Zig Zag Education

Religious Studies AS / A Level | OCR | H173/H573

Course Companion

for AS / A Level Year 1 OCR Religious Studies

Component 3: Developments in Christian Thought

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Contents

Teacher's Introduction

This course companion is written for the AS / A Level Year 1 OCR Developments in Christian Thought specification and is designed to offer students a comprehensive introduction to the material within that academic course. The sections and topics therefore mirror OCR's specification headings, and every care has been taken to not only help students to understand the key concepts and ideas within the course, but also sharpen their critical thinking skills.

Alongside the main bulk of the writing there are also a number of other features to help students with their learning and revision. Self-guided and group activities are included throughout the writing to better engage students with the material and I have also provided glossaries, textual references and information on key thinkers where appropriate.

I hope you enjoy working through this resource and it benefits both you and your students throughout the academic year.

Note on Suggested Reading

Stretch and Challenge

Any reading in these boxes is not strictly required for the specification. However, it is appropriate, creditable information students could include in an exam context.

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Key Terminology in Augus Teachings on Human Nat

The Fall	The wounding of men and wo after Adam and Eve
Manichaeism	An ancient Chri religious movement including pag particularly dualistic conflict between light and dark.
Pelagianis	A subset of Christian belief that human beings are not and are able to freely choose between God and evil wi
Concupiscence	Normally defined as lust or passion, but is often used b template for all baser human desires and to mean the to sin.
Privation	An absence of something. Augustine regarded sin or ba
Original Sin	The Christian doctrine that all people are born with the
Massa Peccati	Means 'Mass of Sin' and was a term used by Calvin to b state of humanity.
Supererogatory	Moral actions that go beyond the call of duty.
Single Predestination	The idea that God chose, or has foreknowledge of, who heaven.
Double Predestination	The idea that God either knows or chooses who will be be condemned.
Metaphysi	Philosophy that deals with abstract, fundamental conc
Allegory	The hidden meaning behind a story.
Total Depravity	Calvin's teaching that human beings are totally corrupt
Authenticity	The philosophical distinction between those actions wh (authentic) and those determined by outside influence
Grace	The benevolence and mercy of God given to human be
Universalism	The Christian idea that every human being will eventua

Key Terminology in Dea and the Afterlife

Kingdom of God	A varied Christian term that has often been used to ref judgement and eschatologi[illegible]ts.
Parousia	Greek word meanin[illegible] and used to refer to the a returning [illegible]
Beatific Vision	Th[illegible] when a person directly communicates wit [illegible] thought to be the moment of salvation for a hum
Theosis	The process whereby a human being becomes divine a
Eschatology	Theological teaching and doctrine associated with deat
The Parable of the Sheep and Goats	A parable in the Gospel of Matthew widely interpreted correct moral life and God's judgement of humanity.
Second Coming	A belief that Christ will one day return to Earth.
Particular Judgement	The individual judgement by God a person undergoes i
General Judgement	The judgement of all humanity that will occur on the da to Earth.
Millenarianism	A belief in some Christian groups that there will be a fu year age of the Kingdom of God [illegible]ore Christ's final re
Preterism	A theological view that [illegible]or[illegible]hecies of Revelation ha true.
The Divine Comedy	An epi[illegible]al[illegible]ar poem by Dante Alighieri about his t [illegible]d [illegible]aven before finally meeting God.
Apostasy	The renunciation or leaving of a religion or set of religi
Sheol	The Hebrew word for 'Hades' and sometimes translate
Hades	A Greek word, generally thought to refer to the abode of humans go after death.
Gehenna	A Greek word commonly translated as 'hell' in the Bible descriptions in the New Testament.
Predestination	The idea that God has foreknowledge of, or determines the world.
Contrapasso	The ironic punishment souls undergo in Dante's *Inferno*
Purgatory	Often translated as 'purification', the place where impe of sin and prepared to ascend to [illegible]aven.
Election	The doctrine that G[illegible]d [illegible]ho[illegible]s particular people to be
Limited Election	Th[illegible]a th[illegible]God only grants a select group of people
Unlimited [illegible]on	The idea that God grants all human beings the possibili
Principle of Accommodation	The idea that God manifests himself only in appropriate contrast to God, is finite and contingent.
Universalism	The Christian doctrine that all human beings will event

KEY TERMINOLOGY IN KNOWLE GOD'S EXISTENCE

Natural Theology	The theological idea that information or knowledge ab through the natural world [illegible] (general revelatio
Revealed Theology	The theolo[illegible] that knowledge of God can only co
Sensus Divinitatis	The sense of God that each human being possesses.
Semen Religionis	An innate religious sense which predisposes human bei
Sparks of Glory	The ways Calvin argues that God is perceptible in natur
Omnipotence	All-powerful, usually a characteristic given to God.
Benevolence	Loving, a characteristic given to God.
Unknown God	The entity Paul encounters the Athenians worshipping evidence for Christian beliefs that human beings have a partial information about God in the natural world.
Imago Dei	The image of God, which hum[illegible]ings were created i
Process Theology	A type of theo[illegible] depicts God as being radically w throug[illegible] contrast to his traditionally given characte [illegible]ity.
Dialectical [illegible]m	John Macquarrie's defence of natural theology by placi (discourse) between two different opposing concepts.
Immediate Revelation	Revelation that is presented directly to the receiver.
Mediate Revelation	Revelation that is mediated, translated or filtered thro
Reformed Epistemology	A theological school of thought that seeks to demonstr be justified without reference to empirical evidence.
Basic Beliefs	A foundational belief that does not require external ve other beliefs.

Key Terminology in the Per
Jesus Christ

Christology from Above	Christology that begins with the id a of Jesus as the So analyses scripture from th ef.
Christology from Below	Christology th ns with the Jesus of history, analys asp of the Gospels prior to making assertions abou
Christos	'The anointed one', a title for Jesus as the Jewish Messi
Messiah	The one chosen to lead and save the world in the Abra
Son of God	A title given to Jesus in the Gospels. Sometimes also us in the Old Testament.
Son of Man	An ambiguous title Jesus uses to describe himself in the
The Nicene Creed	A profession of faith in a number of Christian theologic the Council of Nicaea in AD 325.
The Chalcedonian Definition	A declaration affirming Christ as both fully God and full upon at the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451.
Homoousios	A Greek term meaning 'in one being', used in the Nicer relationship between Jesus d the Father.
Christ Event	The term used by n Macquarrie to describe the enti continu e in the modern-day world.
Good News	Another term for the Gospel, the message and significa
New Covenant	The new agreement forged between God and humanity Jesus Christ.
The Beatitudes	The list of blessings given by Jesus at the Sermon on th
Metanoia	Another word for repentance, or the changes one unde penitence and spirituality.
Liberator	A term used to describe Jesus as freeing humanity from oppression.
Zealots	A group of political radicals aiming at restoring the Jew overthrowing the Roman occupation.

Key Terminology in Christian Principles

Biblical Authority	The extent to which the Bible [illegible] cripture influence h
Theonomous Ethics	The idea th[illegible] determined or given by God.
Sola Scriptura	[illegible]by Scripture alone' and is a Christian doctrine t[illegible] supreme authority in faith and ethical practice.
The Magisterium	The authority of the Pope and Bishops within the Catho[illegible] doctrine and teachings.
Natural Law	The basic moral principles discoverable by reasoning o[illegible] natural world.
Post-liberal Theology	A modern school of theological thought, focusing on a [illegible] using the historical, communal and social aspects of Ch[illegible]
Agape	A universal, unconditional, sacrificial love originating fr[illegible] ideal motivation for moral action.
Sacred Tradition	The idea that both scripture and the Church are author[illegible] revelation of Christ.

Key Terminology in Christian Action

The Confessing Church	A movement of German Protestants who opposed the Protestant Churches in support of Nazi ideals.
Civil Disobedience	A symbolic refusal of opposing a government's laws, p
Visible Community	The importance of the Church for Bonhoeffer in being community but also in politics and other social issues.
Finkenwalde	An illegal seminary directed by Bonhoeffer between 19 train pastors and put the principles of the Confessing C
No Rusty Swords	Bonhoeffer's call to the Church to continually be active
Cheap Grace	Grace without discipleship, the easy route of Christiani neither reflected Christ's command or embodied his te
Costly Grace	The difficult path of true Christian discipleship that invo
The Church and the Jewish Question	A 1933 essay by Bonhoeffer addressing the problems th faced under Nazi rule and how it should act regarding t Jewish people.
The Cost of Discipleship	Bonhoeffer's 1937 book that focuses on how Christians demands placed upon the true Christianity.
Letters and Papers from Prison	Bonhoeffer's final collection of letters and works from p in 19
Barmen Declaration	A 1934 theological document that rejected the idea tha state and became the focal point for the Confessing Ch
Solidarity	A moral commitment to stand up and alongside those being oppressed.

1A: Augustine's Teachings on Hu

What you will learn in this section:

Augustine's beliefs, teachings and ideas about human life, including:

- Augustine's interpretation of Genesis 3 and how this influences his conceptio and post Fall.
- The nature of original sin and how it affects human lives and societies.
- The role of God's grace in overcoming original sin and achieving the summum
- Discussion about what Augustine's ideas about the human person are ove ramifications for wider theological debate.

Starter Activity:
Write down three distinctive aspects that you believe define the human person. theological or biological in nature? Note your reasons for identifying these aspec Augustine's thought as you progress through this section.

Key Thinker	
Name	Augustine of Hippo
Born	354
Died	430
Key text	*Confessions* (397–400), *The City of God* (early fifth century)
Why are they important?	Augustine is likely the most influential of the Early Church Fat His ideas about creation, eschatology and original sin paved t theology on a wide variety of topics including politics, epister his views have often gathered controversy, especially in recer thinkers have criticised the dogma that arose out of Augustin
Did you know?	Augustine was an unlikely advocate for the abolition of slaver did not release slaves and writing in *The City of God* that the was the result of original sin and unbefitting of those seeking

Introduction – The Early Christian Church

The world as we know it today was greatly shaped by the first Christians across th these individuals is still remarkably slim. Most of what we know is given by their s which talk of their teachings and the fragments of other texts which reference the slim pieces of evidence, it is possible to discern the major theological and philoso across the first five centuries of the Christian Church. The picture that emerges is every major theological decision taken at every major Christian council, there are discarded, excommunicated and declared heretical. Yet this process was slow eve early years in the Christian Church accommodated a wide variety of views, from t considered downright mystical and esoteric to those that could be viewed as thor

Augustine and his Upbringing

St Augustine of Hippo was born in [illegible] this vast mix of conflicting groups a beliefs. His birthplace was Thagaste, a small city in what is now Algeria, North Afri At the time of his birth, occupation, trade had flourished and a wide variety of people passed through its streets. Augustine himself was born into a Berber famil although his father, Patricius, was a Roman citizen. Despite this more traditional setting he grew up under the influence of two different belief systems. Although h until his deathbed, his mother Monica was conversely a devout Christian. As a yo significant degree of privilege, acquiring a classical education in grammar, philoso him to mix with the academic elements of the world during his later moves to Ca

The first significant theological shift in Augustine's life came from his conversion t
Although this was a philosophy he would later repudiate, he spent at least 10 yea
embracing its more radical mystical views until he later met Ambrose of Milan an
This conversion later became the focus of one of his best-known works, *Confessio*
enlightenment to Christian ideas alongside musings about God, time, causality an
became a well-known name in Christian circles, becoming ordained as a priest in
bishop only four years after that. From his position in Hip[illegible] he worked endlessly
to Christian beliefs and became equally well know[illegible] polemics (attacks) aga
apologetics (defences) for the Christian f[illegible]elt.

This brief picture of Aug[illegible] nevertheless doesn't do justice to the myriad
throughout [illegible]velopment, for, in the fourth and fifth centuries, philos
about the p[illegible] of evil and the nature of human free will, two issues that woul
throughout his writings. It is, therefore, worth exploring this background and see
of his time potentially influenced his overall theology.

The Historical Debate over Free Will and

We've previously mentioned Augustine's dedication to Manichaeism during his lif
religious movement founded by the prophet Mani in the mid third century, and fo
the main rivals to Christianity across the world, spreading as far east as China. Ma
teachings of the major prophets throughout history, including Jesus, were incomp
revelations, he had uncovered the deeper nature of the cosmos only partially give
particularly on old Gnostic beliefs in detailing a very rich dualistic cosmology, whic
wholly good, spiritual world of light and an evil world of matter. Human lives are s
between a good, but not omnipotent God embodying this world of light and an et
material world. This elaborate cosmology for believers he[illegible] resolve the proble
have held that elements of Manichaeism influenc[illegible]ustine's thought, particul
corruption of human beings.

However, during Augus[illegible] as a Christian, he also opposed a less prevalent b
Pelagianism[illegible] wa[illegible]ed after the British monk Pelagius, who held that that t
efforts, cou[illegible] salvation with the assistance of God-given abilities. However,
mischaracterised by both supporters and opponents of Pelagius into the view tha
role for the grace of God and human beings could achieve salvation wholly by the
Augustine's later life was dedicated towards criticising this view and he helped gre
discussion at the Council of Trent in 418, which ruled Pelagianism as heretical. For
human free will was put forward by many earlier Church Fathers, including Irenae
Augustine viewed Pelagianism as granting human beings a power only God could
Augustine focused much more on the fallen state of human beings, contending th
and his grace only, that enables human beings to reach salvation.

Other Influences in Augustine's Life

Both these theological movements are important to give co[illegible]ext to Augustine's o
also worth mentioning some of the more personal[illegible]ic[illegible]es Augustine encounte
arguably informed much of his thinking. M[illegible]f [illegible]se revolved around women.
mentions two people in particular[illegible] is an unnamed woman Augustine had
ages of 19 and 28, with w[illegible]s faithful and had a son. The second was his
to give up thi[illegible]ati[illegible]ith the unnamed woman and arranged another mar
Augustine w[illegible]oted to Monica, this turmoil in his personal life, alongside his c
him to believ[illegible]e had been a 'slave to lust' for most of his life, and potentially inf
concupiscent nature of fallen human beings. Much of Augustine's discussion of si
lust, especially of the sexual kind, and historians have pointed towards Augustine'
his own life as a key influence.

However, Augustine's thought cannot be reduced to these historical influences, r
might be. This introduction merely is intended to set the scene for our now deepe
Augustine's ideas beginning right at one of the most important religious events: t
next part of this companion.

Human Beings and the Fall

As we have seen throughout our look at Augustine's li[illegible]bringing, the problem of evil was a key philosophical issue f[illegible]ristians. Why is there suffering if God is wholly good and p[illegible]vation through Christ? For many people in the fourth and fifth [illegible], this question was less abstractly philosophical and m[illegible] particular religious views of the cosmos itself. T existence o[illegible] that challenged the power of God was not an absurd proposition [illegible] which was radically debated among many different societies Augustine's ideas, although maybe difficult to uphold now, presented a view of e mind the action of other evil gods or beings. Instead, it placed the blame for evil a human history, contending that there was a series of events in the past that caus become corrupted and so responsible themselves for this evil and suffering. In co grace of God that enables human beings to overcome this corruption and becom benevolent God.

But where did this idea arise? Well, Augustine primarily took his inspiration from Genesis. In particular he focused on the second creation account, where God crea Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, only to later face their disobedience. It is to for an overview of Augustine's account of the Fall.

Augustine's Interpr[illegible]ion of Genesis

Genesis 3 can be viewed as the crux of the se[illegible]n account given in that While Genesis 2 gives a distinctly ant[illegible]ical account of the formation of hu beings, Genesis 3 is a more [illegible]ical account of the human personality. It deta a crafty serpent per[illegible]e to eat an apple from the forbidden tree in the gar promising t[illegible] 'eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good a evil'. Thus s[illegible]es an apple and offers it to Adam also, and, upon eating it, they suddenly become aware of their own nakedness and the presence of evil. Natura discovers this transgression and curses women to the pain of childbirth and the m life of toil. The key passage comes at the end in Genesis 3:22, where God states '. the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might re his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"'.

There have been many interpretations of this chapter throughout history and ma detailed as primarily metaphorical. However, Augustine draws a more metaphysi Genesis 3. The awakening of man and woman to the nature of good and evil is no consciousness, but a historic, metaphysical change in the nature of human beings the present day. This is what Augustine calls the fall of humanity; the transformat perfect state into an imperfect one.

Human Nature Pre and Post Fall

We can delve into this i[illegible]r. Before the Fall, Augustine argues that humani perfection. [illegible]e it [illegible]es as a union between the actions of the body and the can think of [illegible] a lack of conflict between the physical demands of the body a inclinations of the mind. Therefore, the rational mind held complete control over what we can think of as passions or desires.

If this sounds a bit strange, then don't be surprised. Augustine thought that all of beings have in this state of perfection were settled in a purely rational way. For e

involve lust but rather was a passionless task performed to fulfil God's command
Genesis 2:23. What was the most important aspect of human life was instead cou
beings rationally respected the existence and needs of each other while engaging
exemplified this respect. Thus, the perfect human nature was purely driven by dis

Augustine envisioned love, however, as having two dimensions. The kind that exis
love of generosity towards others that unites human beings and is the basis of Au
Caritas is also the kind of love that Augustine argues unites Christians together afte
more limited manner. Conversely, Augustine argues that post Fall another kind of
a self-aggrandising love of material things that mirrors what we might think of as
does not simply stop at oneself but extends out towards others, meaning that hu
of cupiditas is not restricted to individuals as a means to their own ends.

With these contrasting ideas of love, Augustine clearly sets up a contrast between
relationships pre and post Fall. On the one hand, before human beings disobeyed
absence of lust and other corrupting desires, lumped together by Augustine unde
Human relationships exemplified the notion of **caritas**, and all were united by frie
human beings became corrupted and subject to concupiscence. As a result, huma
dominated by **cupiditas** and people organised themselves around ideas of mutual
ultimately why wars, famines and poverty exist. With a lack of caritas to guide the
constantly engaged in social competition, without an idea of communal friendshi
in a way that benefits humankind as a whole. Yet there is more to explore here o
on how concupiscence manifests itself in the human will.

Corruption and Concupiscence

For an insight into how Augustine frames the concept of concupiscence post Fall,
into how he interprets Genesis 3. Augustine conceives of Adam and Eve's eating o
pride. It is representative of humanity's desire to be God themselves, not just unite
knowledge as such is a symbol of the order of creation, and Adam and Eve's disob
construed as a failure to respect this order. Therefore, through the act of eating th
effectively threw it into disarray. The order which once characterised the world wa
wounded and the unity between the body and soul was disrupted.

Augustine views this disruption as a strict division. Whereas the body pre Fall was
will of the soul, post Fall this will is weakened and the soul is left submitting to the
weakness of will Augustine terms **akrasia**. Usually used more generally to describe
Augustine reframes the concept as a metaphysical deficiency in the power of the
Therefore, sexuality and other passions overtake the human person after the Fall
automatically mired in sin. However, this is not to suggest that this process is inev
Augustine argues that it is possible for human beings to deny these desires and ac
subjugating themselves to God's will. However, this subjugation is naturally very d
inherited consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience. These are what Augusti
the focus of the next part of this section.

Discussion Activity:
Augustine relies on Genesis 3 to develop his ideas about the Fall and original sin
passage in the Bible. What other biblical passages might temper his ideas, and p
human nature? Discuss in pairs or groups.

Original Sin

Interestingly, Augustine does not place the blame for the Fall at the feet of woma historically have done. He argues that both sexes were complicit in the original ac betrayal of God's trust was no less than Eve's. This is important to note as we disc concept that has throughout history been influenced by a vast number of factors, be transferred by procreation and reproduction.

Original sin was not a concept that Augustine cre[illegible] but was developed from ide Paul, who set up a contrast between the [illegible] of Adam's disobedience to G on the cross. It was later formalis[illegible] by Irenaeus of Lyon, who argued that solidarity with the sin of [illegible], sharing in his guilt when they disobey God. Howev compared t[illegible] proposes, and his teachings greatly expand these ea doctrine wh[illegible] phasises the innate corruption of all human beings at birth.

In the last part we looked at how human nature and relationships changed after t is that this change was not limited to Adam and Eve, or the first human beings on transmitted by concupiscent desires, most notably the act of procreation. Therefo being carries this sin and so is subject to the same temptations and afflictions that entailed. This is the basis of Augustine's overall doctrine of **original sin** and the re beings are effectively born into a **massa peccati** (mass of sin), as, regardless of the are continually subject to their sinful desires and passions.

Activity:
Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church on original sin (396–409 linked below and differences from Augustine's thought. Why do you think these differences e

Link: **zzed.uk/10309-vatican**

The Importance of God's Grace

If Augustine's doctrin[illegible] already seems a bit pessimistic, then it only gets worse. He original sin [illegible] in response to what he perceived as the heresy of Pelagianism. held that hu[illegible]eings could reach salvation through their own free will, with the abilities. Now Augustine didn't radically depart from this idea until later in life, arc hold that human free will was weakened by original sin, but still able to choose th circumstances. However, he eventually moved further away from this belief, argu freely choose sin. This means the only way that human beings can achieve salvatic only those that have been blessed by his **grace** can overcome their sinful natures

This stricter doctrine was envisioned by Augustine to support practices such as inf individual, child or not, had been opened up to the grace of God, their original sin condemned. Therefore, human beings have no means to escape their own sinful r receive the supererogatory (freely given) grace of God, which is only bestowed un and inclination to receive it. Regardless of whether it appears fair or just, there ar blind to this grace and automatically condemned.

Augustine's ideas of original sin and gra[illegible] some important implications for u the overall fate of humanity. Particularly important is the idea of **predestination**. A this has become a bit of [illegible] concept to unravel among his writings. Augusti that God ha[illegible] knowledge of who will accept God's grace and who will not. Hov about whet[illegible] idea means that Augustine commits to either **single** or **double**

Single predestination is roughly the position of the Catholic Church and holds that foreknows who will achieve salvation. Such an idea is often couched in the belief t and so must know to some degree how and which human beings will overcome si necessity considering God's omniscience; his all-knowing nature. However, doubl

predetermines or foreknows who will be saved *and who will be condemned*. Whil
heresy, there is a certain amount of evidence in Augustine's writings to suggest th
predestination, especially since it is coherent with his more radical beliefs about o
Regardless, what is important to note is how Augustine's emphasis on the necessi
his wider beliefs about predestination and original sin.

Discussion Activity:
What philosophical issues are there with Augustine's views on grace and predes
objections or thoughts in pairs or small groups.

Evaluating Augustine's thought

In comparis much of modern Christian thought, Augustine's account of origi
extreme. Mo thinkers now reject such a strong idea of predestination and hold t
human nature, able to choose good and evil with equal power. In fact, upholding
thought to be important to do justice to the themes of moral responsibility prese
Testament. Yet Augustine seems to argue that when human beings perform a goo
and only evil acts are freely done.

As a result, many have criticised Augustine's conception of original sin as overly p
human beings are completely beholden to their sinful desires and God already po
will be saved, what motivations do human beings have to do good? Many individu
even excuse these acts as unavoidable rather than work to be better people. In th
belief in a strong version of original sin potentially counter-intuitive, it is also cou
stands in tension with much of the moral teaching of the Bible (especially the New
people to love their neighbour and seek to be better human beings in the eye of G

Perhaps an even deeper issue concerns the depiction of God in Augustine's thoug
that a strong notion of original sin contra belief in a benevolent and just God.
the rest of humanity suffer simply because of Adam's actions at the beginning of t
would a benevolent and just God predetermine who would be saved and who wo
metaphysical claims regarding sin and human nature seem far from what an al
especially if potent. Such issues are also present in Augustine's interpretatio
were in a complete state of unity between body and soul, why would they make t
Friedrich Schleiermacher argues that the only way such a choice could occur is if G
enacting the Fall through creating imperfect human beings, meaning God himself
corruption of humankind as a whole! Augustine therefore struggles with internal
of scripture.

A final problem it is important to mention is how Augustine's thought can be reco
understanding of the human person. Evolution and other scientific theories not o
the Genesis account Augustine relies upon, but the idea altogether that human be
tendency towards sin. Many modern **humanist** thinkers even hold that morality c
religious discussion, either through an appeal to philosophy alone or to notions of
the case, then human beings may have an innate tendency towards good and co
ones. While these debates are closer to ethics or philosophy of religion, it is impo
reconciliation between Augustine's propositions and modern ideas about the human
day religious discussion has to accommodate secular or non-religious knowledge a

Karl Barth and Augustine

Within this section, we've looked at how Augustine's concepts of grace and sin a pessimistic. However, Karl Barth identifies an important, often overlooked aspec fact that God's grace itself is a necessarily free action. God cannot be influenced and so whatever salvation is offered to human beings come from God.

Now Barth diverges from Augustine by pre[illegible]ti[illegible]more Christological view on reconciliation of God and humanki[illegible]s already taken place through the saving earthly ministry of Jesus C[illegible]. In this sense, Barth takes a very different approa he does cont[illegible]d t[illegible]ustine is perhaps correct about not committing to any powers o[illegible]n free will. Whoever shall be saved, Barth contends, is knowled such, there[illegible]use imposing restrictions or ideas about salvation or condemna simply not within human power or knowledge to contest whatever God has deci can do is have faith in election of man through Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

For some, Barth still hasn't answered key issues with Augustine's account of pre God's saving actions are free and unknowable does not disavow philosophical re entail based on his nature. However, for others, Barth eschews too much of Aug been accused of adopting **universalism**, the idea that all human beings will even this debate, it is nonetheless useful to note that a pessimistic interpretation of A presumptuous. Rather, Augustine might simply be acknowledging the fallibility a face of a supreme and almighty God.

The Influence of Augustine on Modern Christianity

Before we continue onwards to other theological disc[illegible]s in Christian thought, Augustine has influenced thinkers throughout his[illegible]. Augustine's greatest contri thought. Whether it be original sin, [illegible]o predestination, many of his ideas can verbatim in key texts such as t[illegible]Catechism of the Catholic Church. In fact, many s Christianity have be[illegible]ncepts proposed and developed by Augustine, espe sin. For exa[illegible]he Protestant theologian John Calvin proposed an even more ra based on Au[illegible]ian theology, arguing that all human actions, even ones that se sin and selfishness. Calvin also held a similarly strong belief in predestination, beli for salvation and leaves the rest to condemnation.

However, Augustine's account has also conversely inspired opposing proposals ab thought ironically inspired a lot of Continental philosophers in the twentieth cent Husserl, although many existentialists, such as Sartre, contended that, contrary to specific nature or purpose to human life. Instead, human beings are born with no radical freedom to choose a course of life. What these myriad influences highlight simply narrowly interpreted through the lens of modern Christian dogma. There is resists easy categorisation, and it is worth approaching the source material in this

Quick Quiz

1. What is the Fall?
2. What is original sin?
3. What biblical cha[illegible]s[illegible]ugustine look to for his interpretation of the Fa
4. Wha[illegible]y w[illegible]ugustine combating with his doctrine of original sin?
5. What[illegible]difference between single and double predestination?
6. What is the difference between caritas and cupiditas?
7. What is concupiscence?

1B: Death and the After

What you will learn in this section:

Christian teachings and ideas regarding the nature of heaven, hell and purgatory,

- Traditional religious beliefs in these concepts as actu[illegible]aces or realms in th
- Modern proposals that these concepts are sp[illegible]al [illegible]tes or degrees of sepa
- More radical suggestions that these [illegible]ts should be viewed as symbols o on Earth.

Christian te[illegible]s a[illegible]deas regarding the existence and nature of election, inclu

- The dif[illegible]s between limited and unlimited election.
- The advantages and disadvantages of universalist approaches to election.
- How different interpretations of scripture influence ideas about election.

Starter Activity:
Where do you stand on the existence of an afterlife? Write down a paragraph b about whether heaven, hell and purgatory should be conceived of as real places through.

Key Thinker	
Name	John Hick
Born	1922
Died	2012
Key text	*Death and the Eternal Life* (1976)
Why are they important?	Hick is perhaps simultaneously one of the most influential and religion of the t[illegible]et[illegible]entury. Although Protestant, he argu should h[illegible]ough of as myth and that other contentious ideas [illegible]ism and pluralism, should be adopted by Christians.
Did you know?	[illegible]ick, in the late 1950s, accepted a place at Cornell University was also becoming more liberal at that time and he faced sev conservative academics, with many even accusing him of her doctrine of the virgin birth. This hostility eventually led to hi place at the University of Cambridge in the early 1960s.

Introduction – What is the Afterlife?

It is safe to say that, for the most part, the nature and form of the afterlife is one theological debates in Christianity. While nearly all religions have their own theor death, the duality of heaven and hell has governed Christian thought throughout rise to countless works of art and literature. This may be due to the highly specul afterlife, often termed **eschatology** in Christian circles. While there are plenty of worlds and realities beyond our material existence, by th[illegible]ry properties they unappreciable while we still live. So while concep[illegible]s[illegible]h a[illegible]heaven and hell have definition since the early days of Christia[illegible]eological interpretations certainly such as purgatory have also ari[illegible]n the history of the Christian Church and believers. Therefore, it i[illegible]ry to be careful when talking about Christian bel denominati[illegible]hi[illegible]may have a radically different view from the next.

So what are the basic options? Well, the persistent view throughout most of Chris and purgatory are actual places. They are where people go after they have been j whether they have lived morally good or bad lives. Heaven is most commonly tho where individuals are reunited with God after death and enjoy eternal bliss or ec commonly conceived as a place of eternal suffering, where those who have failed

or have shunned God entirely go after judgement. However, while these quite lite
and hell hold a broad scriptural appeal, many thinkers, both secular and religious,
interpretation in recent years. If a benevolent God exists, it would seem strange t
beings to undergo eternal suffering for mortal crimes. Therefore, especially in rec
often preferred to view heaven and hell as degrees of separation from God. Thos
lives are spiritually united with God after death, while those who haven't are sepa
have gone radically further, however, and even suggested that heaven and hell sh
person's spiritual and moral life, eschewing talk of [illegible] death altogether.

Regardless of the position one takes, it is first necessary to look at the key elemen
Much of the talk of the afterlife is bound up in quite artistic, symbolic and metaph
the Bible as a source of evidence can at first be quite confusing. Even when heave
realms or places, thought is rarely unified, with thinkers referring to various notio
the coming of a 'New Jerusalem' or 'New Earth'. As a result, some have even argu
construed as a transformation or perfection of the created world rather than a sp
Nevertheless, we can begin at the first key concept of the afterlife, the foundatio
is developed: **judgement**.

Judgement

Judgement necessarily precedes an individual being sent to hell. However, when
does this judgement occur? Different forms are presented throughout the New
Testament but the concept can broadly be divided into two kinds: **personal** and
general judgement. Personal judgement is individual and is generally conceived t
occur straight after a person's death. On the other hand, general judgement is of
of humanity and is more commonly conceived to occur at the **Second Coming**, wh
brings about a new spiritual age.

For the most part, the Bible refers more to personal judgement. In Matthew 25:32–4
when all will be judged based on whether they have been righteous or apathetic. Si
allude to a future event where all will face judgement, rather than each personal fac
death. Yet, in analysing the nature of judgement in scripture, it is always worth
landscape of the Middle East in the first century was very different from now. Many
have anticipated, based on Jesus' words, that the Second Coming was imminent an
lifetimes. For, while passages such as Matthew 24:2 maintain an ambivalence about
Luke 21:32, are much more direct, with Jesus stating, 'Truly, I say to you, this genera
has taken place' (NRSV). This means that the idea of a general judgement was a mu
to early Christians and so a more developed theology about personal judgement wa

This anticipation of the afterlife, or Second Coming, is often referred to as
parousia. While most present in early Christianity, it has been a theme
throughout much of the history of theology, with successive generations of
Christians giving their own predictions about the end of the world. In fact, it
is likely you've occasionally seen various Christian figures on the news,
especially in places such as the USA, give their own prophetic insights into
when Jesus will return to Earth in one guise or another. Nevertheless,
successive centuries after the death of Jesus saw a greater development of
the idea of personal judgement. Passages such as Luke 16:19–31, which
details the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, highlight the possibility that some
immediately [illegible]

To this extent, most modern Christian denominations sign up to belief in personal
remaining open about a future general judgement event. The Catholic Church, for
forms of judgement are important and the Gospels give every indication that ther
Christ will return to the world and judge humanity as a whole. As we have noted a
attributed to Jesus in the Gospels paint a less than clear picture of the core concep

about the afterlife. Yet, although this ambiguity extends to all the concepts we wi
not mean that ideas about heaven and hell are confused. As an illustration, we ca
key passage on the afterlife, Matthew 25:31–46.

Interpreting the Afterlife – A Closer Look at Matt

This Matthean passage is often used as a benchmark for Ch[illegible]ian theology about
the parable of the sheep and goats, an eschatolog[illegible]st[illegible] Jesus uses to outline t
general judgement and the nature of heav[illegible]d [illegible]. The central narrative is tha
sheep) will receive eternal life, wh[illegible]e who are not (the goats) will receive et
simple idea is more inter[illegible]t initially appears. For one, it seems to sugge
good works r[illegible]r t[illegible]here faith. Secondly, there is an emphasis on univers
necessary t[illegible]rm these works under Christ. Rather, Jesus seems to be implicit
salvation cou[illegible]extend to all who are righteous. The parable in this way potentiall
Jesus himself during his earthly ministry. Through the Gospels, Jesus does not sim
miracles to encourage faith in God but instead in order for human beings to live b
well-being for others. This cohesiveness in particular arises in v45, where Jesus sta
did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me' (NRSV).

So what ambiguities remain? Well, the passage as a whole has to be reconciled wi
have already noted, give somewhat conflicting perspectives. In fact, one major dif
drawing together sayings and teachings from different Gospels, which, perhaps du
offer distinct, thematic looks at the life of Jesus. Another issue is that, despite the
being concretely outlined by Jesus, the nature of the eternal life and punishment
passage is not developed. Does this eternal punishment occur in a particular place
condemnation? Although the nature of judgement provides some clues as to how
Christian afterlife, there is still a theoretical gap between the process of judgemen
Nevertheless, scripture does potentially offer mo[illegible]e c[illegible]e, and, through the next p
evaluate the relevant evidence for each [illegible]ng interpretation of heaven, hell a

Revelati[illegible]d [illegible]schatology

In our discu[illegible]sion of eschatology in this section, it would be remiss not to talk ab
upon ideas of heaven and hell. The Book of Revelation is the final book of the Ne
symbolic and imagery-filled account of the apocalypse. It is thought to have bee
AD 70 and AD 90 and is attributed to an unknown author, 'John'. As one would ex
apocalypse, it deals largely with a vision of the end times and the arrival of a nev
Earth. However, it does also potentially give clues about the nature of heaven its
21:1–8 heaven is described as a place containing no death or pain, where those
Perhaps most significantly, Revelation is at least partially responsible for the beli
throughout the history of Christianity. Millenarianism is the idea that upon his se
rule for 1,000 years before the general judgement of humanity occurs.

There is no easy way to interpret Revelation, however. Som[illegible] have viewed it as a
in its narratives prophecies about different events th[illegible]no[illegible]t time. Others have
examined with the community struggles of t[illegible]e [illegible]rst century. One popular idea is
symbolic account of the struggle b[illegible]tween good and evil, employing allegory and
popular representation of Ch[illegible]ian teaching. Regardless, if you read Revelation,
that it was pr[illegible]babl[illegible]t[illegible]itten to garner a literal interpretation, and many of th
throughou[illegible]wil[illegible] contain meanings lost on modern audiences.

Heaven

What do you envision when you picture a place or state of eternal reward and ha
view differs from nearly everyone else's throughout the world. The sheer abstract
automatically difficult to outline how heaven should be talked about. Yet that has
somewhat intoxicating idea for ordinary Christians. Typically it has been viewed a
removed from the material concerns that dominate our lives. However, others ha
seen heaven as some future reality on Earth yet to be [illegible]ated.

In fact, how one interprets the nature of the 'Kingdom of God' has a significant de
location, state or symbol of heaven. Throughout the Bible, the term is used in a va
the Kingdom of God as encompassing the entirety of creation, while others use it
where God is [illegible] sides. This makes discussion of heaven a little more compl
considers the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the temptation may be to use t
human beings are united with God in the afterlife. This nonetheless may be an un
especially considering talk of ideas such as 'New Earth' (see Isaiah 65:17, 66:22, Re
Christian thinkers to contend that the afterlife may be a future utopia born out of
human beings. If this is the case then heaven is better thought of as a transformat
a separate place. Such an idea is also not contested tremendously in the Bible, as
vision Jesus puts forward is most concerned with the promise of eternal life, not t

One particularly revealing passage comes in 2 Peter 3:10–13, which talks not only
cleansing or reforming of the Earth that will occur in the afterlife. Similarly, in Acts
about the restoration of all things on the return of God to the world, an indication
reworking of creation rather than another realm. It is important to note also that
personal and general judgement also affects this debate. The idea that heaven co
creation better fits with a notion of general judgement rather than personal, since
moment when heaven is brought to Earth rather than [illegible]an beings brought to h

However, it is also worth noting that the New Earth idea is only one part of Christi
the correct interpretation divides even a number of different philosophical and the
one, all the principal discussions still assumes further that heaven has to be a location
spiritual, may not be better to think of eternal life as a state beyond anything
is plenty to unpack about this suggestion, and it is worth taking a deeper look at t
idea.

Biblical Discussion of Heaven

There are many passages in the Bible which, if interpreted literally, seem to prese
as a physical place. For example, in 2 Corinthians 5:1–2, St Paul compares the 'ear
of the world to the 'building from God… eternal in the heavens' (NRSV). Going fur
various elements of both the Old and New Testaments offer specific dimensions a
details of heaven. Ezekiel and Revelation (see 3:12 and 21:2) both speak of a New
Jerusalem, with various features based upon an idealised version of the city in the
Such literalist thinking has dominated much of Christian history, with theology, ar
literature often chipping in different visions of the physical form and nature of hea

On the other hand, such interpretations have often been tempered also by philos
immateriality and incomprehensibility of heaven itself. Many accounts also sugge
present form cannot [illegible] real knowledge of heaven at all and it is only through
unification with God that human beings begin to understand the realms of divinity
beatific vision, developed by theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, adheres to this
the final moment in a person's ascent to heaven where they fully perceive God an
fallibility in the face of a wholly omnipotent, benevolent and omniscient being.

Such ideas are certainly as artistic as they are theological, but they hint at a deepe
understanding of heaven. Rather than risking **anthropomorphising** it as a realm w

features, it may be best to view heaven as a specific kind of spiritual state, where reconciliation and relationship with God after death. In fact, if one did become un process undergo **theosis** (self-divinisation), then one might well expect to leave th Earth and achieve an immaterial state more reflective of God's being and nature.

There is plenty of biblical evidence to support such a suggestion. Revelation 22:5, heaven as not needing 'light or sun', implying physical co[illegible]ns are an irrelevanc Similarly, Hebrews 9:24 states that Christ 'did not enter [illegible]anctuary made by hum is of another reality entirely to the physical [illegible]orld on Earth. Moreover, it may simply about the afterlife literally is a th[illegible] misstep. If heaven is a place so fundam material world, the only [illegible] scripture to describe it might through using met Therefore, [illegible]na[illegible] to be literal statements about the nature of heaven comprehen[illegible]form of reality completely at odds with ordinary human existen

Modern Interpretations of Heaven

Many Christian denominations in the last few hundred years have shifted to viewi state or communion with God, although there are still plenty who view it as an ac Catholic Church endorses quite a broad view of the afterlife, describing heaven in of life and love with the Trinity' and a 'state of supreme definitive happiness' (n. 1 had the support of recent popes, with Pope John Paul II describing heaven as mee death and not 'a physical place in the clouds'. Therefore, despite popular imagina heaven as a physical place, much of the academic theological discussion has prefe afterlife to physical concepts and things.

However, if a more subjective and metaphorical approach is taken to interpreting afterlife, this raises a thornier question about the nature [illegible]e afterlife itself. To s heaven is not any knowable or conceivable reality [illegible]ially a tacit recognition entirely meaningful in the context of hu[illegible]s. As some modern thinkers have fruitful approach is to view he[illegible]n as a **symbol** of the presence of God in a perso existentialist theologian [illegible]s this view, arguing that 'heaven and hell must be ta the polar u[illegible]s i[illegible] experience of the divine'.

What does this mean? Well, at a core level, heaven and hell are states of mind tha psychological power over human beings. Whatever a person's religious inclination God may be somewhat hellish in the sense that there is a void of meaning when lo sufferings. Conversely, a life enjoyed through a relationship with God is one that i extent, this view is also supported by scriptural evidence. Many of Jesus' teaching spiritual betterment of human beings, implying that the well-led Christian life pro one wholly concerned with material circumstances. Some scholars, such as C H Do teachings a form of 'realised eschatology', where the symbolic nature of Jesus' life instantiation of the Kingdom of God on Earth, which all human beings can particip

This symbolic approach to heaven and hell is quite radical. Although it avoids a lot linguistic problems with describing heaven as a place or a[illegible]e, for many it makes altogether. It becomes reduced to a mere idea ra[illegible]th[illegible] a concrete reality that faithful. Equally, the critical theologian m[illegible]ise the point that the expectation morality. If one is motivated by th[illegible] of eternal reward, one is not really ac motivations. Yet at the [illegible]s, taking up the idea that heaven is a symbol also **eternal**, a k[illegible]m[illegible] Jesus in the Gospels. Many critics as such might point ou interpretati[illegible]eaven or other realms of the afterlife equally requires some cre nature of eternality, if such realms are primarily psychological. Even if this is possi one is taking too many liberties with the interpretation of scripture to support it.

The nuances of this discussion nevertheless emerge more when one turns to heav
hell. It is this concept we will examine in the next part in the same fashion, with th
the intricacies of theological debate about the afterlife.

Discussion Activity:
How were you taught about heaven as a child? In small groups, compare your di
the nature of eternal reward and discuss how they inf[illegible]ur perspective on th

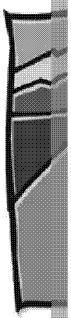
Hell

Throughout the history of [illegible]y the concept of hell has held a pivotal role in
disagreeable [illegible]avi[illegible]apostasy. Yet the nature and form of hell is perhaps e
than its cou[illegible]rt, heaven. One of the main philosophical issues has been how
reconciled w[illegible]a benevolent God, a problem that inspired many of the more mys
belief we looked at in the section on Augustine. Yet without some idea of eternal
that judgement altogether loses meaning, for why be morally responsible for one'
punishment? Therefore, there is a clear tension at the heart of Christian belief in h
overarching reality it threatens the very sovereignty of God, yet if it is part of God
threatens God's benevolence.

Like heaven, hell has traditionally throughout the history of Christianity been view
descriptions are accompanied by lurid ideas about the kinds of sufferings human b
has been a certain grim fascination shown by theologians and artists alike in detai
punishments the condemned face. However, in recent years, this idea about hell h
Instead, hell is viewed as a spiritual state; a holistic separation from God in the aft
failed to have faith or live well do not enjoy the reward of union with God in heav
difficult to unpack in scripture and it is to its various incar[illegible]ns in the Bible we n
understanding of its form and place in Christian b[illegible]ief.

Biblical Discussion of Hell

What is first i[illegible]rta[illegible]. Note is that there is no unified concept of 'hell' present
number of d[illegible]t terms used to describe negative realms of the afterlife that a
modern Christians. For example, in the Old Testament, the term *sheol* is sometim
meaning would be the Greek concept of 'Hades', a temporary underworld where
place of eternal punishment. In fact, the term *Hades* is used similarly in the New T
to the abode of the dead where individuals await judgement and resurrection. Th
throughout the New Testament is *Gehenna,* which is commonly translated as 'hel
to refer to a place where the body and soul are painfully destroyed (e.g. Matthew



When talking about hell, it is this final term that proves most pertinent. Nevertheless, there are many other descriptions of forms of eternal punishment in scripture. As we have studied already, the parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:36–45) refers to an 'eternal fire' for the condemned, and many passages in Revelation adopt simila[illegible]magery. For example, Revelation 20:15 describes hell as a 'lake [illegible]fir[illegible], while 14:10 holds that sinners will be 'tormented with fi[illegible]nd [illegible]phur in the presence of the holy angels'. Simil[illegible]a[illegible]s prevail through the Gospel also, with the phrase 'we[illegible]g[illegible]gnashing of teeth' appearing seven times (see Lu[illegible]3:2[illegible]the image of 'unquenchable fire' given as a consequen
(Matthew 3[illegible]ke 3:17).

All this certainly can seem quite morbid at first, and early Christians did not shy av
different evils one might find in hell. Such discussion naturally oriented itself arou
actual place the condemned went to, just as the saved ascended to heaven. It is q
assumption was made. The talk of hell in the Bible is very easy to take literally, es

as 'fire' are invoked. These very physical terms are rooted in the human imaginati
contact human beings have with suffering is that of the body, rather than a spiritu

Yet it can be questioned to what degree a literalist interpretation of hell in the Bi
assumes to some degree there is a **resurrection of the body** in the afterlife. If not,
why physical suffering would be considered undesirable in the same way on Earth
philosophical problem, there are perhaps clues early Chri[illegible]s did subscribe to th
(see 1 Corinthians 15:35–40). However, it is also [illegible] from the writings of bib
what form a new body in the afterlife would take and whether it is comparable to
Perhaps more important is the **immortality of the soul** in Christian theology, whic
between the spiritual and physical aspects of the human person in this life and their spiritual ex
case, then it may be [illegible] appropriate to view hell as a form of spiritual punishme
being united with God in the afterlife.

Such a view is certainly appropriate if one interprets talk of hell in the Bible to be
This is not a far-fetched approach, as texts such as Revelation were likely to be wr
artistic intent and are full of symbolism and metaphor, even if interpreted literally
storied form of passages such as the parable of the sheep and goats naturally invi
spiritual or moral conclusions about the afterlife, not simply assume it to mirror th
This understanding is perhaps also supported by the dual meanings of many term
John the Baptist announces in Luke 3:15–18 that Jesus will arrive to baptise huma
fire', yet, in this context, it is clear that fire is intended to conjure up a different m
describe hell. Whatever punishments are, therefore, posited by biblical authors to
fruitful approach to interpret these as symbolic expressions of a certain kind of sp
them literally.

Modern Interpretations of Hell

Similarly to heaven, many Christian denominations for a long time endorsed a lite
However, this has accordingly changed, especially in the twentieth century. For ex
Catholic Church states that the chief punishment of hell is eternal separation fro
possess the [illegible]d [illegible]ppiness for which he was created and for which he longs'. W
possibility of [illegible] physical punishment, it does downplay such possibilities in fav
spiritual state. This interpretation also makes it easier to reconcile hell with the ex
is simply human beings' free choice to deny a relationship with him and be separa

Yet it is also not clear how this interpretation coheres with biblical interpretation.
that talk of hell naturally uses 'symbolic language' and that hell is better viewed a
and definitively separate themselves from God'. Yet if this is the case, why invoke
describing the punishments of hell? Just as we explored with heaven, if the Bible i
there may be philosophical grounds to simply view it as a moral symbol altogethe
described in the Bible simply refer to the pains and difficulties the individual witho
contrast to the believer who has the security and joy of their faith in God.

This idea also completely avoids the tricky process of reconciling hell with God, fo
spiritual state prima facie dodges the question of why God would physically punis
asked why God would also spiritually punish human beings. One important idea re
in **universalism**; the idea that a benevolent God would choose to eventually save
their actions on Earth. There are [illegible] many corresponding issues with this idea, but th
all physical and spiritual interpretations of hell since the very existence of hell itse
opposed to the existence of a benevolent God unless one invokes an event such a

Nevertheless, one idea might well come to the rescue here: **purgatory**. Although
posited as a solution to the philosophical conundrums that come with heaven and

Depictions of the Afterlife in Art and Literature

Art and theology have always gone hand in hand throughout history. Yet the co
perhaps proved most enduring in artistic imagination. If you've been to any Cath
likely you have seen a vast array of images inspired by various conceptions of th
reflects a longstanding tradition in Christianity of treating heaven and hell as lite
Augustine, who contended hell was a physical place with no purpose but the tor
sinned, gave rise to plenty of artistic and literary ideas about what these punishr

Yet the most important literary work about the afterlife is probably the *Divine Co*
thirteenth–fourteenth-century Italian poet Dante Alighieri. It details, in a highly
first through then purgatory and hell, outlining the soul's journey through t
reconciliation with God. The first part, *Inferno*, for example, deals with Satan, he
suffering within it, while the last part, *Paradiso*, describes how the soul ascends
before undergoing the **beatific vision** with God.

However, the *Divine Comedy* does more than simply narrate a story. It also outli
morality, justice and religion. For example, in his conception of hell each circle re
historical and religious figures shown suffering in various ways according to thei
poem is highly allegorical, containing a variety of symbolic and metaphorical illus
Scholars in particular have identified what is often called a **fourfold method** of i
Dante, which held that to draw the most amount of meaning from a particular t
historical, moral, political and spiritual elements. The idea was that the *Divine Co*
kind of *interpretation*, where each story at each level of the afterlife offered gre
the spiritual lives and philosophies of human beings.

Purgatory

The word 'purgatory' means 'purification' and most commonly refers to an interm
heaven and hell where individuals are purified of their excess sin before ascendin
purgatory, and whether it exists at all, is still a heavily debated idea. It is most co
Catholic Church although there are some sections of the Eastern Orthodox Churc
possibility of an intermediate stage between death and the afterlife. A large part
purgatory comes from a lack of scriptural support. It does not appear a distinct co
and has largely been developed out of a choice reading of a few passages and phil
nature of the afterlife.

One key issue purgatory potentially solves is answering how sinful human beings
condemned, for it is far from clear in the Bible what kind of acts will send a humar
to hell. It is practically impossible for anyone to live a blameless life, yet in order t
God, human beings will have to achieve perfection of some sort. Accordingly, the
between **mortal sins** and **venial sins**. The former are sins that are unforgiveable a
On the other hand, the latter are sins which result in only temporal punishment, a
reflection, they can be cleansed from an individual in the afterlife.

Therefore, it can clearly be seen that purgatory as an idea provides an intuitive way
which human beings are sent to heaven or hell even if there is no easy way of dis
counts as a mortal sin or a venial sin. Furthermore, although its official adoption b
occur until the thirteenth century, the idea of an intermediate state between deat
tradition stretching back beyond the birth of Jesus. Plato and Heraclides, for exam
'celestial Hades' an intermediary state or place souls went to after death before
ascending to a higher plane of existence. Similarly, the idea of praying for the dea
stages of the afterlife has been suggested to be not uncommon in older Jewish tra
the early Church theologians posit basic forms of purgatory. Clement and Origen s
'spiritual fire and punishment' in between death and the afterlife while even Augu
possible an intermediate stage existed before heaven and hell.

Yet there is still a major difference between acknowledging the possibility of inter
purgatory as an actual place. It is, therefore, important to first consider what bibli
purgatory (however limited it may be) and whether belief in it is justified.

Biblical Evidence for Purgatory

While critics of the Catholic Church have often argued that there is no solid biblica
number of passages have been cited in its support. Perhaps most important is Ma
discussion about forgiveness, Jesus alludes to an 'age to come' beyond the presen
forgiveness is possible even after death. An argument put forward by Pope Gregor
Catholic theologians in particular have drawn upon this passage as an indication t
stage between death and the afterlife. A similar passage can be found in 1 Corinth
uses the metaphor of a builder for early Christians in the process of developing th
phrase 'the builder will be saved, but only as through fire'. Once again, this implie
purification for the early sins and imperfections present in each human being.

Yet these passages are still only indirect support, so why hold a distinct belief in p
denominations conflict here, differences are in large part due to the sources of ev
holds to be important. This is a discussion we will focus on in the next section, but
essential tool when interpreting the Bible. If there is a philosophical gap in the un
which a scripturally coherent solution exists, then it is fair to posit a concept such
Protestants, who typically hold the Bible to be centrally important, if there is no fo
for purgatory, then it should not be argued for even if it solves some abstract prob

Nevertheless, even if belief in purgatory is reasonable, there is little scriptural evi
While it might be natural to view it as another actual place, similar to that of heav
view it as a kind of spiritual state. If this latter interpretation is the case, then purg
of a soul coming to terms with its own sinful life whilst undergoing union with God
another stage in the process of salvation, is certainly a view that has been ad
as we will analyse in the next part of this section.

Modern Interpretations of Purgatory

The Catholic Church itself acknowledges there isn't a huge amount of biblical evid
contends that a reasonable perspective on scripture and the nature of God reveal
For example, Pope John Paul in 1999 described purgatory as a 'condition of existe
physical place, it is a state after death where people have their sins cleansed by Je
heaven and hell, many modern theologians are reluctant to view purgatory as an
is less clear whether viewing purgatory as a condition or state is altogether meani
painful purification necessary to enter heaven, and to what extent does the idea c
notion of a forgiving God? Usually, forgiveness does not require a punishment of
imply the exact opposite.

Karl Rahner, a famous modern Catholic theologian, answers such questions by co
something inflicted by God on individuals. Instead, it is a metaphor for a person's
their own imperfect state in light of an utterly perfect being. Purgatory is, therefo
process of conscious reflection on one's own sins. But as this causes a certain deg
this reflection causes a similar but not overwhelming suffering in the afterlife as
the meaning of their actions in their life and the ways they might have hurt o
notions of fire and pu[illegible] invoked in discussion of purgatory are useful metaph
interpreted literally. It is possible to describe the process of purgatory without the
characteristi[illegible]

A similar argument is also an unlikely part of John Hick's theology. Despite being a
purgatory is an essential part of his **universalism**, the idea that all people will ever
purgatory is similar to Rahner's; an intermediate stage between this life and heav

they understand the meaning and importance of their actions during their life. Ye there is no hell and all human beings will go through purgatory on their inevitable Purgatory therefore becomes a way of reconciling the existence of evil human act beings will eventually be saved by God. Although for many Hick's ideas here deval the present ages, it is an important example of how the doctrine of purgatory has years as theologians are more willing to step outside the bounds of traditional chu

Yet both Hick's and Rahner's ideas perhaps lend support to viewing purgatory as s psychological anguish they postulate in an intermediate state in the afterlife can e symbolic state in this life when one reflects on one's own sins in light of one's fait eventually one might forgive oneself and become a better person, this causes its c cannot be a[illegible] i[illegible] [illegible] believes in Christian ideals. Therefore, just as with h purgatory a[illegible] spiritual state may be somewhat of a slippery slope to viewing it as

Which Interpretation Should We Favour?

Throughout this section, we've looked at different proposals about the afterlife. N purgatory have been outlined as potentially actual places, spiritual states or symb yet there is no easy way of evaluating which one of these interpretations is best. C realms of the afterlife as actual places is scripturally simplest and does not require when it comes to analysing the Bible. However, this literal interpretation of script the rich symbolism in the Bible and leads to difficult philosophical issues when att hell and purgatory with the God of classical monotheism.

On the other hand, viewing the realms of the afterlife as spiritual states or symbol philosophical problems, as it is not required to explain in the same fashion why a l would choose (or allow) physical punishment to be enacted on human beings in th these positions makes interpreting scripture a tricky process since no declaratio face value. Instead, careful analysis needs to [illegible] of individual passages and t and messages drawn out. The difficulty of this kind of interpretation mean that t of the afterlife simply become whatever the reader reads them to be, and ideas a become overly subjective. Whatever the case, when discussing Christian ideas abo to accomm[illegible] both these scriptural and philosophical problems when supporti

> **Activity:**
> Pick five of the Bible passages mentioned throughout this section. Read through sentences about the interpretation of the Christian afterlife you think each best

Election

We've partially explored in our discussion of the afterlife how different interpreta nature of salvation. Perhaps most important to such discussions is detailing who w not, and this has led to a large amount of theology on **election**. The word 'elect' h might guess, the doctrine of election in Christianity stipulates that there are some specifically chosen by God to be saved. Yet this is a more controversial claim than human beings be eventually saved regardless of their [illegible] or are there some w God know who will be saved in his infinite wisdom, or are human beings able to d whether they reach salvation?

Such questions make [illegible] that election is not an easy concept to unfold and ties i about **pred[illegible]** and the afterlife. Predestination is the idea that God in som occur on Ea[illegible] typically this means that God foreknows or predetermines all thin individual human soul. Both the Catholic and Protestant Churches traditionally be they are often more split as to what this entails. At the core, there is the idea that humanity but the entirety of creation, yet the nature of this plan is more difficult t natural to believe as a Christian that one ought to be saved due to one's faith, the about election and the extent of God's benevolence and omniscience.

Before we delve into these issues, it is worth exploring the differing views that ha
throughout history and how they reflect different strands of Christian thought.

The Different Interpretations of Electi

Wrapping your head around the different forms of election can be a tricky proces
have remained consistent in their use of terms, and they often make quite symbo
nature and form of salvation. One early key distinction that is often clear is betwe
election. Theologians who propose limited election are generally contending that
are chosen by God for salvation; everyone else is destined for perdition. Converse
God grants all human beings the possibility of reaching heaven. For the most part,
has upheld limited election. It is only in more progressive forms of modern Christi
been propo cluding radical strains of **universalist** Christian belief.

Yet this distinction can still be clarified further, especially in the case of limited ele
some people to be saved, when was this choice made? Although this might seem
has been a key area of theological debate, especially in the last 1,000 years. The C
writings of John Calvin) have traditionally favoured what is called **unconditional e**
God determined who would receive salvation before the creation of the world. Na
entails quite a strong interpretation of predestination. If God knew who would be
the world, then it seems equally true that he willed some to be condemned also.
of predestination also arguably fits well with a wholly omniscient and omnipotent

On the other hand, the Arminians (following the life and writings of Jacobus Armi
election, where God determines who will receive salvation based on whether the
Christ. Under conditional election, there is a much greater place for free will. It is
whether someone is saved, but whether they themselves exercise belief in the life
diversion in doctrine between Calvinists and Arminians also results in another diff
to unconditional election, there is also **limited atonement**; where Christ dies for t
elected by God before creation. Arminians, however, argue for **unlimited atonem**
died for all humanity's sins without exception.

It is not nec to know the details of these historical differences in views on
election but it is important to understand how Christian theologians have diverge
their interpretation of the doctrine. As we analysed in the section on Augustine, a
strong belief in election prior to creation (as endorsed by Calvinists) can potentiall
lead to **double predestination**, the view that God predetermines both who will be
saved and who will be condemned. Naturally, this is a very controversial view, one
adopted by few denominations today. Most, including the Catholic Church, favour
single predestination, believing that God only elects individuals who will be saved
does not play a part in those who will be condemned.

However, to characterise the debate around election as philosophical is at least pa
reconciling the actions of a benevolent God with the nuances of election is undou
much of the disagreement has also arisen due to competing interpretations of scr
we will look in the next part of this section.

Salvation and the Fall

Interestingly enough, the theological debate about election doesn't just end at th creation. There is a further debate among thinkers about when God chose people Fall. **Antelapsarianism** (Supralapsarianism) is the view that God determined who condemned before the Fall, while **Postlapsarianism** (Sublapsarianism) is the oppo determined who will be saved after the Fall. This is a [illegible] or discussion but it implications for belief. If God chose who will be saved before the Fall, it implies th enabled human beings to become [illegible]. However, if God chose the elect afte plan for humanity began or [illegible] the corruption.

Biblical Discussion and Election

There is no simple way to encapsulate the scriptural debate around election. The broad nature of the language within the Bible and the difficulty in extracting preci meanings from its passages means that for any passage there is a variety of ways reading it. For example, a well-known verse, the subject of much debate concerni election, is John 15:16. Here Jesus declares, 'you did not choose me but I chose yo and appointed you to go and bear fruit'. Now here it is clear there is an overriding dimensions of this theme are not clear. Whether all human beings are chosen or a transparent. Although Jesus' speech in the chapter is directed towards the disciple standalone address to the reader of the Gospel, as emphasised by the author him from their context throughout the chapter.

A similar case emerges with Romans 11:1–3. Here St Paul directly states that 'God whom he foreknow'. For those who favour limited electio[illegible]is is a clear indicatio and power, set apart some people to be saved. However for others this interpret context of the chapter, which concerns h[illegible]the continuation and fulfilme The talk of foreknowing is, therefore, referring to the Jewish people God safeguar

A final exam[illegible]e's [illegible]ed extensively is Acts 17 and Paul's charge against the the Athenia[illegible] their unknown god is the Christian God and created human be they might search for him. In contrast to Romans 11:1–3, there is no indication th instead Paul gives the impression that all human beings are the offspring of God, (the ministry of Jesus) when human beings can be reconciled with him. This passa interpreted as supporting unlimited election, or even universalism, for the empha human beings hearing the message of Christ and repenting, not only a select few.

Therefore, even from a basic overview of the scriptural references to election, it is clear biblical evidence for either position. For all the possible philosophical scruple unlimited election, there is also a scriptural gap in the discussion, and any argume election has to somewhat creatively engage a number of biblical passages. To som ambiguities themselves may be reflective of the uncertain attitudes of the writers wasn't written long after the death of Jesus and for many th[illegible]eschatological visio of debate, especially since at times Jesus had promised that the Kingdom of God w followers' lifetimes. Nevertheless, this equally does not mean that a coherent doc scripturally supported, simply that there are no straightforward answers to be fou

Predestination and Salvation

So far we've [illegible]looked at a basic outline of the different forms of election but there still is much to delve into. In the current day, most Christian denominations have shifted to a view closer to unlimited atonement, but throughout much of Christian history a doctrine of limited atonement was favoured. Why was this the case? Well, there are certainly historical reasons. Although Christianity nowadays

the largest religion across the world, it had its own humble beginnings. Early Chris
way, could be argued to resemble what we might view as a cult now. It had a sma
the teachings of a man little known outside the region of Judea, even after his dea
man who preached about a future coming Kingdom of God. Maintaining Christian
religious commitment far beyond what many modern-day Christians adhere to, pe
insular outlook about the nature of election.

Yet this is only a small part of the story. Christianity has been coloured by many in
history theology on the whole has been [illegible] accommodating of those of other fait
suggest that religions did not co[illegible] influence each other, but instead to poin
whole taught **exclusivism** – the idea that only one religion holds the truth about sa
learn more about this in [illegible] but it is useful to mention now, as it informs why limite
Christian be[illegible] such a long time. One theologian we can look at in particular is
Calvinist forms of Christianity. Typically these held up a strong doctrine of predest
limited election meant God also foreknew those to be condemned. For example, t
Faith, set out by the early Church of England in 1646, declared that 'some men an
everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death'.

Yet Calvin himself held slightly more nuanced views about predestination. In his fa
affirms a doctrine of predestination at the time, similar to that of the *Westminste*
argues that since human beings cannot draw upon their own free will or powers t
their place to try to comprehend the nature of predestination and election altoge
has set into motion is of his own free will, and whoever God has chosen is the sub
The real motives of God for these actions are ones beyond human comprehensio
individuals as elect and some as condemned is misleading, placing a human persp

This is an interesting suggestion and highlights perhaps the intricacies of limited e
on the surface. Calvin throughout his works applies what he calls the **principle of**
that God only reveals himself in ways that are suitable for human intellect and cap
being too vastly transcendent for human beings to understand. This means the do
although it might appear unfair or difficult, is perhaps only this way because huma
ability to see on a larger scale. What this suggests, at least for Calvin, is that hum
predestinati[illegible]election as having decided their fate already, and in effect treat
morally whenever they can, and not presume to know what God's overall plans ar

This kind of thinking still pervades most modern denominational interpretations o
not adhere to double predestination as Calvinists did but still hold that God impor
even if the exact reason is not known why. For example, the Catechism of the Cat
predestination, declaring that 'God predestines no one to go to hell'. However, it
Last Judgement that human beings will understand the entire 'economy of salvati
for humanity. Therefore, there is an overriding role for faith in many forms of limi
many Christians, Jesus has simply revealed that some or all human beings are elec
accordingly be placed in him that following his teachings will lead to salvation ove

Universalism

Reading through justifications for limited [illegible]limited atonement, you might find
thinking: why should we maintain [illegible]logical ambivalence about God's will? If
truly benevolent and omn[illegible]ent, would he not seek to reconcile all human being
himself, not just some few? Such thinking can eventually lead to the theological
doctrine of **universalism**, or apokatastasis. This holds that all of humanity, regardl
their sin, will eventually be reconciled with God and achieve salvation. It's a contr
seen significant adoption within many Christian denominations. However, it has b
proposed idea in the last 100 years and may find a place in future Christian dogma

This lack of support throughout history is not to suggest there is no history at all. S
such as Origen, did propose forms of universalism. However, as the centralised be
gradually became established, universalism became a heretical idea. Yet there are
favour of it, and it has become increasingly popular with modern liberal versions o
universalists often question whether hell can be reconciled with the idea of a ben
idea of God 'choosing' individuals for salvation is at all just or good. The Christian
charity should extend not just to human interactions but should also reflect some
embodies. Therefore, universalists often stress the importance of freely willed goo
predestination or limited election. Rather than individuals being marked as corrup
they are naturally imperfect beings on a journey in unison with God towards a greate

The most influential universalist theologian in the twentieth century is John Hick,
notion that a benevolent God would never condemn any human being to, or allow
punishment. Instead, he develops a theology that transcends ordinary Protestant
afterlife and its intermediate stages explain how human beings, although perhaps
reflect upon their actions and eventually be reconciled with God. Simply put, if ea
around moral and spiritual growth, then it is not far-fetched to think that the afte
such, although a Protestant, Hick argues in favour of purgatory, contending that a
challenges the good and evil actions human beings commit on Earth, while provid
to achieve salvation. Therefore, if Hick is correct, contrary to the beliefs of Catholi
human beings will go through purgatory in some form or another.

Therefore, under Hick's view, all human beings are elect and human beings are de
the journey for those who are evil is likely to be a longer and more painful one. It
Hick's ideas within his wider theological framework. Hick advocates **pluralism**, the
exclusive access to the truth about salvation. All religions, therefore, including Chr
partial truth, and the limitations of religion as a whole are exposed in the after
the teaching of Jesus in Christianity, which reveals a distinct way for human beings
which can be refined and learned not only from contact with other religions but a
we gain about the world itself.

As mentioned before, Hick's views are quite controversial, and many thinkers hav
proper Christian belief. Cardinal Ratzinger, for example, criticises Hick's universali
central importance of Christians' sacrifice and atonement. As Karl Barth notes, ele
Christian faith with Christ himself, and declares that he is 'both the electing God a
who decentralises the process of salvation from Jesus and his divinity, in effect for
Christian from Christianity. Now it is unlikely that Hick would even disagree with t
thinking about whether Christian beliefs about election should necessarily commi
about Jesus and his teaching, especially if the doctrine of election is revealed thro
transparent difficulty when it comes to justifying universalism through scripture, w
support some idea of limited or unlimited election in the pages of the Bible.

Nevertheless, Hick does mount an effective challenge to many of the assumptions
election. Should God really be viewed as a monarchical figure directing the course
picture seems to contrast so much with our intuitive ideas about benevolence? Su
answer and to a great extent draw off how we come to believe we have knowledg
coincidentally, perhaps not, is the subject of our next section.

Discussion Activity:
Is it possible to have single predestination without it collapsing into double predes
in pairs or small groups and give your opinions on the most coherent form of elect

Quick Quiz

1. What is eschatology?
2. What is heaven?
3. What is purgatory?
4. What is hell?
5. What is the difference between personal and general judgement?
6. What is the difference between limited and unlimited election?
7. Give one Bible passage that potentially supports a doctrine of limited election
8. Who is a key twentieth century opponent of universalism?

2A: Knowledge of God's Ex

What you will learn in this section:

Christian teachings and ideas regarding how one arrives at knowledge of God's ex

- Whether human beings possess a natural, innate ser the divine.
- Whether God can be observed in the order a ur se of natural things.
- The fallibility of the senses and the l ed for faith and grace in orde
- How scripture and the life of s reveal knowledge of God.
- The philosophical gical debates surrounding whether natural or re primac lig eaching.

Starter Activity:
In a basic list, write down, in order of importance, the sources you would emplo knowledge of God's existence. At the end of this section, compare this list with anything changed in your view?

Key Thinker	
Name	John Calvin
Born	1509
Died	1564
Key text	*Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536)
Why are they important?	Calvin was one of the most important theologians and figure in the sixteenth century, and his work ga e rise to the Christi Calvinism. Throughout his life, hi a d ideas were very doctrines of salvation and r de ation. However, his writi influential thro t istory of Christianity, for Protesta
Did you kn	When C di itially his body was laid out in the open fo , his friends and compatriots eventually became wo ople arriving to see it, they would be thought to be encou cult, and so they buried it in an unmarked grave the next day.

Introduction – How Do We Know God?

Questions about knowledge of God's existence might initially seem more philoso Yet even religious thinkers have disagreed among themselves how human beings what sources of knowledge should be prioritised over others. In fact, such questio important now than ever, as theological enquiry has to reconcile itself with the e knowledge human beings come to possess. Whether we come to know God thro or through scripture greatly affects not only the conception of God we develop b altogether in our everyday lives. If human beings are naturally disconnected from reliable point of contact comes from the revelations God has granted humanity a the other hand, if God granted human beings the natural fa ties to witness him continuing element of our observations of the world.

Such questions cast a divide betwee t ften termed **natural** and **revealed** focuses on the capabilities h bei have to gather knowledge about God fro be from an innate ser d being or from specific observations of his work in knowledge th natural theology is, therefore, often termed **general rev** beings with t capacities. Revealed theology, conversely, looks at how God h known to human beings through various forms of revelation. As such, knowledge g is often termed **special revelation**; it is only available to individuals at particular tim favouring revealed theology often cast doubt on the reliability of the senses, argui observation and reason should be a good argument for distrusting natural theolog those times when God's grace has enabled direct communication between God an

It is divide we shall focus on in this section, for while many theologians have main between these two approaches, many have also argued that they are two sides of ways God has communicated himself to humanity as a whole. First, we shall look a various arguments put forward that human beings can come to knowledge of God natural world and its properties.

Discussion Activity:
What do you believe is the most important source of knowledge about God? D or small groups.

Natural Theology

Before we c to this topic, we can ask a much more fundamental question: w an issue that has so far eluded an easy answer for philosophers, yet, in asking this some interesting dimensions to the debate around knowledge of God. On the one focused on **propositional knowledge**. This is the kind of knowledge which focuses 'God created the world'. Here many philosophers have developed theories out of such knowledge can be defined as 'justified, true belief'. For Plato, each of these t order for a statement to count as knowledge, and certainly, even in theology, such place. The theist will generally contend not only that their belief in God is true but variety of ways, from personal experience to philosophical argumentation.

Yet, especially in religious discussion, it is not clear whether propositional knowledg at play. In particular, we can note another kind: **knowledge by acquaintance**. This is direct experience or a direct connection with a particular thing and may well apply t Christians believe they have about God, for such knowledge may be of a much more nature than can be captured by truth-evaluable statement especially if given by a This distinction certainly comes to the fore at least when the question whether hum of the existence of God. This might be a more controversial proposition nowadays, neuroscientific explanations of mental phenomena are commonplace, but it is one and will be the first form of natural knowledge we will look at in this section.

Innate Knowledge

The discussion around the different forms of knowledge is very pertinent when lo whether human beings possess an innate sense of the divine, for although suppor natural theology have pointed towards the widespread practice of religion in the evidence for such a sense, it is less clear what nature or form such a sense should the sense of the divine a particular set of capacities that allows human beings to c and understand the presence of God in the natural world, or is it an intuitive awar God in all things? Discussion around innate knowledge of God has often tended to together, even if this innate knowledge might manifest itself in different ways. As be important is that the innate sense of God human beings possess allows for spe would not be available without this sense.

For example, the Catechism of the Catholic Church state that because man is cre 'the desire for God is written in the human heart'. Therefore, even if there are dif religions, it is still fair to refer to humans as 'religious' beings, for all have some se sense manifesting itself differently across cultures. John Calvin, a famous sixteenth agrees with this idea and distinguishes between what he terms a **sensus divinitati religionis** (sense of religion). The former is the innate understanding human beings latter is what predisposes human beings to engage in religious activity. For Calvin, religions can be so different but share a belief in God. Whatever joint sense there necessarily reflected in the way human beings are predisposed to religious practic

Moreover, the idea of an innate sense of the divine is well scripturally supported. be Acts 17:16–34. Here St Paul speaks to the Athenians about their idolatry and th practices. In the process he notes an altar with the inscription of an 'unknown Go their worship which is wrongful but rather their ignorance of the thing they are su many theologians, this passage is evidence for some innate sense of the divine. Ev in effect worshipping idols and false Gods, they still had an understanding of som revealed to the world properly through Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, even if this sense is establi[illegible] exist, as we've noted previously, sense manifests itself, or what ex[illegible]standing it brings of God, for while it m comprehension of a larg[illegible]power, similar to what the Athenians possessed, far from wh[illegible]m[illegible] knowledge altogether. In fact, the most it might tell u whether Go[illegible]ny real personal connection to human beings altogether. To un can look at two aspects of how this innate sense might manifest itself: through **be**

Beauty and Goodness

What do you see when you are looking at a beautiful painting or a magnificent lan all feeling, chances are you might get a sense of awe or wonder. This is not to sug of ordinary objects; the philosophical study of **aesthetics** is often preoccupied wit beauty and whether there are any real underlying principles to what we regard to imply instead is that there is an underlying innate sense from which human beings beauty in the natural world.

How does this apply to religion? Well, for the theist, the fact that human beings can world is a result of one's innate sense of the divine. When one gets feelings of awe beautiful or magnificent phenomena, one is actually gettin[illegible]internal appreciatio For art as a whole is reserved for human beings an[illegible]ot[illegible]r creatures. The religiou the perception of beauty is a natural expr[illegible]of every human being's innate sens

The same is true for go[illegible]s. Nearly all Christian denominations appreciate the i moral comp[illegible]r h[illegible]beings, and it is a key faculty that enables joint moral k humanity. W[illegible]ne feels the prick of conscience, it is this innate sense respondi right as human beings with a particular moral understanding of what is right and w conscience is certainly controversial. Many psychologists in the last 100 years hav explanations for this moral sense of the world. Yet, for the everyday Christian, the goodness is a facet of this innate sense of the will and being of God. Moreover, fo Catholics, it is a key part of **natural law**, which is thought to represent moral truth reasoning about the world and God.

Such a view is a step beyond simply possessing an innate sense of the divine. Whil with accepting that human beings can sense God on some instinctual level, there whether the human intellect itself is able to reason about and develop knowledge we examine in more detail in the next part of this section.

Intellect and Reason

It is easy to see why theists might arg[illegible]or[illegible]t in our rational capacities. Genesi were created in the **imago dei** – **man is of God**. This is generally held to mean tha human nature reflect[illegible]'s nature. Moreover, this passage potentially explains w innate sens[illegible]e o[illegible]ne. If they contain aspects of God's nature, this is likely to the religious[illegible]sions of the world itself. Similarly, one could go further and arg are reflected in human beings. We explored two in the last section: beauty and co theologians go even further than this and contend that human rationality is a refl power. Through using reason, human beings can come to knowledge about God s capacity used to develop knowledge about the world in general.

This idea that reason is a key tool for arriving at knowledge of God is an importan element of **natural theology**. Many different arguments have been put forward t to reason to claim some attribute is a part of God's being, or that it is reasonable believe in the existence of God altogether! In philosophy of religion, for example, Aquinas' **Five Ways** are particularly famous arguments which attempt to deduce t existence of God from basic features of the universe. While these may not prove t existence of God outright, even for many theists, they do in the eyes of believers strong evidence that God's existence is a reasonable proposition and help define how God relates to the natural world.

So at first glance, it seem[illegible] natural theologian is in a strong position. However, theological [illegible]. As looked at in the section on Augustine, **the Fall** is typicall corrupted h[illegible]nature, making human beings not only aware of good *and bad* the human soul to make reasonable decisions. Therefore, the Fall seems to prese beings: although we were once created perfect in the image of God that is no lon we believe we have is limited and we no longer have the connection or union wit enabled us to naturally appreciate God's will.

One important theologian we can look at here is Calvin. Now, on the whole, Calvi and reason are a little difficult to decipher. Although generally quite perceivably p theology, his views often shifted throughout his lifetime. At certain points he pres powers of human reason while at others he acknowledges the natural abilities hu mysteries of the natural world. One key distinction we can initially make, nonethe the **twofold knowledge of God** (**duplex cognitio Domini**). The first kind of knowle knowledge of God as creator of the world. This forms more natural observations a and how the natural world reflects his greatness. The second kind of knowledge, redeemer of humanity. This is a much more religious [illegible]nowledge which co the lives of humanity and his saving power.

Why is this distinction import[illegible]. Well, for Calvin it forms the background for his of natural theology. He [illegible] that to some degree all human beings can come since all ca[illegible]m, [illegible]te his work in the natural world. These points of connectio **glory**, the re[illegible]s of the creator in the created object. Yet Calvin argues these s knowledge. He holds instead that whatever revelations one can arrive at through are filtered through the **principle of accommodation**. This principle is a consisten forward that God only shows himself to humanity in ways that are appropriate to since God is transcendent and infinite while human beings are finite. This means t the sparks of glory becomes a **mirror** of God, it only reflects an imperfect or acco and being. Human beings can certainly develop ideas about God from this reflecti or omnipotence, but all these ideas will naturally fail to do justice to his true natu partial understanding.

Therefore, it can be seen there are a number of limitations on natural theology fo only provide partial knowledge of God as creator and even this knowledge is liabl nature of human beings. Whatever knowledge we can co[illegible] is always restricte rationality and Calvin contends that points of con[illegible]act wi[illegible]h God such as conscience individual receives God's grace. This m[illegible]s [illegible] the natural order of the world, o goodness, are not automatic p[illegible]l way[illegible] knowledge about God and must be subj revelations presented b[illegible]t[illegible]s the Bible.

However, w[illegible]ch a conclusion might seem initially extreme, Calvin does not e theology entirely. In fact, he acknowledges that general revelation is extremely i ways of observing God as creator in the natural world then there would be no wa witnessed Christ to be prompted into ideas about God. Christianity as a whole do builds off the innate sense of God individuals possess. Furthermore, natural theo once an individual understands the revelations given by Christ; it just cannot be r

grant decisive and accurate knowledge of God. If we turn back to Acts 17:16–34, C
applied. The Athenians understand God the creator through their worshipping of
knowledge was at best partial and at worst horribly misguided due to their extens
St Paul and his deliverance of Jesus' message that provided the Athenians with a

There are a lot of unanswered questions in Calvin's theology. For one, it still relies
the Fall and many modern critics question whether human reason is subject to th
supposed by Calvin. This has resulted in somewhat of a split in theologians drawin
example, Emil Brunner argues that the sparks of glory presented by Calvin do prov
between human beings and God, even although human beings are materially
important innate sense of the divine that manifests itself in forms such as conscie
Barth leans more in Calvin's view of the Fall and contends instead that human n
the Fall, such that there are no formal or natural ways human beings can come to
God's freely given grace that allows a connection with God.

Nevertheless, if we suppose that there are at least some reliable ways human bei
God through general revelation, what conclusions can we arrive at? This will be th
study of natural theology.

Order, Creation and Design

The idea that human beings can discover God in the order or design of the world i
one unique to Christianity, although theologians have fleshed out its implications
extensively over the last 2,000 years. Although Calvin and others have drawn doul
over the *reliability* of human rational capacities, there is an extensive body of bot
philosophical and theological literature that discusses what can be known of God
through his creation. Some of this you will study in the Philosophy of Religion mod
look at the process of extrapolating attributes and characteristics of God from the
can examine the scriptural basis for such a process and examine whether there is
between natural and revealed theology we have not yet explored.

There are many different arguments which draw upon the order of the natural worl
mentioned above. One classic example is the argument from design, which argues th
complexity of the world demands that the world must have a designer; the world si
chance. Moreover, many thinkers have claimed that it is possible to infer the nature
properties in the world. For instance, its complexity and scale require a designer of
order and goodness indicate a designer of benevolence. Altogether, proponents of
have held it is possible to infer the God of classical monotheism from certain featur

This idea is supported in particular by Romans 1:19–20. Here St Paul states that G
eternal power 'has been understood and seen through things he has made', such
for any individual there is no good excuse for acting immorally out of ignorance. T
seems to support the idea that the attributes and characteristics of God are obser
within the order or design of nature. If this is the case, then it may cast doubt on t
validity of Calvin's arguments. If scripture, the very thing which Calvin argues shou
priority over general revelation, calls for human beings to use natural theology, th
may be that his strong views on the corruption or defectiveness of reason may be
duty for human beings to use their intellectual capabilities when discussing or debati

There is perhaps another important implication if we take Romans 1:19–20 to be
no distinct separation between general and special revelation. If God intended human b
and revealed theology to arrive at an understanding of his being then both are val
only reason to suppose there is a split between the two approaches is if either the
forms of knowledge about God or one approach is naturally defective. In the form
whether it is right to differentiate between God the creator and God the redeeme
while in the latter case, we can question whether the Fall really rendered human
when attempting to arrive at knowledge of God.

Nevertheless, one difficulty arguments from natural theology face is that they are theists and atheists alike. In the case of the design argument, critics often point out characteristics out in nature are far from transparent and potentially don't exist at although nature might be perceived as ordered and purposeful, theories such as e alternative view that it is chaotic and purposeless. Similarly, while to some the nat and good, to others it might be brutal and full of evil. In either case, the design arg meaningful knowledge about God and so doubt is cast over whether a natural the at all. It may be that Calvin is right and special revelation should prioritised over it

However, revealed theology also faces its own set of issues that cannot be ignored this approach we shall turn to in the next section.

Discussion Activity:
Do human beings have an innate religious or spiritual sense? Or are there reason be another phenomenon or feeling misinterpreted by theists?

John Macquarrie and Dialectical Theism

Macquarrie presents in his works a defence of natural theology, beginning with t theologians have been guilty of painting God as 'just another object in the world monarchical depiction of God as creator has often been assumed, rather than a picture of God developed within natural theology. As such, Macquarrie argues th discarded, it is possible to see how natural and revealed theology intersect.

His main proposal is that God effectively lies in a **dialectic** (discourse) between t attributes. A classic example of this is **being** and **nothing**. In this case Macquarrie of God is better revealed when one analyses the idea of God within the context can be noted that the existence of God is not like that of a conventional object, i basic terms we use to talk about the being of things. Yet God is not just nothing beings. Therefore, the existence of God is contained within a tension between thes

Importantly, the same is true for the knowability and unknowability of God. In th can know God by his recognisable presence throughout the entirety of creation. way beyond comprehension, not reducible down to a set of properties or charac For Macquarrie, understanding dialectics such as these allows one to form an ide insights from natural theology while drawing upon the inspiration that revealed take God's transcendence to be an indication of his separation from human bein analyse how humanity's rational capacities can come to understand his nature th God can be understood within and outside of the world.

Macquarrie's approach is quite complex at times, but the key idea is that the wa the kind of theology we think is appropriate. If God is seen as an immanent part theology seems appropriate, but if God is viewed as a being far beyond human c theology seems redundant. But what Macquarrie contends is that God is a being respect of these competing conceptual ideas of his being, and this process requi theology to make sense of him. There is no competition between the two or a

Revealed Theology

Revealed theology is the study of God through means of special revelation, which, we defined before, refers to cases where God has deliberately chosen to reveal himself to humanity. Special revelation can come in many forms and it is not alwa clear what counts as a case of special revelation versus general revelation. Typical forms such as prophets, visions, scripture or prayer are held up as examples of special revelation, but, equally, others have questione[illegible]er the Bible is an example of special revelation considering it is [illegible]written [illegible]human authors and is no necessarily the literal word of God.

The broad distinction be[illegible]ealed and natural theology was mainly formed issues about [illegible]or [illegible]of human nature at the moment of the Fall were at th On the one [illegible]he Catholic Church upheld the importance of human reason an tradition. On the other hand, the Reformist movement viewed many traditional C argued that greater priority had to be given to revealed theology, as exemplified i extent still exists today. You might note that more evangelical Protestant moveme special revelation for guidance, whereas many modern liberal Christian denomina and revealed theology.

Nevertheless, it is rare to find Christian believers who do not emphasise the impo free gift of God's grace through Jesus Christ, among other means, is held up as the special revelation for Christians and is generally viewed as the foundation of the f leads to some issues. Compared to general revelation, special revelation may only people and to varying degrees. For example, only some people will have religious lifetime, while others might simply rest their faith on readings of scripture. This ha **immediate** and **mediate** revelation. The former is where God has revealed himsel instance, through visions – whereas the latter is where pe[illegible]gain revealed know through the Bible or hearing the words of prophet[illegible]

But could religion rest on revealed th[illegible]logy [illegible]one? This is a difficult question to a pointed out, to hold revealed [illegible]olog[illegible]as of primary importance is to grant any of the information we [illegible]our senses or rational capacities. This means one m belief in th[illegible]is [illegible]ccount of creation, even if it disagrees with the knowledge Such a posit[illegible]often called **fideism**, the idea that belief in the existence of God alone. A very strong commitment to revealed theology is often aligned with this p various issues with believing that faith itself is wholly sufficient for belief.

Nevertheless, as we examined in the section on natural theology, there are thinke argued for the primacy of revealed theology. Here there is a strong interpretation capacities have been so readily damaged by the Fall it is simply folly to prioritise n theology. For such theists, it is only the freely given grace of God, revealed at mo can give true knowledge of his being and nature. Calvin, for example, states in his now experiences God either as Father or as Author of salvation, or favourable in a mediator comes forward to reconcile him to us'. It this position we will probe thro

Faith and Grace

Why is faith so central to special revelati[illegible]ll, part of the answer lies at least i the truths of special revelation [illegible]ems[illegible]es. In the last section, we noted how Calv argued that natural the[illegible]ld give no truth or knowledge about God the redeemer. [illegible]w[illegible]special revelation offers in terms of knowledge and how t knowledge [illegible]about is often opposed to what appears rational. Beliefs and id regarding salvation or moral teachings are arguably not self-evident, and a volunt assent to these ideas requires moving beyond evidential certainty and into the realms of faith. Moreover, for figures such as Calvin, faith necessarily has to be understood through Christ. It is when human beings voluntarily accept salvation

through Christ and cultivate faith in their lives that they become assured of his gu
amount of rational reflection as such can lead one to understand Christ as the red

Yet putting faith on a pedestal here is a controversial proposition. Many theologia
typically held that reason and faith are reconcilable. While there are some elemer
require faith, they do not have to rest on faith alone and can be reasonable on ph
example, Thomas Aquinas famously distinguishes faith from **scientia**, the matters
everyday experience of the outside world. What Aqui[illegible]ains is that these matt
world are not in conflict with Christian belief[illegible] God as creator not only can be obs
granted human beings rational capacities so they could learn particular truths abo
reflection. This means that [illegible]th revealed by sources of special revelation ma
reason, not refuted [illegible]e, it is not clear on further examination whether it is
reason whe[illegible]me to knowledge of God.

However, proponents of revealed theology may point to a further issue in this deb
God's **grace** in special revelation, for while God might be able to be partially unde
the natural world if it bears signs of his creation, special revelation involves the fr
to human beings. For those who favour revealed theology, this is a clear sign of its
considered in light of the **Trinity**. Most Christians hold that special revelation has
mutual work between God and the **Holy Spirit**, which allows God to be immanent
ways human beings can understand. For example, the Catechism of the Catholic C
comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God' (687) and identifies th
which the scriptures and saints were inspired. Therefore, regardless of the knowle
the role of the Holy Spirit in transmitting knowledge of God cannot be overlooked

Nevertheless, it can still be questioned whether grace necessarily has to be under
Many Christians hold that the Holy Spirit is present at all times and works through
Catechism of the Catholic Church also states that 'God fa[illegible]ed man with his ow
Holy Spirit] and impressed his own form on the fl[illegible]e and fashioned, in such a v
might bear the divine form' (704). This implies that the natural capacities of huma
the power of the Holy Spirit, and natural knowledge may be the result of God's gr
knowledge.

Scripture, Church and Revelation

One significant aspect to special revelation you might have already picked up on i
previous parts is the role of scripture. Within revealed theology, the Bible is not ju
historical document but a witness to God's actions in the world. It reveals his actio
the person of Christ as well as the wisdom of other prophets and writers inspired
visions or experiences of God. This means that not only does scripture potentially
reveal knowledge beyond that of reason and observation but also that it is the pri
source by which the key teachings of Christianity are revealed. Therefore, much re
on how the Bible is a unique case of special revelation, and one's interpretative
approach influences the position it holds in respect to other forms of revelation ar

This is a topic that will be covered in more depth in 3A: Christian Moral Principles,
whether a literal interpretation of the Bible is appropriate, whether human beir
evaluate its teachings in light of present-day knowledge or those favouring revealed
the former. Martin Luther famously argued for **sola scriptura**, contending that the
of knowledge about God. He even claimed that 'a simple layman armed with Scrip
mightiest pope without it', which emphasises the priority he gave to revealed the
of special revelation.

On the other hand, other Christians argue the Bible naturally has to be interprete
inaccuracies. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, for example, warns against Ch
reading of the Bible, arguing that reducing the source of theology down to just the
wealth of wisdom from figures inspired by God throughout history and restricting
teachings in light of modern ethical and philosophical issues. Such a position there

importance of natural theology in examining the Bible and accordingly grants othe
greater level of significance. Under this view, while the Bible is still a vitally import
prophets, it was written by authors bound to a particular time and place and so re
extent of its message.

If this position is upheld, it grants the Church a significant level of importance, not
theology but revealed theology also. It is the position of the Catholic Church that t
manifest itself in the life of the Church and its followers, such that during worship
to human beings. This often marks out a key difference between the Catholic Chu
Churches. The former believes that the Church, the traditions it upholds and scrip
the grace of God making its followers, whereas traditionally, under reformist princ
that the Bible is the only true reflection of the Word of God. While most Protestan
significantly with this position, it is useful to contrast the two approaches. For spe
encompass scripture but the continuing life and work of the Church and its adhere

Jesus Christ and Revelation

There is one final important aspect of special revelation to cover and that is the ro
Son is one of the most, if not the most, significant examples of special revelation.
Earth, he represents the most direct contact with God throughout human history
God has freely chosen to reveal himself to humanity as a whole. Therefore, for ma
revelation necessarily requires talk of Christ as the mediator by which God choose
himself. For it is by the Son and through the Holy Spirit that God communicates w

For example, Calvin argues that throughout the incarnation, Jesus Christ was God.
understand is that Christ is also not a full revelation of God's being. Whatever is sh
necessarily follows the **principle of accommodation**, meaning God has to appear i
can understand. Therefore, God appears in human form and talks to people throu
them to partially discover knowledge about God the Redeemer, even if certain asp
are not able to be revealed. More specifically, Calvin argues that when human bei
Christ, they receive a **double grace**. The first grace is that of **justification**, where o
eyes of God through recognising him as the Father and not simply as a judge of hu
grace is that of **sanctification**, whereby human beings open themselves up and be
goodness in their lives according to the will of God.

Why is this double grace important? Well, it signifies that revealed knowledge of G
God to human beings regardless of their actions. It is freely given to those who are
true recognition of Jesus Christ as the mediator of salvation. Simply put, one could
redeemer without recognising Christ also. Therefore, salvation is exclusively open
possible to receive God's grace outside of the Christian faith.

Throughout history, most Christian denominations have maintained this role for C
However, as we noted in the last part, there are potentially ambiguities in how to
given by revealed theology. Like scripture, there is debate as to whether the figur
history requires consistent reflection. Whereas Calvin and other reformers tended
special revelation was given through the coming of Christ and his testimony, the C
the responsibility of Christians to engage with and analyse this revelation through
similar to the role of scripture in special revelation, Catholic teaching holds that th
in this process. For example, the Magisterium of the Catholic Church states that whi
completed in Christ, 'it has not yet been completely explicit'. This supports the idea of
being the 'body of Christ' responsible for continuing the ministry of Christ into the
worship and teaching. Therefore, it is important to note that, similar to scripture,
perspectives on how Jesus Christ fits into revealed theology and the knowledge it

Alvin Plantinga and Reformed Epistemology

One standard philosophical argument levelled against revealed theology is that i
for prioritising matters of faith over reason in comparison to natural theology. H
religion Alvin Plantinga contrarily argues that natural theology itself cannot give
belief in God when one can always doubt the veracity of the senses or reason. F
theology cannot by itself accommodate Christian id as such as grace, it cannot j
religious teaching!

Therefore, under what is often termed **reformed epistemology**, Plantinga puts f
attempts to justify theology on its own terms. He develops Calvin's idea
notion that is a general religious sense among human beings, to contend t
properly **basic** knowledge refers to the kind of statements or propositions
sensibly doubted. For example, our ordinary perceptions of the outside are gene
we do not regularly doubt them unless there is good reason. Plantinga argues th
fundamental knowledge of God's existence. However, this is only true for the Ch
damage to the religious sense from the Fall means that without accepting the po
Christ, basic knowledge of God cannot be held or appreciated.

This is quite a controversial claim. In essence it states that the religious person is
that the atheist cannot possess, and one common criticism is that this idea of 'ba
applied to any strongly held, inaccessible beliefs. For example, Satanists could ar
Devil is properly basic and only by accepting the Devil into one's life can it be rev
criticised by various religious denominations. The Catholic Church sees such idea
argues that reason and other sources of authority are essential in moderating ar
God that human beings hold.

Is Faith a Sufficient Reason for Belief in the Existence of God?

Throughout this section we have looked at both natural and revealed theology, exa
might lead to knowledge about God and the pitfalls of each. However, a key philo
during this section is to what extent do humans possess or rely on the ability to obse
If one is a strong advocate for revealed theology, it might be tempting to suggest
fundamentally cannot rely on their senses or reason. Both are corrupted by the Fa
fallible beliefs should not take precedence over the knowledge that God has freely
humanity through his grace. On the other hand, it can also be suggested that thes
observation have led to a vast array of knowledge not directly granted by God, an
beings in his image, he also gave them the natural capacities to arrive at knowledg
positions have their merits and both to a degree are supported by biblical evidenc

So choosing one is not necessarily a case of weighing up the philosophical advanta
Christians now simply support a mix of both natural and revealed theology, using
balanced and accurate conception of God that still draws on faith as a necessary i
grace. Yet, at the same time, there is something arguably decisive about special re
towards a belief in God purely dependent on faith. Whatever your choice, it is nec
what philosophical weaknesses there are with both natural and revealed theology
worship and come to belief in God in their everyday lives. For an outside or secula
reflective of how belief and faith are viewed from within.

Activity:
Do you believe natural theology or revealed theology is a better way of acquiring
exercise, take the other side and write down three ways in which you would crit

Quick Quiz

1. What is the difference between natural theology and revealed theology?
2. What is the sensus divinitatis?
3. Name two ways that a person might arrive at knowledge of God through nat
4. What is the principle of accommodation?
5. What is believed to have damaged the human ability to discover God using o
6. What is the difference between mediate revelation and immediate revelatio
7. What is the theological position which says that belief in God can be justifie

2B: The Person of Jesus C

What you will learn in this section:

Christian teachings and ideas regarding the person of Jesus Christ, including:

- Jesus as the Son of God, with reference to his miracl surrection and self-
- Jesus as a teacher of wisdom, with reference s moral stances on repenta motivation.
- Jesus as a liberator and wha er i le is best understood in a political or
- Whether any of the e are more important than the others and their ran

Starter Ac

Read the Sermon on the Mount (excerpt Matthew 5:17–48) and the Sermon on
What differences do you note in their comparative presentations of Jesus? Note
as you progress throughout this section.

Introduction – The Difference Faces of Jesus

Jesus is an inordinately iconic figure across the religious world. However, in the m
spirituality, it is easy to forget that Jesus was a historical figure, whose life as a hu
Gospels by a number of different authors. In this respect, the study of Jesus is not
debate, but of historical enquiry. In fact, the last century in particular has seen a w
the **historical Jesus**, as many different thinkers attempt to get to the bottom of n
the meaning of his words and actions in the cultural milieu of first-century Judea.

This does not mean that the historical Jesus is a separ gu e from the divine Je
shall see in the first part of this section, there are vari s titles used for Jesus to si
relationship with God, and any histo ac nt of the life of Jesus has to bear in
expressed. What is potentiall of ical importance is the various other faces o
of him. There is Jesus s th **eacher of wisdom**, who imparted important moral a
followers. F m re radical still, there is also Jesus as a **liberator**, who offered
way to escap r spiritual and political bondage under the Roman occupation a
of these particular aspects to Jesus' identity are more important than others is up
know about Jesus is contained within the New Testament, and there are few othe
person. Therefore, any number of competing arguments can be formed as to his t
will study in the upcoming parts of this section.

Discussion Activity:

How have you traditionally viewed Jesus as represented in the Bible? Discuss yo
pairs or small groups and see where you might have an incomplete or misleadin
in the Gospels.

Jesus as Son of God

Jesus as the Son of God is perhaps the most endu ng e he has occupied throug
It is generally regarded as one of the mo t rtant titles given to Jesus through
affirmation of the intimate and a ter i ly unique relationship between Jesus and
a confirmation of his di i t al his authority over all aspects of human life. Yet i
of the most ste ies in the Gospels for it occupies a far-from-simple place
Jesus himse rred to call himself the Son of Man. As such, in the early Christi
the Father (abba) and his relation to Christ as Son were the subject of an uncount
debates, with many positions eventually being branded heretical. It is now genera
unique, co-substantial, divine Son of God that has emerged triumphant in moder

Part of the difficulty with assessing the title lies in the Gospels themselves. Althou directly refers to himself as the Son of God, especially in the Synoptic Gospels, the Jesus and God is regularly stressed. Now this could mean a number of things, and suggestions throughout history that Jesus is just a messenger or was infused with baptism, but the divine power Jesus wielded, along with his direct communicatio evidentially support the idea that Jesus himself was altogether divine, even if he throughout his lifetime. It is worth giving an overview of t before we progress about the nature of Jesus and the kind of self-kno e possessed.

The Gospels and Jesus' Divinity

Giving an ov w ine aspect of Jesus' life from the Gospels is a very tri Gospels the s are dedicated to revealing this part of his life! So, to a certain actions and ds are intended to establish his special relationship with God. For moments such as Jesus' baptism and Transfiguration, God calls down from the he son. In other passages, such as the 'I am' sayings in the Gospel of John, Jesus is se aspects of his personality. The same is true of other characters, such as the centu witnessing the death of Jesus and the tearing of the temple curtain, exclaims 'Tru altogether, witnesses to the divinity of Jesus are very common throughout the Go particular reflects key moments where this divinity is asserted.

Nevertheless, there is a variety of other sources of evidence for the divine nature are the miracle accounts, where the power Jesus wields over nature is presented example is Mark 6:47–52, where Jesus walks on water and calms the winds, recall in Genesis. Other instances include the various healings Jesus performs as well as the Gospel of John. Such powers were generally thought an authority to be only p Jewish tradition, and so these various miracles were thought to verify Jesus' relati However, perhaps the most important miracle is the resurrection. For many Chris of the divine nature of Jesus, and it will be examined in more detail later in this se

Jesus' Humanity and Divinity

One key qu hat emerges when examining Jesus' divinity is how this aspect with his more human elements. At various points in the Gospels, Jesus' humanity suffering on the cross, or through moments in which he feels tired or emotional. such human aspects to his personality seem out of place. Would a divine being fe fundamentally a tension behind Jesus' divine and human aspects that is still discu of what is known as **Christology**, the study of the relationship between Jesus and gatherings such as the Council of Nicaea in 325 asserted the full divinity of Jesus, earthly life of Jesus is still a controversial issue.

Importantly, how Christological questions are answered often depends on the ap Some represent what is often called **Christology from above**, which focuses on th significance for humanity when examining scripture. Conversely, **Christology fro** Jesus first, drawing out his teachings and messages before questions of divini way of deciding which approach is more suitable f theologians. On the on nature of Jesus can easily lead to misrepres tic of the earthly, human aspect on his human nature can obscure the theological ramifications of his perso

What is key th reconciling how Jesus viewed himself and God in the of his divini while it is clear in scripture that Jesus did enjoy privileged acces it is less tran ent whether Jesus saw himself as divine. This has become known **knowledge** and will be the focus of the next part of this section.

Jesus' Knowledge and Wisdom

If Jesus was truly the Son of God, it is a fair question to ask to what extent he was aware of his divinity. A divine being would surely be thought to be omniscient and knowledgeable about their own divinity, yet the Gospels paint a less-than-clear pi of Jesus' self-awareness. For example, in Mark 5:30, Jesus is seemingly ignorant of touched his cloak in order to receive healing, but this ignor[illegible]e would be strange divine being. It seems here either that Jesus is pret[illegible]o be ignorant or that su by Jesus' divine knowledge. Conversely, in Jo[illegible]9.[illegible]1, where Jesus heals a blind an example of Jesus possessing a f[illegible]nderstanding of his divine nature, with the restore the blind man's p[illegible]t but to allow him to witness the true divinity there are key theol[illegible]uestions about how Jesus' divine and human natures co self-knowle[illegible]out the dimensions of his own divinity.

There have been many solutions to this issue proposed throughout history. Medie the divine knowledge Jesus held was simply different from his human knowledge. simply not a case where divine knowledge is pertinent as it concerns material circ such as the 'I am' sayings in John, Jesus is referring to an aspect of himself that do knowledge. However, this risks being a little arbitrary since anything could be clas knowledge if one desired. The issue is not discerning what Jesus should know at a understanding how Jesus' divine self-knowledge should be framed considering his

Karl Rahner, the Catholic theologian, gives a more nuanced solution to this issue. He being possessed consciousness in such a way that his awareness of his divinity was l This means that whatever self-knowledge Jesus had of his divinity, it was not overt a will. Instead, it was a deeper recognition of God's power working through him in sul We can contrast Rahner's account here well with ordinary human experience. Throu often have an understanding of things they cannot immediately recall or summon. T language or distant memories about a historical event. In a similar fashion, Jesus po but deeper within his psyche, meaning it was not always available at certain momer

Rahner's sc[illegible]is [illegible]nt but we can still question why Jesus' divinity was mani make more [illegible]or it to be overt and able to be accessed at any point? One resp then Jesus' humanity would be non-existent. In order for his divine and human na both have to be fully present. This was also the problem with early formulations o Church, which sometimes pictured Jesus as a wholly divine, omniscient being, reg his human persona in the Gospels. What is key, therefore, in talking about Jesus' k not to simply develop theological responses to specific instances in the Gospels bu that explains the radical way that human and divine natures interacted in his pers

Miracles

In investigating Jesus as Son of God, we can also delve a little more deeply into the miracles and how they exemplify Jesus' divinity, for while it is undeniable that the miracle accounts in the Gospels play an important role in understanding the divini Jesus and his relationship to God, they also have deeper meanings that it is useful appreciate. For instance, many biblical scholars emphasise the highly symbolic nat of many of Jesus' miracles. The healings in particular recall the prophecies of the M reinforce the idea that Jesus' unique relationship with God as the culminatio scholars, such as N[illegible], identify the healing miracles as exemplifying Jesus' p the socially [illegible]t with God, thereby symbolising the authority he possesses to b disparate fig[illegible]s into a new spiritual community. What the miracles therefore pot the divine power Jesus possesses but the nature of his relationship with God and t how Jesus encourages humanity to act.

However, it is also possible to question the authenticity of the miracle accounts. T highly symbolic nature of the miracles in the Gospels potentially suggests there is authorial editing involved in order to fit Jesus' actions into older prophecies and e At least at first glance, it is difficult to tell what the genuine intention behind a mi act was and what the Gospel authors interpreted it to be. As such, it may be a ste far to suggest miracles uphold a unique relationship between Jesus and God.

In fact, in many modern liberal forms of Christianity, the literal significance of mar the miracle accounts has been downplayed in favour of analysing them in relation Jesus' moral teachings. This is in part due to secular criticism. David Hume famous argued that it is always more reasonable to believe that a report or testimony is w than to believe that the laws of nature has been broken. However, it is also due to further miracles in the Gospels. It is important to note that there is no fixed word for 'mir actions are generally referred to as 'mighty works' or 'signs', and they are often co misleading 'wonders' performed by false prophets of the time. In an important se performed to show the divine power or strength Jesus possesses but rather to op God invested in their moral and spiritual lives. If this is the case, the idea that mir is potentially less important than the teachings they impart.

The Resurrection

Although, as a whole, it is possible to interpret Jesus' miracles as teachings rather event stands apart in this respect. While much doubt has been cast upon miracles nature, most Christians hold that at least the final event of the Gospels, the resurr number of reasons. The first is that the resurrection of Jesus is seen as central to t relationship with God; it is the most groundbreaking and miraculous affirmation o ministry and the beginning of a **new covenant** between human beings and God. T resurrection is perhaps the one truly unique event within the Christian faith. Many where their spiritual leaders healed individuals or wielded power over nature, but Christianity possesses a number of distinctions not present in other major religion

This notion is supported by scripture. In 1 Corinthians 15:13–15 St Paul states that dead, all his preaching and life would be in vain. It is the resurrection that guarantee Jesus' ministry and backs up the claims throughout that Jesus is divine and/or has Yet the uniqueness of the resurrection does not necessarily preclude a single inter some theologians, such as Wolfhart Pannenberg, claim the resurrection is the dec 'visibly and unambiguously' revealed to God, they maintain that Jesus is still just fl infused with divine power for the purposes of appearing once more before the dis there might be good reasons to view the resurrection as evidence for Jesus as Son his innate divinity.

Was Jesus' Relationship with God Uniq

Throughout this section we've looked at various aspects of the Gospels which can divinity. Yet, at each juncture, we've also noted ways in which doubt might be cas of God title. For all the various miraculous events contained in the Gospels, there of Jesus' identity. These range from qualms about how the human and divine aspe to criticising miracles themselves as problematic of divinity, especially in light of m such, it may be that although a literal reading of the Bible supports a divine accou vital part of the Gospel narratives, other aspects may prove more important if one perspective is various stories and teachings.

In fact, the issues surrounding the nature of Jesus' divinity are far from modern. T early Christian Church, various different parties around the ancient world debated relationship was to God. For example, in AD 325 the First Council of Nicaea was br the Arian controversy, a conflict over the remarks made by a priest, Arius, who ha

Father begat the Son, he must have created him. This suggests that Christ was no
himself but instead a lesser divine or human person who had a beginning. At the C
heretical and the Nicene Creed, a document formed by the members of the counc
orthodox view that the Father and the Son are of the same substance (homoousic

A similar controversy led to the formation of the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. Th
bishop Nestorius, who had argued that there were two separate natures in Christ, t
together in one will. However, another bishop, Cyril of Alexandria, criticised this pro
was adopted by God rather than being conceived. This led to Nestorianism being co
proposal put forth that Christ possessed both a truly divine and a truly human natu

Yet, as you may have noticed in these conflicts, simply declaring one position to
doesn't really solve the underlying philosophical issues. As such, debate has conti
whether Jesus had what can be called a **unique** relationship with God, or simply a
argue for the unique side, Jesus had a relationship with God that no other human
being the privileged sole messenger of God or simply being God himself. There are
position, however. One is that calling Jesus the unique messenger of God denies t
religions may have of God. It places Jesus at the centre of all religious thought, a p
hold up unless one places absolute faith in his message. The second is that a claim
While the Gospels suggest that Jesus was divine, this does not preclude the existe
divinely inspired individuals. Furthermore, it suggests that the connection Jesus ha
cannot be replicated, rather than a future union which all human beings can aspir

John Macquarrie nonetheless presents quite a distinctive argument for a unique r
God. He argues that any claim of uniqueness is justified not just when looking at t
Gospels, but when looking at the entirety of Jesus' life, influence and place in hist
Therefore, taking small moments of his life such as the resurrection to justify a un
but not so when one notes the defining moment for Christianity as a whole that the
Therefore, for Macquarrie, Jesus is not simply another prophet. The revelations G
their own unique trajectory through human time and space that has not been rep
throughout history. His continuing impact in the present day is a continuation of t
testament to the unique relationship Jesus had with God.

Although Macquarrie's argument is forceful here, it is also a little high-minded. If
it is bound to be unique due to the vast number of contingent facts about their lif
relationship to God could be argued to be unique, and, while this doesn't invalida
perhaps does render them less meaningful than initially supposed. A more ground
from E P Sanders, who simply puts forward that it is impossible to know whether
God is unique simply from analysing the historical evidence in the Gospels. In fact,
'unique' relationship is a matter of faith rather than a reasonable argument. Takin
the Gospels, the various miracles and mighty events of Jesus' life make him a pers
nothing more.

Sanders' argument here displays a clear priority of a **Christology from below** appr
which emphasises **Christology from above**. As we noted at the beginning of this s
Jesus' identity potentially greatly influence how his divinity is depicted and so it is
evaluating a title such as Son of God. There are myriad interpretations which lean
Jesus' life to be more important than the others. However, in the next part we wil
element of Jesus' ministry which perhaps emphasises the importance of his huma
of wisdom.

Gerard O'Collins and Jesus' Self-knowledge

O'Collins deeply analyses the issues around the nature or kind of self-knowledge that it is impossible to give a satisfactory answer to the questions they pose. The forward. The first is noting the natural difficulty in investigating any person's inn gleaned from outwards words and actions, it is hard to know even while a perso consist of. The second reason is that in the case of Jesus there is no written test left after his death. All we have to go on is second-hand accounts of his ministry, time after it had ended.

Therefore, O'Collins argues that questions about self-knowledge don't really hav analysis of consciousness would have to not only have a more detailed un workings of the mind than available today but also significantly more sources ab nature of consciousness is different from that of straightforward knowledge, an aware of himself as divine or divinely inspired then it would be an awareness tha pattern of thought we can easily identify in other human beings.

Nevertheless, O'Collins does state that it is possible to determine at least a basic contends it is clear that Jesus, in knowing he had a special or unique relationship salvation, would have had some natural intuition about his divinity. It is deeply u to undertake his ministry without it. Therefore, Jesus' self-knowledge might not awareness of a divine presence within himself but it would have at least held an of the relationship between himself and God.

Jesus as Teacher of Wisdom

In the theological frenzy that comes with discussing the nature of Jesus' divinity a role Jesus has as a teacher of wisdom can get lost along the way. In fact, even a cu reveals many figures who are reckoned as great simply due to the timeless knowle brought into public discussion. Such a line of thinking can also lead to a much Perhaps the key to understanding his life doesn't lie in identifying some unique or the impact Jesus' teachings had upon individuals' moral and spiritual lives. If Jesus wer or found himself in a position to impart knowledge of God, then this surely is the the most?

Throughout scripture, this role certainly isn't played down. The bulk of the Gospel recounting the various universal spiritual and moral truths Jesus taught in the forr sayings. Often he is referred to by followers as a 'Rabbi', a term generally applied and respected, signifying that above all Jesus was a figure of wisdom. However, th numerous different interpretations, for while liberal Christians might view Jesus' t regardless of the nature of his person, many more orthodox Christians would reck such importance is because Jesus is divine. There is a continual risk that examining teacher *once again becomes another debate* about his divinity. However, through apart a number of key teachings proposed by Jesus and examine how they can be questions about his relationship with God.

Repentance and Forgiveness

The Gospels, as per their name, present the 'good news' to those who are reading the coming of the Messiah and the possibility of salvation for all those who hear h message. Y[illegible]important to identify what the core of this message is, and, for m theologians, **repentance** is the fundamental means by which human beings come adopted within the Christian faith. A central part of Jesus' message throughout his ministry is that human beings are not the ultimate judges of each other's lives. Th only belonging to God. Therefore, it is the duty of all human beings to help those whatever vices or bad actions they had in the past and concentrating on living the

This has some important ramifications. The first is that there is no particular spirit Jesus' message in the Gospels. All human beings are capable of repenting and cha theme is that Jesus' followers were not just the rich or educated. His message rea typically marginalised in society at the time, such as sinners, tax collectors or the s automatic purity, cleanliness or virtuous living but on a willingness to change in th

Yet this also requires a parallel duty from human beings, and that is the **forgivene** can repent, it is necessary for them to forgive the sins and transgressions committed a grudges against those they perceive to have wronged them. These dual duties of r mirror the goodness of God as judge, in that individuals display forgiving attitudes in th too will be forgiven by God. This idea can be seen in Luke 15:11–32, the parable o brother. This details a situation where there are two sons, one who is hard-workin is lazy and eventually becomes destitute. While the hard-working one thrives, the poverty and has to come back to his father for help. His father, on seeing his son r back and forgives his past actions, much to the chagrin of his harder-working brot

The main thrust of this parable is detailing the radical nature of Jesus' teachings o given in the parable, one's instincts might be to typically reject the lazy, destitute deserves. However, the father exemplifies the forgiving attitude required of Christ instincts, is simply happy the destitute brother has returned and can be in their liv note that the parable makes clear the difficult psychological requirements of Jesus son's brother, who has lived his life well, is resentful of the treatment of his prodi that the parable is meant to present a moral truth that is somewhat hard to stom **metanoia** (repentance) and forgiveness of sins are hard, complex processes that r all stages.

Reversal and the New Covenant

The presentation of the quite radical teachings of repentance and forgiveness in t last part gives pause for thought about the nature of Jesus' message. Most notabl we can ask whether Jesus envisioned himself creating a new religious system of thought or whether he saw himself as a continuation or amendment of previous Jewish teaching. This question we won't look at in too much detail but that is essential in understanding Jesus' role as a teacher, as well as his potential role as a liberator, which we study later in this section.

Throughout the Gospels, the idea of **reversal** is a consistent theme. Reversal here expectation and is used in a variety of ways. In Luke, for example, reversal is ofte sense, where the poorest and most marginalised face riches in heaven while thos punishment in hell. However, reversal can also apply to Jesus' moral teachings. Th extent Jesus sought to overturn Jewish tradition versus simply reforming it in light important as it reflects the kind of teacher Jesus envisioned himself as. Was he a r messenger of wisdom that had been lost throughout history?

Part of the Gospels seems to emphasise the former. A key passage we can examin extract from the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus, having given the Beatitudes, Jewish law. Now the scene for this teaching is already a major point of interest. Prior to ascends a mountain, recalling how Moses in Exodus ascended up Mount Sinai. Thi moral prophet in the same vein, especially as, throughout the passages, he pre Commandments, only to elaborate on and overturn many of people's thoughts or One important example is his rejection of a common view of justice at the time: 'an e tooth'. The Gospels see this kind of moral thinking as commonplace, and so Je principle is misleading has radical connotations. When Jesus argues individuals sh are hit, it illustrates his later teaching that all human beings should 'love your ene persecute you'.

However, despite this overturning of preconceptions, there is equal reason to sus to subvert Old Testament teaching here. There is a key ambiguity where Jesus sta

have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fu
fulfilment is not entirely clear but a reasonable interpretation may be that Jesus v
summation of God's will, as partially realised in the teachings of other prophets th
case, then the idea of reversal is more muted, referring to simply the expectations
Jewish law itself. Nevertheless, what is important is understanding that the teachi
way of thinking for Christians but also part of a **new covenant**. 'Covenant' here m
where the life and death of Jesus give way to a new relationship between human
certain rules, including the moral teachings presented by Jesus throughout his mi

Motivation and Purity

One of the typical criticisms presented against religious ethics is that the end of
acting well is not to be to help others but to secure salvation. To some extent
this is fair when discussing how religion is practised, but in the Gospels Jesus takes
care throughout his ministry to discuss how his teachings should be implemented.
One important aspect of this discussion is the kinds of motivation people should
possess when acting well. Jesus is often disparaging about those he identifies as
hypocritical, and one of the most common targets of his disdain were the Pharisee
and religious authorities, who he accused of an obsession with observing religious
customs and a failure to act from a place of moral goodness and purity. Therefore
the criticisms Jesus presents of preconceived moral attitudes in the Gospels do no
extend simply to outward behaviour but the very inner lives of those seeking to ob
God's will. If a person acts well just for the expectation of reward, they are not tru
acting out of the right motivations.

This idea plays an important part throughout the various sermons Jesus gives. For
Mount, in Matthew 5:48, Jesus commands that all who hear 'be perfect, therefore
perfect'. The implication of this is that one should be good for the sake of being go
favour. Thus, one's motivations should always be in line with one's actions. Religio
obedience but is about the right kind of intentions someone should hold in their h
principle concerns **purity**. The Gospel portrays the Pharisees and religious leaders
to the extent where they refuse to mix with the poor and marginalised for fear of co
is a wholly misguiding conception of purity. What matters most is that one's inten
outward appearance or actions. Therefore, individuals who simply act to maintain
religious laws are missing the point of those laws entirely, and that is to reflect a c
naturally seeks to help others and sacrifice one's fortunes for the betterment of h

All these teachings naturally present a much more human aspect to Jesus but one
reconciled with his divinity. Nonetheless, more liberal Christians on the whole pric
more divine roles, for the argument can be made when looking at Jesus' moral tea
much more important than religious devotion. If Jesus is correct in his criticism of
many of the rituals practised by Christians should take a diminished place in religi
ideas about repentance, forgiveness and purity that Jesus presents throughout his
lead to a vastly different perspective on Jesus; that of a **liberator**.

Discussion Activity:
To what extent do you think Jesus should be viewed as a moral teacher over mo
person? Does a less theological perspective help reconcile any scriptural conflict
small groups.

John Hick and Demythologisation

John Hick is a Protestant theologian who holds some quite radical ideas about h
viewed in relation to other religions. In his 1977 collection of essays, *The Myth o*
that Jesus' awareness of God is not unique and a similar relationship is seen acr
Any claim that Jesus' relationship to God is unique, he contends, is simply an ar
own religion above others, rather than a real reason. Philosophical propositio
solution instead is simply to view Jesus as one of many individuals perceiving Go
removing the idea of the incarnation from Christian belief. He holds that if one s
metaphorically, one can avoid many of the traditional theological issues present
up more productive dialogues with other religions who claim prophets with simi

The natural consequence of such a view, as Hick puts forward himself, is that Jes
to the power of his message and his engagement with the important moral and
humanity. The focus of Jesus' ministry becomes not his unique relationship with
insights he brings to human beings about their spiritual lives, insights that persis

Hick in fact applies similar thinking to much of the Gospels, engaging in a proces
This involves examining scripture from a scientific perspective, discounting the e
knowledge of the world today and instead drawing out what can be considered
are teachings). Through this myth-removing process, the idea is that not only is t
wisdom, discovered, but one gains a clearer perspective on the relevancy of Jesu
human beings.

Jesus as Liberator

What do we mean when we call someone a liberator? Typically, there are two dime
that in order for someone to be liberated they typically have to gain some freedom
While this could be a physical freedom, typically liberation refers to more generalise
or slavery. The second dimension involves the notion that the liberator has remove
constraint upon this freedom, such that those who have been liberated do not have
returning. Yet even if we take this definition as a starting point, we can still questio
was. What freedoms did he bring his followers, and what constraints did they leave

The idea of Jesus as a liberator gained a lot of traction in the 1960s, especially wit
Brandon's *Jesus and the Zealots* and the rise of liberation theology in Latin Americ
study more extensively in Year 2 but, in short, liberation theology blended theolog
that the two are inseparable and encouraging a reading of the Bible which leant m
struggles. As part of this, the traditional belief in Jesus as an other-worldly, divine,
much more human and political interpretation of his actions in defending the poo
persecution by the authorities of the time. The theory was that Jesus cannot be u
actions and words had particular political and social connotations at the time that
who was eventually killed for his radical beliefs.

However, naturally this interpretation has been resisted by orthodox elements of
they speak of liberation, it is typically in a more spiritual context, where Jesus libe
from sin and a life without God. In particular, the European Catholic Church often
the Bible as too narrow in scope for failing to accommodate the religious circu
Nevertheless, it is undeniable that, for many, the image of Jesus as a liberator is a
a figure in the everyday political and social struggles people face and is often popu
forms of Christianity are viewed to have failed to enact the material changes Jesus
Throughout the rest of this section, we will look at the various ways Jesus can be
outlining the evidence for each one.

Jesus as a Political Liberator

It is often overlooked by modern Christian thought that during Jesus' life, Jewish people lived under Roman occupation. Although the presence of Roman soldiers a figures was tolerated on the whole, many individuals still looked to the day when figure would liberate them from Roman rule and restore Jewish control of Judea. fact, the idea of a 'Messiah' at the time could not be separated from these politica expectations. While it would be important for them as a religious leader, the M would be the one to restore Israel to its former glory, and many religious thinkers coming of this liberator. One particular important group leading a resistance dur This was not a properly organised group of individuals but was a loose collection o violent resistance against Roman occupation.

As we've covered before, Jesus is regularly called Messiah throughout the Gospels have begun to question whether the use of this term carries the same political co Jewish thought at the time. Some have even occasionally portrayed Jesus as close than to a spiritual man of peace. Whether this is true or not, the coming of Jesus c the messianic expectations many Jewish people had during the first century. Altho thwarted by the catastrophic event of the Temple in Jerusalem being burnt down Mark, and potentially Matthew, were thought to be written prior to this date, and c Jesus in some way fulfilled the political ideals of his followers.

There are many ways this can be observed in the Gospels themselves. Throughout showed favourable dispositions towards the poor, sick and marginalised. This ten **preferential option for the poor** in modern theology. Yet this preference by itself Jesus as a political liberator. Many instead are forced to creatively interpret a num Gospels against the historical background we have analysed so far. One key passa the **mission statement**. Here, Jesus reads from Isaiah to the crowds gathered in th very early point in his ministry. Alongside his theological ideals, he proclaims that 'proclaim freedom for the prisoners and set the oppressed free'.

These are significant verses, and typically in orthodox Christian thought these have be to fulfilling spiritual life during his ministry. However, a more radical view is the idea bringing involves challenging the political orthodoxy of the time. In fact, the call to square with a purely theological reading of Luke, which often expresses strong the Liberation theologians as such have argued that to ignore this political dimension ignore its rightful place as a declaration of resistance to the social, religious and p

There are other passages in the Gospels which might support such a view of Jesus For example, in Matthew 10:34, Jesus declares 'I did not come to bring peace, but statement has rightly been greatly discussed throughout the history of Christian th Jesus' reputation as a person of peace. However, considering the mission stateme reason to believe that Jesus viewed political resistance as involving more than wo also come to light when one considers the nature of Jesus' trial. When Jesus rides **triumphal entry**), the nature and form of his entry allude to Zechariah's messianic scholars have pointed out the important connotations this would have for an audi expectations. Others have noted that Jesus himself was tried as King of the Jew crime against the Roman Empire, not a religious one. Although, as some theologia conspiracy by the High Priests to convict Jesus where he had committed no crime, overlooks the possibility that Jesus was in fact a figure of political and social resist

However, this last example also sets up a competing explanation of Jesus as a libe theory or engagement in the Gospels has led to equal speculation that Jesus migh liberator instead of a political one. This is the idea we shall delve into within the n

Jesus as a Religious Liberator

One other plausible possibility is that Jesus was more focused on liberating people from religious oppression than political. Many of the examples we examined in the previous part were noted to not always have clear political connotations, and required examining against the historical background of the conflict between the Jewish people of the first century and the occupying Roman authorities. Yet, conversely, there is plenty of evidence that Jesus challenged religious authorities. Whether it be the Pharisees, Sanhedrin or High Priests, Jesus often accused those hierarchy of being hypocritical and [illegible] such opposition potentially explains executed more reasonably than political activities. If his teachings and messag the machinations of the religious elite at the time through liberation of ordinary p good ground to take the passion narratives in the Gospels at face value.

There are many other Gospel passages which support this view. For example, in M trial testify that Jesus claimed he would destroy the Temple and replace it. While being false, it supports the idea that the religious authorities saw Jesus as a legitim true considering how throughout the Gospels Jesus is unsparing in his criticism of and other religious figures. For instance, he lambasts the importance they give to tithing in Luke 18:12. In Matthew 23:13, he provides an especially damning challe stating 'woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of

From such declarations, the theologian Gerard O'Collins points out that the origin lie in distinct social issues but instead Jesus challenging the religious rules that, in people from true reconciliation with God. But is this the same as ending religious difficult question, for although the religious rules may have been a theological nui preventing people from living fulfilled and healthy lives, [illegible] is true then Jesus m people from a sinful religious life than from specific oppression from religious

Nevertheless, there is other biblical evidence to suggest that people were to an ex orthodoxy of the time. Throughout his ministry, Jesus meets and shows preferent typically marginalised by the more wealthy religious communities. For example, in Samaritan in Luke 10:25–37, Jesus draws out a moral teaching about generosity a Samaritan as the upstanding protagonist, even though these individuals were ofte by Jewish orthodoxy. A more pressing example can be found at Mark 5:24–34, wh woman who had been bleeding for 12 years, a person who under the Torah would to be seen with. This theme is often prevalent throughout the healings in the Gosp typically treat those who the religious authorities would not venture near. As such evidence in the Gospels that not only are people prevented from reconciling with tradition, but the religious rules established by the authorities are also failing to e the communities they oversee.

Liberation and Sin

It is worth briefly mentioning at the end of this section the more traditional theolo of sin as a contrast to the other positions we have studied. The central idea behin throughout history is that Jesus' death on the cross was an act of atonement, liber original sin created by the Fall. This allowed human beings to not only no longer by but also be granted a new chance to reconcile with God and receive his grace. Fo Paul states 'for the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in C have a clear representation in many of the figures we have studied throughout th Calvin, and this view of Jesus as liberator is very theology heavy, so much so that a threatens it.

As we have looked at different facets of Jesus, from his divine nature, to his roles be seen that the idea of Jesus one draws as much relies on one's pre-existing idea

The traditional view of liberation as referring to sin naturally draws on other orth
original sin, the Fall and atonement. Yet if one examines the Bible without relying
interpretation, one is perhaps more likely to arrive at the ideas of Jesus as religio
Moreover, if one interprets the Gospels in light of the historical context of first-ce
even more difficult to ignore the importance of various forms of historical oppres
marginalised. Regardless, what is important to recognise is that there is potentiall
person of Jesus. There may be a number of different imp t characteristics tha
significant ways, all of which should be taken into ac u t when reading the Gosp

Activity:

Research the life of Je s nd three examples of passages in the Bible (not i
companic re Jesus could be described as encouraging political or religious
the view t us was primarily a liberator?

E P Sanders and Jesus as a Reformer

E P Sanders is one of the main scholars of religion who argues that Jesus primari
movement in Judaism rather than create a new religion. He contends that while
narratively shown to be in opposition to the religious authorities, it is likely cons
attitudes at the time that Jesus was closer to Judaic traditions than is recognised
thought. If this is the case, then Jesus may not be best cast as a liberator, as he v
modify or renew Jewish law rather than break it. Sanders even suggests that the
have embellished certain stories for dramatic effect, such as the Pharisees surpr
which can be reasonably doubted to be accurate.

Another important aspect Sanders highlights is hat throughout the Gospel, Jesu
application of Jewish law, not the la itself. F gures such as the Pharisees simply
understand the meaning and intent behind the law, and Jesus is often presented
prophets rather tha a figure who stands outside them. Therefore, if Sanders is
liberator i m y be nuanced than some have suggested, and a balanced port
Jewish tra and scripture is needed to accurately identify where and why J
political authorities in the Gospel narratives.

Quick Quiz

1. What is the difference between Christology from above and Christology fro
2. What is the question of Jesus' self-knowledge?
3. What title in the Gospels is typically used to refer to the divinity of Jesus?
4. What key section of Matthew involves Jesus giving many important moral t
5. What does Jesus teach is of equal importance to the obedience of laws?
6. What is a liberator?
7. What is Luke 4:16–21 often called?

3A: Christian Moral Princ

What you will learn in this section:

The various sources and forms of Christian ethics, including:

- Use of the Bible as the primary authority for Christian ethics and the principle
- The role of the Church and tradition in guiding Christian ethics principles.
- The importance of reason in evaluating Christian ethics and applying them to
- The role of agape love in governing Christian ethical practice and the theolog this concept.

Starter Ac

Do you think the Church should play a role in evaluating Christian ethical princip examples
you believe support your view, and refer back to them when working through th

Introduction – How Should Christians Live?

Although centred around a common set of religious principles, the Christian comm a broad church. Each denomination, and even elements within these denominatic the right way to live, especially when it comes to modern-day ethical dilemmas. O heart of Christian ethics in this light is how to interpret the Bible. Although this is guidance for any Christian, the kind of teachings one finds inside greatly depends interpret it. Should one take its messages literally, or is there room to read betwe depth of current human knowledge? These questions aren't easily answered and precedents set by earlier thinkers as they are by the thoughts of theologians toda

We can first make the distinction between **propositional** and **non-propositional** a The former holds that the Bible should be seen as direct revelation from God. This inside should be treated as messages sent by God to inform ethical practice. This the Ten Commandments are fixed and inflexible. Irrespective of time or space, the applies equally to all human beings. Non-propositional approaches, on the other h on biblical ethics. Instead, they generally view the Bible as accounts of individuals' concerns his birth, ministry and death, and the narratives given about the life of Je relation to the reader's life. This means that the moral teachings in the Bible are n simply a moral example whose virtues provide guidance for the right kind of chara during ethical dilemmas. There are no hard and fast laws which the Bible propose approaches.

It is possible to see immediately how this distinction raises more questions than it traditional approaches to biblical ethics often regard the inflexibility as a virtue; w one's life, it is possible for the Bible to provide a straightforward, honest answer t many conversely argue this inflexibility is far from meaningful. Many modern ethi basic moral laws, and it is necessary to use one's reason and prior precedents to e action, a task that is perhaps only possible if one adopts a more subjective stance the Bible presents. It might even be that on multiple issues few laws or no laws what adopt the basic moral principles embodied by the figure of Jesus. The various dim studied throughout this section, beginning first with biblically oriented approache

The Bible in Christian Ethics

It is very rare to find a Christian denomination or movement that does not draw u its principles and ethics. However, as we noted, the extent to which the Bible is he matter of theological debate, and many historical schisms in the Christian Church disagreements about whether the Bible should be the ultimate, or even only, sou

who focus on it as authoritative typically argue in favour of **theonomous ethics**, th
principles are determined by God's commands and that the only guaranteed sour
text which documents the fashion by which God has revealed them to humanity. T
been the preserve of the Protestant Church. While many modern denominations
to accommodating other sources of ethics, the original reformist theologians held
scriptura, the focus of this part of the section.

Sola Scriptura

We looked at sola scriptura briefly when we examined special revelation, and the
between questions about how Christians can gain knowledge of God and the auth
Christians who emphasise special revelation are likely to view the Bible as the prima
beings come to know God and his commands. The doctrine of sola scriptura, mean
this theological position, holding that the Bible is the sole authority in all matters
practice. Those who endorse sola scriptura accordingly usually maintain that the B
meaning it possesses no errors, while a smaller subset of Christians put forward a
self-authenticating. This means that not only does the Bible contain no errors but
the rational reader and does not require any debate over the correct method of in

But what is the justification for such a view? Holding that the Bible is infallible or s
a number of additional assumptions, not all of which are necessarily reasonable. C
stated biblical laws, such as the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1–17, should be
contents seem intuitively wrong or misguided in present-day contexts. Similarly, s
least partially endorse the view that the writers of the Bible are not fallible author
translators for what God has commanded, a view also known as **amanuensis**. Mar
on passages such as 2 Timothy 3:16, which states 'all scripture is inspired by God a
reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness', and other similar sentime
which puts forward that 'no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpr
these verses suggest that at minimum the Bible is a wholly reliable source in all m

Yet there are also potential philosophical advantages to sola scriptura. One sometim
Bible as a source of authority prevents the conceptual confusion found among denomina
other sources. The schism between the Protestant and Catholic Churches throughou
caused by the various Catholic teachings and practices that were not seen to be sup
as purgatory or the selling of indulgences. Upholding the doctrine of sola scriptura m
moral matters and there are less likely to be theological conflicts over extra-biblical
reasons to suspect sola scriptura has its disadvantages also, which we will examine i

What's Wrong with Sola Scriptura?

As mentioned before, many modern Protestant denominations no longer uphold s
to the weaker view of **prima scriptura**, which holds that the authority of scripture
Only more fundamentalist or evangelical elements of Christianity tend to still pres
and there are a number of reasons why. The first is the potential impossibility of r
personal bias creeping in. It is clear that when interpreting any text a certain degr
and ideas is needed, and these draw on a person's own experience and beliefs. If
argument against the Bible being self-authenticating emerges. However, if this sub
interpretation is always present, then sola scriptura is difficult to uphold also, for i
background knowledge necessarily requires the use of reason and tradition to form,
whether one believes or not to be drawing on scripture alone in ethical matters,
on other sources of authority.

This issue can be noted strongly in cases where the Bible itself seems to present c
example, although the Gospels all present accounts of Jesus' life, they vary in style
differing details about the routes Jesus travelled or the people he interacted with
John in particular stands apart from the Synoptic Gospels, presenting a much mor

account of Jesus' ministry compared to Matthew, who is transparently more conc
with Jewish scripture and tradition. There are also issues in the internal conflicts i
have studied, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew potentially shows Jesus over
Testament commandments, making it difficult to decide how Exodus should be in
Testament. Similarly, there are many rules and practices in the Old Testament tha
fear of absurdity, such as the rule against planting two crops in the same field in L

In fact, a case can be made against sola scriptura for Jesus' words themselves. T
narratives, Jesus warns against blind religious observance, criticising the Pharisees
rather than acting to help their fellow human beings. For many this is an indicatio
treated as an infallible document and instead should be measured against other s
conscience, human knowledge. So sola scriptura faces criticism from two angl
of authority necessary when examining any religious text and the second that
other sources of authority. This does not mean that key ethical principles cannot b
that in order for these principles to be meaningful in modern ethical dilemmas, ot
may prove just as important as the Bible itself.

Should the Bible be Viewed as Infallibl

This is a more difficult question that arises out of the debate on sola scriptura. Ma
denominations are still reluctant to hold that the Bible could contain errors, often
might open the floodgates to a wealth of criticisms about its content. Many instea
infallible but careful reading is necessary to ensure its truths are not misinterprete
light of the wealth of knowledge held in modern times, this position is under strai
debate about what counts as an 'error', many of the biblical narratives concernin
Old Testament) can appear intuitively wrong, as we discussed in the last part. So t
equally question the infallibility of Christian scripture.

In fact, many theologians deviate from the position held by Christian denominatio
Catholic theologian, warned against treating scripture as infallible. He argued th
status to the Bible risked idolatry, when only God himself can be accurately tho
keystone of Barth's is a refashioning of Calvin's principle of accommodation
Word could be fully captured in any human language. Rather it can only be
understandable to human beings, which means that it can never literally represen
it graspable by humanity. The Bible, Barth concludes, is best thought of as a witne
accounts of people who have had first-hand experience of the grace and revelatio

Discussion Activity:
Should the Bible be viewed as infallible, or is there room for human reason whe
Discuss in pairs or small groups.

The Church and Reason in Christian Ethics

So, if the Bible is not the only source of authority, what other sources should we l
to? Our discussion in the last part of this section neatly leads us onto the next, for
contrast to Protestant tradition, the Catholic Church has always endorsed t
importance of reason and tradition in deriving Christian moral principles. Why is t
the case?

Well, it must be noted that the Bible itself is not necessarily a first-hand acco
Much of the New Testament was written a number of decades after the death of J
time, it is likely that his teachings were passed down through the Christian commu
smaller writings. These very first years of the Christian community represent the e
and Catholic tradition argues that its beliefs are rooted in the actions of these ear
succession. This idea holds that the Catholic Church can trace back an unbroken li
apostles, meaning it holds a significant claim to being a true reflection of what wa

Yet the Church in the Catholic tradition is also not a static entity, simply passing o earliest Christians. Instead, as the **living expression** of Jesus' message, it holds the upon his teachings and ensuring they remain meaningful and relevant to modern itself becomes a source of revelation for its followers, providing collective insight traditions that allow human beings to communicate with God. Importantly, there commitments that support this authority given to the Church. The first, as express that interpretation of scripture is never objective. Its insights are rooted in histori of the Church to preserve but also translate for modern audiences. This process re from theologians if the Bible is to address modern ethical dilemmas. More vital, h Church and tradition such authority also means giving human reason itself author human rational capacities. The process of interpretation could never arrive at obje explored before, the Catholic Church regards natural theology as an important ap of God and the world.

However, there is much more to say here, and throughout the next part of this se of ways Church tradition and reason can possess authority when it comes to matt

The Role of Church and Tradition

It would be a mistake to say tradition does not play a role in nearly all Christian denominations. Since most Protestant Churches now maintain **prima scriptura** rat **sola scriptura**, there is a lesser authority they grant reason and tradition to adjudi pressing ethical matters the Bible does not easily address. However, the Catholic a bit different: it holds that Church tradition itself is of equivalent authority to the calling it **sacred tradition**. The reasons for this are simple. As we noted in the intro paragraph, the Catholic Church believes in **apostolic succession**, meaning that the teachings themselves are not developed in a vacuum. Rather, they reflect principl ideas that have come from Jesus himself and been passed down by the apostles. T the Catholic Church views tradition as a continuing function of the Holy Spirit, whi inspires new ways of understanding scripture and the world.

You will have heard about the consequences of sacred tradition many times throu The Catechism of the Catholic Church, which has been quoted often throughout th summary of many of the traditions and doctrines the Church has developed throu followers with moral guidance on many different ethical and religious issues. Othe statements. For example, the Anglican Church developed the Thirty-nine Articles itself from the Catholic Church, even if they aren't completely adhered to by minis Anglican Catechism at the back of the Book of Common Prayer provides an easy w acquainted with the practices of the Anglican Church. The difference at times mer importance different denominations give the traditions contained in these various

But how are these texts formed in the first place? The process varies between den have **synods** which meet to draw up new developments on Christian doctrine whi ethical concerns among their members. For the Catholic Church, great authority is body of the Bishops, Pope and Church Councils which is said to provide authentic line with the Word of God. The Magisterium is the term for the centre of ethical de Church and regularly gives guidance on moral and ethical issues, whether it be abort contraception. Now, this does not mean that Catholics are necessarily required to wholly to the decisions made by the Magisterium. The Catholic Church recognises and reason. What it does mean, though, is that ordinary Catholics are required to important sense of moral authority in their life.

The same is true of other Protestant Churches but often to a lesser degree. Variou levels of the Church to discuss religious and ethical issues, sometimes with official accompanying their conclusions. For example, in the Anglican Church, the Genera assembly and is primarily responsible for developing nationwide Church legislatio

regional synods that take place to debate more local issues that do not necessarily
Importantly, everyday churchgoers are not required to hold up Church legislation
lives, although it may prove useful for moral guidance. What is most important ac
is that practising Christians engage with the Bible and its core teachings per prima

Nevertheless, the authority of the Church across most Christian denominations m
ethics as fundamentally **communal**. Simply put, so long as one invests in the Chur
authority, one is also engaging in a form of ethical decision-making that places less emph
inclinations. Instead, one is part of a wider body of Christians who contribute to a
scriptural teaching and are willing to be bound to decisions about moral issues as a
also elements of Christian teaching that seem to disavow this kind of communal th
according importance to other sources of authority presents a more **personal** inte
One of these sources of authority is **reason**, and this potentially stands in tension
Church and Bible as authoritative.

Reason and Natural Law

Reason itself as a concept is tricky to pin down. While we might ordinarily think of
to achieve certain ends, the value of it as a faculty has often shifted throughout hi
during the Enlightenment period it was seen as a thoroughly objective way of disc
modern-day perspectives often tend to be a bit more sceptical. Some critics have
partially conditioned by one's own culture and circumstances. Alasdair MacIntyre,
because rationality is always developed with tradition, the two are inseparable, m
can be a corresponding idea of reason and rationality.

These philosophical quibbles may seem trifling against the larger theological back
the question of whether reason is subjective to a degree is important when discus
for it is still often seen as necessary in Christian ethics as a bridge between the wo
present-day ethical dilemmas. However, if reason itself is not always objective and
conclusions, then this potentially affects its use and function in Christian theology
well claim that use of reason shows that God himself is illogical, while the Catholic
exact oppo

Understanding these issues also gives a certain flavour as to the role reason might
For example, approaches from reason may be both **communal** and **personal**, with
individuals arriving at their own moral conclusions based upon the other sources a
Many religious thinkers have often argued that conscience itself is based upon rea
of conscience one is simply intuitively recognising a situation where a moral law is
Therefore, there is a slight tension when it comes to analysing the place of reason
churches and denominations provide their own doctrines on current social issues,
their reason and interpretation of scripture. However, reason itself may at times p
direction for Christian ethics. Although an individual might subscribe to a denomi
reasonable thought disagrees with some of its teachings.

For an example of this in action, we can look to the Catholic Church. In the Catholi
can be developed from reasonable analysis of the natural world, which reveals wh
foundation for natural law comes from the idea that the world displays the marks
living thing was created to possess and pursue particular purpose by God and so the right w
derived from observation of their behaviour and purpose, including human beings.
best-known classical natural law and was responsible for developing Aristoteli
framework for many of the ethical principles which underlie Catholic thought

Aquinas argued that reason is the primary characteristic that distinguishes human
human beings to understand the will of God as well as rationally act upon their kn
For Aquinas, natural law was embodied in a set of universal primary precepts that
these primary precepts derive from an innate principle called **synderesis**, which is

be sought, evil avoided'. From these primary precepts, secondary precepts can be
beings navigate ethical issues that are context-dependent to a particular time, soc
therefore, promises to provide guiding principles in ethical living for ordinary Chri
understand whether their actions comply with or contravene God's will.

Yet it is also possible to see how cracks could emerge in this fashion of thinking. F
any primary precepts one develops accurately reflect the will of God? It might be
but disagreement is always possible when it comes to observations of and reasoni
although most Christians would claim that God created human beings with a purp
how it relates to particular ethical dilemmas is still a matter of debate. For exampl
precepts is that human beings should not perform any action that threatens the 'o
this is a vague notion, for almost anything could threaten the ordering of society if or
fashion, and it may be necessary to question why primacy should be given in Chris
the Bible, for example, one may end up with an ethical system vastly different fro
scripture.

Should We be Suspicious of Tradition

We've noted before when discussing the person of Jesus that there is, at least on
surface, a conflict between Jesus' teachings, which are often wary of the tradition
Jewish elders and Pharisees, and many modern-day Christian denominations whic
to tradition for guidance on moral issues. This creates an interesting tension betw
the sources of authority that we've analysed so far. For some, it supports the noti
that sola scriptura is the only correct way forward when analysing Christian ethica
issues, while for others it simply reaffirms the importance of multiple sources of
authority. Yet it is certainly true that this conflict can't be overlooked. In Matthew
3, for instance, Jesus directly equates the Pharisees' tradition with transgressions
God's will, and throughout history such passages have been used to support chall
to Church authority. Luther's call for reformation is perhaps the best-known exam
a theologian criticising the abuse of Catholic traditions for the material gain of its

This raises a more interesting issue of whether tradition itself should be given an autho
ethical issues. Whether the past works of theologians and Church figures should
light of modern advances in knowledge. One particularly difficult criticism, which
that holding tradition to be sacred has through the history of Christianity meant v
attitudes have been upheld rather than challenged. For example, Rosemary Radfo
feminist theologian, argues that sexism is rife within Christian tradition as it has b
by male perspectives and women's experiences have rarely been taken into accou
news will reveal regular conflicts within many Christian denominations as the soci
around the inflexible traditions of their churches.

This is not to suggest that tradition should play no role in the Christian Church. Lo
thoughts and ideas of past thinkers is an incredibly useful way of developing more
theology, but the question remains whether this tradition should be viewed as sac
be a benchmark for future study rather than a body of timeless knowledge that sh
especially if Jesus himself questioned blind adherence to tradition in the Gospels.

Such thinking, however, potentially leads down a bit of a rabbit hole, for if traditio
and reason can lead down two different paths, what is distinctively 'Christian' al
teachings of Jesus are not wholly original and have been mirrored by many other
history. This does not well mean that Christian ethics are just secular ethics in religio
a worry for some, there is one final interpretation of Christian ethics we can explo
concerned with a particular conception of love.

Stanley Hauerwas and the Christian Community

Hauerwas is a well-known American theologian who exemplifies what is often ca
this thought, he holds that the individualism at the heart of secular ethics is diffe
under Christianity. The Christian ethic, for Hauerwas, does not simply involve ide
principles or laws. Rather it has to be situated within the narrative and context o
history. This means that understanding Christian ethics is learning not just about
provides, but also how it was created and developed as a response to the issues
community faced.

One example of this is Jesus' teachings at the Sermon on the Mount. He
the old va Judaism and his teachings are only truly illuminated when one
meaning in of the struggles of the early Jewish and Christian communities o
Christian ethics is as much about the trials and difficulties of the Christian comm
ideas about what is right according to the will of God. Furthermore, Christian eth
the personal ideals of an individual matter less than how various moral principle
larger material and spiritual issues for the community at large.

Discussion Activity:
Do you believe Christianity offers personal or communal moral insights? Is the B
or a text which illuminates the future of the Christian community? Discuss in pai

Agape in Christian Ethics

We questioned at the end of the last section what might be distinctive about
Christian ethics if there are no sources of authority that should be held up as sacre
or infallible. Well, one short answer might be love, specifically **agape** love. This is
commonly held to be an important form of **selfless**, **altruistic** love that forms the
bedrock of Jesus' moral teaching in the Gospel, especially concerning the
importance of pure motivations behind all actions. The idea that some thinkers
have put forward in the twentieth century is that agape love is the only ruling mo
drawn out of the Gospels, and all Christian ethical principles can be defined by the

This is less dramatic than it might initially sound. Agape love has long played a hug
from the two commandments given in Mark 12:28–31 to 'Love the lord thy God' a
yourself'. Similarly, in John 15:12–13, Jesus states the commandment that all shou
loved you'. It is likely that you have heard these two teachings before, and when p
Christian ethics to a set of basic principles it is usually some variation on these tw
love is the foundation of all Christian relationships is extended not just to human l
God's sacrifice of his Son on the cross to fulfil the atonement of the sins of human
paradigmatic example of agape love, while Jesus' interactions with other human b
thought of in the same way. For instance, in Matthew 5:43–46, Jesus contrasts Ol
love one's enemies, while similarly in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8, St Paul provides an el
nature and importance of the Christian ideal of love, contrasting it to the tempora
language and knowledge.

So there is a strong basis for agape love being the foundation of Christian ethics a
positions. However, there are deeper questions about whether agape love is the
authority in Christian ethics. Many modern thinkers on both sides have drawn a d
of law-based Christianity and newer forms that draw on agape love. For example,
American theologian, distinguished between forms of orthodox Christianity which
tradition or law and later prophetic Christianity which looks to agape love as the p
Yet, despite the important position given to agape love, many Christians today stil
aren't easily derivable from this concept alone. In fact, there are numerous compl
dealing with the implementation of agape love, and many critics have contended

source of authority. First, however, it is necessary to go into a bit more detail abo
play in Christian ethics.

Justice, Love and Wisdom

One natural issue that emerges when it comes to outlining agape love is how it pr
we understand what love is in a Christian context, it is not always clear what actio
Therefore, many thinkers have proposed different ways that agape love can mani
and what principles there may be to applying it within one's life.

Take Paul Tillich, for instance, proposed that there were three ultimate ethical
moral decisi[illegible]ak[illegible] most important was love, but of equal necessity were
guided how [illegible]as applied in ethical decision-making. Tillich argue that the Chu
ultimate aut[illegible]ity in any Christian's life. Instead, through understanding the natu
norms, a person's own intellect should be consulted in any ethical dilemma, with
motivating factor behind any action. Thus, Tillich explicitly and implicitly criticises
Christianity, which focus on obedience to rules. Instead, moral thinking should be
maintains loving relationships with others and how one can act in the most loving
means there are also no hard or fast moral rules or principles in one's life other th
towards others. Any beliefs about the right action in a situation might be re-evalu
rejected when they might fail to uphold one or more of the three ethical norms Ti

A similar line of thinking can be found in **situation ethics**. This is a system of ethic
the centrality of love within moral decision-making. It's best known proponent is J
that a proper reading of the Gospels shows that Jesus was distrustful of **legalistic**
ethics being largely based on laws throughout its history. Instead, he argued that
follow is the law of love, which holds that, in any situatio[illegible]ristians should do w
This means that situation ethics is **relativistic**; there are no hard or fast rules abou
loving action might be one that involves [illegible]ing actions that on the surface se
more radical proposal than Tilli[illegible]s, b[illegible]Fletcher does argue similarly that justice
when deciding loving a[illegible]h[illegible]. However, Fletcher argues that justice is simply 'love
the most lo[illegible]tic[illegible] is naturally also the most fair, since it cannot be loving to t

Nevertheless, an interesting observation can be made of these agape-based appro
central to their ideas about Christian ethics, other important concepts enter to he
Importantly, it might be argued that for any agape-based approach reason is also
in helping evaluate what action to take in any ethical dilemma. Without the entry
another term, it may well be impossible to judge what is loving and what isn't. Ho
difficulties faced by Christian ethics built upon the idea of love. On the one hand,
love really offers moral guidance, and on the other hand we can also ask whether
principles given by scripture and other sources.

Is Agape the Only Guiding Principle?

One common criticism given of agape-based approaches to Christian ethics is that
concept to apply to everyday ethical dilemmas. Thi[illegible]su[illegible]an be broken down in
for example, arises when one considers how[illegible]m[illegible]beings are naturally fallible. W
use of reason could lead to conflicti[illegible]about ethical principles, and the same
perhaps even to a greater [illegible]if agape is used solely as a criterion for moral ac
that a Christi[illegible]our[illegible]m an immoral act out of what they to believe to be lo
action is pe[illegible]d for selfish or sinful reasons. What may appear loving to some
others, and i[illegible]ere are no strict external rules on how to apply agape to ethical di
permitted by such an approach. Another problem is that love just doesn't seem to
situations very well. If I were deciding between giving to two different charities, b
to see which action could be more loving than the other.

However, a greater problem for many Christians is that if love is the foundation fo
effect reduced to secular ethics, for many non-religious people would claim that t
they act well. This means ultimately that the Christian aspect of ethics is meaningl
longer **distinct** from other ethical systems. This might initially seem to be a trivial
foundation of *all* ethical behaviour, then why does it matter whether Christian eth
difficulty, as noted before, is that many Christians believe moral laws are God-give
by a separate principle, what need is there for the Christian God? The religious as
to be meaningful if it prescribes little more than c[illegible] religions or belief systems
little more than an intellectual curiosity r[illegible] having a real moral force.

This issue has also led to many theologians proposing how aspects of Christianity
moral prop[illegible] For example, love might not be the only influencing factor for m
they believe[illegible] e centre of ethical decision-making. One could look to other fu
Bible, such as the Kingdom of God, repentance and redemption, and argue that th
develops good moral intentions and practices when applying agape within one's e
be a good argument that such concepts are essential to ground, or give practical r
agape love.

The theologian Richard Mouw makes the important point that even if love is the c
truth does not necessitate that there are not other commandments that should b
theological matters. In particular, if the Bible is the main source behind the knowl
commandment, why should its other commandments not be taken seriously? It m
right intention behind ethical action but the Bible additionally provides instructio
important ethical practices. The aim should be then to find correlations between t
and the various ethical dilemmas human beings find themselves evaluating in thei
notes that not all of the Bible presents moral commands. Many passages are to d
human beings and God, and, regardless of the foundati[illegible] hristian ethics, thes
human beings choose to live their lives, whether [illegible] be personal choices or choices
although agape love might play a very [illegible] t role in Christian ethics, it can't b
commandments or sources of authority might still play a vital role in people's mo

Activity:

What wou[illegible] the most loving action in the following scenarios? Write down yo
answer. How might the difficulty in evaluating the most loving action exemplify t
Christian ethical principles other than agape love?

1. Helping a friend cheat in their exam so that they can become an accountant
   support their struggling family.
2. Assassinating a military dictator who is oppressing the citizens of their coun
3. Lying to a relative about your religious beliefs when they are on their deathb
4. Giving positive feedback to a friend about their tuba playing despite thinkin

Quick Quiz

1. What is theonomous ethics?
2. What is sola scriptura?
3. What is sacred tradition?
4. What is the Magisteri[illegible]
5. What is [illegible]ssion?
6. What [illegible]ural law?
7. What is agape love?

3B: Christian Moral Act

What you will learn in this section:

The life and teachings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, including:

- Bonhoeffer's teachings on the relationship between religious faith and one's views on civil disobedience.
- Bonhoeffer's views on community and discipleship in the context of his own Church and his seminary at Finkenwalde.
- Bonhoeffer's ideas about solidarity and sacrifice, including the distinction be
- The debate about the relevancy of Bonhoeffer's theology for modern Chris from his example.

Starter Activity:
Research the rise of the Nazi Party in 1930s Germany and how it developed rel denominations at the time. Write down notes in particular about the activities use them to inform your understanding of Bonhoeffer's life and theology throu

Key Thinker	
Name	Dietrich Bonhoeffer
Born	1906
Died	1945
Key texts	*The Cost of Discipleship* (1937); *Letters and Papers from Pris*
Why are they important?	Bonhoeffer is one of the most impactful theologians of the t his political resistance to the Nazi Party during the Second W theology that arose out of his wish for Christians to truly live and solidarity set out in the Gospels.
Did you know?	Although Bonhoeffer was executed in 1945 due to his being ... to Hitler a year previously, historians are still unsur ... the plot, or whether he had a substantive role at all.

Introduction – The Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of the most prominent and distinctive theologians of thought and as an example of how Christian moral principles should be put into pr thinkers throughout the history of Christianity, he advocated a radical system of th Christians should be much more active in challenging the state when it routinely b endorsement of civil disobedience didn't arise in a vacuum, however. It was motiv the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany during the 1930s and a fundamental opposit actions they undertook during their time in power. This led to a theology which en sacrifice in Christian belief and the need for Christians to stand in solidarity with th endangering their own lives. Throughout this section, we will extrapolate upon the was influenced by a variety of sources and analysing his co... ing impact on Chris

The Early Life of Bonhoeffer

Bonhoeffer was born in 19... ...rge, educated family in Germany. His father ... psychiatrist a... ...is ... ...teacher, and they both encouraged Bonhoeffer's inte age. He con... ...his doctorate in Theology at the age of 21, in 1927, and, since h ordained into... ...Church, he chose to go to America for postgraduate study in 193 times in the world at large. The Great Depression, which had its greatest impact in the world, and fascist movements such as the National Socialist Party in Germany ... was not a fan of the American seminaries, believing there was a lack of engaging th academic study there, and during this time he began to form stronger beliefs abou

'from below'. This encouraged thinking about Christian principles from the perspec
oppressed rather than from the perspective of those who enjoyed significant wealt

Bonhoeffer eventually returned to Germany in 1931, but his ecclesiastical career
Nazi Party to power in 1933. This rise was met by a variety of different views in th
Some of the clergy had capitulated to the power of the party and avoided speakin
policies, while others, such as Bonhoeffer had criticised th anti-Semitic and poli
within the Church, and Hitler capitalised on this, unconstitutionally announcing ne
shortly after taking power. Despite critics' claims, these elections were rigged, an
positions were given to Nazi collaborators and the German Protestant Church eff
of the Nazi Party, still offering religious services throughout the German provinces
for Hitler's regime. This realism set the stage for the most significant part of Bonh
developme the more radical elements of his theology.

Bonhoeffer and His Life during Nazi Ru

Despite the Nazi Party managing to take over a significant portion of the German
still many who criticised their rule. In response to the rigged elections, a section o
away and created what became known as the **Confessing Church** in an attempt to
alive and separate from Nazi ideology. Bonhoeffer himself declared his allegiance
1933 with a radio broadcast titled *The Younger Generation's Altered View of the C*
heavily critical of the Nazi Party and described the way Bonhoeffer perceived it to
than a real political movement. This broadcast was ended early, with historians st
Party itself was responsible, but it marked a clear division between those Christian
content to appease the political powers at the time and those who felt it was thei
they believed injustice was occurring.

Throughout the next five years, Bonhoeffer was involved in mixed efforts in worki
Between 1933 and 1935 he lived in England despite criticism from Karl Barth that
important conflicts at home. However, in 1935 he returned to Germany and begar
seminary, Finkenwalde, with the aim to teach a new generation of ministers away fro
Yet, despite Bonhoeffer's efforts, Himmler declared that it was illegal to educate
Church, and in short time, Finkenwalde was shut down. Bonhoeffer continue
nonetheless, moving from town to town in secret and instructing students as best

In 1939, with war on the horizon, Bonhoeffer faced perhaps his greatest dilemma.
he was likely to be conscripted, and while on a trip to the USA that year he began
return to Germany. However, he eventually resolved to take action and moved ba
helping the small but significant resistance at the time. Joining the Abwehr, a Ger
organisation, in 1941 he began to realise this promise and started feeding informa
Allies, as well as helping German Jews escape to Switzerland, which was neutral d
successes, he was arrested on 5th April for this latter act and, further still, on 24th J
failed plot to kill Hitler (historians are still unsure as to the extent of his involveme
imprisoned for these actions, but he was also sentenced to death and was hanged
alongside his alleged fellow conspirators on 9th April 1945.

Bonhoeffer advocated a Christian theolo should be altogether radical in ch
power, in contrast to traditional Christianity, which historically has regarded obed
This endorsement of civil disobedience sprung from a reinterpretation of Luther,
viewed the Church and the state as equivalent in many ways, as well as a resistan
ideology, w s growing in influence in Germany in the run-up to World War

Bonhoeffer rejected Nazi beliefs and ethics and, as a founding member of the Con
and protested against many of the Nazis' practices. He argued particularly that th
system of support for people, but also a place to assist with spiritual discipline in
primarily an ethic placing others first before the self. The Church should, therefor

performing rituals and rites, or comfortable adherence to a set of theological beli
concerned with playing an active part in shaping the ethical environment of the w

Obedience and Leadership

As you might have gathered from the overview in the last section, Bonhoeffer's li
was marked by a fundamental moral conflict between what he perceived as Chris
relationship of these to a state power that engaged in fu[illegible]entally immoral act
the German Christian Churches came under sever[illegible]y for their part in facilit
worst abuses of power, and many found in [illegible]hoeffer's writings an easily digesti
attitudes within these Churches. However, at the same time, the dramatic events
he never managed to de[illegible]matic theology around his ideas, and thinke
to interpret [illegible]. On the one hand, he heavily emphasises the importance of
figure for a[illegible]duals, yet he often presents very universal commitments to jus
appeal to people of all faiths and beliefs. However, despite the fragmentary natu
are plenty of concepts to unpack, the first being the relationship between the Ch

Duty to God and Duty to the State

Typically throughout the history of Christianity, the Church and the state have go
in hand. Although there have been significant conflicts, for the most part the cler
maintained a large degree of political power, and the laws and rules imposed by
have reflected Christian ideals in Western societies. This is partly due to the natu
societies, which wish to see their religious ideals exemplified in everyday life, but
theologians have also pointed to a key biblical passage to support this status quo
verses state that Christians should obey the 'governing authorities', since their po
instituted by God himself. This includes not only following laws but also paying ta
a leadership position. On the surface, if one takes this passage literally, it seems t
duty not just to their own religious beliefs but also to the state itself.

However, this creates various dilemmas for Christians where their moral principle
digress. Should a Christian obey a law given by the authorities if it transgresses th
from an un[illegible]or to adherence. Throughout history, there are many documente
religious au[illegible]es have been guilty of corruption and committed crimes others
for. Yet an ethical dilemma is created when scripture presents moral laws that Ch
arguing that they should also display complete obedience to the state. For many
simple; institute a Christian society and the conflict is dissolved.

However, Bonhoeffer recognised the reality was more complicated and rarely ful
some theoretical way to resolve this conflict, he simply argued that the call to dis
the Gospels called for obedience only to Christ and God. It is not the case that the
weigh their different beliefs against each other, picking the one they believe to be
authorities. For Bonhoeffer, being a Christian is concerned fundamentally with th
the leadership and authority of God above all else. This 'singe-minded obedience'
faith, and one's duty towards God as a result should not be tempered by human
agreeable or convenient. More importantly, if Bonhoeffer is correct here, it mean
no obligation to the state whatsoever beyond their willingness to uphold its beliefs. This results i
ramifications, as we shall explore next.

Civil Disobedience

Many researchers have often contended that Bonhoeffer's theology can be in part explained by his historical background. It would certainly be wrong to ignore it, but, equally, care should be taken to analyse his theology on its own terms as well, espe when it comes to one of the key ramifications of his doctrine of obedience: the legitimacy of civil disobedience. Since Bonhoeffer holds that Christians are only req to serve God, then any law issued by the state that contradicts God's will should be resisted. This is a natural break from theologians in the Lutheran mould, who saw th Church and the state as two sides of the same coin, but the rise of the Nazi Party cr there was an intensive moral gap between one's duty to God and one's duty to t

However, there are many other political conditions under which civil disobedienc obedience for Bonhoeffer should not just be framed as duty to God but also as a c God's will presents a series of moral rules and principles Christians are required t rules are being transgressed by the state it usually results in the persecution or o single-mindedness can be seen to be exacted at various moments in Bonhoeffer's lose his job for speaking out against the Nazi Party in the 1930s, but at various m Confessing Church for not doing enough to help Jewish victims of Nazi persecutio

Yet a common issue, which we will explore in more detail later, is that it is uncle disobedience should be endorsed during more peaceful times. Bonhoeffer's ideas appeal in political climates where persecution and oppression are rife, but are Ch state for any difference between its laws and their moral principles? To what exte violence to achieve their aims? These are more difficult questions that arise out o create issues when trying to implement it in different political and social contexts. some extent, individuals do owe some allegiance to the state, either because the people they have important social or familial bonds with, or due to what the state g healthcare, a livelihood or other important services. Therefore, it is worth conside theology is ultimately too inflexible for present-day Christians.

Discussion Activity:
Do you believe, like Bonhoeffer, that human beings should not obey the state w religious beliefs? What issues could this cause?

Church, Community and Discipline

Bonhoeffer's ideas about the important of obedience extend not just to the individu Throughout his life, Bonhoeffer stressed the need for the Christian Church to be a v that the Church should be not only a place of worship for Christians but also a sour when the Church functions to help Christians enact God's will in their own lives can the world during times of difficulty. Therefore, in Bonhoeffer's theology, the Churc pastoral role then most Christian churches do now. The moral guidance it offers is n where a person fails to live up their duties as a Christian, the Church should encoura

The Confessing Church

The idea of the Church as a Christian community was reflected in the original princip set up by Bonhoeffer and other key German clergy in the early 1930s in order to p Nazi-aligned German churches. One key document it released was the Theologica by Karl Barth. It set out six primary theses that stressed the separation of church a authority of Jesus Christ for Christians and denied that any other leader could pos the Confessing Church also put these principles into action. In 1934 and 1935, the and civil service personnel were required to undertake a civil oath towards Hitler, Church strongly opposed and which ended up costing Karl Barth his professorship

Nonetheless, perhaps the most significant implementation of Bonhoeffer's ideas a time leading his secret seminary at Finkenwalde. This took place in a disused scho down by the Nazi government, who ruled that members of the Confessing Church new ministers. Certainly Bonhoeffer himself saw one of the primary aims of this s he saw it necessary to train new pastors who were free of Nazi influence. Yet he a chance to enact other values he saw as essential to a Christian community. There on discipline but also on Bible study, meditation and brotherhood with the aim of purpose to Christian work.

Despite Finkenwalde embodying Bonhoeffer's ideals for the Christian community, for the Confessing Church. At heart, Bonhoeffer viewed the ideal Church as being were being persecuted or oppressed, and increasingly throughout the 1930s he fe was failing on this count. While it professed opposition to Nazi policy and in princi difficulties living under their rule, it did not always encourage action in the same r Bonhoeffer was when, at a synod meeting, the Confessing Church refused to oppo requirement for pastors to take the civil oath to the Nazi Party. Similarly, he felt la it was not vigorously speaking up on behalf of Jewish people, instead only focusin process avoiding its Christian responsibilities. Eventually, he offered a more damn Church, arguing that in any Christian community there should be 'no rusty swords oppression, Christians were required to do everything in their power to prevent it

Discipleship

We've noted so far Bonhoeffer's emphasis on obedience and discipline within Christian belief, both for the individual and the Church. Thus it is possible to delve a little further into Bonhoeffer's theology here. In 1937, he published one of his best-known texts, *The Cost of Discipleship*, which outlines the commitments required by the individual who truly wishes to follow Christ's example. It is primarily focused around the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and details a number of important concepts which not only guide Bonhoeffer's concept of disci criticisms Bonhoeffer made of the Christian Church during the 1930s. One of the k Jesus' teachings throughout the Gospels, reflected in the summaries of the Beatit but a real model for how Christians should live their lives. He contended that too sacred ideal, which diminishes the responsibility of humans on Earth when it is ev emulate his example whenever possible. Obedience to Christ is not just accepting denying oneself and taking up the cross just as Jesus did. In accordance with this l out a number of ideas which encapsulate the thrust of his argument.

Cheap and Costly Grace

Bonhoeffer naturally as part of his strong call to discipleship criticised the directio taken in many Western countries. He argued that in attempting to meet the dema people's work lives, many Churches had become dreamy, ritualised and placed a ritual over real obedience to Christ as depicted in the Gospels. In doing so, the Chu had become an ineffective, capitulatory institution incapable of addressing oppres the world, preferring to engage in arcane discussions about abstract theological c source of discipline and strength for suffering individuals.

This criticism, along with Bonhoeffer's views on discipleship, led him to distinguish **grace** and **costly grace.** Cheap grace is the comfortable, unchallenging form of Chr truly committed to be a disciple of Christ. Within institutions that embody cheap g significant moral struggle or cost, and this practice not only devalues the sacrifice denies the presence and force of the living Word in a Christian's life. Costly grace, embodiment of Christian discipleship. Costly grace is the acceptance and expectat and requires any disciple to make radical changes to their lives in order to obey G faith as the need to simply quietly follow rituals and practices and instead accepts one is sacrificing the comforts and luxuries of the material world.

The distinction Bonhoeffer makes here is key to understanding his overall concep
case that the Christian life can cherry-pick the aspects of the religion that suit a pe
Bonhoeffer, the surrendering of one's autonomy to the wisdom of a higher power
that surrender. Importantly, what Bonhoeffer argues with the ideas of cheap and
there might be some future idyllic world where Christians are united in brotherho
far from being a utopia. Real Christian belief requires sacrifice and suffering on be
two ideas we will explore in the next part.

Sacrifice and Suffering

As we've noted, Bonhoeffer's ideas about cheap and costly grace are linked to the
life is given and a gift by extension of his will, the rest of humanity. Therefore, t
existence for others and Bonhoeffer argues one only truly encounters God when
one's neighbours above oneself. The road to salvation is not simply having faith in
through obeying his will and sacrificing oneself for the benefit of others.

Bonhoeffer links this stricter idea of discipleship to the Passion in the Gospels. Jus
others, so Christians are expected to do the same. Jesus' death on the cross, while
atonement, was also an example for human beings on how to live their lives. Chris
take the guilt of the world onto themselves; any act of persecution and oppressio
treated as an act against oneself. Therefore, the sacrifice given by Jesus is not sim
the kind of sacrifice that Christians should be undertaking throughout their lives in

Naturally, the act of sacrifice also involves suffering, and this is also a key element in
the charity that comes easily is worth little. If one can help someone else without an
life it is a sign that no real sacrifice has been made. For example, the wealthy indivi
their money to a charity, however great a sum, is far from embodying the Christian
commanded in the Gospels, the disciple must give their wealth to others and wit
the poor and marginalised. This is quite a radical proposal, but, for Bonhoeffer, the
of inaction when push came to shove. It only engaged in charitable actions that fun
wealth and power of the Church, and failed to make a real political and social differ
necessity of suffering along with sacrifice that true discipleship can be attained.

Solidarity

There is one final concept to cover and that is **solidarity**. The term is often used w
of standing up for or alongside someone in their struggles. By doing so, one not o
person's struggle against another power but also helps them achieve their ends. W
there is a strong emphasis on the importance of solidarity. Christians, in living the
to take on others' struggles and stand alongside them. In standing in solidarity wit
one becomes connected with the experience of God, who also stands alongside hu
Furthermore, it is only by standing in solidarity with others that the Christian Chur
moral change in society. If the Church restricts itself to Christian affairs only it bec
of the same immoral acts as the oppressive power.

This emphasis on solidarity to a great extent inspired Bonhoeffer's criticism of the
churches as well as the Confessing Church. He noted, Bonhoeffer criticised the Cor
enough to help Jewish people in Germany who were being persecuted, and in 193
Church and the Jewish Question, which argued that the Church was obligated to
towards Jewish people, even though their religions presented conflicting teaching

These strong ideas about sacrifice and solidarity are certainly applicable in the cor
agreed that more decisive action was needed to stop the rise of fascism in Germa
First World War, even if it was catalysed by larger-scale political decision-making.
challenged a lot of conventional Orthodox Church teaching precisely because a lot
unheeded by a Church too preoccupied with its own quibbles and issues, instead

wider oppressive forces gathering around it. However, this also creates an issu
still relevant in other political and social contexts? Are Christians expected to s
tremendously in peaceful, agreeable situations? This is what we shall explore n

Activity:
What are some modern-day situations in the Christian Church you think Bon
displaying a lack of true discipleship? Write out three give your justificat

Bonhoeffer and ... ionless Christianity

As has ... in this section, the circumstances of Bonhoeffer's life and s
manage ... ather or write a systematic theology on his ideas. As such, his st
ways, and many of his letters reflect Bonhoeffer's own internal theological di
letters while in prison in 1944, Bonhoeffer directly questions the place of reli
an increasingly secular world. In particular, he said he had become disillusion
whole and the failure of the religion to prevent the rise of the Nazi regime.

As part of this questioning, he pondered the possibility of a future 'religionles
can effectively be secular individuals participating in God's will without the ri
Bonhoeffer posited that it may well be the practices of Christianity, whether i
hierarchy of the Church itself, that prevented it from focusing on the importa
also debates what he perceived to be the present reality of 1944 where peop
religious yet display none of the duties required in their own lives. The questi
Bonhoeffer of what religion actually means. Is it a metaphysically meaningle
moral obedience to God, or is it just a term that has ... ace in the modern s

Discussion Activity:
Has modern Chri... become complacent when it comes to taking action
Jesus i... ? Should Christians be willing to sacrifice more? Discuss i

Evaluating Bonhoeffer's Thought

Bonhoeffer's theology is naturally difficult to evaluate. It was written during o
struggles of the twentieth century and many have reflected whether it has rel
instance, come critics have claimed that Bonhoeffer places too much emphasis
people doesn't necessarily require hardship; a good Christian can enjoy helping
from the idea that other people's lives are improving. In particular, this might b
of Christians during peacetime, when it may well be excessive to expect all Chr
others; a situation which might just result in pointless suffering in aid of other
such critics also potentially overlook Bonhoeffer's ideas about solidarity. Living
peace and happiness. Naturally, sacrifice is needed to get there, but Bonhoeff
about this solidarity is what allows oppressive forces to thrive.

Others have found issues in Bonhoeffer's ... on civil disobedience. In hist
Nazi regime, it is theoretically e... ort civil resistance to their oppressi
other ethical dilemmas ... choice is not clear. For example, should a Ch
or euthan... perceive them to be against God's will, even if such l
of a pop... The call to obey the state may simply be pragmatic in certain di
that diffic... political decisions can't be made without some party being negati
what extent a Christian should endorse civil disobedience without a full unders
to suggest that collaboration with the Nazis was the correct action for the Chri
the complete separation of duties Bonhoeffer puts forward is more difficult to

One important difficulty that arises out of these questions is how to reconcile Bo
with human fallibility in knowing the will of God. We've explored in previous sec
to read the Bible without interpretative bias or the use of reason. Therefore, for
there may be a shortfall of moral guidance offered by scripture which needs to b
own moral intuitions. Yet this creates an issue for Bonhoeffer, for it may be that
interpret the will of God. In these cases, alongside Bonhoeffer's notion that an ir
of God, then his teachings may encourage people to act irresponsibly, or even vi
perceive as God's will.

One response to such worries is to argue that Bonhoeffer's ideas about communit
human fallibility only come to the fore when one considers discipleship to be a
part the Church has to play in supporting, but also regulating, the actions of Chri
therefore, a licence to do whatever a person wishes, but instead a justificati
to oppose political powers where there is clear evidence of persecution and opp

However, these restrictions don't wholly allay the concerns of critics. There are
day where there is considerable conflict between Christian groups and denomin
theologians, as a result, have argued that Bonhoeffer's theology is perhaps an ex
under Nazi rule and that his calls for strict discipleship no longer possess the sam
outside of this context. It is perhaps easy to initially agree with this assessment b
variety of reasons. One is the continued suffering of many poor and marginalise
Wherever one looks, there are still many political and military conflicts where Bo
intuitive appeal and may carry significant weight. Some might even argue that th
modern capitalism and its structures is an example of the injustice Bonhoeffer ra
theology in the present day.

Similarly, it is easy to point out many countries where state power overextends i
their everyday lives. Under these circumstances Bonhoeffer's call to obedience
state might be more relevant. Similarly the importance of solidarity with margin
many charitable organisations across the world. Therefore, Bonhoeffer's messag
timeless and critics of his theology guilty of the complacent thinking Bonhoeffer
although Christians may be under pressure to modernise and adapt to secular
invalidate Bonhoeffer's call to sacrifice and solidarity, and it is still possible to arg
injustice and persecution still need addressing across the world. Therefore, whe
important not to take for granted the difference in political contexts. One has to
responsibilities discipleship might embody in the modern world and examine wh
help inform ethical action.

Quick Quiz

1. What is the Confessing Church?
2. What is civil disobedience?
3. Who did Bonhoeffer argue that Christians have a duty to?
4. What is the difference between cheap and costly grace?
5. What is solidarity?
6. What did Bonhoeffer argue was essential in discipleship?
7. What was the name of Bonhoeffer's underground seminary?

Answers

Answers to Activities

Augustine

Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church on original sin (390–409) and identify si
Augustine's thought. Why do you think these differences exist?

This task might seem initially tricky but the aim is to get students to compare theol
sometimes be a bit obtuse and dense, but students might hopefully see the way Cath
contexts of original sin are like toning down some of the more extreme aspects of Aug
extent of corruption and the way it affects human behaviour.

Afterlife

Pick five of the Bible passages mentioned throughout this section. Read through the
about the interpretation of the Christian afterlife you think each best fits. Why is thi

This is quite a straightforward exercise, but it gets students analysing some of the k
detail. Students should try to offer justification for each. For example, if talking abou
why the unknown God does not fit a contrary position rather than just stating it fits
elimination is common in biblical studies at higher levels.

Natural/Revealed Theology

Do you believe natural theology or revealed theology is a better way of acquiring kn
exercise, take the other side and write down three ways in which you would criticis

This is also a straightforward exercise but is useful for students when beginning to
Moreover, it is easy to simply accept a middle ground between natural and revealed
criticise one or the other is a good way of getting them to avoid taking the easy rout
issues posed.

The Person of Jesus

Research the life of Jesus and find three examples of passages in the Bible (not inclu
where Jesus could be described as encouraging political or religious liberation. Do t
was primarily a liberator?

There are still plenty of passages in the Bible which support the idea of Jesus as a lib
intended to shift students' attention from the Gospels to look at how Jesus is portra
Examples of passages might include Romans 6:18, 6:22, 8:21, Galatians 5:1, Matthe

Agape Love

What would be the most loving action in the following scenarios? Write down your
How might the difficulty in evaluating the most loving action exemplify the need for
principles other than agape love?

There are many different possible answers to each situation. The idea is to get stude
Christian might apply agape love and get an understanding of the relativistic nature
might conflict with biblical laws.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

What are some modern denominations in the Christian Church you think Bonhoeffe
lack of true discipleship? Write out three, and give your justification for each.

There are many possible examples, and students should be careful to differentiate i
simply adhered to Christian teaching as they see it and where they have displayed a
examples might include standing up for the rights of the poor or homeless across th
abuse in the church, the environment, etc.

Answers to Quick Quizzes

Augustine's Teachings on Human Nature

1. The Fall is the theological event where the first human beings disobeyed God a
2. Original sin is the post-Fall corruption of Adam and Eve, passed down to succes through procreation.
3. Genesis 3
4. Pelagianism
5. Single predestination puts forward that God only foreordains those who will rece predestination puts forward that God ordains both those who will be saved a
6. Caritas is generous love towards others, whereas cupiditas is greedy love of ma one's own ends.
7. Concupiscence is strong desire, typically sexual in nature.

Death and the Afterlife

1. Eschatology is the theological study of the afterlife and the final events of huma
2. Heaven is a realm or state which people enter who have been good and righteo
3. Purgatory means 'purification' and is a state or realm where people are cleanse heaven.
4. Hell is a realm or state which people enter who have been evil or unfaithful thr
5. Personal judgement is the singular evaluation of one's sin immediately after de the evaluation of all of humanity's sin at a future point in time.
6. Limited election states that only some human beings have the possibility of ach unlimited election states that all human beings have the possibility of achievin
7. Romans 11:1–3
8. John Hick

Knowledge of God's Existence

1. Natural theology looks at the ways God can be know through observation of, a world. Revealed theology looks at the ways God can be known through the ever has shown himself to humanity.
2. Sensus divinitatis is Calvin's term for the innate, general sense of the divine hu
3. Beauty, goodness, rea
4. The idea that God shows himself to human beings in a way that befits thei
5. The I
6. Media lation occurs through one or more mediums, such that any knowled hand. Immediate revelation is directly given knowledge of God through experien
7. Fideism

The Person of Jesus Christ

1. Christology from above studies Jesus in the Bible assuming the truth about his studies Jesus beginning with the notion that he is first and foremost a human b
2. To what extent Jesus was aware of his divine nature during his life
3. Son of God
4. Sermon on the Mount
5. Good moral motivations and purity
6. A liberator is someone who ends the oppression of others and offers them new
7. The mission statement

Christian Moral Principles

1. Theonomous ethics is the view that al ws and principles are reflection
2. Sola scriptura is the view th is the sole source of authority for Christ
3. Sacred tradition is the religious tradition is of equal authority in the Ch
4. The Magi body of bishops and the Pope in the Catholic Church wh rule ious and ethical matters.
5. Apost cession is the belief that there is an unbroken line of authority tha bishops to the apostles in the Bible.
6. Natural law is a field of theology which holds that moral laws can be derived fr upon the natural world and human nature.
7. Agape love is selfless, altruistic love often thought to be at the heart of Christia

Christian Moral Action

1. The Confessing Church is a church set up by dissenting clergy after the Nazi Pa
   the key positions of the major German churches.
2. Civil disobedience is the active rejection of a state's laws, orders or powers.
3. God and Christ
4. Cheap grace is easy practice of religious belief, involving little sacrifice or effor
   to Christian ideals, involving both sacrifice and suffering.
5. Solidarity is the standing up for, or awareness of, oth[illegible]ople's struggles, crea
   in the process.
6. Sacrifice
7. Finkenwalde