

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 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)