

T3 Full exam for May 2021

When teaching an undergraduate class on “Buddhism and Violence”, I usually start by asking students to rank religious groups in the order of how many followers they have in the British army. Typically, Christians are at the top of students’ lists and Buddhists at the bottom. This reflects an unconscious bias many of these students have regarding Buddhism. So they’re always surprised to find out that Buddhists outnumber Muslims and Sikhs in the British Army – despite the relatively small number of Buddhists in Britain.

According to historian Professor Jonathan Walters, this belief has its roots in colonialism and the work of Christian missionaries. In encountering different beliefs among colonised peoples, missionaries framed other religions in such a way that Christianity could be presented as superior and attractive. In their eyes Islam was too aggressive and focused on strict adherence to rules. Buddhism was too other-worldly, pacifist, and passive to the point of stagnation. Christianity was placed in the Goldilocks spot between the two. This framing still has serious traction and leads to a certain cognitive dissonance when, for example, Buddhists make the headlines for the wrong reasons.

Avoiding “onslaught on living beings” and instead cultivating loving-kindness towards them is at the heart of Buddhist ethics. The Buddha discouraged violence and counselled kings to find alternative ways of resolving problems. Selling weapons is considered an inappropriate livelihood for a Buddhist. But Buddhists have been involved in violent conflicts pretty much since the religion first emerged. Justifications for such actions have typically been based on defending the Dharma (the Buddhist teachings), occasionally altering the perspective of the enemy to make it less karmically wrong to kill them. A particularly uncomfortable example of this is found in the fifth century Sri Lankan quasi-mythological Mahavamsa chronicle, in which monks reassure a king that out of the millions he’d just slaughtered only two were Buddhists and the others were more like animals than humans.

Buddhist monks actually bore arms and fought in the Korean defence against Japanese invasions of the late 16th century. While military service is not prohibited in Buddhist texts, a soldier’s life is considered problematic because of the likelihood of dying in battle, psyched up for killing and dwelling on violence. Ideally, a Buddhist wants to die with a calm mind which is more likely to be attracted to a positive rebirth. A violent mind could lead one to Buddhism’s realms of hell.

It’s not only war and external threats that provide examples of Buddhist violence. Corporal punishment was a feature of the pre-modern Tibetan legal system. In 1997 three Tibetan monks were murdered in Dharamsala, India – the police linked the suspects in the case to an ongoing controversy within Tibetan Buddhism. Thailand retains the death penalty, last using it in 2018.

At the end of the class, I always fear that students will fixate on the more sensationalist and violent material covered: that one extreme view will replace another. However, the pacifist stereotype of Buddhism is not without foundation. Like Christianity or Islam, Buddhism is at least as internally diverse – and, as such, we should be wary of making generalisations. After all, few Christians would like the perception of their religion to be based solely upon images of the Quakers or of the *Westboro Baptist Church.

*Westboro Baptist Church is an American hyper-Calvinist hate group, known for engaging in inflammatory hate speech against atheists, Jews, Muslims, transgender people, and numerous Christian denominations.

1. In paragraph 1, the writer 's aim is to show how

- A. people generally take it for granted that Buddhists are more peaceful than those who follow other religions
- B. Buddhists are unlikely to be violent even if they join the army.
- C. people who follow other religions are not as likely to join the army
- D. all people whether religious or not can become violent

2. In paragraph 2, Professor Jonathan Walters wants to point out that

- A. missionaries were working hard to bring Christianity to native peoples.
- B. missionaries particularly disliked pacifist religions.
- C. missionaries managed to make Christianity look like the perfect religion.
- D. colonialism was to blame for destroying entire cultures.

3. In the context of paragraph 3, which of these would be a way of "altering the perspective of the enemy?"

- A. Blinding them.
- B. Dehumanising them.
- C. Illuminating them.
- D. Reaching out to them.

4. According to the text, why is it considered wrong for a Buddhist to be a soldier?

- A. It could lead to an undesirable state of mind.
- B. A Buddhist is not allowed to kill.
- C. He may be forced to kill people who do not deserve it.
- D. A Buddhist who kills cannot be reincarnated.

5. In paragraph 5 what are we supposed to deduce about Thailand?

- A. It must be a country where the predominant religion is Buddhism.
- B. They are lagging behind modern ideas of justice.
- C. It is influenced by Tibet in its political decision-making.
- D. The murderers must have been taken to Thailand to face justice.

6. The last paragraph could be best summed up by saying

- A. it is wrong to believe that both Buddhism and Christianity are pacific religions.
- B. within each religion there are factions who have more radical beliefs than the majority.
- C. we cannot really understand how a religious group might react in any circumstances.
- D. people enjoy reading about the more violent, radical ideas within a religion.

WORD FORMATION

The word spiritual once had connotations of **strength** (STRONG) and it made one think of an elevated level of **awareness** (AWARE) It spoke of an ability to transcend and see beyond **materialistic** /*immaterial* (MATERIAL) concerns.

Nowadays, in many western countries, if you say you are spiritual, you may be seen as **ridiculous** (RIDICULE). Since the 1960s it has been **increasingly** (INCREASE) common to hear people state that they are of the “*spiritual-but-not-religious*” (SBNR) denomination. This **tendency** (TEND) has its roots in the counterculture of the 1960s and in the 1980s New Age movement. **Unlike** (LIKE) official religions, whose leaders encourage or oblige **worship(p)ers** (WORSHIP) to attend religious ceremonies, people who declare themselves to be SBNR have no churches and no dogma to follow. They make all their own **choices** (CHOOSE) with regard to what **beliefs** (BELIEVE) and practices they follow.

nb : LITERALLY OVER 90% of students misspelled STRENGTH, writing STRENGHT AND RECEIVED A HALF POINT

ONLY A VERY FEW STUDENTS GOT “UNLIKE” (A DIFFERENZA DI) CORRECT.

CHOICES AND BELIEFS WERE OFTEN WRITTEN IN THE SINGULAR, GAINING HALF POINTS EACH

Verb Tenses

1. The two old ladiesHAD BEEN WAITING.....(wait) outside the church for half an hour when the priest came to open the doors.

- MANY WROTE “WERE WAITING”, BUT IT IS NOT CORRECT HERE AS THERE IS THE TIME REFERENCE “FOR HALF AN HOUR WHEN.....”

2. ...HAD I KNOWN.....(I/know) that he was extremely religious, I would not have told that particular joke.(do not use “if”)

- This was an inverted third conditional, studied in the course

3. The whole stadium stopped ...TO DEDICATE.....(dedicate) a minute’s silence to those who had perished in the tragedy.

- This was to test knowledge of the difference between stop to do something and stop doing something. Many failed. If you need to revise the difference especially if you will be repeating the exam.

4. This is the first time IHAVE BEEN.....(be) to Rome.

Present perfect mandatory after this introductory expression

5. Were I to lend you some money, ...WOULD YOU PAY.....(you/ pay) me back?

- Many wrote "will you pay" but Were I to lend or If I were to lend(both stylistic variations on the second conditional "If I lent you" so as a second conditional "would you pay" is the correct answer, not will

6. When we got to the front of the queue all the tickets ...HAD ALREADY BEEN SOLD.....(already/Sell)

7. By the time I graduate, I hope you ...WILL HAVE FOUND.....(find) a job you like.

-**"By the time" referring to the future requires a future perfect tense. Some people wrote "I had found" but this refers to the future: "I graduate, not "I graduated"**

8. MeditationIS SAID...TO BE.....(say/be) an experience everyone should try.

9. Not only ...DID HE TRAVEL.....(he/travel) to Tibet when he was a student, but later on in life he also lived with some monks in a monastery for 7 years.

-**Half point was given for "had he travelled" even though "when he was a student" would require a past simple tense . Also after "Not only... " we need a negative inversion**

10. Father Brown is tired because he ...HAS HEARD.....(hear) 22 confessions so far this morning and it's only 11.30.

-**"So far"(finora) and "this morning" clearly require a present perfect as this is unfinished time. However, not present perfect continuous- he has been hearing- because the emphasis is on quantity- 22 confessions. Continuous is only used for emphasis on actions or time. Also, hear is a stative verb which makes its use in the continuous improbable.**

SENTENCE TRANSFORMATIONS

Partial points were given depending on the grammatical form written and the degree of deviation from the original sentence. 0.5, 1.0 and 1.5 were often given.

Also some other variations(few) were given 2 points if they came up for another way of solving the task and using the key word given.

1. I regret not asking my dad for a loan of his car before taking it.

WISH

I ...wish I had askedmy dad for a loan of his car before taking it.

2. Perhaps he was working in an area with no signal when you phoned him.

MIGHT

He.....might have been working..... in an area with no signal when you phoned him.

3. I'd prefer you not to discuss religion, if you don't mind.

RATHER

I _'d rather you didn't _have_____ a discussion about religion, if you don't mind.

4. The ministers are about to sign a new agreement.

POINT

The ministers ____ARE ON THE POINT OF SIGNING_____ a new agreement.

5. Didn't I make it clear that you ought not to speak about our private life?

AVOID

Didn't I make it clear that you ...should/ought to avoid speaking about our private life?