



F A C E S 2 3 O A 7

**IN THE WONDERFUL GARDEN OF
RELIGIONS / PHILOSOPHIES
AN INNER PERSPECTIVE**

STUDENT'S BOOK



**Funded by
the European Union**

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EDUC8

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

OUR WONDERFUL GARDEN

Dear Students,

As its title already claims this book hopes to be a short but concise tour in the wonderful garden of religious traditions and philosophical worldviews. Like in real gardens one of its main features is diversity, the many colours, odours, and sounds that their visitors apprehend when entering these smaller or larger worlds full of life but also the mixed emotions of joy, curiosity, thrill or respect that this encounters arouse.

Most of you or some of your relatives, acquaintances and neighbours belong to one or the other of these traditions. You have sometimes experienced the sincere curiosity of those who do not belong to your tradition or even the prejudice and dismissal by some others. In a few cases, you may discover that you are also influenced by stereotypes when you run into persons that belong to a different religious or non-religious ethical tradition. It is the purpose of this book as well as of the rest of the material in the shallow module of EDUC8 to introduce you to some aspects of these traditions, to explain main points of their faith or worldview, to welcome you into their festivals and everyday life. It is expected that through this encounter you can become aware of this diversity, get enough information that will help you interact with them, adjust your knowledge about the others, find differences but also similarities and eventually create the requirements for mutual understanding and respect.

In this book you can find material, exercises and concise information, for some of the main faith and ethical communities in Europe: **Judaism**, the three main Christian denominations in Europe, namely **Catholicism**, **Orthodoxy**, and **Protestantism**, **Islam** and **Ethics**. The point of departure is always a short video, approximately 7 minutes long, that provides essential information about these communities, their convictions, their holidays and



Figure 1
Diversity
Source: © vector_s /
Adobe Stock

aspects of communal life, their rituals and worshipping places, the presence of women and children in them, and their moral values. This information is presented to you by young boys and girls at your age and that of your schoolmates. They describe their own experience and their daily routine, they share their feelings with you, and in many cases they also have one or two critical remarks for their own tradition. The exercises and the short texts in this book are an encouragement to reflect upon this data, to focus on the most important material, to instigate your critical thinking, to interact with your classmates, among whom some may come from these traditions, to engage yourselves in discussions and debates, to go underneath the surface of these presentations, to acknowledge and appreciate the cultural richness and the fullness of life in all of them. In this respect, all voices in these traditions are important and valuable. Special effort was given to allow space for as many of them as possible: the culturally diverse, the geographically apart, the women, the children, the environment. This has been a difficult task and the contributors of this book, women and men with long experience in matters of religious diversity, have tried hard to make it possible.

It is now up to you to make good use of their work. All material is designed to be used in the classroom during a teaching hour. The format and content of the exercises presuppose the existence of an active group of young people, eager to learn and open to discussion. There are no special practical guidelines you need to follow. There are, however, some important requirements: approach each tradition with respectful curiosity, be ready to hear, think outside the box, engage in discussions, confront your own prejudices, communicate your ideas to the rest of the group.

After watching the video and with the help of your instructors you can accomplish all tasks of the exercises of the book. Some of these exercises

expect you to dig into the material presented in the video, some others encourage you to reflect and critically discuss certain aspects of these communities (e.g. the role of tradition as authority, the place of women, the everyday cycle) and they expect you to deal with stereotypes, even your own preconceptions. There are some exercises that demand little effort and some others that expect you to ponder upon them longer and more critically. Some of them are designed to enhance the information already provided in the videos while some others to critically evaluate this data. In the book you can also find the script of the video and a glossary of terms that are typical for each tradition that are probably unfamiliar to you.

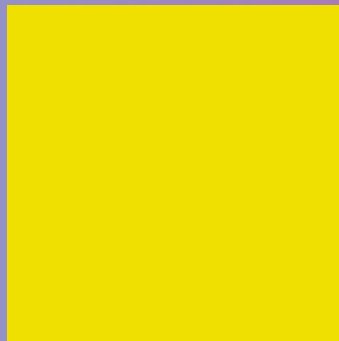
Finally, it should be noted that this is actually an open book. It is hoped that it will be the beginning of your adventure in the wonderful worlds of religions and ethics in two ways. First of all, the material of the shallow module aims at providing you with the necessary information that can help you with the critical issues raised and discussed in the videos, texts and exercises of the deep module. Secondly, it is hoped that it will encourage you to do some research on your own, read, ask and look for the signs of these communities and their impact in public space, in cultural and political history. Thus, apart from providing you with knowledge the ultimate purpose of shallow module is to help you become aware of and appreciate the richness of the lives of these communities as well as their vital role in shaping the lives of people in Europe and elsewhere in this world.

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“ WHAT IS NEEDED FOR RELIGION, IS TO GUIDE PEOPLE TO THE DEPTH OF THIS TRUTH, TO A CHANGE OF MIND AND LIFE AND TO MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. THIS IS INDEED THE CORE OF OUR RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS. ”

————— Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch

1



JUDAISM

JUDAISM

BEFORE WE START

1. Please write down five things that come to mind when you think of Judaism.
2. Please write down three questions that you would like to ask about Judaism.



Figure 1.1
The interior of the
synagogue Brahat ha-
levana in Bnei Brak ,
Israel.
Source: © suprunvitaly /
Adobe Stock

1.1 A LETTER FROM MOSHE: WITNESS MY LIFE AS A JEW

Hello! My name is Moshe, and I would like to tell you about my religion: Judaism! There are 14 million Jews all over the world. A lot of us live in Israel, but not every Jew is an Israeli! Jews living outside Israel are what we call the diaspora. I live in Europe, so I'm part of the diaspora! We are also the smallest monotheistic religion. Monotheism means believing in only one God. Although Judaism is the smallest monotheistic religion, it's actually the oldest one!

Some people find the terms 'Jew' or 'Judaism' a little bit complex. Someone is born as a Jew when their mother is Jewish. Few of us were not born by a Jewish mother, but converted to Judaism. Also, not all Jews look alike. We can even vary in how we live our Jewish life. Some Jews decided to assimilate into the cultures they lived in. As a result, they became less strict in following traditional customs and practices. These are liberal or Reform Jews. My family is orthodox or traditional. That means we keep close to our traditions. But there are even Jews who do not believe in God. Every Jewish community is unique!

Our main holy book is the Torah that God revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai. That's why it's also called the Five Books of Moses. Most of our texts are in Hebrew, but we also have some texts written in Aramaic and Greek. Our relation to God is the most important aspect of our lives. It is a covenant of love that guides our daily life. We believe that God loves us in a unique way, and this love gives us the task to love other people and do justice. Hearing God's word means actually doing God's word! A sign of this covenant is circumcision: every Jewish boy has to be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth.

Several rules guide our behavior towards God and other fellow humans. These are called mitzvot (commandments). The Ten Commandments are the most famous among them. But life constantly changes, and is now very different from life in ancient Israel, an area now made up of Lebanon, Israel, a part of Syria, and Jordan. That's why we need help to interpret these commandments in order to apply them in our lives. Rabbis, our religious leaders, discuss and teach these rules in the form of halacha, Jewish law. Halacha in Hebrew means 'to go', 'to walk', so Halacha refers to the Jewish walk of life!

A lot of halachic rules were written in important texts called the Talmud. Learning our traditions is very important for us. It's part of our education. However, every rule is founded on the Torah, as the expression of God's love for us, and every rule needs to be accepted by a majority of the community. And because our life and experiences keep changing, we never stop discussing these laws. Our tradition is not just repeating what our ancestors did, but learning what they thought, in order to learn things for our own lives! That way our tradition never becomes closed, but stays open.

A big part of our life takes place in the synagogue. 'Synagogue' is Greek and means 'house of assembly'. It's the place where we learn, pray, and celebrate feasts! In earlier times, we had a temple in Jerusalem. It was the center of our religious, cultural and economic life. Unfortunately, the Temple was destroyed in ancient times. The Wailing Wall is the only thing that's left of this destroyed temple. Me and my family go and visit Jerusalem once a year. This place makes me feel connected to my Jewish history, which is very important to me and my family. Some moments in our history are sad to think about. During the second world war there was the Shoah, in which the Nazi's killed many Jews. For me and my family, this event is a reminder to always keep going!

Rituals and feasts are very important in the lives of Jews. They celebrate our covenant with God. Let me tell you about two of my favorites. Firstly, there is Shabbat. Shabbat is a day of rest. It lasts from Friday evening to Saturday evening, because Jewish days begin at sundown. The Torah teaches us that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Imitating God, we also rest on the seventh day! This Shabbat is a special occasion: I turned thirteen this week, so we will celebrate my bar mitzvah! This means that I'm now a 'son of the commandment'. The ceremony will take place in the synagogue. I'm kind of anxious, because I have to read the parashah, the weekly Torah portion. What makes matters even worse is that it's written in ancient Hebrew. As if reading out loud in front of a full synagogue wasn't stressful enough! Luckily, there's a feast afterwards, and I'll get many gifts! My younger sister will be there too. According to our tradition, girls become adults at the age of twelve. That's when they become bat mitzvah, 'daughter of the commandment'.

Besides Shabbat, my favorite feast is Pesach, or Passover. Passover is known as the Festival of Celebration, when we remember our exodus from slavery in Egypt. God liberated us and under Moses' leadership brought us to the promised land. This event is the origin of our identity, during which God gave us the Torah! Passover is always in the spring, and it lasts eight days. The evening before we have Seder, a ritual meal during which we retell the story of Exodus. During Passover Seder, we only eat food that reminds us of ancient Israel. That means we can't eat anything with chametz, or leaven, because ancient Jews had to leave quickly and didn't have time to let their bread rise. My favorite part is the search for chametz the day before Pesach. This ritual search is always a lot of fun! It symbolizes getting rid of arrogance or pride in our house.

In short, Judaism is about the love of God, learning the Torah, doing good for others, and justice!

Exercise 1: Quiz

What do you remember from Moshe's letter? Circle the correct answer.

1. Halacha

- a. Are the Jewish laws for a Jewish walk of life!
- b. Are the 613 commandments of the Torah
- c. Are enforced by rabbis
- d. All of the above

2. The synagogue is also known as the

- a. House of assembly
- b. House of learning
- c. House of prayer
- d. All of the above

3. On Shabbat Jews

- a. Connect with God and with their family
- b. Live a secluded life
- c. Get their final work done
- d. Eat food that reminds them of Ancient Israel

4. The word "monotheism" means
 - a. Believing in multiple Gods
 - b. Believing in only one God
 - c. The same as polytheistic
 - d. The Jewish walk of life

5. The Torah
 - a. Is the central Holy book for Jews
 - b. Contains the Five Books by Moses
 - c. Contains the written words given to Moses by God at mount Sinai
 - d. All of the above

6. A bar mitzvah celebrates
 - a. The twelfth birthday of a Jewish boy
 - b. The twelfth birthday of a Jewish girl
 - c. The thirteenth birthday of a Jewish boy
 - d. The thirteenth birthday of Jewish girl

7. Pesach is
 - a. a festival of sorrow
 - b. a festival of celebration where we remember the story of Passover
 - c. another word for Seder
 - d. the weekly day of rest or *Shabbat*

Exercise 2: Following tradition

Moshe gives an important insight into how Jews understand tradition: "Our tradition is not just repeating what our ancestors did, but learning what they thought, in order to learn things for our own lives! That way our tradition never becomes closed, but stays open."

Tradition plays a big part in Judaism, as the accumulated experience and knowledge, but also as the customs, habits, and commandments. Of course, not every Jew strictly adheres to the tradition. Within Judaism there are a lot of questions about to what extent we should follow the tradition. Having watched Moshe's presentation, please make the following exercise in groups of two or four:

- a. Jews have their own view on tradition, as explained by Moshe. What is your opinion on their idea and practice of tradition?
- b. Does your family or society have similar practices that are seen as traditional? Discuss them among each other.
- c. Tradition can be authoritative in how it regulates the everyday, religious lives of the members of a religious group. Discuss among each other positive and negative aspects of being part of a tradition



Figure 1.2
Torah scroll with Kippah
Source: © ollega /
Adobe Stock

Exercise 3: Jewish ethics

Judaism places a big emphasis on justice and doing good towards others. Feasts often remind Jews of these, and other, obligations. Pesach, for example, is a feast that commemorates the exodus, departure, from slavery in Egypt. The story of this exodus is told in the Book of Exodus, one of the five books of the Torah.

Take a look at the following passage from the Book of Exodus and answer the following questions.

[9] You are not to oppress a foreigner, for you know how a foreigner feels, since you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.

- a. Who is the 'you' in this story? Why was this 'you' a foreigner in Egypt?
- b. What possible associations could someone reading this passage make, considering current situations and challenges?



Figure 1.3
Hand holding a Star of David, a Jewish religious symbol against the Western wall of the Jewish Temple in the Old city of Jerusalem.
Source: © Roman Yanushevsky / Adobe Stock

Exercise 4: Experiencing Shabbat

You have read or watched Moshe's description of Shabbat. Fill in the missing words:

Ten Commandment – kiddush – covenant – challah – wash our hands – Torah – covenant – parashah – Kiddush Cups

Today is a happy day. We are celebrating Shabbat: our weekly day of rest. On this day, we celebrate our with God. We do this by laying down our work for one day, and reconnect with ourselves and our community. This way, we honor God who created the world in six days, and rested on the seventh. It's also one of the A Jewish day is from evening till evening, not from twelve till twelve. *Shabbat* begins on Friday evening, and lasts until Saturday evening. *Shabbat* is officially over the moment we can count three stars in heaven.

Because we can't work, we have to prepare everything beforehand. That means Friday is usually an extra busy day! Once the sun starts to set, my mother lights two candles for every family member that is present. And my dad speaks a prayer, to which everyone answers with 'amen'. This blessing is called Everyone gets a little bit of wine, that we drink from On this day, everyone wears beautiful, fancy clothes. We always eat fish, and sometimes chicken soup. It's a usually a big dinner with salad, potatoes, meat, and dessert! My favorite part, however, is eating a special braided bread called It's white, and eggy, and very soft inside! My mother makes it for Shabbat. We have to before. It's forbidden to eat bread with dirty hands. We eat the challah at the start of the dinner, by ripping of the pieces with our hands. It's a lot of fun to eat bread that way!

Every Saturday morning, there is a Synagogue service, where we read a portion of the, called We read these portions three days a week, on Saturday, Monday, and Thursdays, but on Shabbat we read the biggest portions. By the end of the year we have read the Torah in its entirety.

2.6 GLOSSARY

Aramaic

Aramaic is a language that originated in the ancient Near East. For example, Aramaic was spoken in regions that today are known as Iraq, Syria, Israel, Palestine, and Eastern Arabia. Aramaic and Hebrew are part of the same language family.

Circumcision

Circumcision is a medical practice through which a piece of the foreskin of the penis is removed. In Judaism, this is taken as a corporeal sign or token of their covenant with God. In Genesis 17:10-13, God commands Abraham, the patriarch of the Jewish people, and all of his descendants to be circumcised. The circumcision is a very common practice, even among areligious Jews. Nowadays, this practice is carried out by someone from the medical field, and the potential pain of the operation is seriously minimized.

Covenant

The covenant is another word for 'bond': the relation between God and his People, the Jews. This covenant implies rules about how Jews should act, and thereby it has consequences to how Jews orient themselves in life.

Diaspora

Diaspora is the whole of Jewish people living outside of Israel. After the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, or during various periods of slavery, the Jewish people dispersed all over the world.

Exodus

The term 'Exodus' has two meanings. Firstly, it refers to the Book of Exodus, the second book of the Torah. Secondly, it refers to the first part of this book: the Jewish people's exodus out of Egypt. The name Exodus comes from Ancient Greek and means "going out-" The Hebrew name is "Names", which refers to the opening words of the text.

Mitzvah

Mitzvah is a synonym for a religious commandment or religious obligation. The plural of 'mitzvah' is 'mitzvot'.

Mount Sinai

Mount Sinai is the place where the prophet Moses is said to have received the Torah from God. It is also the place where the Jewish people made their covenant with God. It is known as a sacred location.

According to the story in the Bible, the ancient Jews were slaves in Egypt, until God helped them escape. Afterwards, they wandered through the desert for 40 years, during which they reached Mount Sinai.

Torah and Talmud

The Jewish texts are divided into the oral Torah and the written Torah. According to Judaism, Moses received both on Mount Sinai. Together they form the Torah. Torah is Hebrew for “Law” or “Teaching.

The written Torah consists of five books, also called the Five Books of Moses. These are the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The oral Torah is the set of explanations that Moses also received in the process. Moses passed them on orally to Joshua, who in turn passed it on to the elders, until finally it was passed on to the rabbis. These explanations are very important. The written Torah is not always clear on every point. For example, Jews are not allowed to work on Sabbath, but it is not clear what is meant by ‘work’. This problem is solved by appealing to rabbinic explanations and commentaries.

Two commentaries formed on the Torah: a commentary on the written Torah, and a commentary on the oral Torah. The commentaries on the written Torah are called Midrash. These are direct text commentaries. The commentaries on the oral Torah are known as the Talmud. The Talmud itself consists of two parts: the Mishna and the Gemara. According to Orthodox Jews, the oral Torah has as much Divine authority as the written Torah.

Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments is a list of ten principles that have to be followed according to the Written Torah. Judaism believes that the Torah has many more commandments, but the Ten Commandments are often understood as being the basis of all the other commandments. The Ten Commandments also exist in Islam and Christianity!

Shoah

The Shoah, also known as the Holocaust, was a horrific event in the years 1941-1945 during which many European Jews were killed by Nazi Germany. It is thought that approximately 6 million Jews were killed in this genocide. At the time, this accounted for almost two-third of the Jewish population in Europe.

Wailing Wall

The Wailing Wall is another term for the Western Wall, the last remaining piece of the ancient Temple of Jerusalem. This Temple was the center of the religious, cultural and economic life of ancient Jews. The Temple was destroyed twice. The first time by the Babylonians, after which the Jews were enslaved in Babylonia. After a while they escaped, however, and they returned and rebuilt the Temple. Sadly, it got destroyed a second time, by the Romans.

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2



CATHOLICISM

CATHOLICISM

BEFORE WE START

1. Please write down five things that come to your mind when you think of Catholicism.
2. Please write down three questions you would like to ask about Catholicism.



Figure 2.1
Church buildings are places of worship for Catholics. The photo shows the Saint Giles church in Bruges, Belgium.
Source: © Renáta Sedmáková / Adobe Stock

2.1 A LETTER FROM SARA

Hello! My name is Sara, I am 14 years old, and I am Catholic. Like the rest of my family, I feel connected to the Catholic Church. Catholicism is a denomination within Christianity. Catholic means 'universal', so you can say that the Catholic message and the Catholic Church are addressed to everyone.

Like many other Christians, Catholics believe God exists as three persons: God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. This is known as the Holy Trinity. This is also reflected in the sign of the cross that Christians perform, saying 'In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'. The sign of the cross is a symbolic action; it is a reference to the cross that Jesus died on, which is one of the most important symbols within our faith.

Jesus was born in the first century of the Christian era in Palestine and was a unique person. He taught many inspiring lessons, shared stories, and performed miracles. He announced the Kingdom of God: a kingdom of love, not of power. That is why Jesus experienced resistance. He eventually died on the cross for the sins of all people. However, as the Son of God, he rose from the dead. His death and resurrection reveal God's love for us and marked the beginning of Christianity.

Today is Christmas! Every year on December 25, Christians around the world celebrate the birth of Jesus. Christmas is a real family celebration. We come together with the whole family to eat and open presents! You know what I really like about Christmas? The nativity scene! A nativity scene reminds us of the birth of Jesus. Catholics often put a crib next to a decorated Christmas tree.

Besides Christmas, there are other feast days that have an important place in the life of Catholics. The most important holiday is Easter. At Easter, Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The love of God is stronger than death. Thus, Easter is the symbol of hope and the future. The suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus are at the heart of the Christian faith. Easter is also a cheerful family celebration where we go on a chocolate Easter egg hunt, or we decorate boiled eggs!

On holidays like Christmas and Easter, Catholics go to church, the Christian house of prayer. During every Mass, we read passages from the Bible. The Bible strengthens believers. In addition, Catholics receive the sacrament of the Eucharist during the Mass. A sacrament is a ritual in the Catholic Church in which God and humankind meet. The Catholic tradition has seven sacraments that mark important moments and transitions in life.

The sacrament of the Eucharist is received for the first time at one's First Holy Communion, I was seven years old back then. The Eucharist reminds Christians of the Last Supper. This is the last meal Jesus shared with his apostles. Jesus asked his disciples to keep repeating this meal. That is why the ecclesial community has come together from the very beginning to celebrate the Eucharist.

In addition to the sacrament of the Eucharist, there are six other sacraments that play important roles in the lives of Catholics. The first sacrament is baptism. My parents chose to have me baptized as a baby. Baptism is a sacrament of initiation in which people are formally welcomed into the Catholic Church. Water is poured over the head of the person to be baptized, and they are assigned a Godfather and a Godmother. Children and adults can get baptised to become a member of the Catholic Church. A Catholic believes that baptism is the beginning of a new life in Christ.

When I turned 12, I received the Sacrament of Confirmation. This is also a sacrament of initiation, like baptism. The confirmand is anointed with the Holy Spirit. It is an affirmation of baptism and of the union with God and the ecclesial community. One publicly declares to everyone: 'I want to be a Catholic'.

In the future, I would like to get married in a church! The Sacrament of Marriage not only connects two Christians with each other, but also with God, and the faith community. Some male Catholics are called to the priesthood, or to a religious life. They receive the Sacrament of Ordination. These men are not permitted to marry. Also, women can serve the Church, as religious persons in congregations or as lay people, both inside and outside of marriage.

Last year my grandfather died. At the end of his life, he received the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, which was a special and comforting moment for him and our family. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is given to the sick and dying. The sick or dying person experiences or feels that God is lovingly close to them.

The last sacrament I want to tell you about is the Sacrament of Penance, or reconciliation. This sacrament gives Catholics the opportunity to confess their sins to a priest. Our sins, anger, and powerlessness are entrusted to God, who then grants us forgiveness and reconciliation if we are willing to renew our lives. Being a Catholic has moral implications: to respect the dignity of the human person, and to take responsibility for the community and the whole of creation.

In the everyday life of Catholics, the veneration of saints plays an important role. Saints are examples of a Christian life that inspires. The most famous saint who is venerated is Mary, the mother of Jesus. There are also certain places connected with Mary, such as Lourdes in France. People often go on pilgrimages. A pilgrimage is a journey of a believer to a place of religious significance. For many people, a pilgrimage is an inspiring experience that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

To end, I just want to say a few words about Vatican City, located in Rome, and it is the most important place for Catholics all over the world because it is the headquarters of the Catholic Church. It is the place where the Pope lives! The Pope is the head of the Roman Catholic Church. Besides the Pope, there are other leadership figures within the Catholic Church: bishops, priests, and deacons. Catholic believers who do not take up a formal leadership office in the Church are called lay people, or the laity. The laity are called to engage in society based on the Christian inspiration.

I would like to conclude with a prayer, perhaps the most famous Christian prayer in the world, given by Jesus himself: The Lord's Prayer.

Our Father who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

2.2 EXERCISES

2.2.1 EXERCISE 1: A FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH CATHOLICISM

Answer the questions below after listening to/reading Sara's letter.

1. What did you already know about the Catholic faith?

2. What information about the Catholic faith is new to you?



Figure 2.2
Catholic believers find closeness with each other, the Church community, and God.
Source: © cottonbro / Pexels.com

**2.2.2 EXERCISE 2:
WHAT DO YOU KNOW
ABOUT THE CATHOLIC
FAITH?**

Answer the questions below after listening to/reading Sara's letter.

1. What does the word, Catholic, mean?
 - a. Universal
 - b. Church
 - c. Big

2. When Catholics speak of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, they call this...
 - a. the cross
 - b. the Last Supper
 - c. the Holy Trinity

3. What is the correct ranking of leadership figures within the Catholic Church?
 - a. Bishop, priest, deacon
 - b. Bishop, deacon, priest
 - c. Lay people, priest, bishop

4. At Easter, Catholic believers commemorate...
 - a. ... the resurrection of Jesus Christ, after the crucifixion.
 - b. ... the birth of Jesus Christ.
 - c. ... the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

5. What is the name of the sacred text of Christianity?
 - a. The Old Testament
 - b. The Bible
 - c. The Koran

6. The Catholic Church has seven sacraments. What is a sacrament?
 - a. A sacrament is a reference to a text in the sacred text of Christianity.
 - b. A sacrament is a ritual in which God and humankind meet.
 - c. A sacrament is a holy place where believers pray.

7. The veneration of saints plays an important role in the everyday life of Catholics. What is a saint?
- a. A saint is someone who has been on a pilgrimage five times.
 - b. A saint is a person born on Christmas.
 - c. A saint is an example of a Christian life that inspires.
8. Where does the pope, the head of the Catholic Church, live?
- a. Vatican City
 - b. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
 - c. Lourdes, France
9. What is one of the most important symbols for Catholics?
- a. The mountain
 - b. The cross
 - c. The grave
10. The Eucharist is a commemoration for Catholics of...
- a. ... the pope.
 - b. ... Mary, the mother of Jesus.
 - c. ... the Last Supper, Christ, and the Easter mystery.



Figure 2.3
The moment of the
Eucharist during Mass.
Source: © lightpoet /
Adobe Stock

**2.2.3 EXERCISE3:
THE SEVEN
SACRAMENTS**

A sacrament is a **ritual in the Catholic Church** in which God and humankind meet. The Catholic tradition has **seven sacraments** that mark important moments and transitions in the life of Catholic believers.

Below you will find the seven sacraments. Connect each sacrament with its definition by noting the number of the sacrament next to the description:

1. Sacrament of baptism
2. Sacrament of the Eucharist
3. Sacrament of confirmation
4. Sacrament of marriage
5. Sacrament of holy orders
6. Sacrament of anointing of the sick
7. Sacrament of penance or reconciliation

Description	Sacrament (number)
In this sacrament, a Catholic believer is anointed with the Holy Spirit. It is a confirmation of baptism. In this way, the believer shows God and the Church community that they want to be Catholic.	
This sacrament grants forgiveness and reconciliation after a Catholic believer has confessed their own sins and is willing to renew their own life.	
A Catholic receives this sacrament for the first time at their First Communion. The sacrament reminds Catholics of the Last Supper, where Jesus asked his disciples to always repeat the meal in the same way. With this sacrament, Catholics commemorate Christ and the Easter mystery.	
In this sacrament, two people are joined not only for life to each other, but also to God, and the Church community.	
People join the Christian faith by means of this sacrament of initiation. Water is often poured over the candidate's head.	
This sacrament is given to the sick and dying. It allows the sick or dying person to experience the closeness of God.	
With this sacrament, a person demonstrates their choice to serve God and the Church community. Only unmarried men can obtain this sacrament.	

**2.2.4 EXERCISE 4:
RIGHT OR WRONG?**

Read the statements below after listening to/reading Sara's letter. Are the following statements right or wrong? Justify your answer.

1. Jesus lived in the first century of the Christian era. He was a unique and inspiring person. He encountered no opposition throughout his life.

RIGHT / WRONG



Figure 2.4
A cross is one of the most important symbols for Catholics.
Source: © izuboky / Adobe Stock

2. A Catholic pilgrim is a traveller who is on a journey to a place of religious significance. Catholics can choose to go on pilgrimages to places connected to saints, such as Lourdes.

RIGHT / WRONG

3. Vatican City is a special place for Catholics. It is the only place where the Bible, the sacred text of Christianity, can be read.

RIGHT / WRONG



Figure 2.5
The photo shows St.
Peter's Square in the
Vatican City.
Source: © sborisov /
Adobe Stock

2.2.5 IN CONCLUSION: THE LORD'S PRAYER

Prayer is an important activity for Catholics. The best-known prayer for all Christians is the **Lord's Prayer**, also called the **Our Father**. This prayer is not only important for Catholics, but also for other branches of Christianity, such as Protestantism, Anglicanism, Orthodoxy, and so on. The prayer was given by Jesus Christ himself; it is ancient and can be found in the Bible.

The Lord's Prayer is a powerful text addressed to God. Believers can find comfort, support, hope and trust in it. It is a text that also makes Catholics dream about the future, in which nothing good is ultimately lost.

Our Father who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

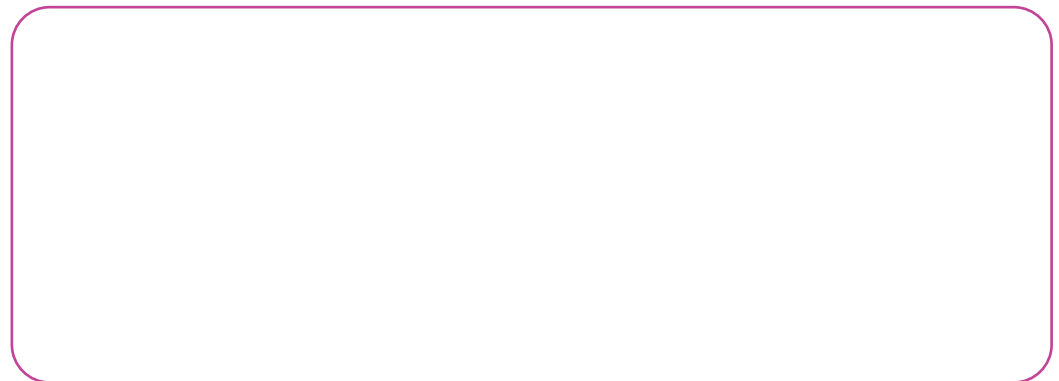
and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

1. What amazes you the most in this prayer?



2. Do you pray?

3. If you do not pray, do you understand why others do? What would you like to ask them?



Figure 2.6
A person who is praying.
Source: © RODNAE
Productions / Pexels.com

2.5 GLOSSARY

Bible

The Bible is the book of faith for Christians. This sacred book for Christians consists of two parts: the Old/First Testament and the New/Second Testament. The term 'Bible' comes from the Greek word *biblia*, which means 'books'. Indeed, the Bible is a collection of several books, consisting of different literary genres: legends, wisdom, (historical) stories, prophetic visions, Gospels, and so on.

Catholic

Catholicism is a movement within Christianity. Catholic means 'universal'. The Catholic message and the Catholic Church are addressed to everyone.

Holy Trinity

Like other Christians, Catholics speak of God in triplicate: God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. We call this the Holy Trinity. This is also reflected in the sign of the cross that Christians make, saying, *"In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."*

Kingdom of God

Jesus announced the Kingdom of God: a kingdom of love, not power. The Kingdom of God has an important place within Christianity and is partly at the heart of Jesus' proclamation. When Christians speak of the Kingdom of God, they refer to the hope and dream of a different and new world of God's Kingdom. However, the exact meaning and content is open to interpretation and varies according to context and time.

Pilgrimage

A Catholic pilgrim is a traveller who is on a journey to a place of religious significance. Catholics can choose to go on pilgrimages to places connected to saints, such as Lourdes. For many people, a pilgrimage is an inspiring experience that stays with them for the rest of their lives.

Sacrament

A sacrament is a ritual in the Catholic Church in which God and humankind meet. The Catholic tradition has seven sacraments that symbolize significant moments and transitions in the lives of Catholic believers: sacrament of baptism, sacrament of Eucharist, sacrament of confirmation, sacrament of marriage, sacrament of ordination, sacrament of anointing of the sick, sacrament of penance and reconciliation.

Saint

In the everyday life of Catholics, the veneration of saints plays an important role. Saints are examples of a Christian life that inspires. A well-known example of a saint is Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The Lord's Prayer/The Our Father

The Our Father is a well-known and frequently prayed prayer among Christians, addressed to God. It was given by Jesus himself and can be found in the Bible. This prayer is centuries old and has been translated into hundreds of languages.



Photo: Annie Spratt | Unsplash

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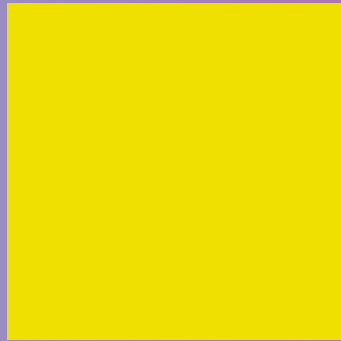
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3



ISLAM

ISLAM

BEFORE WE START

1. Please write down five things that come to your mind when you think of Islam.
2. Please write down three questions you would like to ask about Islam.

3.1 A LETTER FROM SAMIR

Hello, my name is Samir and I would like to talk to you about Islam. I still remember my first religion class when the teacher of Islam told us that “Islam” is an Arabic word with several meanings. The most common meaning is submission. In other words, Islam means accepting with your heart what you cannot grasp/understand with your intellect. Therefore, faith is rather a matter of feeling, he said. He also told us that Islam means peace.



Figure 3.1
Source: © Ahmed Aqtaï /
Pexels.com

Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him, is a very important person to Muslims, because he received a revelation from Allah and he was hence acknowledged as the trustworthy (al-amine) in the Arabic society. Muslims respect Mohammad so much that any image of him is considered disrespectful.

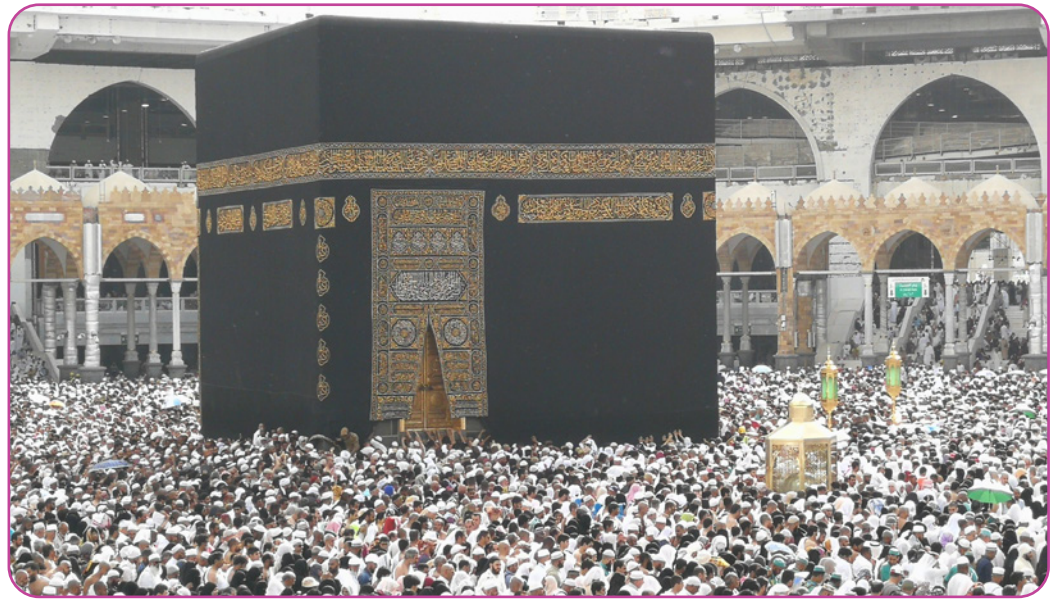


Figure 3.2
Source: @Hashem /
Adobe Stock

He was born in Mecca, a town in the western Arabian Peninsula, around 570 AD. He started receiving revelation from God at the age of 40. The religion he brought, Islam has approximately 1.6 billion followers. The spiritual capital of Islam is Mecca. Islam spread from there not only geographically, but also culturally through art, science, poetry and philosophy. In a short time, the Islamic empire stretched from the borders of China in the east to southern France (Poitiers) in the west.

The largest Muslim population is concentrated in Africa and Asia. There are also Muslims in Europe, especially Eastern European countries, such as Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Islam is the largest world religion. Due to the large migration flows in the 1950s and 1960s, Islam, especially through Moroccans and Turks, settled in Western Europe.



Figure 3.3
Source: © Peter Hermes
Furian / Adobe Stock

Today there are 2 dominant schools of thought within Islam., Sunnism and the Shi'ism. Sunni Muslims, who make up 87 of all Muslims, follow the tradition based on the life of Islam's last prophet, Mohammed. Shi'ites believe that Mohammed himself designated Ali ibn Abu Talib (Mohammed's nephew; married to his daughter Fatima) as his successor but he was prevented from this.



Figure 3.4
Source: © alexlmx /
Adobe Stock

The Sunni Islam has four main schools of law: the Hanafi, the Maliki, the Shafi'i and the Hanbali.

The different schools can also explain why some Muslims read the texts literally and others focus on the spirit of the words.

Islam has five main faith pillars:

- 1) The profession of faith (As-Shahada),
- 2) Prayer (As-Salat),
- 3) Giving alms (Az-Zakaat),
- 4) Fasting during Ramadan (As-Sawm),
- 5) Going on pilgrimage to Mecca once in life (Al-Hadjj).

1. **As-Shahada** is the testimony that Allah is the only God and that Mohammad is His prophet. As-Shahada is considered “the key” of Islam. This is also the only sentence that a person must utter if he wants to convert to Islam.



Figure 3.5
Source: © Monstera /
Pexels.com

2) A Muslim prays five times a day. **As-Salaat (The prayer)** is a form of meditation. For me, prayer is a means of escaping from human substance (body) to the universe full of goodness and beauty far from the worldly noise. While reciting from the Quran and bowing to Allah, I am in search of Enlightenment where I can find my peace.



Figure 3.6
Source: © fotokitas /
AdobeStock

3. **Az-Zakaat** means that rich people give some of their wealth to the less fortunate. For me Az-Zakaat means purification of the soul because, it is a way to purify the soul of the rich from avarice and greed and of the poor from jealousy towards the rich. In short, Az-Zakaat teaches me as a Muslim to share with others so that there is a certain justice in society.



Figure 3.7
Source: © asnidamarwani
Adobe Stock

4) The ninth month of the Islamic calendar is called Ramadan and is observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of **fasting (sawm)**, prayer, reflection and community.

I participate in fasting. This means that from sunrise to sunset I do not eat or drink. Fasting has a spiritual dimension in addition to a physical effort, especially the path to freedom. That means, I must not make my soul dependent on lusts and material things.

Fasting is, therefore, an extraordinary opportunity to find the path to freedom and liberate myself from any dependence on material things.

Furthermore, fasting helps me to think of people who are less fortunate because by fasting I partially experience the feeling of hunger.

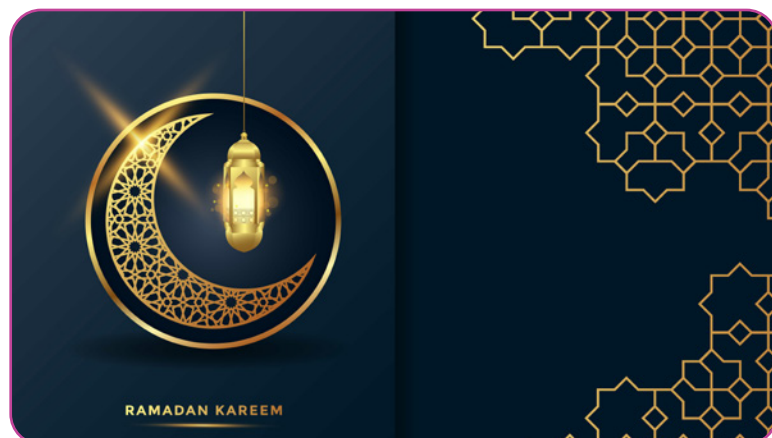


Figure 3.8
Source: © Yudi /
Adobe Stock

5. **Al-Hadj** is the fifth pillar of Islam. This means that all Muslims who are able to do so (financially and physically) must visit Mecca, the holiest place in Islam once in their life.



Figure 3.9
Source: © Konevi / Pexels.com

I try to read from our holy book, namely the Quran, every day. For Muslims, the Qur'an is the Word of God. The archangel Djibriel revealed those words to Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him). If I find something vague in the Qur'an, like, for example, how should I pray, I turn to the Sunnah to find an answer. The Sunnah are words and deeds of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him).



Figure 3.10
Source: © anut21ng Stock Adobe Stock

A mosque is a sacred place for Muslims where, among other things, we participate in communal prayer. The first time I visited a mosque I was 8 years old. I experienced a pleasant feeling and peace. Most rituals are done communally. Praying together in the mosque or fasting during Ramadan are examples of this. This closeness made me feel good as a Muslim.



Figure 3.10
Source: © mitzo_bs /
Adobe Stock

Friday is an important day for Muslims. We gather for afternoon prayers and listen to the imam's sermon. He stands on a seat or minbar and preaches about social issues from a religious perspective, like, for example, poverty, climate change, and solidarity. This gathering also strengthens the sense of belonging.



Figure 3.11
Source: © Roxanne
Shewchuk / Pexels.com

In addition to the Friday prayer, prayers during the feasts of Ramadan and sacrifice are also special. The end of Ramadan is celebrated with a banquet. In the morning, I dress myself beautifully to perform the morning prayer of the Ramadan feast together with my brothers and sisters in Islam. But before the morning prayer I offer a small contribution called "zakat elfitr" to poor people, because this is a religious obligation. Thus, everyone can celebrate that day without exception. Then I spend the whole day with my family. We exchange wishes and gifts.

The feast of sacrifice is also celebrated together. After the morning prayer, those who are able to do so sacrifice a sheep. The meat is normally distributed to people who are less fortunate.



Figure 3.12
Source: © MITstudio /
Adobe Stock

Rituals are performed by both women and men. However, only men can become imams, that is religious guides of Muslims who lead communal prayer. A woman, however, may become a Mufti. A mufti is a spiritual religious leader who has the authority to give religious advice regarding certain issues.



Figure 3.13
Source: © FS-Stock /
Adobe Stock

Muslims celebrate many beautiful moments together, but during less beautiful moments, they also support each other. A few months ago, I had to say goodbye to my father. The imam closed his eyes and pronounced the As-shahada (The Creed). He was then washed and wrapped in a shroud. After washing, the prayer for the dead was performed in the mosque and then we buried him.



Figure 3.14
Source: © view /
Adobe Stock

After that, the mourning period began. The official mourning period for the relatives of the deceased is three days. Those who have not been able to send their condolences earlier will visit the family of the person who died on one of these days to do so. The mourning visit is also done to comfort and support the next of kin. Those who visit the bereaved traditionally bring food because relatives of the dead person have other concerns. There is also reading from the Quran.

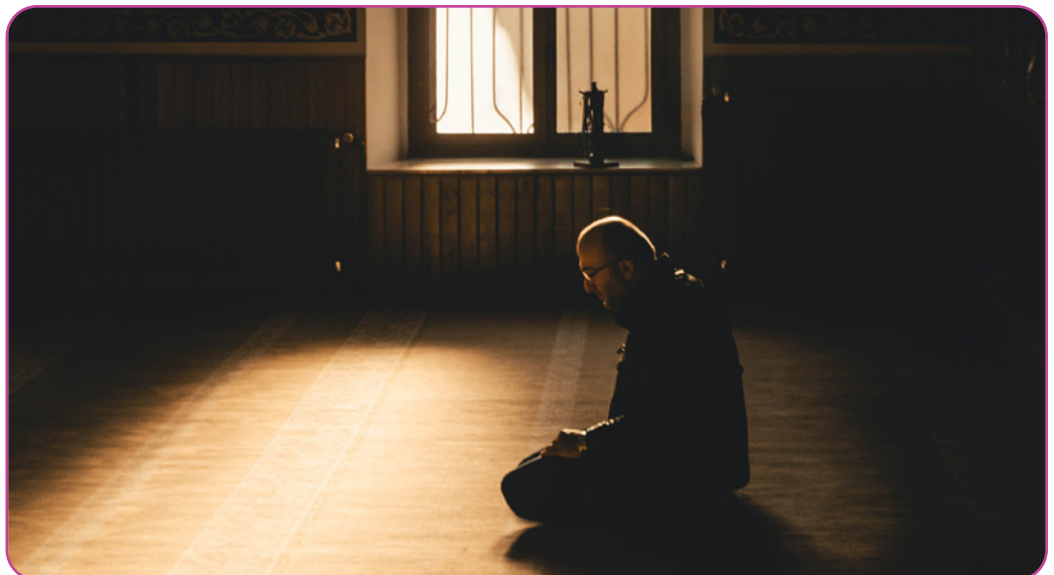


Figure 3.15
Source: © Ali Arapoğlu /
Pexels.com

Islam actually expects Muslims to be good persons. This means to live according to the Islamic principles such as respecting monotheism (the oneness of Allah), showing respect to others, doing justice....



Figure 3.16
Source: © Sawapanf
Photo / Adobe Stock

3.2 EXERCISES

Exercise 1: What do we remember from Samir's letter?

1. What does the word "Islam" mean?
 - a. Mandatory conversion.
 - b. Understand with your heart.
 - c. Understand with your mind.

2. Why is Prophet Mohammad very important to Muslims?
 - a. Because Prophet Mohammad is an Arab.
 - b. Because Prophet Mohammad is a descendant of the elite.
 - c. Because Prophet Mohammad received the Revelation from Allah.

3. Which city is the most important city for the Muslims.
 - a. Mecca
 - b. Baghdad
 - c. Fez

4. What are the two dominant currents in Islam?
 - a. Sunnism and Shi'ism
 - b. Hanbalism and Malikism
 - c. Hanafism and Shafi'ism

5. The different schools of Islam:
 - a. Prove that Islam is homogeneous.
 - b. Result from the fact that there are some Muslims who interpret the Qur'an literally and others who interpret the Qur'an in spirit.
 - c. prove that there is only one method of interpreting the Qur'an.

6. How many pillars are there in Islam?
 - a. 3
 - b. 4
 - c. 5

7. Muslims gather in the mosque to listen to the imam preach on social issues such as poverty, climate change, and solidarity from a religious perspective:
 - a. On Saturdays
 - b. On Fridays
 - c. On Thursdays

8. What are the two most important feasts in Islam?
 - a. Feast of birth and feast of marriage
 - b. Circumcision and Birthday celebrations
 - c. Feast of Ramadan and feast of Sacrifice

9. A woman can
 - a. Become a mufti
 - b. Become an imam
 - c. Become a Friday preacher

10. Islam teaches Muslims
 - a. to think only of himself.
 - b. to be a good person.
 - c. to think only of his family.

Exercise 2: Islam and interpretation

As Samir has explained to us, Islam has various currents. Read the following sentences and mark with (v) if it is right and with (x) if it is wrong:

- Islam has various currents but only one is dominant.
- Sunnism has the most followers.
- Shi'ism has four schools of law

Exercise 3: The prayer/As-Salat

In the story of Samir, you can see that prayer occupies an important place in Islam. A small ablution or wudu precedes prayer. This is a ritual washing that all Muslims perform before praying. This washing distracts them from all worldly affairs. In addition, this washing has a symbolic meaning; it is those parts, which in general take part in the daily activities that should be washed.

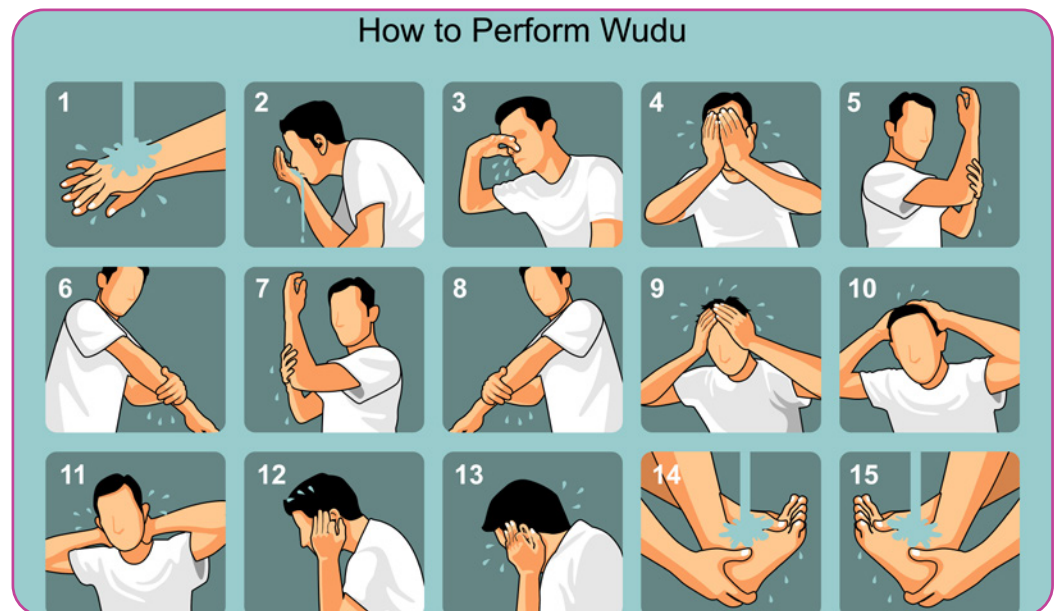


Figure 3.17
How to Perform Wudu
Source: © Ariyadi /
Adobe Stock

It is important that each person who wants to perform the wudu should have a pure intention to serve Allah. One washes their hands, then they rinse their mouth and blows their nose. Then they wash their face, then both arms up to the elbow. Then the hair on the head and ears and finally both feet up to the ankles.

As mentioned in Samir's story, Muslims pray five times a day and draw strength from this. The posture of prayer expresses reverence for God and human submission to God. Prayer consists of a number of postures: standing, bending over and kneeling. In a prescribed ritual manner, these forms are addressed during each prayer. The ultimate expression of submission is the moment in prayer when one kneels down and touches the ground with their forehead. The whole ritual is concluded with a head movement from right to left.



Figure 3.18
Praying Girl
Source: © Creativa
Images / Adobe Stock

- a. Muslims, as you may have noticed, pay a lot of attention to the prayer and draw their strength from it. What is your opinion about the prayer of Muslims?

- b. Do you also have an activity or a habit from which you draw your strength?

- c. Muslims experience prayer as a form of rest. They often regard prayer as a remedy for stress and burn-out. What is your opinion about this?

Exercise 4. You have read/watched Samir’s full description of the five main faith pillars of Islam. Please try to fill in the gaps with one of the words given below. Each word can be used only once.

Purification - Full of goodness - Freedom - Mecca -As-Shahada

1. is the testimony that Allah is the only God and that Mohammad is His prophet. As-Shahada is considered “the key” of Islam. This is also the only sentence that a person must utter if one wants to convert to Islam.
2. A Muslim prays five times a day. As-Salaat (The prayer) is a form of meditation. For me, prayer is a means of escaping from human substance (body) to the universe and beauty far from the worldly noise. While reciting from the Quran and bowing to Allah, I am in search of Enlightenment where I can find my peace.
3. Az-Zakaat means that rich people give some of their wealth to the less fortunate. For me Az-Zakaat means. of the soul because, it is a way to purify the soul of the rich from avarice and greed and of the poor from jealousy towards the rich.

In short, Az-Zakaat teaches me as a Muslim to share with others so that there is a certain justice in society.

4. The ninth month of the Islamic calendar is called Ramadan and is observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting (sawm), prayer, reflection and community.

I participate in fasting. This means that from sunrise to sunset I do not eat or drink. Fasting has a spiritual dimension in addition to a physical effort, especially the path to freedom. That means, I must not make my soul dependent on lusts and material things.

Fasting is, therefore, an extraordinary opportunity to find the path to and liberate myself from any dependence on material things. Furthermore, fasting helps me to think of people who are less fortunate because by fasting I partially experience the feeling of hunger.

5. Al-Hadj is the fifth pillar of Islam. This means that all Muslims who are able to do so (financially and physically) must visit, the holiest place in Islam once in their life.

Exercise 5: Islam and Peace

Samir told us in his letter that Islam also means peace.

However, Islam is often associated with violence. Several incidents 'in the name of Islam' created an incorrect perception of what is prescribed in Islam. Some Islamic group use Islam to justify violence. Use of violence is by no means a justified manner of bringing change in society. Violence must always be condemned.

However, there are specific situations where violence is allowed like war for protection. When a Muslim country is threatened and all alternatives to stop violence have been exhausted, one may resist with violence, if the strict rules of war within Islam are still respected. The rules are:

1. No violence until all alternatives to stop violence are exhausted.
2. No violence unless a country is attacked, then they can protect themselves.
3. No violence unless people is driven from their homes.

As can be understood from above, war is something to be strongly avoided in Muslim tradition. But if it becomes real, still there are humanitarian rules that should be observed. Those are:

Those are:

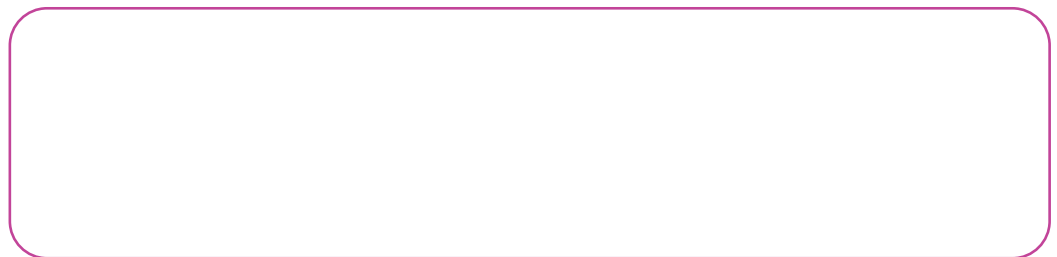
1. Do not kill women, children, the elderly or sick people (only use of force against soldiers in a war).
2. Always respect nature and animals.
3. Always respect people's homes.
4. Looting is never allowed.

As we see, the rule that allows violence refers purely to protection.

a. Why do you think Islam is often associated with violence?



b. In your opinion, are the conditions of violence righteous? Why yes/no?



3.3 GLOSSARY

As-Shahada

Is the testimony that Allah is the only God and that Mohammad is His prophet.

Az-Zakaat

It is an important rule of Islam that demands that rich people should give some of their wealth to the less fortunate.

Djibriel

Angel Jibreel is Allah's messenger Allah to all prophets. He has conveyed the revelation / Quran to the Prophet Mohammad.

Imam

The religious guide of Muslims who also leads communal prayer.

Minbar

The minbar is the pulpit in the mosque where the imam stands and gives a sermon (khutbah) during Friday's prayer.

Mufti

A mufti is a spiritual religious leader who has the authority to give religious advice regarding certain issues.

Ramadan

The ninth month of the Islamic calendar.

Sawm

This term describes the abstinence of food and drink from sunrise to sunset in the month of Ramadan. Besides its physical effort, fasting also has a spiritual dimension and is a path to freedom. It teaches that human soul should not be dependent on lusts and material goods.

Shi'ism

Current of Islam that claims that Mohammed himself designated Ali ibn Abu Talib (Mohammed's nephew; married to his daughter Fatima) as his successor but his wish was not fulfilled.

Sunnism

Current of Islam that follows the tradition based on the life of Islam's last prophet, Mohammed.

Wudu

The wudu is the small ritual ablution performed by a Muslim before salat,

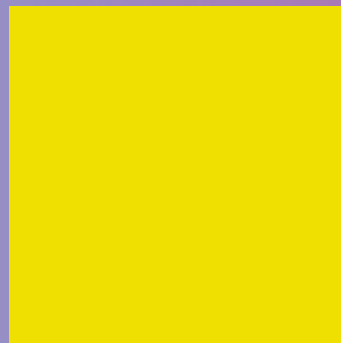
Zakat elfitr

It is a small contribution offered before the end of the month of Ramadan. It is intended for the neediest and aims to compensate for the deficiencies during the fasting period.

3.4 REFERENCES

Al-Qardawi, Youssef. 1990. *Alibadaat fi al-islam*. Almaktaba Alwahiba, Cairo

4



ORTHODOXY

ORTHODOXY

BEFORE WE START

1. Please write down five things that come to your mind when you think of Orthodox Christians.
2. Please write down three questions you would like to ask about the Orthodox Church.



Figure 4.1
Cathedral of the Nativity
of Christ in Riga, Latvia
Source: © ingusk /
Adobe Stock

4.1 A LETTER FROM ELENI: WITNESS MY FEELINGS ON BEING AN ORTHODOX

Hello, my name is Eleni and I would like to talk to you about my religious tradition, the Orthodox Church. The name “Orthodox” comes from two Greek words, namely “orthos” (proper, right) and “doxa” (belief or thinking) and it means the right belief or thinking. There are around 260 million Orthodox Christians all over the world. Most of them live in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, as well in Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa.

All Orthodox Christians share the same belief but have different traditions when it comes to rituals, history, and feasts. I am, for example, Greek Orthodox, since I come from Greece but there are also Russian, Romanian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Polish, or Albanian Orthodox to name some of them. The head of each Orthodox Church can be a Patriarch or a bishop but we have also priests in our parishes for our regular rituals and celebrations.

Like other Christians, we believe that God is a Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This Trinity of three distinct persons is at the same time only One God. The true mystery of our God was revealed by Jesus Christ who is the Son that became human. He lived in Palestine in the 1st century of the Christian era, he taught and performed miracles but then he was persecuted and died on the cross for our sins. However, being God he rose from death. His death and resurrection revealed God's love for his world and was the beginning of the Christian Church.

Almost all our rituals take place in our worship houses that are called churches. They have some distinct features with deeper symbolic meanings. The sanctuary is always in the eastern part of the church. Only the priest and those who help him can enter it.

Icons, namely paintings of holy women and men, stories from their lives and our holy book, the Bible, are respected by Orthodox and play an important role in our tradition. They cover the walls of our churches or are painted on pieces of wood. My family has two such icons at home that belong to the family for many generations. They are placed in the small icon corner that is used for prayer in my family house. My mother usually takes care that the oil lamp that hangs in front of them is always burning. Icons are usually called the books of all believers, especially of those who cannot read. They remind us in a simple way of the sacred stories and persons of our faith. Our holy book, though, is the Bible or the Holy Scripture. It consists of two parts, the Old and the New Testament. The Old Testament contains 49 books and the New Testament 27. Passages from them and especially the New Testament are read in our worship. In the Greek Orthodox Church, they are usually read in ancient Greek, which makes it sometimes quite difficult to understand. My aunt, however, gave me a nice translation of the New Testament last year and I have spent some time reading it. It is certainly a fascinating book!



Figure 4.2
Decorated Easter eggs,
traditional for Eastern
Europe culture
Source: © tynza /
Adobe Stock



Figure 4.3
Orthodox ceremony of
the Eucharist
Source: © Kadmy /
Adobe Stock

Figure 4.4
Little boy in the church
on Easter
Source: © Anna Om /
Adobe Stock

One of the most important symbols in our faith is the cross that reminds us of Jesus Christ's sacrifice and God's love. We usually wear it around our neck. We also often cross ourselves, especially during worship or when praying. With our joined three right-hand fingers that symbolize the Holy Trinity, we touch our forehead, below the chest, the right side of the chest and then the left. This is at the same time a gesture of prayer and blessing.

Orthodox Christians usually pray at the beginning and the end of the day. One of our favourite prayers is the Prayer of the Lord, a short prayer that Jesus Christ taught to his disciples and is recited ever since in our worship gatherings but also during prayer at home.

The Orthodox Church has many feasts that are celebrated throughout the year. Some feasts have fixed days in the year and some others that change the date of celebration every year and are called movable. In the period before great feasts, we usually fast, which means that we do not eat certain kinds of food. There are also two regular fasting days in the week, Wednesday and Friday, when we commemorate Jesus' death on the cross. One of the most important fixed feasts in winter is Christmas when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. However, the greatest feast is Easter (or Pascha), a movable feast in spring, celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is one of the most joyous feasts in our tradition. Due to a different calculation system, we celebrate Easter on a different day than other Christian traditions. There is a preparatory Holy Week and at midnight after Saturday, we celebrate Jesus' rising from the dead. Easter Sunday is a day of great joy and family time. We eat together, crack dyed red eggs and greet each other with the phrase "Christ has risen".

Sunday is the holiest day of the week. It is the day when we go to the church to participate in the Divine Liturgy, a special worship gathering. In the Liturgy we celebrate Eucharist, that reminds us of Jesus Christ's last supper with his friends and disciples, his death and resurrection. The gifts of bread and wine are offered and are consecrated. We believe that they are changed into

the Body and Blood of Christ spiritually. At the end of the Liturgy, the priest invites the members of the congregation to receive them. Through their consumption we believe that we remain in communion with Jesus Christ but also with the rest of the community. At the end of the Liturgy small pieces of bread are also offered to all participants, a reminiscence of the common meals that ancient Christians held when they met.

Our parish church is very important for our family life not only because of the celebration of great feast and the Divine Liturgy but because some of the most important events of our family life take place there.



Figure 4.5
Newborn baby baptism
in Holy water
Source: © Denis /
Adobe Stock

Today, for example, my young sister is going to get baptized and become a full member of the Orthodox Church. During the ceremony, she will get her Christian name, she will be dressed in white new clothes and wear a cross. Although in ancient times people were baptized as adults, today in the Orthodox Church children are usually baptized in the early months of their lives. Baptism will be performed by the priest and the godparents of my soon-to-be-baptized sister will be there to help. They will be her spiritual parents and responsible for her growing up following the teachings of the Orthodox Church. My sister will be called Sophia, after one of my grandmothers. During the ceremony, the priest will immerse my sister three times into the water of the font in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, a symbol of dying and being reborn into a new life following the example of Jesus Christ who died and was risen from the dead. No surprise that this is an important day in our family. After the ceremony, we will celebrate with a large dinner and music and my lucky sister will get a lot of presents!

There are so many things to celebrate as a family, like baptisms, name days but also marriages. My aunt Maria married two months ago and it was really a big event with relatives coming from all over the world to be present

in the ceremony that took place in the church. The priest exchanged the wedding rings three times in the fingers of the young couple. Number three is important in the Orthodox Church because it refers to the Holy Trinity. He also placed the wedding crowns on their heads and led them around the table, in a dance that symbolizes their joyful beginning in their common life. The priest also held the cross in his hand that stands for the difficulties that they have to face together.

Well, life and death are a cycle as my grandmother Eleni says. As a family, we celebrated happy events but also the death of some dear friends and relatives. We had to say our goodbyes to my grand-grandfather Nikos some years ago. It was a difficult time for us all. When the casket was placed in the earth the priest poured olive oil and wine in the shape of a cross three times and threw some wheat seeds on it. The priest explained that like the seeds that are buried in the earth to grow and come into light in spring so the dead will rise at the end of the days. Orthodox people believe that death resembles a kind of a long sleep from which all dead will wake in the Second Coming of Jesus. Till then we have to remember them with love. Memorial services are very important, then, and are held on certain days of the year. Women bring sweets and boiled wheat to the church on these days and the family offers almsgiving in the memory of the dead. We are sad but at the same time we hope to meet them again and we never stop to love them.

Women participate in all worshipping events in our church, clean it or volunteer in the social work of our parish by preparing meals for the poor or visiting families in need. Although we are regarded equal members of the community we are not allowed to become priests or have some other public role in the life of the community. It is a pity but as it is often said this is a matter of tradition and history. Well, tradition is a very important aspect of our lives and it can encompass many aspects of our religious life; teachings but also common practices and customs. Since the Orthodox Church believes that it is the continuation of the early Church, tradition is of great importance. However, especially young people think that some things that older people call "tradition" could certainly change according to contemporary needs.

As members of a religious community but also of society we are expected to live according to our faith and also act in ways that reflect this faith. Loving God and our neighbour (either Christian or non-Christian) is the highest command and besides our regular worship and participation in Eucharist, we have to show our love and solidarity to other human beings but also our respect to the rest of God's creation. Almsgiving then but also a life of humility and careful and respectful use of goods are some of the most important practical aspects of Orthodox life. As the priest in our church usually says in his preaching being Orthodox does not only mean keeping the proper faith but also living according to this faith.

4.2 EXERCISES

Exercise 1: What do we remember from Eleni's experience

1. The word "Orthodox" means
 - (a) the right belief
 - (b) the conservative
 - (c) the old-fashioned
2. Why are icons so important for Orthodox Christians?
 - (a) they tell stories of faith in a simple way
 - (b) they are the holy book of the Orthodox Church
 - (c) they are made by holy men of the Bible
3. The holy day of Orthodox Christians is
 - (a) Saturday
 - (b) Sunday
 - (c) Friday
4. The most important feast for the Orthodox Church is
 - (a) Christmas
 - (b) a fixed feast in spring
 - (c) Easter
5. In the Orthodox Divine Liturgy the participants
 - (a) receive both the consecrated bread and wine
 - (b) receive only the consecrated bread
 - (c) drink wine from a cup

6. During the Baptism in the Orthodox Church

- (a) water is sprinkled on the head of the child
- (b) a crown is placed on the head of the child
- (c) the child is immersed three times in a font full of water

7. Which number is important in the Orthodox Church?

- (a) two
- (b) three
- (c) forty

8. In the Orthodox Church, women

- (a) do not participate in common worship
- (b) help in the church but cannot be religious leaders
- (c) they can be priests like men

9. Eleni says that living according to the Orthodox faith means

- (a) caring only for other Orthodox Christians
- (b) leading a secluded life in the family
- (c) showing solidarity to other humans and all creatures

Exercise 2: Let's talk about icons

Icons occupy a central place in Orthodox life and spirituality. Orthodox icons have a deep symbolic meaning. Even the colours used stand for certain ideas.

Read the following explanation and choose the colour you feel suits you better. Explain why:

Gold: It is the colour that symbolizes the divine world. It is usually found as a background in various icons, in halos and on the clothes of Jesus Christ.

Blue: It stands for the Kingdom of God, heavens, infinity or eternity. It is usually found as a background in various icons and as the colour of garments of the Mother of Jesus.

Green: It is the colour of renovation, hope, youth and nature. It is usually found in icons that depict Jesus' birth or the annunciation of his birth to his mother by the angel.

White: It stands for purity and divinity. This is the colour of garments of the angels and Jesus when the aim is to stress his divine nature as the Son of God



Figure 4.6. The Theotokos in the type of Glykophilousa (kissing the infant Jesus). Genève: "Creta o venezia, madona glykophilousa, 1457.JPG", [madonna_glykophilousa_1457.JPG](#)



Black: It can either be the colour of death or evil but it also used for the garments of the ascetes and monks to denote that they abstained from all worldly pleasures.

Brown: The colour of the earth, a symbol of mortality and ascetic life.

Purple red: The colour of royalty and glory. It is used for the garments of Jesus Christ and his Mother.

Now look at the following icon of Jesus' Mother and Jesus as a young child and try to explain the message of the colours used on it.

g her child, Jesus), 15th c. Musée d'art et d'histoire de
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Creta_o_venezia_

Exercise 3: Baptismal Ritual

You have read/watched Eleni's full description of the ritual of baptism. Please try to fill in the gaps with one of the words given below. Each word can be used only once.

Faith, anointment, candle, cross, cut, oil, crossing, life, reborn

Today is a happy day in my family. My young sister is going to get baptized. She will become a full member of the Orthodox Church. During the ceremony, she will get her Christian name, she will be dressed in white new clothes and wear a, all symbols of her new as a Christian. Although in ancient times people were baptized as adults, today in the Orthodox Church children are usually baptized in the early months of their lives. Baptism will be performed in our parish by the priest and the godparents of my soon-to-be-baptized sister will be there to help during baptism. Godparents are usually friends of the family or relatives. They will be her spiritual parents and responsible for her growing up following the teachings of the Orthodox Church.

In the first part of the ceremony, the priest will announce the name of my sister and everyone will look happy. He will, then, ask her godmother to recite the Symbol of on behalf of my sister who is of course still too young to read it on her own.

Then the priest will lead both my sister and her godmother in front of the baptismal font and with the help of the godmother, he will anoint my sister with blessed, a symbol of blessing and new creation. He will immerse her three times into the water of the font in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Well, not all babies find it very amusing and many of them cry when immersed in water. It is, however, a moment of joy. My teacher explained to us that this is a symbol of dying and being into a new life following the example of Jesus Christ who died and was risen from the dead. Immediately after getting out of the font, the chrismation takes place. It is the of the child's body blessed oil. Through this, my sister will become a child of God who received the Holy Spirit of God. The priest will a few hairs from her head that symbolizes a small gift that my sister offers in the ceremony. She will be dressed in new clothes and she will wear a cross, an important symbol of

faith for all Christians. It shows that from now on my sister will have to follow the example of Jesus Christ in her own life. The godmother will carry my sister and hold a lighted symbolizing my sister's first steps in her new life as a Christian. Finally, the priest will read a short passage from the holy book of the Gospel and bless my sister again touching her head with it. People show their great respect towards this book by kissing it and themselves, a typical gesture of the Orthodox people. As a member of the Church my sister will participate in the sacraments of the Church. No surprise that this is an important day in our family. After the ceremony we will celebrate it together with friends with food, sweets and music and my lucky sister will get a lot of presents!

Exercise 4: That's tradition

Tradition as the accumulated experience and knowledge of the Orthodox Christian Church plays an important role in the lives of Orthodox Christians even today. However, the question is often raised whether or in what extent can or should tradition shape the life of contemporary Orthodox Christians. Having watched Eleni's presentation, please, discuss the following questions in groups of two:

1. Think of practices and customs that are regarded as traditional in your families or society and discuss them among each other,
2. What role do you think tradition plays in the lives of Orthodox Christians, and
3. Discuss the pros and cons of tradition as an authority regulating the religious lives of the members of a religious group (the one member of the group could present the positive aspects and the other negative ones).



Figure 4.7
Young mother and her
little blond Caucasian
daughter with candles in
Orthodox Russian Church
Source: © vadiar /
Adobe Stock

Exercise 5: Living according to faith

Eleni finished her letter by saying that “being Orthodox does not only mean keeping the proper faith but also living according to this faith”. This is often repeated in many ways in texts of Orthodox worship. Moreover, it is often stressed in them that a true expression of love towards God is love towards people in need. Jesus Christ many times is used as the prototype of all people that are unjustly persecuted and suffer.

Read the following verses of a hymn sung on Good Friday (the Friday before Easter Sunday). Joseph of Arimathea, one of Jesus’ followers laments his death and asks the Romans for his body to bury.

“Give me this stranger, who from infancy has been as a stranger, a sojourner in the world.

.....

Give me this stranger, that I may hide him in a tomb, for as a stranger He has no place to lay His head.”

When hearing the hymn what are the associations that one could make to current situations and challenges?



Figure 4.8
Hands of the poor receive food
Source: © kuarmungadd / Adobe Stock

4.7 GLOSSARY

Almsgiving

Offer to those in need material help as a gift.

Anointment

The application of holy oil in a religious ceremony.

Ascete

A person who leads a life of self-denial and austerity for religious reasons.

Bishop

The highest spiritual leader for the Orthodox Christian communities in a certain geographical territory that is usually called 'diocese'.

Congregation

A group of people gathered for religious worship.

Consecrate

Make or declare something sacred (holy).

Deacon

From the Greek word "diakonos" (helper). A member of the lower rank of Christian ministers (the other two being priest and bishop).

Divine Liturgy

The most important worship event in the Orthodox Church during which Eucharist is celebrated.

Eucharist

A ceremony during which the bread and wine are consecrated and are consumed by those participating in the event who are baptised. Eucharist comes from the Greek word "eucharistia", which means "thanksgiving". Orthodox Christians believe that the wine and the bread are mystically the Blood and Body of Jesus Christ.

Godparents

Those persons that present a child to be baptized and take responsibility to act as their spiritual parents and care for their religious education. They are usually either relatives or friends of the family.

Halo

A golden crown around the face of a saint or Jesus Christ. It indicates holiness and divine glory.

Iconostasis

A high screen covered by icons separating the sanctuary from the rest of the church.

Monk

A member of a religious community of men living a secluded life of poverty, chastity and obedience. The female equivalent is a nun.

New Testament

The second part of the Christian Bible that contains the stories of Jesus Christ, his disciples and teachings deriving from Jesus' life and preaching.

Old Testament

The first part of the Christian Bible that contains the history, teachings, prophecies, and rituals of ancient Israel.

Parish

A small community of Christians that has its own worshipping house (church) and a priest as its head .

Patriarch

A leading bishop among all the other bishops who is also the spiritual father of an Orthodox Church.

sacrament

A religious ceremony that imparts divine grace.

Sanctuary

The most sacred part of the church.

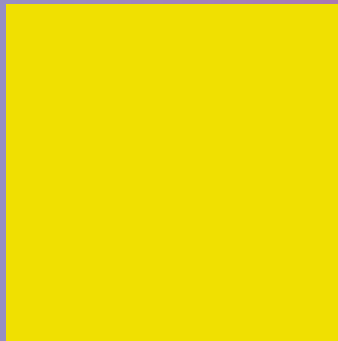
Theotokos

A name of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. It comes from the Greek words "Theos" (God) and "tikto" (give birth) and it refers to the Christian faith that Jesus was not just a man but also the Son of God.



Photo: Annie Spratt | Unsplash

5



PROTESTANTISM

PROTESTANTISM

BEFORE WE START

1. Write down five things that come to mind when you think of Protestants.
2. Write down three questions you would like to ask about Protestantism.



Figure 5.1
Interior of a Lutheran
Church with an organ.
Source: © christoph-
mueller / Pixabay

5.1 A LETTER FROM HANNAH: MY FAITH, EXPERIENCE, AND LIFE AS A PROTESTANT.

Hello, I am Hannah, and I come from a Protestant family. I want to tell you about what that means for me. Protestantism arose about 500 years ago because people did not agree with the course of the 'Western' church. An important moment was when Martin Luther drew up a list of 95 points of the practices of the church of that time, which he believed were not in line with the Bible.

Let me tell you more about my life as a Protestant. When I wake up, I often try to do a quick prayer. My father has always made it clear that prayer is important because it is a way to communicate with God.

Faith is very important to us. We Protestants emphasize that God asks us to put our faith in Jesus, rather than try to live perfect lives. For most protestants, this faith is more than just saying you believe that Jesus has once walked on earth. It means that you trust him as someone who loves you and wants the best for you, also today. We call this personal faith. Such faith should also be visible in what someone does in their life.

Oh, maybe I should have started with telling you about Jesus at the start. Just as in other Christian traditions, Jesus is at the center of Protestantism. In the Bible we read that Jesus walked on this earth, was crucified, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Traditionally, Protestants believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that he did all this in order to save mankind. My sister, on the other hand, thinks Jesus is important, but she sees him only as an exemplar whose life shows how we can live together lovingly with each other.

What we believe about Jesus comes from what we find in the Bible, which is a holy book to us. For this reason, we read a section of the Bible at dinner every day. My parents also go to church for a Bible study every week. There, they reflect on the Bible together with others. When they encounter a problem in life, they often seek for guidance in the Bible, because they believe the Bible is the word of God. My sister disagrees with this. According to her, the Bible is just a book of humans, but it may serve as a valuable source of inspiration for life.



Figure 5.2
Bible and folded hands
as a sign of praying.
Source: Pixabay

Every Sunday we go to church , where we sing songs, listen to a sermon, and pray together. My brother no longer attends church with us. He thinks that in traditional protestant churches, people are too much focused on themselves and on their salvation. He says he can experience what we do in church at home also by watching a church service. According to him, he can live out his faith better by being focused on others. He does a lot of volunteer work, such as helping a family of refugees who recently moved to our village.

The sermon is an important and big part of the church service for us. A lot of time is allocated to the sermon in my church, but I know of other churches where sermons are much shorter. The sermon is always about a Bible text that is applied to the Christian life. We call the person who leads the church the pastor or preacher. Our pastor is a nice man, who had to study for 6 years before he was allowed to lead our church. I also went to the church of a classmate a couple of times. In her church people are allowed to speak who have not studied but believe that God commissioned them to speak in churches.

The pastors in our church are always men. Women are not allowed to become a pastor and therefore cannot lead a church service. My father says this is what the Bible teaches us. In our church, there was a discussion about this three years ago and it was decided not to change anything about it. My sister was one of those who disagreed. She therefore went to another church. According to her, it is not at all in the Bible that women should never preach. She also thinks that this belief is outdated.



Figure 5.3
Protestant pastor
Source: ©
EugenioAlbrecht /
Pixabay

Another important part of the church service is singing together, which gives us a means to worship and praise God. In our church, this is done under the guidance of an organ. My mother likes this very much. I find it a bit old-fashioned myself. What I like better is the band with guitar, drums, and keyboard in my classmate's church.

Another element in our services we consider important is the Lord's Supper. In some churches, this is even more important than the sermon. In my church, we celebrate this once a month during a church service. The Lord's Supper involves remembering what Jesus did for us and consists of eating bread and drinking wine. The bread represents the body of Jesus and the wine the blood of Jesus. Jesus himself said that his followers should do this regularly to remember him. By consuming bread and wine, we remember that Jesus died to save us.



Figure 5.4
Lord's supper symbols
Source: Pxfuel

During a vacation in South America with my uncle and aunt, we visited a church that was nothing like ours. There was a lot more singing and a lot of dancing. They also spoke in a strange language. My uncle called it "speaking in tongues." They also prayed for people while laying hands on them. My uncle told me this is a Pentecostal church. He said that Pentecostals consider it important to listen to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the power of God who works through people. Protestants believe with other Christians that there is one God, but he exists of three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I don't understand this well, but it is called 'the Trinity.'



Figure 5.5
Pentecostal youth
worshipping God during
a youth congress in
Mexico.
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#).

Another symbol that is important to us is baptism. This ritual symbolizes the purification of a person and the admission into the community of God. In our church we administer what is called infant baptism, in which water is sprinkled over a baby's forehead. In my classmate's church, on the other hand, they believe that a person should not be baptized until they make a conscious decision themselves to be baptized. This is called believer's baptism and happens later in life and the person is fully immersed in water. Both forms are usually done while proclaiming the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Figure 5.6
Adult baptism in the
Jordan River in Israel (left)
Source: © Pxfuel



Figure 5.7
Infant baptism in a
Church (right)
Sources: © Pxhere



Faith in God, central in Protestantism, is not just saying you believe but also showing it in rituals and in living as a follower of Jesus. This means that we must act loving and caring for each other and the world as Jesus did.

5.2 EXERCISES

Exercise 1: Understanding the letter

Answer the following questions to better understand the contents of Hannah's letter.

1. Hannah was talking about prayer. Which statement is consistent with what she said?
 - a. Protestants only pray at fixed times of the day.
 - b. Prayer is a way for Protestants to communicate with God.
 - c. Prayer plays a minor role in the Protestant church service.
 - d. Protestants only pray together with others.

2. Select everything important in a Protestant church service
 - a. Penance
 - b. Eating together
 - c. Icons
 - d. Rituals
 - e. Music and singing
 - f. The Bible
 - g. Prayer
 - h. Being together
 - i. Dancing
 - j. j. Kneel down
 - k. Meditation
 - l. Sitting still

3. For each statement, indicate whether it is true or false:
- a. Protestants usually believe that the Bible is the word of God.
 - b. Protestants believe there are three Gods.
 - c. All Protestants believe that a pastor should always have a specific degree.
 - d. The Sunday church service plays an important role in Protestantism.
 - e. Personal faith is important to Protestants.
 - f. In Pentecostalism, they believe that the Holy Spirit is irrelevant today.
4. Which two forms of baptism exist in Protestant churches and how do they differ?
- ...baptism and the ...baptism
5. In her story Hannah talks about herself, her parents, her sister, brother, classmate, uncle and aunt. All of them are Protestants, but they don't always agree in their beliefs. Fill the correct person for each descriptions of a person.

Brother, Classmate, Hannah, Parents, Sister, Uncle/Aunt

Believes that Jesus is an example and that the Bible serves as a source of inspiration.	
Attends a church where choosing to follow Jesus marks an important moment through baptism.	
Likes more modern music in the church and finds churches that differ in form and style from his own church very interesting.	
Attend a church where experiencing the holy spirit is important.	
Finds it important to practice his faith together with others and has not so much with the individual focus of many churches.	
The Bible is the word of God for them and they use it to make life decisions.	

Exercise 2: Practice

For many Protestants, the concept of personal faith is very important. If you look at the story, what does this personal faith look like in the life of a Protestant?

What does faith or searching for meaning in life look like for you?



Figure 5.8
Man praying in an empty church.
Source: © Pexels / Pixabay

Exercise 3: Doctrines of Faith

The five solas of the Reformation are five principles that describe what Protestants in the 16th century considered important, formulated in Latin. Although these principles were central during the birth of Protestantism, there has been much discussion about them in the past 2 centuries. Protestants differ in their valuing of the different principles today.

<i>Sola Scriptura</i> Only through Scripture	Protestants have traditionally believed that one can only know God with certainty through the Bible. The Bible is therefore considered the Word of God.
<i>Sola Gratia</i> Only by grace	Important to Protestants is the belief that not the works of men but only God's grace can save someone. Grace is getting something that one doesn't deserve.
<i>Sola Fide</i> Only by faith	This principle implies that people become justified in God's eyes only by faith in Jesus. This principle is in line with the Sola Gratia because it emphasizes that righteousness is not due to human actions.
<i>Solus Christ</i> Only Christ	This principle means that only Jesus plays the crucial role in salvation and can bridge the distance between humans and God. For Protestants this also means that Jesus can be worshipped as he is the Son of God.
<i>Soli Deo Gloria</i> Glory to God alone	This means that everything people do should be for the glory of God and not for their own honor.

What do you notice about the five principles? What do these principles reveal about Protestants?

These principles reflect what is important to many Protestants. What principles would you set for yourself as important for your life and/or faith? Why do you think this is important?

Exercise 4: Contemporary developments - gender

The Bible speaks of men and women in several places. These Bible texts are not only about the relationship between men and women, but also about the roles given to women in the life of the church. Gender roles and what the Bible says about that is a topic discussed in many Protestant churches. The Bible text below often plays an important role in the discussion.

Ephesians 5:21-33:(NIV)

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Read the following 2 quotes about the role of women:

“Men and women, though equal in essence, were designed for different roles. Women are in no sense intellectually or spiritually inferior to men, but they were quite clearly created for a distinctive purpose. In the economy of church and family, the Bible says women should be subordinate to the authority of men. Yet scripture also recognizes that in a completely different sense, women are exalted above men - because they are the living and breathing manifestation of the glory of a race made in God’s image.” ~ John F. MacArthur Jr.¹

¹John MacArthur, *Twelve Extraordinary Women: How God Shaped Women of the Bible and What He Wants to Do with You* (Nashville, Tenn.: Nelson Books, 2005), 8.

"If a woman is held back, minimized, pushed down, or downplayed, she is not walking in the fullness God intended for her as his image bearer, as his ezer warrior.² If we minimize our gifts, hush our voice, and stay small in a misguided attempt to fit a weak and culturally conditioned standard of femininity, we cannot give our brothers the partner they require in God's mission for the world. " ~ Sarah Bessey³

MacArthur and Bessey represent two different camps within Protestantism. John MacArthur represents the first position. He believes that men and women have different but complementary roles in the world. Sarah Bessey represents the second position, and she believes that men and women are equal in the roles they are allowed to fulfill.

Compare the quotes with the Bible text. What questions do you have about this Bible text? Do you think these questions are easy to answer?



The discussion about gender roles is very sensitive and often focuses on discussions of how the Bible should be interpreted. For some protestants this discussion impedes on the principle of Sola Scriptura. The discussion can lead to frustrations, anger and even churches that split. Are there discussions you have in life that conflict with your principles of Exercise 3? How do you deal with them?

This exercise is focused on letting students reflect on their own conflicts. The goal is to make students understand some of the underlying conflicts in a person that often fuel discussions within religions.



²Ezer Warrior is a term used to emphasize the strength of womanhood.

³Sarah Bessey, *Jesus Feminist: An Invitation to Revisit the Bible's View of Women*, First Howard Books trade paperback edition. (New York: Howard Books, A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc, 2013), 80.

Exercise 5: Contemporary developments - Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism is a fast-growing movement within Protestantism. This movement has experienced strong growth, especially in South America and Africa. Pentecostalism can be described as a movement of energy and strength. The working of the Holy Spirit is central. This means that supernatural experiences are often emphasized by Pentecostals. Consider, for example, divine healing and prophesying. Pentecostalism gives much value to the experience of people. Living with the Holy Spirit then means personally and physically experiencing the Holy Spirit.

An important concept to talk about is *supernatural*. It refers to everything that does not fit into our common perception of the laws of nature. This is a very important concept in the Pentecostal movement. Below is a black and white photo of people praying for divine healing for a woman in a wheelchair. Not all Protestants necessarily believe in God working in supernatural ways. Some may believe that the miracles in the Bible were supernatural, but do not believe that supernatural events occur in our time.



Figure 5.9
Laying on of Hand in the
Church of God in Lejunior
Kentucky on 9 May 1946
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#)

A frequently described supernatural experience is prophecy. Prophecy means passing on a message from God that says something special about the world, the direction of the church, or people's lives. In Pentecostalism, this is a common practice, but in Protestantism as a whole, there is a great deal of disagreement on this subject. Many Protestants do believe that God can speak to a person's heart, but they do not believe in prophetic messages supposedly given to some people.

Why does the concept of prophecy lead to discussion within Protestantism?
Use the principle of Sola Scriptura from Exercise 3 in your answer.



What is your view on the concept supernatural?



5.3 GLOSSARY

Bible

The Bible is the sacred book of Christians. It is composed of two parts: the Old and the New Testament. The Bible is actually a collection of various types of books, such as poetry, narratives, visions, and numerous other genres. To Protestants, the Bible is made up of 66 books.

Baptism

Baptism is a ritual that symbolizes the purification of a person and his/her admission into the church. In some churches, a baptism involves sprinkling water on the head, usually of a baby. In other churches, an (older) person is completely immersed in water.

Church

Church is a term that is used in several ways. It can be used to refer to a community of believers that are engaged in activities with one another. In addition, the term church can be used to describe the community of all believers in the world. Finally, the buildings that are built specifically for Christians to gather on Sundays are also called a church.

Pastor

A pastor is a person who leads a Protestant church community. In some denominations, this person must undergo training before they are allowed to do so.

Faith

Faith is a strongly held belief and trust in a thing or person. In Protestantism and Christianity in general faith is put in Jesus and God.

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is one of the three persons in the Trinity. Pentecost celebrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church.

Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a sacred act that Christians perform in all traditions perform. It consists of eating bread and drinking wine. By consuming bread and wine believers remember that Jesus died to save humanity. According to the Bible, Jesus himself instructed his followers to perform this act regularly.

New Testament

The New Testament are the 27 books of the Bible written after the life of Jesus.

Old Testament

In the Protestant Bible, the Old Testament contains 39 books which were all written before the time of Jesus.

Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism is a movement within Protestantism that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit through people.

Salvation

The word 'salvation' means that someone is saved from harm. In Protestantism the term is used to indicate that a solution has been provided so that people can bridge the distance between mankind and God.

Sermon

A sermon is a speech by a pastor on a Bible text with the aim of teaching people about Christian faith and life.

Sola's

The Solas are a set of principles that make clear what Protestants in the 16th century, and often still today, consider important in their religious life

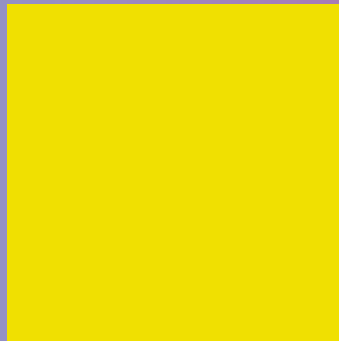
Trinity

The Trinity is a central doctrine within Christianity. This teaching states that there is one God who consists of three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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6



ETHICS

ETHICS

BEFORE WE START

Please write down five things that come to mind when you think of “ethics”?



Figure 6.1
Ethics Compass
Source: ©Zerbor /
Adobe Stock

6.1 A LETTER FROM IRIS: LEADING AN ETHICAL LIFE

Hello! My name is Iris. Ethics forms the basis of my daily conduct and my orientation in the world. The word “ethics” comes from the Greek word “ēthikós” or “ēthos” and refers to our moral character, that is to the persons we are or aspire to be. Ethics investigates which things are valuable, important, meaningful. And it guides me on how to act and behave. It is a part of my everyday life.

When I am with my friends and schoolmates, I try to treat everybody else as I would like to be treated by them. This certainly makes sense. I learned in an ethics class that this is called the Golden rule and that it is very ancient, present in all cultures. It means showing respect for others and caring about each other. In my school class we have also written down a code of ethics in which I took a great part and which I am enthusiastic about following. It unites us together as a class, importantly, each and every one of us needed to accept it. I am always trying to be fair, caring, and cooperative. I also strive to obey laws and rules and to improve myself.

When I am playing football with my friends, we all aim to play fair. Of course, there are football rules. But these rules are not enough for a fun game that everybody would enjoy. Fair-play or good sportsmanship means showing respect for others in the game, cooperation and fellowship, having a team spirit and not focusing on winning for the sake of winning or ridiculing the side that loses. You have to play the game fair. Just following the rules of the game or the decisions of the referees is not enough. I don't like it when somebody cheats or fakes a foul, and the referee does not see this. What is important is that we shake hands at the end of each game.

Fairness is not important only in sports, but it is the basis of how we live together as a society. This is what is called justice. Our common institutions and practices must be just. A court, for example, should treat everybody the same, since we are all equal before the law. This last thought comes from the Chinese tradition and Athenian democracy tradition. In present times it is most often a part of the constitution or the basic legal document for a state. There the most fundamental rights of every citizen are written. Human rights are related to what is called dignity. Dignity is a fundamental value of an individual and the absolute status that belongs to all humans. The dignity of each individual protects against interference and all forms of unworthy treatment, like for example, torture and humiliation, and it speaks against human circumstances such as slavery and extreme poverty.



Figure 6.2
Poverty

Source: © Milan Rout / Pexels

Last month in our school, we learned about children rights written in *The Convention on the Rights of the Child*. We made large colourful posters and described each right in our own words. My task was to present the right to food, clothing, and a safe home. Many kids do not have access to such basic things, and it is our duty to

try to help them. I read some of their stories. The difficulties they are facing and the conditions they are living in made me sad and angry. And our society here lives in affluence, so we take some things for granted. My grandmother is a retired theatre actress and she grew up in great poverty. Our family thus decided to organize and stage a theatre play in the local park, and the money collected went for famine relief charity. I forgot some of my lines, but we all laughed. We also handed out leaflets through the entire town about ways to give. All members of my family helped me with this and we made some new friends in our neighbourhood.

My mother is a medical doctor and researcher. She tells me that each time she wants to study a disease, she needs the permission of an ethics committee. That is important since such a committee is there for the protection of the most vulnerable ones and to guard their rights. In my boy scout group, we have a similar committee. At meetings, we sometimes decide how to solve disputes and whether one acted in a way contrary to being brave, noble, and caring. We vote and each member has the same say as any other, even though some leaders are older and more experienced. It is always important to vote and decide as you think is right.

I like holidays, especially Christmas and New Year season holidays. All the family comes together and we enjoy a shared meal, play games and tell stories. We exchange gifts. My grandfather always tells how giving and receiving is the most universal activity and how it is important that we are humble, generous and thankful. It is a ritual of a sort. And it is a bond with family and friends. I am most thankful that the whole family is together.

What I most look forward in school to is the Nature and environment week celebrating Charles Darwin day. We pack our things and go camping somewhere, learning about the surrounding nature and its importance. Last year we camped at the riverbank, and every day we walked for hours picking up the trash from the river and its surroundings. At the end, we collected more than a ton of trash. The river area looked completely different, more beautiful and healthier. We saw fish, bees, butterflies, dragonflies, turtles, and even otters. On the last day we together created a charter of the rights of animals. We wrote down what would they expect from us and how they can be preserved for future generations.

And I can now sum up, what I think is the most important for leading an ethical life. Ethics is not just following customs or the law, and it is not just about following one's feelings. Something is not good or right just because we like it, and if we disapprove of something, that does not mean that it is wrong. Ethics means thinking carefully about what is right and what is wrong and acting accordingly. And it extends beyond us humans and includes taking into consideration other fellow beings and the Earth as a whole, not merely because it sustains our life, but because it is valuable as such.

6.2 WHAT IS ETHICS?

6.2.1 INTRODUCTION

As you read the following pages and complete the assignments that they contain, you will get to know the field of ethics. Ethics will be presented in four ways. First, we will take a look at the definition of ethics and see what it includes. Second, basic ethical concepts and associated elements of ethical thinking will be presented. In the third section, you will get to know some of the thinkers that enriched our understanding of ethics, and you will get to see how the basic ethical concepts were developed or used by them. And lastly, the chapter includes the text of the scenario from the video presentation of ethics, where you can read again how ethics figures in our everyday lives. There are five assignments for you to complete.

6.2.2 WHAT IS ETHICS?

The term “ethics” comes from the Greek word “ēthikós” or “ēthos” and refers to our moral character, that is to the persons who we are or aspire to be. Ethics deals with questions about what is good, what we ought to do, how our actions affect others and why is this important, who and what (e.g., nature) gets affected by our actions, how we can tell the difference between good and evil, etc. Ethics is the part of philosophy that deals with good and evil. Another word for ethics is morality as in when we say that somebody did something morally right or morally good. Ethics is the basis of our relationship with the world around us and to ourselves. It enables us to live together. Learning about ethics can thus also be understood as learning to live together peacefully; therefore, it includes learning about each other. Ethics is the basis of forming respectful, caring, and loving relationships.

Although ethics tries to formulate ethical principles and rules, ethics is not simply obeying particular rules, customs, or the law; and, it is not just about following one’s feelings. Something is not good or right just because we like it, and if we disapprove of something, that does not mean that it is wrong. Ethics always includes thinking critically and carefully about what is right and what is wrong and only then acting accordingly.

It also emphasizes building our character. Each of us is different from everyone else, has one’s own personal characteristics, ways of thinking and feeling. This gets reflected in what we do, in our actions. That is why it is important to cultivate our character.



Figure 6.3
Parthenon
Source: © Pixabay /
Pexels.com

Ethics is thus a joint effort of all of us to preserve common humanity. Our common humanity and human dignity also provide a basis for human rights that each and every one of us possesses. But ethics extends beyond humanity and includes taking into consideration other fellow beings and the Earth as a whole, not merely because it sustains our life, but because it is valuable as such. Think about the following example that concerns animals. So-called animal ethics deals with questions about the moral status of animals and our treatment of them, for example, if it is morally permissible to raise animals in very contained spaces and use them for food as meat. Animal ethics looks for reasons for our practices involving animals and the need to change them. For example, one such reason would be that animals can feel pain just as we do.

6.3 BASIC ETHICAL CONCEPTS

In this section, several basic ethical concepts will be presented. There are also assignments for you to complete.

6.3.1 GOOD, BAD, AND VALUES

The concepts of good and bad are generally used when we evaluate things and situations or persons and their characters. Such evaluations are at the heart of ethics since they determine what our lives should be focused on (what we should strive to achieve and what to avoid or prevent). When we say that something is good or bad, we ascribe value to such a thing. In ethics, there is an important difference between things that are good in themselves (things that are intrinsically valuable) and things that are merely instrumentally good. Things that are instrumentally good merely have value as an instrument or means to achieving something that is intrinsically valuable. For example, money is only instrumentally valuable, while the pleasure of listening to a song or the fun experienced on a roller-coaster ride is intrinsically valuable. We must always be careful in judging what is really valuable. The Greek philosopher Aristotle claimed that happiness is the ultimate value that all human beings aspire after. Another important aspect when we speak about something being good or having value is the notion of a common or social good, since humans are social beings and we live in communities. The common good exceeds the sum of interests of all individuals in society and is a benefit for society as a whole. A practical example of this would be facilities like public parks, healthcare systems, or a clean environment.



Figure 6.4
Gratitude
Source: © sosiukin /
Adobe Stock

6.3.2 ASSIGNMENT 1

Part1: Think about what you really value in your life, that is, which are the values that matter to you. Write what you think of down and then rank these values by positioning them into the pyramid below, with the most important value being at the top. It might be hard to decide on some of them, but try to give it a go.



Figure 6.5
Value Pyramid

6.3.3 RIGHT, WRONG, AND DUTY

When we think about the ethical status of actions, we use the terms right and wrong, as when we say that what someone did was right or that a certain act was wrong. We use these terms to evaluate actions. Actions that are right and that we have an obligation to implement are called duties. To have a certain duty means, in the most direct sense, to be bound by a binding ethical requirement. Sometimes it may happen that we have more than one duty and if we do not have a clear answer on what to do, that is which duty is more important, we face a moral dilemma. Being ethical is not always easy. What can help us are ethical principles and rules. Ethical principles are usually more general (e.g., “Respect the freedom, autonomy, and equality of people”), and moral rules are more specific (e.g., “Don’t lie”). Both help us, first, determine what is right and wrong, and, second, decide what we must do in a particular situation.



Figure 6.6
Dimensions of Ethics
Source: © N.Savranska /
Adobe Stock

6.3.4 VIRTUES, VICES AND IDEALS

Virtues are morally valuable qualities of our characters, that is, of us as persons. For example, honesty, kindness, compassion, civility, fairness, generosity, and courage are usually regarded as virtues. The opposite of virtues are flaws or vices, for example, arrogance, cowardice, greed, laziness, narcissism, envy, and vanity. Virtues and vices are parts of our character, in particular, those parts that we have some control over. We can cultivate virtues and try to get rid of vices. Virtues are formed through moral upbringing. Since there is no specific list of rules or instructions on how to be virtuous and behave virtuously, it is often the case that we can begin by following an example of a role model. Role models (real persons or even fictional ones) help us, first, in seeing what kind of persons we want to be, and, second, as we work to become such persons. In this sense, role models represent ideals. An ideal is a certain perfection or model of excellence that helps us think and act ethically. An ideal can also be a broader model as when we think of what an ideal society would be, e.g., one fully governed by justice, respect, care, and sustainability.



Figure 6.7
Source: © Pixabay / Pexels.com

6.3.5 ASSIGNMENT 2

Think of who is or could be a role model for you to become more ethical and virtuous. Write down at least five such persons in the spaces provided below. Next to them write down the reasons for your choices.

Role model	Reason(s)
1:	
2:	
3:	
4:	
5:	

6.3.5 DIGNITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Dignity is a basic, inherent, and inalienable value that all people have on the basis of their humanity. It is often regarded as the basis for basic entitlements and human rights of each individual. Dignity is therefore associated with an inalienable status that belongs to all human beings, regardless of their characteristics and circumstances. The dignity of each individual protects against interferences or types of improper treatment that would interfere with their dignity (e.g., degrading treatment, torture, etc.) or situations in which he may find himself (e.g., extreme poverty, slavery, etc.). Human dignity in the modern world is often understood as a civilizational and ethical foundation of legal norms, especially human rights. Human rights (e.g., the right to life and liberty, right to privacy, right to fair trial, freedom of religion, etc.) are the minimum conditions for the protection of individuals and communities. Dignity is also a common concept in the most important legal documents. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948) begins with the following statement: “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” and its Article 1 states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” Children are protected by the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) and Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which recognize that children and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance.



Figure 6.8
Human Rights
Source: © STOATPHOTO /
Adobe Stock

6.4 PHILOSOPHERS

Throughout history, various philosophers and other thinkers importantly enriched our understanding of ethics. In this section, you will get to know some of them and the ideas they endorsed.

Socrates, a Greek philosopher from ancient Athens, is famous for his words that *“the unexamined life is not worth living.”* Socrates emphasized that being ethical does not mean merely following the laws or customs, but that one must think and reflect on what is right. One must challenge conventions, and Socrates was known to stroll the streets of Athens, discussing various issues with others and challenging their views. It is important to listen to the voice of our moral conscience, to what we truly think is right. Doing this will also promote our own happiness.



Figure 6.9
Statue of Socrates
Source: © anastasios71 /
Adobe Stock

6.4.1 ASSIGNMENT 1

In the space below, write down how you understand or how you would interpret the claim that *“the unexamined life is not worth living.”*

Socrates successors, **Plato** and **Aristotle**, understood ethics as related to virtues or our character, e.g., our being just, courageous, humble, and moderate. Plato rejected the claim that ethics is relative or dictated by the powerful. Ethics is objective, which means independent of particular interests or desires. He discussed a famous legend about the ring of Gyges. Gyges had the ring that rendered the one who wore it invisible. Others challenged Plato that if someone would be in possession of such a ring, one would not behave ethically, since one could get away with anything. Plato claimed that the person that is really ethical and truly knows what is good would not misuse the ring. Aristotle is famous for his doctrine of the Golden mean or middle. Virtue is the mean between two opposite extremes, e.g., courage is the mean between cowardice and foolhardiness, and generosity is the mean between stinginess and wastefulness. In order to live ethically, one must live virtuously, and the best way to becoming such a person is through education and the following of role models.



Figure 6.10
Source: © Min An /
Pexels.com

Now let's jump several centuries forward into the era of the Enlightenment. **Immanuel Kant** was a German philosopher who was known for being very punctual. Every day at 3.30 pm, he was seen taking a walk, seven times up and down the Lindenallee in the Prussian city of Königsberg. Kant emphasized the universality of ethics. This means that the moral law applies to all of us equally. He proposed the following ethical principle – “act only in a way which you can at the same time understand as a universal law”. In more practical terms, this means acting in a way that you also expect others to act towards you. For example, if you give a promise with the intention of keeping it only if it suits your needs, then you will not act ethically. If everybody acted in this way, this would undermine the very practice of promise giving.

Kant also emphasized the importance of human dignity and full humanity. Another variation of his supreme moral principle claims that we should not treat the humanity of the other or of ourselves as merely a means (for our own goals or purposes) but always also as an end or goal. This means that we must regard others as equal human beings that merit certain respect in virtue of this. For example, when we make a promise to someone without the intention of keeping it, we are treating the other only as a means.

6.4.2 ASSIGNMENT 2

Dignity is an important ethical concept that represents the foundation of human rights. *United Nations also accepted Convention on the Rights of the Child*. In the animated video it was explained that a child is entitled to special rights. Write down how you understand child's rights on the left being connected with dignity.

The right to life and development	
The right to a name and a nationality	
The right to education	
The right to well-being	
The right to freedom of opinion and expression	
The right to the protection of your privacy	

Shortly after Kant, **John Stuart Mill** focused on happiness or well-being as the main value. For Mill, happiness or well-being can roughly be understood as the excess of pleasure over pain. His theory is called utilitarianism, and it states that we act ethically when our actions produce the most good or most value. His predecessor **Jeremy Bentham** used this ethical framework to defend a more humane treatment of animals. He said that it is not important if animals cannot talk or cannot reason, but they can certainly feel pain and suffering. And in light of these, we should abstain from actions that cause them needless pain and suffering. What counts as ethical is the well-being of human beings and also animals to the extent that they can feel pain and pleasure.



Figure 6.11
Chicken Transport
Source: © Patrick Poendl/
Adobe Stock

6.4.3 ASSIGNMENT 3 Do you agree that animals deserve to be treated in a way that takes into consideration their pain and suffering? Think of at least three ways in which we, as a society, could reduce animal suffering.

A large, empty rectangular box with a purple border, intended for the student to write their response to the assignment question.



Figure 6.12
Animal Rights Protest
Source: © AndriiKoval /
Adobe Stock

We will end our journey through the history of ethics in the 20th century with the philosopher and novelist **Iris Murdoch**. She emphasized that becoming a better person begins with seeing in light of the idea of good. This means seeing persons or situations justly, humbly, and lovingly, since perception governs actions. For example, if you see somebody that is different from you as dangerous or alien because of your own fear, this can lead you to treat this person in an unethical way.



Figure 6.13
Manifestation
Source: © Brett Sayles /
Pexels.com

6.5 GLOSSARY

Categorical Imperative: a supreme principle of morality according to Kant, which requires that we act only in ways that could be accepted as general rules for all, and we treat people with respect.

Deontology/deontological ethics: an ethical theory that takes the notion of a duty as a fundamental ethical concept.

Dignity: the basic and inalienable value that all people have on the basis of their humanity. It is often regarded as the foundation for the basic entitlements and human rights of each individual.

Duty: an action that is morally required, that is the action that we ought to do.

Ethics: a system of values, principles, virtues, and ideals that shape our lives and determine the basis for the relationships that we form with others, with ourselves and the world.

Human rights: basic rights that belong to every human individual (or a group of individuals) solely on the basis of being human. They protect their basic interests and safeguard the possibility of leading a good and meaningful life (e.g., right to life and liberty, right to privacy, right to a fair trial, freedom of religion, etc.).

Moral principle/rule: a statement that determines which actions are right (e.g., "Be respectful.") or wrong (e.g., "Do not steal.") or which things are good (e.g., "Knowledge is valuable.") or bad (e.g., "Suffering is bad.").

Utilitarianism: a moral theory that claims that the right action (or our duty) is the action that brings about the most utility or value, that is the action that has the best consequences for the happiness and well-being of people.

Value/worth: what represents the goodness and badness of things (e.g., happiness is good and pain is bad), persons (e.g., Irena Sendler, a nurse who saved several hundreds of Jews, mostly women and children from the hands of Nazis, was a good person, and Adolf Hitler was a bad person) or aspects of a person's character (e.g., honesty is good and cowardice is bad).

Values: are important, deep-rooted, pervasive and lasting beliefs, attitudes, ideals, and attachments which are usually shared by the members of a given community and concern what is good or bad (e.g., freedom, beauty, autonomy, friendship, creativity, love, wisdom, etc.).

Virtues and vices: a virtue is a praiseworthy or commendable character trait of a person such as courage, benevolence, charity, and humility. As the opposite, vices are blameworthy character traits of persons such as dishonesty, cowardice, vanity, cruelty, chauvinism, etc.



Ekaterini Tsalampouni



Apostolos Kralidis



Jelle Creemers



Samuël Velinga



Vojko Strahovnik



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