

# 3

## Issues of good and evil

### ► The Big Picture

#### Key Concepts



**Good** That which is considered morally right, beneficial and to our advantage.



**Evil** That which is considered extremely immoral, wicked and wrong.



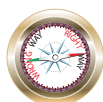
**Forgiveness** To grant pardon for a wrongdoing; to give up resentment and the desire to seek revenge against a wrongdoer.



**Free will** The ability to make choices voluntarily and independently. The belief that nothing is pre-determined.



**Justice** Fairness; where everyone has equal provisions and opportunity.



**Morality** Principles and standards determining which actions are right or wrong.



**Punishment** A penalty given to someone for a crime or wrong they have done.



**Sin** Deliberate immoral action, breaking a religious or moral law.



**Suffering** Pain or distress caused by injury, illness or loss. Suffering can be physical, emotional/psychological or spiritual.

#### Core Questions



What makes an act wrong?

Why do people suffer?

What causes crime?

What are the aims of punishment?

How are criminals treated in the twenty-first century?

Is it ever right to execute someone?

How do we make moral decisions?

Is it really possible to forgive?

**Task**

Discuss some of the 'core questions' on page 83 in pairs. Write a brief answer to one of them, showing you have thought about different perspectives.

**Overview**

This chapter explores the nature of good and evil and how both are related to suffering. You will look at religious and non-religious teachings, beliefs and attitudes to suffering, crime, punishment and forgiveness.

Firstly, you will explore what 'good' really is and what makes an act 'wrong'. You will examine the role that free will and conscience play in moral decision-making, and the different types of morality that exist.

You will then move on to question the causes of crime and the aims of punishment. The concepts of justice and reformation will be introduced, as will the work of prison reformers and prison chaplains (both religious and non-religious). The ethics of the death penalty will then be explored in detail, enabling you to apply religious, non-religious, ethical and social arguments to the debate.

From here you will examine the nature, purpose and process of forgiveness. Through examining modern, historical and religious examples, you will reflect upon the moral question of whether forgiveness is really possible.

Finally, you will consider the philosophical problems with the presence of evil and suffering in the world. Philosophical ideas about the origin and nature of evil will be investigated. You will conclude by examining how the existence of evil and suffering can challenge a belief in God.

Throughout the course of this chapter you will consider the role these issues play in twenty-first-century Britain. You will examine the diversity of belief and interpretation that exists both between and within religions.



What are the aims of punishments like imprisonment?



Why is there suffering in the world?



How might religious people respond to issues of suffering, evil and forgiveness?

## Crime and punishment

### How do people make moral decisions?

#### Key Concept



**Morality** Principles and standards determining which actions are right or wrong.

**Conscience** an inner voice which keeps a person on the right track; a sense of right and wrong; an instinct (some think given by God) to help us to make the right choices.



**Free will** is a human's ability to make free choices in life.

#### What is 'wrong'?

Any act or pattern of behaviour which contravenes accepted moral, religious or ethical codes is considered to be 'wrong'. Much like 'good', 'wrong' is a relative term.

Making **moral** decisions is not a straightforward, risk-free process. We all have a **conscience**, which helps us to assess the right choice to make when reviewing a situation. Some believe that our conscience develops as we grow older, and that it grows through the process of making right decisions. It also grows through the guilt felt when making the wrong decisions. Some people also believe that our conscience gives us advance warning of whether the decision we are about to make is right or wrong. We then choose. It is our **free will** which enables us to make decisions and choices that are genuinely our own.

- ▶ Our past experiences allow us to learn the rightness and wrongness of our actions, partially through the responses of others to our behaviour and choices. The human brain has evolved to learn from previous experiences and use these reflections to help us to make decisions in the future.
  - ▶ The law offers us strict guidance for our behaviour. Laws are made by our elected representatives in government, and exist to help maintain order, peace and harmony. Breaking these laws is met with punishments such as fines, community service and prison.
  - ▶ Many people (both religious believers and those without a religious belief) consult either religious leaders or community elders for advice and guidance before making difficult moral decisions. It is widely accepted that these individuals have the wisdom, experience and knowledge to offer counselling. They have usually received special training to understand and interpret holy scriptures and teachings, and many are seen to be God's representatives on earth.
  - ▶ Religious believers also look towards their religious teachings before making moral decisions. These are found within the sacred texts of each tradition: the Bible, the Qur'an and Hadith, and the Torah. In the modern world, there are many moral decisions for which ancient sacred texts are unable to provide specific guidance. In situations like these, believers look to religious leaders to interpret and attempt to apply teachings. They also look towards the example of prophets such as Muhammad or other notable individuals from within the religious tradition such as Martin Luther King or Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Other forms of belief which sit outside of strict moral codes and religious beliefs can also guide decision-making. For example, many people, such as humanists, take what is known as a 'situation ethics' approach to making decisions. Every single instance of moral decision-making is viewed as totally unique (because the circumstances of each case are always different) and choices are made with the guiding principle that the well-being of people is the most important thing.





The What Would Jesus Do (WWJD) movement was started by Evangelical Christians in America in the 1990s. It has since become popular in Britain. The bracelet is worn as a reminder of a person's Christian beliefs and to prompt them to make decisions that will be in keeping with the life and teachings of Jesus.

## Virtues

A virtue is a quality thought of as good, right and honest. Examples are: chastity, temperance, charity, diligence, patience, kindness, and humility. Practising these virtues is believed to keep people safe from the temptation to commit sin.

Utilitarian decision-making – when choices are made based on the principle of creating the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people – is another example.

Finally, some people look to reason and logic to guide their moral decision-making. This is when decisions are made according to strict principles. In practice, it means looking at the moral dilemma away from our emotions and ideas from religion, law or accepted codes of moral behaviour, and making a decision rationally – according to a set of agreed principles.

## ► Types of morality

There are two common forms of **morality**:

- Absolute morality is when a person has a principle such as 'it is wrong to kill' and never alters it. They apply this principle or moral standard to all situations, no matter what the context or circumstance. This person might believe that all killing, including in war, is wrong. Within both the Islamic and Christian traditions there are examples of groups who traditionally adopt an absolute moralist approach, for example Catholics and Quaker Christians.
- Relative morality is when a person holds a moral principle but is prepared to adapt or adjust it in certain situations. This person might believe that, if it reduces suffering in the future, killing in war might be necessary. Buddhists and many Protestant Christian denominations like the Church of England would be considered relative moralists. Similarly, humanists follow a relative moral approach to judging situations and moral dilemmas.

## Tasks

- 1 In your own words, explain what moral decision-making is and summarise how moral decisions are made by identifying five different factors.
- 2 Explain the difference between absolute and relative morality. For each, give an example of a viewpoint that would be held (for example abortion is always wrong) and a religious group that would follow that stance.
- 3 Choose three different factors that help us to make moral decisions. For each, explain their importance and how they work.
- 4 Read and reproduce the quote below from William Penn. Is he an absolute or relative moralist? Explain how you can tell.

*'Right is right, even if everyone is against it, and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it.'*

William Penn, a seventeenth-century Quaker and founder of Pennsylvania, USA



## Crime

### What is crime?

Crime can be defined as any offence that is punishable by law. The government makes laws which govern our behaviour, the police force prevents and detects crime, and the principal job of the criminal justice system (including courts and judges) is to enforce these laws and punish crime. Throughout the course of history, what constitutes a crime, ideas about the causes of crime and how criminals should be punished have changed.

### Crime versus sin

Although there are many **sins** that can be punished by law, a great many sins are not considered crimes in modern society. For example, while it goes against the Ten Commandments to commit adultery (to have an affair) and to work on a Sunday, neither are crimes according to the law.

The consequences of committing a sin are critically different. For Christians, sinful behaviour can lead to personal suffering, offending God, excommunication (being cut off from the Church) or even exclusion from heaven.

Jews believe that, while to sin is part of human life, those who sin will suffer in this life in order to atone for their behaviour.

For Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists, sinful behaviour affects **karma**, leading to negative consequences either in this life or the next.

Through **Shari'ah law**, Muslims who openly go against accepted religious codes can receive specified punishments.

### Key Concept



**Sin** Deliberate immoral action, breaking a religious or moral law.

**Shari'ah law** Muslim law based upon the Qur'an.

### Examples of sins

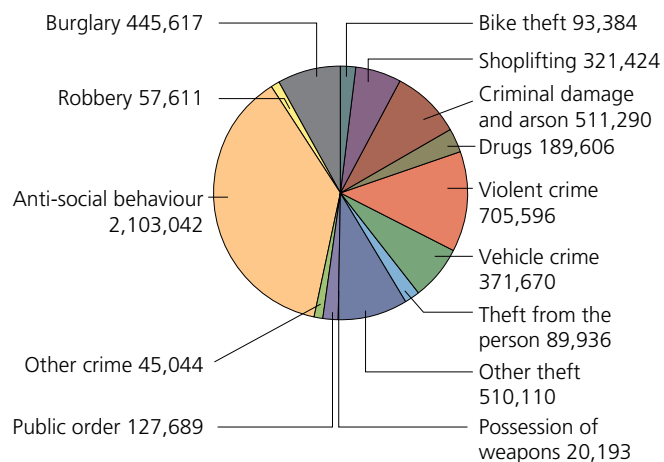
Most religions agree on the main sins of humanity. These are sometimes referred to as the Seven Deadly Sins, and are believed to be the source of all other vices:

- Pride
- Greed
- Lust
- Envy
- Gluttony
- Wrath
- Sloth

### Life in twenty-first-century Britain

Today in Britain, over 30,000 crimes are believed to be committed each day. These range from crimes against property and people to internet crime and fraud. Many of these crimes are not reported to the police, which means it is very difficult to know the true extent of criminal behaviour in Britain. Recent crime statistics show that people are at more risk of falling victim to cybercrime than ever before.

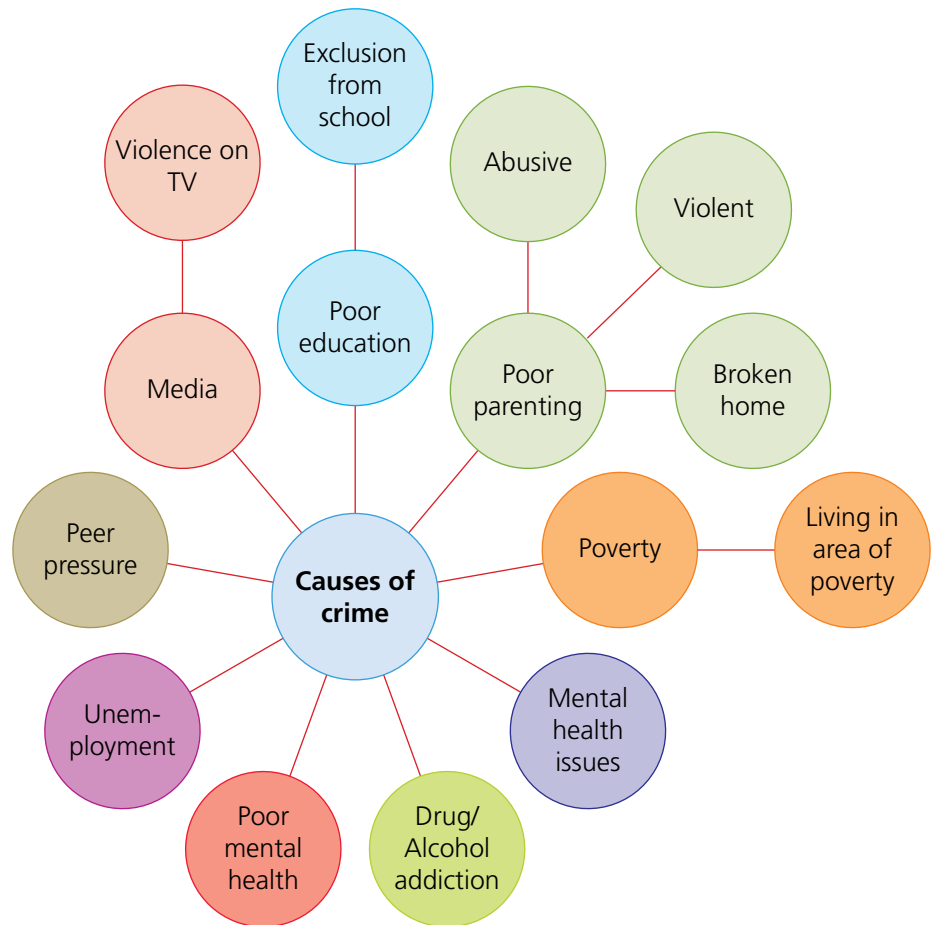
Despite the fact that statistically the most danger is posed by anti-social behaviour, society has become most concerned with extremism, terrorism and sexual offences.



Crime in the UK, May 2013–April 2014

## ► Causes of crime

The causes of crime are complex. Most people today accept that poverty, parental neglect, low self-esteem, and alcohol and drug abuse are all connected in explaining why people commit crimes. Some people are simply at greater risk of becoming offenders because of the circumstances into which they are born.



### Tasks

- 1 Define what 'crime' is.
- 2 Explain the difference between crime and sin. Give two examples for each.
- 3 Write a short paragraph to identify the main causes of crime. Give clear examples of three.



In society, it is important that people are brought up with a good understanding of the concepts of good and bad and the difference between the two. Members of any society have a duty to follow the laws of the country. When citizens choose not to be law-abiding, chaos ensues. Because of this, parents and schools have a moral responsibility to teach the difference between right and wrong so that young people will be respectful of others and, critically, not commit crime. All major religions agree on the importance of law in society and the role it plays in maintaining order and protecting citizens.

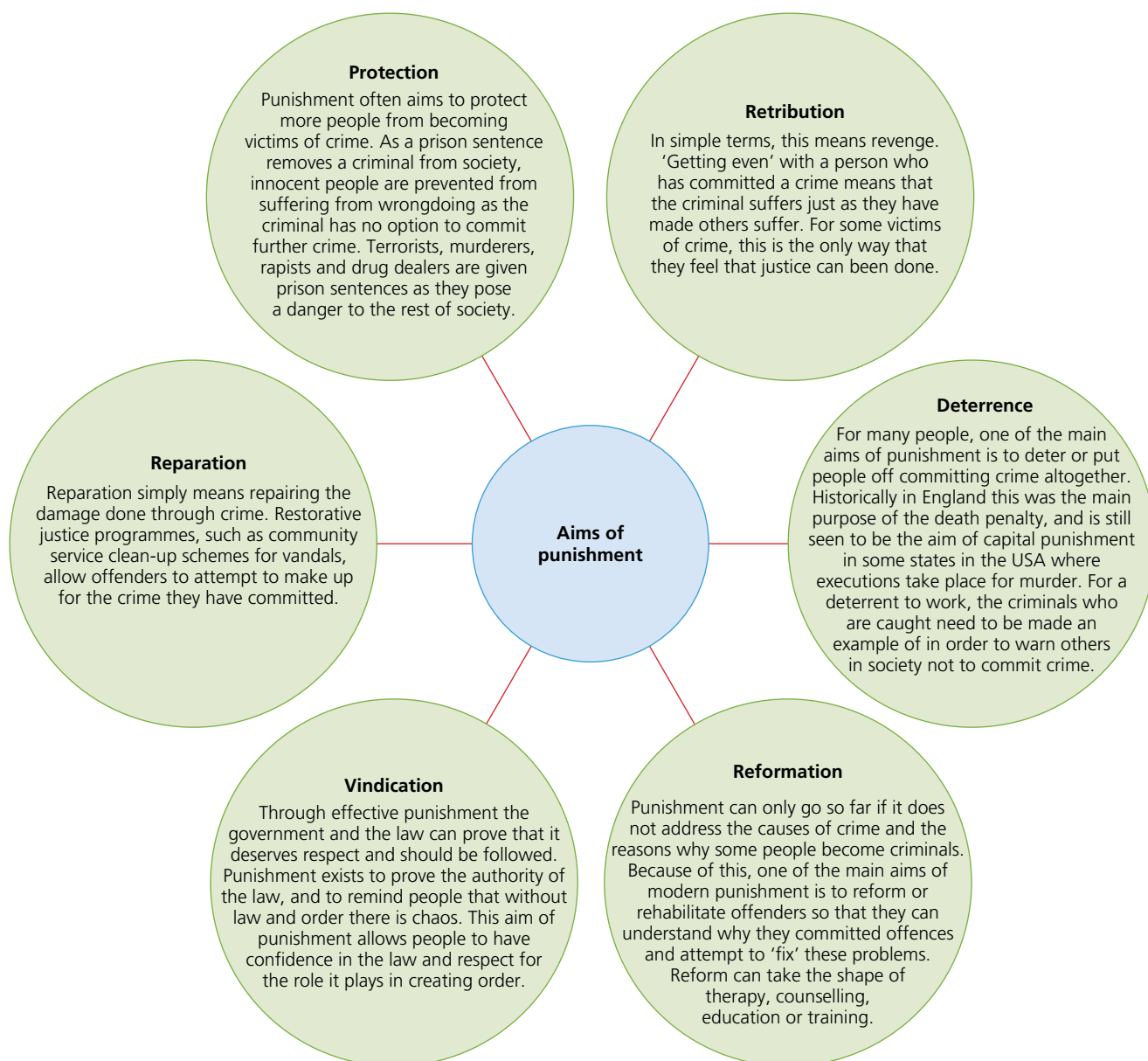
## ► Aims of punishment

### Key Concept



**Punishment** A penalty given to someone for a crime or wrong they have done.

When detected and prosecuted, criminal behaviour results in **punishment**. There are a number of different punishment options available to judges (such as community service, fines and prison terms). Often, a judge will consider several different purposes when sentencing a person for committing a crime.





**Utilitarianism** the belief that a good act is one that brings the greatest good for the greatest number. Also known as the principle of the greatest happiness.

## Punishment and utilitarianism

**Utilitarianism** and punishment are closely linked. The utilitarian theory of punishment is about punishing offenders to discourage, or 'deter', future wrongdoing. Laws and prison should be used to maximise the happiness of society. Because crime and punishment are inconsistent with happiness, they should be kept to a minimum. Small numbers of criminals suffer punishment in order to benefit the large numbers of people in society.

*'It is the greatest good to the greatest number which is the measure of right and wrong.'*

Jeremy Bentham

### Tasks

- 1 Draw a table like the one below. Copy the six aims of punishment from the diagram on page 89 into the first column. Explain what each aim means in the second column and then summarise each, in no more than four words, in the final column.

Purpose	Explanation	Summary (four words)
Retribution		Getting your own back

- 2 How are utilitarianism and punishment linked?

## Justice

### Key Concept



**Justice** Fairness; where everyone has equal provisions and opportunity.

### What is justice?

Strictly speaking, **justice** simply translates as fairness. When talking about crime and punishment, most people take justice to mean that a criminal is caught, fairly tried in court, and given a punishment which both fits the crime and allows the victim to overcome their resentment.

Both religions and governments focus upon maintaining justice as a key feature of a moral society.

### The relationship between justice and punishment

Many people would agree that justice cannot be achieved without some form of punishment. For justice to truly be achieved, however, the punishment must address the cause of the crime and reflect the severity of the crime. It would be totally inappropriate to give a murderer a community service order, but similarly it would be ineffective to give a drug addict a life sentence in a high-security prison.

*'It is better to risk saving a guilty person than to condemn an innocent one.'*

Voltaire

## Life in twenty-first-century Britain

*'Prisons are schools for crime.'*

The prison system in Britain is at breaking point. Numbers in prison have never been so high, and yet neither have rates of reoffending on release. Something, it seems, is not working properly. There are many benefits to prisons. They protect society from violent and dangerous criminals, and remove those who have done wrong from their families, friends and communities (retribution). Criminals are given the opportunity to reflect on their actions and potentially reform. Furthermore, prison can be seen as a deterrent.

On the other hand, many prisoners reoffend on release, with the rates higher for those who have received short

sentences of less than a year. Prison has a poor record for reducing reoffending – 46 per cent of adults are reconvicted within one year of release. For those serving sentences of less than 12 months this increases to 58 per cent. Over two-thirds (67 per cent) of under 18-year-olds are reconvicted within a year of release. There are several reasons for this. It can be incredibly difficult to get a job with a criminal record, which can add to the bitterness and resentment felt at having served a prison sentence. On top of this, prisons are often referred to as 'schools of crime' – and it is well known that many prisoners educate each other in criminal methods.

Stats from PrisonReformTrust.org. Bromley Briefings Summer 2014

### Tasks

- 1 What is 'justice'?
- 2 Explain why it is important to think about justice when punishing someone for a crime.
- 3 For the religions that you are studying, explain their attitude to punishment and justice. Make sure you outline both beliefs (teachings and ideas) and practice (actions or behaviour).
- 4 Look Voltaire's quote on page 90. What view on punishment do you think he holds?
- 5 Read the 'Life in twenty-first-century Britain' article about prisons. Copy and complete the table below, identifying the current benefits and problems with prisons.

Benefits	Problems

## ► Religious attitudes to punishment and justice

### Christian attitudes to punishment and justice

Christianity is a religion of forgiveness, and as such Christians do not support the idea of retribution as a purpose of punishment. Christians do, however, believe in justice, which means that forgiveness and punishment should go together. Christians should try to follow the example of Jesus who forgave those who betrayed him. Because of this, many support punishment practices which lead to forgiveness, for example **restorative justice** programmes in prisons.

Similarly, Jesus taught compassion and not revenge and because of this many Christians have been actively involved in prison reform to ensure that people are treated humanely in prison. They also believe that it is important to recognise and address the causes of criminal behaviour, such as poverty, unemployment and poor social conditions

as a means of restoring social justice and preventing crime. Most Christians also firmly believe that punishment should enable a person to reform – to change their ways on release from prison and add value to the community. Some Christians have become prison chaplains (see page 94) so that they can help prisoners to reform effectively.

*'But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream'.*

Amos 5:24

**Restorative justice** a system of justice that enables criminals to make amends for their behaviour by meeting with their victim and apologising.

## Islamic attitudes to punishment and justice



Although forgiveness is very important in Islam, so is the need to protect society (called the ummah) and keep law and order. Punishment is therefore seen as central to justice and essential in keeping people from straying from what is good and just. 'Shari'ah' translates as 'straight path' and Shari'ah law outlines both the rules to live by and the punishments if these laws are broken.

Many Shari'ah law punishments are designed to deter as well as protect society from further wrongdoing, for example: cutting off a hand for theft, or a receiving a

beating in full view of the local community. For Muslims, punishment has nothing to do with removing sin as only God can forgive – it is a way of keeping law and order. Muslims do hope, however, that offenders will repent, reform and seek forgiveness both from God and their victims.

*'Indeed, God orders justice and good conduct and giving [help] to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded.'*

Qur'an 16:90

## Jewish attitudes to punishment and justice



Within Judaism, there is a firm principle that people have been given free will and must therefore take responsibility for their actions. Jews believe that punishment should deter, protect society, provide retribution and promote justice. Just as God created a just world, Jews believe that they must practise justice themselves. Judges must be appointed to rule over the actions of others. They should be fair and incorruptible. The Torah also contains many laws giving instructions on how crime should be punished. There are many different

views on the issue of punishment within Judaism. Members of the Reform Jewish community are often active in protesting for the fair treatment of prisoners while in jail. Like Muslims and Christians, Jews are taught that they should be forgiving; however, within Judaism, only the victim is able to forgive as no one can be forgiven on behalf of others. Offenders should repent and ask God's forgiveness by avoiding repeat offending, giving money to charity and fasting – especially on the Day of Atonement.

## ► How are criminals treated in modern prisons?

### Life in twenty-first-century Britain

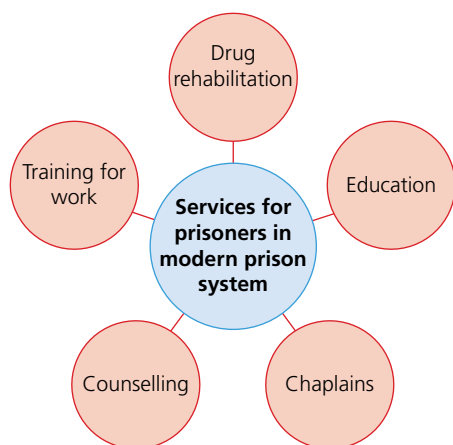
*'Prisoners riot over poor treatment and overcrowding.'*

Since prisons were first built there has been concern about how the prisoners within them are treated. There are many different opinions about what prison should achieve, and because of this there are a great many opinions about the kind of treatment prisoners should receive. Some feel that prison should be a place of isolation and punishment, and that prisoners should have few if any privileges, such as access to television or computers. Many others, however, see prisons as a place

of rehabilitation and reform. Because of this they believe that the treatment that prisoners receive should enable them to address the root cause of their criminality and equip them for life as a responsible citizen.

The treatment of prisoners is a carefully monitored thing. Prisoners are entitled to humane treatment which shows respect for their human rights. No matter what the arguments about prison regimes, the fact remains that many prisoners continue to complain about overcrowding, poor treatment and a lack of access to important services. Many argue that the impact of poor prison conditions can be seen in rising rates of assault, self-harm and suicide among inmates.





**Reformer** someone who lobbies or pressurises for change.

**Quaker** (also known as the Society of Friends) a Christian denomination whose central belief is that every human being contains a reflection of the image of God.

## Prison reformers

Britain has a proud history of prison **reformers**, many of whom were inspired by their religious beliefs to lobby for change.

John Howard was a committed Calvinist (Protestant Christian) and inspected prisons in the late eighteenth century. He found them to be diseased, dirty and corrupt, and gave evidence to Parliament with recommendations that conditions and practices be improved. He called for basic but essential provisions such as clean running water, separate cells for men and women, access to doctors, and greater numbers of prison officers to support and ensure the safety of inmates. This was at a time when the majority of prisons were privately run for profit.

Elizabeth Fry was a nineteenth-century **Quaker** prison reformer, who dedicated her life to improving the state of British prisons after visiting Newgate Prison in London in 1813. She was a passionate advocate of education in prisons and looked towards reforming prisoners as opposed to simply isolating them from society. She is most famous for teaching female prisoners to read and write and holding Bible readings for inmates.

By the 1870s ideas both about prison and prisons themselves had changed dramatically. Purpose-built institutions (like Pentonville Prison in London) were to be found across the country, and a lively debate about how to treat prisoners once in jail had been born. Finally, real thought was being given to how we should approach the reform of individuals once in prison.



Elizabeth Fry, a prison reformer chosen to feature on the £5 note

## Life in twenty-first-century Britain

The prison population of England and Wales is 85,641, compared to 44,246 in 1993. Reoffending rates are high. According to the National Audit Office, reoffending costs us the equivalent of staging another Olympic Games every year. In light of these figures, many again are calling for a reform of prisons and prison regimes.

According to Government statistics, only 53 per cent of the prison population have any qualifications, compared to 85 per cent of the working-age population. The key focus of current discussions about prison reform are therefore focussed on education. The Government recently announced plans to overhaul the prison system in Britain, calling for prisoners to be viewed and treated as 'potential assets, not liabilities'.

## Tasks

- 1 In your own words, explain what the term 'reformer' means.
- 2 What was wrong with the early prisons in Britain?
- 3 In a mind map, identify the four main suggestions that John Howard made to improve prisons in the eighteenth century. For each suggest how it would improve prisons.
- 4 Explain the current concerns with prisons in twenty-first-century Britain. Extend your answer by mentioning what the government is hoping to improve.

## ► Care for prisoners – chaplains

### What is a chaplain?

For many of us, our only experience of chaplains is through movies or television. Here they are often portrayed as people on the side-lines, without a uniform or an easily defined role, who give out quick slices of advice. Traditionally, a chaplain is a minister, such as a priest, pastor, rabbi, imam or community member of a religious tradition. They are attached to non-religious institutions such as hospitals, prisons, schools or universities. Their job is to provide 'pastoral' care for patients, pupils, or in this case, prisoners.

### What is their role?

Prison chaplains have a demanding and essential job, providing counselling to inmates, supporting them through their rehabilitation and seeing to their spiritual (and often religious) needs. Prisoners have to deal with a complex mixture of emotions and needs during their sentence, and they often need someone who is not a prison officer or warden to offer support. Fear, loneliness, guilt, concerns about family or children on the outside – all of these become the concern of the prison chaplain. In addition to this, chaplains often help prisoners re-enter the community, working with **parole officers** and other volunteers. Families of inmates also have access to prison chaplains. Family members can be the victims of the inmates' crimes and require the care of the chaplain just as much as the inmate.

**Parole officer** a person who supports a prisoner on their release from prison and their return to the community.



Prison chaplains help prisoners deal with both their emotional and practical needs

Chaplains do not have to be religious, and it is documented that 32 per cent of the prison population have no religious faith. Since 2011 the British Humanist Society has been running a project with Humanist Pastoral Support Volunteers at Winchester Prison. This includes meeting inmates with 'nil' religion on admission, holding discussion groups and providing counselling, such as bereavement support, for inmates. This is especially important as often prisoners are unable to attend funerals of loved ones or benefit from the type of community support offered to those who have suffered the loss of family or friends.

*'You are there primarily for the inmates. Most offenders are also victims. That doesn't mean that we feel sorry for them; but we do offer them enough compassion.'*

Kate Johnson, Quaker and prison chaplain

## Tasks

- 1 What is a prison chaplain and what is their role?
- 2 Explain by offering two specific examples why you think chaplains are important in prisons. Tip: Use excerpts from the quotes of chaplains as evidence or to support your explanations.

## Why do people become chaplains?

*'As a Quaker I believe that there is something of God in everyone – no matter how they have behaved or what crimes they have committed. I feel it is my duty to advocate for them.'*

*Through my work as chaplain I am following Jesus' commands – I am showing compassion, love and kindness.*

*There are so many problems in prison that cannot be solved by therapy, doctors or rehab. These problems are outside of religion – they are matters of the spirit.*

*People are more than the worst thing they have ever done in their lives.*  
Helen Prejean

Helen Prejean is a Roman Catholic Nun, and leading advocate for the abolition of the death penalty. She began her prison ministry in 1981, when she began writing to a death row inmate.

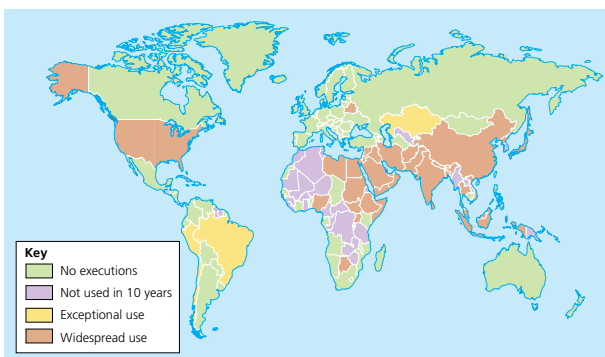
*'Prison chaplains are non-judgemental. We are not there to judge their actions. Loss of freedom is the punishment for the crime and this becomes particularly apparent when they are unable to attend events, whether joyous or sad. That's when reality hits home and makes them aware of the consequences of their actions. We are there to empathise and give them hope for the future.'*

Michael Binstock: Director of Jewish Prison Chaplaincy

## ► The death penalty

The death penalty has been a feature of punishment practices for thousands of years. It has been used by societies across the world to deter crime and to punish the very worst criminal behaviours. Also referred to as capital punishment or execution, the death penalty is still legal in over 80 different countries (although 50 of these countries have not used execution as a punishment in the last ten years). The majority of the countries that retain the death penalty are African or Asian-Pacific nations like China, Afghanistan and Iran. The greatest exception to this is the United States of America. Of the 50 states in America, 31 allow execution in both law and practice for the crimes of murder and treason. Death row, the name given to the area where death penalty convicts reside in prison, has now become a popular feature of film, TV programmes and documentaries.

Methods of execution have changed over the past century as governments look for cheaper but more **humane** ways to end the life of convicts. In America, executions can take the form of lethal injection, electric chair, gas chamber, firing squad or hanging (although in practice lethal injection is most widely used). Other less humane methods still in use include decapitation (North Korea and Saudi Arabia), shooting under anaesthetic (Taiwan) and stoning (Sudan).



Worldwide use of the death penalty

**Humane** showing kindness and compassion.



## Tasks

- 1 Copy and complete the table below. Add five statements that agree with the death penalty and five that disagree.

Agree with the use of the death penalty	Disagree with the use of the death penalty

- 2 Write down what you believe the death penalty is designed to achieve?

## Life in twenty-first-century Britain

The UK parliament abolished the death penalty in 1969. Although public opinion has at times been in favour of reinstating execution for the worst criminals, all attempts to bring it back have failed. Some of the last people to be executed, including Derek Bentley, who was convicted of being involved in the killing of a policeman, have since received pardons after their death. Essentially this means that they should not have been convicted in the first place.

Last discussed in parliament in 1998 during the passage of the Human Rights Act, the death penalty has always been hotly debated. The British Social Attitudes survey has recorded popular attitudes to the death penalty since 1983. Since then, the number of those in favour of execution has fallen from 75 per cent to 48 per cent in 2015. The UK is now among the 82 per cent of global nations that do not use the death penalty.

There are a number of key arguments and beliefs linked with the death penalty.

- The death penalty is just state-sanctioned murder.
- There is evidence that innocent people have been executed.
- The death penalty does not deter murderers.
- Only God has the right to end a life.
- Two wrongs do not make a right.
- The state should be a moral force for good.
- Forgiveness is important.
- The death penalty disproportionately affects members of racial, ethnic and religious minorities, as well as those living in poverty.
- Life terms in prison are very expensive – £40,000 per year.
- Some people – such as the criminally insane – cannot be reformed.
- It is the only way that victims can experience closure.
- There has to be an ultimate punishment for the very worst crimes.
- In Britain, life sentences amount to 15 years.
- Execution is the only way to truly protect society from very dangerous murderers and terrorists.

## ► Religious teachings – the death penalty



### Christian attitudes to the death penalty

Christian attitudes to the death penalty vary. This is due to different interpretations of the Bible (specifically the Old Testament) and the extent to which teachings about the sanctity of life and Jesus' examples of compassion and forgiveness over-rule early biblical teachings about justice.

#### Liberal Christians

Most Christians believe that only God has the right to take a life. Execution goes against the sanctity of life, as all life is precious and only God should end it. Christians believe that God commanded 'Thou shalt not kill' (Exodus 20:13), and that this is a clear instruction. Christians should also follow the teachings of Jesus to be compassionate and forgiving. Jesus was openly forgiving to the adulterous woman (John 8) and also pleaded with God for his executioners to be forgiven when he was on the cross:

*'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do'.*

Luke 23:33–34

Many Christians favour reform over execution, and because of this many have been involved in prison reform and continue to work in prisons as chaplains. Jesus also taught us to 'turn the other cheek' (Matthew 5:38–39), to love our enemies and to forgive (Matthew 5:43–47). Execution makes all of these impossible. The Golden rule of 'do to others what you want them to do to you' also compels us to treat others as we would wish to be treated.

#### Quakers

Quakers have campaigned against the death penalty since 1818. All human life should be respected as every person is a reflection of God/contains a little of God. Quakers firmly believe that punishments should be used to reform. Some of the first prison reformers were Quakers who worked to maintain the dignity and humanity of prisoners.

*'Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.'*

Romans 12:17–18

#### Conservative Christians

Some Christians advocate the death penalty, seeing it as following the Old Testament law of 'an eye for an eye'. In the Old Testament it states:

*'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed'*

Genesis 9:6

In total, the Old Testament specifies 36 capital offences including crimes such as idolatry, magic and blasphemy, as well as murder. Some Christians would therefore argue that the death penalty was not only approved, but created by God. Some Christians also argue that capital punishment upholds the commandment 'thou shalt not kill' by showing the seriousness of the crime of murder.

#### Catholics

Catholic Christians are also divided. Traditionally the Catholic Church has allowed (but not encouraged) capital punishment. In 1997, the Vatican issued a statement saying that execution was acceptable where the identity of the criminal was absolutely confirmed and where execution was the only means to protect society from the aggressor. It did, however, state that non-lethal means of punishment were:

*'more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and . . . the dignity of the human person'.*

Pope John Paul II – The Gospel of Life



### Muslim attitudes to the death penalty

Islam as a whole accepts capital punishment. Muslims believe that capital punishment is a severe sentence but one that can be issued for the most severe crimes. While criminals will be punished by God on the Day of Judgement, Muslims also believe that they should be punished on earth.

Forgiveness is important (and is preferred if possible) but so is the need to protect the ummah (Muslim community). Islam sees punishment as being central to justice. This means that all punishment is part of justice and stops people from straying down the wrong path.



The Qur'an 17:33 forbids the taking of life:

*'Nor take life – which God has made sacred, except for just cause'.*

Most Muslims agree that this 'just cause', for which the death penalty is permitted, is the crimes of murder and openly attacking Islam.

Most Muslim countries (for example, Saudi Arabia and Iran) retain the death penalty. Methods of execution in Islamic countries vary and can include beheading, firing squad, hanging and stoning. In some countries public executions are carried out to provide a deterrent.

Islamic countries that practise very strict Shari'ah law are associated with the use of capital punishment as punishment for the largest variety of crimes; for example for adultery, homosexuality, terrorism and treason.

There is a small but growing number of Muslims who disagree with the death penalty and call for it to be abolished. They argue that Shari'ah law is often used by repressive governments that attack women and the poor. In addition, there are examples of these countries executing the accused while denying them access to a lawyer or a proper trial. These acts are totally against the concept of Islamic justice.

## Jewish attitudes to the death penalty

There are many different Jewish views on the death penalty.

The Torah stipulates several offences for which capital punishment could be used, and is clear in its guidance concerning the justice of using the death penalty:

*'One who takes a human life must be put to death. If one kills an animal, he must pay for it, [the value of] a life for a life. If one maims his neighbour, he must be penalised accordingly. Thus, full compensation must be paid for a fracture or the loss of an eye or a tooth. If one inflicts injury on another person, he must [pay as if the same injury were] inflicted on him.'*

Leviticus 24:17–20

According to the **Mishnah** the death penalty could only be inflicted, after trial, by a **Sanhedrin** composed of 23 judges and there were four types of death penalty: stoning, burning, slaying (by the sword) and strangling. Heavy restrictions and conditions are placed on the use of execution, for example the requirement for two witnesses to the crime itself and for both of those witnesses to have issued warning prior to the crime being committed.

**Mishnah** the Oral Torah.

**Sanhedrin** a council or assembly of men appointed in every city in the Land of Israel.

## Orthodox Judaism

As the death penalty is allowed in the Torah, some Orthodox Jews believe that it should be allowed for certain crimes. However, many rabbis and Jewish academics view this guidance with suspicion, as it means that in practice it is virtually impossible to issue a death sentence. What it shows is that the death penalty is permitted, but should only be used with the greatest of caution.

Israel allows the death penalty for acts of genocide, treason and murder – although in practice it is rarely used. In fact, when Israel was made a Jewish state there was wide debate about whether or not to abolish the death penalty entirely. The last person to be executed in Israel was Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in 1962. Now the death penalty exists purely as a deterrent and not as retribution.

## Reform Judaism

Since 1959, the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) has formally opposed the death penalty. They said that 'both in concept and in practice, Jewish tradition found capital punishment repugnant' and there is no persuasive evidence 'that capital punishment serves as a deterrent to crime'. The death penalty also goes against the commandment not to kill (Exodus 20:13).

## Humanist attitudes to the death penalty

Capital punishment is generally opposed by humanists because they think premeditated killing is wrong, even when carried out by the state. The death penalty raises the possibility of error and an irreversible failure of justice by

issuing a sentence that cannot be reversed. Humanists believe treating criminals fairly also helps to ensure that innocent suspects are treated fairly.



## ▶ Arguing for the death penalty

For those arguing from outside a strict religious belief, views about the death penalty are affected by a number of factors. Some people argue that there needs to be an ultimate punishment to act as a deterrent, and feel that for the greater good of society the death penalty is necessary. Some religious believers agree with these arguments and believe that religious teachings on justice allow for the use of the death penalty.



*'While the evidence tells me that the death penalty does little to deter crime, I believe there are some crimes – mass murder, the rape and murder of a child – so heinous, so beyond the pale, that the community is justified in expressing the full measure of its outrage by meting out the ultimate punishment.'*

Barack Obama, President of the USA, 2006

*'I believe that people who go out prepared to take the lives of other people forfeit their own right to live. I believe that that death penalty should be used only very rarely, but I believe that no-one should go out certain that no matter how cruel, how vicious, how hideous their murder, they themselves will not suffer the death penalty.'*

Margaret Thatcher, Former British Prime Minister, 1984

## Arguments for Britain using the death penalty

In the last ten years, there have been plenty of examples of the system of justice and punishment in the UK failing to work, and many more examples of dangerous criminals who need to be permanently removed from society. Here are some examples of those cases, and sadly of the victims who paid the price:

- In July 2010 Jonathan Vass, 30, murdered his ex-girlfriend Jane Clough, 26, after he had been released on bail for raping her. He was jailed for 30 years.
- Myles Williams, 19, from East London, was convicted for the murder of his girlfriend Kirsty Treloar who was 20. He had previously been arrested for violently dragging her along the street, but was released on bail (on the condition that he did not contact her).
- Nathan McLeod, 16, murdered Temidayo Ogunneye, 15, for a mobile phone in May 2011. Earlier that day he had been granted bail at Camberwell Youth Court in London after being accused of attacking a gas man with a bread knife.



Average cost of keeping a person in jail for a year: \$58,351



Average cost of a lethal injection: \$1,300



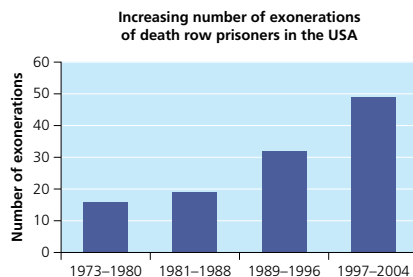
*'You have to kill me. I am evil. If you don't I'll just kill again.'* Aileen Wuornos, convicted serial killer, Florida. Executed 2002

## Arguing against the death penalty



'You can't have a penalty that isn't reversible – that you can't take back later and say "I'm sorry, we got it wrong" ... It is given out by human beings, and human beings make mistakes'. Ray Krone, former death row inmate

**Exoneration** means that a conviction for a crime is reversed, either because the prisoner is innocent or there was an error with the trial that led to conviction.



'My objection to the death penalty is based on the idea that this is a democracy, and in a democracy the government is me, and if the government kills somebody then I'm killing somebody.'

Steve Earle, musician

### Amnesty International

Amnesty opposes the death penalty absolutely – for all crimes without exception. They believe that:

- The death penalty violates basic human rights in every case.
- Evidence shows that it doesn't deter crime. It is often used within skewed or unfair and corrupt justice systems.
- It discriminates. Statistics show that the death penalty is used disproportionately against the poor, minorities and members of racial, ethnic and religious communities. It also discriminates based on the race of the victim – in the USA you are several times more likely to receive the death penalty if the victim was white than if the victim was African-American.
- It can be used as a political tool. In the USA, many state governors have fast-tracked the executions of inmates during re-election time to prove that they are 'tough on crime'. Similarly, many politicians use the issue of the death penalty to prove that they prioritise protection and justice.

### OKLAHOMA INMATE TAKES 43 MINUTES TO DIE AFTER BOTCHED LETHAL INJECTION

BBC News April 2014



Average cost of a prisoner being sentenced to the death penalty: \$3 million



Average cost of a prisoner being sentenced to life imprisonment: \$1.1 million

'I do not think that God approves the death penalty for any crime, rape and murder included. Capital punishment is against the better judgment of modern criminology, and, above all, against the highest expression of love in the nature of God.'

Martin Luther King Jr

### Task

'All murderers should be executed.'

#### Your task

Look at the previous three pages and respond to the statement above, referring to both sides of the argument.

Aim for at least one paragraph for each side of the debate and give a reasoned judgement on the validity and strength of that argument. Conclude your answer with a justification of your own viewpoint.

## End of section review

### Stickability

Key concepts:

- Justice
- Morality
- Punishment
- Sin

Key teachings about:

- crime and punishment
- the death penalty

### Knowledge check

- 1 Explain what the term 'capital punishment' means.
- 2 Create a mind map of the different methods of execution used in the twenty-first century.
- 3 Draw a table with two columns. Add five reasons for agreeing and five reasons for disagreeing with the death penalty.

Agree	Disagree

- 4 Create a Venn diagram to summarise the main beliefs about punishment of your two chosen religions or religious traditions. Ensure that where they overlap, you identify similarities.
- 5 Explain three different Christian viewpoints on the death penalty. For each, you must name the denomination and extend your explanations by highlighting why they differ.

### Skills Link

- 1 Giving one example, state what is meant by 'sin'.
- 2 With reference to one religion you have studied, explain views about the use of the death penalty.

### The Big Question

*'The aim of punishment should be to reform.'*

#### Your task

Respond to the statement above, showing that you have considered more than one point of view. Give reasoned judgements on the validity and strength of these views.

### Task

For both of the religions (or denominations) you are studying, explain in detail religious teachings about the **death penalty**. Use the guidance below to help you to write a **developed explanation** for Christianity and a second one for your other chosen religion or denomination. Ensure that you use key terms fluently and frequently.

All/many/most Christians believe that ..... This comes from the teaching/Bible quote .....

This means that/Because of this they .....

Some/other Christians such as ..... believe that ..... This comes from the teaching/Bible quote .....

This means that/Because of this they .....

Finally, Christians such as ..... believe that ..... This means that/Because of this they .....

Their beliefs do/do not differ because .....

## ■ Forgiveness

### Key Concept



**Forgiveness** To grant pardon for a wrongdoing; to give up resentment and the desire seek revenge against a wrongdoer.

When working for peace and harmony, when trying to rebuild relationships after a wrongdoing, or when differences of opinion and hostility arise, **forgiveness** is essential. Forgiveness enables wrongs to be acknowledged and relationships to be rebuilt.

### ► Does true forgiveness exist?

True forgiveness is not about forgetting about wrongs done to us – in fact, it often involves exactly the opposite. To forgive properly we have to remember the wrongs done, analyse them, understand them, accept them and then continue to live our lives.

**Reconciliation** accepting an apology, forgiving and moving forward together in harmony.

#### Reverend Julie Nicholson

*‘That wound in me is having to heal’*

Forgiveness is not an action, but a process. For many, it is a life-changing process. After the 7/7 suicide bombings in London in 2005, the Reverend Julie Nicholson, whose daughter was one of the 56 who died, resigned from her job as an inner city vicar.

*‘It’s very difficult for me to stand behind an altar ... and lead people in words of peace and **reconciliation** and forgiveness when I feel very far from that myself.’*

Mrs Nicholson has said that she cannot forgive her daughter’s killers and that she does not want to. She now believes that there are some things that the human spirit simply cannot forgive. The murder of her daughter is one of these things.

### ► Can we learn to forgive?

All religions have clear teachings about the importance of forgiveness. They do not suggest that forgiving is easy or that it comes without further conflict, but they are clear that forgiving enables believers to reach a deeper spiritual understanding about themselves.

Forgiving cannot be taught. We learn to forgive through our own human experience; through reading religious teachings, through being forgiven by others, and through learning of others who have forgiven in spite of the great wrongs done to them.

Following the destruction of Coventry cathedral during German bombing in 1940, a commitment was made not to seek revenge, but to work for forgiveness and reconciliation with those responsible. The altar, which stands in the remains of the destroyed cathedral, features a cross made out of charred wood from the ruins and has the words ‘father forgive’ inscribed on the wall behind it. The cathedral now houses the Centre for Reconciliation which has provided support to thousands of Christians addressing issues of conflict and forgiveness.





## ► Religious teachings about forgiveness

### Christian attitudes to forgiveness



**Beatitudes** the blessings listed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

Forgiveness is a prominent theme within Christianity and within the Bible as a whole. Christianity is known as a religion of forgiveness, love and compassion, and these themes are evident in religious teachings and the example of Jesus and other leaders within the faith such as Martin Luther King.

#### Jesus' teachings

The Bible clearly instructs Christians to forgive:

*'Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.'*

Luke 6:37

The importance of forgiveness is emphasised in the Lord's Prayer. Christians ask God to 'forgive their sins, as they forgive those who have sinned against them'. This means that Christians can only expect to receive forgiveness from God if they are forgiving towards others.

Jesus taught the importance of forgiveness, which is seen in his teaching in the **Beatitudes**:

*'Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.'*

Matthew 5:7

His words from the cross demonstrate how central forgiveness is to the Christian tradition:

*'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'*

Luke 23:35

#### Jesus' actions

The actions of Jesus offer a further example for Christians to follow, and they are expected to do so. He visited the tax collector Zacchaeus despite his cheating and selfishness and, in doing so, enabled Zacchaeus to make

amends and reform (Luke 19:2–10). He similarly forgave the adulterous woman (John 8:1–11) imploring her to 'go and sin no more'.

#### Bible stories

Bible stories clearly demonstrate the importance of forgiveness. The story in the Bible of the prodigal son teaches explicitly about forgiveness and repentance. Sometimes known as the Parable of the Forgiving Father, it tells the tale of a son who demands his inheritance from his father, abandons the family home to seek his fortune elsewhere, and returns years later, poor and hungry. The father forgives his son and welcomes him back, despite his wrongdoing (Luke 15:11–24).

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21–22) reinforces the teaching that we must forgive others in order to be forgiven ourselves and that forgiveness is something which should have no limits. In this parable, the servant refuses to forgive a friend for borrowing a small sum of money when he had received a very large sum of money from his master. This teaches Christians to forgive a limitless number of times because they will be forgiven by God for all of their many sins.

*'For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.'*

Matthew 6:14–15

#### How to get forgiveness

For Catholics, forgiveness is supported through confession and religious acts of atonement, for example saying specific prayers. The Catholic Church teaches that Christ instituted the sacrament of penance, and they believe that God's forgiveness is granted through the priest's pardon after confession. Evangelical Christians, however, believe that forgiveness of sins is granted by God and reliant upon faith. Here, confession is not accepted as a route to forgiveness.

## Muslim attitudes to forgiveness



The Qur'an states that those who forgive others will be rewarded by God and that forgiveness is the path to peace. Islam accepts that human beings are not perfect and that everybody makes mistakes in life and unknowingly sins.

Within Islam there are two kinds of forgiveness: God's forgiveness and human forgiveness. Human beings are in need of both as they make mistakes in their actions towards each other and their actions towards God. According to the Qur'an, there is no limit to God's forgiveness.

The words 'God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful' are repeated many times throughout the Qur'an. In Islam, individuals who commit a sin ask for forgiveness directly from God; there is no intermediary. They believe that God will forgive all those who are truly repentant. In the Qur'an it says:

*'God loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and He loves those who keep themselves pure'*

Muslims are to follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad, who helped the old woman who became sick even though she had regularly brushed dirt in his direction. Even in punishment, forgiveness is important and valuable.

*'(O you who have believed, indeed, among your spouses and your children are enemies to you, so beware of them. But ...) if you pardon and overlook and forgive – then indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful.'*

Qur'an 64:14

## Jewish attitudes to forgiveness



Jews believe that it is a mitzvah, a divine command or duty, to forgive. The Torah explicitly forbids Jews from taking revenge or bearing grudges. It also commands:

*'Do not hate your brother in your heart.'*

Leviticus 19:17

Within Judaism it is firmly believed that humans are responsible for their actions. If someone does wrong, they have the responsibility to recognise it, regret it, decide never to do it again, admit it to the one who was mistreated, and ask for forgiveness. Once the person who has caused harm has sincerely apologised, then the wronged person is religiously bound to forgive. Only the victim, however, can forgive. Even without an apology, forgiveness is considered a worthy and virtuous act (Deuteronomy 6:9).

Repentance is important. Teshuva (literally 'returning') is a way of atoning. This requires cessation of the harmful act, regret over the action, confession and then repentance.

Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement when Jews particularly strive to perform teshuva. It is the one day set aside to atone for the sins of the previous year. Jews fast; attend synagogue; and abstain from work, sex, bathing and the wearing of cosmetics for 25 hours. Much of this time will be spent in prayer and reflection in order to seek forgiveness for sin.

*'Who takes vengeance or bears a grudge acts like one who, having cut one hand while handling a knife, avenges himself by stabbing the other hand.'*

Jerusalem Talmud, Nedarim 9:4

*'Who is a God like You, Who forgives iniquity and passes over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not maintain His anger forever, for He desires loving-kindness'*

Micah 7:18

## Humanist attitudes to forgiveness



Humanists believe that forgiveness is crucial for human relationships. We all make mistakes and are all capable of selfish behaviour, but we are also capable of understanding and forgiveness. The Golden Rule to treat others as we would hope to be treated ourselves requires us to forgive mistakes and selfish behaviour and to accept different views.

Humanists also believe that the existence of human compassion and common sense compels us to forgive.

They recognise that it is not easy to forgive, and sometimes behaviour is so inhuman that forgiveness seems impossible, so the best we can do is work to make sure that whatever needs forgiving does not happen again.

*'Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive.'*

C.S. Lewis

## ▶ Examples of forgiveness



■ Mahatma Gandhi – Hindu leader of the Independence Movement in British-run India, 1869–1948

*'The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.'*



■ Gee Walker – practising Christian and mother of Anthony Walker, who was murdered during a racially motivated attack in Liverpool in 2005

*'Unforgiveness makes you a victim and why should I be a victim? Anthony spent his life forgiving. His life stood for peace, love and forgiveness and I brought them all up that way.'*  
*'I have to forgive them. I cannot hate. Hate is what killed Anthony.'*

Victims' relatives and members of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, speaking after the South Carolina Church shooting, where nine people were killed in a racially motivated shooting by Dylann Roof

*'I thank you on the behalf of my family for not allowing hate to win. For me, I'm a work*

*in progress and I acknowledge that I'm very angry. But ... DePayne always taught me we are the family that love built.'*

*'We have no room for hate. We have to forgive. I pray God on his soul. And I also thank God I won't be around when his judgment day comes.'*



■ Martin Luther King, Baptist Minister and American civil rights protestor, 1929–68

*'Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a constant attitude.'*



■ Nelson Mandela, South African anti-apartheid protestor and the first black President of South Africa, 1918–2013

*'Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.'*

*As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison.'*



■ Khaled Hosseini, Afghan-born American author of *The Kite Runner*

'I wondered if that was how forgiveness budded; not with the fanfare of epiphany, but with pain gathering its things, packing up, and slipping away unannounced in the middle of the night.'



■ Confucius, Ancient Chinese philosopher, 551–479 BCE

'To be wronged is nothing, unless you continue to remember it.'



■ Eva Kor, Jewish Holocaust survivor who, with her twin sister Miriam, was subjected to human experimentation under Josef Mengele at Auschwitz. Both of her parents and two older sisters were killed at the camp; only she and Miriam survived

'My forgiveness... has nothing to do with the perpetrator, has nothing to do with any religion, it is my act of self-healing, self-liberation and self-empowerment. I had no power over my life up to the time that I discovered that I could forgive, and I still do not understand why people think it's wrong. I forgave the Nazis not because they deserve it but because I deserve it.'



■ Desmond Tutu – South African civil rights activist during apartheid and Anglican Bishop

'Holding onto your resentment means you are locked into your victimhood – and you allow the perpetrator to have

a hold over your life. When you forgive, you let go, it sets you free, and it will probably set free the perpetrator. There is much to be won from making yourself a little vulnerable.'

'Forgiving is not forgetting; it's actually remembering – remembering and not using your right to hit back. It's a second chance for a new beginning. And the remembering part is particularly important. Especially if you don't want to repeat what happened.'

### Task

Select five of the forgiveness case studies. For each individual you choose, provide an excerpt or quote on forgiveness and explain what it means.

Person / Individual	Excerpt on forgiveness	Meaning



## End of section review

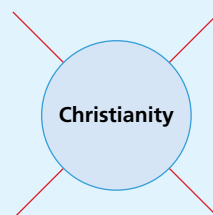
### Stickability

Key concept:

- Forgiveness

### Knowledge check

- 1 In your own words, explain what forgiveness is and why it can be difficult to achieve.
- 2 What is important about the altar at Coventry Cathedral? What does it symbolise?
- 3 For each of the religions or religious traditions you are studying, create a detailed mind map describing the teachings about forgiveness. Ensure that you refer to the example of religious leaders, stories from sacred texts, and at least one quote for each religion. Your mind maps should have at least four arms each.



- 4 Explain three different reasons why forgiveness is necessary and important. In your answer refer to at least three different case studies from the previous two pages – for example, Desmond Tutu.

### The Big Question

*'True forgiveness is impossible.'*

#### Your task

Respond to the statement above, showing that you have considered more than one point of view. Give reasoned judgements on the validity and strength of these views.

### Task

For both of the religions (or denominations) that you are studying, you need to explain in detail religious teachings about **forgiveness**. Use the guidance below to help you to write **a developed explanation** for Christianity and a second one for your other chosen religion or denomination. Ensure that you use key terms fluently and frequently.

All/many/most Christians believe that ..... This comes from the teaching/Bible quote .....  
This means that/Because of this they .....

Some/other Christians such as ..... believe that ..... This comes from the teaching/Bible quote .....  
This means that/Because of this they .....

Finally, Christians such as ..... believe that ..... This means that/Because of this they .....  
Their beliefs do/do not differ because .....

## ■ Good, evil and suffering

### Key Concepts



**Good** That which is considered morally right, beneficial and to our advantage.



**Free will** The ability to make choices voluntarily and independently. The belief that nothing is pre-determined.

### ► What is 'good'?

'**Good**' means different things to different people. Do your ideas about good depend upon the life that you have lived, the experiences you have had, and the things that you have seen?

'Good' is a relative term – which means that it really is different things to different people. One person's good could quite easily be another person's evil. Similarly, it is a flexible concept – we can have some elements of good and some of evil, and can even work to develop the good within ourselves.

What we know for sure is that ideas about good have shaped our history, the way that we are governed by our leaders, and our opinions of other people and nations.

### ► The nature of good

Some might say that good is just when there is no evil or 'badness'. Others would argue that it is something which is approved of or desired. Either way, most people would agree that good is something which is morally right.

Good qualities tend to be linked to empathy. Caring, selfless, charitable, kind and giving people are generally seen to be good. Those people who sacrifice themselves for others, who are compassionate, and who treat all people equally as human beings are also considered good. If we think of the people throughout history who we consider worthy of respect, from Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King to Mother Teresa, they all possessed these qualities of compassion for others and selflessness.

The question still remains, however, of whether a person can be good or whether it is just their actions that are good. Many believe that good is not an intrinsic thing – it is not something which you just possess as a natural part of you. Good actions come from our conscience, and we are able to make good actions as a result of our **free will**. As such, good can come from environmental factors such as our childhood or from social factors such as family and friends. A person who, of their own free will, continually makes good choices driven by the qualities of empathy that we discussed above, would therefore be a good person.

### Life in twenty-first-century Britain

In modern Britain, good behaviour is often judged in terms of the moral values that are seen as underpinning British society: tolerance; respect; democracy; the defence of individual liberty; mutual respect for different religions, faiths and beliefs and those with no faith at all. As such, any act which goes against these values is generally accepted to be wrong.

## ► Religious teachings about good

All religions have general principles that help believers to assess what is right and good, as well as teachings that help to explain the presence of good in the world.

### Christian attitudes to good



In Genesis it says that God made the earth 'and it was good'. The world that God has created is basically good. God has, however, given people free will – the ability to choose between right and wrong for themselves. The story of humanity's battle with good and evil is told in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Adam and Eve chose to disobey God by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. This is called the Fall, and explains how free will can be used to stray from what is good. God has shown people how they should live a good life through both rules of behaviour found in the Bible, for

example the Ten Commandments (a list of religious and moral rules that were given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai) and through religious teachings. Jesus' life and example also show Christians the ways to lead a moral, good and righteous life. It is up to individuals to decide whether or not to follow God's instructions.

Christianity is a religion which places 'good' qualities at its core – tolerance, compassion and love. Jesus demonstrated all of these qualities through his life, and it is considered a Christian duty to treat others with kindness, humanity and genuine acceptance.

### Muslim attitudes to good



Everyone is born with a natural instinct to understand the difference between right and wrong (fitrah). All humans have free will, and they must choose between right and wrong. Some say this means choosing between the path of God and the temptations of **Shaytan** (the devil).

Doing good and having the right belief go hand in hand in Islam. The Qur'an speaks of true Muslims very often as 'those who believe and do good deeds'. Doing the will of God is indistinguishable from doing good.

The Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad outline the qualities required for good, including truthfulness, patience, humility and kindness to others. Muslims are expected to follow this example to guide their actions and choices in everyday life, for example, by doing **sadaqah**.

God will judge each person individually, according to their faith and their good actions. God will show mercy and fairness in his judgement. According to Islamic teachings, those who believe in God and perform good deeds will be eternally rewarded in heaven.

**Shaytan** Satan or the devil.

**Sadaqah** voluntary charity given out of kindness. The Prophet Muhammad said that every act done to please God or make life more pleasant was sadaqah.

### Jewish attitudes to good



Judaism teaches that God is good and will always protect and care for people. The goodness of God is shown by the creation of the world, by the giving of the Ten Commandments and on the occasions when God saved the Israelites.

Jews believe that when God created humans he gave them free will so that they could choose whether or not to worship him. If free will is to mean anything, then humans have to live in a world which allows them to make moral choices between good and evil. The Torah

provides guidance in how to live a life of good actions, and the Ten Commandments are the ultimate guidance for how to live a good life.

Judaism recognises that people are born with the inclination to do good but also with the impulse to do wrong. Empathy, compassion and giving are encouraged as good impulses, for example, through the practice of pushke in the home. For more on Judaism and free will, see page 300.

## Tasks

- 1 What is 'good'? Give some examples of good qualities.
- 2 Copy and complete the table below. For each of the religions you are studying, explain three different teachings about 'good'. Then summarise each one in no more than four words.

Religion	Teaching on 'good'	Summary (four words)

## ► What is 'evil'?

### Key Concepts



**Evil** That which is considered extremely immoral, wicked and wrong.

People talk about **evil** in different ways: evil people, evil deeds and evil as a force that somehow makes people do wrong.

The question of evil is an example of an ultimate question (a question about the fundamental principles in life). There are many different answers to why evil exists in the world, and none of them are necessarily wrong. It is up to each individual to decide which is right based upon their religious beliefs, their own experiences, their own reasoning and upbringing.

There are two different types of evil in the world: moral and natural. Both lead to suffering, but each have different causes or sources.

## ► Moral evil

Moral evil is the result of human actions and is often caused by humans acting in a way that is considered morally wrong.

## ► Natural evil

Events that have nothing to do with humans, and which are to do with the way the world is, for example natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, floods or earthquakes, are examples of natural evil. These events cannot be stopped or affected by human action. Natural evil can also include disease and illness.

Even Britain, with its temperate climate, has had to face its own natural disasters over the years.

Human evil and natural evil can often work together, with human evil making natural evil even worse (for example, by looting after an earthquake).



These are all examples of moral evils





Weather events, like hurricanes, that cause suffering are a natural evil.

## Life in twenty-first-century Britain

Evil (and the suffering that it brings) is one of the most common reasons that Britons give for not believing in God.

### Tasks

- 1 In a short paragraph (roughly three sentences) explain what is meant by 'evil'.
- 2 Copy and complete the table below. Describe five different types of moral evil and five different types of natural evil.

Moral evil	Natural evil

## Religious teachings about evil

All religions offer some form of response to questions of why there is good and evil in the world and how we make moral choices.

### Christian attitudes to evil

Christians have different viewpoints about the causes of evil and suffering and the origin or source of evil within the world. Many argue that God created people with free will and because people are not programmed like computers, they can choose whether to do good or evil. When they choose evil, suffering happens.

#### Soul-making

Some Christians believe that God allows evil to exist because suffering through evil is necessary for

individuals to develop or complete their moral souls. This concept is known as 'soul-making'. We need to learn what morality is about and we need to develop the proper virtues. We are not born instinctively knowing what morality and goodness is. The suffering of ourselves and others is essential for individuals to learn lessons about morality and virtue. Without the opportunities offered by suffering and evil, people would not have the chance to develop or demonstrate moral virtues, like compassion or courage.

#### St Irenaeus

St Irenaeus (130–202 AD) was a Father of the early Christian Church. He believed that human kind was not created perfect, but that they required growth in order to become spiritually perfect and moral. He argued that God does not necessarily intend evil to provide the only opportunity for this kind of spiritual growth, as a person could grow to spiritual perfection simply by obeying God's laws. Irenaeus also believed that God does not intervene in human affairs to prevent evil because that would mean interfering with free will.

#### John Hick

John Hick (1922–2012) agrees with Irenaeus' theory (known as the Irenaean Theodicy). He believes that God

created humans with the potential for spiritual growth. Hick argues that the process of 'soul making' (as he calls it) is a response to the evil in the world. If murder, cancer and natural evils did not exist, we would not have the means to develop and perfect ourselves spiritually. There is some suffering in the world that we can never understand or rationalise, which simply proves to us that we can never truly understand God's reason or plan.

Hick also believes that humans are born with an immense distance between themselves and God. We are born not knowing of God's existence, and it is not something which it is easy to gain knowledge of. Therefore, the process of soul making also involves the struggle to find religious faith.

## Original sin

Catholics believe that evil comes from human beings. Adam and Eve introduced sin to the world (known as **original sin**) when, in the Garden of Eden, they chose to disobey God and eat from the tree of knowledge. This act brought sin into humanity. Since then people have been born with the ability to commit acts of evil. Within the Catholic tradition, every baby is born with 'original sin'.

**Original sin** the first sin ever committed – when Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. The action that brought sin and evil into the world.

## Life as a test

Many Christians also believe that life is a test. Part of this test is whether or not an individual will tolerate suffering and keep their faith. The way people react to suffering and evil determines whether they go to heaven or hell in the afterlife. The story of Job in the Bible gives Christians an example of how suffering can come to anyone, even the most holy and good-living, and that we will be judged on how we behaved throughout our suffering. Job suffers greatly and is taken from great success to tragedy. His friends try to convince him that he is suffering due to his own past sins. Job questions God on this but is given no direct answers. He somehow maintains his faith in God and is rewarded when his suffering is brought to an end.

## Evil and suffering as beyond human understanding

The story of Job also reveals to Christians that we should not question why we suffer, but simply accept

that we do. Many say that 'God works in mysterious ways' and he has reasons for letting evil and suffering happen, but humans will never be able to understand the mind of God. We have to accept that God has chosen suffering for us, and that he has a purpose. We can be reassured with the knowledge that God is compassionate and understanding and will never give us more suffering than we are truly able to cope with.

## Suffering helps humans understand Jesus

Christians point to the example of Jesus as a way of explaining suffering and its purpose. Jesus chose to endure suffering and pain in order to achieve greater good. His death and resurrection were to bring an end to death and suffering forever, with the promise of everlasting life and a new heaven and earth. For many Christians, suffering is both a way to bring them closer to an understanding of Jesus and his suffering and a way to bring about a greater good.

## Other explanations for evil and suffering

Some Christians argue that evil is simply the absence of good. St Augustine believed that things were created good but free will enabled things to grow away from good and become evil. Others argue that evil comes from Satan. Satan creates evil in the form of temptation, pain and suffering.

Many Christians simply argue that evil exists because good exists. The world is not perfect – evil in the world is not malevolent, it is just a natural happening.

## Muslim attitudes to evil

Within Islam it is believed that everything happens because it is the will and the plan of God. This is known as al-Qadr, and means that suffering and hardship are part of God's greater plan for humanity. Even though people may be unable to appreciate the value or purpose of suffering, they must accept that suffering exists and that they will never be able to truly understand God's will and purpose. Muslims believe that all life is a test. Humans are given life as a gift by God, and throughout their life their good and evil acts are noted down by two angels. Muslims will have to answer to these at Judgement Day, and these will determine whether they will enter paradise or be sent to hell – a blazing fire that never ends.

Good can come from suffering and evil. It is a greater good when people resist temptation and follow the right path and the example set by the Prophet Muhammad. God is also known as Ar-Rahman (The Merciful), Ar-Rahim (The Compassionate) and Al-Karim (The Generous). Because of this, those who resist Shaytan and follow the straight path will be rewarded in the afterlife.

Many Muslims believe that evil comes from Shaytan. The Qur'an explains how he refused God's command to bow down before Adam. As a result of pride and disobedience, God banished him from heaven. He now exists to tempt people to turn from God and to do wrong.





The following teaching from the Qur'an directs Muslims to beware those who might be corrupting, and to resist temptation and follow the path laid down:

*'O you who have believed, indeed, among your wives and your children are enemies to you,*

*so beware of them. But if you pardon and overlook and forgive – then indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful.'*

Qur'an 64:14

## Jewish attitudes to evil

On the one hand, evil exists due to the presence of free will – in Genesis it is explained that God gave humanity free will and therefore the ability to choose between good and evil (see page 301). However, evil also comes from God as he can use it as a way to cause suffering and discipline, punish or test.

The story of Job gives Jews an example of how suffering though evil can come to anyone, even the most holy and good-living, for no apparently clear reason. Job suffers greatly and is taken from great success to tragedy. His friends try to convince him that he is suffering due to his own past sins. Job questions God on this but is given no direct answers. Job accepts that God has control, even though Job cannot understand what is happening to him and why. Judaism teaches that God is merciful and holy and that it is wrong to question him.

*'A person is obligated to bless upon the bad just as he blesses upon the good. As it says, "And you shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart and all your soul and with all that you have."*

Berakhot 9:5

This teaches Jews to welcome both good and evil in their lives in a similar way, as both are sent by God and have purpose.

Jews also believe that the punishment for being tempted by evil is death and destruction, whereas

the reward for resisting temptation is protection and prosperity:

*'See! Today I have set before you [a free choice] between life and good [on one side], and death and evil [on the other].*

*I have commanded you today to love God your Lord, to walk in His paths, and to keep His commandments, decrees and laws. You will then survive and flourish, and God your Lord will bless you in the land that you are about to occupy.*

*But if your heart turns aside and you do not listen, you will be led astray to bow down to foreign gods and worship them.*

*I am warning you today, that [if you do that] you will be utterly exterminated. You will not last very long in the land which you are crossing the Jordan and coming to occupy.*

*I call heaven and earth as witnesses! Before you I have placed life and death, the blessing and the curse. You must choose life, so that you and your descendants will survive'*

Deuteronomy 30:15–19

The Avodah Zarah is a part of the Talmud which talks of the rules regarding idol worship and interacting with those who practise it. It makes clear that engaging in idol worship is the same as denying God, and is therefore viewed as an outright evil.

## Task



For both of the religions or denominations you are studying, explain in detail religious teachings about **evil**. Use the guidance below to help you to write a **developed explanation** for Christianity and a second one for your other chosen religion or denomination. Ensure that you use key terms fluently and frequently.

All/many/most Christians believe that ..... This comes from the teaching/Bible quote .....  
This means that/Because of this they .....

Some/other Christians such as ..... believe that ..... This comes from the teaching/Bible quote .....  
This means that/Because of this they .....

Finally, Christians such as ..... believe that ..... This means that/Because of this they .....  
Their beliefs do/do not differ because .....

## ► Suffering

### Key Concept



**Suffering** Pain or distress caused by injury, illness or loss.  
Suffering can be physical, emotional/psychological or spiritual.

We simply need to turn on the news or glance at the front cover of a newspaper to see **suffering** in the world. Suffering, it seems, is an inevitable part of living. Why people suffer is one of the greatest of all ultimate questions (questions about the fundamental principles in life). There are many different beliefs linked with the causes of suffering, some of which we have already looked at in the previous section on evil.



### Types of suffering

Natural suffering is caused by events beyond human control – by natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis and floods, as well as disease.

Human suffering is caused by the actions of human beings – murder, rape, terrorism and so on.

‘Try to exclude the possibility of suffering which the order of nature and existence involve, and you find you have excluded life itself.’

C.S. Lewis, the Christian author of *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, whose wife tragically died of cancer two years after they married.

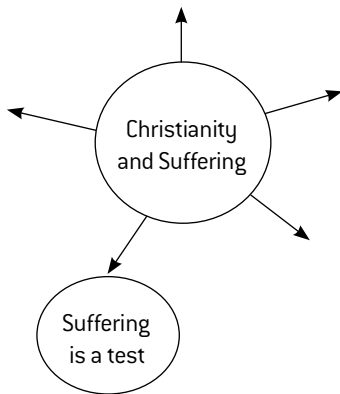


## ► Religious teachings about suffering

Religious teachings about suffering are closely bound into teachings about evil, as evil leads to suffering. Below is a basic summary of religious teachings about suffering – many of which we have already examined through evil.

### Task

- 1 Explain the causes of suffering in the world. Aim to include the following terms: natural, human, evil.
- 2 Copy and complete the mind map below, outlining the key beliefs on the suffering for Christianity.



### Christian attitudes to suffering

Christians might view suffering in the following ways:

- Within the Christian tradition, suffering is seen to be a test.
- Suffering is a punishment for sin and for Catholics is the result of original sin.
- Suffering is also part of God's plan – we might not understand it but should know God will never make us suffer beyond our ability to cope.
- Suffering enables us to appreciate what is good in the world and allows us to grow closer to Jesus, who also suffered.
- Stories from the Bible, such as that of Job in the Old Testament, teach Christians that anyone can suffer and that persevering with suffering can strengthen faith in God.

### Muslim attitudes to suffering

Muslims might view suffering in the following ways:

- Islam teaches that everything that happens is part of the will and plan of God [al-Qadr].
- Life is a test and therefore so is suffering.
- Suffering enables Muslims to prove their faith by resisting temptation. Those who resist Shaytan and follow the straight path will be rewarded in the afterlife.
- Good can come from suffering, both because it leads to personal spiritual development and because it allows us the opportunity to support others.
- Muslims should follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad.

### Jewish attitudes to suffering

Jews believe that suffering ultimately results from free will. It can also come from God as a means to discipline, punish for wrongdoing, test, or force someone to return to God. The story of Job shows that we may not be able to understand why suffering happens. Throughout history, many Jews have been persecuted for their beliefs and suffered greatly [see page 116].

### Humanist attitudes to suffering

Humanists do not believe that suffering is punishment or a test or see evil and suffering as part of a divine plan. Human beings have a degree of choice and control over their lives and must take some responsibility for the way they turn out. Some evils, for example war, famine and poverty, are caused or made worse by human greed and folly. Some forms of suffering like illness, floods, or earthquakes, may have natural causes or happen by chance, just because the world is the way it is.

Often those who suffer the most are not to blame. Humanists see the concept of original sin as cruel and unjust. They do not believe that all human beings are innately flawed and 'sinful' or that suffering and evil are inevitable. Humanists believe that it is up to human beings to fight evil and suffering in the world.

## ► The Holocaust

The word 'Holocaust' means a burnt offering. The Holocaust is often referred to as the Shoah – literally 'the catastrophe'.

**Persecution** persistently cruel treatment, often due to religion or belief.

Between 1933 and 1945, Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe suffered prolonged **persecution**. During this period, Hitler and the Nazi regime carried out a programme of systematic discrimination against Jews. At first, through the Nuremberg Laws, Jews were banned from parks, theatres and universities.

They were forbidden from holding positions in public office and forced out of employment. Eventually, the rights to own property and businesses were removed and Jews were rounded up and placed in ghettos. Across occupied Europe atrocities took place, and whole communities were wiped out by paramilitary units tasked with rounding up and executing Jews. This programme concluded with the 'final solution' – the extermination of Jews in purpose-built concentration and death camps.

This genocide resulted in the murder of over six million Jews, two-thirds of the Jewish population of Europe. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were left displaced and homeless, as refugees in their own homeland, with no family or livelihood to return to.



The entrance to Auschwitz, one of the most notorious of the Nazi death camps



'After the Holocaust I did not lose faith in God. I lost faith in mankind.' Elie Wiesel, who survived a concentration camp

*'Why did miracles occur only during biblical times? Why don't they happen in our time?'*

*The rabbi replied, 'The fact that there are Holocaust survivors who, after all they endured, can still keep faith, is itself, the greatest miracle of all.'*

Memory of a Holocaust survivor questioning a rabbi who lost his wife and 11 children.

### Where is God?

For some Jews, their experiences during the Holocaust – especially in the camps – were so hideous and impossible to understand that they ceased to believe in God. Many questioned how a loving, just and righteous God could allow such senseless tragedy. A great many Holocaust survivors could not reconcile their terrific suffering and personal loss with the God that they had believed in before the war. They felt abandoned by the God who they had believed was their protector and provider.

For some, continuing to practise their religion became their ultimate act of defiance. Some risked their lives to be able to continue to mark holy days and fulfil the ritual of prayer while in the concentration camps and ghettos. For others, believing in God became the key to their ability to survive.

## ► Suffering, good and evil – a perfect link?

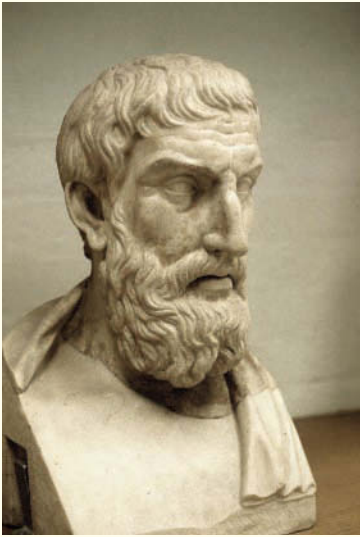
It is clear that suffering and evil are inextricably linked.

Evil – whether natural or moral – causes human suffering. Ironically, good and suffering are also closely linked. Good, especially the human qualities associated with good, such as compassion and empathy, have the power to alleviate the suffering caused by evil.

All religious people and many without a religious faith (such as humanists) believe that it is important to try to help those around them who are suffering. This becomes a motivator for how they behave and how they treat and ‘serve’ others.

*‘We place human welfare and happiness at the centre of our ethical decision making’.*

British Humanist Association



Is God willing to prevent evil,  
but not able?

Then he is not omnipotent.

Is he able, but not willing?

Then he is malevolent.

Is he both able and willing?

Then whence cometh evil?

Is he neither able nor willing?

Then why call him God?

Epicurus



## ► The problem of evil and suffering

For religious believers, the presence of evil and suffering in the world creates a number of problems. God is believed to be omnibenevolent (all loving) omnipotent (all powerful) and omniscient (all knowing). Because of this, evil should not really exist. But it does. There are, therefore, a number of possibilities:

- God is not powerful enough to stop evil.
- God does not know that evil is happening.
- God does not love us enough to want to stop the evil.

None of these are very satisfactory conclusions. As a result, religions have a number of teachings which help to explain how it is possible for there to be both evil in the world and a benevolent, all-knowing and all-powerful God.

## ► Are we free to choose?

Religious believers would argue that there is genuine purpose to life, and many would say that God has a plan for everyone.

The dilemma here is that, if this is really true, then human beings are not free to make their own decisions and forge their own path in life. Whether we call it **fate** or predetermination, the idea of humans having a purpose and plan means that their lives are planned out in advance for them.

In some ways, modern science supports this argument. How a person looks and even what illnesses they might suffer from in later life is determined by their genes (passed from their parents). Experts can predict with a high degree of accuracy weather systems, eclipses, tides and what times the sun will rise and set. Natural and human laws combine to make people behave in a certain way in society.

### Fate

A power or force that determines the future. The idea that the outcome is predetermined or unchangeable – inevitable and irresistible.

vs

### Free will

The belief that humans have free choices in life. The belief that humans were created with the ability to obey God or not according to their own choice.

**Fate** a power or force that determines the future. The idea that the outcome is predetermined or unchangeable – inevitable and irresistible.

**Predestination** the belief that all events have been willed by God. The idea that God has already chosen who will receive salvation and enter heaven.

## ► Religious responses to the problem of evil and suffering

All religions try to explain why evil and suffering exists and all their explanations make some reference to free will.

### Christian attitudes to the problem of evil and suffering



Christians believe that free will is given by God to human beings. Humans therefore have the ability to choose to do good and the ability to choose to do evil. Catholics believe that as a result of original sin, humans find it easier to choose to do wrong, but with the help of God can choose to do good. Those who do sin can attempt to atone and gain forgiveness through prayer and, for Catholics, confession and penance.

Fate is not a Christian idea, and the vast majority of Christians do not believe that their life is totally planned out for them. Some denominations (for example Lutheran and Calvinist Christians) believe in **predestination** – that God has already chosen who is to reach salvation. Predestination, here, is subtly different to fate, as it particularly focuses on the notion of salvation after life on earth and not on the decisions that we make during earthly life.



## Jewish attitudes to the problem of evil and suffering



Many Jews believe that what happens in life is ultimately decided by God. In the Talmud there is a description of an unborn child being shown the fate that awaits it. This means that predestination exists, but critically so does free will. Jews believe that everyone is responsible for their own actions, but that God chooses the *final* outcome. There is an emphasis in the Talmud on everyone learning the law so that they can properly understand the difference between good and bad behaviour. Whether a person is good or bad is therefore a part of their free will.

## Muslim attitudes to the problem of evil and suffering



*'Say, "Never will we be struck except by what God has decreed for us; He is our protector." And upon God let the believers rely.'*

Qur'an 9:51

Teachings on free will and predestination in Islam are not straightforward. For Muslims, free will must exist as without it humans are simply puppets – unable to truly take responsibility for themselves or offer genuine faith and submission to God. Similarly, though, predestination must exist as without it, God is not ultimately powerful and omniscient:

*'God has power over all things.'*

Qur'an 3:159

Islam teaches that every person is free to choose whether or not to follow God. As some do not, suffering occurs.

*'Whatever of good befalleth thee it is from God, and whatever of ill befalleth thee it is from thyself.'*

Qur'an 4:79

Al-Qadr is the will of God and translates literally as 'fate' or 'pre-ordainment'. It is one of Islam's six articles of faith. In the Qur'an this is also referred to as God's 'decree'.

Some Muslims believe God wrote down all that has happened and will happen (on the 'Preserved Tablet'). God has measured out the span of every person's life, their

lot of good or bad fortune, and the fruits of their efforts. Again, God does not need to force anyone to do good or evil. Although many Muslims believe in predestination they also believe that we have free will. It is granted by God so that people are not puppets. The idea of iktisab means that while God knows the final outcome, a person must 'acquire' or 'merit' responsibility for their own actions. These Muslims believe there is no fate in Islam as this infers surrendering yourself helplessly. Instead there is the idea of working to understand and cooperate with God, and bringing oneself to a unity with his will.

### Sunni and Shi'a beliefs

Sunni Muslims believe in the concept of the 'Preserved Tablet' and that God has written down all that has happened and will happen. An individual has power to choose, but since God created time and space he knows what will happen.

Shi'a Muslims reject the idea of predestination. They firmly believe in the concept of 'Bada', which states that God has not set a definite course for human history. Instead, God may alter the course of human history as is seen to be fit. Shi'a Muslims believe that God has definite power over the whole of the universe, however, whenever he wills, he can replace a given destiny with another one (effectively changing the course of fate). Some of these changes of destiny are brought about by man himself, who can through his free will, his decisions, and his way of life, lay the foundations for change.

## ► End of section review

### Stickability

Key concepts:

- Evil
- Free will
- Good
- Morality
- Suffering

Key teachings about:

- the origin of evil
- free will and the problem of evil and suffering

### Knowledge check

- 1 Write a paragraph outlining how Christians explain the presence of suffering in the world.
- 2 What is the difference between free will and fate?
- 3 Explain one of the problems with believing in fate and predestination.
- 4 Why does evil and suffering cause a challenge for believing in God?

### The Big Question

*'You can't believe in God while there is evil in the world.'*

### Your task

Answer the question above, referring to both sides of the argument.

Aim for at least one paragraph for each side of the debate and give a reasoned judgement on the validity and strength of that argument. Conclude your answer with a justification of your own viewpoint.

### Skills Links

- 1 From two different religions or two religious traditions, explain views about 'free will'.
- 2 "The existence of suffering proves there is no God." Discuss this statement, showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)

### Task

For both of the religions (or denominations) you are studying, explain in detail religious teachings about **suffering**. Use the guidance below to help you to write a **developed explanation** for Christianity and a second one for your other chosen religion or denomination. Ensure that you use key terms fluently and frequently.

All/many/most Christians believe that ..... This comes from the teaching/Bible quote ..... This means that/Because of this they .....

Some/other Christians such as ..... believe that ..... This comes from the teaching/Bible quote ..... This means that/Because of this they .....

Finally, Christians such as ..... believe that .....

This means that/Because of this they .....

Their beliefs do/do not differ because .....

## ► Exam focus

### Issues of good and evil

#### (b) questions

In these questions you will be expected to describe a particular religious teaching or view. There is a maximum of five marks for this type of question. To gain full marks you should be able to show your knowledge using appropriate religious terms and any relevant sources of wisdom or sacred texts.

(b) With reference to one religion you have studied, explain views about the use of the death penalty. (5)

Mark looked at this question and noted:

- How many marks? Five marks are awarded so that means he has about five minutes to answer the question.
- What is the question asking him to do? He needs to show his knowledge about one religion's attitude to the death penalty. The question is not asking him about his views on the death penalty or even what the death penalty is. He needs to focus the whole of his answer on the Christian attitude to the death penalty.

Which words in the question are important? Mark has decided the most important words are:

'With reference to one religion you have studied, explain views about the use of the death penalty.'

Firstly Mark realises he needs to only write about one religion. However there are many different Christian attitudes to the death penalty so Mark is going to show diversity of views in his answer.

Secondly Mark realises he will need to explain views and this will include using some references to religious teachings.

Thirdly Mark realises that the question is about the death penalty. Although other areas such as sanctity of life and attitudes to punishment are relevant the focus of the answer are on the death penalty.

Look at the band levels on page vii.

How many marks would you give to this answer? Using the words from the band justify your reason.

*In Christianity there are many different beliefs about the death penalty. The sanctity of life is very important in Christianity because in Genesis it says God gave everyone life. For this reason many Christians do not believe in Euthanasia or abortion.*

# 4

## Issues of human rights

### ► The Big Picture

#### Key Concepts



**Censorship** The practice of suppressing and limiting access to materials considered obscene, offensive or a threat to security. People may also be restricted in their speech by censorship laws.



**Discrimination** Acts of treating groups of people, or individuals differently, based on prejudice.



**Extremism** Believing in and supporting ideas that are very far from what most people consider correct or reasonable.



**Human rights** The basic entitlements of all human beings, afforded to them simply because they are human. An example of human rights as stated in the Declaration of Human Rights is that all people should receive an education.



**Personal conviction** Something a person strongly feels or believes in.



**Prejudice** Pre-judging; judging people to be inferior or superior without cause.



**Relative poverty** A standard of poverty measured in relation to the standards of a society in which a person lives, for example, living on less than  $x$  per cent of average UK income.



**Absolute poverty** An acute state of deprivation, whereby a person cannot access the most basic of their human needs.



**Social justice** Promoting a fair society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity. Ensuring that everyone has equal access to provisions, equal opportunities and rights.

#### Core Questions

What rights do we have simply because we are human?

How do religious people support human rights?

Should people always have the right to express their views?

Should you always stand up for what you believe in?

How do religious people work to tackle poverty?

Are some forms of poverty worse than others?