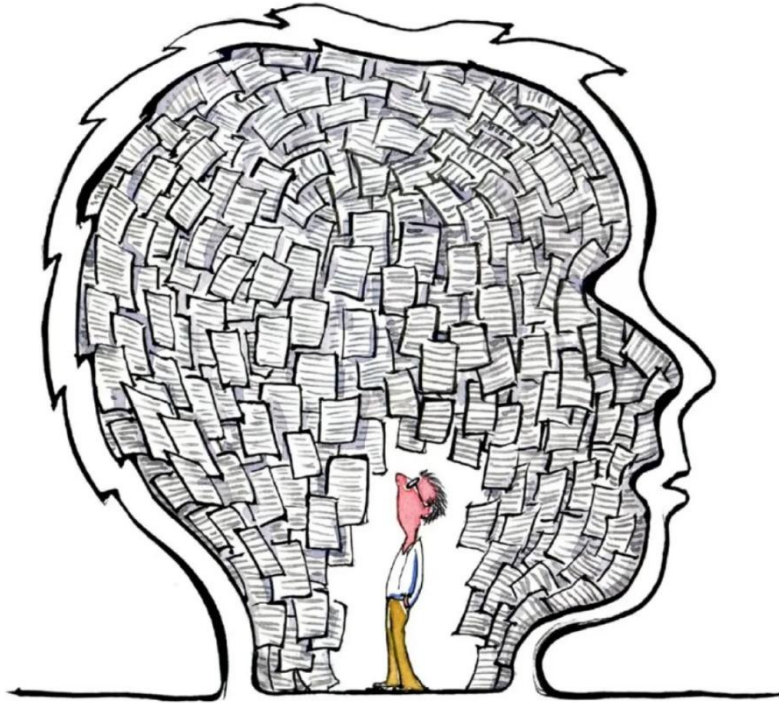




# SUMMER HOMEWORK PACK



## Philosophy Ethics DCT

email [ogorman.m@myton.co.uk](mailto:ogorman.m@myton.co.uk)  
if you have questions



**Subject:**

Religious Studies A Level

**Topic(s):**

Philosophy / Ethics / Theology

**Independent Learning Task(s) to Complete:****INTRODUCTION TASK**

**A. Course Details:** You are studying Religious Studies A Level. The exam board is OCR and the main religion for Component 3 is Christianity. A brief overview of the course is here:

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-and-a-level/religious-studies-h173-h573-from-2016/specification-at-a-glance/>

You can look at the full specification here too

**B.** Create a folder for your Religious Studies lessons. Use dividers to create the following three main sections:

- Philosophy of Religion
- Religion and Ethics
- Developments in religious thought  
*[we call this DCT - Development of Christian Thought]*

*You also might want to get a big folder for each paper. (If you struggle to buy these look out on Facebook Marketplace and local recycle sites as lots of people give these away for free)*

# TASKS: YOU MUST COMPLETE TASKS 1-3. TASKS 4-5 ARE OPTIONAL.

1) What is Philosophy and Ethics?

Go to the link below:

**What is Philosophy? Crash Course Philosophy #1** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A\\_CAKYt3GY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A_CAKYt3GY)

**Task:** Summarise the main ideas in no more than one paragraph.

2) In Religious Studies, you will be introduced to many scholars to support arguments you make in your essays.

For each one make notes on them as follows:

- ▶ When were they alive?
- ▶ What key books did they write?
- ▶ What key issues they write about?
- ▶ Are there any key quotes?
- ▶ Do you find their work convincing?

## **Scholars List:**

**Task:** You must complete this for scholars 1-4. You may then pick one more (from 5-9).

1. **St Augustine**
2. **St Thomas Aquinas**
3. **Aristotle**
4. **Plato**
5. Richard Swinburne
6. Mary Daly
7. Joseph Fletcher
8. Jeremy Bentham
9. Immanuel Kant
10. Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Like all well-informed research, you need to consider the location of the information you find. Some good suggestions for research are:

*Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* [[plato.stanford.edu](http://plato.stanford.edu)]

*Philosophy Cat* [<https://www.philosophycat.org/>]

*The School of Life*



**3) Church History.** Having some understanding of how the church began, how it grew and spread and how it has split over time is really useful when starting to study A Level. To get started with this, access the Ted-Ed lesson on Church History here <https://ed.ted.com/on/IVs36zph>

Test yourself with the multiple-choice questions in the 'Think' tab, add a comment to the discussions and explore some of the further links in the 'Dig Deeper' tab. Then, make your own set of notes on some of the key dates and developments. Try to include the following;

#### **1st Century Christianity – key figures and events**

- Who were the apostles?
- Who were the leaders in the early church?
- When were the first letters of the New Testament written?
- Which was the first gospel? When was it written? When were the others written?
- How and why were Christians persecuted by the Roman Empire?

#### **2nd-10th Century Christianity**

- Who were the church fathers?
- When did Christianity come to Britain?
- Who was Constantine and why is he so important?
- When and what was the Edict of Milan?
- What was the Council of Nicaea (325CE)?
- What was an ecumenical council?
- How many were there?
- What did they focus on?
- Why was Theodosius and why is he important?
- Which groups left the church? Why? At which church councils did they leave?
- Why did the Pope become increasingly powerful?
- When and why did the Eastern and Western churches start to drift apart?
- What was the Holy Roman Empire?

#### **The 11th-15th centuries – Schism, Crusades and dissatisfaction with the church**

- When was the Great Schism and what was the outcome?
- What were the Crusades? When did they happen and what was the outcome?
- Why were some Christians concerned about the church and that the Bible was only available in Latin?
- Who was John Wycliffe?

#### **The 16th Century – Reformation and Counter-Reformation**

- Who was Martin Luther?
- What were the 95 theses and when were they hammered to a church door?
- When was Luther excommunicated and what did he do afterwards?
- Who were some of the other Protestant Reformers?
- Who was William Tyndale and what did he do?
- What is the significance of Henry VIII?
- Who was Thomas Cranmer?
- When and what was the Act of Supremacy?
- What and when was the Council of Trent?
- Why is King Edward VI (yes, that's our KEVI!) significant?
- Cranmer wrote the 39 articles and The Book of Common Prayer. What are they?

#### **The 17th century onwards – Protestant Diversity**

- Which new churches were formed in this period and when?

#### **The 20th century**

- When and what was Vatican II?

#### 4) **OPTIONAL: If you lack knowledge about Jesus**

You will study Christian theology as part of your A Level. For this, it is helpful to know the story of the person of Jesus. To help with this, we recommend reading one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark (the shortest!), Luke, John) or watching [The Miracle Maker](#) film!

The Bible Project has an excellent series of videos of parts of the Bible (please note they are created by and for Christians) [BibleProject - YouTube](#)

***There are some scanned textbook pages at the back of this pack which will be helpful reading!***

#### 5) **OPTIONAL: Essay writing skills.**

**Task:** the style of essay writing at A level steps up from GCSE. Please read through the essay transition pack and consider completing the activities to support you with the requirements for writing at A level.

### **OPTIONAL – WIDER READING**

**Here are some suggested books to help develop your thinking skills:**

[The Pig That Wants To Be Eaten](#) by Julian Baggini

[50 Philosophy Ideas You Really Need to Know](#) by Ben Dupre and Laurence Kennedy

[Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy](#) by Simon Blackburn

[The Blind Watchmaker](#) by Richard Dawkins

[The God Delusion](#) by Richard Dawkins

#### **Introductory texts:**

[Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction](#) by Craig Edwards

[Ethics: A Very Short Introduction](#) by Simon Blackburn

[Jesus: A Very Short Introduction](#) by Richard Bauckham

[Ethics Matters](#) by Peter and Charlotte Vardy

[The Puzzle of God](#) by Peter Vardy

[The Puzzle of Christianity](#) by Peter Vardy

#### **Podcasts:**

All available for free from wherever you like to listen to podcasts (Apple, Android, Spotify etc.)

[Panpsycast](#) - use the search bar to find episodes linked to topics we have studied

[Panpsycast DCT Audiobook](#) - a free audiobook which covers the DCT specification. Amazing resource!

[Philosophy with Mr Stone](#) - teachers giving lessons on their favourite OCR topics

[The RE Podcast](#)

[Within Reason](#) - less focused on our specification than other resources above, and sometimes controversial!

#### **Here are some suggested online resources:**

***The Philosophy Man*** [[www.thephilosophyman.com](http://www.thephilosophyman.com)]

This website gives you lots of different ideas to think about. Some are for younger children but you could try the 'brain squeezers'. These are good if you don't have too much time, or if you're finding it difficult to settle to anything concentrated.

***The Philosophers' Magazine*** [[www.philosophersmag.com](http://www.philosophersmag.com)]

***The Bible Project*** [<https://www.youtube.com/user/jointhebibleproject/playlists>]

***I Think Therefore I Teach*** [<https://ithinkthereforeiteach.com>]

***A level Revision Notes*** [[A Level Philosophy & Religious Studies](#)]

***Logos*** [[Logos | Online](#)] A level model essay resources

***Peped*** [[peped.org](http://peped.org)]

This website has a lot of good resources that you might use once you start your A Level course; you could dip in and start exploring some of the ideas you will meet next year.

### **Some things to watch and think about:**

All kinds of films and series have philosophical and religious ideas in them, so follow your own interests! You could try these, or choose something else, but try and use them as a stimulus for thinking and writing:

- ▶ [The Good Place](#)
- ▶ [The Matrix](#)
- ▶ [Unorthodox](#)
- ▶ [Twelve Angry Men](#)

**TED Talks** — these are usually wonderful, with plenty to stimulate your questioning and reasoning skills. Some favourites:

Elizabeth Loftus: How reliable is your memory?

[https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth\\_loftus\\_how\\_reliable\\_is\\_your\\_memory](https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_loftus_how_reliable_is_your_memory)

Dan Gilbert: Why we make bad decisions

[https://www.ted.com/talks/dan\\_gilbert\\_why\\_we\\_make\\_bad\\_decisions](https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_gilbert_why_we_make_bad_decisions)

Richard Dawkins: Militant atheism

[https://www.ted.com/talks/richard\\_dawkins\\_militant\\_atheism](https://www.ted.com/talks/richard_dawkins_militant_atheism)

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: We should all be feminists

[https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_we\\_should\\_all\\_be\\_feminists](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_we_should_all_be_feminists)

Damon Horowitz: Philosophy in prison

[https://www.ted.com/talks/damon\\_horowitz\\_philosophy\\_in\\_prison](https://www.ted.com/talks/damon_horowitz_philosophy_in_prison)

There are loads of talks on TED so use the search engine find topics interest you.

### **Deadline:**

The first lesson of Philosophy, Ethics or Theology after the summer holidays.

# Unit 1: History and belief

## What is Christianity?

Today, there are 2.2 billion Christians around the world, making Christianity the most followed religion on the planet, but where did this religion come from and what do Christians believe?

### Where did Christianity begin?

Christianity began nearly 2000 years ago, in present-day Israel, which was then part of the Roman Empire. The first Christians had radical new beliefs. They claimed that a recently executed Jewish man named Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. They believed that three days after being killed on a wooden cross Jesus had been **resurrected**. He appeared to many people before ascending to heaven. Christians claimed that Jesus had died so that people who believed in him could be forgiven for their sins and have eternal life.

These were extraordinary claims. They were very different from traditional Roman beliefs, as well as those of the Jews who lived in the Roman Empire at this time. Despite this, these early Christian beliefs spread rapidly across the Roman world, creating a new religion: Christianity.

### What do Christians believe about God?

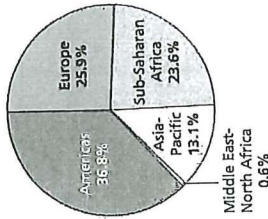
Christians are **monotheists**, which means that they believe in one God. However, Christians also believe that God is three. This distinctive belief – that God is both one and three – is called the **Trinity**. The three 'persons' of the Trinity are:

- God the Father (God in heaven)
- God the Son (Jesus)
- God the Holy Spirit (God in the world).

The **doctrine** of the Trinity is an attempt to express how Christians understand God. For 2000 years, Christians have tried to understand how it is possible for one God to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit at the same time. This belief has caused many disagreements, but, ultimately, Christians accept that God is a mystery and cannot be fully understood by humans.

Christians believe that God is the creator of the world and that he is eternal, which means that he has no beginning or end. They also think that he is omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing) and omnibenevolent (all good). Christians believe that they can speak to God through prayer and they try to **worship** him through the way that they live.

2010



Christian populations by region.

### Fact

At the time of Jesus, Jewish people were waiting for God to send them a Messiah – a rescuer or saviour. The word 'Messiah' is Hebrew and the Greek word for it is 'Christ'. People who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, called him Jesus Christ, and so were given the name Christians.



The Roman Empire at the time of Jesus's birth.

## Denominations of Christianity

Christians are united by their faith in Jesus, but there is no such thing as a typical Christian. Over the past 2000 years there have been many disagreements between Christians, and sometimes these have led to new types of Christianity. Today, there are over 30,000 **denominations** of Christianity. The largest of these is the Catholic Church.

### The Bible

The Bible is a very important book for Christians. It teaches them about God and tells them how to live in a way that pleases him. The word 'Bible' comes from the Greek word *biblia*, meaning 'books'. The Bible contains many books, which are split into two sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Each book is divided into chapters and verses.



### Life after death

Christians believe that after people die they will be judged by God, based on their faith and how they have lived their lives. Most Christians think that some people will be rewarded in heaven and others will go to hell. However, Christians disagree about whether heaven and hell are real places, or whether they are metaphors or spiritual states of being that no one can fully understand.

Many Christians believe that the only way to get to heaven is by having faith in Jesus and following his teachings. One reason for this is that the Bible (John 3.16) says: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.' For these Christians, spreading the Christian message (**evangelism**) is an important part of their faith. Other Christians believe that an omnibenevolent God would not send somebody to hell for not believing in him, so they place less emphasis on evangelism.

### Key vocabulary

- denomination** A group within Christianity
- doctrine** A belief held and taught by a particular denomination
- evangelism** Spreading the Christian message in order to convert people
- monotheist** someone who believes in one God
- resurrected** Brought back to life after dying
- Trinity** The belief that God is three as well as one – Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- worship** To show the highest respect or adoration for someone or something

### Check your understanding

- 1 How many Christians are there in the world today?
- 2 What do Christians believe about Jesus?
- 3 Explain what Christians believe about God.
- 4 How is the Bible structured?
- 5 Explain different Christian beliefs about life after death and evangelism.

Read answer.

Very important - especially if you have not done the GCSE.

# Unit 1: History and belief

## How did Christianity begin?

Spreading the Christian message could be dangerous work, as Paul found out, so how did Christianity grow at such an astonishing rate?

### Christian followers

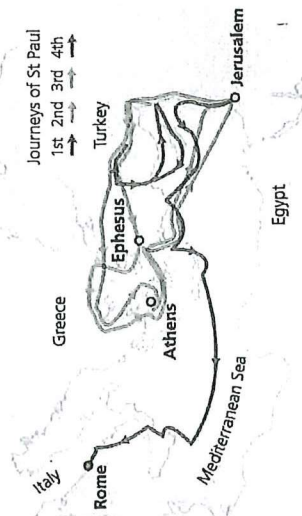
When Jesus lived on earth, he had 12 chosen followers called **disciples**. Yet within 20 years of his death, most major towns around the Mediterranean had a Christian community. Like the disciples, these Christians claimed that Jesus, the executed Jewish man, had been God living on earth. They said that he had risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, and that by believing in him their sins would be forgiven and they would have eternal life.

Within 100 years of Jesus's death, there were 300,000 Christians living across the Roman Empire. Most of them had never met Jesus and lived far away from his homeland. So how did the beliefs of a few Jewish men living in Israel become a global religion with 2.2 billion followers?

### Paul's problems

In the years after Jesus's death, **missionaries** spread the Christian message throughout the Roman Empire. Life was tough for these travelling preachers. They often journeyed long distances and faced **persecution**.

One of these missionaries was a man named Paul, who spread the message about Jesus across Asia and Greece. Many people listened to him and became Christians, but the ideas he preached about also caused a lot of anger. Eventually, Paul was put in prison. He described his experiences in a letter written to Christians living in the city of Corinth. The full letter is in the New Testament.



Paul spread the Christian message across the Roman Empire.

<sup>24</sup>Five times I was given the thirty-nine lashes by the Jews; <sup>25</sup>three times I was whipped by the Romans; and once I was stoned. I have been in three shipwrecks, and once I spent twenty-four hours in the water. <sup>26</sup>In my many travels I have been in danger from floods and from robbers, in danger from my own people and from Gentiles; there have been dangers in the cities, dangers in the wilds, and dangers on the high seas, and dangers from false friends. <sup>27</sup>There has been work and toil; often I have gone without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty; I have often been without enough food, shelter, or clothing. <sup>28</sup>And not to mention other things, every day I am under the pressure of my concern for all the churches. <sup>29</sup>When someone is weak, then I feel weak too; when someone is led into sin, I am filled with distress. <sup>30</sup>

2 Corinthians 11:24-29

### Who was Paul?

Before becoming a Christian, Paul was a passionate Jew who wanted to wipe out Christianity.

One day, while travelling to the city of Damascus to persecute Christians, he saw a blinding light and heard the voice of God. He became a Christian and spent the rest of his life telling other people about Jesus. When the Jewish authorities realised Paul had converted to Christianity, they tried to kill him. Paul made a daring escape from the city by hiding in a basket while his supporters lowered him through a hole in the city walls.



Paul fooled the guards waiting at the gates of Damascus by escaping in a basket.

### The Council of Jerusalem

The early followers of Jesus were Jews who became Christians. As the Christian message spread through the Roman Empire, Jesus's followers faced a difficult question: should non-Jews (**gentiles**) also be allowed to follow Jesus? Paul met with leaders of Jesus's followers in Jerusalem to discuss this. At this 'Council of Jerusalem', they agreed that Jesus had died so that all people would be forgiven for their sins, not just Jews. Both Jews and gentiles could be followers of Jesus. They also agreed that non-Jewish people who became Christians did not need to undergo **circumcision**. In one of Paul's letters (Galatians 3:28), he wrote: 'There is no difference between Jews and gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus.'

The decision to allow non-Jews to follow Jesus's teachings was momentous. Jesus's followers were no longer a group within Judaism. A new religion had begun, which needed a new name. The followers of Jesus became known as Christians because they believed that Jesus was the Christ.



Paul wrote many letters to the people who converted to Christianity on his travels.

### Key vocabulary

- circumcision:** The removal of a male's foreskin
- disciples:** The 12 followers of Jesus who helped him to spread his message
- gentiles:** A name given to non-Jews in the Bible
- missionaries:** People who spread the Christian message
- persecution:** Discrimination against a group of people

### Check your understanding

- 1 What are missionaries?
- 2 List the difficulties Paul faced when spreading his message.
- 3 Before converting to Christianity, which religion did the first Christians follow?
- 4 What was decided at the Council of Jerusalem?
- 5 What sort of character was Paul? Give evidence to support your points.

Read the answer

## Unit 1: History and belief

# What was life like for the Early Church?

Why was being a Christian so dangerous in the first three centuries and how did secrecy help the Early Church to survive?

### Rumours in the Roman Empire

In c. 64, Nero was the Roman Emperor. During his reign a huge fire broke out and destroyed large parts of the city of Rome. Nero was an unpopular ruler. When he had a luxurious palace built in the place where the fire had destroyed other buildings, rumours spread that Nero had started the fire himself. However, Nero blamed Christians for the blaze. He gave orders that they should be rounded up and put to death. Some were set on fire and burned to death in the Roman arenas. Others were killed by vicious dogs.

Many people knew that Christians were not to blame for the fire in Rome, but they did not mind Christians being persecuted. Non-Christians believed that the **Early Church** was uncivilised and they did not understand its practices. One reason for this was that Christians met secretly at night. People heard that at these meetings Christians ate and drank the body and blood of Jesus, so they thought they were involved in cannibalistic feasts. In fact, the Christians were eating bread and drinking wine to remember Jesus's Last Supper and his death.

For the first three centuries, Christians were often persecuted. Under some emperors, they were persecuted if they refused to offer sacrifices to the gods that the Roman Emperor believed in. Many Romans thought that the success of the Roman Empire depended on keeping their gods happy, and they worried that the gods might be angered if the Christians did not respect them.

### Pliny's letter to Emperor Trajan

Different parts of the huge Roman Empire were ruled by governors, acting on behalf of the Emperor. When there were problems in an area, governors would often blame Christians.

At the start of the second century, a Roman governor named Pliny was given a notebook filled with the names of Christians.



Emperor Nero watching the burning of Christians.



Christians sewn into wild animal skins and savaged to death by dogs during Emperor Nero's rule.

Pliny chose two Christian girls from this list and tortured them so they would give him information about what Christians believed and how they worshipped. This helped him devise a test. To find out if someone was a Christian, he made that person worship Roman gods, offer incense and wine to a statue of the Roman Emperor, Trajan, and deny following Jesus. If his prisoners did these things, they were freed. If they refused, they were executed as Christians.

Pliny was concerned by the growth of Christianity and wrote a letter to Emperor Trajan in c. 112. He said: 'The superstition has spread like the plague, not only in the cities but in the villages and the countryside as well. I feel it must be stopped and checked.'

Trajan wrote back to Pliny. He said that if somebody was accused and found guilty of being a Christian then that person should be killed, but that Christians should not be targeted and hunted down. Other emperors in the first three centuries were less tolerant. Although many Christians were **martyred** in the first three centuries, their deaths helped publicise Christianity, which continued to spread across the Roman Empire.

### Secret tunnels and tombs

In the first three centuries c., people were often cremated (their bodies were burned) after death. Christians believed that they would be resurrected, so they wanted to be buried rather than cremated. They were not allowed to use land in Rome for their burials, so they used a 560-kilometre network of tunnels and caves beneath the city. These underground passages are known as the **catacombs**. There are 40 separate catacombs under Rome. In the largest, called Domitilla Catacombs, there are more than 14 kilometres of tunnels. You can still find bones and see a painting of the Last Supper that dates from the second century in these catacombs today.

Another advantage of the catacombs was that Christians could hide in them and hold meetings there during periods of persecution. The Roman authorities knew the catacombs existed and they probably knew that Christians were meeting there. However, Roman soldiers were not keen on going into – and perhaps getting lost in – dark tunnels filled with dead bodies!

### Check your understanding

- 1 What did Emperor Nero blame on Christians in c. 64? What happened to the Christians?
- 2 What rumour was spread about Christian meetings?
- 3 Describe how Pliny and Trajan treated Christians.
- 4 Explain what the quote from Tertullian means.
- 5 Give three reasons why the Early Church used the catacombs.

Read + answer

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. Tertullian, a Christian writer in the third century



Christians would bury bodies on the ledges of the catacombs.

### Key vocabulary

**catacombs** Tunnels full of tombs underneath Rome  
**Early Church** Christians in the first three centuries c.  
**martyred** When someone is killed for their beliefs

# Constantine and the Council of Nicea

Why did life change so dramatically for Christians after the conversion of Constantine and why did he call a meeting of bishops in Nicea in CE 325?

## The conversion of Constantine

During the first three centuries of Christianity, Roman emperors either persecuted Christians or simply ignored them. The emperors themselves were not Christians. Roman authorities had been responsible for Jesus's execution, and emperors would not follow a religion that worshipped a Jewish criminal.

This changed in CE 312. The Roman Emperor Constantine was preparing for a battle against his enemy, Maxentius. Rumours spread that Maxentius had help from magical powers, so Constantine was afraid that he was going to lose the battle.

Constantine's mother was a Christian, so he decided to pray to her God for victory. Legend says that while Constantine was praying he looked up to the clouds and saw a bright cross bearing the words 'conquer by this'. The next day, Constantine sent his army into battle carrying a cross. His men defeated Maxentius' army. Constantine believed that the Christian God had granted him this victory, so he converted to Christianity.



The Battle of Milvian Bridge, which Constantine believed he won with God's help.

## Secret signs

Because of the threat of persecution, the Early Church often had to be secretive. They met in secret locations and they had secret signs. One of the most popular signs was a fish. The Greek word for fish is *ichthus*. Each letter stands for a different word in Greek:

- I Jesus
- Ch Christ
- Th God (Theos)
- U Son
- S Saviour



Secret Christian signs were engraved on walls, floors and objects all around the Roman Empire. They were a way for Christians to show devotion to God and communicate with each other.

## The Edict of Milan

A year later, Constantine passed the Edict of Milan. This made Christianity legal and allowed Christians to meet and worship freely, without fear of persecution. The edict also banned Jews from owning Christian slaves. Constantine ordered that any property that had been taken from Christians must be returned to them. He even gave his wife's palace to the Bishop of Rome.

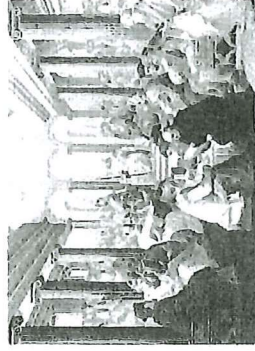
Constantine ordered more copies of Christian scriptures to be made and more churches to be built. Christians were now offered good jobs and given privileged treatment in court. Church leaders were not required to pay certain taxes. In CE 321, Sunday was declared an official Christian day of rest, when markets and workplaces were closed. Within 100 years of Constantine's conversion, Christianity had become the main religion in the Roman Empire.

## The Council of Nicea

Constantine had ended the persecution of Christians, but the Church's troubles were not over. A man named Arius began causing arguments in the Christian community by raising questions about the identity of Jesus. Arius claimed that God had created Jesus, so Jesus must be a lesser being than God. This is known as the 'Arian controversy'.

Arius's ideas were becoming popular and Constantine was afraid that they might split the Christian Church and the Roman Empire. In CE 325, he called a meeting of 220 bishops, which took place at Nicea (in modern Turkey), to discuss the Arian controversy and to agree exactly what relationship Jesus had to God.

The bishops at the Council of Nicea agreed that Arius's ideas were **heresy**. They wrote a **creed**, known as the Nicene Creed, outlining the beliefs that all Christians should hold. The creed stated that Jesus is 'true God' and 'of one substance with the Father'. The creed is still recited in church services around the world today.



Constantine presides over the First Council of Nicea.

## Fact

From the start, people who wanted to become Christians were baptised.

**Baptism** is a ritual using water in which people dedicate themselves to God. Today, Christians disagree about whether people should be baptised when they are babies or when they are adults. In some denominations, a person's whole body is immersed in water when he or she is baptised; in others, holy water is just placed on the person's forehead.

## Key vocabulary

**baptism** A ritual in which people are immersed in water to symbolise turning away from sin and following God

**bishop** A Christian leader with authority over the priests and churches in an area

**creed** A statement of belief

**heresy** Beliefs that are opposed to those of the Church

**scriptures** Religious texts, such as the Bible

## Check your understanding

- 1 Why did the Early Church use signs? Explain the meaning of a popular sign used.
- 2 Why was Christianity unappealing for Roman emperors in the first three centuries?
- 3 Why did Constantine convert to Christianity?
- 4 Make a table showing what life was like for Christians before and after Constantine's conversion.
- 5 What was the Arian controversy and how was it settled?

*Need to answer*

## Unit 1: History and belief The Great Schism and the Catholic Church

If someone is genuinely sorry for what he or she has done and wants to change, the priest will give the person **penance**. Priests must never reveal what people tell them in confession.

### Fact

In Catholic churches, the communion service is known as Mass. Often, the priest drinks any wine left over from the Eucharist. This is because they believe that it is Jesus's blood, so it should not be wasted.

### Holy water

Near the entrance in Catholic churches there is often a small bowl of water that has been blessed by a priest. Catholics dip two fingers in the water and make the sign of a cross. They do this by moving their hand from their forehead to their chest and then from their left shoulder to their right shoulder. While doing this, Catholics usually say 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' to express their belief in the Trinity and to remind them of their baptism.

### Purgatory

Most Christians believe in heaven and hell. Catholics also believe in purgatory, which is not mentioned in the Bible. Catholics believe that purgatory is where souls are purified before going to heaven. A soul cannot go from purgatory to hell. By praying for a dead person's soul, Catholics believe that they can speed the passage from purgatory to heaven.

### The Virgin Mary

Catholics place greater importance on Jesus's mother, Mary, than many other Christian denominations. They believe that unlike all other humans Mary was born into the world without sin. Catholics believe that when Mary died her body and soul were taken to heaven. They pray to Mary because they believe that she will act on their behalf before God when they reach heaven.

### Activity

Divide your page into four boxes. In each box draw an image that represents a Catholic belief and explain the belief.

### Check your understanding

- 1 What was the Great Schism and why did it happen?
- 2 What do Catholics believe happens during the Eucharist?
- 3 How do Catholics receive forgiveness for their sins?
- 4 How do Catholic beliefs about life after death differ from those of other Christians?
- 5 Why is Mary important in Catholicism?

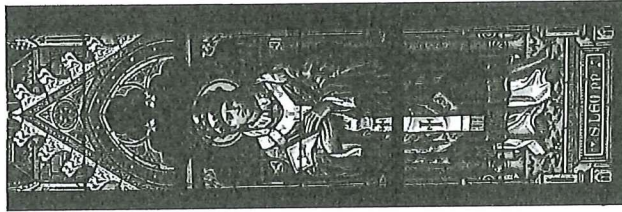
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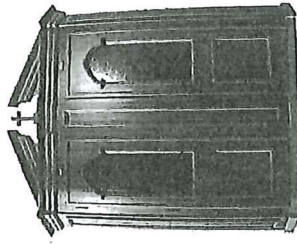
There is often a statue of Mary in Catholic churches.

### Key vocabulary

**confessional** A booth where Catholics ask a priest to grant them God's forgiveness  
**Eucharist** The practice of eating bread and drinking wine during a church service  
**penance** Prayer or some other action to show that one is sorry for sinning  
**transubstantiation** The belief that the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Jesus during the Eucharist



Pope Leo I suggested that whoever held the title of Bishop of Rome would also be leader of the Christian Church.



A traditional confessional.

Why did the Church in the East split from the Church in the West in 1054 and how do Catholic beliefs differ from those of other denominations?

### The Bishop of Rome

When Christianity began, Rome was the most important city in the Roman Empire, so the Bishop of Rome was effectively in charge of the whole Church. As Rome declined in importance, however, there was less reason for the Bishop of Rome to have greater powers than other bishops.

In c. 440, the Bishop of Rome was a man named Leo. Leo did not want to lose his power and influence, so he said that before Jesus ascended to heaven he had put his disciple Peter in charge of the whole Church. Leo claimed that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome and that the authority given to Peter by Jesus was passed from one Bishop of Rome to the next.

For many centuries, people accepted this decision, but by 1054 Christians in the East no longer wanted to be led by the Bishop of Rome (whom we now call the Pope). In addition, Christians in the West wanted to change the wording of the Nicene Creed. Christians in the East did not want this. These disagreements led to the 'Great Schism' – a split in the Church. The Church in the East became known as the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Church in the West became the Catholic Church.

### The Catholic Church

Today, approximately half of Christians follow Catholicism. Catholics have some beliefs that other Christians do not share.

### Transubstantiation

Christians often have Holy Communion services at church, where they eat bread and drink wine to remember Jesus's death. This is known as the **Eucharist**. Catholics, however, believe that when the priest repeats Jesus's words from the Last Supper, the bread and wine actually turn into the body and blood of Jesus (although their outward appearance stays the same). This is called **transubstantiation**. Other Christian denominations think that the bread and wine symbolise Jesus's body and blood, but are not transformed.

### Confession

In order to be forgiven for their sins, Catholics go to confession. They sit either face to face with a priest or in a **confessional** and explain how they have sinned. In a confessional, they are separated by a wall with a grid or curtain in it so that the priest and the person confessing cannot see each other.

## Unit 1: History and belief Who is the Pope?

There are about 1.1 billion Catholics in the world, so the head of the Catholic Church, the Pope, is an extremely influential figure. How is he chosen?

### From Peter to Francis

Catholics believe that the Pope is a successor of the disciple Peter, whom Jesus put in charge of the Church. The Pope lives in the world's smallest country, Vatican City, which is located in Rome. Popes can come from anywhere in the world, but there has only ever been one British Pope – Adrian IV, who was chosen in 1154. The current Pope, Francis, is from Argentina and is the first non-European to hold this office for more than 1300 years.



Francis is the 266th pope.

### Secrecy and smoke

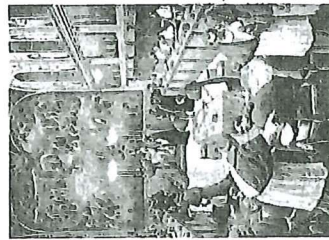
After the Pope, the most senior leaders in the Catholic Church are **cardinals**. They are sometimes called 'Princes of the Church'. There are over 200 cardinals, from different countries.

Catholics believe that the Pope is chosen by God through a meeting of cardinals called a **conclave**. This is a highly secretive process. All cardinals who are under 80 years old meet in Vatican City to discuss which of them will be the next pope. They are not allowed any contact with the outside world during this time. All newspapers, TV, radio, internet and mobile phones are banned.

After the discussion, a secret vote is held in the Sistine Chapel. A cardinal needs two-thirds of all the votes to become Pope, so sometimes there are several rounds of voting. After each vote, the ballot papers are read and then burned, giving off black smoke from the chimney of the Sistine Chapel.

### Fact

When someone becomes Pope, he chooses a new name for himself. The name shows people what issues the Pope feels are important and whose example he might follow. Pope Francis named himself after the twelfth-century Saint Francis of Assisi, who was very concerned about the poor and caring for the natural world.



Catholics believe that the Holy Spirit guides the conclave.

When a new pope has been chosen, chemicals are added to the papers, causing the smoke to turn white. A bell is also rung from St Peter's Basilica. During this process, huge numbers of Catholics from all over the world gather in Vatican City to wait for the announcement. The only clue they have about what is happening inside is the smoke and bell. Once the Pope is appointed, he makes his first public appearance. He usually makes a short speech and gives a blessing to the waiting crowds.

### The first conclave

The first conclave took place in 1268. Local villagers had become angry at how long it was taking the cardinals to choose the new Pope, so they locked them in the palace. To encourage the cardinals to make a decision, the villagers tore the roof off the palace and gave them only bread and water to eat and drink. The conclave lasted nearly three years and three of the twenty cardinals died while it was happening.

### The Pope and the public

In 1981, someone tried to assassinate Pope John Paul II. Since then, popes have usually travelled in a bullet-proof vehicle nicknamed the 'Popemobile'. However, Pope Francis prefers not to travel in the Popemobile because he feels that it separates him from people. He has also chosen not to live in the palace where the Pope traditionally lives. Instead, he lives in a small flat that is normally used by guests who are visiting the Pope.

On the Thursday before Easter Sunday – Maundy Thursday – it is traditional for the Pope to wash and kiss twelve chosen people's feet. This is a re-enactment of Jesus's washing of his disciples' feet, as recorded in the New Testament. In 2015, Pope Francis broke with tradition by doing this in a prison. In 2016, he became the first Pope to include women and Muslims in this ritual, which took place at a refugee centre.

### Activity

Imagine you are a newspaper reporter in Vatican City on the day that Pope Francis is elected. Describe the atmosphere, what is happening, how the Catholic crowds are feeling and why it is an important day for them.

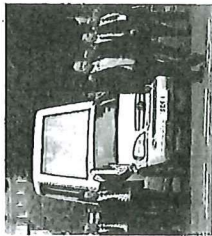
### Key vocabulary

**cardinals** The most senior members of the Catholic Church, after the Pope  
**conclave** The meeting at which a new pope is elected

### Check your understanding

- 1 How many Catholics are there in the world?
- 2 What do Catholics believe about the Pope?
- 3 Explain in detail how the Pope is chosen.
- 4 What is the significance of Pope Francis's name?
- 5 Explain three ways in which Pope Francis has broken with tradition.

*Read answers*



The bullet-proof glass in the Popemobile keeps the Pope safe while he is out in public.



Pope Francis kissing a prisoner's feet.

# How did Plato think we can know the truth?

Why did Plato think that our senses cannot tell us what is real?

Western philosophy began approximately 2500 years ago in Ancient Greece. Two of the earliest and most influential Ancient Greek philosophers were **Plato** and **Aristotle**. Plato observed that everything in the world was constantly changing. For example, things age, change temperature, size and shape. Nothing in the world that we can see, smell, taste, touch or hear stays the same. Therefore, the moment we think we have understood something, it has changed and so is no longer the same thing. This led Plato to conclude that we cannot rely on our five senses to give us accurate information about reality. It is only possible to gain true knowledge by using our minds, or reason alone, to reflect on unchanging things. Plato believed these unchanging things exist in another realm.

### Think

Think of three things you know for certain. Can you prove for certain that these things are true? How?

### The Realm of Forms

Plato thought there are two different parts to a human: a physical body and a non-physical, immortal soul. He argued that before the soul joined the body, it lived in another realm called the **Realm of Forms**. In the Realm of Forms, there is a perfect, unchanging 'form' of the things that can be seen in the world around us. For example, goodness, honesty and beauty exist in their perfect, unchanging form. It is unclear whether Plato thought that there is a perfect form of every quality and object in the Realm of Forms – for example, a perfect form of badness, jealousy, apple, tree, insect and so on – or whether he thought that there were only perfect forms of some qualities, such as goodness.

### The Realm of Appearances

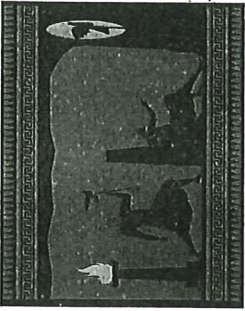
Plato called the world in which we live the **Realm of Appearances**. He claimed everything in the Realm of Appearances is merely a reflection or shadow of its real, true form. He believed that when we see something in the world, such as beauty, we recognise that it is similar to the perfect form of beauty that our soul experienced in the Realm of Forms. However, everything that we see in this world is simply an imperfect, shadowy copy of its true form. For example, if we were to zoom in closely, we would realise that every circle we have ever seen is an imperfect circle. However, we still recognise the shapes as circles because they are similar to the perfect form of circle. Likewise, we have never experienced a perfect act of kindness, but we call things 'kind' because they resemble the perfect form of kindness.



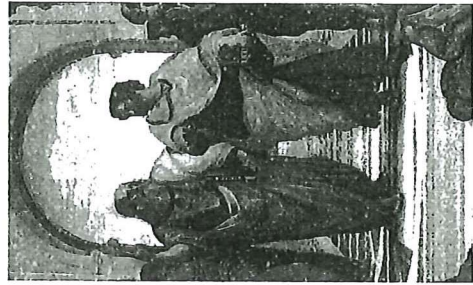
How does an apple constantly change? What about a non-living thing, like a table?

### The analogy of the cave

To illustrate his theory, Plato told a story called the *analogy of the cave*. He asks us to imagine prisoners who have spent their entire lives in an underground cave. They sit in front of a small wall, behind which is a fire that provides light. Every day, people walk past the wall carrying various objects. The prisoners cannot see the fire, the people or the objects. They can only see the shadows of the different objects reflected onto the cave wall they are facing. However, the prisoners think that the shadows are the actual objects; they do not realise they are shadows. Plato thought that people who trust their five senses to give them knowledge of the world are like the prisoners who think they are seeing reality, but are only seeing shadows or reflections of it.



Plato used the analogy of the cave to explain his ideas about human knowledge.



Raphael's painting *The School of Athens* portrays these two differing views. Plato is pointing up to show that we gain knowledge by using reason to reflect on the Realm of Forms. Aristotle is indicating towards the Earth to show that we gain knowledge by using our senses and the world around us.

Many have criticised Plato's belief in the Realm of Forms because he provided no evidence of its existence. One critic was Plato's student Aristotle, who attended a school of philosophy set up by Plato in Athens. Aristotle disagreed with Plato that we can only understand reality by using reason. He did not believe in the Realm of Forms or that humans have a soul that is separate to our body. According to Aristotle, there is no reason to doubt that the things we see are real, and so we should use our five senses to understand reality.

Aristotle is known as an empiricist because he believed that we gain knowledge through our senses (**empiricism**). Plato was a rationalist meaning he believed that knowledge is gained through using our reason (**rationalism**). Today, most people believe that both rationalism and empiricism are helpful in understanding different things.

### Key vocabulary

**empiricism** The theory that knowledge is gained through our five senses

**rationalism** The theory that knowledge is gained through reason

**Realm of Appearances** Plato's name for the world in which we live

**Realm of Forms** Plato's name for a perfect realm where our souls previously lived

### Check your understanding

- 1 Why did Plato claim that we cannot rely on our senses to understand reality?
- 2 Explain what Plato believed about the Realm of Appearances and the Realm of Forms.
- 3 Explain what happens in Plato's analogy of the cave.
- 4 What message is Plato trying to communicate through the analogy?
- 5 How were Aristotle's views different from those of Plato?

Read + answer

## Unit 1: Philosophy of religion

# Why did Descartes doubt everything?

How did Descartes think we can know what is true?

### Are our senses deceiving us?

Think of something that you know is definitely true. How can you be certain? This was the question that troubled the 17th-century Christian philosopher, **René Descartes**. How can we be sure that anything that we *think* is real and true actually *is* real and true and not an illusion?

To solve this problem, Descartes decided that he would doubt everything that he believed; he would then see whether there was anything left at the end that he could know for certain. If he could not be 100 per cent certain about a belief, it would fail his test. Descartes decided that he could not trust his senses to tell him what is true because sometimes our senses give us false information. For example, when a drinking straw is put in water it looks bent, but this is not really the case. Sometimes we also think we have seen or heard something, but haven't. Therefore, Descartes ruled out the possibility of knowing anything for certain through empiricism (senses).

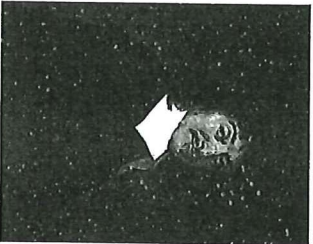
### Are our minds being tricked?

Descartes also ruled out knowing anything for certain through rationalism (reason), for example mathematical truths such as  $2 + 2 = 4$ . He thought that he could not prove that there is not an evil demon tricking us into thinking  $2 + 2 = 4$  every time we do the sum when actually  $2 + 2 = 5$ ! Descartes was troubled by the fact that everything his mind thought was real and true could be an illusion – he could be nothing more than a mind trapped in an evil demon's laboratory. If this were the case, Descartes wondered, what one thing could the demon *not* trick his mind about?

Descartes realised that the demon would not be able to trick his mind into thinking it existed if it did not. In order for the demon to trick his mind, he would have to have a mind. He summed up this idea by writing one of the best-known lines in all of philosophy: 'I think; therefore I am.'

### The first certainty

Descartes thought that the fact he could doubt his own existence meant he must exist. He did not think this proved he had a body; the demon could be tricking him into thinking he had a body. However, he must have a thinking mind; otherwise there would be nothing for the demon to trick. Descartes did not think that this could prove that anybody else existed; these could still be illusions. It wouldn't work for him to say, 'You think; therefore you are' or 'We think; therefore we are', but he could be certain of his own existence. This is sometimes called the **first certainty** and is often written in Latin, *cogito ergo sum*.



French philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650)

### Is the idea of God tattooed on our minds?

Although Descartes had managed to find one thing of which he could be certain, he wasn't satisfied with stopping there. In order to add further certainties, Descartes claimed that the idea of God is imprinted on our minds. In other words, people are born with an understanding of God. This is known as the **trademark argument**. Descartes thought that we have an inbuilt knowledge that God is 'the sum of all perfections'. By this, Descartes meant that God possesses every perfect characteristic – for example, God is completely loving, powerful and wise. Descartes also thought that in order for God to be perfect, he must exist. This is because things that exist in reality are better than things that only exist in our minds. For example, having one million pounds is better than the idea of having one million pounds. Existence is a perfection, so if God is the sum of all perfections, then he must exist.

The existence of a perfect God was important for Descartes because he thought that if a perfect God exists, God would not let his senses and mind be deceived. Therefore, Descartes concluded that he could trust that his mind and senses were giving him accurate knowledge about the world most of the time.

### Was Descartes right?

Many people would disagree with Descartes that all humans are born with the idea of God imprinted on their minds. If everybody were born knowing what God is, then everybody would believe in the same God. However, through history, people have had very different ideas about what God is like. They have also disagreed about whether there is one god, many gods or no gods at all.

Secondly, many people would question Descartes' claim that things that exist in reality are better than things that exist in the imagination. For example, sometimes the idea of eating a delicious food can be better than actually eating it.

Furthermore, Descartes argues that God exists because in order for God to be perfect, God must exist. However, he does not begin by proving that there is a perfect god; he simply states that this is the case because he has been born with the idea of a perfect god imprinted on his mind.

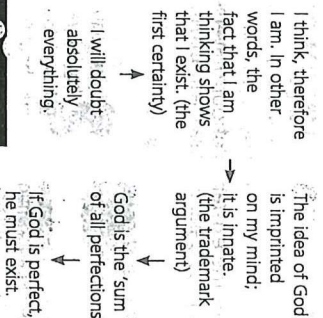
### Check your understanding

- 1 Why did Descartes decide to doubt everything?
- 2 Why did Descartes initially rule out knowing things through empiricism and rationalism?
- 3 What did Descartes mean by the phrase, 'I think; therefore I am'?
- 4 How did Descartes think that the idea of God made it possible to know things for certain?
- 5 Why might Descartes' view be criticised?

*Good answers!*



Descartes' thought journey



### Key vocabulary

**first certainty** 'I think; therefore I am.'  
 Descartes' realisation that the fact he thinks shows that his mind must exist

**trademark argument** Descartes' argument that humans are born with the idea of God imprinted on their minds

# Was God the first cause of everything?

Does the existence of our universe provide evidence that God exists?

## Summa Theologica

Over the course of history, religious philosophers have developed arguments that aim to show that it is reasonable to believe in God. For example, the 13th-century Italian philosopher, **Thomas Aquinas** wrote a 4000-page, unfinished work about God called *Summa Theologica*. The two most famous pages explain his 'Five Ways' – five attempts to demonstrate that it is reasonable to believe in God. His Third Way is known as the **First Cause argument**.

## The First Cause argument

Aquinas noticed that everything that exists relies on something else for it to begin existing; it is impossible for something to cause itself to exist because this would require it to exist before it existed! Aquinas did not think it logical to believe there had been an **infinite regress** (endless causes). He thought that something must have been a first cause and so he argued that there must be a skilful, powerful being who was the first cause of everything else. This is known as the First Cause argument. In short, the argument is:

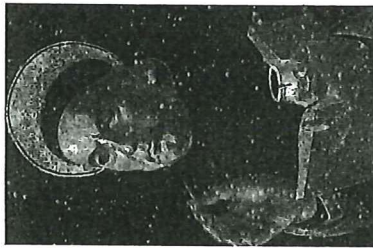
1. Everything in the universe has a cause.
2. If everything in the universe has a cause, the universe itself must have a cause.
3. The cause of the universe must be God.

## Does the argument prove anything?

Some people think that Aquinas contradicts himself by arguing that everything needs a cause, whereas God does not. In response, it could be argued that God is outside the universe he created, and so he does not need a cause like everything in it. He is eternal.

Secondly, Aquinas assumes that an infinite regress is impossible, but this might not be the case. Even though it is hard for us to imagine, maybe there is an endless sequence of causes that goes back forever, meaning there was no beginning.

Thirdly, even if Aquinas was right that there was a first cause, it could be any kind of being or force, not necessarily the Christian God. Many scientists would argue that the Big Bang caused the universe. In response, a Christian could argue that God caused the Big Bang.



Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) was one of the most influential theologians and philosophers ever to have lived.

### Fact

Towards the end of his life, Aquinas concluded that everything he had written about God was like 'straw' because God is a mystery that cannot be fully understood by human minds.



To topple all the dominoes, something must make the first domino fall. In the same way, the First Cause argument claims that there must have been a first cause of the universe.

## The fallacy of composition

The 18th-century Scottish philosopher, **David Hume**, was one of the first people to challenge religious belief. He claimed that the First Cause argument was based on a **logical fallacy** called the **fallacy of composition**. This fallacy is when one claims that what is true of something's parts must be true of the whole. For example, just because every player in a football team is good, that does not mean the team is good. In the same way, just because everything in the universe needs a cause, that does not mean the universe itself needs a cause.

## The Design argument

In his Fifth Way, Aquinas argued that natural things in the world appear to have been designed and that this shows that there is an intelligent designer: God. This is known as the **Design (or teleological) argument** and can be summarised as follows:

1. The world around us looks as if it has been designed.
2. Designed things need an intelligent designer.
3. The intelligent designer of the world is God.

Inspired by Aquinas's original idea, an 18th-century English philosopher and priest called **William Paley** used the example of a watch in his version of the Design argument. He noted that all the complex parts of a watch fit together in an orderly way so that it can achieve its purpose of telling the time. This is not simply an accident that has happened by chance; it is because a watch has a watchmaker. Just as a watch needs a watchmaker, he argued, then something even more complex, orderly and purposeful like the world must have a world maker.

## Does the argument prove anything?

The Design argument has been criticised for many reasons. Hume argued that the designer could be any sort of being or beings. Others have argued that the evil and suffering in the world are evidence of a bad designer not a perfect, god-like designer.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the Design argument is **Charles Darwin's** theory of evolution by natural selection (see Topic 1.5) because it provides another explanation for why things look designed. Living things have adapted over millions of years, becoming more complex in order to survive. If they had not adapted and become complex, they would have died out. In response, it could be argued, if evolution is a blind, unconscious process, without anyone guiding it, it would be unlikely to result in something as complex as a human. Therefore, some would argue that perhaps God uses the method of evolution to create complex forms of life.

## Check your understanding

- 1 Who was Thomas Aquinas and what did he write?
- 2 Explain the First Cause argument.
- 3 With reference to Hume, explain why the First Cause argument might be criticised.
- 4 Explain the Design argument and why it might be criticised.
- 5 'The existence of our complex universe makes it likely that there is a god.' Discuss.

Read + answer



Paley compared the world to an intricately designed watch.

## Key vocabulary

### Design (or teleological) argument

The argument that the world looks designed and so has a designer – God

### Fallacy of composition

An argument that wrongly claims that what is true of something's parts must also be true of the whole thing

### First Cause argument

The argument that everything in the universe needs a cause and so the universe also needs a cause – God

### Infinite regress

An endless sequence of causes with no beginning

### Logical fallacy

A statement that is logically flawed

# Is God involved in the world?

Do religious experiences provide evidence that God exists?

## Do people experience God?

One reason people might believe in a god or higher power is because they believe they have experienced something supernatural. For example, they might claim that they have seen an angel, that God has spoken to them or that they have experienced a **miracle**, such as being healed of an illness. These experiences can cause a person to believe in God or strengthen their existing religious belief.

However, religious experiences do not provide such convincing evidence for those who have not had the experience. They are required to trust that the person claiming to have had a religious experience is not lying for some reason – for example, to achieve fame, earn money or persuade others that their religion is true. Even if someone believes that they are telling the truth about their experience, it is possible that they have misinterpreted what happened. This might be especially likely when they are tired, grieving, fasting or under the influence of drugs.

## Does God answer prayers?

Another reason people might believe in God is that they feel a sense of God's closeness or presence when they pray. They may also believe that some of their prayers have been answered. However, others would argue many prayers appear *not* to be answered. It would seem random for some prayers to be answered while others are not. Doubters would say that it is more likely to be just a coincidence when prayers appear to be answered.

In response, a religious person might argue that there could be good reasons why God would not answer some prayers. Some prayers might be selfish or logically impossible to answer. For example, if two people prayed for their team to win a football match, it would not be possible for God to grant both requests. God's plan might be different from what people want and he might be doing what is best for people by *not* giving them what they ask for.

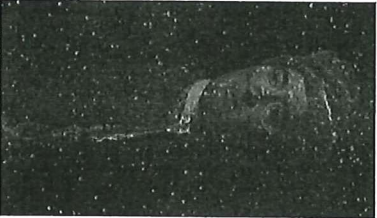
Some people argue that claiming that we cannot understand why God acts in the way that he does is making an excuse for God rather than providing a good reason. Others argue that it is reasonable to think that some things, such as the activity of God, are beyond human understanding.



Prayer is an important part of many religions.

## Hume's criticism of miracles

The philosopher David Hume was very critical of belief in miracles. He thought that people are naturally fascinated by things that seem unusual and bizarre, and as they pass these things on, they exaggerate. He thought that people should only believe in a miracle if it was more remarkable or surprising than the miracle *hadn't* happened than if it had happened. He also claimed that, in all of human history, there is no example of a miracle that was witnessed by enough sensible, educated people to believe it really happened.



David Hume (1711–1776)

## Has anybody seen God?

Sometimes people say that the only thing that would make them believe in God is if they saw him. Christians believe that, 2000 years ago, people living in the Middle East did see God because he came to Earth in the person of Jesus and lived among them. His life is written about in four books found in the Bible called the Gospels.

## The Four Gospels

The **Gospels** are the first four books of the New Testament. They describe the life and teachings of Jesus and are named after the four men traditionally thought to have written them: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. In the Gospels, Jesus speaks and acts as if he was God; for example, he forgives people for their sins, talks about what heaven is like and performs over 35 miracles, such as turning water to wine, walking on water, healing ill people and coming back to life after he is killed. In the books in the Bible that come after the Gospels, the authors claim that Jesus was God on Earth.

Most historians agree that a man named Jesus lived and that he was killed on a cross. However, there is much disagreement about whether the Gospels are a reliable source of information. They were written approximately 1900 years ago, and we do not have any certain information about their authors. It is possible that, after Jesus' death, people exaggerated what he had said and done in order to persuade others that he was God. Therefore, many people would say that there is not strong enough evidence to believe that Jesus was God on Earth.

Christians might respond by saying that they have experienced Jesus in their life, perhaps through prayer, a miracle or having a sense of him. They might argue that the brilliance of his teachings recorded in the Gospels shows that he was not just an ordinary person. Furthermore, Jesus is arguably the most influential person ever to have lived, with nearly one in three people in the world today following the religion that worships him – Christianity. A Christian might argue that it is unlikely that so many people can be completely wrong.



Jesus is arguably the most influential person ever to have lived.

## Key vocabulary

**Gospels** The first four books of the New Testament in the Bible, and teachings of Jesus

**miracle** An event that cannot be explained naturally and so is seen as an act of a god or gods

## Check your understanding

- 1 Explain why David Hume was critical of belief in miracles.
- 2 Do you think religious experiences provide convincing evidence that God exists?
- 3 Why might a Christian argue that Jesus was God?
- 4 Why might it be argued that Jesus does not provide strong evidence for God's existence?
- 5 Unanswered prayers show that God probably does not exist. Discuss.



In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is said to have walked on water.

# How should we live if God is dead?

Why did Friedrich Nietzsche accuse atheists of acting like Christians?

## 'God is dead'

**Friedrich Nietzsche** was a German atheist, famous for stating that 'God is dead, and we have killed him'. Nietzsche was not trying to say that humans had literally killed God. He meant that the idea of God was no longer necessary or plausible (believable) because science could now answer difficult questions about human existence instead.

*"We have killed him -- you and I. We are all his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? ... God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him."*

Friedrich Nietzsche



Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

## The death of morality

Nietzsche thought that the death of God should have dramatic consequences for how humans live. Christians believe that God decides what is right and wrong and reveals it to humans, but if God does not really exist, then it makes no sense to follow his rules or ideas. For example, there is no longer any need or reason to believe in forgiveness, caring for the weak or human equality. The death of God frees people to rethink how to live. It allows us to start afresh and create a new, more natural morality that reflects our true human nature.



The Ten Commandments, found in Jewish and Christian scripture, set out ten 'rules' for leading a moral life.

## The will to power and the enemy of life

Nietzsche believed that humans are driven by a desire for strength and power. He called this **the will to power**. Nietzsche thought that Christian morality was invented by weak, powerless people in order to control strong, powerful people. The weak trick strong people into believing that qualities such as selflessness, humility, forgiveness, equality and caring for the weak are 'good' whereas the actions that the strong, powerful people would naturally do are 'sinful' or 'evil'. This means that instead of living naturally, the strong are tricked into acting against their human nature and behaving in weak, unnatural ways to be 'good' and avoid sin. This is why Nietzsche described Christian morality as 'the enemy of life' and a 'crime against life'. Nietzsche hated the idea of sin because he thought it causes humans to feel ashamed of their natural instincts and dislike themselves.

## The doctrine of eternal recurrence

Nietzsche thought that if people wanted to know whether they were living a good life, they should ask themselves whether they would be willing for their life to repeat itself in exactly the same way over and over if they would have regrets or be unhappy with their choices, then they were not living a good life. He called this idea 'the doctrine of eternal recurrence'. Nietzsche thought that only the truly strong people could accept the doctrine of eternal recurrence because it requires people to love life and accept the physical world as it is rather than find comfort in an imaginary god or illusory afterlife. He imagined a future stage of human development where there would be a higher form of being called an Übermensch (Superman) whose hatred of weakness would lead him to defeat it and create his own strong morals.

## Was Nietzsche right?

Many atheists would argue that the morals that Nietzsche viewed as 'Christian' were not really Christian morals, but simply good and natural human morals. Therefore, atheists do not need to abandon their morality simply because they do not believe in the Christian God. Some philosophers have argued that humans are not motivated by power, but actually want to care for others and create equality. Their ideas influence humanists, who believe that people should use their natural reason, empathy and respect for others to make the world a better place for everyone. A humanist might argue that Nietzsche's ideas would lead to inequality and suffering, making the world a far less pleasant place for most people to live.

## Check your understanding

- 1 Who was Friedrich Nietzsche and what did he mean by 'God is dead, and we have killed him'?
- 2 Explain why Nietzsche thought that the 'death of God' was a good thing.
- 3 Explain Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence.
- 4 Why might a humanist disagree with Nietzsche?
- 5 'Nietzsche's ideas are wrong and the world would be a worse place if everyone followed them.' Discuss.

*Read + answer*

Nietzsche wrote:  
It is no surprise that lambs do not like great birds of prey. However, he didn't think that we should see great birds of prey as evil because they attack lambs. In the same way, people who are naturally strong and powerful should not be seen as evil for demonstrating their strength over others.

## Key vocabulary

**the will to power** A term used by Nietzsche to describe a natural human desire for strength and power

# Does the idea of God make sense?

Is it possible for God to be completely powerful, knowledgeable and loving?

## The paradox of omnipotence

Some people say that it is impossible for an omnipotent god to exist because omnipotence is illogical. This is often illustrated by the following example:

*Q: Can God create a rock that is too heavy for him to lift?*

*A: Yes. This means he is not omnipotent because there is something he cannot lift.*

*A: No. This means he is not omnipotent because there is something he cannot create.*

Some people argue that God cannot create a rock too heavy for him to lift, but this is not because God is not omnipotent; it is because the idea of a rock that God cannot lift is illogical, in the same way that God cannot create a square triangle, achieve 11/10 in a test or create a dog that is also a fish. Others argue that God is not limited by logic in the way that humans are. If there are things that God cannot do, then he cannot be omnipotent because there is something more powerful than him. Others argue that omnipotent means being the most powerful being in the universe, but not being able to do anything.

## Can God be omniscient if humans are free?

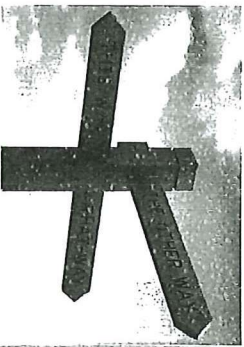
Some people also argue that God cannot be omniscient if humans have **free will**. This is because if God knows with absolute certainty what we are going to do in the future, then there is nothing that we can do to change what is going to happen. For example, if God knows for certain that you are going to tell a lie tomorrow, then it is already fixed that you will do this and you cannot not do it. If we do not have free will, it seems unfair for God to judge us for our actions because we are not able to choose to do otherwise. Others argue that it is possible for God to know what we will freely choose to do without in any way controlling it.

## Why doesn't God stop suffering?

Many people argue that if God was truly **omnibenevolent** and **omnipotent**, then there would be no suffering in the world. The suffering caused both by natural disasters and disease as well as human actions show that there is no God – or at least not an omnibenevolent, omnipotent and omniscient one. This is known as the **problem of evil**.



The question of whether it is possible for God to be all-powerful is known as the 'paradox of omnipotence'.



If God knows everything, is it possible for humans to be free?

In response, religious philosophers argue that it is possible for there to be a good reason why an omnibenevolent god would allow evil and suffering. It could be to test and strengthen people's belief in God, to help their character grow or because to stop suffering would require God to take away our free will, which would be suffering. Perhaps a world where humans are free, but can choose to do evil is the best possible world. This is because a world where people's actions had neither good nor bad intentions would be a world where neither good nor evil would be possible. It would simply be a bland, neutral world where no action had any meaning.

For some people, the problem of evil is enough to convince them that God does not exist. Others argue that the only way we could know why an omnipotent, omnibenevolent god would allow evil is if we knew what omnipotent, omnibenevolent gods usually do, or if we were this god. As neither of these is possible, the reason why God allows evil and suffering remains a mystery, but our inability to know the reason does not mean that there is not a good one.

However, some people would say that defending God by saying he is a mystery is an unsatisfactory way of resolving the problem of evil. In response, it could be argued that the view we should be able to understand an infinite god with finite minds, is equally unreasonable. This point was made by a 5th-century Christian philosopher named Augustine, who claimed that if you think you have fully understood God, you are wrong; you have simply understood your own invented idea of God.

◀ If you think you have grasped him, it is not God you have grasped. <sup>99</sup> St Augustine of Hippo

## Key vocabulary

- apophatic theology** The view that God cannot be accurately described in positive language, only by saying what God is not
- free will** The ability to choose between right and wrong
- omnibenevolent** All-loving
- omnipotent** All-powerful
- omniscient** All-knowing
- problem of evil** The argument that evil and suffering shows that an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent god does not exist

## Watch your language

Some philosophers argue that the problems described above arise because our language is too limited to express the essence of God. There is nothing that we can say that accurately expresses what God is like. Therefore, some Christians think that they should only talk about what God is *not*, rather than what he is. This is known as **apophatic theology**. For example, they would say that God is not bad and not weak, but neither is he good or powerful, because this limits God to ideas of good and powerful that we use to describe imperfect things in the world.

Some would go as far as saying 'God is nothing'. They do not mean that God is not real, but that there is literally no 'thing' in the universe that can be used to describe God because he is completely different from everything that exists. He is in a category of his own and is not describable or even fully knowable by human senses or reason.

## Check your understanding

- 1 Explain two ways that a religious person might understand omnipotence.
- 2 Do you think it is possible for humans to have free will if there is an omniscient god?
- 3 Explain two ways that a religious person might defend God against the problem of evil.
- 4 Explain why some people believe in apophatic theology.
- 5 'The idea of God does not make sense.' Discuss.

*Read + answer*

## Are goodness and pleasure the same?

Should we decide if actions are right or wrong based on whether they produce pleasure?

### What is utilitarianism?

The 18th-century English philosopher **Jeremy Bentham** was an atheist, who did not think that God decides which actions are good or bad. Nor did Bentham think that goodness was about protecting people's rights. He described the idea that people naturally possess rights as 'nonsense on stilts'. Bentham thought that humans are simple creatures, motivated by the desire to avoid pain and experience pleasure. Therefore, when deciding on whether an action is good or bad, we should simply focus on how much pleasure or pain it will cause. If an action causes more pleasure than suffering, it should be viewed as good; if an action causes more suffering than pleasure, then it should be viewed as bad. Bentham's theory is known as **utilitarianism**.

Utilitarians think that the best action in any situation is the one that creates the greatest amount of pleasure or good for the greatest number of people. They are relativists, meaning they believe that no action is good or bad in all circumstances; whether an action is good or bad depends on its context and consequences.

**66** Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we shall do. **99**

Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789)

### The hedonic calculus

A difficulty with utilitarianism is that it is hard to measure happiness. To solve this, Bentham created a method of calculating happiness called the **hedonic calculus**. This involves considering on one side all the pleasure an action might produce and on the other side, any pain that it might cause. The amount of pain should then be subtracted from the amount of pleasure to find what Bentham called the 'utility' (usefulness) of an action – the more pleasure an action creates, the more useful it is. If there is no other action that creates a higher happiness value, then you have found the best action.

### Bentham: A radical thinker

Bentham's theory was radical because it was based on the idea that everyone's happiness was equally important; nobody's happiness was valued more highly because of their wealth or place in society. Although controversial at the time, Bentham's theory influences the way that governments make decisions today.

### Was Bentham right?

Bentham suggested that calculating happiness is as easy as calculating a mathematical sum. However, units of pleasure and pain are hard to quantify and often depend on an individual's opinion. Also, we cannot predict the future and so can never be certain of what the consequences of an action will be. Furthermore, there is often not time to apply the hedonic calculus to decisions, which reduces its usefulness: Some utilitarians would respond to this by saying that general rules should be created that work most of the time, rather than individuals working out what is right and wrong in every situation.

Critics of utilitarianism argue that right and wrong cannot simply be reduced to pleasure and pain; morality is more complicated than this and other things need to be considered. Bentham's view that no actions are always wrong and human rights do not exist could be used to justify cruelty to an individual or minority group if it created happiness for the majority. For example, if three prison guards took pleasure in torturing a prisoner, this would be allowed because it causes happiness to a greater number. Equally, if imprisoning an innocent person would make the inhabitants of a village feel safer after a crime had been committed, then there would be no reason not to do this.

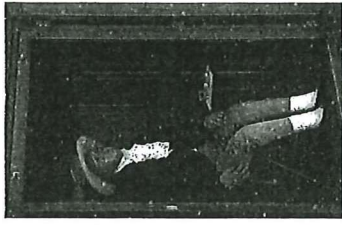
A 19th-century philosopher, **John Stuart Mill**, developed his own version of Bentham's theory that partly aimed to address this problem. Mill argued that there are both 'higher pleasures' and 'lower pleasures'. For example, he thought the pleasure to be found in reading Shakespeare is higher than the pleasure of a pig rolling in mud. He thought that it is not the *quantity* of the pleasure produced by an action, but the *quality* of the pleasure produced that is most important. However, deciding which pleasures should be viewed as higher and lower causes much disagreement.

### Robert Nozick's experience machine

An American philosopher, **Robert Nozick** (1938–2002) disagreed with utilitarianism. He claimed that, if it were possible to attach electrodes permanently to our brain that could trick us into thinking and feeling we were having any pleasurable experience we wanted, such as making a new friend or reading a book, many people would not choose to do it. This is because we want to actually do certain things and be certain sorts of people, for example, brave, intelligent and funny, not simply experience these as a result of deluded thoughts. Furthermore, plugging into the machine would limit us to experiencing an artificial reality that we had created for ourselves rather than true reality. Nozick thought that this shows that goodness cannot be reduced simply to pleasure; humans desire and value more than this.

### Check your understanding

- 1 What is utilitarianism?
- 2 Explain how the hedonic calculus works.
- 3 Why were Bentham's ideas radical and what happened after his death to keep them alive?
- 4 Explain two criticisms of utilitarianism.
- 5 'Utilitarianism is a helpful way of deciding what is right and wrong'. Discuss.



To help keep his ideas alive, Bentham wanted his body to be stuffed and put on display after his death. His preserved body can be found sitting on a chair in a glass box at University College London. His real head has been replaced with a wax one.

### Key vocabulary

**hedonic calculus** Jeremy Bentham's way of calculating which actions are right and wrong

**utilitarianism** The theory that the best action in any situation is the one which creates the greatest amount of good for the greatest number

*Radical thinker*

# What should we do with the runaway train?

Why did Philippa Foot think morality should not be based on the consequences of an action?

## Philippa Foot's runaway train thought experiment

Imagine you are standing on a railway bridge. Beneath you are five workers repairing the railway track. Either side of the track are slopes that are too steep and high to climb. Coming around the corner is a runaway train without a driver. It is hurtling towards the workers and they are certain to die. Next to you is a lever. If you pull the lever, it will cause the train to divert onto a separate track and the five people will be saved. However, there is one worker on the separate track who will be killed if you divert the train. You have two options and seconds to decide: Should you pull the lever?



Philippa Foot devised the original version of the train problem.

This is what is known as a **thought experiment** and was first created in 1967 by an English philosopher called **Philippa Foot**.

An absolutist might think that to actively do something that will kill one person is worse than not interfering and letting five people die. Therefore, they would say the right thing to do is to stand back and do nothing. However, most people would pull the lever and divert the train because they think it is better for one person to be killed than five.

### Should you kill the heavy man?

Imagine you are on the railway bridge again. This time, there is a heavy man standing next to you. If you push him onto the tracks, it will cause the train to stop before it reaches the five people. However, it will cause the heavy man to die. Should you throw the heavy man off the bridge? If not, how is killing the heavy man to save five people any different to pulling a lever to redirect the train and save five people?

### Is our morality consistent?

Philippa Foot created the runaway train thought experiment because she wanted to explore why people think it is right to kill a person to save others in some situations, but not in others. In her view, the thought experiment showed that the consequences of an action cannot be all that determines whether an action is right or wrong. Therefore, ethical theories such as utilitarianism are flawed.



Philippa Foot (1920–2010)

### Think

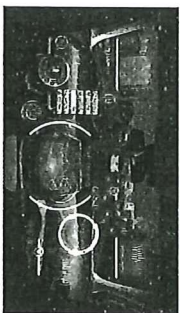
Would you pull the lever? Would you change your mind if one of the workers was a friend or relative? How would you justify your decision?

Foot gave another example to demonstrate this point. Imagine you are a surgeon. You have five patients who are all going to die if they do not receive a transplant that day. Two of the patients need one lung each, two need a kidney each and the other patient needs a heart. A healthy young man walks into the hospital with all five things that are needed. If you chop him open and take out his organs, the other five people will be saved, but the young man will die. You ask the man if he is willing for this to happen, but he says he is not. Should you kill the healthy young man anyway to save the five people? Most people would think it wrong for the doctor to ignore the young man's request and kill him to take his organs. However, Foot wondered why we view this differently to killing one person on the train tracks in order to save five others.

Foot gave a further example. Imagine you are a judge. An unknown person has committed a crime. Rioters have taken five innocent people hostage. They are going to kill the five hostages unless you hold a trial and someone is executed for the crime. You only have two options. Should you let the rioters kill the five hostages, or should you accuse an innocent person of the crime and sentence them to death in order to save the five hostages? Again, most people think that it would be wrong for the judge to sentence an innocent person to death, but this seems inconsistent with a willingness to pull a lever to kill one worker on the train tracks.

### The ethics of programming driverless cars

The ethical questions raised by the runaway train are similar to those facing people who programme decisions into driverless cars. For example, if a driverless car's brakes fail forcing it to crash into an equal number of people whichever way it turns, how should it choose which way to crash? Should humans be prioritised over animals? Children over adults? Pedestrians over passengers? Furthermore, who is responsible for any of those deaths? Perhaps most importantly, who should have the power to choose the decisions that are programmed into the car?



The invention of driverless cars raises many ethical questions.

### Key vocabulary

**thought experiment**  
An Imaginary scenario invented to examine the consequences of a philosophical idea

### Check your understanding

- In each of the runaway train scenarios, what do you think the person on the railway bridge should do and why?
- Why did Philippa Foot create the runaway train thought experiment?
- Do you think pulling the lever is less wrong than the doctor or judge killing one person? Explain why.
- What are some of the ethical issues facing designers of driverless cars?
- The only thing to consider when making ethical decisions is the number of people affected. Discuss.

*Answers*