Zig Zag Education

Religious Studies

A Level Year 2 | AQA | 7062

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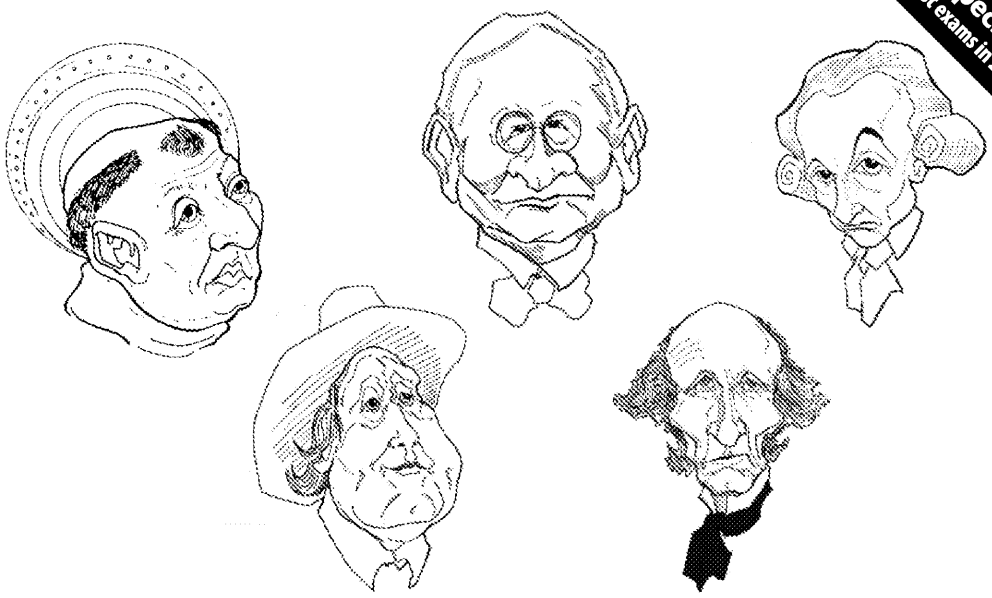
first exams in 2018



Course Companion for A Level Year 2 AQA Religious Studies

Component 2B: Christian Dialogues

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Contents

Teacher's Introduction

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

Remember!
Always check the exam board website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

However, in comparison to the other course companions for this specification, this resource takes a slightly different form and direction. The Dialogues topics within the AQA specification are designed to test a student's skills of reasoning and analysis; taking the knowledge they have acquired from their investigation into Christianity as a religion and comparing it against their studies into the Philosophy of Religion and Ethics. Students reading through this companion will thus be expected to already possess a good grasp of the key concepts, thinkers and ideas within these topics and use the material within to strengthen their understanding of the relationship between philosophy and religion. In the process, they will hopefully become more confident in their essay-writing abilities and powers of analysis when approaching their end-of-year exams.

Nevertheless, alongside the 12 sections that make up this companion, there are also a number of other features to help students with their learning and revision. The companion begins with an overview of the important discussion elements that are central to the Dialogues specification, looking at the kinds of questions they should be asking when working through each section. Self-guided activities are also included throughout the writing to further engage students with the material, and more information is provided on key thinkers and concepts where appropriate.

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

January 2022

Students' Introductio

Although you might not have anticipated it, your work on the Dialogues section o
the moment you began your first religious or philosophical topic. However, whil
is important for your end-of-year exams, half of the marks for Component 2 revo
questions involving Dialogues. Moreover, these questions involve a significant a
meaning that understanding the concepts you've studied and how to evaluate th
different arguments is key to getting the best possible mark for each.

This might seem daunting at first, but the AQA specification is highly interrelated.
Philosophy of Religion and Ethics can be applied to your knowledge of Christianity
inseparable from one another. This companion is, therefore, not to go over what you ha
your understanding of the relationship between philosophy and Christianity and g
into your end-of-year exams. Thus, it is highly recommended that you will have a
in each of these 12 sections. However, they can also be separated and studied in
parts of the course. First though, we shall take a quick look at the structure and f
and the essential questions you should be asking as you progress through this cor

The Structure and Form of Dialogues

The Dialogues specification is oriented primarily around the religion you have ch
course. This companion has been designed to specifically cover Christianity. Thu
religion, then turn back! However, for those who have been studying Christianit
12 different sections that match the specification for the Christian Dialogues. Th

Philosophy of Religion

1. God
2. Self, death and the afterlife
3. Sources of wisdom and authority
4. Religious experience
5. The relationship between scientific and religious discourses
6. The truth claims of other religions
7. Miracles

Ethics

8. Christian responses to deontological, teleological, consequential and charac
9. How far Christian ethics can be considered to be deontological, teleological, character-based
10. Christian responses to ethical issues
11. Christian responses to social issues
12. Christian understanding of free will, moral responsibility and conscience

As you can see, the Philosophy of Religion specification is a little bit more succinc
require a good knowledge of a wide variety of areas, and you may find that one s
aids you in studying another. The key element to consider about the examinatio
sections is that they are **unstructured**. Simply put, you'll be given a broad questi
to narrow down a number of different responses, analysing each and presenting
strongest position on the matter in question. Thus, you may well decide that yo
play a part in writing about another topic such as religious experience or the afte

The Dialogues specification itself covers how you should be approaching the top
Thus, for each major topic, we will explore important connections between ideas
of how philosophical and Christian perspectives might conflict, overlap and harm
not make a broad division between secular and religious perspectives. Rather th
times, for despite it seemingly presenting itself often as unchanging, the Christia
been greatly influenced by both secular and religious perspectives throughout its

Essential Questions

Beyond the basic topics presented in this section, there are a number of essentia
the Dialogues specification requires students to consider. Throughout this comp
and illustrated, but a significant aspect of these questions is that they are open-e
evaluate them yourselves and arrive at an argument you believe is strongest abo
mind, we can consider the first set of the questions for topics within the philoso

Philosophy of Religion

- How far the (proposed) beli[illegible]able; whether it is based on reason o
- How meaningful th[illegible]posed) statements of faith are, and for whom.
- How co[illegible] t[illegible]roposed) beliefs are, and how consistent they are with o
- The rele[illegible] of philosophical enquiry for religious faith, with particular refe
  nature of faith as 'belief in' or 'belief that'.

There's quite a bit to break down in these issues, but the key thing to analyse is t
each statement. First, we have to consider what is meant by a belief being **reaso**
and large this means that a belief is in accordance with our logical understanding
being reasonable is when it is justified or explained with known facts, causes or e
based on faith is one that goes beyond such evidential grounds; it cannot be wh
always clear what kinds of beliefs are actually logical and to what extent many o
important domains of philosophy, such as ethics, aesthetics or even science itsel

This is where the second of the important terms comes into play – the idea of **m**
meaningful even if it is not wholly reasonable. In fact, it can be argued that man
our daily lives cannot be reasonably justified or explained but still are of key imp
religious or spiritual in nature. Here the term 'meanin[illegible]' [illegible]cult to completely
significance, value, purpose or importance, de[illegible]ding on the context.

The third and fourth terms to [illegible]side[illegible]re **consistency** and **coherence**. In philos
it is thought to posse[illegible]ical contradictions. A secondary use is often wheth
over time, [illegible]important to clarify whether you are using 'consistent' in this
God is incor[illegible]' can be understood in multiple ways depending on the conte
often used in a similar way, denoting a belief that is logical and consistent. Howe
broader philosophical position, it often means that the position itself is unified, w
another. Thus, like consistency, it can be important to clarify the use of the term
context of the argument in question.

Lastly, the fifth and sixth terms to consider are **belief in** and **belief that**. These a
to employ in your end-of-year exams, but the broader distinction is important to
use a 'belief that' statement, we are using the term in context of declaring a basi
'I believe that God exists' is equivalent to saying that one believes there is an act
'belief in' statements aren't so straightforward. Stating that 'I believe in God' co
'I believe that God exists', but for many theists it takes on a deeper meaning. It
in God or faith in his divinity and care for humanity. Th[illegible]ief in' statements
mere facts. They express deeper ideas, meanings or [illegible]symbols of a person's

It is likely that you have alread[illegible]over[illegible]these terms in depth. Yet, knowing hov
important when studyi[illegible]t[illegible]Dialogues specification, and throughout this compa
topic accor[illegible]th[illegible]key issues we've just outlined.

Ethics

Just as with the Philosophy of Religion topic, Ethics has its own set of questions t
required to think about *'the impact of other ethical perspectives and ethical stud
issues, both past and present.'* This includes:

- The challenges to and support for Christian views from other ethical perspec
- The compatibility of Christian views with those of other ethical perspectives.
- The relative strengths and weaknesses of Christia[illegible]pectives and other et
these issues.
- The implications of criticisms of C[illegible]ar[illegible]ical teaching for the religion as a w

Throughout these cri[illegible]ever, there are two clear running themes. The fir
effective **co[illegible]so**[illegible]ween Christian ethics and other ethical perspectives. T
portion of t[illegible]panion will be dedicated primarily to this aspect, with the aim
theme: a **critical analysis** of the coherency and soundness of Christian ethics. In
ethical positions demonstrated the Christian ethical perspective to be weak or fl

This question can be addressed in multiple ways. On the one hand, there are mo
challenges to Christian ethics. It might be contended that Christian ethics does n
guidance, does not possess meaningful ethical sources of authority (e.g. conscien
moral principles. However, Christian ethics can also be criticised based on the gu
contemporary ethical issues relating to human and animal life. Ultimately, if Chr
resolve, or gives unintuitive advice about, pressing ethical dilemmas today, then
can be called into question, especially if other ethical positions potentially give b

AO1 and AO2 Assessment Criteria

A key aspect of the Dialogues specification is to test what AQA terms AO2 under
assessment objective, and is used to categorise the different criteria with which
marked. Let's take a quick look at the difference between the criteria for AO1 a

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including
- religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching
- influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities an
- cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and
- approaches to the study of religion and belief

AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, inc
influence and study.

What's key to note here? The foundation of your answers will be AO1 knowledg
in all the questions you will be set on individual topics within the Christianity, Ph
specifications. However, a key element to your exam answers will also be AO2 a
questions centred around Christianity and the 25-mark questions in the Dialogue
just being able to list facts or demonstrate understanding of key concepts but be
strengths and weaknesses, evaluating what you believe to be the strongest posit
theology and philosophy and is not as straightforward to develop in comparison

It is within this companion, however, that hopefully your powers of AO2 analysis
each of the sections, the key areas on which you will be assessed will be explored
and ideas that you might employ in your exam answers. Sections are designed no
but to prompt further thought and discussion about the concepts you have alread

Now, it is likely that there are some areas you already feel very comfortable with
you've already made up your mind about an issue, or you naturally feel there is a
Therefore, the 12 sections of this companion may not be equally necessary, depe
If so, you may well choose to pick out and select different topics to focus on. Ho
prompts for further research, revision activities and discussion questions that ma
your arguments on a particular area. Moreover, for each concept or argument y
about the following questions in this rough order:

1. Is the argument philosophically valid and/or sound? Are there any fallacies,
   that pose an issue?
2. Is the argument coherent with other philosophical positions? What inconsis
   proposing the argument alongside other pre-existing beliefs?
3. What implications does the argument have for our philosophical and/or reli
   the world?

Working through these three basic questions is a good way to begin any AO2 ana
argument individually, before gradually widening the net to look at its overall co
positions. Why is this useful? Well, if an argument fails the first hurdle by being
fallacious, then you may well not need to focus on its coherency. It simply may n
be a sound argument, then it may be worth focusing on broader issues of cohere
with a reasoned perspective of the world, or maybe it has unintuitive (or absurd
disagree wit

When working throughout this companion, try to analyse each section and divid
categories. At times, various boxes and notes will be present through this comp
criticisms of arguments to one of these questions. Keep an eye out for these as

CHRISTIANITY AND PHILOSOPH

Starter Revision Activity:
Revisit the following areas of the Philosophy of Religion and Christianity course
required to justify belief in the existence of God? Write down two responses, o
and another taking a religious (or Christian) positio

Arguments for the Existence of God		**Ontological Argument**
	Key Terms	A priori, Necessity, Reductio ad absurdum,
	Key Thinkers	Anselm, Gaunilo, Immanuel Kant, David Hu Alvin Plantinga
		Cosmological Argument
	Key Terms	A posteriori, Contingency, Deductive reaso
	Key Thinkers	Thomas Aquinas, David Hume, Bertrand Ru
		Design Argument
	Key Terms	Design, Complexity, Spatial order, Inductive
	Key Thinkers	William Paley, David Hume, Charles Darwin

The Problem of Evil		**Soul-making Theodicy**
	Key Terms	Natural evil, Moral evil, Evidential problem
	Key Thinkers	Irenaeus, John Hick, Richard Swinburne, D Z
		Free Will Theodicy
	Key Terms	Logical problem of evil, Free will, Inconsiste
	Key Thinkers	Alvin Plantinga, J L Mackie, Richard Swinbu
		Process Theodicy
	Key Terms	Panentheism, Persuasion, Becoming
	Key Thinkers	David Ray Griffin

Christian Doctrine on God		**The Attributes of God**
	Key Terms	Omnipotence, Omniscience, Transcendence
	Key Thinkers	Jesus, St Paul
		Christian Doctrine on God
	Key Terms	The Trinity, Son of God, Father, Kingdom of

Introduction – Bringing Together Philosophical and Theological Perspectives

From the large number of topics featured at the start of this section, it is easy to
approaching the topic of God. However, don't panic at this first hurdle! Many o
more detail later in the Dialogues specification, particularly issues such as religio
afterlife. At the same time, it is important to note that when thinking about the
there is an incredibly wide set of sources and discussions to draw from. If you do
about God in your end-of-year exams, it is more vital than any other topic to n
argument and work from a more limited perspective on the issue.

It may be a bit of a platitude at this point, but beliefs about God influenc
theology. Moreover, theology is often at its most systematic when thinking abou
being and nature can only be potentially outlined through reasoned a priori and
arguments can also rebut and address criticisms from atheists as well as paint a
such as religious experience. Thus, here it is perhaps most important to dwell on
of beliefs about God, not just whether they are reasonable. One key example of
of evil. Here, theodicies may well draw a logically non-contradictory position on
coherent with the rest of Christian theology (e.g. process theology) or with the n
soul-making theodicies).

However, this is not to say that reason does not play an important part when thi
consistency is founded on the idea that beliefs should be reasonable in nature, a
evaluating **arguments for the existence of God**. Key objections to the ontologica
arguments often rest on pointing out various fallacies and inconsistencies in thei
these undermine the foundations of such arguments to the point where belief in
faith. At the same time, proponents of arguments for the existence of God often
not intended as proofs but to simply show that the existence of a God is consiste
around us. In either case, the extent to which belief in God is reasonable arguab
influence our understanding of religion.

These introductory discussions form the bulk of what we will cover in this sectio
when we look at other religious phenomena in greater detail. For the moment,
at the various arguments for the existence of God and how to best assess them.

Comparing Arguments for the Existence

In your studies into the Philosophy of Religion, you will have covered three prima
of God; the **ontological argument**, the **cosmological argument** and the **teleologi
are perhaps the three most well-known arguments for God, they are by no mean
for God's existence have been routinely proposed and the failure of these argum
mean that God is effectively disproved. At most, the failure of these arguments
gives support to the proposal that belief in God is irrational.

Another key point to consider is that calling these three topics 'arguments' is per
misrepresentation. A large number of different arguments for God are containe
share no more in common than a similar approach. For instance, you've seen ho
can be divided into two different arguments: the **a priori argument** and the **argum
main thing these arguments share in common is an appeal to the impossibility of
arguments they start from sufficient foundations. So, when talking about th
sure that you state exactly which variations you are talking about and how these
considerations about the nature and existence of God. Precision is perhaps impo
about a topic that has been discussed for thousands of years!

At the same time, these three topics do roughly demarcate different approaches
of God. Moreover, they each appeal to **reason** in a different manner.

The Ontological Argument

The **ontological argument** is in essence an appeal to pure reason. In attempting t
reasoning alone, it states that it is logical to believe in God. This means that if the
then it is also incredibly strong, for it must deductively follow that God exists if th
time, it also means that the ontological argument is inherently weak if there is a s
the conclusion doesn't follow from the premises, or the premises themselves are
can be done to recover the argument. In hanging on reason alone, the ontologica

The Cosmological Argument

The **cosmological arg** s, in contrast, not wholly dependent on reason. Mo
deductive f t s appeal to premises that in some way draw on our experi
criticism of nal cosmological argument is that it assumes certain principle
be indisputable, logical truths rather than assumptions founded on our experien
contingency argument. The appeal for a necessary being is rooted in our experie
However, the cosmological argument has the benefit of talking about specific kin
rather than directly observable objects. Ideas such as the causal principle may b
have a universal quality that makes them difficult to both verify and refute.

What does this mean for the strength of the cosmological argument? Well, they
employing metaphysical principles we take for granted in our daily lives. Yet at t
clear what status these metaphysical principles should have and whether or not
universal truths. For everyday life, such questions might not be important, but w
certainly take on a new significance, especially if God is outside of space and tim

The Teleological Argument

Lastly, the **teleological argument** is perhaps the one least significantly based on
still plays an important part in its formation and structure. In contrast to the ontologi
most versions of the teleological argument employ inductive or abductive reason
analogy or through direct reference to the best explanation. In strict philo
teleological arguments are weaker; even if we agree with the premises, it may n
merely evidentially supported.

However, this naturally isn't the whole story. Concepts such as design, complexi
easy to question as broader metaphysical principles. The nature of experience n
not a complete abstraction. It may well be directly visible to our eyes! This mea
not stronger in form, may well be just as strong due to the nature of the evidenc

Fallacies, Incoherencies and Inconsiste

It is likely you have a good awareness of the natural strengths and weaknesses o
approach. But beyond study of individual arguments the broader connections
between the arguments for the existence of God are important to consider. Sho
theists be looking for a deductive proof on God based wholly on reason? Or sho
they be gathering evidence for his existence, forming a cumulative case for his
creative actions? This is where the meshing of philosophy and theology most
commonly occurs. If, like Anselm, one is claiming that one is 'a fool' not to belie
God, then it is natural to expect an approach such as the ontological argum
However, if one is committed to the importance of faith as well as reason, the
teleological argument may well be an acceptable approach also.

But where should we begin in analysing the **fallacies** of such arguments? For if t
are key internal problems with arguments for the existence of God, then we mig
even have to judge their coherency with Christian belief. Well, one incredibly us
and basic starting point is the philosophy of David Hume. His work you will have

applied to all of these arguments and more. But beyond your studies, it is Hume enduring sets of criticisms of religious belief that spurred on a greater debate ab faith and reason. Moreover, these criticisms were not motivated solely by a dist broader epistemological work that Hume is best known for today. So, let's briefl Hume's criticisms broadly to the structure of these arguments for the existence

Contingent and Necessary Beings

This is a problem which affects both the ont[illegible]rgument and the argument whether the notion of a **necessary** [illegible] w[illegible] in fact meaningful at all. When the it is in the context of a phil[illegible]proposition or statement which must be log meaning of th[illegible]d. However, in the context of beings it is thought t begun to e[illegible]must exist eternally. Yet, Hume points out a basic problem w conceive of [illegible]essary being not existing without contradiction. Moreover, if w not logically necessary in any way that a necessary being must exist. Thus, Hume doesn't really add anything to our understanding of a being.

Naturally, this poses a problem for the ontological argument and is one of the influ more developed argument that existence is not a predicate, for it doesn't impart i of a being. Similarly, the same is true for the argument from contingency; the mer does not imply that a necessary being must exist or is even possible. You can see I Bertrand Russell in his debate with Frederick Copleston, where Russell points out t opponent's argument, where he points out he is making a philosophical leap by as necessary being is sensical at all! In either case, the basic sentiment behind Hume influence; does the notion of 'necessity' really add anything meaningful to our unc

The Causal Principle

Beyond questions of ontology, Hume also p[illegible]de[illegible]luminating analysis of th history, many philosophers have t[illegible]ause and effect to be an intuitive or self Surely every effect must ha[illegible]fficient cause? But as you will have studied, H principle is not [illegible]at human beings come to know a priori. Rather it is similar eve[illegible]g constantly conjoined. There is no logical reason to suggest t another. Th[illegible]ief is just a habitual belief born out of consistent observation o have any logical guarantee that an effect must have a cause, that a certain effect future will resemble the past at all.

It is important to note here, of course, that Hume is not arguing we should not b guides our scientific enquiries and enables us to trust in the operations of the na that when it comes to extraordinary events, outside the realms of human experi careful when employing it. This is certainly the case with arguments for the exis version of the cosmological argument, it is taken that there must be a first cause of the causal principle. But why does this have to be the case? Could there not fundamental lack of experience of beginnings of a universe should give us pause making such philosophical leaps.

The same is true of the teleological argument. It is [illegible]ed that evidence of des cause in a designer. Yet, we have no [illegible]er [illegible]ce of universe design and so no re must be a designer at all. O[illegible]tain it seems as if proponents of the teleologica the creation of the [illegible]ather than making a reasonable judgement. Altoge Hume's cri[illegible]f t[illegible]causal principle can underwrite several different criticism of God, and [illegible]orth getting to grips with it as best as possible.

Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism, as you will have studied, is the attribution of human charac
do not necessarily belong. Hume refers significantly to this idea in his critiques c
design in particular fall under this umbrella. Is design really a feature of the univ
human beings seek to make sense of a chaotic world? The world itself may not l
any number of properties which we typically apply to it. Similarly, even if God is
necessarily mean God created a good, ordered or intelligent world. The subtle p
prominent in the teleological argument, is that we should be careful when apply
which does not necessarily reflect these concepts. Humans are constantly seeki
even where there are none. When thinking about notions such as design, w
they are philosophically meaningful and applicable, not just whether they are int
world. This also comes to the fore when we look at the problem of evil.

Revision Activity:
For each of the cosmological, ontological and teleological arguments, pick wha
problematic fallacy, writing down a few sentences about your reasons. Is there
out in particular?

The Problem of Evil

In the same way we analysed the reasonableness of the various arguments for th
the same for the problem of evil. The ultimate question is whether the existence
belief in God irrational or a matter of faith. Moreover, the problem of evil is perh
difference in 'belief in' and 'belief that'. Evil is not just an abstract concept but so
faith on a daily basis. Belief in a God that is fundamentally good is very different f
God does in fact exist. Theists, in the face of evil, trust in the goodness of God in
different from holding a mere belief that there is reason for the existence of evi
the different senses of belief when analysing the two primary forms of the proble

The Logical Problem of Evil

The logical problem of evil presents the clearest realisation of the **inconsistent tr**
evil is a logical challenge to a benevolent, omnipotent God. The three things can
this sense, like the ontological argument, the stakes are fundamentally clear. Eit
be put together in order to demonstrate that there is a world where these three
benevolent, omnipotent God (or evil) cannot exist.

What is important to note, however, is that the logical problem of evil is not inte
existence of God altogether, but the God of classical theism typically invoked in t
primary philosophers behind its development, pointed out that even if theologia
logical problem, these aren't necessarily heartfelt. While they might argue (as A
privation, for example, so evil doesn't really exist, they don't follow through with
and change their theology accordingly. The same is true with soul-making theod
we should treat evil as such rather than seeking to eliminate it in all circumstanc
find someone suffering from illness claiming it was actually a good in the heat of

At the same time, the logical problem is inherently weak precisely because it is n
examples where the three claims can logically coexist. The free will theodicy a
classic example of this. Natural evil is the necessary result of human free will, ar
influence of free agents with free will (e.g. angels or matter), then the problem
respond here that we don't exactly have evidence for angels, but this to some de
the evidence for angels is a separate issue to the logical problem of evil. It's not
evidentially supported but whether it is *possible*. Thus, like the ontological argu
falls down wholly if a solution is provided.

The Evidential Problem of Evil

However, the same is not true of the evidential problem of evil. In many ways, it theologians to answer, for it is the character and purpose of evil that is in questi evidential problem forces theologians to answer why evil exists in the way that i arguments against the logical problem aren't always as convincing against the ev simply talk about angels and expect the problem to be solved. Rather, the onus often appears so **gratuitous** and **unnecessary**. Criticism against the evidential p the **coherency** and **implications** of the problem, rather than whether it proves C

Thus, the soul-making theodicy has more in common with the teleological argume might initially appear, an evidential case has to be built up for the existenc so an evidential case has to be built up for the necessity and purpose of evil. Richa Swinburne and other theologians have thus often turned towards a multifaceted a against this problem. They draw on the importance of free will to answer the prob evil, while looking towards soul-making-type solutions to natural evil. As Swinburn human beings are to make significant free choices and undergo moral growth, the grow up in a '**toy world**' designed to coddle them.

In any case, both the logical and evidential problems of evil are different ways of the **consistency** and **coherency** of the three premises of the inconsistent triad. N similarly to the arguments for the existence of God, it takes certain properties of whether belief in these properties is reasonable considering our experience or re While these differ according to the argument in question (e.g. necessity, designe vital to note the root property in question and address how it potentially also rel we shall note in the next section, although it is most common for Christians to be conception of God, there are alternative portrayals in the field that might affect reasonableness of religious belief.

Revision Activity:
Do you believe that logical or evidential evil poses a greater threat to Chris points for and against each, identifying how conventional theodicies may fail to

Christian Concepts of God

For the most part, arguments for the existence of God and the problem of evil have classical theism; a creator who is omnipotent, necessary, benevolent, omniscient ar is the concept of God that most Christians have subscribed to and continue to subs each of these properties is not necessarily fixed in meaning. The nature of omnipot heavily debated both in theology and the philosophy of religion. Does it mean pow fact subject to the limits of logic? If the latter, maybe it simply isn't logically possibl questions that aren't part of the AQA syllabus but are useful to think about in conte

Responses to the arguments for the existence of God or the problem of evil don' from the God of classical theism, even if you believe that one is a good respons instance, a significant part of your studies into Christianity was learning about th who believe God is neither omnipotent nor transcendent in the manner typically theologians. Instead, they propose a panentheistic God who pervades the entire power to '**persuade**' rather than coerce beings, not directly control them. But why is it i theology in particular or in the philosophy of religion?

Well, let's turn to the cosmological argument for a start. In these contexts, tryin cause is perhaps not the right way of thinking about the existence of God at all. the abstract beginning of the universe but is in a process of becoming with it. So causal argument is starting at a wrong assumption. Similarly, with the problem o would argue that it is wrong to hold that God possesses the power to eliminate a

but matter possesses its own power to resist divine influence. Overall, the impo balance between faith and reason may be dependent on the concept of God one about the philosophy of religion in comparison with Christian belief, it is essentia criticising the God of classical theism or another concept of God entirely.

Faith, Reason and Classical Theism

With this in mind, we can think a little more deeply about the relationship betwe the topics we have covered. Each of the arguments for the existence of God has hidden assumptions, yet it is unclear to what extent these issues should affect be analysis of the causal principle essentially shows that trust in cause and effect al we would not [illegible] lives believing that events might randomly happen on a basic philosophical level, it should be clear that the mere existence of fallac false; instead many needing refinement.

This means in your arguments you should not stop short at giving a basic version endeavour to find how proponents of an argument might respond. There are ma draw on, but a key example we will use here is the philosophy of Richard Swinbu versions of every topic here throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries versions of these topics to provide an inductive cumulative case argument for his that while God cannot be proved through one argument alone, taken together w which God is reasonably consistent with the observable universe. Moreover, Sw on metaphysical principles, such as the principle of sufficient reason or the causa argument off the inexplicability of an infinite series in the context of the known u

The AQA syllabus is broad enough that you should have other ideas of modern th these arguments. For while it may not be reasonable to believe in God due to a be more reasonable when one adopts an updated version of these arguments. S it is natural to recognise that Augustine's theodicy is inherently weak due to the which were commonplace in ancient worldviews. However, the central idea tha understanding moral evil's [illegible]ment today in modern theodicies.

These upda[illegible]uments also naturally adjust the way we approach the God of Christians is inherently unknowable, with belief naturally incorporating some fait show that such a belief is on the right track, even if many Christians would be ha For in many ways, reason and faith may be on a sliding scale for theists. Some be while others require faith. A key example of this might be salvation. While it ma creator God exists, it is more a matter of faith to believe that such a God is dedic Nevertheless, with these considerations, let us turn to the final section, where w constructing arguments for the topics studied so far.

Revision Activity:
Is there an alternative conception of the Christian God which would answer the theological issues)? Put yourself in the shoes of a Christian defending your fait such issues through your ideal God.

Exam Question Preparation

Now we've [illegible] key aspects of discussion surrounding God, we can be might consu[illegible] argument to questions you may face in your end-of-year exa daunting, but at heart it is simply realising the ability to express your opinions in preparation you can do as always is just to work out for yourself what you believ arguments and evidence for that belief.

In your end-of-year exams, you're likely to encounter one of several forms of qu
- Analysing a particular argument for God from a Christian perspective.
- Evaluating the problem of evil for Christians today, including analysing theo soul-making theodicy.
- More generalised questions that potentially address a variety of different to existence of God.

The final kind of exam question is perhaps the most t[illegible]o address. For instan question developed by us:

Exam-style Question:
'If the univer[illegible]ha[illegible]ning, it is reasonable to believe in God.'
Critically e[illegible]e and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue betwe

Here, we can see that the exam question is quite open-ended. It is possible to ta the design argument to the cosmological argument. It may be that you can addr later topics such as the relationship between religious and scientific discourse. H question is 'reasonable'; the main thrust of your argument should be judging wh a good reason to believe in God beyond faith, or whether science may well provi existence of the world instead. Moreover, the use of 'beginning' here is a good i expected to talk about the cosmological argument, especially whether the conce the existence of God.

Yet, when it comes to arguments for the existence of God, we've seen there is ar the philosophy of David Hume. If you're struggling to evaluate the strength of ar his initial critiques, questioning the assumptions behind it, whether it be the mea being or the validity of a metaphysical law such as the caus[illegible]rinciple. From thi develop a deeper thread of discussion, asking whet[illegible]st[illegible]ns should approac whether there is a more mature version of th[illegible]ar[illegible]ent that answers the issues Altogether, you can eventually mak[illegible]de[illegible]ent on the reasonableness of belie you have discussed.

For instanc[illegible]u[illegible]the existence of the world certainly is puzzling, it may just notes, we h[illegible]proportion our beliefs to the evidence. Since we cannot gain a of the universe, nor of a creator God that might be behind such an action, any at may well simply be speculation. However, the Christian may simply respond tha God don't have to prove he exists, just show that his existence is consistent with Since we don't have an explanation for the world, or why it appears ordered and is certainly reasonable to invoke a personal explanation in the form of God.

These two sides can easily be supported by a variety of arguments and ideas we' chapter. Moreover, you can draw on information you refine through study of lat concerning the discourse between science and Christianity. For the moment, ho different set of topics: the self, death and the afterlife.

Revision Prom[illegible]ts:
Based on your studies throughout these sections, thes[illegible]sc[illegible]ne revision prompt notes on when preparing for your end-of-year[illegible]x[illegible]ns[illegible]r each, consider how yo philosophical and theological conflict[illegible]d[illegible]ues and how others might critically

1. Do arguments fo[illegible]s[illegible]nce of God prove that he does in fact exist? Or existe[illegible]Go[illegible]s consistent with the observable world?
2. Can ar[illegible]s for the existence of God be anything more than philosophic
3. Do any of the arguments for the existence of God make belief in God more still a matter of faith?
4. Is there a theodicy that effectively addresses both the logical and evidential
5. Does the nature of evil and suffering prevent belief in an omnipotent and b being reasonable?

Starter Revision Activity:
Revisit the following areas of the Philosophy of Religion and Christianity course argument that justifies belief in the existence of an afterlife? Write down two secular position and another taking a religious (or Ch[illegible]n, position.

Judgement and the Afterlife	**Judgement**	
	Key Terms	Particular judgement, General judgement, S
	Key Thinkers	St Paul, Augustine
	Realms of the Afterlife	
	Key Terms	Heaven, Hell, Purgatory
	Key Thinkers	Dante, John Hick, Paul Tillich
	Self, Experience and the After	
	Key Terms	Objective immortality, Resurrection, Electio
	Key Thinkers	Calvin, Charles Hartshorne

The Soul/Mind	**Dualism**	
	Key Terms	Substance dualism, Mind–body interaction,
	Key Thinkers	René Descartes, Plato, Richard Swinburne
	[illegible]aterialism	
	Key Terms	Behaviouris[illegible], R[illegible]duction, Category error, G
	Key Thinkers	[illegible]er[illegible]e, Richard Dawkins, John Hick

Introducti[illegible]e Relationship between the Soul and the Afterlife

In the previous section, we looked at some classic arguments for the existence o of evidence often overlooked is the potential existence of the soul. Many people irreducible, immaterial part of the human person which persists after death, and about God and the afterlife. At the same time, belief in a soul has also been que growth of a scientific world view. If there is a soul, it cannot be discovered throu located anywhere in the human body. Thus, many have argued that belief in a s alone. So should Christians still subscribe to this belief if it is wholly irrational?

Naturally, you will have considered such a question in your studies so far. But this be concerned with analysing belief in the soul and the afterlife from this angle, and be raised in your end-of-year exams concerning this topic. It is also a more difficul you hold yourself to be a **materialist**, you might well imagin[illegible]at belief in an after the growth of materialist perspectives has also see[illegible]n[illegible]ased number of Christ challenge this view. So, the possibility of a m[illegible]ia[illegible]version of Christianity is one of a philosophical dualism might r[illegible]t[illegible]utional Christian belief. Your main t these nuances and decide [illegible]e concept of a soul is coherent with our mod more import[illegible]w[illegible]is reasonable for human beings to look forward to so our investig[illegible]to such questions by first revisiting the case for materialism.

Reason and Materialism

At heart, the case for materialism is quite simple. Matter is the fundamental thi
Space, time… these cannot exist without matter. Even looking at humans, we ar
despite our conscious abilities. If the brain dies, so does the ability to think and
there to believe that there is a soul, other than prior ideas about the existence a
who could create and sustain the existence of souls also? In other words, belief
or a case of circular reasoning. If we ask why we believe souls, we might say G
ask why we believe there is a God and the answer we can't really say the existe
mere existence of God doesn't guarantee that human beings have souls at all. It
material world but not an immaterial aspect beyond himself. It is the belief in a
the persistent existence of human beings after death – that makes a soul necess

Thus, materialism is, in a sense, the more self-evident position considering our sc
important to note that this is not a historically widely held belief. Nor is it commo
religious. Throughout much of human history it has been assumed that there is a
self. Otherwise, where do our thoughts come from? And what governs our actio
psychological and neuroscientific research that has begun to answer these questi
dualistic beliefs bear the burden of proof for belief in a substantially mental or sp

This imbalance is important to note when constructing an argument concerning
mere possibility that these things exist is not enough to make belief in them reas
deeper philosophical argument which shows the errors of subscribing to a wholl
number of these which we will briefly examine!

Religious Belief

This is a broad and difficult position to summarise. But as noted, many Christ
sufficient evidence from the Bible and other forms of revelation to justify belief i
Bible contains key passages in which it describes how human beings might be re
traditional Christian theology is based on Platonic philosophy, of which be
we might hold belief in a soul is not something which can be judged impartially.
religious evidence for belief in God, we also naturally arrive at belief in a soul.

Philosophical Arguments for Substance Dualism

Throughout your studies, you will have considered several key arguments for du
been René Descartes' **arguments from indivisibility** and **conceivability**. Simply p
identify the mental parts of the human person as possessing different properties
the body. If this is the case, then the mind and the body cannot be the same thi
conceive of something really reveal its essential properties? We can go a little d
whether the mind has any **irreducible** properties.

Qualia and Property Dualism

Philosophers have long noted there's something strange about subjective experi
a personal element which isn't easily describable in physical terms. This often is
feel like. For instance, although we know why human beings perceive colour, we
what it is like to experience the colour blue or what each person sees when they
Philosophers call such forms of experience *qualia*, and they perhaps hint that ou
properties that go (or contain content that goes) beyond our material understan

For theologians such as Richard Swinburne, such kinds of experience are enough
dualism. The idea, as you may have studied, that mental experiences poss
dependent on physical matter, cannot be reduced to or described by the proper
Instead, they are **emergent** from physical matter. For theologians such as Swinb
is needed to support the belief that human beings can persist beyond death. It i
properties and experiences that can survive through the action of God.

Supporting such a notion might be the existence of religious experiences, includi
These are difficult to quantify or even describe but are deeply persuasive forms o
Furthermore, they share a lot of key links with discussions around the soul and t
Christians maintain a connection with God if not for some immaterial part of the
the self revealed during near-death and religious experiences. Altogether there
human experience, whether it be consciousness, qualia, religious experience, t
materialist terms, meaning that belief in the soul and the afterlife may not be wh

Assessing These Arguments

Part of the purpose of assessing these arguments was to set out a rough path of how
conflicts between a materialistic perspective and a religious perspective. While t
aren't likely to be convincing, just as we did before with issues of God, we can de
their wake. Although Descartes' arguments might not support substance dualism
for a stronger argument about property dualism. Similarly, although prior belief
impress the atheistic critic, specific evidence in the form of religious experiences

These more mature arguments also provide a response to the Ryle-style argume
materialist is likely to contend that talk of the mind as a separate substance is ta
simply committing a category error in believing that the ability to conceive of the
enough to justify this being a real possibility. If this is the case, then dualism is si
even think about whether it's coherent with our wider understanding of the min
more in refuting **property dualism**, for although under this view mental properti
fundamentally dependent on physical matter. Moreover, the evidence for the in
is before our own eyes. We can all recognise the distinctive feeling of our experi
inexpressible to others.

It is here also where the dialogue between religion and science are clearest, for
just to explain why we have experiences but why these experiences are the way
this explanation involves describing why experiences feel a certain way to people
premature to declare this a win for dualism. We've progressed a lot in our unde
century. Could not a proper explanation for qualia simply be a future scientific d
mind, we can turn to another response to the challenge of materialism.

Revision Activity:
Go through your notes on each of the arguments you have studied in favour of
mark out of 10 for how philosophically strong you think it is and why you believ

Then, once you have found what you believe to be the strongest argument, wr
from a materialist perspective. Do any of these potentially change your initial s

A Materialist Christianity?

So far, our discussion has been focused primarily around the soul, though the same a
In fact, most concepts of the soul are proposed to be a mechanism by which hum
death. But what if the soul wasn't necessary in order to justify belief in the after
one's intuition, could be part of a largely materialist religion when it comes to life o

Such a suggestion is not out of the question. In fact, if we wish Christianity to co
perspective, it may well be necessary. This is the view at least of the Protestant
forward his **replica theory** of the afterlife. His contention is that after we die Go
as when we were alive, which is the vehicle by which we become reunited with G
you have covered this in some way during your studies, but it is an important co
between Christianity and materialism. Moreover, it is one that also has some sc

Christian theologians, such as St Paul, subscribed in some way to beliefs about th
to many passages in the Bible which suggest this as a possibility, particularly if th

What does this mean? Well, for one it means that beliefs about a soul aren't necessarily connected to beliefs about an afterlife. Hick's project of demytholog Christianity potentially shows that we don't need to invoke a concept of the immaterial for ideas such as heaven and hell to be meani[illegible]. Another support theory for this is Tillich's conceptions of the realm of th[illegible]fterlife, which he construes more to be symbols of psycho[illegible]realities that human beings experience during their lives. Th[illegible]point here is that refutation of a soul is necessarily refutation of [illegible]afterlife. If God is as all-powerful as Christia suggest, th[illegible]ha[illegible]oul isn't needed whatsoever. The result is that belief soul may be[illegible]more **irrational** and less **coherent** if we accept the importance modern scientific perspective.

Here, you can think also about process theology and Hartshorne's suggestion tha **objective immortality** in the afterlife. This means that although human beings w subjective experiences after death, they would persist in the mind and being of a undoubtedly radical and unorthodox, but they are important to consider when di For in the Dialogues part of your course, it is not always enough to present a basi concept such as the soul. Instead, it is important also to judge how this concept f beliefs and affects our understanding of other religious and philosophical phenom the afterlife might just be a sign that certain elements of the Christian faith need altogether should be abandoned.

Revision Activity:
Do you believe that Hick's vision of a materialist Ch[illegible]ty is reasonable? Or human beings have a soul? Write down a f[illegible]of your thoughts, noting whethe with Hick.

Philosophy and the Realms of the Afte

Throughout this section, there has been a broad emphasis on the importance of it comes to beliefs about the soul and the afterlife. Importantly, we've noted tha of the afterlife is held to be consistent with the existence of a soul, we've also se purely materialist perspective on the human person. So, there is a need to asses an afterlife, separate to our discussion of the soul. Yet, it is perhaps even more d evidence beyond Christian dogma for the existence of life after death. By its ver annihilate the possibility of subjective experience, so what else is there to draw o circumstantial evidence such as near-death experiences?

Well, here even Christian thought about the afterlife is naturally vague, as you w scripture seems to contain numerous physical descriptions of heaven- and hell-ty often on the importance of judgement. Thus, what sc[illegible]e aims to impart to r life after death but the need to be prepared. Righteous acts lead to reward, whe punishment. The inherent simplicity of this framework is itself vital to note. Wh are likely to be fair beyond what the human mind can envision. Here, we can ev **accommodation**. God has only revealed the nature of the afterlife simply b understanding is [illegible]y after death that belief and faith may be rewarded. If w going to be, [illegible]ld simply be rational to act well.

The Coherency of Christian Beliefs about the Afterlife

So, philosophical talk about the afterlife doesn't necessarily benefit from an anal
Neither can tell us what the afterlife will be like, nor what its nature might be. H
the consistency and coherency of beliefs about the afterlife with other religious
holds that it is the soul that persists beyond death, then perhaps judging heaven
missing the point. If it is an immaterial part of ourselves that lives on, then shou
thought of as spiritual states? Similarly, if God is beyond it, then why would he
physical punishment? What many Christian thinkers are ultimately seeking is tha
reflects their system of beliefs. If there are inconsistencies, then these can effec
incoherency of the Christian faith as a whole.

A good exa[Zig Zag Education] f this in action is in the eschatological thought of John Hick. Al
that there is purgatory, based on a similar kind of reasoning to the Catholic Chu
universalism – the belief that God will eventually save all people. Yet, if salvatio
wicked, then this belief seems to be irrational. For Hick's theology to be coheren
or state by which individuals are forced to confront their sins and be purified bef
interesting here is that Hick chooses philosophical coherency over adherence to
raises questions about the nature of faith versus reason when talking about the
the afterlife cannot be proved, Hick still chooses to make his theology rationally
faith in a particular form of the afterlife.

Thus, it is important to note that even if belief in the existence of an afterlife is t
this does not mean that philosophical reasoning and reason as a whole do not pl
developing your view to account for the coherency and consistency of your posit
supported by experience or reason.

Revision Activity:
Is belief in heaven and hell more reasonable than belief in purgatory? Or is bel
speculation? For each realm of the afterlife, note down two arguments that m
be reasonable.

[Zig Zag Education]

Exam Question Preparation

Now we've looked at the different dimensions of discussion around the soul and
more about how we can construct arguments for exam questions. The first thing
way that the broader debates between materialist and dualist perspectives fram
this topic. The atheist committed to a wholly rational outlook is likely to say tha
overwhelming, while there is not any significantly strong argument in favour of
matter of faith to believe in a soul and the afterlife. However, this may not elimi
shorthand for a person's character, personality or capacities.

On the other hand, we have a variety of religious positions that oppose this pers
are religious and philosophical arguments for both substance and property duali
render belief in a soul or the afterlife wholly reasonable, do demonstrate th
these concepts that extend beyond mere faith or religious conviction. Mor
of other phenomena such as religious or near-death experiences, there arises at
for recognising the potential existence of a spiritual or immaterial realm. So, the
realm or part of the self is, how might it be coherent and consistent with our

[Zig Zag Education]

With these perspectives in mind, we can consider an exam-style question:

Exam-style Question:
'There is no reasonable evidence for Christian beliefs about the afterlife.'

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue betwe

This question is perhaps one of the most straightforward you might receive, aski reasonableness of a distinct element of this topic. However, it is key to note tha you might receive a question that is a little more open-ended. Nevertheless, eve such as the above, it is still up to you to narrow down a particular line of argume heaven and hell reasonable due to evidence from phenomena such as religious e are they reasonable based on philosophical arguments for God and the soul? Or one adopts a Christian materialist perspective such as Joh k?

Ultimately, what is vital is that you build a r your position carefully and with arguments for a soul, mind or afte e established and then connected to done, it is then necessar s e coherence and consistency of arguments fo anticipating at criticisms that might weaken it. The end result will not existing Chr gma but one which attempts to show the underlying rationality afterlife if there is one to be found!

Revision Prompts:

Based on your studies throughout these sections, these are some revision promp make notes on when preparing for your end-of-year exams. For each, consider h answering the philosophical and theological conflicts it addresses and how other your answer.

1. Is there a good philosophical basis for believing in a mental or spiritual part
2. Should we take a scientific view of the human self, or is there still room for soul?
3. Should Christianity adapt to new philosophical thought about the mind and developing a materialist Christian world view?
4. Do arguments for the soul provide evidential sup oi beliefs about the a
5. Are Christian conceptions about the afte fe oh nt with traditional theo should our understanding of th is afterlife change?

Christianity and Philosophy: Sourc and Authority

Starter Revision Activity:
Revisit the following areas of the Philosophy of Reli[illegible]nd Christianity course listed below, write down one Christian belief th[illegible]been influenced by each, you progress throughout this secti[illegible]

Sources of Authority		
	The Bible	
	Key Terms	Sola scriptura, Inerrancy, biblical criticism
	The Church	
	Key Terms	Sacred tradition, Apostolic succession, Mag
	Reason	
	Key Terms	General revelation, Natural law, Liberal the
	Conscience	
	Key Terms	Ratio, Synderesis, Moral knowledge
	God	
	Key Terms	Divine command theory, Miracles, Revelati
	Religious Experience	
	Key Terms	Special revelation

Introduction – Comparing Different S[illegible]t Authority

Out of all the Philosophy of [illegible]opics in the Dialogues specification, this is t[illegible] knowledge of C[illegible]hris[illegible]e sources of wisdom and authority Christians draw[illegible] generally b[illegible]than the atheist or agnostic. Out of the topics listed above, it [illegible] religion migh[illegible]y draw on reason, experience and perhaps their conscience wh[illegible] the other hand, the Christian might regularly let religious experience, prayer, the[illegible] their views and ideas.

Yet, as you will have analysed as part of the Christianity specification, not all Chri[illegible] authority to be of equal value. Moreover, there are broader philosophical quest[illegible] reasonable to trust in each of these sources of authority. Is believing in the teac[illegible] of faith than reason? And is it truly possible to trust faculties such as conscience[illegible] going over the differences between Christian perspectives but will instead be pe[illegible] different sources of authority from a philosophical perspective, looking at the re[illegible] and our understanding of reason and faith.

Furthermore, we'll be examining how to compare ea[illegible]rc[illegible]of authority from[illegible] influence of Christian dogma. For while Christ[illegible]an [illegible]mig[illegible]trust one source of auth[illegible] often arises outside of philosophical [illegible]or[illegible]g. The history of the Christian Chur[illegible] judgement of different sour[illegible]e[illegible]au[illegible]ority and it is much more useful in Dialogu[illegible] of authority fro[illegible]m bo[illegible]t[illegible]logical and philosophical perspective. What might[illegible] trust for a t[illegible]n [illegible]ess likely to appeal to the atheist. First though, we must l[illegible] reason in th[illegible]osophical world view and how different sources of authority m[illegible]

The Primacy of Reason

Why have we referred to reason as the foremost authority at the start of this sec
scientific perspective, it is hard to deny that reason is perhaps the faculty that pl
belief. We are constantly (at least in philosophy) assessing different sources of i
they logically cohere with our prior understanding of the world. Moreover, the c
knowledge is based on the systematic application of reason to our experiences a
arguments could one present to accept other sources of authority which aren't s

Well, in reality, we don't really employ reason as often as we might think we do.
last non-fiction book you read (even this companion is an example). Reading it, y
that the information contained in that book was – on the whole – true, unless you
was lying. Such trust isn't likely solely based on reason. If you were reading a
most likely be trusting in the information based on the credentials of the author
knowledge you learn is likely to be judged against other knowledge which you ha
the credentials of an author or a publisher). In fact, most of the things we learn
beyond use of our reason.

As another example, think about your observations of the room around you. Wh
observe many different objects, such as tables or chairs, it isn't necessarily reaso
the attempts to justify trust in our experiences through reason alone haven't exa
successful. The most famous example is in Descartes' *Meditations*, where he be
therefore I am') and uses this initial argument as a foundation for his concept of
which he then attempts to develop an ontological argument for the existence of
that God would never deceive human beings, so human beings can trust in our s

Descartes' arguments aren't exactly airtight and you certainly will have your own
point is that regardless of the overall primacy of reason, we regularly employ var
our way through the world. More importantly, this trust often rests on different
about the world. This means that when thinking about sources of authority, it is
distinction between 'belief in' and 'belief that'. For our beliefs about different so
extra assurance of things beyond the mere physical facts that surround our belie
trust that it is essential to probe in Dialogues and which provide an important fo
faith as a whole.

Christianity and Reason

In your studies into Christianity, you will have examined the different ways that
the use of reason in analysis of scripture and theology. Yet, with the exception o
denominations which hold the Bible to be **self-authenticating**, you are unlikely t
Christian denominations denying the importance of reason in faith. From the Ca
reason is routinely employed as a source of authority, though often secondary to
and the Church.

However, there is a natural tension between reason and other sources of author
importantly, it is difficult to ascertain to what extent claims based on reason sh
Christian teachings. For instance, liberal Christians are likely to argue that any te
coherent with a scientific world view. Reason suggests that the world is organi
Christian teachings about the natural ordering and purpose shouldn't be ac
from another source of authority in the faith. A classic example of this preceden
is the theory of evolution, which liberal Christians will typically take to be true de
creation accounts in the Bible.

Yet conservative Christians are unlikely to feel the same way. Sources of authori
information directly imparted by God, who is omniscient and infallible. Why sho
trusted over the greatness of the Christian God? In this way, it is easy to see hov

the importance of reason in the Christian faith. If it is believed that reason is a G natural faculty, then it seems absurd to prioritise other sources of authority over believed that human reason is impaired, e.g. by the Fall, or that other sources of then it arguably is rational to prioritise revelation over the information we receiv

Now, such a distinction of course ignores the wider debate over the authenticity important to think about nonetheless. Within philosophy and other fields, the what reason actually is and how it should be applied. What may be reasonable t necessarily reasonable to another, and when considering the sources of authorit huge role, it is more difficult to discern sources that are reasonable than when w arguments, such as those for the existence of God we explored in the first sectio of the debate. Furthermore, the plurality of sources of authority makes it difficult to apply a dualistic fr onto issues surrounding this topic.

Revision Activity:
To what extent should Christians judge their beliefs against the use of their rea source of authority or simply a check upon the sources of authority we use?

As a simple exercise, note down three traditional Christian beliefs and analyse undermine their plausibility. Do the results of this process require abandoning them to better fit a modern world view?

Analysing Rationality, Coherency and Consistency

So, what kind of analysis can we perform? Well, the complexity of the issue doe developing philosophical arguments one way or the other. If, for example, I put experience as a source of authority above all else, one might question this judge problems with religious experience as a whole. Thus, the question for the Christ it is rational to endorse multiple sources of authority over one. This issue has be discussions around Catholicism's Protestant sources of authority, but there is p philosophical analysis.

This kind of analysis ties into questions about the coherency and consistency of While I used the example of complete trust in religious experience as a 'weak' po thinkers (such as Kierkegaard or Schleiermacher) who have adopted this position philosopher of religion John Hick, whom you've studied in various guises, argues heart of all religious enterprise (although he also strongly advocates for a rationa to the Christian faith does not necessarily also mean adherence to the Bible or th

The ultimate point here is that the problem of sources of authority is very open- single ultimate 'rational' Christian or atheistic position. Thus, when thinking abo Christianity, faith and reason, it is more vital than ever to narrow down your own of each source of authority and judging how it might fit into an overall consisten be that you can exactly quantitatively weight the importance of every source of long as you can identify those sources which should be emphasised for a Christian can be constructed and outlined.

Revision Activity:
Do you believe it is necessary for all Christian ideas to be coherent? Or does th this is a fool's errand?

Similarly to the last exercise, pick out three Christian beliefs and analyse any in them. Are satisfactory answers available for these incoherencies, or should Ch help find a solution?

So far, we have noted two key ideas in this section. The first is that trust in sourc different sets of assumptions. The second is that a variety of different reason- o developed out of these assumptions. Moving on from this, we can think a little m sources of authority you have covered in your studies and how they might be ph such as religious experience, will be analysed only briefly as they are covered in topics. However, others – such as the Bible and the Church – will take centre sta dissected in detail.

The Bible

The status of the Bible is an issue you will have covered quite a bit in your Christi have analysed the relationship between the different books and parts of scriptur teachings within it as well as the correct interpretation of key figures such as Jes theology are grounded on the fundamental belief that the Bible in some way is a Moreover, the main thrust of atheistic criticisms of Christianity (and other religio does not reflect any special truth or revelation. It is just a book written by huma the forces and laws that govern the natural world. It is perhaps easy to conjure u events that by their nature can appear mysterious to the naked eye. But for mo scientific world view, such explanations are less than convincing.

We will look at such critical arguments in more detail when we analyse the issue companion. But the case against the Bible being a source of authority can take a of a priori argument, holding that no text should be held as possessing supreme human beings. In other words, human beings have always got things wrong and Maintaining any text or faculty as possessing authority above all else is just a rec can also take a more a posteriori approach, holding that the authority of any tex our current evidence and experiences. Thus when we analyse the Bible, we n should naturally count against its authority. This means that our trust in any tex

Now, such perspectives naturally come into conflict with a Christian world view. at what point does being subject to revision affects its status as a source of auth would be happy to accept that the Bible contains human error. But they might a underlying truths which reflect the will of God. Therefore, it may also ironically b disregard the authority of the Bible based on its various errors. On the other ha traditional Christians might regard the Bible, at heart, to still be infallible. What failure to understand its deeper message.

Coherency, Consistency and Scripture

As such, a key issue here is determining whether a lack of apparent **coherency** an affect trust in it as a source of authority. While it is clear that the Bible doesn't al set of teachings, this does not necessarily prevent it from being valuable to Christ has to be tempered with other sources of authority. Yet, there is also the possibi lack of coherency and consistency, along with potential errors, means that it shou source of authority when, philosophically speaking, there are more reliable sourc

So how do these problems tie into reason and faith? Well, it may highlight the ir **sola scriptura**, which holds the Bible to be of the utmost authority. Unless there aid interpretation of external issues found within scripture, belief in its infalli matter of faith. Similarly, when the authors seem to present beliefs that are no be irrational to trust the Bible on issues to which modern-day scientific belief is t then why should the Bible be trusted at all? Is it not meant to explain why the w

Well, it may also be irrational to take a wholly simplistic or one-sided view of Chr
we noted in the beginning, trust in texts or scripture rarely is conducted on a cas
particular are likely to point out the value of the Bible in giving deeper ethical an
beyond the remits of scientific explanation. In other words, critical examination
of the Bible may miss the point when thinking about its value as a source of auth
contain scientific errors, the Bible may not be a scientific text. Trust in it as a sou
process of analysing its unifying, underlying message, not its surface explanation
irrational to dismiss it based on the presence of human errors in its pages.

Ultimately, what is key is that 'belief' in the Bible is not a mere example of faith in
at least partially reasoned out by considering the kinds of teachings the Bible o
play out when looking at the broader relationship between religion and science (w
companion), answers the Bible provides are potentially ones beyond which a
this means that in it trust is not necessarily misplaced. Yet, at the same time, com
misguided. Thus, scripture in itself can be a key case study of the relationship betw
highlight both the shortcomings of a completely 'rational' outlook and the need fo
scripture. In fact, this latter perspective we can analyse in a bit more detail when

Revision Activity:
For each of the subjects below, research two biblical passages that provide con
found, assess how from a Christian perspective you might seek to resolve such
assessment involve accepting the principles of liberal theology?

1. Gender
2. Wealth
3. The afterlife

The Church

In comparison to the Bible, thinking about the Church as a source of authority co
discussions. With the Bible we're asking to what degree trust should be placed
large, has remained unchanged since the time it was written. While this potenti
becoming out-dated as beliefs change throughout history, the same is not necess
Christian Church is potentially much more flexible (depending on one's views) an
knowledge and ideas. Thus, when thinking about whether to trust the Church as
to ask what kind of Church we're envisioning and the relationship between reaso

Reason and the Catholic Church

One easy example to draw on here is the Catholic Church. Adherents believe tha
the Church is the continuing link between God and the world, with its clergy divi
appointed to carry God's will throughout human history. This in part is based on
the idea of apostolic succession; that the Church has an unbroken line of clergy t
can be traced back to the earliest Apostles. Thus, it reflects what was being taug
during Jesus' lifetime and immediately afterwards. However, it also maintains th
the Magisterium is capable of issuing new religious laws. Being ordained is not
simply a matter of repeating old teachings but instead interpreting and crafting
new ones based on novel religious insights into the Bible and tradition.

So strangely enough, this is a situation where one is required to trust the Churc
unchanging teaching but also to trust it because it is a body ordained by God an
interpreting it well. There is both faith in the Church as the true voice of God bu
is necessary in order to ensure that Christian teaching is relevant to modern aud
accept the idea that the Church has any sanctity at all? Surely the Apostles were
why, therefore, should tradition govern how we view the world? Such questions
difficult to answer, especially for the Catholic Church as their position on many e
begun to look increasingly backwards in the modern age.

Other Approaches to the Church

On the other hand, we might take the line of many Protestant Churches and hold source of authority, it is not sacred in and of itself. It primarily is a source of teac Christians in order to help them understand the Bible. Here, one could hold that more rational position on the Church. If one disagrees with the Church, it is not the Catholic Church which is supposed to carry sacred authority. Moreover, it ca the Church is more likely to result in a more critical ar[illegible]h to scripture as ther interpretation, determined solely by those wh[illegible]ned.

Such conclusions are arguably [illegible]fore[illegible]n the large number of different denomin Protestant Church. Yet [illegible]a view of the Church arguably leads to its own set o we can ask [illegible]er [illegible]church is truly a source of authority at all if its own teach reason. Sur[illegible]at is being talked about is the use of knowledge and reason to g arbitrary or faith-based trust in an institution? Unless the Church does possess sc the Church perhaps isn't a proper source of authority at all, merely a place of spir

Nevertheless, the final part you should be considering in this debate is to what e a source of authority to Christians. Maybe the idea of a centralised Church alwa Should the Church function as anything more than a place to meet like-minded p authority of the Church may be an important step towards rational reform wher over sustaining tradition. Here, you might use the Quakers as a key example. As Church structures or hierarchies, it potentially embodies a different perspective function and the responsibility of individuals to develop their own insights and ic

Conscience, Religious Experience and God

So far, we've set up a discourse that focuses on a com[illegible]or between the Chur authority, for by and large the daily life of a Ch[illegible]is an[illegible]revolve around these t also take time to consider a few other [illegible]ur[illegible]hat you might employ in your arg discussed individually in other [illegible]ics, [illegible]t it is worth bringing them to the fore a s sources of authority.

The first sou[illegible]e can consider is that of conscience. For many Christians, cons voice or will of God working through them. When a pang of conscience is felt, th potentially transgressing God's will. However, this isn't the only interpretation. A more developed view that conscience is the application of reason, guided towar **synderesis** – the notion that human beings are naturally inclined to do good and critics such as Freud argued that conscience is merely the expression of conflictin superego clashing with the id.

Here it is clear to see the relationship between reason and faith in action. If con God's will, then it is perfectly rational to follow it. Yet, it is perhaps also a matte conscience reflects God's will in the first place, rather than, as Freud suggests, ar Nevertheless, even if Freud is right, many Christians will maintain some kind of t if it has guided them towards good before. Moreover, o[illegible]again we reach a kin conscience is perhaps, at least partially, based on [illegible]ne[illegible]ion that its reliability is, God. There is also the further troubling [illegible]s[illegible]at it is unclear to what extent ex consistency can weigh in on th[illegible]ida[illegible]e given by conscience. It is a purely inte person, and thus it can[illegible]t[illegible]veyed as anything more than a feeling or an im

A similar kin[illegible]oblem emerges in the case of religious experience. As we will special properties of religious experience (numinous, ineffable) make it difficult t reason. Since our reason is in some way dependent on experience altogether, it properties of religious experience should guide us towards trusting or distrusting experience, then it is certainly reasonable to hold it as a source of authority, but dangerous, especially if religious experiences guide us towards potentially delusi

Thus, we can arrive at the final source of authority: God himself. This is importa about other sources of authority and the ways they can be trusted. For there is behind Christians' use of the Bible, the Church and other sources of authority su experience. This principle of faith is that it is God who is revealing himself throu omniscient, then these sources must contain truths about the world, even if the However, the tricky part for the atheist is arguing against this fundamental princ that God does not exist is a separate argument to holding that certain sources of analysed through reason.

But this is perhaps what the arguments about sources of authority boil down to hold that faith is a key principle in God and so this faith also extends to sourc by God. Th[illegible] it is important to be careful when constructing arguments about s claiming tha[illegible] does or does not exist still does not answer the question abou beings should put into sources such as the Bible. At the same time, it cannot be the Bible goes beyond mere reasonable judgement due to this underlying faith in

Revision Activity:
Which source of authority do you believe Christians should prioritise in their ev write down three arguments for and against your views.

Exam Question Preparation

The most fundamental question you might be asked is: *What source of authority trustworthy*? And throughout this section we've explored a number of different and delved into the underlying assumptions behind these answers. Nevertheles complex and difficult to tease out topics in the Dialogue of Identification as so muc sources of authority in the Christian religion is based on the belief that God has r means to human beings. Nonetheless, one could construct a number of differen of which we will explore.

The first we[illegible]nswer is that of the typical Protestant view – that the Bible is We might be[illegible]y noting a few key Christian perspectives, such as Barth's view authority as it is a witness to the revelation of Jesus Christ. From this we can pro truly disentangle what is correct witness versus human error? Does this not req such as the Church? Should not our reason come before belief in the testimonie much more mythological society and world view? Is even holding the Bible to be admission that belief in its teachings is a matter of faith? And does this mean th experience God, either through conscience or religious experience?

A similar approach can be taken with the Church or any other source of authority note here is that if you do select a single source of authority to focus on, you mus supporting arguments and criticisms to a select key few. It is easy to get sidetrack same is true conversely if you choose to hold that Christians should adopt multipl have the time to delve into complex arguments for each, it is important that yo of each source while fending off criticisms that might suggest that Christians prior

Other Forms of Question

The second kind of question you might be asked is a direct comparison of two di authority. For instance, the June 2018 paper for the Christianity Dialogues speci

Exam-style Question:
'Secular critiques of the Church have undermined Christian beliefs about the au

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue betwe

Here, your answer is narrowed down for you. But equally this means that it is no of authority in particular. Whatever argument you are constructing, it must be f these kinds of more direct question that might appear. In our example of the ar earlier, it becomes easy to adapt this position when answering this question. All problems that trust in the Bible faces from contemporary critiques of the Church surrounding the trustworthiness of Christian tradition and the Church's use of re interpretations of a document that has been deeply shap theological debat address whether continued trust in the Church is ce de the Bible is regarded the primary source of authority. Yet, if t e ase, are Christians still require such as the incarnation or Trinity?

Such questi ill s easier to answer after you complete your revision fo Neverthele ikely that the questions you will face will focus on one of thes found purely in the Christianity specification. As such, it is worth ensuring that y different ways that Christians of different movements and denominations might surrounding religious sources of authority.

Revision Prompts:

Based on your studies throughout these sections, these are some revision promp make notes on when preparing for your end-of-year exams. For each, consider h answering the philosophical and theological conflicts it addresses and how other your answer.

1. To what extent should reason be a key source of authority in the lives of eve
2. Does reason fundamentally undermine trust in other Christian sources of au trust in revelation and faith?
3. Should the Bible be viewed as infallible, or are th o many internal cont to work?
4. What role should the Church ha a ce of authority in contrast to the
5. Are any other sources of ority, such as religious experience or conscien Bible and the Ch

CHRISTIANITY AND PHILOSOPHY: RELIGI

Starter Revision Activity:
Revisit the following areas of the Philosophy of Religion and Christianity course religious experience below, note down one historical event that fits the criteria when progressing through this section.

Religious Experience		**Forms of Religious Experienc**
	Key Terms	Corporeal, Imaginative, Intellectual, Mystic
	Key Thinkers	Rudolf Otto, William James, Stace, Happold
		Analysis of Religious Experien
	Key Terms	Principle of credulity, Principle of testimony
	Key Thinkers	Richard Swinburne, Peter Vardy, Sigmund F
		Religious Experience, Verification and
	Key Terms	Cognitivism, Non-cognitivism, Form of life
	Key Thinkers	A J Ayer, Antony Flew, Ludwig Wittgenstein

Introduction – Philosophy, Theology and Religious Experience

In the last topic we briefly looked at religious experience as a source of authority discussion to be had about the nature of religious experience and whether it can evidence about the existence of God. Here, reason and faith are difficult concep judge what kinds of experiences are trustworthy over others? While some might our experiences converge in a kind of public agreement, such a process isn't nec widespread occurrences of religious experience, contrary to the wishes of atheis of convergence around a distinctly otherworldly source. In this sense, religious e own views, might be an incomplete matter of faith or a reasonable source of author

The Nature of Religious Experience

So how do we tease out a constructive philosophical debate around religious exp arguably three parts to your studies that can be drawn into any discussion. The experience itself. While we noted already that there does seem to be widespre experiences around the world, is it really correct to say that these all share comm Philosophy of Religion course, you will have studied numerous different types of corporeal to intellectual to mystical forms. All these are oriented around God, b similarities end. In fact, despite the work of William James and other thinkers, a heart of religious experience is a set of shared sentiments. The actual expressio experiences vary so wildly that it may not be right to gather them all under the s

The Authenticity of Religious Experien

The second part is thinking about the properties of religious experience itself and for an argument for the existence of God. Most commonly, religious experience numinous. These properties mean that it is vastly different from our ordinary ex of convergence or public agreement that typically verifies our everyday observat here, we can differentiate between **public** and **personal** evidence for God. Even form an effective base of evidence for a broad philosophical argument for God, t incontrovertible evidence for an individual's belief in God. Moreover, without ac be difficult for the atheist critic to argue against such personal reasons for a thei

However, in another sense, these unique properties also maybe give reason to d
religious experience. Here, various arguments have been given by religious think
Richard Swinburne, for instance, provides two principles (the **principles of testin
argues make trust in the authenticity of religious experiences a matter of ordina
doubt our experiences unless given good reason, so why do the same for religiou
might think of religious experiences as essentially **basic**, to echo Alvin Plantinga's
beliefs. If this is the case, then religious experiences are also to any other kind o
building blocks of faith just as our ordinary experiences are the building blocks o

Yet, it is possible to take another view of these unique properties of religious exp
differentiate them from other kinds of experience. On a fundamental level, we c
experiencing in our daily lives as any kind of corporeal, material thing, so it is
experience a special kind of experience. The trouble is, of course, that we can
properties, in so marking out religious experience as special, give us ample reaso
Such questions may arise from the similarities of religious experiences to phenom
the lack of verifiability of the things being experienced (God). We will look at the
later on, but for the moment we can turn to another slightly more nuanced issue
religious experience.

Religious Experience and Language

As part of your studies, you will have looked at philosophical ideas such as verific
While they appear to primarily concern religious language, they also tie in to deb
For a key part of Christianity is not just historical accounts of religious experience
Christians have of God. Yet, as we have noted already, religious experiences are
can these statements, accounts and testimonies of religious experience have me
verificationist understanding of religious language, then arguably they do not. T
religious experience would be either making metaphysical claims (about the inte
which can't be verified or simply talking nonsense altogether.

However, there may be perhaps we take a **non-cognitivist** view of religious la
ideas about language games. If this is the case, then talk of religious experiences
verified, it just has to have meaning according to the rules of the relevant langua
though slightly more difficult, way to think about religious experiences. Essentia
intended to be public arguments for the existence of God but ways for believers
of their experiences in a way that is meaningful to those who have experienced a
many theists, this might seem a bit defeatist. Surely religious experiences across
evidence for God?

It is likely that many people would be unhappy relegating religious experience to
there is good scope for thinking about the ways in which religious experiences m
least expressed symbolically in religious practice. Moreover, such an interpretat
criticisms made of religious experience and the testimonies given by people who
for the moment, we shall turn to these criticisms and see how the theist might re

Revision Activity:
Which of the factors listed so far do you believe is the most impactful when ass
source of knowledge? Using your answer, note three supporting argumen

Is Religious Experience a Trustworthy Source o

So, we've analysed a few different angles on thinking about religious experience trust them as a source of authority? Can we build an argument for the existence of religious experiences? What we will focus on in this section is whether belief experiences is a matter of faith or reason. For while it may seem that the specia experiences give us reason to distrust them, the reality is a little more complex. studied as part of your Philosophy of Religion cou... ...ne key consideration a vital role in living religion today, not just ... ...hey can be authenticated in first take a look at the case for religious experience.

Christianity, Religious Experience and Faith

The first thing to note when thinking about religious experience in the context of Christianity is that there is commonly seen to be an element of irrepressibility in the nature of religious experiences themselves. By this, I mean that someone who undergoes a religious experience struggles to reconcile their experience of God wit their ordinary life and world view. When you studied figures such as Rudolf Otto, hopefully you caught on to this aspect, for he captures it with the term *fascinans* (o fascinating). In other words, those who have religious experiences are not just blin placing their faith in whatever they have seen. They often have to work through th challenge of seemingly experiencing something which is beyond their understandin

Such forms of conflict can be seen in many of the major religious figures of the C Moses, Abraham or even St Paul. Thus, even in Christianity, there is an implicit d between reason and faith within religious experiences themselves. What this hi with religious experiences is also coming to terms with a being (God) that requir to have an authentic religious experience and then to continue living the same li happened. William James also notes this in his study of religious experience. H key tests for an authentic religious experience is whether it produces genuine ch

The Cumulative Case Argument

So, what does this tell us about the trustworthiness of religious experiences? Well, complete certainty about religious experiences is impossible. Rather, there is alwa in any religious experience. Thus, the kind of argument for God based on religious **inductive** to a significant degree. Moreover, it is a kind of **cumulative case** argume experience provides additional evidence for potential existence of God that interve these religious experiences are generated in human minds. The result is a kind of b primarily of witness testimonies that by themselves might be doubtable but en ma

This is an important aspect you should note when developing an argument. The argument that religious experiences must be caused by God but that the overall experience is an argument for God. Such arguments are also strengthened by th of all shapes and sizes continue to happen, whether they be through basic praye Moreover, the trust in any individual experience is strengthened by the similar e undergone and the way these continue to develop within the Christian Church to and wealth of religious experience is an important context to consider, not just i

Perhaps the most interesting way we can think about religious experiences in thi ordinary experiences. ... novel that human beings experience is often dis experience... ...and we overcome internal barriers towards belief, it b that a novel experience is trustworthy, even if there is still an element of faith in process theists wish to illuminate when talking about whether religious proposit considered **basic**. Moreover, it is a kind of process still in action today in the Chr progress to looking at some criticisms of the authenticity of religious experience, slightly philosophical perspective.

Individual and Corporate Religious Experience

So far, examining the argument for God from religious experience has primarily foc
But there are cases where **corporate** religious experiences seem to have occurred,
During a fairly brief period, a large number of people at a Christian Church had very
which eventually led to a revival movement in the area. So why is corporate religio
separately? Well, the nature of corporate religious experience is difficult to discern
experiences tend to be private, so the appearance of co[illegible]eligious experience
sure everyone had a similar religious experience? How could they have communica

For instance, the Toronto Blessing involved what many considered to be supernatu
of the religious experience involved the manifestation of physical behaviours, thus
automatically [illegible] nature. Many have criticised reports of the Toronto Bl
atheistic perspectives. The former typically point out that the events didn't reflect
way God has typically communicated himself to modern audiences. On the other h
claimed that the events were the result of mass hysteria, where the behaviour of so
others to behave in a similar way and delude themselves into thinking they had a g

Thus, corporate religious experiences are difficult to evaluate. Under the cumulati
would appear as if they are strong evidence for a single divine source of such expe
corporate religious experience shows the importance of considering not just the n
quality of these testimonies also. The cumulative case argument for God based on
point to a large number of experiences as evidence. It has to demonstrate that the
reliable and trustworthy. Otherwise, as we shall see, the atheist has an easy line o

Revision Activity:
Research the Toronto Blessing once again. Considering the time frame and the
right to call the events a corporate religious experience [illegible] it a number of inc
bound together?

Write down two arguments for each position. From these, evaluate whether t
with defining a corporate religious experience.

Is It Reasonable to Trust Religious Experiences?

There is a clear line of argument for the theist when talking about religious expe
the large number of religious experiences that have occurred throughout the wo
principles such as Swinburne's principles of testimony and credulity as reasons to
unless given significant reason otherwise. Then, connecting these two lines of a
the cumulative case that such religious experiences are more likely than not to h
God, especially considering the other religious evidence for his existence.

Yet, even within this argument, there is a clear line of attack for the atheist. As y
principles of testimony and credulity still admit that we may have reason to doul
experiences and the reports people make of them. Now, the special qualities of
themselves may not be enough to doubt them without other evidence, but the a
set of explanations for religious experience, ones that may well draw attention t
Moreover, they might even draw comparisons between religious experiences an
consider indicative of mental health conditions, heavy drug use or even extreme

For instance, consider the [illegible] Christian account of the conversion of Saul on t
Saul witnessed a flash of light from heaven before Jesus appeared before him. A
St Paul after [illegible] was blind for three days and did not eat or drink. Taking this
might simply say that Saul had a religious vision and was converted. But the athe
If Saul was travelling, it is likely he would have been tired and hungry, maybe eve
even be the result of these factors, or even just due to a moment of psychosis or
from uncommon in human beings across the world. Why should we jump to bel
experience, especially when it seems so out of the ordinary?

Psychological Explanations for Religious Experience

Alternative explanations for religious experiences are often described in psychol
kinds of qualities thought to be unique to religious experiences are a product of
example you are likely to have studied is Freud's arguments concerning religion,
God is a form of wish fulfilment developed in response to our anxieties about the
world. Religious experience may well simply be part of this wish fulfilment, whe
comfort so much that their brain convinces them that certain experiences have a
they might be the result of ordinary neurosis or delusions.

Similar sentiments have been echoed by other atheist critics, where religious exp
the result of a natural human need to seek patterns of order in the world. In the
knowledge, we, as human beings resorted to explaining natural phenome
earthquakes, as the result of higher powers. Yet, in the modern world, we now
offer adequate explanations for most of the things we observe in the world. Thu
and its associated experiences has been quelled in developed nations. Such a th
secularisation observed in Western countries.

Nevertheless, there are a few problems with such a view. Despite our increased
spirituality have far from diminished among human beings. Rather it can be argu
religion has simply declined. Furthermore, these kinds of psychological explanat
strongest argument against God himself. For surely if God did exist, it is reasona
have created beings with an innate desire or wish to seek him out. In an importa
explanations for religious experience rely on conjectures about the maturity or i
But these kinds of explanations themselves are difficult to test and don't always
spirituality and religious experiences manifest themselves in the real world.

Neurophysiological Explanations for Religious Experience

Instead, an alternative kind of explanation can be put forward in neurophysiolog
is not a product of the mind but a direct product of the brain; neurons firing in c
accidentally, due to our cultural background, project a religious meaning onto. N
complex organ of which we still know very little. But scientists have already pro
neurophysiological level and explored the various triggers that can form differen
psychoses. Moreover, we have a wealth of evidence about conditions such as sc
which can produce the kinds of experiences one might mistake as religious.

Why is this important though? Can these natural occurrences not be responded
psychological explanations? Well, not quite. The problem occurs when looking a
testimony and credulity. For if, on a neurobiological level, we cannot easily tell t
experiences and other mental phenomena, then it is hard to tell what a genuine,
Moreover, if religious experiences share a lot in common with other kinds of me
delusions, then it may even be fair to distrust the authenticity of religious experi
qualities. In other words, we are given reasonable suspicion to doubt both the c
and the testimonies of those who have undergone one.

Revision Activity:
Research Michael Persinger and the 'God Helmet' he developed to test religiou
is good evidence for a neurophysiological explanation for religious experience?
ideas.

Talking about Religious Experience and

The final issue we can analyse is that of the testimonies about religious experien number of angles to potentially approach this from. One is the distinction betwe **cognitivism**, which we shall analyse more in the next section. Simply put, are th experience really giving factual statements, which we should analyse as true or f kind of declaration of faith, which cannot be understood on a objective level, b subjective meaning alone? Here, we can bring in the idea of Wittgenstein's lang reporting of religious experiences is itself contained within a religious language g religious experiences are nonsensical to those who have not had one themselves converted to a religious way of life as a result.

This is an ir g idea to consider. For while it concedes that religious experi argument fo existence of God, it does retain their meaning even if there are authenticity. A similar kind of debate can even be found when we turn to discus could take an anti-realist position on religious experiences in the same way one c on miraculous events. It is not about whether religious experiences are direct, c it's about the fashion in which they allow human beings to probe their inner spir these kinds of non-cognitivist or anti-realist positions do make religious experien reason. But for those who are religious, this conceding of the reasonable ground

Thus, it is key to consider these kinds of approaches to religious experiences. Fo authenticity cannot be proved to be reasonable, it can still be questioned wheth really matters to those who have undergone a religious experience and adopted what William James said about the authenticity of religious experiences as whole effective public argument for the existence of God, it is not unreasonable or surp one will change their perspective and way of life.

Exam Question Preparation

Now, we've un one kind of exam question you might encounter in the Let's briefly this question and see how we can apply our knowledge from

Exam-style Question:
'Scientific explanations of religious experience undermine the authority of the

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue betwe

Here, the emphasis is on the trustworthiness and authenticity of religious experi you will be expected to deal with how criticisms of religious experiences may hav scripture. The clearest issue perhaps is that if religious experiences cannot be re evidence for God, then we should perhaps dismiss elements of the Bible which r experiences. The problem, of course, is that in the Bible these are everywhere, v burning bush, the conversion of Saul, or even the resurrection experiences. So, i verifying the authenticity of religious experiences the foundational authority of

There are plenty of arguments we've analysed that can be explored here. If you might talk about the difficulties of religious experience, the problems with aspects, or the various modern explanations that are presented for its occu disagree, you must point towards the significant role religious experiences still p cumulative case argument for the authenticity of religious experiences, and the p credulity given by Swinburne. All these may just about give good reason to trust sought to relay the authentic and trustworthy experiences of those in the early C

The same kinds of arguments, however, can also be developed with more genera
authenticity of religious experience. Take a quick look at the exam-style questio

Exam-style Question:
'Religious experience cannot provide trustworthy knowledge about the existen

Critically examine and evaluate this view with refere[illegible]e dialogue betwe

This is perhaps a more common and [illegible] question you may encounter. Y
Christian religious experienc[illegible] demonstrate how they led to significant
key example might h[illegible] conversion and his writing of the Letters in the New
experience[illegible] to teachings such as the Ten Commandments. Yet, you c
philosophic[illegible]ments about the credulity of religious experiences and the use
case, it is most important that you both acknowledge the role of religious experi
analyse what kind of knowledge both ancient and contemporary Christians migh
religious experiences.

Revision Prompts:
Based on your studies throughout these sections, these are some revision promp
make notes on when preparing for your end-of-year exams. For each, consider h
answering the philosophical and theological conflicts it addresses and how other
your answer.

1. Is it correct to distinguish between different kinds of religious experience, o
   share similar qualities?
2. Does the private nature and ineffability of religious e[illegible]iences prevent the
   for an argument for the existence of God?
3. Should religious experiences be thou[illegible]a[illegible]rustworthy source of know
4. Is any form of religious expe[illegible]e[illegible]e evidence for God than another? I
5. Are there any convi[illegible]p[illegible]ological or neurophysiological explanations f
   these u[illegible]mi[illegible]gious experience as a source of authority for Christians

Christianity and Philosophy: The Between Scientific and Religious

Starter Revision Activity:
Revisit the following areas of the Philosophy of Reli[illegible]nd Christianity course scientific theories studied, note down the m[illegible]or Ch[illegible]an beliefs threatened by evaluate whether Christian claims [illegible]e reconciled with a scientific world view this section.

Science and Developments in Christian Thought		**Evolution**
	Key Terms	Natural selection, Mutation
	Key Thinkers	Charles Darwin, Richard Dawkins, Richard S
		Big Bang Theory
	Key Terms	Space–time, Singularity, Infinity
	Key Thinkers	William Lane Craig
		Quantum Mechanics
	Key Terms	Free will, Determinism, Indeterminism
	Key Thinkers	John Polkinghorne

Christian Responses to Issues Raised by Science		**Genetic Engineering**
	Key Terms	Gene therapy, G[illegible]ng, Designer babie
		Ethical Issues
	Key Terms	[illegible]g, Embryo research, Abortion, Euthan

Scientific Perspectives in Christian Arguments		**Arguments for the Existence of**
	Key Terms	Infinite regress, Causal principle, Multiverse
	Key Thinkers	Thomas Aquinas, William Lane Craig, Bertra
		Religious Experiences
	Key Terms	Psychology, Neuroscience, Wish fulfilment,
	Key Thinkers	Sigmund Freud, Richard Dawkins
		Religious Language
	Key Terms	Verification, Falsification, Verification princ
	Key Thinkers	A J Ayer, Antony Flew, Ludwig Wittgenstein
		Life After Death
	Key Terms	Physicalism, Mat[illegible]n, Monism
		Miracles
	Key Terms	[illegible]l law, Mass hysteria, Verification
	Ke[illegible]	David Hume, Maurice Wiles, Richard Swinb

Introduction – The Influence of Science upon Christianity

Throughout the companion so far, we've looked at a number of issues where the view' has played a key role in assessing the impact of reason on the Christian fait have always accommodated the importance of reason within their theology, the that is now equated (perhaps wrongly) with a scientific outlook. The basic idea i to an unparalleled growth in knowledge about the world, and as science is the sy our observations and experiences, the intuitive conclusions that science and re

Yet, at the same time, there are still areas of philosophy and theology whe of reason. Ethics is perhaps the most key example. Knowing how the natural wo give us an insight into how we should behave. Nevertheless, there are also many require sort[illegible] knowledge, such as genetic engineering. In these cases, w science don[illegible]essarily overlap, they do inform each other to some degree.

On the other hand, this relationship is not always two-way. With the rise of scie liberal Christianity, which examines and re-evaluates Christian teaching based on given us. This means that liberal Christians generally try to avoid subscribing to t of the faith and, in many cases, jettison aspects of Christian theology that natura view. The aim is for a more mature Christianity, although many critics argue tha Christianity removes its distinctiveness as a religion and fails to recognise the sig

Furthermore, there is the possibility that liberal Christianity has simply kicked th kerb. If it is so necessary to 'demythologise' the Christian faith, is that not just a religion has become irrelevant? If it fails to explain why the world behaves in th echoes moral sentiments that human beings naturally hold, should we simply re instead maintain a purely scientific world view?

Overall, the Christian faith can be seen to[illegible]between a rock and a hard place wh science. Those conservative Christians who refute key scientific teachings appea choosing blind faith in the face of overwhelming evidence and knowledge. On th Christians who[illegible]accommodate scientific teaching, in an attempt to ren rational, co[illegible]and consistent with a scientific world view, may well be tacitly of the religion today. Thus the aim of this section is to look over your studies so broader questions that arise out of this fork in the road that Christians face toda

Revision Activity:

What influences do you believe have led to increased secularisation in the Wes phenomena below on which have been most and least influential on the declin

1. Science
2. Alternative religions and spiritual beliefs
3. Political separation of Church and state
4. Changing Christian beliefs about evangelism and conversion
5. Changing cultural norms

Verification, Falsification and Christia

The first to[illegible]this[illegible]gues section that you might be asked to specifically ad about the n[illegible]f religious language. While at first this might seem to be a se the logical positivists, as well as figures such as Antony Flew, were keen to refash more scientific image. In other words, verification was what scientists were con the natural world, so why should all human beings not be concerned with verific Flew drew his ideas about falsification from the work of Karl Popper, who had de demarcating the field of science from that of pseudoscience or non-science.

Logical Positivism

So, let's begin with the verification principle. The key thing to remember here is was not developed as a way to determine what human beings should say or do b kinds of statements could be said to be **cognitively meaningful**. This means they be realistically judged to be true or false. It is particularly important to note this around whether Christianity should be interpreted from a **cognitivist** or **non-cog** that could very well come up in your end-of-year exams.

So, the verification principle, in asking that statements be either analytically t synthetically, obviously takes a cognitivist world view. Yet, even if Christians acc verification principle applicable to religious beliefs? This is perhaps the mo Dialogues. Fortunately that you won't need to consider the internal problems with much as whether it truly captures the meaningfulness of Christian discourse. Co such as 'Jesus possesses both fully human and fully divine natures', one of the m Chalcedon. Can such a metaphysical claim be verified? Unlikely, but equally it d the Christian faith, one that many people subscribe to.

Falsificationism

The same problem comes forth when we think about falsification. In your studie at Antony Flew's criticism (arising out of the **parable of the invisible gardener**) b Mitchell and R M Hare. Flew's argument presents a strong cognitivist challenge a statement or belief can be effectively falsified, then it is not truly meaningful. case of theism, it leads to believers continuously qualifying their ideas of God in often to the point of absurdity. Yet, once more we can ask whether Christians re to such a principle. There are many statements we cannot falsify that we typical religion singled out here?

This supposed 'singling' out is one way to tackle both these views. An enduring principle is that it omits too many historical, artistic and even scientific stateme be considered cognitively meaningful. On the other hand, Flew's criticism much. Why do theists have to answer to falsification when no one else does? Ev a way to distinguish science from non-science. Ultimately, there is a deeper prob belief that religion should be subject to certain tests of reason to be meaningful. perhaps, is that religion is inevitably faith-based. But even Christians would ackn world view, so are the challenges from atheists such as Ayer or Flew really that i

Beyond Tests of Meaning

Ultimately, it may be that single tests for cognitive meaningfulness are simply im no easy way of capturing what is meaningful in a set of principles, let alone just o pointed out the absurdity of such efforts. John Hick is a good example here, with **eschatological verification**, which shows that Christianity potentially meets the c principle so long as claims can be verified after death. Hick did not intend his arg verification principle, rather he just aimed to show that despite the wishes of its claims to be meaningful!

Others, however, have attempted to meet them head on. Mitchell, for instance, parable that is intended to demonstrate how Christians engage in a 'reasonable' faith. For a theist there is an initial point at which they are given evidence one might think another human being upon meeting them). Yet, it is far-fetch never be challenged in our complex and difficult lives. Faith is a necessary comp in God and his plan for humanity. As such, the Bible is filled with stories and par ways in which human beings can rise above doubt and continue to have faith. M put their trust in Jesus as both a spiritual and moral leader, a figure whom they c live a good life.

Naturally, there are still problems with such a view that you will have studied. S being is not exactly like trust in God, who is supposed to be omnipotent, omnisci the broader issue is not that having faith in God or other people is wrong or unn numerous different roles in our lives, regardless of what endeavour we are enga scientist's belief that the world is fundamentally ordered and obeys certain natu based on a kind of faith. It is not possible to observe everything happening in th such a belief is true!

These nuances of faith we have already [illegible]ke centre stage in issues such as r and the soul, where the relationship between faith and reason is not always clea perhaps most important when considering the overall relationship between scie we can still [illegible] a little deeper when thinking about religious language, for the principles, even incorrect, potentially illustrate how religious claims are, in som scientific claims. With this in mind, we can turn to the grander problem of whet interpreted from a **cognitivist** or **non-cognitivist** perspective.

Revision Activity:
Review Flew's parable of the invisible gardener and the counter-parables given were to devise your own parable, what relationship between God and human b Briefly give a few sentences or a paragraph on your own counter-parable, notin cognitivist or non-cognitivist perspective on religious belief and language.

Cognitivism and Non-cognitivism

It is likely that the last section only covered ideas you've already studied. Howev verification principle and falsificationism are only a starting point for considering way to interpret the Christian faith. Should we take Christians as making real tru world? Or are statements made by Christians only proclamations of faith? Part question is, at different times, the answer seems to be 'yes' to both. Christians v claim such as 'God created the world' is literally true, not simply a statement of s hand, when Catholics make claims such as 'the body and blood of Christ is prese little more difficult to discern. While Catholics may argue that such a statement draw back from such a suggestion.

So, part of the problem is that, in a descriptive sense, both cognitivism and non-c this does not affect the question about whether Christians *should* view their stat or non-cognitive. Here is where we can tie our brief examination of logical posit broader debate about the nature of religious language in Christianity.

Cognitivism

First, let us consider cognitivism. The argument given by a Christian here might b are truth-evaluable but the criteria given by the logical positivists or Flew are sim towards the internal problems of both the verification and falsification principles meaningful discourse in a range of fields. Similarly, Flew might suggest a view sim reasonable faith can coexist with truth-evaluable claims. Or, on another tack, th of Christian claims simply differs from verification of scientific statements, such a verification or religious experience. Here, the onus is on the Christian to explain principle and scientific principles are wrong, and also how Christian statement these princ[illegible]e misguided.

In other words, defending cognitivism presents a double challenge for the Christ evaluable, it must be reasonable to suggest that there must be some way of dete practice, whether it is true or false. Otherwise, the notion of truth-evaluable is a the debate around the relationship between scientific and religious discourse tie

authority. It may be that Christians can hold that religious claims are by and larg
revelation, rather than observation and reason. However, this in many ways is d
that all statements should have universal truth conditions. For we wouldn't norm
based on evidence from religious scripture!

Here is where the idea of **non-overlapping magisteria** might play a role. It may b
Christian claims are different because they concern a sep[illegible] or coexisting field
would be that religious claims are verified by relig[illegible]ces of evidence and s
scientific sources of evidence. There is p[illegible]lly merit to this idea, but if suppo
important to be precise. Does th[illegible]ere is effectively no overlap between
there be solely religious [illegible] evidence without religious pluralism? Regard
supporting [illegible]iti[illegible]osition on the Christian faith opens a number of difficul
easily take [illegible]ge of. Thus, if constructing an argument in favour of a cognit
to work through whatever ramifications you can envision.

Non-cognitivism

Conversely, if one holds a non-cognitivist perspective on the Christian faith, thes
apply as much. Rather, one can simply claim that Christian statements aren't me
does their meaning derive from adhering to certain truth conditions. Rather, Ch
(e.g. Tillich) or develop meaning from being contained within a particular Christia
Thus, it is only really possible to evaluate the complete meaning of a religious sta
religious game or perspective. If one merely attempts to evaluate religious claim
or falsifiability, one is dragging terms and ideas from a more scientific perspectiv
not hold weight. The key idea behind adopting a non-cognitive perspective upon
hold their own meaning that is derived from the context and world view from wh
not meant to be tested or evaluated scientifically.

The advantages to non-cognitivism are cl[illegible] develops a framework for under
statements can be meaningful w[illegible]ing to resort to tests such as the ver
conform to many of our [illegible]s about the way religions are practised around t
are doing s[illegible] a [illegible] of personal communication and are not really intendin
about the w[illegible]l acts. Similarly, it doesn't really make sense to apply a broad
when it fundamentally deals with matters of spirituality, ethics and meaning, all
which science addresses. Finally, there are many instances where scripture, the
figures do speak symbolically about their religious teachings in terms which elud

At the same time, the primary problem facing non-cognitivism is that there are p
religious individuals do make cognitive claims about God and the world. Many b
the idea that their faith is reduced to a matter of perspective. Taking non-cognit
statements such as 'God created the world' could not be interpreted as true or f
of a religious perspective which holds God to be creator. Rather than addressing
positivists head on, non-cognitivism seems to accept that religious claims cannot
world and so make religious belief mere subjective opinion. Yet, as we shall note
is necessary considering the modern developments in scien[illegible]c knowledge.

Revision Activity:
Do Wittgenstein's ideas about l[illegible]ge games necessarily result in non-cognit
There is good evidence [illegible] Wittgenstein resisted such an interpretation
how one [illegible]nc[illegible]s a cognitivist perspective on language games.

The more theoretical discussion around the relationship between science and religion without reference to the real cases where scientific explanation appears to have repla world view. There are two key examples presented throughout your studies where t **theory of evolution** and the **Big Bang theory**. Both are typically perceived to be a cha yet both also have recent rebuttals in recent years where theis[illegible]ttempt to reconcile

In the case of the theory of evolution, such [illegible] have focused on the idea th principle, used by a creator God t[illegible] development of conscious life in t the Big Bang theory, it's th[illegible] this event was the means by which a creato question, ho[illegible]r, [illegible] whether these proposals are plausible, but whethe viability of [illegible]s explanation. Simply inserting religious ideas about God into knowledge i[illegible] you will have studied) potentially guilty of 'God-of-the-gaps'-sty such reasoning is the notion that these kinds of religious proposals are just specu investigation, which continues to bring new, evidentially supported explanations

In other words, what might seem to be a reasonable religious explanation is not, when one looks at the wider context in which it is presented. In fact, simply inse without much thought is the kind of faith-based thinking that motivated Flew to statements as merely offering 'qualifications' for the errors in previous argumen rather than rejecting them as any good scientist would do. So how can the theis these real-world concerns about the continued relevancy of religious explanatio

Cognitive Approaches

We've previously mentioned Basil Mitchell's response to Fl[illegible]as an example of a over the meaningfulness of religious explanation. [illegible]ver, we can also look at t who often points out the ways that scienc[illegible]religion not only intersect but ca other. While science can unveil h[illegible]rld works on a mechanical level, it ca the universe, the eviden[illegible]ning and our wider moral knowledge. All th intervention[illegible]re [illegible]re is the consideration that there are spaces of the w material un[illegible]ding, whether they be mental or spiritual. It is the role of reli investigate t[illegible]se spaces beyond ordinary empirical means.

Polkinghorne has also invoked the difficulties of quantum mechanics in support of that God may work on a quantum level rather than a macroscopic one. In combin might be put forward that Polkinghorne does endorse a more cognitive interpreta is not simply to represent the declarations of faith or subjective opinions of follow claims about the world that mesh with our scientific knowledge. Thus, he attempt view of religion while avoiding the God-of-the-gaps reasoning that can imperil mo

Thus, there may be space to understand statements such as 'God created the wo with known events such as the Big Bang. The same may also be true of the theo part of a law-like deterministic world, for God as omniscient [illegible]ay have understoo to creation of the world. Such approaches also poter[illegible]re[illegible]ain the 'reasonable belief in God into a matter of good judgeme[illegible]t[illegible]at[illegible]e[illegible]than blind faith. Yet, this p colourless one. Christians aren't [illegible]re[illegible]ed with showing that there is a cos God that intervenes in the [illegible]offers the possibility of salvation to human into Polkingho[illegible]e's [illegible]w?

This is a key [illegible] Many atheists and agnostics alike have long admitted that a this isn't the God most Christians have faith in. Moreover, while it provides a fou much harder to connect the God and gods of religions worldwide with this very a creator. Thus, it may be that a non-cognitive approach captures the nuances an deeper manner.

Non-cognitive Approaches

While the reconciliation between scientific and religious discourses may be poss
would argue that such reconciliation isn't particularly meaningful. Religion may
fundamentally different area of human life than science. Most importantly, relig
of existence and meaning which cannot be captured in strictly cognitive proposit
Polkinghorne's notion that the intelligibility of the universe requires explanation
question about human life is 'Why do we exist?' or 'Why does anything exist?'.
cognitive theorist and the non-cognitive the[illegible] that the latter does not hold
that can satisfactorily answer this question.

For instance, the th[illegible] Paul Tillich argued that such existential questions w
enterprise. God was not simply another object to be categorised by the fundam
impossible in our own way to comprehend. The only manner in which human be
understanding of God was, therefore, through symbolic language, which allowed
limitations of ordinary language and grasp at deeper meaning behind things in th
by its nature is thus not cognitively true or false. Similarly, as we explored befor
Wittgenstein's language games reaches a similar conclusion.

Thus, in contrast to Polkinghorne, many non-cognitivists might hold that the rec
religion is simply unnecessary. Scientific explanations have not supplanted religi
latter deal with questions of existence and meaning that are beyond the remits o
quite a nuanced point and naturally the same issues arise as when we previously
section. Moreover, there still may be some overlap between science and religio
the universe is and the presence of mysterious properties such as dark matter pr
which religion may have to address. Even if non-cognitivists might claim that rel
science, this does not mean that they might not complement each other in certa

Technology, Religion and Faith

This possibility is perhaps n[illegible]h when it comes to talking about the relation
in ethical matt[illegible]. Many of these we will cover in greater detail in later sections, bu
technology [illegible]ossible by new scientific knowledge mean there is a potential in
thought and [illegible]ce that extends beyond beliefs about God. The most significant c
revolves around the value or sanctity of human life. Those who are religious and ho
of divine purpose are often opposed to new technologies that somehow subvert or
instance, voluntary euthanasia is still campaigned against by many Christian moven

One other key example you have studied, however, is that of genetic engineering
a number of divisive issues including personhood, quality of life and human natur
offers a way forward to potentially cure countless genetic conditions and improve
may lead to greater inequalities in the future if its use is not restricted in some ar
wealthier be able to edit the genes of themselves or their children in order to gai
Could there be any unforeseen and unwanted consequences in allowing individua

These questions aren't answered by science itself and [illegible]at require some ethi
human beings should live their lives and what should be permissible in modern s
humanists who claim that such input should be developed free of religious influenc
forward that religious principles can help illuminate these issues. In the case of g
human beings have a God-given purpose might provide a foundation for restricti
where it ha[illegible]r therapeutic use, not one based on individual improvement.
kinds of que[illegible]you encounter, it may be appropriate to bring in these wider
exclusively on issues primarily involving belief in God.

Exam Question Preparation

Throughout this section, the overarching discussion around whether Christianity or non-cognitively has played an important role in analysing the degree to which might be reconciled. This might seem a little strange considering that it formed studies, but there is a good reason to making sure you're up to speed with how i elements of religious belief. For instance, take a look at th[illegible]am-style question

Exam-style Question:
'Christian statements about G[illegible] are fundamentally cognitive in nature.'

Critically e[illegible] evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue betwe

This is a very open-ended question to which all the topics we've studied in this sect be approached? If you were to argue that Christian statements are cognitive, you n number of truth-evaluable claims Christians often make, the vital role reason has o (especially liberal theology) and the ways in which Christianity and science might in to argue that Christian statements are non-cognitive, you might well point to the us language in the Christian faith, the importance of faith and the important difference endeavours. All of these can bring in the major figures you've studied, including Fle

Yet you may well find yourself with a much more precise question about the rela religion. As of writing, these have not featured in AQA's sample or past examina possibility that a question similar to that below could emerge.

Exam-style Question:
'Christianity cannot be reconciled with science.'

Critically examine and evaluate [illegible] with reference to the dialogue betwe

Here, many [illegible] you will cover are similar, but there's a greater emphas scientific th[illegible]ather than a more philosophical discussion about the nature you might refer to the theory of evolution, the Big Bang and quantum mechanics Christian ideas might cohere with these natural explanations. Importantly, if suc mention what form of Christianity one is talking about. For while it is true that n Christianity may not mesh well with much of science, the same is not necessarily even radical proposals such as process theology. Regardless of the position you be precise and clear about the position you're defending or criticising.

Revision Prompts:

Based on your studies throughout these sections, these are some revision promp notes on when preparing for your end-of-year exams. For each, consider how yo philosophical and theological conflicts it addresses and how others might critically

1. Should Christian claims be subject to tests of verification or falsification?
2. Is a non-cognitivist perspective on r[illegible] language coherent with traditio
3. What kind of language is reli[illegible]guage if it is non-cognitive?
4. Can Christian claim[illegible] the world be reconciled with modern scientific th
5. Can th[illegible]m[illegible]gful dialogue between scientists and Christians if both langua[illegible]es?

Christianity and Philoso
The Truth Claims of Other

Starter Revision Activity:
Revisit the following areas of the Philosophy of Reli[illegible]nd Christianity course
exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism, revise [illegible]w[illegible]l passages that could s
attitudes towards other religions

Christianity and Religious Pluralism		**Exclusivism**
	Key Terms	Christocentric, Extra ecclesiam nulla salus
	Key Thinkers	Karl Barth, Hendrik Kraemer
		Inclusivism
	Key Terms	Anonymous Christians, Solus Christus
	Key Thinkers	Karl Rahner
		Pluralism
	Key Terms	Universalism, Global theology
	Key Thinkers	John Hick

Introduction – Philosophy and Christian Attitudes towards Other Faiths

It can be difficult to envision a Christianity without a sens[illegible]exclusivism at its h
salvation to people if you can't guarantee that yo[illegible]n[illegible]now the definite path
problem modern Christians face when th[illegible]about the reconciliation between
vision of Christianity and the te[illegible]ng[illegible]ered by Christian tradition. In other w
other religions share in [illegible]a[illegible]presented by Christianity, or that no religions a
the truth ab[illegible]lv[illegible], naturally leads to a radical rethinking of the Christian f
thinkers, su[illegible]ahner, it means rejecting the centrality of the Church in matte
means addressing the myths that have lingered in the minds of Christians throug

In your A Level studies so far, you will have studied both orthodox Christian teac
exclusivism) and the broader philosophical debate around whether it is correct t
religious matters. Combining the two is perhaps one of the more straightforwar
your Dialogues study. For much of the debate about the right attitudes to hold t
centred around Christianity, due to it being the largest religion in the world. Exc
sprung from the Christian Church and affected the way it has treated both atheis
Moreover, such treatment has often been hostile, leading to conflict and violenc
debate around attitudes towards other faiths has motivated many critiques of Cl
exclusivism in the Church.

This is just one of many ways in which the discussi[illegible]n[illegible]s section will overlap w
exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism is al[illegible]te[illegible]ontained topic. Any questio
of-year exams are likely to be fo[illegible]c[illegible]s topic alone. This means that knowi
inside out is always usefu[illegible]when it comes to the more radical ideas of f
moment, th[illegible]w[illegible]n first to the nature of exclusivism and its relationshi

Exclusivism, Reason and Faith

There are two primary arguments for exclusivism in the Christian religion. The fi
as follows:

1. The Bible teaches that salvation is made possible for humanity due to God s
   atonement for human sin. Thus, salvation can only be achieved through Ch
   religions do not believe in this central teaching they ca ot teach the truth
   viewed as misguided by those professing to h ristians.

Now, this basic argument can be giv re ance. But the essence of such argu
that, taken at face value, th sents an exclusivist interpretation of the Chri
the Bible to be th hen it is necessary to uphold exclusivist attitudes tow
one is simp g ners be condemned by following false religions. A classic exa
in support o iew is John 14:6 where Jesus states 'no one comes to the Father
literally, this seems to imply that Jesus is the only figure who holds the truth about

However, here of course we can probe this line of thinking a little further. Why s
teachings at face value, rather than interpreting them alongside our modern kno
should we take the Bible to be the utmost authority and not employ other sourc
probe at the underlying reasons behind maintaining exclusivist attitudes. But th
can go, especially if one begins at the development of more modern liberal theo

Before we address those avenues, we can consider the second primary argumen
Christian perspective:

2. Christianity presents a set of teachings about God, salvation and the world t
   All other major world religions are the same, presenting their own view abo
   with each other about the nature of the world, God the right way to live
   denominators or teachings between these m re ons typically distorts,
   views. Thus, considering the distinc s between each religion, it does
   shared truths. Rather only could be said to be true and the oth

In comparison th gament, this kind of exclusivism is much more philoso
may be son ce-level similarities between religions but instead holds that, or
religions do share key teachings and truths. Thus, trying to reconcile them thr
to change or distort these religions in order to make them cohere, which is simply
together Christianity and Hinduism is akin to saying both Ptolemy and Copernicus
universe revolves around Earth while Earth revolves around the Sun. It just isn't re

However, there are key disagreements to initially note with this position. For on
Abrahamic religions share more than just surface similarities. Not only do they s
recognise many of the same figures as key prophets. Moreover, nearly all religio
by early philosophical figures such as Plato and Aristotle. There is altogether a g
are fundamental truths shared by most of the major world religions. Furthermo
disagreements about the nature of the world and God, many also share key ethi
way to live one's life, similarities that are exposed often through interfaith dialog

Nevertheless, the key thing to note is that an ri ia inclusivist or pluralist positi
of arguments. It's not enough to sim v t Christianity is similar to other relig
similarities can be reconciled h ore exclusivist aspects of the Bible and Chr
hand, Christian lsc otentially show how to retain the distinctiveness of t
the truths c s. or if salvation is possible without the action of Christ or the C
all? We shal ore both the inclusivist and exclusivist responses to these proble

Revision Activity:
Which of the two arguments given do you believe is a stronger argument for ex
notes in support of your answer and review as you progress throughout this se

Inclusivism and the Middle Path

In the previous section, we outlined two rough arguments for exclusivism. One w
that only the Christian faith can guarantee salvation through the mediation of Ch
more reason-based, presenting the more philosophical argument that the teachi
reconciled with one another. Meeting these two arguments head on can be a lit
studied, a major response came from the Catholic theologian Karl Rahner. He no
to be mediated through Christ, it was possible to r[illegible] other ethical and spir

Thus, Rahner's concept of anonymous Christians was born. The central idea was
participate in a Christian life by following its ethical teachings and recognising th
salvation. Thus, the challenge of the first argument is met as Christ is retained a
human bei[illegible] second argument is also potentially met as it recognises
differences exist between religions without contradiction. However, this did
Perhaps the most controversial was that Rahner rejected the traditional Catholic
from within the Church (also known as extra ecclesiam nulla salus).

So, what are the issues here for Christians? Well, first the function of the Church
reduced to mere education rather than being an essential mediating influence in
salvation. This proves a problem for many Christians that hold the Christian Chu
be sacred, such as Catholics. However, perhaps the greater issue is that while Ra
attempts to preserve the uniqueness of Christianity, it also makes Christian ethic
teachings less distinctive. In fact, someone could choose not to worship the Chri
God, but as long as they live a good ethical life, they will still be saved. While ma
atheists would certainly regard this as fair if God is thought to be benevolent, it a
devalues the role of the Christian faith in the process. Many Christians would ho
important to believe in the *Christian* God, not just follow Christian teachings.

Neither are critics of other religions often happy about Rahner's proposals. One
Rahner effectively patronises other religions by reducing their beliefs and ideas to
other words, Rahner doesn't quite overcome the exclusivist's second argument an
religious belief too much. However, those of other religions typically don't like
on their coherence with Christianity, rather than on their own beliefs. In many w
exclusivist [illegible] tending towards pluralism.

Addressing the Issues with Inclusivism

You are likely to have already studied many of these problems. But going a little
Rahner from these criticisms? The first may be simply to point out the philosoph
greater with exclusivism than inclusivism. For instance, while exclusivists might
great emphasis on ethics above faith in a Christian, we also have to ask what the
exclusivists really be happy with the idea that a benevolent God could allow the
all intents and purposes, led a good ethical life? Similarly, with the deep differen
denominations, is it right to hold onto the traditional idea that the Church is nec
just be the most effective means by which to learn about the right path towards

Similarly, addressing the critics of other religions, it can be argued that most wou
their teachings in the same manner as Rahner. Moreover, if they did so, they mi
kind of inclusivism. The issue is thus not whether Christianity has to be the 'right
teachings are compatible with an inclusivist attitude towards other religions and
for effective interfaith dialogue. Moreover, Rahner's proposals can be seen as th
inclusivist pr[illegible] w[illegible]istians can begin to learn about the true similarities
religions, w[illegible]aim of finding key shared ground. Yet, all these responses ma
take a slightly different tack to the exclusivist's arguments, one that endorses rel

Revision Activity:
Is it fair to argue that Rahner's inclusivism relativises or flattens the claims of o
arguments in support of his concept of anonymous Christians and two argume

The main figure you will have studied as a strong advocate of religious pluralism most of his life was fundamentally committed to dismantling the attitude that ar to the truth about salvation. Instead, Hick argued that all religions are effectivel manifestations centred around a core source of religious insight, which he terme incorporate atheistic religions such as Buddhism). The Real typically reveals itsel which, just as with any experience, is filtered through cultural lens and so is t depending on what lens one holds. Thus although it may seem as though religio one another, once viewed from a different perspective it becomes possible to ar instead focused on unveiling the deeper grounds from which our reality is compo

But how do we address the first argument we studied? How can Christianity conception of the Real? Well, the nature of Hick's arguments means that he is n a foundational core to religious enterprise but showing also how this core can be scientific knowledge. If religious experience is, in part, psychological projection l to find the essence of what this experience is directed towards involves shedding accompanies our interpretation of these experiences. Thus, Hick endorses a gen Christianity, removing aspects of theology that are more likely to be based on cu interpretation of scripture and religious experience.

This background is especially important when defending or criticising religious pl stating that Christianity is wrong or that any other religion is right; he's making a about the need to develop a more rational, scientifically informed conception of ways, Hick's world view is the end point of a very liberal theology, taking our mo understanding not only what religious teachings are correct but how we should a place. In this context, Hick's call for a **global theology**, w those of different understand the Real, makes a lot more sense. It's also a call for interfaith d develop a broader unity between the claims of conflicting religions.

In other words, while the pluralist can argue that religions really are too differe that these differences exist because individuals of conflicting religions haven't hist find core similarities in their religious experiences and teachings. Contending tha becomes not a reasonable philosophical position but a self-fulfilling prophecy. H similarities, great changes in the religious perspective have to be made, starting where many find fault in Hick's arguments and we shall take a look at some of th

Addressing the Issues with Pluralism

One of the immediate problems that Hick's pluralism encounters is how to make the Bible, especially surrounding salvation. As you know, Hick is unusual in endo view that all human beings will eventually be saved – but also a belief in **purgato** those who commit evil acts can meaningfully enter heaven. Yet, both these con supported. It can even be argued that although theological constructs such as th don't have a wholly firm basis in scripture, there is much more evidence for thes salvation. So, there really appears to be a difficult struggle in justifying Hick's co over that of the Orthodox Church.

This is really where your own knowledge of Christianity can come in handy. Hick the Bible, where each passage should be judged not only against our own theological ide understand the cultural landscape of the time and the religious context wit were writing. It's unsurprising that there's so much mythological baggage in the themselves were enmeshed in a mythological world view. When one reads the person of Jesus becomes much less concerned in Hick's view with promoting him instead much more focused on relaying key ethical and spiritual truths which all problem is that, over time, these teachings have become distorted and then bec actions of the early Christian Church.

You may recall, for example, early ecumenical councils such as the Council of Nic
Chalcedon. These were called to address key theological disagreements in the e
Son was coeternal with the Father or whether Jesus was fully human and/or divi
were not always philosophically solved by participants. Often, it was simply agre
over another. What Hick is thus arguing is that Christianity is not fixed in its relig
right interpretation of scripture. These aspects can all be revisited and re-evalua
understanding of the world. Moreover, we may end up with more philosophic
understanding of Jesus and the Christian faith by doing so. At the same time, the
have reservations about such actions. Why bother to change something that has suc

The second major problem lies with Hick's conception of the Real. Simply put
underlying and transcendent religious enterprise? Hick's arguments for this concept
natural theology, a field of theology which holds that God can be observed, reas
the natural world. What Hick contends is that natural theology can't provide a r
in one religion over another. Thus, there is no independent reason to believe on
salvation in comparison to its potential rivals. But what about weird or irrationa
religion that believed aliens created human beings out of starlight, would we be
over the Christian faith? In some way, we do recognise that there is a rational b

Similarly, if religious experience is influenced by prior cultural contexts and conc
it is a source of anything real altogether? If we are supposed to be sceptical of r
could we not just argue that religious experience is some kind of psychological p
work into religious experience can come in handy. For Hick's criticisms of orthod
especially if our contemporary scientific knowledge of the brain seems to hint th
natural product of psychological or neurophysiological interactions. What may s
pluralism may well end up being a good argument against religion altogether.

Revision Activity:
What might Hick's 'global theology' look like in practice? As an exercise, write
could identify a common [illegible] their beliefs and how Christians might integra
the study of other [illegible]

Exam Question Preparation

Throughout this section, we've mainly focused on the single issue of Christian at
tying together your pre-existing philosophical studies with Christian theology. N
included a sample or past examination question on this topic, but you may poter
is similar to the one we've devised below.

Exam-style Question:
'Christianity is incompatible with relig[illegible]alism.'

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue betwe

Here, the em[illegible] will be on judging whether one can be Christian and pluralist a
onto whether a theology such as Hick's can be justified in the context of the exclus
Now, while this does give room for a more philosophical examination of Hick's plu
pay significant attention to the first argument given in this section and not solely a
are simply distinctive from one another. Perhaps most importantly, it should be e
shed key Christian ideas such as the incarnation and the Trinity prevents his theolc
whether it is possible to conceive of a Christianity in which Jesus is not the sole pat

However, you may encounter variations on this kind of question. Some might as
Christianity is compatible with inclusivism, or ask whether all Christians should b
form of the question, however, it is useful to develop your own idea of the attitu
towards other religions. For, in any case, you will always be able to compare the
with your own belief, either expressing support for the question's claim or critici
perspective. In either case, make sure you have a response to the two major line
prepare any supporting evidence accordingly.

Revision Prompts:

Based on your studies thro[illegible] these sections, these are some revision promp
make notes on [illegible]ng for your end-of-year exams. For each, consider h
answering [illegible]losophical and theological conflicts it addresses and how other
your answe[illegible]

1. Can a Christian exclusivism be justified on the basis of biblical evidence for J
2. Do the differences in beliefs between Christians and those of other religions
3. Is Rahner right to claim that salvation can be achieved without the influence
4. Does Rahner's concept of anonymous Christians deliver a genuine inclusivis
   claiming that all salvation has to come through Christ?
5. Is Hick's pluralism coherent with Christian belief, or does it demand too ma
   Christian theology?

CHRISTIANITY AND PHILOSOPHY:

Starter Revision Activity:
Revisit the following areas of the Philosophy of Religion and Christianity course
occurrences of three different miracles as a foundation to our discussion throu

Miracles	**Realism**	
	Key Terms	Natural law, Empiricism
	Key Thinkers	David Hume, Richard Swinburne, Maurice W
	Anti-Realism	
	Key Terms	Coincidence, Symbol, Sign
	Key Thinkers	Paul Tillich, R F Holland
	God	
	Key Terms	Omnipotence, Process theology, Deism
	Key Thinkers	David Ray Griffin

Introduction – Miracles, Realism and Anti-realism

Out of all the topics in the AQA A Level Religious Studies course, the topic of mir
contentious, especially in the present day. If an acquaintance testifies that they
are likely to be quite sceptical, preferring instead to look for a natural explanatio
Moreover, belief in miracles has typically been soured by the number of less tha
meaningless miracles, such as seeing the face of Jesus in a crisp or piece of fruit.
suspicions. We don't typically see the kinds of miracles that Jesus performed too
say that if Jesus were to perform miracles today, we would treat it as a kind of m
contravention of the laws of nature.

For at heart the debate around miracles really is an extension of the critical disc
religion. Should we trust our instincts today that are broadly scientific in nature,
testimonies about miracles throughout history, even when these are perhaps do
knowledgeable perspective than ours? There is an underlying tension that is sim
discussions about miracles, and depending on whether one adopts a realist or an
that the authority of scripture and the Church is undermined as a result.

Thus, despite miracles seeming to be an isolated topic, there is much to interwea
coherent position on miracles is likely to be formed not from an objective investi
from pre-existing philosophical views. If one adopts a more scientific perspectiv
ordered by underlying natural laws, then miracles naturally will seem far-fetched
these laws. However, if one accepts that there is a spiritual dimension to the wo
unreasonable to expect that this spiritual dimension, at times, might intervene w
world. As we shall see throughout this section, developing an argument about th
more often than not going to hinge on other philosophical assumptions and idea

Before we take this philosophical turn, it is important to consider the roles of mi
Church. The Bible, especially the Gospels, can be seen to be primarily a witness
documents the lives of Jesus and other prophets, who, through divine influence
feats that seemed impossible to those witnessing them. This, most importantly,
regarded as the most important miracle contained within the Gospel narratives.
hinges on the notion that the miracles in the Bible are authentic and able to grou
Christ and God.

However, it is easy to see how belief can be undermined. We certainly don't
resurrection and other miracles (at least accounts that are authenticated as th
is a rough c[illegible] the Christian Church about whether it is possible for such for
present day. Typically, those in more mainstream Christian denominations subsc
cessationism – the view that the period in which God enacted miracles or impar
has ended. On the other hand, there are many Christian denominations and mo
which subscribe to **continuationist** views – the view that spiritual gifts are still im
beings around the world. These might take the form of healings, visions, glossol
revelations and other kinds of events that are perceived to contravene laws of n

In many ways, it is difficult to distinguish which of these views is more reasonabl
believed to have intervened in the natural world throughout history, why would
in time? On the other hand, why should we continue to believe that God regular
to demonstrate his existence to human beings? Perhaps most key here is the no
idea that God has to maintain a certain barrier between himself and the world, s
preserved. If God were to reveal himself to humanity completely, it would make
good and bad actions a bit meaningless, since we would always rationally choose
will. Yet there is no easy way to ascertain how much distance God would have t
miracles are required in the modern era and our propensity to be sceptical ab
the first place!

Nevertheless, [illegible] remain the same when questioning the existence of mi
they occur, it is possible to doubt the authenticity or reliability of miracle repor
many of the miracles contained in Christian scripture. The result would either be
Christianity, gutted of any mythological or miraculous elements, or a Christianity
in events which, by today's standards, seem impossible. In this sense, there is a
belief in miracles is reasonable given their nature and propensity across the wor
justifications are often similar in form to those given in favour of the authenticity
cases, these is a phenomenon that goes beyond a materialistic understanding of
naturally call for scepticism about their trustworthiness or reliability as a source
the world.

For if miracles do truly exist, then they are very good evidence for God. Moreov
Christians are correct, then this evidence is still able to be judged in the present
arguments surrounding miracles are often philosophical and abstract, key attent
kinds of miracle reports we're considering and their relationship to Christians toc
trustworthiness of historical writers, embedded in their own cultural contexts? C
accounts of present-day Christians, whose experiences may or may not reflect th
With these questions in mind, we can turn to the orthodox position on miracles,

Revision A

Which do you believe is the most reasonable Christian position – that God still
in the world today, or that such acts have ceased to occur? Write a few notes

A Philosophical Analysis of Miracles – R

One of the most common definitions of a miracle is an event which is inexplicabl scientific laws. Now, there are still various ways of interpreting this statement. forward by David Hume, is that miracles involve a *transgression* or breaking of th other agent. This is likely to have been the focus of your studies into **realism** – t viewed as objective, supernatural occurrences caused by G[illegible]. In other words, w matter of interpretation. There are clear instances [illegible] God or a deity has inte way that involves them acting beyond the l[illegible] of the physical world.

Yet, the trouble with this [illegible] is that identifying these events is difficult i itself. Ultim[illegible] it [illegible] down to finding examples that are not just inexplicabl understand[illegible] the natural but which are wholly inexplicable altogether. Takin Gospels as a[illegible] example, we can see this problem in action for contemporary Chri Jesus supposedly turned water into wine, which does seem to break the laws of to the impossibility of directly transmuting one substance into another. Howeve event truly inexplicable? Could it not be that onlookers were tricked, mistaken, misremembering this event? Such possibilities have to be considered particularl the lack of scientific knowledge audiences possessed compared to individuals to

As such, there are many Christians who, despite taking realist positions on mirac accounts as genuine. One can even find theologians who focus solely on the res event in the Gospels and don't try to justify the myriad of healings or nature mir scripture. For the resurrection is claimed to occur by nearly all early Christian so dead is certainly a case of something that might be truly inexplicable, not just ine knowledge and understanding. So, thinking about the resurrection as the gold s how might one undermine a realist position that uses thi[illegible]acle as an example anchor point for our discussion.

Hume, Testimony and Evidence

Hume is lik[illegible]be [illegible] the key critics you have studied surrounding miracles easy to mis[illegible]and. There are two key parts to note, which are very useful t addressing end-of-year exam questions.

Hume's First Argument

The first is almost an a priori problem that realists face when attempting to supp Hume does not argue that miracles are not impossible. That would go against hi ultimately judged according to the evidence given by our sense experience. Rath point is that the nature of miracles means that the evidence for them will never laws of nature cannot be transgressed.

Let's apply this to the resurrection accounts. Throughout the course of our lives generally been accepted that one cannot return from death (especially if one has days). The evidence for such claim is uncountable. Philosophers will even use th example of a tautology, due to the overwhelming empirical evidence for such a p the evidence that Jesus rose from the dead [illegible]limited to a number of different ey details and times reported. [illegible] there is perhaps evidence for this miracle, it is evidence for the claim that human beings cannot return from death.

Now, the ke[illegible]here is that Hume argues that we as human beings should alw evidence. That is the essence of being a rational person. And if a rational perso for and against the miracle reports about Jesus' resurrection, especially from a n clearly be in favour (at least initially) of believing that Jesus could not have risen evidence for this law is clearly too strong.

Hume's Second Argument

Now, Hume of course does not end his argument here. What if the miracle repo to be completely trustworthy and authentic? And surely there is greater reason eyewitnesses? For it is certainly right to point out that the resurrection was not by many potential witnesses. This is where Hume's second argument comes in a contentious than the first.

Hume does acknowledge that it may be pos[illegible] a witness is completely reli evidence could effectively counter [illegible]mony. Moreover, we may have mu witnesses that mean there [illegible]greater reason to trust miracle reports if these inexplicable e[illegible]t c[illegible]. But we have to ask here, is it ever possible that a w hundred pe[illegible]eliable when there is plenty of evidence that human beings by Moreover, c[illegible]e ever really say there are ever more witnesses to a miracle eve operation of natural laws?

Hume points out a number of ways in which human beings may be unreliable. T to believe in the fantastical (despite conflicting empirical evidence), problems wi exaggerating, our propensity to fall victim to witnesses' rhetoric and the tendenc for religious explanations. Perhaps most controversially, Hume notes that mirac least have their origins in 'ignorant and barbarous nations' and, as such, the repo societies develop new scientific knowledge and understanding of the world.

Let's think about the resurrection in the context of these issues. Abandoning all pr of the Bible, could it not be that the witnesses to Jesus' resurrection were mistake invested heavily into believing Jesus had divine authority? Could the visions they h religious suggestion or even a misunderstanding based on [illegible] more mythological could be possible, and what Hume is thus suggesti[illegible] th[illegible]no witness can reason per cent reliable, especially those of prev[illegible]to[illegible]al societies and cultures.

But what about the num[illegible]witnesses? Well, Hume acknowledges this is a fa number of [illegible]se[illegible]y miracle outnumber the number of witnesses to the natural law[illegible]her words, maybe up to a hundred people witnessed resurrec numbers of people have watched others die and never return. Taking this aspec together with the unreliability of witnesses we have a situation where we cannot reasonably say that the evidence for miracle events ever outweighs the evidence for the regular operation of natural laws.

Evaluating Hume

Hume's two arguments here are an incredibly useful grounding when discussing reference them early where appropriate. However, it is key here to note that Hu **epistemological** argument, concerning what we can know rather than what is po miracles do occur but that we, as rational beings, will never encounter good eno believe that they have in fact occurred, in light of the overwhelming evidence fo natural laws that govern the behaviour of the world a[illegible]. So, how can the respond to Hume? Let's take a quick look at a nu[illegible]key options:

1. Question the soundness of his fir[illegible]t; that our evidence for **inviolab** greater than that of mira[illegible]ver[illegible]
2. Question the so[illegible]is second argument; that witnesses are both to enoug[illegible]al[illegible]ge our evidence for **inviolable** natural laws.
3. Questi[illegible]e's definition of miracles themselves.

Revision Activity:
Which of Hume's arguments do you believe is the strongest against miracles fr Note your answer and provide a few supporting comments, comparing them w throughout this section.

So, let's take a look at Hume's first and second arguments. In many ways they se possibility of miracles but our reasons for believing in them, a much more manag religious critics have pushed back against Hume's reasoning here in a number of guides to evaluating arguments in support of a realist position on miracles. Let's key suggestions.

1. Hume Misunderstands Natural Laws

This is perhaps the primary challenge to Hume's first argument. For how d natural law has been violated in our everyday lives? We typically walk around ass things behave regularly, but is this really an evidentially backed argument or just a why should this assumption be prioritised over competing assumptions, such as t events, and the world does not always behave uniformly? In other words, we mi in the possibility of the violation of laws of nature based on our observations of m

C S Lewis proposes a similar kind of argument to this, suggesting that if one does the possibility of miracles. In other words, our acceptance of miracle events doe where we evaluate competing kinds of evidence, but against a backdrop of pre-e the world, one being that reality is not just physical and that non-physical things

Others, however, take a slightly different tack which you might also employ in yo don't necessarily have to be interpreted as **universal** truths. Rather, they can jus upon theories put forward by contemporary science. Polkinghorne takes up this does not tell us what can and cannot occur but instead what goes against our ex point in time. In other words, the evidence for natural laws isn't really about wh instead what is coherent with our everyday experience of the world. Yet, for mir resurrection, what is important to judge is whether such events are coherent wit creator God and how that God might be doing to bring in a new relationship w

Richard Swinburne also takes a similar position that you might find useful to draw scientific laws are really **statistical** rather than **fixed**, **universal** truths. In other w on observing things happening in a regular fashion over and over again; they tell not what necessarily will happen. Thus, if one accepts the possibility of a creato power, then it may be possible for such a God to act in a way that suspends or vi natural laws, without the actual meaning of 'natural law' being affected. In fact, events, not regular ones. For if they were regular, we would begin to question w properly operate in our everyday lives!

All these arguments don't question exactly Hume's first argument, but they do p possibility of miracles is not as simple as balancing evidence for inviolable natura miracle event. Instead, we have to consider more deeply what we consider natu might operate in a world where a creator God may be active.

2. Testimonies and Miracle Reports

One problem that perhaps emerges with the second limb of Hume's argument is testimonies as good evidence for miracles - the problem being that using the ba evidence for miracles does not differentiate between the different kinds of evide Swinburne, for instance, is a good reference here and points out that miracles m 'physical evidence' not just the sight of miracles occurring. In our example of the speak of the disciples encountering the physical wounds of Jesus, thus confirmin dead and not just a vision. It may be that similar kinds of physical evidence occu healings) that confirm that something has occurred which contravened or violate these kinds of physical evidence may be of different, independently verified kind miracle event.

Furthermore, we can think a little more closely about how we go about investiga
Science has regularly changed what we think are the dimensions and parameters
singular experiments. If we adopt Hume's idea that more witnesses must be pre
the confirmation of natural laws, then we might point out such standards are cer
practice of science today. In fact, much of what human beings accept about the
trust in the experiments and accounts of scientists who use complicated devices
Yet, we don't question the fallibility of the human perso[illegible]e same way we do
criteria Hume uses when judging witness testimo[illegible]r too strict?

Supporting Hume – Realism

The challenge[illegible]'v[illegible]at so far present some interesting points. The cent
Hume's arg[illegible]oversimplifies the process of assessing miracle events. It's no
evidence bu[illegible]stead a real process of uncovering how a miracle event might h
more importantly, **coherent** with a pre-existing understanding of an intervention
another troubling line of enquiry for theists and a way of potentially supporting H
theists and atheists alike have pointed out the inherent trouble with a God that i
in the lives of human beings.

The figure you have perhaps studied most is that of Maurice Wiles, who argues t
to believe in a non-interventionist God. For if God can arbitrarily intervene to pr
simply help other human beings, why would God not then intervene at other mo
occurring? The problem of miracles is tightly woven in with the **problem of evil**.
human beings and reveal himself also essentially proves that God possesses the
not choose to do so. The existence of miracles is thus a threat to the idea that G

Moreover, it would seem to make the laws of nature me[illegible]less in the first pla
objects can behave, then they do not really const[illegible]an[illegible]ing if a deity can arbi
few replies we can mention here. The fi[illegible]be[illegible]ppeals to a different kind of
objection. For instance, **process [illegible]s** might well argue that God does no
the world all the time. T[illegible]s[illegible]ection and other miracles might just represent
limits of his[illegible]r t[illegible]nce the matter of the world in a way that revealed hi

The other kind of response, however, focuses more on what benevolence means
Wiles that if God were benevolent then he would surely want to interact with his
from it. The Christian use of familial terms represents this kind of personal relati
God, who is thought to occupy a parental role, not just the role of creator. More
neither arbitrary nor amoral for they may well inspire belief and encourage hum
world a better place, rather than just one in which evil is accepted as a natural fa
objection may hold some force, it is important to balance his ideas against those
coherency of an interventionist God is an important task, but it may not sink the

Challenging Hume – Anti-realism

So far, we've noted how you can construct an argument or a discussion based on
before expanding such a discussion with reference to [illegible]t[illegible]nkers. However, w
far we have not looked at point three mentio[illegible]d [illegible]ar[illegible] – the possibility that Hu
simply erroneous. Why might this be[illegible]c[illegible]? Well, the primary approach to m
history has been to view the[illegible]re[illegible]events. Yet, as history has progressed, ce
more common. Add[illegible]s[illegible]as liberal theologians have questioned many of the
behind Chr[illegible]oc[illegible]nes, many thinkers have shifted to anti-realist perspective
fundamenta[illegible]rstanding of what miracles are.

As you will have studied, this involves interpreting miracles not as acts of God in
laws of nature but as a subjective experience of highly improbable or strange occ
argument to the one put forward by non-cognitivists in discussions around the n
many of its proponents share a common approach with non-cognitivists. For exa

that religious language was, by nature, symbolic, and who proposed a generally n
Christian claims, also holds that miracles are simply astonishing events with grea
resonance. They do not challenge our rational understanding of reality but inste
greater mysteries of being.

Such arguments have the potential to neuter the main thrust of Hume's argume
question the legitimacy of the laws of nature! But, equall[illegible]s folly to imagine t
human beings from reading meaning into our exp[illegible]of the world. We pert
whenever we engage with things we ima[illegible]ha[illegible]a deeper meaning, whethe
object that produces a symbolic [illegible]response. So, it's not as if the anti-r
truly radical; instead, it[illegible]non-cognitivism, anti-realism is a way of addre
critics of rel[illegible]s [illegible]scoping out the kinds of questions and problems relig
everyday liv[illegible]

The most significant anti-realist figure you are likely to have studied is (again) Ma
position is explicitly connected to his criticisms of realism, and, similarly to Tillich
have symbolic significance for the theist. They are a way to learn about the natu
will might be reflected on Earth. For it is important to note that if God did create
laws, it is likely that he would possess knowledge about the improbable or strang
influence these in a way at the moment of creation to allow for human beings to
them. So, perhaps the most key point to note when thinking about anti-realism i
argue that God did not have a hand in or plan events that seem miraculous. Rat
involve direct interventions by God in the world, nor do they involve violations o

Criticising the Anti-realist Position

The primary problem facing the anti-realist is the same a[illegible]facing the non-co
the view that miracles are a matter of subjective [illegible]e with scripture that s
with direct religious significance? Think f[illegible]on[illegible]it once again about the resu
doctrine holds that Jesus' death [illegible]nent for human sins, with the resurre
representation of victor[illegible]and a promise of salvation for all of humank
subjective [illegible]bo[illegible]pretation, what does that mean for human beings an
Taking an a[illegible]ist position on miracles may fundamentally undermine much o
central to mainstream denominations across the world.

In other words, it is both difficult to make an anti-realist position coherent with t
challenging to account for how miracles can continue to play an important role f
ancient, second-hand testimonies about the meaning of these miracles. The pro
realist position may not be an answer to the criticisms of Hume but instead a cap
that Christians cannot reasonably prove the existence of miracle events and so ir
them proclamations of faith. It calls into question whether religion can be a ratio
founded on unprovable or wholly subjective events.

Moreover, we can approach this problem a little more philosophically. If the me
subjective, then how do we know exactly what meaning w[illegible]ould give to a mira
noted the problem of **trivial** miracles – those which [illegible]ti[illegible]ordinary person seem
which religious people have given meanin[illegible]es[illegible]ight include seeing the face
hearing the sounds of angels in th[illegible]water of a river. It ultimately becom
anything if it is just interp[illegible]an extraordinary event with religious mean
something is[illegible]dly [illegible]able does not necessarily make it miraculous! Thus, i
important t[illegible]ow taking miracles to possess only subjective meaning does n
absurd. Anti[illegible]ists arguably have an uphill struggle in developing a satisfactory
that does not succumb to this kind of problem.

Revision Activity:
Is an anti-realist position more reasonable than a realist position on miracles? Bible as a source of authority for Christians today?

Write down two arguments for and against an anti-realist position, noting whe day Christian perspectives on miracles.

Exam Question Preparation

Throughout this sect[illegible] explored how it's possible to centre discussion of likely to ha[illegible] in depth – David Hume. Then, from these arguments, one or discussio[illegible] encompasses either a realist or an anti-realist perspective on m either to justify whether belief in miracles is rational or simply a matter of faith. for a ZigZag-given example of what you might encounter in your exams:

Exam-style Question:
'It is incoherent for Christians to be realists about miracles.'

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue betwe

This is perhaps the most straightforward question you might come across. You'r or not miracle events can be said to have occurred or whether they are a matter as we explored in this section, you might reference the historical evidence for Ch resurrection, before looking at the philosophical arguments for and against mira reference Hume, but make sure you characterise his arg[illegible]ts correctly; Hume happen, just that we can never possess enough e[illegible] to know or believe a m evidence we have for the inviolability of [illegible] laws. For the purposes of our ev to claim that miracles do not happen, b[illegible] make sure to note this nuance in yo

Alternative[illegible] m[illegible] encounter variations in this kind of question which refere nature of b[illegible] miracles. You may even get a question that directly addresses we've given below:

Exam-style Question:
'Belief in miracles is a matter of opinion.'

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue betwe

In either case, you can draw on the same kinds of information in your answer. M the question is framed in such a way as to draw in different discussions from oth around non-cognitivism, which might provide broader support for an anti-realist sure you address the question directly and be precise in your arguments!

Revision Prompts:

Based on your studies throughout thes[illegible] these are some revision prompts notes on when preparing for y[illegible] year exams. For each, consider how you philosophical and theol[illegible] it addresses and how others might critically

1. Should C[illegible] believe that miracles still occur today, or are they only a fac
2. Does Hume successfully cast doubt on the reasonability of believing in miracle
3. How do Hume's arguments affect Christian beliefs in the Bible as a source of a
4. What arguments might Christians give in response to Hume's critiques?
5. How might Christianity adapt to accommodate an anti-realist perspective on

Christianity and Ethics: Moral Di

Starter Revision Activity:
Revisit the following areas of the Ethics and Christianity courses. For the ethica
moral decision-making process for each and research how it might approach th

Christianity Moral Decision-making	**Deontological Ethics**	
	Key Terms	Law, Duty, Obligation, Categorical imperati
	Key Thinkers	Immanuel Kant
	Teleological and Consequentialist	
	Key Terms	Utility, Hedonism
	Key Thinkers	Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill
	Virtue Ethics	
	Key Terms	Virtue, Vice, Eudaimonia
	Key Thinkers	Aristotle

Christianity Moral Principles	**The Bible**	
	Key Terms	Agape love, The golden rule
	Key Thinkers	Jesus Christ, St Paul
	The Church	
	Key Terms	Sanctity of life, Magisterium, Catechism

Introduction – How Do Christians Make Ethical Choices?

The first topic in the AQA Christian Dialogues specification asks us to think about th
decision-making can be reconciled with other ethical perspectives. Initially, you
Secular ethical perspectives don't use God as a source of authority, so why even
fair point to make initially, but we shouldn't assume the distinctiveness of Christ
relationship with a Christian God. Our intuitions about what is right and wrong a
different forces that are difficult to pick apart, and there are significant ways tha
other ethical perspectives, particularly when it comes to actual moral guidance.

As a starting point, it is useful to think about a basic question: how should a Christi
dilemma? The basic starting point for an answer to this question is likely to be scri
within scripture moral guidance is not always so clear. At times, the Old Testamen
and there are many ethical laws in the former which Christians no longer follow, s
not always clear whether Christians should prioritise the Gospels or other books, s
advice. So, we may simplify the process a bit and point towards Jesus as the prime

Yet even this is problematic. Jesus does not prescribe a detailed system of ethics. D
focuses on, moral guidance is given by a mixture of direct laws, principles, parab
an appeal to common sentiments such as love or compassion. Should we thus fo
rule, or should we view Jesus as a **moral exemplar**, aiming to act in a way that w
during his life? Which laws should we prioritise if the former, and, if the latt
help us with modern technological issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and gene
can seem as though Christians have not only a multitude of sources of ethical gu
interpretations of these sources. Narrowing down even a basic position on scrip

So, we may look to other sources of authority to help us with this task. Catholics, attention to the doctrines of the Catholic Church, since it is held to be of equal au they may look to both scripture and the Church for moral guidance, not prioritisin is a conflict. On the other hand, liberal theologians may well employ current scie cultural values to evaluate the teachings of scripture. Those who are more libera scientific ideas and moral progress have important roles to play in developing Chr

Altogether, this means that there are two difficulties. The first is understandi unified, distinctive Christian set of ethical principles or concepts. The second is u concepts to guide moral decision-making. However, the two aren't necessarily s certainly inform the former. Perhaps the most important factor in understan involves is looking at what Christians are required to do. With that in mind, we c different ways Christian ethics can be compared with other secular and religious

Deontological Moral Decision-makin

At first glance, it might appear as if Christian ethics is the closest fit to a deontolo will have studied, deontological ethics holds that what is good and right involves Accordingly, most deontological ethics places a strong importance on **moral inte** that a rule is followed but that a person intends to follow that rule when acting. systems of ethics place little to no moral value in the consequence of an action, j rule in the first place.

So, how can we observe deontological ethics in Christian moral decision-making? perhaps in the Old Testament, which is littered with various moral rules that Chr follow. The Ten Commandments is often held up as a foundational pillar of Chris individuals being required not to transgress any of the principles given within. Si books, such as Leviticus, detail long lists of ethical and religious laws that could b deontological ethics. However, the New Testament has a notable absence of suc St Paul give teachings that could be interpreted to be strict ethical laws (e.g. the clear whether Christians are actually expected to follow such rules exactly or emp principles in daily life.

There are two parts to this issue. The first is that it is agreed that Christians are n the rules given in the Old Testament, especially those that are religious, dietary o are even supplanted by many of the principles given in the New Testament. Mo Gospels criticises the legalistic thinking of his religious opponents such as the Ph much importance on adherence to religious tradition and not enough on good m as compassion and love.

Thus, there is a tension when thinking about the Bible as a system of deontological ethics. In fact, when we look at contemporary Christian ethical practice, there is often a divide in how moral guidance is construed. More conservative or traditional Christians are likely to look at the moral rules in the Bible as essential to follow. However, more moderate, or liberal Christians are likely to view them more flexibly; important to follow but not when this involves sacrificing one's good intentions, conscience or virtues. In other words, perhaps these rules do not give complete moral guidance in our everyday lives. For a little more clarification, we can turn once again to the key figure in deontological ethics – Thomas Aquinas.

Aquinas, Natural Law and Christian Ethics

We can think a little bit more about the relationship between Christian ethics and
at the work of Thomas Aquinas; for natural law, although teleological at heart, als
elements. Aquinas, as you will have studied, held there was one guiding principle
the idea that good should be pursued and evil avoided. From further reasoning o
principle, it becomes possible to identify the **primary precepts** of which there are
even these aren't really deontological. Aquinas does not think that the primary prec
should follow, but rather that they are general teleological principles (e.g. a natur
human beings should act to bring about good whenever possible. So where does deont

Well, Aquinas held that primary precepts were ultimately too abstract to gui
beings have to apply practical reason to derive from these general principles m
that can resolve ethical dilemmas. These secondary precepts might include laws
murder and many other common moral intuitions. However, not all secondary p
sense we might not always be required to follow them, because they concern th
just things we might refrain from. Thus, it can be seen how Aquinas' ethical tele
framework that can effectively give moral guidance, so long as reason (both abst
through the moral decision-making process.

Kant, Deontology and Christian Ethics

Such a system of natural law might well appeal to Christians looking for a deonto
still holds a teleological core. In other words, the ends of human action can still
good while adhering to strict moral laws, so long as those laws reflect our natura
most interesting is that Aquinas' natural law is very similar to secular systems of
Immanuel Kant, and these similarities are perhaps more than skin deep.

For it is likely that you have studied how Kant argued God must be one of the three po
deontological ethics to be meaningful. And although this mention of God is claimed
still derives much of his ethics from the application of reason, not from God himself
in itself, but it is also important to analyse in comparison with natural law. For desp
developed quite complex universal teleological principles, many of them still mirror the
the application of the categorical imperative. For example, do not steal can be just
and as a universal Kantian law. So why do both of these systems mirror each in oth

A key aspect is the reliance on reason as a foundation for ethical thinking. Both
ultimately draw on reason for moral guidance. For Aquinas, this reason is much
Kant it is much more abstract – a tool to derive universal moral principles. More
contradictions in reason, it can be contended that these same contradictions wo
formulation of secondary precepts. Finally, despite the different ends of ethical
of both natural law and Kantian ethics. For Aquinas they are a way of identifying
to the right end of ethical conduct, while for Kant they are a way of ensuring tha
not merely in accordance with duty.

What does this reveal? Well, it shows that Christian ethics potentially has a lot mor
deontological systems of ethics) than merely having God as its foundation. Moreove
isn't too far from Aquinas' use of reason within a natural law framework. The key d
Kant does not have a teleological slant to his ethics. In other words, thinking about
not needed to arrive at the right ethical action, nor are human beings required to eth
ethical end point. Rather, universal moral laws are available to all with a correct app

Now, this obviously shows a key difference between Christian ethics and Kantian
decision-making, the processes Christians might use (if employing reason as a so
too greatly! This is key to note. Christians do regularly fall back on religious laws
reason on the nature of these religious laws when thinking about the right action
factor in an individual's ethical life, then their moral decision-making process ma
with a proponent of Kantian ethics!

The Categorical Imperative and Moral Decision-making

It might seem as if the comparisons between Christian ethics and Kant finish with the role of reason in both ethical systems, but there is perhaps a little more to be said about the processes involved in Kantian ethics as a whole. For if both Christianity and Kant acknowledge the importance of reason, shouldn't we be abl to identify concepts such as the categorical imperative in actual Christian ethical decision-making? Well, there may be some significant overlaps, and not just in th kinds of laws generated by Christian and Kantian ethics.

A clear example of this is the golden rule as put forward by Jesus in the Gospels. heart, this holds that we should treat other human beings as they would be treated themselves. Yet, although this seems very intuitive as we move through our lives, there is a curious logic behind such a principle. For we can ask why this principle makes sense at all. We might say that it is based on a broader principle equality, yet it is easy to imagine treating people differently depending on their wishes and desires, even if we thought we were equal. In fact, when we probe a be a moral principle based on the kind of **universalisation** that is essential to Kan

Let's unpack this a little further. If we were to conceptualise a world in which ev other however they wanted, this world would arguably be contradictory, or at le For if this world existed, it would be more than likely that no one would get treat everyone has a morally free licence to do what they want to each other. Thus, th a morally good law, for it passes the categorical imperative in contrast to its cour course, it is unlikely that Jesus somehow was thinking of Kant when he uttered th how Kant's categorical imperative, and its process of universalising moral laws, m with certain forms of Christian ethical thinking, especially when it comes to form our everyday moral interactions.

> **Revision Activity:**
> If Christians employ reason as a source of authority, should reason play an imp And does reason employing an ethical system closer to Aquinas or Kant?
>
> Make a few notes on your answer and compare to the other ethical systems re

Teleological Moral Decision-makin

In the previous section, we looked at natural law and how Aquinas developed a t professed to offer good moral guidance through the correct application of practi explore how the dimensions of Christian ethical decision-making may vary depen Christians are required to work towards. In other words, was Aquinas right in ide the right general principles Christians are required to work towards? If not, wha when attempting to make ethical decisions?

This is a difficult question to answer partly because it relies so much on the sourc derive potential ends. Aquinas holds that human nature is defined by the ability reason is fulfilling our purpose as humans. At the same time, Aquinas does primary precepts he uses as exemplary principles derived from reason are exha precepts that reveal themselves as we further reason on human nature. Moreov law have to be the right understanding of God's eternal law and the divin scripture and sources of revelation. In other words, reason is limited and t of ethical guidance to ensure we are acting according to the right moral ends.

Yet this all ends up quite complicated. What happens when our reasoning on na law? There appears to be plenty of aspects of our human nature that are discuss easily revealed by use of our reason. Think for a moment about contemporary li

reason to critically examine the Bible and eliminate elements that contradict our
Thus, although Aquinas perhaps identifies some of the right ends of ethical cond
clear moral guidance. So, what should we take from scripture and reason separa
teleological moral decision-making?

We can think about this problem not only as one of the nature of Christian ethics
good actions from more general moral principles and end
his we can apply in
come to examine different applied ethical issues. For the moment, however, let
Aquinas to another more radical theory
ethics.

Situation Ethics and T
g.

As you are
ly aware, situation ethics holds that there is only one right end
demonstrati
promotion of agape love. This is the basis of Joseph Fletcher's
the central moral message of the Gospels and the primary principle by which Ch
Now, what's interesting is that the teleology of Aquinas leads to very different co
Fletcher, yet both are held together by an emphasis on scripture and reason. Fo
basis for the law of love while our reason is essential to work out in any situation
exemplify agape love. Thus, perhaps ironically, the structure of natural law and
are very similar. The primary differences are they identify different teleological e
situation ethics does not develop deontological moral principles out of these end

This means moral decision-making for Christians is at heart not clear-cut, even w
Christian moral decision-making need not endorse a deontological approach and
consequentialist approach depending on the ends of ethical conduct one derives
Moreover, weighing up these different ends is not an easy task and is based larg
relied upon. For Aquinas, the whole of the Bible is the w
f God whereas for
Fletcher, it is primarily the words and actions of J
we can go a little dee
and look at how Christian ethics might h
ila
oral decision-making proce
consequentialist theories.

Consequentialist Moral Decision-mak

So far, we've
en that Christian ethics can veer away from an obvious deontolo
identifying different ends of ethical conduct that are dependent on the ends of e
important. So, to what degree might Christian ethics be consequentialist; that is
is dependent on the consequences it produces? This is not a typical way of think
theologians, yet as we have seen from the example of Fletcher, it may be that Ch
follow the law of love and choose actions which exemplify agape love in any give
we gain a little more insight into consequentialist ethics from a secular perspecti

As you may have guessed, your primary source should be the work of Jeremy Be
Bentham was a legalist, dedicated to developing a system of ethics that might be
This emphasis means his ideas can be contrasted quite interestingly even with co
such as Fletcher. For utilitarianism, the position defended by Bentham, holds th
dependent on whether it adheres to the principle of
l is holds that the r
the most utility, interpreted by Bentham as
n
isation of pleasure and the

In comparison to Fletcher
ark of love. Bentham believed that utility
each action, a
l
is is difficult (even with Bentham's hedonic calculus
feasible tha
la
g love. In comparison to Aquinas, human nature is not th
reason or by
pensity to do good and avoid evil. Instead, Bentham took the
generally seek pleasure and avoid pain, using this natural fact as a basis for his e
ends of ethical conduct could not be more different from the Christian thinkers y
Bentham even have a place for God in his ethics. It is just dedicated towards wh
Christians as a very base **hedonism**, the view that what is good is what is pleasur

Comparing Bentham and Christian Ethics

With this comparison in place, it might seem as if there is little for the Christian t more than meets the eye to Bentham's consequentialist ethics, particularly whe making. For one, a key part of utilitarian ethics is **impartiality**, the idea that no o over another. In one sense, this seems strange. Shouldn't we prioritise the welf above others? But if one examines Jesus' words a little more deeply in the Gosp impartiality should form an important part of Christian ethics to some degree. A not just be concerned with who matters to them, but humanity as a whole, inclu or marginalised.

Secondly, wh[illegible] get down to moral decision-making, how do Christia be a good a[illegible]nc what could be a bad one? We can envision many situation much more [illegible] good than bad. In these situations, is telling the truth really co it to be so? Moral intuitions here are important. If a Christian naturally holds lo important, they are likely to want to increase pleasure and reduce pain in people only goods, but Bentham here is perhaps pointing out a simple, if not always obv about goodness and badness in natural terms. The abstract idea of agape love a always graspable in real-world scenarios. Thus, we are potentially in a similar sit Kant. Even if the ends or sources of ethical conduct are different, Christians may consequentialist aims in moral decision-making, even if these don't seem resolut

Revision Activity:
Is there any biblical evidence to suggest that Christians should accommodate th their ethical thinking beyond demonstrating love? Research and pick two pass consequentialist Christian ethics.

Character-based Moral Decision-mak

The final form of moral decisi[illegible]aki[illegible]g we can look at is perhaps a form that Chri identify with. Ethics tha[illegible]ai[illegible]ter-based typically asks people to act according in a morally [illegible]nc[illegible]dual. The classic example you will have studied is that of vi that to act w[illegible]o act virtuously. This means performing actions one can envisio while avoiding actions which a vice-like individual would embody. In many ways, t ethics. Even if Aristotle held a different end to ethical conduct (eudaimonia or flou virtues Aristotle identifies as important we might find in the figure of Jesus Christ.

Why is this important? Well, it is very common to find Christians who hold that l involves acting as Jesus would have done in an ethical dilemma. In other words, virtues of Jesus' character and embody them in our own lives. Moreover, this ki process can arguably help with ethical dilemmas that aren't easily covered by th in the Bible. To act with compassion, humility, courage and truthfulness can pot situations that don't have an obviously morally good path to take. Moreover, so importance of practical reason, these virtues can be flexible. For one can still be even if it is necessary to lie on occasion.

Aristotle and Christian Ethics

Such a harmony is unsurpri[illegible]g[illegible] Aristotle has been a huge influence on ma theologians. Y[illegible]th[illegible]e of moral decision-making we have outlined does Aristotle's [illegible]f a golden mean between virtue and vice perhaps does not ea For Christian[illegible]pically look towards Jesus as an ethical example, not towards an character in order to derive what are virtues. More simply, we don't need to ru between vices of deficiency or excess, for we have a direct source for what is virt Jesus. This means when Christians are in ethical dilemmas, the process by which virtuous is perhaps more simplified than the kind of reasoning Aristotle wants us

Second, it is not as clear to what extent the figure of Jesus influences ideas abou virtuousness. While there may be a few clear examples, such as being selfish or difficult to place vices that Aristotle envisions, such as being melancholy, self-de Think about the nature of Christian discipleship. Does this mean simply being ch theologian such as Bonhoeffer might argue, being completely dedicated to the w there is not always a clear path to noting the exact relationship between the virt what their counterpart vices might be.

The cause of this is quite clear. Since Jes[illegible]rtedly good in the Christian faith vices. But this means we have n[illegible]ompare Jesus to when thinking about extent, this is remedied [illegible]e ethical teachings and words of Jesus himself, it sh decision-ma[illegible]sn [illegible]mple as looking towards Jesus as a moral exemplar. In be other so[illegible]hat Christians draw upon in moral decision-making beyond the when it comes to deciding what is vice-like behaviour. Yet, this shouldn't also ob Christian moral decision-making may be at heart and the way in which Christians help them live their lives.

Exam Question Preparation

It is unlikely that AQA will directly ask you to compare the moral decision-making other secular positions in an abstract fashion. As we shall see when it comes to most likely going to be asked how Christianity and another ethical position can b issue you will have studied. Yet this does mean that you should have a good gra and secular moral decision-making might cohere and differ. And what this sectio Christian moral decision-making, depending on one's interpretation, can be deon consequentialist and character-based. Moreover, when [illegible]ian moral decision perspectives, it holds a lot in common with the s[illegible]cists you have studied whether it be Kant, Bentham or Aristotle.

Thus, it is important w[illegible]d [illegible]ress later applied ethical issues, that you prop Christian m[illegible]ci[illegible]making may intersect with more secular moral decision of these sim[illegible]s that humanists argue God is not needed to develop a viable Nevertheless, as we shall explore in the next section, the nature of moral decisio Christian ethics is not just about how Christians make ethical decisions, but what generation of ethical principles and to what these ethical principles are directed partly when talking about teleological ethical decision-making, but there is plent progress to evaluating the nature of Christian ethics as a whole.

Revision Prompts:

Based on your studies throughout these sections, these are some revision promp make notes on when preparing for your end-of-year exams. For each, consider h answering the philosophical and theological conflicts it addresses and how other your answer.

1. What sources of authority do Christians empl[illegible]y w[illegible]e [illegible]hinking about the proc
2. What role, if any, does reason play i[illegible]ian moral decision-making?
3. Does Christian ethics accom[illegible]od[illegible]nsequentialist decision-making, or is fundamentally dec[illegible]g[illegible]s?
4. How p[illegible]en [illegible]deas about virtue in Christian moral decision-making?
5. Can Ch[illegible]moral decision-making be categorised into any single system o accommodate a variety of systems of ethics?

Christianity and Ethic
The Nature of Christian

Starter Revision Activity:
Revisit the following areas of the Ethics and Christia... ou...ses. Pick two Chris... research how they approach ethics. Do they fit int... y single ethical system, ... them a multifaceted ethical system?

Christianity and Moral Decision-making		**Deontological Ethics**
	Key Terms	Law, Duty, Obligation, Categorical imperati...
	Key Thinkers	Immanuel Kant
		Teleological and Consequentialist
	Key Terms	Utility, Hedonism
	Key Thinkers	Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill
		Virtue Ethics
	Key Terms	Virtue, Vice, Eudaimonia
	Key Thinkers	Aristotle

Christianity Moral Principles		**The Bible**
	Key Terms	Agape love, The golden rule, Beatitudes, Go...
	Key Thinkers	Jesus Christ, St Paul
		The Church
	Key Terms	...tity or life, Magisterium, Catechism

Introduction - The ... of Christian Ethics

In the previ...tion to this course companion, we looked at the different way... a variety of forms of moral decision-making. Through this discussion, it was note... taken, a Christian may well turn to deontological, consequential, teleological or ... in an ethical dilemma. Moreover, despite the diverging ends and sources Christi... similarities to be found between Christian moral decision-making and other syste... in this section we're going to truly address what makes Christian ethics distinctiv... principles, laws and concepts might emerge from the sources and ends of Christi...

For there is ultimately a tension at the heart of the Christian faith, especially as ... denominations continually emerge within the religion itself. First though, cast yo... centuries AD, when the early Christian Church was properly beginning to form an... separated it from other religious sects and groups. Here, a great deal would hav... groups around the world in terms of spiritual and ethical be...fs, especially consi... Jewish and referred often to what we now know as the ... Testament. In estab... religion, those who were Christians were ...er... concerned with what made ... the theological and ethical realms ...ct...

Nowadays, we can e... tify these distinctions, whether they be religious ru... practices) o... fs ...out the right way to live, raise a family and act towards ot... distinctions ...always so clear when we compare Christian ethics in particula... world. We've seen how discussions about inclusivism and pluralism often point ... ethical outlook between individuals of different religions, to the point where the... salvation available to all who simply live a good life. But these similarities have i... Christianity as a whole. Is it simply distinctive due to its theological beliefs and r... ethical laws does it put forward?

The answer to these questions depends largely on the kind of Christianity we choo
more conservative Christians are likely to endorse more of the strict moral principl
the Church. For instance, conservative Catholics are still likely to endorse a strong
disagree with permitting abortion, euthanasia and contraception, even when the c
practices seem to be positive. In other words, they might well view the Bible and t
deontological system of ethics, where salvation is guaranteed by following the law
these sources of authority. Alternatively, they might prefe[illegible]stem of natural law
deontological ethics are represented through the [illegible]d secondary precepts

On the other hand, it is important to [illegible]the beliefs of more liberal Christia
such a strong view on the [illegible] and principles in the Bible, balancing them
knowledge, in[illegible]tural beliefs. In this case, they might endorse only
life principl[illegible]cing any endorsement also against a recognition of the impor
might also lo[illegible]arther afield for sources of ethical authority other than the Bible
thought in areas such as feminism, pluralism and political theory to inform their
might view Christianity as incorporating different kinds of deontological, conseq
ethics, depending on these different sources of authority that are held to be imp

Regardless, throughout this section we will be balancing these two different pers
looking at the degree to which taking a conservative or liberal stance on Christia
For a common complaint from conservative Christians is that the liberalisation o
longer truly unique and cannot be divorced from secular ethical theory. In this w
secular humanists, who argue that religion is not essential to be a good person.
questioned whether a conservative Christian position is truly ethically coherent
is needed to make sense of our modern-day ethical intuitions. With these quest
first area of discussion – whether Christian ethics is deontological in nature.

Is Christian Ethics Deontological?

We noted when discussing moral d[illegible]king that Christian ethics often see
There are plenty of biblical [illegible]Christians follow in their everyday lives, tra
often present [illegible]or moral laws, and even Jesus gives important laws
that separa[illegible]stian ethics from Jewish ethics. Naturally, there are some diffe
deontologic[illegible]s can be interpreted. On a meta-ethical level, Christians may
theory, claiming that what is good is equivalent to God's laws and commands. A
form of natural law in which God's commands accompany a universal moral goo
specific precepts, principles or laws.

In the case of Protestant theologians, concerns with natural law mean that deontol
ethics have often focused on a meta-ethical grounding of divine command theory.
Church is too broad now to centre around one interpretation, with different forms
teleological and character-based ethics often endorsed, with varying degrees of nat
for Catholic theologians, natural law is generally preferred, meaning there is a joint
interpretation of Christian ethics. Yet, because secondary precepts are the most co
for Catholics, it can be argued that Catholicism is generally concerned with deontol

In these cases, living a good life is fairly simple. If [illegible]n wants to achieve sa
the Bible and Church. Nevertheless, such [illegible]owing more controversial t
The idea that Christians should fo[illegible]laws without hesitation comes into
contemporary moral intu[illegible]practical reason. Moreover, the idea of strict
often associ[illegible]an fundamentalism, perceived by many to be far too
held that G[illegible]mmands are the right actions to take, does this have to manife
Christians ar[illegible]ways required to follow, or does it allow for more consequential
interpretations of Christian ethics?

The Bible and Deontological Ethics

The Bible is filled with moral laws, as we've noted quite a few times now. These
principles, such as the Ten Commandments, to more ambiguous statements. Fo
tells his onlookers to 'love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'
law that Christians have to follow, even when they are under threat of violence,
circumstances under which this rule might be broken (for example, if the princip
difference may be Christians having to be absolute pacifists, rejecting violence at
conditional pacifists, who can endorse violence if it produces a greater good effe

For conservative Christians, it is likely that they will see nuance in these kind
statement that Jesus' instruction as a moral law, it is the duty of Christians to f
interpretation for the fallibility of human beings, not a nuance in what Jesus h
Moreover, the kinds of character virtues espoused by Jesus in passages such as t
more reliable way for Christians to ensure that they adhere to the moral laws he
moral exemplar because he follows the moral laws he sets down in the Gospels.

Yet, for liberal Christians, this interpretation might be questioned. Do we not loo
because these can provide better moral guidance than the limited number of law
Maybe even the moral laws are a way of cultivating good virtues, such as loving
Certainly, there are times when Jesus stresses the importance of good moral inte
he does adherence to the law. Moreover, Jesus at times seems to question the l
preferred by groups such as the Pharisees. Could it not be, as Fletcher suggests,
traditional moral law favoured by Jewish groups at the time, instead exhorting h
loving in any situation?

These questions are complicated, but it shows there is more than one way to ap
Gospels, even if they seem to intuitively adhere to a deontological schema. It m
right action is not determined by whether a person follows a law but whether it r
law is directed. In short, those moral laws Jesus teaches may be a route towards
love, virtue and even utility.

The Church and Deontological Ethics

We can see similar problems arise when we look at the way deontological ethics
Typically, throughout history the Christian Church has generally declared certain
actions to be right. More conservative denominations in particular are likely to h
it comes to modern ethical dilemmas. On the other hand, more liberal Christian
can have a more permissive attitude, acknowledging that people may have a var
beliefs that mean they view actions as right or wrong depending on the context.

For instance, if we take the Catholic Church as an example, their strict views on t
generally they maintain a strong opposition to practices such as abortion. In this
simply endorse a moral law that says, 'it is wrong to practise abortion', where th
action is dependent on whether it follows this law. Of course, there may be exce
mother's life, which fall under the principle of double effect, but a more liberal C
consequential or character-based approach to the problem. They may instead h
when it is a loving action, compassionate or even just would result in the most h

We can see the divide also clearly also when we look at the differences in how
moral law in first place. The Catholic Church endorses a natural law approac
Church is a fundamental source of secondary precepts. This means, in an import
authoritative when it comes to human law in Aquinas' ethics. On the other hand
maintain the same kind of authority, relegating such matters to scripture itself, v
recognise a variety of ethical perspectives. Simply put, it is important to conside
interpretations of scripture when thinking about Christian ethics, but also the ro
sources of authority, for these tacitly may influence how we think about the natu

Revision Activity:
How significant a role do moral laws play in modern Christianity compared to t
answers in the starter activity to your studies throughout this section and your

Is Christian Ethics Teleological?

We've briefly considered this question already, but we can go into a little more d
ethics is truly teleological. For while it may seem as if there is potentially both a
conduct (God) and a natural one (love, virtue, rationality, utility), the case is not
more about the role of meta-ethics in teleology.

For if we adopt a strict form of divine command theory, resulting in a Christia
good is simply what God commands. There isn't an end to our moral actions bey
obeying these divine commands. On the other hand, if we hold that there is som
ethical conduct, such as a natural human purpose based on our character and ca
well be teleological. Such forms of teleological ethics are obviously found in bot

So, the teleological nature of Christian ethics is, to a large degree, based on whic
Euthyphro dilemma, and there is significant disagreement still among theologian
the ends of Christian ethics, if there are really any at all. However, if Christian et
human moral conduct are perhaps what truly makes it distinct. For while secula
appeal to God-given human reason or agape love are ends that secular ethicists
Moreover, having these unique ends to ethical conduct also means that the incre
may not affect its uniqueness. Even if our modern ethical intuitions and knowled
derive moral guidance based on these ends, the distinctiveness of these ends re

Despite this, there are still similarities we can draw between secular ethics and C
distinctive teleology behind it. For one, situation ethics and utilitarianism aren't
being critical, we may even say that appeals to agape love are really appeals to c
happiness really is. In other words, while it may seem as if agape love is unique,
down to choosing the action which promotes the most happiness. Similarly, whi
law has a unique understanding of human purpose, it is still very similar to virtue
moral guidance by reasoning on what allows human beings to flourish in differen
to remember that even if certain teleological ends appear unique to Christianity,
indistinguishable from teleological systems of secular ethics.

The Bible and Teleology

Part of the difficulty with addressing the teleology of Christian ethics is that the t
explicitly addressed in the Bible. Human ethical action is generally reported to re
God's will and be necessary for salvation. But whether ethics has a teleology or
beyond this requires a bit more interpretation. It involves identifying that huma
were created for a purpose by God, what this exact purpose is, and how moral p
reflect this purpose. For a theologian such as Aquinas, who was heavily influenc
Aristotle, this purpose wasn't a given from the teachings in the Gospel. It had to
reflection on human nature. Similarly, for Fletcher, the purpose of human ethica
throughout Christian scripture. Rather, one had to focus on the words of Jesus h
both cases, the ends of human behaviour did not necessarily come through from a li

This, however, is a broader discussion about how we interpret sources of aut
address in the Philosophy of Religion specification. Of course, you should not addr
answers to issues of ethics. But it is useful to know how these two different topics
Catholic Church is central to ethics because there needs to be a reasonable interpr
and tradition but also of the nature of human life itself. In this sense, the teleology
deeply important role in applied ethical issues for Catholics today. Much of the Ca
abortion and euthanasia, for instance, is driven by concerns raised by the natural l

On the other hand, Fletcher's willingness to contemplate the potential rightness rejection of these kinds of formal ethics. The only end to consider is agape love severe reflections on human nature nor does it require a formal authority such a demonstrate it at any point. The ultimate authority is Jesus himself and his lovin reading of the Gospels themselves. Moreover, knowing what is loving cannot be concepts. This knowledge comes for Fletcher from a process of moral maturatio we develop as we work our way through different ethical dilemmas in our lives.

Revision Activity:

Are there any significant ends such as law ethics beyond acting according to Go believe there are other moral purposes to life?

Note three possible ends to Christian ethical action and write a few sentences e

Is Christian Ethics Consequentialist?

Despite the prominence given to Fletcher in the AQA specification, it still should Christian ethics is consequentialist is perhaps one of the most controversial posit situation ethics is recognised by many to be a viable ethical system, it is not one many mainstream Christian denominations, and Fletcher faced a great deal of cr proposing his ideas. At the same time, in the last section on moral decision-mak ethics may unwittingly adopt elements of consequentialist moral decision-makin agape love or utility. For, ultimately, one of the benefits of consequentialist ethi provide useful moral guidance in complex ethical dilemmas, where our ordinary too inflexible or unhelpful.

But even if that is the case, does that truly mean that Christian ethics is consequ great deal of the opposition to consequentialist ethics in Christian tradition arise to grotesque conclusions about what is right that violates the integrity and sanct however, flips this idea on its head. Actions might seem bad but could rea situation at hand. Ending the life of a person who is in great pain but can't fully result for everyone involved, even if it seems an instinctually wrong action to un back for the moment. How can Fletcher arrive at such a conclusion when there principles in the Bible?

The Bible and Consequentialist Ethics

Just like teleology, the Bible does not overtly discuss consequentialism as a distin scripture to an extent to find a grounding for situation ethics. However, he is als existence either. Rather it comes from reasoning on the central law he holds is a law of love.

Matthew 22:34-40

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered t lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in th to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall l On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Now, it may seem as though even this law isn't really consequentialist by itself. what loving means. It is perhaps not merely a state of mind. If I only thought lo actions, I would hardly be regarded to be a good person. Rather, as Fletcher hol requires us to perform actions which themselves are loving. And the measure of an action produces, not whether it follows certain laws or principles. Thus, there argument behind Fletcher's adoption of the law of love, one that can easily be q theologians favouring other ethical positions. Maybe lovingness is just an intent supposed to develop to help us follow God's law, not a kind of good we are supp

At the same time, Fletcher's position is hardly inconceivable. His move from the
Christian ethics makes sense if the law of love is held to be central to moral deci
this of course hinges on a certain interpretation of the Bible which disregards or
its text in favour of a very Christocentric perspective. But this also still perhaps g
consequential flavour. No secular ethical system is likely to endorse agape love
human moral actions, even if it sometimes coheres with a consequentialism with
Fletcher arguably diverges from Christian tradition, his vi of Christian ethics
its own right.

Christian Ethics Character-based

The final asp of ethics we can consider is the role of character traits
been very l egarded in the Christian faith, although they play a complemen
words, the i tance of virtue is not just as an end to moral action but instead
according to the teachings of the Bible. Thus, it is important to first note that, to
say that Christian ethics is partly character-based. Very few Christians would arg
more like Jesus, even if their moral principles don't seem to cohere exactly with

But how far should we judge Christianity to be character-based? We explored th
the nature of Christian moral decision-making, noting how a Jesus-based version
pitfalls when it comes to issuing moral guidance. But there are a few more prob
which is that taking a purely character-based approach to Christian ethics may w
Why is this the case? Well, if we're attempting to live according to how Jesus wo
as emblematic of the kind of virtues we should be cultivating in our lives, then ar
same, without ever holding Christian virtue ethics to have any connection to God
based conception of Christian ethics may fail to be religious at all.

The Bible and Virtue Ethics

There is a potential avenue around s n s. For there are many kinds of
person would not recognise oc t. For instance, piety or faithfulness is o
in scripture, alongsid conventious ideals such as chastity or meekness. In
in the Bible ure such as Jesus may be different from those a secular indivic
the same ti s also leaves us with the problem of finding competing virtues
Jesus as a character in many ways seems to conflict with many figures that are p
fact, the kind of warrior-messiah envisaged by the Jewish people at the time of J
from the pacifistic individual who is celebrated as the Messiah by Christians.

Also, perhaps more troubling is finding a virtue-based teleology in the Bible. Wh
ethical conduct was eudaimonia, or flourishing, this is unlikely to appeal to Chris
fundamentally areligious concept. So, what might be an option? Well, one optic
beaten track, and that you are unlikely to have covered in your studies, is that of
more commonly discussed in the Eastern Orthodox Church and refers to a proce
in those who have committed to themselves in faith. It begins with an individua
moral until eventually they reach the point of unification with God in heaven.

This idea is potentially a stretch beyond what you need to know for your exa
understanding how a character-based ver f stianity might possess a goo
short, a Christian may wish to cult virtues as part of theosis, with the
union with God. This ob not answer all the problems we've discusse
may interact th laws found in the Bible. But it does present the opti
of Christian may be philosophically coherent, if not entirely theologically c
present a dis tive version of Christian ethics that goes beyond the virtue ethic

Revision Activity:
Is Christian ethics primarily character-based, or are considerations of character
moral laws? Write down your thoughts and see whether you can spot any phil

Exam Question Preparation

The first two sections of this companion for Ethics may seem a bit weighty at firs
dimensions of Christian moral decision-making, seeing how they can be compare
In this section, we've taken it a bit further and have philosophically examined ho
deontological, teleological, consequentialist and even character-based in nature
may receive is one similar to the kind we have developed as an exam-style quest

Exam-style Question:
'Christian ethics is not chara[illegible]-ba[illegible].'

Critically [illegible]e [illegible]valuate this view with reference to the dialogue betwe
ethical stu

Here, the emphasis is on whether a character-based system or a virtue-based sy
Christian ethics. There is an easy point at which to begin your analysis, and that
philosophically and theologically coherent. Moreover, there is a variety of positi
response.

1. Christian ethics is not character-based.
2. Christian ethics is partially character-based but is also deontological/conseq
3. Christian ethics is wholly character-based.

As we've explored, the position of many Christian denominations and theologians
But by now you should hopefully have the tools to argue for any of these positions
well argue that Christianity, for instance, is wholly deontological due to the Bible s
theory view of ethics, although plenty of other positions are possible! Similarly, if
point to the faults of other systems and explain how Christian ethics primarily focu

Either way, there is always going to be room for a scope with these kinds of questio
always to develop a good understanding of each position we've studied in case it
Moreover, the above question can easily be reframed into other kinds of questio
answering. For instance, see the exam-style question we've included below.

Exam-style Question:
'Christian ethics is deontological.'

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between

Here, although the question is essentially the same in structure as the previous e
does shift a little bit. Here, you will have to explain how the moral laws in the Bi
either do or do not support a deontological Christian ethics. However, since a lit
seem to grant a role for deontological laws in the Christian faith, the burden of p
against this position rather than for it!

Revision Prompts:

Based on your studies throughout these sections, these are some revision promp
make notes on when preparing for your end-of-year exams. For each, consider h
answering the philosophical and theological conflicts it addresses and how other
your answe

1. To wha[illegible]t is Christian ethics concerned with following moral laws?
2. Can Christian ethics be effectively compared to or reconciled with Kantian e
3. How does Bentham's utilitarianism differ from Christian ethics?
4. What role does virtue play in Christian ethics?
5. Is Christian ethics truly distinctive as an ethical system?

Christianity and Ethics: Christian Issues of Human and Animal Life

Starter Revision Activity:
Revisit the following areas of the Ethics and Christia... ou...ses. For each of th... revise what Christian ethical perspectives ca... and ... principles they employ ... decision-making on these issues

Applied Ethics		**Issues of Human Life and Dea...**
	Key Terms	Embryo research, Designer babies, Euthana... Genetic engineering, Assisted suicide, Capit...
	Key Thinkers	Thomas Aquinas, Joseph Fletcher
		Issues of Non-human Life and D...
	Key Terms	Intensive farming, Blood sports, Cloning
	Key Thinkers	Jeremy Bentham, Aristotle
		Christian Moral Principles
	Key Terms	Sanctity of life principle, Personhood, Natu...
	Key Thinkers	Jesus, St Paul

Introduction – Applying Christian Ethics to Contemporary Moral Dilemmas

Whereas in the previous sections we were discus...ng h... ature and distinctiven... comparison with other ethical systems, t...s ... of this companion will be focuse... other meta-ethical concerns such as t... will. Yet, applying Christian ethics to co... least partly dependent o... how we construe Christian ethics in the first place. Th... grounding i... e ... al systems studied so far before we turn to applied ethi... a strictly de...gical interpretation of Christian ethics? Or an alternative syste... situation ethics? How we grapple with a particular ethical issue or moral dilemm... we choose to adopt in response.

But, as we shall examine in more detail later, being able **to compare Christian ar...** is perhaps the most important part of the Dialogues specification in ethics. It is n... at least one question on an applied ethical issue or topic to which you will be req... Christian ethical perspective with a secular perspective. For instance, this might ... and Bentham's utilitarianism on an issue such as genetic engineering. Thus, deve... Christian ethical stances and their major differences with secular positions is ess...

This means that the next few sections won't be analysing the details of the differ... studied so far. The table above features a list of the issue... t the focus of this ... important aspects of Christian and secular ethics ... ho... you can use different ... any ethical issue you face in your end-of-... ... For cultivating this deeper ... the easiest route to confidence n... ... your assessments but in your wider e...

Science, Technology and Human Life

Before we d... into these ethical principles, we can first explore a little bit abou... arise. For, to some degree, many moral dilemmas we face now still have similar ... be through historical narratives, myths or more theologically inclined documents ... relevancy of traditional Christianity largely comes down to whether the teaching ... guidance to Christians today. If the ethical issues we face are vastly beyond the ...

Bible, then even if Christianity is a useful text to study when thinking about what help us in our ordinary lives. And while to some degree this might be remedied b ultimate source for the key ethical principles that Christians hold dear.

So, when we look at the ethical issues in your AQA specifications, what is the rea of them? The answer is – by and large – **technology**. The advance of scientific k means we have the capability to manipulate, prolong and change the course of h than ever before. Moreover, these technological changes have made us questio **intrinsically** valuable (valuable in and of itself) or whether we should be focusing valuable, such as happiness or consciousness. It has also brought attention to the proble divisions behind human beings and other non-human forms of life. Should we re the centre of ethical perspective when our ability to manipulate the natural w untold suffering and damage to the environment?

But what of ethical issues such as homosexuality or marriage? Well, the advance of the world have also lent themselves to a broader materialism in our general p technology has allowed us to probe the most microscopic parts of the world and kinds of phenomena traditionally feared by the Christian Church are as natural a has even led to Christians re-evaluating institutions such as marriage, to focus or rather than emphasising the unbreakable spiritual bond that the sacrament was In this sense, it is important to recognise that technological and scientific change applied ethical issues. If we question one aspect of Christian tradition concernin equally question another ethical issue in a similar fashion.

Why stress this now though? There is one key reason. The assessment question focus on a single ethical issue. Instead, they might address whether Christianity animal rights and welfare. They might ask you to evaluate whether Christians ha human life and death. In either case, the scope of the question is much broader bring in multiple ethical issues in your answer.

Christianity, Personhood and Scientific Developments

The most c problem that emerges when thinking about new technological In the past, it was perhaps easier for Christians to create a divide between the hu beings were perceived to be the only beings that were truly rational and self-con prime example of what constitutes a person in comparison to an animal, which c Yet, with increased scientific study of animals, these boundaries are being withd animals, such as dolphins, primates, pigs and crows, which are capable of solving which seem to possess elements of conscious thought similar to those of human these animals are more emblematic of being persons than, say, a baby? Further possess complex emotional lives and have rich experiences of the world that incl

These questions around personhood are particularly important when we think a human life. For they question how we approach issues such as abortion, euthan someone truly a person at the moment of conception, or does it occur at a later capacities we hold to be representative of personhood are primarily, if a human be capacities due to injury, does that mean they lose their status of personhood? T definition of personhood, but our intuitions about it influence how we approach and non-human life and death. Moreover, these intuitions aren't necessarily inc themselves. Whether our attitude towards life and death is dependent on with it and the wider perspective on the universe. A more materialistic outlook linked with a more materialistic outlook on personhood.

Yet, for the Christian, such considerations are potentially dangerous. While ther potentially improve the welfare of individuals, the possibility of subverting a stro lead to negative effects on the way we view the unborn, the disabled and the ma

important here leading up to our examination of different Christian principles is personhood and the potential sanctity of life are not just rooted in religious belie beings are created in the image of God is an important foundation for viewing hu more philosophical concern about moral equality underlying it. For a latent criti around the definition of personhood is that we may undermine the moral respec This is most commonly expressed as a slippery slope argument, but there may al that more is gained morally when we view human life as intrinsically valuable rat measures of happiness or welfare. These argume[illegible]ve will explore in a bit mor key Christian principles in the next part of this section.

Revision Activity:
How do y[illegible]ev[illegible]e should define personhood? And should any definition the rights [illegible]are of animals? Write a few sentences outlining your beliefs a as we progress through this section.

Applying Christian Moral Principles

So far, we've given a brief overview of the kinds of topics you will potentially be concepts that have driven the development of new ethical dilemmas. In this par Christian moral principles you might draw on to help develop your arguments. T especially considering the general wealth of ethical teaching present in the Bible commonly employed when talking about applied ethical issues in modern discus comparing Christian and secular ethical systems. With this in mind, we can turn important – Christian moral principle active today.

The Sanctity of Life Principle

As you should know, the sanctity of life principle [illegible]oin[illegible]at all human life is inhe number of general moral laws that Chri[illegible]a[illegible]e expected to follow. The most i be preserved whenever possib[illegible]. Sin[illegible]God creates each human being with a pu and since human bein[illegible]r[illegible]ed in the image of God, ending any life early is Throughou[illegible]y, [illegible]sanctity of life principle has typically thought to refer to sense, it is [illegible]simple principle to understand and is one that perhaps doesn' But in a more modern context, where medical technologies have sufficiently adv beyond the imagination of those in the past, new issues have emerged.

For there is a potential ambiguity in the sanctity of life principle. Does preservin possible reason to end it prematurely? Or does it mean that we should simply co human life in all of our actions? We might end with a *strong* sanctity of life princ wrong to end human life prematurely, or a *weak* sanctity of life principle, where the sanctity of human life, but it does not always outweigh all other consideratio the sanctity of life principle, it is necessary to be specific about which form you a influences the ethical principles we derive from it.

The Strong Principle and Applied Ethics

The strong principle can be contended to gi[illegible]le[illegible]moral guidance in issues o time, it is perhaps more inflexible [illegible]uidance it gives may be morally unint than we consider issues s[illegible]e[illegible]tion, euthanasia and genetic engineering. I principle com[illegible]nd[illegible]ways preserve life, even if it risks greater suffering fo perhaps a p[illegible]where Christians fail to consider how the strong principle sho If life is sacre[illegible]houldn't we be more committed not only to preserving it but to sanctity of life mean that we should attempt to eradicate poverty, disease and ill

The first problem here is that the sanctity of life principle, as we noted before, imp
human life. But does this plan involve suffering? Would God intend for us to suffe
plan? Or does this plan involve us overcoming suffering through the means availa
are potentially a few contradictions when we are thinking about the strong sanctit
particular, the notion that God has a plan for each human life can be interpreted ir
easily conflict. If life is sacred, then preservation of life may not be the only princip

The second problem is that the strong principle, if taken at face value, seems to p
implementation. For instance, we argue that we should not end the life of an unborn
is a decision that would seem to run against our moral intuitions. Now, those in s
might raise the principle of **double effect** in these cases. Yet, for critics, this is sir
other factors or consequences are important beyond the mere preservation of
unwittingly engage in euthanasia when attempting to relieve the pain of those wh
of **passive euthanasia**, which in principle involves death by omission, is rarely pe
practitioner's knowledge of what is going to occur.

In short, these kinds of exceptional cases are not really exceptional at all; rather,
consider other important principles (such as the quality of life, compassion, or lo
value of life, not just a blind wish to preserve it. If this is the case, then the stron
inflexible but misguided.

The Weak Principle and Applied Ethics

So, what is the alternative option? Well, naturally it is to adopt a weaker form o
us to generally preserve human life without the issues that arise from the strong
there might be exceptional circumstances where procedures such as abortion an
especially when someone's **quality of life** may be severely affected. Thus, we ar
to consider not only the sacred nature of human life but also the other factors w
our abilities to reason, love and experience happiness.

So, what's the problem? Well, for many Christians, especially those of the conse
sanctity of life principle this weaker version makes it fundamentally meaningle
about the quality of life, or other factors besides sanctity, then it doesn't mean v
life is inherently valuable. In fact, it can be seen as a tacit admission that the san
altogether, a conclusion that a lot of Christians would be reluctant to stomach. M
other factors we are required to consider and how these arise. Should Christians
philosophers and other theorists about the value of human life? Or should they
what the Bible says?

The Sanctity of Life and Animal Rights

The issue is perhaps further complicated when we think about animal welfare an
of life principle, it is only human life that is sacred and so should be preserved wh
animals fit into this interpretation? Do we have no duty to protect animal life? U
has fundamentally set apart human beings as sacred. Such a principle ties in wel
dominion. But it says ultimately very little about the importance of **stewardship**
personhood may overlap with non-human beings.

On the other hand, a weak sanctity of life principle may allow for greater flexibili
and welfare, for it admits other factors may be important when considering the
Medical testing, intensive farming and the use of animals as a source of organs m
are significant negative consequences for the environment, despite the possibilit
preserve human life in different ways. The emphasis thus shifts to stewardship o
dominion, and critics may argue that the weak sanctity of life principle fails to all
for a proper divide between the value of human life and the value of non-human
Regardless, it is important to note how different interpretations of the sanctity o
principle have ramifications beyond human ethical issues.

Biblical Moral Principles

What exactly can we focus on when we talk about moral principles in scripture? we looked at in previous sections. There are examples such as the law of love ar also commands to act towards social justice, equality and faithfulness to God. S these to modern ethical issues? Should we prioritise one principle over another later parts, we will examine these questions in relation to b situation ethics a this analysis, it is worth considering some of the b and virtues that can b

Biblical Moral Laws

One of the mos bas the Bible is thought to be the **golden rule**, which c direct law, m al principle or a simple guide to the right kinds of moral ac Regardless, ite powerful, particularly when thinking about basic moral issu put, we would not want to be lied to or stolen from in most cases, so we shouldn other people. Similarly, it might provide a basis for a broader equality when it co homosexuality and transgenderism. No one would want to be discriminated aga own life outside their control, so any discrimination against others of this kind is

Note here, though, that this kind of universal principle does potentially go agains systems such as natural law and situation ethics. For the former, reasoning on h kinds of acts and behaviours which require condemnation, despite the importan Similarly, for the latter, the law of love might require us to perform acts such as more loving. This does not mean that honesty, for instance, is not generally mor where the law of love may contradict our intuitions about the golden rule. Altog golden rule to be an example of a heuristic (shortcut) in moral guidance, not a st required to follow.

However, it is also worth considering othe c of the Gospels which may re they do not take the form of a str w. These in particular include the p **parable of the good Sam** ght be possible to derive a principle such as need'. This is co y broad, but it's the kind of principle that might supp euthanasia, tance. One person might argue that helping those in need inv die if life has become unbearable, while another might argue that this help simp process of dying is as comfortable as possible. More broadly though, we can link moral action in the Bible to the place of moral virtues.

Biblical Moral Virtues

Think once again about the parable of the good Samaritan. In one sense, we cou charity from the narrative. Alternatively, we could construe it as talking about th compassion and love in one's life. Many different teachings in the Gospels fit thi accompanying healings to the more general principles found in passages such as Altogether, Jesus' example seems to suggest that when thinking about modern e looking to apply the kinds of virtues he embodied, such as compassion, honesty,

Yet, in comparison to straightforward principles s ch the golden rule, virtues derive moral guidance from, especiall y mplex ethical issues are concern compassion, for instance. Und ts m t basic interpretation this virtue should value of other human b p to be concerned about their welfare. Perhaps f studied, su e lying, compassion is easy to apply. Stealing someone's compassion e case may be the same with issues such as homosexuality ar should mean that we treat anybody well, regardless of their sexual or gender ide

But think for a moment about the Catholic Church (and other mainstream Christ history). Do they not maintain that it is important to condemn sin while remaini Here, we might disagree with this interpretation of compassion, but the fact rem

compassion isn't an easy process. These same problems arise when we consider
and euthanasia. Many Christians would argue that any kind of euthanasia apart
profoundly uncompassionate, since it maintains a fundamental disregard for the
But there are plenty of individuals who are in favour of legalising active euthanas
suffering of some individuals, arguing that it can only be compassionate to allow
they wish. Altogether, it is important to remember that biblical moral virtues are
means there is still an active debate about the correct way to apply them to man

Revision Activity:
Do Christians today still value biblical moral laws over use of reason in ethics, o
proven too inflexible in modern society?

Research and write down two examples where modern Christian denomination
biblical law on contemporary ethical issues.

Natural Law

After considering how biblical principles and virtues face problems when applied
consider how more established positions might approach applied ethical issues.
examining how they can relate to each individual issue; rather, we will look at so
implementation that you may choose to focus on in your exams.

The first of these is natural law, which is perhaps the most difficult to grapple wi
ethical issues. For as you hopefully should recall, natural law contends that ther
human nature. There are thus kinds of capacities, characteristics and behaviours
to develop effective moral principles that guide our lives. For Aquinas, there we
include protecting and preserving human life, reproduction, education, worshipp
society. From these primary precepts, using practical reason, we should be able
secondary precepts that give effective moral guidance.

But you may well note that some of the primary precepts are a bit vague. Mor
contentious: human beings really required to reproduce, for instance, or eve
what counts as the ordering of society? Is any action which potentially destabilis
intuitively good consequences? All these problems are hidden within Aquinas' s
distinct problems when we try to apply them to different modern ethical issues.
unclear when we encounter these problems whether it is the primary precepts v
natural law is fundamentally flawed as an ethical system.

Let us consider abortion as an easy example. Under Aquinas' natural law (and tha
is wrong because it transgresses our imperatives to both preserve human life and
be said for voluntary, active euthanasia. But here we might encounter a number o
reproduction really be viewed in moral terms? Isn't it simply a natural desire, not
only thing potentially supporting this belief in Christianity is scriptural evidence, nc
Similarly, we've explored the problems with preservation when we looked at the s

The problem only grows deeper when we think about homosexuality and transge
opposition to these phenomena under natural law is once again the transgressio
reproduce. But our modern scientific knowledge shows these phenomena are e
law theorists re-evaluate the primary precepts, or should we question the validit
the former, there may be a path forward where natural law might cohere b
moral intuition. However, it may be that trying to generate moral principles ba
subjective process, and natural law cannot offer truly helpful moral guidance. Ei
applied ethical issues from a natural law perspective, it is important to trace how
relates back to the original primary precepts developed by theorists.

This is perhaps truest when we consider issues of non-human life and death. The precepts here is that they are all human centric. This means that a division is arb beings and animals, with the former having no real responsibility to the latter un Aquinas himself said as much, contending that human beings were effectively all wish. Ultimately, this means that under Aquinas' natural law human beings do n as intensive farming unless they impact other human beings, e.g. through enviro this seems to transgress good principles of stewardship a[illegible]ems to be a blank guidance natural law can give. Do we not have so[illegible] responsibility to ani for how their exploitation might affect h[illegible]ves?

Situation Ethics

Comparativ[illegible]atural law, the moral guidance given by situation ethics is eas practice. Th[illegible]ght sound a little strange, but think about the nature of situatio contends ultimately that the right action is always dependent on the situation or at hand. We have to apply what is a very simple and abstract idea, the law of lov problems of our material world. In other words, it is always easy to know for the approach an ethical dilemma. It is another thing entirely working out or calculat

However, that does not mean we cannot form general judgements about loving It is likely, for example, that theft and lying are generally unloving actions, even i some circumstances. Similarly, it is easy to argue that being tolerant, respectful relationships and transgender individuals is also likely to be loving. Where situat complicated is around issues of human and non-human life and death. For insta Many would argue that in many circumstances it is, as long as the individual faci autonomous choice to die. The same perhaps is true of genetic engineering in m individual cure their genetic condition or improving their [illegible]are a loving action?

At the same time, for problems such as [illegible] and designer babies, the choice i really call these loving actions if we e[illegible]osed the practice of either? Or are they material concerns? Re[illegible]ss there still may be situations where allowing thes Fletcher's e[illegible]er [illegible] best captures is a kind of 'maturity' when it comes to m words, the [illegible]up ethicist is one who can recognise that context matters and way they formulate moral guidance. Even if some practices seem intuitively wro there may be certain situations where they might be loving, despite appearance

A further advantage of situation ethics is that it perhaps can incorporate issues o more reasonable fashion than natural law. The law of love need not be human c precepts are. Thus, we could easily contend that intensive farming or blood spo situations. In this way, situation ethics, in being more abstract in certain aspects moral guidance which can prove useful to Christians in truly understanding non-

Revision Activity:
Is situation ethics or natural law a more productive ethical system for Christian contemporary ethical issues?

Note down three arguments for and [illegible]ur chosen position.

Even within systems such as natural law and situation ethics, there is the implicit principles they produce must cohere in some way with biblical law. However, w requirement is, of course, absent. In many ways this frees the ethical debate fro such as the sanctity of life principle. On the other hand, depending on which eth other problems arise. When comparing religious and secular ethical systems, es ethical issues, it is important to note how the drawbacks of each connect to thei Throughout our exploration of each system we will therefore, look not only at h unique moral guidance but also at how it can lead to unintuitive or unusual c ethical systems in question.

Kantian Eth

Kantian ethics is perhaps one of the most difficult systems to evaluate, especially fill out how it could be applied to contemporary ethical dilemmas. What is clear imperative provides easy guidance for issues such as theft and lying. The univers envisioned by Kant himself, with laws generated against each. Of course, the pr laws are universally binding, there can be no circumstance which permits breaki came to your door asking for the address of your neighbour whom they wished t committing a wrong action by lying to them. In this way, although the moral adv often clear, it can also be resolutely inflexible.

But what about homosexuality and transgender issues? These are morally socia are not easily universalisable. We might formulate a law about equality, claimin treated with equal respect'. We might even refer to Kant's second formulation o treating individuals as ends. But this doesn't answer questions about whether sa allowed to marry, and whether this truly is an issue of equal respect or whether exclude some individuals from certain worship practices. In other words, the pri categorical imperative may prove difficult to apply to cultural ethical issu

The same mi[illegible] practices such as abortion and euthanasia. We might holds that [illegible]n is not allowed except in instances where the mother might s Such a princi[illegible] is arguably universalisable without contradiction, since a world i give birth in these circumstances would produce greater harm, death, or unhapp hinges on what we define as severe distress or harm, and whether embryos or fo in and of themselves, not just as means to an end. The same is true for euthanas principles entirely specific to a particular situation, the moral guidance they prov meaningless or overly simplistic.

Moreover, we encounter similar problems in issues of non-human life as we do w in Kantian ethics which requires human beings to consider the welfare of animal mistreatment would result in a contradiction upon universalisation. The second treat other human beings as ends, but this is based on a recognition of other pe conceive of animals as having the same rational powers to deduce moral laws, th as a means. But is this really correct? Does it not show, perhaps, that reason isn morality, and intuitively we bring in other emotions, virtues and ideas when deci

Altogether, Kantian ethics is [illegible] very good at generating broad laws about w bit more when considering complex applied ethical dilemmas, which require a bi if you're asked to compare Christian ethics to Kantian ethics, care needs to be ta may not always grant useful guidance on a particular issue, nor may it always be This is not to say that the various formulations don't at least hint at the potentia should be undertaking, but that the scope and applicability of Kantian ethics is a proponents. Thus, in any answer it is key to note how these shortcomings affect thought and Christian ethics around difficult ethical dilemmas.

Utilitarianism

In comparison to Kantian ethics, utilitarianism has often been argued to be able dilemmas, even if the utility of various actions is difficult to calculate in practice. you should be aware, are often now termed **act utilitarianism**, as they require th utility for each action that we undertake. For simpler issues such as theft and lyi according to Bentham's hedonic calculus) might be fairly straightforward. Typica stealing a bar of chocolate might not be greater than the distress it causes a shop plenty of situations we can envisage where the result is reversed. If I had a starv to feed them is likely to be acceptable if it would generate a significant amount minor pain caused to the shopkeeper.

Where this more difficult is potentially when we consider social issues. For of the popul was against same-sex relationships, then allowing same-sex m greater total pain for the majority than pleasure for the minority in same-sex rel potentially true of transgender issues. In fact, one of the primary problems you act utilitarianism is that it offers no protection for minority groups and potential majority, as even minor pleasure given to the majority is likely to outweigh great minority. This is potentially where Bentham's ethics are more contentious comp latter's second formulation of the categorical imperative guarantees some rights true of Bentham's ethics. Thus, there is no hard and fast guidance about social i the treatment of minority groups.

However, Bentham's ethics allow us to perhaps properly address issues of human and non-human life and death in a manner which other ethical systems so far have failed to do. Whether it be abortion, euthanasia or cloning, we are only required to decide what would provide the greatest pleasure versus minimal pain. If we take euthanasia as an example, there is perhaps a clear case for legalising voluntary euthanasia since a person's choice to end their suffering is likely to cause a net positive gain in pleasure for themselves and their families. It may lead to a more permissive attitude surrounding genetic engineering, but the ability to cure genetic conditions and improve the welfare of human lives will naturally take precedence over the worries about changing human nature and personhood.

Finally, as long as we include the pleasure and pain of non-human beings in our c potentially allows us to properly address issues such as intensive farming and bl Peter Singer have often made strong arguments for vegetarianism and veganism human beings receive from eating meat is comparatively minor to the massive a farming inflicts on animals. In this sense, it is clear how a utilitarian position can animal rights and welfare, especially in comparison to natural law and Kantian et important to consider the tyranny of the majority. If enough human beings gain meat or watching blood sports, does that override the pain and suffering experie

Virtue Ethics

Finally, we can consider how virtue ethics can be applied to a variety of ethical is and Kant, the moral principles given by virtue ethics are a little more difficult to also be argued that virtues are easy to implement in practice. We don't have to principles but instead look towards figures and behaviours that are considered c problems c an flying, for instance. It is generally clear that a virtuous pers to be hones if practical reason dictated that this would not always be poss

Moreover, we can point towards virtues such as compassion, respectfulness and about social issues such as same-sex relationships and transgender issues. In all hold that promoting accepting attitudes towards all individuals is a more virtuou persecution and marginalisation. Moreover, there is no problem of the tyranny

Bentham's utilitarianism. Since all people should aspire to be virtuous and achie potentially a natural tendency towards equality within virtue ethics. However, t what virtues we choose to emphasise in any given society or culture.

This is perhaps the greatest problem facing virtue ethics when thinking about its a dilemmas. Aristotle, for instance, identifies a number of virtues which we are unlik such as liberality and magnificence. Yet, there are also ma[illegible]uch as friendliness, would recognise as still important. Moreover, alth[illegible]ugh m[illegible]y of these are difficult dilemmas, they do at least point towards t[illegible]d of behaviour we should be endo euthanasia as a key example. Wh[illegible]ght argue the person in the face of suffe potentially should also re[illegible]s that those not suffering should have compassion that are. Th[illegible]he [illegible]stances are severe enough, it may be acceptable to all especially if [illegible]ssibility of them achieving eudaimonia is being severely limited

The same is potentially true when we consider issues of non-human life and dea we recognise that eating meat is sometimes a necessity. Such a recognition is pa good sense. Yet, our adherence to other virtues such as compassion or temperance would have us recognise that practices such as intensive farming involve a disregard for the suffering of other beings and may result in more vice-like behaviour towards all life. Thus, eudaimonia may involve practising virtues not only towards other human beings but also towards non-human beings and cultivating a virtuous character to the entire natural world. For some this may be a bit of a philosophical leap, but it is key to note that, depending on the kinds of virtues we believe people should embody, virtue ethics can be very flexible in generating moral guidance.

Revision Activity:
Can Christian ethics learn from the applica[illegible]n of secular ethical systems, or do thinking on modern ethical issues?

From your pr[illegible]viou[illegible]s, note three ways in which Christian ethics might co on conte[illegible]y ethical issues.

Exam Question Preparation

This section is the broadest in the Dialogues specification and is one that you sho studying as part of your exam preparation. A good knowledge of how to compar ethical systems in the context of contemporary ethical dilemmas will be likely to the two questions you will encounter. This is especially the case as the kinds of could arrive in a variety of forms. Check out the exam-style question given by us

Exam-style Question:
'Christian beliefs about animal rights and welfare are inconsistent with the view

Critically examine and evaluate this view with re[illegible]nc[illegible]o the dialogue betwee moral law.

This is the first kind of qu[illegible]n you may find, requiring a comparison of consiste another eth[illegible]st[illegible]e, the example is quite simple, as natural moral law ethics, so w[illegible]equired is to evaluate whether Christians as a whole agree wit moral law o[illegible]nimal rights and welfare. Here you may raise a number of issues could be mentioned is that both Christianity and natural moral law don't genera they oppose using animals for human benefit, as part of the Christian principle o seen how natural moral law, in being a human centric form of ethics, does not ex at all to non-human life.

Why does this matter? Well, there are plenty of Christians who might oppose in on the basis that both these practices are not very compassionate or loving. In t raise situation ethics, and how Christians might consider wider ethical principles out by Aquinas. In other words, there are plenty of ways to take apart this quest attitudes towards animals can be more varied and complex than natural law sup can also be used in broader questions about the relationship between Christian non-human life. Check out another exam-style question below:

Exam-style Question:
'Christian beliefs about anim[illegible]ght[illegible]nd welfare have been undermined by ins ethical systems.'

Critically e[illegible] and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between

Here, the scope is much broader. You might bring in a variety of ethical systems out how Christian principles around dominion and stewardship have developed Similarly, you might again reference natural law and situation ethics, talking abo welfare and rights of animals from different Christian perspectives. These can al variety of secular ethical systems we looked at, particularly utilitarianism and vir higher status on animals than systems such as natural law.

Lastly, you may encounter questions that ask for a direct comparison between C of ethics. See once more the exam-style question below:

Exam-style Question:
'For both Christianity and virtue ethics, voluntary euth[illegible]s is wrong.'

Critically examine and evaluate this view [illegible]ference to the dialogue between

For this question, the c[illegible]n is clear. However, it may be difficult to compa on a single [illegible]nc[illegible]e is where good knowledge of both ethical systems will that both Ci[illegible]s and Aristotle are likely to share many virtues in common. Th virtue ethics to natural law or situation ethics, which may well develop different euthanasia. Moreover, it may be useful to develop some nuance in your answer we should be focusing on here (e.g. compassion) or do other virtues and factors knowing these systems back to front will enable you to make precise and effecti in your exam answers.

Revision Prompts:

Based on your studies throughout these sections, these are some revision promp make notes on when preparing for your end-of-year exams. For each, consider h answering the philosophical and theological conflicts it addresses and how other your answer.

1. What key Christian principles might a religio[illegible]s p[illegible]rs[illegible] employ when approa
2. How should the sanctity of life prin[illegible]interpreted for contemporary Ch
3. Should concerns about the [illegible]ali[illegible]re play a role in Christian moral decis contemporary eth[illegible]u
4. Can Ch[illegible]e[illegible]provide meaningful guidance on issues of non-human li
5. In wha[illegible]might secular ethical systems undermine the moral guidance g contemporary ethical issues?

Christianity and Ethics: Christian Issues Surrounding Wealth, Tol Freedom of Religious Expr

Starter Revision Activity:
Revisit the following areas of the Et[illegible]ristianity courses. For both wea expression, revise two cas[illegible]ies [illegible]each which demonstrate the problems s

Christianity and Social Issues	**Wealth**	
	Key Terms	Reversal, Prosperity gospel, Piety
	Key Thinkers	Jesus, Aquinas, Joseph Fletcher
	Tolerance and Freedom of Religious E	
	Key Terms	Church and state, Law, Rights, Utility
	Key Thinkers	Aristotle, Jeremy Bentham

Introduction – Christianity and Social Issues

In comparison to the singular applied ethical issues we studied in the last section more difficult to grapple with using traditional systems of ethics. In many cases, moral guidance about problems such as wealth or freedom of religious expressio be political problems rather than ethical ones. At the same time, it is always imp theory, and, therefore, politics, to some degree is [illegible]thics. We use our eth pragmatic reason to decide what is right for [illegible]oc[illegible]y and what laws we would n that this equal and just society or [illegible]y for all.

Think for a bri[illegible]no[illegible]out natural law. There is a reason why Aquinas held be the orde[illegible]society, alongside other principles such as education. We rare a direct and [illegible]gular form. Instead, they are enmeshed in deep and complex con think about a particular issue in the first place. While it is easy to argue that edu child, it is not so clear what this education should consist of and whether educati prioritise the thought and knowledge of children themselves.

In short, social issues are naturally messy. We can use our pre-existing systems o but, for the most part, such a process does not often occur in real life. Look at a problems of wealth or tolerance. Will they reference situation ethics or utilitaria they will talk about the different parties involved in a social issue and generalise intuitions of each side. However, in a more academic setting, these are essentia should we prioritise the right to free expression of religion, even when it potenti should we relegate religion to the private sphere and restrict the freedom of reli sphere? These kinds of questions we shall grapple wi[illegible]hi[illegible]section, looking at thinkers might approach these problems.

[illegible]ristianity and the Issue of Wealth

The issue o[illegible]h [illegible]s long been a historical problem for the Christian Church; a across the w[illegible]t is likely to prove more divisive in the coming years. For there Christians themselves over whether it is right to accumulate wealth during one's to seek it in the first place. It is likely you will have studied these tensions throug but here we will unpick them a bit further using the ethical tools developed thro Moreover, we shall question whether it is right for wealth to be construed as an whether it is one that extends to all human beings today.

The Bible and Wealth

One key feature of Jesus' ministry in the Gospels is his embracing of those who a
beyond this focus, there are many aspects of his teaching which suggest that the
correlates with spiritual depravity. In short, focusing on money or material good
immoral choices but also to a neglect of one's spiritual duties. In Matthew 19:16
phrase that 'it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for so
kingdom of God' (NRSV). Moreover, wealth appears to be a stumbling block for
Gospels, including the Pharisees, the money changers in the Temple, and Judas I
Jesus for money!).

In comparison, many of Jesus' teachings talk about the importance of compassio
and charity. The [illegible] 19:21 sees Jesus saying to a rich young man, 'If you wish t
be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you w
have treasure in heaven'. Many biblical scholars have identified numerous them
arising from this contrast. One is the idea of **reversal**, exemplified in Luke 16:19–
31, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. This holds that the afterlife will see
individuals' fortunes turned upside down, the rich becoming poor and the poor
becoming rich (though in spiritual wealth, not necessarily material!). Another is
that of piety and asceticism, where one tries to live without excess material
belongings. (This ideal has, however, been more traditionally found among mon
and monasticism in the Christian Church, rather than among the lay community.

With these aspects in mind, you might think that Christian teaching is fairly clear
remember that the reality is a little more complex. In one sense, wealth is not a
have driven new technological advances that have improved human welfare. In
necessarily the generation of wealth but the unequal distribution of it and the m
accumulated it. Thus, what should be focused on is the use of wealth to improve
and marginalised. Moreover, wealth has numerous cultural influences that have
communities have thought about it and interpreted the Bible.

One of these [illegible] studied is new Christian movements that encourage
These typically emphasise that wealth can be seen as a reward for faith, with chu
encouraging donations as a way to secure one's fortune in life. Prosperity gospe
criticised by more moderate or mainstream Christian denominations, but moven
often pointed to passages such as Mark 10:29–30, which seem to suggest that Cl
their lives for faith, not just in the afterlife. Moreover, those who support these
point to the more prevalent connections between wealth and faith that are pres
that it is a more cohesive view of the Bible to find similar connections in the New

So, the problem is complex, and it is important to be aware that Christian ideas a
influenced by the Bible. When considering the issue, it is worth focusing not onl
see, also on the Church and the ethical systems derived from Christian sources o

The Church and Wealth

The previous part probably contained a lot of info[illegible]ion you are already aware
traditions in biblical interpretation, one fo[illegible]ing on the problems of wealth and
reward for faith, have a long histo[illegible]ct in Christianity. The purpose of an
work out whether one tradition should be favoured over the other, or whether t
between the[illegible], finding such a middle path is a contentious issue in
looking at t[illegible]ionship between wealth and the Christian Church.

Many mainstream Christian denominations have long been under attack for hoa
wealth and focusing this wealth on expanding Church institutions rather than he
Church is perhaps a key example, with its wealth often estimated to be 10–30 bi
the Church point to the need for it to maintain the large number of buildings, wo

world, but there is still an inherent tension concerning a Christian denomination wealth when Jesus taught about the problems that wealth can cause.

In response, the Catholic Church, among others, has often pointed out that it is t that is the source of evil, not the accumulation of wealth itself, especially when i endeavours. But we previously pointed out how Jesus did not merely question t emphasised how wealth should be redistributed towards the poor. In contrast t denominations, it is likely that the early Church would have been much more co property and the accumulation of wealth. Accordingly, there have been plenty o have aimed to move closer to this ideal by distribute their wealth among those Catholic Church certainly is engaged in plenty of charitable activities, it can still b should be more directed towards this ideal also, rather than accumulating furthe

Christian Ethics and Wealth

So how can we incorporate Christian ethics into this discussion? Well, the first r wealth in the context of **natural law**. For how could the accumulation of wealth set out by Aquinas? The main principle that seems to have the greatest relevanc society. Simply put, a society in which a few people command great wealth whil to be one which is successfully ordered. Similarly, it may be one in which human nor perhaps educated properly. In other words, it would be easy to develop sec excess wealth should be redistributed towards others where it is not needed. O obligated to follow these, depending on the fortunes of a particular society, but them to be consistent with the primary precepts set out.

The same is likely to be true of **situation ethics**. Fletcher's law of love command actions that would best demonstrate agape love. In many situations, it is likely t is more loving than buying a new television, so Fletcher thinks this is likely to lead u everyday life and much less concerned with accumulating worth. Of course, the such as if buying a new television for starving children. But altogether, both r give grounds for opposing the accumulation of wealth, especially if it causes neg

So, consider that both these forms of Christian ethics potentially support a str criticisms of wealth, how can its accumulation be defended, whether it be in the Churches or modern Christian movements that adhere to the prosperity Gospel? systems there is also an emphasis on practical reason in implementing principles context of the ethical dilemma. The Catholic Church, for instance, may simply ar them to dissolve their wealth without risking harming not only Christians but oth charitable support. However, we can further question whether it is right to prior matters of wealth. For a more critical perspective, we can turn to secular ethical

Revision Activity:
Is the problem of wealth becoming more acute in the twenty-first century, or h reduced the burden of Christians to explain their accumulation of wealth?

Note down a few ideas and compare with your studies so far to secular critiques of

Secular Ethics and Wealth

In the last section, there has been the implicit assumption that the Bible and/or the
source for how we think about wealth. But secular ethical systems obviously do no
thinking about social issues. In other words, religion and, as such, the Christian fait
to society and our thoughts about inequality. They are only important either if they
right moral principles or if they bring some natural or instrum[illegible]al value to society,
thinking about wealth, secular ethical systems can p[illegible]duc[illegible]ery different kinds of n

Take, for example, **Kantian ethics**. If we de[illegible]oped a maxim such as 'do not accu
arguably universalisable. A [illegible]in[illegible]ich everyone accumulated or sought to a
would be likely to b[illegible]n for a variety of reasons, whether it be social inequ
destruction[illegible]es a world in which everyone limited the amount of wealth t
result in gre[illegible]quality and charity. Yet, in many ways, this kind of thinking cri
that we might hold in a capitalist society, which often holds that profit is inheren
to the kind of teaching that Jesus espoused, although to a different end. For Jes
obstacle, whereas for Kant it may just result in rational contradictions when take

What's key though is that some might object to how we just applied the categor
be argued that if everyone sought excessive wealth, then the world would be a n
social welfare would increase. This is really the difficulty with using the categori
such as wealth. It can prove useful for working out the different ways that exces
contradictions or problems, but it doesn't really tell us whether wealth is a distin
problem in real-world contexts. For this, we might have to turn to other ethical

Take the example of Bentham's **utilitarianism** next. Here, there is nothing general
it is only an issue if it results in decreased utility. We can first note that this can pr
context to Jesus' teachings. For it can be argued that w[illegible]– to a certain point –
money enables us to eat well, enjoy activities with frie[illegible]and live a healthy life. H
that after a certain point the happines[illegible]ea[illegible]ings is reduced. Many note that
we don't often seem to gain m[illegible]hap[illegible]ess from buying new, often inessential, t
may be necessary to thi[illegible]re broadly about the unhappiness or pain that wealt

Think for a [illegible]t about much of the developing world, where poverty may be
distribution of wealth results in the hungry, sick or marginalised gaining significa
be that the right act for those who are wealthy is to give their excessive wealth a
arguments that, practically, this kind of charity is problematic in a political or ec
various kinds may present the general argument that excessive wealth in any un
redistributed, much in the same manner that Jesus taught. In fact, these kinds o
developed by utilitarian thinkers such as Peter Singer, who argue that those earn
the developed world should give a fixed portion of their income to those in deve

Finally, let's think a little more about Aristotle's **virtue ethics**. For while wealth c
to concepts of virtue, it is rare to find anyone arguing that greed is a good charac
points out magnanimity (generosity) as a key trait for a virtuous person to posse
ethics does not present a general argument for wealth redist[illegible]bution, it does hol
not seek excessive wealth. Thus, any individual wou[illegible]ng[illegible]ging in vice-like be
generously, and allowing wealth inequalities t[illegible]p[illegible]sist would be a moral proble
presents the closest secular view to [illegible]'t[illegible]chings, which often focus on wealt
than a specific social proble[illegible]ough some theologians do disagree here).

Thus, altho[illegible]re[illegible]e differences in interpretations, many systems of secular
cohere with teachings rather than those of movements such as the prospe
important is that, for all, wealth isn't a sign of goodness or faith but something t
criteria. In this sense, secular ethics can be a useful comparison to Christian ethi
problems of wealth in a broader context. For now, though, we can turn to the o
freedom of religious expression.

In comparison to wealth, it is perhaps even more difficult to evaluate the social a surrounding tolerance and freedom of religious expression. For as a personal m to be good to tolerate those who hold different beliefs or lead different lifestyles emerges that this tolerance can only extend so far. Those who hold different be change in order to accommodate their preferences, which in turn may generate oppose such changes. Even on an everyday level, many of our beliefs are not sin imperatives. How is it possible to tolerate the actions of a person who you belie fundamentally wrong?

Tolerance in this way is often contrasted with freedom of religious expression. Fo often seen as important component of their faith to be able to practise eleme sphere or express their beliefs in the ways they act. Yet these practices and actio problematic to many, and throughout your studies you should have examined a Christians have come into conflict with their employers, neighbours or even the perceived to be their deeply held beliefs. Throughout this section, we won't be they are important to know); rather, like wealth, we will be looking at the ethica this issue and examining how you may critically approach it in an exam context.

Christian Faith, Practice and Worship

What's important to note first is that not all elements of Christian expression are controversial. When Christian practice coheres with common ethical sentiments surrounding the way Christians practise their faith. Rather, there needs to be a f controversy to arguably be generated.

The first is that the practice needs to be within the **public sphere**. This is often n broadly, it means in a place, location or space which is accessible and used by all spaces, the most important guide to action is usually the law; however, dependi there may be a consensus that there are some activities that are acceptable and is often agreed that paid sex or incest should be allowed in public spaces, even if t disagreeable. However, in many secular countries, an instance of mass the law if precautionary measures are followed, would be perhaps less agreeable to ma

This leads us to the second aspect. The practice needs to embody some elemen be morally disagreeable, unlawful or obtrusive to those who are present in a pub this aspect can be very vague, and it is important to note that this vagueness is a freedom of religious expression. For instance, a local church taking donations fo bank is unlikely to be frowned upon, even if there are religious motivations behi a local church attempting to evangelise and convert people by preaching on the to be even more disagreeable when they directly impede people's rights, such as grant their custom or services to individuals in same-sex relationships.

The problem here, though, is that Christianity is literally a broad Church. It holds and movements, some of which hold certain beliefs that would be reprehensible there are continued exhortations not only to preach and convert others, but to f convictions. Thus, for many Christians, freedom of religious expression is not sin matter. They may well believe they are called to operate in the public sphere from condemnation and living eternally. Moreover, they may well translate su freedom of religious expression into a belief that individuals have the explici faith freely.

Moreover, there are pragmatic concerns for Christian Churches. The increased s countries that has often accompanied a retreat from the Christian presence in th worries that Christianity fundamentally cannot survive as a religion unless free re some sense, religions must be allowed to freely express themselves in public in o as any other activity, whether it be music, art or film, enjoys the same kind of pri

debates around freedom of religious expression are not always competing discus
also of value and happiness. In other words, the limiting of freedom of religious
with a limitation of joy for those who are religious, and this may be necessary to
values all its citizens.

So, what we can see is that the debate around freedom of religious expression ca
secularists, there may be an undue focus on the harms of fr dom of religious ex
religious may be inclined to overlook the conflicts th t much freedom can ca
thinking about freedom of religious expressi ar tolerance is not just focusing
but trying to judge the importanc d in the context of our modern soci
expression should be limits tain degree but allowed in other cases. Ma
not in a way th ur imposes on people trying to go about their daily lives. M
allowed bu n religious holidays or other important moments. These are t
grappling wi order to give nuance to your position wherever possible.

Natural Law

Despite this nuance potentially being important, there may be support from Chri
freedom of religious expression. For instance, let us consider Aquinas' primary p
of ethics. If you recall, there Aquinas holds that worshipping God is one of the p
value, we might well say that natural law should support a strong belief in freedo
worshipping God is not simply something which is done in private, but often in p
same time, you might have already noted that another primary precept is the or
not simply say that worship of God should be allowed at any given point. Instead
primary precepts against each other when developing secondary precepts, or hu

Moreover, we might employ practical reason when thinking about the situations
these secondary precepts. Altogether, this means that w e worshipping God is
for Aquinas, it cannot be pursued at all costs. Ins ead w e must consider how wo
worship, harmonise with the ordering of soc . If we pursue freedom of religio
there may be conflict and dest b isa of society which prevents the primary p
Thus, it is key to note th e el within Christian systems of ethics that explicitly l
essential g er oom for pragmatism when it comes to freedom of religi

Situation Ethics

The same is true if we consider freedom of religious expression from the perspec
However, in comparison, it's a little more difficult to evaluate what limits we mig
agape love. In one sense, allowing religious individuals to freely practise their fa
for the individual practising their faith, ensuring that this practice does not cause
The result may be that situation ethics advocates for some limits on freedom of
allows for religious individuals to engage in forms of worship that could be consi
community outreach.

The problem perhaps with situation ethics is that there is no direct rights or cons
religious. If you imagine a situation whereby every time a Christian preached in
well think it would be more loving for Christians not to p c in public. Yet, if th
potentially no guaranteed rights to freedom of re gi s pression in situation e
persecuted, it may be difficult to justify th notion of such rights if the only r
love. Perhaps ironically, consid ng a Christian ethic, situation ethics may re
contexts completely re t n religious activity to the private sphere.

Revision A

Should freedom of religious expression depend on the kinds of beliefs being ex
blanket right for individuals to practise what they deem to be religiously impor

If the former, try to compile a list of unacceptable religious behaviours as a refe
two arguments to support your position.

So far, we've generally considered freedom of religious expression from a Christian ethical perspectives, there is no primacy given to Christianity, nor is there any inhe social level. Thus, in contrast to the perspectives studied so far, it is perfectly coh to hold that freedom of religious expression should be banned or completely limit this is a viable conclusion to draw, however, depends on a number of factors, whic

Kantian Ethics

Taking **Kantian ethics** first, let's try to universalise the maxim 'one should freely e without limit'. Does this result in a contradiction or a conceptual conflict? There yes it does. For we live in a world with a huge number of different religious be fundament[illegible] it can be argued that if we all were allowed to freely express there would be chaos. In fact, it may simply result in enough conflict and violence cannot actually freely express religious beliefs at all without threat of harm! Thus the categorical imperative, freedom of religious expression does have to have so

The same kind of problem emerges when we consider another maxim, 'one shou religious beliefs, worship and practices'. For there are plenty of religious beliefs of other religions and systems of thought. In this case, what would happen were individuals would be forced to tolerate religious people committing moral wrong forced to tolerate the intolerant! Thus, we might judge that tolerance, just as wi expression, has its limits.

Yet, we have to be careful here. Is the categorical imperative really giving us good m that Kantian ethics can't really give good concrete advice about complex social issue that we should be tolerant of others' religious beliefs that do not cause direct harm, beliefs should not be practised publicly. In other words, the situation should not hav practised in the first place. These kinds of complexities [illegible] easily universalisable t imperative may show that ideas such as freedom of religious expression without lim certain assumptions, it doesn't necessarily show us what the limits on religious expr

Utilitarianism

Here, we can potentially turn to Bentham's **utilitarianism**. What's key here is that t freedom of religious expression is good is the happiness that is produced by the act limit it. Naturally, depending on the consequences of these acts, we might find a po happiness of freedom of religious expression is maximised. If presented without lim by clashes between religious individuals may produce more unhappiness than happ much, then the same result may occur. What's interesting about utilitarianism is th dependent on the levels of religious belief in a country and the happiness that relig

The first is clear in affecting how we measure the importance of freedom of relig of people in a society are religious, then it stands that allowing some freedom of a good amount of happiness. Promoting tolerance would also certainly have the more difficult is assessing the happiness that religion brings individual people. N of course say that their faith brings them more pleasure than pain. But what abo restrictive moral laws that prevent people having fun? Or a religious focus on sh aspects aren't particularly joyful and yet are often promoted in different religious g

Thus, if adopting a secularist point of view, utilitarianism might be a natural fit fo of religious expression. First, one can point to how too much freedom leads to m also point to the inherent characteristics of religious belief itself, arguing that the unhappines[illegible] increased freedom of religious expression leads to increase faith, then it can be argued that greatly restricting freedom of religious expressio happiness in any society. This kind of view to a certain extent can be found in ne Dawkins. For if we believe that religion itself is inherently harmful or leads to un argued that freedom of religious expression should be greatly restricted.

Virtue Ethics

The final ethical system we can consider is **virtue ethics**. While this might be app about how we treat each other, it is a little more difficult to apply to freedom of guidance it gives greatly depends on the kinds of virtues we identify as being imp is perhaps holding that tolerance itself is an important virtue to develop. If this i argument for allowing freedom of religious expression not only out of compassio because being virtuous also means being tolerant of th ences between inc

But what about religious practices that we might regard as being non-virtuous? denying business to individuals also in spite of a lack of tolerance, respect or n apply virtues universally to both religious and non-religious groups. But this is a groups will [illegible] different virtues to be important. And what of virtues Aris indignation [illegible] this not cause us to oppose practices, religious or not, that beliefs? There are a lot of complexities when considering how to develop a virtu freedom of religious expression. For some, this may be a sign that virtue ethics whereas for others it may highlight simply how complex the issue is, and solutio misleading us about the right ethical path forward.

Exam Question Preparation

Any exam question you are likely to receive on either freedom of religious expre straightforward, assessing whether Christianity and/or other secular ethical syste practices that place limits on them. For instance, take a look at the exam-style q

Exam-style Question:
'Freedom of religious expression should be limited for the public good.'

Critically examine and evaluate this view with refer[illegible] e dialogue betwe approach to moral decision-making.

Here, the kinds of argument[illegible] ar[illegible] supposed to incorporate are quite clear. C the Christian views [illegible] m of religious expression with Bentham's utilitarian throughout [illegible] ct[illegible], we can see how both perspectives might take a more lic freedoms, o[illegible] o restrict them for public good, happiness or even the orderin you might encounter a similar question about wealth:

Exam-style Question:
'It is immoral to accumulate excessive wealth.'

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue betwe approach to moral decision-making.

This is perhaps a little more difficult to address. But in the first part of this sectio embody a variety of attitudes towards wealth, including one that was critical of i saw how Aristotle's virtue ethics placed a strong emphasis on magnanimity or ge room to compare and contrast each perspective and highlight the ethical dilemm discussing the nature and morality of wealth.

Revision Prompts:

Based on your studies thro[illegible] these sections, these are some revision prompts notes on whe[illegible] ep[illegible] your end-of-year exams. For each, consider how you philosophic[illegible] he[illegible]ogical conflicts it addresses and how others might critically

1. What is the right biblical teaching around wealth?
2. Can modern Christian movements such as the prosperity gospel cohere with
3. How might secular systems of ethics critique Christian teachings on wealth?
4. Should there be any limits to freedom of religious expression?
5. How far should individual tolerance extend to morally disagreeable religious

CHRISTIANITY AND ETHICS: FREE W
RESPONSIBILITY AND CONSC

Starter Revision Activity:
Revisit the following areas of the Ethics and Christia... ...ou ...ses. Revise Christi the nature of conscience, before offering t... o... ...own criticisms of each. C throughout this section.

Free Will and Moral Responsibility	Free Will and Moral Responsib	
	Key Terms	Hard determinism, Libertarianism, Compati
	Key Thinkers	John Calvin, David Hume
	Conscience	
	Key Terms	Synderesis, Ratio, Superego, Collective cons
	Key Thinkers	Sigmund Freud, Thomas Aquinas, Emile Du

Introduction – Freedom and Normative Ethics

Throughout most of the Dialogues ethics specification, you don't have to think a moral action. In this sense, the final part where we look at free will, moral respo separate in content to the rest. However, it is very useful to try to gain a good u not only is there always a good chance that a question may arise in your exams, how we think about ethics altogether. In the case of free will and moral respons concepts for Christianity. Without them, the meanin... ...ss of salvation is brou Similarly, although conscience is not always ... ...erceived to be as important, fo essential way of understanding God'... ...in ...eir everyday lives.

So how can we effe... ...mpare Christian thought to secular analysis on both to note is t... ...h, ...some degree, possess a metaphysical component to their will, for exa... what we are arguing is not whether we make choices free of va our lives, but whether human beings have genuine agency above and beyond th other words, if human beings do have free will, it is potentially something that is relationship between our minds and the material world. Similarly, if conscience whether as a way to directly communicate with God or as a form of reason able good, then we are dealing with a real structure of the world on a level which we natural terms.

These metaphysical considerations are important, for there are many strands of studied that reject this kind of talk. For the compatibilist or hard determinist, it is to suppose that human beings can act in ways that are above the laws and const psychologists such as Freud, the same is true for human conscience. There is no it is merely the product of different environmental for... ...ing on the mind. Ye perhaps more scientifically appealing, have th...ir ...wn ... of issues. Is ethics real fundamentally not in control of our ... ...ac...? And if this is the case, should w of theological determinism wh... ...thi...g about the Christian faith? These kinds a little further in this ...

As noted in the introduction, free will is often thought to be deeply important fo
theologians have professed that human beings must possess **libertarian** free will
judgement and salvation to be meaningful. If we truly did not have agency or au
human beings arguably cannot be morally responsible for their choices. And if h
morally responsible, then it cannot be just or fair for God to judge people accord
condemning people potentially becomes an arbitrary and almost despotic act if t
important for Christians. Either human beings do possess genuine free will or Chris

In truth, the history of Christian thought is a little more complex than this argument su
libertarianism. It is true that human beings have complete autonomy all the time o
most Christians would be happy to admit that a person's environment, character
important role in how they act. Moreover, it would be strange to imagine that
time didn't consider mitigating factors. The faith of someone born into a life of s
valuable than the faith of someone who was born rich and never had to struggle.
judgement may be a mystery, this doesn't prevent Christians from having a nuan

For think a little more about the foundation of such a form of free will. Under a
who guarantees the freedom of our actions. Yet, it is also God who created an o
two things in any theological picture must cohere somehow. It would be strange
beings were causally excluded from all forces in the world, and as you may have
did possess such an extreme freedom, it may result in a kind of moral paralysis.
on every action rather than focusing on cultivating our characters such that we a
Christian virtues. Moreover, a nuanced view accommodates the kinds of struggl
good Christians. If it were as easy as simply selecting another action out of many
difficult to develop as a coherent concept.

So how might a Christian idea mesh with libertarian ideas of free will you have s
philosopher Robert Kane as an example, it may be that God guarantees the possibi
actions during our lives. Kane suggests, these are key moments where human b
agency in certain situations. These moments are the basis for our fundam
we approach situations from then on. What's important also is that these se
necessarily common. If we tie this into a Christian world view, it might be that all h
and goodness during their lifetimes, which are the primary way in which God judge

Theological Determinism

Alternatively, we can also note that there have been Christian thinkers who have
theological determinism and rejected the idea that human beings have genuine,
notable of these was John Calvin, who held that God elected those to be saved, n
human being is predetermined. Now, there are considerable disagreements as t
double predestination – the idea that God also wills the condemnation of some p
Calvin's thought is that God, as a supremely powerful and knowledgeable human
ignorant about matters of salvation. Rather, it is through his grace alone that hu
face of their corrupted nature after the Fall.

What's interesting of course is that theological determinism itself is a kind of hard
only free will we have is the freedom to live as we have been created. It is not a f
enable one to achieve salvation by one's own means. This is only possible throug
saved are predetermined to be saved. Where this kind of theological determinism d
conflicts between free will and a deterministic world. For secular hard determinis
the causal regularity of the world. Whereas for Calvin, free will is simply incompa
might well seem a strange position to take now, but it is important to note that n
free will.

Revision Activity:
Do Christians have to choose between libertarian free will and hard theological
criticisms of both these positions and research whether there are any alternati

Hard Determinism

So, we have a standard Christian position in place when t[illegible]ng about free will. there any room for a different Christian position t[illegible]orth? First, let's think itself. The world around does appear ve[illegible]ar and ordered. And every effec have a sufficient cause. Finally, these causes and effects seem to be thoroughly invoke a mental or spir[illegible]ision in order to explain how and why human b they do. Th[illegible]e fundamental premises for determinism that Christians ul

One method is to simply argue that despite there being evidence for determinis one hand, we simply don't have the tools to probe every single human action on underlying causes. Nor do we have the ability to even see whether cause and ef across the universe. Simply put, positing the truth of determinism is simply spec determinist may reply that positing indeterminism is speculation, but there is so that an indeterminist perspective is at least coherent. One interpretation of qua probabilistic behaviour of electrons under observation is just what it seems like. world, particles ultimately behave in an indeterministic manner and we still have for human agency. It may be that free will arises as a result of quantum fluctuat

However, this is very speculative. It is certainly true that determinism isn't nece right about the rarity of self-forming actions in an indeterministic world, this me observe a meaningful case where determinism doesn't pertain would be extraor the determinist does not necessarily have to be a har[illegible]inist. One can acc explanation we have right now of the world, but not that this means free w we will look at a bit more when we t[illegible]o [illegible]patibilism. However, if we are pr evidence, then why not cho[illegible]ard [illegible]eterminism?

Well, the s[illegible]hr[illegible] of the libertarian argument might attempt to point towa libertarian f[illegible]. For the Christian, this may be a combination of religious sup intuitions. If we don't have free will, then why does there seem to be such inner Such thoughts may be chance, but they may be an indication (perhaps a divine n significantly free. Simply put, we may not have to question determinism to asse argument may just be presenting the various kinds of mental, spiritual and religi

Compatibilism

One possibility that you may not have covered during your studies is that of a Ch sound a little bit strange, since how can one effectively judge actions that are co Even if we accept Hume's revised ideas about free will, where they are simply th character, surely the Christian sense of freedom requires that we be able to act way that human beings could overcome a concept such a[illegible]inal sin or act so a achieve salvation. But this kind of contrast is perh[illegible]or[illegible] that is set up due to a God's judgement resulting in an afterlife [illegible]ve[illegible] hell. What if we adopted a all human beings were saved?

Here, a com[illegible]ilis[illegible]ight make more sense, but it would still be very cont as a Protes[illegible]s in favour of purgatory and universalism – argued that comp 'spin doctori[illegible]. The only kind of free will that was meaningfully defensible, he a based on a non-Cartesian dualism. Hick's arguments potentially hold some force compatibilism, even if less fatalistic than hard determinism, still entails a 'soft de don't really have agency over their lives, only the appearance of agency. This is views are wrong, but they don't necessarily strike at the heart of what Christians

At the same time, maybe it is in the afterlife – rather than in our current material achieve genuine freedom. In a sense, this life could exist to shine a light on God a place to reflect. If we think about Calvin's views more broadly, there is nothing in compatibilist Christianity could not exist, but it would require a great revision of m Moreover, we would have to approach issues such as justice and judgement quite court of law if we learned that human agency was limited. We might begin to loo character traits in order to examine their actions, rather t[illegible]elieve they deliber

For let's go back a moment to one of Hu[illegible]guments in favour of compatibili live in a seemingly regular world, and in this regular world we generally draw co motives, emotions and [illegible]cs and their actions. Where we can't find an this is due t[illegible]ea[illegible]ses we are unaware of. In other words, we don't rea do have ma[illegible]owers of agency, rather we do on the whole take a much more explaining their behaviour. This is important, as in the Christian world view, if in are we supposed to truly explain human actions? How do we know what actions character and environment, and which ones are genuine instances of free will?

The Christian might argue that this is only for God to know at the moment of jud Hume's idea carries a lot of force. Internally, we might believe our own actions a this same logic when studying human behaviour as a whole. For if there are hidd how do we judge these in terms of moral responsibility? What makes someone over something good, without reference to their past motives, desires and chara makes such choices inherently spooky and raises the prospect that moral respon actually *requires* determinism to make sense of it. Thus, when thinking about Ch important to balance the desire for libertarian free will in the religion with the ge that this kind of concept brings in the real world.

Revision Activity:
What position on free will do yo[illegible]e[illegible]most philosophically coherent, and Christian belief?

Write dow[illegible]w of your own views and evaluate whether Christianity should debates o[illegible]matter or whether there is independent religious justification f version of free will.

Conscience

Although we may not always trust it, conscience plays an important part in our e quick kinds of ethical dilemmas we often face and our feelings of guilt or satisfac more so true for Christians, who have often viewed conscience as something Go understand God's will or one that allows human beings to fundamentally unders bad. In this sense, talk of conscience can sometimes be equated in importance t have conscience, would we really be capable of making good decisions, or would discerning what is right and what is wrong?

Similarly, we can ask whether we can trust our conscience if its origins are not di naturalistic processes. At most, conscience may simply be an inner voice that co psychological tendencies that have been instilled in us from a young age. All the studied throughout analyses of different topics in the Philosophy of Religion this part we[illegible]o a little deeper in thinking about how we can evaluate a tradit importance of conscience and whether or not its importance can be preserved in

Conscience and the Voice of God

The idea that conscience is a way of understanding God's will is most simply exp
is the voice of God communicating with us during ethical dilemmas. This idea is
nuanced theological considerations of conscience, but it is an important foundat
evaluate the role of conscience in our everyday lives. For if interpreted to be the
potentially conflicts with free will and moral responsibility. We would not have t
ourselves and act on them but simply follow our conscience, for that would be a
is right. This problem is also keener when we consider the times when our consc
There are plenty of occasions where individuals have made the wrong choices or
yet if this were the case it would be tantamount to saying that God willed somet

Thinking about the nature of conscience this way reveals an important tension th
evaluation. Conscience for Christians in some way has to reflect the will of God,
possibility of being wrong. This tension is inherently hard to resolve when God is
conscience cannot be a simple idea. Rather, there needs to be some interpretat
fallibility while preserving its ability to generate good moral guidance that reflect

Aquinas and Conscience

The main focus of your studies into Christian ideas about conscience will be the v
conscience was not a manifestation of the voice of God; rather it was wholly mo
signposting what is right and wrong in any given ethical dilemma. Conscience th
intellect and is most simply the end point of our rational ethical reasoning. Whe
the correct application of natural law, it can be said to be a correct conscience. W
to be an erroneous conscience, which, although binding human action, does not
exempting circumstance for an erroneous conscience is when there is invincible
ignorance that could not have reasonably been overcome given the situation.

This naturally is a truncated version of Aquinas' ideas. But you can see that it ou
inherent tension we identified in a simple Christian view of conscience. It can be
depending on whether we have correctly employed practical reason in any given
conscience can therefore simply be thought of as reason (or ratio) itself. It is not an
Yet, at the same time, we can note that conscience is a God-given property to hu
is what ultimately separates us from other beings and defines our natural purpos
view is quite a nuanced answer to the problems facing a Christian understanding

Yet it is not without its problems. For Christians, reducing conscience to a matte
its importance to our everyday ethical lives. Many Christian forms of worship an
communication to God. Moreover, many Christians believe that God intervenes
religious experience and miracles. Is it so far-fetched to imagine that God can di
beings at times of ethical difficulty? Or could it not be that human beings and Go
what is good? Aquinas may be giving a philosophical answer to a problem that h
long as one can resolve some of the theological tensions in positing such a direct

At the same time, Aquinas' view of conscience also produces not fully answe
about conscience in practice. If it is a matter of reason, then why are some indiv
rational capacity than others? And what of the plenty of people who are able to rea
variety of matters so able to override or diminish their conscience where necessary
very nice in theory, but does not easily explain how conscience works in practice
to find their conscience agreeing with or ignoring a large number of morally com
his distinction between vincible and invincible ignorance to explain various indivi
potentially only pushes the problem further down the line. For what are we gen
out in any given situation, and why is this knowledge not often more accessible t
action to take?

Moreover, we find further problems when we consider individual decision-makin conscience. For trust in our conscience comes from believing that it is a good so means that in the past, when we have performed a good action, our conscience when we have performed a bad action, we have felt a pang of guilt arising from for Aquinas, conscience can be either correct or erroneous. Moreover, its error- based on its ability to guide us but rather our ability to reason about a situation. unable to reason properly or in possession of a conscienc t can be (and ofte reason at all to trust our conscience. Yet, we ultir in a bind, for Aquina our conscience. For both the secular cri the Christian, there may be deep

> **Revision Activity:**
> Are there tive Christian points of view on conscience to Aquinas? R on consci d make notes on an alternative theological perspective to Aq

Secular Views on Conscience

In the previous part, we saw how Aquinas attempted to provide a solution to th view of conscience. Yet, ultimately, it is unclear whether he managed to escape view conscience neutrally, as a faculty of our practical reason, we're still placed obliged to follow our conscience, even when it might regularly lead us astray. P conscience in some way is trustworthy and important to follow in the first place. resolved by simply pointing out how conscience is not a real source of moral kno kinds of values instilled in us through the various influences on our lives?

This is often the focus of secular views of conscience. Throughout your studies, on both psychological and sociological interpretations of conscience. But prese conscience reflects something else, and is not an inte y to discern right therefore may differ from person to person, society, without ever foundation in reason or human na oes not mean that there aren't sim of different people, but tha reflective of conscience being an objec many Christia Let's take a look first at psychological views of co

Psychology Conscience

The most prominent figure you will have studied around psychology and conscie is that of Freud. For Freud, conscience was the product of the interactions of th unconscious mind, composed of the superego, the ego and the id. In particular though, the superego can be best said to contain or represent that which we thi as conscience. It is the moralising part of our mind, developed through an internalisation of the values and norms taught to us during our upbringing and throughout our lives. Yet, the superego is not a dominant aspect of our mind. Regularly the id, which is directed towards baser desires, will drive us to do thing that the superego disagrees with. Even the ego, the rational part of our mind, is always beholden to the superego.

So, taking Freud at face value, we can observe a r key things about the conscience. The first is that it does not any objective, trustworthy sou of knowledge. If my parents stealing from my friends was a goo thing, I'm unlikely to fe conscience when I do so. Second, it treats th among ma ds, we do not regularly follow our conscience becaus our mind, n particularly instinctual. There are plenty of situations where desirable to the wrong thing and act on this. Third, Freud is not saying that c neuroses can arise due to the unconscious interactions of our mind, and recogni and its demands can lead to greater understanding of human moral behaviour, f

Now, Freud's claims were, and still are, controversial. Much of modern psychol
approach than Freud, whose claims ironically are quite scientific since there are
to prove his ideas about the unconscious mind. Despite this, the central idea tha
can arise due to processes in the mind that are beneath our conscious thoughts
it is this trend that perhaps poses the greatest threat to Aquinas' understanding.
Aquinas treats conscience as a rational process, where the errors it produces are
knowledge. But if conscience is a process that is fundam[illegible]y inaccessible to o
powers, then it certainly can achieve what Aquina[illegible] to.

But is Freud really a threat, or is [illegible] for Christian views of conscience
bit? Maybe conscience i[illegible] but an essentially moralising part
towards th[illegible] subtract Freud's ideas about interactions between
and simply [illegible]hat there is some internal God-given part of the self that helps
good. This part of the self also does not need to be unchangeable or the voice o
affected by our own free choices and character. But it may well be essential in o
to freely choose the good in the face of conflicting desires. In other words, cons
of understanding how libertarian free will could work in practice.

These are all quite speculative thoughts, but it is important to consider whether
psychology could cohere, despite their surface differences. More modern views
studied, often focus on the concept within a developmental context. Conscience
maturity that are reached depending on the kinds of moral situations, education
exposed to. If this is the case, then conscience isn't necessarily something ration
simple as being the voice of God or morality. It might be representative of our o
to intuitively understand the moral lessons we have been brought up with. Thus
ideas, it is important to consider what alternatives there are for Christians when

Sociology and Conscience

Beyond individual psychology, we can look to society and culture for clues ab
may have studied is Emile [illegible], who posited the idea of collective conscienc
an autonom[illegible] set of values, norms and ideals that defines any cultu
access whe[illegible]g about ethical dilemmas. Simply put, when we are seeking t
just think on an individual level, but on a societal level to some degree. Our actio
by the kinds of norms and values that persist within the different cultures and soc

We can potentially see this in action across a large number of more complex eth
concepts such as equality, freedom and human rights. However, collective cons
more precise ways, such as believing there is an important moral aspect to art, f
What a sociological understanding of conscience potentially adds is a broader st
different influences that govern each individual in a society, enabling us to see th
which play an important role in our everyday thinking.

What does this mean for Christians? In one sense, it is partially positive. It impli
individuals are, to some degree, going to have a collective c[illegible]science which refle
it is perhaps not as pessimistic as Freud's view, wh[illegible]d have conscience de
upbringing alone. However, like a psycholo[illegible] view of conscience, it calls into q
Aquinas have mistaken the nature of conscience due to a misunderstanding abo
may seem to be a univers[illegible] human moral life may simply be a societal
it could be w[illegible] to [illegible]niversal conclusions about conscience altogether.

This does not necessarily mean that conscience could not have some roots in hu
distinctive differences between the ways conscience interacts with individuals or
question whether it is right to trust conscience at all. In our own societies or cul
follow one's conscience since it is likely to reflect the values and norms held by n
discussions between them, conscience may not be a reliable source of knowledg

conflict. In fact, one could potentially argue that relying on intuitive understand
led to violence between different cultures around the world. Thus, it might be in
responses a broader sociological understanding of conscience when thinking abo
not solely focus on its individual psychological elements.

Exam Question Preparation

Similar to wealth and freedom of religious expres[illegible] it's likely that the questio
will and conscience will be fairly straightfo[illegible]. Take a look for a moment at th
us below.

Exam-style Question:
'Christian [illegible] about free will and moral responsibility are incoherent.'

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue betwe
ethical studies.

Here, you are asked to directly grapple with the problems facing Christian ideas a
responsibility and judgement. You may well begin by noting in what ways Christ
of free will, before critiquing this position by noting the internal problems it face
viable alternatives of compatibilism and hard determinism. One avenue may als
crime and punishment as a direct way of introducing and explaining these views
addresses the relationship between free will and responsibility.

However, it is also key to consider the kinds of questions you might face when th
Examine for a moment the exam-style question we've provid[illegible]d below.

Exam-style Question:
'Conscience is not a trustworth[illegible] moral knowledge.'

Critically e[illegible]e [illegible]luate this view with reference to the dialogue betwe
ethical st[illegible]

Once again, there are many discussion points you can bring in to help answer thi
there is the idea that conscience is a reasonable process and so capable of point
when applied correctly. On the other hand, there are the psychological and soci
steer away from describing conscience as an objective source of knowledge. Wh
make sure you justify it with well thought through and precise arguments!

Revision Prompts:

Based on your studies throughout these sections, these are some revision promp
make notes on when preparing for your end-of-year exams. For each, consider h
answering the philosophical and theological conflicts it addresses and how other
your answer.

1. What kind of free will is necessary f[illegible]tian ethics to be meaningful?
2. How do secular ideas about free w[illegible]itique traditional Christian perspectiv
3. Does conscience ha[illegible]ducation in reason, or is it simply a reflection of p
   sociolo[illegible]or
4. Can Ch[illegible]views of conscience be reconciled with modern psychological
5. Can conscience be trusted as a source of moral knowledge?