jesus.

This restored relationship to those who through faith turned back to God meant that they could experience God's presence now and be with God after death.

God gives believers a new nature, which St Paul describes as a new creation.

Salvation, this rescuing from the consequences of our rebellion against God, was nothing that we did but was God's free and gracious act.

It was immensely costly to God, since it was achieved at the great price of Christ dying on the Cross.

Key terms



- Grace:** The free and undeserved favour of God towards human beings.
- Salvation:** Being rescued by God from the consequences of our rebellion against him.
- Sin:** Rebellion against God in thought, word or deed, the consequences of which exclude us from the presence of God. Sin is a rejection of God's authority.

Key quotes



- So the Lord God banished him [Adam] from the garden of Eden. (*Genesis 3:23 NIV*)
- ... the birth of Christ was about God entering the world in order to redeem it. (*Alister McGrath*)
- For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (*Romans 3:23 NIV*)
- For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. (*Romans 5:19 NIV*)
- For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (*Romans 6:23 NIV*)
- God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood. (*Romans 3:25 NIV*)
- ... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. (*Hebrews 9:22 NIV*)
- This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (*Matthew 26:28 NIV*)
- For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. (*1 Peter 3:18 NIV*)
- Jesus did not come to live as an example of how to die as a martyr, but as a substitute, taking the place that we deserve in order that we might enjoy what we don't deserve. (*Alistair Begg*)
- Before we can begin to see the Cross as something done for us, we have to see it as something done by us. (*John Stott*)
- For it is by grace that you have been saved. (*Ephesians 2:8 NIV*)
- She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. (*Matthew 1:21 NIV*)
- Through salvation our past has been forgiven, our present is given meaning, and our future is secured. (*Rick Warren*)
- Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation is here. All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ. (*2 Corinthians 5:17–18 NIV*)



in our place. St Paul wrote, 'While we were still sinners Christ died for us' and 'God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.' (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21)

- If we all have a bias towards sin, how can we be blamed for our sin?

Christians who believe that the story of Adam and Eve is literal would argue that as we are all descendants of Adam, we all inherit his nature and so inherit a bias towards rejecting God's rule and authority. The Bible also makes clear that we have free choice, and we often freely choose to disobey God's rules. Indeed, the Bible says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. So, by nature and/or free choice we sin. Therefore, we can be blamed for our sin.

Evaluation focus



Whether belief in original sin means human beings are not to blame for their sins

In this answer you:

- Should give reasoned arguments in support of the statement
- Should give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- Should refer to religious arguments
- May refer to non-religious arguments
- Should reach a justified conclusion

Sample answer

The Book of Genesis in the Old Testament recounts the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It describes how God told Adam that he was free to eat from any tree in the garden but not from the tree of knowledge. If he did then he would die. However, the serpent tempted Eve to eat the fruit from the tree, and then she tempted Adam, who also ate. This disobedience to God caused a separation with God. The Christian belief is that this disobedient nature of rebellion against God is inherited by all human beings.

If this is so, then I can see that it is unfair to blame anyone for their sins, as they are born with a bias towards disobedience of God's rule. It is their very nature, so they cannot do anything about it. Roman Catholics believe that this original sin bias can be removed through baptism. Though they may still sin, it will be through their own choice.

It seems hard to believe that God blames us for sin, yet he has created us with a bias towards it. The whole idea of an original Adam and Eve and a garden seems to be more a picture story than an actual event. Descriptions of trees of knowledge and snakes talking are seen as symbolic. Therefore, many Christians see it as story expressing our individual rebellion against God and how that breaks our relationship with God. In this understanding of the story, we are to blame for our sins, as we deliberately go against God's commands. It rejects the idea of an inherited bias that comes from Adam and Eve's disobedience, and so rejects the traditional understanding of the doctrine of original sin.

Yet it does seem a common human experience that we sin. Every human being seems aware that they have done things they should not have done. Paul said, 'I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.' So perhaps we do have a bias towards disobedience but that still does not mean the story in Genesis is literal. We must just accept that we don't know where the bias came from.

These comments directly identify the focus of the debate about inherited disobedience.

These comments introduce an alternative way of understanding inherited disobedience and sin.

This part of the response demonstrates a logical chain of analysis and reasoning that is consistent with the arguments presented.

These sections demonstrate evidence of religious teachings from sources of authority and different denominations.

The conclusion suggests a way of resolving the debate based upon the common understanding of a 'bias' towards disobedience and sin.

Final comments

This answer includes all the features of a good evaluation. The answer has a very mature understanding of the difficulties involved in the notion of inherited sin while at the same time suggesting solutions based upon evidence. The conclusion makes sense and is consistent with the paragraphs leading up to it.



Evaluation Toolkit

Remember the colour-coding as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Make observations and insights | Balance arguments and counter-arguments |
| Provide evidence & examples | Include logical & consistent arguments |
| | Come to a conclusion |

Evaluation focus



Whether it is possible to be sinless

Instructions

Answer the evaluation focus opposite. Make use of the Evaluation Toolkit, to help you build up your answer. You'll find useful information under convenient headings in the key materials box below to help you, but you can also use your own class notes.

Key materials

Possible observations and insights

- Biblical understanding of sin – rebellion against God in thought, word or deed.
- Sin excludes us from the presence of God.
- Sin is a rejection of God's authority.
- The story of Adam and Eve describes the first sin.

Possible arguments and counter-arguments

- The traditional Christian teaching is that we all sin.
- Being tempted is not the same as being sinful.
- Original sin – we are born with a bias to sin.
- Catholics believe baptism removes original sin, so it is possible to not sin after baptism.
- Some people seem to live good lives and keep God's commandments.
- Jesus didn't sin, so it must be possible not to sin.
- But Jesus was God. God cannot sin.
- But Jesus was also human, so it may be possible to be sinless.
- Jesus needed to be sinless in order to save us.

Evidence from the Bible and Christianity

- I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. (*Romans 7:15 NIV*)
- If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (*1 John 1:8 NIV*)
- For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (*Romans 3:23 NIV*)

- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (*2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV*)
- He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. (*1 Peter 2:22 NIV*)

Possible examples

- Jesus' temptations.
- Our need for salvation.

Critical analysis/logical consistency

- The Bible makes clear that all human beings sin.
- The only example of a sinless person is Jesus.
- If the Bible is the Word of God then what it states is trustworthy.
- But is the Bible the Word of God, and even if it is, is it understood and interpreted in the right way?

Possible judgements/conclusions

- It is possible to never sin, as Jesus was human and never sinned.
- It is not possible to be sinless. All have sinned and all need saving.
- Jesus is a unique case, as he was God.
- Human experience is that we all sin.
- After death we will be made perfect and then we will not sin.
- So it is possible not to sin, but not until we have eternal life.

Further quotation:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin.
(*Hebrews 4:15 NIV*)

Evaluation focus



Whether the belief in the atonement is reasonable

In this answer you:

- Should give reasoned arguments in support of the statement
- Should give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- Should refer to religious arguments
- May refer to non-religious arguments
- Should reach a justified conclusion

Sample answer

Since the time of Adam and Eve, Christianity teaches that human beings have rebelled and disobeyed God and the result is that we have all become separated from God. Christianity centres on the Cross, which reminds Christians that Jesus, the Son of God, was crucified.

The Christian doctrine of the atonement is that this separation between God and human beings has been bridged, by God, by means of the death of Jesus. Paul wrote, 'God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood.' And in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul states that Christ died for our sins.

So the Bible is quite clear about atonement. However, it is difficult to understand how one person's death on a cross can remove the barrier of sin for all people. Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God. So, Jesus is no ordinary person. But is it reasonable to think that Jesus is both fully human and fully God? And even if he is, how does his death on a cross remove sin?

Couldn't God just forgive our sins? Why does a terrible death have to take place? Isn't God a God of love, yet the solution to sin that God has worked out involves suffering and pain? Such a solution seems contrary to the nature of God and so is surely unreasonable to believe. However, those who believe the Bible is the word of God and God's revelation to us may agree that they do not understand the atonement but will accept it. For them, it is reasonable to think that just because we can't understand it, it doesn't mean to say it is unreasonable to believe and trust in God's word. God's ways are not our ways, and it is not surprising that we don't understand. However, God has promised us that we can be forgiven and inherit eternal life.

Those who do not think the Bible is trustworthy or are atheists may will see the atonement as a doctrine that is barbaric and nonsensical – a myth belonging to an age long gone. However, does faith always have to be reasonable? I think there is no satisfactory solution to this debate.

These comments provide a general summary and overview of the reasons the atonement is significant.

These comments introduce alternative views that are supported with reasoning and evidence.

This part of the response analyses the logical chain of reasoning but also raises some interesting questions.

These sections demonstrate evidence of religious teachings from sources of authority.

The final section is directly linked to the argument that goes before it (in red) and chooses to raise a question in response to this by way of a conclusion.

Final comments

This answer includes all the features of a good evaluation. Teachings and evidence are presented in a logical manner, and are successfully argued and supported by evidence and clear reasoning. The conclusion is a single question – this is clever here, because it suggests that the debate is unresolved.



Evaluation Toolkit

Remember the colour-coding as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Make observations and insights | Balance arguments and counter-arguments |
| Provide evidence & examples | Include logical & consistent arguments |
| | Come to a conclusion |

Evaluation focus



Whether the means of salvation is by good works or by grace or by faith

Instructions

Answer the evaluation focus opposite. Make use of the Evaluation Toolkit, to help you build up your answer. You'll find useful information under convenient headings in the key materials box below to help you, but you can also use your own class notes.

Key materials

Possible observations and insights

- Salvation is about being rescued from the consequences of our rebellion against God.
- The means by which salvation is achieved are unclear in the Bible.
- It is by good works.
- It is also through grace.
- Is it by faith?
- Is there a contradiction, or is it all three?

Possible arguments and counter-arguments

- The Bible has all three, so all three are required.
- The Bible is the word of God, so is reliable.
- Saved by God's grace, which through faith we trust, and the result is that we do good works because God is working in us (evidence of our faith).
- But some texts refer to just one means of salvation, e.g. the parable of the rich young man.
- But can't be just works, since we are unable to save ourselves.
- Are good works the result of faith and so accompany faith?

Evidence from the Bible and Christianity

- For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. (*Ephesians 2:8–9 NIV*)
- And all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (*Romans 3:24 NIV*)
- You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. (*James 2:24 NIV*)
- The one who believes in me will live, even though they die. (*John 11:25 NIV*)

- If you want to enter life, keep the commandments. (*Matthew 19:17 NIV*)
- To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life. (*Romans 2:7 NIV*)

Possible examples

- Parable of the sheep and the goats.
- Parable of the rich young man.

Critical analysis/logical consistency

- There are apparent contradictions between the three means of salvation.
- Grace is God's gift, but faith and works are things we do.
- Neither faith nor works can lead to salvation since we cannot save ourselves.
- If the Bible is the word of God then how do these three means fit together?

Possible judgements/conclusions

- Salvation is God's gift, so only grace is required. God saves us – we can do nothing.
- We need to respond to God's gift, so faith/belief is required as well.
- Our faith is shown genuine if we then do good works.
- Therefore, all three means are involved in salvation.

Further quotation:

Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

(Matthew 25:45–46 NIV)

Key areas of study

- Tawhid (the Oneness of God)
- Qur'an Surah 112
- The nature of God: omnipotence, beneficence, mercy, fairness
- Justice/Adalat in Shi'a Islam
- Different ideas about God's relationship with the world
- Immanence and transcendence

Key examples

Mosques: *The places of worship for Muslims. You will not see any statues or pictures of people or animals in mosques. Muslims believe they distract from the worship of the one God.*

Calligraphy: *Decoration using Arabic writing, usually from the Qur'an. It can be seen on the walls of mosques and sometimes around the pages of the Qur'an. Muslims focus on words for God and not images.*

Allah: *The word for God translated into Arabic. It means not just God but 'the' God, emphasising the point that God is singular, one and only.*

Qibla: *The direction of prayer in Islam, towards Makkah. Muslims all face the same way just as they worship the same one God.*

Muslim homes: *Often contain framed prints of the names of God, high up on the wall, instead of other pictures.*

Key thinkers/beliefs

Ibrahim: Made the Kaaba in Makkah a centre of worship of God and removed idols. The Kaaba was first built by Adam, the first prophet, then destroyed by the flood in the time of Noah. Ibrahim, known as Abraham in Christianity and Judaism, draws together the three monotheistic traditions.

Isa: Another prophet, known as Jesus in Christianity. Unlike Christians, Muslims do not think of Isa as a son of God, but do recognise the virgin birth as a miracle from God. Isa came to turn people against the worship of idols to the Oneness of God.

Muhammad: The last Prophet in Islam. The Kaaba had become full of idols, statues and images of pagan gods. The people of Makkah gave offerings and made sacrifices to these idols. Muhammad removed the idols so that it was restored to the way it was in the time of Ibrahim.

Key facts and discussion points

- In Islam, God is beyond time, beyond physical form, and cannot be seen or represented by any visual means. Instead, Muslims refer to 99 names which are used to describe the attributes of God.
- God existed before time so was the first cause or creator of the universe. God has the power to do this because God is all-powerful and continues to create by being the power behind all events that happen on Earth.
- These are decided in advance by God, but at the same time, God gives humans a degree of free will as a test of faith. This makes God a judge as well, because God then judges the actions and intentions of people after they die, and decides if they go to heaven or hell for eternity.
- When exercising judgement, God is thought to be fair and compassionate, and has the power to forgive even the worst sinner.
- However, Muslims should not presume forgiveness and should do everything in their lives in dedication to the one God. This includes not just prayer but every other action in life, with the mindset that God is all around and watching them.
- God is not just above and all around but close and near. One saying in Islam is that God is close to the jugular vein. Muslims also try to keep God in mind as if God is right in front of them when they pray, or in every thought and action.
- The words of Surah 112 in the Qur'an sum up Islamic teaching in the Oneness of God and that there is no one like God. To associate anything else, such as a picture, with God is a sin in Islam.
- Declaration of faith in the one God is the most important part of Islamic belief and is said alongside declaring faith in Muhammad as God's prophet at the time a person converts to Islam, as well as during daily prayers.



Key terms

Adalat: God's justice and putting justice into place in the world with fairness. One of the five principles of faith for Shi'a Muslims, known as Usul ad-Din.

Beneficence: Doing good, particularly God's as beneficent. Muslims believe that God is good and all good in the world comes from God's goodness.

Immanence: Nearby, closeness or right in front of a person. Muslims believe that God is right there, in front of them, as they pray, even though they cannot see God.

Monotheism: The belief in one God. Islam is a monotheistic religion and recognises followers of other monotheistic religions as such believers in God.

Omnipotence: God is all-powerful, and there are no limitations of the powers of God. One of the 99 names of God for Muslims, which help them to understand what God is like.

Shirk: Linking something else alongside God, such as an image or son of God. This is the biggest sin in Islam as it detracts from God's oneness.

Taqwa: God-consciousness. Muslims aim to be aware of God in all that they do in life.

Tawhid: The Muslim belief in the Oneness of God with no partners. This is the first belief in Islam and is stated in the first Pillar of Islam, the shahadah.

Transcendence: God is everywhere and above all things, even the whole universe, which God created and controls.

Key quotes



Islamic teaching about the Oneness of God

- Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him. (*Surah 112, Yusuf Ali*)
- He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent: and He has full knowledge of all things. (*Surah 57:3, Yusuf Ali*)
- No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things. (*Surah 6:103, Yusuf Ali*)
- He that doeth good shall have ten times as much to his credit: He that doeth evil shall only be recompensed according to his evil: no wrong shall be done unto (any of) them. (*Surah 6:160, Yusuf Ali*)
- Whoever meets Allah without associating anything with Allah, nor spilling sacred blood, that person will enter Paradise. (*Hadith*)
- All in creation, life or death, riches or poverty, and everything else, originates from God alone. (*Ghazali*)
- If you understand Allah's Majesty, then you will not attach any importance to the creatures. (*Imam Ali*)



- Shi'a Muslims emphasise God's justice. This is referred to as the ultimate justice, which should be put into place on Earth by referring to God's guidance. Anything which is not fair and right according to God's justice, revealed in the Qur'an, is therefore rejected.
- There are different perspectives on God's role in the world. Some Muslims emphasise that God controls all actions and say thanks to God, even when things go wrong, because they believe everything is part of God's wider plan.
- Other Muslims put more emphasis on human ability to change things using their free will, and say that God the all-powerful has the power to see what humans do and change the divine plan that God has written if God so wills.

Evaluation focus

*Whether God's nature is
compassionate*

In this answer you:

- Should give reasoned arguments in support of the statement
- Should give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- Should refer to religious arguments
- May refer to non-religious arguments
- Should reach a justified conclusion

Sample answer

One of the names of God used by Muslims is 'the Compassionate'. There are 99 different names for God in Islam. Others include similar words such as God 'the Merciful'. For this reason, Muslims think of God as the power behind events in the world which show the value of compassion. The Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, calls God Al Rahman, 'Compassionate One', and repeats this often. Muslims believe that God shows compassion in the world through giving people food, shelter and opportunities in their lives. However, some look at suffering and hardship in the world, and question how God can be compassionate if God allows this. In Islam, God created the world and planned everything that happens, so God must bear responsibility for the suffering that takes place as well.

Some Muslims argue that as God is all-powerful, this role encompasses being stern as well as being compassionate. God sent humans to Earth as a test, so that God can see whether they obey the commands given in the Qur'an such as pray, be truthful and help others. God is known as 'master' of the Day of Judgement, at which time God sends people to heaven or hell for eternity, based upon their actions and intentions upon Earth. A compassionate God would forgive and send everyone to heaven, rather than make some people suffer in hell. However, if God were to forgive everyone, there would be no need to follow God's rules on Earth. People could do what they liked. This could lead to people treating each other badly on Earth, and going out to get everything for themselves. A truly compassionate God would not want this.

God's nature is both compassionate and judgemental. This is necessary so that God can be both judge and forgiver. Human suffering suggests there is a limit on God's compassion. This is a test of faith to see how humankind responds to others in need. God's compassion is an important part of Islamic belief, but needs to be seen alongside the other attributes of God to be understood.

These comments show insight into the relevance of the beliefs about God's nature in Islam, which is relevant to this question.

These comments introduce alternative views that are supported with reasoning and evidence.

This part of the response demonstrates a logical chain of reasoning that is consistent with the arguments presented about God's compassionate nature.

These sections demonstrate evidence of religious teachings from sources of authority in Islam, the Qur'an and Islamic tradition.

The final section of the answer presents some critical analysis and the overall conclusion or judgement regarding God's justice and compassion.

Final comments

This answer includes all the features of good evaluation. Other elements such as the different attributes of God might be mentioned and weighed up. The logic of the answer makes sense and several points are successfully argued and backed up with evidence and clear reasoning. The conclusion makes sense and is consistent with the paragraphs leading up to it.



Evaluation Toolkit

Remember the colour-coding as follows:

- Make observations and insights Balance arguments and counter-arguments
Provide evidence & examples Include logical & consistent arguments Come to a conclusion

Evaluation focus



How Muslims find God everywhere

Instructions

Answer the evaluation focus opposite. Make use of the Evaluation Toolkit, to help you build up your answer. You'll find useful information under convenient headings in the key materials box below to help you, but you can also use your own class notes.

Key materials

Possible observations and insights

- God is omnipresent, everywhere, alongside human beings in all they do in life.
- God cannot be seen. God has no physical form, is not a person and has no son.
- Muslims look for guidance from God about applying their beliefs and how to go about things in their lives.

Possible arguments and counter-arguments

- God created the universe. Beauty in the world is a sign from the creator. Therefore, Muslims can find God everywhere.
- Muslims believe that God is watching over them, and will judge them. So, they can think of God's presence in all that they do.
- When times are difficult, Muslims turn to God in prayer, and feel that God is close to their hearts.
- God gave humans free will as a test of faith. Therefore, those doing evil actions cannot be following God.
- It is hard to think of a compassionate God causing suffering.

Evidence from the Qur'an and Hadith

- To Allah belong the East and the West: Whithersoever ye turn, there is the presence of Allah. For Allah is all-Pervading, all-Knowing. (Surah 2:115, Yusuf Ali)
- If some good befalls them, they say, 'This is from Allah'; but if evil, they say, 'This is from thee' (O Prophet). Say: 'All things are from Allah.' (Surah 4:78, Yusuf Ali)
- When a person is born, Satan remains hidden from him. If one remembers Allah Almighty, he will leave. If one does not remember Allah, he will remain fixed over his heart. (Hadith)

Possible examples

- Muslims pray five times a day and can pray at work or school, so they find God everywhere.
- Muslims suffering natural disasters turn to God for comfort.
- It can be easy to forget God while busy with work and other things.

Critical analysis/logical consistency

- If God is good and God is in the hearts of believers, a problem arises when people exercise their free will and go astray.
- It may be argued this is part of God's plan, even suffering, because greater good will come in the end.
- Some Muslims respond by developing God-consciousness during every action; others remember God at particular times or on certain occasions.

Possible judgements/conclusions

- Muslims find God in many places but can be distracted in others.
- God created everything, good and evil, so can be seen at work in every situation.
- God allows free will, so when humans go astray, they do not find God.

Further quotations:

Allah knows exactly what to give you to help you return to Him. The events in your life are purposeful, appropriate and non-random.

(Hamza Yusuf)

It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein.

(Surah 50:16, Yusuf Ali)

Evaluation focus

*The significance of Adalat for Shi'a Muslims*

In this answer you:

- Should give reasoned arguments in support of the statement
- Should give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- Should refer to religious arguments
- May refer to non-religious arguments
- Should reach a justified conclusion

Sample answer

Adalat is one of the five roots of Shi'a Islam, known as Usul-ad-Din. It means God's justice. The five roots draw together the main beliefs of Islam for Shi'a Muslims, so are an important foundation which helps to explain their religion. The Qur'an states that God will judge people by weighing up their actions, and award them heaven or hell in the afterlife as a result. This inspires Shi'a Muslims to think that when they do good, God will reward them, because God is always fair. It also helps keep them on the straight path for fear of an eternity in hell. Therefore, the belief in Adalat helps inspire Shi'a Muslims that when they do good, they will be rewarded by God.

Adalat is stated specifically as part of the Usul-ad-Din, whereas for Sunni Muslims it is not.

Sunni Muslims have six main beliefs, including belief in the Day of Judgement and the afterlife, together with God's predestination. Shi'a Muslims also believe in judgement and the afterlife, suggesting the beliefs are just as significant to Shi'a and Sunni Muslims. The focus on judgement helps all Muslims think carefully about doing the right thing for God.

In Shi'a belief, God is perfect, so God must be just, and always rewards people fairly. The Qur'an states: Allah is never unjust in the least degree (*Qur'an 4:40*). This helps to explain to Shi'a Muslims that human beings, living with free will, are able to do unjust things, but these do not come from God. Some see this as a significant difference from the Sunni belief that God predestines all of these things, including the injustices, it's just that human beings cannot understand the meaning behind all of them.

There are particular practices in Shi'a Islam. Every year, at the time of Ashura, Shi'a Muslims mourn the events at Karbala, where their leader Husayn and his family were killed. This event is important because it was a major injustice for Shi'a Muslims. The belief in Adalat is significant in encouraging Shi'a Muslims to struggle against injustice, and support justice, in the world today, following the memory of Karbala.

These comments show insight into the relevance of the beliefs about God's nature in Islam in terms of the significance of Adalat for Shi'a Muslims.

These comments introduce alternative views that are supported with reasoning and evidence.

This part of the response demonstrates a logical and coherent chain of reasoning concerning the significance of Adalat for Shi'a Muslims.

These sections demonstrate evidence of religious teachings from sources of authority in Islam, the Qur'an and Islamic tradition.

The final section of the answer presents some critical analysis and the overall conclusion or judgement regarding the significance of Adalat for Shi'a Muslims.

Final comments

This essay covers a complicated topic and takes aspects of it step by step, in clear, concise paragraphs. Note that the question asks about the significance of Adalat, not just a description of what it is. The essay achieves this by explaining aspects of the belief at the beginning of each paragraph and ending with a concluding sentence clearly pointing out the significance. Note that particular care should be taken to ensure the skills of evaluation, such as significance, importance and views about a topic, are covered in an answer where required.



Evaluation Toolkit

Remember the colour-coding as follows:

Make observations and insights Balance arguments and counter-arguments

Provide evidence & examples Include logical & consistent arguments Come to a conclusion

Evaluation focus



The significance of common and divergent views on God's relationship with the world

Instructions

Answer the evaluation focus opposite. Make use of the Evaluation Toolkit, to help you build up your answer. You'll find useful information under convenient headings in the key materials box below to help you, but you can also use your own class notes.

Key materials

Possible observations and insights

- There are many questions regarding God and the world, such as how the world was made and why God allows suffering in the world.
- Muslims can look to the Qur'an to explain to them God's role in creation and how God's will is present in the world today.
- Other sources include the Hadith, the traditions of different groups of Muslims and their scholars, who provide guidance.

Possible arguments and counter-arguments

- God created the world and everything in it, and controls all things, even suffering, which has deeper meaning and is all part of God's plan.
- God is the first cause – the one that started everything going – but God gave people the freedom to do what they want, and this freedom creates the conditions for human suffering.
- Muslims have different arguments about how far science is consistent with God, God's creation and scientific observations of the world.

Evidence from the Qur'an and Hadith

- Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation), before we clove them asunder? We made from water every living thing. (Surah 21:30, Yusuf Ali)
- He that has created you in diverse stages ... And Allah has produced you from the earth growing (gradually). (Surah 71:13,17, Yusuf Ali)
- No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that. (Hadith)

Possible examples

- Dr Usama Hasan, an imam and scientist, believes evolution and the Qur'an are compatible, because God created the world in stages.
- Modern scholar Yasir Qadhi believes the Qur'an must be interpreted literally and is opposed to evolution, as the Qur'an says God made each stage.

Critical analysis/logical consistency

- If God is good, then God would not create a world in which people suffer. However, if that suffering leads to something better then there is a point to it.
- God and science can be two different ways of looking at the same truth. Suffering is due to humans who fail God's test to show compassion to others.

Possible judgements/conclusions

- God created the world and predestined everything, including suffering, as part of God's plan.
- God worked through science in the world at a distance, creating the laws we know as science and allowing people free will.

Further quotations:

And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours: verily in that are Signs for those who know.

(Surah 30:22, Yusuf Ali)

If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues.

(Surah 5:48, Yusuf Ali)

It is He Who begins (the process of) creation; then repeats it.

(Surah 30:27, Yusuf Ali)

Key areas of study

- Religion and belief as a cause of war and violence in the contemporary world
- Nuclear weapons, including nuclear deterrence
- The use of weapons of mass destruction
- Religion and peacemaking in the contemporary world including the work of individuals influenced by religious teaching
- Religious responses to the victims of war including the work of one present-day religious organisation

Key examples

Religious conflict: *The Israeli–Palestinian conflict began in the mid-twentieth century. It is generally presented as a conflict between Jews and Muslims, but both sides consist of a variety of religious beliefs, including Christian. Rather the conflict is more political, as two groups of people who have a sense of separate nationality lay claim to the same land. While religion contributes to this, it is not the cause of the conflict.*

Nuclear weapons: *On 6 and 9 August 1945 respectively, the USA detonated two atomic bombs in Japan, one in Hiroshima and the other in Nagasaki. In Hiroshima, the city estimated that 237,000 people were killed directly or indirectly by the bomb's effects, including burns, radiation sickness and cancer. In Nagasaki, estimated deaths reached 80,000.*

Nuclear deterrence: *The UK nuclear weapons programme is called Trident. According to www.gov.uk, the UK possesses nuclear weapons for the purpose of preserving peace, preventing coercion, and deterring aggression. This means that other countries are put off using their weapons against the UK because they know that if they do, the costs to them would outweigh any benefits. The UK has four submarines carrying nuclear weapons, one of which is always on patrol.*

Weapons of mass destruction (WMD): *The USA used a chemical weapon called Agent Orange in the Vietnam War. The chemical herbicide was sprayed over a large area to kill off plants that provided cover to the opposing forces. However, it contaminated water supplies, killed off crops and caused significant health problems and birth defects for generations of people.*

Key facts

- Christian teaching promotes peace and involves treating other people with love and kindness. Many Christians choose to follow Jesus' teaching and example to avoid conflict where possible and treat others with compassion.
- Christian teaching also tells of Jesus responding to injustice with anger by overturning tables in the temple and challenging inequality.
- Many religious people object to the use of war and violence in conflict, but religious differences have often led to conflict when land or leadership has to be shared.
- The Bible teaches that war and violence tend to be triggered by sin rather than commanded in scripture.
- Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are a modern method of warfare and are designed to kill and injure large numbers of people with nuclear, radiological, chemical or biological warfare. They target civilian populations rather than military centres and cause widespread destruction to the environment.
- Nuclear weapons are explosive devices that use nuclear reactions to generate a large amount of energy in comparison to a conventional bomb of the same size. They can devastate an entire city by fire, blast and radiation. Nuclear weapons are a type of WMD.
- Most religious people disagree with WMDs, and many have even joined protests against them.
- No religion teaches that the use of WMDs is acceptable. They are too extreme, uncontrollable, and cause too much long-term damage through radiation sickness, cancers or other illnesses.
- Just war theory argues that *jus in bello*, the law that governs the use of violence during war, should be proportionate and discriminate. It must not produce more harm than good and must respect civilian and innocent life. This means that the use of WMD and nuclear weapons should always be forbidden.
- Pope Francis has appealed for all nations to work towards a world without nuclear weapons.

Key thinkers

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: German Lutheran Pastor, theologian and anti-Nazi activist. He founded the Confessing Church, a movement to oppose Nazi attempts to create one pro-Nazi super church.

Malala Yousafzai: Young Muslim activist who won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work advocating equality and peaceful resistance to oppression, which led to her being shot and wounded. She calls on world leaders to 'send books not guns'.

Mohamed ElBaradei: Egyptian law scholar, diplomat and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, known for his efforts to prevent nuclear energy from being used for military purposes. He donated his prize winnings to build orphanages in Cairo.

Key terms

Jus in bello: The set of criteria to help determine just and fair conduct during warfare.

Nuclear deterrence: The development and ownership of nuclear weapons for the purpose of preventing others from attack by making them fearful of the consequences.

Sanctity of life: The teaching that human life is holy or sacred and should be protected.

Weapons of mass destruction (WMD): Any weapon that can kill and bring significant harm to large numbers of people or the environment. They include chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons.

Key quotes



Christian teaching about war, violence and peace-making

- 'Put your sword back in its place,' Jesus said to him, 'for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.'
(*Matthew 26:52 NIV*)
- 'You have heard that it was said, "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth". But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.'
(*Matthew 5:38–42 NIV*)
- A time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. (*Ecclesiastes 3:2–8 NIV*)
- Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. (*Matthew 10:34 NIV*)

Muslim teaching about war, violence and peace-making

- Do not let your hatred of people incite you to aggression.
(*Qur'an 5:3*)
- Those who have been attacked are permitted to take up arms because they have been wronged. God has the power to help them. (*Qur'an 22:39*)

- The Vatican signed and ratified the 2017 Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty, an international agreement to prohibit nuclear weapons with the goal of their total elimination.
- Religious believers often say that life is sacred, and that modern weapons violates the sanctity of life. They do not promote justice because they harm civilians.
- Some believers accept the use of nuclear weapons as a deterrent. Others think that they are unacceptable. For them to act as a deterrent, this means the nation that owns them must be open to using them if the occasion arises.
- The Quaker Movement (the Society of Friends) is a Christian pacifist group. It believes that pacifism is the true teaching of Jesus. During war, Quakers take on peace-making roles like mediation, medical care or supporting refugees and war victims.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Christian pacifist living in Germany during the Second World War. He worked against the abuses of the Nazi party and was imprisoned. He eventually went against all his own principles and joined a group that intended to assassinate Hitler. He was arrested and executed.
- Pax Christi is an international Catholic movement that promotes peace, respect of human rights, justice and reconciliation across the world. It was established after the Second World War to help reconcile French and German people. The movement prioritises non-violence in politics, a ban on nuclear weapons, and works for justice in Latin America, Israel and Palestine.
- Christian Peacemaker Teams is an organisation that places teams into communities who face lethal conflict. Teams support local peacemakers who are at risk of injury and death and help them to work non-violently to defend their communities.
- Muslim thinkers in the past, and a few fundamentalist believers today, argue that there are some verses in the Qur'an that allow the use of warfare for more than just self-defence. For example, war can be used against unbelievers or enemies of Allah.
- However, Islamic teaching is in favour of peace and against violence. For example, in 2004, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, spoke out against the use of nuclear weapons, and other scholars have argued that they are haram because the basic function of them is to kill the innocent.
- The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is a humanitarian network that reaches across the globe. In Muslim countries, the Red Crescent Society relies on Muslim volunteers to help care for casualties of war and refugees.
- Muslim Aid is a UK-based charity founded in 1985. It provides vital emergency supplies to victims of war and implements education and healthcare programmes for refugees. Muslim Aid is guided by the teaching of Islam and relies on donations from Muslims such as zakat and sadaqah.

Evaluation focus



Whether religion is the reason for most or all wars

In this answer you:

- Should give reasoned arguments in support of the statement
- Should give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- Should refer to religious arguments
- May refer to non-religious arguments
- Should reach a justified conclusion

Sample answer

Religion is blamed as the cause of all or most wars by many atheists. Sam Harris is a well-known atheist who said that religion is the main cause of all violence in human history, and it is well known that events like the Crusades, performed by Christian believers, were bloody and vicious. However, to say that all war is caused by religion is simplistic because that would mean that the causes of war are never greed for money or territory, self-defence or political change. The Second World War is an example of a war that was not religiously motivated since it was defence against attack from nations that sought to gain power and territory. Religion was certainly involved in the Second World War, since it involved aggression against Jewish people and attempts to ally the Nazi regime with Christianity; however, these were not the causes of the war, which concerned the extreme limits put on Germany after the First World War. Having said this, religion has a history of violence and is interwoven with politics. It was a priest who blessed the atomic bomb before it was dropped on Hiroshima at the end of the Second World War. Furthermore, it is religious feeling that fuels the conflict between Islamic and predominantly Christian nations, or between Israel and Palestine, and there is no denying that the Bible often contains divinely approved war. In Isaiah, it says that God stirs up city against city and kingdom against kingdom. Therefore, while religion is not the sole cause of all war, it contributes to the justification of wars that take place. In conclusion, it is unfair to say that religion is the cause of all war. Human beings find plenty of reasons to fight; they want power and control, or to defend their own interests. However, religious people are no different from any other people – they want these things too – and therefore religion plays a part in the wars in human history.

This section makes clear observations that within Christianity there is a history of involvement in wars both biblically and beyond.

There are several sections where the answer balances arguments with counter-arguments about the extent to which religion may cause conflict or not.

The response makes several coherent suggestions about the implications of the evidence presented.

Examples have been used of different kinds of wars and of teachings from scripture or scholars.

The final section of the answer comes to an overall conclusion in response to the question, that gives clear reasons.

Final comments

This answer includes all the features of strong evaluation. This is a clever conclusion that argues it is not just religion or religious people that can be guilty and identifies that it is humanity as a whole that defend their interests, religious or not. Most important is that the answer has met the AQA criteria listed under the question.

An alternative religious view:

Islam

Islam teaches that it is a religious obligation for Muslims to fight, as a last resort, in the name of Allah in self-defence, defence of Islam or defence of the innocent or oppressed. However, the Qur'an also says that it is a sin to take the life of another person, and promoting peace is an important theme in Islam. Many Muslims believe that the belief is sometimes used as an excuse for violence by some fundamentalists who want to use force to spread Islam, but this is not in accordance with Islamic teaching.

Further quotations:

In the words of Pope Pius XII: 'The calamity of a world war, with the economic and social ruin and the moral excesses and dissolution that accompany it, must not on any account be permitted to engulf the human race for a third time.'

(Pope John XXIII)

Fight in God's cause and remember that He is all hearing and all knowing.

(Qur'an 2:244)



Evaluation Toolkit

Remember the colour-coding as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Make observations and insights | Balance arguments and counter-arguments |
| Provide evidence & examples | Include logical & consistent arguments |
| | Come to a conclusion |

Evaluation focus



Whether religious organisations do enough to prevent war

Instructions

Answer the evaluation focus opposite. Make use of the Evaluation Toolkit, to help you build up your answer. You'll find useful information under convenient headings in the key materials box below to help you, but you can also use your own class notes.

Key materials

Possible observations and insights

- In the past, and today in some countries, religion and politics are intertwined. Increasingly in the Western world, religion and state are separated, so religion has a smaller role in politics.
- To prevent war you have to be able to anticipate it and organise calls to intervene in advance. It is sometimes difficult for individuals to make themselves heard as tensions rise among ruling authorities.
- Religious people have been accused of aiding or standing by when they could have prevented war or violence. Equally, churches and religious groups have suffered and individuals have died trying to protect the innocent and stand in the way of war.

Possible arguments and counter-arguments

- Religious organisations have worked hard to influence governments regarding matters of war, by campaigning, voting and speaking out against the use of war to resolve conflict.
- Religious organisations have remained silent or failed to stop warfare between nations. Their leaders are in powerful positions and often try not to get involved.
- Organisations like Pax Christi and Christian Peacemaker Teams work to prevent conflict and campaign for peace. They support victims of war and place themselves between conflicting sides.
- If a government has decided to go to war for economic reasons or reasons of power, they are unlikely to listen to religious groups that have no political power themselves.

Biblical evidence (Christianity)

- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (*Matthew 5:9*)
- He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. (*Isaiah 2:4*)

- Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (*Colossians 3:13*)

Possible examples

- In the sixteenth century, Spanish Christians conquered the Aztecs in the Americas and Christianised them, bringing great wealth to the Catholic Church in the process.
- The Pope did not protest against the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, who came through Rome on his way to conquer Ethiopia and killed approximately one million.
- In 2002, Catholic bishops signed a letter to President Bush opposing a war against Iraq as unjust and the Vatican issued statements in opposition. In the UK, the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke out against war and the World Council of Churches issued statements declaring it immoral. People were encouraged to march for peace, but the war happened anyway.

Critical analysis/logical consistency

- If religious organisations have less political influence than in the past, it is unlikely that they can do much to prevent war if a government has decided it is necessary.
- Religious organisations rely upon support from their members, both financially and through volunteering. For organisations to 'do enough' they need individuals to do more as well.
- Religious groups do participate in wars and even contribute to the causes of war sometimes. This means that they could do more to prevent them from happening.
- It is not the sole responsibility of religious groups to prevent war when the causes of war are so wide and varied. It is the responsibility of the authorities to make that judgement.

Possible judgements/conclusions

- Religious organisations do enough to prevent war.
- Religious organisations do not do enough to prevent war.
- Religious organisations cannot do anything to prevent war.

Evaluation focus



Whether religious organisations do enough to help the victims of war

In this answer you:

- Should give reasoned arguments in support of the statement
- Should give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- Should refer to religious arguments
- May refer to non-religious arguments
- Should reach a justified conclusion

Sample answer

There are a great many religious organisations that work hard to help the victims of war. These groups, like the Red Cross and CAFOD, all work hard to provide emergency medical and social care for refugees, education for children who have been displaced or orphaned, and even to mediate between warring groups to end conflict. It seems harsh to expect these groups to do more than they are already doing (which is far more than the average person does). However, there are still many people suffering because of war. Refugee camps can host large numbers of people, even unattended children, for long periods of time in conditions that are far from ideal. Host communities for victims of war are often reluctant to incorporate refugees, so religious organisations should do much more to support survivors in rebuilding their lives at home or in new countries. However, this is not the responsibility of religious groups. This is a job for governments who are responsible for enabling people to live their lives, and if large numbers are harmed or displaced through war, then governments are failing. Yet, religious organisations have a spiritual and moral obligation to support people in need. Hebrews says that everyone should show hospitality to strangers, and Jesus says that those who welcome strangers will inherit God's kingdom. The Bible also says that we should love our neighbours as ourselves and treat people equally. Therefore, religious groups do have an obligation to work to help victims of war and to welcome them and support them as they try to rebuild their lives. In conclusion, religious organisations do much to help victims of war, but it is never enough, and it is not their sole responsibility. Both governments and the individual religious people have this obligation, and so everyone should be working together to support people who are in need.

This section makes clear observations about the current situation regarding the work of religious organisations and the needs of people affected by war.

There are several sections where the answer balances arguments with counter-arguments from within Christianity about whether religious organisations should do more to help.

These comments include several coherent suggestions about whose responsibility it is to help victims of war.

These sections give religious teachings as examples, along with examples of religious organisations and the work that they do.

The final section of the answer comes to an overall conclusion in response to the question, and is supported by reasoning.

Final comments

This answer includes all the features of strong evaluation. The conclusion is clear and effective, noting that 'enough' can never be achieved but that religious organisations do play a major role and argues that government bodies should do more. Most important is that the answer has met the AQA criteria listed under the question.

Further quotations:

We ... testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world. (The Quaker Peace Testimony)

Goodness does not consist of turning your face towards East or West. The truly good are those ... who give away some of their wealth, however much they cherish it, to their relatives, to orphans, the needy, travellers and beggars, and to liberate those in bondage (Qur'an 2:177)

An alternative religious view:

Islam

There are Muslim organisations that do significant work to help the victims of war. The Red Crescent Movement, Muslim Aid and Muslim Hands UK all help refugees and protect children as well as giving emergency help. It is the responsibility of all Muslims to give zakah and they may also give sadaqah or khums to help people who are in need, so all Muslims should contribute to the effort to help victims of war.



Evaluation Toolkit

Remember the colour-coding as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Make observations and insights | Balance arguments and counter-arguments |
| Provide evidence & examples | Include logical & consistent arguments |
| | Come to a conclusion |

Evaluation focus

Whether religion is violent or peaceful



Instructions

Answer the evaluation focus opposite. Make use of the Evaluation Toolkit, to help you build up your answer. You'll find useful information under convenient headings in the key materials box below to help you, but you can also use your own class notes.

Key materials

Possible observations and insights

- The Bible contains a significant proportion of stories of divinely sanctioned violence, but also significant exhortations to peace.
- Religious teaching or belief has historically been responsible for, or played a part in, a significant number of conflicts around the globe as well as the peacemaking activities of religious charities.
- There are differences between mainstream religious teaching and the beliefs or teachings of fundamentalist groups.
- Historically, governments and their policies have been intertwined with religious belief. It is easier to persuade populations to fight in costly wars if you can convince them that God is on your side.

Possible arguments and counter-arguments

- Religion uses God's will, commands from God or the defence of God as reasons for action. It is difficult for religious groups to compromise if they believe that God wills conflicting things.
- Religious teaching contains so many exhortations to compassion, kindness and peace that it cannot be the teaching that brings people into conflict.
- Religion is a handy scapegoat to blame for conflicts that often involve human greed or error and are more about political gain than religious teachings.
- It is impossible to separate the events of human history from the religious beliefs that they have held. If a human is religious, then that can be used to justify their actions.

Biblical evidence (Christianity)

- This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbour.' (*Exodus 32:27 NIV*)
- Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. (*Romans 14:19 NIV*)
- Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you. Live at peace with everyone. (*Romans 12:17–18 NIV*)

Possible examples

- The Crusades are a title for several religious wars fought between Christians and Muslims over the land of Jerusalem.
- Catholics and Protestants have fought several wars against each other, each believing that God was on their side. The 30 Years' War in the seventeenth century involved, in part, a Catholic attempt to overcome Protestantism.
- State-imposed atheism has led to violence against religious people in countries such as China and the former Soviet Union, where places of worship were destroyed and religious leaders executed.

Critical analysis/logical consistency

- Many of the acts of violence in the Bible are not necessarily historical or should be understood in context. Problems arise when symbolic stories are interpreted as absolute commands.
- Religious teaching does not command violence as a general rule. Acts of violence in scripture or religious history are often a response to a significant problem or failure of peacemaking efforts.
- Mainstream religious teaching and belief tends to settle for moderation and co-operation within a society. However, it has the capacity for violence and can enable violence if the need arises.
- Religious organisations are no longer so powerful in Western government. In modern society, it is more likely to be political or economic causes that give rise to war rather than religious influences.

Possible judgements/conclusions

- Religion is more violent than peaceful.
- Religion is more peaceful than violent.
- Religion's peace or violence depends upon other factors.
- Religion is as violent or peaceful as the humans within it.