

# Key Terms: Crime & Punishment



## Religion, Crime, and the Causes of Crime

**Good and Evil Actions:** Actions judged as morally right or wrong; debate exists on whether causing suffering can ever be justified.

**Good Intentions:** Motivations that aim to benefit others, even if outcomes are imperfect.

**Evil Intentions:** Motivations to harm others, considered morally wrong in most religious teachings.

**Causes of Crime:**

- **Poverty:** Lack of resources leading some to commit crimes for survival.
- **Upbringing:** Poor role models or unstable family environments contributing to criminal behaviour.
- **Mental Illness:** Psychological conditions influencing criminal actions.
- **Addiction:** Dependence on substances leading to theft or violence.
- **Greed:** Desire for wealth or possessions driving criminal acts.
- **Hate:** Hostility towards individuals or groups resulting in hate crimes.
- **Opposition to Unjust Laws:** Breaking laws perceived as immoral or discriminatory.

**Types of Crime:**

- **Hate Crime:** Crimes motivated by prejudice against a person's identity (e.g., race, religion, sexuality).
- **Theft:** Taking someone else's property without consent.
- **Murder:** The unlawful and intentional killing of another person.



## Death Penalty

**Death Penalty:** The execution of a person as punishment for a serious crime, such as murder or treason.

**Arguments For the Death Penalty:**

- **Principle of Utility:** The greatest good for the greatest number; may deter crime.
- **Justice:** Seen as a fitting punishment for severe crimes.

**Arguments Against the Death Penalty:**

- **Sanctity of Life:** All life is sacred and only God has the right to take it.
- **Risk of Error:** Innocent people may be wrongly executed.



## Religion and Punishment



**Aims of Punishment:**

- **Retribution:** Punishing offenders to give a sense of justice or revenge.
- **Deterrence:** Discouraging crime through the fear of punishment.
- **Reformation:** Helping offenders change their behaviour and reintegrate into society.

**Treatment of Criminals:**

**Prison:** Incarceration as a means of punishment and protection for society.

**Corporal Punishment:** Physical punishment (e.g., whipping); debated for its morality and effectiveness.

**Community Service:** Offenders complete unpaid work to benefit the community.

**Forgiveness:** Letting go of resentment against those who commit crimes; central to Christian teachings like Jesus' words on the cross ("Father, forgive them").



## Ethical and Religious Perspectives

**Sanctity of Life:** The belief that life is holy and belongs to God, influencing views against the death penalty and corporal punishment.

**Principle of Utility:** Ethical theory focusing on actions that maximise happiness or minimise harm.

**Justice:** Ensuring fairness; punishment must be proportionate to the crime.

**Rehabilitation:** Religious and ethical focus on helping offenders reform rather than seeking revenge.

**Christian Teachings on Crime and Punishment:**

- "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).
- Jesus' forgiveness of sinners, encouraging mercy over strict retribution.

**Other Religious Teachings:**

- **Islam:** Emphasis on justice, but also mercy, as seen in Shari'ah law.
- **Buddhism:** Non-violence (ahimsa) and reformation over retribution.

