

## Key Concepts

### Goodness

The quality of being like God. Putting the needs of others first.

### Free Will

The God given ability to choose right from wrong freely and without being controlled.

### Evil

The absence of good that results in suffering.

### Incarnation

Means 'made flesh'. The belief that God became human in the person of Jesus.

### Suffering

The pain or loss that harms human beings.

### Natural Law

A belief that there are universal laws of right and wrong that apply to all humans at all times.

### Privation

The absence of something. Catholics believe evil is an absence of good.

### Conscience

A God-given feeling of right and wrong.

## The Problem of Evil & Suffering

Catholic Christians, Liberal Christians and Jews believe in one God, who is omnipotent (all-powerful), omnibenevolent (all-loving) and omniscient (all-knowing). The problem caused by evil and suffering is that if God has these different qualities then he should want to end suffering and would have the power to end suffering. As suffering continues to happen then religious people ask the question: Why does the world contain so much evil and suffering?

## Sources of Authority

*"That which is evil...enhances our admiration of the good"* (St Augustine Enchiridion)

*"For what is that which we call evil but the absence of good (privation)"* (St Augustine Enchiridion)

*"He (God) can bring good, even out of evil"* (St Augustine Enchiridion)

*"A world without problems and hardships would be morally static"* (John Hick: Evil and the God of Love)

### Catholic response to the problem of evil and suffering (St Augustine)

Catholics believe that **free will** is a gift from God. God created humans with the ability to choose between good and evil. When humans choose the wrong thing it causes suffering. **Humans are to blame** for the suffering, not God. The story of Genesis tells how Adam and Eve decided to eat the forbidden fruit, going against God's wishes. This is the **first (original) sin**, sometimes known as the **Fall**. Original sin is a symbol that we all share some responsibility for the evil and suffering in the world. St Augustine gives three answers to the question of suffering: 1) The existence of evil helps people to appreciate the good in the world. 2) Evil is just the absence of good things. This is called **privation**. God does not cause or permit evil because evil isn't even a thing. 3) God allows suffering because he is omnipotent and good. He is always able to **bring a greater good out of suffering**.

### Liberal Christian response to the problem of evil and suffering (John Hick's Soul Making)

**John Hick** developed the ideas of **St. Irenaeus**. According to Hick humans were made in the **image of God**, but they and the world itself were not made perfect. They need to **grow** to become spiritually perfect. Suffering and evil is the best way for humans to **develop**. Hick argues that God allows evil and suffering to happen, so that people can grow and develop in how they respond to it. Natural evil is one part of God's creation which allows humans to respond and **grow spiritually**. Hick calls this the process of '**soul making**'.

### Jewish response to the problem of evil and suffering

Jews do not believe that people are born evil. They do not share the Christian concept of **Original Sin**. Jews believe they are **born free** with the feeling to do good or to do evil. The Torah teaches that God has given human beings choices and that it is important to struggle against the feeling to do evil actions by obeying God. Jews have been provided with guidance through the **Torah and mitzvot** which are actions that Jewish people should perform or avoid. By being obedient to the Torah and mitzvot Jews **can avoid evil**. Jews believe it is not possible to hide evil actions from God and each year, during the festivals of **Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur**, Jews apologise (make up for or make good) for the times when they have followed their feeling to do evil.

## Exam Practice

- b) Describe what St Augustine taught about the origin of evil. (5)  
d) 'Suffering is not always evil'. (15)

Key Words

Suffering

Pain or loss which harms human beings. Some suffering is caused by other human beings (often called moral evil); some is not (often called natural evil).

Natural Law

The moral laws of right and wrong which are universal and not dependent on human laws.

Conscience

Human reason making moral decisions. The knowledge we have of what is right and wrong and the God-given compulsion to do what is right and to avoid what is evil.

Evil

The absence of good and the impulse to seek our own desires at the expense of the good of others.

Privation

The loss or absence of something that is normally present. Evil is a privation of good.

Free will

A person’s ability to choose right from wrong without being controlled by other forces.

Incarnation

“Made flesh” The Christian belief that God became man in the person of Jesus, fully human and fully divine.

Goodness

The quality of being like God: seeking the well-being of others selflessly.

Trinity

What?

There is One God. God exists as three persons (Father, Son & Holy Spirit). Each person is distinct from the other two, each is fully God but there are not 3 Gods.

Why?

Nicene Creed. The Bible makes it clear that Jesus existed with the Father at the creation. Jesus said ‘baptise them in the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit’. All 3 persons were present at Jesus’ Baptism.

Catholic views about the origin of evil

FREE WILL – humans choose to do wrong. Most suffering is caused by humans misusing their free will.  
ORIGINAL SIN – God created a perfect world. Adam and Eve went against God. This introduced pain and suffering into the world. We all have Original Sin, the tendency to go against God.  
AUGUSTINE’S VIEW - God made a perfect world. Fallen angels caused chaos in nature which brought natural evil into the world and Adam & Eve brought moral evil. Evil helps us to appreciate good. Evil is a privation of good.

Other religious views about the origin of the universe

Christian views	Judaism	Atheist responses (Hume & Mackie)
<p><b>John Hick:</b> God made suffering to help us to grow and learn.</p>	<p>Jews do not believe in original sin but they do believe that humans are born with the inclination to do good and evil. The Torah teaches that they must struggle against the evil and Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur give them the opportunity to return to God when they fail. Some suffering is a test or punishment from God but we cannot understand God and so should not question him.</p>	<p>God does not exist. The belief that God is all powerful, all knowing and all good is an ‘inconsistent triad’ (Hume) Mackie said:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We don’t need bad to appreciate good and even if we did we don’t need as much suffering as we have in the world.</li><li>• Why does God need to make us better people through suffering? Why not just make us perfect to begin with?</li><li>• Why does God allow us to choose evil?</li></ul>

Catholic responses to suffering

We can’t understand God so shouldn’t try to (story of Job);  
We suffer because we love ‘grief is the price we pay for love’;  
Discipleship will always involve suffering.  
We share in Jesus’ suffering when we suffer; The world is not supposed to be perfect, heaven is perfect and without suffering;  
Suffering gives us an opportunity to help others through prayer and action; We deserve our suffering when we misuse our free will; We should bear our suffering patiently and we will grow stronger (Pope John Paul Salvifici Doloris).

Evidence that God is ‘good’

God made creation and ‘saw that it was good’. He created colour, beauty and variety that are not required for the survival of the species because he is good and loves us.



**What Jesus’ example teaches us about how we should behave**

Golden Rule – treat others as you would like to be treated  
Jesus welcomed the sinner and the outcast  
Jesus said ‘Love one another as I have loved you’

**Sermon on the Mount**

Jesus praises peacemakers, the merciful and those who seek to do what is right. He says that those who are persecuted will be rewarded. He tells us to do more than what the law requires e.g. do not murder becomes do not be angry. He says ‘turn the other cheek’ and do good in private.

**Natural Law (St Thomas Aquinas)**

God gives all humans the instinct to ‘do good and avoid evil’. To do this we should follow the 5 primary precepts ; Worship God; live in an Ordered society; Reproduce; educate children, preserve life.

**Conscience**

Only humans have a conscience. The instinct to ‘do good and avoid evil’ means we feel guilt when we fail. Our conscience must be informed by the Church, teachers, Bible etc.

**The Rosary**

**What?**

A set of beads to help Catholics focus on prayer. They pray decades of 10 Hail Marys, Our Father and Glory Be whilst focusing on the life of Jesus in the mysteries.

**Why?**

The sorrowful mysteries can help those who suffer to consider how Jesus suffered too. His resurrection can bring them hope.

**Catholic views on incarnation of Jesus**

(‘Carne’ = flesh) Jesus is FULLY GOD and FULLY HUMAN  
Jesus became human and can identify with human suffering. Those who suffer can be comforted – Jesus suffered too. Jesus is an example of how to accept suffering. Jesus’ suffering ended in the resurrection which gives us hope.

**Sources of Authority**

ISAIAH 53 *“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.”*  
Philippians 2:5-11 *(The kenosis hymn) Jesus made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”*  
*For what is that which we call evil but the absence of good? Disease and wounds mean nothing but the absence of health’ (St Augustine)*

**What sources of authority should we use to make moral decisions & why**

We should follow Jesus’ example as he is the Son of God

We should use the teachings of the Church (magisterium) as the Pope is chosen by God and has authority.

We should use the Bible as it is the Word of God

We should use our conscience as it is the voice of God speaking to us.

We should use Natural Law as it helps us to ‘do good and avoid evil’

We should do the most loving thing in (situation ethics) or whatever brings the greatest happiness to the greatest number (utilitarianism).

**Why Catholics use statues**

Focus for prayer  
Someone whose example we can follow  
We ask the Saints to pray for us (we do not pray to the saints)  
Crucifix reminds us of Jesus’ suffering for our salvation.

**Other religious views on statues**

Goes against the 2nd commandment ‘Do not have idols’  
Praying to anyone other than God breaks the 1st commandment ‘Worship one God’.

**Michelangelo’s Pieta**

A sculpture of Mary holding the body of Jesus, her son  
Mary’s open hand – she accepts God’s will  
Jesus seems at peace – no wounds are visible. Gives hope to those who suffer.

**Lourdes**

**What do people do there?**

Visit grotto; Torchlight procession; Pray; Seek spiritual and physical healing; celebrate Mass; celebrate Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**Why do people go there?**

Pray for something special ; Strengthen their faith ; Give time and attention to God ; To thank God ; To show sorrow for sin  
Join with other members of their faith.

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## The Trinity & The Incarnation

Catholics believe in one single God, who made himself known to the world (revelation) as three separate persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit. This is known as the doctrine of the Trinity, and is a fundamental belief for all Catholics. The Trinity is a mystery which means that Catholics can never fully understand this idea. The Incarnation is the Christian belief that God becomes flesh (human) in the person of Jesus.

## Sources of Authority

*"There are three things in love...love is of someone that loves, and with love something is loved. Behold, then, there are three things: he that loves, and that which is loved, and love."* (St Augustine)

*"We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty...We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God...We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life."* (Nicene Creed)

*"The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us"* (John)

*"Who, being in very nature God...made himself nothing"* (St Paul – Kenosis Hymn)

### Catholic beliefs about the Trinity

Catholics believe in one single God, who made himself known to the world (**revelation**) as three separate persons: **God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit**. This is known as the doctrine of the Trinity, and is a fundamental belief for all Catholics. The Trinity is a mystery which means that Catholics can never fully understand this idea. This belief is found clearly in the Nicene Creed. The importance of the trinity is shown through prayer as Catholics make the sign of the cross which is trinitarian. The Bible does not mention the Trinity directly, but the concept is shown in stories such as Jesus' baptism and in John's Gospel. St Augustine helped describe the Trinity using the analogy of love (Lover, Loved and Love itself).

### Jewish beliefs about the Trinity

Jews do not accept any belief in the Trinity, as they do not accept Jesus as the Son of God. There are different qualities of God such as '**lawgiver**', '**judge**' and '**creator**' but these are only characteristics of the one God. These attributes of God are not separate persons, but are just the different ways in which human beings experience God. Orthodox Jews may argue that the belief in the Trinity challenges the first commandment "**You shall have no gods before me**". A belief in the Trinity would break the **covenant** that God made with **Abraham and Moses**.

### Catholic beliefs about the Incarnation

Catholics believe that Jesus is God the Son. God became a human being through the person of Jesus. It is called '**the incarnation**' because God became human '**in the flesh**' in the person of Jesus. When Catholics call Jesus the '**Son of God**', they mean that he is God who has become a human being; that he is the '**incarnate Son**'. Catholics also believe that Jesus is 'fully God and fully human'. Catholics believe that Jesus is one person, with two natures: one human nature, and one divine (which means 'godly'). The Gospel of John highlights that God became human and lived in the world. **St Paul** wrote the Kenosis hymn. **Kenosis means 'empty'** and shows that God gave up his power to become human in Jesus.

### Jewish beliefs about the Incarnation

Jewish people do not accept that Jesus was God, as this challenges their basic belief that God is one. This belief is stated in the **Shema**, which is a very important prayer for Jews. It is also stated in the Ten Commandments which were given to Moses on Mt Sinai: "**You shall have no other gods before me**". The Jewish **patriarch, Abraham** taught the early Jews that they were to believe in one God only as part of the **covenant (promise/agreement)** made with God. Orthodox Jews also reject beliefs in the Incarnation due to their beliefs about the Messiah. Jews reject the belief that Jesus is the **Messiah** because they believe that the Messiah will be a human descendant of **King David**.

## Exam Practice

- c) Explain either from Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, beliefs about the Trinity. (8)
- c) Explain either from Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, beliefs about the Incarnation. (8)