The background of the cover is a photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright, shimmering path of light across the water's surface. The sky is dark with some clouds. A small, dark silhouette of a boat is visible on the horizon line.

Social and Ethical series

COMPARATIVE RELIGIONS

Christian Values in Education

Age: General

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Foreword

Every attempt has been made to ensure that the information contained in this pamphlet is as accurate as possible, but the study of religion is an enormously complicated subject. Consider the range of belief and practice within Christianity alone. Therefore, if any reader knows any point written here to be factually incorrect the Committee will be pleased to be corrected. Of course, at times, generalisations have had to be made in order to keep the subject simple. The aim of the pamphlet is to help children at school to counter the level of argument they experience there, not to cover the depth that would be heard from the pulpit.

NOTE:

In order to distinguish between the various deities worshipped by those following the religions described in this pamphlet, the following convention has been adopted: where reference is made to a number of beings of equal status the word 'god' or 'gods' is used (small g); where one supreme being is indicated the word "God" is used in inverted commas. This is to make a distinction from the true Christian God.

About This Book

In the world today there are many different religions. Each religion tells us what it thinks God is like and how people can please Him. It explains to its followers how they can lead happy and useful lives and what will happen to them when they die. Every religion has different ideas about these things. How can we know which one is right?

God has told the people of the world all they need to know about these things in the Bible. True Christians believe what God says in the Bible. They know that if any other religion contradicts what the Bible says, or teaches anything that is not in the Bible, then it is teaching a lie. It is not telling the truth.

If you come from a Christian home, your Mum or Dad try to teach you about the Bible and what it says about the way of salvation. They pray that God will speak to you, forgive your sins and take you to heaven when you die. Many parents worry about what you are taught at school about other religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Islam and Judaism. They worry that you will listen to the wrong things these religions say or begin to wonder if any

religion is right. In this pamphlet you will find information about some world religions and what the Bible says about their teachings. It also explains why you learn about other religions at school and what may worry you in some Religious Education lessons.

Before you read on, you need to read the important note on the next page.

Important!

Christianity is the only true religion, but it is important to remember two things about other religions.

1. By law, everyone in the United Kingdom is allowed to follow any religion, or none, as they think best. This is an important freedom. It is something God's people are very thankful for. It means that no one can stop them reading the Bible or going to a place of worship. It also means that people have the same right to follow Buddhism, Judaism or any other religion. It is important that people should be allowed to follow their own religion in peace, even if Christians do not agree with what they believe.

2. At school, you will meet people who do not have the same religion. You might hear other children laugh at them because of what they believe. Never, never join in. Jesus said, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31). You may feel upset if children laugh at you. Never make anyone else feel the same way, **even if you do not agree.**

Teaching About Other Religions

**Answers to
some
important
questions**

Q. ARE ALL RELIGIONS AS GOOD AS ONE ANOTHER?

ANSWER.

In our country we have religious freedom. Everyone is allowed to follow the religion they choose (as long as they don't hurt anyone else, of course) but this does not mean that all religions are as good as each other. The Bible shows there is only one way to heaven—by having our sins forgiven through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus taught this when He said, “No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6). The Christian religion is the only religion to teach this. Other religions may encourage people to be kind and help others, but they cannot show anyone the way to heaven.

Q. IF CHRISTIANITY IS THE ONLY TRUE RELIGION, WHY DO WE HAVE TO LEARN ABOUT OTHER RELIGIONS AT SCHOOL?

ANSWER.

Over the last one hundred years people from many different parts of the world have come to live in Britain.

Some of them brought with them religions that are mainly followed in the countries that they came from. So, today, there are many people with different religions living in Britain. The Government decided that if the British people were taught about these religions, the life of the newcomers would not seem so strange and people would be kinder to them. So teachers are now trained to teach about other religions.

Q. WAS THIS A GOOD IDEA?

ANSWER.

In some ways this was a good idea. When you learn at school why a Sikh wears a turban or why Hindus do not eat meat, you can understand the Sikh and Hindu children at school better. You can be careful not to hurt their feelings by asking them to do things their religion does not allow. We ought to respect other people's feelings. The Bible says, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." (Romans 12:18). Sadly, some people who wanted teachers to talk about other religions went too far. On the next page are three of the dangers of teaching in this way.

Dangers

1. Some people began to say that it does not matter what religion a person follows. They said that, as long as a person tries hard to follow one religion properly they will go to heaven when they die. They said no particular religion is better than any other. Many teachers who teach you about religion at school believe this. Some will even tell your class that it is true—but it is not true.
2. Children who learn about lots of different religions, all with very different beliefs, may get very confused. They may wonder which beliefs are the right ones. They may even begin to think that all religion is nonsense made-up by people and nothing has come from God.
3. Teaching about religion in this way may make people think that they can choose any religion they want to follow, because all of them are as good as each other. This makes people think they can choose the way to follow God. This is not true. God brings true Christians to Himself (see John 6:44).

Introduction

The following pages tell you a little about the beliefs of:

Hindus.

Buddhists.

Sikhs.

Muslims.

Jews.

Christians.

These are the most popular of the world's religions and you are most likely to be taught about these in school. Whenever we read about the beliefs of others we should be careful to compare them with what God says in the Bible.

After you have read about these religions you can read what the Bible says about their ideas.

Hinduism

- 1. Beginnings**

Hinduism did not begin at a certain time in history. It was not begun by a single person. It is the name given to a mixture of Indian religions which are thousands of years old.
- 2. The Hindu "God"**

Hindus do not all believe the same things, but they all believe in 'Brahman'. This is their name for their "God". They believe that he is everywhere, in people, plants and animals.

Hindus worship thousands of gods and goddesses. We call this idolatry, but Hindus say these gods are just different pictures of one "God". Their paintings of gods show some looking like humans and others half human and half animal, like the elephant-god Ganesh.
- 3. Special writings**

The Hindus call their writings 'shastras'. They are written in the old Indian language called Sanskrit. One set of writings, called the Mahabharata, is the longest poem ever written. It has 100,000 verses!
- 4. Special meeting place**

Hindus believe that it is more important to pray at home than anywhere else, but sometimes they meet in a mandir (temple). They believe this is a place where a god lives. You find statues and pictures of Hindu gods in a mandir. Every morning the priest of the temple washes and dresses the

gods and offers food to them. When night comes, he puts them to bed. When a service is held in the mandir the priest lights a 'holy fire' which is passed around all the people there. He puts 'kum-kum' (red paste) on the foreheads of the statues, pictures and people there. Then the people eat food which has been offered to the gods and sing Hindu hymns called 'bhajans'.

Hindus do not keep a special day like the Christian Sunday. They can go to the mandir at any time. Prayers are said there every day.

Hindus believe that when people die they are reincarnated (reborn as a new person). If they have lived quite a good life they will be reborn as a rich person, but if they have done wrong they will be reborn as a poor person, an animal or an insect. Because of this belief, Hindus will not kill the smallest insect and do not eat meat.

Hindus believe that there are three ways to escape being reborn. To follow the first way they have to carry out their religious duties properly. The second way tries to find 'the meaning of life' by thinking carefully about it and meditating (see Buddhism—prayer). Hindus following the third way worship one favourite god.

5. Day of rest

6. The Hindu way of salvation

7. Living a happy and useful life

Hindus try hard to live a 'good life'. They teach that it is wrong to steal and that people should always tell the truth, be kind to others and learn about their "God".

8. Prayer

Every day, a Hindu family carries out the 'puja' ceremony. In their home they have a little place for statues and pictures of their favourite gods. We call this a 'shrine.' They light lamps and give the statues presents of fruit and sweets. They sing a prayer and repeat Hindu names for their "God". They do all this to show how much they respect their gods. They also hope that they will be saved by worshipping a favourite god in this way.

9. Some Hindu festivals

Diwali—the story is told of how the god Rama rescued his wife Sita from the king of the demons. Lamps are lit to celebrate.

Holi—a spring festival. People spray each other with coloured water and powder.

10. Where most Hindus live

Most Hindus live in India.

DID YOU KNOW...?

- Cows are sacred (holy) to Hindus.
- Hindus are born into a certain 'caste', or group of people who all carry out similar jobs. They are expected to do the same kind of work when they are older and marry someone from the same group. The poorest group are called 'the untouchables'. They carry out dirty and poorly paid jobs.

Buddhism

- 1. Beginnings**

Buddhists tell this story about the man that began their religion. About 600 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a prince called Siddhartha Gautama was born in northern India. He lived a life of luxury and was not allowed to see the suffering of ordinary people who lived outside his father's palace. One day he slipped out and for the first time he learnt about illness and death.

Gautama decided to leave his rich life and find out how people can stop suffering. One day, when he was 'meditating' (thinking peacefully), he suddenly thought that he knew the answer. People began to call Gautama 'the Buddha'. People who follow his teachings are called 'Buddhists'.
- 2. The Buddhist "God"**

Buddhists do not believe there is one "God". They believe there are other worlds with all kinds of gods and half-gods living there.

Buddhists often treat the Buddha like a "God". They bow down to statues of him and pray to him.
- 3. Special writings**

Buddhists read the ideas of Buddha. These were written down hundreds of years after his death. Buddhists also read some books written by other Buddhists.

Buddhists visit temples where they have images (statues) of the Buddha. They go there to pray by themselves to the Buddha, not to meet with other people. Some offer gifts to the Buddha, and to his monks.

There is no special day of rest for Buddhists.

The Buddha said that when people die they are reborn into another world. Buddhists believe there are six worlds. If they were good in this life they go to a happy world. If they were bad, they go to a world where they are punished.

Buddhists say that people die and are reborn into other worlds over and over again. If they live a very good life they can stop being reborn and be at peace.

There are eight rules a Buddhist must obey to live a good life and feel at peace. These include being kind to other people, not hurting or killing anyone and not stealing or telling lies.

4. Special meeting place

5. Day of rest

6. The Buddhist way of salvation

7. Living a happy and useful life

8. Prayer

Meditation is more important to Buddhists than praying. Meditation means to sit by yourself and think quietly. Sometimes they chant (repeat words) to help them concentrate.

In Tibet, prayer wheels are used. The wheel holds the words of a prayer. Buddhists believe that each time the wheel spins round it counts as one prayer said. The faster the wheel is spun, the more prayers they can get through! Tibetan Buddhists use prayer wheels in their temples.

**9. Some
Buddhist
festivals**

Many of the Buddhist festivals remember important events in the life of the Buddha, such as his birth and the preaching of his first sermon.

**10. Where
most
Buddhists
live**

Most Buddhists live in Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Japan and China.

DID YOU KNOW...?

- Some Buddhists live as monks. They live together in a building called a 'monastery'. They shave their heads. They own nothing but their robes, an alms bowl, a razor, a needle and a water-strainer. They beg for food.
- In 1950 Communist China took over the country of Tibet, where many Buddhists live. A protest against Chinese rule was crushed in 1959 and the Buddhist leader of Tibet fled to India. The 'Dalai Lama', as he is called, has become well-known as he fights for Tibetan freedom.

Sikhism

1. Beginnings

Sikhism was begun by a man who became known as 'Guru Nanak' ('Guru' means teacher.) He was born in Panjab, north-west India, in 1469. Sikhs believe that one day, when he was still a young man, he disappeared into a river and found himself in "God's" court. He said "God" told him to teach people about him. He did this by singing poetry about "God" to people he met on his travels.

Guru Nanak had been a Hindu, but he hated to see Indian Hindus and Muslims fighting each other. He wanted to take the best of both religions and make them into a new, peaceful religion.

After Guru Nanak died, there were nine other Gurus that taught Sikhs about their "God". After the tenth Guru died, Sikhs believe their special book, the Guru Granth Sahib, became the next Guru. They say the book teaches them about their "God" just like a human teacher would.

2. The Sikh "God"

Sikhs believe in one "God" who created the world. They believe that the more they obey him the closer they come to him.

3. Special writings

The special book of the Sikhs is called the 'Guru Granth Sahib'. It is full of poems praising their "God". Sikhs treat it as if it is a very respected person, putting it to bed at

night and getting it up again in the morning. They wrap it in beautiful cloths and keep it on a throne with a canopy over it. No one can keep a Guru Granth Sahib in their home unless they have a spare room to keep one in.

The special meeting place is called a 'gurdwara'. The gurdwara can be any building where there is a Guru Granth Sahib. Men and women sit separately in the gurdwara. They both cover their heads. The service can last up to five hours. First, people give a present of food, money or a cloth to cover the Guru Granth Sahib. They then read from the Guru Granth Sahib, sing hymns, pray, listen to a sermon and eat a special food called 'karah parshad'. They speak in Punjabi, which is the language spoken by most Sikhs. Then they go to the kitchen and share a meal together.

Sikhs do not keep any special day of the week. They go to the gurdwara on whatever day is a holiday in the country where they live.

Sikhs believe that their "God" judges a person's soul after they die. If they are good enough, they stay with "God". If not, they are reincarnated (born again as a different person).

4. Special meeting place

5. Day of rest

6. The Sikh way of salvation

7. How to live a useful and happy life

Sikhs believe they should work hard and share what their “God” has given them. They often share food with each other and with people who are not Sikhs to show that they believe everyone is equal and that they do not believe in the caste system like Hindus.

8. Prayer

A prayer book tells Sikhs what to pray at the beginning and end of the day and at regular times during the day.

9. Some Sikh festivals

Sikhs celebrate the birthdays of the Gurus—like Guru Nanak’s birthday in November.

They celebrate Diwali, like Hindus, but for a different reason. At Diwali they remember the time the sixth Guru was freed from prison and managed to gain the freedom of other prisoners too.

10. Where most Sikhs live

Most Sikhs live in India, but even in India there are very few of them compared to the number of Hindus.

DID YOU KNOW...?

- Many Sikh men wear 'The five K's' to show that they are Sikhs. These are;
kes - they do not cut their hair (often Sikh men wear turbans to keep their long hair tidy),
kirpan - a sword with a curved blade (often a brooch nowadays),
kangha - a comb,
kara - a steel bangle,
kachh - an undergarment.
- Sikh girls are given the surname 'Kaur' meaning 'princess'.
Boys are called 'Singh', which means 'lion'.

Islam

- 1. Beginnings**

This religion was begun by a man named Muhammad. About the year 610 A.D. Muhammad left the city of Mecca, where he lived, to pray in a cave. When he went back to the city he told the people there that he had seen an angel who had given him a message from “God”. He soon had many followers who believed his message. People who belong to the Islamic religion are called ‘Muslims’.
- 2. The Muslim “God”**

Muslims believe there is one “God”. They say that people must submit to him (obey him completely). They call him Allah, which means ‘The One’.
- 3. Special writings**

Muslims call their special book the ‘Qur’an’ (Koran). Muslims believe that the Qur’an is written on a tablet kept in heaven and that it was told to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel at different times. Muslims only use copies printed in Arabic, the language in which it was first written. Only people who have washed carefully can touch it. When it is not being used, it is kept safely on a high shelf.
- 4. Special meeting place**

Their meeting place is called a ‘mosque’. Muslims take off their shoes and wash before going into a mosque. Men cover their heads because they always do this before they pray. They sit separately from the women.

Muslim men have to go to the mosque on Friday at midday to say prayers and listen to a sermon. Women can go too, but they don't have to. Apart from that, Friday is like any other day to a Muslim. They do not have to rest on that day.

5. Day of rest

The Qur'an says that one day there will be a Last Judgement. If people have behaved well, they will go to heaven. If they have done bad deeds, they will go to hell. The Qur'an explains how a person can live a good life and go to heaven.

6. The Muslim way of salvation

The Qur'an says that there are 'five pillars' that hold up the Muslim religion, just like pillars (tall posts) hold up the roof of a building.

These are the Five Pillars of Islam:

- The Confession of Faith—There is one "God" called Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.
- Prayer
- Fasting during the month of Ramadan.
- Giving to charity

- Visiting Mecca (now in Saudi Arabia) at least once in their lifetime if they can. They go at a special time of the year and wear specially simple clothes. This journey is called ‘the Hajj’.

7. Living a happy and useful life

Muslims have to obey lots of rules about everyday life in the Qur’an. For example, some tell them what they are allowed to eat and drink.

8. Prayer

Muslims pray five times a day: in the morning, at noon, in the middle of the afternoon, after sunset and at bedtime. As they pray, they face Mecca and carry out certain movements, for example, kneeling down on the floor. Muslims are also told to pray to their “God” secretly.

9. Some Muslim festivals

Ramadam—this is the ninth Muslim month. During this month Muslims must fast (go without food) while it is light. They have an early breakfast before the sun rises and a late dinner after sunset. Young children do not have to fast. Eid-ul-fitr—celebrates the end of Ramadam and fasting.

10. Where most Muslims live

Muslims live in Bosnia, Albania, Bulgaria, the Middle East, North Africa, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia.

DID YOU KNOW...?

- The Qur'an forbids Muslims to draw anything which is alive. As they are not allowed to draw people, animals or plants, Muslims draw beautiful patterns made up of many shapes.
- Many Muslims are Arabs. These people live in the Middle East. They are the descendants of Abraham's son Ishmael, the half-brother of Isaac from whom the Jews are descended.
- Parts of the Qur'an tells Muslims to fight people who do not agree with their religion. Muslims who follow this teaching say they are fighting a 'holy war' called 'Jihad'.

Judaism

1.

Beginnings

The Jews believe that one day a special king will come to live on the earth. They call him, 'the Messiah'. From the earliest times people have believed a Messiah will come. God told Adam about this in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 3:15).

The Jews are a nation (people who come from one country) as well as a religion. Jews and Christians both believe that God spoke to a man named Abraham and told him that the Messiah would be one of his descendants. The Jews are descendants of Abraham.

One of Abraham's descendants was called Moses. God gave Moses 'the law'. The law is a list of rules people must obey.

God told Moses that He takes special care of the Jews. He gave them the country of Israel to live in (see Exodus 6:7,8).

2. The

Jewish God

Jews believe there is one God, the Great Jehovah, whom they must love with all their heart, soul and strength.

3. Special

Writings

In a Jewish synagogue you will find a book called the 'Torah'. This is the law God gave to Moses. It is the first five books of the Bible and includes the Ten Commandments. The Torah has decorated covers and is kept behind curtains

in a cupboard called 'The Ark of the Covenant'. The Ark faces Jerusalem in Israel where the Jews used to have a great temple. Jews also study most of the Old Testament of the Bible.

Over the years many Jewish teachers (called 'Rabbis') have written down their own ideas about how Jews should behave. Their ideas are found in books called the 'Talmud' and the 'Mishnah'.

Jews worship in a synagogue. Here people pray and listen to sermons and readings from the law. A lamp is always burning in the synagogue, just as a lamp burned in the temple in the Old Testament days.

In Orthodox (strict) synagogues, men and women sit separately and men cover their heads with skull caps when they pray.

The Jewish day of rest is called the Sabbath. It lasts from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. When God made the world He rested on the seventh day of the week (Saturday), so Jews rest on this day too.

The Sabbath begins with a special family meal on Friday evening. Jews keep the sabbath very strictly. They do not work at all on that day. There are strict rules about what

**4. Special
meeting
place**

**5. Day of
rest**

they may and may not do on the Sabbath. For example, no Jew should light a fire on the Sabbath.

6. The Jewish way of salvation

In the days when some parts of the Old Testament was written, there was a temple in Jerusalem. Here animals were sacrificed (killed and offered to God). This was to remind Jews that one day a Messiah would come and die for His people's sins. God would accept His sacrifice.

Jews no longer sacrifice animals. God said they could only sacrifice in the temple and the last one was burned down by the Romans nearly two thousand years ago. Jews today concentrate on keeping the law. They believe that when the Messiah comes He will raise all people from the dead, send good people to heaven and send bad people into hell.

7. Living a happy and useful life

Jews have to obey the law of Moses. The law is very important to a Jew. Jews hope their children will marry Jews and teach their own children to keep the law. Only children born to a Jewish mother may call themselves Jews.

8. Prayer

Jews have a prayer book, with prayers for all kinds of life's happenings from eating bread to putting on a new set of clothes. They also pray privately. Many Jews visit the 'Wailing Wall', (the remains of the temple in Jerusalem), to pray there.

Passover—Jews eat a special meal to remind them of the night when God slew the eldest sons of the Egyptians, who had made them their slaves, but passed over(spared) the families of the Jews. The Egyptians were so afraid that they set the Jews free to journey to Canaan, the land that God had given them for their own. The special meal reminds the Jews of the meal of unleavened bread which they ate on that first Passover night.

Hanukkah—Jews remember the time when the temple was restored to them in 164 BC. A Greek tyrant had invaded Israel and treated the Jews cruelly. The Greeks behaved wickedly in the temple so the Jews fought the Greeks and forced them to leave their temple and their country.

When the Romans attacked Israel about two thousand years ago, many Jews fled. They are now found in countries all over the world. Eleven million Jews live outside Israel.

In 1948, the Jews fought a war to win back Israel for themselves. Many Jews have gone back to live there. 3.5 million Jews now live in Israel.

**9. Some
Jewish
festivals**

**10. Where
most Jews
live**

DID YOU KNOW...?

- In Old Testament times God told the Jews they must only eat animals that have divided hoofs and which chew the cud. In Leviticus 11 you can find a list of the foods Jews may not eat.
- A Jewish boy becomes an adult at the age of thirteen. He is allowed to read from the Torah in the synagogue. The first time he does this is a special time he calls his 'bar mitzvah'. In less strict (Reformed) synagogues girls do this too; they call it their 'bat mitzvah' ceremony.

Christianity

Around the year AD 30, when Israel and many other countries were ruled by the Romans, a Jewish man named Jesus began to tour parts of the country teaching the people about God. Christians believe that this Man is the Son of God, the Messiah that God had promised to the Jews (see 'Judaism — Beginnings').

Jesus gave His life for His people and was crucified by the Romans at around the age of thirty-three. He rose again after three days and forty days later ascended into heaven. After this, His followers began to tell others about His life and death and many others came to believe in Jesus too. People began to call Jesus' followers 'Christians' because they believed Jesus was the 'Christ', another name for the Messiah. Most Jews refused to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, so Christianity became a separate religion from Judaism.

Nowadays there are many different kinds of Christians all over the world. Their beliefs do not always agree. The things mentioned here are all taken from the Bible, the special book of Christians.

1. Beginnings

**2. The
Christian
God**

Christians believe that there is one God, an invisible Spirit who is holy and all-powerful. They believe that He is eternal (that means that He has always existed and will never die). He made the heavens and the earth.

Christians believe the One God is three distinct persons: God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit. God the Father so loved the world that He sent God the Son (Jesus) into the world to suffer the punishment of death for the sins of His people. Whilst on the earth Jesus taught the people the truth of God's love and that through believing on Him they would be saved from their sins. Since Jesus returned to heaven God the Holy Spirit gives His people faith so that they too can believe on Jesus and be saved.

**3. Special
writings**

The special book of Christianity is called the 'Bible'. There are two parts to the Bible. The first part (which is also studied by the Jews) tells how God made the world and how He promised to send a special Jewish king called the 'Messiah'. This part of the Bible is called the 'Old Testament'.

The second part of the Bible is called the 'New Testament'. This tells about the life and death of Jesus and explains that He is the Messiah. It also tells about the first followers

of Jesus.

The old and the new Testaments are made up of sixty-six books written by people who lived at different times. Christians believe that these writers were ‘moved by’ the Holy Spirit (see 2 Peter 1:21). This means that God told them what to write (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible does not tell us what to call the place where Christians meet for worship. Different Christians have given it different names: chapel, church, meeting house, kirk and many more. What the Bible says is important is that Christians should meet together, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together”, (Hebrews 10:25).

When Christians meet for worship they pray, sing hymns or Psalms and listen to a sermon. Traditionally, women cover their heads while men go bare-headed. They are told to do this in the Bible (see 1 Corinthians 11:4,5). Men and women may sit together.

Genesis 2:2,3 tells us that, after God made the world, He rested on the seventh day of the week (Saturday). Jews call this day the Sabbath. The Bible is full of reminders to keep the Sabbath day holy (see, for example, Exodus 20:8 and Isaiah 58:13,14). This means that people should spend the

**4. Special
meeting
place**

**5. Day of
rest**

day thinking about God and worshipping Him and resting so that they feel ready for the week ahead.

The first Christians changed their special day from the seventh day of the week to the first day (see Acts 20:7). They did this because Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week. They called their new Sabbath, the 'Lord's Day'.

When Jesus was alive on earth the Jews had many rules about what they could and could not do on the Sabbath Day. Jesus was angry that they spent more time thinking about these than in worshipping God (see Mark 2: 23–28). Jesus also taught the people that it is right to do good and that which is essential (see Mark 3:1–5, Luke 13:10–17 and John 5:10–11), for example, nursing the sick and looking after animals.

6. The way of salvation

The Bible says that one day God will cause the world to come to an end and the people still living, together with all the people who have ever lived, will be judged by the Lord Jesus and sent forever to heaven or hell. Heaven is a happy place where God's people will worship Him for ever and ever. People whose sins have not been forgiven will be punished forever in hell.

The Bible does not say that people who have done good deeds will go to heaven. The Bible teaches that everybody is a sinner (see Romans 3:23)—they are always doing wrong—but that Jesus died for sinners. When Jesus died on the cross God punished Him for His people’s sins. Because Jesus was punished instead of them, God will not punish them again in hell (Acts 5:30-31).

There comes a time in the life of every true Christian when God teaches them that they are a sinner and they confess their sins and are shown that God has forgiven their sins. Jesus calls this being ‘born again’ (see John 3:3). When a person is ‘born again’ the Holy Spirit makes them feel they are a sinner, that they have behaved badly throughout their life and that they can do nothing that is good in God’s sight. The Holy Spirit also shows them that Jesus was punished on the cross instead of them so that they will not be punished for their sins in hell when they die but will be taken to heaven to praise God for forgiving their sins.

When God shows a person that Jesus has died for them they feel a great love to Him because He has saved them from hell. God gives them this love. When we love a person we want to please them. In the same way, Christians want

**7. Living a
useful life**

to do what pleases God. The Bible tells us how God wants us to live our lives in a way pleasing to Him. This is to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8 and Mark 12:28–34).

God also gives Christians a love to other people. This makes them want to help others as much as they can.

Of course, no Christian is perfect. They are still sinners who need the Saviour, Jesus Christ. They are often disappointed because they do so many things that the Bible tells them not to do. This makes them pray to God to help them to live as He wants them to. Sometimes God has to discipline them to remind them that they are not living as Christians should. The Bible calls this act of discipline, ‘chastening’ (see Hebrews 12:6).

8. Prayer

Jesus taught his disciples how to pray (see Matthew 6:9–13). Prayer is making our requests known to God (Philippians 4:6). Jesus promised that God would answer their prayers. He said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7). The Holy Spirit teaches Christians what to ask for.

9. Festivals

Many Christians remember events from the Bible at certain

times of the year. The most well-known are Christmas (when they remember the birth of Jesus) and Easter (when they think of His death and resurrection).

The Bible does not tell us to keep special times such as Christmas and Easter, so some Christians do not. Other Christians find it helpful to be particularly reminded of Jesus' birth and death at these times.

'Christianity' has 1500 million followers all over the world. Many of them can be found throughout America, the Caribbean, Europe, the former Soviet Union, south of the Sahara in Africa, Lebanon, China and Australasia.

Sadly, the teachings of many 'Christian' churches are not found in the Bible. Only God knows how many of the 1500 million have really been born again by God's Holy Spirit. The Bible calls God's people a 'remnant' (see Romans 11:5). A remnant is a piece left over when the rest has been used or thrown away. This tells us that God's people are only a small number of people when compared to the total number of people in the world.

**10. Where
most
Christians
live**

DID YOU KNOW...?

- During the century following the ascension of Jesus, the Christians worshipping at Rome became very powerful. Such a large part of the world was ruled by the Romans that the Roman Christians felt that they ought to lead Christians all over the world. They thought that if two other churches were arguing the Roman church should decide who was in the right. From this developed the Roman Catholic Church which over the years added to and altered the teachings of the Bible. The Roman Catholic Church was very powerful for centuries.
- The church of Constantinople wanted to share power with the church at Rome, but the two churches had many arguments. In 1054 the 'Orthodox Church' which was led by the church of Constantinople separated from the Roman Catholic Church. Today, many Greek Orthodox churches are found in Greece and Russia. Throughout this period small groups of people such as the Waldensians in Northern Italy continued a form of worship based directly on the teachings of the Bible.

- The 'Reformation' took place during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This is the name given to the time when more and more people began to find fault with the Roman Catholic church. They felt it was wrong that ordinary Roman Catholics were not allowed to read the Bible and when some of them did see a Bible they found that some of what the church did was not mentioned there. For example, the church sold forgiveness of sin to those who could pay enough but the Bible says that forgiveness cannot be bought—it can only be believed by faith. Some of the reformers left the church of Rome to begin new churches of their own. These became known as 'Protestant' churches as they 'protested' against what they thought was wrong in the Roman Catholic church.

Comparing Christianity with other World Religions

In the pages you have just read there are many different ideas about God, the way to heaven and how people should live their lives on earth. How can we know the truth about these things when so many people disagree on them? If we look at Christianity carefully, we can see it is very different from all other world religions. The following tables explain how Christianity is different from the other religions we have looked at. These differences make Christians believe that their religion is very special. They believe that it shows that their religion alone came from God and that it is different because God thinks differently from the men who made up other religions.

BELIEF ABOUT BEGINNINGS

WORLD RELIGIONS

Buddhism, Islam and Sikhism were begun by men. Some of their ideas were good (for example, they might tell people to be kind to animals) but they could not make a way for sinners to be saved from their sins because only God can do that. We know they were only men because they lived sinful lives as all of us do and the day came when each of them had to die.

Hinduism does not have a clear beginning. Many of the old religions of India with their many different gods were mixed together to make this religion.

CHRISTIANITY

This pamphlet has already explained how God began the Jewish and Christian religions in the Garden of Eden. But Christianity became a separate religion through the teaching of the Lord Jesus who the Jews would not accept as the promised Messiah. How can we be sure that Jesus was not just an ordinary man like the leaders of other religions? We know that Jesus was God because He could not be killed. He gave up His own life on the cross and after three days He was able to rise from the dead by His own power. Since Jesus is Himself God He is the only one able to tell us how we may have our sins forgiven by God and live lives pleasing to Him.

BELIEF ABOUT GOD

WORLD RELIGIONS

Buddhists and Hindus pray to statues in their worship.

Hindus see their “God” as lots of different gods and goddesses who often behave like people, making mistakes and doing all kinds of things wrong.

Sikhs, Muslims and Jews believe there is one, invisible “God”. They do not believe that God is made up of three persons.

CHRISTIANITY

True Christians believe that it is wrong to pray to statues or pictures, even if they try to show God the Father or the Lord Jesus, because a statue is not alive and cannot help anyone.

Christians believe in a living God that can be trusted. He can never do wrong or be unkind. He is all-powerful and can never make a mistake.

Christianity is the only religion which tells of a God who is three wonderful persons—a loving yet holy Father, a mighty Saviour and a comforting, teaching Spirit—everything that people need.

BELIEF ABOUT SPECIAL WRITINGS

WORLD RELIGIONS

All religions have great respect for their special books.

Only Sikhs who have a room in which to keep their special book may own one for themselves.

Muslims use copies printed only in Arabic, the language in which the Qur'an was first printed.

CHRISTIANITY

Like other religions, Christians read their special book, the Bible, carefully. They believe it is God's message to them.

God has not given any rules in the Bible which make it difficult for anyone to have a Bible of their own. Christians do not have to be rich enough to have a spare room in their house before they can keep a copy. They are allowed to read Bibles written in their own language.

BELIEF ABOUT A SPECIAL MEETING PLACE

WORLD RELIGIONS

Buddhists always pray alone in their temples. They do not meet together as a group. Hindus think it is more important to meet as a family than with other Hindus in the mandir.

Buddhists and Hindus have statues and pictures for people to pray to in their temples.

Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs are 'superstitious' in their meeting places. That means that they think that if they do certain things, such as give gifts to their "God", receive 'holy' fire or use a prayer wheel lots of times, "God" will be pleased with them.

Muslims and strict Jews separate men and women in their meeting places.

CHRISTIANITY

The Bible tells Christians to meet for worship and prayer with others. Seeing other Christians regularly reminds them to pray about each others' problems and strengthens their love for each other.

Bible-believing Christians have nothing in their places of worship to distract them from thinking about the invisible God. They have no pictures and statues to pray to as these cannot help people.

God loves His people freely, though they make many mistakes and do many things wrong. They know they cannot earn His love.

Men and women, boys and girls can sit together, coming to God to worship as families and friends.

BELIEF ABOUT A DAY OF REST

WORLD RELIGIONS

Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Muslims do not keep a day of rest. Some of their followers visit their meeting place on a particular day of the week but they spend the rest of the day working or having fun.

Orthodox Jews keep the Sabbath very strictly. They have many rules about what they can and cannot do on that day. They cannot even light a fire on the Sabbath.

CHRISTIANITY

Christians have a whole Sabbath Day on which to rest so they are refreshed for the next week. They also use it to think about God and pray to Him and are reminded that they need to be made ready for eternity through the pardon of their sins. These things are much more important than the most serious events of everyday life.

Christians should spend the day worshipping God and praying to feel God's presence and help and His peace in their hearts. They do not spend the day in constantly worrying and checking that they are keeping detailed rules for the Sabbath. They do not make themselves feel ill, cold or hungry just because it is the Sabbath.

BELIEF ABOUT THE WAY OF SALVATION

WORLD RELIGIONS

Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Muslims and Jews are told that they can only reach heaven (or some other happy place) if they live a good life. Their religion tells them the things they must do to live a good life.

CHRISTIANITY

Only Christianity gives any hope and help to people who sin and fail as all human beings do. Christianity warns against sin and explains what sadness follows when people do sin, but it tells of a God who welcomes sinners to Him. They cannot earn His love by obeying His rules. He forgives people who are sorry for their sins however bad they have been. This gives hope to the most wicked people in a way other religions cannot.

BELIEF ABOUT LIVING A USEFUL LIFE

WORLD RELIGIONS

Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Islam and Judaism give their followers rules about how to live. Many of these are very good rules. For example, they tell people not to steal and that they must be kind to animals.

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity also tells its followers what they should and should not do in their lives. It does more than this, though. God gives Christians a love to Him and to other people. This gives a warmth to what they do when they obey His commands.

BELIEF ABOUT PRAYER

WORLD RELIGIONS

Hindus sing prayers at the shrine of a god in their home when they give presents to the god each day.

Sikhs and Muslims must pray at certain times each day. They are told exactly how to pray. This kind of prayer is very important to them, though they may pray secretly as well.

Sikhs and Jews have prayer books which tell them exactly what to pray at certain times.

Buddhists do not think prayer is very important. They say it is more important to meditate. When they do pray, they sometimes use prayer wheels to say the same prayer many times.

CHRISTIANITY

Christians do not pray to gods in their homes who can do nothing to help them. Many Christians pray at certain times of the day (for example, first thing in the morning and before they go to bed) as they find it helps them to make time for prayer. There are no strict rules in the Bible about when to pray, though, or the exact words that must be used. The Bible encourages people to pray at any time for whatever they need, using whatever words they need to use. They pray to God as a Father who will hear and help them.

Christians believe it is very important to pray. They do not believe that meditating can help solve people's problems. People who meditate are trying to help themselves but Christians believe that they are too weak and sinful to save themselves from their sins or from many other problems they have. They would rather pray to an almighty God who can do everything for them. They believe God hears them every time they pray. He is willing to listen however many times they tell Him about something that is worrying them but He is ***not more likely*** to listen if they repeat the same prayer over and over again.

BELIEF ABOUT FESTIVALS

WORLD RELIGIONS

Many religious festivals remember events that happened to the leader or followers of the religion many years ago. Others remind people of stories from the special books. Some religions tell their people that they must remember certain festivals if they want to go to heaven. For example, Muslims have to remember to fast at Ramadan as it is one of the Five Pillars which they must keep to reach heaven.

At some religious festivals there is a carnival atmosphere with lively music, dancing and people playing jokes on one another. Others (like Ramadan) are serious times for prayer and fasting.

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity, too, remembers events in the lives of its great leader, the Lord Jesus, and its followers. It remembers the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the first Christians at different times of the year. They know about these events from the Bible. But Christians do not have to remember these times to earn their way to heaven. Christians believe the only way to heaven is through the free forgiveness of God.

Although some enjoyable traditions have grown up around Christianity's special times of the year (such as eating good food and giving presents at Christmas) Bible-believing Christians do not see them firstly as a time for having fun. They think it is more important to ask for God's blessing at these times of the year.

RELIGION AROUND THE WORLD

We can place world religions in order to show how many people belong to each one, with the religion with the most followers first. The list looks like this: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Judaism. It is an interesting fact to think about but it is hard to tell anything from the numbers of people who follow each religion because we do not know how many of the followers are really committed to their religion.

Matters Arising

In the "Did You Know...?" sections of each religion you have read facts about each religion. Some of these are very interesting but it is important to understand that the Bible does not agree with many of the ideas explained in these sections. This part of the pamphlet explains what the Bible tells us about some of these ideas.

- The Hindu caste system has made many people unhappy. If a Hindu falls in love with a person from another caste they cannot marry them. If they are born in a poorer caste they may not apply for an interesting, well paid job. The Bible does not tell us we have to live like this. It says Christians are brothers and sisters who should treat rich and poor with equal respect (see Colossians 3:11 and James 2:1-9).
- When Buddhists meditate, they think they can find peace by sitting quietly and thinking. But real peace can only be given to us by God. The only right way for Christians to meditate is to think quietly about the things of God.
- Some religious people think God will be pleased with them if they become monks and live as poor people. They are wrong. God has said that we can enjoy all the good things He has made, as long as we do not think more of them than God Himself (see I Timothy 4:1-5).
- Many of the religions you have read about in this book have rules about what their followers may and may not eat. Some tell their followers they must be vegetarians and never eat meat. Others have a list of some foods (such as pork) which their

followers are not allowed to have. Christians do not have food rules like these. In Acts 10:9–16 we are told of how God shows Peter that, though as a Jew he did not eat certain foods, as a Christian he may eat these. Some Christians believe that 1 Timothy 4:1–5 shows them they do not have to be vegetarians. It says that God has given all things in His creation to be enjoyed by Christians with a thankful heart, including the food we eat.

In the Classroom

When you take part in R.E. lessons at school, you may enjoy learning about other religions. It is an interesting subject. Sometimes, however, you may feel a little worried about what the teacher says or asks you to do. Here are some of the problems you may meet in the classroom.

1. Sometimes teachers may ask you to 'celebrate' the festival of another religion in class or assembly. Others might ask you to 'imagine' you follow another religion. If they do, they shouldn't be surprised if they get complaints from parents of children in the class. Many teachers agree that it is unfair to expect children to celebrate religions that are not their own.
2. Many teachers nowadays take their classes to visit the special meeting places of other religions. Christian parents often feel unhappy about their children visiting temples, mosques and so on. They do not have to let you go on such trips. However, it is important that they carefully explain that they are keeping you from the visit for religious reasons.
3. Teachers sometimes ask the children in their classes to answer important questions,

such as:

“Is there a God?”

“What happens to a person when they die?”

“What is heaven like?”

They often say that it doesn't matter what answers you give to these questions, that everyone's answers are as good as anyone else's and that no one knows the right answers to them. Never believe this. The answers to all these questions and many other important ones are given to us in the Bible.

4. Sometimes teachers say things that make the Christian religion sound silly. They might ask you to do a piece of work that makes fun of Christianity or things found in the Bible. Again they should not be surprised if Christian parents do not want you to do the work. Of course, it can be very embarrassing if you are not allowed to do the same work as other children in your class, or if you have to stay at school when they go on a visit. It might seem very hard that you have to be different from all the other children. Try to remember that God is able to help you when school seems difficult. He can hear your prayers about the things that worry you. Sometimes you may be the only one in your class not allowed to do something but remember the saying, **“One with God is a majority.”**
5. Many children know the Bible narrative in Genesis telling how God made the world in six days. At some time an R.E. teacher will probably talk to you about the Creation stories of other religions. Many teachers will tell you that all these stories, including the account from Genesis, are made-up stories, that God did not make the world but that it developed over millions of years.

You might find the Creation stories topic worrying. How can you be sure that the

Creation story in Genesis (believed by Christians and Jews) is true and the Creation stories of other religions are not?

If you listen carefully to the other Creation stories, you will find parts of the stories are very like the Creation story in Genesis. For example, man is usually created before woman and often out of earth or mud. Why are the Creation stories of peoples from all over the world (who have never met each other) so similar? It is because each of the religions began by telling the same story—the true story—the story in Genesis. Of course, over thousands of years, as the story has been handed down ‘by word of mouth’ (told as a story, not written down), parts have been changed, but other parts stay the same to show that all the stories were once the same story.

Yet in some ways, the story in Genesis is different from the other Creation stories. It is different in the way it speaks about God. This difference shows that the person writing the story knew more about God than the writers of the other stories. This was because God was showing him what to write.

In some of the stories the god creating the world has many other gods to help him rule the world. Sometimes he needs help from other animals to make the world or takes something already created to help him make people. Sometimes he behaves unkindly. The people who made up the stories were wrong in their ideas about God. They thought that God was just like them.

In Genesis, God tells us what He is really like. We see one, holy and eternal God who always acts wisely. There has never been a time when there was no God and so the Bible tells us that He was there before all things were made—“In the beginning God” (Genesis 1:1). In Genesis we see an all-powerful God. He did not need creatures

to help Him create the world.

The Genesis story explains more than just how the world was made, important as that is. It explains how sin came into the world, how God hates it and must punish people because of it, but how He promised that one day a Messiah would come to save His people from their sins. Many Creation stories have already been forgotten. Probably, many more will be forgotten. The Genesis narrative will never be forgotten to the end of time, because it tells a most important truth—the way by which people can be saved from their sins.

6. Not all R.E. lessons are about religions. Some lessons encourage you to think and behave in the right way: to be helpful and kind, to look after the world around you, to notice how beautiful Creation is. Such lessons can be very helpful, but sometimes the teacher might tell you that people who behave like this are 'religious' or 'spiritual'. This is not true. Real 'religion' is about having our sins forgiven. Spiritual people are people who have been taught by the Holy Spirit to believe on Jesus. You are not very likely to hear about these things at school—but they are the most important things in life. You can pray that God may teach you about them. He is the best teacher of all. May God help you to pray like this:–

**Gentle Jesus, meek and mild
Look upon a little child;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to Thee.**

**O may I to Thee be brought!
Gracious God, forbid it not!
In the kingdom of Thy grace,
Give a little child a place.**

Notes for Parents

During the nineteenth century, when it first became law for children to attend school, R.E. lessons usually entailed learning the Scriptures. The Church of England and non-conformist churches, who had previously set up their own schools, were afraid that the doctrine of their rival churches would be taught in the new state schools. Baptists did not want their children taught about infant baptism by Anglican teachers. Therefore, it was agreed that R.E. lessons should focus on the stories of the Bible, which would not offend Anglicans or Dissenters.

This system worked well whilst the majority of people living in England were nominal Christians. During the 1950s when the British government allowed people from former colonies who had recently gained independence, to enter Britain, the immigrants came as active participants of religions about which most British people knew very little. In order to make the new arrivals feel more at home and to encourage tolerance of their lifestyles amongst the British, some educationalists suggested that British schools should teach about the new religions.

Although these educationalists may have meant to be kind, their ideas have been used by the Devil to undermine Britain's Christian heritage. Fifteen years ago, young children were still taught Bible stories at school. Now many R.E. lessons, even for

infants, are about examining religious forms and practises. A generation is growing up that knows very little about the Bible. This is a frightening thought.

This doesn't only work against us, of course. R.E. teachers like to get at the heart of a religion, carefully explaining its beliefs and the feelings of its followers. This gives an opportunity for Christian teachers to be explicit about Christian teaching in their lessons on Christianity. They can carefully explain what Bible-believing Christians feel about themselves and God. Sadly, many text books concentrate on the views and practises of liberal Christians.

It is, of course, very sad that many children are no longer taught the Bible stories which once every British child knew. It may be that such considerations lead you to conclude that you do not want your child to take part in modern R.E lessons at all. This is an understandable viewpoint.

However, such a stance could be ultimately unhelpful to our children. In an age when Hannukah (a Jewish festival) cards are displayed in the window of High Street card shops, children cannot be protected from hearing about other religions. Questions about the value of these compared to our own will naturally occur to them. It seems that the best way to help them is to confront the issue head-on, explaining what other religions believe and why

these beliefs can never help a soul reach heaven. This pamphlet attempts to help in this way.

A clear understanding of Biblical truths can help children safely take part in R.E. lessons about other religions. Sadly, however, occasional problems arise in the teaching methods used. For example, no teacher should ask children of any religion to take part in the activities associated with a particular religion; such behaviour seems clearly unprofessional. If it occurs, a gentle word from the parent to the teacher is probably all that will be needed to prevent a child having to take part in any activities with which the parent is unhappy. Members of the teaching profession are usually very sensitive to the opinions of parents. The possibility of offending anyone has probably never occurred to the teacher.

If, after speaking to the class teacher and Head, a parent finds a school insisting that a child taking part in R.E. lessons must carry out activities the parent is concerned about, the parent has a legal right to remove their child from all R.E. lessons. It would, of course, only be sensible to carry out such an action as a last resort. Children from Christian families have enough to contend with at school, without being marked out as different more times than is necessary.

It may also interest parents to know that the law also states that

R.E. should give more time to Christianity than to other religions and that daily assemblies of a broadly Christian nature should be held. If any parent finds this is not true of the R.E. syllabus and assemblies of their child's school, they have every right to raise the matter with the Head Teacher.

In all subjects except R.E. the details of what must be taught are laid down by the government in its National Curriculum. R.E. is not part of the National Curriculum; instead the R.E. topics which have to be taught in a school are agreed within the county in which the school is found. The county publishes these details as its 'Agreed Syllabus' for R.E. Recently, R.E. and Information Technology have been elevated nationally to the status of 'Core Subjects' to join English, Mathematics and Science. This shows the importance government still places on the teaching of religion.

The Law Says...

- Schools must hold a daily assembly of a broadly Christian nature.
- R.E. lessons must spend more time on Christianity than on other religions.
- Any parent may withdraw their child from R.E. lessons if they wish to do so.
- Local Education Authorities(LEA) work out the details of what is taught in the R.E. lessons of their schools. (National government does this for other subjects.) This is called the LEA's 'Agreed Syllabus' for R.E.

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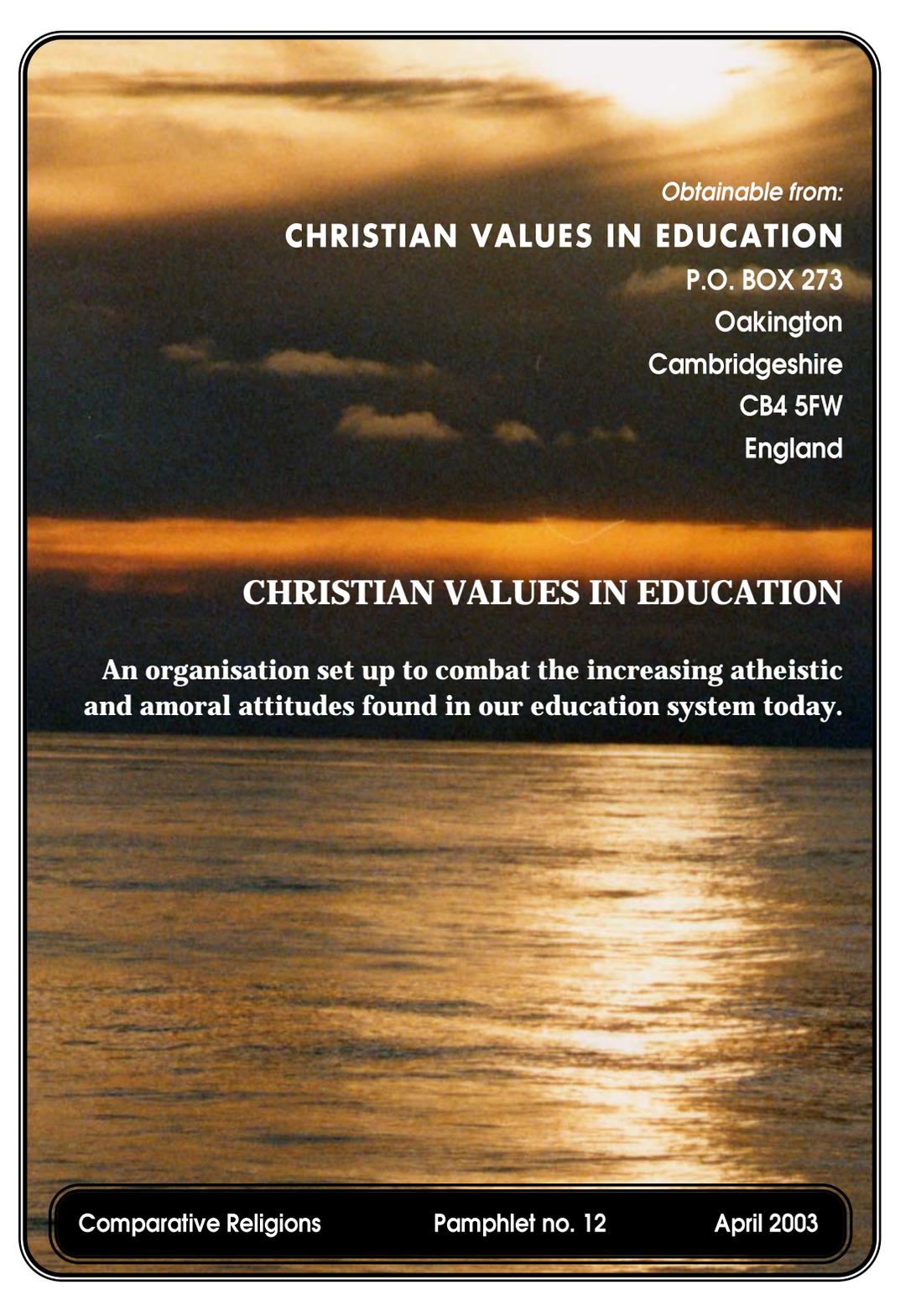
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(N.B. The above books are not Christian texts and are not necessarily recommended for further reading.)

Titles available:

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