

Revision 8.2: Why can't religions change the world as quickly as they want to?

Key Words:

Prejudice – judging someone before you know them. A negative belief or idea towards others.

Discrimination – treating someone differently because of who they are – often due to prejudice.

Racism – Prejudice or discrimination based on a person's skin colour or ethnicity

Religious Prejudice – Prejudice (negative thoughts or ideas) based on a person's faith, beliefs or religion.

Religious Discrimination – treating someone differently (often negatively) based on a person's faith, beliefs or religion.

Islamophobia – Prejudice or discrimination, hatred or dislike towards Islam or Muslims.

Antisemitism – Prejudice or Discrimination, hatred or dislike towards Judaism or Jews.

Crusades – Medieval wars between Christians and Muslims over the holy land and the city of Jerusalem.

Lesser Jihad – military struggle to defend Islam, has strict rules which include not killing women and children.

Greater Jihad – the struggle to be a good Muslim, e.g. to pray 5 times a day, fast during Ramadan etc.

Terrorism – the unlawful use of extreme violence to terrify the public, often used for a political or religious goal.

Islamophobia is the dislike of, hatred of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims. Muslims are portrayed in a negative way as violent and completely different to people living in the West. It is a new word for something that has been happening for centuries. **Sadly it has been increasing** due to the way Islam is being portrayed in the media because of extremist violent people who call themselves Muslims.

Where does Islamophobia come from? The Qur'an which Muslims believe was given to the prophet Muhammad by Allah (God) in 610 says **'And they ill-treated them (believers) for no other reason except that they believed in Allah'** The Qur'an Surah 85-8

Islamophobia existed even when there were no Muslims living in Europe. It is on the increase in the UK.

- Negative views against Islam can be traced back particularly to the Middle Ages and the way Muslims were portrayed so that people would go and fight to gain back Jerusalem and the Holy land because the Pope wanted them to.
- Since the **Crusades** Islam and Muslims have been portrayed (shown to be) as violent, barbaric and completely alien to the Christian west. This is how Islamophobia which we can see today started. The way Muslims and Islam was shown to be during the Crusades and even before this is at the root of Islamophobia.
- Although Christians learnt a lot from the Muslims they met; a better counting system, the works of Greek philosophers which had been lost, technology, inventions and scientific discoveries as well as ideas about how to wage war, the negative ideas that were circulated before and during the crusades have never really disappeared.

*The **Crusades** were wars between Muslims and Christians for the Holy Land and the city of Jerusalem. They took place in the Middle Ages. In all, eight major **Crusade** expeditions occurred between 1096 and 1291. **The Pope said** that the Crusades **were God's will** and that anyone who died fighting in them **would go to heaven**.*

The actions of **terrorists** (those who unlawfully use violence to spread fear and terror) who claim to be performing a Jihad and claim that they are Muslims has not helped the ways Muslims are portrayed in the media. Acts of terrorism do not fit with the Muslim concept of Jihad. The lesser Jihad has to be fought according to strict rules.

Muslims believe in an idea called Jihad. This means to **'strive or struggle'** in the name of Allah. There are two types:

- **The Greater Jihad** – this is the struggle to be a good Muslim. To follow the 5 pillars of Islam, to pray 5 times a day, to be generous and kind to others, to be nice to your parents etc.
- The **Lesser Jihad** is a **military struggle** – it has very strict rules about how the war can be fought. It is like a Just War.

For a war to be a Jihad it:

- **must keep the suffering of innocent civilians to a minimum (women and children should not be targeted)**
- **prisoners of war should not be killed and must be released at the end of the fighting,**
- **must be authorised by an accepted religious leader,**
- **cannot be to spread the faith** as the Prophet Muhammad made it clear that religion cannot be forced on someone.
- **must keep destruction of crops and plants to a minimum.**

- **places of worship must also not be targeted.**
- **must be a last resort.** Everything else should have been tried first
- must also have a **just cause** and **not be an act of aggression** –e.g. it could be for self-defence.

After looking at the rules of Jihad it is clear that terrorism goes against the rules for war in Islam. Although terrorists claim that they are performing Jihad they are NOT.

‘NOT in MY NAME’ - This was a campaign set up 2 years ago to make it clear that Muslims do not agree with Isis and acts of terrorism.

Anti-Semitism has existed for centuries. It has resulted in the unfair treatment, hatred and killing of Jewish people in Britain and across Europe. **Anti-Semitism is increasing again in Britain.**

- **The root of Anti-Semitism is ‘deicide’, the idea that Jewish people were responsible for the killing of God in the crucifixion of Jesus.** This is despite the fact that all the individual Jewish priests who had encouraged Jesus’ arrest by Roman soldiers were long dead and that the Crucifixion was actually a ROMAN punishment carried out by Roman executioners. The entire Jewish people were to now bear the blame. Anti-Semitism exploded when Emperor Constantine became a Christian and is still happening today.
- **In the Middle Ages:** Europe was openly hostile to Jews and many countries persecuted them. Jews were pushed out and banned from towns, cities and entire countries, they were forced to change their religion and mass killings took place. This was justified by the idea of the **‘blood libel’**, the accusation that Jews murdered Christian children and drank their blood, often at Passover. Jewish people were blamed for the death of a little boy in Norwich in 1144. This was based on the allegation of blood libel. There was no evidence at all but the Jewish leaders of the town were still executed. Persecution increased (17 bodies of Jewish descent were found in a well in Norwich) until in 1290 Jewish people were banished from England.
- In 1543 Martin Luther, father of the Reformation and the Protestant church, published *The Jews and their Lies*, in which he stated "...we are at fault in not slaying them...". **Luther encouraged attacks on Jewish houses and business, which have become known as pogroms.**
- Persecution of Jewish people has continued over the centuries including mass killings in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century (Pogroms). The combination of Anti-Semitism and beliefs and ideas about racial purity led to the killing of the Jews known as the Holocaust under Hitler – when 6 million Jews were killed. This happened during WWII. Anti-Semitism exists today, even in Britain and has been increasing over the past few years.

Christian Teachings: The following teachings make it clear that there should be no prejudice towards others even religious prejudice. Christians are taught that **all life is sacred** and that all are made in the **‘image’** of God (Genesis 1:27) Therefore they should not be prejudice. Jesus taught to love other faiths in the **‘Story of the Good Samaritan’** even those who were the enemy.

- John 13: 34 ‘A new command I give you. **Love one another.** As I have loved you, so you must love one another.’
- Matthew 22:39 ‘And the second is like it: **‘Love your neighbour as yourself’**
- Act 10: 34-35 ‘Then Peter began to speak: ‘I now realize how true it is that **God does not show favouritism** but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.’

Teachings from the Old Testament: ‘And **you are to love those who are foreigners**, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt (Deuteronomy). **‘Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner** for you were foreigners in Egypt’ (Exodus 22:21)

Refugee: a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution or a disaster.

Migrant: a person who moves from one place to another, especially in order to find work or better living conditions

Syria: A civil war has waged in Syria since 2011 and many people have been forced to flee the country to try to save their lives and in the hope their children can grow up safely away from the war zone.

Christian Beliefs: Christians are taught it is a duty to help those in need, they are not to be prejudiced towards them. **CAFOD** is a Christian charity that works to help refugees, providing for basic needs such as food, drinks, hygiene kits and blankets for warmth. The Pope has spoken out about a Christian duty to help refugees. Christians remember that Jesus himself was a refugee in Egypt when his parents believed his life was threatened. The teachings above about helping others and to **‘love those who are foreigners’** teach Christians to help all people.