



REVISION GUIDE

Edexcel GCSE Religious Studies Unit 2 - Matters of Life and Death



Key Words

Sanctity of Life: the belief that life is holy and comes from God.

Abortion: the removal of a foetus from the womb before it can survive.

Quality of Life: the idea that life must feel like it is worth living.

Euthanasia: bringing about a premature but painless and gentle death.

Voluntary Euthanasia: ending life painlessly when someone in great pain requests death.

Non-Voluntary Euthanasia: ending someone's life painlessly in their best interest when they are incapable of requesting death themselves.

Assisted Suicide: helping a seriously ill person to commit suicide.

Near-Death Experience: when someone about to die has an out of body experience.

Paranormal: unexplained things which are thought to have spiritual causes e.g. ghosts, mediums.

Reincarnation: when souls, after death, are reborn in a new body.

Resurrection: when after death, the body stays in the grave until the end of the world when it is raised.

Immortality of the Soul: the idea that the soul lives on after death.

'THE SANCTITY OF LIFE'

Sanctity of Life (SoL): 'Life is precious because God gave it, therefore only God has the right to take it.'

The Bible says,
'God created
Humans in His
own **image**.'
Genesis 1:27



The Bible also says,
'The Lord
God formed man
and breathed
life into him.'
Genesis 2:7



Revision tip: including Bible verses as evidence helps secure HIGHER grades.

'THE SANCTITY OF LIFE'

'Humans are made like God, so whoever sheds the blood of a man, by man will his blood be shed.'

➤ Genesis 9:6

'You created every part of me, you knit me together in my mother's womb.'

➤ Psalm 139:13
(also Jeremiah 1:5)

'Do not commit murder.'

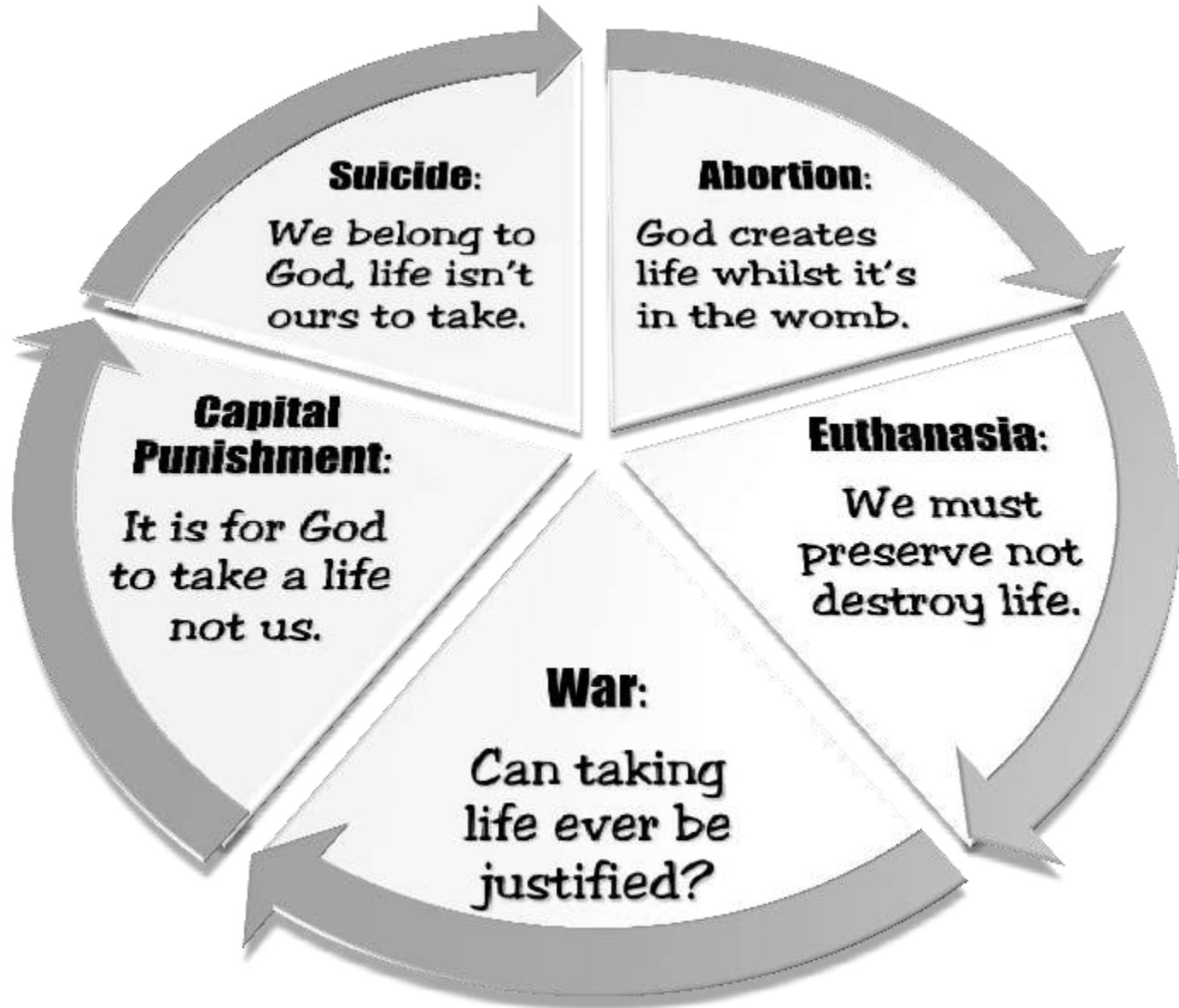
➤ Exodus 20:13

'Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you. You do not belong to yourselves but to God.'

➤ 1 Corinthians 6:19

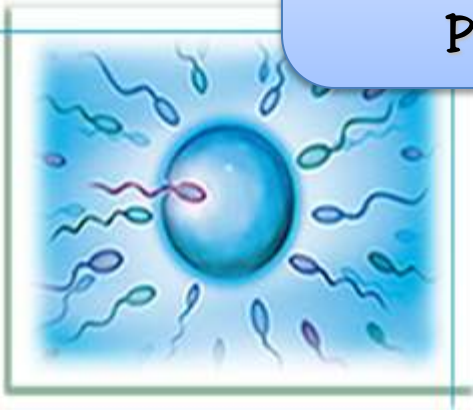
Top Tip: Quotes from the **Bible** are often seen as the best kind of **evidence** to show Christian belief.

The Sanctity of Life has implications in many areas.



Life: When Does It Begin?

Conception: When the sperm meets the egg resulting in pregnancy



Heart Beat: When the heart starts to beat around week 9 of the pregnancy.



Viable. When the baby is able to survive outside of the womb. Around week 24 of the pregnancy.

Birth: When the baby is born. Usually 40 weeks into pregnancy.

The Law and Abortion



The 1967 'Abortion Act' states

TWO doctors must agree that **ONE** of the following is true:

The mother's **life** is at **risk**.

The **wellbeing** of an **existing** child may be at risk with the arrival of an **additional** child.

The mother's **physical** or **mental health** may be at risk.

There is a **substantial risk** the child may be born seriously **handicapped**.

The 1990 Act states abortions cannot take place after 24 weeks unless the mother's life is at risk.



Abortion: Whose Rights?

Pro-Choice (pro-abortion)

The belief that the **woman** should be the person to **decide** as it is her **body**.

- A woman should not be **forced** to go through with an **unwanted** pregnancy.
- Stopping abortions would make women turn to **illegal** 'back street' clinics.

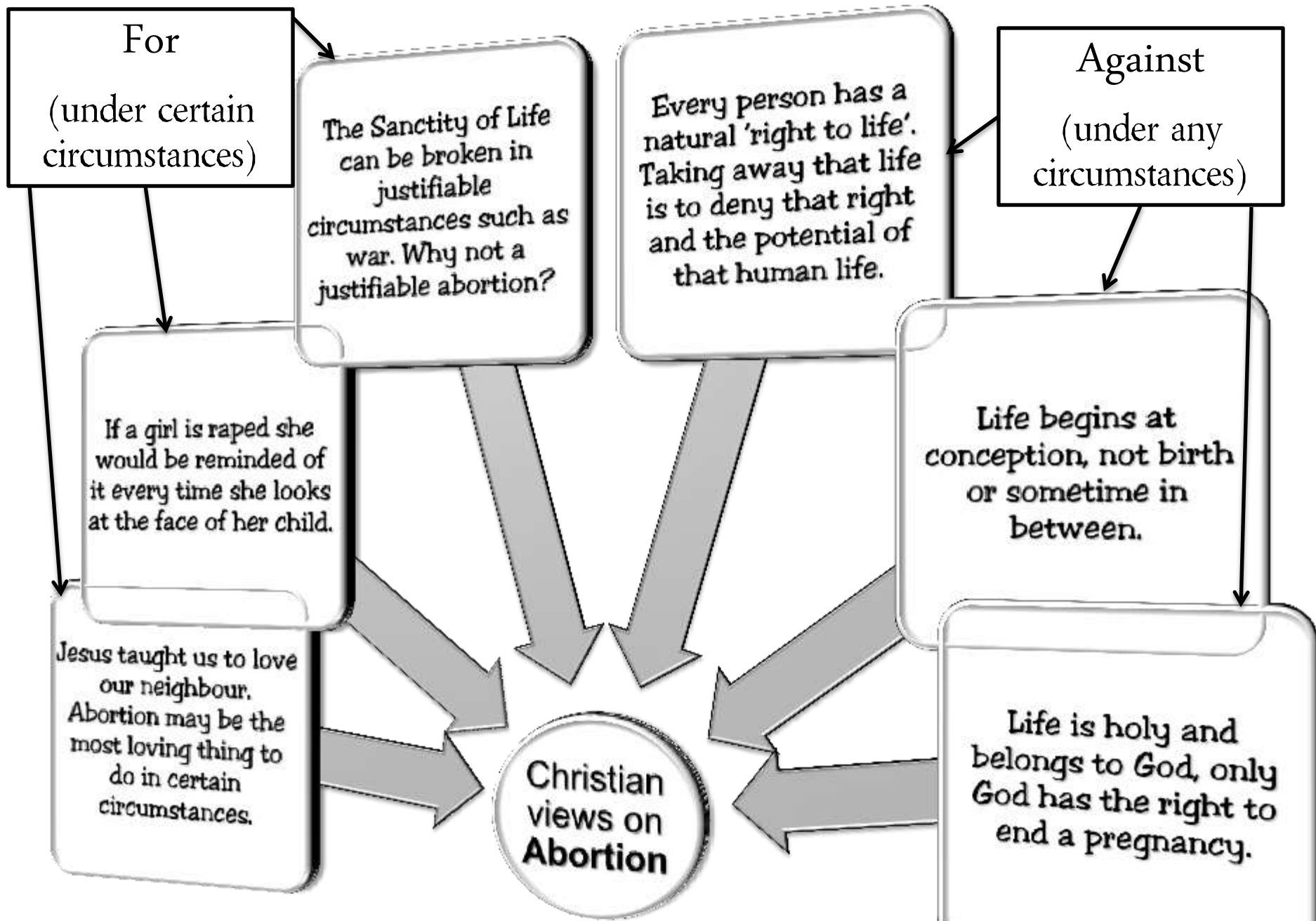


Pro-Life (anti-abortion)

In favour of protecting the life of the **foetus**. The belief that life **begins** at **conception**.

- The foetus is a **living** growing thing. To destroy it is the same as **killing** it.
- True '**choice**' would consider the choice the **baby** and **father** might make.





E.g. Methodist & Quakers

E.g. Catholics & Evangelicals

Euthanasia



The word 'Euthanasia' comes from two Greek words:

'Eu' (meaning 'good') + 'Thanatos' (meaning 'death') = 'A Good Death'

Or 'The act of bringing about an easy and painless death.'

It is mainly seen as a **release** for those suffering with an **incurable** and/or **degenerative** disease, or for those who are in a 'Permanent Vegetative State' (**PVS**).



Voluntary Euthanasia

- Voluntary euthanasia is carried out at the **request**, and with the **full knowledge** and consent, of the person who dies.

Non-Voluntary Euthanasia

- Non-voluntary euthanasia is ending the life of a person in their **best interest** when they are **incapable** of giving permission themselves.

Assisted Suicide

- Assisted suicide is where an individual provides the means for a terminally ill person to take their own life (e.g. Tablets/overdose).

Within the UK there is currently **no law** that **directly** deals with **euthanasia**.

However, the act of taking a life is dealt with under **murder** laws, and the 1961 Suicide Act states '*A person who aids, abets, counsels or procures the suicide of another is liable to imprisonment for up to 14 years.*'

Active Euthanasia:

Active euthanasia is a direct act of a doctor or other to end the life of an individual. e.g. giving a patient an overdose of pain killers such as morphine.

Passive Euthanasia:

Passive euthanasia is where treatment that would help a person live longer is stopped with the idea of ending the life. e.g. not using life support.

Some doctors may give painkillers to ease suffering knowing that the dosage needed would eventually lead to **death**. This is known as '**Double Effect**' and is the only form of euthanasia the **Catholic Church** will agree to.



Under certain conditions euthanasia is legal in **The Netherlands, Switzerland**



and parts of **Australia.**

Arguments For Euthanasia

Helping a person to end their suffering is the most loving thing to do.

God has given us the ability to think for ourselves; we should therefore be able to choose.

People should be allowed to die with dignity.

People don't want to be a burden.

Keeping someone alive artificially with medicine and machines could go against God's wishes by preventing their death.

Arguments Against Euthanasia

Life comes from God. Only God has the right to give and take life, i.e. the 'Sanctity of Life.'

Suffering sometimes helps people feel closer to God and understand what Christ went through.

Allowing euthanasia could be open to abuse e.g. murder disguised as euthanasia.

There are alternatives such as palliative care available.

There is nothing dignified about taking a person's life.

Precedent: Legalising euthanasia in some circumstances sets what is called a '**precedent**' for the future. In other words; to **allow** one now makes it hard to **disallow** others in the future.

Moral Arguments
Surrounding Euthanasia

Right to Life: Diane Pretty argued that with the 'right to life' came a right to **reject** life. The **High Court** in London said that the right to **life** was not the same as the right to **die**.

Medical Society: All doctors agree to attempt to **save** life at **all** costs, this is called the 'Hippocratic Oath'. The British Medical Association (BMA) **opposes** the legalisation of euthanasia.

Medical Implications: Allowing euthanasia now for **current** medical conditions could create problems in the **future** after advances in medical science.

Quality of Life: People argue that having **no** **quality of life** is an argument for euthanasia. However, this argument relies on a **personal idea** on what 'quality of life' **actually** means.

The Hospice Movement



Patients can go to a hospice for short-term **breaks** as well as long-term **care**.

Hospices offer **palliative care**; that is treatment of the **symptoms** of an illness e.g. pain, not the illness itself.



A place where **terminally ill** people can live out the remainder of their life and be looked after in **comfort** and with **dignity**.

A Christian doctor, **Dame Cicely Saunders**, started the first modern hospice, St Christopher's, in **1967**.

Counselling and support is available for **patients** and their **families**. Family support often continues afterwards.



Case Study 1: Robert & Jennifer Stokes

In 2003 Robert Stokes, 59, and his wife Jennifer Stokes, 53, flew to Zurich in Switzerland. They stayed in an apartment owned by a Swiss voluntary euthanasia organisation called Dignitas. At the request of Mr and Mrs Stokes, Dignitas supplied them with a lethal amount of a poison called Pentobarbital Sodium. On April 1st 2003 Mr and Mrs Stokes took the poison and as a result they both died. This kind of euthanasia is usually reserved for those with terminal illnesses, however, neither Mr or Mrs Stokes were suffering a terminal illness. Mr Stokes suffered from epilepsy and depression; Mrs Stokes suffered from a bad back and had bouts of depression. Mr and Mrs Stokes had their solicitor inform their family of their decision to die only after they were confirmed dead. Mr and Mrs Stokes believed that neither of them had a decent quality of life and neither wished to live without the other.



Case Study 2: Diane Pretty

In 1999 Diane Pretty was diagnosed with the illness Motor Neurone Disease (MND), an incurable disorder causing progressive weakening of the muscles. Death occurs through suffocation when the muscles that help breathing are paralysed. Diane Pretty lost almost all use of her limbs and was confined to a wheelchair. Due to weakening facial muscles, her speech was no longer understandable except by her immediate friends and family who became interpreters. Diane Pretty, 43, had been married to her husband, Brian, for 23 years. Mrs Pretty wanted to be able to end her life before the disease did. As she was physically unable to commit suicide, Mrs Pretty wanted her husband to assist her suicide. Mrs Pretty asked the courts to promise that her husband would not face criminal charges if he helped her commit suicide. Mrs Pretty lost her fight with the courts and died of MND on May 11th 2002.

Immortality of the Soul & Life After Death

Christians believe in **life after death** for many reasons. The belief in the **immortality of the soul** leads them to ask '*In what form will that be?*' It is the **form** that divides opinion.

Jesus rose from the dead and he taught his followers that they would have 'everlasting life.' John 3:16

The Bible talks about life after death, and the early Christian leaders including St Paul taught about life after death.

The church has always accepted and taught the belief in life after death even if opinions differ as to what form it takes.

Life after death gives a meaning and a purpose to the life we live now.

A new heavenly body for the soul

New resurrection body

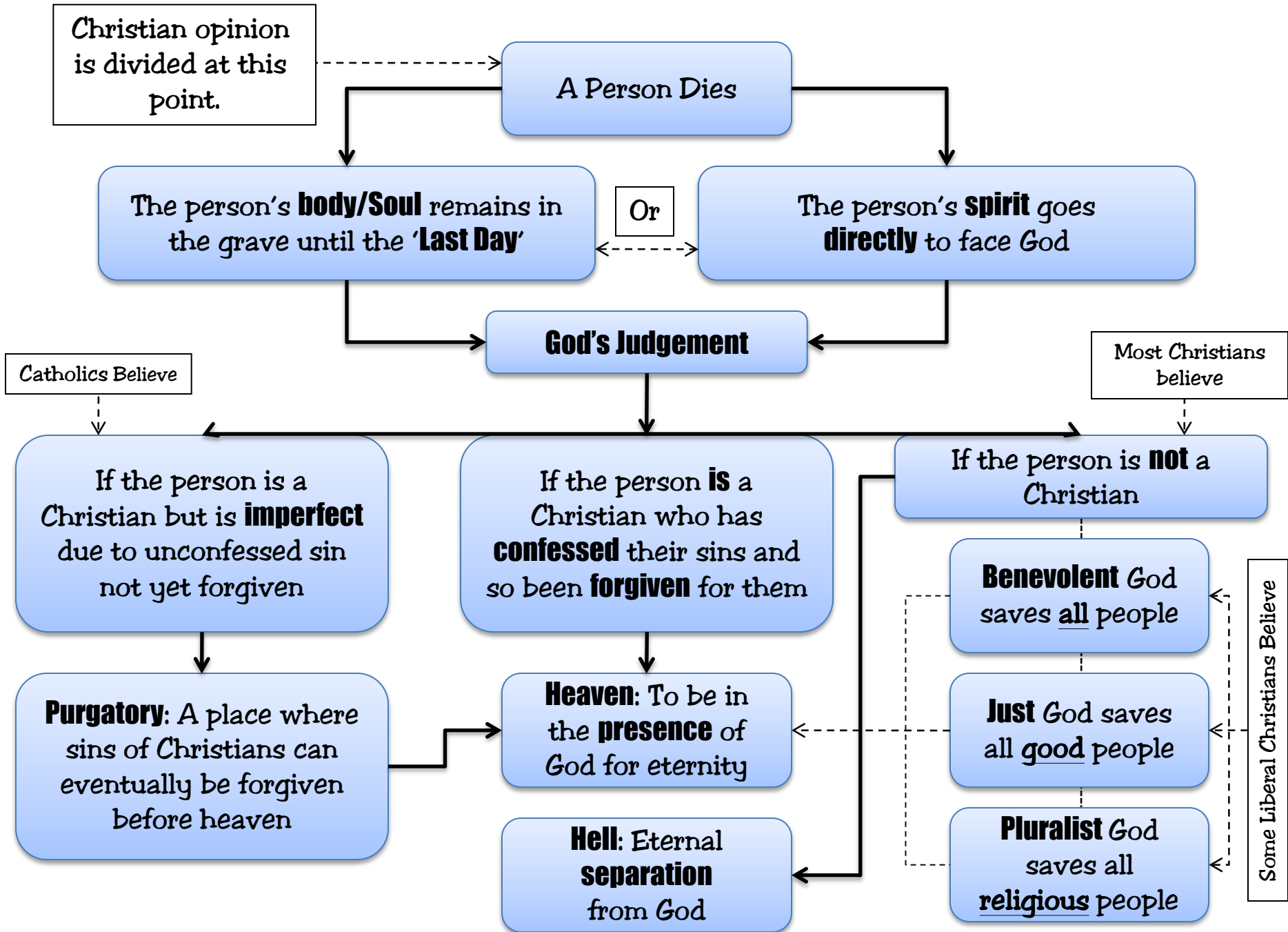
Soul

Lives forever, but has no physical qualities

Has physical qualities but suggests limits

Body





Secular Views on Life After Death

Many people have non-religious reasons for believing in life after death.



Near-Death Experiences

- People claim to have near-death experiences when they are classed as clinically dead for a short period then revived. They often describe feelings of peace; out of body experiences; seeing a bright light; and even meeting deceased relatives.



Paranormal Activities

- Beliefs in ghosts and Ouija boards give some people reasons to believe that the spirits, or souls, of the dead live on. Mediums claim evidence for life after death by contacting people's dead relatives and telling them things only their relatives could know.



Reincarnation

- Many people believe that after death the soul is re-born into a new body. The idea is found in many ancient mythological and pagan beliefs. People believe the memories of past lives can pass into a person's current life offering evidence for life after death.

The Media & Matters of Life and Death

The issue of **Euthanasia** was tackled in the **BBC** film '**A Short Stay in Switzerland**'.

Julie Walters plays **Dr Anne Turner**, a retired doctor suffering from **Supranuclear Palsy**, a degenerative and debilitating illness. Dr Turner believed her **quality of life** was deteriorating to such a level she no longer wished to live with her condition. With the help of her



three grown-up children she travelled to the **Dignitas** clinic in Zurich, **Switzerland**, where doctors gave her drugs to end her life.

A SHORT STAY IN
SWITZERLAND

BBC

GCSE questions in this section will focus on **how** an issue is dealt with and if **religious people** and their **beliefs** were treated **fairly**.

The film deals with the issue of **assisted suicide** and shows the moral dilemma faced by friends and family of Dr Turner. Although the viewer may feel sympathy for Dr Turner and her family the film is **not biased** one way or the other.

The film makers clearly show assisted suicide is **illegal** in the UK but present the debate on legalising it **fairly**, with thoughts and opinions aired on both sides.

The Media & Matters of Life and Death

One particular scene in the film involves a religious friend of Dr Turner expressing her concern over suicide. Whilst her opinions are expressed passionately, she is not portrayed by the film makers unfairly as a fundamentalist, and both the woman and her religious views are treated respectfully.



Clare: I ask you this with some trepidation, may I pray for you.

Anne: Of course; yes. If it helps you.

Clare: I want it to help you.

Anne: You do I'm sure, and if it does, I'll be the first to let you know. But, we each have our own way of doing things - we will, as ever, beg to differ and respect that.

Dr Turner's friend, Clare, also offers to pray for Anne in order to offer her some spiritual comfort. Anne Turner is not religious and whilst she is happy for her friend to pray for her, she is clear it will not have the same meaning for her as it does for Clare. In showing this the film makers have again tackled a religious topic whilst respecting the spiritual beliefs of a religious character within the film.