Theme 1 Religious figures and sacred texts

1A Jesus – his birth

Now Test Yourself – page 7

1 Name the three hymns from Luke’s narrative.
   - Magnificat.
   - Benedictus.
   - Nunc Dimitus.

2 Whose account includes the angel Gabriel?
   Luke’s.

3 Which account includes prophecies from Jewish scripture?
   Matthew’s.

Now Test Yourself – page 8

1 Name three things that the Matthew and Luke accounts have in common.
   - The two stories both support the doctrine of the incarnation.
   - Both agree on the cast of the holy family and their location in Bethlehem for Jesus’ birth and Nazareth for his upbringing.
   - Both agree on Mary’s virginity, betrothal to Joseph and conception by the Holy Spirit.

2 What is redaction criticism?
   Redaction criticism – a scholarly method of studying biblical texts. It views the writers as editors who selected and adapted materials from several sources to make their own theological or ideological points to their audience.

3 How can we tell that Luke aimed his account more at gentiles than at Jews?
   - Dedicated to ‘Theophilus’, either a Greek nobleman or any gentile followers of Christ.
   - Quotes in Greek from the Septuagint, not the Hebrew scriptures.
   - Emphasises Jesus’ humble nature through the shepherds’ visit, meagre sacrifice in the temple and stories from women.

What Do You Think? – page 9

Does redaction criticism show that the birth narratives are untrustworthy? Consider the following:

- When you read the newspaper, what makes the article believable?
  - How well it is written.
  - Whether it matches up with our common experience of the world.
  - Whether it equates with other reporters’ accounts.
  - Whether scientific or historical facts that can be checked are accurate.

- Why do people emphasise different things in a story?
  - They may have seen different things.
• They may have a different world view and so interpret events differently.
• They could have found different aspects of an event shocking/interesting/inspiring.
• Can an account of an event ever be considered untainted by the attitudes of the storyteller?
  • No:
    o Historical study always takes into account whether a source is primary, secondary or tertiary.
    o Historical study also recognises a tendency of all accounts to conform to the writers’ national, political or cultural bias.
    o No account can ever categorically be considered completely unbiased because a human understanding involves seeing things from a point of view.
  • Yes:
    o Only events that are scientifically verifiable can be considered objectively true.
    o If the account includes only actual events that took place and does not include interpretation or opinion about them.

1B Jesus – his resurrection

Now Test Yourself – page 10
1 What is meant by the term Sitz im Leben?
Situation in life.
2 What does Bultmann mean by demythologisation?
We should strip away the myths to get to a message that can be understood by a modern audience, but instead of disregarding it we should look for the kerygma in the mythological passages.
3 What does Bultmann think the resurrection myth is proclaiming?
We are sinful and have an inauthentic existence where we cling to the past and rely on our own efforts. God’s gift of salvation through Christ that enables human freedom to be authentic.

Now Test Yourself – page 11
1 How was the new Christian teaching of life after death different from Jewish teaching?
  • Christian belief was more sharply focused.
  • Everyone was to accept bodily resurrection.
  • This teaching became central rather than peripheral.
2 How is resurrection for Paul a two-stage event?
  • First Christ returns.
  • Then we are resurrected on Judgement Day.
3 Why does Wright call resurrection life after life after death?
Trying to indicate that it is not immediate but that first we live, then we die and have a period of time being dead, then we return in resurrected form.

What Do You Think? – page 13
Whose approach to the resurrection of Christ seems more convincing, Bultmann’s or Wright’s?
Consider the following:
• Does it matter for the Christian faith if the physical resurrection of Christ is a myth?
Yes, resurrection is central to the Christian faith and it is impossible to have Christianity without it.

No, the resurrection itself is pointless unless there is a deeper meaning behind it to teach us about our relationship with God. It is possible to understand the meaning without the actual event.

- Is a physical resurrection necessary to explain the emergence of Christianity?

Yes, the change from a sect of Judaism to Christianity as distinctly different would have required a big historical event to explain it. The behaviour of Jesus’ disciples was so unusual, the reality of the event is the best explanation.

No, human beings do behave unpredictably. Christ’s life and death were not necessarily identical to those of other failed messiahs and the state of mind of his disciples may have been a catalyst for a different response. There is too much information about the circumstances that is unknown to us, and too much that cannot be verified from other sources to conclude that resurrection is the only option.

1C The Bible as a source of wisdom and authority in daily life

Now Test Yourself – page 14

1 What is the Apocrypha?
Books contained within Roman Catholic and Orthodox Bibles, containing controversial teachings or not considered scripture in the Jewish tradition.

2 How do Jesus’ commands for moral behaviour differ from those of the Old Testament?
Jesus appears to address followers’ understanding of good moral behaviour by demanding moral perfection (Matthew 5:30 – even looking at a woman lustfully is adulterous) yet also a sense of practicality in moral behaviour (Luke 6:1–11 – Jesus plucks grain and heals the sick on the Sabbath).

3 Why would Christians consider the Bible to be an authority on matters of morality?
Because its commands come directly from God.

Now Test Yourself – page 16

1 What does the Bible teach is the primary focus of daily living?
The love of Christ.

2 What does Genesis teach about the purpose of human life?
The purpose of humanity is to be in the image of God, with qualities that reflect his, and to rule over the earth.

3 What is Heilsgeschichte?
The period of salvation history.

What Do You Think? – page 17

Can the Bible be regarded as authoritative as a source of practical teaching? Consider the following:

- What does authority mean and what does it require?
Power and/or reliability. An authority is powerful and requires obedience. An authoritative source of information would be required to be verifiable and consistent with other factual sources so that we can trust it.

- Can the Bible be said to possess the things we would usually require to call something authoritative?
Yes, since it is the word of God, it is powerful and can be trusted to contain truth since God is the ultimate truth.
No, it is not possible to verify any information contained in it and it is not internally consistent or consistent with any external sources.

- What difference does it make if we take a liberal attitude to the Bible rather than a fundamentalist one?

A fundamentalist attitude to the Bible will view everything in it as factual without question whereas a liberal attitude will accept that the Bible may contain errors or information that is no longer relevant or appropriate today. A liberal attitude will accept that the Bible contains an account of how people in that time and place understood and responded to God. Both may still see the Bible as useful or inspirational but in different ways.

Sample A01 Questions – page 20

1 Outline the arguments for and against the harmonisation of the birth narratives. (AS only)

- The birth narratives are recorded in the gospel books of Matthew and Luke only.
- There are significant differences between the two accounts.
- To harmonise the two birth narratives is to make both accounts work together.
- This is what tends to happen in practice when Christians recount the Christmas story.
- There are many reasons why harmonisation is possible:
  - The narratives do not directly contradict each other.
  - Both stories support the doctrine of the incarnation.
  - The holy family could have been visited by both magi and shepherds.
  - The flight to Egypt may not have happened immediately, it could have been up to two years after Jesus’ presentation at the temple.
  - Both stories agree on the cast of the holy family and their location in Bethlehem for Jesus’ birth and in Nazareth for his upbringing.
  - Both agree on Mary’s virginity, betrothal to Joseph and conception by the Holy Spirit.
- However, there are difficulties with harmonisation:
  - There is little of similarity between the two stories.
  - The authors were not eyewitnesses to these events.
  - The timescales of the two stories do not correspond. Luke has Mary and Joseph returning to Nazareth much sooner than Matthew does.
  - In Matthew, they originate from Bethlehem and settle in Nazareth, in Luke they come from Nazareth and return home.
  - Luke appears ignorant of some Jewish historical customs, e.g. only Mary would need purifying after the birth, not the whole family.
- Redaction criticism shows that Matthew and Luke may have selected and adapted materials from several sources to make their own theological or ideological points to their audiences. This makes the accounts less possible to harmonise because they have different goals.
  - Matthew is aimed at Jewish readers. He includes extensive genealogy to demonstrate Jesus’ heritage and connection with King David, he emphasises Jesus’ authoritative nature through visiting noblemen and threat to Herod, and includes multiple examples of prophecy that Jesus fulfilled.
  - Luke is aimed at Gentile readers, dedicated to ‘Theophilus’, either a Greek nobleman or any gentile followers of Christ. Luke quotes in Greek from the Septuagint, not the Hebrew scriptures, and emphasises Jesus’ humble nature through the shepherds’ visit, meagre sacrifice in the temple and stories from women.
- However, redaction criticism could show that while they manipulated the material to appeal to a certain audience, the essential core of the material remains the same.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

2 Compare the views of R. Bultmann and N.T. Wright on the resurrection narratives.
Rudolf Bultmann  |  N.T. Wright
---|---
If we view the world scientifically, it is impossible to accept the resurrection of Christ as an actual historical event.  |  Wright argues for the literal and physical resurrection of Christ in history rather than resurrection as a myth.
Bultmann employed a technique called form criticism. This involves classifying parts of scripture by their literary genre and identifies its historical context or Sitz im Leben.  |  He offers a study of beliefs about life after death that were around at the time of Christ to support his argument.
- The ancient Greeks – dualist concept of a disembodied soul.
- The Jewish faith had a range of ideas about life after death.
The biblical accounts of Christ’s resurrection are myths. Myths are reports of events that contain supernatural powers at work.  |  These accounts cannot be myths. Previous failed messiahs produced different reactions – to give up the cause, or to find a new messiah to lead the cause forward. Something different happened with Christ.
The modern reader no longer thinks in terms of first-century mythology, so scientific thinking has rendered the New Testament unintelligible for a modern audience.  |  Sudden mutation of Christian teaching about life after death demonstrates a real resurrection event:
- clear teaching in bodily resurrection
- this becomes central
- claim that Jesus has done it
- two-stage resurrection.
To get to the historical truth of the story, we must demythologise or strip away the myths to find a message that can be understood by a modern audience.  |  These mutations can have taken place only if Jesus had risen from the dead in bodily form. No other explanation accounts for this dramatic change.
For Bultmann, the resurrection is historically false but should not be completely dismissed. Instead we must look for the kerygma in the mythological passages.  |  Wright dismisses alternative explanations for Jesus’ resurrection as bad arguments. The resurrection is historically true.
The kerygma tells us we are sinful and have an inauthentic existence, but through Christ we have freedom to be authentic.  |  Wright calls resurrection life after life after death because it involves life, death, a period of being dead (for days or even thousands of years), then a return to life in a new body.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

3 Examine the different ways in which biblical teaching is used as a source of comfort and encouragement.
- The Bible is not one systematic book, it is a collection of books written by different people over a long period of time. Therefore, it does not give a coherent set of instructions that can be understood in only one way.
• The Bible is used by Christians in different ways, but all Christians look to it for inspiration and guidance. Those who take a fundamentalist approach will view all scripture as containing literal truth. Conservatives will consider scripture to be written by human beings who were inspired by God whereas a liberal approach will see scripture as being the writings of humans about God in the context of their society.

• Fundamentalists and some conservatives will consider the Bible to contain propositional truth or facts of faith.

• Scripture offers comfort to the reader in the form of God.

• Psalm 46:1–3 tells us that God is our refuge, strength and help when we are in trouble. We shouldn't be afraid, even of quaking earth, mountains and seas.

• This psalm encourages us to trust God because no matter how terrible events seem, he is steadfast in any adversity. When humans struggle with sin, temptation, bereavement, poverty, conflict or fear of death, they can all trust in God to give strength and help. Even the strongest people meet challenges – we do not face them alone.

• Some will view this as a promise by God to answer prayers for help when in trouble, or of God’s enduring qualities of power, knowledge and benevolence.

• Others might see this as emotional support – through the act of prayer Christians can gain the emotional strength they need to cope with life’s challenges.

• In Matthew 6:25 Jesus says we should not worry about our life, food, drink, body or clothes. Life is more than these things.

• In this Matthean passage, Jesus emphasises that there is more to life than temporary, material things. This is a comfort to people as they struggle with poverty or when things are lost, stolen or broken. It is also an encouragement to handle suffering with courage and to treat the poor equally, since we are not defined by our belongings. Death isn’t the end, there is hope for the future.

• Some will view this passage as being a promise of a life to come and this is comforting if this life is difficult.

• Others will take comfort in the thought that this passage reminds us that material things are only a part of this God-given life and that God provides us with more than that in the present moment. These Christians might be encouraged to take heart in the more spiritual or emotional aspects of the present life.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

4 Explain how the birth narratives demonstrate the doctrine of the incarnation.

• The incarnation of Jesus means that at a particular point in history, God was made flesh. Incarnation is based upon the Latin word ‘carnis’, which means flesh.

• The gospel writers did not intend to use the birth narratives to communicate the doctrine of the incarnation. Such doctrine did not exist then.

• The struggle to understand the nature of Christ as told in the birth narratives has brought controversy, but the doctrine of the incarnation claims that Christ:
  o is fully God and fully human
  o is united in the person of Jesus (hypostatic union)
  o is eternal and perfect
  o experienced life just as other humans do
  o was begotten, not created by the father.

• This concept is rejected by the other monotheistic faiths. The birth narratives provide an answer to the problem of who Jesus is.

• The substantial presence model of the incarnation claims that although unseen, God is fully and actually present in Jesus. Jesus had all the characteristics of God at birth, he did not develop or inherit them later. Evidence for this is taken from the birth narratives.
He is conceived through the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18/Luke 1:35).

Jesus is called Immanuel, ‘God with us’ (Matthew 1:23).

The magi seek Jesus out to worship him (Matthew 2:2).

Herod is threatened by him (Matthew 2:3).

Jesus seems protected from harm (Matthew 2:13).

- The kenotic understanding of the incarnation comes from the Greek ‘kenosis’, meaning ‘to make empty’. The reason for this model is that some questioned how God could become a helpless baby and apparently lose some of his attributes.

  - Paul describes Jesus being in ‘the form of God’ but ‘emptied himself’, taking ‘human likeness’ (Philippians 2:7).
  - Before the incarnation, Jesus chose to take the form of a human (Luke 2:40).
  - His suffering was real, demonstrated by his birth in Bethlehem (Luke 2:7) and his flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:14).
  - He limited himself and submitted to God’s will (Luke 2:21–22).

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

Sample AO2 Questions – page 20

1 Evaluate the view that scripture has no historical value.

There are so many acceptable ways to answer this question. The suggestion below is an abbreviation of an acceptable method but not the only one.

Introduction:

- Historical value – could mean a range of things: historical accuracy, insight into people’s lives through history, implications or insights from history that might have application today.

Paragraph one:

- There is a range of literature in the Bible: law, poetry, mythology, history, theology and so on. They have different functions and may all be valuable in different ways.
- However, these accounts are so ancient that there can be no value to scriptures in terms of speaking to us today – life is too different now.
- Yet these scriptures attempt to address universal questions that all human beings have, such as the meaning of life. These texts show that historically, people struggled with the same issues.

Paragraph two:

- These texts have no value because they contain material that is contrary to modern science and so cannot be historically true.
- However, the mythological nature of these texts may be said to hold the kerygma or preaching regarding God’s purpose for us. There is something of value hidden inside the myths. We can strip them away in order to find it.
- Yet there is no way of ensuring that we have interpreted the kerygma correctly or that we have resisted the urge to replace an old mythology with our new one. Thus, these texts are meaningless because we cannot access any truth within them.

Paragraph three:

- Scripture gives us insight into the lives of people in history and how they viewed their relationship with God. This liberal approach shows that we can learn from their behaviour and therefore there is value to it.
• However, there is no way of verifying any of these scriptures with reference to our own experience of life or against other historical texts. Much of what is contained in scripture is fantastical and therefore of little value.
• Yet if scripture is ‘God breathed’, it is to be valued with or without verification. Its historical value is only one aspect of it.

Conclusion:
• Wright views scripture as historically valuable since it offers us insight into the events that shaped Christianity. But this view rests on assumptions such as the accuracy of the resurrection narratives and the unlikelihood of the disciples inventing the stories. This goes against common experience of life and death and so the historical value of the texts remains in doubt.

2 ‘The birth narratives show no evidence of the doctrine of the incarnation.’ Evaluate this view.

Introduction:
• Evidence – a body of facts or information that confirms the validity of a belief or a proposition.

Paragraph one:
• The incarnation is the doctrine that God was made flesh in the form of Jesus. Therefore, the question asks whether there is anything in scripture to confirm that this event occurred. Both Matthew and Luke confirm that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit yet born of a human woman, thus giving evidence that Jesus’ birth was at least very unusual.
• However, the doctrine of the incarnation was not formulated at the time that the scriptures were written, thus indicating that Matthew and Luke were unaware of it and so could not write about it.
• Yet the evidence in scripture is present. The writers’ lack of awareness of a formal doctrine is in their favour. Their writing shows the evidence, even though they had no agenda to display it.

Paragraph two:
• If accounts are harmonised, both Jesus’ humanity and his divinity are clear. Matthew emphasises his divinity in the Old Testament prophecies and visitations from the magi. Luke emphasises his humanity in his humble beginnings and engagement with human ritual.
• However, the process of harmonisation is unconvincing as it relies upon unproven assumptions about the text. In addition, there are so many historical inaccuracies in Luke that it seems unreasonable to trust his ‘evidence’ as accurate.
• Yet the literary devices employed by the writers show something significant happened and this is a good reason to consider the narratives as evidence of God’s work in the world through Jesus’ birth.

Paragraph three:
• Matthew 1:23 calls Jesus Immanuel – God with us, a clear indication of his divinity and clear evidence of the incarnation.
• However, the human genealogies given in Luke and Matthew demonstrate only that Jesus was human. It makes no sense to trace the genealogy of Joseph’s line if he was not Jesus’ historical father.
• Yet the wise men emphasise the significance of Christ’s birth in Matthew. Along with his birth from a virgin and the visitations by angels in both Luke and Matthew, this suggests that God was present in the form of Christ.
Conclusion:

- The differences in the biblical accounts of Jesus’ birth, and the limited number of accounts to draw on, lead to doubt as to the amount of evidence offered for the incarnation. However, to say that they offer no evidence is not true. These accounts of the birth of Jesus, even if they are historically flawed, offer a basis for the more systematic doctrine of incarnation that later emerged.

1D The Bible as a source of wisdom and authority

Now Test Yourself – page 22

1 What is the Apocrypha?

Apocrypha – (Greek) hidden away or obscure. Books rejected as canon by the Protestant church.

2 Why was it important for Christians to establish a canon?

Many writings circulated as the church grew. Some had dubious authorship or contained heresy, and different Christian groups were operating with different canons. A collection of authoritative writings was needed to preserve the integrity of Christ’s message and teaching.

3 How was the Torah originally circulated?

Oral tradition, no written text.

Now Test Yourself – page 23

1 What is meant by plenary verbal inspiration?

Every word was chosen by God.

2 List three features of an objective view of inspiration.

Any of the following are acceptable:

- Focus on divine initiative in authoring scripture
- God’s perfect character causes the truthfulness of the Bible
- Scripture as inerrant (it cannot be wrong)
- Plenary verbal inspiration
- See God as a dictator
- Humans are controlled by the Holy Spirit
- Propositional
- Fundamentalist
- View humans as God’s passive instrument

3 List three features of a subjective view of inspiration.

Any of the following are acceptable:

- Focus on humanity’s role in authoring scripture
- Scripture can contain error due to human authorship
• Humans experience Christ and the church
• Humans recorded their experiences personally
• People are brought to faith (inspired)
• Humans encounter the Holy Spirit and respond
• Non-propositional
• Liberal
• Humans are active authors

What Do You Think? – page 24
Can the Bible be in error? Consider the following (think of the reasons for your answers):
• Are all statements that are contrary to science false?
  Yes, science shows us the facts about the material world so if a statement directly contradicts what science shows us, then it is false.
  No, not all statements are intended to be factually true or false, so some statements can’t be judged in this way.
• Is it false to talk of sunrise and sunset?
  Yes, the sun does not rise or set. It looks like it does, but this is factually inaccurate.
  No, these terms are meaningful to us on earth as we perceive them. We know that they are not to be taken literally, they are a conversational aid.
• Is it false to speak of the earth as flat?
  Yes, it is scientifically inaccurate to speak of the earth as flat and it is dangerous for us to speak in this way as it spreads misinformation.
  No, if we are to view biblical language as being a vehicle for us to converse about God or hear from God in a way that is helpful for our comprehension, the earth looks flat to us from our perspective, so we should accept such terms and look for what they tell us about God.

1E The early church (in Acts of the Apostles)

Now Test Yourself – page 26
1 Who is thought to have authored the Book of Acts?
2 What does the word kerygmata mean?
   Plural form of kerygma (preaching or proclamation of the Christian gospel).
3 What six components comprise the kerygma?
   1 The messianic age of fulfilment, that was prophesied in scripture, has dawned.
   2 This has taken place through the life, ministry and death and resurrection of Jesus who was of Davidic lineage.
   3 Jesus is exalted as being at God’s right hand.
   4 The Holy Spirit is given by God to the church.
5 The messianic age will shortly be completed when Christ returns.
6 Listeners should repent and be baptised.

Now Test Yourself – page 27

1 Identify three challenges to the kerygma. Any of the following are acceptable:
- Jesus was preaching about the end times that he believed would happen within his lifetime.
- The apostles were equally convinced that the end times were imminent.
- The writers of the New Testament books presented Jesus as an eschatological figure.
- They were all mistaken as more than 2000 years later, the world is still here.
- History has demonstrated the central error in early Christian preaching.

2 Identify three challenges to the historical accuracy of Acts. Any of the following are acceptable:
- Acts may have been written some 40 or 50 years after the events were supposed to have happened.
- Luke, as a gentile, was unlikely to have been present in person at these events.
- The structure of the speeches and language used suggests that the speeches were created by the author to make a point.
- Other speeches by figures like Paul do not reflect the same messages or themes as when he speaks them in his own letters.
- The speeches follow miraculous events that are not consistent with our scientific knowledge of the world.

3 Which mythologies did Bultmann identify in Acts?
- Jewish apocalypticism
- Gnosticism

What Do You Think? – page 29

Whose interpretation of the speeches in Acts seems most credible? Consider the following:

- How do we know that the kerygma is not part of the myth?
  - We don’t. Bultmann is just picking and choosing the parts of the text that he finds acceptable.
  - We do. There is nothing contrary to our scientific understanding of the world that is present in the kerygma, and it is a set of teachings that run through the whole of scripture as a common theme.

- If the author of Acts put the speeches in his own words, can we trust them?
  - We can. Dodd recognised that Luke was a careful historian. He sets out his aims at the start. He even includes passages, like the conversion of Saul, where he uses multiple sources that tell slightly different versions. He was not intending to mislead.
  - We cannot. We can never be sure about which passages he has used his imagination to construct and which, if any, are genuine historical fact.

- Is Dodd’s realised eschatology a new myth to help us deal with the failure of the old one?
  - Yes, it is a way of understanding the scripture so that it does not need to be dismissed as wrong.
• No, Dodd backs up his theory with evidence from the gospels and a careful historical analysis of it. Translation from the original text is difficult and so interpretation is bound to be challenging.

1F Two views of Jesus

Now Test Yourself – page 31

1 Which three disciplines did Crossan rely upon to understand the historical context of Jesus?
Cross-cultural anthropology, Roman/Jewish history, Galilean archaeology.

2 What is an apocryphal gospel?
A non-canonical gospel that was rejected by the early church in their formation of the canon, maybe because it contained heresy, its authorship was in doubt or its dating was too long after the time of Christ.

3 What was Jesus’ Kingdom movement protesting?
Roman commercialisation and the buying and selling of lands that belonged to God, thus penalising the poor.

Now Test Yourself – page 33

1 What is involved in an enlightenment world view?
Seeing reason and history as the only paths to knowledge and truth, thus keeping faith and God separate from the world and in a private or personal domain.

2 How is the New Testament world view different?
It is messier, mixing religion, politics and history because God is present in the world.

3 What does critical realism require us to do?
We must be open to analysis of our own viewpoint because it necessarily interprets objective facts in a subjective way.

What Do You Think? – page 33

Whose view of Jesus is more convincing? Consider the following:

• Is it ever possible to ‘know’ something if we know it only from a subjective viewpoint?
  • Yes – if we understand what our world view is and how it shapes our understanding, we can be analytical and open to revision or abandonment of erroneous ideas if necessary.
  • No – we can only know about ourselves and our own perspectives. We can never know anything objective because our minds interpret and distort everything we perceive.

• Can we trust ‘gospels’ that the early church felt were untrustworthy?
  • Yes, the early church had its own historical agenda and perspective which is why it only selected the books that it did. If we are trying to reconstruct who Jesus really was, we must be aware of this and look beyond the historical perspective of the church at that time.
  • No, these texts contain material that the early church considered doubtful. The church had reasons for rejecting them and they contain materials that do not necessarily accord with scripture.

• How would most Christians respond to the idea that Jesus was a political activist rather than a supernatural figure?
It is enlightening – the behaviour and teaching of Jesus make more sense if we put them in historical context, but it is also challenging because it shows that from quite early on, people began to skew Jesus’ message to suit the perspective at the time. It is unacceptable because it reduces Jesus to a mortal being, a political and moral teacher, not a messiah or the son of God, and such beliefs cannot be stripped away, they are central elements of faith.

Sample AO1 Questions – page 36

1 Examine what is meant by John Calvin’s doctrine of accommodation.

- The doctrine of accommodation is an attempt to deal with the problems caused by the spectrum of views about scripture as inspired by God.
- To call this a doctrine is not quite accurate. Calvin does not develop a systematic doctrine. It is more of an idea or assumption that Calvin uses throughout his work to illuminate and explain scripture.
- The extreme end of the objective approach to inspiration focuses on plenary verbal inspiration – every word is inspired by God. This fails to address the cultural differences between biblical content and our knowledge today.
- The extreme end of the subjective view has humans as the authors of scripture, which can dismiss God’s voice in revelation altogether.
- Calvin’s doctrine of accommodation goes some way to solving these problems.
  - Scripture is the word of God, none of it is mistake or error.
  - There is an epistemic distance between humankind and the nature of God.
  - God is infinite, we are finite.
  - God is incorporeal, we are corporeal.
  - God is outside time while we are within it.
  - If God wishes to communicate with us, he must lower himself to our level so we may understand.
- Calvin gives the example of a nurse speaking to a child. God prattles to us through scripture in a rough and popular style.
- For example, in Genesis 1:16 it says that God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars.
- Genesis is not scientifically accurate. Yet it conveys truth in the sense that this is how the sun and moon appear for humans on earth. Had God communicated it scientifically, this would have detracted from his message.
- In Isaiah 6:1 it says, ‘In the year that Kind Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lofty, and the hem of his robe filled the temple.’ This description of God in scripture can potentially be viewed as ‘wrong’ – God does not have a body. But it is necessary to describe God in these terms so that it is meaningful to humans. The image given of God in Isaiah is not illusory but is a reflection of his glory.
- John seems to affirm this through Jesus in John 3:12. Jesus tells Nicodemus that if we cannot understand when he speaks in human terms, we would never cope if he spoke in heavenly terms.
- So, God accommodates us. He condescends to the condition of his listeners so that we can understand. When the Bible appears to speak falsely, this reflects accommodation.
- Accommodation means we can never know exhaustively about God, but we can know him sufficiently for our needs.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

2 Explain the different views of the Bible as the word of God.
Christians believe that the Bible is the word of God, but they differ over what this means.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 says, ‘All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.’

In Greek the word we translate as ‘inspired’ is ‘theopneustos’, which means God-breathed.

There is a spectrum of views that attempt to describe the communication between humankind and God that is called ‘inspiration’, but they can be broadly described as objective or subjective.

The objective view of inspiration, at its extreme end, focuses on:
- divine initiative in authoring scripture
- plenary verbal inspiration – every word was chosen by God
- God dictated scripture
- scripture is inerrant (it cannot be wrong)
- humans are controlled by the Holy Spirit
- this view sees humans as God’s passive instrument
- propositional content – scripture contains facts, recorded accurately in its words
- God’s perfect character causes the truthfulness of the Bible
- Such approaches can be fundamentalist – associated with the fundamentals of Christian doctrine and literal interpretation of scripture.

The subjective view of inspiration, at its extreme end, focuses on:
- humanity’s role in authoring scripture
- humans are active authors
- scripture can contain error due to human authorship
- humans experienced God then recorded their personal experiences in their own way
- scripture reflects a personal encounter with God
- non-propositional content – the words of scripture are a human response to a revelatory event
- such approaches can be liberal – scripture is written by humans about God and must be interpreted in a modern context.

In fact, views on inspiration do not fit neatly into these two categories. Some attempt to sit between these apparently opposing views or to blend them. Conservative approaches of Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism may view God as an author working through humans within a social and historical context.

Calvin’s doctrine of accommodation goes some way to solving the problems caused by the extremes of these approaches. It acknowledges apparent cultural differences between biblical content and our knowledge today, yet also accepts God’s voice in revelation.
- Scripture is the word of God, none of it is mistake or error.
- There is an epistemic distance between humankind and the nature of God.
- God is infinite, we are finite.
- God is incorporeal, we are corporeal.
- God is outside time while we are within it.
- If God wishes to communicate with us, he must lower himself to our level so we may understand.

Calvin gives the example of a nurse speaking to a child. God prattles to us through scripture in a rough and popular style.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

3 Compare the view of Jesus from J.D. Crossan with that of N.T. Wright.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>J.D. Crossan</th>
<th>N.T. Wright</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both write as historians and theologians in a search for the Jesus of history</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
They agree that faith, politics and history cannot be separated from each other

| Crossan’s approach begins by considering the disciplines of cross-cultural anthropology, Jewish/Roman history and archaeology to establish the social, political and economic background that Jesus came from. Draws on apocryphal material for evidence. Uses only earliest scriptures where evidence is repeated in more than one source. | Wright’s critical realist approach accepts:  
• there is a reality that can be known as separate from ourselves as observers  
• our own world view colours our sense perception and prevents us from seeing objectively. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasises the problems faced by the poor and for the Jews as the Roman Empire commercialised farming and farmland for profit.</td>
<td>Distinguishes between the modern Enlightenment world view that separates reason from faith and the New Testament world view that tells the story that God is passionately present in history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus was a Mediterranean peasant who was the leader of the Kingdom movement – a non-violent resistance of Roman commercialisation.</td>
<td>Wright rejects attempts to shrink or reduce the message that Jesus was the true messiah by viewing him as just a moral teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus was an itinerant preacher who said commercialisation is not the kingdom of God. His work and preaching were a non-violent programme of resistance against Roman commercialisation. The lifestyle was attractive to and attainable by peasants.</td>
<td>Jesus believed that he was the messiah. Other religious movements claiming messianic leaders also made proclamations about the kingdom of God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By declaring the kingdom of God at hand, he was initiating a political movement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Kingdom movement did not die with the death of Jesus because its structure was not dependent upon him. At Jesus’ death, the kingdom was already here, being lived by people who had followed Jesus’ example. The fact that Jesus’ movement did not die with him is evidence that something amazing had happened. The resurrection must have occurred for the movement to continue.

Rejects any supernatural accounts of Jesus as later additions and not factual. Sees Jesus’ teachings and miraculous accounts as authentic and evidence for why the movement continued after his death.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

4 Examine the challenges to the kerygmata with reference to R. Bultmann.

- **Kerygmata** is the plural form of kerygma, which is the preaching or proclamation of the Christian gospel.
- This can be found most clearly illustrated in Peter’s speeches in the Book of Acts where he proclaims:
  - the dawning of a new messianic age through the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus
  - Jesus’ position at God’s right hand and the gift of the Holy Spirit
  - Christ’s prophesied return and the need to repent and be baptised.

- The kerygma can be argued to be irrelevant to a modern audience:
  - Jesus was preaching about the end times that he believed would happen within his lifetime.
  - The apostles were equally convinced that the end times were imminent.
  - The writers of the New Testament books presented Jesus as an eschatological figure.
  - They were all mistaken as more than 2000 years later, the world is still here.
  - History has demonstrated the central error in early Christian preaching.

- Another challenge is that the Book of Acts may not be historically trustworthy:
  - Acts may have been written some 40 or 50 years after the events were supposed to have happened.
  - Luke, as a gentile, was unlikely to have been present in person at these events.
  - The structure of the speeches and language used suggest that the speeches were created by the author to make a point.
  - Other speeches by figures like Paul do not always reflect the same messages or themes as when he speaks them in his own letters.
  - The speeches follow miraculous events that are not consistent with our scientific knowledge of the world.

- Rudolf Bultmann argued that if we view the world scientifically, we cannot accept that the events in Acts are actual historical events.
- Throughout the Book of Acts are mythological elements that are irrelevant to modern people.
- The mythology at work in the speeches of Acts are twofold:
  - Jewish apocalypticism – taught that there are two eras, the present era containing both good and evil and a coming era that will be perfect. This future era will be preceded by the coming of a messiah.
  - Gnosticism – of Judaeo-Christian origins. Humans are sparks of light trapped in material bodies. Jesus, a pre-existent being, has been sent to bring liberation through gnosis or knowledge. This is evident in apocryphal texts such as The Shepherd of Hermas, 67:11 – ‘The Holy pre-existent Spirit, which created the whole creation, God made to dwell in flesh that He desired’.
There is no such thing as a pure kerygma because the preaching must always be expressed in words that are meaningful to people within their own time and culture. The kerygma is something that demands a faith response from each individual.

Bultmann claimed that while Acts contains mythology that is meaningless to us today, the myths cannot be removed entirely since this would remove the personal engagement with the Christian message. It reduces the message to simple moral exhortation. Instead, the mythology must be identified and interpreted for a modern audience.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.


The kerygmati is the plural form of kerygma, which means preaching or proclamation of the Christian gospel.

The New Testament Book of Acts is believed to have been written by Luke, the author of the gospel by the same name. It records the beginning and development of the early church and the lives and work of the apostles after Jesus’ ascension to heaven.

This seemingly historical account contains the proclamation of the Christian message or kerygma. Some of this proclamation is presented by Luke in the form of speeches by Peter or other key figures.

Preaching and teaching within scripture are two different things. Teaching is usually ethical instruction or reasoned explanation of doctrine, often to a Christian audience. Preaching announces the Christian message to the non-Christian world.

Peter’s speeches in Acts are the first Christian public preaching. Luke has used multiple sources to compose Acts and he or one of his sources may have been a companion to the apostles. Yet Peter’s words are likely to have been freely composed by Luke to proclaim the early church kerygma.

Dodd identifies six main features of the kerygma in these and other speeches by Peter:

1. The messianic age of fulfilment, that was prophesied in scripture, has dawned.
2. This has taken place through the life, ministry and death and resurrection of Jesus, who was of Davidic lineage.
3. Jesus is exalted as being at God’s right hand.
4. The Holy Spirit is given by God to the church.
5. The messianic age will shortly be completed when Christ returns.
6. Listeners should repent and be baptised.

These features are what biblical writers call the preaching of the gospel or the preaching of the kingdom of God. They are also present in the letters of Paul.

C.H. Dodd saw the Christian kerygma as being highly relevant to a modern audience.

- For Jesus the Christian message is not simply for the future.
- It is unnecessary to wait until the apocalypse to experience the fullness of God.
- This is realised eschatology – biblical passages concerning the end times relate to Christ’s ministry, not the future. So, the prophesied time is now.
- This is emphasised in Luke where Jesus claims that the kingdom of God is present.
- It was not an early advent for Christ to return that was promised but an immediate advent.
- The speeches of Acts largely do not expect an imminent return.
- Acts sees the eschaton as a single event that had been achieved by the Messiah now.
- Repentance and salvation are for now, not preparation for the future.
- The apocalyptic warnings are an interpretation of the challenges that humans face.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.
Sample AO2 Questions – page 36

1 Evaluate the view that the apocryphal gospels cannot be used to understand the historical Jesus.

There are so many acceptable ways to answer this question. The suggestion below is an abbreviation of an acceptable method but not the only one.

Introduction:
- Be used – does this mean considered critically and analysed? Or read and trusted?

Paragraph one:
- The apocryphal gospels were rejected by the church in the fourth century as containing heresy or as unreliable in authorship or date, so they are unusable.
- However, there is some argument that they were rejected because they didn’t affirm the agenda and authority of the early church, so maybe they need to be reassessed for usefulness.
- It seems we must be cautious – they may offer some insight but they are mostly fragments rather than coherent documents. A lack of context may mean they are used wrongly.

Paragraph two:
- They can add to our knowledge of the cultural context of Jesus’ life if used in a critical way as Crossan proposes.
- In addition, we can point out that they contain earlier layers or versions in the same way as other gospels do. If the gospels are worthy of study, maybe the apocrypha is as well.
- However, there is little direct evidence for an early date for gospels like Thomas and the later they are, the less reliable they are. This makes them unusable.

Paragraph three:
- The gospel of Thomas is more convincing than the gospels due to its lack of supernatural events. This makes it more usable for modern scholars.
- In addition, the structure of Thomas and Q appear like early Christian lists of Jesus’ sayings, which makes them appear more authentic and usable.
- However, the four gospels we have offer a more consistent approach, they are earlier in date, are known authors and were approved by the early church. They are worthier of study.

Conclusion:
- It is reasonable that a cautious approach of considered critical analysis of the apocrypha could yield some information about the historical Jesus, since they are ancient texts. However, this does not mean that they should be read and trusted in the same way as the gospels. It should be noted that the four gospels are just as prone to difficulties as the apocryphal gospels and so all require detailed analysis and study.

2 ‘The Book of Acts has no historical value for us today.’ Evaluate this view.

There are so many acceptable ways to answer this question. The suggestion below is an abbreviation of an acceptable method but not the only one.

Introduction:
- Historical value – value as a historical artefact or value in providing historical facts?

Paragraph one:
- There is evidence that these speeches have been added by Luke, not spoken by Peter, which means that they cannot be valued as an accurate historical account of what happened.
- However, we should not throw out the whole of the text as lacking value just because of this difficulty – they may still provide historical information.
• For instance, they can show us what Luke wanted us to believe about Christianity, which is then an area for investigation. Why did he want us to believe this?

Paragraph two:

• It is possible to see how rhetoric was used to persuade readers in ancient times when reading the speeches in Acts. This suggests that Acts is an interesting artefact but cannot provide valuable facts for us.
• However, literary structure is evidence of the author’s education, not his invention. We teach budding writers to consider structure and language carefully when constructing an essay, so we can view Luke as an educated writer who structured his historical account well.
• Yet the speeches of Peter are wrapped up in too much mythology to be historically valuable – the only way they can be of use is as artefacts of faith.

Paragraph three:

• There is evidence in Acts and Pauline epistles that Luke had travelled with Paul and had first-hand knowledge of many of the events that are reported. This makes them valuable historical accounts.
• However, the speeches were written too long after the reported events to be trustworthy. Only accounts written at the time could be said to be trustworthy and potentially accurate.
• Maybe it is possible to demythologise the speeches and interpret the message underpinning them as a message of faith rather than accurate historical treatise.

Conclusion:

• The speeches of Peter in Acts demand a faith response which is possible after interpreting the mythology and possibly more important than the accuracy of the words that were used in the account. Acts therefore has value as a historical artefact, written in ancient times for an ancient audience, but more value as an artefact of faith than of historical accuracy.
Theme 2 Religious concepts and religious life

2A Religious concepts – the nature of God

Now Test Yourself – page 38

1 What is panentheism?
The belief that the divine is the soul of the universe, perceived in every part of it.

2 Why is it incorrect to speak of God as feminine?
Female qualities are those that focus on the basic things that women are, whereas feminine qualities are those society deems desirable.

3 Why are metaphors useful?
Metaphors are useful since we have no raw knowledge of the theological realm.

Now Test Yourself – page 40

1 What does it mean to call God impassible?
Impassible (Latin: inpassibilis): not able to suffer or experience emotion.

2 Why is God’s impassibility a problem for Moltmann?
- God does not understand human suffering.
- This is remote from the death cry of Christ in Matthew.
- The cross is not meaningful to those who suffer if God is impossible.
- It is then not relevant to modern times.

3 What task does Moltmann see Christians being given by the cross?
- Christian identity means solidarity with those who suffer.
- By joining forces against oppression, Christians truly identify with the cross.

What Do You Think? – page 40

Do these scholars help us to understand more about the nature of God? Consider the following:

- Is McFague’s image of the Father a fair one?

Yes, it has long been established that the image of God presented by the church is a patriarchal one, based in a Victorian-style view of God as an authoritarian, distant figure.

No, fatherhood is no longer presented in this way and the New Testament image of God is as a loving, forgiving, nurturing father.

- What traditional qualities does a suffering God seem to lack?

Power, authority and the ability to save us.

- Is there sufficient biblical evidence to support these scholarly views?

Yes, God is clearly presented in a range of ways in the Bible, both male and female, both as identifying with human suffering and as an authority. The use of these different images speaks to people at different times in different places.
No, the pronouns he and his are used consistently throughout scripture and the female images are used infrequently in a very different way. God is also presented clearly throughout the Old Testament as an authoritative power, not just a big human, so there is little evidence.

2B Religious concepts – the Trinity

Now Test Yourself – page 43

1 What is meant by the Trinity?

The doctrine of the trinity is the teaching that there:

- is one God (monotheism)
- are three distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- is equal status of each person as fully God.

2 What is a heresy?

A belief or teaching that runs contrary to official Christian doctrine.

3 Why were creeds formulated?

The doctrine of the trinity arose because the early church was faced with addressing problems of heresy. As Christianity gained popularity, its identity was threatened as the idea of God became diluted with other ideas that were so controversial, they threatened to split the church.

Now Test Yourself – page 44

1 What does the term filioque mean?

(Latin) And the Son.

2 Give two reasons why the Eastern Church objected to the addition of filioque to the creed.

- The addition was made without the agreement of the five patriarchs.
- The Eastern Church sees the Father as the source of divinity, the Son as begotten of the Father and the Spirit proceeding from the Father.

What Do You Think? – page 44

Is the Trinity really monotheistic? Consider the following:

- If the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three distinct ‘persons’, how is this different from three Gods?
  - It is different: they are the same in the same way that H₂O is the same as water, ice and steam.
  - It is no different: this is why Islam rejects the Trinity.

- How is the Father immutable if he can begin to exist in time as the Son?
  - The Father and the Son are one God but different persons, therefore the Father did not begin to exist in time, the Son did.
  - He cannot: it is a paradox and therefore logically impossible.

- Is it valid to argue that a doctrine is a divine mystery?
• Yes, God has revealed only some of the knowledge of the universe to us. We are required to trust him over matters that he has revealed only in part. That is what faith is for.
• No, it is a ‘cop-out’ that is taken when there are no logical arguments left to support a weak argument or hypothesis.

2C Religious concepts – the atonement

Now Test Yourself – page 47

1 What does atonement mean?
Atonement is the action of making amends for a wrong or injury. In the context of Christianity, it is the restoration of the relationship between God and mankind through the actions of Jesus Christ on the cross (at-one-ment).

2 How is God viewed in the Christus Victor model?
As a triumphant conqueror and king who defeated death, sin and the devil.

3 Why is the idea of God having to pay a ransom to the devil problematic?
It suggests that God is subject to the will, power or control of the devil to some extent.

What Do You think? – page 47

Can these models be treated as compatible with each other? Consider the following:
• Can a benevolent God ever require torture and death as part of his plan for humanity?
No, it is unacceptable to suggest any kind of deliberate torment is ever excusable in pursuit of a ‘greater good’.
Yes, what seems like something terrible to us may appear differently to an omniscient God who knows the end result is our freedom and a complete relationship with him.
• If Christ is a moral example, did we really need him to save us?
Yes, we needed to see the ultimate virtuous example to be capable of accepting and receiving salvation.
No, he does not need to be divine and so there is no supernatural requirement for salvation. It is through human effort that we are saved.
• If Christ’s death was victorious in saving us, does it matter if we sin now?
No, God’s love for us meant that we are now released from slavery to the devil.
Yes, human sin must show that we have willingly chosen to remain at the mercy of the devil despite God’s sacrifice.

Specimen Exam Questions

Sample AO1 Questions – page 50

1 Outline what is meant by the doctrine of the Trinity. (AS only)
• The doctrine of the trinity is the teaching that there:
  o is one God (monotheism)
  o are three distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit
is equal status of each person as fully God.

- The debate about the nature and identity of Christ began with the experience of the Apostles but continued in response to emerging heresies.

- The first ecumenical council of Nicaea formulated what has become known as the Nicene Creed in 325 to deal with Arianism, which was modified by the first ecumenical council of Constantinople in 381.

- In 451 the Chalcedon council adopted the Chalcedon Definition as a statement of the doctrine of Christ’s nature and identity, condemning heresy and affirming the Nicene Creed.

- These creeds lay out the relationship between the three persons of the one God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

- The Chalcedon Definition says: 'We confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in Godhead, perfect in Manhood, truly God and truly man…'

- This definition lays out both Jesus’ divinity and his humanity. There is no confusion about his nature. This combination of the divine and human nature of Christ is known as the hypostatic union.

- The Nicene Creed states that Christ is ‘being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made’.

- Jesus, with the Father, pre-existed creation. He is not a creature created by God, as suggested by Arius.

- The Holy Spirit is God in action.

- The creeds attempted to answer the question: Where is the Holy Spirit from?

- The end of the Nicene Creed addressed this question: ‘And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father.’

- But the council of Toledo made additions: ‘Who proceeds from the Father and the Son.’

- This was due to disagreement over who was the source of divinity.

- The addition was made without the agreement of the five patriarchs.

- For six centuries this disagreement continued without splitting the church.

- In 1054 Rome accused the Eastern Church of heresy for not accepting filioque.

- This led to the Great Schism, which divided the church into East and West.

- The Eastern Church differentiates between:
  - the Immanent Trinity – what God is, the nature of each person of the Trinity
  - and the Economic Trinity – what God does, the action of each person of the Trinity.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

2 Examine the reasons why Moltmann argued for a suffering God.

- Traditionally, the church taught that God is impassible, he does not experience pain or pleasure from the actions of another being.

- This doctrine has developed out of several other characteristics said to be God’s nature, such as aseity. God is independent, an uncaused causer. If he were affected by emotion it would imply that his causality depended upon another being.

- God is immutable and so he cannot be changed by the actions of humanity.
Emotions of God described in scripture are considered to be anthropomorphism: the attribution of human characteristics to God.

Malachi 3:6 – I the Lord do not change.

Jurgen Moltmann is a German reformed theologian whose theology was born out of his experiences in the Second World War. He had seen his friend torn to pieces by a bomb and was horrified and ashamed at the concentration camps.

Moltmann’s view of the suffering God is a response to the problem of evil and suffering.

He rejects God as impassible and distant from the human experience.

He feels that this problem of a God who distances himself from a suffering world is resolved on the cross.

The cross must be meaningful to those who suffer if it is to be relevant to modern times.

The church has sanitised the cross and taken Christ off it, losing its true meaning.

This is remote from the death cry of Christ in Matthew 27:46: ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’

Christ is God incarnate, part of the Trinity. In Christ, God suffered and died.

He experienced abandonment, bereavement, humiliation, helplessness, despair and pain.

God is a fellow sufferer who knows and understands human suffering.

He suffers with us today.

Christian identity means solidarity with those who suffer.

This is the foundation of all Christian theology, more meaningful than tradition and dogma.

This is the other side of Moltmann’s theology of hope.

Suffering as a reality prevents hope from being blind.

By joining forces against oppression, Christians truly identify with the cross.

The hope for liberation comes from the spirit of the risen Christ.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

3 Explain the atonement theories of the death of Jesus as a substitution and a moral example.

Atonement is the action of making amends for a wrong or injury.

In Christianity, it is the restoration of the relationship between God and mankind through the actions of Jesus Christ on the cross (at-one-ment).

By his life and death, Jesus brought salvation to humanity and made atonement for their sin.

This reparation was necessary because of original sin.

His death brings the gifts of forgiveness of sin and eternal life.

Substitution:

St Anselm of Canterbury set out this model in Cur Deus Homo.

God is presented as a feudal lord, recovering a debt.

Human sin was dishonour to God and required satisfaction.

God’s wrath requires punishment, yet his mercy issues forgiveness.

God gave Jesus in our place to repay the debt that we owed.
• Humanity sinned, showing God dishonour that needed satisfaction.
• Humanity does not have the power to satisfy the debt, but God cannot fail.
• Only the God-Man had both the power and nature to repay the debt.
• Christ’s obedience to God in death provided the merit needed to save us.
• In the sixteenth century this was developed into a penal substitution model.
• Justice shows the laws set by God and violated by humans cannot go unpunished.
• God paid the punishment for us in the form of Jesus.
• This is evident in scripture: ‘For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God.’ 1 Peter 3:18

Moral example:
• Peter Abelard offered this model in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.
• Jesus is presented as a benevolent martyr.
• Humans are sinful, in need of forgiveness. Jesus’ example shows the need for repentance.
• No wrath from God is demonstrated for human sin, only the love of God for humanity.
• God gave himself, in the person of Jesus, as a free gift to humanity.
• The cross is an appealing demonstration of the love of God.
• Seeing Christ’s loving action causes shame in sinful humans.
• Christ’s example of love induces the need for repentance.
• Acceptance of Christ’s gift is necessary for forgiveness.
• This is supported in scripture: ‘If they want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’ Matthew 16:24
• This was developed further during the Enlightenment.
• While this was not the view of Abelard, modern scholars felt that Jesus need not be divine in the traditional sense. He was just morally superior.
• This means that it is possible that humanity can save themselves through good actions if they follow Christ’s example rather than being dependent on Christ as a saviour.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

4 Compare the Christus Victor and moral example theories of the atonement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christus Victor</th>
<th>Moral example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is a model that was re-popularised by Gustav Aulén in the nineteenth/twentieth century in his book, Christus Victor</td>
<td>Peter Abelard presented this model in the eleventh century in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God is presented as a triumphant conqueror</td>
<td>God is presented as a benevolent martyr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aulén saw that humanity was in need of forgiveness, having sold themselves through sin to the devil</td>
<td>Humans are sinful, Jesus’ example shows the need for repentance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here, God’s anger is directed at the devil, yet his love is directed to humanity

There is no wrath from God directed at humanity, only his love

In this model, Aulén saw God as having fought a battle against sin, death and the devil

According to Abelard, God gave himself, in Jesus, as a free gift to humanity

Jesus’ resurrection demonstrates a defeat by God over the forces of evil

The cross, then, is an appealing demonstration of the love of God

God triumphs by reconciling the world to himself (atoning for our sins)

Seeing Christ’s loving action causes shame in in humans for our sinfulness

Sin, death and the devil no longer have power over humanity

Christ’s example of love inspires the need for repentance from us

Christ is conqueror of sin, death and the devil. He is king

Human acceptance of Christ’s gift is all that is necessary for forgiveness and atonement

This is supported by scripture: ‘Who gave himself a ransom for all.’ 1 Timothy 2:6

This is supported by scripture: ‘If they want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’ Matthew 16:24

This kind of model was preceded by a ransom model from scholars like Origen and Irenaeus. Origen claimed Christ was a ransom paid by God to the devil, Irenaeus claimed that humans owed the ransom to God through sin. Jesus defeated the devil and cancelled the ransom. During the Enlightenment, this model resurfaced since Jesus need not be divine in the traditional sense. He could just have been morally superior, inspiring humans to emulate his example to achieve salvation, rather than needing Jesus to save us.

Gregory the Great also developed this idea by presenting Christ as bait, offered by God, allowing him to defeat the devil.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

Sample AO2 Questions – page 50

1 Evaluate the view that the doctrine of the Trinity is essential to understanding the God of Christianity.

There are so many acceptable ways to answer this question. The suggestion below is an abbreviation of an acceptable method but not the only one.

Introduction

- Essential – absolutely necessary, cannot do without it.

Paragraph one

- The Trinity is central to the Christian faith through the creeds and tradition, therefore it is utterly essential, it is the essence of what Christianity teaches.
- However, the differences between this view and the ‘heresies’ are so subtle, they may not be errors. The church was involved in political power struggles, disguised as debate over the nature of God.
In addition, the Trinity is an unnecessarily confusing doctrine and diminishes faith as a result since it appears illogical and so is not essential.

**Paragraph two**

- The position of the different persons of the Trinity is still an area of disagreement today since the eastern and western churches did not settle their dispute over the Holy Spirit. This suggests that it is not essential since both sides identify as Christian.
- In addition, day-to-day Christian living does not wrangle with this problem because it is about living a Christian life, not intellectual assent to dogma.
- However, without trinitarian doctrine, Christ’s acts on the cross are significantly diminished since salvation requires him to be the God-man.

**Paragraph three**

- Understanding God requires scripture alone. This contains no reference to the Trinity and so it is not essential in revelation.
- In addition, even if a relationship with God is based on personal experience rather than acceptance of doctrine, different people may place different emphasis upon the need for the Trinity, so it is not essential.
- However, the role of the Holy Spirit as God is central to the continuation of the church today and without it, God does not work in the world. Therefore, the Trinity is a vital doctrine.

**Conclusion**

- The formation of the church as we know it today is based on the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. The creeds are repeated in all services, through song or speech. Christ and the Holy Spirit are viewed as having equal authority with God for the continuation of the church, so the doctrine is essential.

2 ‘God should never be referred to as a mother.’ Evaluate this view.

**Introduction**

- ‘Should never’ – absolute, means there can be no circumstances under which it is acceptable.

**Paragraph one**

- This image denies the authority of scripture and tradition that clearly present God as male, using the image of God as king, creator and using the pronouns him, his and he.
- However, we cannot accurately speak of God in human language, we can only use metaphors. The female metaphor is as adequate as any other metaphor as it presents the divine image of comforting and nurturing relationships between God and humanity.
- God as male helps some people, whereas God as female is useful to others, so God should sometimes be used, not ‘never’.

**Paragraph two**

- To abandon God’s male qualities is to abandon his authority and power over the whole of his creation. This is clearly an error since God is omnipotent.
- However, human needs have changed, so the mother image is more helpful for modern times when we need reminding of our place in the universe and our responsibilities in the world.
• In addition, McFague never expected us to abandon metaphors, we can use a combination, so we can make use of those that emphasise authority when necessary and those that emphasise nurture when needed.

**Paragraph three**

• Metaphors are not factual, they might be helpful, but they cannot be trusted for accuracy so there is limited usefulness in referring to God as mother or father and we should proceed with caution.

• However, the image of God as mother helps to place us firmly in the world, with responsibility for it having been part of all that God has borne.

• Yet the male image of God as creator also placed us in the world, there are no advantages to female qualities. We can still be stewards even if God is referred to as male.

**Conclusion**

• We should take care not to replace old idols with new ones and so the image of God as female is one we should consider cautiously. However, it is an extremely helpful image in a world that no longer views kings as objects of worship and men as the ultimate power. It is time to find images that help us relate to God, and the image of God as mother can be useful here.

**2D Religious life – faith and works**

**Now Test Yourself – page 52**

1 What does the term sola fide mean?

(Latin) Faith alone.

2 What two ways did Luther attempt to reconcile himself to God?

• The path of confession and penance – he could never confess enough or do enough works to amend for his sin.

• The path of mysticism – the transient nature of religious experiences meant that he felt even further from God once it had passed.

3 Which passage of scripture did Luther reject as an ‘epistle of straw’?

James 2:24.

**Now Test Yourself – page 53**

1 Identify four declarations decided by the Council of Trent.

• Both scripture and church tradition are authoritative.

• Humans must co-operate with divine grace, they are not passive recipients.

• The requirements for justification are:
  – Baptism – God’s initial justification through grace
  – Confession, Eucharist, penance and good deeds – righteousness is earned through works.

• We cannot be confident that we are saved, but we need not despair either. We can have a relative certainty in our salvation.

2 Why did Protestants think this was against scripture?

There are passages that indicate that only faith is required to gain justification from God, and these passages appear to reject the need for good works, e.g. John 6: 28–29: Then they said to him, ‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’ Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’
What Do You Think? – page 54

Can a believer expect justification through faith or through works? Consider the following:

1 Can an atheist be justified if they dedicate their lives to help others?

No, to be justified by God, there is a requirement that you believe in that God in the first place. Why would an atheist even want to be justified by God? Justification is through faith.

Yes, atheists are capable of as much or sometimes more compassion and kindness than Christian believers. A just God would surely recognise this and reward it appropriately. Justification is through works if God is really just and benevolent.

2 Can a Christian be justified by faith in Christ even if (s)he knowingly sins?

No, scripture clearly indicates that faith without deeds is dead (James 2:17). Both are needed or the faith that the believer claims is empty and meaningless. Justification must at least be supported by works.

Yes, sola fide, or faith alone, means just that. There is no condition upon God’s salvation for humanity, otherwise we would be able to save ourselves without the need for Christ’s actions on the cross. Justification is purely from God’s grace.

3 Is it legitimate of Luther to dismiss the Book of James?

Yes, if it is inconsistent with the rest of scripture. After all, the selection of canon was made by human beings at a particular point in history, they may have made an error in selecting James. Scripture does not show any clear reason to accept works as a means of justification.

No, his principle of sola scriptura places total authority upon scripture as being true. It is inconsistent to then pick and choose the bits he likes and reject those that he doesn’t understand. Scripture clearly places some emphasis upon works as means of justification.

2E Religious life – the community of believers

Now Test Yourself – page 56

1 What evidence can you see that this early Christian community still saw themselves as Jewish?

- Church (Greek: ekklesia) means an assembly of people called to group together for political purposes. In the Septuagint it is used interchangeably with the word synagogue.
- There was no New Testament yet. The Bible, as they knew it, was the Jewish scriptures.
- Baptism resembled the Jewish tvilah for converts to Judaism. This was adopted by the early church for all members.
- A Jewish tradition is to pray over loaves and break bread before a meal. New Christians continued Jewish practices.
- Jewish men traditionally prayed at the temple three times each day. 2:46 shows this practice continued.

2 What has happened in Acts immediately before this passage about Christian living?

Peter’s big sermon on the day of Pentecost where three thousand people were baptised and converted to Christianity.

3 List the five main features of the early Christian communal activity.

- They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching
- And fellowship
• To the breaking of bread
• And to the prayers
• They had all things in common

Now Test Yourself – page 58

1 What is a sacrament?
A ceremony or ritual that is regarded as imparting divine grace. Augustine called it a visible sign of God's grace.

2 What basic teaching do all Christian denominations have in common?
All contemporary Christian denominations teach that Jesus Christ was the messiah and that his life, death, resurrection and ascension enabled forgiveness from sin and fellowship with God.

3 How has mission changed in more recent years?
• In the past, mission was focused on evangelisation and westernisation of some cultures.
• Now mission can be about offering both practical and spiritual help and support to people who are suffering.

What Do You Think? – page 58

Does the church today show any resemblance to the church in Acts 2:42–47? Consider the following:

1 Is there any evidence you can think of that Jesus required Christians to live communally and share possessions?
Yes, Crossan’s view of Jesus was as an itinerant preacher who encouraged people to reject commercialisation and riches in order to follow him.

No, as a wandering preacher, Jesus visited people in their homes, but did not command or request that resources should be pooled so that no one owned anything.

2 Does the Christian church really devote itself to the apostles’ preaching?
Yes, the creeds are still a clear reflection of the kerygma and are still actively used in worship today, as is the practice of baptism.

No, times are very different now and Christians have not committed to the way of life proposed in the Jerusalem community.

3 Should Christianity show more commonality with Judaism if it is to be faithful to early church example?
Yes, this is the kind of lifestyle that Jesus modelled, worship of God was constant in their lives rather than reserved for Sunday mornings only.

No, Christianity has evolved as a different faith, inclusive of gentiles, not just the Jewish people. The early church was still finding its way and there is no necessity to copy it exactly.
2F Religious life – key moral principles

Now Test Yourself – page 59

1 What does Leviticus mean by ‘aliens’?
Vulnerable people from foreign countries who are not citizens of the place where they live.

2 Who does Jesus command that we show love to?
God and our neighbours.

3 Who is a neighbour according to Jesus?
Anyone nearby who needs our help.

Now Test Yourself – page 60

1 What is meant by the term Heilsgeschichte?
Salvation history.

2 What is someone denying when they deny the truth?
What scripture communicates about the nature of God, the person of Jesus and the Heilsgeschichte.

3 What similarities are evident in God’s actions referred to in 1 Samuel and Ephesians?

- 1 Samuel refers to the great things the Lord had done: delivering the Jews from slavery in Egypt and through the wilderness into salvation in the promised land.
- In Ephesians, the truth that they are to speak is that God delivers us from slavery to sin, into salvation in the kingdom of heaven through the actions of Jesus.

What Do You Think? – page 61

Is God’s behaviour towards humanity a good model for Christian moral action? Consider the following:

- Does scripture always show God behaving in a way that seems loving to us?
No, sometimes God commands that people are killed, or that children suffer for the sins of their parents.
Yes, sometimes it is difficult to understand God’s actions from the perspective of a human living in the world within a particular point in history, but God is always presented as loving his people in scripture.

- Is the visiting of the inequities of parents onto future generations consistent with love and forgiveness?
No, it is unfair to cause suffering in some for the sins of others. The same is true when the whole of humanity is held responsible for original sin.
Yes, we can interpret this to mean that there are consequences to our sin that last beyond the life of the individual sinner. It is not a punishment that God inflicts, but a consequence that we bring about through our sin.

- Can love be a good excuse for a failure to keep the law?
Yes, Jesus failed to keep all the Jewish laws when he healed or picked grain on the Sabbath or refused to punish the adulterous woman according to law.
No, we can do terrible things with the excuse that we were trying to be loving. God’s law is there to correct us when we make mistakes of conscience.

Sample AO1 Questions – page 64

1 Compare the life of the New Testament community of believers with the life of the Christian church today.
This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Testament community</th>
<th>Contemporary church</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Acts 2:42 says they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.  
  - Greek – didache is the apostles’ teaching.  
  - Peter’s preaching contained the kerygma.  
  - There was no New Testament yet. The Bible was the Jewish scriptures. Thus, the proclamation by apostles was essential for Christians. | All contemporary Christian denominations teach that Jesus Christ was the messiah and that his life, death, resurrection and ascension enabled forgiveness from sin and fellowship with God.  
  - Traditional churches often follow a lectionary.  
  - Services often include a sermon.  
  - Churches may also offer Sunday school, confirmation classes, Bible study groups and Alpha courses.  
  - Creeds are recited that reiterate the kerygma preached by Peter. |
| Acts 2:42 states that the church was devoted to fellowship.  
  - Verses 44–45 show that fellowship means they:  
    - had possessions in common  
    - shared food together  
    - prayed together. | Church groups often offer social activities, Bible study, prayer groups or community meals.  
  - There is a common tradition of tithing.  
  - Ministers also go out into the community to offer the eucharist to the sick, or to bring the elderly or infirm into church. |
| Acts 2:42 says they were involved in the breaking of bread.  
  - There are two possible meanings for the term:  
    - q re-enactment of the last supper  
    - q shared meal.  
  - Both practices reflect a relationship with each other and with God. | Re-enactment of the last supper is central in some churches.  
  - Roman Catholics and Anglicans have a clear liturgy that sets out the music, readings and words to be used in the service.  
  - Artwork or ornamentation that is significant for worship, such as a silver chalice in the Eucharist, or a crucifix as a focal point. |
| - Baptism is taught by Peter to be the entry requirement for Christianity. | The role of the church is to administer sacraments. Of these, the following resemble practices in the New Testament community:  
  - baptism  
  - Eucharist (breaking of bread). |
| Acts 2:42 says they were involved in the prayers:  
  - Jewish men prayed at the temple three times each day. 2:46 shows this practice continued.  
  - There is also reference to prayer in private homes in 2:46–47.  
  - The use of the plural implies different types of prayers: | Prayers and hymns take a central role in Christian church services and have a Christian flavour rather than a Jewish one.  
  - The liturgy laid out by a denomination may require set prayers to be used or may allow for private prayer and reflection during a service.  
  - The Lord’s Prayer is one such required prayer that is recited or sung weekly by some denominations. |
There were traditional or common Jewish prayers that are likely to have been used. There may have been new prayers emerging such as the Lord’s prayer or new Christian hymns.

Acts 2:42 says they had all things in common. Christians sold their possessions and goods and the proceeds were distributed to those in need. There is no suggestion that this was an enforced redistribution of wealth. Communal life was not compulsory. There is no evidence of similar communities outside Jerusalem.

Acts 2:47 says: ‘And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.’

This supports the great commission given in Matthew 28:19–20: ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.’

Mission, service and outreach.

- Mission can be practical or spiritual.
- Practical mission or service is offered via humanitarian aid.
- Spiritual mission or outreach projects such as church planting aim to spread the gospel and develop new congregations.

2 Examine the different responses to Luther’s justification by faith from the Council of Trent and E.P. Saunders.

- The Council of Trent was held by the Roman Catholic Church between 1545 and 1563 and was called by Pope Paul III. The council met 25 times to decide how to respond to what was seen as the heresy committed by the Protestant reformation.
- Martin Luther had taught that humanity is justified sola fide (by faith alone), not by works, and that the authority is sola scriptura (only scripture).
- The Council of Trent rejected this, claiming that:
  - both scripture and church tradition are authoritative
  - humans must co-operate with divine grace, they are not passive recipients
  - the requirements for justification are:
    - baptism – God’s initial justification through grace
    - confession, Eucharist, penance and good deeds – righteousness is earned through works
  - we cannot be confident that we are saved, but we need not despair either. We can have a relative certainty in our salvation.
- Luther had rejected the law as the means of justification and saw Judaism as futile. The only purpose of the law was to push a person to despair and therefore to faith.
- E.P. Sanders rejects Luther’s claim that Judaism is futile or that it is about salvation through works or legalism. He argues that:
  - underlying Pauline literature is the assumption of covenantal nomism
  - there are two fundamental underlying principles to covenantal nomism:
    - God chose Israel through his grace to be his people. They are born into the covenant. The status is a gift, not a reward.
    - He gave them the law.
Jewish people worked out the underlying principles in the following way:
- The law implies God’s promise to maintain the election.
- There is a requirement for Israel to obey the law to maintain the covenant.
- God rewards obedience and punishes transgression.
- The law provides a means for atonement.
- Atonement results in maintenance or reestablishment of the covenantal relationship.
- Those who maintain the covenant are part of the group that are saved.
- God’s mercy rather than human achievement allows for salvation.

Pauline logic approaches Christ’s death with these underlying assumptions in mind. He begins at the end and works backwards:
- Christ’s death on the cross was for the purpose of salvation.
- It follows then that humanity must have needed saving.
- The law exists, but if Christ’s death is our salvation, then the law is not for this purpose.
- The law’s purpose must be for demonstrating our sinfulness so that we may be saved.

Paul sees the mosaic law as problematic because it excluded the gentiles and led the Jewish people to boast about their status.
- The laws that Christians are exempt from are those that are required to keep Jewish identity, such as circumcision, food laws and keeping the Sabbath. Other laws are needed to remain in the covenant.
- Christians should still do good deeds as a result of their faith in Christ.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

3 Explain the key moral principles of Christianity with reference to scripture.

The importance of love for neighbour.

‘You shall love the alien as yourself.’ Leviticus 19:34

- In Leviticus, the Hebrew word for love is aheb. It indicates a sibling or friendly care for another person.
- It commands compassion for vulnerable people from foreign countries who are not citizens of the place where they live.

‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.’ Luke 10:25–28

- Jesus calls this a summary of the whole of the law – to love God and each other.
- The Lucan passage is followed by the story of the Good Samaritan to demonstrate that a neighbour is anyone in need.
- The ancient Greek word for love is agape, which is charity, a selfless compassion for others.

Regard for truth

‘Only fear the Lord, and serve him faithfully with all your heart; for consider what great things he has done for you.’ 1 Samuel 12:24

- Truth is what scripture communicates about the nature of God, the person of Jesus and the Heilsgeschichte.
- The Israelites needed a reminder in 1 Samuel, since they had begun to forget their trust in God and wanted a king to lead them.
- The great things the Lord had done included delivering them from slavery in Egypt and through the wilderness into salvation in the promised land.

‘So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another.’ Ephesians 4:25–27
In Ephesians, the truth that they are to speak is that God delivers us from slavery to sin, into salvation in the kingdom of heaven through the actions of Jesus.

Christian people are members of the body of Christ, to speak falsehood is to damage Christ’s body.

The need for forgiveness

‘For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you Matthew.’ 6:14–15

Forgiveness is a running theme in scripture.

Matthew 6 is the only area of the Lord’s Prayer that received more development.

Forgiveness here is in the best interest of the forgiver, since it enables them to receive forgiveness from God for themselves.

Matthew 18:21–22 has Jesus command Peter to forgive 77 times. This suggests boundless forgiveness (although not necessarily unconditional forgiveness).

He commands forgiveness only if the sinner has also forgiven others.

‘As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.’ Colossians 3:12–13

In Colossians, God’s forgiveness is offered as an example for Christians to follow rather than conditional upon their decision to do the same.

Forgiveness is difficult and a continuous choice that Christians must make repeatedly through their lives.

Christians are taught about the psychological benefits of forgiveness – that they will experience freedom from pain and anger, although this is not explicitly taught in scripture.

Forgiveness is part of the character of God, to fail to forgive separates humans from God.

Only two of the above options will be credited.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

4 Outline what Luther meant by Justification by faith alone. (AS only)

Justification – being made righteous in God’s sight.

In the Middle Ages, justification was achieved in two ways for a Christian believer:

- Baptism – removes original sin, so was performed shortly after birth.
- Confession and penance – acknowledgement to a priest of individual sins and an imposed punishment, such as prayer, asceticism or other good deeds, to repair the wrong.

If a believer had not completed enough penance at death, they could expect to go to purgatory or pay to gain justification for themselves or others through indulgences.

Luther looked to Romans 1:17: ‘For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written “the one who is righteous will live by faith”.’

This led him to a conversion experience in which he realised that righteousness is a gift from God, via faith alone (sola fide), not earned through works, such as being baptised, confessing sins, performing penance or buying indulgences.

He agreed with Ephesians 2:8–9: ‘For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast.’

Luther decided that the only function of the law is to drive the believer to despair so that they may come to faith.

According to Galatians 2:16, legalism (and thus the approach of Judaism) has nothing else positive to offer. ‘And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.’
Luther could not reconcile the passages in scripture that claimed differently and so he rejected them, calling the book of James 2:24 an epistle of straw. He argued that our deeds can never make us adequate in God’s sight: ‘You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.’

Luther rejected the abuse and sale of indulgences for justification as an abomination. It is through solus Christus that we gain salvation and sola scriptura has authority, rather than the church or the Pope.

On 31 October 1517 he posted his 95 theses against clerical abuses of the Roman Catholic Church. It was this spark that ignited the Protestant Reformation and ultimately resulted in his excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

Sample AO2 Questions – page 64

1 Evaluate the view that God’s behaviour towards us is the basis for all Christian morality.

There are so many acceptable ways to answer this question. The suggestion below is an abbreviation of an acceptable method but not the only one.

Introduction

- The basis for all Christian morality – suggests that no other principle would underpin Christian morality.

Paragraph one

- 1 John is clear that God loves us first and we should follow his example: ‘We love because he first loved us.’
- However, God is transcendent and omniscient whereas we are not. Our behaviour cannot be so well informed and so it is impossible of us to always behave as God would do, we need other principles to guide us.
- Yet following God’s example demonstrates Christian faith in him, even if a person lacks his knowledge. This is the only basis for Christian morality – faith that God knows best.

Paragraph two

- We can see the ideal that we are expected to aim for, even if we cannot reach it, so surely to use God’s behaviour towards us as an example is the ultimate basis for morality.
- However, we can never reach God’s standards of morality by ourselves, there are other principles that are required, whether they be love, reason or law, so that we can understand Christian moral behaviour.
- Yet God sets and commands all the moral law, this is his divine command, so that we can be clear about moral action. So the basis of love, reason or law will always be God and how he behaves towards us.

Paragraph three

- In Exodus 34 God appears unjust in punishing children for the sins of parents. If this is God’s behaviour, we would not expect to emulate it, since Christian morality would not allow a human to punish a child for the mistakes of a parent.
- However, God’s behaviour demonstrates his power to judge us all and urges us to be cautious in our moral decision making. This is an important example to follow.
- In addition, God’s love for all of us is how we gain salvation. It should act as inspiration for our own acts, even if we are not directly mimicking divine actions.
Conclusion

- Ultimately, as God incarnate, Jesus was a moral example to all of humanity. Through the behaviour of Christ towards human beings, we can see a practical example of how Christians should behave. This requires a loving, compassionate attitude that shows respect for the law, but not at the cost of love. This example does seem to be the basis for Christian morality.

2 ‘The most important role of the contemporary church is to provide fellowship.’ Evaluate this view.

There are so many acceptable ways to answer this question. The suggestion below is an abbreviation of an acceptable method but not the only one.

Introduction

- The most important – suggests that any other role of the church is less important or is not important at all.

Paragraph one

- Fellowship is the most vital role of the church so that believers do not struggle alone in spiritual, emotional or physical matters.
- However, the example presented in Acts by the early church was more than simply fellowship. Fellowship is a part of the role of the church, but outreach, prayer and teaching are all vital.
- In addition, it could be argued that the kerygma as presented by Peter in Acts is the essence of what Christianity is about and so rather than fellowship, teaching is actually the most important function of the church.

Paragraph two

- Teaching underpins the great commission in Matthew 28:19–20 to make disciples of all nations, so it seems that fellowship alone would not give Christianity its character.
- Yet missionary organisations cannot preach to people who are suffering too much; ultimately what people need is not teaching but fellowship and community to help them in their lives.
- It seems that fellowship is the thing that people are most in need of, and it is this that the New Testament community most ably provided.

Paragraph three

- The church’s most vital role is in providing teaching about the meaning of scripture, which is the point of Christianity.
- However, while teaching gives a community a central focus, it is fellowship that keeps them together and supports them as they live their Christian lives.
- Furthermore, it can be argued that it is the community rather than teaching that attracts and keeps believers faithful because it is this that people desire most of all to make their lives feel meaningful.

Conclusion

- Ultimately Christianity is based upon the teachings and actions of Christ in his life, death and resurrection, but what he taught seems to be about loving and supporting each other unconditionally. This is fellowship, so the vital role of the Christian church is not teaching about Christ but living the life he taught them to live.
Theme 3 Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

3A Social developments in religious thought – attitudes towards wealth

Now Test Yourself – page 66

1 What is meant by alms?
Alms – charitable donations of food or money that are given to the poor.

2 What humorous imagery is given in Matthew 6:25–34 to show the value of human beings?
‘Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns’ – Jesus makes jokes. He conjures up images of birds carrying farming equipment.

3 What contrast does Luke 12:33–34 use to help the reader understand how to prioritise?
‘...unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys’ – makes a contrast between temporary material wealth and never-failing treasure.

Now Test Yourself – page 67

1 What is stewardship?
Stewardship – administration/management.

2 Give two examples of biblical ascetics.
St Paul – 1 Corinthians 9:27.

3 Why do stewardship and asceticism seem to conflict with each other?
- Stewardship is about careful use of worldly resources. Asceticism is about refraining from worldly pleasures to achieve a higher spiritual goal.
- Stewardship includes providing for those in need in the world. Asceticism focuses attention away from the world and towards God.

What Do You Think? – page 68

Is wealth really dangerous? Consider the following:

- Is there any evidence that love of money can cause suffering or distance from God?
Yes, Matthew 19:22 shows that giving up wealth for God is difficult. This means that someone who can’t do this prioritises their possessions above God, which causes spiritual pain and distance from him.

No, when Christians gather wealth with a view to sharing, giving or making positive change for others, they can still remain focused on doing God’s work and reducing suffering.

- Do the passages on stewardship promote a love of money?
Yes, they suggest that the more financially focused a person is, the more God will reward them financially. There is a focus on worldly wealth.

No, they deal only with careful management, not financial gain. This prevents wastefulness and encourages fair distribution of wealth rather than selfishness or greed.

• Is it necessary to sell all possessions to prevent a love of money?

Yes, ascetics have noticed how distracting material possessions can be. This is true across many world faiths; shunning material wealth completely is the only way to be free of the concern it brings.

No, there are many Christian charities and concerned individuals who gather wealth in order to share it with those in need. Jesus and the early Christians met with homeowners and benefited from those who were prepared to share their wealth.

3B Social developments in religious thought – migration and Christianity in the UK

Now Test Yourself – page 71

1 Give three examples of push factors that bring people to the UK.

Any of the following could be acceptable:

• Join family who live here.
• Work or receive education.
• Escape poverty, war, natural disasters or persecution.
• Access healthcare or other resources.

2 How does Leviticus tell Christians to treat people who have migrated?

• Treat them as you would any other citizen among you.
• Love them as yourself.

3 Why might a migrant Christian have difficulties accessing church services?

• Language barriers might prevent participation or knowing when events are happening.
• Services have an unfamiliar format, rituals and liturgy.
• Native churchgoers may be unwelcoming.

Now Test Yourself – page 72

1 List three problems faced by churches in the UK.

Any of the following could be acceptable:

• Increasingly secular society.
• Apathy regarding religion.
• Reduced interest from the younger generation.
• Aging congregations.
• Declining congregation numbers.
• Attendance from habit rather than conviction.
• Rise in the number of church closures.
• Aging buildings.

2 Why is the phenomenon called ‘reverse mission’?
It involves sending missionaries to Europe and North America from churches and Christian organisations that were on the receiving end of Catholic and Protestant missions between the sixteenth and twenty-first centuries.

3 Give an example of a project that a reverse missionary might be involved with.

- Church planting.
- Running food banks.
- Evangelism.
- Providing resources for the homeless/lonely/drug addicts/vulnerable women/ethnic minorities.
- Teaching English to those who have immigrated.
- Small projects like Messy Church or Teen Outreach.
- Youth and family work.

What Do You Think? – page 72

Does the UK really need visiting missionaries? Consider the following:

- Is missionary work more about social action or evangelism?
  
  Social action – Christianity has learned from past mistakes and is much more accepting of other faiths. Most missionaries are more concerned with loving their neighbour and helping those in need. There are plenty of people in need in the UK for visiting missionaries to assist.

  Evangelism – whatever the project is, it is just a tool for evangelism. Spreading Christianity is the ultimate motive of any work from Christian organisations, social action is simply the method or tool used to spread the Christian message. As an increasingly secular society, there are many people to evangelise to in the UK.

- We have religious education in school in the UK. Do people already know about Christianity?
  
  Yes, throughout their schooling children are taught about all the world faiths in a non-coercive environment so that they can be aware of diversity and make their own decisions, there is no need for mission.

  No, young people only know bits about Christianity, and school education cannot give young people a personal understanding of faith. Evangelism shows faith in action, which is more inspirational and is necessary for people to make their own decisions about faith.

- Is it more important to preserve Christianity in the UK or to accept individual choices regarding faith?
  
  Accept choices – it is vital that people make their own decisions about faith. If it is forced upon someone, it is not their faith and it is useless anyway.

  Preserve Christianity – Christians believe that theirs is the one true faith since John 14:6 says that the only way to God is through Jesus. Evangelism and mission are not about forcing a religion on someone, just about informing them of their options.
3C The relationship between religion and society: religion, equality and discrimination

Now Test Yourself – page 74

1 What does Daly mean when she says Mary was a total rape victim?
Both her mind and her body were forced into bearing a child. She had no choice and was both physically and mentally coerced.

2 How does Daly redefine what God is?
God is not a noun (a being) but is a verb (be-ing); a transforming power for all people.

3 What is the unholy trinity?
Rape, genocide and war – products of a phallocentric society.

Now Test Yourself – page 75

1 How does the church limit female involvement?
- By characterising women as being like Mary – passive, meek, feminine and therefore not capable of leadership.
- Or characterising women like Eve – temptress, inferior, weak and susceptible to witchcraft and carnal abomination, so incapable of leadership.

2 What does androcentric mean?
Androcentrism – placing a masculine point of view as central.

3 How can the church reform to achieve liberation?
- It should be free from patriarchy and androcentric language.
- It must fight against oppression of women.
- It should have an inclusive approach to leadership.
- It should accept the full and equivalent nature of both genders.
- Clericalism (a leader who expects others to submit) should be removed.

Now Test Yourself – page 76

1 What is apostolic succession?
Apostolic succession – clergy ordained by bishops whose ordination successively leads back to the apostles, ordained by Christ.

2 Give two arguments against women in the priesthood.
Any of the following are acceptable:
- There were no female apostles.
- It is not traditional.
- It will damage ecumenical relationships.
- Scripture describes God using male pronouns and Christ was male.
- Priests and bishops represent Christ at the altar.
- Scripture gives leadership to men.
- Scripture forbids women in leadership roles (1 Timothy 2:12).
- Women are different to men and have different roles.

3 When were women first allowed to be ordained ministers in the Church of England?
- 1992 – the General Synod of the Church of England voted to allow women priests.
- 1994 – first women priests ordained.
What Do You Think? – page 77

Should Christian communities within the Church of England be able to opt out of accepting a female priest or bishop? Consider the following:

- Would a man have an unfair advantage when applying for a job?
  Yes, a man has the opportunity to be employed in any diocese whereas a woman has a limited range of choices.
  No, a diocese will only employ someone suitable for that area. If a particular man is unsuitable, they will not employ him. In some dioceses, clerics are unsuitable because they are female, so they will not be employed.

- Is it ever acceptable for a Christian to tolerate an intolerant viewpoint?
  Yes, tolerance is vital in a diverse society. There cannot be exceptions to tolerance, it is the price we pay for having our own views tolerated.
  No, there must be some rules or standards that are inviolable or Christianity loses its character. Jesus did not tolerate injustice and so Christians should not tolerate viewpoints that are unjust.

- Should the church be expected to change in line with society?
  Yes, the needs of a society are fluid and change according to the physical, financial or political environment. For the church to adequately serve the people, it must respond to their ultimate concerns and these are subject to change.
  No, scripture offers a standard which cannot be violated because it comes from God. To change the nature of Christian faith because secular society has different values misses the point of God’s message to his people. We should change to be more godly, we should not require Christianity to change to be more like society.

Specimen Exam Questions

Sample AO1 Questions – page 80

1 Examine the impact of women’s ordination upon the lives of believers and communities in contemporary Christianity.

- In the Roman Catholic Church, women may not be ordained to the priesthood.
- Pope John Paul II issued an apostolic letter, Ordinatio Sacerdotalis, in 1994 declaring that women can never be ordained as ministers.
- Some Roman Catholic women may feel that they are unable to fully serve God without ordination and so both men and women in the church work and campaign for change.
- The campaign organisation Catholic Women’s Ordination campaigns and protests calling for change within the Roman Catholic Church. This is met with hostility from some people.
- In 2016 Pope Francis commissioned a study to investigate the possibility of women deacons in the Roman Catholic Church.
- In 2019 the Study Commission on the Women’s Diaconate advised Pope Francis that non-ordained female deacons are in accordance with New Testament tradition, which may enable women to serve God within the church in the future.
- In 2017 the Greek Orthodox Church reinstated order of deaconesses (female deacons), allowing women more opportunities.
The ordination of the first female priests in the Church of England in 1994 caused several men and women to leave and join the Roman Catholic Church in protest. This issue is still contentious.

Married Church of England clergy who joined the Roman Catholic Church over this issue have been given exemption to remain married and still serve as priests.

Women can still legitimately be discriminated against when pursuing their calling to be ordained in the Church of England:
- Legislation includes clauses allowing individual parishes to refuse female ministers or to restrict their ability to perform the sacraments.
- Bishops who have ordained women are considered ‘tainted’ by those who object, as they have acted outside of their communion with the universal Christian church.

The creation of female bishops causes similar difficulties for those parishes that cannot accept the ministry of a woman:
- New male bishops who object to women’s ordination do not have hands laid on them at their own ordination by any ‘tainted’ bishop.

Some accept women can perform the legal job of vicar but not the holy order of priesthood. Therefore, the sacraments she administers to communities are considered invalid.
- This impacts upon congregations who attend baptisms or receive holy communion, since these sacraments are invalid.
- It is harder for women to perform well in interviews when some senior appointments panel members are still against women’s ordination.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

2 Explain the challenges posed by Christian migration to the UK.

- There is a wide range of push factors explaining why people migrate to the UK. People may wish to join family who live here, to work or receive education, to escape poverty, war, natural disasters or persecution, or to access healthcare or other resources.
- As a result, there may be challenges in offering pastoral care – migrant Christians may need help in understanding and engaging with legal and social processes after moving to the UK. They may have to cope with separation from loved ones. This may be made even more challenging if they do not speak English well.
- Some churches may have to find a way to appoint chaplains or members of the church who can translate. They sometimes may have to find workers with enough knowledge to assist with applications for work, housing, legal matters, medical treatment or schooling. Some churches need to find staff to provide English language classes.
- Assimilation is the absorption and integration of people into a culture. In this case we are talking about integrating migrant people who arrive with different traditions, languages, ideas and values into an established church community. Churches in communities with high migrant populations face many challenges.
- If a new member of the church is not confident in English, they may struggle to participate in worship. They may also have difficulty accessing teaching, such as confirmation classes, Bible study groups or sermons.
- It is difficult to assimilate if you do not know about church events. Language may be the main barrier, but also finding out about the church in the first place may be difficult.
- Sourcing translators, sometimes in many different languages, is a priority in some areas of the UK where there is a high migrant population.
UK church services may take a different format to those that migrant Christians are used to so they may not know how to behave. Services in the UK can be much shorter and more reserved. There may be unfamiliar rituals and liturgy that is difficult to follow.

Incorporation of music and prayer that is native to a migrant Christian’s home is one way of making people feel welcome and included. However, this adds to the challenges for some when existing church members may be more reserved or uncomfortable with more charismatic styles or worship.

There may be resistance from existing congregants to new members from overseas. Native churchgoers may be anxious or have preconceptions regarding new migrant members. Native members of the church may need to be educated regarding biblical teaching on welcoming others into the neighbourhood.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

3 Compare the approaches of Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether to feminist theology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mary Daly</th>
<th>Rosemary Radford Ruether</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American radical ecological feminist philosopher and theologian, with a Catholic background.</td>
<td>American feminist scholar and Catholic theologian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argues that women must abandon the Roman Catholic Church which is incapable of reform as it is too steeped in patriarchy.</td>
<td>Argues for reform within the Roman Catholic Church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity pretends to put women on a pedestal but is anti-women. The ideal values expected of women are submission and passivity.</td>
<td>Classical theology is androcentric; thus, it is not universal human experience: looking to scripture does not help as it perpetuates a sexist bias as it is written by men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary was a vessel for male goals. She was a total rape victim of the mind as well as the body. She had no real role in the conception and birth of Christ. She is ‘revered’ for her humble, submissive obedience.</td>
<td>The church teaches that women must be like Mary: passive, meek and ‘feminine’; if they lack Mary’s purity, they are like Eve: temptresses, inferior and weaker than men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If God is male, the male is God – all moral and spiritual values are centred around men.</td>
<td>Yet Christianity has a tradition of fighting oppression: Jesus placed women on an equal footing to men and offered a new social order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An unholy trinity of rape, genocide and war exists in a phallocentric society. Women are assigned the values of passive self-sacrifice to prevent them interrupting men’s work.</td>
<td>It is unnecessary for Christianity to subjugate women. Other forms of Christianity, including the early church, have seen women as equals or used female language to speak of God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God is not a noun (a being) but is a verb (be-ing), a transforming power for all people.</td>
<td>Reuther used strands from different feminist thinking:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation is no longer a passive acceptance of God’s will. It is participating in be-ing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table compares the approaches of Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether to feminist theology.
Worship should not be idolising the god-man. Instead it is accepting the power of be-ing in all people.

Our goal is not to remain in God’s favour but to be free human beings.

Women cannot restore or reform a failed Christianity through the creation of feminist liturgies. It is futile because it is still a patriarchal tradition.

Daley moved from a Catholic reformist to a post-Christian stance and argued that women should be anti-church.

Women must ‘fall’ from the way men want them to be and become morally independent. To achieve liberation, women require support from the ‘sisterhood’, or ‘cosmic covenant’ with other women, as they face criticism from the patriarchy.

The church should be reformed to become a community that manifests liberation:

- It should be free from patriarchy and androcentric language.
- It should fight against oppression of women.
- It should have an inclusive approach to leadership.
- It should accept the full and equivalent nature of both genders.
- Clericalism should be removed.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

4 Examine the prosperity gospel of the Word-Faith movement.

- The prosperity gospel originated in America. It teaches that the faithful can expect wealth and good health to be given to us by God. Poverty or suffering are not inevitable or necessary to faith.
- There is evidence in scripture that God wants health and wealth for his creation.
- And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).
- The origins of the prosperity gospel lie in the nineteenth-century USA – the New Thought movement said our mental states become our reality in the material world.
- In the 1950s, healing revivals in the USA gave rise to the evangelical and charismatic movement.
- In the 1980s, American televangelism took off, meaning that preachers could use television and radio to preach, conduct services and request donations.
- The prosperity gospel says that the covenant God made with Israel included a promise of material blessings, not just spiritual ones.
- The Bible is a contract between God and humanity.
- If we have faith, then God will provide for us physically and financially.
- Malachi 3:10 instructs us to bring the full harvest into the store house, so that God will put down for you an overflowing blessing. This implies that the more that the faithful carefully bring in, the more God will multiply what they have.
- Sickness and poverty are curses that can be broken only through faith in Jesus’ saving work on the cross.
- Faith, prayer and donations to charity will increase one’s wealth and health.
• Prosperity preachers often solicit financial gifts or ‘seed faith’ offerings to God, with the promise that God will give back one hundred times more than they put in.
• The Word-Faith movement professes the prosperity gospel. It claims that we should profess aloud the work God has done.
• The Word-Faith movement (or Word of Faith movement) is a non-denominational interpretation of Christianity teaching that Christians can access faith through positive speech.
• This is known as positive confession – you should declare positively what you believe God has done, for instance by healing you or making you rich, even if there are no signs that he has done it yet. This will result in God’s providing.
• For example, Paula White is the senior pastor of a non-denominational mega-church and adviser to Donald Trump. Her online and televised sermons encourage followers to give her ‘seed offerings’, sometimes suggesting a portion of their first month’s salary, which will result in God’s blessing. In return, she promises that God will materially reward givers with more than they donated.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

Sample AO2 Questions – page 80

1 Evaluate the view that the UK is not an appropriate modern mission field.

There are so many acceptable ways to answer this question. The suggestion below is an abbreviation of an acceptable method but not the only one.

Introduction

Appropriate – suitable or proper. The question suggests that it is somehow not fitting for Christians from overseas to come to the UK seeking to evangelise or to support people.

Paragraph one

• This view may come from a racist stance that says that since the UK went out into the world and colonised, it is not appropriate that people from those colonies should consider themselves authorities over the UK now. People might further argue that the UK is a source of Christian mission: we still send missionaries to the world.
• However, there are non-Christians everywhere in the world. All areas are legitimate fields of mission.
• Furthermore, the church in the UK is in decline – missionaries may help to revive some form of religion in a culture that is abandoning it.

Paragraph two

• There is plenty of need and suffering in the UK – help should always be welcome wherever there is suffering, and we should not be too stubborn as a country to accept help when it is needed. Therefore, the UK is an appropriate field for mission.
• Others might point out that secularisation is a good thing – it shows development is taking place in UK thinking so there is no need for evangelising.
• However, although society is secular, missionaries can give practical support to the vulnerable. There are two sides to mission, it is not all about spreading the gospel message.

Paragraph three

• There has been a sharp fall in religious commitment to Christianity in the UK so it is legitimate that members of the Christian church should wish to come to address this.
• However, the UK is well educated, religious studies is taught in school here and people can choose to accept or reject faith without persuasion.
• While there may not be a need for evangelism, there is a limited role for mission to offer aid if society cannot or will not.

Conclusion

• Often a message can be more interesting if presented by someone new. A different face, accent or approach to life can be welcome for some people. Therefore, the UK is an appropriate modern mission field, even if we still send missionaries overseas from here.

2 ‘The ascetic ideal is completely incompatible with Christianity.’ Evaluate this view.

There are so many acceptable ways to answer this question. The suggestion below is an abbreviation of an acceptable method but not the only one.

Introduction

• Incompatible – asceticism and Christianity cannot coexist without conflict.

Paragraph one

• Jesus made use of asceticism during his lifetime: in Matthew 4:1–11 he goes out into the wilderness and fasts, away from society for 40 days. This suggests it is perfectly compatible with Christianity.
• However, Jesus ultimately rejected asceticism in favour of working among communities. He had experimented with asceticism, but it was clearly not an approach that he felt was effective.
• Yet the focus of Christianity is God, the means by which he is reached are irrelevant. This question is more about style than content.

Paragraph two

• Many biblical figures had ascetic lifestyles, e.g. John the Baptist and St Paul, suggesting that the two approaches are wholly compatible.
• On the other hand, in scripture there are faithful characters who lived and functioned in society. In Matthew 8:5–13 the centurion is commended by Jesus for his faith, even though his life is far from ascetic in nature.
• In addition, key biblical figures, such as Philemon, lived in society and owned property. Paul does not condemn people for this, he works with them, and so asceticism seems unnecessary, even if it is not incompatible.

Paragraph three

• Asceticism has a long biblical history: Numbers 6:1–21 gives instructions as to how ascetics should live, suggesting compatibility.
• Yet withdrawing from society is ineffective in a faith that commands evangelism. Practically speaking, it seems highly unlikely that the two approaches can coexist.
• However, there are many ways in which a person can demonstrate their faith in God. Asceticism is described in the Bible, but it clearly is not required. This suggests it is compatible but not necessary.

Conclusion

• Paul teaches Christians that they live by grace rather than by law (Romans 6:14). Asceticism is embraced by Paul but it is not required. Therefore, it is compatible.
3D Historical developments in religious thought – challenges from secularisation

Now Test Yourself – page 82

1 What does secularisation mean?
Secularisation – separation of church institutions from state such as government and schooling, etc.

2 Why would a secularist object to faith schools being state funded?
Church schools are exclusivist for staff and students. This means that even though everyone pays for the schools through taxes, priority can be given to Christians over those with no faith or those from a different faith. This seems to be unfair and against UK values.

3 Give two pieces of evidence that the UK is still a Christian country.
- Christianity is still the most represented religion according to the 2011 census, with 59.3 per cent of the population identifying as Christian.
- Prominent churches/ancient and modern cathedrals.

Now Test Yourself – page 83

1 Why would Christian law conflict with UK law?
Christian ethics are based on scripture and church tradition, UK law has a history of this but is increasingly secular and is based upon the needs of society rather than divine commands.

2 What is the view of the Roman Catholic Church regarding remarriage after divorce?
It is adultery, unless the first marriage had been annulled by the church.

3 Why could the church be considered discriminatory regarding gay marriage?
Because UK law states that people of the same gender may legally be joined in marriage. However, many churches do not recognise this or have the legal privilege to refuse to conduct such ceremonies.

What Do You Think? – page 84

Is the separation of church and state a good thing? Consider the following:

• What things give the UK its unique identity?

Maybe – its geography, architecture, government and faith structure, all of which are Christian in flavour or explicitly Christian.

Or – all of the above, which need not be exclusively Christian in nature. In addition, its inclusivity, vibrancy, diversity which allow for people of all faiths and none.

• Are Christian ethics in contrast to secular ethics?

Yes, Christian ethics require the belief in an omnipotent God whereas secular ethics are based purely in the empirical world, they have no connection with religion.

No, both forms of ethics fundamentally are looking for ways to benefit people. They disagree about the method via which they arrive at these conclusions, but any ethics, whether religious or secular, are looking at what is good for people. They agree that human life should not be wasted and that the planet should be protected.
Will Christianity disappear if it is not connected to government?

Yes, it is governmental law that enshrines Christian belief and practice. It must be protected if it is not to be overcome by atheism and materialistic concerns, or by other kinds of faiths.

No, the separation of church and state merely emphasises that belief is a choice rather than a duty to the state. It allows personal belief to flourish positively when it is not forced upon people by law, provided that the law still protects it as a right.

3E Historical developments in religious thought – challenges from science

Now Test Yourself – page 86

1 What do Dawkins and the McGraths agree on?
They challenge Stephen Jay Gould’s presentation of science and religion as NOMA.

2 What does Gould mean by a NOMA?
Non-overlapping magisterium – science and religions are separate and each has its own area of expertise that the other does not.

3 How does the religious method differ from the science method according to Dawkins?

Now Test Yourself – page 87

1 What is proof according to Dawkins?
Proof is where empirical evidence can be tested or observed and falsified.

2 How do the McGraths define scientific proof?
Scientific proof is the identification of reasons for believing that something might be true, noting that our conclusions are provisional.

3 How is science limited according to the McGraths?
There are questions beyond the scope of science. These concern meaning, such as ‘Is there purpose in nature?’.

What Do You Think? – page 88

Are science and religion completely incompatible? Consider the following:

• Can religion reliably tell us how the universe and all its contents came about?
Yes, scripture is revelation, divinely inspired by God, and so it can be relied upon as true.

No, the purpose of religion is different from the purpose of science. Religion and its scripture are not trying to explain the existence of the natural world. Religion is trying to comment on the purpose and meaning behind existence.

• Can science give us moral guidance or explain why the universe and all its contents exists?
No, the purpose of science is not to give moral proclamations about what we should and should not do, it is to explain phenomena in nature.

Yes, science can indicate to us what is practical for human survival and what will harm individuals or species. It informs moral pronouncements all the time, e.g. advice on tackling climate change or the origins of our sexuality and gender.

- Is there any overlap in the remit of science and religion?
Yes, both science and religion are trying to make sense of the world in which we find ourselves. They have different approaches and often a different element that they are trying to discover, but they both have interest in the origins of the natural world and in the phenomena within the universe.

No, religion is focused on the metaphysical and repeatedly rejects too much interest in the material world as a distraction from God.

### 3F Historical developments in religious thought – challenges from pluralism and diversity within a tradition

**Now Test Yourself – page 90**

1 Give one way that tolerance is different from pluralism.

Pluralism claims that other religions may be considered equally valid, even if they claim to be exclusively true. However, tolerance accepts the existence of alternate views but still regards them as errors.

2 How do Christians believe salvation is achieved?
Through Christ alone.

3 What does exclusivism mean?
Christianity is the only way and all other religions are in error. My faith is the only true faith, all the others are wrong.

**Now Test Yourself – page 93**

1 What is a lawful religion?
Rahner’s term for any religion that provides the means of a relationship with God.

2 What analogy does Hick give to explain why there are different understandings of the noumena?
White light (the noumena) passes through a prism (human, sensory experience) and is refracted into a rainbow of colours (phenomena).

3 Why did Rahner see pluralism as a threat to the church?
Because it rejects the authority of the Catholic Church, suggesting no religion is more accurate or leads to God more effectively than any other.

**What Do You Think? – page 93**

Can Christianity ever be compatible with pluralism? Consider the following:

- Does scripture suggest that truth can be found anywhere other than Christianity?
Yes, there are passages that suggest that other paths should be tolerated and that those who believe should be treated well. Christ sometimes argues against discrimination based on belief (e.g. the Good Samaritan story).

No, it is explicit in its claim that Jesus is the only way to the Father and that salvation is only achieved via Christ.

- If pluralism is correct, why should I bother being a Christian?

If Hick is correct, then Christianity is one way to understand salvation. It might be the most meaningful to you and it might reveal the Real more fully.

Or – you need not bother being a Christian if you don’t find it useful.

- Can something be true even if it is not popular?

Yes, mainstream Christianity may have difficulties accepting pluralism, but this does not make it false. Kant’s suggestion that we only perceive subjectively as phenomena means that we will always struggle to understand other viewpoints but they may contain some elements of truth, as might ours.

No, what is true is what the majority holds to be true. Christianity is held by the vast majority of Christians to be the only way to salvation. It has been understood this way for 2000 years based on the teaching of Christ himself. Pluralism is unpopular because it is false. The two things go hand in hand.

Specimen Exam Questions

Sample AO1 Questions – page 96

1 Compare the views of Richard Dawkins and Alister McGrath regarding the relationship between science and religion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dawkins</th>
<th>McGrath</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Began as a Christian and lost his faith due to his studies in evolutionary science.</td>
<td>Began as an atheist and converted to Christianity, which broadened his studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion believes because of faith in a holy book. Science believes because of gathered empirical evidence. Their methods are at odds.</td>
<td>Natural sciences are consistent with both religion and atheism, the interpretation of the evidence is where people differ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific conclusions are supported by evidence. They would be abandoned if evidence arose to disprove them. This is very different from the religious approach of fundamentalism.</td>
<td>Arguments from science against religion are fundamentalist in character, rejecting any and all evidence that does not support atheistic views. In this sense, both religion and science have their fundamentalists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative natural selection explains all life as a non-random, purely natural chain of events and means that there is no room or need for a designer.</td>
<td>Science does not entail atheism. People who believe or disbelieve do so for reasons other than science. It is possible and logical to be religious and a scientist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejects Stephen Jay Gould’s NOMA (non-overlapping magisterium) model of science and</td>
<td>Rejects Gould’s NOMAs – religion and science are POMAs (partially overlapping magisterium)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
religion – there is only one magisterium (science).

| offering possibilities of cross-fertilisation and interpenetration of subject matter. |

There is no expertise that theologians have that science does not. Religion is not a field in which expertise can be gained.

| Questions about transcendental ideas such as God or the meaning of life are better left to religion than trying to answer them with science. |

Religion and science are incompatible. Those who profess both are lying to appease or to continue earning money. Pantheism or deism are often confused with theism.

| Many scientists have faith. A 1997 survey of US scientists showed 40 per cent believed in a personal God who answered prayer, not including deists or other ideas of God. |

Religion is a byproduct of human survival qualities – obedience to authority and tendency to assign meaning and purpose. It is a meme.

| There is no evidence against God from science and there is no evidence that religious belief is a product of psychological illness. |

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

2 Examine the features of Karl Rahner’s Christian inclusivism.

- Inclusivism – an acceptance that while Christianity is completely true, other religions may hold a partial truth. My faith is the only true faith, but I will include others.
- Rahner says that pluralism is cowardly because it does not take its own convictions seriously in dialogue, so there is nothing meaningful to say.
- He also claims that pluralism is one of the greatest opponents of Roman Catholicism. It rejects the authority of the church.
- Thesis 1:
  - Christianity is the one absolute authority concerning salvation.
  - The historical Christ is the only route to salvation.
  - God desires salvation for everyone.
  - Salvation was possible before people could know of the historical Christ.
- Thesis 2:
  - Acts 17:22–27 shows that other religions are incorrect but may lead people towards God with Paul’s sermon to the Areopagus about their worship of an unknown God.
  - All religions that lead people to God are lawful religions.
  - Non-Christian religions contain error, so they are not harmless.
  - God uses other religions to reach those who cannot truly hear of Christ.
- Thesis 3:
  - Atheists and other non-Christians who are unable to respond to Christ may be anonymous Christians.
  - God is already working within them through Christ even if they do not know or accept it.
  - Christian missionaries should recognise this and show respect.
  - The anonymous Christian exhibits genuine faith through their behaviour and attitudes. They are not consigned to hell or granted salvation on their own merit without reference to Christ.
- Thesis 4:
  - Conversion to Christianity helps the anonymous Christian complete their journey.
  - The work of the church is to bring people out of implicit faith in Christ and towards explicit faith.
  - Even rejection of the Christian message may not always be a rejection of Christ.
  - Not all will be saved. Someone may opt out of God’s salvation if they hear and correctly understand.
• Influenced by Rahner, Vatican II agreed that some polytheists or atheists can be saved if they have not heard the gospel but still try to do God’s will.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

3 Explain the challenges Christianity faces from secularism in the UK.

Faith schools are being challenged:
• The National Secular Society campaigns for the abolition of faith schools on the grounds that they are unfair.
• Christian schools are often very successful with both state funding and additional funding from the church.
• They may be selective in who they choose to offer schooling to.
• Secularisation would prevent daily compulsory Christian-themed worship in schools.
• They are perceived as discriminatory to staff, only appointing Christians, for instance.
• If they receive funding from taxpayers, all should have the opportunity to attend if they wish.

The UK may not be a Christian country:
• There has been a decrease in the number of people who claim to identify as Christian.
• The 2011 census indicated a 12.4 per cent decrease in those calling themselves Christian.
• Many churches are being sold for secular use as cafes, flats or climbing walls.
• The National Secular Society campaigns for a separation of church and state so that bishops may not have unelected seats in the House of Lords and the head of state would not be head of the church.
• There is no longer a legal requirement for all work to cease on Sundays or religious holidays and there is a decrease in the uptake of religious rites of passage such as funerals, weddings or baptism.

Christian beliefs often conflict with UK law:
• UK laws on abortion, gay marriage and equal opportunities for women in employment are at odds with the wishes of the church in many cases.
• Secularism would see employees being legally obliged to fulfil duties that conflict with their faith, such as providing cakes for weddings of both heterosexual and homosexual couples.
• A ban by some employers over the wearing of Christian symbols in the workplace conflicts with people’s wish to express their faith.
• Advertising of the Christian faith has been at odds with UK law when advertising in the cinema or on buses.
• Secularists wish to see Christianity offered no special protection from criticism according to UK law.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

4 Examine the exclusivist and inclusivist views expressed within scripture.
• Exclusivism – Christianity is the only way and all other religions are in error. My faith is the only true faith, all the others are wrong.
• The Old Testament clearly states that the covenant that existed between God and the Jewish nation is exclusive. He commands that they worship one God only and that they are chosen by him alone. Dire consequences are expected for those who disobey.
• Deuteronomy 6:5: You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.
• This makes up part of what is known in Jewish tradition as the shema. The implication is that there is only one God and that the believer should dedicate all their devotion to this God.
alone. There is no room for the worship of numerous gods (polytheism) or of a different understanding of God.

- Joshua 23:16 indicates that people can expect punishment from God if they engage in worship of any other God, for he will be angry at the betrayal of the covenant between God and humanity.
- The New Testament widens this covenant to the gentiles, but Christianity still clearly states that it is only through Christ that people can expect to be saved.
- John 14:6: Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’
- This passage is very clear that it is only through faith in Jesus Christ that salvation can be gained, and that no other faith will be sufficient. This is reiterated in Acts 4:12 when it states that only the name of Jesus can provide salvation. This leaves no room for acceptance of other faiths.
- Inclusivism is a religious position which accepts that while Christianity is completely true, other religions may hold a partial truth. My faith is the only true faith, but I will include others. This retains a flavour of exclusivism but tolerates or even sees some value in other faith positions.
- There are some biblical passages that some claim may imply inclusivism.
- Leviticus 19:34: The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself.
- This does not imply that the ‘aliens’ beliefs should be accepted or adopted, but it does imply that they should not only be tolerated but respected too. In addition, Micah 4:5 suggests an acceptance rather than judgement that different people have different faiths.
- In the New Testament, Mark 9:40: Whoever is not against us is for us. This implies more than just a tolerance of other faiths. For instance, Hinduism may allow for the worship of Christ among other avatars. In this instance, the belief might be perceived as not being actively against the Christian faith.
- 1 Corinthians 10:32 indicates that respect should be shown to any people of any faith position. There should be no negative judgement and so this may be interpreted as inclusivist.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

Sample AO2 Questions – page 96

1 Evaluate the view that science has proven religion to be false.

There are so many acceptable ways to answer this question. The suggestion below is an abbreviation of an acceptable method but not the only one.

Introduction

- Proven – proof in regard to science refers to empirical evidence. So, for science to prove religion false, it would have to provide empirical evidence to demonstrate that religion cannot contain any truth about the world.

Paragraph one

- Science answers all the questions about the origins of human life and of the universe with empirical evidence. According to scholars like Hawking and Dawkins, if science cannot address a question with evidence from the world, then it is a non-question.
- Yet science does not prove religion to be false, since God transcends the physical world. But it does show that God and the afterlife are not part of the world and so are meaningless ideas.
However, many Christians follow their religion irrespective of the findings of science. It almost doesn’t matter what science says.

**Paragraph two**

- Science can explain the origins of the universe with no need for God or supernatural explanations. Everything that exists can have a natural explanation and so in that sense, science has proven religion to be false because there is no natural explanation that supports its ideas.
- In addition, even if science does allow space for religion to coexist with it, science reduces God to a distant force who cannot interact with the world rather than a personal designer because its explanations are not consistent with a being that suspends natural laws or acts outside of them.
- However, the Christian faith must not be influenced by science so that science cannot dictate to Christianity what it can and cannot believe. Thus, science cannot prove religion false.

**Paragraph three**

- When science cannot answer a question, it works to discover knowledge that is consistent with the physical laws of the universe. Religion is not consistent with empirical evidence and so it has been demonstrated to be false.
- While science cannot disprove religion, it does not require it to explain anything because a gap in scientific knowledge requires more science to fill it, not faith or religion.
- However, science and Christianity are not mutually exclusive – many scientists are also religious and this could not be the case if science has proved religion to be false.

**Conclusion**

- Science has not proved religion to be false. However, the God allowed for by science does not require worship or faith as it is simply an impersonal power or force rather than a personal God.

2 ‘Christianity cannot resist the challenge of secularism.’ Evaluate this view.

There are so many acceptable ways to answer this question. The suggestion below is an abbreviation of an acceptable method but not the only one.

**Introduction**

- ‘Resist the challenge’ – means to withstand the effects of. What evidence is there that Christianity can withstand whatever challenges are brought about by the rise in secularism?

**Paragraph one**

- There has been rapid growth of charismatic and Pentecostal churches in the UK. This is evidence that despite secularist growth, Christianity is growing too.
- However, statistics show that the Christian church as a whole is in decline. This suggests that Christians have failed to adequately address the secularist challenge of declining interest and raise in atheism.
- In addition, we can notice that the growth of new churches is not a response to secularism but to immigration instead, since these churches have been planted to attract those who are new to the UK.

**Paragraph two**

- An increasingly secular society offers the challenge to Christianity that its laws are not compatible with Christian morality. If secularists have their way, bishops will be removed from the House of Lords and Christian influence over law will again be reduced.
• However, it seems that the foundation of UK society is Christianity. The reigning monarch is the head of the church, and laws are made with reference to the Christian flavour of the country. Therefore there is no significant challenge to the faith.
• Yet the National Secular Society is increasing in numbers and continues to campaign for change. If Christianity is to survive, it will not be in the same form as it will have to adapt to being a minority position, especially if the 2011 census is to be believed.

Paragraph three
• A challenge offered to Christianity by secularism is the campaign to ban faith schools. This is a significant challenge since this would prevent perceived indoctrination of children by Christians and thus encourage a decline in numbers.
• However, Christianity would argue that faith schools are there to support those families who already have faith and since such schools are acceptable according to UK law and are very successful, there is no serious threat to them.
• Yet this challenge raises awareness in society that there is an inequality where schools and jobs are offered to Christian families that are not available to families of no faith or alternative faiths. It is expected that the campaign will only grow as people hear of this problem, and the threat to Christianity will grow.

Conclusion
• Secularism is a social issue rather than a religious one. It is about equal treatment for every member of society rather than an attempt to eradicate Christianity. Therefore, there is no reason why Christianity should not be able to withstand the challenges of secularism, provided it is willing to adapt to the changes in society.
Theme 4 Religious practices that shape religious identity

4A Religious identity through diversity in baptism

Now Test Yourself – page 98

1 What happens to an unbaptised baby who dies?
   Infants are born with original sin and without baptism will received eternal damnation.

2 What does baptism cleanse the recipient of?
   Original sin – inherited from Adam who brought sin into the world.

3 What does Augustine compare infant baptism to?
   Like circumcision in Judaism, baptism is an outward seal of an inward faith.

Now Test Yourself – page 99

1 What is the main difference between Zwingli and Augustine on infant baptism?
   Baptism itself is not necessary to salvation.

2 Why did Zwingli object to the Anabaptists?
   Requiring a believer’s baptism for salvation is a challenge to God’s sovereignty and has no precedent in scripture.

3 What is the point in infant baptism for Zwingli?
   It is a pledge from the parents to properly instruct children and bring them up as Christians and members of the faith.

What Do You Think? – page 100

Is it important that a person consents to being baptised? Consider the following:

- Can a parent consent on behalf of their child?
  Yes, in the same way that a parent must sometimes make other choices that they believe are best for the wellbeing of their child (like getting vaccinated or denying them excessive sweets), a parent can choose to bring them up in the Christian faith. Baptism is a symbol of this.

- No, the whole point of religious faith is that it is a personal decision. Just as most westerners would consider the decision to marry a personal one that cannot be made by anyone else, the decision to have a relationship with God cannot be made by someone on a person’s behalf.

- Would it matter to an adult if they have been baptised as a child or not?
  Yes, it removes the opportunity for a new believer to signify that step they are making for themselves. Barth thought that confirmation devalued the significance of baptism, and unless you accept Anabaptism, there is no outward symbol for the new believer to perform to indicate their new faith. The atheist may also resent the fact that they have been inducted into a faith which they do not value.
No, the atheist should not care, since it is unimportant and holds no deep significance for them. The theist can be confirmed or be content that the decision they have made is more important than an outward action.

- To what extent can children be indoctrinated to ‘choose’ baptism?

All children who are educated in the Christian faith are at risk of being caused to accept the faith rather than finding God for themselves. It is not a free choice for any child to ‘choose’ baptism. It is a decision for adults only to make for themselves.

Or – children need to be educated about what baptism is before they choose it. This is not indoctrination, it is information. A child can then decide if and when they are ready to consent to this symbolic action if they feel they have a relationship with God. If they have been baptised in the spirit, it will not matter what parents say, the child will want to be baptised in water as well.

4B Religious identity through diversity in Eucharist

Now Test Yourself – page 102

1 Why do Christians share bread and wine in the Eucharistic service?

2 What is transubstantiation?
Where the bread and wine, after consecration, miraculously and mysteriously transform into the actual body and blood of Christ (although they still look like bread and wine).

3 Why would the Roman Catholic Church reject the other two approaches?
Because they contradict transubstantiation (which is official church dogma) and appear to make the bread and wine merely symbolic.

Now Test Yourself – page 103

1 How does transubstantiation differ from consubstantiation?
Transubstantiation claims that there is a change in substance of the bread and wine so that they become the body and blood of Jesus.

Consubstantiation claims that the bread and wine do not transform but they now coexist with the body and blood of Christ.

2 What was Luther’s example to demonstrate consubstantiation?
An iron rod placed in a fire will become red hot, thus the fire and iron coexist without changing their substance.

3 Which Bible verse did Zwingli use to show that the real presence of Jesus is not required for salvation?
John 6:63 – It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless.

What Do You Think? – page 104

Do the differences in theology over the Eucharist affect what is being celebrated? Consider the following:
- If the bread and wine don’t transform, does it matter how the Eucharist is celebrated?
  Yes, the real presence of Christ is in the Eucharist, even though it doesn’t become his body and blood. Therefore, it is sacred and should be treated with respect.
  No, it is just symbolic, so the service can be adapted so that it is meaningful and useful for the worshippers who are celebrating and remembering Christ’s actions.

- Is it right that only the priest can consecrate the gifts?
  Yes, the priest is the representation of Christ on earth. He has been ordained to perform these tasks whereas the laity have not been separated by God for this task.
  No, a priest or pastor is a human being. They have an important role, but they perform no magic in blessing the bread and wine. Anyone can pray to God to do the same.

- Is it necessary to drink the wine to be saved from sin?
  No, in Roman Catholic thought, only one of the gifts is needed to ensure salvation. The body and blood of Christ are inseparable from each other. Alternatively, other Christians might argue that since the bread and wine do not transform, they do not save. Only God can do that, so it doesn’t matter if you take communion or not.
  Yes, the act of taking the eucharist into your own body is the taking of salvation for yourself. It is necessary to eat the bread and drink the wine if we want God to save us from sin.

4C Religious identity through diversity in festivals

Now Test Yourself – page 106

1 What difference is there in focus between the western and eastern Christmas celebrations?
   In the west, Christ’s birth and his second advent (the Parousia) are paramount. In the Orthodox church, there is more focus on Christ’s birth that enabled salvation through his death and resurrection. Western Christmas is more commercialised than eastern nativity.

2 Why do eastern Christians celebrate on 7 January?
   This is according to the Gregorian calendar used by the western church. However, eastern Christians who follow the traditional Julian calendar celebrate on December 25th according to their own calendar.

3 How does the Eastern Church prepare for the Nativity?
   By fasting for 40 days, avoiding animal products, oil and wine. They then have a great fast on the eve of the nativity where they do not eat at all until the first star appears in the evening sky.

Now Test Yourself – page 108

1 What event(s) does Easter mark in the Christian churches?
   The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the series of events that led up to this in the life of Christ.

2 How is Holy Week different for Orthodox Christians than for Western Christians?
   For Orthodox Christians, every day in Holy week is a holy day with a service celebrated each day with a different theme. For Western Christians, the key events are on Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.
3 What is the Vernal Equinox and why is it important at Easter?

It is when the sun is observed to be exactly above the equator and is one of the deciding factors that marks the beginning of Easter in the Orthodox Church.

**What Do You Think? – page 108**

Are Christians celebrating the same events in the eastern and western churches? Consider the following:

- **Is the different naming of events important?**
  
  Yes, Christmas in the west is too commercialised and secular, a different name indicates that this is a holy period where Christ is central. Easter is a name based upon Roman or pagan worship in the spring. Pascha shows that this festival is distinctly Christian.
  
  No, Christmas is a Christian celebration that marks the birth of the Christ child. Easter is always connected with the Christian festival in the modern west. Any secularisation of these seasons need not affect Christian celebrations.

- **Do the quantity or content of services indicate greater faith within one tradition than another?**
  
  Yes, the Orthodox services are more numerous, requiring more dedication. They are also more concerned with internal preparation than with commercialisation. The fasting expectations require dedication that is not expected in the Protestant or Catholic churches.
  
  No, outward tradition does not reflect the inward dedication of a believer. Not all orthodox worshippers will attend every service, any more than a member of the western church would. Individual worshippers will take their fasts more or less seriously depending on the family or the society in which they live.

- **Does it matter that the events are not celebrated on the same day?**
  
  Yes, these events are to mark the dates of the birth and resurrection of Christ. Part of what makes these events holy is that they are celebrated on the day on which these events occurred or on dates that the Church has declared holy in God’s sight.
  
  No, these dates are largely arbitrary, chosen by religious leaders rather than because they have any historical accuracy.

**Specimen Exam Questions**

**Sample AO1 Questions – page 111**

1 Outline **two** arguments for infant baptism. *(AS only)*

- Augustine argued that there was scriptural precedent for baptising babies or young children and that this was practised by the apostles as a means of removing original sin.
- Acts 2:38–39: For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.
- Augustine wrote that there were two kinds of sin:
  - original sin – inherited from Adam who brought sin into the world
  - personal sin – resulting from our state of sinfulness.
- Sin results in both spiritual and literal death, but Jesus, who was born sinless, died and was raised to life again. Baptism cleanses people of original sin and enables them to share in Christ’s resurrection.
• Infants are born with original sin and without baptism will receive eternal damnation.
• It is the firm tradition of the whole church that infants should be baptised.
• Infants are presented for baptism by both the parents and the whole church.
• They cannot yet choose Christ for themselves, so parents respond on the child’s behalf.
• Baptised infants who die are given salvation through this grace of God.
• When Christian parents take the child’s vows on their behalf, the sacrament is completed.
• Zwingli’s main challenge to Augustine’s position on infant baptism is that baptism does not cause salvation. The water itself has no power to wash away sin, that power belongs only to God, who can save whomever he chooses. Baptism only symbolises salvation.
• Scripture shows this: Acts 8:16 – For as yet the Spirit had not fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.
• However, Zwingli agreed that baptism was still important.
• The sacraments are instituted by Christ – through his own baptism and the great commission:
  o It is a promise or oath made by a believer to God.
  o It symbolises (but does not guarantee) salvation through God’s grace.
  o It can strengthen the faith of a believer (but does not cause faith).
  o It demonstrates Christian unity.
• Baptist did not erase original sin. Instead, it was a pledge from the parents to properly instruct children and bring them up as Christians and members of the faith. In this way, their faith in God is the path to their salvation.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

2 Examine the distinctive features of the celebration of Christmas in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

• The eastern churches refer to Christmas as the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord. They emphasise that Christ’s incarnation made his crucifixion and resurrection possible.
• It is a lesser celebration in the Eastern Church and not so open to the trappings of commercialism.
• The Feast of the Nativity is celebrated on 25 December according to the traditional Julian calendar. In 1752, the Gregorian calendar was adopted in the west. According to this calendar, Orthodox Christians mark Jesus’ birth on 7 January.
• Some observe the nativity and adoration of the shepherds on 6 January and then the Adoration of the Magi on 7 January.
• The nativity fast is a period of preparation, abstinence and penance lasting 40 days until 6 January. Christians abstain from eating animal products, oil and wine.
• The day before the nativity, a strict fast day, paramony, is observed: no food is eaten until the first star appears in the night sky.
• Two Sundays before nativity, the Sunday of the Forefathers commemorates the human ancestors of Christ.
• The Sunday before nativity, the Sunday of the Holy Fathers commemorates all righteous men and women who pleased God from scripture.
• At the nativity celebrations, vestments are worn in the liturgical colours of red (symbolising God’s presence) and gold (symbolising value or majesty).
• On the eve of the nativity all-night services are held:
  o The Hours – an aggregate of five services in one, containing psalms, hymns and readings to prepare for Christ’s arrival.
  o Vespers – chanting and readings celebrate Christ’s incarnation.
  o The Liturgy of St Basil the Great – an old baptismal and chrismation liturgy.
  o The Vigil – psalms and chanting.
  o Matins – proclamation that Christ is born.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.
3 Explain the similarities and differences between the eastern and western churches’ celebration of Christmas.

- Both churches celebrate the incarnation of Christ as God incarnate, or God-made man. However, there is a slightly different emphasis between the churches.
- The eastern churches celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, emphasising that Christ’s incarnation made his crucifixion and resurrection possible.
- Western churches celebrate two aspects of Christ’s incarnation at Christmas time:
  - Remembering God made flesh as a human child.
  - Anticipating his second coming (the Parousia).
- Christmas is celebrated on 25 December in Christianity. However, how this is calculated differs between traditions.
  - The Feast of the Nativity is calculated according to the traditional Julian calendar, but in 1752 the Gregorian calendar was adopted in the west. According to this calendar, Orthodox Christians mark Jesus’ birth on 7 January.
- In Eastern Orthodox Christianity, there is little commercialisation around the event of the nativity. Yet in the west, commercialisation has become a huge part of celebrations, even by Christian worshippers.
- Advent is the period of preparation for the coming of Christ in all Christian churches.
- For the Eastern Church, advent is a period of preparation, abstinence and penance. It includes a fast, much like at Easter, lasting 40 days until 6 January. Orthodox Christians abstain from eating animal products, oil and wine. The day before the nativity, paramony is observed: no food is eaten until the first star appears in the night sky.
- There is no formal fasting on the western church calendar. The sense of preparation is marked using advent calendars and the lighting of advent candles on an advent wreath on each Sunday in advent, symbolising:
  - hope
  - prophets
  - joy
  - the annunciation.
  - A fifth Christ candle in the centre is lit on Christmas eve.
- There is a great deal of liturgy and ceremony within the orthodox and many western churches at Christmas time. In the Orthodox Church, liturgical colours of vestments are red (symbolising God’s presence) and gold (symbolising value or majesty).
- In the west, those churches that use role will use purple (symbolising royalty or suffering) or blue (symbolising hope or the heavens). The third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) uses rose vestments, symbolising joy.
- In the east, on the eve of the nativity all-night services are held:
  - The Hours – an aggregate of five services in one, containing psalms, hymns and readings to prepare for Christ’s arrival.
    - Vespers – chanting and readings celebrate Christ’s incarnation.
    - The Liturgy of St Basil the Great – an old baptismal and chrismation liturgy.
    - The Vigil – psalms and chanting.
    - Matins – proclamation that Christ is born.
- Western Christmas day celebrations begin at 11pm on Christmas eve:
  - Midnight mass – Eucharist is performed at midnight, often by candlelight.
  - Dawn service – at sunrise, or early on Christmas morning, a Eucharist is celebrated.
  - Christmas day service – on Christmas day at mid-morning, a third Eucharist is celebrated.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.
Compare the Roman Catholic approach to the Eucharist of transubstantiation with the Protestant approach of consubstantiation.

- The Eucharist is a sacrament in the Christian church – an outward sign of an inner reality.
- The Eucharist is the re-enactment of the Last Supper in accordance with Jesus’ command in Luke 22:19: Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’
- What Jesus meant when he said ‘this is my body’ has different interpretations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transubstantiation</th>
<th>Consubstantiation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Trans’ indicates change or movement. So, the bread and wine change in substance.</td>
<td>‘Con’ means ‘with’, so the bread and wine coexist with Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At consecration there is a change in substance from simply bread and wine to the actual body and blood of Christ.</td>
<td>At consecration the real presence of Christ exists alongside the bread and wine without destroying the integrity of either.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bread and wine miraculously transform in substance (but not appearance) into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.</td>
<td>The bread and wine do not miraculously transform in substance, i after consecration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The passage from Luke 22:19 is interpreted literally: the bread is Christ’s real body and the wine is his real blood.</td>
<td>Connection is made with Christ who took a human body at his incarnation, without destroying either his humanity or his divinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquinas claimed the substance of the bread and wine is different from their accidents (their outward appearance.) The substance changes, the accident remains the same.</td>
<td>Luther gave an example to illustrate this union: When an iron put in the fire it becomes red hot. Both the Iron and fire are united in the poker yet remain unchanged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Eucharist is not just a symbol, it is a mystical event in which there is the real presence of Christ.</td>
<td>The Eucharist is not just a symbol, it is a mystical event in which there is the real presence of Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Eucharist contains the real presence of Christ.</td>
<td>The Eucharist contains the real presence of Christ.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Adopted by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.  
• Confirmed as Catholic dogma by the Council of Trent in 1551.  
• Reaffirmed at the Second Vatican Council in 1965. | • Condemned as heresy by the Council of Trent in 1551.  
• Rejected by many Lutherans as error, since it was never a clear philosophical doctrine espoused by Luther. |

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.
Sample AO2 Questions – page 111

1 Evaluate the view that baptism should only be administered to consenting adults.

There are so many acceptable ways to answer this question. The suggestion below is an abbreviation of an acceptable method but not the only one.

Introduction

Consenting – to agree to or give permission for.

Paragraph one

• It is vital that the believer consents to baptism so that it represents a true relationship with God, otherwise there is no meaning to the idea of the Christian faith.
• However, don’t infants deserve the chance for salvation as much as adults? A sick child should surely be given baptism and thus salvation so that it is not condemned by God.
• It seems that baptism is necessary for salvation. This means that it is not up to individual choice, it is up to God, who desires to save us all. Thus, the church should decide if the individual is worthy of baptism.

Paragraph two

• Scripture shows that baptism always followed conversion, not the other way round, so if we are to be true to scripture, then baptism should be administered to consenting adults only.
• However, scripture showed that whole families were baptised – this must include the children – and so there is a precedent that shows that explicit consent is unnecessary.
• Scripture shows that God calls an individual to baptism. This shows that it is not the person’s choice but God’s and so no explicit consent is necessary.

Paragraph three

• The believer can only consent based on instruction in the Christian faith. Otherwise they would not know what they were consenting to. An infant cannot participate in this.
• However, provided the parents are committed to educating the child, baptism can take place. It might not be ideal, but the parents can ensure explicit consent after the ritual.
• Yet this stinks of coercion and is not really free will. It is necessary that a believer makes this decision without brainwashing from parents and schools.

Conclusion

• In scripture, baptism with water follows baptism with the Spirit, which requires personal consent. It makes sense that baptism is reserved for adults only. However, when a person is capable of consent is another argument – since God can commune with anyone he wishes, it is entirely possible that a child could legitimately require baptism.

2 ‘Belief in transubstantiation is not important for celebrating the Eucharist.’ Evaluate this view.

There are so many acceptable ways to answer this question. The suggestion below is an abbreviation of an acceptable method but not the only one.

Introduction

• Not important – suggests that such a belief has no impact upon how or whether the Eucharist is celebrated or suggests that it has no effect upon the future of the Christian.

Paragraph one

• Roman Catholics accept transubstantiation and so participate in the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. This makes more sense as a practice when we know that they believe that the bread has now become the actual body of Christ.
• However, congregants tend to do what is traditional, as led by their priest. Most will not consider the theory, or if they do they may inwardly reject it yet celebrate the Eucharist anyway.
• In addition, most Christians celebrate some form of the Eucharist regardless of what theory their church adheres to. It does not matter whether it has transformed or not, the significance of Christ’s death is what is most important.

Paragraph two
• If the sacrament is only a symbol, there is no necessity in receiving it for salvation. This means that it is important to believe in transubstantiation or there is no reason to believe it provides salvation and no reason to perform the ritual.
• However, regardless of which theory is held, the Eucharist is still celebrated and considered sacred by the vast majority of Christians, so it isn’t important that it actually becomes Christ’s body and blood.
• The theory affects the more trivial, symbolic actions that are performed in the service rather than the vital aspect of coming together before God and receiving his grace. This is achieved with or without transubstantiation.

Paragraph three
• Transubstantiation and the similar theory of transelementation cause Catholic and Orthodox worshippers not to recognise the Eucharist in other churches. They may not want to receive the communion of others if it is not true Eucharist and they may not want to impart such holy items to someone who does not appreciate what they are receiving.
• Yet although there is disagreement, all Christians still remember Christ’s actions and accept his salvation no matter what they believe the bread and wine become.
• However, since this theory leads some denominations to practise a closed communion, such beliefs lead to a barrier to inclusivity and ecumenical progress. This is an important problem for church unity.

Conclusion
• Transubstantiation is an important belief in that it affects the unity of the church and, if correct, it can affect whether the person receives Christ’s salvation. Even if a Christian rejects this doctrine, the impact it has upon the ability of churches to recognise each other’s ministry makes it important for celebrating the Eucharist.

4D Religious identity through unification

Now Test Yourself – page 113

1 Why was Edinburgh crucial in the development of the ecumenical movement?
   The size and scope of the event was huge, bringing together many Christian groups from around the world and inspiring the formation of organisations that brought about the WCC.

2 Why would denominational differences damage the Christian missionary effort?
   • Individual missionaries were working alongside each other but there was no co-ordinated effort.
   • Denominational divisions led to disagreement and hostility.
   • Money and time were being wasted in working separately.
   • New converts did not understand western denominational divisions.

3 Why didn’t the conference attempt to resolve differences in doctrine?
Emphasis was upon how churches can work together regardless of differences. There was no need to create a universal doctrine other than worship of the same Lord Jesus Christ.

Now Test Yourself – page 114
1 When was the WCC founded?
1948.
2 What is the central purpose of the WCC?
For the community of churches to work together towards visible unity to fulfil God’s calling.
3 Which significant Christian church is not currently a member of the WCC?
The Roman Catholic Church.

What Do You Think? – page 115
Has the WCC been successful in its aim to promote visible Christian unity? Consider the following:
• Does it matter that the Roman Catholic Church is still not a member?
  Yes, Roman Catholics make up 50 per cent of the world’s Christians. If they still reject membership of the WCC then Christian unity has not been achieved.
  No, the Roman Catholic Church has gradually begun to accept the need for unity. It is a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC and has participated in dialogues with other churches. It is an ongoing, slow process but unity is still being achieved.
• Is the largely Protestant flavour of the WCC a barrier to Christian unity?
  Yes, it prevents Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches from comfortable participation. Both these churches recognise only their own tradition as an effective pathway to salvation and many of the social justice issues that the WCC deals with, e.g. sexuality and gender in the ministry, are at odds with views from these churches.
  No, the WCC is more interested in finding common ground than it is in solving doctrinal differences. It is not trying to make everyone a Protestant. It is recognising that regardless of denomination, Christians all have Christ in common.
• Has the WCC weakened its aim by emphasising service over evangelism?
  Yes, the whole point of the ecumenical movement has been about effectively spreading the message of Christianity around the globe. If this aim is watered down by a focus on politics and campaigning or dealing with social issues, then spreading the word is being forgotten or pushed to the side.
  No, Jesus did ask that the message was to be spread, but he also asked that his followers work to provide for those in need. All the work of diakonia is doing God’s work. Sometimes witnessing is more effective if it is backed up with action.
4E Religious identity through religious experience

Now Test Yourself – page 117

1 How is the Charismatic movement different from Pentecostalism?

**Pentecostalism** is a denomination dedicated to the personal encounter with the Holy Spirit. The Charismatic movement is influenced by this but occurs within existing denominations rather than forming new ones.

2 What is meant by glossolalia?

**The gift of tongues.** Praying to God in a spiritual language.

3 What does it mean to be ‘slain’ in the Spirit?

It includes falling then resting under the influence of the Holy Spirit, laughing, shaking, prostration and healing.

Now Test Yourself – page 118

1 Which spiritual gifts does Paul list in 1 Corinthians 12:7–10?

- The utterance of wisdom.
- The utterance of knowledge.
- Faith.
- Healing.
- The working of miracles.
- Prophecy.
- Discernment.
- Tongues.
- Interpretation of tongues.

2 Why did Paul instruct congregants to take it in turns to prophesy?

To avoid disorder/chaos, and to ensure that there is time for the church to consider the spiritual integrity of each prophecy.

3 How might charismatic worship differ from traditional worship?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charismatic worship</th>
<th>Traditional worship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary music and instruments.</td>
<td>Organs and/or choirs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words projected on a screen.</td>
<td>Hymn books and orders of service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic, often emotional participation in worship.</td>
<td>Long sermons, little or no interaction between minister and congregants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open prayer with spontaneous contributions from the congregation.</td>
<td>Strict liturgy followed from a service sheet with set responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical participation through dance and raising hands.</td>
<td>Congregants stand, sit or kneel during the service.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More frequent or longer services to allow time for healing or listening for God’s word.  
Set, ordered service times that have a clear end.

A time for laying on hands at the front when people come forward for prayer.  
Set order of service followed with a clear ending.

The Eucharist or the end of the service may contain singing and praying in tongues.  
Silence or organ music provided.

What Do You Think? – page 119

Is the Charismatic movement in accordance with Christian teaching? Consider the following:

- Does it matter that St Paul claimed glossolalia should be private?
  
  Yes, Paul was trying to avoid attention seeking or self-righteous behaviour that was a distraction from God or a reason for some worshippers to judge the faith of others. These problems are evident in Charismatic churches as there is pressure to speak in tongues at services to show you are baptised in the Spirit.

  No, Paul was speaking to the church at a specific time and place in history. The church is in a period of renewal and Christians may argue that they need these outward signs of inward faith more than ever before.

- Is the charismatic style of worship important?
  
  No, Bennett, who initiated the Charismatic movement, says that what makes a service charismatic is not the style of worship but whether God has baptised congregants with his Spirit and they have received his gifts. This could happen in a traditional service.

  Yes, it is important to charismatic Christians that they do not restrict God by making services so rigid that he has no space to move people with his Spirit. They argue that the practice of open prayer and physical participation make people more able to receive gifts.

- Are the ‘gifts’ compatible with divine characteristics?
  
  Yes, God is believed to be all-powerful, all-loving and personal. It stands to reason that this kind of God would bestow upon his followers the ability to experience his power and love first-hand.

  No, there is nothing loving about using power to mock or devalue others and the ‘gifts’ of babbling ‘in the spirit’ or being ‘slain’ or even barking like dogs debase humans and mock them. This is not in keeping with God’s nature.

4F Religious identity through responses to poverty and injustice

Now Test Yourself – page 121

1 Why do liberation theologians see capitalism as a failure?

   Because the wealth remains with a few rich people and never trickles down to benefit the poor.

2 What is CST?

   Catholic Social Teaching. This is Catholic doctrine that concerns matters of social justice, wealth and poverty and the role of the state. It is influential upon Roman Catholic liberation theologians.
3 Why would liberation theologians think that Jesus would approve of this approach?

Because in scripture he is recorded as saying that he came to free the poor and oppressed, e.g. Luke 4:18.

Now Test Yourself – page 122

1 What is the difference between orthodoxy and orthopraxy?

- Orthodoxy – right or correct belief/doctrine.
- Orthopraxy – Right or correct action/practice.

2 What do liberation theologians mean by ‘a preferential option for the poor’?

Where the poor and weak are given preferential treatment or we side/God sides with them out of particular concern for them.

3 Why does Boff value the formation of base communities?

They are the roots of the church, enabling transformation within the church and wider society as they initiate change.

What Do You Think? – page 123

Is the message of political liberation more important than spiritual liberation? Consider the following:

- Can someone focus on the spiritual if they are caught up in extreme physical suffering?

Yes, when suffering seems unbearable, the hope that the spiritual message of the gospel gives is a comfort since there is the promise of relief and of justice after death. People will be less interested in spiritual solutions if their lives are comfortable.

No, people need real solutions now when suffering is unbearable and when the rich profit excessively from the toil of the poor who simply get poorer. Spiritual promises in these instances seem empty and no help in the present.

- Is it necessary to choose between physical and spiritual ideals?

Yes, they are often in conflict with each other. Scripture is constantly telling people that riches will not save them and that they cannot bring salvation from sin. Scripture requires people to cast off material wealth in favour of spiritual treasure.

No, Christianity teaches that there is more to us than the physical body, but it also shows that Jesus sided with the poor and was concerned that wealth should be shared, not hoarded. Scripture suggests that how we treat each other in this physical life now has a direct effect on our judgement in the afterlife.

- Can the poor be helped without structural change?

Yes, there are charities and aid agencies that work to support communities and provide their basic needs or give them skills to enter society and succeed. There are also government initiatives to encourage growth in poorer countries through fair trade.

No, Boff argues that none of these has worked in the past and they just make things worse as the workers must do more for less money while people at the top of the chain profit. Even charities have CEOs earning large sums of money while the people they should help are starving. The only way to help is to encourage fair distribution of wealth rather than the rich being allowed to hoard it all. This means that the church must change its structure too since it is known to hoard wealth and power.
Specimen Exam Questions
Sample AO1 Questions – page 126

1 Examine the development of the ecumenical movement since 1910.

- The word ecumenical is from the Greek οἰκουμένη, meaning worldwide. The ecumenical movement promotes worldwide Christian unity or co-operation.
- The beginning of the ecumenical movement is dated from the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910.
- Missionaries needed Christian unity in their missionary work:
  - Missionary groups worked alongside each other, but there was no co-ordinated effort.
  - Denominational divisions led to disagreement and hostility.
  - Money and time were wasted by working separately.
  - New converts did not understand western denominational divisions.
- Christ prayed ‘on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one’ John 17:20–21.
- 176 Protestant Christian missionary societies sent 1215 delegates from around the globe to the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, although no Orthodox or Roman Catholic missionary organisations were invited.
- The common goal of the conference was to achieve co-operation within an official framework for evangelising to the world within their generation.
- There was no discussion of doctrine, ministry or sacraments to avoid conflict.
- Subjects to be discussed were prepared in advance by eight commissions:
  - Carrying the gospel to all the non-Christian world.
  - The church in the mission field.
  - Education in relation to the Christianisation of national life.
  - The missionary message in relation to non-Christian religions.
  - The preparation of missionaries.
  - The home base of missions.
  - Missions and governments.
  - Co-operation and the promotion of unity.
- Inspired by Edinburgh, three significant developments furthered the ecumenical cause:
  - The International Missionary Council – established as a continuation committee from Edinburgh. Further conferences were organised across the globe.
  - The Faith and Order movement – met to discuss doctrinal and worship differences. The Orthodox Church, but not the Roman Catholic Church, attended as observer.
  - The Commission on Life and Work – aimed to develop a consensus on the role of the church in society. Their slogan was Doctrine Divides, Service Unites.
- These three bodies were all eventually incorporated into what is now known as the World Council of Churches, whose work continues today.
- In 2010, a centenary conference met in Edinburgh to examine Christian mission over the last 100 years and to consider the global future for Christianity. Both the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches were present.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

2 Explain the philosophical challenges to charismatic experience.

- Charismatic experiences include glossolalia, healing and/or miracles and prophecy. These are gifts of God’s Holy Spirit as a result of a second baptism by the Spirit.
- There are many philosophical challenges to claims of these kinds of gifts. The first is the lack of verification for charismatic claims.
• In the 1920s, the Logical Positivists argued that for any statement to be meaningful, it must be verifiable. They divided language into three types:
  o Analytic – meaningful because they are tautologies derived from reason such as mathematical statements.
  o Synthetic – meaningful because they are statements derived from observation of the material world.
  o Meaningless – any statement that does not fit in the categories above.

• Descriptions of charismatic experiences are not analytic as they are not purely rational in nature.

• Some try to argue that they are synthetic because they describe physical experiences that are observable in the material world. Miracles, xenolalia and prophecy make claims about occurrences in the material world.

• However, they are not repeatable or testable. In fact, since it is claimed that they are from God, who exists outside the material world, there is nothing that can be done to check their source in any way. It is rare that a miracle lacks an alternative explanation, no xenolalia has ever been scientifically proven and prophecy or glossolalia cannot be checked for truth.

• In addition, another type of philosophical challenge to charismatic experience is that there can be other, naturalistic, explanations for these events.

• Many prayers for healing are not answered with a physical cure at all. In such cases, believers claim spiritual or emotional healing has been given instead. As Antony Flew has pointed out, these claims of miracles become meaningless if believers refuse to allow any evidence to count against them.

• In some cases, healing may result from a placebo effect, where the emotional effect of expecting God’s provision is enough to make the patient believe they have been given a cure and respond accordingly. This does not require the existence of God to occur.

• Charismatic experiences such as the Toronto Blessing could be a result of mass hysteria, much like when people in the 1960s went to watch The Beatles or the Rolling Stones in concert. They would faint, scream and respond in a kind of religious ecstasy.

• Charismatic experiences could be the result of vulnerable people having been taken advantage of by powerful organisations or charismatic speakers who shut down rational thought in the congregant by appealing to their basic needs or desires.

• It is evidence of psychological immaturity or sickness. As Freud claimed, it is a regression to an earlier mental state of childish narcissism and needs to be outgrown for people to reach psychological maturity.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

3 Examine the implications of the Charismatic movement on the practices of Christian communities.

• The Charismatic movement is the adoption of some beliefs and practices of Pentecostalism by other established Christian denominations such as Roman Catholics and the Church of England.

• Like Pentecostalism, a charismatic Christian is one who has been baptised in the Holy Spirit as the disciples were on the day of Pentecost when they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages.

• Therefore, in charismatic worship, there is evident a longing for this to be repeated for believers today. So, in such worship it is important that space is given to allow God to move and work within the congregation.

• Often charismatic services will have a time of open prayer with spontaneous contributions from the congregation that replaces strict liturgy.

• There may be a more physical participation during worship through dancing and raising hands.
Often charismatic congregations have more frequent or longer services to allow time for healing or listening for God’s word. Such congregations tend to be very large and may need more frequent services to make up for the lack of space for everyone.

Services may contain a time for laying on hands at the front when people come forward for prayer in the hope that God will move them through his Holy Spirit.

For charismatics, this movement is a force for renewal within pre-existing congregations rather than evangelisation, mission or the formation of a new denomination.

It is therefore likely that charismatic churches may still practise some of their more traditional liturgy as well, since they may still identify within a specific congregation, such as Roman Catholic or Church of England.

Dennis Bennett admits that when people receive the Spirit they will worship more joyfully and freely, but old traditions of worship can also enable the Spirit to touch people’s lives.

It is common to see contemporary music and instruments replace organs or choirs in charismatic services to enable a more exuberant style of worship.

Words tend to be projected on a screen to replace hymn books so that worshippers are not bound by clumsy service sheets and other items.

Worship in these churches is often enthusiastic or emotional as congregants believe that God is baptising them in the Spirit and as he gives them their spiritual gifts.

The Eucharist or the end of the service may contain free singing and praying in tongues as people respond to the Holy Spirit.

There are some non-denominational churches that have grown up as a result of this, such as the Vineyard Fellowships, so that this worship style, along with an openness to the Holy Spirit, can be freely encouraged.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

4 Explain the response of the Roman Catholic Church to liberation theology.

There have been both positive and negative responses from within the Roman Catholic Church to the issue of liberation theology.

Negative

Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict) expressed concern about the connection and use of Marxism in liberation theology throughout the 1980s and 1990s:

- Marxism denies individual value and rights.
- It is atheistic at its core.
- It encourages people to be anti-church.
- Marxism encourages violence to bring change.
- Violent revolution takes priority over evangelism.
- Christian liberation should be spiritual liberation from sin, not material liberation.
- Christ’s Sermon on the Mount was about judgement after death, not social reform.
- Structural change cannot ultimately bring salvation.
- Only God has the power to remove suffering.

Ratzinger agreed that the church should struggle for the poor but without the use of Marxism, which is inherently unchristian.

Ratzinger suspended and silenced Boff for a year in response to his work Church, Charism and Power. Boff gave up the priesthood so that he could continue to work for liberation.

Other challenges include:

- Liberation theology is so concerned about social action that it has ignored Roman Catholic theology and church teaching.
It has no method of determining which actions are right or wrong if it prioritises praxis. It focuses exclusively on a small number of biblical themes at the expense of others. Without spiritual change, new structures could be as troublesome as the old.

Pope John Paul II dealt harshly with liberation theology by closing institutions that taught it and rebuking scholars like Gutiérrez and Boff. The business of the church was to preach the message of Christ, not create a Marxist regime.

Positive

However, there have been positive responses to liberation theology from within the Roman Catholic Church:

- Liberation theology was supported at two conferences for Latin American bishops: Medellin in 1968 and Puebla in 1979.
- Pope Francis is the first Latin American pope, originating from Buenos Aires in Argentina.
- Francis asked Gutiérrez to be a keynote speaker at a Vatican event in 2015 and has named Oscar Romero as a martyr.
- He has spoken out against greed, materialism and capitalistic excesses but has supported the use of charity over liberation.

This is not a checklist. Any valid alternatives may be credited.

Sample AO2 Questions – page 126

1 Evaluate the view that the non-membership of the Roman Catholic Church has prevented the World Council of Churches from achieving its aims.

There are so many acceptable ways to answer this question. The suggestion below is an abbreviation of an acceptable method but not the only one.

Introduction

- Prevented – suggests that no aims can be met in any way.

Paragraph one

- The focus of the work of the WCC should be on the unity achieved rather than the few that are still divided. The WCC has multiple projects that include 350 member churches, even though Roman Catholics are not among them.
- However, there cannot be unity among Christians while 50 per cent of the world’s Christians are excluded. The WCC can never achieve its aims if that number of Christians continue to be absent.
- Yet while there can never be a shared eucharist with Rome, on account of differences in ecclesiastical doctrine, other aims can be achieved, with or without Catholic participation. Roman Catholics are increasingly participating in dialogue with the WCC over other matters, which indicates progress.

Paragraph two

- The Roman Catholic Church traditionally has been unwilling to recognise what other Christians have to offer; as a result, the aim of Christian unity can never be realised.
- In addition, Pius XI forbidding Roman Catholics to participate sent a divisive message to non-Christians and prevented a unified Christian approach to mission in the world.
- However, the more recent movement towards dialogue between the WCC and Rome, or between other Protestants and the Church of England, suggests unity may be possible in some form in the future.
Paragraph three

- It can be argued that the programme of objectives of the WCC can be achieved without the Catholic Church. Most of the projects involve diaconia and education – this involves witnessing to the world through service and educating members to do likewise. There is no need for Rome to agree for this work to be effective.
- However, there can never be any form of unity for the whole church of Christ while the Catholic Church aims to return everyone to Rome and is unwilling to consider that other Christians may receive salvation from God.
- Yet the absence of the Roman Catholics does not prevent any projects from happening. It may slow them down as true unity should involve everyone, but unless the church actively works against the WCC, its aims can be realised, at least in part.

Conclusion

- The non-membership of the Roman Catholic Church is a problem only if Christian unity needs to be instant. Deep divisions take time to heal and there has been substantial progress in the right direction over the last 100 years. The aims of the WCC are a continuing project that are being achieved over time.

2 ‘Spiritual liberation from sin is more important than political liberation from material poverty.’

Evaluate this view.

There are so many acceptable ways to answer this question. The suggestion below is an abbreviation of an acceptable method but not the only one.

Introduction

- ‘More important’ – suggests that it retains some importance, not that spiritual liberation is not important at all.

Paragraph one

- On the one hand, people cannot focus on spiritual goals if their physical suffering is too severe. This means that political liberation is more important in the first instance.
- On the other hand, others might argue that the spiritual message is the hope people need when suffering is severe. It gives people the courage to continue fighting and therefore is the priority.
- Yet it is stated repeatedly in church encyclicals that the church should be a church for the poor. This surely means in every aspect of their lives, both spiritual and physical, therefore they should be considered equally important.

Paragraph two

- Jesus preaching on the kingdom of God is said by some scholars to relate to this life in the present rather than the next. The kingdom of God is now, not after death.
- However, Cardinal Ratzinger clearly stated that the message of Christ is about freedom from sin, not liberation in society. As a church authority and later the Pope, his message is clearly that spiritual liberation takes priority.
- However, both material and spiritual liberation are interrelated; Jesus’ spiritual message was both political and ethical. Human spiritual judgement rests partly upon people’s relationship with the material world.

Paragraph three

- It should be clear that working for political change among the poor and vulnerable promotes sympathy for the spiritual message. If the church is to evangelise effectively, they need to be useful allies in the world.
Yet political change by human beings will never bring eternal salvation – only God can effect this, so it is far more important to focus on God, not on change, in the here and now.

However, this is Marx’s point: that religion is an opiate that will keep the poor paralysed with promises of justice after death and prevent them from having a flourishing life in the present. Spiritual concerns cannot be allowed to prevent political action where it is needed.

Conclusion

It seems that the gospel message speaks to all aspects of poverty, both physical and spiritual. Gutiérrez clearly showed that scripture says that physical poverty is never acceptable to God and thus if we are to hope for spiritual liberation in the future, we should show love for the poor and oppressed now. This means that all types of liberation are equally important because they affect each other.