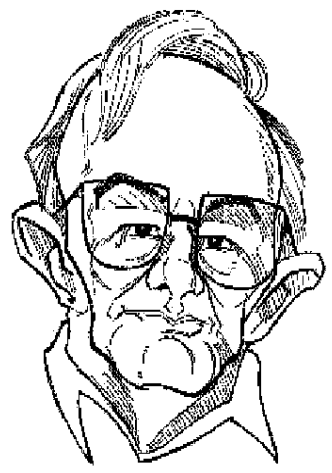
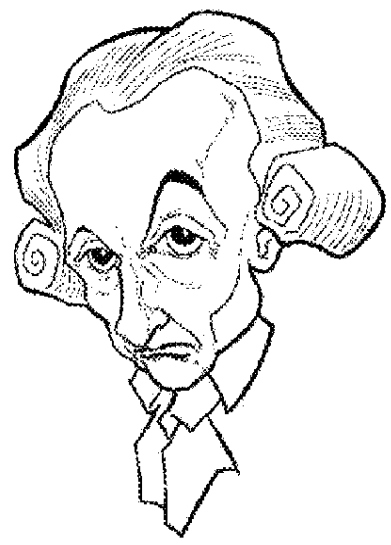
Zig Zag Education

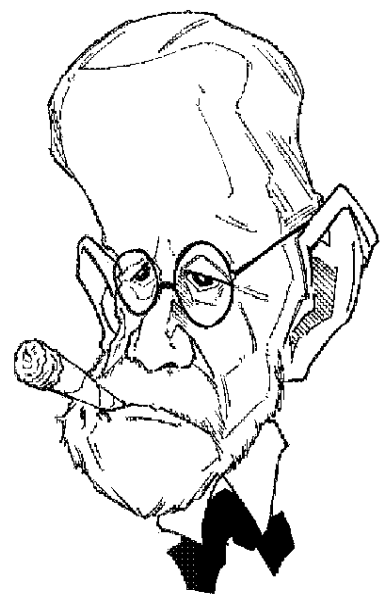
**Religious Studies**

A Level Year 2 | OCR | H573

2016 specification
first exams in 2018







# Course Companion

for A Level Year 2 OCR
Religious Studies

Component 3:
Developments in Christian Thought

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POD
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# Contents

# Teacher's Introduction

This course companion is written for the OCR A Level Year 2 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 to provide material to help sharpen their critical thinking skills.

Alongside the main bulk of the writing, there are a number of other features to help students with their learning and revision. Self-guided and group activities are included throughout the text 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 that it benefits both you and your students throughout the academic year.

**Stretch and Challenge**

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

*March 2020*

 

# Key Terminology in Religious and Theology

| | |
|---|---|
| **Exclusivism** | The belief that only one religion is authoritative in teachi to salvation. |
| **Inclusivism** | The belief that while one religion is authoritative or true, partial insight. |
| **Pluralism** | The belief that no religions have a claim to absolute truth have equally valid claims to truth. |
| **Biblical Realism** | The view that the Bible is an authentic source of true kno |
| **Total Replacement** | A model of exclusivism where the beliefs of a particular fa other religion being regarded as false. |
| **Partial Replacement** | A model of exclusivism or inclusivism which holds other re some truth about salvation, but not the complete truth. |
| **Dominus Iesus** | A theological declaration by the Catholic Church which aff to its exclusive claim to the knowledge of salvation, while truths in other religions. |
| **Solus Christus** | A Protestant belief meaning 'by Christ alone' that holds th achieve salvation. |
| **Christomonism** | A charge levelled at theologians who put too much empha towards salvation, ignoring the work of the Holy Spirit. |
| **The Real** | The ultimate reality, truth or God that John Hick argues lie The term is primarily used to include other religions, such affirm the existence of a God or gods. |
| **Kantian Epistemology** | A field of epistemology developed by Kant that, among ot divide between rationalism and empiricism, positing the c and noumena to describe the external world. |
| **The Mystery of Salvation** | A Church of England report released in 1995 that sets out maintaining salvation is primarily obtainable through Chri |
| **Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus** | A phrase meaning 'outside of the Church there is no salva importance of the Church in allowing humans to achieve s |
| **Noumena** | A 'thing-in-itself' that exists behind knowledge obtainable |
| **Phenomena** | The objects that appear to oneself through one's senses a |
| **Global Theology** | [illegible] of a theology that fairly discusses and weighs the inherent bias towards Christianity or other religions. |
| **Demythologising** | The process of analysing the historical Christ and his teach theology built up since his ministry and death. |
| **Anonymous Christians** | A term Rahner suggested for people who possibly share th but do not directly affirm him as saviour or absolute path |
| **Historical Jesus** | The figure of Jesus that can reasonably be historically veri truths of faith later affirmed by the Christian Church. |

# Key Terminology in Religious and Society

| | |
|---|---|
| **Multifaith Societies** | Societies that have people living within them of numerou |
| **Interfaith Dialogue** | Discussion, debate and engagement between different re differences of their teachings. |
| **Asylum Seekers** | People fleeing their home for reasons of war, oppression refuge in other countries. |
| **Nostra Aetate** | An important 1965 decla[illegible]on [illegible] the Catholic Church aim Catholicism and [illegible] religions. |
| **Redemptoris Missio** | A 19[illegible] encyclical by Pope John Paul II detailing how the C [illegible]nsitive of other people's beliefs during missionary work |
| **Sharing t[illegible]per of Faith** | A 2010 report by the Church of England focusing on the b the good news while being aware of other people's belief |
| **Interfaith Network** | A UK organisation set up to help facilitate interfaith dialo between different religions. |
| **Scriptural Reasoning** | A practice of communal textual analysis used by theologia different faiths to come to a greater understanding about between their respective beliefs. |

# Key Terminology in Gender an

| | |
|---|---|
| **Gender Roles** | The view that there are separate natural or God-given rol and women. |
| **Patriarchy** | A system or systems within a state/society under which m power compared to women. |
| **Misogyny** | A held prejudice against, hatred of or contempt against w |
| **Liberal Feminism** | Within theology, a field of feminism that aims to show Ch patriarchal or misogynistic and that within the Bible and c is the potential for religious gender equality. |
| **Reconstructionist Feminism** | A field of feminism that argues granting women technical to erase patriarchal elements of religion or society. Rathe but that the patriarchal structures prevalent within so change and true gender equality. |
| **Radical Feminism** | Within theology, radical feminism is a field that either exp gender equality within Christianity, or argues elements of are required to dismantle patriarchal structures within th |
| **Marginalisation** | The treatment of a group of people, e.g. women, as insignificant or not worthy of attention. |
| **Mulieris Dignitatem** | An apostolic letter by Pope John Paul II, published in 1988 Church's views on the roles and dignity of women against the nature of gender within society. |
| **Theotokos** | A title given to Mary within some Christian denominations |
| **The Other** | The term De Beauvoir uses to describe how women have defined throughout history. |
| **Naturalistic Feminism** | A field of feminist thought that emphasises the differences the importance of natural elements of women's experience childbearing and motherhood are vital in understanding ho |

# Key Terminology in Gender and

| | |
|---|---|
| **Diachronic Exegesis** | The study of the Bible as it developed over time and histo as it exists in the present. |
| **Sophia** | The goddess of wisdom, often worshipped within esoteric In traditional Christianity she is understood as an expressi with some identifying her as synonymous with the second She features extensively in the wisdom literature of the O and Ecclesiastes, as well as apocryphal works such as the |
| **Total Rape Victim** | Daly's description of Mary as the person, devoid of agenc part of the virgin birth. |
| **Golden Thread** | A theme or teaching of prophetic liberation that Ruether Christian s[illegible]ur[illegible]nderneath its various culturally condi |
| **Accidental Malenes[illegible]** | [illegible]erm Ruether uses to illustrate how Jesus's gender is understand his teachings. |
| **Unholy Trinity** | Rape, war and genocide; the three practices that Daly arg throughout history as a result of its patriarchal influences. |
| **Phallocentric Power** | The term Daly uses to refer to the concentration of male p Christian Church. |
| **Scapegoat Psychology** | The mentality or attitude women are made to adopt in Ch blamed for society's ills and come to believe themselves t |
| **Pirate** | The term Daly uses to describe how she takes back or rec myths distorted by the patriarchal elements of Christianit |
| **Hermeneutic of Suspicion** | A term used by Paul Ricœur to describe the process of an understanding of the author's intentions or motives. |

# Key Terminology in the Chal… Secularism

| | |
|---|---|
| **Secularism** | The belief that religion should be separated from political … are equal under law, with no special preferences given to … |
| **Ego** | The organised, rational part of the human mind that medi… superego and one's perceived reality. |
| **Superego** | The cultural, critical part of the human mind that reflects … beliefs and ideals. |
| **Id** | The instincts and dri…es of t…human mind towards base… |
| **Wish-fulfilment** | Fre… view …hat human religious beliefs (and dreams) ar… …si…es repressed by ordinary thought (the ego and super… |
| **Guilt** | For Freud, an emotive struggle between the ego, supereg… ordinary actions and often results in anxiety. It is often pr… especially in Christianity. |
| **Neurosis** | An excessive, irrational obsession often resulting in depre… odd behaviour. |
| **Totemism** | The process of worshipping or elevating a sacred object o… |
| **Totem Feast** | Ceremonies focused around the consumption (or other ta… icons. Freud holds the totem-feast is symbolised in preser… |
| **Memetics** | A theory describing how units of culture (memes) can be … person to person via evolutionary mechanisms. |
| **God Hypothesis** | The term Dawkins uses to describe what he views as a sci… existence or non-existence of God. |
| **Genetic Fallacy** | A fallacy where the truth or falsity of an argument is base… premises rather than on the merit of the argument itself. |
| **Creationism** | The belief that the world was caused by an act of divine c… scientific theories about the origins of life and the world a… |
| **Selective Bias** | The selection of arguments or data for a proposition that … full possible range of information or perspectives. |
| **Psychic Determinism** | The view that all human mental ac…ns are determined b… or beliefs. |
| **Illusion** | A false id…pe…ance or understanding of an ordinary … |

# Key Terminology in Liberation and Marx

| | |
|---|---|
| **Liberation Theology** | A Christian movement that developed primarily in Latin A which uses Marx and other political thinkers to develop th and a preferential option for the poor. |
| **Ecclesial Base Communities** | Semi-autonomous congregations or groups of Christians l addition to meeting for Bible study, work to improve the v communities. |
| **Evangelii Gaudium** | A 2013 apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis that focuses social obligations the Church and ordinary Christians have modern missionary wor. |
| **Preferential Option for the Poor** | A Catholic moral doctrine which emphasises the importan [illegible] who are marginalised and/or in poverty. |
| **Alienation** | A Marxist concept that described how people are persona their work and the fruits of their labours. |
| **Exploitation** | The unfair treatment of someone so that one can benefit |
| **False Consciousness** | A term retroactively applied to Marx; it describes the stat about their exploitation by their employers. |
| **Proletarian Revolution** | The revolution by the proletariat (poor) against the bourg their exploitation. |
| **Underside of History** | A term used to describe how the poor have traditionally b life throughout the history of the world. |
| **Orthopraxis** | An area of theology that focuses on the right kinds of acti their lives. |
| **Orthodoxy** | An area of theology that focuses on the right kinds of beli should focus on in their lives. |
| **Capitalism** | A system of governance and economics that puts forward control major areas of trade and industry. |
| **Socialism** | A model of political and social organisation that argues th industry should be state controlled, and there should be r wealth between the rich and the poor. |
| **Communism** | A model of political and social organisation that argues th controlled, with workers receiving only what they need fr enterprises. |
| **Latifundia** | The traditional [illegible] feudal system of agriculture that exis [illegible] |
| **Structural Sin** | The sin that is present in, and arises as a result of, unjust a social structures. |
| **Reversal** | A Christian concept that details how in the coming or pres be a shift in wealth and fortune from the rich to the poor. |
| **Lay Catechist** | A non-ordained, baptised individual appointed to lead ma Christians without a parish or local vicar/priest. |

# 4A: Religious Pluralism and T

## What you will learn in this section:

The different approaches to, and models of, Christianity, including:

- Christian exclusivism and the view that only Christian teaching grants true kn to salvation.
- Inclusivism and the view that other religions can offer a partial insight into kn reference to the theology of Karl Rahner.
- Pluralism and the view that no religion can offer exclusive access to knowled to the theology of John Hick.
- Discussion about whether pluralism can be recon h traditional Christi difficulties with each approach to religiou b liet.

**Starter Activity:**

Look back across yo 1 studies. Do you think that Christians are justified in access to th bout salvation? Note down a few of your ideas and compare progress th this section.

| Key Thinker | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | John Hick |
| **Born** | 1922 |
| **Died** | 2012 |
| **Key texts** | *God and the Universe of Faiths* (1995) |
| **Why are they important?** | Hick is perhaps simultaneously one of the most influential and of religion of the twentieth century. Although Protestant, he a should be thought of as myth and other contentious ideas such and pluralism should be adopted by Christians. |
| **Did you know?** | Hick in the late 1950s accepted a place at Cornell University i becoming more liberal at that time and he faced severe critic academics, with many even accusing him of heresy for not ac virgin birth. This hostility eventually led to him coming back t Cambridge University in the early 1960s. |

## Introduction – What Authority does Christianity Possess?

The history of religion is filled with prophets and thinkers claiming that their faith knowledge or grants the only means to salvation. Moreover, there have been cou the inevitable arguments these claims bring about, and in th modern world, we a any individual who claims to have exclusive acces the truth. However, most re hold that they equally do not possess the s to knowledge or salvation. Consi faiths in the world, both major an , this creates a distinct philosophical issu individuals approach the their religion makes and how can these be reconc of other bel te

This section will look at these questions in depth, examining three models of religi **inclusivism** and **pluralism**. While the main focus of these models will be Christiani applied to almost any other religion, so long as it maintains some position about t its claims. Similarly, while the issues analysed will seem quite abstract, they do ha As you will study in the next section, the ways in which religions portray their trut about converting others, communicating with other religions and interpreting the religions are able to reconcile with each other is often directly dependent upon th the validity or reasonability of competing claims. However, before we get into suc analyse the mentality that has dominated Christian thought throughout much of i

# Exclusivism

In the context of Christian thought, exclusivism holds that only faith in Jesus Chris
God) can grant the means to salvation and eternal life, a position sometimes calle
consequence of this mentality is that, for exclusivist Christians, other religions do
knowledge of salvation and may only lead an individual towards condemnation. T
throughout the history of Christianity, this was the view that most theologians he
attitudes have shifted at various times. Many of the figures you studied in Year 1,
Calvin and Luther, adopted some variation of exclusivism, some more pointedly th
those who do not have faith in Christ will be punished, regardless of the lives they

It is important to note that such exclusivist beliefs have not always been a commo
of religion, particularly for polytheistic religions. The emergence of Christianity ac
partially because Roman-oriented paganism was decried as more pluralist in its ap
gods and religious beliefs of other cultures into its own during the conquest of oth
history of Christianity there were many heretical movements which combined Chr
other religious beliefs. Whether it be Gnosticism or Manichaeism, the journey tow
was paved by theologians explicitly rejecting some movements as heresy and mai
even if they developed out of important philosophical concerns.

Nevertheless, it is also important to note that there are potentially strong theoret
based on the nature of Christian beliefs themselves. In fact, exclusivism as a whole
natural conclusion of believing Christ to hold the truth or means to salvation. If th
distinctiveness of Christian teaching means that no other religion can be equally t
belief. Furthermore, many other key Christian doctrines arguably tacitly support e
beliefs about predestination (single or double) and election, in positing that God p
naturally support exclusivist attitudes as they imply there are some individuals wh
path and some who will choose the 'wrong' path to salvation.

Accordingly, many thinkers who endorse exclusivism also hold the Bible to be an
authentic source of true knowledge about God and salvation (**biblical realism**). If t
Bible were thought to contain significant errors then it would equally affect the cl
that only Christianity holds the means to salvation and it might be possible for oth
religions or belief systems to criticise the foundations of Christian thought. To den
exclusivism in Christianity is often seen by proponents as a denial of the veracity o
scripture itself. Yet, it is also worth noting that exclusivist attitudes do not always
this principle. Karl Barth, whose thought is sometimes thought of as endorsing
exclusivism, famously warned against upholding the Bible as infallible, holding suc
bibliolatry. However, even Barth held that the Bible was still an authentic witness
such, it would be wrong to categorise Barth as a critic of scripture-focused theolog

Overall, maintaining an exclusivist attitude towards Christian belief is arguably not
thinking. For proponents it is justified by a prior belief in the truth of Christ and his
are also key theological difficulties in reconciling exclusivist thinking with tradition
For example, it has often been criticised for the explicit (or at least implicit) idea th
in Christ will be punished. This stands in contrast with many of Jesus's teachings in
to emphasise the importance of good ethical conduct over religious observance. E
context this is still debated. Some argue that under single predestination, ex
necessarily entail condemnation for those outside of the Christian faith. R C Sprou
only those who would willingly turn their backs on Jesus knowing he is the path to
condemned, not those who are ignorant of Christian teaching or are innocent in o

There are numerous other issues with exclusivism that will be exposed as we stud
accordingly. What is important to remember is that even if exclusivism can be just
attitude to hold, it is still not necessarily reflective of biblical teaching overall, and
disagreements as to what Jesus and other prophets envisioned in their discussion
However, exclusivist beliefs are still common among many Christians today, lay ar
part, we will discuss some different modern positions on the nature and authority

## Biblical Evidence for Exclusivism

The biblical evidence for exclusivism is often difficult to assess. Throughout the A Le studied many aspects of Christian teaching that quite easily align with exclusivist thi accepts Christian dogma to view the Bible as supporting it. For example, Christian b prospect that human beings can only be saved specifically by God's redemptive wor other figure. Your studies into Augustine and Calvin certainly fit this picture and ma and original sin as supporting broadly exclusivist beliefs. Similarly, beliefs about the **atonement** are often detailed with the view in mind that Christ is the absolute savi Christianity itself as a religion is informed by a vast number of other religious and p

Perhaps the greatest support for exclusivism, however, comes from key passages Proponents often refer to John 14:6, which states 'I am the way, the truth, and th Father except through Me'. John 3:16 carries a similar sentiment, proclaiming tha whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life'. At first glance bo support an exclusivist attitude as they clearly state that only Christ provides the m complex story emerges when one examines the context of these passages and the historical accuracy.

One common issue is that many of these exclusivist passages come from the Gosp **Synoptic Gospels**. John was probably written much later than the Synoptic Gospe picture of Jesus's ministry. Some theologians argue this is due to the author drawi others think that the author added in their own ideas that reflected the beliefs of they were part of. As we will see in the section on inclusivism, there are other bib suggest all non-Christians cannot be saved and these have to be taken into accou kind of attitude to hold. In fact, St Paul himself discusses these issues in Romans 1 the fates of those who cannot hear Jesus's teachings, reflecting that even in the e Church, the potentially exclusionary nature of the religion was not set in stone.

## The Church and Exclusivism

When looking at the history of exclusivism it is also important to note the role of th – for instance, the Catholic Church – adopt the principle of **extra ecclesiam nulla sa** outside the Church'. This means that it is not enough simply to follow the teaching God. One has to be a member of the Christian community, who, in the eyes of mar to salvation through tradition and worship. However, the nature of the 'Church' als denomination. For Catholics, it refers specifically to the Roman Catholic body of th clergy whose authority can be traced back to Jesus through apostolic succession. F denominations, the 'Church' often has a looser definition, referring instead to the v Christians around the world. Yet, regardless of the definition of Church, the princip is often seen as essential in order to give meaning to practices such as baptism or c

Note though that is not essential to subscribe to such views and be an exclusivist. salvation is mediated through Christ without referring to the Church but beliefs in denominated exclusivist discourse throughout much of Christian history and they declaration Dominus Iesus (2000), Pope John Paul II reiterates strongly that the Ca to guarantee salvation through Christ. He also firmly rejects any form of religious to other faiths outside of 'what is true and holy in these religions'. Therefore, alth inclusivist elements in the declaration, it does contain many exclusivist attitudes, in matters of salvation, non-Christians are 'gravely deficient'.

One final important point is that although many denominations still maintain excl now regard each other as **heretical**. Instead they often talk of **schismatic** differen they generally avoid declaring any followers to be misguided about the means to s many might claim to be the true 'Church', in reality there is often much more agre about key issues.

## Modern Theology and Exclusivism

Before we look at the views of specific theologians, it is worth outlining the differe present in Christian thought. The theologian Paul Knitter, for example, divides exc forms. The first he titles **total replacement**. This model holds that Christian faith c knowledge and insights of other religions, in effect making them meaningless. Thi exclusivism one can encounter as it completely negates the ideas and beliefs of ot potentially presents the view that religion or spirituality itself provides no natural true or real. The total replacement model is perhaps most closely found in the the will explore later in this section, believed that if Jesus was the only path to salvati human construct and holds no inherent value.

However, the second model Paul Knitter identifies is that of **partial replacement**. religions might share partially in the truths offered by Christianity but does hold th no concrete path towards reconciliation with God and salvation. Partial replaceme but stops short of claiming that those of other religions can be saved or possess in means to salvation. Therefore, those adopting such a model can acknowledge the with other religions while still maintaining the primacy of the Christian faith as a w model can perhaps be broadly located within the position of the Catholic Church w more inclusive position in recent years, still maintains that only the Christian Chu

So which modern thinkers can be classified as exclusivist? One apologist for such a has been Hendrik Kraemer, a lay theologian who worked extensively in mission w The starting point for his exclusivism is not a wholesale belief in Christ as saviour, part, but the fundamental dissimilarities of world religions. He argues that regardl (for example, Abrahamic faiths) share moral or spiritual beliefs, they all profess th saviour, and accordingly there are key differences between religions that cannot b about truth and salvation. Therefore, Kraemer does not approach the question of Christocentric position. His main point is that individuals cannot pick out beliefs a points of contact or connection from a Christian perspective. This reduces other re of teachings when they are whole belief systems and ways of life that have to be a To engage in trite inclusivism is to either mispresent the nature of other religions they present.

Kraemer's exclusivist position holds a certain impartial appeal. As we will explore pluralists, often struggle to identify similarities or connections between religions w differences. However, there are other potential modern theological arguments fo Christocentric in nature. We've previously mentioned that Karl Barth has often be exclusivist mentality, due to his heavily Christological approach and scepticism of which posit that human beings can, of their own accord, observe or understand G innate sense of his existence. However, the extent to which Barth can be classifie matter of debate within theology, and some contend that his ideas about the free inclusivist understanding of his work.

We can elaborate on this more. Barth argues that the revelation given by Jesus Ch Jesus Christ, for Barth, presents the true path to salvation, and if this is accepted, accepted that other religions can only mislead. From this idea, Barth develops t is human work and contrary to revelation, which comes from faith in Christ and th for Barth, is a dynamic event, sent from God through the Word that is mediated th is that human beings find salvation through this connection between God and the scripture as witness to Christ or **ecclesia**, the preaching of this witness. Religion, fo which concerns itself with sanctification through various rituals and rites that are understand God better. However, since revelation is freely given by God, there ar between God and human beings. This means that religion itself inherently posses Christian religious practices possess value is because they engage with the revelat whereas the practices of other religions, because they do not engage with this rev to be meaningless.

This background is important to appreciate when evaluating whether Barth is excl
surface, it might appear that Barth is clearly endorsing exclusivism. If other religio
contact with God then surely this means that Barth is naturally presenting Christia
other faiths? Yet the situation is not this clear-cut. Although Barth presents Christ
means to salvation, his theology also emphasises the freedom of God's grace and
intellect. For, acknowledging that religion is human work also means, for Barth, ac
have no real knowledge about God's plan for salvation or the reasons why God ch
way that he does. Therefore, human beings cannot make judgements about who
such decisions or actions by God are ultimately unknowable. In practice, this mea
out that those of other religions possess some path to salvation, even if it is not th
human beings.

Some of Barth's critics have suggested that his thought h[illegible]ides into **universalis**
beings will be saved. However, this is perhaps mis[illegible]ing Barth's thought. A be
that Barth is somewhat **agnostic** abou[illegible]re and dimensions of salvation. Fo
given by God through the revel[illegible]ons presented to human beings, it is equally not
judge themselves the r[illegible]s for which God acts. For some thinkers, this places B
the possibi[illegible]th religions sharing in some truths about God and salvation a

Ultimately, what discussion of Kraemer and Barth reveals is that exclusivism can b
perspectives and does not simply arise from dogmatic belief in one faith. It can be
differences between various religions as well as the inability of human beings to e
salvation. Moreover, it may be that there is not a clear dividing line between exclu
The partial replacement model, for example, comes very close to acknowledging t
religions, while even Barth's naturally exclusivist presentation of religion does not
other religious beliefs. However, this closeness, for some, is a more clear indicatio
untenable position. Thus, in the next part of this section, we turn our gaze toward
whether it can provide a better account of modern Christian belief.

**Discussion Activity:**
Is exclusivism an outdated approach to Christianity? Discuss in pairs or small gro
right for Christians to hold that they have exclusive access to the truth or means

## Inclusivism

Inclusivism, in respect to Christian belief, refers to the view that although Christia
salvation, other religions can possess partial knowledge of this means. Typically, t
it is possible for non-Christians to be saved, even if their respective religions cann
their teachings alone. As such, in comparison to exclusivists, Christian inclusivists
of election, believing that Jesus died for all of humanity's sins not just those who
salvation by God. Similarly, inclusivists may also ha[illegible]re positive disposition t
multiple religions can share in knowledge of God and salvation, this implies there
between God and human beings separate from revelation in Jesus Christ. Perhaps
can be seen as a broader attempt to reconcile the idea of a benevolent God with t
faith. For, if God is all loving, it would be an unintuitive proposition to claim that t
religion at all should be condemned, even if they led a good life. As such, many m
attempted to provide accounts of how those living good moral lives might be save
beliefs they hold.

However, Christian inclusivists may have a variety of different viewpoints, even if
other religions possess important theological insights. Where inclusivism in partic
is that it avoids some of the pitfalls of exclusivist attitudes while not sliding into pl
significance of revelation through Jesus Christ. Furthermore, inclusivism in more r
a healthy way of encouraging interfaith dialogue and communication between dif
religions, as it implies that, at the minimum, they might share some teachings or b
churches have been seen to move towards more inclusivist positions in the last ce

many key theologians, such as Karl Rahner and Gavin D'Costa. Nevertheless, befo
the ideas these thinkers present, it is worth considering how inclusivist attitudes r
considering the history and nature of the Christian faith.

## Inclusivism and the Development of Christianity

We noted in the section on exclusivism that there are some significant Bible passa
only Jesus Christ holds the keys to salvation. Yet, at the same time, it was also que
might be interpreted in light of not only the historical development of the Christia
intentions of the Gospel writers. This debate is particularly important for inclusivis
exclusivist attitude towards Christian teachings is not coherent when one conside
Christianity and other religions. For a start, we can note that Jesus himself was Jev
ministry it is likely that he saw himself as a Jew, leading a renewal of, or break in,
As such, Jesus often refers to Jewish law, the prophets of the Old Testament and t
in his teachings to help those listening understand their meaning and relevance to

More transparently, it is possible to note that most Christians refer to the Old Tes
theological insight into the nature of God. If this is the case, then how would it no
who share the scripture and teachings with Christians, to possess some knowl
Without an inclusivist position on the nature of the Christian faith, it may be impo
and Christians are not misguided both in the use of the Old Testament and other s
Jesus is viewed as an important prophet, especially in studies of eschatology, and
that the similarities between Christianity and other religions provide grounds to b
do possess partial knowledge of God and salvation.

This idea is not just limited to religious thought. Christian theology throughout his
areas of philosophical thought to influence its ideas. Some historians, for example
Jewish philosopher Philo, who synthesised Jewish teaching and Greek philosophy,
and the concept of the Logos. Perhaps more significantly, Aquinas and other medi
drew on Aristotle to help illuminate fields such as natural law, while Platonism pro
influence on many early Christian theologians. An exclusivist, as such, may well stı
philosophies could not possess certain knowledge of God or salvation if they mair
Christian teaching over all other religious thought.

Such issues were appreciated by many of the early church fathers. Although it was
history has revolved around exclusivist attitudes, many early theologians considere
appropriate stance to take. Justin Martyr, for example, argues that those who part
even if they are unaware of it, can arguably be considered to be on the path towar
puts forward that when a culture denies the influence of another on its thought, th
admission of its influence. For, in order to reject a school of thought, one has to in
one's own ideas have evolved either separately or away from such a school. Tertul
that religions do not arise in a vacuum and, as such, it is impossible for Christianity
to the truth about God and salvation when it has been so deeply influenced by Gre

Although such views might not have enjoyed extensive popularity with later theol
Christian thought were less accessible, they have been once again raised in recent
in particular explored in the writings of one of the most important Catholic theo
century: Karl Rahner. It is to his ideas we shall turn next.

## Karl Rahner and 'Anonymous Christians'

Karl Rahner's inclusivist theology primarily aims to reconcile two different principl
**Christus**, the idea that it is only through the atonement of Jesus on the cross that
grace. Without this action of Jesus, Rahner argues that people would not be able t
principle is that any religion can mediate this grace, even if it necessarily requires
Through reconciling these two ideas, Rahner ultimately seeks to provide a theolog
is the ultimate source of knowledge about God and salvation while acknowledging
separately arrive at a partial understanding of this knowledge. However, as you m

surface can prove to be a tricky goal. Many religions do not hold Jesus even to be ultimately is sent through Jesus, then it is difficult perhaps to judge how they wou such an idea in their thought.

Rahner's solution is not to suggest that all religion must incorporate Christian idea those of other religions may in fact live their lives as **anonymous Christians**. This i virtues embodied by Jesus in the Gospels and so has implicitly accepted God's gra unaware of it themselves. What's interesting here is that in endorsing this idea of explicitly denies a principle that the Catholic Church continues to hold today: that the idea that salvation can only be found in the Church. Instead, Rahner argues fo **open Catholicism**, a central tenet of which is that Catholics should not be wholly i open to the idea that those of other religions might find truth and salvation throu then, is not simply the community of individuals who practise Christianity through encompasses all who follow its teachings in their lives. This does not demean the Rahner. The natural depravity of fallen human beings means that other religions r right kind of behaviour, and the visible Church still has a duty to proselytise to tho Yet through denying the essential role of the Church, Rahner allows for the possib be saved, regardless of whether they adhere to the visible signs of the Christian fa

The philosophical support Rahner gives for his inclusivism is much the same as the at in this section. Rahner argues that God is revealed not just in the historical mor whole of creation. One example is St Paul's sermon in Acts 17 at the Areopagus, w Athenians' 'unknown God'. Similarly, Rahner acknowledges the importance of Chr before Jesus when individuals were still aware of God's presence but unable to be Therefore, although the Christian faith was an essential part of God's plan, it is no reveals himself to human beings, and there are a variety of ways that individuals r understand his being and work outside of Christianity.

Rahner's ideas might initially seem attractive. They preserve the role of Jesus Chri time acknowledging how people of other religions might share in this salvation. H about anonymous Christians were, and still are, highly controversial. Among Cath undermining the role of the Church in mediating salvation. The Catholic Church, y the authority of its teachings and traditions by referring to **apostolic succession**; t it is not just Jesus who mediates salvation but the Church as a whole, supporting t **nulla salus** in the process. Yet Rahner's rejection of this doctrine severely diminish and effectively contends they are far from essential in matters of salvation. Simila Rahner's theology is that sacraments such as the Eucharist (communion) are also found outside the Church, what role should be accorded to any Christian practice

The criticisms of Rahner's thought always carry another difficult implication. The i suggests not just that Christian practice is inessential but also that Christianity as a matters of ethics. This was an objection put forward by a contemporary of Rahner argued that if individuals can be saved without practising any visible signs of Chris Christianity itself is nothing more than a prelude to acting virtuously. Rahner disagre holding that such criticisms neglect his emphasis on anonymous Christians 'impli God alongside Christ, but these kind of objections still pose an issue for Chris conception of Christian faith, encompassing both worship and ethics.

A final issue concerns whether Rahner's inclusivism is conversely insulting or 'patr Critics such as Hans Kung have argued that defining those of other faiths as anony presumptuous about their understanding of their religious beliefs but also reduce extensions or versions of Christian thought. It can, therefore, be reasonably argue religions would resist such a characterisation of their views if they hold a sincere b importance of their faith. Rahner's theology doesn't really 'include' other religions to a form palatable to Christians. For, while it can be contended that Rahner is spe stance towards other faiths, it can also be thought that his adherence to the princ tacit endorsement of an exclusivist attitude that implicitly denies the wisdom and

## D'Costa and Trinitarianism

So what is the way forward if neither Christians nor those of other faiths are happ
Gavin D'Costa presents an alternative conception of inclusivism that is worth com
D'Costa's central contention is that focusing on Christ as the only path to salvatio
for both Christians and those of other religions, for it ignores the important role o
therefore, suggests is that matters of salvation should be approached from a Trini
Holy Spirit a deeper role in the mediation of the grace of God opens up the possib
which other religions can access and develop knowledge of God and salvation in t

D'Costa contends that this focus on the action of the Trinity gives deeper grounds
of revelation. There is the possibility that the Holy Spirit, although acting primarily
acted elsewhere throughout history. Jesus, although providing an authentic point
human beings, does not necessarily provide knowledge of God and salvation beyo
religious figure, as the action of the Holy Spirit might offer similar revelation for ot
possible to observe D'Costa drifting somewhat towards pluralism than exclusivism, a m
Christians might oppose. Yet, at the same time, it can be argued that by reframing
D'Costa also avoids many of the criticisms levelled against Rahner's idea of an
threatens to patronise or demean the beliefs of other religions. However, there is
potentially surpasses D'Costa in acknowledging the validity of other faiths: **pluralis**
turn in the next section.

### The Church of England and Inclusivism

Although the Catholic Church has made steady inroads into promoting more incl
the Church of England that has fully embraced a more inclusivist perspective. In
1995 report by the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England, the Church re
beliefs about the afterlife and salvation yet also affirms at the same time the uni
in God and his potential acceptance of those of other religious beliefs. Therefore
adheres to belief in the existence of heaven and hell, as well as the absolute trut
acknowledges (similarly to Rahner) that the free grace of God may be extended
faith and at least be implicitly accepted by those of other religions living good m

### Discussion Activity:

Is Rahner's idea of 'anonymous Christians' patronising to other religions? Discus
whether inclusivism can ever successfully accommodate the beliefs of other relig

## Pluralism

Religious pluralism, in contrast to exclusivism and inclusivism, holds that no religio
or knowledge of, God and salvation. This equally means that, for pluralists, there a
ways to salvation and multiple religions might possess equally valid claims to know
they present competing beliefs or principles. Yet, with these basic ideas in mind, t
ways of interpreting pluralism. On the one hand, religious pluralism might arise si
fallibility of human intellect and the varieties of thought in the world. It may b
equipped to know what is and what is not the right religion and so, by virtue of th
acknowledge that each religion may have a valid claim to knowledge about God a
other hand, some pluralists hold that if one analyses the competing claims of relig
observe how they are all simply different forms of underlying universal or spiritua
enterprise. Such ideas are often based on the concept of **philosophia perennis** (pe
is a single metaphysical truth from which all spiritual or religious knowledge has a
themselves 'Perennialists' or, more commonly, 'Traditionalists'.

Throughout the history of Christianity, pluralism has been a rare proposal from th
unique nature of Jesus Christ and the theology that arises from that belief has typ

inclusivist attitudes. Yet one modern theologian, John Hick (who will be the focus
opened up the discussion in Christian circles to consider pluralism as a viable mod
work *God and the Universe of Faiths*, he presents a detailed outline of how Christi
position, but a justifiable one to take with respect to other religions, and much of
helped flesh out this vision through discussion of a myriad of theological and philo

Hick's central contention is that when one considers the various dimensions and e
claims and ends of various religions, it is a more viable solution to search for theolo
emphasise their differences. Moreover, despite the claims of critics, he also argues
religious pluralism does not reduce down to relativism. For Hick, holding that all re
equally valid claims to knowledge of salvation is not the same as arguing that truth
Rather, if one recognises that all religions are not 'final' – that is, they are still in a d
evolution – it is possible to reconcile their different claims through respecting their
common goals. Moreover, Hick contends this is not a radical proposal. Even the mo
would recognise that theological disagreements and conflicts have contributed to t
re-examining these disagreements lead to pluralism itself? This we shall cover in th

## The Evidence for Pluralism

We analysed in the section on exclusivism the argument that acknowledging religi
with competing claims can easily lead to exclusive mentalities. Yet in the introduct
how these competing claims may potentially not be real disagreements but reflec
different religions undergoing various forms of growth. But how is it possible to de
Hick does not present one avenue towards choosing one presentation over anoth
characterised as a complete overhaul of the assumptions behind the Christian fait
therefore, proceed by analysing its parts, and it is necessary to appreciate the vari
theological reasons Hick has for presenting a very different world view to that of C

The first, and most basic, reason Hick gives for pluralism is his belief in a benevole
Hick contends that an all-loving God would never condemn anyone to eternal
punishment, regardless of their actions or their faith. This leads him in turn to enc
**universalism**, the idea that all human beings will eventually be saved. We won't d
this aspect of Hick's thought too deeply but he holds a number of beliefs unusual
Protestant theologian. One is that he argues for the existence of purgatory, conte
that an intermediary state between life and the afterlife is reasonable in the conte
universalism, as it means individuals can come to understand the moral nature of
actions before they are saved. Another is that Hick is ultimately a materialist. He d
separate spiritual aspect to human beings; such a belief is anathema to modern sc
proposes that in the afterlife God creates a sort of 'replica' of each person, compr

You don't need to know these aspects of Hick's thought in depth when evaluating
to note that Hick is far from orthodox in his beliefs and these help inform his plura
individuals are eventually saved, the exclusivity of Christianity is automatically tor
will eventually reach salvation due to God's benevolence and it may be that Christ
paths that help human beings understand this process.

The second, perhaps equally important, reason is the limitations of the human
reflected in the immaturity of religion itself. We've explored this partially in the la
is not based simply on philosophical rumination of God but on how individuals co
beliefs and the potential causes of these beliefs. Importantly, Hick asks whether th
rationally justify one religion's claims over another, ultimately concluding that the
from our own beliefs, it is possible to observe an incredibly wide range of spiritual
the world, yet each is largely based upon experiences of ineffable, transcendental
using conventional empirical methods. In the case of Christianity, Judaism or Islam
are largely unknowable while in other religions, such as Buddhism, higher states s
indescribable using conventional language.

What Hick argues is that natural theology, or any other 'rational' religious endeav religion over another. In any argument for a particular conception of God or salva contradictory evidence to dispute its claims. Each religion may have good reasons are by and large not based on independently analysable evidence but the words a figures. Yet at the same time, Hick notes that nearly all religions have some conce way or path human beings can take to engage with that reality and transform one indicates for Hick is that the most coherent position to take is not to arbitrarily fav as preaching the truth about God and salvation but to view each religion as poten reality or level of existence that is imperfectly understood by fallible human being acknowledges that all religions may have some partial knowledge of God and salv exclusive access to this knowledge.

However, this is ultimately only an outline of Hick's work. Before we assess wheth Christian faith, it is worth exploring the more philosophical side of Hick's work and had for theology in the future.

## Religious Experience and Its Real

In the last p[illegible] noted that, for Hick, there was no rational way to justify belief So what are [illegible]grounds for religious belief? Hick contends that it is primarily **relig** their heart, he claims, are based on the different experiences individuals have had underlying reality and their attempts to get to grips with what they have experien experiences are naturally **private**, **incommunicable** and often **ineffable**, there is a being in relating them to others, let alone understand their overall implications fo whole. In fact, religious experience may itself only be communicated through met which can perhaps more readily capture its often strange and mystical dimension

More importantly, if religious experience is the foundation for religious beliefs the actually truth claims about *experiences* of God. What this means is that no religion influences and constraints upon human experience. These include the very catego to understand experience, the cultural influences upon the way we experience thi circumstances of this experience. For Hick, this does not mean that religious expe knowledge. Rather he holds that all religious experiences originate from the same **the Real** (this is to avoid the often loaded term 'God'). While the Real ultimately c we term as religious, these experiences are affected by the subjective elements of history which result in the differences in religious belief we can observe today.

By detailing the grounds for religion in this way, Hick seeks to avoid charges of **rel** and separate himself from philosophers and theologians such as Don Cupitt, who **non-realist** interpretations of God and religion. He employs categories developed philosopher Immanuel Kant in order to further illustrate how a realist, pluralist po religion is possible. Kant distinguished between what he termed the **noumena** (th themselves) and the **phenomena** (the things that appear). The phenomenal world therefore, the world as experienced by human beings, whereas the noumenal wo real world behind this experience. Kant held that the noumenal world was fundam inaccessible to human beings, who could only engage with the phenomenal world experience. In a similar fashion, Hick argues that the Real exists in this noumenal occurring in the phenomenal world. Whatever the Real is, it is inaccessible to hum structures of their experience.

So Hick, along with his initial evidence for pluralism, gives a deeper philosophical a the competing truth claims of religion. However, if this account is true, it stands in truth claims of most religions, who generally hold that they alone have exclusive k So how does Hick resolve these tensions between his world view and that of the c aspect of Hick's thought we shall analyse next.

## Demythologisation and Global Theology

Although Hick himself was a Christian, it would be unfair to characterise his theol
Much of his work on pluralism was aimed at not just Christians but people of all re
encourage the development of a **global theology**, an approach to God and salvati
of religious claims and sought to build bridges between those of different faiths. C
between his perspective on religion and the **Copernican Revolution**, the shift in a
belief in the heliocentric model of the solar system. He compares the older **Ptole**
and the planets revolved around the Earth, to orthodox Christianity. The Christoce
analyses all things as if they are centred around Christianity as the only source of
God, when a more fruitful attitude would be to view Christianity as one of many r
centred on the Real. Yet this view requires accepting the ideas of other religions a
automatically comparing them to Christian belief.

However, Hick also argues for reanalysing and redefining many key Christian conc
the Bible, the source of Christian beliefs about the world, is far from reflective of t
of the scientific knowledge we possess about the nature and form of the universe
expected und[illegible]ical proposals, since the experiences of the Gospel authors and
the languag[illegible]re and historical circumstances under which it is written. This r
truths are contained within the Bible are buried within layers of myth and story th
modern audiences. Simply put, the Bible, for Hick, is not a timeless document but
experiences historical individuals had of the Real.

Therefore, Hick holds that in order to reach the core teachings and truths of the G
**demythologise** the stories around Jesus and attempt to discover the historical bel
of demythologisation was first prominently espoused by Rudolf Bultmann, an earl
biblical studies, who argued scholars should attempt to find the **historical Jesus** u
embellishments and imaginings of the Gospel writers. For Hick, if this task is unde
evaluating many of the core concepts accepted as orthodoxy by the Christian Chu
that the historical Jesus did not teach his followers about the **Trinity** or **Incarnatio**
primarily formed by theologians extrapolating different ideas from the myths surr
most important aspect of Jesus, for Hick, is his humanity. Recognising the mortalit
message to transform the lives of ordinary human beings is arguably more inspirir
Jesus painted by the Christian Church. More importantly, however, it means that,
unique nature or relationship with God and so the assertions within traditional Ch
evidence of his exclusive access to the means of salvation are ultimately unwarra

Throughout this section it should be possible to see how Hick's pluralism is based n
entire overturning of the assumptions made by many religions, including Christianit
benevolent, if the claims of religion should be judged against various different form
no religion can rationally justify its claims over another, then there are good ground
approach might provide the most coherent attitude to various evaluating Christian be
claims can be contested, and, in the next part we will look at the various criticisms
world view.

**Activity:**

There are [illegible] questions about whether Hick's pluralism overstates the simila
religions. Pick three different religions and research their beliefs about God and
ways you think they might be reconciled or not.

## Evaluating Pluralism

It was noted earlier in this section that Hick's pluralism is quite contentious, and it it deny Christianity exclusive access to the means to salvation but it also denies a n teachings that are often perceived to be central to the Christian faith. Many conse therefore, argued that pluralism simply strays too far from conventional Christian b of demythologisation itself or the dismissal of key aspects of the Gospels such as th argued that Hick's pluralism makes Christianity itself meaningless. Jesus simply bec with any other secular figure, and there is little to inspire faith in God when Jesus is However, such a view is perhaps also misleading. The reason Hick proposes his plu with the philosophical issues at the heart of Christian dogma as it is to do with his b maintain an exclusive claim to the truth about God. It may be that Christian beliefs to still be reasonable and meaningful when considering the nature and extent of m

Moreover, there are good reasons to believe that Hick may be right about his theo Much work has gone into developing viable accounts of election in order to explai human beings to be condemned while saving others. Is it not just simpler and mor benevolent God would eventually save all human beings, regardless of their actio that this process of salvation is longer and more painful for those who do commit overlooked that philosophically Hick's ideas may be fundamentally sound.

Yet it is also possible to criticise Hick from the other end of the spectrum. Hick pre representing an actual being or thing that exists outside of our perceptions. But w in the noumenal world? Non-realists might contend that Hick is assuming too muc ideas such as demythologisation, he should extend this to his beliefs about religio there is not one underlying cause but simply a myriad of different physical causes different ways depending on a person's background, culture and psychological sta propositions about religious experience in detail here but it can be questioned wh It may be that his commitment to a realistic portrayal of Christian belief ends up u

Alister McGrath makes a similar point here, contending that Hick provides no valid connection between the 'Real' in the noumenal world and religious experience in only leads to questions about whether there is a Real but also makes it impossible had a genuine religious experience in the first place. Similarly, it can be questioned a genuine religion with meaningful access to truths about salvation. For example, should be considered to possess the same privileges as Christianity does? Mark He Hick is still closer to inclusivism as his authentic religious experiences would not ex faiths which do not possess reasonable or valid spiritual beliefs.

Therefore, even if Hick's pluralism does possess some theoretical advantages, he st fleshing out the exact dimensions of the 'global theology' he proposes. Yet, with th the development of interfaith dialogue, it may be that inclusivism is unwittingly reali these phenomena we turn in our next section where we analyse how religious plu

| Quick Quiz |
|---|
| 1. What is the difference between exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism |
| 2. What is universalism? |
| 3. Who is one prominent exclusivist thinker? |
| 4. What are anonymous Christians? |
| 5. What is Solus Christus? |
| 6. What is the Real in Hick's thought? |
| 7. What is a global theology in Hick's thought? |

# 4B: Religious Pluralism and

## What you will learn in this section:

The discussion around the ways interfaith dialogue and communication are condu
different religions, including:

- How multifaith societies develop in the modern world and the influences upo
- The importance of interfaith dialogue and how different Christian denominat
  those of other religions.
- The scriptural reasoning movement, its methods and aims and how it looks t
  understanding of the truth claims of different religions.

**Starter Activity:**
What actions would you take to impr e c mmunication and dialogue between
Kingdom? Note down three ctions and compare them to the ideas studied thro

## Introducti he Development of Multifaith Societies

The existence of multifaith societies isn't a new phenomenon. Throughout the his
been many different documented societies or cultures that have possessed indivi
especially in landlocked states which have possessed fluid borders. In this respect,
multifaith societies are also not new. Discussions of inclusivism and pluralism hav
aiming to reconcile the conflicting views of different religions, and it is erroneous
have constantly been racked with religious conflict. For many throughout history,
state has been inconceivable and, although there have been an uncountable num
over religion, rarely has a state been able to religiously isolate itself from the influ

Yet, with the increasing ease of travel and communication in the modern world, m
prevalent than ever and individuals regularly come into contact with people from
world. While this presents challenges in everyday life, it has also put increasing pr
issue guidance to followers on interfaith dialogue and develop more balanced app
mission work. This is particularly true for the UK. Although Christianity is still the l
country, there have been growing numbers of Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Jews, al
moral and spiritual ideas from many Christians. This means that all Christian deno
Catholic Church and Church of England, have been pushed to engage in more inte
address how conflicts arise between individuals of different religions in order to e
These various efforts will be the subject of this section, as we explore how represe
have worked with those of other religions and even adjusted Christian doctrine ar
preaching and conversion.

## What Factors Contribute to the Development of Mu ith ocieties?

Multifaith societies are largely develo e th gh the movement of people. Whil
cluster around those of their cu cult re or faith, there are a number of influence
necessitate them mo i g to another location containing those of other cultures a
aren't isola e on might in some senses choose to move to a certain place
pressures or straints while others might be wholly forced to move without an
location. Religions often face difficulties in evaluating and judging these different
there are external perceptions of individuals of different faiths that influence how
by those of the native faith or culture. For example, many people judge migrants
opportunities without understanding how inbuilt economic structures may have
without their say. Unpicking the myriad of different factors that affected the mov
bit of a minefield. Rarely does someone have a full understanding not only of the
surrounding such movements but also the individual psychological reasons indivi
However, there are a number of key aspects we can note:

### 1. Voluntary Migration

This is often the most transparent factor in the development of multifaith societie misunderstood. As travel and communication have become easier with technolog barriers people have faced when moving to other places have diminished. As a re to other countries for a change in lifestyle and environment. A classic example is E climates. Such voluntary movement can be short-term or long-term but, on the w opportunities for people to explore other cultures and religions has led many to m birthplace. Such migration might be spurred on by a multitude of personal reason more so than ever, individuals voluntarily choose to engage with those of other re has led to the development of communities without a single unifying faith.

### 2. Economic Necessity – Labour, Development and the Free Market

Increasingly, the effects of **globalisation** can be felt amo ividual communitie placed upon international trade, markets and eco ion ic growth across borders m influences can inform people's move e t. n in impoverished areas, there is s work for people to survive, and s thi ight spur movement in both skilled and u In particular, compani a e gage in a larger number of international projects workers, es y i abour-intensive fields such as construction or resource gat people of di t faiths having to migrate. However, there is of course debate a necessity and what counts as simply economic desire. What might appear necess be a desirable choice to another.

### 3. Involuntary Migration – Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Following on from economic necessity, there is arguably an even greater influenc conflict and war. This is perhaps the most visible aspect of the mixing of individua in light of modern conflicts such as the civil war in Syria. Simply put, the continue around the world means that people are displaced from their native countries du placing them alongside those of different faiths. Yet, even though such migrants h will, tensions can easily arise between them and native populations due to conflic Moreover, many often conflate such forms of involuntary migration with both vol meaning interfaith dialogue may be even more necessary to ensure the persisten process we turn to in the next section.

## The Role of Interfaith Dialogue

More so than ever, the last 50 years have seen many Christian denominations un encourage interfaith dialogue, often through changes to Church doctrine. Howeve dialogue arguably has both a scriptural and historical precedent. Many Christians, dialogue as a vital element of Jesus's call for reconciliation and a natural conseque and compassion. Whether it be the parable of the Good Samaritan or simply the g pressed to find Jesus ever encouraging conflict with those of other faiths, even if, has often been at odds with religions such as Islam and Hinduism.

Yet, even to conservative Christians, not those less concerned with maintaining the other roles. Many see it as a vital part of evangelism. Regardless of the mission w people of different religions in order to convert them requires endearing potentia Such a proc ually would be hard to carry out if the evangelical arm of the C as hostile to of other faiths. Whether one is focused on ensuring a harmoni aiming to present a good face to the Church, it is arguably necessary to holistically communities using well-thought-out methods of interfaith dialogue. In fact, mode often have a mix of these two aims. Most Christians do not wish to invoke religiou wish to encourage new converts.

To this end there are even dedicated organisations set up to mediate communicat For example, the Inter Faith Network is an organisation set up in the UK to specifi between different religions in the UK through advocacy, events and information. the Catholic Church and Church of England we shall focus on next.

## Dialogue in the Catholic Church

In the Catholic Church, the importance of inter-dialogue has been increasingly appreciated in the last half a century. While it is an institution held in esteem by many, it has often been the seat of historical controversy, particularly in its treatm However, a number of important declarations have been made in recent years tha One key document is the *Nostra Aetate*, published in 1965 by Pope John VI, which elements of God's work within humanity across different religions. Perhaps most i focused on reconciliation between the Catholic Church and the Jewish population many regard it as a turning point in relations between these two faiths.

A more recent document is the *Redemptoris Missio,* an encyclical published by Po Paul II in 1990. In contrast to the *Nostra Aetate,* it focuses on how the Catholic Ch meaningfully engage in missionary work in the modern world. Here three elemen identified as key: the conversion of the areligious and the of different faiths, th of commitments within disinterested Christians and a greater emphasis on pastor within the Christian community. However, the *Redemptoris Missio* equally attemp acknowledge the difficulties in mission work and the need for good interfaith dial For example, in Chapter 3 (verses 31–40), the Pope details the importance of miss non-Christian world but asserts that the Church is required to address people 'wit respect for freedom'. Key especially is verse 39, which declares 'The Church She respects individuals and cultures, and she honours the sanctuary of conscienc clear call for mission workers to engage with other religions as equals and not sim

These ideas are repeated in verses 55–57, where the Pope directly addresses the dialogue. He argues that ultimately, if understood as a means of knowledge and e not opposed to missionary work, and is, in fact, 'one of its expressions'. Such an u Church's more **inclusivist** position. The Pope directly notes that the Church gladly other religions, even if such truths should divert from its mission to proclaim truth Therefore, the Pope argues that interfaith dialogue stimulates Christians to discov religion, particularly the way God works in the world and challenges their underst Christian religion. Moreover, the use of interfaith dialogue allows a 'dialogue of lif religions which can potentially help form a more 'just and fraternal' society.

## Dialogue in the Church of England

In 2010 the Church of England published a report titled *Sharing the Gospel of Faith* which was written to clarify how the Church should approach preaching the good news while at the same time being aware of the changing religious lands is concerned with how Christians can ethically engage in mission and conversion v it holds there is more of a level playing field in the country as fewer and fewer pe For example, it discusses interfaith dialogue in verse 96, holding similarly to the C conflict between "dialogue" and "evangelism" since both are part of proclamatio identifies four different kinds of dialogue that Christians might engage in:

1. The dialogue of daily life – common forms of discussion or conversation enga
2. The dialogue of the common good – conversation generated when engaging
3. The dialogue of mutual understanding – more formal theological conversatio
4. The dialogue of spiritual life – reflections or engagement during prayer an

All of these may raise the prospect of mission work, and the Church of England of case studies examples of how evangelism can be undertaken in a suitably un fashion. However, you might have noticed that despite both the Catholic Church a emphasising the importance of respect for other religions, they are still ultimately For many, this is still emblematic of exclusive (or, at best, inclusive) attitudes; wer these Christian denominations then one might well expect a reduced emphasis o Nevertheless, it is possible to see how even with a strong focus on the necessity o equally possible to reconcile a need for interfaith dialogue.

**Discussion Activity:**
Do you think the efforts to promote interfaith dialogue from Christian denomina enough in recent years? Or should more effort go into developing positive relati Discuss in pairs or small groups.

## The Scriptural Reasoning Movement

In the last section, you might have raised your eyebrows at the third form of dialo
*Gospel of Salvation*. Within it, the Church of England directly mentions the **scriptu**
Although initially contained only to academic groups, this is a set of religious prac
many different groups aiming to come to a greater understanding of each other's
reasoning is often credited with helping develop better responses from religious c
social issues.

But what does scriptural reasoning involve? Primarily, it requires a small group of
regularly meeting to discuss their religious texts on a specific topic. The aim, howe
find agreement with each other but to develop a deeper knowledge of different p
own religious assumptions. Through this process of critical analysis, people from p
communities can begin the groundwork towards working together on social issues

Naturally, for such an approach there are basic guidelines put in place. For one, th
reasoning are encouraged to focus on topics which are not widely agreed upon, to
Furthermore, meetings are required to take place in a neutral space, thus promot
discussion and no person will be removed from places of religious observance. Al
scriptural reasoning can vary from group to group, often there is a basic process a

1. Participants identify an issue, theme or narrative arising from their lives or wi
2. Each individual of their respective faith selects a scriptural passage relating to
3. In small groups, the individuals read aloud their passage, often giving it an int
   order to give it context.
4. Participants then begin to ask questions about the passage or share their ow
   opening up further discussion.

Ultimately, scriptural reasoning is perhaps best conceived of as a tool. There is no
participants developing greater knowledge about other faiths, exploring the differ
and making new friends. Yet the potential for scriptural reasoning in breaking dow
religions and encouraging interfaith dialogue is a greater sense of a global religiou
potential hostilities between conflicting faiths. However, some have criticised the
and we will turn to their objections next.

### Criticisms of Scriptural Reasoning

Some have viewed scriptural reasoning as emblematic of 'post-liberal' theology. T
thought to less focus on religions as describing conflicting truths or ideas but inste
historical and cultural contexts of different faiths, looking at how they developed
crises. For post-liberal theologians, what is true or false is, therefore, much less of
developing knowledge of the religion itself and its followers. Through shifting the
a more holistic view of religious belief can be formed which is not limited to an in
but encompasses all manner of ideas, even if there is a central faith behind one's
potentially an important part of such an approach, for listening and gathering kno
perspectives from members of the religion themselves may lead to a greater unde
religious complexity and the way it views the world.

However, some theologians have argued that such a post-liberal approach to theo
**flattening** Christian beliefs. For scriptural reasoning and other such tools arguably
partisan approach to scripture that, on the face of it, is in conflict with the reverer
ordinary Christians. The rooting of Christian belief in its historical or social context
tension with the idea that the Bible presents universal truths. This means that crit
reasoning is an erroneous approach to Christian holy works if they are taken to be
the Bible is thought to be reflective of God's will, then comparing it to other religi
objective or neutral perspective is a pointless or misleading exercise.

Therefore, an interesting debate emerges around the purpose and use of scriptur
exercise necessary not only to promote good relations and interfaith dialogue bet
Or is it reflective of an over-liberalisation of theology, unsuitable for Christians co
the authentic Word of God? Whatever your thoughts, to a certain extent one's po
importance of scriptural reasoning depends on the nature of one's attitudes towa
exclusive access to the truth about salvation.

**Activity:**
How do other religions view the resurrection event of Jesus? Do some independ
and write out your own ideas about how the scriptural reasoning movement mig
people of different religions to discuss this event.

**Quiz Quiz**

1. What is interfaith dialogue?
2. What factors contribute to the development of multifaith societies?
3. What key docum[illegible]ts out the position on interfaith dialogue for the Cath
4. What [illegible]oc[illegible]t sets out the position on interfaith dialogue for the Chu
5. What [illegible]scriptural reasoning movement?
6. What criticisms have been made of the scriptural reasoning movement?

# 5A: Gender and Societ

## What you will learn in this section:

The way changing views and philosophies about gender have influenced Christian

- Traditional Christian teaching on the roles and responsibilities of men and wo
- The different ways Christian thinkers and denominations have responded to r roles, including discussion around parenthood and family.
- The debate around the extent to which Christian teaching should adapt to co about gender.
- Whether contemporary secular philosophies of gender have successfully und teaching on gender roles.

**Starter Activity:**

Research and write down three aspects of the modern Christian Church where s to be present. Compare these examples to your studies throughout this section

## Introductio The History of Gender in the Christian Church

It is fair to say that women throughout the history of Christianity have not always as their male counterparts (and this is putting it lightly). While women played key the Christian Church has largely been dominated by male influences such that mu history has undeniably conferred greater status and power to men, whether it be household. Yet, with the rise of feminism in the twentieth century, the Church has potentially **sexist** or **misogynistic** teachings. Moreover, feminist critics as a whole an institution is thoroughly **patriarchal**, with women regularly being denied the sa Sometimes these patriarchal influences are obvious, such as the Catholic Church c sometimes they are much more subtle, with their ramifications less easily detecte

What is perhaps most difficult for theologians and critics to reconcile is the insister alongside the traditionally gendered language used to describe him. Throughout th whether biblical language should be re-examined, but it is easy to note at first glan Father and Son, King and Lord reflect the notion that male roles are emblematic of is often little attention given in the Bible to the historic oppression of women and r potentially only serve to reinforce this oppression. Also many theologians, mostly m question the treatment of women within scripture and perhaps even furthered sex within the Church. Whether it be early church fathers such as Augustine or later th have put forward doctrines that claim women are second in status to men and sho to their decisions. Ultimately, it may be that literal interpretations of the Bible itsel as theological truth and built into the foundations of Christian belief, whether in ac

There is no easy solution to these issues of gender. Some more conservative or m argued that while it is important to discover the sexist structures of the Christian C from sexist or misogynistic itself. With a proper historical analysis, it may be possi can be developed that is free from patriarchal influences and mirrors the spiritual Church. Yet as with such a project sounds simple, complications easily arise. Shoul abandoned? Should the words of potentially sexist authors in scripture be dis of extracting a gender-neutral form of Christianity has led other, more radical criti itself is irredeemably misogynistic and that any future feminist religion has to com foundations of Christian thought.

These debates will be examined in greater detail in section 5B. However, we can no position about Christianity, there are good arguments for a feminist reinterpretatio Candy Stanton, for example, suggests that so long as Christianity is part of the cultu feminists cannot overlook critiquing its ideas. Therefore, we shall first turn to an ess theological minefield: the traditional Christian teachings on gender and how they ar

# Traditional Christian Teaching on Gender

There is no easy way to outline Christian teaching on gender throughout history bu has viewed women as equal in principle but possessing different roles from men. V egalitarian to a degree at first glance, in reality it has often meant that women hav status to men. Women, in the eyes of many Christian individuals, were created to b simply being to facilitate procreation and take care of the household. In contrast, m to be the head of the household and created by God to fulfil intellectual and worki perspective, this naturally appears quite backwards. What reasons are there to sup to fulfil specific roles? If women are equal in principle why can they not also be ess political and spiritual working lives? We can begin our analysis with the roles of wo at how both Jesus treated women in his ministry and how this treatment might co

## Gender Roles in the Bible

One important consideration when stud[illegible] Bible from modern perspectives i creeps into the interpretation of its text. On the one hand, it is easy to be informe fail to acknowledge the [illegible] that the Church itself might have erroneously elevat above othe[illegible]the[illegible]ther hand, it may be that modern values or wishes mean th to character[illegible]might have played marginal roles in Jesus's ministry. For examp speculated that women such as Mary Magdalene might have played a much great the writers of the Gospels intentionally or unintentionally marginalising her role. H speculations is that the perspectives of the reader might influence their reading o conclusions beyond what can be historically determined from the text itself.

At the same time, it is important to note that even with these difficulties, the mar Bible can be easily noted. Despite there being some stronger female influences, su majority of the women in the Bible are generally portrayed as being victims, dang virtuous, meek and submissive as a result. If we take the prior questions posed ab then left with an interesting question. Is the lack of women in the Gospel narrativ centred life, or were they written about by sexist or misogynistic Gospel authors? Regardless of the answer, patriarchal attitudes throughout history and their respe interpretations of the Bible have often simply been accepted at face value and bu teachings of Christianity itself. This means that gender roles have been assigned t critical reflection such that these roles may not reflect the will of God. This means simply be misleading from the perspective of modern secular critics but also from

One important method that has been employed to counter this historically male-ce **feminist hermeneutics**. This involves reanalysing small parts of the Bible while also overall historical, cultural and philosophical context. Thus, those employing such h discern what exactly might be the inadvertent misogyny or sexism of the authors c in the Bible. Through employing this process, a wide number of views have emerge on gender roles in scripture. Some have argued that Jesus himself displays very litt call misogyny. Although Jesus was embedded in a patriarchal society, some feminis prominently progressive views [illegible] the time. Others, however, have held that Jesus criticism, with other figures such as St Paul only embellishing the patriarchal eleme

Taking the m[illegible]positive view of Jesus first, it can be noted that he speaks very litt between men and women. Furthermore, even though the 12 disciples are all men numerous times that Jesus had female followers. One key example proponents of Luke 10:38–42, where Jesus visits the home of Mary and Martha. There Martha is has been spending too much time in prayer and worship, neglecting her household her that Mary's spiritual life is of equal importance and to let her follow her desire This supports the belief that Jesus did view women as possessing equal roles to m women should not be relegated to mere household duties. At the same time, desp can be noted still that these are few in number and dwarfed by the parts of the G with and teaches men.

Where the difficulty lies here is drawing Jesus's true teachings outside of the circu
Women did not enjoy anywhere near the same luxuries and power as men across
In the case of Judaic tradition, it is naturally likely that many of Jesus's public conv
have been primarily towards men and that the Gospel authors were simply recor
teaching as well as being selective of certain male-centred conversations they vie
be that even the most careful readings of the Gospel texts may not be able to disc
is for the lack of women featured in the narratives. What is apparent, nonetheless
perspectives of women in the ministry of Jesus may not have been fully considere

Another great influence on Church teaching on gender roles has been St Paul. Yet v
progressive in his views on gender roles, Paul is often viewed as much more regres
problematic teachings within Paul's letters which do put forward as Christian doctr
gender roles, and even gender hierarchies. For example, Ephesians 5:22–23 states
husbands as you are to the Lord', strongly implying that men occupy a position of g
Similarly, in Corinthians 11:7, in dealing with [illegible]des, Paul argues that women'
declaring that 'woman is the reflection of man'. Such passages pose a problem for
it is held that women are in principle equal to man, they have helped contribute to
secondary or lower status of God to man, justifying their oppression in Christian so

Despite the problematic nature of many of Paul's writings, there are also other pa
broader equality between men and women. Galatians 3:28, for example, declares
and female; for all of you are one in Jesus Christ', which indicates that underneath
writings, there is possibly evidence within the New Testament to suggest that Chr
that there is true equality between men and women. Much of the discussion for r
down to reconciling the promise of Genesis 1:27, which states that God created b
**imago dei**, and whether this equality can accommodate the possibility of differen
shall look at next, although there have been overtures made towards the equality
denominations and theologians have favoured an 'equal but different' approach t

## The Catholic Church on Gender Roles

The Catholic Church sets out its position on the roles of women in an apostolic lette
**Mulieris Dignitatem**, written by Pope John Paul II in 1988. It covers a number of diff
but is primarily concerned with outlining the Church's position on gender roles in lig
secular values. As such, it takes a broad look at the women in the Bible, analysing th
Catholic tradition and drawing on the example of Jesus as a supporter of women's d
importance. One particularly important concept analysed is that of **Theotokos** (God
reference to Mary. The Mulieris Dignitatem uses Mary as a key exemplar of the kind
and roles women are supposed to embody since she is viewed to be one of the peo
been most intimately connected with God in human history. Moreover, she possess
Church, only a woman could have, and symbolises the relationship with God that hu

The Mulieris Dignitatem, therefore, analyses the person of Mary in light of Genesi
in creation may still allow for the possibility of separate roles. In contrast to many
it holds that Eve's creation out of Adam in Genesis 2 was simply out of suitability,
men and women are equal in status and there are no contradictions between the
Mulieris Dignitatem also explains much more controversial passages, especially th
importance that have often perceived to be regressive views of gender roles. F
her role as a helper' for Adam and stresses the virtues of motherhood and virgini
against the 'masculinisation' of women and the 'emasculinisation' of men in respo
criticisms of these roles, arguing that the Church should not be unduly swayed by
thought. Critics, as we shall see, have contended that such passages still perpetua
the Catholic Church is in principle committed to gender equality under God.

**Activity:**
Read the Mulieris Dignitatem passages 18–19. Write down three ways you belie
promotes true gender equality and three ways it might still promote sexist attitu
believe the Church still perpetuates unequal gender roles?

## Is Misogyny Prevalent in Theology?

Before we take a look at some contemporary secular views on gender roles, it is w
on gender has evolved from the writing of the Bible to the modern Catholic positi
broad look at the ideas of three key theologians: Augustine, Aquinas and Luther. V
have a significant number of similarities, their thought also reflects the evolution
women throughout the history of the Church.

## Augustine

Historical discussion around Augustine's views on gender and the roles of women
such as Rosemary Radford Ruether, have argued that he developed a strongly pat
explicitly and implicitly laid the foundations for misogyny to proliferate in the Chri
have argued that Augustine was more progressive than many of his peers and tha
equality unusual for the time. The main difficulties in assessing his views often occ
well remember studying Augustine's account in Year 1 but we can go a little deepe
are potentially complicit in the corruption of humanity.

Augustine's vision of the Fall rests on a literal interpretation of Genesis 2 and acco
agrees with the chapter's presentation of Eve as a 'helper' for Adam, made as part
plan for humanity to procreate and spread across the world. The ideal virtues for
of helper, for Augustine, are loving obedience and subordination, which were fully
in woman pre-Fall in contrast to man, who Augustine argued was created a delibe
creature. After the Fall, however, Augustine argues man becomes 'master' over w
and subordination is no longer through love but rather through the body. The per
pre-Fall relationship is only partially represented in marriage.

It is easy to see how such a view can be construed as misogynistic. Why should th
obedience and subordination? Ruether argues here that Augustine holds that wo
men and only secondary in the image of God compared to men, who are the prim
evidence to support such an interpretation. For example, Augustine states in the *L*
together with her own husband, is in the image of God' implying that women are
of marriage. For Ruether this subordination is a classical expression of the patriarc
pervades Christianity as a whole.

However, other feminist theologians have argued that Augustine isn't as pervasive
Genevieve Lloyd, for instance, contends that Augustine actually puts forward that
men, only bodily inferior, in contrast to much of traditional Greek philosophy and
Christian Church. In particular, we can note that Augustine does not place blame u
common view at the time, and did, at the minimum, envision a sort of equality in
between men and women. For although some might argue there is no equality if v
held to be ideal for women, Augustine views pre-Fall relationships as bound by a r
domination of women by men.

## Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas in many ways builds upon Augustine's views of gender and the roles of w
woman's main purpose is as a helper. Yet Aquinas also potentially can be construe
in many of his views. For example, Aquinas argues that it was appropriate for God
the dignity as 'first principle'. As such Aquinas also contends that women being cr
adapting to their role by tying them closer to, and complementing, man's role as h
Furthermore, in contrast to Augustine, Aquinas holds that women are subordinate
he argues, was created for a greater spiritual and intellectual purpose that means
authority over women by their greater powers of reason.

One particularly problematic view of Aquinas' is his views surrounding how man a
image of God. While he argues the imago dei subsists in the intellectual natures o
holds it exists in a secondary way in man beyond that of woman. For example, he

'man is the beginning and end of woman; as God is the beginning and end of ever
contentious saying in the same work is his well-known remark 'Woman is defectiv
Ruether argues this commits Aquinas to a false account of woman's biological inf
and exposes his deep-held misogyny. However, others have argued this quote has
context of medieval biology, when it is imagined that a man's 'seed' in perfect cor
Regardless, it can easily be argued that Aquinas echoed the cultural misogyny of
did little to promote gender equality in Christian theology.

## Martin Luther

Luther is sometimes held up to be more progressive than his peers, partly because
Reformers sought to make to the Christian sacraments. Luther, for example, did not
sacrament and argued against celibacy, saying it simple made a person liable to indu
However, there are still a number of problematic teachings he advocates which hav
modern feminist criticism. Luther, like Augustine and Aquinas, still argues that the
helping, marriage and procreation are all that they do not have 'mastery' of them
Luther argues that once women are married they have a duty to have sex and procr
idea of a completely celibate woman was disparaged. Instead, motherhood was see
a woman could inhabit. In this sense, Luther does not radically deviate from his con
other areas of theology Luther proposed quite radical changes. In some ways Luther
for he subscribed to the view that it was Eve that bore the brunt of the responsibilit
it was she who deceived Adam, and this is the reason why women are subordinate

Yet in examining these three theologians, it is possible to raise a number of difficu
much older thinkers should be judged by modern ethical standards. Some researc
of theologians have to be understood only in the historical context in which they
simply reflects the prevailing social attitudes of their time, then it is possible to ar
more egalitarian or progressive than appears at first glance. For instance, as we n
shown greater respect towards women as a whole than other theologians of the e
and Philo, who placed great blame and guilt upon Eve for the Fall. At the same tim
as Ruether and Daly, contend that historical theologians did not simply reflect the
endorsed them, creating doctrine that actively furthered the oppression of wome
absolved of responsibility for perpetuating misogynistic attitudes in the Church.

Furthermore, Ruether and Daly's arguments can be supported by reference to the
If Jesus was broadly egalitarian, as reported in the Gospels, much of the Christian
should reflect this attitude. Instead, they draw much more on other aspects of scr
letters of St Paul. If there was a feminist message within the Gospels, it may be th
it or actively ignored it, even if many agree that in principle man and woman are
God. To what degree individual thinkers can also be held responsible for the patri
Christian Church is also a matter of debate. Having been built up over hundreds, i
are undoubtedly larger forces that led to their formation. Nevertheless, in the nex
contemporary secular views on gender roles and how they might influence Christi

## Contemporary Secular Views on Gender

Over the last few years, the traditional roles that women have been assigned have
in many different ways. The beginning of the twentieth century saw the birth of li
women began to demand equal legal rights, including the right to vote and the rig
women eventually began to occupy a more prominent space in work and politics,
more systematic, psychological sexism that pervaded societies across the world. T
argued, was not solvable simply through legal equality and instead required a mo
patriarchal structures. One example is in the various cultural attitudes surroundin
Many people, particularly those with religious inclinations, saw one of the major p
procreate and have children. Such views were supported not just by traditional in
various other naturalistic arguments about women's biological functions and opp

Yet at the same time, such arguments were seen to potentially rest on shaky foun
Is it the case that just because women possess the capacity to be mothers they ar
required to fulfil such a role? **Radical feminists** in particular argued that motherh
role used as a method of control by patriarchal elements of society, and true equa
only be achieved by eliminating the cultural importance of motherhood and famil
altogether. However, other more **naturalistic feminists** have criticised this idea, a
that motherhood and reproduction are essential aspects of womanhood that hav
been manipulated and controlled by male elements of society. For this kind of fe
breaking free of such forms of manipulation that they can reach true fulfilment of
roles as mothers.

Regardless of one's position, most strands of secular feminist thinking oppose the
featured in historical Christian thought. The idea of wom[illegible] primarily 'helpers' t
dismissed, even if some seek to preserve the imp[illegible]ce of motherhood. Howeve
of these feminist criticisms, it is worth [illegible] the major fields of feminist thoug
paragraph. Thus, we turn first [illegible] natu[illegible]istic feminism.

## Naturalistic [illegible]ism

Much of fem[illegible] thought is concerned with how women can achieve and retain t
patriarchal environments. Autonomy is a difficult concept to capture sometimes.
which a group of people possess legal autonomy but under cultural pressures are
occupations. In fact, many would argue such a world is reflected in the one we liv
though is that understanding how women may be oppressed or pressured into ce
granting certain rights into law but of changing the psychological and cultural stru
laws. It is both the nature of these structures and the process of changing which d
much of the philosophical discussion we shall encounter in this section.

Simone D'Beauvoir provided much inspiration for second-generation feminists, esp
1949 book *The Second Sex*. She explored both historically and philosophically how c
manifested and become so pervasive in society. Famously, she identified how wom
by male influences. This meant they were perceived as fundamentally different or i
mystification of their thoughts and ideas, which in turn further spurred a denial of t
societies. D'Beauvoir also had much to say about motherhood and family, arguing t
'riveted to her body' and allowed her to be dominated by men who wished to confi
Although she conceded that there may one day be a world where women could hav
and be supported in equal measure by men, in the present day motherhood is a rol
and which they succumb to under this pressure rather than through their own choi
argued that women do not have an innate instinct towards being mothers. Rather,
to a woman if it is of her own autonomous, rational choice.

You might already sense the direction in which this se[illegible]is going. D'Beauvoir's a
different thoughts about the roles women sho[illegible]ld oc[illegible]y in society. While some h
views, seeking in turn to further dism[illegible]e the idea that motherhood is an essenti
contended that D'Beauvoir i[illegible]s the greater joys of reproduction and the creat
to motherhood.

Such a line o[illegible]king leads to a field that is broadly known as **naturalistic feminis**
notion that there are some essential human differences between men and women
such differences as evidence for the belief that this means both sexes have varying
for naturalistic feminists, the aim of critical analysis of gender is to find what the es
then explore how women can embrace this essence free of patriarchal influences.
D'Beauvoir was right in identifying how motherhood can be constraining under op
room for women to define this role for themselves by exploring different female ex
to the wider world.

Many naturalistic feminists as such have identified motherhood and reproduction
Simply put, men cannot know or understand the experiences women have as moth
biology potentially helps inform the freedoms and limitations of this role. Mary O'B
D'Beauvoir's theories on motherhood, arguing they fail to account for how childre
mothers, whether it be through the values mothers can grant them or the power n
of reproduction. Therefore, rather than the focus of motherhood being the ways w
role, O'Brien points out the ways children can be an essential and fulfilling part of t
In this way, naturalistic feminists perhaps can find some level of agreement with tr
Although they might reject the idea of women as helpers to men, they still recogni
motherhood in a similar fashion to that of the Catholic Church in the Mulieris Digni
to be noted that the vision of motherhood many naturalistic feminists uphold may
Christians, either due to its much more secular approach or the diminished role of

It is also necessary to note that there have been numerous critiques of naturalistic
relation to the way they champion motherhood. Ann Oakley, for example, argues
motherhood is a myth based upon the ideas that all women need to be mothers a
need each other. While naturalistic feminists might seek to understand motherho
it is wrong to think that this process will find some essential role of mothers divor
As such, many feminists have criticised O'Brien's arguments, contending that drav
women and motherhood is misguided, as the idea of motherhood is patriarchal its
reformed. Acknowledging these issues, we can turn to a very different field of crit

## Radical Feminism

In contrast to naturalistic feminists, radical feminists have often sought to 'liberat
perceive as the oppressive and patriarchal ideas of motherhood and family. For w
much more prominent throughout the twentieth century, with more and more wo
there was still a significant pressure for women to bear children. Yet at the same t
become mothers were often penalised in other areas of life, whether it be career
endeavours. This meant that many critics, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, bega
motherhood itself and whether it was still used to limit and constrain the powers
Simply put, just because women possess the ability to be mothers does not neces
occupying this role, especially if throughout history motherhood has been a way f
other areas of life.

For example, Shulamith Firestone argues that the fundamental origins of women's
Being less physically strong as well as being the individuals biologically capable of
ignored when it comes to studying the patriarchal structures of society. Firestone
women's struggle for emancipation can be compared to Marxist class struggle. Jus
seize the means of production to liberate themselves, women should seize their n
control of the process of childbirth. For Firestone, this means using reproductive r
that enable babies to be grown artificially, removing the burden upon mothers an
the biological power that they naturally fail to possess.

Such ideas are radical indeed. In fact, the next section will see you study another
detail: Mary Daly. But for the moment we can concentrate on Firestone's ideas, as
many further ramifications for how we understand not only motherhood but the i
we shall look at in the next part of this section.

## Alternative Views of Parenthood and Family

If Firestone is correct, then how do we envision parenthood and family in a world
The removal of reproduction by natural means in any society is likely to cause a ch
familial structures and, while many might balk at such a suggestion, Firestone ent
changes. She argues in particular that the idea of the nuclear family is not a natur
**construct** developed through patriarchal demands in society. It facilitates the fath
engage in a variety of pursuits while the jobs of maintaining the household and ra
left to the mother. Firestone, therefore, puts forward that there are other healthy

One suggestion she makes is that raising children communally would avoid many
nuclear family, as well as ensure children are not over-parented. Furthermore, she
raising of children would eliminate inherited privilege as many people would have
single child, not just their mother and father. Overall, Firestone holds changes in t
family would aim to remove ingrained cultural ideas about gender in the minds of
which there are fewer or no expectations attached to being male or female.

Firestone's ideas raise the prospect that the idea of family is altogether **culturally d**
This means it is not a model or idea set forth by God or nature but simply given by t
cultural norms of a particular society. For Christians this is not an attractive prospec
family is presented in the Bible to be the nuclear family, with a mother and a father,
fulfilling separate roles. But if Firestone is correct, there may be better ways to raise
whether it be communally or through alternative models of family. One is simply no
to what is given by scripture or the prevailing norms of one's culture.

However, it is important to note that many feminists disagree with Firestone's vie
family. Andrea Dworkin, for example, argues that technology is more likely to lead
gender imbalance as men would no longer need to rely on extended interaction w
women to have children. Instead women would simply become 'prostitutes' as the
functions they would have for men would be sexual in nature. If this is true, then a
not liberate women as Firestone envisioned. Nevertheless, we can also ask wheth
own really apply. Firestone's change in the idea of family may naturally be intende
changes to the patriarchal structures of society that ensure other marginalised in
powers associated or not associated with reproduction. Being able to use technol
many other familial models to proliferate, whether it be same-sex couples or thos
are arguably marginalised in current society.

Vitally, Firestone did not see her arguments as final. Her radical proposals were as
discussion about gender and family norms as they were to destabilise them. As su
explicitly advocate reclaiming the means of reproduction at any particular time bu
whether structures such as the nuclear family are the only way of effectively raisi
reinforce patriarchal structures that are overdue for being dismantled. Naturally, s
reading for Christians and in the next section we will look at some of the response
denominations have given to secular gender theory.

**Discussion Activity:**
To what extent do you think traditional Christian teaching on gender roles is still re
Are there reasons to believe its ideas about motherhood or family are outdated?

## Christian Responses to Secular Gender Theory

For the most part, although modern femi[illegible]ticism has forced Christians slightl
thought has held firm to its beliefs about gender roles. While many thinkers recog
perspectives about gender and family have shifted greatly over the last 100 years,
motherhood and fatherhood are still upheld as important to the Christian family a
ideals given by Genesis. Yet at the same time, some have also contended that ther
Christian beliefs and some strains of feminist thought. As we briefly explored in th
be key similarities between naturalistic feminism's endorsement of motherhood a
Christian scriptural ideals. Both also emphasise the importance of the biological di
women and how these may be reflected in values or responsibilities they may hol

Nevertheless, any similarities are largely absent between Christian thought and ra
large encourages an upheaval of prevailing attitudes about motherhood, family ar
Moreover, we can also question to what extent Christian thought and naturalistic
agreement. Even if naturalistic feminist theories still value motherhood, they also

of family and child-rearing as well as disagree with any portrayal of woman as a 'h
Christians, at the minimum, may view Genesis as symbolically highlighting the imp
relationships between men and women as a response to God's command to 'go fo
feminists are likely to view such a command as reflective of patriarchal ideals and
separate from religion's influence. They may even go so far as to argue that the su
of reproduction to any divine command is reflective of a certain kind of sexism or
especially if God is defined in male terms.

These issues arose in particular when we looked at the Mulieris Dignitatem. In Ma
archetype of the ideal woman. As the Theotokos, she encompasses motherhood n
spiritually, and so possesses a union with God unlike any other. What is ideally fe
therefore, exemplified in Mary. However, he also argues that in reproduction the
woman; that although women are physically and psychologically predisposed to n
take this for granted. For Catholics, this is likely to increase that the ideal of mothe
the oppression of women so long as men do not value the importance of motherh

Yet at the same time, the Catholic Church still prevents women from being ordain
This means that although supposed care is given by the Church to value women as
only the role of motherhood, the Church arbitrarily limits their intellectual and spi
meaningfully reduces their status within society. Whether the Church likes it or no
still implicitly make the claim that women are of different rational or spiritual sign

The difficulties don't end here, however. Pope John Paul II in the Mulieris Dignitat
highlighting the value of virginity and criticises what he calls the 'masculinisation'
teaching. In the former case, the emphasis on the value of virginity can still be see
control over women's sexuality, while in the second case, the fears over differing
be an instance of a largely male organisation imposing its own ideals about the fe
regardless of whether it correlates to actual women's experiences. Mary Daly, wh
emphasises this criticism strongly. She argues that women's ideas of sexuality hav
by patriarchal elements, such that the free woman has to separate herself from al
and thought to journey beyond any world view that prioritises male interpretatio

Overall, one can easily observe wider tensions between modern Christian thought
Although Christians have largely resisted the upheaval in thought and attitudes as
one can still see how modern Christian thinkers and denominations have sought t
while still positing different roles for men and women. Moreover, it is possible to
Mulieris Dignitatem already look dated in light of such feminist criticism. Is it reall
importance of roles such as motherhood while denying women intellectual and sp
same breath? This potential dissonance in thought has led to some critics asking a
whether feminist criticism has ultimately undermined Christian thought on gende

## Has Secular Feminism Undermined Christian Teaching on Gender?

This is a difficult question to answer conclusively. Many Christians would be reluct
theories have impacted Christian dogma, which is supposed to contain eternal tru
more apparent that in recent years many Christian thinkers and denominations ha
criticisms and attempted to outline the ways Christian thought can be gender incl
modern political discussion, much more attention has been given to secular belief
Christian ideals, such that, at least within wider society, Christian teaching on gen
position of importance.

One of the key difficulties potentially comes within reconciling the various strands
While traditional Christian teaching draws extensively on Genesis for its perspecti
argue that Jesus's message of inclusivity in the Gospels should be prioritised abov
Such a view might be supported by more thorough historical analysis of the Bible
seeking the historical Jesus or those engaged in feminist hermeneutics. These for
traditional Christian teaching may be more a reflection of patriarchal cultural attit

rather than a true representation of the will of God, especially if the prevailing mo
historical cultures match the views put forward in the Bible.

Therefore, traditional Christian teaching faces not only demands from external se
also from internal revisionism of Christian sources of authority. This two-pronged
is asked whether Christianity can ultimately be a religion that can outgrow its olde
one hand, there are the **reconstructionist** theologians, who argue that underneat
the message Jesus gives during his ministry is very egalitarian. This means that so
structures of the Christian religion are accurately dismantled and deconstructed, t
truly become a gender-inclusive religion. However, there are also still many radica
Christianity is beyond saving. If this is the case then feminism and Christian thoug
with the former thoroughly undermining the latter.

This is the debate we shall turn to in the next section, when we turn to the ideas o
Rosemary Radford Ruether and Mary Daly. But, as we shall see, envision a very d
Christian religion.



**Discussion Activity:**
Do you believe secular feminist theory has undermined Christian teaching on ge
helped it become more progressive? Discuss in small groups or pairs.

| Quick Quiz |
|---|
| 1. What is a patriarchy? |
| 2. What is feminism? |
| 3. Which document sets out the Catholic Church's views on gender roles? |
| 4. What is the importance of the title of Theotokos for Catholics? |
| 5. What is the main difference between naturalistic and radical feminism? |
| 6. What is the nuclear family? |
| 7. What does it mean to say the idea of the nuclear family is a cultural constru |

# 5B: Gender and Theolo

## What you will learn in this section:

How feminist theologians have analysed and reinterpreted the Christian God, incl

- Rosemary Radford Ruether's reconstructionist theology, including discussion the role of Sophia (wisdom) and the androgynous nature of God.
- Mary Daly's radical theology, including discussion around the historical misog trinity' and new conceptions of spirituality.
- The debate around whether Christianity is essentially sexist and whether the with feminist thought.

**Starter Activity:**
Read through Chapter 9 of Ruether's te*m and God-Talk* and Chapter 4 of *Father*. Make notes on both a eva ate which you believe presents the strong nature of misogyny in tianity.

| Key Thinker | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | Rosemary Radford Ruether |
| **Born** | 1936 |
| **Died** | N/A |
| **Key text** | *Sexism and God-Talk* (1983) |
| **Why are they important?** | Ruether is one of the most important feminist theologians of centuries, not only contributing extensively to reconstruction campaign for many different social issues as part of the Catho |
| **Did you know?** | Ruether has been a longstanding board member of the pro-ch for Choice and has been an outspoken supporter for gender e throughout her life. |

| Key Thinker | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | Mary Daly |
| **Born** | 1928 |
| **Died** | 2010 |
| **Key text** | *Beyond God the Father* (1973) |
| **Why are they important?** | Daly is perhaps one of the most radical and uncompromising delivering some of the most pointed critiques of sexism and r her academic life. |
| **Did you know?** | Daly was forced to retire from academi fe in 1999 for refusi advanced women's studies cla s. |

## Introduction – Modern Feminist Theology

Throughout th last s ic we took a broad look at both Christian and secular vie Christian th faced difficulties in light of modern feminist criticism. However, there isn't ne ssarily a strict divide between the two fields. Many modern theolo women, have worked extensively to reconcile Christianity with feminist ideas, att religion that emphasises gender equality in the process. This is naturally to some e Many traditional Christians, both individuals and denominations, are reluctant to recent years have attempted to offer women the same opportunities as men in th

Nevertheless, the main issue encountered by those seeking to reform or re-evalu extent to which 'maleness' is embedded in the religion itself. From gender-specifi Jesus, unpicking the patriarchal elements of Christian thought is a deep and diffic critics have contended it is ultimately impossible. Moreover, it is hard to discern w

Christianity can accommodate such changes. Many believers hold fast to the idea
Word of God such that altering any key aspect of Christian thought is akin to reint
Despite such reservations, it may be that a fatalistic attitude to the process of rec
thought is misleading; the loftiness of its aims may simply be indicative that a shif
and the patriarchal influences on Christian thought run far deeper than expected.
of this section: the reconstructionist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether.

## Rosemary Radford Ruether

Rosemary Radford Ruether is a well-known American feminist theologian who was responsible for helping to greatly develop critical analysis into the various patriarchal elements of Christianity theology in the 1960s (and onwards).
While her early work drew upon liberal feminist tradition, she later became more radical in her views, embodying what is now often referred to as **reconstruc**
criticises the various ways misogyny and sexism creep into religious thought and p
by which Christianity can become truly equal. Therefore, while it focuses extensiv
of Christian thought, it does not endorse a wholesale rejection of the religion. Inst
needs to be reconstructed in a way that avoids patriarchal attitudes and ideas infl
This accordingly means redeveloping ideas about Christ and God which do not inc
and eliminate any presence of 'maleness' in statements or propositions.

In pursuing these ends, Ruether helped pioneer the use of feminist hermeneutics,
previous section. She held that this process was essential in reclaiming true Christ
the cultural attitudes that influenced scripture at the time of its writing. However,
the methodology of this form of criticism, adopting from Paul Ricœur the 'hermer
way of analysing texts by considering how people might have previously interpret
have personally gained from interpreting them a certain way. In the case of the Bi
interpretation throughout history has been primarily from a male perspective and
evolved in line with what benefits men the most in a typically patriarchal environr
arguably justified considering the long lineage of male theologians, such as Augus
on the whole deviated little from a potentially very misogynistic interpretation of

The hermeneutic of suspicion, however, requires more than mere scepticism; it al
as a historical document, not the absolute Word of God. This means any interpret
subjective to a significant degree, and the legacy of patriarchal thought is testame
what they wish to see into the Bible rather than critically engaging with it as any o
required at the minimum is a conscientious attempt to understand the Bible from
context. The lack of this form of interpretation in the past means Ruether argues t
interpretations have led to a false symbolic hierarchy of 'God-male-female' in Chr
principle, it is held by Christian thinkers that both genders are equal.

One final important element of feminist hermeneutics worth noting is **diachronic**
encountered the word 'exegesis' before Biblically, it means 'reading out' and is the
discover the roughly objective meaning of any text. But 'diachronic' in this contex
process. It refers to the aim of historians to understand a text through the differe
two different moments in time. Diachronic exegesis, therefore, is the process of 'r
with an eye to how the language of the text would have been understood at the t
differs from the understanding now. Through this process, Ruether aims to uncov
scripture would have been understood by those absorbed in the cultural attitudes
how they are understood now. What may appear normal or radical to us now may
different ways by earlier audiences, and examining these differences is key to rec
theology within Christian thought. This is especially the case for Ruether, who is lo
female' hierarchy emerged over time and how a gender-neutral or female-oriente
exist beneath embedded cultural attitudes.

## The Historical Jesus and Messianic Expectation

With Ruether's methodology outlined, we can turn to deeper questions about her male-focused elements of Christian thought; namely Jesus and God. In contrast to Ruether analyses the figure of Jesus not through present-day dogma but through Messiah, which would have been the most prevalent comparison levelled at Jesus By analysing Jesus through this lens, Ruether exemplifies the use of diachronic ex would have been seen by his peers with how he is interpreted now. This is useful, accurately assess the views Jesus himself possessed on gender, it is important to a have been progressive or regressive in relation to his environment. Simply put, di during his ministry, or did he endorse them?

What Ruether ultimately argues is that in contrast to the male warrior-type Messi for or expected by the Jewish population to liberate them from Roman occupation and progressive figure. He led in what Ruether sees as a prophetic liberating traditi moral commands such as the golden rule as well as criticism of legalistic practices egalitarian social norms. The fact that Jesus embodied these characteristics means clashed with both religious and political authorities. These ideas may well have bee patriarchal culture at the time and key observations can be made about the gave his female followers and his encouragement that they seek fulfilment in their

Ruether holds in particular that these teachings are the underlying authentic mor the Word of God within the Bible. However, with the biblical authors themselves enlightened than Jesus himself, this liberating morality ended up being dressed in various Jewish cultures at the time of writing. Nevertheless, Ruether's important someone who fulfilled male expectations but rather was someone who sought to social order that also promoted the equality of women. The fact that Jesus was th means also that his maleness is **accidental** rather than **essential**. As such, his male understanding his teaching. The fact that Jesus was born a man ultimately cannot patriarchal hierarchies as endorsing the superiority of men as such a conclusion st earthly teaching.

The same, Ruether argues, is true of God. Most Christians will hold God to be gen exclusively male terms such as Father, Lord or King when describing him. While th certain extent, Ruether argues that the use of these male terms has contributed t feminine perspectives in theology since power, wisdom and goodness are symboli masculine ideals. Furthermore, Ruether contends that the sole use of male langua phenomenon than might be expected. Going back further in history, there are oth that were employed, one of which we will take a closer look at in the next part.

## The Role of Wisdom

At the start of this section it was broadly asserted that many of the terms used to However, Ruether argues that this is a construction without precedent in early form This means that female terms may have been historically used to describe God bu marginalised or lost through patriarchal influence. One particularly important ter often thought to represent wisdom. Ruether argues that Sophia was used as a me maleness of God led to the preference for male terms among scholars when des Ruether contends that Jesus may have originally been a prophet of Wisdom in the Proverbs and Solomon, mediating Sophia through his ministry until rival interpret followers after his death. Such an idea may also carry weight if Jesus's maleness is than essential.

You might well see the focus of Ruether's thought coming together at this point. S there is a **golden thread**, or a consistent set of themes running throughout Christi the importance of **liberation**. Whether it be the emphasis upon wisdom or the eg teaching, this golden thread raises up both men and women and, as such, any inte overemphasises maleness fails to do justice to the role of liberation in scriptural t

naturally implied to be less perfect or vital to the spiritual life than men. As such, v
that certain elements of scripture are irrefutably patriarchal, there is much to be l
liberating theme is held in mind when reading it. More importantly, this critical le
be reconstructed with an eye upon gender neutrality.

## Reconstructing God

So what is the way forward for modern Christianity? Ruether herself acknowledge
unconvincing to traditional Christians; it involves the selection of certain passages
than others, while discarding aspects thought to be overly patriarchal or misogyni
it leads to the natural conclusion that aspects of modern theology should be adjus
liberating themes within scripture. The most obvious starting point is to start with
altogether. The reconstructionist theologian typically argues that gender-neutral t
referring to God, while if gendered terms are used, they should be an equal mixtu
just male. To some this seems radical, but theologians such as Ruether typically no
genderless in principle, so the precedent for using male terms is not one that nece
theological discourse, especially if fundamentally inaccurate. Moreover, the move
neutral or female-leaning [illegible]ology can only have the upshot of encouraging re
experiences [illegible] Christian Church.

Similarly, overt references to Jesus's maleness should be downplayed if his malen
than essential. One is simply being more theologically accurate when one exclude
narratives of his life that do not encompass his egalitarian and liberation-focused
this proposal are perhaps more significant. Catholic ideas such as apostolic succes
and adopting such a reconstructionist feminist perspective towards scripture natu
conclusion that there should be an equal balance of genders in all Church position
be ordained is contrary to the golden thread of liberation Ruether identifies in the

Despite these changes being significant, it should always be noted that, for reconst
that Christianity can be repaired and purged of at least a significant amount of its p
section, we shall look at a thinker who, contrary to such a line of thinking, argues t
fundamentally irredeemably misogynistic. In fact, she holds that in order for wome
envisioned by Ruether, women have to construct their own religion which prioritis

### Janet Soskice and the Trinity

Ruether's reconstructionism has been influential. One supporting argument com
looks at the Trinity and the way it may be interpreted without gender bias. She c
concept of the incarnation, there has always been the belief that while Jesus is f
be thought of as Jesus alone in a similar fashion. Simply put, there is something
that is not fulfilled by Jesus's male form. Jesus is fundamentally human, not esse
earthly body misses essential aspects which God possesses.

Soskice notes, however, that, contrary to observation, the Trinity has always
to male dynamics, e.g. the Father/Son relationship. Yet if these male terms are n
characteristics, then it is important that they are recontextualised to include fem
structures. Naturally such a process has its own risks. One doesn't want to elimi
God and Jesus relationship by using neutral terms, but equally one doesn't wa
mother, which relegates women's essence to that of motherhood.

Therefore, Soskice argues one should seek to supplement male language with a n
that God is represented by both genders. This means the grammar and terminolo
is not limited by aspects of male cultural interpretation but can include all human

### Discussion Activity:

Do you believe Ruether's reconstructionist perspective does enough to eliminate
elements of Christian theology? Discuss in pairs or small groups.

# Mary Daly

Mary Daly was an American feminist philosopher and theologian who, in her own words, described herself as a 'radical lesbian feminist'. While her work initially bega in a much more liberal or reconstructionist vein, her later writing, beginning with *Beyond God the Father* in 1973, became increasingly radical, expressing severe doul as to whether the liberation of women could ever occur within the Christian religior

This transformation of thought, however, didn't come out of nowhere. From the v encompassed many different radical themes. In *The Church and the Second Sex* (1 Christianity presents only an illusion of gender equality, when in actuality women theological discourse and denied participation in the spiritual fulfilment the religic One of the main difficulties she identifies, and which com play a key role in h Jesus. She ultimately contends that both God and Jes s' maleness are highly prol work these aspects will always be interpr s representing the superiority of m of hers that became particularly well known was her claim that 'if God is male the

So what do m well, for Daly, it signifies that the reconstructionist proje not simply p e to change the language we use to describe God, or identify lib The foundations of Christian thought simply prioritise man over woman and such recontextualising or adjusting the way we study this fact. This might sound very p believe that if women are to achieve liberation in any spiritual pursuits, this cannc religion. In fact, she argued for the metaphorical 'castration' of God. This meant c term, since it was loaded with patriarchal connotations. Instead, God should be re instead of a noun. For Daly, this represented the importance of women not only s oppression (both theological and secular) but also embracing the possibility of bei realising how they can achieve self-fulfilment and self-imagination.

This might sound quite abstract, but for Daly modern theological discourse was lo influences. Simply put, the only way forward was to abandon both the thought an discussion. Yet because this thought and language is so prevalent, it requires mor than usual to work out how women can be truly liberated from its use. Christianit step backwards. Its endorsement of Jesus as a unique male saviour only supports superiority in theology, regardless of whether the historical Jesus was egalitarian a of all. All Christian thought has done for women, in Daly's view, is encourage a **sca** that women are a source of temptation and that meekness for them is an ideal vir

Therefore, we can already see how Daly significantly diverges in thought from ma summary above does not do justice to her critiques of the Christian religion. For a her examination of the history of Christianity and what she terms the **unholy trini**

## The Unholy Trinity

In contrast to the view of most traditional theologians, Daly argues that our moral become known through study of scripture or through specific forms of revelation. Christian ethics is a male construct; a consequence of patriarchal influences shapi to suit men's experience. For women, this means their morals and virtues are focus idea that women are naturally submissive or victims and they should act accordin ask for the same powers or wishes as men, whose morality is focused around enti physical and psychological freedom to engage with the world as they see fit.

Daly argues that this gendered separation of morality results in an overt concentr **phallocentric power**. This means that the prevailing structures of society are natu geared towards giving men an advantage in their ends while women are restricte pursuing their own fulfilment or liberation. The fact that this male power is entren in conflict with Christianity as far as Daly sees it. Rather both are intertwined with as through this concentration of phallocentric power Christianity naturally gives ri

she terms the **unholy trinity** of rape, genocide and war, phenomena that have acc
Christian thought across the world. Simply put, although many Christians view the
peaceful one, the natural power imbalance that lies at the heart of the religion an
these evil acts have been both overtly and surreptitiously endorsed throughout hi

Ultimately, Daly argues that whatever female perspective there might be in Christ
conspicuously absent from Christianity's own religious history, and institutionalise
provide support or emancipation for women. So why are the reconstructionists so
liberating themes in a religion that has never cared for them? Daly here primarily
may well be a false aim to try to save a religion that throughout its history has onl
justification to the evil acts of men across the world. If this is the case, might it no
new religion with real egalitarian or female-focused principles? Well, this is precis
shall explore in the next part.

## Christianity and Myth

In her 1978 book *Gyn/Ecology* Daly presents the fullest realisation of her radical i
Christianity is not only a construct of male power but it also consists of pre-existin
subverted and stolen from pre-Christian beliefs in other ancient religions. In partic
show that Christianity as a whole is based upon older goddess myths and stories o
For example, she identifies the Trinity as having been formulated prior to Christia
in Hellenistic, Celtic and African cultures. Similarly to Ruether, therefore, Daly look
of religious history to find pre-existing themes and ideas that justify looking at the

However, Daly's conclusions are far different, for she advocates 'stealing' back the
been taken from women by patriarchal Christianity. In doing so, Daly effectively re
that were the precursor to Christianity and a more fitting basis for a religion that p
women. For in *Gyn/Ecology,* Daly perhaps makes some of her strongest criticisms
Christian thought. One often cited passage is where she describes Mary as the **To**
that in the virgin birth, Mary is made to be subordinate. She is stripped of her age
Jesus and spiritually invaded by God while giving little resistance. This makes her o
eyes, a hollow vessel exploited by Christian tradition who comes to represent the
under the Christian faith.

Thus Daly seeks to cast herself as a **pirate**, taking back the personhood and divinit
women. Yet, she also holds that, for the liberated woman, a new spirituality cannot
pre-existing elements of Christian thought. Instead, Daly held that women should
in their religious pursuits. Through this pursuit women as a whole can grow closer
themselves of the malignant influences of patriarchal religions such as Christianity
Christianity is simply left behind. It is not a religion that can be saved in meaningfu
for the full and complete liberation of women.

So, overall, we can see a few key elements of Daly's position. The first is that a genu
by a messiah or God-like figure. Such an idea Daly holds, is ultimately patriarchal; it
power as devised by men and forces women to submit to a male-type authority figu
spirituality requires understanding God as Be-ing and experiencing God through one
everyday natural world. The second element, connected to this idea, is that women
spirituality through a male saviour or idol. Any such relationship naturally devalues
them to deny their importance in favour of worship coined or wished by patriarchal
important aspect of Daly's thought here, which underpins this idea, is that men as a
developing a proper spiritual life in accordance with Daly's ideals. The male, for Daly
predisposed towards violence, power and conflict – the very forces that stand in co
vision. As such, the future of women's spirituality lies in a significant degree of sepa

However, such a view is not only very controversial, but wholly conflicts with Ruet
have often pointed out that Daly here commits to a kind of essentialist thinking th
egalitarian principles. For Daly, men and women are not equal. Women are the gr

through unjust means are forced to submit to male wills, whether it be in politics sphere. Such a view is undeniably radical, but Daly would argue that her point is n observations. Countless wars, conflicts and abuses of power have been committe why should one believe that traditional religion can be an effective restraint on th can find genuine spirituality in a religion which seems to prioritise these worst tra

Such questions raise the prospect that Christianity itself may not be worth saving. final part of this section.

**Activity:**
Look back across your notes on the previous part of the specification (5A Gende both Ruether and Daly do you think there is a golden thread running through sc previous work and judge whether there is more evidence for Ruether's or Daly's

## Can Christian Beliefs be Reconciled with Femini

Throughout this section we explored two competing perspectives: Ruether's reco and Daly's post-Christian theology. The former holds that Christianity can be save elements of its thought are dismantled and the religion reconstructed alongside t accompanying scripture. The latter holds that Christianity cannot be saved; it is irr misogynistic to its core, and, regardless of the efforts reconstructionists might put has a male saviour it will never achieve the liberation of women.

This issue is perhaps the crux of the debate. Much of the difference between Rueth upon the prominence given to the 'maleness' of Jesus. While Ruether holds that th accidental, such that a genderless interpretation of his ministry is possible, Daly arg never be separated from the male supremacy it justifies among many Christians. T solve. One might argue that Daly is being unduly pessimistic. How does she know t fail when it hasn't even been tried? However, one might also hold that Daly is just promoted women's liberation or not has little bearing for those traditional theolog hierarchy of genders. Moreover, why should one support a project to reconstruct a religion? Why not simply leave it behind and seek a new truly liberating form of sp it simply stands to reason that self-liberation cannot occur while one bows to a figu

There are also difficulties faced in interpreting the Bible for Ruether that are perh reconstructionist camp. While Jesus might have promoted equality between men still largely a document devoid of female experience. To that end, it is questionab liberating tradition she desires. Furthermore, it might even be contended that her is highly speculative and subjective. How can one know if one has truly hit upon a or if one is simply reading what one desires into biblical narratives? A final, perha whether it is even possible to adequately replace the entire Christian vocabulary v oriented terms without losing aspects of traditional theological meaning. The reco up losing important levels of insight into the nature of God or human beings by se language without considering the full range of connotations traditional terms mig

Yet Daly herself also faces many similar criticisms. By her own admission, she is ex methodology in theology, for it has typically been used by theologians to rationali throughout history. But such an approach also leaves her open to the objection th God is far from comprehensive or meaningful. Why should we accept Daly's claim be found outside Christianity, and should we reject the idea that there is nothing thought about God? In particular, there have been many issues raised around her existing mythology behind Christian thought. Many would argue that if one exten conceptions of God can be traced back to another mythological origin. Yet, the be ministry of Jesus is within a Jewish context, not from a pre-Christian mythological

Here Ruether may have the clear advantage as her aim is in part to recover the his depiction of his ministry is greatly different from that of traditional Christian doctr claim that morality is ultimately constructed by men. Many would disagree with h religious and tend to believe that there are moral principles that are universal and Ruether's methodology makes a lot more sense. The golden thread she identifies truths that God has offered to humankind throughout history, but which have bee fallibility and cultural context. Regardless, both Ruether and Daly have much to w both may have pertinent points to make about the future of Christianity as a who

| | Quick Quiz |
|---|---|
| 1. | What is reconstructionist feminist theology? |
| 2. | What is the hermeneutic of suspicion? |
| 3. | What is the difference between accidental and essential maleness? |
| 4. | What is Ruether's golden thread? |
| 5. | What is the unholy trinity in Daly's thought? |
| 6. | Why is Mary the Total Female Victim for Daly? |
| 7. | Why does Daly describe herself as a pirate? |

# 6A: The Challenge of Secu

## What you will learn in this section:

The challenges facing Christianity from the rise of secularism and secularisation, i

- The view that God is an illusion and belief in his existence is a form of wish-fu
- The ideas of Sigmund Freud and Richard Dawkins and their criticisms of Chris
- The belief that Christianity and other religions should not be present in publi role in education and government.
- The criticisms that Christianity is a major cause of social and personal conflict whether secularism and secularisation present opportunities for the religion general good.

**Starter Activity:**

What issues in society can you identify as arising from religious conflict? Note do them to the ideas studied throughout this section.

| Key Thinker | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | Sigmund Freud |
| **Born** | 1856 |
| **Died** | 1939 |
| **Key text** | *The Future of an Illusion* |
| **Why are they important?** | Freud is the most famous and perhaps the most influential fig all of history, even though many of his ideas are now thought From dreams to neuroses and aberrant behaviours, Freud wa psychoanalysis to understand and treat a wide array of menta |
| **Did you know?** | Freud in his early years advocated for cocaine as a treatment illnesses. This position he was naturally later forced to abando |

| Key Thinker | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | Richard Dawkins |
| **Born** | 1941 |
| **Died** | N/A |
| **Key text** | *The God Delusion* (2006) |
| **Why are they important?** | Dawkins is an incredibly important figure in evolutionary biol *Selfish Gene* popularising a gene-centred perspective on natu years, his atheism has taken centre stage, with Dawkins beco prominent critics of religion in the public sphere. |
| **Did you know?** | Dawkins is responsible for introducing the term 'meme' in *Th* the Internet might hold is to be his most important achieve |

## Introduction – The Rise of Secularism

It is often a observation that, at least in the Western world, it is increasingly com atheistic or a religious, a historical process that is often referred to as **secularisatio** much less of a role in public life than it once did. In the UK, for example, there is a between **church and state**, meaning that the Christian Church does not play an ac decision-making. Yet even a cursory look back across the last few thousand years phenomenon. For the most part, religious thought and politics have been deeply i extent this is still the case across many different states and countries. However, o secularisation has taken place. On the one hand, the rise of modern scientific enq religion was once relied upon to answer are now solved by secular means. On the sidelining of religious thought have been increased criticisms of many major faiths granted, for instance, that the Christian Church is a beacon of moral guidance, an

have often claimed that religion itself is a social malaise, responsible not only for a
progress but also for much of the conflict, violence and oppression around the wo

Throughout this section, we will break these claims down, seeking to understand th
from **secularism**; the view that individuals have the right to be free from the influen
and public lives. Despite this broad definition, secularism can encompass many diffe
advocate an atheistic or materialistic view of the world, rejecting religious practices
philosophically reasonable basis. Furthermore, they also typically support leaving al
choice. This means that governments cannot be allowed to be influenced by religiou
such as education should not uncritically teach religious thought. Such ideas are oft
to present an existential threat to religion itself. For example, many conservative Ch
that political decision-making is so deeply separated from the teachings of the Bible
secular criticisms of Christianity may present an unexpected opportunity for the reli
for it to grow and remain meaningful for individuals in the modern world. Before we
however, it is worth exploring another system of thought closely tied to the process

## What is Humanism?

When we discuss the decline of religion in the world, we're not just pointing tow
ideas but the adoption of a new, secularly oriented system of thought. Most comm
or areligious often support a broad set of ideas known as **humanism**. Humanists t
perceive to be dogma, superstition and faith-based thinking, preferring what they
critical thinking and scientific discovery. In practice, this means humanists are ofte
religion and its impact upon the world. However, philosophically humanism also p
arguments. Central to adherents is often the belief that meaningful ethical systems
rely on God as a justification or reason for their adoption. Furthermore, humanists
importance of individual freedoms and the need for scientific progress. This mean
conflict with scientific theory, humanists side with the latter over the former.

Why, though, is humanism important when considering the place of religion in the
consider the rise of humanistic and/or scientific thought to be one of the major re
occurred across many different countries. Moreover, many thinkers sympathetic t
presented many of the key criticisms of religious thought that have arguably inspi
or atheist. Therefore, in the next part of this section, we shall look at two key thin
Christianity and other religions are not only fundamentally irrational but have con
oppression across the world.

## Is Belief in God Rational?

One part of assessing the place of Christianity in the modern world is to assess whet
beliefs. As noted before, humanistic thinking often values rationality, such that irrat
are ones which should not be promoted in public life. Critics, as we shall see, critics
irrational thought or belief as the basis for conflict, which to some degree can be ar

Yet at the same time, even Christians acknowledge that a significant part of the re
secular critics wish to blame the religion with irrationality? Well, one important a
been to see the psychological basis for belief in God. This line of thinking wishes to
are nothing more than neuroses or delusions arising out of natural human wishes
illusion or projection, arising out of human ignorance about the underlying laws a
events to happen. In an 'enlightened' world, in which human beings possess a sign
knowledge, critics often claim that religion is effectively obsolete. It neither prese
natural world nor is it needed to make sense of events that at first glance seem fu

This might seem an unusual line of criticism to press. The majority of Christian thi
or religious thought, just like any other kind of belief, has a psychological basis. Ra
the validity of beliefs cannot be reduced down to their psychological form. Yet, it
critiques of religious thought do effectively cast doubt on the idea that religious ir

to communication with God. Furthermore, they potentially present a naturalistic v
religious belief arose that does not rely on the existence of a divine being. As such
if even such critiques cannot disprove God, they do justify scepticism about whet
rational. Simply put, if there is a simpler, natural explanation for human belief in G

## Freud and Wish-fulfilment

Ke
Fre

The first important figure we can look at who sets out a psychological critique of religion is Sigmund Freud. Freud was a strict atheist and viewed religion as a series of psychological processes that humans develop as a response natural world. It is an illusion, not in the sense of a false idea, but as a form of wis humans subconsciously want the world to be. The religious wish, therefore, for Fr history of human thought but also in the basic experiences and psychology of eac throughout his work he switches between analysing r[illegible]ous thought as a genera individual anxieties and neuroses that form the basis for its adoption.

Much of Freud's thoughts on religion are detailed in *The Future of an Illusion*. Wit argues that religion is primarily a natural psychological response to the apparent and chaos of nature to the uneducated individual. Whether it be volcanos, earthq droughts, there are many natural events that to the naked eye seem random and uncontrollable. This means for the everyday person, who is generally concerned w survival and preventing harm to themselves, there is a natural anxiety in dealing v forces of nature. What Freud argues is that this anxiety subconsciously creates a d within human beings not only to understand these natural forces but to control th this desire which leads to the idea of divine beings. By believing in the power of a gods who are capable of transforming the natural world, human beings can then s develop ways to align themselves with their will. Through acts such as prayer or sa gods to intervene on their behalf and save them from the chaotic powers of natur establish control over the natural world in the face of their anxieties about their o

Freud's ideas here are simple but persuasive. He points towards many different ar contending that, in its most primal form, religion tends to focus on worship aroun societies hold to be important. For instance, a society reliant upon harvesting crop god, as currying favour with this god might ensure bountiful harvests. Examples o in Greek paganism, where many different gods are thought to represent different world. However, we might also ask how Freud's theorising leads to the God of Chr attributes of God aren't easily connected to specific elements of nature nor are th certain concepts.

Well, here Freud looks at how the wish for God manifests itself on an individual le contends one is intensely exposed to the various dangers of the world and, as suc others for one's survival. Parents are the most obvious caregivers here, but childr adults in different ways. Yet when one looks at the Christian God, one can begin t its form and one's wishes or experiences as a child. For example, within the Judae asserted that God is the Father of humankind. Moreover, God is thought to be pe human beings suffer hope in salvation despite their suffering on Earth. Freud, the we wish for God in the same sense as one wishes for a parent to take care of us. It human beings grow older and lose the safety of their parental upbringing, they co of their caregivers.

Therefore, for Freud, the Christian God is still just another example of wish-fulfilm unforgiving world. Each person has a powerful psychological need or incentive for whether he does in reality. Freud, therefore, argues that psychological experience relied upon to demonstrate this existence. They are fundamentally irrational wish thought. The only way believing in the existence of God could be rational is if he w scientific enquiry, something Freud thought to be an impossible task.

## Assessing Freud's Ideas

Freud's arguments do have an intuitive appeal. Whether or not one's believes God t an important psychological niche in human life and, taken at face value, it can easily conjure up the concept as a crutch in their everyday lives. Yet despite Freud's ideas b also faced numerous criticisms from both the theological and psychological commun theories often provide useful explanations for human behaviour, they also often fail marker of what makes a good scientific theory. In the case of religious belief, althoug how the idea of God arises, he cannot necessarily say how religious concepts might e particular religions diverge from each other in thought.

Many religious critics, as such, have pointed out that just because Freud provides a p belief in God, this explanation does not prove there is no God altogether. In fact, if a realms of possibility that he would create within human beings capacity to underst wish to connect with him. What Freud might perceive as wish-fulfilment is in fact act reconciling with their creator. Therefore, it is not strictly the case that Freud's argum of God altogether. Freud in particular can be viewed as a strong advocate for **psychic** mental processes and behaviour are determined by pre-existing mental structures o idea held by many of the early psychoanalysts, but one of the main issues they faced obvious logical connection between certain mental events and their deeper complex belief in God is caused by deeper anxieties in the human psyche, this is not evidence irrational. Such anxieties may well have been placed by God himself.

While Freud's models of the mind might be less impactful than previously thought, t Christians and secularists might learn from his arguments. Perhaps the greatest is tha many different emotions and ideas might come into play when thinking about God t what God might be himself. This possibility will be explored more when we look at th belief, but for the moment we shall turn to our second thinker: Richard Dawkins. He seek to paint religious belief as fundamentally irrational.

## Dawkins and the Irrationality of Religious Belief

Dawkins famously argued against the rationality of belief in God in his aptly named 2 In it he not only argues that religion is a delusion compared to healthy atheistic attitu thinking can take its place. This means that fundamental moral principles can be und reference to God or religion. In particular, he argues that religious beliefs need to be any other argument. This leads to an evaluation of that he calls the 'God hypothesis', against God is weighed against conflicting views of the universe.

Many of his criticisms against religious belief focus on the various arguments for God throughout history. For example, Dawkins strongly argues that it is not possible to in world itself and that natural selection and other scientific theories are superior to an the cause of the world. Simply put, the idea of God served a useful explanation thro ignorance, but now that scientific enquiry offers verifiable insight into the causal stru of God serves no explanatory purpose. At most, theists can only offer 'God of the gap seek to infer the existence of God through gaps in current scientific knowledge. Daw propositions such as scientific enquiry in the past is only evidence that gaps in closed and the concept of God rendered even more meaningless.

Beyond such criticisms, however, one of Dawkins' most important proposals is that r accidental by-product' of how the mind intentionally considers the world around it. I that in the absence of explanation for a particular natural phenomenon, human bein for events that might seem meaningless or causeless, even if such answers are wron multitude of ideas or beliefs might form about the world which aren't connected to i processes. These ideas accordingly spread between humans through a process know biological idea proposed by Dawkins about how genes replicate and spread across po in a more general sense to explain how abstract ideas propagate throughout human

Most importantly, memetics puts forward that the fittest ideas within a human cu
propagate the most. However, the ability for an idea to survive is not necessarily r
reflects the nature of the world itself. Rather, its propagation is often due to how
certain desires of humans about how they wish the world was ordered. In the cas
that at its core it presents a series of very attractive ideas. It gives a simple messa
centred around one God, making it easy to understand and replicate among huma
faith also makes it difficult to reject, as belief in the Christian God does not have t
empirical evidence. In fact, Dawkins contends that followers of Christianity are oft
and trust in powers beyond their control.

Therefore, Christianity as a religion is well suited to spreading among human bein
it is not a set of ideas which best explain the world around us. If belief were judge
hypothesis, the God hypothesis would be ruled out. Moreover, if Dawkins is corre
have upon the importance of faith and submitting oneself to a higher power make
to assess Christianity objectively. They are fundamentally committed to an irration
the fulfilling nature of Christian belief over its actual truth.

## Assessing Dawkins' [illegible]

Dawkins has been a bit of a magnet for controversy over the last 25 years for his v
thought shares a lot of similarities with that of Freud in identifying religious belief
irrational or delusional thinking, his explanation for why Christian belief is so pron
understanding of the intuitive appeal of its message. As such, it potentially avoids
at Freud. For Dawkins, the psychological origins of religious belief are less importa
which it presents easy-to-understand explanations for mysterious phenomena. Ye
superseded by more accurate scientific knowledge, it can be equally understood v
countries with higher levels of literacy and education.

However, just as in the case of Freud, it can also be pointed out that noting the 'fi
really an argument against them. Moreover, theologians such as Alister McGrath h
ways in which Dawkins himself possesses a limited understanding of Christian tho
date critiques of religion and oversimplifies the arguments of theologians such as
Importantly, McGrath also argues Dawkins ignores the ways in which modern the
accommodated many of his critiques. Contrary to the 'God hypothesis' being a riv
scientific enquiry, the two may in fact complement each other, with theology prov
questions outside of the remit of scientific knowledge.

Noting these points is important because the way Dawkins frames religious belief
as a world view that conflicts with the rational knowledge given by scientific enqu
complementary, then this argument has much less force. Moreover, the memetic
reflect the way they answer questions that scientific enquiry is not poised to answ
as a whole simply reflects the success it has where science does not. Such fields m
or questions of meaning that, although being answerable from a humanistic persp
importance to those who are spiritually minded. Therefore, it is important to note
makes a good case for elements of religious thought being irrational, such a case r
oversimplified understanding of religions such as Christianity.

But even if there are grounds for rationally accepting a place for religious thought
a part of public life? For example, does it have a role in education or politics? The
form a valid perspective on the world is arguably still a separate question from rel
Both Freud and Dawkins, as we shall see in the next section, go further with their
that it is the cause of much strife and conflict around the world, and that it should
private sphere of any society.

**Discussion Activity:**
Do you think that religious belief is fundamentally irrational? In pairs or small gr
ideas of Freud and Dawkins before presenting your own views to the others.

# Should Christianity be Part of Public Li

Many critics of religion have claimed that despite many variations promoting pea of religious thought has often accompanied violent, destructive behaviour. The pr religion claims exclusive access to the truth of salvation, its followers are often wi force in the face of disagreement, especially when many religions favour adheren This is quite a strong claim but perhaps one that is supported by evidence. In the vast number of conflicts, both internal and external, stretching back throughout it theological disagreement. One prominent example is the Crusades, where multipl Middle Eastern lands in search of conflict and war.

Yet at the same time, one common reply to these kinds of criticism is that they over play. In many cases of religious conflict, different political a ocial motives often p conflict despite the Bible's message of peace. As su h, it is equally easy to claim tha in the name of religion is more often than not due to personal ambitions or motivat specific religious principles. How er, this response equally might underplay the rol religious psychologically f e their reasons for the violent or destructive acts they the religiou set a, predispose an individual to certain acts they would avoid areligious or tic, regardless of whether their respective religion promotes pea

It is, therefore, easy to observe the complex nature of the debate around the goo regardless of the occasional goods religion might provide, when part of public life conflict than peace. Furthermore, whatever goods religion can provide can be me On the other hand, for ordinary Christians, the moral principles in the Bible may r should be ordered. Denying Christianity a role in public life is, therefore, not only religious beliefs of a section of the population but also excluding important insigh upon public affairs. Furthermore, for many Christians, evangelism is an important If salvation is only achievable through Jesus Christ, then at least basic teaching of government is important to ensure any person can be saved if they wish.

Nevertheless, before we take a deeper look at whether religion should be a part o worth coming back to the views of Freud and Dawkins, in order to see how their b irrationality of religion tie in with their perception of it as damaging to society. Th not only becomes easier to understand their respective criticisms of religion as a p possible to potentially gain a deeper psychological appreciation of how a peaceful Christianity can stoke violence or conflict on a broader level.

## Freud and the Neurosis of Religion

Freud focuses less in his work on whether religion was responsible for social ills ar religious belief. However, he does come to address somewhat how religious belie of violence and conflict. Freud's picture of humankind as a ally men, views it as ways. Under the surface of our good behaviour lie nu s ous instincts and impuls destructive behaviour. The main influ e t aining such behaviour are the soci acting in a way that preserves the overall future of a particular culture or society. informed these social c tions such that religious thought has been a way of s natural des e i tincts of humankind. So why does religion often lead to con

Well, Freud notes that the human mind's need for security in the face of the cha to faith and religion being exclusionary. If there are multiple competing religions t casts doubt and anxiety on any individual human being able to control the forces attitude to other religions can easily foster aggressive and hostile attitudes to tho war and conflict. Simply put, while religion can encourage seemingly good behavi culture, it also encourages aggressive behaviour by those outside of it, regardless of the religion promote peace. The need to quell human psychological anxieties b aggressive urges and pushes away the good behaviour encouraged by the practice

This is quite a broad picture but is a potentially intuitive explanation for religious c communities there is rarely internal violence, but large-scale violence has often oc different religions. However, Freud also goes deeper into the individual psycholog Christianity in particular. He notes that many Christians are encouraged to view th fundamentally sinful, whether it be impulses towards sexual activity or towards vi these impulses, others will often shame them into feeling guilty. Now, while these **guilt** might be useful in stabilising human aggression in societies, Freud argues the **neurosis** in human populations. Individuals, rather than understanding the differe are constantly torn between acting upon their impulses and feeling guilty for doin anxiety and irrational fears in equal measure.

Freud often focuses on guilt within his wider work, identifying many ways in which human beings experience it in response to wider moral fo[illegible] whether it be religion, the governance of one's parents or the p[illegible]s of a particular society. He argues that guilt often drives human act[illegible] subconsciously in a myriad of way even if unwarranted. In the ca[illegible]f Ch[illegible]tianity, human beings are encouraged to feel guilty about actio[illegible]e w[illegible]en't even a part of, such as the death and atonement [illegible]s Christ. While undoubtedly this would have been a source of guilt for his [illegible]diate followers, especially if his death led to their redemption, it meant future Christian thinkers became obsessed around being guilty for Jesus's s redeem oneself in the eyes of God. One example is communion, a form of worshi a revival of the ancient **totem feast**, where primitive societies absolved their guilt sharing in its consumption. Whereas in primitive societies, this would have been r Christianity introduces Christ as the object of shared sacrifice for its followers. The blood represents shared participation in the guilt around his death.

However, Freud contends that even if this kind of guilt encourages good behaviou with it in Christian thought is ultimately damaging, especially when it is repressed subconscious behaviour. It leads to various neuroses in human beings that becom conscious level. People might become depressed or anxious in ways that seem to reason. Combined with the exclusionary attitudes of many religions, Freud seems not only an irrational psychological wish but also a detriment to human fulfilment becomes more humanistic is one that sheds the guilt and neurosis associated with

However, at the same time, many religious individuals take umbrage with Freud's often argued that Freud's examples of guilt are highly selective and fail to take ac Christian beliefs. The ritual of communion, for example, is just a manifestation of atonement rather than a reflection of deep-seated guilt. Similarly, many might say finding their faith and do not possess the kinds of neuroses Freud identifies. As su difficult to assess. Many atheists who were brought up in religious environments r ways their experiences caused negative psychological th[illegible]s or obsessions, but number of theists who would claim the opposite. Reg[illegible]ess of whether Freud is r irrational, there are likely to be innume[illegible]b[illegible]mpeting accounts about the happi brings. However, such respons[illegible]ion [illegible]dress perhaps the more important claim exclusionary violence h[illegible]t [illegible] by religion. For greater insight on this phenomen thinker in c[illegible]n: [illegible]wkins.

## Dawkins and the Harmfulness of Religious Thought

In the second half of *The God Delusion*, Dawkins argues that religion is responsible immoral attitudes still present in modern society. Not only does religious thought attitudes towards those of other faiths or those who are areligious but it also still LGBTQI+ individuals and those with alternative lifestyle choices. Simply put, religi perspective which in turn results in violent, fanatical behaviour and bigotry towar

This is quite an extreme claim in many ways, but Dawkins holds there is plenty of Chapters 9 and 10 in particular document a significant number of examples of the

the mental abuse of children by evangelical preachers, female circumcision, the criminalisation of homosexuality, abortion and euthanasia, and apostasy. For Daw while individual cases of these practices might be excusable on the basis of singul immorality, for the most part religion has fostered prejudiced attitudes on these i Moreover, the elements of religious thought which encourage accepting irrationa of thinking mean these prejudiced attitudes have not been radically challenged by individuals within their specific religions. It is only the growth of humanistic thoug the consideration of these ethical cases by secular individuals, that has led to thei increasing acceptance in the modern world (an acceptance that Dawkins argues m religious thinkers continue to challenge).

So although religion seems to promote peace in name, Dawkins presents evidence in reality it endorses all kinds of subtle harms. The diffic[illegible]s[illegible]ems to lie as much i religious person genuinely believing certain practices or principles are fundament immoral and deserving of persecution, even [illegible]ot committing any specific harm t human beings as a whole. In the case of abortion, for example, many conservative it is unacceptable ex[illegible]t when there is severe risk of the mother's death. They wo embryo as [illegible]m[illegible]dering a human being and so worthy of significant oppositi perspective, [illegible]n may not view embryos in the same way, this position may seem chalk up this conflict to a mere disagreement of opinion, Dawkins traces a clear lin discussion of beliefs but a failure for the religious individual to study evidence obj humanist proportions his views to the evidence, accepting reasonable limits on ab individuals, while the conservative Christian is unrelenting in their opposition.

The answer, for Dawkins, is simple. Religious thought has to be removed from pub corrupting reasonable debate about pressing social and political issues. This mean potentially removing more uncritical forms of religious education and severely lim government. However, it is first worth noting how religious thinkers have respond Perhaps one of the most common criticisms levelled against his ideas is that they misleading portrayal of religious thought throughout history. For all the harms tha equally point out the significant contributions Christianity has made to moral thin charity and even scientific enquiry. Furthermore, although religious individuals ma in the past, so have the areligious or atheistic. Whatever instances of evil are selec conflict with the Christian ideals of compassion and sacrifice, ideals that are suppo which arguably benefit society at large. Where bad actions have occurred, they ca human vice or selfishness taking precedence over the teachings of Jesus.

In fact, the critic might simply argue that what Dawkins is arguing against is not rel pernicious elements of human psychology. Exclusionary attitudes or irrational thin beings, not just the religious, and if one were to reduce Dawkins' criticisms in line w difficulties of religious immorality might well be conclu[illegible]o[illegible]e the result of more patterns of behaviour. Such a conclusion is mu[illegible]h [illegible]ore fitting with Freudian-type c suggests that Dawkins is not critiquin[illegible]eligion but a more fundamental aspect of h religious exclusivism is just one manifestation. Such a conclusion is also to some de of many modern theologians. Barth, for instance, argued that faith in Christ is sepa which is a b[illegible]ychological urge possessed by human beings. Similarly, Bonhoeff severe doub[illegible]s to the moral legitimacy of religious practice when it does not adh in the Gospels. To this extent, even theologians themselves may agree with Dawkin practice, when they don't represent the important moral teachings presented by Je

Yet even this line of thinking is unlikely to satisfy Dawkins, who has argued that de elements being present in the Gospels, Christianity as a whole also endorses just a He identifies many stories in the Old Testament that display an unhealthy fixation punishment, such as Noah and Abraham, and contends that beyond their 'true' re broadly quite horrible and sadistic narratives. Furthermore, he notes that there ar Testament which are held to be rightly punishable by violent retribution or death.

eye' as given in Isaiah and other books is not only one that many people would en
at the heart of Old Testament morality. Similarly, he holds that the New Testamer
of Jesus as atonement, encourages a collective guilt within Christians that manifes
sacrifice, cruelty and suffering. In fact, Dawkins argues there is little difference be
The exclusionary attitudes of Christians mean that each compassionate teaching,
been distorted to only apply to other Christians and not to other religions or com

Therefore, Dawkins quite resolutely rejects the idea of historical evils being due to
actions were committed by those already predisposed to evil, religious thought pr
actions. In contrast, Dawkins argues that ethics can be rationally worked out and j
He holds that human beings have a natural moral sense originating in their geneti
identify Darwinian origins for altruistic behaviour without holding a God or spiritu
source. In fact, he claims such an attitude only encourages evil good actions, as pe
wish to be moral rather than out of fear of divine punishment. If this is the case, t
for religious thought to be removed from public life. While naturally it would be a
from people's private lives, there may be equally be good reasons for limiting its i
government. This discussion will be our focus in the next part of this section.

## Christianity and Education

If one accepts the arguments of Dawkins, and to a lesser extent Freud, it is easy to
religion should be kept out of education. However, many secularists disagree abo
Religious studies, as you will naturally know studying this very specification, is still
landscape of the UK. Although optional in most schools, there are still some faith
undertake compulsory GCSEs in religious studies and, to some degree, many scho
churches, religious buildings or denominations in their local community. This is un
considering the roots of Christianity and other religions in everyday life in the UK,
there is still too close a relationship between religion and education. Yet, consider
many people's lives, many contend that an educational curriculum which ignores
UK would be both misleading and uncomprehensive. So how should religion be ta

On the one hand, there are the secularists, who argue that religion can be studied
voluntary for students and it has to be from a critical perspective. This means that
taught as valid where they meaningfully conflict with scientific evidence or rationa
common evangelical Christian belief in intelligent design would have to be discuss
thought or as a fringe view without merit. It simply should not be the case that su
footing with evolution. On the other hand, there are secularists who simply conte
banished from educational curriculums completely. They hold that even teaching
much space, when there are more useful and important topics for students to lea
those who contend that religion is not only harmful as a whole but is also categori
explaining the world.

Nevertheless, both positions take the broad view that uncritical teaching of religio
indoctrination. Dawkins in particular has been very vocal about students being exp
creationism without effective disclaimers that they are in direct conflict with curre
What Dawkins ultimately contends is that this kind of uncritical teaching fosters socia
resources to rationally analyse statements or propositions, meaning later in life th
views that are irrational or mistaken. Furthermore, he notes there are still many e
force fundamentalist religious views upon children and this contributes to the mo
can lead to, including violence and war.

However, it is important to also consider religious perspectives on the matter. Da
religious thought is fundamentally irrational and dangerous, whereas many theist
helps them to be a better individual. As such, it is not hard for Christian thinkers t
education can add much to a child's life, including an awareness of spirituality and
ethical dilemmas. In fact, some religious critics have claimed that Dawkins' view is
Teaching children only about scientific knowledge leaves them unprepared to dea

oriented issues in their life, and so a balanced and comprehensive education mus
considering whether religion has a place in education, it is worth considering not
irrational, but also what the aim of religious education is in the first place. Is it to
different beliefs people hold throughout the world, or is it to teach them an alter
humanism and its focus on scientific enquiry?

## Government and Religion

The debate around the place of religion in government is similar in nature to that
on whether religion as a whole contributes to social ills when given too much of a
making, either through neglecting the wider interests of those who are areligious
considered to be immoral or unscientific. Many Western societies have, in princip
**church and state**, and such a separation is often considered to be foundational to
However, in reality, the situation is a little more complicated. In the UK, for exam
Lords, which scrutinises all key pieces of legislation by the House of Commons. M
political parties are regularly given donations by religious groups, and commentat
blocs such as the 'evangelical vote' can, in key states, strongly influence who
So religion still plays a role, if more removed, role in government and policyma

Naturally, this attracts the ire of individuals such as Dawkins, who often laments t
politics. Many conservative Christians oppose more progressive legislation on issu
and stem cell medicine. This opposition, from his perspective, is not only scientific
immoral from any reasonable ethical perspective. Letting religious individuals hav
letting irrational dogma take precedence over reasonable critical thinking. The se
therefore, not just a matter of preventing religious groups offering up elected offi
the influence of religious thinking on political decision-making.

While naturally a difficult idea to implement, it is also perhaps more controversial
and to a certain extent politics itself, is often described by thinkers as 'applied eth
political decision-making one is making in the end draws on one's own (or others'
religious values are also their ethical values, should these not be taken into accou
other partisan groups get to influence political decision-making, why not religious
the rejection of religion is simply due to it being irrational, but this of course is an
shared by religious people themselves.

At the same time, it is easy to observe cases where religious influences may have
progress on key issues. From legislation on same-sex relationships to women's rig
sought to interfere or prevent important laws on issues that are now taken for gra
argument may well have a historical precedent, and banning religion from politics
outcome for many societies. Where difficulties emerge is preserving the freedom
many theistically inclined people would support and not excluding religious persp
altogether where they may reflect the democratic will of a significant group of pe
therefore, more difficult than it appears. Even if one supports Dawkins' argument
be fairly implemented in a society where many still consider religion to be importa

**Activity:**

How would you go about legislating the rights and freedoms of religious individu
down five different laws you would craft about the roles you would allow (or no
both education and government. What issues could you foresee with these laws

## Is the Rise of Secularism and Secularisation an Opportu

This is perhaps the broadest and most difficult to answer question that emerges o
Christianity. As we have noted throughout this section, the issues levelled at the r
with its promotion of irrational thought and the social harms it potentially inflicts
this not simply be a call for Christians to be more mindful of the effects of their fa
simply indicate that it is unsatisfactory for ordinary Christians to still believe in the
faith when scientific knowledge is ever-growing. In fact, it might even suggest tha
do more to criticise ideas such as creationism and work to deny them a place in Cl
emerge is a more secularised Christianity but, despite the protestations of more c
might ultimately be the direction that Christianity has to grow to retain its relevar

Similarly, the criticisms raised by individuals such as Dawkins might highlight how
assume their religion is a force for social good. Even if it promotes good virtues, it
psychological effect of dogmatic belief is a tendency towards conflict and violence
encourage a greater awareness of how religion can cause social harm even if in pr
As such, it might also suggest that Christians should adopt a more critical perspect
effectively challenges might be cultural relics of ignorant attitudes held by its
Christians to be more critical of how the Church itself is structured and operates.

In this sense, secular criticism may simply be an opportunity for Christianity to impr
the virtuous moral principles at the core of its teaching. While many conservative Cl
suggesting it is not right for the religion to adjust itself at the whim of atheistic pers
greater sense that Christian churches and groups have a duty to monitor themselve
ensure their activities are reflective of the moral principles at the heart of the faith.
universal call all along that has not been truly answered, or a response to secularism
but, at the minimum, secular criticism may be a catalyst for positive change at the h

**Discussion Activity:**
Do you believe that secular criticism is an opportunity for Christianity? Or does i
Discuss in pairs or small groups.

**Quick Quiz**

1. What is secularism?
2. What is secularisation?
3. What is humanism?
4. What is wish-fulfilment?
5. What is memetics?
6. What is the separation of church and state?
7. What are some of the examples of social harm caused by Christianity in Da

# 6B: Liberation Theology and

## What you will learn in this section:

The relationship between liberation theology and the thought of Karl Marx, includ

- Marx's teachings on alienation and exploitation and how they were adopted
- The ways in which liberation theology used Marxist methodologies to criticise including critiques of capitalism and its institutions.
- Liberation theology's teachings on the 'preferential option for the poor' and orthopraxis over orthodoxy.
- Questions about whether Christianity should be influenced by secular ideolog liberation theology's use of Marxist political theor

**Starter Activity:**

What do you know about Ma[illegible]sm? The term is often used in political media but Write down three examples of how you have heard it being used and compare t progress [illegible]out this section.

| Key Thinker | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | Karl Marx |
| **Born** | 1818 |
| **Died** | 1883 |
| **Key text** | *The Communist Manifesto (1848), Das Kapital (1867, 1885, 18* |
| **Why are they important?** | Karl Marx is perhaps the most influential political theorist and contributing immensely to the understanding of how societie also helping to bring about political revolutions around the w twentieth-century historical events. |
| **Did you know?** | Marx lived most of his later life in England and you can still vis Cemetery, London! |

## Introduction – Who is Marx and What is Marxism?

It would be an understatement to say that Karl Marx is perhaps the most influenti modern history. No other figure has encompassed such extreme praise and criticis political leanings, his economic ideas laid the foundation for how we understand l goods today. But who exactly was Marx? Although born in Germany, he eventuall his life, living out many years in exile in London with his wife Jenny von Westphale published the first volume of his most important work *Das Kapital*, with volumes 2 1894 respectively. This sets out an overarching view of hum[illegible] politics and econor often known as historical materialism. At its simplest, th[illegible]olus that the material produces goods and how it organises tha[illegible]uction is what governs its formatio This includes what social classes a society possesses, the kinds of political thinking between human beings a[illegible]s different forms of work and life. Therefore, Marx's He wished t[illegible]on to explain how societies came to be the way they are but also way they or[illegible]labour and produce goods might predict how they will change i

One well-known example of the historical materialist approach is Marx's discussio societies. Marx himself drew great inspiration from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hege progression of stages that grew towards a more spiritually complete form of socie materialist, viewed such a progression through an economic perspective. He argu world had moved through different political and economic stages as a result of ch standards of living and political struggles by ordinary people. For Marx, societies a oriented systems, before moving towards feudalism and finally capitalism.

Yet Marx argued that capitalism itself was also naturally flawed, relying upon the
(proletariat) by a ruling, wealthy class (bourgeoisie). This imbalance in relations (a
thinking throughout *Das Kapital*) meant that capitalism was fundamentally unstab
capitalist societies suffered from increasingly instability, the oppressed workers w
oppression and eventually revolt, beginning a new form of society where all share
exploitation was eliminated from all economic interactions. This political system, a
was termed **communism**.

So if those were Marx's philosophical aims and thoughts, then what is Marxism to
the political ideas and discussion that have grown out of his works are beyond sur
simply the use of Marx's core ideas to explore different aspects of politics, econor
broadness of Marx's original writings has meant that his theories have been applie
originally envisioned, and many thinkers contend that his approach is still an impo
the structures of society in the modern world. The different forms of Marxism tha
cover here. However, we will take a more current, close look at one form that has er
religious communities over the last 80 years; that commonly called **liberation the**

## Liberation Theology and Marx

Liberation theology is a Christian movement that emerged primarily out of Latin A
as a response to the economic and social oppression many poorer people suffered
in the region. In many ways, it sought to distinguish itself from Christian orthodox
emphasis on the importance of **orthopraxis** and the **preferential option for the p**
explore throughout this section, but we can initially say that liberation theology ge
on the application and practice of Christian teaching rather than discussion aroun
the belief of many who defined themselves as liberation theologians that the Chri
enough to help those who needed it the most and, as a whole, was failing to imple
social vision Jesus presented throughout his ministry.

Perhaps the most distinctive element of liberation theology, however, was its blen
teaching with political theory. The most important figure thinkers drew upon as a
Not only did Marx offer a theoretical structure from which to understand the varie
economic reasons for the impoverishment of human beings, but for many his wor
illuminated Jesus's struggle to liberate his followers, suffering under the oppressi
authorities at the time of his ministry. As such, Marx's work provided liberation th
basis for understanding how Jesus's teachings can be applied in modern political c
can work to overcome the oppression and impoverishment of people around the

Liberation theology's use of Marx was controversial at the time (and is still contro
Christian thinkers, including the Pope himself, criticised the introduction of secula
theology, arguing it risked distorting the moral teachings derived from scripture. S
motivated by liberation theology's thinly veiled disagreement with the work and
Church itself. Liberation theology primarily grew in regions that were typically Cat
argued that traditional Catholic doctrine had purposefully diminished the political
the Gospels. This meant that theology as a whole had also ignored the important
and overlooked his calls for the liberation of the poor and marginalised. As a whol
theologians the Catholic Church had at its core become part of the very social stru
marginalisation and oppression of the poor in Latin America. Only forcing a radica
Church operates could ever help those who were truly suffering under unjust poli
Church becoming complicit in the activities of those benefiting from the impoveris

The heyday of liberation theology has arguably passed, but its influence has been
theologians still operate under its principles today. Throughout this section we sha
of liberation theologians, how they exemplified the application of Marxist thought
highlight the ways Christian thought can work with secular political theories. First,
important Marxist concepts: **alienation** and **exploitation**.

# Alienation and Exploitation

An important first thing to note is that liberation theology does not advocate supp
concepts to displace Christian theology. Rather, Marx's work is used as a tool to d
poverty and oppression have developed in a society and the way Christian teachir
issues. The Bible thus remains the ultimate source of truth and moral guidance, bu
be relevant within a modern-day political context. Nevertheless, many liberation t
Marxist society as one that is closer to the ideal Christian society than a capitalist
has a much greater focus on community, justice, sharing and equality compared t
holds an obsession with the growth of material wealth, and, through this obsessio
of other human beings.

But how does this exploitation occur on a basic level? Well, to understand that, w
fundamental insights into how capitalist economies tend to individuals being t

## How are Human Beings Exploited?

Of particular interest to liberation theologians is how Marx explores the nature of
production and a capitalistic economy might naturally lead to oppression and in
that is defining the way human beings transfer wealth through various means, y
more often than not don't consider how our wealth is divided. Although inequalit
pressing political issue in the last decade, we typically still search for jobs that are
we don't question the system which structures and delivers those wages. Marxist
one analyses these structures, the full extent to which capitalist societies engage i
revealed. For at their heart, capitalist societies, for Marx, thrive on taking advanta
less than they truly deserve.

Let's break this down a bit further, though, for typically the ordinary person might
slightly at the suggestion they are being exploited. Many people enjoy their work
believe they are being paid a fair wage, if not a wage which supports the life they
leave. But Marx's concept of exploitation is a bit more fundamental than this idea
It simply holds that in a just society, people would be paid for the total economic v
their work. Simply put, whatever work I do in an ideal society, I should reap the re
Yet Marx notes that in capitalist societies, this does not happen. One has employe
take a share of the value of the work for themselves, even though they did not co
whatever work one does, one is probably also paying for a vast array of employers
the fact that they *own* the place of work or production.

As an example, imagine you work in a pizza takeaway. Each pizza costs £10 and yo
can make 10 pizzas every hour, meaning the total amount of money that can be e
Now, let's imagine there's an additional £20 per hour used in the cost of running t
the cost of ingredients, operation of facilities, etc. So overall, the total value of em
is £28 per hour. However, you're creating £100 per hour in value. So where is the
Well, this is of course a grossly simplified example, but Marx notes that it goes to
takeaway, who takes the total value produced by selling pizzas but only gives a sm
employees themselves. The point is, regardless of whether one believes one's wage
structured, capitalist societies are always exploitative because they thrive on payi
economic value of the goods they are tasked to produce. Exploitation as such is in

This exploitation, however, only occurs because capitalist societies divide betwee
those who do not. Capitalists, therefore, are really those who own what Marx call
These are the machines, instruments or entities that govern the extent to which w
In the case of the pizza takeaway, a person could not make pizzas without the ove
materials. Yet this ownership we can see is manifestly unfair. Simply because a pe
production means they can extract wealth from others despite not doing any of th
more often than not this ownership is not even justified. A cursory glance across t
individuals who have inherited the wealth they possess. Even for those who are th
Marx would note that their wealth inevitably trades on the increasing exploitatio

What is important to note, however, is that although Marx opposed capitalism, he specific cabal of capitalists who propped up the system. In fact he argued that bot capitalists) and the **proletariat** (working class) suffered from not being able to und exploitation behind capitalist societies (although the proletariat inevitably suffere whole was simply a system that had emerged from the way human beings produc could be replaced to the benefit of all by another system which erased the exploit **communism**. Much is said about what communism is or isn't, but Marx argued tha was the idea that workers themselves should *own the means of production*. Simpl should communally own the machines, instruments or entities that produce good profits with everyone else.

For liberation theologians, this Marxist analysis of exploitation was not just theory America, the tradition of **latifundia** and **hacienda** – large plantations and workhou individuals – mirrored Marx's criticisms of capitalism. Much of the land and means hands of wealthy individuals who took much of the value generated by their work return. Moreover, the workers often had no choice but to accept these small wag of production and so if they quit their job they would starve. To a certain extent, t the world, is in large part why Marx's ideas are still thought to be relevant in

## How do Human Beings Become Alienated?

Another concept Marx puts forward which is readily picked up by liberation theol At its core this is a state workers find themselves in when producing goods in a ca because ordinary workers are separated from the means of production and the fr example that can be given of this concept is assembly line workers. These individu the entire workday performing repetitive tasks with little to no creative engageme Typically, for those who do find some fulfilment in varied and interesting work, th shocking or saddening. One might wonder whether people in such jobs feel any af whether they feel disconnected. Yet Marx holds this same kind of feeling persists environment for a number of reasons, and, in any job, one is likely to find people

The first reason is that most modern workers in the world do not produce goods t Whatever we create is typically sold back into the market without the buyer havin Whether it be physically manufactured goods or more abstract services, the indus that workers now do not see the completion of their work from beginning to end. capitalism means that people are forced to compete with others. Increased produ a capitalist society, and growth is typically used as the measure of its success. This is overtaken by competition to produce it more quickly and more efficiently than is individuals under capitalist societies are typically denied autonomy in their worl forced to turn up to work at a particular time and produce their work to specific d leave when their employer dictates.

What this all adds up to is any ordinary worker being treated as if they were a ma produce goods as if they only impassively care about the value of the work rather they care, they are separated from the fruits of their work in the end. This treatm eventually (and perhaps very quickly) being alienated from the work they do, and effect upon mental health. It creates feelings of worthlessness and detachm empathy towards others. These are the kinds of feeling that anyone who has worl probably experienced, but what Marx argues is that such feelings are expected. Th individual deficit but in the way society and work are structured. Moreover, they working lives were changed, such that we owned the means of production and we from the fruits of our labour.

Liberation theologians argued that this concept of alienation could easily be identif marginalised. Many have to work menial jobs with little reward or satisfaction. In t little time for one's religious life. Either belief in God becomes a crutch to get throu fundamentally disillusioned with the idea that God is looking out for human beings

argued that the Church as a whole needs to avoid the former. It cannot simply be a
the aim of encouraging alienated workers through their everyday lives, but it shou
intervening and ending structural oppression, alienation and exploitation. This goa
next section, in which we explore liberation theology's discussion of capitalism and

**Discussion Activity:**
Can you observe exploitation and alienation in today's world? In small groups or
on these two Marxist concepts and whether you believe they are still present in

## Liberation Theology and Social Sin

Throughout your studies into Christian thought, you might have noticed a commo
with individual actions. In any case, when a person commits an evil act, the blame
of self-control or the failure to exemplify a particular virtue. Yet, as you might wel
archaic in the modern age as we become increasingly aware of how particular pol
can instil certain attitudes or beliefs. Liberation theologians, in contrast with ortho
a similar way. Marx's analysis of the flaws in capitalism easily give way to an unde
conditioned human being with political and social forces around them. Individuals don't
volition; they are governed by the structures of the society and culture they find t
are deeper reasons for sin than just a person's own inherent vice.

Thus we can turn to the idea of **social sin**. At its simplest level, social sin can be th
cumulation of personal sins that form a class of sin in themselves. Common exam
homophobia. Each of those is not defined by individual instances of actions but by
that reveal collective attitudes. Yet if these kinds of social sin can't be reduced to
occurrence, then they can't typically be combated by commanding individuals to
Social sin has to be, in some way, analysed at a societal level as the product of a w

This is especially true when we consider how social sin manifests itself. While it m
scale events that trigger certain attitudes to arise, more often than not it manifest
can call **structural sin** is where social sin becomes embedded in a society due to le
practice. For example, racial segregation in US history is an example of where the
Individuals were taught that black people should not mix with white people and d
treatment throughout society. A similar case might be apartheid in South Africa. I
little opposition (at least at the beginning) from Christian churches, who in many c

What does this mean? Well, in short, it means that Christian teaching which simply
responsibility to act well is perhaps not equipped to deal with cases of social and st
structural sin exists, individuals may not even be aware that they are committing a
they are licensed by the state or culture they live in. What would be needed to cha
the societal structures and laws that enable such sin to occur, which means dismar
to racism, for instance. In the case of the examples we just analysed, it would mea

However, cases of structural and social sin are not always so clear-cut. In the case
we've noted how the very structures of capitalism may give rise to attitudes that c
the exploitation and oppression of everyday workers. Their welfare and fulfilment
sacrificed to ensure economic growth and the fruit of their labour may be taken fr
unfairly. Hence liberation theologians argued that capitalist societies exhibited bo
social and structural sin towards the poor and oppressed that could not be solved
arguing for individuals to act better. Rather, the very structures that encouraged t
exploitation, marginalisation and oppression of the poor had to be dismantled the
For example, Leonardo Boff, a well-known liberation theologian stated:

*... unjust structures or oppressors are objectively an evil. For this reason, they are*
*sense. These unjust structures are, to society, what lust is to the individual: they co*

Therefore, we shall take a look next at some of the key targets liberation theologi
discussing structural sin and look at whether there are potentially religious groun
destruction or dismantling.

## Liberation Theology and Capitalism

We've explored in many ways already how capitalism might end up in the exploita
a number of angles. But how can this idea be understood within a Christian conte
focuses upon individual sin and not social sin? Much of Christian thought is genera
Jesus atones for the personal sins of human beings. This means that any analysis o
nature and does not consider what social or political contexts this sin is found wit
might remember from your Year 1 studies, this interpretation of scripture has bee

For one, Jesus himself might have been much more of a political and social liberat
traditional Christian thought. You might recall the mission statement at Luke 4:16
he had come to 'bring good news to the poor' and to 'set the captives free'. In par
have often seized upon the idea of **reversal** in the Gospels – the overturning of th
order such that the poor will prosper and the rich suffer. One key example of this
Jesus preaches that 'the first shall be last and the last shall be first'. However, whi
this to indicate the way the downtrodden might be rewarded in the afterlife, liber
interpret it as evidence for Jesus wishing to instigate a revolution on Earth that wi
oppression of the poor.

Moreover, to what extent there is the idea of corporate responsibility present in t
Old Testament is regularly depicted as holding the Israelites responsible for the si
population. Similarly, God is often portrayed as punishing entire cities or civilisatio
Taking this into account, it can be argued that the revolution from a capitalist soci
socialist or communist society is one that is potentially supported by scripture. A l
rests on the possibility of a classless society, but where liberation theologians ofte
reconciling this idea with Marx's more radical ideas about the struggle to reach su
the bourgeoisie would not be interested in giving up their wealth voluntarily. The
this is the case is through violent resistance to the capitalist order, such that the n
taken away from the capitalist class and given to the workers.

Whether such violent revolution is equivalent to the religious idea of reversal fou
strong debate. Most liberation theologians keenly advocate for structural change
limiting of capitalist enterprise. However, at the same time, most are keen to emp
aspect of necessary change. For example, one key figure in the movement, Gustav
different and equally important kinds of liberation. The first is **political and social**
ending of structures and laws that entrap the poor. This form of liberation necessa
engagement with political issues. The second is **human liberation**, which aims to v
focusing one's charitable engagements on the poor and ensuring society is more o
The third is **liberation from sin**, the traditional kind of liberation focused on by the
the relationships with God and human beings. Thus Gutierrez does not abandon o
instead argues it has to be integrated with wider political and social concerns.

This is important to understanding the liberation theologians' criticisms of capitali
sin to matters of structure or the existence of poverty to the existence of capitalis
that it is important to note that capitalism contributes to the development of stru
dispossess and marginalise the poor. In order for human beings to properly recon
all three kinds of liberation have to be addressed.

### Liberation Theology and Institutions

When lookin[illegible]the dismantling of structural and social sins it is important to con
political system but also the institutions inside of it and how they individually migh
sins. As we've noted before, liberation theologians in Latin America were quite cri
First, they considered it to value **orthodoxy** (right thought) much more than **ortho**
considering the context and teachings of Jesus's ministry, the latter is arguably mo
out of poverty and oppression. Moreover, considering the corruption and violence
Latin America, it was clear to many liberation theologians that the Catholic Church
own moral principles, if it was not complicit altogether in these nefarious activitie
very institutions of government and Church were responsible for enforcing structu
marginalisation of many poor workers.

The key takeaway from this for liberation theologians is that the Christian Church restructure itself to help those in need. Moreover, it had to address the concerns them how Christianity works for them in the present, not just in the speculated af early conference at Medellin, the Latin American bishops agreed that priests in th '*awaken in individuals and communities... a living awareness of justice... [and] a se solidarity*'. Without such principles, the Church risked becoming irrelevant to thos difficulties. But still, all this is still just theory; how did liberation theologians conv

One key response was the development of **Ecclesial Base Communities** (EBCs). Th groups of Christians who meet outside of a church context to study the Bible and teachings within their local communities. EBCs originally began in Latin American when mean **lay catechists** took over the duties of overseeing communion and oth different parishes. Over time, however, they started to develop their own identity Catholic Church as a whole. In particular, they focused on an egalitarian model of would not simply be preached to the congregation; rather groups would form and (reading in rather than out), where individuals would use their own experiences to Gospels. Therefore, the search for the 'objective meaning' of scripture was jettiso Christians participating to find their own meaning in the Bible.

As a result, within EBCs there was often a greater emphasis on the social and polit and a broader understanding of how his ministry related to the modern world. Ov EBCs meant that, over time, ordinary Christians became more directly involved in moral principles together with their perspectives on poverty and oppression in th advantage of encouraging **praxis** on behalf of ordinary Christians and, for many, p alienation that came with simply being an invisible member of a traditional, hierar For liberation theologians, EBCs were an important example of how Christian prac empowerment of ordinary workers, and demonstrated the natural structural flaw to an extent, was largely inaccessible and unrelatable to ordinary suffering Christi

Naturally, some Christian thinkers argued that EBCs were not authentic reflections While they might be empowering to some, they also risked distorting the message anyone to read their own meaning into the Bible. However, liberation theologians minor in comparison to the strengthening of faith and community that resulted fro EBCs. In fact, such criticisms highlight traditional Christianity's blinkered focus on o What the Christian Church should be designed to do rather was to focus on the co especially those poor, marginalised and oppressed. If the Church fails to accommo their needs, then, for liberation theologians, it is just another part of the structural

There is an important principle, nonetheless, running through these concerns; one v While a longstanding idea in the Christian Church, it was given new life by liberation and centre of their ethical teaching. This principle is commonly known as the **prefer**

## The Preferential Option for the Poor

Liberation theology, more than any other Christian movement, puts the p at the front and centre of its thought. At heart, this principle dictates that Christia first for those who are marginalised or powerless in society before those who are liberation theologians often go a bit further, specifically claiming that God blesses those who are rich. The basic idea behind this is that if one is significantly materia one is to some degree complicit in their poverty, as it is likely that one is exploiting way or failing to give one's wealth away to those who need it.

The doctrine of the preferential option for the poor can be seen to have its roots i the Bible itself. There are many narratives and passages where Jesus notably sided with those who were sick, poor or marginalised instead of the prevailing religious authorities. We've already noted the importance of the mission statement in Luke 4:16–21, where Jesus seems to make a direct declaration of his preference for tho who are impoverished and oppressed. Yet there are plenty of other supportive passages. For example, the parable of the sheep and goats in Matthew also reinfo Jesus's commitment to the poor. In particular, in Matthew 25:35–36, Jesus affirms goodness of those who help those in need, and he throughout emphasises the importance of righteousness on behalf of those who are dispossessed. Similarly, i Old Testament, the prophet Amos regularly called out the hypocrisy of the religiou similar vein to Jesus's criticism of the Pharisees. In Amos 9:10, he even affirms tha who have oppressed the poor, and throughout the book of Amos criticises the ine the poor in Israel present during his life. A final example might be found in Exodus assistance, frees the Hebrews from slavery and leads them out of Egypt.

So, on a core level, the preferential option can be seen as a vital part of Christianit justice and ethics. Many liberation theologians, however, also approach the prin Those who are privileged have the time, space and money to find fulfilment in the struggling inevitably through unfair treatment or marginalisation cannot find the s religion or faith as a part of their daily lives may be difficult. This is perhaps more t system, which Marx held attempts to squeeze every ounce of productivity out of i might feel as a result prevents them from finding spiritual satisfaction in their lives call to end structural sin ties in with the preferential option for the poor.

When liberation theology first declared its support for a strong version of this prin controversy. Should Christianity, with its emphasis on universal morality, not focu arguing they are more blessed than another? In fact, it seems perfectly viable to h who are poorer without affirming they are somehow greater in the eyes of God. L seems to require the prioritisation of one group above another, even though Chris emphasises God's universal love for humanity. This is a tricky question, for in man whether liberation theologians are making an affirmation about the nature of God

In fact, such a criticism may be misplaced when one considers the wider theoretic As discussed before, most liberation theologians hold that orthopraxis should take Within this context, the preferential option for the poor is much clearer in its aims it is not enough to simply be good to those around you. One has to direct one's ch engagements to the poor and marginalised. This idea is far less controversial and t liberation theologians' focus. It has even been reaffirmed in recent years by the Ca Pope Francis, in his 2013 apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, stresses the ne the poor, arguing that is an essential vocation for any Christian to help those in ne that those who are poor need greater time for their spiritual lives, since they will l preoccupied with day-to-day survival.

## Orthopraxis and Orthodoxy

We've explored in numerous ways so far how liberation theologians have argued t placed upon **orthopraxis** (right action) than **orthodoxy** (right thought), especially of the Christian Church. Such an idea has potentially broad support throughout sc can be felt especially in Jesus's ministry, where he not only heals the sick, but calls wealth and feeds those who are hungry. In contrast, the depictions in the Gospels are often of religious authorities too concerned with ritual, purity and observance interpreted as an overestimation of the importance of orthodoxy. Many different taken the various miracles and healings to be evidence of Jesus's divinity, and man been held over the correct minutia and terminology to be used when describing Je

But liberation theologians argue that such debates overlook the broader point of Jesus's work during his ministry. Simply put, his helping of the poor and oppressed represented a call for individuals to do the same in their communities, not a call to discuss the theological meaning of such actions. This is the impetus for liberation theologians criticising elements of the Catholic Church, which they contend has been too concerned with orthodoxy, to the extent where it has failed to act to help the poor around the world, and even tacitly maintained the socio-economic order that keeps them oppressed and impoverished. The Christian Church as a whole cannot be an apolitical entity; it has to get involved in ending structural sin. Simply reinforcing hierarchy in the Church that mirrors the hierarchies of capitalism will leave ordinary Christians alienated and unable to seek help from the Christian Church itself.

But how can Christianity as a whole be reoriented towards orthopraxis? The liberation Gutierrez envisioned it happening in two acts, or stages. The first act was living alongside, experiencing life from their perspective and standing alongside them during difficulties. The second act then involved drawing on these experiences in developing theology, such that theology starts from an understanding of and solidarity with the poor as the **underside of history**. This is a term Gutierrez to describe how the poor have typically had a lack of representation throughout history and the world, by Christian, especially those in positions of spiritual or political power, to ignore poverty around the world and not seek to live richer lifestyles than the people they serve.

However, even these two stages can be thought to be a bit vague. They are a basic way to consider good **praxis** in any Christian life, but we can go into more detail. One theologian is Boff, who argues for what he terms the **three mediations**. This would enable liberation theology what Boff called 'a new spirit' and approach theology in a radical way, not chained to how Christianity developed in the academic world. The first meditation is known as the **socio-analytic**. This focuses on using the social sciences, particularly philosophy, political theory and economics, to analyse why ordinary people experience poverty and oppression, focusing particularly on the causes of these phenomena. The second is the **hermeneutic mediation**, which argues for using theological resources, in particular the Bible, to understand the experiences of the poor as theologically valid, looking for parallels in biblical accounts to see how theology can also give insight into the causes of oppression. Third is the **practical mediation**, which focuses on action, particularly social action. Communities and groups dedicated to building and developing society. Here the combination of the socio-analytic and the hermeneutical mediations helps liberation theologians to understand what positive action to take and enact social change to help those suffering in lives of oppression.

Thus, through Boff's thought we can see that liberation theologians do not wholly reject orthodoxy. Theory is important but it must always be used to guide right action. Both must be in light of the kind of radical praxis Jesus pointed towards in his ministry. However, even this is controversial, especially due to liberation theologians drawing on secular theory to help guide what will be right action. In the final parts of this section, we shall look at whether liberation theology should work with Marx and whether religion should work with secular ideologies at all.

**Activity:**
What Christian principles might you develop to guide orthopraxis? Write down your ideas for the mediations and note where you think your thoughts might differ from Boff's.

## What Issues are there with Liberation Theology?

Liberation theology on the surface seems like quite an attractive approach. Why should Christians not engage with the political situation and work towards helping the poor and oppressed? Despite its appeal there have been questions about whether liberation theologians have fully thought through or presented a coherent vision behind their movement. It is well known, for example, that Marx criticised religion, calling it the 'the opium of the people' and holding that it contributed to the suffering of the poor and oppressed. This meant that they developed mental attitudes that justified their poverty and failed to direct their anger or disappointment at the ruling capitalist class. So, on the surface it seems as if liberation theology has a significant hurdle to overcome. How can a theology that is so concerned about the afterlife fully motivate people towards reversal and revolution in this life?

In fact, we can start with the concept of reversal itself. As we explored, both libera
on the need for widespread revolution and social change as a permanent way of e
oppressed can be free of the economic and social constraints that capitalism bring
disagree on the physical methods involved in this revolution, even if in principle th
requires ordinary people to realise their economic and social circumstances throu
and fortune. Taking the agreements first, liberation theologians have often criticis
development often promoted by the Catholic Church and other charities. In partic
development only temporarily helps those who are poor and suffering. This mean
only helps people for as long as it lasts, with the structures of capitalism ensuring
permanent way of improving their own situation, or realising their own self-fulfilm
Furthermore, in the case of certain forms of development, such as loans to poore
poorer countries into long-term debt to wealthier countries, which can at times b
may even simply trap the receiving country into long cycles of debt they cannot h

However, how do liberation theologians hope to dismantle structural sins and over
capitalism? This is less clear. For while Marx endorsed violent struggle, such an ide
peace and to turn the other cheek. Thus, liberation theologians are often necessita
principle of [illegible] instead of Marx's full-fledged revolution, leaving the approach
would go ab[illegible]ding poverty and oppression. In fact, some have charged liberat
critical of conventional charitable efforts, without promoting a genuine alternative
also be argued the revolution Marx seeks is an economic one, not a moral one. The
proposes may ultimately be an atheist one, and the liberation theologian may have
of religion once certain structural sins are dismantled.

Yet we can go even further here and question liberation theology's ideas about stru
Catholic Church has criticised the movement's use of Marx here, arguing that while
circumstances the poor might unfairly find themselves in, identifying, or attempting
wrong approach. This is because in the view of the Catholic Church this allows indiv
their actions. The idea of structural sins implies tacitly that it is not individuals who s
sin, rather the structures. For many, therefore, acknowledging structural sin atones
One particularly strong critic of liberation theology in this vein was Cardinal Ratzinge
movement of uncritically appropriating Marx and ignoring his thoughts on religion a
over ordinary people. Furthermore, Ratzinger argues Marxism directly puts forward
counter structural sin, which is inherently un-Christian. Instead, Christianity focuses
as a response to sin, not encouraging further conflict.

While one might be inclined to consider Ratzinger's criticisms here as somewhat na
of political systems in the world, he does potentially highlight how Christianity mig
universal set of moral principles that naturally clash with any contextual call to acti
liberator in some senses, was simply putting forward a notion of how all human be
situation they find themselves in. If this is true, then Christianity is naturally in tens
materialism, which judges moral requirements based on the political system at har
there is some evidence that the Catholic Church has in part adopted some of the ta
theology. Pope Francis himself in the Evangelii Gaudium, criticises the 'crony capit
and prevents people from achieving fulfilment and autonomy in their lives. Nevert
oppressed, does not advocate revolution, and falls short of identifying capitalism

This raises a broader issue, about whether Christianity should engage with secular
secularism itself, feminism or political theory, there is the growing argument that
isolated from the wider academic progress made in the modern world. This discus
this section and of this companion.

**Discussion Activity:**
What issues do you think trouble liberation theology the most? Discuss in pairs o

# Should Christianity Engage with Secular Ide

Much of your Year 2 work has dealt with how Christianity responds to secular ideo
the most keenly studied areas of modern theology. While many denominations ha
since their formation, academic theology has arguably progressed in the opposite
theology, liberation theology or religious pluralism, more than ever theologians ha
secular theories can add to the understanding of Christian thought. On the one ha
Christianity presents universal truths; why should secular theories have any say? Th
have mirrored such thoughts and those predisposed to distrust natural theology of
presents revelations that are timeless and immutable then secular ideologies can

On the other hand, there is the argument that secular ideologies may be in some
alternative viewpoints on the world that may still be inspired by divinely given rea
context of Christian thought can only add balance and insight to traditional theolo
movements may well have exposed hidden sexism in the structure of the Christian
theology may have shown the need for Christian belief to accommodate certain p
fact that denominations such as the Catholic Church have felt the need to respond
developments, may be testament to the fact that in order to keep up
Christianity has to engage with the forms of thought that define it. Moreover, it
new phenomenon. Throughout its history Christianity has worked with, and chang
new kinds of thought, and different perspectives have only improved our underst

Nevertheless, there may be limits. In the case of Marx, adopting his ideas wholesa
naturally stand in conflict with Christian teaching. As such, liberation theology ma
The use of Marx by liberation theologists might prove useful in understanding hov
be applied effectively in modern societies, but this very application might prove to
principles themselves! These kinds of issue once again bring up the difficulties exp
and feminism; whether the rise of secular ideologies undermines Christian though
What may initially appear to be a boon for theology may inevitably show that in it
unequipped to deal with the theoretical problems of the modern world, and at lea
thought may be of very limited usefulness in dealing with political and social crise

| | Quick Quiz |
|---|---|
| 1. | What is the difference between orthopraxis and orthodoxy? |
| 2. | What is exploitation in Marx's thought? |
| 3. | What is alienation in Marx's thought? |
| 4. | What is social sin? |
| 5. | What is structural sin? |
| 6. | What are Ecclesial Base Communities? |
| 7. | What is the preferential option for the poor? |

# Answers to Activities

**4A Activity:**
There are lots of questions about whether Hick's pluralism overstates the similarities be
Pick three different religions and research their beliefs about God and salvation, then wr
might be reconciled or not.

There are many potential answers to this question and many potential differences betw
worth getting students to look at a non-Abrahamic religion such as Hinduism or Buddhis
atheistic religion, is an interesting case for Hick (and partly spurs his use of the term 'the
its beliefs are so fundamentally different from a religion such as Christianity, it is imposs
outlook which acknowledges the potential truth of both.

**4B Activity:**
How do other religions view the resurrecti[illegible] of Jesus? Do some independent rese
your own ideas about how the scri[illegible]ning movement might tackle bringing tog
to discuss this event.

There are [illegible]iffe[illegible]answers to this question. One starting point for students might
is a key pro[illegible]d figure in eschatological matters and much of the traditional Islamic
Jesus as a pi[illegible]tal character. It is, therefore, a good way to look at how Christian ideas ab
can be compared against those of another religion.

**5A Activity:**
Read the Mulieris Dignitatem passages 18–19. Write down three ways you believe the C
gender equality and three ways it might still promote sexist attitudes. On the whole, do
perpetuates unequal gender roles?

This passage is quite wordy, and occasionally difficult to get through. Students should hi
concerning gender roles. Why is the Catholic Church so keen to emphasise the importan
largely glossed over by Genesis, with the pain of childbirth even being a punishment? W
figure in the Bible and not one who seemed to live a spiritually fulfilling life? These ques
issues about female ordination, contraception, sex before marriage, etc.

**5B Activity:**
Look back across your notes on the previous part of the specification (5A Gender and So
and Daly do you think there is a golden thread running through scripture? Annotate you
whether there is more evidence for Ruether's or Daly's position.

Students should revisit their work on scriptural evidence for gender equality. In particula
writings of St Paul, which present many sexist attitudes. Some might come to the conclu
egalitarian attitudes, undermining the idea of a golden thread throughout the entirety o
there is foreshadowing of Jesus's ideas in various parts of the Old Testament.

**6A Activity:**
How would you go about legislating the rights and freedo[illegible]religious individuals in th
different laws you would craft about the roles you would allow (or not allow) religion to
government. What issues could you foresee with these laws?

This is quite an open task and could be made into a group activity. Discussions might
For example, should a society have blasphemy laws? How might slander and libel laws ir
allowed to [illegible] their religious beliefs in public through wearing items of faith? If a stu
potentially [illegible] or inflammatory law, make sure they address the ramifications of su
freedom, peace, prosperity, etc.

**6B Activity:**
What Christian principles might you develop to guide orthopraxis? Write down your own ve
note where your thoughts might differ from Boff's.

Students might draw on their Year 1 work in order to inform this exercise, and it is a usefu
apply liberation theology. If their principles are too broad then they might fail to engage p
issues, yet if they are too specific or narrow they might fail to capture the universal moral
the Gospels.

# Answers to Quick Quiz

## Religious Pluralism and Theology

1. Exclusivism holds that only one religion has exclusive access to the truth about salv
   religion has access to the truth about salvation but other religions may have a parti
   Pluralism holds that no one religion has exclusive or guaranteed access to the truth
2. The view that all human beings will eventually be saved.
3. Hendrik Kraemer
4. Individuals who unwittingly participate in a Christian moral life and so can be saved
5. The view that salvation can only come through Jesus Christ alone.
6. The thing or truth at the heart of all religious experience and enquiry, which exists
7. A theology that draws upon all religious beliefs in order to inform its understanding

## Religious Pluralism and Society

1. The communication and t[illegible]etween individuals of different faiths.
2. Numerous – migration, conflict, war, economic pressure, etc.
3. Rede[illegible] Mission
4. Sharing the Gospel of Salvation
5. A textual studies movement which encourages those of different faiths to sit togeth
   issues by comparing scripture.
6. It relativises and flattens Christian belief; it does not reflect the right Christological

## Gender and Society

1. A system or systems within a state/society in which men hold an imbalanced level
2. The study of women's issues and the advocacy of women's rights and equality.
3. Mulieris Dignitatem
4. It means God-bearer and reflects the importance of motherhood in the Christian fa
5. Naturalistic feminism holds there are some essential differences between men and
   in understanding how women can be liberated and fulfilled. Radical feminism tend
   are cultural constructs and there are no essential differences between men and wo
6. The nuclear family is a traditional archetype that supposes the ideal family is a husb
7. It means that it is not a natural form of family; it is a form imposed by the cultural
   of society.

## Gender and Theology

1. A form of theology that aims to dismantle sexist elements of the Christian Church a
   equal fashion.
2. A term used by Paul Ricœur to describe the process of analysing a text from an und
   intentions or motives.
3. Accidental maleness refers to how Jesus's gender is not important to consider whe
   Essential maleness holds that his gender is of vital importance when considering hi
4. A theme of prophetic liberation that runs through Scripture.
5. Rape, war and genocide; three phenomena that are patriarchal elements of Christi
   its history.
6. As she is used by God without her input or consent in order to produce a male savi
7. As Daly aims to [illegible]ver back the pre-existing myths that Christianity distorted in

## The Challenge of Secularism

1. The view that religion is harmful and irrational, and has no place in public life.
2. The process by which societies or cultures gradually become more areligious and a
3. The view that religion is not needed to justify ethical systems and that a scientific p
   when investigating the world.
4. The process by which people come to believe things about the world based upon u
   desires they are unaware of in their daily lives.
5. The study of how ideas are transferred between individuals based upon their 'fitne
6. The idea that religion should be separated from matters of government and politic
7. Sexism, homophobia, war, etc.

## Liberation Theology and Marx

1. Orthopraxis concerns right action, orthodoxy concerns right thought.
2. The idea that capitalism intrinsically requires workers to receive less than the total they produce.
3. The idea that capitalism, through separating workers from the fruits of their labour people's working lives.
4. Cases where sin is understood on a collective level.
5. Cases where social sins are embedded in political structures or laws.
6. Groups of individuals who study the Bible under the guidance of a lay catechist wit scripture can help them engage in political and social action within their communit
7. The view that God inherently favours those who are poor and that Christians shoul primarily to those who are impoverished and marginalised.