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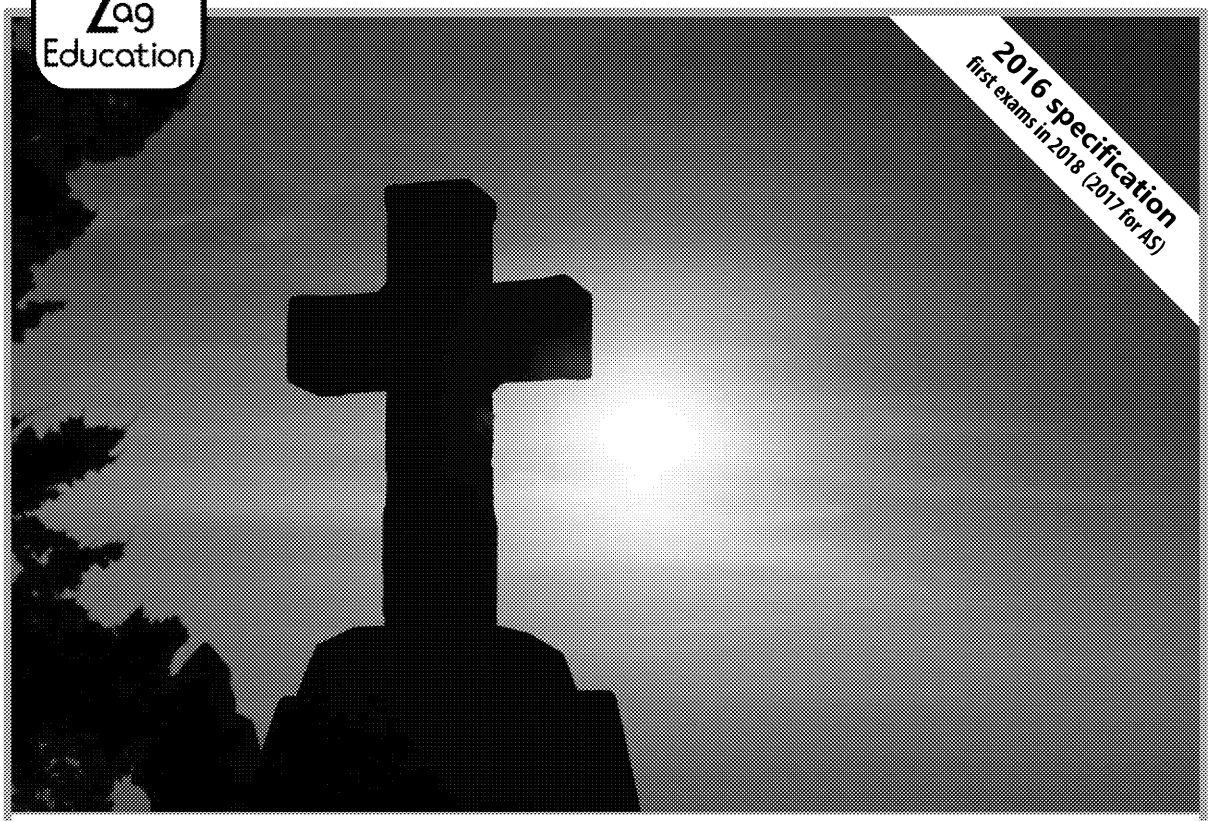
AS / A Level Year 1 | Eduqas | A120/B120



Course Companion For AS / A Level Year 1 Eduqas

Component 1: Christianity

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Contents

Teacher's Introduction

This course companion is written for the AS and A Level Year 1 Eduqas Religious Studies specification (B120/A120) for Component 1A: Christianity and is designed to offer students a comprehensive introduction to the material within that academic course. The sections and topics therefore mirror Eduqas's specification headings, and every care has been taken to not only help students to understand the key concepts and ideas within the course, but also sharpen their critical thinking skills.

Alongside the main bulk of the writing, there are also a number of other features to help students with their learning and revision. Self-guided and group activities are included throughout the writing to better engage students with the material, and we have also provided glossaries, textual references and information on key thinkers where appropriate. The glossaries cover key terms as singled out by the Eduqas specification for each section of the guide. Other terms are highlighted in bold font throughout the text to draw attention to important aspects of the section.

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

Please note: This Year 1 Course Companion has been written to both suit students and teachers undertaking just the AS Year 1 course and those undertaking the full A Level Year 1 and 2 course. Across the two study options, some of the themes have been structured/named a little differently by the Eduqas specification. The table below demonstrates which themes are covered in this resource and how they differ across the two study options, highlighted in grey:

AS / A Level Eduqas Year 1 Component 1A: Christianity
Theme 1: Religious figures and sacred texts *A: Jesus – his birth* *B: Jesus – his resurrection* *C: The Bible as a source of wisdom and authority in daily life*
Theme 2: Religious concepts *A: Nature of God* *B: Trinity* *C: Atonement*
Theme 3* *AS Level / Theme 2* *A Level: Religious Life *A* *AS Level/D* *A Level: Faith and works* *B* *AS Level/E* *A Level: Community of believers* *C* *AS Level/F* *A Level: Key moral principles*
Theme 4: Religious practices *A: Baptism* *B: Eucharist* *C: Festivals*

To purchase the A Level Eduqas Year 2 Course Companion for Christianity, please visit **zzed.uk/10656**.

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Theme 1: Religious Figures & Sacred Texts

Birth Narrative	The beginning chapters in Matthew and Luke that detail events surrounding Jesus' birth.
Demythologisation	A [illegible] employed by Rudolf Bultmann which [illegible] the Bible from its ethical and theological elements.
Dominion	A Christian concept found in Genesis which holds that humans have been given authority by God in order to rule over the natural world and use it how they see fit.
Exegesis	A critical method of biblical study which looks to extract the meaning of the text in focus.
Existentialism	A field of philosophy that primarily looks at issues surrounding human existence.
General Judgement	The judgement of all humanity that will occur on the day of the Second Coming of Jesus to Earth.
Harmonisation	The process of combining one or more texts in a unified narrative.
Historical Jesus	A term referring to the 'real' Jesus behind historical sources. Scholars who study this attempt to reconstruct with a variety of historical, literary, textual and archaeological methods.
Historicity	A term referring to the historical authenticity or credibility of a text.
Incarnation	The Christian doctrine which holds that Jesus embodied both human and divine nature.
Infallibility	Refers to something that can never be wrong or is incapable of error.
Kenotic Model	A theological model which holds that Jesus at times throughout his life 'emptied' himself of his divine nature.
Kerygma	A Greek term meaning 'proclamation', generally used to refer to the core message of the Christian Gospel.
Particular Judgement	The individual judgement by God that a person undergoes immediately after death.
Psalms	An Old Testament book that contains a variety of hymns, prayers and songs centred around the praise of God.
Redaction Criticism	A critical method of biblical study which looks to discern how the author has shaped their text according to their theological aims.
Sacred Tradition	The idea that both Scripture and the Church are authoritative sources of divine revelation of Christ.
Sola Scriptura	Meaning 'Scripture alone' and is a Christian doctrine that holds the Bible as the sole authority in faith and ethical practice.
Virgin Birth	The religious belief that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a virgin at the time of Jesus' conception and birth.

Anathema	A formal denouncement by the Pope or [illegible]ch, typ excommunicate an individual [illegible] are [illegible] idea heretic
Anthropomorphism	The ascribing of hum[illegible]ara[illegible]tics to a non-human necessarily [illegible]ss [illegible].
Aporia	[illegible]k wo[illegible]used to indicate an irresolvable internal [illegible] [illegible].
[illegible]tus Victor	A model of atonement that focuses on how Christ's dea forces of evil in the world.
[illegible]ouble Procession	The view that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Fa just the Father.
Egalitarian	A person or concept which supports the idea that all hu
Filioque	A controversial clause or belief in the double procession Father and the Son.
Immutability	The quality of being impervious to change or impossible
Impassibility	The quality of not being able to experien[illegible]e[illegible]or plea
Moral Exemplar	A model of atonement t[illegible]at f[illegible]uses[illegible]ow Christ's dea or sacrifice that i[illegible]ma[illegible]beings to reconcile with
Panentheism	The t[illegible]o[illegible]that God pervades or is present i [illegible]te[illegible]beyond it).
[illegible]rich[illegible]	A Christian concept used to describe the 'mutual indwel of the three persons of the Trinity.
[illegible]ost-Christian	A theological term used to refer to philosophers or theo that are thought to fundamentally alter or change the f thought.
Radical Feminist Theology	Within theology, radical feminism is a field that either e of gender equality within Christianity or argues that ele religious belief are required to dismantle patriarchal str faith and Church.
Reconstructionist Feminist Theology	A field of feminism that argues that granting women te sufficient to erase patriarchal elements of religion or so dismantle and reconstruct the patriarchal structures pr enable permanent change and true gender equality.
Substitution	A model of atonement that focuses [illegible]Ch[illegible]t's dea debt of honour or sin to God.
Theosis	A concept used [illegible]s [illegible]the transformative process being [illegible]with[illegible]grow closer to union with God.

Theme 3 (AS) / Theme 2 (A
Religious Life

Agape	A Greek term referri[illegible] unconditional love
Antilegomena	T[illegible] whose authenticity, value and importance are dis
[illegible]tin[illegible]	The view that morality does not require people to follo
[illegible]matic Worship	Worship which involves dynamic activities such as singi shouting.
Conscience	A person's inner sense of what is right and wrong.
Council of Trent	The 19th ecumenical council of the Catholic Church brou growing Reformation.
Covenantal Nomism	E P Sanders' view that justification comes through indu maintained by following the law of that covenant.
Great Commission	The instruction that Jesus gives at the end of the Gospel and spread the teachings of his ministry.
Indulgences	Acts and rituals performed by [illegible] which are thought punishment Christian[illegible] for their sins.
Justification	The act by [illegible] God [illegible] moves sin from human beings [illegible] righteous. It is typically thought of as a necessary step i [illegible] salvation in the Christian faith.
Litu[illegible]	Refers to the form that worship takes in a Christian chu the routine customs performed during this worship.
[illegible]Mission	The organised efforts that Christians undertake to conv
Pseudepigrapha	Texts that were not written by the author to whom the Traditionally used to refer to pseudonymous Jewish and within 200 years of the death of Christ.
Sacrament	A ritual or ceremony which is thought to demonstrate
Sola Fide	The view that justification comes through faith alone.
Sola Scriptura	A theological doctrine held by some Prote[illegible]denomi Christian Scripture is the sole autho[illegible] matters of fa

Theme 4: Religious Practices Shape Religious Identity

Advent	The period preceding Christmas when Western Christians [illegible] the celebration of [illegible]
Anabaptism	A Christian movement which emphasised the importance [illegible] and 'second' baptisms on those who had been bapt[illegible]
[illegible]'s Baptism	Baptism that is performed on adults and often involves spe[illegible] age group.
[illegible]stmas	A Christian festival which celebrates the birth and incarnat[illegible]
Consecration	The act of making something sacred or holy, typically by in[illegible] change.
Consubstantiation	The belief that at the moment of consecration, the body a[illegible] alongside the bread and wine in the Eucharist.
Easter	The festival period when Christians celebrate the passion, [illegible] of Jesus.
Epiphany	The holiday succeeding Christmas when Western Christian[illegible] Three Wise Men, and Eastern Christians celebrate the bapt[illegible] the Baptist.
Eucharist	The Christian service and sacrament which commemorates [illegible] participants consecrated bread and wine.
Infant Baptism	Baptism which is often performed on children and often involves [illegible] this age group.
Lent	The period preceding Easter when Christians typically fast [illegible] abstinence in preparation for Easter celebrations.
[illegible]rialism	The belief that there is no change in substance at the mom[illegible] the bread and wine used in the Eucharist only symbolise t[illegible]
Nativity Fast	The period preceding Christmas when Eastern Christians fa[illegible] abstinence in preparation for Christmas.
Open Communion	The stance of some Christian denominations that the Euch[illegible] anyone who wishes to partake in it and not restricted to th[illegible] or are members of the local church.
Original Sin	The Christian doctrine that all people are born with the na[illegible]
Sacrament	A ritual that is thought to impart divine grace and reflect th[illegible] in the world.
Second Coming	The belief that Christ will one day return to [illegible].
The Fall	The wounding of men and women [illegible] Adam and Eve bit[illegible]
Transfinalisation	The belief that there is no change in substance at the mom[illegible] change in function or purpose in the bread and wine used [illegible] and blood of Christ.
Tr[illegible]signification	The belief that although there is no change in actual substance [illegible] consecration, Christ's body and blood are nonetheless objec[illegible] change in the underlying reality of the bread and wine.
[illegible]ubstantiation	The belief that the bread and wine used in the Eucharist a[illegible] body and blood of Christ at the moment of consecration, e[illegible] same.

THEME 1: RELIGIOUS FIGURES AND S

What you will learn in this section:

A. The theology and historical study of the birth narratives in the Gospels of Mat
- whether the birth narratives are consistent and credible
- whether the birth narratives can be reasonably harmonised into a single
- how the birth narratives influence modern Christian theology

B. The theology and historical study of the resurrection of Jesus in the Gospels, i
- the views of Rudolf Bultmann and N T Wright about the historicity and m
- eve
- how beliefs about the resurrection influence theology surrounding death

C. The use of the Bible as a source of wisdom and authority in every Christian life
- how the Bible is considered to be authoritative by Christians
- the various ways in which it can be a source of moral advice, a guide to l and purpose of life, and a source of comfort and encouragement.

Starter Activity:
Before starting this section, read through both the birth narratives in the Gospels 1:26–2:40). What differences can you spot between the narratives, and why do y exist? Note down your thoughts and compare them to what you learn in Section

Key Thinker	
Name	Rudolf Bultmann
Born	1884
Died	1976
Key text	*Hist* *Tradition* (1921)
Wh re th nt?	as one of the most influential biblical scholars of tury, pioneering not only form criticism but an existentialis theology that sought to demythologise Scripture and draw ou
you know?	Bultmann was famous in arguing it was the 'thatness', not the mattered when studying the Gospels. In other words, all that existed, not what happened throughout his life!

Key Thinker	
Name	N T Wright
Born	1948
Died	N/A
Key text	*The Resurrection of the Son of God* (2003)
Why are they important?	N T Wright is a deeply important contemporary theol gian wh historical matters surrounding the Bible, as we o many k
Did you know?	Wright is quite critical of many figur ber eology and and theological basis, literal fs id as such as the Secon of the dead in Chris th

Introduction – How Should We Analyse Religious Texts?

Whether or not you are a Christian yourself, the Bible is a daunting text to read. Should you begin right at the start at Genesis or at the beginning of the New Testament? Do you really need to read all those random and seemingly dated laws in Leviticus? Well, if your [illegible] looking for a comprehensive overview of five centuries of religious thought, then yes. But for the most part the Bible is a compilation of disparate writings that reference each other in a myriad ways. Analysing them is not a simple task of reading the Bible from cover to cover but rather involves looking at the various influences may have spurred its [illegible] as events in a certain context or manner. In fact, when [illegible] Christianity, the best place to start is undoubtedly the Gospels, and the [illegible] looks at the beginning of two: at what are called the **birth** narratives.

However, before we delve into this subject, we should also consider how one can [illegible] they contain a wide array of stories, the Gospels are not exactly designed to be like recount the life, ministry and death of Jesus, the son of God for traditional Christ straightforward biography. Their purpose is as much to offer theological insight a the events of Jesus' life – but then they are also not just a theological discourse (to to provide moral guidance for believers in Jesus' message and help them navigate classification of the Gospels may be simply the rough English translation of 'good purposes, and each Gospel writer in turn wishes to impart their own perspective o

So how can we look to analyse and criticise the Bible, consider its religious genre theologians have employed various methods to draw as much insight as possible most important method in the last century has been what is often termed historic interpret biblical writings in light of the historic context and setting in which they this important not only to gain a true understanding of any particular Gospel pass to try to work out what really particular passage is historically credible! Another **literary criticism**, which looks at the various literary genres with the hope of finding out more about the authors' intent. Similarly, fo to different classifications of the material, such as a parable, saying or h a how they were composed.

Nevertheless, the most important method we will look at in the next section is red how the Gospels (or any other biblical text) were potentially assembled by the aut and traditions they drew upon when writing. This might seem strange initially. Don the Bible is the Word of God? This is true to a certain extent, but biblical scholars a with the orthodox theology that is derived from the Bible. Their main aim is gener meaning of the text, or what is commonly known as **exegesis**. This process of 'read lead to tensions or conflicts between modern Christian teaching and the findings their main role as historians, biblical scholars ultimately want to find out the histo What did the authors intend to say? Why did they include certain p and no embellish any elements of the Bible? All these questions will be addressed when w narratives in the next section.

The Birth of Jesus

The birth of Jesus plays an important place in Christian belief. Every year Christ as children you have likely been part of a performance of the Nativity: a retelli h. Based on this experience, it might be expected that there is a single, unifi s this story, but this could not be further from the truth. The Nativity is M s account, yet there are many differences between this narrative and the Biblical scholars therefore have long puzzled over numerous issues of **historicity** a narratives. Although many hold that it is likely there is little historical truth (if any)

accounts, they are still important to study to find out the intentions of these auth
their Gospels frames the rest of the teachings within.

The Birth Narrative in Matthew

If you didn't complete the starter activity at the beginning of this course companio
the first thing to do is read Matthew 1:18–2:23, which recounts the core events of
birth narrative. Matthew recounts quite a familiar narrative around Jesus' birth. The
beginning looks at Mary's encounter with the Holy Spirit, but
surrounding her surprise pregnancy is a wider story about King Herod
and his fears about the newborn Messiah. His bloodthirst leads him
to order the killing of the children under two in Bethlehem, while
Joseph, guided by guidance from an angel, takes Mary and the young
Jesus to Egypt. There they wait until Herod dies before returning to
live in Nazareth, a town in Galilee.

Matthew's narrative encompasses many of the traditional features of
the birth narrative you have probably encountered before. The wise
men are guided by a star to the location of Jesus' birth, where they
offer gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. However, there are few important aspe
the underlying complexity of these passages. The first is that the number three is
wise men; this is simply assumed due to the giving of three gifts. In fact, some Eas
12! Furthermore, the more accurate translation is 'Magi'. Although this can be equ
Christian tradition this is often thought to imply 'wise kings', since passages such a
bringing 'gold and frankincense'. Finally, only the Gospel of Matthew refers to Ma
Luke contains no mention of them, and this causes issues when it comes to assessi
accounts.

So just from analysing the wise men we can learn a thing or two. The first and mos
Matthew is very concerned with prophecy in his narrative. This is clear even from
his account, Matthew cites various parts of the Old Testament, including Hosea
11:1. His most important reference comes in Matthew 2:15, where he directly alludes to
the travels of the Israelites under Moses. Many scholars in fact have argu
that a lot of traditions about Moses' life, are key to understanding the significan
Gospel. In some sense, such allusions might be a reference to Jesus being a new M
of such prophets (there is still great discussion about this theme!). What is ultimat
note the heavily Jewish flavour of Matthew's birth narrative. He wishes to assert
connected to, and is even the culmination of, a wide array of Jewish traditions and

The second important insight is the weight placed upon the **virgin birth** in Matthe
pains to emphasise how Jesus was conceived from the Holy Spirit and Mary, with
prove vital later when we analyse how the birth narratives have informed Christia
lays out the idea that Jesus had divine origins; he was not simply a human being in
Spirit later in life, but from birth was set apart as the result of God's intervention.

The final note to make is that the case of the Magi shows that Matthew may not b
account for dramatic or theological effect. If we apply the method of redaction cri
might come to the conclusion that Matthew included the Magi as a way of emphas
Jesus' birth. It is not just Jewish individuals that were called to his arrival but figure
traditions – yet how can we prove the historicity of this event when there are no p
indication of how such a strange, miraculous event could occur? This is a difficult q
even to conclude that Matthew's birth narrative is made up altogether! But
part: the birth narrative in Luke.

The Birth Narrative in Luke

Luke's account of Jesus' birth and infancy is considerably longer than Matthew's a
contains a number of events not present in his counterpart's narrative. While both
the concept of the virgin birth, with an angel also visiting Mary in Lu
includes details about her relative Elizabeth, who also mir
turns out to be John the Baptist. Similarly, Mary herself gives a speech now recited

The second part of Luke's birth n
Mary and Jesus travel to Bethlehem to register the child due to a census being und
nativity story of the shepherds and the shepherds who come to Jesus' manger a
Jesus with, h
sus preaches that he is a 'light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the
–32). Then, after fulfilling the requirements of the (Jewish) law, Joseph
N

As can be easily noted, Luke attaches the same importance to Jesus as the fulfilme
does. In Zechariah's song in Luke 1:67–80, Jesus is identified as a figure continuing
David. However, the prophecies and revelations in Luke also at first appear less in
Jesus' future plays a much greater role in these prophecies, with plenty of artistic
Jesus will bring light to the world.

Furthermore, there is a direct reference to Jesus' significance being important for
population), whereas Matthew is very much focused on Jewish tradition
this is evidence for some biblical scholars that Luke was writing
containing Greco-Roman elements.

However, we can go a bit further than this
theological functions of the birth narrative
in the process, develop our use of

What are the Features of the Birth Narratives?

de
action criticism. At heart, we want to discover why the Gospel authors
atives in the way they did, but, more precisely, this involves a deeper set
questions that may be answered through employing this method. These include:

- Why are there differences in narrative, style and content between the Gospels
- What was the purpose of the author in writing the Gospel?
- Who were the Gospels addressed to? Was there a single audience or were the
  multiple audiences?
- Was there a single author behind the Gospel, or does it reflect a community e
- What cultural climate or context were the Gospels written in, and how did this
- Was historical accuracy a concern of the Gospel authors, or were they more in
  message?

These are all broad and difficult questions to answer. If
realise that very few biblical scholars agree ever
conflicting views have been put forward
underlying historical evidence
and intent of the Gospel
the early first
ars
be used as evidence for a particular argument, when the author might
tail in the first place!

- scholars might assume in the case of fantastical themes or details that the aut
  own ends, when they might have believed them to be historically accurate.

- Authors might have included details to simply round out a narrative, not belie importance. Scholars might, therefore, place too much emphasis on the inclus
- Scholars may assume the author was trying to convey a theme with an event fact trying to convey. Since we are not privy to the ways people th in the modern thinking in inappropriate ways to historical texts.

So it is important to be careful when using rit Undoubtedly, it is greater understanding in the past ut always easy to misuse.

With that in mind, what is the intention of the birth narratives? Overall through in both Matthew and Luke: Jesus is a divine being sent by God to save hu his conception and the various signs, prophecies and revelations that ac idea that Jesus is someone special whose life and teaching deserve to t nt why both authors would choose to include a birth narrative, even if it tells the reader that Jesus is not just another prophet or teacher, but is set apart f history by his direct connection to God *before he was even born*. As such, Jesus' id established before the key events of his life.

'She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his p
(Matthew 1:21 NRSV)

'He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no be holy; he will be called Son of God.' (Luke 1:33, 35 N

'to you is born this day in the city of David a Savio is Messiah, th

At the same time, it is clear that this centra shed out in different ways b address different audiences. As w Matthew can easily be interpreted a importance in relation to Jewish tradition and prophecy. In particular, Matthew's specific prophecies Jewish Scripture, whereas Luke does not explicitly refer to a th prop Matthew, we can see the clear parallel with Isaiah.

k place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel"' (Matthew

'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with c shall name him Immanuel.' (Isaiah 7:14 NRSV)

We also noted in the prior section the allusions to Jesus as potentially being a new lineage of Mosaic prophets, yet there are even greater indications that Matthew w Jewishness of Jesus, potentially to a broadly Jewish audience. A key part of his birt infants in Bethlehem by King Herod. This sets the stage for Jesus' exile and his ever many scholars have cast doubt on the historicity of this event. It is not mentioned including that of the famous Jewish historian Josephus, which is strange considerin the likely impact it would have had on the Jewish popula ound Bethlehem.

However, it is possible that Matthew is ed to event in order to fulfil yet suggested that this event refers to pt emiah where God strikes a new co rescuing them. This ma the importance of Jesus in saving the Jewish pe religious misd

s are surely coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant w Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors w bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I the Lord.'(Jeremiah 31:31–32 NRSV)

Either way, there is much to suggest in Matthew's birth narrative (and in the rest of preoccupied with demonstrating how Jesus slotted into Jewish tradition and history suggestion either. Jesus himself was a Jew, and it is likely most of his early followers after his death when Matthew was written, most of Jesus' followers are likely to and so have been concerned with how he, as the Messiah, relat[illegible] their [illegible]

'Where is the child who has been born [illegible] of the Jews?' (Matth

On the other hand, in the case of Luke, we can note more details in his infancy nar been writing for a wider audience. Notably, in Luke 2 it is directly referenced that within Jewish tradition, it has an important role to play for all religious individual

my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presen revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.' (Luke

Here, the inclusion of Gentiles is particularly telling. Many Jewish people would no Jewish Messiah would have to appeal to those outside their faith. In fact, most Jew of the first century would have been expecting a wholly political Messiah, who wo Roman occupation and governance.

Another example of this can be found in Luke's inclusion of shepherds rather than Jesus' birth. Luke is generally viewed as a more political account of Jesus' life, so t rather than religious leaders is potentially telling of Luke's focus. The birth of Jesus marks the culmination of an important lineage of enlightened individuals, but the l typically neglected by religious tradition. The Jesus in Luke's account is immediately universal importance, who will bring salvation for all people, not just those who ar

Can the Birth Narratives be Harmonised?

Whether or not combining the two birth narratives is literarily possible, it is certain you are most familiar with, it performed is a **harmonised** account of the beginning Both the shepherds and the wise men are present, and various elements fied story. However, is this really a justified move, or are there too many to combine them?

On the surface, it might be argued there are certain core similarities that are central Matthew both describe angels visiting either Mary (Luke) or Joseph (Matthew) to an Messiah and the virgin birth. They also agree on the location of Jesus' birth, Bethleh as it goes when it comes to similarities between the two narratives. Whether it be t shepherds in Luke, the differences far outweigh any common features. In Matthew, Joseph all travel due to the actions of King Herod, whereas in Luke it is due to the ne for a census. In fact, Matthew implies that the family lived in Bethlehem, then Egypt Gospel they live in Nazareth, travel to Bethlehem, then go back to Nazareth. Further Luke's birth narrative is dedicated to explaining the importance of Mary's cousin Eli

So, at least at first glance, there is not much consistency between the stories. Usin explain why each author wrote their narrative in the way they did, but it can also u **credibility** if applied in a particular way. For example, knowing the author's motives might narratives, although centred around the idea of the virgin birth, are not based on pre-existing myth or tradition, but created to justify Jesus' later teachings as divin explore this further in the next part of this section, but if the birth narrati the assignment that true harmonisation of Matthew and Luke is not justifie

Activity:
How would you harmonise the birth narratives? Write down your own synthesis Luke. What would you leave out (if anything), and why?

Are the Birth Narratives Credible?

Many Christians naturally hold that the birth narratives are credible. Even though they contain significant differences, this may just be the Gospel authors reporting different events or perspectives on the miraculous circumstances of Jesus' birth. Such an idea is often contained within a wider belief in the inf[illegible] of the Bible. However, most biblical scholars don't wish to start with the p[illegible] that any source is completely accurate, even if the source c[illegible]s faithful. The process of historical analysis means treating any text[illegible] as inaccurate, or, at best, reflective of one or more people's limited perspective on a set of events. In order to engage with redaction criticism effectively, it is necessary to first cast theological assumptions Bible aside.

'All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for righteousness' (2 Timothy 3:16 NRSV)

In fact, the large number of differences between the two accounts is significant even if they are not credible as accurate, historical reports of Jesus' birth. At the very least, the structure of the family's travels to be similar, along with their reasons for travelling to place.

Moreover, we are not just limited by mere comparisons of the texts. There is also historical evidence for the credibility of either Matthew's or Luke's account. In the case of Matthew, Matthew's description of a massacre by King Herod does not appear in any other [illegible], being most notable in Josephus' writings, which do cover vital details of the reign. Many biographers of King Herod are disinclined to believe the event occurred, especially as it is to have the birth of Jesus align with Jewish prophecy. Still, it cannot necessarily be ruled out. Although the massacre seems dramatic in scope, Bethlehem was a small town, and the number of infants under two likely to be killing during his reign, it may be that a killing escaped historians' investigations [illegible] insignificant life.

Matthew's account also lacks historical credibility, perhaps more so than Luke's. The basis for the family's journey to Bethlehem took place a decade after the census (according to Luke) was ruling at the time of John the Baptist's conception (and Jesus' birth six months apart). Therefore, either Luke's understanding of the date of Jesus' birth is wrong or he shoehorns in the census as a justification for Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. While there is no record referring to a different census, most scholars believe that this is unlikely to be the case given the number of records kept about these kinds of political activity.

The fact that even these core aspects of the narratives lack historicity also casts doubt on other parts. Was there actually a Star of Bethlehem which guided the wise men to Jesus? Some suggested it was a planetary conjunction or a supernova, but there is no concrete evidence for either of these having occurred around the time of Jesus' birth, especially when the star means many biblical scholars have argued it might well be an example of various figures using religious myths around a person and justify their divine or divinely inspired nature. Did Jesus' birth line up so well with various prophecies can be read as a sign of his divinity as well because Matthew wished to show, knowingly or not, how Jesus was the culmination of figures. The lack of corresponding sources and the differences between the two main accounts about Jesus' birth are certainly enough to seriously question their credibility.

At the same time, many Christians may also accept such an argument. The birth narratives may not be historical accounts, but theological or narrative devices designed to support Jesus' ministry. Through the writers employing a diverse set of artistic and literary techniques, Jesus is emphasised, along with the miraculous circumstances of his birth. In this section, we shall look at how the birth narratives inform modern Christian thought.

Discussion Activity:
Do you believe the birth narratives are credible or contain any historical facts? D

The Birth Narratives and Christian Theology

We've explored how the birth narratives, at their core, r[illegible] th[illegible]ea of the vir[illegible] Messiah and/or Son of God. However, throughou[illegible] t[illegible]e hi[illegible]ory of Christian thought viewed as important in supporting th[illegible] **[illegible]ine** o[illegible] t[illegible] **incarnation**: the belief that God and human at the same tim[illegible].

Why is this th[illegible]a[illegible]? Short, both narratives claim that Jesus was the product of [illegible] pe[illegible]s of the Christian **Trinity**). Therefore, if Jesus had both human and [illegible]at he was both human and divine. Evidence for this can be found strew[illegible] L[illegible]ounts:

'[Mary] was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit… "the child conceived in
(Matthew 1:18, 20 NRSV)

'Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to
upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the chi
be called Son of God."' (Luke 1:34–35 NRSV)

As seen above, Matthew believes that Jesus fulfils a **prophecy** – to be Emmanuel – believes that God intended to come to Earth as a human.

'All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord [illegible]gir[illegible] the prophet
and bear a son, and they shall [illegible] him Immanuel"' (Matthew

Similarly, the attitude of ang[illegible]s and w[illegible]en indicates Jesus' importance, and co[illegible] divinity:

[illegible]will [illegible]n over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will b

For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homag

However, we also have to be a little careful here. Although the birth narratives ap[illegible] for the incarnation, can it be claimed that the Gospel authors themselves held suc[illegible] asserted to be the Son of God, this idea can be interpreted in a myriad ways, and t[illegible] incarnation can suggest that claiming this was the authors' intention is a step too f[illegible] recognised that Jesus was a divine figure, but it may be the case that belief in the [illegible] early Christian communities.

One key detail here to note is that Matthew and Luke are generally not thought to written. Although no scholar is certain about the order, many schol[illegible]ve tha[illegible] first, or at least written before the Gospels of Matthew an[illegible]Luke ([illegible]e th[illegible]e Gos[illegible] **Gospels** because there are many similarities betwe[illegible]n th[illegible]m). S[illegible]an idea is suppo[illegible] and Luke both appear to use Mark as a sou[illegible]e[illegible]o that there appear to be re[illegible] to the destruction of the Temple i[illegible]e[illegible]s[illegible]n[illegible] event that did not occur until 70 event in Mark however, su[illegible]it ma[illegible]ve been written prior to this extremely history.

[illegible]g re[illegible]tion criticism once more, we can note something interesting. Ma[illegible] [illegible]so seemingly written prior to Matthew and Luke. This potentially indica[illegible] t[illegible]arnation took hold only later in the development of early Christian commu[illegible] Matthew and Luke began to believe it was important to assert how Jesus was con[illegible]

not simply during his ministry. In fact, there are a few other reasons why we might full-blooded concept of the incarnation to any Gospel author:

- The Latin term 'incarnation' is not used in the Gospel, so the doctrine is not ex
- If Jesus was half human and half God, this does not map neatly to [illegible] being is the accepted Christian understanding of the incarnatio
- The baby Jesus himself is not described as possessing any divine attributes.
- Jesus is not referred to as God in the birth narratives – the title 'Son of God' di at the time – indeed, the Jewish people were referred to as the 'children of G

[illegible] will be called Son of God' (Luke 1:35 NRSV)

'You are children of the Lord your God.' (Deuteronomy 14

We can pick up on a number of key considerations here. Among the points listed a that the Christian doctrine of the incarnation involves Jesus being both fully human This is a difficult idea initially to wrap one's head around, but Christians generally support the idea of **substantial presence**: that since Jesus was fathered by the Hol God himself. As you will learn later in your studies, such an idea is also integral to Christian thought. For the moment, though, it is simply important to appreciate th discussion around Jesus' nature – for early Christian history involved a series of thi around unpacking what the birth narratives (and the rest of the Gospel accounts) s

For example, one belief that later became **heretical** (rejected by the orthodox Chu that Jesus was not at all human and simply appeared to be in light of his physical b unattractive in part because it downplays the role of Mary (as if she did have a physic important human attributes to him that are importantly expressed throughout the another view that also became heretical was **Adoptionism**: the belief that Jesus w some time during his life (or during his ministry). This equally was viewed as un narratives clearly indicate the miraculous, God-willed nature of Jesus' birth, which divine.

Clearly, from such considerations, the now orthodox position on the incarnatio possessed both a fully human and fully divine nature brought together i simply means that through divine action (beyond human comprehension) the per God and human. However, how can such an idea be reconciled with the very humi Would a divine being feel emotion or be truly experiencing life in the same way as in any sense actually feel pain and die? Although the incarnation may be plausible of Jesus' birth, there is the rest of his life to consider.

One common response to such questions has been to suggest what is commonly k that Jesus at various times throughout his life commits to a **self-emptying** of his di the birth narratives, this explains why Jesus is born through normal means, why as special capabilities and why many did not recognise him to be the Messiah until th many years later. This self-emptying is viewed as necessary for human beings, but a suggestion is that Jesus chose a particular time to reveal himself and in order to beings he too had to live life as a human being without their typical attributes. His lif would not be the same without this human aspect and so self-emptying was nece human beings and fulfil the purpose of his life and ministry.

*'Let the same mind in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the [illegible] something to be exploited, **but emptied himself**, taking the [illegible] likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and beca death—even death on a cross.' (Philippians 2:5–8 NRSV) [Our*

In the next section, we will cover another key event to which this model also pote than any other throughout the Gospels: the **resurrection**.

B: The Resurrection of Jesus

In the last section, we explored not only the content of the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke but also methods of biblical criticism which you can apply to any particular event in the Gospels for while the circumstances of Jesus' birth are important, they arguably are superseded by the circumstances of his death and **resurrection**: his rebirth and appearances before his disciples.

It is likely you know the basic details of the resurrection. Jesus was sentenced to death by Pontius Pilate (or Herod in some of the Gospel accounts) and was crucified. After he died on the cross, he was moved to a tomb, where three days later his body was discovered missing. After this mysterious occurrence, Jesus' disciples and followers began seeing Jesus who approached them, proclaiming evidence of his preservation and calling upon them for the **Great Commission**: their responsibility to spread his teachings around the world. After these appearances, which vary in length, duration and significance according to different biblical accounts, Jesus **ascends** into heaven (the **ascension**) and the Gospels end.

In comparison to the birth narratives, there is significantly more agreement among potential historicity of the events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection. Even if disciples were mistaken about the resurrection appearances, all four of the Gospels the same manner, and this lends credibility to the notion that, at minimum, there around the death of Jesus that warrant historical investigation. Nevertheless, scho views beyond this point, and we shall study two figures in this section, Rudolf Bultm present strongly different interpretations of the Gospel accounts.

How Should the Resurrection be Interpreted?

This question has been pondered since the time of nearly every Christian scholar thro part, religious thinkers have attempted to take the resurrection accounts at face value and it is now the responsibility of Christians to understand what that means for hu tradition but also from the different narratives describing the appearances.

In modern times, this assumption has been questioned. Do the Gospels by standards of modern scientific knowledge is fundamentally impossible? Is it disciples were mistaken or lying about their witnessing Jesus after he had died? Do signify his resurrection or perhaps the simpler explanation that his body was taken pondered all these questions yourself as you read through the Gospels' accounts o modern audiences, it probably seems fairer and more impartial to treat the Gospe sources and approach them in a more impartial manner, seeing where they diverg against what we know today.

To start, we can look at some of the differences between the resurrection narrativ first important things to note is that it is not strictly true that all the Gospels agree appearances once certain historical details are taken into account. Mark, the Gosp have been written first, is widely recognised to have originally had a shorter ending original text and 16:9–20 being added later, most likely between the second to fourth case? Well, many ancient manuscripts either contain the longer ending and that en and stylistic flourishes not present throughout the rest of the Gospel.

As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting d. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Na raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell h ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to a

(Mark 16: 5–8)

There are many explanations for this shorter ending. Some scholars focus on how t pattern of behaviour the disciples exhibit throughout the Gospels when presented Others focus on the possibility that audiences already knew to some degree about or hearing Mark, while some even claim that Mark was left unfinished! Like this sho also raise the possibility that later authors expanded on a much earlier set of resu using new historical sources or elaborating on Mark's original resurrection. Perhap shorter account does not actually feature the angel instructing the disc appearances in Galilee. Rather, Mary Magdalene and the other women see a youn By itself, there is nothing miraculous about this description and so it has fuelled sp possible reasons for the shorter ending.

And important aspect of the resurrection accounts are the differences in th Jesus after his death. In Matthew, for example, there are two main appe Magdalene and 'the other Mary' at the tomb, while the second is to the disciples o contrast, Luke does not list any of the appearances given by Matthew. Two angels had come with him from Galilee', with Jesus only appearing later to two followers inform the other apostles that Jesus has already appeared to Peter. Jesus then app during this conversation, where he proves his resurrected appearance by showing and eating their food. Finally, in John, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene at the tom from Thomas) and finally to Peter and six of the disciples in Galilee.

So, altogether, there is no deep agreement between the Gospels about who Jesus they are added on to the truncated ending of Mark, one might start to become a lit historical accuracy of the resurrection accounts. Without strict confirmation about capacity, all that remains to be certain about is that there was an empty tomb disc that this tomb was attributed to Jesus' rebirth rather than any other explanation. **naturalistic explanation** for the resurrection appearances, such as delusion or hyst accommodates the different details in the Gospels? Could it even be that the resurrection simply aren't necessary at all in understanding the importance of Jesus was one important New Testament figure who certainly believed in exploring the **Rudolf Bultmann**

Rudolf Bultmann and Demythologisation

Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) was a German Lutheran theologian and perhaps one the most important figures in biblical studies in the twentieth century. He was a ve radical and controversial figure to begin with, but many of his texts are now recogn as foundational when analysing the Bible. However, his writings can be difficult to sense of at the beginning. On the one hand, Bultmann was very suspicious of liber **theology**, which often sought to reinterpret the Bible in accordance with modern scientific knowledge. This often resulted in a search for the **historical Jesus**: the hu figure behind the various miraculous events and naturalistic explanations posited f more fantastical parts of the Gospels. Yet at the same time, his work on form critic breaking down the Bible into its various original narrative pieces – is one of th historical analysis of the Bible. So how are these two parts of his thought reconcile

Well, Bultmann did ultimately believe in historical analysis of the Bible and to a deg Jesus. It's just that he also that he believed that it would never be possible to arrive happened during Jesus' life. The Gospels by and large do not list specific locations reports and are not interested in other historical sources. In an important sense is futile. However, Bultmann also thought it was generally unnecessary. He believed **existentially**, looking at the totality of Jesus' life – as a man who lived, – as a means to discover the essential message of the Gospels behind it **Existentialism** suggests, Bultmann wanted Christianity as a whole to reorien questions of human existence, and these are not rooted in discovering who Jesus risen Jesus' place in the proclamation of the Church.

This all might be a bit overwhelming at first, but the central point to understand fo
wished to 'ground' study of the Bible. He held that it should not be overwhelming
the historical Jesus but it should seek to shed the fantastical elements which overs
essential message. The average person in the first century, Bultmann n[illegible], would
mythological view of the world which stands in stark contrast [illegible]en[illegible]ic view
They would naturally accept the possibility of supernatu[illegible]al vic[illegible]ti[illegible]s of what we
and so any author of texts such as the Gospels w[illegible]ld be [illegible]ng from this fundam

Thus, Bultmann sought to b[illegible]k down [illegible]e Gospels using a process he called demy
note here that this d[illegible]s[illegible]t nec[illegible]. Bultmann endorses a 'scientific' analysis of the
stripping tho[illegible]ls [illegible]eir mythological parts based not on the application of a
dern [illegible]e has generally told us about the nature of the world itself: th
not just another thing which acts in the world as they see fit. When we
counts, a very different picture of Jesus emerges from the one propagat

Most importantly, key beliefs about Jesus as a miracle worker are jettisoned, inclu
physically rose from the dead. Bultmann argues that the most we can really say ab
demythologised was that he was a historical figure who taught for a few years and
the cross, yet even this depiction he held at times was a step too far, for it takes th
central object of Christian faith. For Bultmann, there is a very distinct separation b
post-Easter Jesus. Whatever historical reality Jesus occupied before his 'resurrecti
of his rebirth was put into place by the early Christian community. Jesus was no lo
could be impartially recorded but became a myth himself, and thus a discontinuity
Jesus was established. As such, whoever the historical Jesus was, he [illegible]never b
mythological transformation took place.

At the same time, though, the process of d[illegible]sation informs us that a sup
resurrection could not have occu[illegible]t[illegible]itially leaves the Christian with a bit o
the historical Jesus, yet at t[illegible]ne tim[illegible]ey cannot subscribe to the myth he be
Bultmann argues [illegible]t[illegible], ultimately, neither picture is necessary to understand
Jes[illegible]birt[illegible]s of what happened after Jesus' death, it is the transform
Chu[illegible] and the effect it has on human lives that is important. Bultmann
ith is **kerygma** (proclamation). Through the message passed around aft
c[illegible]liberated. They can study their lives anew and begin a relationship with G

Bultmann's ideas were very controversial throughout his life. Many ordinary Christ
felt that his ideas treated the Gospels unfairly. If Jesus did not die, why did the dis
be a true event despite the mythological world view of first-century audiences? Si
importance Bultmann attached to kerygma was a bit meaningless. What is the poi
in an event which has the possibility of saving people?

There are numerous ways of addressing such questions. As Bultmann's process sug
have been a mythological way for the disciples to express their belief in Je[illegible]us. It m
born out of delusion. These questions, however, can't be reliabl[illegible]ar[illegible]e[illegible]; all we
circumstances of his life, the Church that grew out of his [illegible]ea[illegible]t[illegible]an[illegible]t[illegible]e physical re
understand it today – but, Bultmann argues, tha[illegible]s[illegible]l th[illegible]t i[illegible]needed to make exis

However, what if we could mou[illegible]d[illegible]e[illegible]t[illegible]the Gospel accounts – one that sup
resurrection? It should [illegible]ha[illegible]torical analysis and evidence have grown
writing. Taking [illegible]kgr[illegible]nd information into account, could it be more likely
[illegible]ng [illegible]such a defence was mounted by the scholar we turn to nex

N T Wright and the Physical Resurrection

N T Wright is a biblical scholar and Anglican bishop who has written extensively on
significant portion of his work is dedicated to the resurrection, and he develops a
arguments for the resurrection being a supernatural event that inv
Wright wishes to show that Bultmann's ambivalence tow
Using textual evidence and historical knowledge it
resurrection.

Going back a bit, however,
remain:

- Jesus'
- Jesus' resurrection was physical; the disciples experienced a risen Jesus, with a

Naturally, there are various permutations of these ideas, but it is key to note the
more plausible if a spiritual dimension is accepted, yet at the same time a spiritual
resurrection is not necessarily the supernatural, saving event described in the Gos
necessarily cohere with traditional Christian thought. For the resurrection to have
many Christians, it may be necessary for it to be physical. Such an event would be
the divine aspect of Jesus' identity.

There are various points in the Gospel accounts which seem to affirm a physical re
disciples were able to touch Jesus' body and feel his wounds:

*'Then [Jesus] said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out
Do not doubt but believe." (John 20:27 NRSV)*

Jesus also appeared to act as a physically alive person would, eating with the disci

'They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presen

However, there are also parts of the accounts which suggest that Jesus possessed
to a physically alive human being, such as the ability to disappear, and ap

'…he vanished from their sight.' (Luke 24:31 NRSV)

*'When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the
met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and
(John 20:19 NRSV)*

Furthermore, there are parts of the resurrection narratives which describe how th
Jesus when he first appeared to them. This is certainly strange considering their fa
Jesus during his ministry.

*'While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with
from recognizing him. (Luke 24:15-16 NRSV)*

So if N T Wright wishes to defend the concept of the physical resurrection, there are
The first is whether a physical resurrection, being a miraculous event, can be cons
credible. The second is whether claims of a physical resurrection can be supported b
narratives, which more first to offer conflicting interpretations of Jesus' post

Before the question of historicity first, N T Wright offers quite a simple but pot
Rejecting, as Bultmann claiming as Bultmann does that the first-century perspective is mytho
unapproachable by modern standards, Wright argues that there is significant histo
allows us to understand the words and ideas put forward by the Gospel authors in

written. In this sense, N T Wright uses redaction criticism as a way of justifying the about the resurrection of Jesus. So, considering this analysis, why is a physical resu

Well, in short, Jewish audiences in the first century did have a firm understanding was a physical raising of the body. This idea wasn't new and already had parallels tradition. So, if a set of Jewish writers used the term 'resurrection' to describe Jesu physical raising of the body. Wright points to a number of texts in the narratives w

'They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost...' [T Jesus was not a ghost, they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with

Zig Zag Education

...les were originally reluctant to embrace the idea of a physical resurrecti ...recognise that such an event was impossible, believing Jesus instead to ... at times acknowledge this and reaffirm the miraculous nature of Jesus' p

Similarly, Matthew takes pains to eliminate other possible explanations for the em guard against rumours or criticisms that Jesus' body might have been stolen:

'After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a larg telling them, "You must say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away whil 28:12–13 NRSV)

However, if the resurrection was spiritual in nature, it wouldn't really matter what Whether or not it had been taken from the tomb is only of significa... physic question. Therefore, there is significant evidence for the Gospel authors having a p when they talk of Jesus' rebirth. However, Wright also presents a number of other interpretation.

- Other messianic movements have all fallen out after the supposed Messiah h doubted the physical resurrection of Jesus, it is more likely that Christianity wo rather than g...
- ...e is ...l evidence that nearly all early Christians believed in the r ...with ...early forms of the religion, not a separate or divisive thought.
- ...people, according to Wright, had distinct beliefs about the appearance ...surrected in the end times, such as a shining body. The Gospel accounts do so Wright argues that the unusual nature of the resurrection potentially reflec created (like the birth narratives) to fulfil Jewish expectations but to recount a

So, turning to the second question, if the physical resurrection is historically credit account for the conflicting qualities the resurrected Jesus possesses? Wright's ans although Jesus' physical body was manifestly resurrected, it was also *transformed* actions no ordinary physical body could. This makes sense also if one considers the Although this might have been 'self-emptied' as per the kenotic model we studied not be as restricted in Jesus' post-resurrection state. As such, Jesus may have had an ordinary physical form, maybe even restricting the disciples' ability to recognise

'While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with t from recognizing him.' (Luke 24:15–16 NRSV)

Importantly, Wright is ...that there aren't other explanations for the resurr that if one treats the Gospels as historical documents, then they do support the id ...Jesus did undergo a physical resurrection, which, considering the circums ...ally establish the resurrection as a historical fact.

Zig Zag Education

Note here, though, that this is a different approach also from that of Bultmann, wh modern scientific outlook rejects the idea of the resurrection in the first place. Wri physical resurrection is possible, but whether historically it is said to have occurred

impossible, it is unlikely that any historical evidence could convince them, yet Wri
historical evidence about the perspectives of first-century Jewish audiences means
notion that it was believed the historical Jesus did undergo a physical resurrection
Christians to place their faith in such an event. Wright's arguments encompass a ve
that of Bultmann, who, from the start, is not concerned about historical facts but t
event for the lives of Christians today. This difference is particularly exposed when
figures' views about the **afterlife**, the focus of the next part of this section.

Discussion Activity:
Do you agree with Wright that there is a historical case to be made for the re
supported by historical evidence? Discuss in pairs or small groups.

Resurrection and the Afterlife

In traditional Christian thought, Jesus' resurrection signifies what every human being will undergo after death. However, the interpretation of the resurrection has varied throughout Christian history. There are two important concepts to consider here. The first is the **resurrection of the body**; this has typically referred to the physical rebirth of a person in the afterlife. Often this concept has been used in the context of **general judgement**, where all of humanity is raised at the end times for God to judge. However, the second important concept is the **immortality of the soul**, which refers to the everlasting spiritual aspect of each person. This is more commonly invoked in the context of **particular judgement**: the idea that each human individually after death.

These ideas have been traditionally difficult to reconcile. Different biblical figures contrasting visions of the afterlife, assuming that human beings will undergo their body while at other times talking about the spiritual dimensions of such a re also reflect the confusion as we already explored in the resurrection narratives both physical bodies and spiritual or transformed qualities not present in ordinar immortality of the soul has traditionally led Christians to suppose there judgement of humankind.

'[Jesus] replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

'For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depa far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you.' (Philip

This view has proliferated in modern times. The Catholic Church, for example, teac heaven, hell or purgatory (a realm where people work to atone for their sins befor being reunited with their bodies at the end of time, when spiritual bodies with sou Such a view often draws upon the thoughts of St Paul, who makes a distinction bet body in resurrection.

'There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heaven earthly is another… So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also 15:40, 42–44 NRSV)

It must be noted that this division of resurrection was not necessarily pr communities. Many scholars have reckoned that resurrection would have been m physical terms and that belief in a general judgement, where all of humankind wo

would have been adopted by believers. In this view, the soul would have remained woken at the end times when the general judgement approached.

'... most of whom are still alive, though some have died' (here the Greek for 'sleep' Corinthians 15:6 only)

'But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.' (1

This is the view put forward by Wright. He argues that modern Christians misunderstand afterlife. It is not immediate effect but comes at a future time when the physical body is transformed into a spiritual body, just as Jesus was transformed in the Gospels. The soul after death is inactive. Although joined with Jesus, it awaits the end times and the establishment of the new heaven and earth. Wright is concerned with heaven as the final destination of resurrected bodies.

'But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, in which (2 Peter 3:13 NRSV)

Wright's view potentially reflects the views of earlier Christians and of many biblical scholars in many respects from traditional Christian views, which typically paint heaven as a place for disembodied or transformed souls. Naturally, it is impossible to know exactly the nature of the afterlife. Wright's view is based much more on both the writings of biblical authors and the circumstances surrounding the resurrection.

But what about Bultmann? For an existentialist, committed to demythologising, Wright's view would be hard to stomach. In fact, through the process of demythologisation, Bultmann sees traditional Christian ideas, especially those which talk about the afterlife and specific spiritual dimensions of heaven, as do not reflect what is known about the world today and were based on faith in a world that has been shown to have or have never happened.

In fact, Bultmann's existentialist approach is firmly focused on questions about the meaning of life and has little concern with the afterlife. For Bultmann, what is important is the effect that belief in heaven has on human lives today. Just as the historical event of the resurrection is unimportant to the meaning of Christian thought, so are the actual circumstances of life after death. Heaven is unknown and so its only importance is in how it affects the present. Faith is a present reality and not focused on realms or places in the afterlife. This idea is summed up in his famous proclamation in *New Testament and Mythology* that 'there is no longer any heaven in the traditional sense of the word'. Anything that is said about concerning the afterlife, whether it be resurrection or the soul, has no relevance to us today and only possesses meaning in expressing humankind's understanding of itself in the present.

However, these issues also highlight a broader issue that we shall look at in the next section. Both Bultmann's and Wright's views are coloured not just by their various religious beliefs but also by the way they approach the Bible in light of these perspectives. Therefore, it is worth thinking about what the Bible plays for ordinary Christians, not just in informing their beliefs but also as a source of comfort and encouragement.

C: The Bible as a Source of Authority and Wisdom

It is well known that different Christian denominations and groups disagree on the role of the Bible. On the one hand, Protestantism was significantly influenced by the idea of **sola scriptura**, the idea that the Bible is the central authority in all matters of Christian doctrine and practice. Those who endorse sola scriptura accordingly usually maintain that the Bible is **infallible** (or **inerrant**), meaning it possesses no errors, while a smaller subset of Christians put forward a strong belief that the Bible is **self-authenticating**. This means that not only does the Bible contain no errors but it is wholly clear in meaning to the traditional reader and does not require any debate over correct methods of interpretation.

Modern Protestants don't hold such strong beliefs any more. For example, the Anglican Church put forward the idea of **prima scriptura**, which holds that the Bible simply comes first in terms of authority. This still sets out a different approach from that of the Catholic Church, which sees regarding both the Church and **sacred tradition** as sources of authority that are as important as the case, although the Bible is deeply important to study for Christians, teaching is also provided by the Pope and high-ranking members of the Church who form the **Magisterium**: the body that lays down laws and truths for those of the Catholic faith.

Why are these differences important? Well, the degree to which the Bible is held as authoritative is the greatest difference between conservative and liberal Christians. In the case of the former, you will encounter individuals who prioritise wholly the teachings of the Bible above all else, including scientific knowledge! The label often given to those who believe the Bible is to be read literally (and authoritatively) is **fundamentalism**, and often they draw on the idea that the Bible is the literal Word of God to support their position.

> *'All scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for righteousness' (2 Timothy 3:16 NRSV)*

Most Christians will accept that, at least in part, the Bible is the work of human authors and a representation of God's will. In this case, significant interpretation is needed to understand it properly, usually by trained, educated members of the clergy. For such Christians, the Bible is not to be followed to the letter but a text to be analysed and dissected to draw out and reveal the truths that lie inside. Some of these we have noted already when studying both the birth narratives and the parables.

At the same time, though, it is important to be clear about what is meant by a doctrine of authority. If it is recognised that the Bible is not perfect in representing God's will, then why should we follow the workings of human reason? N T Wright sets out this problem clearly in a 1991 lecture titled 'How Can the Bible be Authoritative?' He notes that, typically, we view authority in a controlling manner, and this is replicated unconsciously in the Christian Church. Followers are instinctively led to believe that there is a rule to be followed, derived from the Bible, yet even a cursory study of the Bible shows that it is not a book of rules and regulations, nor is it easily digestible as a set of timeless truths. The narratives are set in important cultural and historical context, which determines their meaning.

Wright ultimately argues that the authority of the Bible is simply God's authority. The Bible is reflections of the belief in God and God's impact in the world. Studying the Bible is not a matter of simply following the rules it suggests but trying to understand this authority in our lives. This is a widely debated view, and many scholars disagree, arguing the Bible gets different elements of the Bible for divine truths, but it presents at least an important way in which we might use the Bible as a source of guidance in their lives. So, when examining the Bible as a source of authority, keep in mind this discussion around authority and think about how it relates to the way it is employed.

The Bible as a Source of Moral Advice

At heart, the most common belief about the Bible is that it is a good source of mo
Christians may well agree with this belief, considering that many of the moral laws
origins in biblical teaching. However, beneath this admission is a m
Bible as a source of moral advice?

As we noted in the introduction, the Bible i omposed of laws and regul
narratives, parables and psalms, a ft designed to convey religious or m
dynamic ways. This is not to est that Christians don't find value in law; Eccles
presents two rea w Christians should value and follow the rules contained i
1 hun ollow God's laws and do as he commands (thus being m
ill j e humans according to their actions – which implies that they sh
ment, and to gain reward.

*'The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandmen
everyone. For God will bring every deed into judgement, including every secret*
(Ecclesiastes 12:13–14 NRSV)

For many conservative Christians, this is the central idea behind the use of the Bibl
for what it sets out as right or wrong is simply a reflection of what God deems to b
human beings' responsibility to submit to God's authority on all things. Taking a lo
today, it is easy to see how such lines of thinking can lead to opposition to proced
phenomena such as homosexuality. With hundreds of laws, rules and dut s outli
comprehensive yet also stringent on the requirements of a 'good' li

However, many more liberal Christians recognise th t th m pproach is also
may, most conservative Christians do not k p y law listed in the Bible. This
Jewish traditions included in the such as not eating pork, but a ves
appear absurd to moder ces such as not wearing clothes that are made o
sowing a field wit e kind of seed (Leviticus 19:19). These rules prob
t th ng within their own cultural context, but do not appear t
d f modern Christians.

In , it has been widely observed that there are differences in the moral guidan
Testament and the New Testament. Jesus, throughout his life, sought to overturn
that dominated Jewish traditions in the first century and put forward a new vision
the lives of human beings first. If this truth is accepted, then the Bible cannot simp
Christians to follow blindly throughout their lives. Nor should Christians resort to
laws that make sense to them in their lives. Rather, the Bible should be analysed a
moral principles that Jesus sets out during his ministry.

*'Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be jud
will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiv (Luke*

These include ideas about forgiveness, non-judgement, nc olence and
reject a legalistic approach, the Bible is likely to a ou e moral advice in a ve
various stories and narratives might be e eo s mplate for the importance o
particular used as an example of ant **virtues**. For example, the para
10) teaches Christians t er even if they are of a culture or people typica
story of Esther in t es ment also teaches Christians to help others – even
c , to

t might well be accepted by these more liberal Christians that the Bible
moral advice. There might be remnants of views that reflect the cultural assumpti
rather than the Word of God, especially around social matters. This includes ideas
of women in society and euthanasia.

'You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.'

'… women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says.' (1 Corinthians 14:34 NRSV)

In these cases, Christians may recognise that Jesus' commitment to compassion and love should take precedence before the rules laid down by other biblical writers. While the Bible may contain useful moral guidance, this must be balanced against other sources of information that might be knowledge and reason, an understanding of the cultural context under which different books of the Bible were written, and personal conscience if passages appear to point towards certain actions in the Bible not cohering with Jesus' wider moral message.

The [illegible] issue that emerges out of such approaches is to what degree the Bible can be trusted. If the Bible is not regarded as infallible and other sources of wisdom are [illegible] ought be extracted out of its pages, and its rules or laws abandoned on a whim, many have criticised **liberal theology** or **liberal Christianity** on these grounds for making the Bible subservient to whatever ethical ideas are in fashion rather than studying its teachings on their own terms. Even if the Bible truly is not inerrant, Christians may have a difficult path in determining what wisdom they should take from its pages and whether this simply reflects their own natural beliefs rather than God's will.

The Bible as a Guide to Living

It is easy to view the Bible as a set of moral rules or stories, but this perspective does not do justice to and potentially leave out other important roles it plays in the everyday lives of Christians. While one of the key contribution it is often thought to make is as a guide to living. Whether one is religious or not, Christian life is much more than simply following moral guidance. If that were the case, then it could be argued there is little that is distinctive about Christianity at all. However, analysis of the Bible shows that it provides key advice on how to celebrate God in worship and the changes this should invoke in one's [illegible] and decision-making.

First, an obvious element of its guidance is the call to specific forms of worship. Much of this involves prayer. Christians believe that prayer is an act not only designed to demonstrate God's [illegible] also to communicate with him and build a lasting relationship. However, there are [illegible] narratives which celebrate the importance of communal worship. These are not [illegible] such as baptism and the Eucharist (which you will study later) but festivals and [illegible] In these cases, there is no specific moral call that requires Christians to engage on a regular basis. Rather, Christian worship is largely framed as a blessing for Christians: a way to bring joy into their lives.

The importance and joy of prayer are regularly expressed in **Psalms**, a book in the Old Testament with a wide variety of hymns and laments that are concerned with praising God, and expressing gratitude for his beneficence. Alongside expressing the significance of prayer, they also detail the kind of attitudes one should express in their daily lives. This is the second element of the Bible as a guide to living: to have the right kind of motives and intentions in their lives towards God and the material world. In every circumstance, many passages in the Bible develop teachings about the loving attitudes Christians should inculcate in themselves and how mastering these attitudes can [illegible] them from sin. Key examples of these teachings are found in Psalms 119:

'How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to your word. I seek you with my whole heart; do not let me stray from your commandments. I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you. Blessed are you, Lord; teach me your statutes. With my lips I declare all the laws that come from your mouth. I delight in the way that your decrees as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.' (Psalm 119:9-16)

In this passage, the psalmist reaffirmed how internalising Christian teaching helps guide one's life towards a better relationship with God. A similar instance is found later in Psalm 119, which reaffirms the importance of being steadfast against temptation or persecution.

'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn an oath and righteous ordinances. I am severely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to you praise, O LORD, and teach me your ordinances. I hold my life in my hand continually, wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts. Your decrees are the joy of my heart. I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the e

In either case, the Bible regularly steps beyond simply offering laws or rules and of how to cultivate good moral dispositions in one's life. These encourage Christians t only as an end goal of the religious life but as a way of living more meaningfully in nicely into the next section's emphasis on biblical teaching.

Discussion activity:
Do you believe the Psalms provide helpful advice on the correct attitudes and pe If not, why not? Discuss in pairs or small groups.

The Bible as Teaching on the Meaning and Purpose of Life

It has to be noted that the Bible, as a guide to living, is not simply aimed at present teaches about key elements of religious history: how the world was created, why human beings in this created world. In this way, the Bible does not simply dictate moral laws exist as they do and how these generate purpose in a Christian's life.

The best-known example of such meaning and purpose comes from the first book first few chapters it is set out how God created the world and everything within it the foundation of the meaningful religious life: God created humankind in his purpose. This automatically lends a **pastoral** element to biblical teaching. God is s that human beings can grow closer to him and fulfil their purpose as set out at the in particular gives several important ways in which human being should strive toward

'Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; a the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all th every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankin created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and G and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."' (Genesis

The first important aspect of this passage is the mention of **dominion**. God sets hu and responsibility over the natural world. They are allowed to use it as they wish t are equally required to be **stewards**, taking care of the world and ensuring it is not Genesis, the importance of **procreation** is also asserted. As part of their flourishing fill and populate the world, creating new individuals capable of forming their own

However, the Bible does not wholly equate the purpose of life with such God-given we can look to Ecclesiastes 9:5–9, which suggests that, in part, the meaning of life things it brings. God, therefore, gives human beings life not just so they can serve good pleasures it can bring.

'The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no more of them is lost. Their love, their hate and their envy have already perished; n share in all that happens under the sun. Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and heart, for God has long since approved what you do. Let your garments always be w head. Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life tha that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the su

Here, the emphasis is not on human beings becoming wholly **hedonistic** (pleasure but finding value in material pleasures which can be enjoyed under God's approve

and spending time with loved ones. Equally, the importance of remaining good is s
talk of white garments and anointing of oil: symbols of holiness and religious purit

Finally, it is important to note New Testament teaching when considering the mea
Christians recognise that Jesus' death on the cross was an act of sacrifice and op
salvation for human beings.

*'… so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a secon
to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.' (Hebrew 9:2*

*'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who belie
may have eternal life.' (John 3:16 NRSV)*

The meaning of life, therefore, has to be understood in the context of the saving
Whether or not life brings one fortune, it is essential to lead a moral life so that on
afterlife. All good moral acts are directed towards this future for Christians, and ar
primary purpose of biblical teaching in the New Testament.

At the same time, it is important to consider how all these different purposes give
other. The meaning one ascribes to life is an incredibly personal process, and not a
different teachings given in the Bible about such themes. For example, although Ch
importance of procreation, this may well not be an intuitively appealing idea for so
place living a good life above worship of God and believe one's path to salvation sh
others be free of pain and suffering. Some might even ignore Old Testament teach
according to Jesus' example can help form a meaningful life. Whatever the case, it
necessarily one fixed purpose given by the Bible; its meaning is, to a degree, relati

The Bible as a Source of Comfort and Encouragement

The final role of the Bible we will note is as a source of comfort and encouragemen
There are many narratives focusing on the struggles or suffering of various charact
Jesus' ministry in the Gospels. Such narratives, while often designed to
can also be of personal comfort to the reader, for at heart they depict G
with individuals on Earth. Reading through them, Christians may find they
the characters and may be encouraged by the thought that God is on their side.

These themes are also found directly in Psalms. For example, Psalm 46 relates how
believers and help them through the challenges they face in their lives.

*'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will n
change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters
mountains tremble with its tumult.' (Psalm 46:1–3 NR*

Similar sentiments are also found in the New Testament. Matthew 6:25 ff exami
the comfort the spiritual life can bring, even in times of hardship. A common message t
the material world is ultimately transitory. Those who are poor or marginalised can
afterlife for a better future where God will provide for them. All human beings will
have faith in God and perform good actions will be blessed by God after death.

*'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you
what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than cloth*

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inher
undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you' (1 Peter 1:3*

Finally, the Bible also encourages Christians as a community. When the New Testa written, the early Church was a small enterprise, sometimes persecuted and often Christians are likely to have understood the difficulties which may accompany faith encourages Christians by reminding them that they are not alone in their struggles and that God will not let them be tested beyond their limits.

'No testing has overtaken you that is not com[illegible] e[illegible]ne. God is faithful, a beyond your strength, but with the t[illegible]he [illegible] also provide the way out so that
(1 Corinthians 10:13 NRSV)

Understandi[illegible] their Role in Christian Life

ut t[illegible]ection, we've looked at how various biblical passages highlight th ristian's life. However, you may have noticed that books such as Psalms p[illegible]nt. While they emphasise important attitudes and express encouragement it can be argued that such messages are already part of Jesus' ministry. Moreover guidance they present, it can also be questioned whether the New Testament turn – statements so commonplace or clichéd as to be uninteresting or meaningless. So reasons why Christians may or may not draw on Psalms in their spiritual lives.

Why the Psalms (studied) *may* offer a guide for Christian living	Why the Psalms (studie Chris
• Many Psalms are focused on praise. They therefore offer a model for worship (praise, thanksgiving and confession), which is an important part of Christian living (e.g. 119:12). • Furthermore, if Christians live their lives in [illegible] mindset of worship, this should h[illegible]en t[illegible] joyful lives and treat other well [illegible]105). • The Psalms emph[illegible]rtance of follow[illegible] (e.g. 119:15–16). [illegible]y P[illegible]lso deal with desperation and [illegible]air; they remind Christians to look to God in [illegible]s of despair, and not to abandon faith when they feel hopeless (e.g. 119:107). • They also remind Christians not to be swayed in their faith – if they are tempted to act against God's will, or doubt his love and power for any reason (e.g. 119:110). • They teach Christians to rely on God to preserve them and give them strength (e.g. 46:1). • Some Psalms deal with important qualities such as mercy and forgiveness. When they express how God shows these to humans, they remind humans to treat others in a similar way, which can be applied in everyday living.	• Many Psalms are focu greatness of God, rat h[illegible]e. They do [illegible]ora[illegible]idance. Many Psalms expres life. They are human God instructing hum • The Psalms may prov worship, but they giv aspects of living and modern issues, e.g. g • The Psalms were writ and so may not be th Christians, as they w different understand knew nothing about **resurrection** – and th may be, therefore, th New Testament sug give.

Quick Quiz

1. What is redaction [illegible]
2. What is harm[illegible]
3. [illegible]ch [illegible]ide birth narratives?
4. [illegible] is [illegible]ythologisation?
5. [illegible]is the kenotic model?
6. What is the difference between general judgement and particular judgement?
7. What is the main purpose of the Book of Psalms?
8. What is dominion?

THEME 2: RELIGIOUS CONCE

What you will learn in this section:

A. The theological debate around the nature of God ar[illegible] ology used t
- whether it is accurate or appropriate t[illegible] guage to describe G
- the issues with identifying [illegible] Fat[illegible] and the feminist theology of Se
- the question about [illegible] ther [illegible] can suffer, with reference to the theolo

B. The theology a[illegible] y of the Trinity, including:
- th[illegible] ty [illegible] e Son and the issues of his pre-existence and divinity
- the [illegible] of the Father's relationship with the Son and the issues with t
- [illegible] he filioque controversy and the debate around its importance in moder

C [illegible] heology and historical study of the atonement, including:
- analysis of the three major models of the atonement: Christus Victor, sul
- the theological issues with these models and the debate around the nee modern Christian thought

Starter Activity:
What do you believe are the primary attributes God possesses? Make a list and c throughout this theme. Has your concept of God changed in any way?

Key Thinker	
Name	Sallie McFague
Born	1933
Died	2019
Key text	*Metaphorical [illegible] Models of God in Religious Language*
Why are they [illegible]	Sall[illegible] e is a very influential and polarising figure in fem [illegible] approa[illegible] to God that has been described as post-Christian [illegible] taphors and models of God were tainted by patriarchal infl complemented by newer, more egalitarian and female-focuse
[illegible] know?	McFague was also well known for developing an ecological ap which emphasised care for the natural world as care for God's

Key Thinker	
Name	Jürgen Moltmann
Born	1926
Died	n/a
Key text	*The Crucified God* (1972)
Why are they important?	Moltmann is one of the most influential Reformed theologian developing a unique form of liberation theology which focuse alongside humanity, rather than being a distan[illegible] p[illegible] sible. t
Did you know?	Moltmann was drafted into military [illegible] as [illegible] enager in 1 surrendered to the first Briti[illegible] h[illegible] ldi[illegible] h[illegible] e encountered.

Introduction – Analysing Religious Concepts

In Theme 1 we ex[illegible] e [illegible] s parts of the Bible and how Christian approaches t diff[illegible] un[illegible] [illegible] s of key narratives such as the birth of Jesus and the resur [illegible] discu[illegible] ion often encompasses broader ideas and methods. In fact, much [illegible] hat goes on in academic circles can be described as **philosophical**: think k[illegible] edge to shape their idea of God as much as their interpretation of the Bible.

This opens up a much wider theoretical framework for understanding Christian co twentieth century, many theologians have drawn not only on new philosophical id but also a vast array of secular pursuits. For example, the last 50 years in particula growth in feminist theology, which, as we will see, challenges many of the assump used to describe God and the role of women in Christian life. Similarly, we shall als ideas of Jürgen Moltmann, who questions whether the **immutability** (changelessn to feel emotion) are genuinely attributes of God or just a historical infiltration of e both cases, a number of philosophical and historical methods are employed to pro religious concepts and present arguments against orthodox Christian thought.

Part of the reason such lines of questioning have emerged is due to the increasing and the growth of secularisation. Since the start of the **Enlightenment**, Chris loosening of a hold on academic imagination, and the rise of secular thought h opportunities for Christian thinkers to question the received thought of the Christ there are also conservative Christians who push back against such thinking and seek to d thought, and this push-and-pull has arguably produced some of the most fertile de

As we go through the key topics of this section, there are a few important questio first is to ask what methods a particular thinker is employing when analysing religi on historical knowledge? Philosophical theory? Whatever the case, identifying the arrives at their conclusions can often be as revealing as the arguments themselves their form of analysis which aren't fully appreciated or documented. Similarly, ano consider is: what are the consequences of a thinker's line of argument? The under concept can have ramifications far beyond what is expected. Exposing internal the heart of Christian thought is often the task of atheist critics, and the theoretica various aspects of Christian thought might just be evidence of incoherency. T emerge once we study the doctrine of atonement later in this section.

Lastly, and most importantly, it is vital to question your own assumptions as you p the nature of God is: what attributes does God possess? How do these attributes de[illegible]ments of your own views will help you question others, drawing out where [illegible]ironically which you can more accurately assess the current theological landsc yourself, or don't believe you hold a stake in a particular theological discu will sharpen your own critical skills and apply them to new debates.

A: The Nature of God

Before we take a look at some critical analyses of the concept of God, it is worth n Christian view of his being has typically entailed. For a start, God is traditionally co **powerful)**, **omniscient (all-knowing)** and **benevolent (all-loving)** being. These are commonly cited when describing God and are often the focus of worship. Omnipot to be essential for God's role as creator, while his benevolence ensures God is per humankind and invested in the everyday lives of people around the world. However important attributes that it is worth covering.

For one, God is typically held to be **immaterial**, and not [illegible] being such as th this sense, God is contained in another world, and his immateriality enables other paradoxical. For example, God is said to be both **transcendent** (beyond the w and **immanent** (contained within the world and able to be experienced). Theologi how this paradox is [illegible] affairs is possible, but in Christian thought this issue h Trinity and the [illegible] roles played by each person in the triune God. Similarly, G ought to be **eternal**: he does not have a beginning or an end and has alwa

God is naturally thought to be genderless, for how can a material thing possibly ha a controversial suggestion, feminist theologians, as we shall see, have noted that God has been exclusively described through male terms. In the Trinity, God is thou

as the Son, but why is this the case if such terms are inappropriate when talking ab
Likewise, God's immateriality and eternality have often led to the view that it is im
(**immutability**) or feel emotion/pain (**impassibility**), but is this necessarily the case
eternal being to change or feel emotion in accordance with change in the material
that we shall begin to explore when we begin taking a look at God's Nature.

Why is God Viewed as Male?

We noted in the introduction that God is generally viewed as genderless. However
go a step further and state that God being immaterial and transcendent, is wholly
the concept of gender. Gender is a human category represented through
physical, social and spiritual attributes, and to even begin to argue that God repres
stically may be a gross case of **anthropomorphism** – applying human categ
to something that does not possess them. However, at the same time th
use of exclusively male terms used when talking about him, whether it be the
'Father' or other titles such as 'Lord' or 'King'. So, considering God's being is beyon
description, should these terms be dropped?

This is a difficult question and one which feminist theologians have grappled with ext
appears that such male-oriented terms are unsuitable. However, we might also note
describe God are unsuitable considering his immateriality and transcendence. Despit
typically thought that various forms of positive language serve as important represen
some way they capture part of his essence, if not all of it. If we follow the criticism of
logical conclusion, we might arrive at the idea that there is no point talking about God
to be productive, a middle ground may need to be established where positive languag
God but principles are set out to ensure that such language does not develop a distor

The trouble with male terms, therefore, is not just their unsuitability but also in th
back to Theme 1, where we studied approaches to the Bible, you might remember t
elements of Scripture and how much of the cultural context of the biblical authors rath
of the Word of God. When we think about male terminology from this perspective,
evidence suggests early Christian communities existed in a strongly **patriarchal** e
ideas and thought were directed towards establishing or preserving male
usly. In the case of Christian thought, regardless of what **egalitarian** (equa
presented, it is likely to be the case that these were filtered through male writers wi
framework which prioritised a male-focused perspective. For many feminist theolog
as intellectual and physical heads of society and relegated women to the roles of wif

However, even if such a viewpoint was held by many theologians throughout Chris
that such a divide in gender equality would be the work of a fundamentally gender
patriarchal attitudes of Christian cultures have also been responsible for a significa
women, both inside the Church and out. Overall, the patriarchal, misogynistic or s
seem out of step with the teachings of its saviour, who, for the most part, promote
equality and non-judgement. Whether it be Jesus' treatment of Mary and Martha
prominent female followers such as Mary Magdalene, there is much elevated role giv
compared to other parts of the Bible. This suggests that at the heart of Christian theolo
women's experiences as it is of men's, especially when matters as a whole are c

However, at this juncture, there is also a divide in feminist thought. On the one ha
feminist theologians would argue, despite the shaky history of Christianity arou
egalitarian, liberating message in the Bible that can be brought to the fore by critic
ing. On the other hand, there are more **radical feminist thinkers** who e
y beyond saving, and that the only way women can be liberated is by e
o Christian context. Many of these radical thinkers are also what are term
due to the fact that their views often undermine the key foundations of orthodox
new, challenging ways to think about God.

We will study this debate in more detail later. The key thing to take away is that fo
do male terms present a limited, misleading depiction of God, but they are also th
patriarchal attitudes rather than the will of God. The task of reconstruc[illegible] God is
challenge the historical sources of these attitudes and present [illegible]ve ways of
cohere with female experiences of the world. Only then can a [illegible]ul[illegible]faceted idea of
Christian theology become more accurate in its [illegible]ripti[illegible]f his being. In the ne
at a number of important figures and [illegible]hey [illegible]llenge male-dominated discuss

Activity:

H[illegible]oul[illegible]ic[illegible] God if you had the choice? Write down five different un
wou[illegible]elp describe him, and list your reasons why.

Ch[illegible]nging God as Father

Before we look at the challenges to male terminology around God, it is worth cons
importance this terminology may hold. Simply put, if, for all of history, such terms
have they proliferated? Well, in one sense, the use of terms such as 'Father' may r
God. The Father–Son relationship between Jesus and God invokes the personal rel
and establishes the idea of a pastoral God – a being who is looking out for humani
Even if terms such as 'Father' are biased towards male perspectives, they do pote
truths about the nature of God beyond gendered ideals. The same may be true of
Even though these are male-focused, they can be thought to convey ideas about G
world as well as his omnipotence or omniscience.

At the same time, we can easily note the shortfalls of th[illegible]se te[illegible]s[illegible]hinking about
might be unsettling to some, considering th[illegible]i[illegible]res[illegible]despotic imagery or e
servants to God. Similarly, it can be [illegible]e[illegible]hat [illegible]God is Father, there is a lack of m
God's being and how wome[illegible]ght co[illegible]ct to God as either mothers or daughter

Here[illegible]e ca[illegible]t[illegible]o[illegible]m[illegible]eminist theology of Sallie McFague for guidance. McFag
[illegible] de[illegible]be God is a **construction**: it is a tool or method we employ to try t
[illegible]man comprehension. Theology as such, although important, is a kind of
c[illegible]of **metaphors** and **models** that seek to enrich human understanding of Go
substance, even if language is ill-equipped to describe God accurately. Through en
metaphors, it is possible to avoid simplistic, absolutist conceptions of God which re
human roles and ideas, and, therefore, to enable the development of a deeper, m
his relationship to the world around us.

Already, you might be able to see where this argument is leading. McFague conten
ideas to describe God is ultimately misleading. Not only do they generally paint a v
of God but they devalue the importance of present human experience in thinking
argues that although Scripture and tradition are important as building blocks whe
analysis, they should not be given a position of utmost privilege. Th[illegible]ge we
evolve according to the Christian community's own ideas[illegible]d[illegible]xpe[illegible]ces of God
contexts of the modern world. Through comparison[illegible]of n[illegible]w a[illegible]d concepts, a ne
accommodates a greater range of human i[illegible]g[illegible]s ultimately be developed.

So how does this challen[illegible]s Fath[illegible]r. Well, under McFague's thought, the bib
are largely reflecti[illegible]e[illegible]ocultural and political system of the biblical autho
n[illegible]al, [illegible]ew images that modern cultures and communities develop
[illegible]tim[illegible]e non-neutral terminology employed by the biblical authors has
[illegible]ught to provide a coherent explanation of all things. In this way, although
ge[illegible]ess, terms such as 'Father' or 'King' are now regarded as 'true' reflections o
that is not allowed to be challenged for fear of destabilising the coherency of Chris

This might seem complex, but McFague breaks it down simply, remarking in her 1[illegible] *Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* that 'we construct the worlds we inhabit. [illegible] done so'. The male biases that infiltrated the Bible's imagery and terminology were [illegible] significant degree, but subsequent male-dominated theology has also failed to [illegible] ideas considered to be heretical and generating a theological [illegible] which favour such as 'Father', 'Lord' or 'King' have thus naturally made sense to [illegible] theologians that are contained within this world view and do not bear [illegible] assess shortcomings of political systems remain male-dominated.

But why do we need to [illegible] these terms now? Well, McFague notes that ideas unavoidably [illegible] ideas about ownership, servitude and dependency, and that Christians today. However, the changing environments of modern Christianity [illegible] antiquated and unsuitable. The original world view which sustained the [illegible] been determined and shown to be misleading or flawed. Society as a whole has [illegible] recognising that women can fulfil a much wider set of roles than traditionally put forth, that intellectual pursuits are not the sole domain of men. It is, therefore, necessary to begin developing new imagery, models and terms to describe God which accommodate experience and the world views of Christians today.

Such ideas place McFague in the reconstructionist camp of feminist theological thought, abandon sources such as the Bible, but they also need to be deconstructed in order that a rounded concept of God can be rebuilt. However, McFague also suggests new models to enable this reconstruction. Moreover, her emphasis on present experience over tradition [illegible] what are often called **post-Christian** movements, which generally attempt to [illegible] reject thought entirely. For instance, one key idea present in McFague's theology is that God is **Mother**. Through emphasising this role for God, one also develops new connotations and connections that may exist between God and humankind. Furthermore, the development complement the idea of God as Father, referring to God as a being open to both male [illegible]

Conversely, it is important to note that McFague is aware of the shortcomings of the [illegible] which [illegible] Father when talking about God. Throughout her work, McFague [illegible] nature of God and points out that even labelling God as Mother is dangerous [illegible] ideas about the feminine onto God and unhelpfully essentialising what it means to [illegible] face. Nevertheless, the **reimaging**, in McFague's terms, still plays a highly significant role in theology. From identifying God as Mother comes McFague's view of the created world as the manifestation of God's self-expression and, as such, Christians should not attempt to separate being from the world but one who is unavoidably involved in its every workings. McFague's theology as a result of her commitment to alternative metaphors and images for God is **panentheistic**: the view that God or the divine pervades every single part of the world but God is not distinct from the world, but by comprehending the world one is essentially [illegible]

This latter aspect of McFague's theology is perhaps the most radical and also the most [illegible] as a necessary way to ground the ideas, images and metaphors that humans [illegible] beings for it means that human experiences of God are akin to experiences with the world itself. this approach was important in encouraging a 'turn of the century' [illegible] of theologians away from earth'. However, it also means that, for critics, her theology does not encapsulate the [illegible] God's transcendence. As such, it may be that [illegible] using new terms for God such as 'anthropologising' God: taking our [illegible] and wishes about human culture and applying to a divine being. This does not mean that terms such as 'Father' are suitable, but that these terms have [illegible] granted them important transcendent connotations that [illegible] such as [illegible]

[illegible] we might question the extent to which descriptions of God are construed from a critical reading of the Bible and Church tradition that many conservative Christians believe the term 'Father' may be one that is God-given and not a reflection of cultural bias and simply is no need to reimage God. For many modern audiences, this argument is [illegible]

can analyse the authorial context and influences on theology as a whole, why shou
criticism? This question certainly comes to the fore in the next issue we will study:
the use of male terms, it may be that this divine attribute is rooted not in scripture
philosophical assumptions made by early Church Fathers.

Discussion Activity:
Do you believe that it is necessary to dev[illegible] on-masculine metaphors, be
Discuss in small groups or pairs.

The Impassibility [illegible]

[illegible] noted that traditionally God is thought to be impassible, or
an idea was often presented as the notion that God could not possibly
considers how Jesus supposedly suffered on the cross. In the case of his
has often adhered to some form of the kenotic model, whereby Jesus emptied hi
suffering only as a human. Such a solution is thought to have the advantages of no
descriptions given in the Gospels but also solving the quandary over explaining ho
whether Jesus faked his emotions on the cross.

In fact, throughout most of Christian history, the idea of God being able to feel wa
implausible by many scholars, it was believed to be logically impossible. This belief
Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, where a number of attributes were asserted to belong
in order to combat the perceived heresies of Arian theology, which held that God
supreme, but that the Son as Jesus was the first act of creation by G[illegible] every
through the Son. This means that the Son was not coeternal u[illegible] bishop Arius's
beginning, and his divinity was less than that of the Father.

However, this idea about God being i[illegible]ble is not strictly found in the Bible its
in the thought of Philo, a Je[illegible] theologian who brought together many different
that many scholars [illegible] influenced early Christianity. In Greek thought divine in
and God is t[illegible] body this characteristic, being transcendent, unchanging
for [illegible] Greeks were an indication of weakness, and those people who a
Therefore, were a being to be truly self-determining and impassible, th
they would be completely actualised as a constantly perfect and unified b
or sway. In fact, many Greek philosophical schools, such as the Stoics, thought hu
themselves to embody apatheia in their lives, not letting passions rule what should

Nevertheless, when we look at the crucifixion with this ideal in mind, a wide numb
emerge in explaining why Jesus appeared to suffer despite being fully God himself
draw the conclusion that God is in fact able to suffer and feel emotion? Moreover
detrimental impact on Christian theology, or could it even help explain other aspe
where Jesus displayed human emotions, thoughts and feelings? We can begin our
the thought of an incredibly influential twentieth-century theologian; Jürgen Molt

Does God Suffer?

Moltmann begins his discussion of impassibility [illegible] analysis of apatheia, the G
concept we identified as the historical [illegible] to the orthodox view of an imp
God. He argues that although [illegible] councils such as that of Nicaea put forward tha
Son is unchangeable [illegible] accordance with the Father, this does not render th
absolutely unc[illegible]

Moltmann mean by this? Well, he argues that the statement at the Co
[illegible] in 325 isn't wholly clear on the nature of God's immutability and impass
affirms that it is **anathema** to state that the Son of God can be subject to change.
this is not the same as arguing that God could not change himself if he willed it. Fu
likely to have been introduced to excommunicate Arius and declare his thought he

broader theological discussion around a changing or unchanging God was perhaps implicitly concerned with establishing the Son and the Father as coeternal.

Therefore, through this distinction Moltmann affirms that it is possible for God to [illegible]. Such an idea isn't necessarily contradictory. If God does possess [illegible]ce, why power to change aspects of his own being? At this point however, we can pause [illegible] thought. Even if God could possess the power to change, why would God [illegible] benevolent, wise God supported by [illegible] evidence? This is a more difficult question addresses it in a very different way from many other theologians. In particular, he point in his analysis of [illegible] interesting move considering that, due to theological impassibility [illegible] typically taken to inform beliefs about the human, not divine as [illegible] already noted, for Moltmann divine impassibility is not absolute. [illegible] of God's identity and not simply a discourse on the human Jesus?

Before we get into a more philosophical discussion about this possibility, it is important details about the **passion** (trial, crucifixion and death) narratives in the Gospels, for in a different way and Moltmann is keen to ground his ideas in biblical analysis. In completely steadfast in the suffering of the crucifixion and on death cries out that God. For some New Testament scholars even, the crucifixion in Luke is an almost martyrdom, a matter of material necessity in order to reach the wider divine act of

However, one Gospel particularly stands out for Moltmann: Mark. The crucifixion more difficult to comprehend, and it is Mark's passion narrative that Moltmann focuses where Jesus cries out, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (15:34). This theologians analysing the meaning of the crucifixion, particularly when it comes to upholding is fully human and fully God, for in this passage Jesus seems to be directly talking to has abandoned him on the cross. If Jesus was [illegible] fully aware of God's plan for would he utter such a phrase? In this [illegible] Moltmann identifies a *profound aporia*, the divine Jesus would declare that God has forsaken him and emphasise his suffering

Importantly, however, Moltmann argues that this puzzle is not adequately resolved by affirming [illegible] regarding the crucifixion. If the Father and the Son are both coeternal and [illegible] makes sense to arbitrarily separate them at the cross for the sake of mere [illegible] Moltmann argues that Jesus' cry here reveals the mutual suffering of both the Son and a difficult idea to wrap your head around initially, but the simplest way to understand Moltmann there are two different but intertwined forms of suffering happening on there is the suffering of the Father giving up his only Son, and on the other hand the giving himself up for humanity. Therefore, for Moltmann, there is a difference between his death on the cross, and the suffering of God in his giving up of the Son.

But how can these two different kinds of suffering be connected if Jesus is both fully there still the issue that the human and divine Jesus can't be reconciled in such a [illegible] argues that a trinitarian interpretation of the cross is essential to understanding the God at the crucifixion. Even though their acts of 'giving up' are separate, they are which prevents a separation between the Father and Son through their suffering. precedent of God suffering alongside human beings in their hardships. God for Moltmann idly by while human beings undergo pain and suffering but is intimately connected everyday lives.

However, the most important aspect of Moltmann's theology here is understanding the suffering on the cross, for we can ask: could the Father not have simply given up particular line of argument, so long as God is benevolent and looks to intervene [illegible] attitude, should it matter whether he is capable of suffering in a similar as reconciliation with the divine God is possible, it can appear that the answer to this another perspective, the question of whether God suffers unveils a grander debate Christians are choosing to place their faith in. Is it an overarching, transcendent being

with humanity miraculously in spite of the differences in ontology, or is it a God who within creation, and expresses a direct solidarity with the lives and ordinary suffering context, the question of whether God suffers arguably retains a much greater impor systematic theology, and influences the way Christians have faith in God – an unch one who voluntary chooses to understand and undergo suffering through his love fo

For Moltmann, it is the radically personal God that is executed on the cross. The his Son and suffers as a result, but this act of love is voluntary and undertaken by G suffering that God undergoes is not brought about by human action but by God's o Creed is, therefore, not violated – in fact it states that nothing can bring about a cha Moltmann also argues that it is wholly wrong to characterise the giving up just in t Jesus suffered on the cross, by his own nature God is always able to overcom power, justice and love.

This is undeniably quite a departure from traditional Christian thought, but, as we great pains to ensure that his view is consistent not only with orthodox statement also with trinitarian theology as a whole. The biggest shift that Moltmann argues f evidence for God's nature rather than an as abandonment of the divine at one of t the Gospel narratives. The death of Jesus therefore reveals the actions of the Fath and lets us understand how God suffers from his love for the Son and his 'giving up has both given up, and previously been given up by, God. It is an act of love that e reconciliation between human beings and God for the rest of time, and lets us und connected to the world, beyond simply being a transcendent, impassible being.

Naturally, Moltmann's position sounds quite appealing. Wouldn't we rather have a willing to suffer alongside us? However, despite the inclination of some theologians possibly as a comfort to one's own suffering, and those who argue that the be **pathos (invoking of sadness)**, in God should be resisted. Thomas Weina book *Does God Suffer?*, argues that, despite the idea of God as suffering being appe theologically and biblically, also in the important public task of proclaiming and ordinary people. Weinandy dubs the idea of the suffering God to be a 'new orthodo love and compassion that should be seen as his primary way of showing so rather than being consoled by the idea of a God simply experiencing gen consoled by the idea of a transcendent, benevolent being intervening in the world himself, and offering the promise of salvation to all who respond to his Son. In this much more traditional concept of God, but also reiterates why this shouldn't stand having faith in such a God.

The main thrust of Weinandy's argument is twofold. The first is that the idea of dis prevent God from loving human beings, and he criticises Moltmann for writing tha suffering, he would be incapable of love. The second is that, despite the narrative emotionally powerful, it is unreasonable and not backed up when one considers th presented in the Bible that set him apart from the world. When one extrapolates cannot be subject to from these biblical characteristics, one arrives at the same co Fathers: God is immutable and impassible.

Weinandy's criticisms do make a good point – should we be judging the chara about what we wish from human relationships? Why should God, an omnip benevolent being be constrained by the human inability to love freely without suffe paint an emotionally unrealistic view of a suffering God, it also paints a false pictur God is separated from the world, it does not mean that God is not persona that Moltmann ultimately has to mischaracterise the orthodox view of God theological appeal than they might naturally possess. Such problems particul consider bigger questions about the nature of the Trinity, the subject of the next s discussion around a suffering God is the relationship between the Father and the S relationship has perhaps seen far more controversy than any other throughout Ch

B: The Trinity

Although Christianity is a monotheistic religion, believers hold God to be a Trinity. is one being or substance, he is formed of three different persons: the Father, the person differs only in his relationship to the others and the world. The is still who divine nature and the powers that accompany it. So while human beings might exp Trinity in a different manner, they are still experiencing God as one. Similarly, whil Trinity remain distinct in theological study, they are still ultimately held to be diffe one God. Christians simply come to know the dimensions in different fashions: G Son through his incarnation, and the Holy Spirit as the continued presence

For some outside Christianity, this is often a strange notion. In fact, many early cri of a trinitarian yet monotheistic religion was contradictory. For them, if G were distinct beings. However, a significant section of Christian theology has the nature of the Trinity, from both biblical evidence and philosophical ruminations relationship to the others. One important term to initially note is **perichoresis**; this the way that each of the persons of the Trinity is related to the others and is one a accordingly translated as 'mutual indwelling', for while Christians regard the perso they are also thought to be present in one another at all times.

As we shall see in this section, nonetheless, Christian theologians throughout histo challenges explaining how the Trinity should be both theoretically and practically c the death of Jesus, there were innumerable different ideas about who Jesus was a the beginnings of orthodox Christian thought largely coming together in the fourth Council of Nicea in 325 CE and significantly progressing at the Council of Chalcedon Trinity posed a large number of theoretical difficulties for early Christians, it also h puzzling issues about the nature of God. For example, the relationships between t helped explain how God could be both transcendent and immanent, or unknowab

How Did the Doctrine of the Trinity Form?

The Trinity did not simply emerge out of nowhere. There is strong biblical evidence bly formulated by early Christians who were attempting to make sense God. The New Testament contains many references to a triadic interpret to be codified into an official Christian doctrine as beliefs matured and developed

'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28:19 NRSV)

'And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."' (Matthew

'And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the full of grace and truth' (John 1:14 NRSV)

At the same time, it must be recognised that such language may have been intend metaphorical. Although the New Testament may lay the groundwork for a trinitarian u were many variations of Christian beliefs in the first few centuries of its existence t orthodox doctrines championed today. In fact, one of the first major defen Son and Holy Spirit did not occur until the beginning of the third century through th , though with considerable disagreement with his presentation of the doct found the nature of Jesus and his relationship with God that explicitly de contrive.

For example, **adoptionism** taught that, just as the name suggests, Jesus was 'adop Jesus as the Son is, therefore, not cosubstantial or coexistent with God before cre

appointed as God's messenger later in his human life. Similarly, **Arianism**, named [illegible] that although Jesus is the divine Son of God, he was begotten at a point in time aft[illegible] suggested there was effectively a point in time where Jesus did not exist and God [illegible] not fully God or cosubstantial with the Father, an effective denial of the Trinity. Fi[illegible] of **Sabellianism**, which put forward that each part of the Trinit[illegible] was simply a mode distinct person who was fully God in his own right.

In all these cases, fierce debate rage[illegible] between theologians in the third and fourth way to understand God, and in the next section we shall take a deeper look at the mentioned – Arianis[illegible] may seem a trivial issue for non-Christians, the[illegible] around the [illegible] of the Son took a rather tempestuous turn, with Arianis[illegible] and Bishop Arius being excommunicated from the Christian Church.

The Nature of Christ's Pre-Existence

The nature of Christ's existence, as you may well have noted already, took on a m[illegible] doctrinal disputes than perhaps any other theological issue. In fact, it can be argue[illegible] over what it meant to be God's Son led to the beginnings of orthodox Christianity [illegible] increasingly began to demand consensus and clarity about the beliefs of their pee[illegible] has become known, began when the presbyter Arius began to clash with the bisho[illegible] questions about whether the Son had a beginning. On the one hand, Arius insisted **(brought into existence)** the Son, this moment necessitated a time when the Son [illegible] the other hand, Alexander argued that this interpretation was heretical: it denied [illegible] trinitarianism, where each person was regarded as of one coeternal divine essence.

So why did this issue flare up to begin with? Well, on the one hand we have noted scriptural evidence isn't entirely clear when it comes to the Trinity. Looking at the [illegible] there are plenty of biblical references to a Father interpretation of God, it is less cl[illegible] confirm or disconfirm identifying the persons of the Trinity as coeternal. The relati[illegible] Father and the Son implies the Son was created in some way, and this is ultim[illegible] order for the world to be created through the Son, there must have been a time, t[illegible] the Son existed. Also to understand is the important debate over the Greek [illegible] and **homoiousios** (of similar substance). Many in Arius' camp, including [illegible] the Son were of one substance. Instead, if the Father begat or created [illegible] similar substance.

However, there are certain parts of the New Testament which do seem to suggest be thought of as coeternal and cosubstantial. For example, John 10:30 states, 'The Jesus' statement here can be interpreted, depending on one's translation of the G[illegible] literally identifying himself with God. This might especially be the case since he is [illegible] requests for clarification about his identity, and whether he is the Messiah. Simila[illegible] proclaims that there is one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ. This could and God are the same, particularly if Paul is referencing the language of the Shema from Deuteronomy. However, others might argue the use of the term 'L[illegible]' here Greek term 'kyrios' has many different meanings and could just be used Jesus as b[illegible] rather than God himself.

Other parts of the New Testament a[illegible]lly ambiguous. For instance, Colossians image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation'. The term 'firstborn' here himself was the first [illegible] created, and this passage has been cited as key ev[illegible] its supporters [illegible] also sees Jesus stating, 'Very truly, I tell you, before Abra[illegible] that Jesus existed either at a moment of creation before Abraham or coex[illegible] here does seem to suggest the former at first glance.

Either way, it is easy to see how the debate became so divisive. On the one hand, t[illegible] Scripture, while on the other hand there are the ambiguities over terms such as 'b[illegible]

'essence'. For historians, although there is a fairly clear picture of the theoretical e
difficult to trace exactly what Arius' views were, especially when most of what is k
the writings of his opponents. However, despite the nature of the conflict being d
First Council of Nicaea in 325 CE declared an abrupt end to the debate with Arius
as heretical. In particular, John 10:30 played a pivotal role in e ing orthodox
nature of the trinitarian persons.

The Relationship between Christ and

So why did the Council affir now orthodox view of the Trinity against the co
why was Arius so determined to state the case for a created or begotten Son? This
hist lly, a few basic theological reasons in light of other issues to
orta f these concerns the relationship between the divine and human
the persons of the Trinity are coessential, cosubstantial and coeternal.
h ity of Jesus emerge, for how can a being that is infinite in every aspect beco
meaningfully with the human world? The creation of the Son for many early theol
to effectively differentiate the earthly Son from the eternal, transcendent Father.

In many ways, the debate around pre-existence that came to dominate the Counc
later Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE, where participants grappled with how the hu
Christ interacted. In the end, the Chalcedonian definition was agreed, which decla
natures in one person, without ever quite explaining how these could be applied t
we saw in the birth narratives and resurrection, other ideas such as the kenotic m
order to account for this definition and these have been questioned by th logian
Altogether, even though one perspective emerged as orthodox h th e cou
divinity and humanity of Christ remained that many four tisf ory.

Another important difficulty emerges w ne e nsider not just the nature o
functions. If all the persons are ubs a d coeternal, then how is it theoret
various dimensions or w ich they interact with the world? In many ways,
about the Trinity e attered' or rendered meaningless by all the persons bec
The y of theology now which attempts to work out how the dyn
d in ight of the declarations made at the Council of Nicaea, one of whic
s issue commonly known as the **filioque controversy**.

The Filioque Controversy

To be accurate, the filioque controversy does not cover one theological issue but
controversies in the Christian Church centred around the **doctrine of procession**.
Spirit 'proceeds' within the Trinity and the relationship between the three person
this problem would take vastly more writing than is possible within this course co
look at how the controversy arose and the implications that its various solutions h

So how did the controversy arise? Well, if you cast your mind back once a in to t
you will probably be aware that one of the results of this council wa e Nicene C
presented the Church's orthodox beliefs for all clergy to f ow. Th ate ent en
in the Holy Spirit', a belief that was not exactly cont ve ial a time. However
Constantinople in 381 CE, attendees discus ed a set of issues and, at the en
text of the Nicene Creed, omittin e as and including new ones. Most im
to the section about the Holy Spirit, stating:

> *'[the] Holy [Spirit], the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, w*
> *together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the pro*

H you will notice that the Holy Spirit is identified as proceeding from the Fathe
necessarily difficult to uphold. It may be that the Holy Spirit does work primarily th
as creator. However, a conflict began to emerge in the latter half of the sixth cent

began to add 'and from the Son' to descriptions about the procession of the Holy S
the **filioque clause** and set the stage for a long-lasting conflict between what even
Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Let's take a step back for a moment, though. Why did the clau e ch a s
is greatly divided on this question even today. On the or nar it clear that var
circumstances between 550 and 1054 CE def nitive ntr d to what is now kno
separation of the Eastern and Weste t che he filioque clause played a large
Western churches arguing fo t nclu in Christian doctrine and the Eastern ch
heretical, yet, by its s me s difficult to envision why it caused such a spl

he e ion of the Holy Spirit through both the Father and the Son wa
d by many early Church Fathers such as Cyril of Alexandria and Augustin
F re, depending on one's perspective, much of the issue was the result of
when describing God. Some modern theologians have even suggested the filioque
linguistic issue aggravated by historical conflicts between various religious figures
the death of Jesus. Moreover, the history of the early Church was marred by more
hostilities and secular conspiring than can be listed here.

For example, in 1995 the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity pointed
'ἐκπορεύεσθαι' and the Latin word 'procedere', although both commonly translat
different meanings. The Latin term typically means 'to come through a mediate ch
not. When one considers that among many early Church Fathers, the statements
from the Father through the Son' and 'proceeds from the Father an e on' were
interchangeably, it is easy to see how confusion could hav en. In fact, many C
happy to accept the statement that the Holy Spirit 'roc eds t the Father thro
but different formulation. As such, there ar l era Christian theologians t
recognises the historical circumst t le c the filioque controversy, there
reconciliation of the Easter West churches on this doctrinal issue.

Ho it nt to consider the other side. There are still many theolo
pre s a broader theological problem that cannot easily be reconciled
portant to note that the primary reason conflicts emerged was becaus
c ed in either the statement issued by the First Council of Nicaea or that issue
Constantinople. For clergy at the time, the introduction of the filioque clause repre
set out in the First Council of Ephesus in 431, where Clause VII decreed it was unlaw
different principles from those set out in the Nicene Creed. When Latin churches be
clause, they were in effect setting out a different faith and denying the foundation

So there are clear reasons why the controversy emerged besides other historically
Furthermore, many thinkers have pointed out there are also equally important the
the doctrine of procession. For Latin churches, the filioque clause was seen as esse
equality of the trinitarian persons. If the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father an
of the Son is undermined as it implies that the Son is not fully di ine pr ent in
again, it is possible to see how the filioque clause arises a bro , unanswer
Christ. If one argues that Christ is not begotten, it th same to argue that
from the Father alone? It can well be co ide any sort of hierarchy in relati
of unity or equality between the ersons

At the same ti e, ast theologians pointed out that claiming the Holy Sp
d t ermines the importance of the Father. Although all the per
ty oes not necessitate that there aren't certain hierarchical relationshi
nselves in the natural and divine order. In fact, it may be that such hier
preserving not only the absolute power of the Father but the identity of the trinit
is understood as requiring complete equality in all the things, it can be argued that
meaning altogether except as a semantic distinction.

A final important point to note is the disagreements over scriptural evidence. Those controversy have often pointed to John 15:26 as substantive confirmation that the Father alone. It states:

> *'When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf.'* (NRSV)

On the surface, this does support the Eastern churches' position. However, this passage conclusive. Rather, it just makes an absence of the idea of **double procession** in the Orthodox Christians claim is not clear indication that the filioque clause is heretical. Christians, it is argued, the filioque clause should be inferred from other parts of Scripture. John 16:12, where it is implied the Holy Spirit can come from the Son, and verses 19 and Philippians 1:19, which refer to the Holy Spirit using phrases such as

Overall, it is clear to see how the filioque controversy manifested itself from numerous causes. On the one hand, there is the lack of underlying scriptural evidence, difficulties trinitarian unity and unresolved questions about the nature of the Son which aggravate theological problem. On the other hand, there are linguistic difficulties, historical problems which have also drawn a schism between those favouring the filioque cause and those have been taken to reconcile the two sides, with most churches no longer claiming that the filioque controversy is still as active as ever and looks set to remain that way in

Discussion Activity:
Is the filioque controversy simply a linguistic/historical problem or does it reflect problem? Discuss in small groups or pairs.

C: The Atonement

The word '**atonement**' literally means to be at one or in harmony with something. It refers to the steps someone has undertaken to make amends for a wrong they have the exact meaning in Christian theology, it is also not too far from it. For Jesus' death on the cross absolved human beings of their prior sins and enabled reconciliation this singular, unique event, human beings would have remained separated from God and salvation.

On the surface, it is a very attractive idea, and, as you will have likely noted in the it is one of the most pivotal moments in the ministry of Jesus. However, while most importance of Jesus' atoning sacrifice, the actual theological details on what this entails clear. What did Jesus exactly absolve human beings of, and why did this absolution we see, once we analyse the structure and form of the atonement, a whole host of questions are raised, and some scholars recently have questioned whether a doctrine necessary or warranted at all. It may be that the concept is rooted in a historical world profoundly at odds with our moral and spiritual sensibilities today.

Breaking down the concept a little, however, it is possible to observe two components religion John Hick in particular holds that there is a broad meaning and a narrow meaning.

1. **The Broad Meaning:** *'being at one with God... entering into a right relationship the process of salvation'*
2. **The Narrow Meaning:** *'a specific method of receiving salvation, one presupposing It is in this context that we find the ideas of penalty, redemption, sacrifice, satisfaction, substitution, forgiveness, acquittal, ransom, justification'*

Why should we need to distinguish between these two aspects? Well, as Hick notes important in Christian thought because it plays a pivotal role in what we can call the moment at which human beings truly become open to entering a meaningful relationship

beyond this more general sense of the atonement, there is the actual method by w
and this method has been construed in a number of ways by theologians.

These were laid out in an influential 1931 analysis of atonement by the Swedish th
Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonem
three major interpretations of the concept throughout Christian history: the Christ
substitution or **satisfaction** model and finally the **moral example** model. Importan
each of these ideas is fundamentally incomplete; they all possess shortcomings th
unsuitable to adopt as official doctrine.

But why is there such theological vacuum in the study of atonement? Well, the issu
lack of clarity within Scripture itself, for while there are plenty of passages w
Jesus was an atoning event and brought reconciliation between God and hu
how this sacrifice functioned; for example, take a look at the passages below.

*'and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on
peace through the blood of his cross.' (Colossians 1:20 N*

*'and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the
whole world' (1 John 2:2 NRSV)*

In both these passages, the relationship between atonement and the cleansing of
is developed, but the nature of this pre-existent sin is not identified and nor is the
its cleansing identified. Such issues might initially seem trivial for ordinary Christian
matter whether we know how the atonement has occurred? Isn't it enough to kn
reconciliation with God is now possible?
To a certain extent, this perspective might be understandable. However, there are a nu
first is that sin is not simply something that Jesus 'cleans' Christians but denotes a state o
such is not just a bad action but a moving away from God through a transgression
one delves into questions about the atonement, a number of other puzzling and d
natures and the wrath of God. Why would a loving God demand the sacrifice or
redemption of humanity as a whole? We can begin to probe this problem by turn
the Christus Victor interpretation of the atonement.

The Christus Victor Model

The Christus Victor model is the oldest and simplest model for the atonement. It is
substitution model, which we will study next, and is also sometimes known as the
Christus Victor (as its name suggests) holds that the death and resurrection of Chri
the forces of evil, which were let into the world when Adam and Eve disobeyed God
a view held by practically all of the early Church Fathers until Anselm put forward h
eleventh century. So why was it so popular for so long?

Well, we have to consider the much more mythological view of the ancient world.
Bible is often regarded as a symbol of evil, for much of Christian history thinkers ga
evil forces acting in the world and that the world of God and the world of the devil
atonement, therefore, wasn't simply a symbolic event but one which had real-world
the Devil himself were literally overcome through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

It is difficult to discern exactly what each of early Christian thinkers how this actually o
influential proponent was interpreted that Christ was given as a 'ransom' to the Devil
humanity. However, the Devil here was tricked, for he did not know Christ
that of Christ's resurrection effectively lost the rights to human lives while
subsequent, this view is present in the writings of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. H
ransom wasn't really perceived as a transaction by early Christian thinkers and inst
'rescue'. For example, Irenaeus called the victory or ransom of Jesus's death 'Recap

in creation at the moment of Jesus' death. This means that Jesus' voluntary action emphasised in early atonement theories. His death and resurrection were not trick sacrificial victory over evil.

At this point you might be wondering: well, what actually is ex[illegible] this theor it makes little sense for modern audiences to adopt this [illegible] view. We do as ever being just round the corner and ready to [illegible] for his own. Simila Jesus' death? How exactly did it work? [illegible] did [illegible] need to be overcome? There a Victor model that aren't exactly explained by its proponents. This is not to say that trick. Many of their [illegible] the atonement feature elements of the substi models we [illegible] and Jesus' death was perceived to have important symb [illegible] was also wrapped up in a lot of mystical thinking that we might be n

A[illegible] suggests that Christus Victor views of atonement are less about rational death of Jesus and more a passion or drama about the power of God, channelled th and liberating humankind accordingly. To a degree, this makes sense when we think early Christians. For them, Christian dogma had not yet set in; discussing the nature less important than simply celebrating the victory itself. However, by the end of the death, questions about the atonement took on greater significance. Christian thinke the atonement was but *how* it worked. Thus, we turn to the next model we shall st

The Substitution Model

The substitution model is a wide set of theories of the atonement which a[illegible] fundam substitution for the punishment due to humanity for their wilful [illegible] disobedience of G of ways of explicating this idea. Substitution models came [illegible] to [illegible] in the eleven Anselm's **satisfaction theory** of atonement, detailed in his famous work *Cur Deus* beings' disobedience in the Garden of Eden meant that God had been fundamenta a whole. This meant that there was effectively a debt of honour to be paid to God honour taken away must be repaid or punishment must follow' (Book 1, Chapter

[illegible] what honour here means for Anselm. It is not simply some [illegible] ght typically imagine it, for God is no simple king or lord. Rather, honour [illegible] worship that the created world owes to its creator God. Simply put, we wo our worldly benefits if not for God, and the fact that we disobeyed him constitutes time, God is benevolent and ultimately would not seek to punish humanity for the beings do not possess the means to satisfy such a grave debt through their own m us to pay back the honour God is due as a divine being. Therefore, God instead off this debt, in order to avoid the punishment humanity is due. Jesus, as both fully di of restoring the honour that God is due and reconciling humanity with him.

Anselm's theory is often compared with the similar **penal-substitutionary** model popular in **Reformed theologians** such as Luther and Calvin. The structure of this but the focus is very different. Rather than the satisfaction of God's honour, penal their name suggests, concerned with the **punishment** human [illegible] due. God the comeuppance for human sin is. Calvin, for example, argues that the sin incurs towards a fundamentally righteous and just God requires eternal punishment. It is humanity forever, but, instead, God [illegible] his own Son to bear his condemnation, of human beings, such that the debt can be paid and humanity reconciled with Go

This might all [illegible] jim stuff, and you'd certainly be right in thinking that we [illegible] modern beliefs about authority, honour and the way reparations are [illegible] ions. Similarly, the Reformed theologians often had quite a pessimistic v Human beings, they held, could not lift themselves out of their own damnation, a that they could be saved. Yet is this the kind of view that meshes with a supposed God demand the blood of an innocent to save those who are guilty?

We can pick out a few more issues from these questions. The first we can note is that forgiving, why does he demand satisfaction or punishment for human sin? Furthermore satisfies all past transgressions, is there even any room or opportunity for divine forgi demand the blood of an innocent human being rather than finding a way reconcile misdeeds. Overall, the picture painted by substitution theories of atonement is not a be a stern judge who demands complete repayment or satisfaction for any infraction a whole for the disobedience of two, and refusing to forgive them. This idea of God s contradiction with the loving Father portrayed in the Gospels, and it is easy to accuse their own misguided ideas about honour and punishment onto the atonement. Aulén substitutionary models in particular satisfaction and penal-substitutionary models of presupposing a distorted justice that does not align with the modern Christian c can turn to a much more liberal model of the atonement, often referred to

Discussion Activity:

Is there any satisfactory version of the substitution model of atonement, or does judgemental or even morally repugnant idea of God? Discuss in pairs or small gro

The Moral Example Model

The moral example model is the theory about Jesus' death on the cross that is the also, on reflection, the least substantial. It is the third and last view of atonement it presents Jesus' death as necessary in order to improve the moral sensibilities an granting them an insight into God's love for humanity and leading them to better towards others. The moral example model does not have as rich a history as other an extent, its sentiments are present in all the other models we have studied. Many theories have not just focused on the way Christ's death fulfilled some sort of tran moral perfection Jesus exhibited throughout his life. Accordingly, for some theolog separate it as a substantially divergent set of theories from more traditional views

At the same time, the moral example model was originally presented by twelfth-c as an alternative to Anselm's satisfaction model. Abelard was quite liberal for h Catholic but more recently progressive theologians such as John Hick have as a solution to the various issues we have identified with transactiona substitutionary model, for example, it is easy to see the appeal of the moral inspiring regardless of one's religious persuasion, especially in light of the persecut from religious and political authorities alike. His example of sacrifice is one that ca up people to new ways of thinking and being, just like any other important event i

We noted at the beginning the difference between narrow and broad theories of a example model is certainly in the latter camp. As such, it may be unappealing for s to identify the exact reasons why the atonement reconciled humanity to God, yet no narrow, transactional meaning of atonement that can be accepted within huma understanding of the world and their modern sensibilities. In his view, there is not the doctrine of atonement in Christian theology, and unless there is a compelling the reason to consider it important, then it is unnecessary to maintain a Christian life that focus teachings of Jesus himself.

Hick draws attention in particular to how the atonement has been developed in the opposed to Catholic or Protestant traditions. He argues that in the former there has death of Jesus a spiritual significance, whereas in Western world views the atonemen sinful moment that satisfies all of human sin for God. In particular, he r the importance of **theosis** in light of the atonement – the gradual spiritu they achieve oneness and union with God. The atonement thus has an im component that is ignored by transactional theories. What matters is not how divine death but how it influences human beings to perform good deeds and grow spiritual

However, you might well have noticed that this shift in emphasis represents a much substitution model and the moral example model. The former was wholly concerned occurred at the atonement event. Whatever model was adopted, it detailed a series actually occurred at Jesus' death on the cross, regardless of whether one subscribed Conversely, the moral example model is focused only on the **subjective** changes that event. Jesus' death does not really bring about any real change in the world, only in Why is this difference important to note? Well, many Christians, whether they be l exactly be happy with such a subjective explanation of the atonement. It can be arg moral example model fail to justify the necessity of Jesus' death but it also does not Christians should even think about God in the first place. There are plenty of exam individuals have given their lives for others; why should Jesus' sacrifice be speci turn people towards God and not simply towards living a better moral life deny that Christianity alone has the keys to salvation, these questions are ultimately not special and was one of many important moral and spiritual events t Christians this undermines the foundations of their faith and ultimately fails to give important at all. We can thus ask at this juncture: do we even need a doctrine of the

Is There a Need for a Doctrine of Atonement?

The atonement is still studied greatly today, yet it is not always clear why. Does Jes about a shift in human beings' state of sin? This very change is predicated in the fi already being separated from God due to the actions of Adam and Eve in the Garde mythological explanation seems very at odds with our modern scientific world vie to say that human beings don't possess original sin and Jesus' ministry as a whole with human beings and God, not just his death on the cross?

This is not a far-fetched view. Biblical scholars have increasingly in recen support theories of atonement at all. Many Christians who look for the **historical** Jes not necessarily see his death as being salvific. For example, E P Sanders, who first-century Jewish tradition, suggests that Jesus saw himself as the founder of a Je holds it is only 'conceivable' that Jesus may have seen his death as bringing about in the world, rather in the context of how the death of a major religious figure can teachings and identity. However, he notes it is equally not necessary to be c way, and it may well be the case that his disciples and followers attribut death as their own form of vindication of his person.

Sanders' views are not universally agreed with, but they do provide a foundation fo atonement. Moreover, it can be noted that even modern transactional models of escaped the trappings of their historical counterparts. For instance, we can briefly contemporary theory of the atonement in his work *Responsibility and Atonement*:

1. Human guilt/sin is the primary obstruction to redemption and salvation in God
2. Reconciliation with God requires repentance, apologising, reparation and peni heartfelt regret.
3. The way human beings morally engage with each other is the same as the way with God.
4. Sinning against human beings is also sinning against God, and individuals are d duty towards him to live a good life.
5. While human beings can repent and be obedient towards God, they cannot give penance, for the only thing that can atone for a sinful human life is a perfec
6. Jesus Christ is the person who could provide the perfect human life as an offering of reparation and penance for human sin.

Salvation can come only to those who worship Jesus Christ and recognise his s Sin therefore comes through participating in the Christian Church, the Bo

At first this might appear quite agreeable. Swinburne simply takes how we view at human level and maps it onto the relationship human beings have with God. So lo

cause some degree of separation between God and human beings, then it is possi
required to atone for their actions.

However, at the same time, we arrive at similar issues to those with other transac
Simply put, why does an omnipotent, omniscient, benevolent God require atoning
reparations or penance? In fact, as Hick notes in his criticisms of Swinburne, subje
requirements as humans is *'anthropomorphic, non-rational and unimaginative to a de
implausible'*. In the same way as Anselm justified his theory of atonement by appe
honour, Swinburne does the same by appealing to his everyday ideas about atone
arguably still assumes that human beings are in objective need of atonement and
wrath or rightful anger require atonement in the first place. Regardless of whic
it to be true that the need for the atonement can't necessarily be assumed.
to spell out the reasons why atonement is required for human beings a
nature of God.

Quick Quiz

1. What is immutability, and how does it differ from impassibility?
2. What does McFague mean when she talks of 'reimaging' God?
3. What does Moltmann mean when he talks of a 'suffering God'?
4. What is the issue of Christ's 'pre-existence' in Christian thought?
5. What is the filioque clause?
6. What is the Christus Victor model of atonement?
7. What is Anselm's satisfaction theory of atonement?
8. What is the moral example model of atonement?

Theme 3 (AS) / Theme 2 (A Level)

What you will learn in this section:

A (AS Level) or D (A Level)

The theological and historical debate around the nature of justification, including:

- Luther's arguments for justification by faith alone and his views on Scripture
- the issues the Council of Trent presented against the Reformed views on
- E P Sanders' historical approach to justification involving both fa

B (AS Level) (A Level)

- the theology surrounding the Church as a community of believers, including:
- the way the early New Testament community is a model for the Church t
- the different roles of the Christian Church, including provision of worship
- the theological debate around the main roles of the Christian Church tod

C (AS Level) or F (A Level)

The various moral principles that form Christian ethics, including:

- the role of key moral principles such as love thy neighbour, forgiveness e
- the theological debate around what is the most important moral princip
- the way God's behaviour towards humanity can be a model for Christian

Starter Activity:

What do you believe are the key ethical principles that define Christi[illegible] today? and compare to your studies as you work through sections E [illegible]

Key Thinker	
Name	Martin Luth[illegible]
Born	148[illegible]
Died	[illegible]4
Why is [illegible] important?	[illegible]ther was one of the most important figures in the Reformat questioning many traditional Catholic doctrines but also trans which made it accessible for many more people throughout E
Did you know?	Luther's translation of the Bible had a vast impact beyond sim had a strong influence on the first mass-produced English tran helped standardise the German language in the sixteenth cen

Introduction – What is the Religious Life?

It might seem strange to question what the religious life means for Christians, but th Church there has long been a debate about what should be the primary focus of thos Should it be a life led in worship of God, or should charity towards one's fellow huma causes a decline in religious observation? Moreover, this issue concerns not just indiv the religious life is typically a communal one. People congregate to worship together God. Does this mean one has extra duties to those of the same faith, or should all ind

These questions have no easy answers. [illegible]y, schisms have emerged ov God may be essential for a practising [illegible]out is it sufficient in order to achie this theme will cover th[illegible]ing at whether justification can be achieve justification by [illegible] model for the right Christian life. The second sect [illegible]ould [illegible] itself and what its primary roles are in the modern world. [illegible] Christian moral principles, evaluating which are most important and an [illegible]duct in everyday life. Throughout, you should hopefully gain a well-rou discipleship means for Christians today, and what theoretical and practical issues c tested against both historical and present theological conflicts. To start, though, w faith and works in the Christian faith.

Faith and Works

The best way to introduce this section is by asking this simple question: do you nee achieve salvation? On the one hand, if the answer is 'yes', then we're left with trou virtuous or morally good atheists could effectively be condemned for all that see existence of a benevolent God. On the other hand, if the answer is 'no', then we c important or distinctive about Christian moral teaching, even why the Christian place! What this question addresses is one of the dilemma that have long been Should the Christian life be dependent on performing right actions or developing a saving grace?

The former is commonly called **justification by faith**, and it refers to the ce of having a committed faith in God's power to save humanity. Unless t in a person, it can be argued that they simply do not deserve the right to be with God in the afterlife. Only those who are unreserved in their belief in God's grace can justifiably call themselves Christians and be rewarded for this beliefs. The latter response is commonly called **justification by works**. The thought behind this concept is that salvation is dependent on a person being good and righteous throughout their life. Those who are wicked, conversely, are those who do not deserve salvation or the chance to be unified with God in the afterlife.

There is a deeper tension between these concepts when one looks at the various t One of the most difficult aspects of justification by works for Christi at it im possess the means to achieve salvation of their own power. W me might seem modern audiences, it takes away the need for God's gra e and ma s questions ab forms an important part of the Gospel narr es uma beings can save thems regarded as anything more than a m ch at the other end of the spectrum implies that human beings some w corrupted and do not have significant Moreover, it stands c t w Jesus' call to goodness and righteousness in t ultim ly d te to the possibility of salvation, then why are they nece

m as if there is a simple answer: both justification by works and by faith H , we already noted in the first question raised that this too has unintende question touches on many divisions between the Protestant and Catholic denomin all that matters, what is the role of the Church other than to enforce obedience to by works is all that matters, is religious observance even necessary? Such question divisions during the Reformation, and, as we shall see throughout the rest of this s from healed today in theological discourse.

Nevertheless, the difficult and intractable nature of this problem has not stopped t provide a solution. Thus, we shall first take a look at the views of a deeply influenti tradition: Martin Luther.

Martin Luther and Justification by Faith Alone

Luther was a German priest and seminal figure i h Re tion who we previo the development of the Bible (particu fou Protestant rejection of the was one of many which Luth ok up a the Catholic Church at the time. Al 1521 was spurred on by his criticism of the practice of **indulgences**, thes consequence of his ing between 1510 and 1520, where he began to develop nes stification. Whereas in Catholic tradition the role of the Churc important in matters of salvation, Luther began to preach a doctrine of j n is entirely the work and will of God. Human beings as fallen beings do themselves out of their own corruption, and it is only faith in the saving power of grace to be received. However, it is important to also note that faith itself does no

instrument or means by which salvation is received. Luther summarises his positio
an overview of his work until that point:

*The first and chief article is this: Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died [illegible] our sins
justification (Romans 3:24–25). He alone is the Lamb of God w[illegible] away the si
God has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). All ha[illegible] sinned and are jus
works and merits, by His grace, through the redemption [illegible] in Christ Jesus. In H
is necessary to believe. This cannot [illegible] otherwise acquired or grasped by any wor
clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us ... Nothing of this article can be
[illegible] heaven and earth and everything else falls (Mark*

(Luther, Martin. 'The Smalcald Articles,' Part II Article

seem quite an extreme position, but it is worth briefly considering the
l landscape at the time of the Reformation. The Catholic Church was an
immensely powerful institution, capable of drawing together armies, deposing rul
facilitating political careers. Moreover, there was an increasing perception that th
Church was fundamentally corrupt, particularly around the granting of indulgence
These were (and still are) acts taken to reduce the punishment a person undertak
their sins during their lifetime. Originally, indulgences were primarily intended for
and other good people to engage in a process of forgiveness of their sins, but by t
Reformation abuse of indulgences was rampant, with priests and other clergy effe
highest bidder.

Reorienting Christian thought around both the Bible and the religio[illegible]dual w
importance for Luther. The doctrine of sola fide effectively [illegible] the w[illegible]k of th
Christians and places the burden on the individual t[illegible]en[illegible]age w[illegible]their faith. Wor
deeds but the very actions of the Church a[illegible]hich were (not always bene
sin. When justification is through Christ [illegible] God alone, the only role the Church h
says and help individuals [illegible]and[illegible] its meaning, for Luther holds that justifica
moment but a pr[illegible]ss which [illegible]ains individuals the power to become holier and c

[illegible]vel[illegible]e noticed, though, in the quote given from the Smalcald Articles
[illegible]e by Luther. This is important to note, for Luther's doctrine of sola fide w
o[illegible]ion to the Catholic Church but by a complete reinterpretation of Scripture.
we shall explore some key ways that Luther drew upon the letters of Paul to influe
scriptural support for his beliefs.

Luther and the New Testament

The issue of faith and works is complicated when one turns to Scripture for there
both being part of Jesus' ministry. Throughout the Gospels, there is a clear call to
faith in the saving power of God, yet at the same time there are plenty of passage
importance of good works. Perhaps one of the clearest examples of the latter is fo
sheep and goats in Matthew 25:31–46:

*'Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that ar[illegible]accu[illegible]depart from me
for the devil and his angels; for I was hung[illegible]gu[illegible]e no food, I was thir
drink, I was a stranger and you did [illegible]co[illegible]me, naked and you did not give
[illegible]d you did not visit me."' (Matthew 25:41–43 NAS*

Here[illegible]lvat[illegible]mnation are spelled out in clear eschatological condition
th[illegible]s eternal life, and wickedness is the path towards eternal puni
[illegible]mium of faith over works? To find this out, we have to turn to his treat
p[illegible]that of the Epistle to the Romans.

Justification and Romans

Romans is the longest and densest of the epistles, and most New Testament scholars agree that it was written by Paul himself (there are a few of anonymous authorship). For theologians, Romans presented somewhat of an intellectual challenge, with many consid[illegible] to be contradictory to works outside the Gospels. Throughout, Paul writes on the [illegible] justification by faith in Christ for early followers as a path towards salvation. However, throughout the Middle Ages the Reformation scholars generally agreed [illegible] Catholic interpretation, which emphasised a virtuous life. This was largely orig[illegible] Romans 2:5–11:

'For he will repay [illegible] according to each one's deeds: to those who by patiently doing [illegible] seek for glory, honour and immortality he will give eternal life; while for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury.' (Romans 2:6–8

However, when Luther began lecturing on the epistles, he started to arrive at a very different conclusion that although works are held to be important by Paul, there are significant parts of Romans that suggest that justification by faith comes first. For example, we can look to both Romans 1:17 and 3:28 as clear examples of supporting evidence.

'For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17 NRSV)

'Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' (Romans 5:1 NRSV)

Here, Paul seems to suggest that righteousness is subordinate to faith. While the Catholic view was built off prior committed belief and obedience to God. This is the source of goodness, and faith cannot in turn be living a good life. However, Paul's Epistle to the Romans was of great importance to Christian life. In a 1523 preface to the Epistle authored by Luther, he writes that it is an important piece in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian's while to memorize it word for word and be also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the bread of his soul. In this sense, Luther saw Romans as not only scriptural evidence for justification by faith but also for eternal salvation. Understanding it was central in order to live a good Christian life.

'Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.'

However, at the same time, there is some evidence to suggest that Luther may well have tried to read his own views into Romans. In 3:28, he controversially translated the verse so that it read 'by through faith' instead of the version given above in the NRSV. While there is good evidence that this translation was in circulation in Catholic circles prior to Luther's study, the word 'alone' is not in the original Greek text, and Luther had to defend his view here from Catholic critics who argued he was wrong in his interpretation.

However, Luther does not stop at drawing on Romans for evidence, and refers to other passages in the epistles. These include Ephesians 2:8–9 and Galatians 2:16.

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

'yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.' (Galatians 2:16)

Here, there do appear to be clear parallels with Paul's statements in Romans, and Luther clearly views human works as insufficient for achieving salvation. This is not to suggest that

(holding there are no religious laws) but that faith in Christ resulted in a state of fu
love and righteousness. Thus, it is important to recognise that the law issues from
are still necessary for salvation, but they do not cause salvation. As such, Luther se
position of a believer who possesses faith but nothing else, but he still ...es to u
justification solely comes through faith and not works. As he s... this introduct
help doing good works constantly. It doesn't stop to ask 'goo... w... ought to be
it already has done them and continues to d... th... with... ceasing.'

However, as we noted earli... ne di...ussion of Romans, there does appear to b
within the epistle it... M... not clear whether the other epistles do truly
clear perspe... h t... ve can turn to an analysis of the Epistle of James, in part

...n and James

Li...omans, the Epistle of James discusses faith and works extensively. However,
picture of their relationship, in particular verses 2:14–26. In fact, so contradictory
teaching that he explicitly had to reject their validity when it came to his doctrine
writing following his death has had to explicitly accommodate or defend James an
by critics of Luther's theology. Let's take a look at some key parts of this section of
without Works is Dead':

*'What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have
brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in
fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of th... So fai
dead.' (James 2:14–17 N...*

*'You see that a person is justified by works an... by ...ith alone. Likewise, was
justified by works when she welcomed ...h... ...s... and sent them out by ano
without the spirit ...ue... ...h... without works is also dead.' (Jam...*

At first glance, th... ...s...ge... seem to quite explicitly argue that faith alone is not
f... ...ks a... ... achieving salvation. So why did Luther reject James, despit
... ca...on? Well, there has long been significant debate over the authorshi
a... to James the apostle from the third century, there were some early Chu
who doubted this claim and considered whether the text might be **pseudepigraph**
author). Moreover, it was not part of the **Muratorian Canon**, the earliest documen
Furthermore, there are a few pieces of evidence to support the notion of a non-ap
not invoke any special relationship to Jesus in the introduction, and the rather elo
is at odds with the Jewish origins of the apostles. At the same time, there are sign
actual content of the epistle and Jesus' teachings, and there is little dependency o

Nonetheless, Luther in his early career was very critical of James, denying it was th
describing it as an 'epistle of straw'. He pointed out it contained very few referenc
himself and held that it was just the writing of a Jewish person who ha... ...er pro
people. There is evidence to suggest this view softened later i... ...h L...ther ho
authoritative teaching. Nevertheless, it remains part of L...ther's ...thegomena –
disputed – to this day for even if Luther did h... ...cce... ...e importance of Jam
secondary to the writings of Paul, wh... ...e r... ...more extensive, detailed and
justification. The **Augsburg C... ...ssion**, o... of the founding writings of the Luther
by Luther), holds th... ...s... ...t the need for individuals to first be good th
by G... Mo... ...herans, on the other hand, conventionally ar
... of L...e's proposal by James. Instead, James asserts the close connecti
...ow righteousness is pronounced when people witness good works flowi
e... ...sses good works and cannot exist without them.

These ideas are echoed in Luther's original writings, even if there is a slight tensio
authority of James and then seeking to show how it is still consistent with the doct
Lutheran thought morphed into perhaps the more nuanced position in James, simp
of true faith without accompanying good works. However, in the next p[illegible] of this s
responses to Luther, particularly from the Council of Trent.

Discussion Activity:
What New Testament texts do y[illegible] ar[illegible] most important when evaluat
justification? Discuss in pa[illegible] small gr[illegible]ups.

Th[illegible]cil o[illegible]

[illegible]il of Trent was the 19th ecumenical council of the Catholic Church and co
h[illegible]een 1545 and 1563, roughly divided into three phases. It was primarily p
number of Reformed theologians and clergy who had begun to command the alleg
governors around Europe. Despite some minor attempts at reconciliation, the cou
Counter-Reformation movement, with the Catholic Church issuing condemnations
typically proposed by Protestants. Furthermore, it resulted in clarifications and pro
dividing the two denominations, one of them, of course, being justification. This to
in the sixth session and ended up with the council rejecting and condemning a nu
by Luther. One of these was, of course, sola fide, with the council instead supporti
modern Catholic position on justification. But why was the council so vehemently
number of key reasons, arising out of both scriptural analysis and prior Catholic do

The first was that Luther's and other Reformers' conceptions o[illegible]ju[illegible]catio[illegible] engen
reception of grace. Not all Protestants came to hold this idea, but in short, it put
ultimately chooses who will be saved, and h[illegible]gs [illegible]not play a part in this
sola fide and in the eyes of many Ca[illegible]he w[illegible]are intertwined. If the works o
the process of salvation, th[illegible]ce is [illegible]ou something in which human beings partic
bestowed on those [illegible]co[illegible]thr[illegible]ained to be faithful. Now, there were signific
figu[illegible]uch [illegible]s [illegible] and Luther about the nature of how grace worked, but
[illegible]de[illegible]g the importance of **human cooperation** in matters of salvation.

H[illegible], the Council of Trent was naturally keen to emphasise in this way how sal
between God and man. It is a process in which there is no single moment of justific
both are contained in a continuous acceptance of God's grace and an equally contin
principles Jesus endorsed during his ministry. Acknowledging this helps understand
other qualms with the Reformation. If justification is by faith alone, then such a pos
how certain works could lead to condemnation. In particular, the Catholic Church a
that justification is not permanent and can be lost through the committing of morta
damage one's relationship with God. In other words, the Council of Trent took um
because it implied serious sinners could receive salvation so long as they were faith
today, justification is a process which is intended to purify the individual fr[illegible]m sin. If
or sins egregiously, they cannot be purified.

Finally, the Council of Trent opposed sola fide as it s[illegible]gge[illegible]ted o[illegible]mplied that huma
who received God's grace. Such a suggestio[illegible]ru[illegible]s[illegible]he mystery of God and salvat
confidence' over knowing who w[illegible]n [illegible]would not be justified and saved. N
oversimplification of th[illegible]d r[illegible]sion, but it is an important point to note. I
in justification, th[illegible]ec[illegible]ovement was viewed by the Catholic Church as ess
u[illegible]od [illegible]on works; it was given to those who were faithful before al
[illegible]ing[illegible]can effectively judge who will be saved and who won't. The Council
[illegible]at implied individuals can acquire **eternal security** for salvation through
W[illegible]ther through mortal sins or the unknown will of God, one should always ackn
face of God and not claim to know the workings of his divine plan for humanity. De

follow Jesus' example in the hope that one might be justified, rather than believing the faithful.

Finally, it is important to note how the declarations of the Council of Trent intersect Scripture, for the Council also rejected the Protestant idea of **sola scriptura** that the authority in the Christian faith. Rather, it argued that sacred tradition was of equal When one takes this into account, it is easy to see how Catholic objections to the proceeded. Analysis of Paul's letters could not happen without the guidance in the view of the Council of Trent. Reformed theologians such as Luther had no C his views on justification. In essence, these views were just one person's take on the historical tradition as represented in the Catholic Church.

You might well note that we're now at a bit of a crossroads. On the one point that human work should not decide justification, yet the response s that denying human works implies unobtainable knowledge or security a So who should we support? Well, for clarity, we can look to the work of a more m

E P Sanders and the Role of Works

So far, we have broadly analysed two sides to the debate around justification. On Reformed views such as Luther's. These have emphasised a position of sola fide, arguing that human works play no part in justification. Christ's death was a final decisive action in salvation history, and there is no human power of God's will. Instead, through faith, God declares the faithful to be justified and one is assured being saved. On the other hand, there is the Catholic view, which holds that justification is a cooperative, synergistic process, requiring the participation of a human being in both right faith and works. Only is the possibility of salvation raised for an individual, and whether justification may be lost through mortal sinning.

However, both of these can be seen as imposing a certain view on Scripture, glossed over and false dichotomies created between the two theological traditions. W in regard to the view of E P Sanders, who argues that a historical approach dating early Jewish traditions can yield great insights in this topic. A big re-evaluation of key parts of Scripture, such as Paul's letters, in light of earlier Je Temple period (516 BCE – 70 CE). Sanders in particular is a key proponent of analys in the context of the Jewish milieu within which they are likely to have been comp Christianity was probably strongly Jewish in nature.

Why is this important in the context of justification? Well, we talked about how Lu law as necessary for justification. Such a rejection was emblematic of both his ofte distrust in legalistic thinking, which he believed was rejected by St Paul in Romans. Luther's interpretation of Paul misses the mark. He puts forward from analysing Se the Judaism of Paul's time was not overly legalistic, despite the depiction of group Sadducees in the Gospel. In fact, much of early Christian writing is sort of caricatu rabbinic Judaism. So while we might intuitively read Paul as re Jewish legali misreading. Paul certainly rejected key Jewish practices such as dietary restriction was not necessarily rejecting the Jewish the to justification.

So what is this approach? W Sanders suggests that justification encompasses b considered in the co e covenant with God. The idea of a covenantal people Temple Juda Sanders describes their views of salvation during this period or 'nomism'). In short, this means that people are elected to be in the covena law in order to remain in this covenant. Sanders sums this up in eight st
1. has chosen Israel.
2. God has given the law.
3. The law implies both God's promise to maintain the election and…

4. the requirements to obey.
5. God rewards obedience and punishes transgression.
6. The law provides for means of atonement.
7. Atonement results in maintenance or re-establishment of the cov[illegible]tal rel
8. All those who are maintained in the covenant by obedien[illegible]t and
group which will be saved. (E P Sanders, *Paul and P[illegible]estinian Judaism*, 1977,

So applying this to Christian thought [illegible]rs a[illegible]es we can make sense of the m about justification. While fai[illegible]impo[illegible]a[illegible]for Christians as a way of joining a cov is equally important [illegible]m[illegible]e moral teachings of this Church in order to involves bot[illegible]ar[illegible]rks, and Sanders rejects the Reformed view of sola fide. [illegible]oop[illegible]tion by those who accept it.

[illegible]ssion Activity:
Do you believe the New Testament letters support sola fide, or are works requir justified? Discuss in pairs or small groups.

The Community of Believers

The Christian Church has long been the most visible sign of the religion across the Christian faith engage with the Church to some degree, and many accordingly alig denomination. Although this is often due to upbringing within a religious commun Christians also personally choose the church they attend, and this choice can refle preferences. Moreover, such choices often arise out of individual re[illegible]t[illegible]about *be*. Many go beyond simply teaching and educating people ab[illegible]t[illegible]ife, [illegible]ath a towards engaging followers in various forms of wor[illegible]hip, [illegible]van[illegible]li[illegible]and commun

Before we get into these aspects [illegible]h[illegible]w[illegible]it i[illegible]t worth detailing how the term contexts. As you most prob[illegible]w[illegible]ill ha[illegible]e[illegible]oticed in your studies, 'the Christian Ch meanings. On a uni[illegible]s[illegible]l[illegible]th[illegible]church is often held to refer to the entire com som[illegible]ay o[illegible]a[illegible]er[illegible]t[illegible]ess faith in Jesus Christ. This may just be faith in the eth [illegible]ll-b[illegible]n theological belief in his identity as saviour of humanity. Either w [illegible]ents the **community of believers**, whether or not people view themsel c[illegible]

However, the term is often used on this smaller scale. Within a denomination, it m of that section of Christianity. For example, 'the Catholic Church' will often refer t Catholics as 'the Church', even while they recognise the existence of other denom smallest scale, as we all know, the term 'church' often refers to a local parish or co gather under one roof. What's important to recognise is that, irrespective of scale, community. Whether it be only a small Bible study group or the entirety of the Ch Jesus that ties together all these individuals as a church. Thus, it is important that before looking at the various roles the Church undertakes.

Activity:
Research your local church and note down the[illegible]r[illegible]us [illegible]s, programmes and throughout this section, compare th[illegible]t[illegible]the[illegible]s roles put forward by the C whether they cohere!

The C[illegible]mmuni[illegible]l[illegible]ers as a Model for the Church

[illegible]s o[illegible]n Christian Church arguably lie in the **Great Commission**, the instr narratives to his disciples in which they are ordered to spread the good w[illegible]his is particularly prominent in Matthew 28:16–20, where the instruction terms, implying that the apostles were carrying on the work of God through their towards Acts, this idea is reflected in the early work of Peter, who preaches the G

miracles himself. However, beneath these grander acts are indications of how the
founded the Christian Church as we know it today.

*'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the
Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have comm
always, to the end of the age.' (M*

For there is scriptural evidence to suggest that t
common practices and beliefs. Read
Church through community
charity that were re
continuation
acle
beliefs at the core of their religious community.

*'Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done b
were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions
proceeds to all, as any had need.' (Acts 2:43–45 NR*

Naturally, considering our previous historical analysis of Acts as part of the sectio
more fantastical elements of Acts 2, whether it be Peter's conversion of 3,000 pe
himself performed miracles, yet we can also notice that, despite these elements,
focused on discussing the way the apostles put Jesus' teachings into practice. In A
emphasised that early followers sought to embody the ascetic ideals that Jesus em
possessions, gave up property and gave to those in need. Their lives
good news to those who hadn't heard.

Moreover, there is an emphasis on religiou
by the author of Acts to spend m

*'Day by day, as
d a
earts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the pe*

in the activities of the earliest followers, we can see five main aspects to
fi
considering the very small number of Christians existing after Jesus' death. Without
effectively cease to exist within a generation. Second is religious teaching, more pr
Although evangelism was important, the kerygma inevitably gave way to sermons
life that Jesus represented. Moreover, Acts puts great emphasis, as we noted, on th
followers, who sought to emulate Jesus' example by giving up material luxuries. Thi
charitable service within the early Church; it was not enough to preach the gospel

The fourth aspect concerns religious practice. Followers were not simply working
cultivating their own prayers, traditions and practices centred around pra
helped develop the fifth aspect: fellowship. The early communi
the renewed social life this faith gave them, and the opp
Thus, considering these five aspects, we're in th
model itself on this early community? A
importantly, is there any role of
explore in the next part

ion
elieve the early Christian community can be a model for the modern Chr
y differences in culture, situation and belief for them to be compared eff
small groups.

To some extent, all these original beliefs and practices by early followers of Jesus a
yet the way they are implemented or guided by Church doctrine can va
much more emphasis on religious practice, ensuring that all fo
communal setting. Others, however, hold that the prima
cultivating fellowship. Some still even have a str
churches, which place great stock in
we will look at how each of th
emerge as a result.

nd

d the Eucharist are two rituals that are considered to be **sacraments** by
i the Anglican Church, the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. It is
the key duties of the Church to carry out these rituals and ensure that they embod
Jesus' ministry and the history of the Church. This is because sacraments on the w
just ways of symbolically remembering Jesus' example but distinctive outward sig
grace. In other words, they signify God's continued presence in the Church and its
demonstrate the inward commitment those followers make to the teachings of Je

However, you may well remember from your studies in Year 1 that not all denom
sacraments. Moreover, there are strong disagreements about the ways one shoul
baptism, and some denominations have quite radically different forms of worship
sacramental mould. For example, the Catholic Church recognises se
confirmation, **reconciliation**, **anointing of the sick**, **marri**
recognises only the first two. The schisms that e
overbearing role of the Catholic Church
importance given to ritual over t
century was what they
practice should b
sacramental unless connected directly to the teachi

e c
to Church doctrine but instead to ensure that they reflect Jesus' teachi
Christian movements go even further than this. The **Quakers**, for example, do not
and instead gather in groups to undertake silent meditation and participatory disc
from reading Scripture. On the other hand, the Orthodox Church tends to view all
sacramental, although setting aside certain key practices as more important than
although carrying out sacraments is an important Church responsibility, the very
varies incredibly widely from denomination to denomination. This means that it is
guiding the practice of sacraments is a primary role for the Church or not.

At the same time, discussion of the nature and practice of sacraments can obscure
as a general place of worship for Christians. While **private worship** is
many also consider **public worship** to be an indispensable part
for the purpose of worship and, regardless of sacrament
their faith and trust in God. Whether this be
often is a place of peace and reflecti
and not be distracted by the
key role as a place o
ess of how certain worship practices are

Tea

n to be an obvious responsibility, but a key role of the Church has alwa
o se, this is teaching on how to live a properly Christian life. This might inclu
ways that any ordinary person can follow in order to adhere to the will of God, yet
religious teaching that go beyond simple moral guidance. As you will have explore

wide range of advice about the meaning of life itself, and religious teaching may w
their lives in new ways, whether this be cultivating new attitudes or thinking about
Furthermore, many Christian denominations still teach certain cosmological ideas
These might be beliefs about the nature of God or the way God is connected to the
often has particular beliefs not found elsewhere, and religious teaching in any chur
in contrast to other groups and movements.

Moreover, most Christian services e[illegible]ss some kind of **liturgy**. This is the form
teaching which in effect scripts what goes on during a service. Not all churches, how
distinction is often made between **liturgical** and **non-liturgical denominations**. Tu
forms of liturgical worship focus on the kinds of worship involved in a service but a
these can be imparted through readings of Scripture or sermons given by
liturgies also vary in their strictness. In the Catholic Church there is a fixed
rubbers can receive a balanced education on the teachings of the Church in

However, it is equally important to consider non-liturgical denominations. Of key i
those that place much more emphasis on experiencing the Holy Spirit during servic
Although there are many Pentecostal movements which still engage in routine Bib
many who eschew extensive Church teaching for much more dynamic services, wh
express their faith how they wish. In these forms of **charismatic worship**, as you w
are questions about whether they reflect the real teachings and emphasis of Jesus
such non-liturgical services may reflect the dynamic beginnings of the early Church
that there is much more attention given to proclamation over direct ethical and sp
Christian movements which adopt charismatic worship in their servi[illegible]e case i
teaching is not the primary role. Instead, it is to inspire Christians and let them exp
Holy Spirit in their own lives.

As a last point, it is important to [illegible]acy of religious teaching is ofte
Bible in Christian communi[illegible]any Protestant churches adhere to either sola sc
so hold that tradition and the Church are of secondary importance to the Bible. It m
Protestant denominations, the main function of the Church is simply to guide stud
teaching that grants followers the tools to fully understand the message
[illegible]ons should also not undermine the importance of religious teaching in t
tradition and the Church are viewed as sacred. In this case, church services and oth
Church are one of the main sources of information about the doctrines of the Cath
religious teaching is arguably just as important as study of the Bible, if not more so

Mission

We explored how **evangelism** is contained in the foundations of the Christian Chur
explicitly sets out how Christians have a responsibility to engage in missionary acti
certainly present in nearly all Christian denominations today. However, an equal im
good interfaith relations between Christian denominations and other religions, and
many churches take another look at how they engage in evangelism and the wa
encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, written by Pope John Paul II re[illegible]the opportu
extensively about how missionary works can be performed in a respectful manner
evangelism should be differentiated and presented depending on who it is dire
those of other religions, to those of non-religion or to Christians who have lost touch

A similar document [illegible]by the Anglican Church in 2010 titled *Sharing th*
echoes many [illegible]sentiments within *Redemptoris Missio*, for there is a distinct re
Christian denominations that missionary efforts in the past have been some
the welfare of communities they have been directed at. The Catholic Chur
e[illegible]criticism for its evangelical activities in developing countries, where it has
the needs of local communities and cultures. At the same time, there is a healthy

world, and for Christians who view their religion as having essential messages con
of individuals hearing the message of the Church outweighs these criticisms.

However, in recent years, many Christian mission efforts have been m
Western world. Evangelism has not been directed towards co
towards individuals in Christian nations who no longer a
later, due to the increased secularisation of th
worldwide religion. Simply put, most
already have an awareness o
which had to engag
no lo
ash
Zig Zag Education

important point to consider, for there still are many Christian movement
on the importance of evangelism. For example, you have already explored the rev
new churches across the developing world are reaching out to Western countries.
churches, particularly those evangelical in nature, which still regularly engage in m
world. This is in contrast to major denominations, which tend to view mission wo
outreach. By engaging in charitable works or corresponding with the local commu
the Church through more natural means. There is, therefore, a deeper question ab
be construed as a singular role for the Christian Church, let alone a primary one. If
up resulting in inadvertent harm or draws attention away from performing good d
evangelistic activities should be of secondary importance to teaching and outreach
intimately intertwined, as we shall explore in the next part.

Service and Outreach

We hinted at the notion that mission is
seen as a joint enterprise with th
when we take even a b
healings and
bu
Zig Zag Education

good will as a way of attracting people to hear his message. In the same w
an Church places a high value on a myriad different activities intended to
help both the local and global communities.

Covering the former first, most churches will at the minimum hold courses and cle
joining the Christian faith. However, many will also do community work, whether
or social difficulty, assisting organisations such as food banks or performing a varie
The aim of these activities is both to help those who are most disadvantaged in the
church as a place of solace and safety which individuals can turn to if they need to
and charities operate in your area which are tied to the Christian Church!

Many Christian charities and organisations, however, also act globall
these are denominationally tied; CAFOD, for example, is a Cath
poverty and suffering in developing countries. On the ot
Christian charity that once had evangelical
countries across the world. While su
important part of Church mi
Christians, it also se
their
Zig Zag Education

The final role we can explore for the Christian Church is that of a place of fellowshi
individuals, their faith is a defining part of their identity, and naturally the Church
actively talk about it to others who share the same sentiments. However, the sign

people's lives, and the central narrative of redemption and salvation within the Ch
equate it to a mere interest is understating the meaning of the Church for many Ch
much more than just a group of people who share similar ideals but an entire worl
reason why many denominations see the Church itself as a sacred thing, as a livi
unified under the teachings and message of Jesus Christ. This i[illegible] the[illegible]tes a f
other and is the main reason why Christians can find sol[illegible]e a[illegible]c[illegible]rt in their fa

What is the Main Role of the Church?

Throughout this section, we have explored a number of different roles that the Ch
different denomi[illegible]ns the importance of these roles might vary. For more tradi
such as the [illegible]rthodox churches, the focus may well be on teaching, wor
[illegible]n, especially considering the more prominent position these denominat
[illegible]ablished denominations and Christian movements there might be a mu
outreach and mission, such that their unique vision or ideas can spread to new pe
the different dimensions of their faith.

Beneath these different aims, though, are also various theological and philosophic
Those modelling themselves after the early Christian community may well argue t
of the Church, especially considering Jesus' call at the Great Commission. Whatev
not working towards saving as many as people as possible, then it is failing in this
may well argue that it is too easy to give undue focus to this call, or to overly prior
Rather, any evangelism work should be tied into service and outreach, just as it wo
main aim of the Church should be to provide religious teaching.

This idea might especially come to the fore when one co[illegible]e[illegible] wi[illegible]mportance
Catholics, the Church is sacred in itself, bestowi[illegible]s[illegible]re[illegible]tra[illegible]tion and ensuring th
performed by the earliest Christians are continue[illegible] this sense, providing sacram
teaching as they preserve the [illegible]e of the Church. However, for othe
which have eschewed r[illegible]as traditions, the central aim may well be just o
view, the Chur[illegible]h has authority in and of itself; it is just an institution dedicated
[illegible]of t[illegible]here may be a wealth and knowledge of wisdom in the Chu
itsel[illegible]

Therefore, it is important to understand how the roles of the Church are defined b
to the Church by different Christian denominations. In the next section, we will ex
at what key moral principles might be most important in the Christian faith.

Key Moral Principles

It is likely that in some way or another you have encountered Christian moral prin
Many of the common ethical sentiments we express have their origins in Christian
whole has had a deep impact on the way we think about ethics. At the same time,
debates both around what moral principles the Bible puts forward and how these
ethical dilemmas. In particular, it is not clear whether there is a[illegible]mportant
should be employed equally. Similarly, there are questions about the extent to wh
accommodate them in their everyday lives. Is a Christian required to tell the truth
everyone, no matter what they have done? Jesus, during his ministry, if acting as
set a very high bar!

Moreover, Jesus' teachings seem to embody **virtue**-based ethical thought as much as
Christian is trying not just to follow guidelines but to improve their moral
character so they act well instinctively rather than for the goal of salvation by itself
transformation as well as a spiritual one is the goal of following Jesus' example. Th
centred around the notion of **agape**. This is a Greek term commonly defined as a u
towards humankind and God which is thought of as the highest form of love, for it
Therefore, even if there is a situation in which the circumstances point towards be

agape love would still mean one seeks the best for them regardless. We will explo
we come to the importance of compassion and forgiveness in Christian ethics.

It is finally also important to stress the importance of the Church in fac ing and
principles. Although we explored in the last section how the C h the ying co
a body that helps spread and encourage the good virtue emb dir by the Christi
a moral beacon for Christians where they ca o r e guidance, whether
the laity. What is key is that Christian en ages a fellowship among huma
a key example of this fellow p nd a o ganisation dedicated to developing it. Th
to spring from one f k ral principles, which we will look at next: love

Neig ur

eighbour is one of the best-known Christian moral principles, and in ma
fo ation for moral guidance in Christian communities. It calls for a loving attitud
if they were next door to us. However, there are a few important clarifications to
'neighbour' here implies a universal solidarity with all human beings – an egalitari
boundaries. This idea in particular can be found in many of the teachings and para
his ministry. Most notably, we can draw attention to the parable of the good Sam

When most people read this parable at face value, the initial meaning seems obvi
However, such a reading ignores the important cultural context behind its telling
At this time, the Samaritans were largely hated and distrusted by the Jewish peop
the historian Josephus records an incident in which a crowd of Jews des ed the
Gezirim. Tensions were also high around the time of Jesus' min y the Samarit
desecrating the Jewish Temple at Passover with human b s So inclusion of
of Jesus' parable is likely to have been controve ial ror th outset!

Moreover, the parable sees both a pri t Levite, individuals dedicated to the
of the man, who had b d by robbers, beaten and left for dead. The impl
victim was clo t th priest and Levite may have been concerned with rit
ly w d ly thought to be defiling. So Jesus' parable here sees a Sam
po ulation, saving a Jewish person from near death while his countryme
help those in need but to help them regardless of their social standing.
the parable may well have been taking a swipe at the overly legalistic or puritanica
that are depicted as common among the religious authorities in the Gospels.

> *'He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with a
> strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."'*

The parable of the good Samaritan effectively emphasises the central role of agap
when its cultural context is considered. Moreover, it implies that love effectively c
commitment to **social justice**. Loving thy neighbour is not just a case of loving one
route is easy; what love really entails is expressing a universal commit to sho
those who are poor, marginalised and sick.

> *'You have heard that it was said, "You shall l ne or and hate your ene
> enemies and pr os o persecute you' (Matthew 5:4*

This strong underst l ove y neighbour is shown in the composition of Je
minis Jes t ten trayed as being in conflict with the religious authorities
d t who were being disserved by the hierarchical interpretations of
to religious principles over moral goodness. However, at the same time
J probably not advocating an overturning of Jewish law, as many of these
through the Old Testament. For example, Leviticus 19:34 sees God speak to Mose
all equally.

'The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you sha
you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.' (Levit

This statement comes in the context of God having led the Israelites to safety out o oppression the Jewish people faced there, this is an equally ra[illegible]nt as t Samaritan. It calls for the Christian community not to be [illegible]-facing in its love is something that should be given univers[illegible] individuals are Christia greater understanding of this idea of [illegible]her A look at God's relationship to hu take a deeper look at in the next part.

God's love a[illegible]nce

[illegible]re is a focus on love in the Christian faith, or where does this love ha discussing Christian ethics that its principles can't be analysed in the co[illegible] ethical ideas. Many parts of the Bible illustrate how the love human beings other is mirrored in the love God has for humanity. In fact, the various narratives o kind of salvation history, in the sense that they trace God's loving investment in th time. This arguably begins in the earliest moments of Genesis and continues onwa where God's protection of the covenantal Jewish people is explained as a manifest

'The Lord, the Lord,
a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger,
and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,
keeping steadfast love for the th[illegible]n[illegible] generation
forgiving iniquity and [illegible]ression and sin,
yet by no [illegible]ns [illegible]ing the guilty,
[illegible]siting [illegible]niquity of the parents
upon the children
and the children's children,
to the third and the fourth generation.'
(Exodus 34:6–7 NRSV)

[illegible]God's love reaches its peak or zenith in the New Testament, where God his only Son to Earth as a sacrifice for human sin. You previously explored the vari models of redemption and atonement in Year 1, and how figures such as Moltman the cross as a direct example of God's love for humanity and solidarity with their suffering. Although, of course, there are various reasons given as to why the crucif was necessary, theologians on the whole have viewed God's willingness to bear th consequences of human sin as emblematic of the unconditional love he has for hu Even in moral example theories of atonement, the importance of the cross as an e love can be stressed, even if Jesus is viewed only as human and not divine. What is that in an important sense the cross is not a necessary act; it is a voluntary expres love for humanity and a willingness to sacrifice oneself in order that th[illegible]ight be

Furthermore, it is key to stress how the dimensions of th[illegible]s lov[illegible] illustrated in th we used to describe God's relationship with h[illegible]. G[illegible] typically referred to as the Son, familial terms that are of[illegible]sla[illegible]into how Christians talk about t important sense, human be[illegible]re Go[illegible]'s children also, and this makes all other hu sisters. The idea beh[illegible]s na[illegible] images is that it is essential for Christians to unbre[illegible]able [illegible]ot just with God but with all other human beings. The co[illegible]str[illegible]ncept but a concrete reality which paves the way for understandi[illegible]s a whole.

'Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for thos sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The com this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.' (1 J

Thus, the model of God's love and relationship to humanity fo important ba the Christian faith. Agape is due to God and all other hu an b ing b cause of the have to them as children of God. This idea is see the s of 1 John 4:19–21, and sister is made explicit as part of a fa l amework for which God is However, at the same time an als question whether such language is appro towards human bei expected of human beings themselves? Even we expected t ac selves on God's example? In an important way, the mor cal. human beings are naturally fallible, ignorant and incapable of the un aviour as such might give reason and justification to act lovingly in one's t is saying throughout this course, the intentions and nature of God are u degree.

The same may be true of the very images and metaphors we use to describe God's Although familial terms are a useful convention, they probably fail to do justice to humanity in the Christian faith. This raises the prospect that while God's behaviou Christian morality, it is not an exact model. In fact, we might well be better off put behaviour is the basis, especially considering the different kinds of atonement the this course companion. Moreover, the Old Testament is often noted to present a v one who does get angry, is jealous and is wholly concerned with justice. There are Testament when God explicitly punishes human beings for their tra ions, wi the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis.

So using God as the basis for Christian mor , s ome challenges. In one sens mysterious and unknowable, me t er s ns and ideas we use to judge h On the other hand, the pict God roughout the Bible can vary greatly and d represent the ide a e presented by Jesus within his ministry. Therefore, Chri s a s of ; it may well be that the figure of Jesus or another sourc mor principles than God. In the next few sections, we explore another ation for Christian moral principles.

Discussion Activity:
Do you believe God's actions in Scripture are a good basis for Christian morality?

Truth and Honesty

Another important virtue often put forward in Scripture is that of truthfulness and typically oriented around being good and loving to one's neighbours, such as in Ep though, beneath this call to honesty there is a broader message about the import fellowship, for the Christian Church as a community is considered to be or body. section of this theme, and in order for such a community to flourish to avoi its foundations.

'So then, putting away falsehood, let e ch k the truth to our neighbors r. (Ephesians 4:25 NRSV)

Thus, it is import e aspects to honesty here. The first is the naturally h nes ther, but the second is the consequences in building a co s th onesty itself is necessary for fellowship; it is not possible to trust wards God if one misleads others. This highlights another important rel a owards God. In essence, God's love requires a certain honest cooperation fro in 1 Samuel 12:24.

'Only fear the Lord, and serve him faithfully with all your heart; for consider what
you.' (1 Samuel 12:24 NRSV)

Honesty, in an important sense, is linked here with faith, for it is not po[ssi]ble to se[e] transparent about one's misgivings and wrongful deeds. In the [ca]se of the sacrifice beings and the goodness he shows towards them, honesty tow[ard]s [im]proving one proper response, yet this in turn requires another [mo]re Christian moral princi explore in the next part.

Conscience

W[e] in[d] how honesty is linked to moral improvement. However, [t]here spe[ci]fic virtue that connects the two: **conscience**. This term is used in a [va]riety it is referred to as a moral sense each person possesses that naturally [di]stinguishes g[oo]d and bad. Some Christian theologians have even suggested that conscience is human beings to help them along the right path. However, there are a number of [p]roblems term. While it certainly might help steer right behaviour, it can also sum up the sta finds themselves in.

'Indeed, this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience: we have behaved in the sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God—and all the more toward

In this sense, conscience is a state of moral honesty: an acknowledgement of the g has done in their life. Moreover, 2 Corinthians 1:12 here suggests that it is importa conscience. This means repenting for one's past sins and attempting to be more lo conscience is linked with both honesty and the idea we discussed above. For exa[m]ple, forward that Christians should be aware of themselves as sinners. To suggest that lack of conscience: a failure to be honest about one's sins and seek forgiveness for

'The saying is sure and [de]serving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the w
am the foremost.' (1 Timothy 1:15 NRSV)

[Now] that we can turn to the final important moral principle that Christians see

Forgiveness

One of the central messages of Jesus' ministry is the importance of repentance and as the ultimate judge, the only being capable of wholly forgiving sin, and, as we ha requires honesty about one's shortcomings and the possession of a clear conscien However, even if forgiveness can be granted only by God, this does not mean that not forgive each other in all circumstances. This point is made strongly in Colossia placed on a par with many other important Christian virtues.

'As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kind patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another,
Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive [Colossians 3:

Naturally, this call to forgiveness is perhaps [one] of the most difficult moral princip many ways, in ties in with the call to love one's neighbour as a universal moral princ regardless of context or circumstance. Even if someone has done grave wrong to y Christianity is why God wants to forgive them. Forgiveness is central, therefore, to a [wh]ole of [mo]ral conduct. As Matthew 6:14–15 states, unless Christians forgive others [the]y will not be forgiven.

'For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive
others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.' (Matthew

What is the Most Important Moral Principle?

This is a difficult question when considering ethics. There have been some religiou
suggested that the overriding principle in Christian morality is the promotion or go
Fletcher in particular was a Christian thinker who argued that this was the only imp
and there were no other important rules that Christians were obliged to follow. In
most loving action according to the situation at the time. Fletcher termed his morc
held that many practices such as abortion and euthanasia were potentially permis
Christian positions.

Now, situation ethics is quite radical (at least for Christian ethics), for commonly C
are society's moral principles, ideas and virtues that are important. In fact
ut this perfection. However, Fletcher's ideas mean that Christians could be p
an beings if that was the most loving action. While this might seem extr
ju ected the complex nature of many moral problems. Sometimes people hav
can be saved, and we should not hold a grudge against people who have to make t
are acting to demonstrate the most love possible.
However, aren't ideas such as honesty, forgiveness and even justice important? A
example, as we noted, is as much about having a clear conscience in following wh
closely as possible. Fletcher's ethics seems overly subjective and open to interpret
demonstrating agape love, and it can easily be argued that truth, honesty and forg
naturally intertwined with love, not separate from it. While Christians should alwa
this should always be in light of other virtues that Jesus declared to be righteous. I
the most important moral principle but instead equal to all the other ideas contain
when evaluating what Christian ethics holds to be important ab a ls it is wo
principles interact and how Christians can realistically fo w em in their everyda

Discussion Activity:
What do you believe to be the most important moral principle in Christian ethics
or small groups.

Quick Quiz

is sola fide?
hat scriptural text does Luther argue is antilegomena?
3. What is covenantal nomism?
4. What is the Great Commission?
5. What is a sacrament?
6. What is agape?
7. What text does the phrase 'Love your enemies and pray for those who perse

Theme 4: Religious Practices [illegible] Religious Identity

What you will learn in this section:

A. The theological debate around the [illegible]ptism in the Christian Church
   - whether infant baptism is justified with reference to the views of Augu
   - the argument [illegible] baptism, with reference to the views of Karl
B. The theological debate around the nature and practice of the Eucharist, inclu
   - the diverse ways the Eucharist is practised across Christian communitie
   - Catholic theories about the nature of the Eucharist, including transubsta
     Transfinalisation
   - Protestant theories about the nature of the Eucharist, including consubs
C. The theological debate around the identity of Christian festivals, including:
   - the diversity in Christmas celebrations, particularly between Eastern Or
   - the diversity in Easter celebrations, particularly between Eastern Orthod
   - whether there are any unifying ideas or principles behind the celebration
     the Christian world

Starter Activity:
In your own time, look up on YouTube or another video platform how different
the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions) celebrate the Eucharist, Christmas
can you notice? Note the most obvious and compare w[illegible]ir s[illegible]es as you wa

Key Thinker	
Name	Augusti[illegible] Hippo
Born	[illegible]
Di[illegible]	[illegible]
	Confessions (397–400), *City of God* (early fifth century)
Why are they important?	Augustine is probably the most influential of the early Church Catholicism. His ideas about creation, eschatology and origina modern Christian theology on a wide variety of topics, includi free will. However, his views have often gathered controversy and many modern thinkers have criticised the dogma that ar
Did you know?	Augustine was an unlikely advocate for the abolition of slaver clergy to release slaves and writing in the *City of God* that the was the result of original sin and unbefitting of those seeking

Key Thinker	
Name	Karl Barth
Born	1886
Died	1968
Key text	*Church Dogmatics (19[illegible]*
Why are they important?	Barth is one [illegible] twentieth-century theology, a Ref extens[illegible]n nearly every topic imaginable and who has had [illegible]tholic and Protestant thought alike.
[illegible]kno[illegible]	Barth was a key member of the Confessing Church in the 193 who opposed the Nazi Party. He was even deported from Ger sign an oath of loyalty to Hitler.

Introduction – Worship and Practice

In Theme A we explored the role of the Bible in the everyday lives of Christians. One briefly mentioned, however, was how the Bible was a source of information about festivals that Christians engage with throughout the year. To a certain extent, it is basic reasons why Christians celebrate at Easter or Christmas, but the theology behind our events are richer theological issues that are still discussed today. This theme will why Christians engage in certain kinds of worship. We will take a deeper look at why thinkers offer diverging perspectives on the nature and importance of worship acts.

In particular, one of the two different forces creating tension between Christian C[illegible] is the significance of tradition. Should Christians as a whole s have historically professed their faith in God and what this faith has sig[illegible] have been practised in the Church in a similar fashion for thousands of it important to maintain such traditions against the modernisation or transforma at the same time, religious practices are to a degree affected by more liberal trend Christians adhere to certain traditions even if they make sense only within a more seems out of place when a more scientific perspective is adopted?

Throughout this section, you should think about these two questions and evaluate on what philosophical or theological merits they might have but on the way they a questions about religious practices are not just intellectual speculation but have a being Christian today and may have ramifications beyond simply a change in the st Christians choose to engage in.

A Baptism

The first question we can ask when we look at baptism is simply: why are Christians required to be baptised? At heart, it is a rite of **adoption**; it signifies the moment when an individual actively chooses to begin a relationship with God under Christian principles. As such, baptism is often called **Christening**, referring [illegible] person is taken up by Christ during the event. It is likely that you or you know has been baptised during their life. Even as the UK becomes [illegible]arised, many parents still choose to have their children baptised at an early age, a ritual appropriately termed **infant baptism**. However, increasingly par process, choosing instead to let their children make the choice themselves when t denominations, as we shall see, don't even perform infant baptisms, requiring that and reason before committing themselves to a relationship with God. Being baptis referred to as a **believer's baptism** (although 'adult baptism' is often used), and th examine the various arguments for and against both infant and adult baptism in th

But first, it is worth quickly looking at what baptism involves. In the Catholic and A typically involves **aspersion** (a sprinkling of water over the head) or **affusion** (a pou while various blessings are given to the initiate. However, especially in the case of is also common, where the initiate is completely or partially dipped under water. B however, the baptism ritual can vary greatly. For example, until the Middle Ages, t initiate being naked. However, since then, initiates have been dressed in spe commonly, these involve white garments such as baptismal robes to symbolise the enter into a relationship with God. Similarly, the prayers spoken at baptism rituals passages are read. One common selection is John 3:1–6:

> *[illegible]answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God wit[illegible]irit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is sp*

One further important element of believer's baptisms is confessions of faith. Typic declarations read out by the initiate prior to being baptised that testify to the bapt reasons for undertaking the ritual. This is in order to show that the person being b decision and made a real commitment to a relationship with God.

Baptism is considered by many Christian denominations to be a sacrament, includi Eastern Orthodox churches. A sacrament is a Ch[illegible] ri[illegible]t is thought to repre spiritual change in a person. As such, [illegible]hen become a visible symbol of God's indication that he is personally involved in the lives of human beings. This is impor Christians, the bapti[illegible] simply a symbolic commitment to God but invo their underl[illegible] or physical state that enables true reconciliation with Go sense it represents an actual rebirth of a person, not just a symbolic one

Most denominations, however, subscribe to the idea that baptism is a sacrament the idea that baptism is anything more than an outward personal sign that a perso obedience to God's will. Human beings' sins have already been washed away, and itself does not accomplish anything or represent a real change. However, this does Baptists, who still hold it to be an essential element of the Christian faith. Whether meaning as a wholly symbolic act will be discussed later in this section. For the mo more pressing debate: whether infant baptism should still be practised.

Activity:
Read the account of Jesus' baptism in all the Gospels (Matthew 3:13–17, Mark 1 1:29–34). On reflection, note down three key aspects of this account that you be modern-day baptismal practice and compare to the ide[illegible] stu[illegible] throughout t

The Case for Infant Baptism

We noted before that infant baptism has been practised for a long time in the Chr itself is arguably not a key reason for upholding the importance of a ritual, espec criticisms of its performance. So why has infant baptism been a fixture ld it continue to be so in the future?

We can trace the case for infant baptism back to the early Church, yet beyond this extent infant baptism was practised by the very earliest Christians, before official Some scholars believe that it was not a common occurrence in the first century. Al Acts (see 16:15, 16:31–33) to entire households being baptised, this is not clear ev actively baptised their children. Similarly, there is no direct ritual in Jewish traditio baptism, and Jesus himself was baptised by John the Baptist as an adult. This mean that early Christians engaged in infant baptism, Scripture does not directly confirm

The earliest direct references to infant baptism instead come from early Church Fathers. Irenaeus (130–202 CE) talks of children being 'born again to God', while other passages within the work of Origen (185–254 CE) and Tertullian (155– 240 CE) speak of infant baptism as customary among Christian populations. So, at the very least, we can state that infant baptism had its roots in the second century, with it largely becoming standard [illegible] the third century. Nevertheless, it should be noted that adult baptism was still just as common, partly because many new converts to Christianity were adults from other religions and because many [illegible] still wait until they were older or ready to commit to [illegible]ion [illegible]

What are the theological foundations of infant baptism? For an answer to this question, we can look a little later in time to the writings of Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE), who, perhaps more than any other theologian, laid out the case for baptising children as early as possible. Augustine held that all human beings are

born with **original sin** due to the disobedience of Adam and Eve resulting in the Fa nature. This original sin pervades all aspects of human behaviour. Although human is good, they are naturally wounded by what Augustine called **concupiscence**, best motivated desires. Free of divine influence, human beings were effectively enfeebl conflicted by desires of the senses, and Augustine argued that [illegible] humanit condemned crowd.

This might seem a little unfair at first [illegible] though original sin is still a Cath down a little since Augustine's writing. However, the key thing to note is that hum inherited original sin [illegible] to remove it through their own efforts. Aug the **grace** of God was capable of saving human beings, and faith took priority over in contrast to a Christian movement called **Pelagianism**, which was in who believed that human beings did have significant free will and were s through their own efforts.

So how does this all tie in to infant baptism? Well, Augustine generally presented absolutely essential in order for a person to be saved. At the moment of a person the grace of God, cleansing them of original sin and allowing them to be reconcile course, that in Augustine's time, child mortality was much higher than it is now. M past the age of five, and so Augustine was naturally concerned that children who d could not be saved. Hence, in order to ensure that salvation was possible, he argu baptised as early as possible in order to remove their original sin.

Naturally, you may well have some objections to this line of thinking [illegible] a ben infants who hadn't been baptised? While it may be Catholic doctrine to adhere to Augustine's theology has often been criticised as being overly pessimistic. In fact, seen almost as God holding human beings [illegible] preventing them from achievi grace, regardless of what good works [illegible] their lives. Augustine, however, is subscribing to belief in **double predestination**, the view that God both foredeterm will not be saved [illegible] from sin. This is an idea which is likely to be unappealing giv[illegible] context [illegible] view and the importance he places on infant baptism. M Christian Church, it was an essential step in ensuring one could receive the [illegible]nal sin.

At the same time, we might well reject such a strong idea of original sin and argue not condemn infants to hell simply because they are unbaptised. If this is the case, be baptised at all? This question once again came into view in the sixteenth centu **Reformation**, a period when the authority of the Catholic Church was being quest movements were being developed around the writings of figures such as Calvin an new denomination of Protestantism was a group known as the **Anabaptists**, a ter who baptise again'. One of their central practices was rebaptising Christians who h infants, arguing that it was necessary for candidates to make a sound and free co being baptised. Furthermore, they claimed that infant baptism was not a practice should be rejected altogether in Christian worship.

This was quite a radical position for the time and [illegible] opposed by many Reformed particular who challenged the Anabaptists was Huldrych Zwingli, an important refo different case for infant baptism [illegible] Augustine, Zwingli argued that bap to wash away sin. However, he contended that this lack of power did not und baptism in Christian churches. The fact that Christ himself was not baptised as [illegible]but) [illegible] matter. Zwingli gave the example of how women participate [illegible] no women present at the Last Supper. Even though the Bible does not [illegible] Christians to baptise their children, this does not mean it is not important reading of Scripture.

So what is baptism in Zwingli's theology? Well, he primarily holds that baptism is a covenant with God. In this way, it is more than a simple pledge of obedience or commitment relationship (although his view is often reduced to this idea). However, there is a lot within Zwingli's thought. The first thing to note is that Zwingli connects the idea of traditional Jewish practices. If circumcision is the sign of the Jewish people's covenant baptism is the sign of the Christian people's covenant with Jesus Christ. In this way, although automatically confer God's grace or represent the rebirth of an infant, it exists through new generations of people as an important sign in Christian community to be upheld.

From this idea that baptism is the second important element of Zwingli's thought is that baptism is simply a matter of confirming the faith for the infant involved parents. In this sense, baptism does not represent the faith of the individual to the Christian covenant laid down by Christ. Reducing baptism to this denying the importance it has for the community at large and the role it plays in binding generations of Christians under the same church.

However, it is easy to potentially poke holes in Zwingli's arguments. Could believers unity of the Church? All that would be required is for individuals to be older when a difference would not necessarily undermine baptism as a sign of the covenant. Since involve the wider Christian community, why should this undermine the consent of Despite Zwingli protesting against the Anabaptists, his argument might subtly support ultimately feel their baptism is less meaningful due to not actively participating in mind, we can turn to the other side of the argument, best presented by the famous **Karl Barth**.

The Case for Believer's Baptism

In the last part of this section we explored the different arguments for infant baptism have noticed that Augustine and Zwingli's views function more or less as apologies in the face of critics. In many ways, the case for believer's baptism is perhaps more We typically trust children to make rational, sound decisions that No do we generally believe that infants are capable of consenting to Regardless of one's prior theological beliefs, there is an easy philosophical baptism as an adult is a much more meaningful process for the initiate than for a will spell out this argument in more detail with reference to the views of Karl Barth.

First, it should be noted that Barth himself was a Reformed theologian and perhaps Christian thinkers of the twentieth century. His work extended far beyond discussions ways his rejection of infant baptism is rooted in his wider theological thought. Before is worth considering the quotation below, which sums up some of the major points believer's baptism.

Baptism without the willingness and readiness of the baptized is true actual and correct; it is not done in obedience, it is not administered according to proper order clouded baptism. It must and ought not to be repeated. This, however, a wound in weakness for the baptized, which can certainly be healed but which are so dangerous presents itself to the Church: how long can a people be expected to be guilty of the occasions weakening through a baptismal practice which is, from this standpoint, arbitrary and the Church Regarding (Barth, p. 40)

The point we can draw out is the importance of consent. Barth argues that Christ ment to obedience to God. Such a commitment can be meaningful only if the yet in order to understand the basis for this position we have to delve a little thought.

We explored in the previous part how Augustine argued that infant baptism was n being misses out on the possibility of salvation. Barth wholly rejects this idea, argu about **election** (how God chooses those to be saved) were mistaken. Christ's sacri salvation for all human beings, not just those who had been baptised. As such, the power in itself. Nor does its power lie in the initiate's choice o ce it is the reconciliation with God. Simply put, nothing changes wh n a p rs baptised be possess the means to reconcile themselves with . Th God's free choice alo

For Barth, baptism is, therefo **cogn** t e (in the mind) event, which symbolises within a specific ritu e ne g only in reinforcing the reconciliation betwe by Christ. So what does baptism now have in Christian belief? Well, baptism ess ce . Instead, it is best characterised as an awakening of faith. For presence of God in the world that responds in kind to any human being sm is, therefore, a sort of 'instrument' of Christ and the Holy Spirit which strengthen their faith through cognitively opening themselves up to reconciliation aspect of baptism is the **subjective** fashion in which it encourages faith in the initia

This idea lends context to Barth's rejection of infant baptism, for if its meaning is the mind of the initiate, then baptism can be meaningful only if a 'willingness' or person being baptised. This can, in a sense, be reduced to the idea of consent, but point that no real cognitive change could occur in an infant who is being baptised, the capacity for an awakening of faith or the ability to respond to the presence of infants is not necessarily an incorrect or improper procedure – it is just a bit pointl such irresponsibility in the context of faith in the saving power of C s point an issue, since it denies the initiate the power and profundity a tism as an a mentions himself in the quote, to persist in administ ri infa ptisms when it rooted only in arbitrary tradition is a some tic act of the Christian Chur

But what of Zwingli's point the im ance of baptism for parents and Christ are two major iss e h re. The first is that Christ himself was baptised that ch e b sed immediately are simply not following biblical practi m i lined by the objective meaninglessness of the ritual itself. Barth a mportance baptism has is rooted in the saving power of Christ, not the c te or connect with this power. Trying to justify baptism based on human nee and diverts attention away from the core requirement of the Christian faith that on not only is infant baptism without scriptural precedent, its justification based on th communities denies both the role and importance of God and the meaningfulness baptism has no saving power in itself, there simply is not a case to be made for it w subjective importance of a person's faith and understanding during the ritual itself

In the next part of this section, we shall explore another key religious practice in th mirrors the theological discussion around baptism: the **Eucharist**.

Discussion Activity:
Do you believe the Catholic Church should give up infa t bap ism? Discuss in pai

B: Eucharist

While there are many key religious practices in Christianity, such as baptism or mar
important or as universally practised as the Eucharist. Also termed **Holy** Communi
Christian church service and is one of the primary ways Christians maintain a relati
throughout their lives. As a ceremony, it primarily represents commemoration of
when Jesus offered his disciples bread and wine as symbol of his body and blood
perceive as a foreshadowing or prediction of his future sacrifice on the cross. There
Eucharist each week, Christians remind themselves of the crucifixion and the comm
spread Jesus' message across the world.

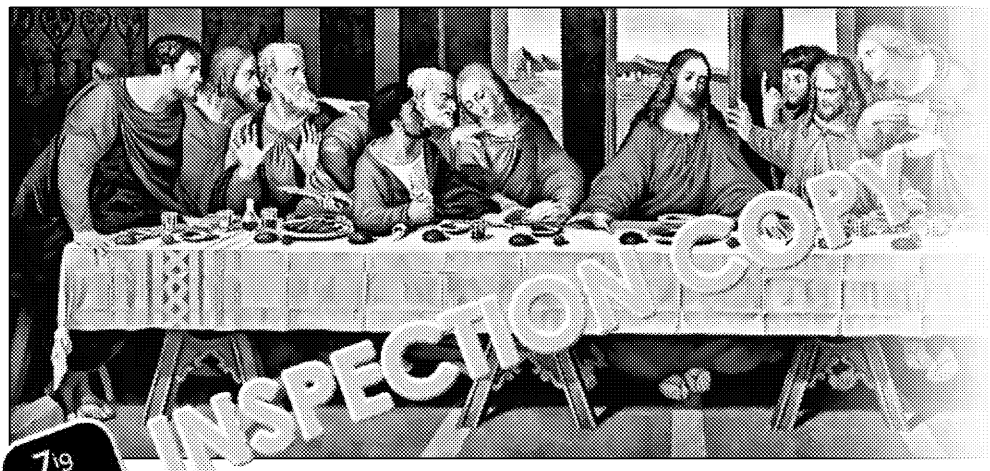
Like similarly to baptism, there is no widely agreed interpretation of the Euch
tions. Generally, Christians hold that Christ is present during the ritual, t
is still a matter of theological debate. Moreover, beliefs about the Euchar
place it has within a Church service. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church, wh
one of the most important ways that Christians can regularly communicate with G
Church, yet for Christians such as Quakers the Eucharist is not even present, and fo
conceived of as a symbol of Jesus' ministry and sacrifice rather than as a mystical e
presence of God in the world.

However, even within the Catholic Church there are numerous theories about the
Eucharist, and in this section we will explore whether it is even correct to hold that
common ground between the various Christian approaches to this important ritua
briefly looking at the scriptural basis for the Eucharist itself and noting a few key p
further study.

The Bible and Eucharistic Practice

Beyond tradition, why do Christians practise the Eucharist? This is a more difficult
might imagine. As we noted above, the Eucharist is primarily a commemoration of
accounts of the Last Supper present it as a ritual for future Christians to emulate. T
meant for the disciples of its other name, the Lord's Supper, is presented more
theological insight. The same is true of Matthew, while in John it is the beginnin
significance of Jesus. In fact, it is only in the Gospel of Luke that Jesus really presents t
religious practice that the disciples should follow in the future.

*'Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave
body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'' (Luk*



Luke presents the Eucharist as a divine command, a way for Christians to co
of Jesus after the resurrection. Despite this command, there is a more fundamenta
historical Jesus himself saw the Last Supper in this way (although that is a question
important is that, regardless of this historical question, there is clear evidence that

central practices of early Christians. We can gain a glimpse into this via 1 Corinthia
the 'institution' of the Last Supper and the divisions in the Christian community ab
practised and how it should be practised.

*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lo[illegible] unworthy wa
body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and o[illegible] the bread o
eat and drink without discernin[illegible]dy, [illegible]nd drink judgment o
[illegible] Co[illegible]hians 11:27–29 NRSV)*

In many ways, this d[illegible] really gone away. St Paul in the above passag
is not simply a [illegible] to [illegible]oy or overlook but a vital way of examining oneself in th
an[illegible] reveals the presence of God in the world. However, you migh
e is 'do this in remembrance of me'. It is not a detailed guide about wha
C[illegible] today or how the Eucharist should be practised in a modern Christian co
foundation for the Eucharist is really just layers of Church tradition, and as various
come into conflict, criticisms of these traditions have been laid bare. Thus, we can
theological debate around the Eucharist, beginning with a selection of Catholic the
meaning.

The Catholic Church and the Eucharist

The history of thought about the Eucharist in the Catholic Church reveals a long lin
of what are often termed 'literalistic' interpretations of the religious practice. In
short, this designation is used due to Catholic theories generally emphasising an
actual change occurring to the objects used with the Eucharistic [illegible]e bread an
wine, in an important way, cease to be merely material [illegible]ods [illegible]nd [illegible]e upon some
aspect of the divine, just as they did during the L[illegible]st [illegible]upper. [illegible]his is quite a tall clai
the various Gospel narratives about the [illegible] Su[illegible]per, [illegible] may not be so far-fetched.
Luke, are to a certain degree am[illegible]guo[illegible]s, [illegible]s declaration that the bread and wi
be taken either literally [illegible]or [illegible]so[illegible] depending on one's approach to scriptur

[illegible] th[illegible] degrees of literalism when it comes to Catholic theories ab
[illegible]there is some real, substantial presence of Christ during the ritual, but th
w[illegible] best-known of these theories is **transubstantiation**, the belief that duri
and wine are converted into the actual body and blood of Christ, with only the app
remaining. This change is typically held to occur at the moment of **consecration**: w
made sacred by the priest who is leading the service uttering the **Words of Institut**
evoke or repeat the language used by Jesus at the Last Supper and are thought to
within the church leading the Eucharist.

There have been some theologians who have sought to provide a theoretical or m
doctrine of transubstantiation, but such backing is often limited. The Catholic Chur
justify why the conversion occurs but simply holds that it does so in a way that su
In this way, one not only remembers the life and teachings of Jesus th[illegible] practi
feels the overwhelming and magnificent power of God acting i[illegible] [illegible]orld during t

Although transubstantiation is not always u[illegible]held [illegible]ll C[illegible]olics, it is one of the c
Church, and certain aspects of the E[illegible]i[illegible]rit[illegible] reflect this belief. For a start, th
are required to **genuflect (b[illegible]d[illegible]g a k[illegible] to the ground)** to the **Blessed Sacrament**
wine that are thoug[illegible]t [illegible]re[illegible] body and blood of Christ. This action also take
includ[illegible]g Ar[illegible]l[illegible]m[illegible] some forms of Orthodox Christianity, yet it is important
[illegible]itua[illegible]t reflects the reverence given to what is thought to be the real pr

Another practice, one not routinely adopted by the Anglican or other Protestant ch
consecrated bread and wine. If there is any left after the **Mass** service, it is taken a

a special receptacle designed to conserve what becomes the **Reserved** Sacrament that the body and blood of Christ should not be discarded or treated with anything reverence. In contrast, most Protestant churches, which do not uphold transubst ministers to reserve the consecrated bread and wine, with some even forbidding leading the Eucharist consume any remaining bread and wine [illegible] guidelines

Finally, it is important to note that the Catholic Church restricts the giving of the E been baptised and have not committed **mortal sin** (many churches go further a been confirmed). These are sins which are grave enough that if the individual does potentially face damnation. Mortal sins are thought to be quite extreme traditionally have also encompassed adultery, divorce, homosexuality and ab [illegible] shows signs of softening due to the controversy over the above is here reflects both the belief that mortal sins fundamentally separate hu a belief that the consecrated bread and wine are genuinely Jesus' body and separated from God to receive them is administering a blessing they do not deser

However, there are also a variety of other Catholic theories about the Eucharist th aren't accepted as Church dogma. These have often been put forward as ways of the Eucharist itself. If the consecrated bread and wine are genuinely the body and not appear to be a more significant material change? Similarly, we've noted that t very literal interpretation of Scripture. What if there were a more reasonable inte Catholics to accept what at first glance can appear to be a very unintuitive doctrin

One variation we can look at here is **transignification**. As the term suggests, this th is no change in actual substance at the moment of consecration, but it's body and objectively present. Thus, it still upholds the idea that there is an underlying chang the Eucharist while making sense of the fact that bread and wine, well, physica Overall, transignification attempts to avoid the quite misleading idea of wh bread and wine have a certain physical structure, their substance is not necessarily other words, although something can *be* bread and wine chemically or physically, only *signifies* bread and wine. At the moment of consecration, the elements of the body and blood and reveal Christ's presence.

The idea is a little tricky to wrap your head around, but, at heart, it simply tries to real presence in the consecrated bread and wine while they substantially remain t and modernising move considering the somewhat archaic way the mystery of the also a move rejected by the Catholic Church. In Pope Paul VI's 1965 encyclical *Mys* theories of the Eucharist are considered and rejected, including **transignification** which are regarded to fail to uphold the real substantial presence of Christ during

Turning to this latter idea though, transfinalisation is a theory put forward by Karl to those we have explored, rejected transubstantiation. He held that it rested on substance as a whole and was an example of a sort of overly mystical thinking whi on human power over the divine world. Instead, Barth suggested a different changi 'transubstantiation' to his preferred term, arguing that a transformation of consecra purpose of the bread and wine that is changed, not its underlying substance. This Eucharist ritual, as the consecrated elements still remain capable of arousing faith in and this is what for Barth should be the focus of the religious practice rather t bring about divine change, which transignification and transfinalisation com approaches, and [illegible] we shall explore in the next part of this section.

Discussion Activity:

Do Christians still hold that transubstantiation happens during the Eucharist unscientific, mystical belief that should be abandoned? Discuss in pairs or small g

Protestant Approaches to the Eucharist

In comparison to Catholic theories, Protestant churches vary much more in their a
although it should be noted that many still hold similar views. For example, Anglic
Catholics that there is a **real presence** of Christ at the Eucharist, alt
transubstantiation. So what replaces this belief? Well, ma
corporeal presence of Christ in the Eucharist, just t
Instead, many academic Anglican theologia
that during the Eucharist the bo

Before we explor
fo
sta
ollardy. This was a pre-Protestant form of Christianity that in many wa
s
between the Reformed theologians and the Catholic Church. Rather contr
transubstantiation, yet this opposition was motivated less by a direct rejection of
firm belief in the real presence at Eucharist. What ultimately was important was t
during the ritual rather than discussion over how the change in substance reflecte

This ambivalence is still a key part of Anglican practice today. Most churches simp
there is a real spiritual presence of Christ at the Eucharist and don't delve into exa
consubstantiation works. However, at the same time, it is clear to most Anglicans
transubstantiation is unsatisfactory, for there is no magical conversion of the brea
At heart, the real presence is necessarily spiritual but not necessarily phy
that, in contrast to Catholic Mass, Anglican Communion service
strict restrictions upon who can partake in the Eucharist
belief is that those who are separated from God
bread and wine, with the spiritual nou
access the real presence of Chri
consecrated bread and
wine in the An
to s
tance of the Reserved Sacrament as the consecrated bread and wine is
lood of Christ.

However, it is still possible to question whether consubstantialism is still a too lite
Eucharist. The focus of Luke 22:19, as we noted, is remembrance. Why isn't this th
instead of some mystical presence of Christ brought about by the service? Well, so
with this suggestion and reject any view that the Eucharist is about anything more
Christians are termed **memorialists** and take the position that the consecrated bre
understood only as symbolising the body and blood of Christ. What is most import
the mind of the participants, not any notion that there is a real objective presence

Memorialism is most commonly upheld by the Baptist Church and na
denominations who affirm that there is a real presence of Chri
about many churches who adhere to memorialism is tha
Eucharist is delivered during a service. In fa
Communion, similarly to the Catholi
Communion is restricted to
restrictions on a fai
mem
se
be undermined by those who are not believers, are unworthy or are no

These beliefs raise an interesting question. Even though nearly all Christian denom interpretations of the Eucharist, it can be asked whether these differences really m practice and implementation. This debate we shall explore in the final part of this s

The Diversity and Similarity in Eucharistic Tradition

We've looked at a variety of ways in which theological interpretations of the Eucha have noticed that, despite various conceptual differences, the core ideas and practic the same grounding. With the exception of a few denominations, most Christian m be one of the most important traditions in the Christian faith, and schisms betwee in opinion. In fact, some of the main routes to **ecumenism** employed by Christian de Eucharist will involve an act of Christian solidarity and unity. Moreover, regardl the core act of consuming bread and wine as an act of remembrance is al Communion or Sunday service. What differs generally are only small t materials used, how these materials are treated before and after the se or blessing said during the service. So do the theological differences explored thro amount to much?

Well, in one sense, the answer is a transparent 'yes'. Even a cursory look across the reveals innumerable conflicts over what the Eucharist means, whether it be betwe between both these denominations and Baptists. Great schisms have emerged ove Christian movements to declare other positions of the Eucharist as heretical, and t reconciliation will happen. Moreover, beliefs about the Eucharist often reflect key Christian movements and denominations analyse the Bible. We've seen how the s symbolic interpretation of baptism in the Bible, and underlying this disagreements broader conflicts about the extent to which biblical references to key religious pra literally. Whether the actual materials involved in the Eucharist undergo any physi issue that is partially emblematic of the different ways in which various Christian denomi in the existence of **mystical** events.

At the same time, however, the answer is also 'no' because, regardless of theological disagr tion, the Eucharistic rite remains broadly the same throughout Christian takes place, the rite is undertaken fundamentally as a way of remembering t for the salvation of human beings. Through the Eucharist, all Christians in commemorating Jesus. It makes the past events of Jesus' ministry real for Chris and respectful recognition of his life and death. Moreover, it can be contended th that allows for variations in theology surrounding the Eucharist. There are always within local Catholic and Protestant churches that reflect both the unity of local co eucharistic practice on a global scale. What ultimately may matter most is that hu commemorate Jesus and understand his life in the way they wish rather than subs interpretation of the eucharistic ritual itself. If this is the case, the different interp this section are perhaps more a reflection of academic theological discussion than understanding of the Eucharist by practising Christians around the world.

C: Festivals

If you're not a practising Christian, chances are that the most contact you have with the the various festivals we celebrate each year. Both Christmas and Easter mark not calendar, but times when most of the UK shuts down, with individuals taking time being scheduled. As such, whether or not you hold Christianity to be important, it lives of people throughout the year, and Christian morals tend to filter down in pra or spending time with loved ones.

At the same time, there has been a marked secularisation of these festivals over t now more readily centred around the buying of presents or figures such as Santa C Christ, and the most memorable part of Easter for most children is surely the rece

However, these festivals still hold a great deal of theological and spiritual importa
celebrations, although likely to incorporate elements of secular culture, have impo
often will be the main focus of their holiday periods. Moreover, those celebrations
to reflect on their faith and think about the ways in which it affects the
eryday

So why are we studying festivals? Well, not all Christian celebrations take the same
events or even happen on the same date. As we explored in this section, there
theological factors that affect the ways in which different denominations celeb
focus on the split between Western churches such as the Anglican and Catholic ch
Orthodox Church, you must remember to remember that even within these broad gr
numerous similarities in the celebration of Christian festivals. In particular, it
Christians can be grouped together. Those of the Eastern Orthodox Chur
don't always follow the same calendar traditions, and specific celebrations
Nevertheless, we will attempt to explore key differences between the two

Christmas

Most people in the UK recognise that Christmas, at heart, celebrates the birth of Je
that the purpose of the festival is to recognise his enduring presence in the world.
Christmas, Christians may refer to Jesus as 'Emmanuel/Immanuel', which means 'G
us'. However, this basic description hides a more important element of Christmas
celebration of the **incarnation**. As we explored in the birth narratives, the moment
arrived on Earth is the focal point of God's plan for humanity, when the Word bec
flesh and lives among human beings. It is this doctrine that gives Christmas so muc
spiritual meaning. If Jesus had never come to Earth, he could not have died for
humanity's sins and we could never be reconciled with God and reach
salvation. T
celebration of the incarnation is perhaps the key theological aspect that binds all
Christmas celebrations throughout the world, from Western to Eastern churches.
reflection upon the incarnation gives Christians the opportunity to improve their
relationship with God, with their friends and families and help out those
in their local communities.

this is perhaps where the similarities stop. For a start, between Western
as is very different. Here, it is important to note that, to a certain exten
completely arbitrary. The birth narratives, as you will remember, do not mention
was born, and, even if they did, it would be difficult to justify this date as historical
evidence that early Christians did celebrate the birth of Jesus and this eventually
date in the fourth century CE as 25th December, which corresponds to the winter so

However, if you're a bit of a history buff, you might know that the old Roman cale
best-known version of this calendar, which was used throughout the Roman world
Julian calendar (so named because it was introduced by Julius Caesar), yet this cal
flaw. Although it accounted for leap years when calculating the revolution of the E
possessed a small discrepancy: the calendar year was about 10.8 minutes longer t
meant that every four centuries, the calendar year gained three days, causing it to
over time.

For the Romans, this wasn't considered enough of an issue to warrant chang
sixteenth century, the Julian calendar was almost 10 days out of alignment from w
the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE agreed to the introduction of the Gregorian calen
by most of the Western churches. The Eastern Orthodox Church, however, stuck to
to the calendar being out of alignment with the solar day, they came to c
festivals on different days from the Western churches. At present, the Easte
Christmas Day on 7th January instead of 25th December, and it will continue to do s

This difference in date also highlights other differences, particularly in the celebrat and afterwards. In the Western churches, the lead-up to Christmas is known as the varies in length but typically begins on the Sunday nearest to St Andrew's Day and weeks (thus encompassing three other Sundays) before ending on Christmas Day begin to prepare for the celebration of Christmas, both remembering the birth of J **Second Coming**.

These preparations take various forms but most probably will have seen Advent houses or in churches. An Advent wreath is made of various types of greenery, and around the outside with candles. For each Sunday in Advent, one of the outside central candles is lit, with the Christmas Day. The four candles are normally thought to John the Baptist and Mary, though they are also said to represent hope, all elements that tie into the birth narratives we explored in Theme 1. Ut the season is an easy way for Christians to meditate on the events lead meaning.

Other preparations take similar celebratory themes. Ministers and clergy delivering often wear royal purple or blue vestments, and congregations will be encouraged typically glorify the prophecies and arrival of Jesus. Ordinary Christians will decora their loved ones and plan their holidays. The Nativity play will often be staged duri Christmas Day. This allows people to learn about the events leading up to the birth Matthew and Luke and gives young children an introduction to some of the centra Christian faith. Some churches even run an Advent course, in which participants ar further on the meaning of Christmas.

Finally, in modern Christian communities **Christingle** services are often held, in wh top of an orange in order to symbolise Jesus as the light of the world. These are and families, aiming to give them an introduction to Church preparations during the A of Christmas as a whole. Such services often extend into Christmas Day. Many chur that includes the Eucharist welcome in Christmas and the arrival of Jesus into th

These examples demonstrate Advent to be primarily a time of celebration in We Eastern churches this period is often more austere and less celebratory, fo both on the birth and Second Coming of Jesus, the **Nativity Fast** prior to C primarily on the glorification of the incarnation. Generally, this fast runs for 40 day sees followers abstain from meat, dairy, fish, eggs, oil and wine. However, during this period, fish, oil and wine are allowed.

Although the Nativity Fast is not as severe as one we shall study later in this section undertaking for committed Orthodox Christians and reflects the different focus of t purpose of fasting is not to simply test the person undertaking it but to focus the m than physical ones. Orthodox theology often elaborates on the connections betwee soul, such that altering the circumstances of one can affect the other. In fact, by f Christ himself undertook in the desert, one emulates his example and becomes mo

As a result, the Christmas period in Eastern Orthodox churches is often perceived focused more on spiritual growth than a time of feasting and celebration. Many Ch undertake the full 40-day fast with abstaining from eating during the eve of the Nativi the star Sirius is seen in the sky. Furthermore, a special service called the R times during the year takes place in the mornings. Nonetheless, similarly to in We would celebrate Christmas Eve, with the **Divine Liturgy for the Nativity of** Christ held for committed clergy living in monasteries. As such, there is no midnight t held early in the morning on Christmas Day. The Eastern Orthodox Church preparation much more similar to how the early Christian Church celebrated Chris Although repentance is a theme, it is not as prevalent as in **Lent**, which perhaps is the year for Christians of all denominations.

There is one final difference yet to explore, and that is the time following Christmas – **Epiphanytide**, which has its focal point on the day of **Epiphany**. In the Western Church, Epiphany falls on 6th January, whereas in the Eastern churches it falls on 19th January, yet, despite having the same days celebrate very different parts of the Bible. Moreover, they equally result in very different customs and traditions. For Western churches, Epiphany commemorates the visit of the Three Kings, as depicted in Matthew 2:1–12. As such, it is sometimes called **Three Kings' Day** or the Feast of the Three Kings. It might initially seem an odd event to focus on, but there is a much broader meaning behind it in the Gospel. Most Christians take it to be the moment Jesus revealed himself to the Gentiles and, therefore, his mission towards humankind. Moreover, it is seen as the culmination of Christmastide, the period running from Christmas Day up until Epiphany (although the Catholic Church no longer observes this specifically as a feast day).

So, what is Epiphany celebrated by Western Christians? Well, you might well recognise the 12th night as the time for removing your Christmas decorations. This is a custom followed by many households and it is considered inauspicious to leave decorations hanging past this date, or else **Candlemas** (the conclusion of Epiphanytide on 2nd February) at the latest. Churches also bless chalk on Epiphany, or during the season, in which the leading priest blesses Epiphany water, frankincense, gold and chalk. This chalk is then used to write the names of the wise men on or over the doors of Christian homes. Christians in some central European countries will also eat **Three Kings' Cake**, a type of sweetbread decorated with icing and glazing. Overall, these celebrations are often focused on Jesus' arrival and mission towards the human world.

In contrast, Epiphany in the Eastern churches is focused on a very different event: the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. The emphasis is, therefore, on the revelation of Jesus' identity as the Son of God and his ministry as the moment in the Gospels. Jesus' baptism is one of the few moments in the scriptures where the Trinity are all present, and so for Eastern Christians it is a key celebration of Jesus as the Son of God, the Holy Spirit and God himself. Just as with Christmas, there is a pre-celebrational focus to the traditions surrounding Epiphany. The eve of Epiphany is another strict fasting day, and on the day itself the churches perform a ritual known as the **Great Blessing of the Waters**. This ritual is performed both on the evening before Epiphany and on Epiphany itself. This latter celebration is more striking as in many Eastern countries it sees a procession to a large body of water. There, the priest will bless the waters by casting into it a wooden cross to retrieve. Afterwards, the priest will then take samples of the water which they will bless in the neighbourhood.

Moreover, Epiphany sees the normal fasting laws we've noted throughout this section lifted for the eight days afterwards. Therefore, Epiphany celebrations in the Eastern churches are as festive and joyous as those in Western Churches, although focused on a different event. There are also many customs and traditions that tie into these celebrations. In fact, every European country has developed its own traditions around this festival period. Next, we shall look at another key celebration in the Christian calendar, **Easter**, and the differences in practice surrounding it.

Easter

Easter, in comparison to Christmas, is perhaps the main Christian festival that has resisted secularisation. At heart, it celebrates Jesus being resurrected from the dead after his crucifixion, although this celebration also incorporates many of the other major events leading up to this event. Theologically, it also encompasses a number of ideas central to the Christian faith, including Jesus' relationship to Jewish law, the atonement and the reconciliation of humankind with God. Furthermore, for many Christians Easter provides hope for eternal life, resurrection and life with God in the afterlife. Whatever traditions and customs accompany Easter, celebrations generally aim to remind Christians of these important aspects of their faith. However, as we look into Christmas, there are a number of variations in the way Western and Eastern Christians celebrate Easter, so much so that it might even be contended that they are almost different festivals.

Beginning with Western churches, it must first be noted that the dates of Easter va liturgical calendar, although **Holy Week**, the main period of celebration, typically o Holy Week is preceded by **Lent**, a 40-day period of fasting (not counting Sundays) Lent is perhaps the most solemn period in the Western churches, and many (or do fast and abstain from festivities. Other celebrations such as m[illegible]are also disc clergy will also engage in greater amounts of prayer and **almsgiving**. Traditionally, as the Catholic Church required practitioners to limit themselves to one meal a day pleasurable foods. However, in the last [illegible]ear this custom has been relaxed, and other forms of commemoration such as charity, piety or abstinence. In recent year change in Lent. Many Christians (even non-Christians) will aim to give up a vic during this period. By doing so, they reflect upon the 40 days Jesus spent in the wil[illegible]n b[illegible]ta

Lent lasts until the Easter Vigil is celebrated on the evening of **Holy** Satur may end it earlier, on **Maundy Thursday**. This is the first of three days known as th the passion narrative in the Gospels, including the crucifixion, death and resurrecti day commemorates the Last Supper as described in the canonical Gospels, and Chr reflect upon and remember Jesus' words and actions during this meal. Thus, typic church services are held for most denominations, which include one important ad This is a practice that has long been popular in the Catholic tradition but is increasi denominations and reflects how Jesus washed his disciples' feet at the Last Supper the word 'Maundy' refers explicitly to the Christian rite of foot washing, although t Latin word 'mandatum' meaning commandment. Lastly, the morning of Maundy T service being held, traditionally called **Chrism Mass**. It is typically a [illegible]emn oc congregation are encouraged to renew their baptismal promises, and holy oils used blessed for their use throughout the next year.

Next, on **Good Friday**, Western Christians traditionally commemorate the crucifixion and death of Jesus. It too is typically a solemn occasion similar to Maundy Thursday, and important church services are held thr[illegible]out the day. For example, in the Catholic Church the Good [illegible]rgy has three important parts. The first is the **Liturgy of the** [illegible]ent ceremony in which the clergy prostrate themselves in fr[illegible]of the altar as a way of symbolising the fall of human beings and the grief and sorrow at Jesus' death. Following this, passages are read or chanted, and a series of prayers is said for all the different sections of the Christian Church. Next is the **Adoration of the Cross**, in which the crucifix is displayed to the congregation, who venerate it by bowing to it or kissing its base while hymns are sung. Lastly, there is **Holy Communion**, in which the Eucharist consecrated on the eve of Maundy Thursday is served to the crowd. Among Protestant denomi strict structure to services but instead a variety of local customs that similarly com and express Christians' grief at the event. In the Anglican Church, services often ta ones, while in the Lutheran Church followers typically abstain fr[illegible]k[illegible]and co

Hot cross buns a (in the UK)

Finally, there is Holy Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday, which in comparison more stripped-back affair. Churches typically do not hold Mass during this day in m and some cover their altars in black cloth to reflect the period of time whe resurrection. However, fasting practices are only adhered to until nightfall, whereu celebrated. This is the vigil which traditionally is the first major celebration of the i[illegible]the **Resurrection**. Depending on the church involved, it may begin as soo [illegible]ght or the next morning, but some key elements are practised throughou the lighting of the **Paschal Candle**, which represents the light of Jesus r continues to burn throughout the rest of the Easter season. Once the candle is lit, church while prayers and blessings are spoken in a call-and-response fashion betw congregation.

The Easter Vigil also sees the renewal of baptismal vows by the congregation in m
sermons and teachings given on the meaning of the resurrection and the continue
world. Finally, most Easter Vigils end with the **Eucharist**. Once sunrise has occurre
Sunday begins: a day of celebration in which Lent fasting and abstinen d. It al
Easter season, which lasts seven weeks and ends with **Pentec y**, which co
the Holy Spirit upon the disciples.

Throughout the Western world, East y is typically a bank holiday, and chu
throughout the day for thos who did attend the vigil. Easter Sunday also sees
oriented traditions, e g of Easter eggs, a symbol of new life and reb
Jesus' rebirth. In the these were dyed chicken eggs, but most Christians now
or ornamental eggs. Overall, while Easter is often a somewhat solemn p
s the passage of events in the Gospels, and the focus is often on comm
p , even though the preceding 40 days of Lent involve abstinence.

However, when we turn to the Eastern churches, we can notice a few major differ
Christmas, the date is significantly later (generally by a week or two but sometime
churches still use the Julian, not the Gregorian, calendar. Easter is also more comm
period of Lent is referred to as **Great Lent** and there are some significant differenc
with both. However, at the same time, there are also many liturgical similarities, a
whether the two traditions can be easily compared, or whether they exhibit irrec

Beginning with Great Lent, there are a few key aspects which should be noted. Thi
Western churches it is primarily a period of fasting, it is significantly s ict. It was
the discipline around fasting and abstinence during Lent h en taken d, but t
occurred to quite the same extent in Eastern churches. Clergy committed follo
from meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, wine ing this period, with the exc
Moreover, there is a strong emph n penitence during this period. Eastern Chr
prayer, commit to confessi r sins and attempt to make restitution with other
towards. This emphasis on a ticism, however, also includes charity and almsgiv
Lent is seen as an opportunity for repentance and self-improvement in Eastern chu

The season of Great Lent is also technically shorter than in the Western churches
Sundays are included. Furthermore, there are a number of liturgical methods by w
encouraged among followers. A special service book, called the **Lenten Triodion**, is
and, gradually, material from this book replaces parts of regular services until Holy
during liturgies. During the week, the Eucharist is also not given, as it is a joyful ev
focus on penitence and repentance that characterises the Great Lent period. This
very different during the Great Lent period, and the hours in which churches open
members of the local congregation have the opportunity to engage more fully wit

One final important difference which should also be mentioned is the chanting of
Literally meaning 'praise the Lord', it is one of the most common phrases used in O
Lent period Western churches refrain from uttering it, for the fo s on abstinenc
However, rather unintuitively for some, during Great Lent it is utte d more in the
that fasting isn't supposed to be a practice that involves suffering but instead shou
better oneself in the light of God. Any s rt that human beings are too flawed or
be balanced against the knowledge and hope of God's forgiving nature. Thus, altho
stricter in Eastern churches than its Western counterpart, it may be a step too far
nature. Instead, the practices adopted by Eastern Christians have to be analysed t
t no t what the practices themselves intuitively suggest.

Great Lent also ends before Holy Week, on a day called **Lazarus Saturday**, so name
Lazarus in the Gospel of John (11:1–45). However, the fast partially continues into

Sunday, although at various points the rules are relaxed. For example, on Maundy Thursday Eastern Christians are permitted to consume wine and oil. Similarly, the washing of feet is common on this day, and, typically after the final evening liturgy churches will change the hangings to black or darker versions to signify the beginn of the passion (in contrast with the stripping of the altar in We[illegible]rches). Furthermore, there is often a special service involving th[illegible]rea[illegible]ng [illegible]f twelve Gosp twelve significant passages from the passion narratives t[illegible]detail Christ's last instructions to the disciples, Christ's [illegible] and [illegible]last moments.

These acts of remem[illegible]ion into Good Friday. Following the changing of hangings in the churches the clergy will generally wear black vestments and engag Similarly to in Western churches, the Eucharist is not practised on this d es a very strict fast for committed Christians, who are expected to abst (as their health allows). Perhaps the biggest difference, however, is that Ea to commemorate the events of the passion but recreate them in a distinct and me the early afternoon Christians gather for the **Vespers** of Good Friday, which comm cross. This is a special service in which, during readings and hymns, the figure of C cross in the church, wrapped in a shroud and taken to the altar. At the end of the upon a table to represent the tomb and processed through the streets.

This procession primarily takes place on the Friday night and is a unique service so **Lamentation at the Tomb**. Crowds will gather around the body prior to the proces series of **lamentations** between readings of Psalm 119 by the clergy. After this, the outside of the church before being returned to the tomb. Although [illegible]re the c large role here, and every church follows different practices, [illegible]ltimately le greater emphasis is placed on, in effect, a re-enactment of the [illegible]ion narrative, commemoration. As such, there is practical [illegible]l service held for Christ hims generally one not of mourning but [illegible]on of Christ's rebirth.

This expectation [illegible]at the Easter Vigil, more commonly called the Pas ch[illegible]. As in Western Churches, committed followers stay all up night to cel [illegible]ore [illegible]night, many will gather to hear Old Testament verses, and the Ac [illegible]owever, midnight is when the main service begins. At first, all the lights e[illegible]or the flame on the altar, and the congregation waits in the dark until the proclaims the resurrection of Christ. At this point, the Paschal Candle is lit and the their candles from the flame. After this, the priest leads a procession around the c for the beginning of the divine liturgy. This marks an important point in the servic to each other the **Paschal Greeting**, which involves one person saying 'Christ is ris 'Truly he is risen!'. Furthermore, the service becomes much more jubilant, with th usual liturgical proceedings.

Overall, the emphasis after the proclamation is on joy and exuberance at the retu Lent is broken, and throughout Easter Sunday people will feast in celebration. In fo Sunday begins is regarded by Eastern Christians as one continu[illegible]. The churc possible, giving Paschal services, and there are generally [illegible] pr[illegible]ssions aroun Sunday is perhaps of greater significance in East[illegible]ad[illegible]ox due to the stricter na before it, and is often a very colourful affair[illegible]ll the local community gets accordingly often very elaborate and the [illegible]y initiates a period known as the P days until the **Feast of [illegible]**. This is the last day of the Easter season, and greetings are [illegible] [illegible]ast[illegible]e until the next year.

[illegible]ity and Similarity in Festival Traditions

T[illegible]us local cultural traditions around Christmas and Easter are far too numer detailed summaries we have explored throughout this section don't do justice to t celebrations. However, through examining how Western and Eastern churches co

and resurrection of Jesus in different ways, we can see the stark diversity in Christi
In many ways, this diversity mirrors the variations both in baptismal practice and E
have analysed throughout this theme, and once again we can question to what ex
truly the same celebration throughout the Christian faith. If both these rituals ar
on divergent elements of faith and require different rituals. is t[illegible] re[illegible] unify
the Gospels themselves?

This is a difficult question to answer a[illegible]h de[illegible]ds on one's willingness to draw
between the Eastern and W[illegible]n chu[illegible]s. In the case of Christmas, it is transpa
primarily celebrate t[illegible] and reflect upon the impact this had upon th
the case of E[illegible]ns are brought together to commemorate the events of
on [illegible]. This latter event is especially important as, regardless of one
recognised that the sacrifice of Christ enables the reconciliation of humi
i[illegible]s Christians across the world, regardless of the way this belief is practise

At the same time, we can see clear differences between the Eastern and Western
greater premium on the importance of fasting and abstinence before major events
and celebrations eschew much of the excessive festivities that are often associated
Western world. It is thus a common observation that both Christmas and Easter in
countries are a much less secularised and commercial affair. However, there are al
celebration, particularly around the feasts that accompany Christmas Day and East
Eastern churches' traditions as austere or demanding is equally unfair. Instead, the
emphasis on the importance of individual spiritual growth around key festival peri

Conversely, Western churches often focus on the importance of communal celebra
a more individualistic approach. This is not to suggest that both Christmas and East
reflection, but typically the demands on Ch[illegible] were are much less rigorous
decorations play a more central r[illegible] t[illegible] way Christians express their feelings an
periods, especially at Christ[illegible] Nonetheless, just like the Eucharist, it may be that
and doctrines of th[illegible] faith enable the kind of diversity shown in festival tr
ea[illegible]ture[illegible] its understanding of the Bible through religious practice
may[illegible] Christians more than it separates them, with the myriad festive
[illegible]ies for Christians across the world to learn from one another.

Quick Quiz

1. Give two differences between infant baptism and believer's baptism.
2. Who did Zwingli defend the practice of infant baptism against?
3. What is transubstantiation?
4. What is consubstantiation?
5. What is memorialism?
6. What is Advent?
7. What is Epiphany?
8. Why do the Eastern and Western churches hold festivals on differ[illegible]t dates?

Answers to Activities

Theme 1 Activity

How would you harmonise the birth narratives? Write down your own synthesis of Matthew and Luke. What would you leave out (if anything), and why?

This activity is designed to get students thinking both about the historical credibility of the narratives and how this should be reflected in contemporary perspectives. Is the theological message more important than ascertaining what is historical and what is not? If so, students might suggest that there were three Wise Men in their harmonised narratives, whereas those who may give a very bare narrative, only including the basic details of the birth.

Theme 2 Activity

How would you reinvent God if you had the choice? Write down five different ways you believe would help describe him, and list your reasons why.

This activity is designed to apply McFague's ideas about 'reimaging' God. If she is right, there are a large number of terms, models and metaphors that suit God depending on the context of the people today. Basic ideas might be familial in nature (e.g. mother/brother/sister) or more abstract (ruler/queen/friend).

Theme 3 (AS) / Theme 2 (A Level) Activity

Research your local church and note down the various ideas, programmes and practices throughout this section, compare them to the various roles put forward by the Church and see whether they cohere!

This activity is designed to get students to think about how the Church operates in practice. Depending on the size of the church, there will be many different ways of service and outreach, and students can hopefully get a sense of how Church practices are scaled up or down according to the denomination and church involved.

Theme 4 Activity

Read the account of Jesus' baptism in all the Gospels (Matthew 3:13–17, Mark 1:9–11, Luke 1:29–34). On reflection, note down three key aspects of this account that you believe to be relevant to modern-day baptismal practice and compare to the ideas you study throughout this section.

This activity is designed to get students thinking about the scriptural foundations of this often-overlooked part of the discussion around the need for infant baptism. In particular, it is about whether other theological ideas should play a greater part in modern baptismal practice if it is to be true to the way Jesus himself was baptised.

Answers to Quick Quiz

Theme 1 Quick Quiz

1. Redaction criticism is a critical method of biblical st… which l…ks to discern … shaped their text according to their theolog…al aim…
2. Harmonisation is the process of co…b…ing … more texts in a unified nar…
3. Matthew and Luke provide …
4. Demythologisation … method employed by Rudolf Bultmann which … aspects of th… …le for… ethical and theological elements.
5. …ken… …is a theological model which holds that Jesus at times thro… …ied …mself of his divine nature.
6. …al judgement is the judgement of all humanity at once, typically thought … coming. Particular judgement is the individual judgement of a human being … their death.
7. Psalms gives a number of hymns, songs, laments and verses primarily design…
8. Dominion is a Christian concept found in Genesis which holds that human be… rule over the natural world and use it how they wish.

Theme 2 Quick Quiz

1. Immutability is the quality of being impervious to, or unable to undergo, cha… the quality of not being able to experience pain or pleasure. The form…r can b… but not the other way around.
2. Reimaging means creating new models and metaph… …d sig… to complem… male-focused terms used to describe God.
3. Moltmann wishes to say that God is n… …mpassible. God can experien… it is of his own volition. God … …e humanity because of his love fo… in solidarity with th… …ing.
4. 'Pre-existen… …th… …s …r whether the Son exists coeternally with the Fat… …e ti… …r…us.
5. …filio… clause is the controversial clause or belief in the double processi… …r and the Son.
6. …e Christus Victor is a model of atonement that focuses on how Christ's dea… forces of evil in the world.
7. Anselm's satisfaction model focuses on how the atonement was necessarily t… honour owed by humanity to God.
8. The moral example model of atonement focuses on how Christ's death is an … sacrifice that inspires human beings to reconcile themselves with God.

Theme 3 (AS) / Theme 2 (A Level) Quick Quiz

1. Sola fide is the view that justification comes by faith alone.
2. Luther argues that the Epistle of James is antilegomena.
3. Covenantal nominism is E P Sanders' view that justificati… …co…s by … intro… and adherence to the rules and principles of th… …t co…enan… …orks)
4. The Great Commission is the instructi… …es t… …e disciples at the en… teachings of his ministry and …e …v… …ples.
5. A sacrament is a ritual … …emo… …at is thought to demonstrate or impart …
6. Agape is univ… …, …co…ditional love as demonstrated by Jesus throughout h…
7. …ph… …s… …enemies and pray for those who persecute you' appea…

Theme 4 Quick Quiz

1. Infant baptism is on children and generally involves aspersion, whereas believ
   more commonly involves immersion.
2. Zwangli defended the practice of infant baptism against Anaba
3. Transubstantiation is the belief that the bread and wi
   the body and blood of Christ at the moment of con
4. Consubstantiation is the belief that at
   alongside the bread and wi
5. Memorialism is the b
   bread and wi
6.
   preceding Christmas when Western Christians begin to
   rat
   Christmas.
7.
   any is the holiday succeeding Christmas when Western Christians celeb
   se Men, and Eastern Christians celebrate the baptism of Jesus by John the
8. The Eastern and Western churches hold festivals on different dates as the We
   dating of the Gregorian calendar, whereas the Eastern churches use the Julia