Religious Attitudes to Matters of Life

Sanctity of Life
Life is a sacred God-given gift. It is only for God to decide when it starts and ends. It is extremely precious and should be treated with the utmost respect.

All religions believe that:
- All life comes from God
- Life is special and precious
- God is in charge of life
- Only He should decide when it starts and ends
- God has plans for all people’s lives

Evidence for ‘The Sanctity of Life’ (Life is God-given and precious)

Christianity
- ‘Surely you know that God’s spirit lives within you...’ (Corinthians 3 v 16–17)
- ‘You (God) formed my innermost parts, you knitted me together in my mother’s womb... in your book were written all the days of my life, before I even had them’ (Psalm 139 v 13–16)

Islam
- ‘He is the one who has created you from a single soul’ (Qur’an 7 v 189)
- ‘Do not take life... which Allah has made sacred... except for just cause’ (Qur’an 17 v 33)

When does a human life start?
1. **Birth** – When the child is born after nine months gestation/pregnancy.
2. Muslims – After **4 months** of pregnancy, when a Muslim believes a child receives its **soul** from Allah, it becomes a full human life.
3. **Conception** – when the sperm fertilises the egg and becomes an embryo.
4. When the embryo **attaches** itself to the womb at **14 days**.
5. When the **heart** begins to beat at **3 weeks**?
6. **9 weeks** – when the child can be felt moving in the womb.
7. When the foetus starts to **breathe** for itself, at about **14 weeks**.
8. **24 weeks** – the UK law holds that life starts here as, with medical aid, the child could survive independently of its mother.
Medical Practices that Interfere with Human Life.

This is a moral issue for religious people because:

- It is like trying to act like God – creating human life.
- Many religious people believe God is in charge of what happens in people’s lives. He has **planned** out the course of each individual life. To many, medicines and operations interfere with these plans. ‘We all have a time to live and a time to die’

**A) Medical Practices that Create Human Life.**

1. **IVF** – In Vitro Fertilisation. The term ‘In Vitro’ means in glass. This is where the egg and sperm are collected and after a few days of incubation conception has occurred and embryos (fertilised eggs) have been created. These are then placed in the woman’s womb and hopefully result in pregnancy. There is about a 25% success rate and the process is used when a woman cannot naturally conceive.

2. **AID/AIH** – Artificial Insemination by Donor/Husband. The donor/husband produces semen samples by masturbating. A doctor will then inject this semen into the woman’s vagina when she ovulates (produces an egg during each month) and hopefully she will get pregnant. AIH is often used when the husband has a low sperm count and AID is used when the father has a genetic disease that he could pass on.

3. **Surrogacy** – This is where another woman carries a pregnancy on behalf of another woman. The resultant child is then brought up by the couple. The surrogate mother has no involvement in raising the child. It is used when a woman cannot medically carry a pregnancy due to having had her womb removed because of cancer or early menopause, meaning that she is infertile. In the UK, it is illegal to pay someone to do it.

**B) Medical Practices that interfere with the Course of Human Life.**

1. **Cloning (or human reproductive cloning)**
   This is creating a genetically identical human being. Throughout the world this is illegal. There is an idea that if a child is suffering from a disease caused by its genes then its parents could have a clone baby, but have its defective genes altered so that when born, the child could be used to replace those defective genes in its older brother/sister. This is known as a ‘saviour sibling’. It is not legal as yet. However, there is some work being done on cloning cells or body parts for transplant surgery and to be used in the research to help find cures for diseases (therapeutic cloning / stem cell research). This is considered to be acceptable by many as it is not regarded as creating life.

2. **Genetic Engineering**
   Genes make us what we are in terms of personality and looks. Genes can be removed from embryos or defective ones replaced to prevent a child being born with a genetic disease which would cause it to be disabled in some way. This is known as ‘embryology’. It could also be used so that a prospective parent could determine the hair and eye colour of their child if they wished to (designer babies). Many are fearful of this seeing it as an abuse of genetic engineering.
3. **Blood Transfusion**  
This is where blood from other people is used to replace blood in a patient.

4. **Transplantation**  
This is where an organ in someone’s body is replaced with the equivalent organ from someone else. Usually the donor is someone who has died.

5. **Human experimentation**  
This is the testing of medicines on paid human volunteers.

6. **Human-animal hybrid experimentation**  
A human-animal hybrid is an embryo created by putting human DNA and an animal egg together. This has been done with a cow egg for the purposes of research into cures for diseases such as Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s.

### Arguments For and Against the 9 Medical Practices that Give and Preserve Human Life.

1. **IVF**

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<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• By having a baby you are fulfilling God’s wishes: ‘go forth and multiply’. (Genesis 1 v 28)</td>
<td>• God didn’t want you to have children; you are going against his wishes.</td>
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<td>• Everyone should have the chance to have a baby.</td>
<td>• God has a plan for everyone – in his plan you were not to have children – you are messing with his plans.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• As these children have not been produced in the ‘normal’ manner of most human life, they can grow up feeling abnormal and detached from the world and other people.</td>
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<td>• An IVF child may never know its biological father and mother. They may never feel totally connected to the parents that have raised them.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Can you ever really love a child in the same way, if it is not biologically connected to you? It will not carry any of your features or family’s personality traits.</td>
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2. **AID/AIH**

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<tr>
<td>• If the husband has a genetic disease it would be unfair to make the child be born with a disease when there is an alternative which could be used to stop it suffering.</td>
<td>• The husband/donor has to masturbate to get the sample. This is immoral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They allow you to fulfil God’s command: ‘Go forth and multiply’. (Genesis 1 v 28)</td>
<td>• If AID is used it wouldn’t be the husband’s child – it will never be his child, and thus he may never be able to truly love him/her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>• As these children have not been produced in the ‘normal’ manner of most human life, they can grow up feeling abnormal and detached from the world and other people.</td>
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<td>• An AID child may never know its biological father. They may never feel totally connected to the father that has raised them.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• God is in charge of life. Not humans.</td>
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3. **Surrogacy**

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| • If everyone who is part of the process wants to do it, then it’s fine.  
• If having children makes you happy then this would please a benevolent God. | • It can be classed as adultery on the husband’s behalf.  
• If an embryo is put into the womb of the surrogate mother and it is successful, any other embryo is destroyed. This is killing God-given life.  
• As these children have not been produced in the ‘normal’ manner of most human life, they can grow up feeling abnormal and detached from the world and other people.  
• A surrogate child may never know its surrogate mother. They may never feel totally connected to the father and mother that have raised them. The bond between mother and a growing baby in its mother’s womb is the strongest and most precious relationship any human is ever to have. A surrogate child has this important bond destroyed straight away at birth. |

4. **Cloning**

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| • It would stop diseases that ruin people’s lives.  
• It provides organs for transplants. | • There is potential to abuse God’s plans by messing with them.  
• It’s like trying to be God as He creates life. |

5. **Genetic Engineering**

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| • It is simply doctors using their God-given talents to improve life.  
• It can treat genetic disorders that cause pain. God is benevolent and would not want people to suffer. Anything should be done to stop suffering. It is what a loving God would want. | • There is potential to abuse this (designer babies).  
• It is messing with God’s human design – we are all meant to be as we are. |

6. **Blood Transfusions**

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| • It can save lives which are sacred.  
• It is an act of charity – giving blood to help others. | • The blood could be rejected by the human body and cause death.  
• It is messing with God’s plans – there is a time to live and a time to die for all of us. |
7. Transplantations

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<tr>
<td>• It can save human life which is created by God.</td>
<td>• If the donor hasn’t agreed to it, it is theft and dishonest and utterly disrespectful to the person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The donor is willing – it is their body to do with as they wish.</td>
<td>• It is disrespectful to mess with a dead body. We are mutilating God’s creature.</td>
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<td>God gave us all free will. Transplantations is simply exercising this God-given gift.</td>
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8. Human Experimentation

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<tr>
<td>• To test on humans is to improve human life. It should be done on the species it is to benefit, not animals.</td>
<td>• Humans are God’s greatest creation. To possibly endanger a life is disrespectful to God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Testing is done in very safe and controlled conditions.</td>
<td>• By testing and trying to rid the world of its imperfections is trying to say we as humans know better than our creator.</td>
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9. Human-Animal Hybrid Experimentation

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<tr>
<td>• Anything should be done to improve life and rid the world of terrible diseases that cause suffering and pain.</td>
<td>• Embryos are living creatures. To test and destroy them is killing precious life when only God is in charge of its creation and destruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We are not creating new cross-breed species. It is merely creating embryos, which are not lives, to test on.</td>
<td>• Cross-breeding of any kind is just simply warped and repugnant.</td>
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Religious Attitudes to Medical Procedures that Create and Prolong Human Life

Christianity (Catholic View)

- It is God who creates human life. Only he should create it and say when it ends, humans should not try to act like God.
  ‘God created man and woman in his image’ (Genesis 1 v 27)
- AID – because this involves a donor it can be viewed as being adultery.
- God has pre-planned everyone’s life. He has decided that some people should not have children.
- Cloning, genetic engineering and any experimentation on a living being, including embryos, mess about with DNA. This is playing with God’s gift of life. It is a sacred gift, not our property to play with.
- God created all human life. To prolong it is to protect it. This cares for God’s creation and follows his instructions to us as Guardians, from the story of creation in Genesis to do this.
- Humans were made in God’s image. To prolong human life is to respect God.
- To love your neighbour is to worship God. According to Jesus second greatest commandment is ‘love your neighbour’. By prolonging a person’s life you are truly showing such care and love.
Christianity (Church of England View)

- Using donated sperm can be seen as breaking the marriage vows. Having a child through donated sperm is a form of being unfaithful, as children are the product of a sexual relationship, whatever form it takes.
- However, it can be seen that IVF/AID/AIH, are all gifts from God. Humans using their God-given scientific talents to allow unhappy, childless couples to be happy.
- Surrogacy is wrong. There is a natural bond between the mother and child. This should never be broken. It could mentally scar both the mother and child.
- Cloning, genetic engineering and any experimentation on a living being, including embryos, mess about with DNA. This is playing with God’s gift of life. It is a sacred gift, not our property to play with.
- God created all human life. To prolong it is to protect it. This cares for God’s creation and follows his instructions to us as Guardians, from the story of creation in Genesis to do this.
- Humans were made in God’s image. To prolong human life is to respect God.
- To love your neighbour is to worship God. According to Jesus second greatest commandment is ‘love your neighbour’. By prolonging a person’s life you are truly showing such care and love.

Blood Transfusions and Organ Transplants

The Christian View

- Christians accept blood transfusions and organ donation from living and dead donors. This is because Jesus preached a message of love ‘love your neighbour’ (Matthew 22 v 39). Donating blood and organs is acting out this teaching.
- Organ donation and blood transfusions help prolong and preserve human life, which is given by God. This is medicine respecting God’s gift to us, and using our God given talents to act as a surgeon, to prolong this gift.
- Transplantations, without the permission of the donor, is disrespectful to the person’s body, as all human bodies are regarded as ‘Temples of God’ (1 Corinthians 3 v 16). Christians therefore only agree with transplants where the donor has given permission.
- God is in charge of life. He is to decide when we live and when we die, not us. We should therefore not try to act like God and artificially prolong a person’s life or alter its course.
**End of Topic Test**  
Religious Attitudes to Matters of Life

1) What does the term 'sanctity of life' mean? (2)

2) Write out 1 quotation from each of the following religion’s holy books, that they use as evidence for the ‘sanctity of life’. (3)
   (i) Christianity   (ii) Islam

3) When do you believe a human life starts and why do you think this? (3)

4) Describe briefly the following medical practices that are used to create human life. (6)
   (i) IVF       (ii) AID/AIH       (iii) Surrogacy

5) Describe briefly the following medical practices that are used to interfere with the course of human life. (12)
   (i) Cloning       (ii) Genetic engineering
   (iii) Blood Transfusions   (iv) Transplantations
   (v) Human Experimentation (vi) Human-Animal Hybrid Experimentation

6) Give 2 reasons people would agree with IVF / AID / AIH / Surrogacy. (4)

7) Give 2 reasons people would disagree with IVF / AID / AIH / Surrogacy. (4)

8) Give 2 reasons people would agree with medical practices that prolong human life. (4)

9) Give 2 reasons people would disagree with medical practices that prolong human life. (4)

10) For each of the following religious groups, describe 1 reason they would agree with medical practices that create and prolong human life. (6)
    (i) Catholic Christians   (ii) Church of England Christians

11) For each of the following religious groups, describe 1 reason they would disagree with medical practices that create and prolong human life. (6)
    (i) Catholic Christians   (ii) Church of England Christians
Exam practice question

Religious Attitudes to Matters of Life (Medical Ethics)

Look at the photograph below.

0 1 What is meant by the initials AIH? (1 mark)

0 2 Explain briefly two reasons why religious believers might agree with the use of fertility treatment. (4 marks)

0 3 “Religious believers should support medical experiments on humans.” What do you think? Explain your opinion. (3 marks)

0 4 Explain religious attitudes towards transplant surgery. (4 marks)

0 5 “Religion tells us all that we need to know about matters of life.” Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer, showing that you have thought about more than one point of view. Refer to religious arguments in your answer. (6 marks)