

## Key concepts

- Pluralism can be defined in terms of salvation: who is eligible to go to heaven in the afterlife. It can also be defined in terms of social relations on earth, and the extent of mixing, cooperation and mutual respect between different faith communities.
- Islam is a missionary faith which promotes conversion, as the Qur'an was regarded as the final and complete message to humankind, Muslims encourage others to follow it. There are various traditions regarding conversion.
- Muslims have held different attitudes towards others based on their interpretations of Qur'anic text and the examples of Muhammad. The Qur'an refers to 'people of the book' (Christians and Jews) as fellow believers with whom Muslims can live alongside, eat their food and marry their women. Muhammad promoted peace between religions on arrival in Madinah.
- However, later a Jewish tribe was exiled, probably for political reasons. At times Muslims have forcibly converted others in the expansion of the Caliphate. Whilst Caliph Umar protected freedom of worship, the 'dhimmi contract' with non-Muslims imposed higher taxes on them and their evidence was regarded as lesser in shari'a law.
- Some Muslims today prefer to live largely separate lives in communities of other Muslims, where they find it easier to find mosques and halal food shops. Arranged marriages with others are common. Other Muslims prefer to live in mixed communities and see no difficulty in this.
- All children are seen as innocent creations of God, Muslims by definition, until they understand and choose an alternative path for themselves.
- Those who are adult and are of free mind may choose to learn about Islam and choose it as their faith. This is known as 'reversion' i.e. returning to their childhood state of being a Muslim.
- A ceremony is held so the revert can publicly announce their commitment to the shahadah, the statement of faith, in front of two witnesses. They can then be welcomed and supported by the community as part of the Ummah.
- Apostasy is debated: some Muslim countries apply the death penalty whereas others say freedom of religion is an important principle to uphold.

## Key quotes

'This day are all things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. Lawful unto you in marriage are not only chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book.' (The Qur'an Sura 5:5, Yusuf Ali)

'What is recorded in the books of Islam is no different from what is in the Confucian canon. Observing and practicing the proprieties of Islam is like observing and practicing the teachings of the ancient sages and kings.' (Liu Zhi)

'Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error.' (The Qur'an Sura 2:256, Yusuf Ali)

'If it had been thy Lord's will, they would all have believed,- all who are on earth! wilt thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe! No soul can believe, except by the will of Allah.' (The Qur'an Sura 10:99-100, Yusuf Ali)

## Key words

Pluralism	Zikr	Tablighi Jamaat	Revert	Wali
Convert	Hizb ut-Tahrir	Iftaar	Deobandi	Sect
Hijab	Brewlvi	Aqidah	Sabians	Heretic
Asbab al-nuzul	Han Kitab	La Convivencia	Jizya	

## Issues for analysis and evaluation

### Key questions, arguments, and debates

- The effectiveness of Islamic responses to pluralism. Effectiveness means how good in practice. Some Muslim charities have helped other communities, promoting a good image. Some Muslims lead separate lives, fearing assimilation. It could be argued that it depends what the aim is, to preserve a pure version of Islam, which would suggest a degree of separation is effective. Or promote interfaith harmony, which would suggest more mixing and integration is key.
- Whether or not there is a coherent approach to conversion in Islam. Conversion in the heart – to mean what you are saying – is important; public ceremonies are also important. A comparison between the two and the role each might have in the experiences of Muslims could be made, referring to examples. This strikes at the heart of faith: is Islam mostly an outward faith identity or an inner, personal spiritual experience?