

Core Curriculum

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1 God, Religion and Islam: An Introduction

1.1

The Problem of Evil, Suffering and Pain

Question : What is the emotional problem of evil?

Answer : It is people's dislike or even hatred of God who permits suffering in the world. They are angry that God doesn't do anything about it.

Question : What is the intellectual problem of evil?

Answer : This problem sees God and evil as mutually incompatible from a logical perspective.

Question : What is one of the main reasons why God allows evil in this world?

Answer : Human evil is produced by free will. By preserving human free will, God allows humans to flourish and reach their highest potential of the good. But free will also means that humans can choose the wrong path.

Question : Why doesn't God punish people who do evil?

Answer : He does punish them, but that can take place in this world (if they are lucky) or take place in the Hereafter if they are unlucky as punishment in the next life is much worse.

Question : Are there rewards for people who suffer from evil in this world?

Answer : Yes, one of the rewards is having sins forgiven.

1.2

God, Allah and Religion

Question : What does Allah mean?

Answer : It is the Arabic word for God.

Question : Why did God send down revelation and religion?

Answer : In order to guide humankind to salvation and purify their hearts from evil and heedlessness of Him.

Question : Does God want us to enter hell?

Answer : No, His will is that we enter heaven through our free will.

Question : Why does God punish us?

Answer : In order to wake us up and realize our mistakes.

Question : What is the difference between deism and God in Islam?

Answer : In deism, God is distant from humankind and does not get involved in their affairs, whereas the God of Islam is closer to us than our jugular veins. He does all that is possible to guide us to salvation whilst maintaining our free will.

1.3

Introduction to Islam

Question : What is the purpose of the Qur'an?

Answer : It is to gear the human mind towards God and offer a social commentary for the purpose of reshaping human behavior in accordance with the Good life.

Question : Does Islam accept the Old and New Testament Prophets?

Answer : Yes, it accepts them for the most part.

Question : Does Islam believe in angels?

Answer : Yes, it believes in the Biblical angels like Gabriel and Michael.

Question : Is Islam a religion of belief or practice?

Answer : Both.

Question : Why was the Qur'an revealed in Arabic?

Answer : Because it was revealed to the Arabs who at the time were the worst of people in the Prophetic region of the Middle East. Furthermore, the Qur'an was revealed in that region as it was the center of the world where Africa and Asia connected together and thereby being an ideal place for the spread of Islam's message.

1.4

What is "Religion" and What's the Point of it Anyways?

Question : What is religion?

Answer : A way of life, a constitutive activity in the world

Question : What is the function of religion?

Answer : There is no agreement on this, but the Islamic view is that it functions as a system of knowing and desiring that guides and determines all of one's ways of looking at and acting in the world and all its various commitments and ways of organizing.

Question : Why is religion failing?

Answer : There is no agreement on this, but according to the Islamic view, religion, if seen as a way of life, is not failing. What is failing is our way of life in the form of a relationship with God.

Question : Why are we losing faith then according to Islam?

Answer : There is never a simplistic answer to these things. But one major reason is our state of heedlessness caused by the plenitude of distractions in the modern world, including TV, computers, internet, blind pursuit of a career etc.

Question : What is the Arabic word for religion?

Answer : Dīn

1.5

A Brief Introduction to the Prophet Muhammad (s), the Prophet of Islam

Question : What is a Hanif?

Answer : A person in the Arabian Peninsula who rejected idolatry and followed the religion of Abraham.

Question : What was the purpose of the Qur'an?

Answer : To change people's beliefs and attitude about God and teach them how to lead the good and moral life.

Question : Did pre-Islamic Arabs believe in Allah?

Answer : Yes they believed in God as the creator of the universe (Allah), however they also believed that He had children and had partner gods who ran the universe.

Question : Does the Qur'an acknowledge Old Testament Prophets?

Answer : Yes

Question : Does the Qur'an acknowledge the Torah and Gospel?

Answer : Yes, although it believes some of it may have been changed by people. The Qur'an is therefore a corrective to the tampering of the texts.