



2016 specification
first exams in 2018

Course Companion for GCSE Edexcel A

Paper 3B: Philosophy and Ethics (Christianity)

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Teacher's Introduction

This resource has been designed to support the learning and teaching of Edexcel GCSE Religious Studies A, the section on Philosophy and Ethics. Both areas of the specification – Arguments for the Existence of God and Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century – are covered, and questions and activities are included to test knowledge and ability, and to help students to engage with the topics.

Remember!

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

The information is comprehensive, and images help to illustrate concepts. Key words and biblical quotes are included to help students to understand the material and to further their grasp of the subjects. A brief introduction to the course and answering exam questions is provided for students at the start, and answers/a mark scheme are included at the end.

This course companion can be used for individual learning, or can be read as a class. Alternatively, teachers could adapt it, to use it in other ways. It can be used as the main focus for a lesson, or to complement other activities.

This topic involves studying a number of different arguments, ideas and opinions. This should both inform students and develop their thinking, enabling them to approach issues from different points of view.

Common and divergent Christian perspectives are covered where necessary, as are non-religious views.

We have sought a balance between explaining relevant concepts in sufficient detail without oversimplification, while not going beyond GCSE level and becoming too complicated. Throughout, we have tried to present all views in a neutral and informative way.

Hopefully, this resource will encourage students in their learning and help to prepare them for their exams. It should take the pressure away from teachers by providing the bulk of the content which they want to teach to their class.

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Introduction to the Course and How to Answer

This course aims to cover both philosophical arguments and understandings which ideas about family and relationship ethics, and to assess your understanding of the designed to equip you with the information you need, and help you to test your knowledge related questions.

Not all the questions and activities included here are exam-style, but those which are should be answered in particular ways.

The exam board will ask you to give quick facts and statements, as well as asking you to 'explain' and 'evaluate' beliefs and opinions. When answering all questions it is important to try to use technical terms, where possible, and to write well, using both a style that is easy to follow and correct spelling and grammar. More of the writing will be required, depending on the number of marks. Try to spend as little time as possible on the short questions and allow yourself more time for the longer ones.

For each of the two sections you will get a 3-mark, 4-mark, 5-mark and 12-mark question in the exam. Three extra marks are given for spelling, punctuation and grammar – and also terminology – making the 12-mark question in section 1 (Arguments for the Existence of God) worth 15 marks.

For the **3-mark question** you will be asked to 'outline' three examples. For 'outline' questions you can give three one-sentence answers. You will get one mark for each point up to a maximum of three marks.

For the **4-mark question** you will be asked to 'explain' two things, e.g. reasons for giving two different points, and, to get full marks, you must develop or justify both points with a quote or other evidence. So you can think of it as being a mark per point and each point. This should show that you understand information as well as being able to develop it. Developments must be relevant to the point they are justifying and to the question. You get full marks if you use the same justification for both points you give in one point.

The **5-mark question** is very similar to the 4-mark question. As well as making a point, you must develop/justify both, you should refer to at least one source of wisdom (e.g. Bible or Catholic teaching) for your development/justification. Again, the points are as different as possible so that the person marking gives you credit for each point/development you make.

The **12/15-mark question** is the longest, and there is a little more to remember. You must give a statement. This means giving arguments and justifications **for** and **against** the statement (and also suggesting an alternative point of view). Make sure you have good reasons for your arguments and link them together well. You also need to come to a conclusion; picking the best argument (based on the arguments you have given!) and saying why you think this is the best. You must refer to Christian teaching. If specified, you must reference non-religious arguments; or different Christian points of view.

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Arguments For the Existence of God

Many Christians believe that God has **revealed** himself to humans, including **miracles**, which they may take to be **proof** of the existence of God, or at least that Christians may also feel that they experience God through other types of revelation when they are **praying**. However, some people are not convinced that religious experiences are evidence. Some Christians have used arguments, such as the **design argument** and the **cosmological argument**, to try to prove the existence of God, though **atheists** have argued against them. Consider whether a religious or non-religious upbringing contributes to whether someone believes in God or not.

Keywords:

- ❖ **atheist** – someone who does not believe in God or gods
- ❖ **cosmological argument** – an argument for the existence of God, based on the idea that everything has a cause other than nothing
- ❖ **design argument** – a case for the existence of God, based on the idea that the universe is too complex to be created by chance and appears organised
- ❖ **disciple** – in Christianity, a follower of Jesus
- ❖ **evidence** – indicates that something is likely to be true
- ❖ **miracles** – events which seem supernatural and unexplainable by natural laws; events which Christians believe to be performed by God or his agents
- ❖ **prayer** – communication with God
- ❖ **proof** – shows something to definitely exist or be true
- ❖ **religious experience** – in Christianity, when people feel God's presence
- ❖ **revelation** – experiencing God in a way in which he is seen, heard, or gives himself to be known
- ❖ **vision** – a type of experience where God, or a messenger of God, is seen

Revelation

Many Christians believe that God has revealed himself to humans, and that this is evidence of God's existence, because if people have experienced God then he must exist. **Revelation** generally refers to where God has been seen, and/or he has imparted knowledge to humans. There are many instances of revelation in the Bible, including to those such as Noah, Moses, and Jesus. In the **New Testament**, and through Jesus, as the **incarnation** of God (God as a human).

Keywords:

- ❖ **compassion** – love and mercy for others
- ❖ **covenant** – a promise between God and humans
- ❖ **faithful** – loyal
- ❖ **idol** – a false God, sometimes created as a statue or image
- ❖ **incarnation** – God as a human, in the flesh
- ❖ **just** – fair and lawful
- ❖ **Jewish law** – the set of rules which Jews live by
- ❖ **New Testament** – the second section of the Bible, dealing with events to do with Jesus and his disciples
- ❖ **Old Testament** – the first section of the Bible dealing with the time before Jesus
- ❖ **prophets** – messengers of God and those who God speaks to

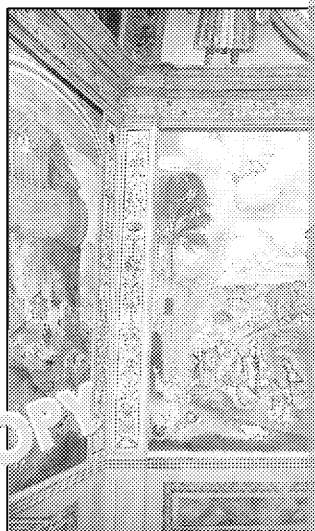
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Old Testament Revelation – Noah

One person to whom God **revealed** himself in the **Old Testament** was Noah, according to the book of Genesis chapters 6-9. God is displeased with humankind, but sees that Noah is a good man. He commands Noah to make an ark, a large boat, and take aboard with him his family and many animals – some animals he should take one pair of, some seven pairs – and food. God tells Noah that he is going to send a great flood to wipe out all the other life on earth. However, he will make a **covenant** with Noah. A covenant is a promise between God and humans.



A fresco (painting on a wall) of Noah's Ark. On the left, the artist portrays God.

Noah does as God has commanded him, and after the flood, God tells Noah to come out of the ark with his family and the animals to repopulate the Earth.

'Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh – birds and creeping thing that creeps on the earth – so that they may abound on the earth and multiply on the earth.' (Genesis 8:17 NRSV)

Noah offers some of the animals to God by burning them as a sacrifice, which means he will not wipe out humanity again.

God gives Noah and his sons instructions. He tells them to multiply and no longer contains blood. He also decrees that humans should kill anyone who kills a human.

God establishes a **covenant** with Noah, for all humans and all living creatures. He promises not to flood the whole earth and destroy its life. He says that the rainbow is a sign of the covenant.

'Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you – every bird and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I will put my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; and again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." (Genesis 9:8-11 NRSV)

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Many Christians believe the **revelations** of God to Noah show that God is not a bad person, but also that he is **compassionate**, because he saved Noah, his family, and the animals from the flood that wiped out life on earth again.

Old Testament Revelation – Abraham

Another person God **revealed** himself to in the **Old Testament** was Abraham in Genesis. Originally, Abraham was called Abram. God tells Abram to leave his land and go to another land, and that he will make him, 'a great nation' (Genesis 12:2 NRSV).

'Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and you will be a blessing."' (Genesis 12:1–2 NRSV)

In the land of Canaan, God appears to Abram, saying he will give this land to him. On another occasion, he also says that Abram's descendants will be as many as the stars in the sky. Later, he appears to Abram in a **vision** and tells him to remember this for the next day, saying that his descendants will be as many as the stars in the sky. He makes a covenant with Abram, saying that he will give his descendants the land he had promised, though they will have to wait for it.

Years later, God makes another covenant with Abram; that he will make him a great nation, as well as giving his descendants land. He renames him Abraham, and tells him to circumcise (remove the foreskin of) all the males of his household, as a sign of the covenant.

Unlike the previous covenants, this one required something of humankind, as God says that uncircumcised males would no longer belong to God's people, because they would have broken the covenant.

God tells Abraham he will have a son with his wife Sarah, though Abraham finds this hard to believe, because they are both old. God tells Abraham that his son Ishmael, whom he had had with one of his wife's slaves, will be the father of a great nation, but that Abraham will have a son called Isaac, with his wife Sarah, who will be the ancestor of God's people and continue his covenant.

Christians believe that God made a covenant with his people through Jesus. The covenant is no longer new, but the children of the old covenant have a new covenant through Jesus.

God appears again to Abraham and Abraham also welcomes three guests to his tent. God predicts that Sarah will have a son, and Sarah, overhearing, laughs. God asks her why she laughed, saying that she will have a son.

Later, Sarah does have a son. When the son, Isaac, is older, God tells Abraham to sacrifice him. Abraham is about to do this when an angel stops him, telling him it had been a test. Because he had been prepared to sacrifice his son, God will indeed grant him a great nation.

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Many Christians believe that the **covenants** God made with Abraham show that God is faithful to his promises. God made a covenant with Abraham and his people, because he did give Abraham his son Isaac, and the Jewish people inherited the Promised Land. However, God's promises to Abraham in the Old Testament also show that God tests people, and that he does not always keep his promises. Abraham had to wait for Isaac, and his descendants had to wait to inherit the land.

Many Christians believe that these revelations of God show that he cared for his people and wanted to show them how to follow him and live good lives, even when they did not trust him. They think that other instances of revelation in the Old Testament show that God is **faithful**, because even when the Jewish people do not keep his laws, he still keeps his promise to Noah.

New Testament Revelation – Jesus

Keywords:

- ❖ **authority** – power over something or someone
- ❖ **baptism** – in the Gospels, immersion in water (a river), symbolising repentance
- ❖ **gentile** – non-Jew
- ❖ **Last Supper** – Jesus' last meal with his disciples before his death
- ❖ **prophecy** – predicting the future, and/or expressing communication from God
- ❖ **reconcile** – reunite people who are separated, e.g. Christians believe Jesus reconciled God and humans
- ❖ **suffering** – experiencing pain
- ❖ **Temple** – the Jewish holy building in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus
- ❖ **Transfiguration** – the event in which Jesus miraculously changes before some of his disciples and his clothes become dazzling
- ❖ **Trinity** – the concept that God is one being, but three persons
- ❖ **Word of God** – Jesus' teaching, which God's power is expressed, and his teaching

In the New Testament, Christians believe that God **reveals** himself through Jesus. Many Christians believe to be God **incarnate**, God as a human. Therefore Christians know about God's nature through Jesus.

'He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, who sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is excellent than theirs.' (Hebrew 1:3–4 NRSV)

Many Christians believe that God showed that he desires to have a relationship with humans. God came to be human in the person of Jesus, to experience what humans experience. God showed himself with humans through Jesus' death (symbolised by the curtain tearing in the Temple) to show that humans are no longer separated from God – the Temple was divided into the parts of the Temple where Jews worshipped from the part where God worshipped.

Christians believe that God showed his love and **compassion** by sending Jesus into the world to heal people, and share God's word with them, and also to die for them. At the **Last Supper**, Jesus says that his blood is given for 'many', 'for the forgiveness of sins' (Mark 14:24, Matthew 26:28 NRSV), which Christians believe was fulfilled when Jesus died on the cross and then rose to life again, conquering death. Christians believe that God must be loving and willing to die to save them from sin and death.

Christians believe that Jesus showed that God cares for everybody, because he associated with outcasts and women, who would not have had a high social status, and also healed **gentiles** (non-Jews), like the Greek woman's daughter and the Centurion's servant. Jesus also told his **disciples** to spread teaching about him, showing that God wants everyone to be able to have a relationship with him.



Moses was given the law written on tablets by God.

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Jesus' healings, including where he casts out demons, also show God's **authority** over the spiritual realm, reassuring Christians that they have a powerful God.

Christians also believe that God fulfilled his plan with Jesus. They believe that God made a new **covenant** with humans through Jesus, and though his promises are different covenants, his nature is consistent; his promises to Abraham show that he carries out his plans immediately, though he is working towards them. Some of this is symbolised in John's Gospel where Jesus turns water into wine at the wedding, which symbolises that Jesus is replacing the older covenant given to Moses (representing the old covenant (represented by wine)). This new covenant is shown through Jesus' sacrifice to those who follow Jesus to forgive their sins and give them eternal life, meaning that they have to follow Jesus rather than the **Jewish law**.

Other indications for Christians are found in the **New Testament** that Jesus is a fulfilment of the **Old Testament** **prophecies**. For example, some link Jesus with the prophecies of the book of Isaiah, and some see different features of his death and resurrection for his clothed and his side being pierced with a spear, as fulfilling words of the Old Testament. Christians believed that Jesus was a continuation of God's message to humanity.

'Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom the world was created.' (Hebrews 1:1–2 NRSV) [A Christian's belief that God spoke through Jesus]

Taking it further...

Why don't you read the account of one of these instances of revelation in the Bible to get a better understanding of revelation?



Jesus also shows God's nature where he is transformed and revealing that God is glorious (see section on **visions** below).

Many Christians also believe that God is made up of three persons, though he is one – and that this is also expressed in the Trinity. For example, during Jesus' **baptism**, Jesus (God the Son) is baptised, God the Father is in heaven, and God the Spirit descends on Jesus. John's Gospel also talks about the Word being present with God the Father at creation. Christians may see God's nature displayed in the three persons. For example, they may feel that God is revealed through the person of Jesus who experienced human life and taught humanity, and through the Holy Spirit whom they want to guide them in their everyday lives.

Different Understandings about what a revelation shows about the Nature of God

Many Christians will claim that a revelation of God shows him to have a consistent nature. However, what revelations say about God. However, not everyone would agree.

Arguably, the revelations of God to Noah show God to be jealous and angry with those who were not following him. However, the revelation of God in Jesus was to save humanity. However, it can be argued that both revelations of God to humanity show God to be **just** and merciful – God rightly punished those who were killed in the flood; they pay the price for sin; justice. However, God was merciful in saving Noah and his family from sin and allowing them to have a relationship with him. Christians believe it is consistent for God to be just and merciful.

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It can also be argued that the two (main) **covenants** which Christians believe (through Abraham and Jesus) are very different – the covenant with Abraham was possessive and controlling, as all males had to be circumcised, while the covenant with Jesus was one of love, extended to all. However, Christians would argue that the covenants were appropriate as part of God's plan, and that he was **faithful** to the Jewish people, even when they betrayed him. They would argue that the covenants were appropriate as part of God's long-term plan.

Some argue that the revelation of God to Abraham shows that God is only concerned with the Jews, and wants Abraham to circumcise his offspring to show that they are different from the rest of the world. However, Jesus is kind to gentiles, and told his disciples to preach to all – showing God's love for all humanity. Christians argue that this was part of God's plan, and that God has always been the same.

It can be claimed that God changed his nature in order to communicate with humans. In the Old Testament, God communicated directly and through prophets, and then through Jesus. This shows that God's nature has changed. However, Christians would argue that all revelation is through Jesus, and that his nature has not changed; he has just shown humans his nature in different ways.

Old Testament revelations showed God to be one, while Christians believe that New Testament revelations showed God to be three persons, the **Trinity** – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Some could argue that Old Testament revelations did not reveal the true nature of God, but Christians still do) believe God to be one person, the God who spoke to Noah and Abraham. They would claim that because Noah and Abraham had revelations of God the Father, they only understood part of God's nature, but not that God revealed his nature to them. Christians believe that God's nature changed.

Quick Questions

1. Outline **three** things which Old Testament revelation shows about the nature of God for Christians.
2. Explain **two** ways in which Christians believe God has revealed himself to be compassionate.

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Visions

Visions are a type of **religious experience** where someone sees, and often be taken as **proof** of the existence of God, often an apparition of a saint, and who see visions are called visionaries. Some visions take place while the vision occurs within dreams. Many Christians believe that if God, or messengers from humans, then this proves the existence of God, and shows that he is active. God's existence makes them important to Christians as it justifies their faith.

Keywords:

- ❖ **Annunciation** – the announcement to Mary that she will give birth to Jesus
- ❖ **Chi Rho** – a combination of the letters 'X' and 'P', which are the first two letters of the word 'Christ'
- ❖ **conversion** – in religion, changing from one religion to another, or from non-religion to religion
- ❖ **doctrine** – set teaching or belief
- ❖ **evangelism** – spreading the news about Jesus and trying to convert others
- ❖ **hallucination** – seeing or hearing something which is not really there
- ❖ **humanism** – someone who aims to live a good life, without belief in God or religion
- ❖ **Immaculate Conception** – the doctrine that Mary was conceived without sin
- ❖ **ministry** – work teaching and helping people
- ❖ **persecution** – targeting people and treating them badly because of prejudice
- ❖ **religious experience** – in Christianity, when people feel God's presence
- ❖ **salvation** – being saved from something; something physical like an illness
- ❖ **vision** – a type of experience where God, or a messenger of God is seen

Old Testament Visions

There are several different **visions** recorded in the **Old Testament**, which

As mentioned above, God revealed himself many times to Abram/Abraham in Genesis 15. The word of God appears to Abraham (then Abram) in a vision to protect and reward him. Abraham questions God, as he has no children, but God says his descendants will be as many as the stars in the sky. God tells Abram to leave his land, and asks him to make an animal sacrifice.

'After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram; your shield; your reward shall be very great."' (Genesis 15:1)

In a dream, God foretells the future to Abraham, telling him that his descendants will be many and lead them to the land he has promised for them. He also tells Abraham that he will live to old age. God makes a covenant with Abraham, promising his descendants the land where he is living.

Another vision in the Old Testament occurs near the start of the book of Exodus, to Moses, a shepherd who is a member of the Jewish (or Hebrew, or Israelite) people, but who was raised in Pharaoh's household before leaving the kingdom of Egypt. The angel of God appears to Moses in a burning bush (the bush appears to be on fire, yet the flames do not destroy it). God calls to Moses from the bush, and tells him not to come closer to the bush, and to remove his footwear, because he is



Moses Sees the Burning Bush

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standing on holy ground. God tells Moses that he is the God of his ancestors to go and free the Jewish people, who are slaves in Egypt. He gives Moses a sign if they will not believe that God has sent him, including turning his staff into a

[God said to Moses] "So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people out of Egypt." (Exodus 3:10 NRSV)

This vision was important because it led to Moses leading the Jewish people out of Egypt. It showed that God had not abandoned his people. This vision, like many others, confirmed belief in God (for Moses) because there was a natural source would explain the vision.

Yet another important vision in the Old Testament occurs to the prophet Isaiah in chapter 6. Isaiah sees God in heaven on a throne, attended by seraphs (angels). Because he has seen God, but one of the seraphs takes a hot coal from the altar and touches his lips, telling him that it has removed his guilt and sin. This is thought to symbolise being cleansed so that he can speak God's holy word. In the vision, God then asks Isaiah volunteers. God sends him to the Jewish people with a message.

'In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and exalted. His robe filled the temple.' (Isaiah 6:1 NRSV)

This vision was important, because it led to Isaiah prophesying for God.

A similar vision in the Old Testament occurs to the prophet Ezekiel, at the same time. He also sees God. God gives him a scroll to eat, which tastes sweet, symbolising the word of God.

'He said to me, "Mortal, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it. In my mouth it was as sweet as honey."' (Ezekiel 3:3 NRSV)

This vision was important in the same way as Isaiah's because it led Ezekiel to prophesy to the Jewish people.

All these visions show that God has a commitment to his people, to free them from slavery and to send them guidance on how to follow his will. The prophet Ezekiel would like to say that these visions strengthened their belief in God because they were cared about by God.

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New Testament Visions

There are also many **visions** recorded in the **New Testament** which are links in the plan for the **salvation** of humankind.

Near the beginning of Luke's Gospel, Mary, soon to be the mother of Jesus, receives the **Annunciation**, which means announcement, because the angel announces to her that she will have a baby who will be the Son of God.

Later, Joseph, Mary's fiancé, and then husband, receives a vision of an angel in his dream, telling him to marry Mary because she is carrying God's baby. He then receives another vision of an angel in a dream after Jesus is born, telling him to flee to Egypt because Herod wants to kill Jesus. These visions are provided at the start of Matthew's Gospel.

These visions are important to Christians because they help to keep his faith and to carry out his mission. They also strengthen belief in the belief that angels exist, as this fits with the Bible.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke also record a vision including Jesus – the **Transfiguration**. (This is the version from Matthew to confuse these details with the other versions.) Jesus takes three of his disciples (Peter, James and John) up a mountain. He changes before them – he shines and his clothes become white. Moses and Elijah, the **Old Testament prophets**, appear with Jesus. Jesus' disciples should put up tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. A cloud appears and God tells the disciples that Jesus is his son, with whom he is pleased, and the disciples fall down in fear. Jesus comforts them, and when they look up, Moses and Elijah disappear.

'And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.' (Matthew 17:2-3)

Jesus told his disciples not to tell anyone until he had been raised from the dead. The disciples ask about Elijah coming back (a Jewish belief). Jesus tells them that Elijah will come, but has also already come and not been recognised, but been badly treated. Jesus says that he will also be badly treated. The disciples do not understand that Elijah has come back as John the Baptist (who was killed).

This vision is important to Christians because it shows Jesus' authority. It also indicates his divinity, and therefore the truth of Christianity, as God voices his approval of Jesus and his mission for the future. It also shows Jesus' obedience and his willingness to die as part of God's plan.

Moses and Elijah appearing is also significant – it shows that Jesus had a mission from God, as Moses and Elijah were leaders of humanity from **sin** and teach them how to have a better life. The disciples also witness the transfiguration, this shows that Christians have a mission from God; to spread the Gospel. Some Christians fulfil this by becoming **missionaries**.

Other explanations for the appearance of Moses and Elijah are that as the one who received the **Jewish law**, represents the old law, and the teachings of Jesus complete the teachings of the law, and that following Jesus takes precedence over the law. It has been significant to Christians in the Early Church that Jesus was the fulfilment of Jewish teaching. Christians today in showing that if they follow Jesus, they do not have to follow the complete Jewish law.

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Moses is incredibly important within Judaism for receiving the Jewish law and leading the people from slavery in Egypt.

The Jewish law was, and is, very important because Jews follow it to show their devotion to God and in order to try to be holy; set apart for God.

Another important New Testament vision occurs to **St Paul**, known as Saul in Acts 9. Saul was a devoted Jew, and was **persecuting** Christians because he was not following God correctly. On a journey to Damascus, to arrest Christians there, he is taken to the heaven, and hears a voice asking:

'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' (Acts 9:4 NRSV)

He asks who the voice is, and is told that it is Jesus. The voice instructs him to stop persecuting Christians. Saul is blinded by the vision. After this, his sight is restored.

St Paul is important for many Christians because he evangelised many people, and wrote many letters to early Christians which are included in the New Testament as teaching for Christians.

This vision was important because Saul became a Christian. It was a **conversion** experience for him – and a key moment in the history of Christianity. This vision can be seen as significant because it shows that God chose to enlighten someone who was persecuting Christians. It shows that God cares for, and will use, even those who are against him. This vision brought Saul/Paul to Christianity because something about the vision compelled him. People who experience visions claim that they are from God because this vision has led them to know the truth. This is a quality of some religious experiences, and will be discussed in the section on *Religious Experiences* below. The vision was strengthened by Ananias coming to restore Saul's sight.

Another important vision in the New Testament was Peter's vision in Acts 10. Peter sees a sheet coming down from heaven filled with many animals which would have been deemed unclean to eat by the Jews. A voice says:

'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' (Acts 10:13 NRSV)

Peter says he will not, because the animals are unclean, but the voice responds that:

'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' (Acts 10:15 NRSV)

The vision was repeated twice over. After the vision, Peter receives a visitor from a **gentile** (non-Jew) called Cornelius, who wants to hear the good news from Peter.

This vision was important, because Peter took it to mean that gentiles, who had been thought unclean, were now entitled to the word of God and **salvation** through Jesus, and he preached the good news to gentiles. Christians came to believe that gentiles did not need to become Jews before becoming Christians.

All these visions show that God had a plan for humanity, and that this plan was carried out through Jesus. Peter's vision shows that God chose to use Peter to show that God was powerful, but also that God was merciful.

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Non-biblical Visions

There have also been many **visions** after the time of the Bible.

The Emperor Constantine had a vision in 312 CE in which God promised to his soldiers had the Christian sign of the **Chi Rho** on their shields.

This vision was important, as when Constantine followed the instructions **converted** to Christianity, and made it the religion of the Roman Empire, spread of Christianity. People such as Constantine may come to belief in God, believe that God has helped them.

Joan of Arc saw visions of saints in 1412, instructing her to help reconquer France.

The vision was important in directing Joan to serve God, as she believed in God.

A young girl called Bernadette had a vision of Mary in 1858 in Lourdes, France. She claimed that she was the **Immaculate Conception**. The Immaculate Conception was conceived without original sin, though every other human inherits sin from Adam and Eve. After the vision, the Immaculate Conception became a **doctrine** of the Catholic Church. The vision of Mary also reportedly told Bernadette to dig for a spring of water which came forth is renowned for having healing properties. Many people claimed to have been healed of various illnesses and other medical conditions. The Church recognises Lourdes as a place of healing and supports people making pilgrimages.

This vision was important in clarifying Church beliefs, and establishing a place of healing associated with healing.

Many other people have claimed to have had visions of God, angels or saints. Visions are important because they reinforce faith, and Christians believe that God will guide people and fulfil his plan.

Importance of Visions for Christians (Recap)

- **Proof** of God's existence, and as such help to strengthen **faith**.
- They show that God wants to have a relationship with humanity and care for them.
- They often teach God's will and instruct people to carry it out.
- They teach about God's future plans for the world.


What Visions Show about the Nature of God (Recap)

- He has power and **authority**.
- He is **compassionate** and cares about humanity.
- He is **faithful** and keeps his word.
- He has a plan and guides humanity to follow it.
 - ↳ Some visions may be taken to indicate that God changes his mind, but this is taken to indicate that God's message was also for **gentiles**. However, God treated the Jews as distinct from others.

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Visions and Belief in God – Arguments For and Against Trusting

- ✓ Many Christians may believe that **visions** provide **evidence/proof** of God, but they may only have a supernatural explanation.
- ✓ One stronger case for visions is that they can go against what people believe. For example, Jesus was a Jew, a Christian, and yet he had a vision which **converted** him to Christianity. If a vision conflicts with what you believe, it must have been caused by something external and cannot be your own internal thoughts.
- ✗ However, not everyone believes that visions provide evidence of God. Non-religious people (including **atheists** and **humanists**) argue that there can be physical explanations for why someone might see a 'vision'. The book  says that Peter was hungry before he saw his vision, so it is possible he was **hallucinating** due to lack of food. The accounts of some visionaries also correlate with symptoms which are known about today, but were not known about hundreds of years ago. Some types of epilepsy can cause hallucinations, which could be thought to have been suffering from such conditions.

Use this example to explain what a vision is and how it can be caused.

 - ✍ Christians can respond that visions are not hallucinations – it has been argued that visions are hallucinations (even if some might be). Further, it is possible that humans have a capacity for receiving visions – which would be seen as different from hallucinations or an epileptic episode. This does not mean they are caused by God.
- ✗ A continuation of this argument used by non-religious people to suggest that visions cannot provide proof of God's existence, is that people see visions of Jesus, Krishna (a Hindu god), and many others. They argue, therefore, that visions are not from God. If visions come from God, then it seems strange that they appear to confirm different beliefs.
 - ✍ Christians can respond that even if visions appear to confirm a variety of different beliefs, they can still confirm *God*. Some suggest that God may often reveal himself in different ways to different people, or that as all visions are mediated by the human brain, they appear differently to people of different religions, but that the human brain processes them in different ways.

Quick Questions

3. Outline **three** explanations for visions.
4. Explain  reasons why a non-religious person might argue that visions cannot prove the existence of God.

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Miracles

Miracles are extraordinary happenings which do not appear to be explainable by natural laws, which may be attributed to the divine. Many Christians believe that miracles prove the existence of God, and show that he is active in the world and cares about his people.

Keywords:

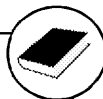
- ❖ **faith** – belief and trust in something, here in Jesus and God
- ❖ **idol** – a false God, sometimes created as a statue or image
- ❖ **miracles** – events which seem supernatural and unexplainable by natural laws; events which Christians to be performed by God or his agents
- ❖ **reconcile** – reunite people who are separated
- ❖ **resurrection** – being raised from the dead

Old Testament Miracles

There are many important **miracles** in the **Old Testament**, several of which are listed below.

In the book of Exodus, God parts the Red Sea for Moses, allowing the Jewish people to escape from slavery in Egypt.

'Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided.'
(Exodus 14:21 NRSV)



Artist's impression

This is an important miracle not just because it shows God's **authority**, but also God's **compassion** for his people; that he cares for them, and will look after them. This is likely to lead to belief in, or confirmation of belief in, God because, for them, a supernatural explanation seems most likely, and the miracle indicates God's power over their lives and his care for them.

In the book of Judges, God calls Gideon to liberate the Jewish people from the Midianites. Gideon asks God to show him a sign that he will be successful. Overnight, God makes the ground dry, and then the next night he makes the ground wet. (Fleeces from animals such as sheep were used for making tents and for warmth.)

This is an important miracle because it shows Christians that God may seem to be testing them, but what he wants them to do, and that he will be patient with them, as Gideon was (he waited each night) before he completely trusted God.

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Jesus tells him that his son will live, and the man trusts him and leaves for his slaves, come to tell him that his son has recovered. He asks them when he realises that it was at the time that Jesus said the boy would live. The official in Jesus.

This miracle is significant because it shows Jesus' power to heal at a distance, and his emphasis on faith. It is potentially significant as the official in the parallel stories in Matthew and Luke). Miracles where Jesus heals gentiles, such as the woman's daughter (Matthew 15, Mark 7) show that God cares about all people.

The miracles in the New Testament are also important because they indicate that Jesus is human, and prepared to show them his authority – Jesus acknowledges faith if they do not see miracles.

Probably the most important miracle in the New Testament is the **resurrection**. Jesus recorded raising others from the dead, but he rises after his own death.

Resurrection miracles are important because they show God's power over death and the hope of life after death. Miracles which conquer death are especially likely as people may feel that no one apart from God can raise people from the dead.

Importance of Miracles for Christians (Recap)

- **Proof** of God's existence, and as such help to strengthen **faith**.
- They show that God wants to have a relationship with humanity and care for them.
- They teach about God's nature.

What Miracles Show About the Nature of God (Recap)

- He has power and **authority**. He is capable of granting life after death.
- He is **compassionate** and cares about humanity.
- He is **faithful** and keeps his word. He looks after those who believe in him.
- He is patient with humanity and sends them signs to strengthen their faith.
- He cares about people having faith in him.
- He has a plan and guides humanity to follow it.
 - ↳ Some miracles may be taken to indicate that God changes his mind. For example, the Greek woman's daughter is taken to indicate that God's love is for all people. However, previously, God had told the Jews as distinct from other people.

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- GCSE Edexcel A Course Companion: Paper 3B: Philosophy and Ethics

Religious Experiences

Revelation of God in any form, such as **visions** or auditory experiences (what is heard), or **miracles** can be termed **religious experiences**.

Other types of religious experience not mentioned above include:

- **Mystical experiences** – in a mystical experience, the person experiences a sense of unity with God.
- Experiences connected with **prayer** (prayer will be covered more fully in the next section).
- **Numinous experiences** – in a numinous experience, someone feels the presence of God from themselves, unlike a mystical experience), and a feeling of awe.

Keywords:

- ❖ **conversion** – in religion, changing from one religion to another, or from no religion to a religion
- ❖ **evidence** – indicates that something is likely to be true
- ❖ **hallucination** – seeing or hearing something which is not really there
- ❖ **mystical experience** – in Christianity, feeling somehow united with God
- ❖ **numinous experience** – in Christianity, feeling the presence of God/the divine, and a feeling of awe
- ❖ **proof** – shows something to definitely exist or be true
- ❖ **religious experience** – in Christianity, when people feel God's presence

Nature of Religious Experiences

Some people would regard anything to do with talking to God, or feeling his presence, as a **religious experience**, but others would suggest that one must feel something that differs from normal experience – so just saying a **prayer** to God might not count.

Various people have classified religious experiences in different ways. For example, the psychologist William James thought that religious experiences had four features:

- They would pass; they are often quick, and people experiencing religious experiences would return to normal experience again.
- They cannot be fully described, or the feeling experienced cannot be fully explained.
- People learn something from religious experiences – this could be God's will for the world (e.g. that Abraham would have a son), or learning or coming to know God (e.g. leaving the experience *knowing* that God is loving).
- Religious experiences are not controllable – one might be more likely to have a religious experience if they are worshipping or praying, but they cannot choose to experience God.

There are other theories about religious experience, and many hold that most religious experiences are subjective; people experiencing them will feel extremely happy or angry.

As dealt with above, not all religious experiences confirm what people already believe (e.g. that Abraham would have a son, and Saul was **persecuting** Christians). In some religious experiences **convert** people who do not believe in God to believing in God, or to a different religion.

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Christian Attitudes Towards Religious Experiences

Christians believe that **religious experiences** occur, and most desire to experience religious experiences **prove** God, and most feel that they provide **evidence**.

Christians may use religious experience as a philosophical argument for the existence of God. The argument could be given like this:

- People have religious experiences of God.
- If people experience God then he must exist.
- ↳ Therefore, God must exist.

Christians might want to check their religious experiences, if they feel that they are not genuine but they are not sure. They might check if their religious experience corresponds to the Bible, or talk to another Christian who has had a similar experience. This might help them decide if their experience is genuine or not.

Why Religious Experiences May be Regarded as Revelation

Religious experiences can be very important to Christians. As seen above, Christians can have their faith strengthened and learn about God's nature, e.g. be reassured of his existence through **visions** and **miracles**.

Christians may also feel that God guides them, and helps them to follow his commands through religious experiences, such as communicating with them through **prayer**.

Religious experience can be viewed as **revelation** because:

- God / a message from God is sometimes revealed visually.

'There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed.' (Exodus 3:2 NRSV)

- God communicates about himself through religious experiences.

'He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.' (Exodus 3:6 NRSV)

- God reveals his nature through religious experiences, e.g. his compassion.

'Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know the suffering, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey..."' (Exodus 3:8-9 NRSV)

- God reveals his will and his plan through religious experiences.

'So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.' (Exodus 3:10 NRSV)

- God reveals knowledge of the future through religious experiences.

'I know, however, that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a stronger hand than mine.' (Exodus 3:19 NRSV)

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Religious Experiences and Belief in God – Arguments For and Against Trusting Religious Experiences

Not all people believe **religious experiences** provide **proof** of God's existence. Non-religious people (including **atheists** and **humanists**) do not believe that religious experiences are genuine, and think that people are not really communicating with a god. Some reasons are presented in the sections on **visions** and **miracles**, and here are some more and some clarifications.

- ✗ **Lack of evidence:** some people, including the famous philosopher David Hume, think there is not enough **evidence** to support religious experiences. No one today can prove what happened in biblical times, and all biblical accounts of religious experiences could be fictional. In terms of religious experiences today, as experiences are proven afterwards where there are witnesses, Hume argued that it is as likely a confused, or lying, witness, than that something supernatural had taken place. We know that people lie, and that people can be confused – maybe inaccurately, like a mirage – but people do not know that God exists and experience them.
 - ↳ Christians can argue that just because other explanations for religious experiences are likely, e.g. a confused or lying witness, this does not mean that religious experiences do not take place and provide evidence of God. Religious experiences are evidence if people experience them.
- ✗ **Use of drugs:** some drugs have been shown to produce experiences which are similar to religious experiences. These can include **hallucinations**, where people see and hear things that are not there, which might seem positive or disturbing. Some people who report religious experiences have been on drugs, which may be the true cause of their experiences. If drugs can produce such effects, then it is physically possible for someone to have religious experiences without the involvement of a god, and so religious experiences do not prove the existence of God.
 - ↳ Christians can respond that a) even if some religious experiences can be explained physically, this does not mean God cannot communicate with people and/or b) some 'religious experiences' may not be genuine, but many are genuine religious experiences when they were not intoxicated.
- ✗ **Hallucinations:** as mentioned previously, there may be various reasons why people have **hallucinations**, for example for medical reasons, and hallucinations can be explained as a hallucination.
 - ↳ As seen above – Christians can respond that visions are not hallucinations. It has been proven that all visions are hallucinations (even if some might be). It has been proven that humans have a capacity for receiving visions – which would be impossible if it was just a hallucination or an epileptic episode. This does not mean that visions are from God.
- ✗ **Wish fulfilment:** some people believe that people have religious experiences – it is a wish fulfilment. If someone is really longing to hear from God, they may have themselves that they have, especially if they are under any kind of stress.
 - ↳ Christians can respond that not all religious experiences are desired. People do not always stress when they receive them. It is probable that some people have themselves that they have had religious experiences when they have not had other religious experiences.

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✗ Further, there are some 'religious experiences' which most people *do not* believe in. Serial killers have claimed to hear God telling them to kill people, and it is the case (and that they are either lying or ill). If people do not believe in religious experiences are experiences of God, then it becomes hard to know how an experience is real or not. It is always a choice, and if one experience becomes true (e.g. a vision of Jesus is more likely to occur if someone believes because people saw him **resurrected**), then it becomes hard to justify the choice to believe.

↳ Christians can respond that just because not all religious experiences are genuine does not mean all are false. People frequently lie, but humans still try to tell the truth. Most people assume people are telling the truth unless they have reason to believe otherwise.

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Quick Questions

6. Outline **three** features of religious experience.
7. Explain **two** reasons why religious experiences may be considered relevant to a source of wisdom and authority.

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Prayers

Prayer is communication with God. Many Christians talk to God for a variety of reasons to build a relationship with him. If Christians feel God responding to prayer, this may be a religious **experience**, but not all prayer will necessarily feel like a religious experience.

Keywords:

- ❖ **prayer** – communication with God

Types, Examples and Importance of Prayers

There are many different types of **prayers**:

- Christians pray to praise God, which is important as the God revealed in the Bible wants his people to worship him, and it helps Christians to strengthen their relationship with God.
- Christians pray to thank God, which is important because Christians want to express their gratitude, and it reminds them what God has done for them.
- Christians pray to confess their sins, which is important to Christians because they believe if they ask for forgiveness, then God will forgive them.
- Christians pray to ask God to help others, which is important as it shows that Christians trust God to help them.



Some examples of prayers are:

- The Lord's Prayer, which is important to Christians because this is the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray, and Christians want to follow his example. It asks God for things which are important, as it teaches Christians to trust God. It also teaches about God's will, reminding them that God's plan should be their priority.

'Pray then in this way:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one."
NRSV [A version of the Lord's Prayer]

- Rosary prayers, which are said with the rosary necklace (especially by Catholics). The prayers with the rosary are important because familiar prayers allow Christians to pray with confidence and not on feeling shy to pray with.
- Psalm. The book of Psalms in the Bible contains many prayers, which can give Christians ideas to pray with, and show Christians how other Christians pray.

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Answered Prayer

If someone **prays** and their prayers appear to be answered in the way they reinforce, belief in God because:

- The person may believe that their prayer could only have, or is most likely, answered in this way by God, and so the answered prayer is **evidence** for the existence of God that God is listening to them and will answer their prayers.

'And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained what we ask of him.' (1 John 5:14-15, IRSV)

- The person may see the answered prayer as a sign that God loves them.

'If you see your brother or sister committing what is not a mortal sin, you will only go to such a one – to those whose sin is not mortal...' (1 John 5:16-17, IRSV)

Note – the author of the first letter of John (not necessarily the same person as the Gospel) seems to suggest that people should not pray for those who have committed serious sins (John 5:16–17). These are often interpreted (especially by the Catholic Church) to condemn someone to hell if they do not repent. These sins are serious sins, such as a seriously bad action (e.g. murder) which is done intentionally. Therefore, some Christians believe there are things which a Christian should not pray for, or expect from God – such as for him to answer a prayer to forgive an unrepentant person who has committed serious sins.

Unanswered Prayer

If someone **prays** and they think their prayer has not been answered, they may lose faith in God, or lose faith in God because:

- The person may feel that if there was a God he would always answer their prayers.
- The person may feel that there cannot be a God because a God would take action based on their prayer, for example, to heal someone. If this does not happen, they may feel there is not a compassionate God.
- The person may feel that if they have had no contact with God, there is no God.

Alternatively, a Christian may have different responses to unanswered prayer:

- They may feel that God has answered their prayer, but possibly not in the way they expected. Maybe they do not realise how God has answered their prayer.
- They may feel that God will answer their prayer in the future, and they should wait.

Quick Questions

- Outline **three** reasons why prayer is important to Christians.
- Explain **two** reasons why prayer which Christians feel has been answered to / reinforce faith in God.

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Design Argument

Christians, and people of other religions, have not just used **religious experience** to **prove** God's existence and justify belief in God. Some have also used philosophy to prove his existence, though not all religious people believe that these arguments. One type of these arguments is called the **design argument** (also known as the teleological argument) based on the idea that the world appears to be created and designed, so must have a designer: God.

Keywords:

- ❖ **analogy** – a comparison between things to note their similarity
- ❖ **evolution** – a scientific theory which states that organisms have adapted over time
- ❖ **fine-tune** – where little things are altered to achieve the best outcome
- ❖ **proof** – shows something to exist or be true

A Classic Design Argument for the Existence of God

The **design argument** could be phrased like this:

- The world resembles a designed object.
- Humans design many objects.
 - ↳ Therefore, the world is similar to objects designed by humans.
- Where there is a similar outcome, there is often a similar cause.
- Human designers are the cause of most designed objects.
- Because the world is similar to objects designed by humans (from the paragraph above)...
 - ↳ ...the world has a similar designer... which is God.

The first part of the argument leads to the conclusion that the world is like a designed object. The second part of the argument suggests that if objects appear to be designed, they must have a designer. And if the world is designed, then the designer is God.

'God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.' (Genesis 1:31)

Use by Christians as a Philosophical Argument for the Existence of God

- ① The scientist Isaac Newton gave the example of a *thumb print*, as evidence for the design argument. He said they indicated that the world had been designed, because they were unique, and there would be no natural reason for humans to have different thumb prints. Therefore, he thought they must have been designed by God.
- ② A philosopher called William Paley said that **evidence** for the **design argument** was that the world:
 1. contained *organised parts*, e.g. there are weather cycles, and plants and animals grow and reproduce and life continues.
 2. had a *function* or a purpose – it allowed life.

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He claimed that these were features of things which had been designed.

For example, a watch has organised parts; cogs which rotate and make the purpose of telling the time. Watches, we know to be designed by a designer. A rock does not have organised parts, and has no purpose on its own. Paley used this comparison to argue that the world is designed. This is called an **analogy**, because an analogy is a comparison, and Paley compared the world to a watch.

If the analogy between the world and designed objects is good, it does suggest a designer, as designed objects cannot exist without a designer, so the argument is thought to be strong in this sense.

- 3 Some Christians argue that a strength of the design argument is that things do not have to be 'just so' for things to exist on earth. It might be possible that things exist by chance, but many things do seem to have been organised by a designer. For example, the elements oxygen and carbon are necessary for human life. If the sea level was slightly different, or the sea level was slightly higher, humans would not be able to survive. This is an example of a **fine-tuning** argument, because the world seems fine-tuned; to have had lots of little things contribute to an overall outcome.
- 4 Another strength of the design argument is that it points to a purpose. If things were designed, and many humans like to feel that they have a purpose in life.

Non-religious Arguments Against the Design Argument

Atheists, humanists and others have argued against the **design argument**. They think that it provides **evidence** for God's existence.

- 1 One argument against the design argument is that the world does not seem to be designed. Earthquakes cause devastation, there is disease, and animals kill each other. If the world was designed, which did not have natural disasters, or disease, or creatures which kill each other, it might seem preferable to many. If there are flaws, which a God would not design, then the world was not designed. Many atheists believe a loving God would not create a world where suffering exists. Therefore, they argue there cannot be a designer God, because there are flaws in the world.
- 2 Another objection to the design argument is that the **analogy** (comparison) between the world and designed objects, and therefore between humans, and the supposed designer of the world, is weak. There are many differences between the world and a watch, and therefore there might be many differences between how the world came into being and human design. For example, the world is not a watch, and therefore there might be many differences between how the world came into being and human design.

There could always be alternative explanations. For example, a puddle on the ground outside could have been caused by the natural process of rain, or by a hose. If you see rain clouds you may assume it was rain, or if you see a hose with a hose, you might assume not. In the same way, as world-design processes are another.

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③ The widely accepted theory of **evolution** provides an alternative way humans could have come into being, and suggests that they were not designed. It can explain why animals can camouflage, or humans are intelligent; but the traits that make species successful have been passed on to their offspring. In other words, if animals might not have been 'fine-tuned' to fit into their environment, then this casts doubt on whether anything was designed.

! Some people also point out that even if the world was designed, this does not prove one Christian God. There could be many designer gods.

Christian Responses in Favour of the Design Argument

- ① It might not have been possible to design a better world. It is possible that a world without earthquakes or disease would have more flaws, or would not function.
- ② Even if the **analogy** between the world and designed objects is weak, this does not disprove a designer.
- ③ God could have designed the world through the process of evolution; many human designers do not design everything from scratch, but may use mechanical processes to help them.

It is possible, from the **design argument**, that there are multiple gods, but not for other reasons.

What the Design Argument May Show About the Nature of God

- God has **authority** and is powerful, if he could design a universe, a planet, and life on earth.

'For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it in the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, but understood and seen through the things he has made.' (Romans 1:18-20)

Romans 1:18-24 discusses why people do not have an excuse for denying God, who is known through the creation he designed.

- ✦ Maybe God is not all-powerful, as there are some things which could not be designed better to minimise **suffering**.
- God is **compassionate** and loving, because he chose to design a planet with life.
- ✦ Maybe God is not all-loving, because he potentially could have designed a world with less suffering.
- God is **creative**; there are many beautiful and different features of the world, and the same.
- God is **similar** to humans, in that he designed the world and humans designed objects.

Quick Questions

10. Outline **three** reasons non-religious people argue against the design argument.

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Cosmological Argument

Another type of argument used by some Christians and people of other religions to prove the existence of God is called a **cosmological argument**. The idea behind the argument is that there is something rather than nothing – the cosmos exists. Therefore, there must be a creator that there must be a creator.

Keywords:

- ❖ **Big Bang Theory** – a scientific theory that the universe started with a rapid expansion from a point of infinite density
- ❖ **cause** – something which makes something else happen
- ❖ **contingency** – here, the possibility of things existing or ceasing to exist in the future
- ❖ **cosmological argument** – an argument for God's existence based on the idea that the universe has a cause rather than nothing, and God caused it
- ❖ **evidence** – indicates that something is likely to be true
- ❖ **first cause argument** – a case for the existence of God, based on the idea that everything has a cause, and this is God
- ❖ **necessary being** – something/one which *must* exist
- ❖ **proof** – shows something to definitely exist or be true
- ❖ **unmoved mover** – God, as being a being who does not change, but who causes change

A Cosmological Argument

Cosmological arguments are very old.

A basic version of a cosmological argument is:

- There is something rather than nothing.
- There must be a reason for this.
- ↳ There is a reason for this: God.

Use by Christians as a Philosophical Argument for the Existence of God

Many Christians have used **cosmological arguments** for the existence of God. One famous example of a theologian who used cosmological arguments is **St Thomas Aquinas**. He wrote down *Five Ways*, which he believed proved the existence of God. The first three of these *Five Ways* are cosmological arguments.

- 1 Here is a version of Aquinas' 1st way, and the **unmoved mover**:
 - The world contains things that are in motion.
 - Change is caused by something other than the thing which changes.
 - There must be something which changes other things which does not change itself.
 - ↳ Therefore, there is an unchanging changer (unmoved mover).

Aquinas makes the point that all motion and change requires a source of the energy that causes the change. Therefore, there must be a source of this energy that causes change. He assumes that this must be God, who does not change, but causes change.

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- ② Probably the best known of these three arguments is St Thomas Aquinas' paraphrased version of Aquinas' 2nd argument – the **first cause argument**.
- Everything has a **cause**.
 - Without a first cause there would be no other causes and no effects.
 - There are causes and effects at the moment.
- ⇒ Therefore, there is a first cause which people call God.

Aquinas makes the point that nothing ever happens without a cause, and if causes and effects back to the start of the universe, there must have been a first cause. This, he says, is God.

Aquinas' first and second ways are very similar arguments. One way of differentiating the *First Way*, Aquinas is arguing for something which is *able* to cause change, and the other is arguing that there must have been something which was the first cause, and so exists eternally. The first argument makes more assumptions about the nature of God, aside from the fact that the universe is still going on.

'In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was without form and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.' (Genesis 1:1-5)

- ③ Here is a version of Aquinas' 3rd argument – **contingency**: (Note: here *contingent* means 'possible to be, and possible not to be').
- Things which exist in the world are possible (if they were not possible, they would not exist).
 - It is also possible for things *not* to be (people die, mountains are eroded).
- ⇒ If everything is contingent (possible to be, and possible *not* to be), then at some point everything will *not* be.
- If everything is contingent (possible to be, and possible *not* to be), then everything will eventually cease to exist.
 - Things do currently exist.
- ⇒ Therefore, there is something which is not contingent (it is *necessary* to be) which allows things to remain existing – this is God (a **necessary being**).

Aquinas makes the point that if everything ends, why has everything not ended already? He assumes that there must be something (God) which sustains existence.

Strengths and Evidence for the Cosmological Arguments

Strengths and Evidence for ① and ②:

- ✓ Aquinas is correct in stating that everything needs potential energy to change. There is nothing in the world which does not require potential energy to change. Therefore, there must be some explanation for the beginning of the universe. Matter (physical, material stuff) to come into being, and to change, needs energy. This indicates some sort of unchanging, non-material cause, probably with the power to make things happen, and this fits well with the idea of God.
- ✓ Moreover, a first cause, which is God, seems (to many) to be more like a starting point, going back forever, or chains of change going back forever, without a beginning. **cosmological arguments** are strong because things have causes, and need energy, and it makes little sense for there *not* to have been a first cause for change.

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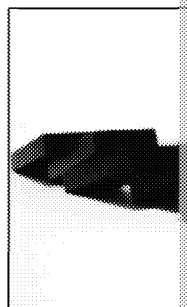
Strengths and Evidence for ③:

- ✓ It is possible to argue that if everything came from one point originally to one point eventually – some theories in physics support this. However, yet, and it may be that God has made sure that this does not happen.

Non-religious Arguments Against Cosmological Arguments and Favour

Atheists, humanists and others have argued against **cosmological arguments** people think that they provide **evidence** for God's existence.

- ✗ The **Big Bang Theory**, a scientific theory which suggests that the universe was **caused** by a rapid expansion of matter, could be a possible alternative first cause for the universe, and could explain when potential energy first began to cause change. There is scientific **evidence** for this, and no scientific evidence for God, so this weakens the **cosmological argument**.



*Dominos in motion
first domino
domino falling
then*

- ✗ Christians could respond that the **big bang** still needs a **cause**, and there needs to be a reason why suddenly potential energy caused change; God could have caused the big bang, which then caused everything allowed potential energy to be released.
- ✗ Even if everything has a cause now, and needs potential energy for change, cannot **prove** that causes and effects do not go back forever without not an infinite chain of change going backwards.
 - ✗ Christians could respond that it is more likely that there is a God who has a cause, or that there is no reason why potential energy has the laws of nature in this way.
- ✗ Further, even if the universe needs a first cause and an unmoved mover of causes and effects, and changes, does not necessarily solve the problem of what caused God, and how and why he does not change.
 - ✗ Christians could respond that God is different to everything else, outside of cause and effect, and because he is perfect and complete he does not need everything in the physical world needs a cause and potential energy. Different rules may apply to him.
- ✗ Physics does not really tie up with the **contingency** argument. Physics says the universe may end, there will still be something (be it matter or energy) just disappear. Also, this is predicted to happen at some point far in the future, wrong in expecting that the end of the universe would have *already* happened.
 - ✗ Christians may respond to this, but this argument is not really used as other cosmological arguments are seen to be stronger.

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- ✗ It is also important to note that even if cosmological arguments succeed, they do not show that there is a Christian God – the first cause, **unmoved mover** and **necessary being** god, and there is a possibility that there are multiple gods.
- ✦ It is possible, from the **cosmological arguments**, that there is a god, but there are multiple gods, but Christians believe in their one God for

What the Cosmological Arguments May Show About the Nature of God

- 1 God is unchanging and unmoving.
 - 2 God is different from everything else, because he does not have a cause.
 - 3 God has necessary existence – he must exist.
- ✦ God has **authority** and is powerful if he could cause everything to exist, create a natural energy, and is the only **necessary being**.

What they do not show:

- The **cosmological arguments** do not really show that God is **compassionate**. Christians might infer this, but if God is just a **first cause, unmoved mover**, this does not necessarily indicate that he did anything after setting the universe in motion, from sustaining life, or that he wanted to create a good planet for humans.
- The cosmological argument does not indicate much about God other than that he caused the universe to start, and sustains it.

Quick Questions

11. Outline **three** of Aquinas' cosmological arguments.
12. Explain **two** ways Christians may respond to non-religious arguments against the cosmological arguments being able to provide evidence for the existence of God.

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Religious Upbringing

If children are given a Christian upbringing, this can provide a *basis* for belief in God. This may be because children find it normal to believe in God and want to experience and build a relationship with God. However, sometimes children's doubts can drive children away from belief in God. If a child is brought up with an **atheist** parent, they may not believe in God, possibly because they see no reason to, or are influenced to reject God's existence.

Keywords:

- ❖ **atheist** – someone who does not believe in God

Christian Teaching about Raising Children to Believe in God

Christianity encourages parents to bring their children up in the religion. The Bible believes that a good way of creating more Christians is to have children and teach them the faith.

Christians want their children to follow the right path in life, and believe that teaching them the faith will help them do this. The Bible teaches that raising children correctly will set them on the right path.

'Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.' (Proverbs 22:6)

Christians not only believe that teaching children to believe in God will allow them to have a relationship with him, but also that it will help them to develop good morals. The Bible teaches that children should not anger their children – a Christian upbringing should not be harsh, and it should be a good person.

'And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the Lord, in the instruction of the Lord.' (Ephesians 6:4 NRSV)

Christianity places an emphasis on children respecting the instruction of the Lord, which is a teaching from Judaism.

'Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land, for this is the first commandment, which God is giving you.' (Exodus 20:12 – the 5th of the Ten Commandments)

'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother," which is the first commandment with a promise, so that it may be well with you and you may prosper. This is the first commandment with a promise, so that it may be well with you and you may prosper. This is the first commandment with a promise, so that it may be well with you and you may prosper.' (Ephesians 6:1–3 NRSV)

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Why Features of a Christian Upbringing May Lead to Belief in God

Why features of a Christian upbringing may lead to or reinforce belief in God	Features of a Christian upbringing that may lead to or reinforce belief in God
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May interest children in the Christian faith through stories and celebrations, bringing the religion to life and making it interesting/exciting. If children enjoy time spent in a Christian environment, they may make positive associations between this and a belief in God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading or being read to Celebrating Christmas and Easter Attending Christian events (e.g. Church, Christian Brigade)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May believe what they are told and accept it as normal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having Christian beliefs Knowing other Christians Attending a Christian event Attending Sunday School Activities (e.g. Bible stories) Being taught to pray
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are likely to believe in God if they believe that someone they trust has definitely experienced God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowing people who have experienced God
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children may feel that they have experienced God personally if they feel him talking to them, or answering their prayers, or feel connected to God through worship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being taught to pray Attending Sunday School Activities (e.g. Bible stories)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children may feel that God, God's word, or people who teach about God, help them to lead their lives and give them useful guidance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being taught to pray Reading or being read to Attending Sunday School Activities (e.g. Bible stories)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If children think Christian figures are a good example, they may associate this with a belief in God in a positive way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeing Christian figures as a good example
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children may believe that they should believe in God, because they have been taught to follow rules telling them to believe in God, and they or their parents may have made promises about them growing up in the Christian faith. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being taught to follow the Ten Commandments Being baptised

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Non-religious Arguments About Why a Religious Upbringing May Lead to Rejection of God's Existence and Christian Responses

Non-religious people (including **atheists** and **humanists**) may argue that a religious upbringing may lead to a rejection of God's existence for many reasons:

- Christian parents/adults often do not live up to the example of Christianity. If children feel that their parents are hypocritical then they may also feel that Christianity is hypocritical.
- Children who are taught religion by their family are also likely to be taught in school. If children feel that what they know about Christianity conflicts with their own experiences or with history (e.g. the Crusades do not seem well-justified), then they may reject Christianity.
- If children feel that Christian rules are unfair, they may reject belief in a God who requires them to follow these rules. Humanists in particular object to certain religious teachings, such as opposition to same-sex marriage and euthanasia, and any religious instruction that promotes discrimination – if children of Christian parents who promote such ideas feel that these rules are fair or right, they may become humanists.
- If children are taught to **pray**, and do not feel that their prayers are answered, they may reject belief in God's existence.
- Teenagers often rebel against their parents. If their parents are religious, they may rebel against something which they rebel against (because it is associated with their parents) or because they disbelieve it for other reasons.
- Christian parents often bring their children up to believe in Father Christmas as well as believing in God. When the children realise that the former are not real, they may lose belief in God as well.

Christians may respond in a number of ways. Many will claim that an offspring of a Christian upbringing gone wrong – parents should be good examples, explain Christian teaching, and explain the concept of prayer thoroughly.

Some will also argue that parents should do their best to make a religious upbringing a good life – e.g. it should be explained that science and religion explain things in different ways and that religious people do not always do good.

Why an Atheist/Humanist Upbringing May Lead to Rejection of Christianity

Being brought up in a family which does not believe in God may lead to a rejection of Christianity. There are a number of reasons for this:

- If a child is never taught to believe in God, and they feel no *need* for God, they may have no reason to choose to believe in him.
- If a child has been taught that there is no God and has *never experienced* God, they may have no reason to believe in him.
- Children may find *scientific* arguments for the creation of the world more believable – they may have been taught that humans were not **designed**, but **evolved**, and that the **big bang** caused the universe, for example.
- Children who have been told there is no God may believe this if they feel that a **compassionate** God would not allow *pain, suffering and evil* in the world.



Image of what the big bang might look like

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- Children who have had any non-religious upbringing, and especially the upbringing, may feel that there are reasons other than faith for acting for others, for example – and that there is a valid meaning to life without faith, their own interests and potential, as well as helping others – and so God is not necessary for meaning.

Christians may respond that being brought up as non-religious and feeling no reason to remain non-religious. They may argue that non-religious people do not realise it (and possibly fill the gap in other ways). They could also argue that it makes sense to people who have been brought up as non-religious, this does not make sense.

Quick Questions

13. Explain **two** ways in which features of a Christian upbringing may lead to faith in God.



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Summary of Arguments for the Existence of God

- Christians believe that some people have experienced **revelations** of God. He has heard God. In the **Old Testament**, revelations to Noah, Abraham and Moses were often directed **prophets** to help his people. He made **covenants** with them and bless them, for example. In the **New Testament**, Christ revealed himself through his son Jesus, who showed God's love by dying for humankind.
- Some people have reported seeing **visions** of God, or messengers of God. In the **Old Testament**, the word of God appeared to Abraham, the angel of God appeared to Moses, and he saw God sitting in heaven. In the **New Testament**, several people received revelations and visions **converted** people to following Jesus, and helped to explain the **transfigured** before his **disciples**. In more recent times have felt visions, often leading them do something for God. Non-religious people feel that these are **hallucinations** but Christians feel that visions are important **evidence** for the existence of God.
- The Bible contains many **miracles** in the **Old Testament** and **New Testament**. Miracles are important, as they show God's **authority** and show he cares for those who follow him. Non-religious people feel that these are coincidences, or are explainable by science, though Christians feel miracles have no other explanation.
- There are many types of **religious experience** other than the ones mentioned. People might experience **mystical** or **numinous** experiences, or feel God coming through **prayer**. Different people think that different things constitute religious experience. Christians may wish to test religious experience to see if it is genuine. Some experiences are genuine. Non-religious people may think there is little evidence for religious experiences; they may think them the product of **hallucinations** due to physical factors; or they may think them wish-fulfillment of people who want to experience them. Christians believe that religious experiences such as God's revelation to Moses in Exodus 3.
- Christians may **pray** for many reasons; prayers are important for thanksgiving, forgiveness, for example. Christians may pray set prayers such as the Lord's Prayer taught. If Christians feel that their prayers have been answered, this may strengthen their faith. If people feel their prayers have not been answered, they may lose faith.
- One argument used to support the existence of God is the **design argument**. The world must be designed, designed objects have a designer, and so the world must have a designer. The world may seem to have been organised in a certain way, and have a purpose. On the other hand, it may also seem to be 'designed', as there is **suffering**, and **evolution**, and things seem to change.
- Another argument for the existence of God is the **cosmological argument**. The world is rather than nothing, and so there must be a God. St Thomas Aquinas gave three cosmological arguments – the **unmoved mover**, **first cause**, and **contingency**. Some religious people argue against such arguments, e.g. the **big bang** may be evidence. Christians disagree and feel that God must have created everything and this shows his power.

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- Christianity teaches that we should bring up children in the religion, with features of a religious upbringing, such as Church attendance, reading Christian festivals may lead to belief in God. On the other hand, a non **atheist** or **humanist** perspective may lead to rejection of God's existence, experience, or feel a need for, God. Religious upbringings may also put into question the existence of God, but Christians may argue that if this is the case then religious upbringings.

Now Try This...

- 'The cosmological argument gives evidence for the existence of God.' This statement.

Argue for and against this statement. You must give Christian teaching and philosophical arguments. Reach a conclusion which follows from your arguments.



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Religious Teachings on Relationships and the 21st Century

Many Christians look to their religion to provide them with **moral** guidance. Religious teachings regarding **marriage**, sexual relationships and families within Christianity. **homosexuality**, **contraception** and **divorce** are controversial within the religion. Some Christians support local families, and some Christians see different roles for men and women, while others do not.

Keywords:

- ❖ **contraception** – methods which aim to stop someone becoming pregnant or prevent sexually transmitted infections
- ❖ **divorce** – the legal end of a marriage
- ❖ **homosexuality** – a sexual orientation where people are attracted to people of the same sex
- ❖ **marriage** – a formal joining of two people. In Christianity, this is normally a religious ceremony as well as a legal one
- ❖ **moral** – ideas about what is right and wrong

Marriage

The Bible contains teaching about **marriage**, and different Church **denominations** have different views about marriage, which may be due to different interpretations of the Bible.

Keywords:

- ❖ **atheist** – someone who does not believe in God
- ❖ **cohabitation** – living with a partner unmarried, often in a sexual relationship
- ❖ **denomination** – a particular branch within a religion, e.g. Catholicism, Anglicanism
- ❖ **humanist** – someone who aims to live a good life, without belief in God
- ❖ **procreation** – making/having children
- ❖ **sacrament** – a particularly important worship practice which has even higher status in some religions like the Catholic and Orthodox Churches
- ❖ **sanctity** – holiness

Christian Teachings About the Purpose and Importance of Marriage

Different Christians may think **marriage** has different purposes and is important for different reasons.

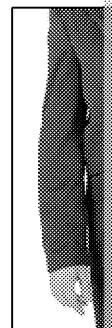
- A purpose of marriage for Christians is **procreation** and raising a family. Some Christians see being married as being a good thing *if you want to have a family*, to provide a stable environment for children. Other Christians think that once married you *should* have a family and that couples should actively try to have children. This is based on Bible verses such as 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...' (Genesis 1:28) which tells humans to have children. This is taught by the Catholic Church, and some more conservative Orthodox Christians or Protestant Christians (different **denominations** of Christianity).
 - ↳ So marriage can be important to Christians if they believe it provides a good environment for children. Those who see having a family as being an important part of God's plan for them, marriage is significant in their Christian life in that it allows them to reproduce.

'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...' (Genesis 1:28)

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- A purpose of marriage for Christians is to allow couples to express love and friendship; to care for and support each other through life.
 - ↳ This makes marriage important because a married couple's love and friendship may play a very large part in their lives. Because of the amount of time a Christian will spend with their spouse, trying to love and support them, marriage will be significant in their Christian life as Jesus taught to love others and treat them well.



A person in a white garment, possibly a religious figure, standing in a doorway.

'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.'
(Matthew 23:1 NRSV) [The Golden Rule]

- A purpose of marriage for many Christians is being able to have sex. Many Christians believe that sex should only be had within marriage, or at least that long-term sex should be within marriage, to make them official.
 - ↳ This makes marriage important for Christians as it allows them to express their commitment to their partner through sex.

'But from the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female." For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.'
(Mark 10:6–8 NRSV)

'Fornication is carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman contrary to the dignity of persons and of human sexuality which is naturally ordered to the procreation of spouses and the generation and education of children.' (Catholic Catechism)

- Many Christians also think a purpose of marriage is to symbolise the relationship between Jesus (represented by the husband) and his Church (represented by the wife) because of this; this is indicated in Ephesians 5.
 - ↳ So marriage represents an even more important relationship of love and commitment. However, feminist Christians may not like this comparison, as it may make the female partner. However, for those who do make this comparison, it reflects the relationship between Jesus and Christians.

'For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the saviour.'
(Ephesians 5:23 NRSV)

- Some Christians believe that marriage is important because it is a **sacrament**. A sacrament is a religious practice or ceremony which is believed to convey God's grace. It is significant in Christianity as a way of receiving God's grace and fulfilling his purpose. This is believed in some other branches of Christianity. For those who believe this, marriage is especially important. Those who believe this believe it is especially important not to divorce. Christians who do not believe marriage is a sacrament still think it is an important part of life.

'So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'
(Mark 10:8–9 NRSV)

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- Many Christians think that marriage is important because it has been of people to get married, and Jesus appears to have approved of marriage. He had intended for marriage, and joined people together in marriage (in the Gospels).
- Many Christians see marriage as important in helping to maintain a stable society, and preventing break-ups and changing relationships.

Atheist and Humanist Approaches to Marriage and Cohabitation

Some non-religious people (including **atheists** and **humanists**) see no need for marriage. They may feel that **cohabitation** – living together unmarried – is perfectly acceptable, because there is no God to decree that marriage is the only way and people can live together in just the same way without making public promises. They would not feel that marriage has **sanctity**. They may feel that cohabiting couples still help to form a stable society, and provide stability for raising children.

They may feel that there is no point to marriage and/or that cohabiting is more sensible than marriage because many couples split up, and having to go through a **divorce** is messy and expensive, and does not help with stability for any children involved.

However, some atheists and humanists may still think that marriage is a good idea for reasons, but for stability, and because it requires couples to make a commitment to each other, which may make them happy and help them to lead good lives. Many humanists have humanist weddings, so that they can have a ceremony which suits them, but is not religious. In some places in the world, humanist marriages are legally recognised, and in others humanists may have a humanist celebration after an ordinary civil ceremony. The fact that the British Humanist Association offers marriages shows that many humanists do value marriage even without religious significance.

Keys. Live

Christian Responses

Some Christians object to cohabitation due to believing that sex should only be for marriage (e.g. Catholics). Some may feel that there are valid objections to **cohabitation** if they take God's will and religious factors into account:

- Being comfortable with cohabitation may mean that couples move forward with a relationship – this can cause problems if they decide to split up and one of them has to move out of their shared accommodation.
- Cohabitation and sex before marriage may be a bad idea if children are born into an unstable cohabiting relationship.

However, some Protestants may accept cohabiting couples – the Church of England, for example, accept cohabiting couples working towards marriage. Some modern Christians may find it fine even if the couple are not sure they will get married, because they think of marriage as a teaching in Christianity, shown in the Golden Rule (see above).

Quick Questions

15. Outline **three** reasons why a Christian may feel marriage is important.
16. Explain **two** purposes of marriage for Christians.

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Sexual Relationships

As seen above, part of the importance of **marriage** for Christians is the intimate relationship. Different Christians have different views on different types of sexual relationships.

Keywords:

- ❖ **celibacy** – the state of not engaging in romantic relationships or sexual acts
- ❖ **contraception** – methods which aim to stop someone becoming pregnant or prevent sexually transmitted infections
- ❖ **extramarital sex/adultery** – sex where at least one of the participants is married to another person, not the person they are having sex with
- ❖ **fornication** – sex outside of marriage
- ❖ **homosexuality** – a sexual orientation where people are attracted to people of the same sex
- ❖ **nuclear family** – a unit of people living together with their biological children
- ❖ **open marriage** – a marriage where the partners agree they can have sex with other people
- ❖ **premarital sex** – sex before being married



Nature and Importance of Sexual Relationships for Christians

Most Christians see sexual relationships as important, and not something to be ashamed of, because they see them as something which conveys love and commitment. Marriage indicates that sex forms a bond between a couple, so sex is significant.

‘But from the beginning of creation, “God made them male and female.” For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’
(Mark 10:6–8 NRSV)

Some Christians believe that sex is only for **procreation** (the teaching of the church that sex should be used to create children). Some Christians believe that the use of artificial **contraception** should be used. Moreover, some Christians believe that sexual acts other than vaginal sexual intercourse, as other sexual acts are not acts of procreation. Some Christians will not engage in other types of sexual activity, though many Christians believe that sex is designed as an enjoyable activity, and will engage in other types of sexual activity with their partner/spouse.

One important early Christian, St Paul, believed that it was better to be **celibate** than to be married, as he believed that married couples should remain more focused on God. Some Christians have agreed with this, and have dedicated their lives more fully to God. Some join religious orders and become monks or nuns. In the Catholic Church, priests must remain unmarried and celibate, as they are seen to be more dedicated to God.

‘...he who marries his fiancée does so for his own sake, and he who refrains from marriage does so for the Kingdom of God.’
(1 Corinthians 7:38 NRSV)



St Paul recommended that married couples should have sex with each other, but if they decided to refrain from sex for a time to focus on their relationship with God, that was also acceptable.

‘Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.’
(1 Corinthians 7:5 NRSV)

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Attitudes to Sex Outside of Marriage

Many Christians believe that sexual relationships should take place only with the teaching of the Catholic Church, and a more conservative Christian view. However, other Christians have a more relaxed view to **premarital sex**, sex before being married, or in a committed relationship.

However, most Christians disapprove of **adultery**, also called **extramarital sex**, where someone who is married has sex with someone who is not their spouse (husband or wife). This is against the Ten Commandments, important rules in the **Old Testament** which many Christians see as generally seen to be the opposite of being loving. Most people would not want to do anything that would not want to do (see the Rule in the section on *Marriage* above).

'You shall not commit adultery.' (Exodus 20:14 NRSV)

Non-religious people such as **humanists** and **atheists** are likely not to have a problem with sex so long as it is consensual. Some will feel that sex should only take place in a committed relationship, though others feel that sex is a personal decision and if someone wants to have sex, then that is their choice. Some Christians do agree, and accept some premarital sex (see the Rule above). However, this is not the case with many Christians – see Christian objections to premarital sex.

Humanists and atheists are likely to disapprove of adultery in the sense that cheating on your partner is wrong. This is especially true for humanists, as they believe in treating others with respect and dignity. However, humanists and atheists may not see adultery as a problem if a couple has already split up and is going through the process of divorce. Some may see the cheating as the problem, rather than the breaking of marriage. Atheists may also accept **open marriages**, where a couple is married, but they agree that they can have sex with other people; because both partners agree on this, it may not be seen as a problem. However, many Christians will not see this as acceptable because they believe in a committed relationship and married partners should only have sex with each other.

Attitudes to Homosexuality

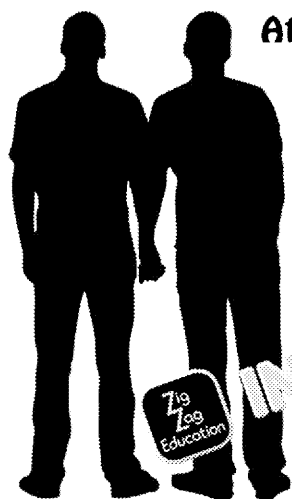
There are various different attitudes to **homosexuality**.

Some Christians, such as Evangelical Christians, believe that homosexuality is wrong in itself, and that if people **pray** to God, they can overcome their homosexual feelings. This is based on teaching in the Bible that homosexuality is a sin.

'You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.' (Leviticus 18:22 NRSV)

'We must not indulge in sexual immorality...' (1 Corinthians 6:18)

Some other Christians believe that homosexual activity is a sin, but that it is not sinful if people control them and do not act on them, because their feelings are not sinful. This is taught by the Catholic Church, and also believed by some conservative Orthodox Christians. They believe homosexual activity is sinful because it is prohibited by the Bible.



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example in Leviticus, and sexual immorality is prohibited in some **New Testament** references. Some Christians interpret these references to include homosexual sex. The Catholic Church opposes homosexual sex because its position is that all sexual activity should be open to the possibility of procreation; this is not possible with homosexual sex. They may also feel that homosexuality undermines the role of the traditional **nuclear family** as a foundation for society.

However, some Christians, such as more liberal Protestants, are not opposed to homosexual relationships. One reason for this is that they may feel that the commandments of the Old Testament do not need to be followed any more because Christians are not bound by the **Jewish law**. For example, Christians do not keep many Jewish dietary laws, which Jews maintain for purity, or cleanliness, as Christians feel that they have atoned for Jesus' death – they may see commandments regarding homosexuality as relating to **morality**, and so they would also be able to ignore them in this way. Christians may also feel that loving homosexual relationships have not caused any harm, and so have stopped. Further, the biblical record of Jesus condemning homosexuality, as well as his teaching to judge others, did not always condemn those who had committed sins. Jesus forgave a woman in Mark 10. Some Christians may feel that homosexuality is sinful, but that God is merciful, so it is unfair to treat homosexuals badly when no one is perfect.

'Or how can you say to your neighbour, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when you do not see the plank in your own eye?' (Matthew 7:4 NRSV) [Jesus on not judging others, when you are not perfect]

'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone...' (John 8:7 NRSV) [Jesus telling Jews that they can condemn an adulterous woman if they themselves are without sin]

However, not all Christians who accept homosexual couples and homosexual individuals believe that homosexuals should be allowed to be **married**. They may believe this because marriage is between a man and a woman, and Jesus taught that marriage was between a man and a woman (in Mark 10). Some also feel that if Christian **denominations** accept homosexual marriage, vicars who do not agree with homosexual marriage will be forced to perform it or will face legal challenges.

'But from the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female." For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' (Mark 10:6–8 NRSV)

Some non-religious people will discriminate against **homosexual** people or believe that it is wrong. However, many **humanists** and **atheists** do not have a problem with homosexuality as it is not seen as a sin against God, and they see no reason to treat homosexual individuals differently from heterosexual ones. Humanists campaign for equality in general, including for sexual orientation. They support all couples. The non-religious people who feel sex is acceptable in a loving relationship include those who are homosexual, those who are bisexual, and those that feel that any consensual sex is acceptable. Some non-religious people also support homosexual and heterosexuals who have more casual sex, or more partners.

Christians who accept homosexuality may have very similar views to humanists. Christians who do not accept homosexuality, or homosexual sexual activity, may have similar views to atheists that while allowing homosexuality may seem fair, it is not part of God's plan. If something does not make sense to humans, it should still be followed.

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Interpretations of 1 Corinthians 6:7–20 – Sexual Relationships and Homosexuality

One reason that there are different views within Christianity on sexual relationships and homosexuality is that some quotes can be interpreted in different ways. 1 Corinthians 6:7–20 clearly condemns sexual relationships outside of marriage. It also claims that **fornicators** (those who have sex outside of marriage), male prostitutes (those who have sex with other men), and sodomites (people who have anal sex) will not inherit the kingdom of God. It also claims that sexual sins are grave sins because they sin against the body. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in a Christian's body – so sexual sins sin against the property of God. However, these verses have been interpreted in other ways.

'Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? The two shall be one flesh.' ... Shame or dishonour! Every sin that a person commits, but the fornicator sins against his own body itself. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, which you have from God, and that you are not to glorify it? (1 Corinthians 6:16, 18–19 NRSV)



- It is possible that fornication was regarded as such a sin because it often involved sex with prostitutes, which was seen as polluting. This is very different from a committed relationship, especially one which leads to marriage. So some Christians regard 'fornication' within relationships as bad because it is in a different context. This is emphasised in biblical passages such as this.
- If fornication (sex outside of marriage) is such a sin, then if homosexuals in the UK and many other countries, they would not be committing this sin.

Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, robbers – none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9–10 NRSV)

- Male prostitution is also condemned because of the type of relationship involved, where money for sexual acts, or engaging in ritualistic sex as part of worship, is involved. This is not seen as a committed relationship within Christianity. Condemning male prostitutes does not automatically condemn homosexual relationships.
- There is also debate about how the word 'sodomite' is used in the Bible. It refers to someone from the place Sodom, which God condemned in the Old Testament for its people's refusal to help others. However, other places in the Bible claim that Sodom's sin was not homosexuality, but refusal to help others. So some argue that 'sodomite', when used negatively, refers to these 'sins' and not to homosexuality.

'This is the iniquity of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, prospered in ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.' (Ezekiel 16:46–47 NRSV)



Quick Questions

17. Explain **two** reasons why Christians may oppose sex outside of marriage.
18. Explain **two** attitudes to homosexuality in Christianity. Refer to a source and authority.

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Families

Christians and non-religious people may have different views on families, and there are many different types of families.

Keywords:

- ❖ **baptism** – a sacrament which involves immersion in water, or, for younger children, pouring water over the head. The baptism of small children is sometimes called a Christening.
- ❖ **contraception** – methods which aim to stop someone becoming pregnant or prevent sexually transmitted infections.
- ❖ **faith** – belief and trust in something, here, in Jesus and God.
- ❖ **morality** – ideas about what is right and wrong.
- ❖ **procreation** – making/having children.
- ❖ **sacrament** – a particularly important religious practice which has even higher status in churches like the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

The Purpose and Importance of Family

Procreation

Many Christians feel that they should have a family because, in Genesis, God told Adam and Eve to 'be fruitful and multiply'. Therefore, the purpose of having a family is to fulfil God's plan and having a family is important because the family is part of God's plan for the world.

'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...' (Genesis 1:28)

As seen above, some Christians, such as Catholics, feel that all sexual acts should be open to the possibility of procreation. Some Christians take this even further – Christian movements oppose any forms of **contraception** or family planning (including natural family planning, such as the rhythm method), as they believe all children are a blessing from God. They feel that any form of contraception stands in the way of God giving them children, and often have very large families.

Some people, including Christians, believe in **marriage**, but do not feel that they are called to have a family. So not all married Christians feel called to procreation.

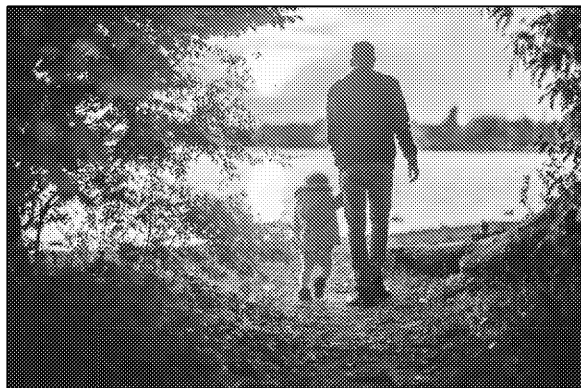
Additionally, some couples cannot have children even if they want to (due to infertility or inability to conceive) in either or both members of the couple. They may accept remaining childless, or seek fertility treatment, adoption or fostering. Those who adopt or foster a child do so for the same purpose as those who have children, just not through procreation. Note: while the Church teaches that all sexual acts *should* be open to the possibility of procreation, it also accepts that some couples are infertile through no fault of their own. It does not condemn such couples, but encourages infertile, married couples to have a sexual relationship. Church teaching does not allow for fertility treatment such as IVF, but encourages adoption.

Security

Many people feel that one purpose of a family is to provide security – stable homes for children, who can grow up in a loving and safe environment; parents should provide for their children. Many religious and some non-religious people feel that **marriage** is the best way to provide for a stable family for children, as this shows the commitment of a couple to each other and to their children without disrupting their children's family unit. Others will disagree, and feel that it is not necessary to be married to provide security for children. They may also feel that different types of families, such as single-parent families, or separated parents who share custody of their children, can provide a safe and secure environment for their children.

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Education of Children

Christians may also feel that the family unit is to raise children. The Catholic Church makes the education of children in the faith a priority. It is therefore important as a place of learning for Christianity. Most Christians have a responsibility to educate their children, and many non-religious people also value education as important in the **moral** education of children, but without the religious context.

Many Christian families get their children **baptised**, to show that they are raising them as Christians and educating them in the **faith**. Baptism also symbolises a new life in God. As an alternative, some may dedicate their child(ren) to God; holding a baptism, but without the **sacrament** taking place, so the child(ren) can choose to be baptised later, if they wish.

Christianity teaches that children should obey their parents, and learn from them (Ephesians 6:1–3 – see the section on *Religious Upbringing* above). It also encourages parents to discipline their children – they should discipline without being too harsh so that the child learns right and good.

‘And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the Lord, in instruction of the Lord.’ (Ephesians 6:4 NRSV)

Other

Some people may feel that the purpose of having a family is so that you have someone to care for you in your old age, and that families are important for this reason. Others may not have a religious reason to have a family, but they may agree that families are important because they support each other.

Importance of Family

Christians may see the family as important because the human family reflects the family of all Christians throughout the world. Also, Jesus took part in family life at the start of Luke’s Gospel, and appeared to approve of family life in the Gospel of John. This shows that family is definitely important to God.

Christians, and those who are not religious, may feel that it is a personal choice to have a family. The family is important because it fulfils the desire of parents to have children, and provides a sense of security, love and care for them. Both Christians and non-religious people may feel that families are important in making up a stable society.

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Different Types of Family

In the 21st Century there are many different types of family.

Type of Family	Description	Different Christian Responses
Nuclear	A family unit where two parents live with their biological children, or adopted children. Some think of this as the traditional family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most Christians see this as the ideal family. Some Christians believe in a couple having children as a duty.
Single-Parent	A family unit where just one parent looks after their child or children. This can be due to the death of one parent, the end of a marriage (in recent times) or a woman has become pregnant with donated sperm or a single person has adopted a child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christians may respond by taking on all the responsibilities which would normally be shared by two parents. Some Christians believe families should not break down, or a parent should not have a child if they feel that they should not have to provide or maintain a family.
Same-Sex Parents	A family unit where both the parents are the same gender. They could have adopted a child; one member of a lesbian relationship could have become pregnant with donated sperm; or one member of a male gay relationship could have fertilised a donor egg.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Christians believe in a homosexual couple providing a loving environment for their children. Christians who do not believe in homosexuality may disapprove of raising children in a family that is not heterosexual. Some Christians believe that homosexual parents are bad examples for children and that children should be raised in a family with both genders in their parentage.
Extended	A family unit where extra members of the family live with parents and their children, for example grandparents or aunts, uncles and cousins.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christians may value living together as a family. Christians may believe that extra family members are taking up space in the family's household.
Blended	A family unit where at least one member of the couple has children from a previous relationship. The children therefore live with one parent and one step-parent. The children of the new couple live with their half-parent(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christians may accept a new family unit where children are brought together because they are the children of the same couple. Christians may disapprove of the parents of the new relationship having children together.

Quick Questions

19. Explain **two** ways in which Christians may respond to a single-parent family.

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Support for the Family in the Local Parish

The family is not just important for members of the family itself. Other members of the community often try to help because the family is important to the Church.

Keywords:

- ❖ **confirmation** – where a Christian affirms their faith; often where they have been baptised and want to make promises to God themselves
- ❖ **counselling** – helping people to discuss their problems and suggesting solutions
- ❖ **parish** – the area within which the local church works

How and Why the Local Church Community Tries to Support Families

Local churches often provide formal worship for all the family. This may include classes for children, often called Sunday school, which aim to teach children about Christianity in an age-appropriate, and often fun, way. There are various approaches to teaching children about Christianity at different ages. Often this is down to those who organise the activities. For young children may be heavily focused on colouring pictures from Bible stories, which may or may not be linked to the Bible. As children get older, the focus may shift to spending longer telling the children Bible stories and, while there may still be fun activities, less time will be spent on activities which do not particularly help children to learn about Christianity.

Teenagers may study passages directly from the Bible, rather than hearing the stories re-told, and will do more age-appropriate activities. They may also focus more on more complex Bible passages, not necessarily stories, but passages of teaching. Some Sunday schools will try to incorporate modern technology, e.g. showing animations / live-action films of Bible stories, or other relevant television clips. They might also ask teenagers to research Bible passages or relevant ideas on the Internet. Many churches run separate Sunday-school activities during services, but the children may return for the end of the service (some or all weeks), and may share what they have done and learnt.

Many churches will also hold family-worship services, where talks are more appropriate for a younger audience, and where there may be more lively music, for example. Some churches also hold alternative types of worship (usually at a time when other Church services are not happening, such as Saturday afternoon), such as Messy Church, where fun activities are provided for children before a short time of worship.

Churches do this to help families educate their children in the Christian **faith**, and to provide a place where parents and children can celebrate their faith together.

Additionally, churches may provide other groups for children, such as youth groups or Boys'/Girls' Brigade. These groups may teach about God and Christianity, but also give children having fun. Churches provide this to help parents teach their children about Christianity in others ways, such as through teaching them practical skills associated with church will make children want to attend church, and keep their faith in Christianity.

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Churches also provide rites of passage for children. When children are born, there is a thanksgiving service, or Christening (infant **baptism**) to dedicate their child to God and them as a Christian. As a child gets older, if they have not been baptised, they can be baptised. Once children are baptised and old enough to understand Christianity, they will be **confirmed**, to make promises about their faith and commitment to church practices, and when and whether they happen varies between different churches.

Churches provide rites of passage to help parents focus on bringing their children into the faith, and to help children to focus on their faith as well.

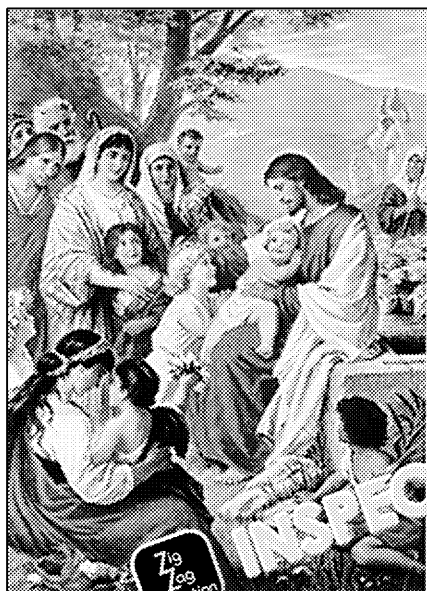
Churches may also help parents with childcare; members of the church can help other church members with babysitting, and churches can have toddler groups for children to go to; or set up groups of new parents so that they can support each other.

Churches and church groups do this to support parents with their practical needs and provide them with people to talk to about any issues they may be having with their children.

Some churches also provide classes to teach parents about childcare, or family issues, and help families to work through issues, whether this is parents who are struggling with their children, or falling-outs.

This is because churches want their members to be happy, and have good relationships. They want people to be able to serve each other, and in doing so, to serve God.

In general, churches want to help families with their children because Jesus taught about the importance of children, and St Paul wanted families to be harmonious and loving, as we learn to serve God.



Bernhard Plossner's Christ Blessing the Children.

Interpretations of Matthew 19:13-15

There have been different interpretations of this passage.

'Then little children were being brought to him, and he would not let them come to him; but he said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.' (Matthew 19:13-14)

An important point not to overlook is that Jesus was with the ordinary people. This shows Jesus, and God **incarnate** to be approachable, and part of everyday life. Churches help families because they believe in what Jesus showed.

A subject of debate is exactly what Jesus meant by 'the kingdom of heaven'. It is not implying that all children have a place in the kingdom of heaven, and that there are features of being a child which good Christians ought to share. It probably does not assume that they have a place in the kingdom of heaven, and maybe adults need to humble themselves in order to have a relationship with God to get to heaven. So churches help families because they believe that children are important.

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right way, to have a child-like, humble Christianity, and because they want to be in the same way.

Also, Jesus is not presumed to mean that people must become Christians with no hope for them. Following on from before, he may mean that those who rely on God, as children rely on their parents; if they feel that they can enter the Kingdom of God's help, then they will not be able to. Churches want to support families.

It may also be that Matthew shows Jesus' disapproval of the disciples' counsel to Christians not to claim ownership of Jesus and deny him to others – God does not want them to choose, but to those who will gladly accept it – church leaders because Jesus should be available for everyone.

The Importance of Family and Support for Christians

Such family support can be very important for Christians. Church-provided support for children, such as through Sunday schools, can help parents with teaching their children, especially if parents do not know much about Christianity, or do not know how to teach. Further, family worship allows parents a space to express their faith with their children, which they may not otherwise have.

Parents may also be grateful for activity groups which build a positive relationship between the family and the Church by making Christianity enjoyable; the support is important for families connected with Christianity.

Rites of passage, such as Christenings are important in helping parents focus on the Christian faith, and may also help them with finding support for this, as they are often appointed to help parents with giving their children a Christian upbringing. Churches support Christians with their faith.

Other support from the Church and church members can be important to parents, especially in practical ways; they may need help with childcare, or with knowing how to be a good parent. They may need help resolving issues between family members.

Quick Questions

20. Explain **two** ways in which the local church community may help to support families.

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Family Planning, Regulation of Births and Contraception

Different Christians have different attitudes to **contraception** and family planning (choosing when and how many children to have) in general, and to different

Keywords:

- ❖ **consequentialist** – a type of ethical theory concerned with the morality of actions
- ❖ **contraception** – methods which aim to stop someone becoming pregnant or sexually transmitted infections
- ❖ **emergency contraception** – contraception used after sex which may prevent pregnancy
- ❖ **encyclical** – an open letter from the Pope to Catholics, instructing them
- ❖ **ethical theory** – something which suggests how people should act, and suggests what is right or wrong
- ❖ **Humanae Vitae** – a papal encyclical about the importance of life and not using contraception
- ❖ **natural law** – a theory about morality drawn from nature and reason
- ❖ **procreation** – making/having children
- ❖ **situational ethics** – ethical theory which suggests decisions should evaluate the consequences in each situation
- ❖ **utilitarianism** – ethical theory which believes actions should try to produce the greatest number

Christian Attitudes to and Teachings about Contraception and Family Planning

Some Christians, such as some Catholics, and conservative Christians (e.g. some Anglican churches), are opposed to all forms of artificial **contraception**, as they believe that the purpose of sex is the **procreation** of new life. The Catholic Church teaches that all sexual activity must have the possibility of new life and Pope John Paul VI continued the Church's stance on artificial contraception in his **encyclical**, **Humanae Vitae** (1968).

'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...' (Genesis 1:28)

"every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, is not ordered towards its natural development; that is, the procreation of new life, is intrinsically evil." (Catholic Catechism 2370, quoted in Humanae Vitae)

The Catholic Church also disagrees with contraception because of **natural law**. Natural law is that God has shown humans what is right through nature and reason, and how to act. Because sex naturally carries the possibility of producing children, artificial contraception goes against nature and obeys natural law.

However, many Christians from other **denominations**, such as many Protestants, are opposed to artificial contraception and family planning in general, but may approve of others. They allow artificial contraception because *there is nothing in the Bible that says that contraception is wrong*, and because they believe people should be able to plan their families, and have to stop having sex if they do not want more children.

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Among other things, contraception and family planning are likely to:

- improve the health of women, as they do not have to constantly have children (especially in developing countries, where there is often sub-standard health care);
- improve women's social position because they can have other roles than mother to choose;
- improve the health of children, because parents will be able to provide better care;
- and improve the quality of life for children and parents because people can have more children when they are able to look after them, provide for them, and when they are financially able to do so.

Further, in the modern world, many people believe that overpopulation can be controlled. If people want to have fewer, or no, children this means there is more to go round. Some forms of contraception, like condoms, can also prevent the spread of some diseases.

However, while many traditional and liberal Protestants (not all evangelical Protestants) approve of artificial contraception, it is relatively modern that the church has accepted it. The Church of England only fully allowed contraception since 1930.

One method of contraception which some Catholics accept is the **rhythm method**, where couples try to have sex when they believe the woman is less fertile, lowering the chance of becoming pregnant. Because this still allows the possibility of procreation, it is seen as a family better while allowing that they may conceive at any time, if God wills. Those who approve of artificial contraception are much more likely to use artificial contraception instead, or in addition, as it is more reliable.

One type of contraception which Christians (e.g. many Protestants) who approve of artificial contraception are likely to approve of is **barrier method** contraception, such as condoms. This type of contraception is seen as more acceptable because it stops sperm from reaching the egg and prevents fertilisation occurring. Therefore, if it fails, it in no way risks harming an embryo if conception does take place.

Some Christians also approve of **sterilisation**, where someone has minor surgery to make them unable to conceive in the future. Christians may feel this is sensible if someone wants no more children, and does not want to have to worry about contraception. However, some object on the basis that Christians could feel called by God to have more children. Some types of sterilisation can be reversed if necessary. The Catholic Church disapproves of sterilisation for the same reasons it disapproves of artificial contraception, though it approves of medical treatment for other reasons, for example removing the uterus (women who have had a hysterectomy).

Many Christians are likely to use **hormonal methods** of contraception such as the pill. Hormonal methods involve using chemicals to convince the female body not to release an egg, or to stop it from maturing. Some Christians, however, will not use such methods, if there is the small chance that if conception takes place, the hormones could cause an early abortion – some Christians feel that this is murder, and murder is against the Commandments (see below).

Some Christians will not use the **withdrawal method** of contraception, where the man pulls out from the woman's vagina before ejaculating semen (containing sperm), because of teaching against this in the Bible. In Genesis 38, a man called Onan uses this method to avoid having children with his wife, and is punished for it.

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Bible records that God was displeased and killed him. However, some other was the withdrawal method which displeased God, but that Onan did not do his duty to have children with his dead brother's wife to raise children for him. Most Christians would probably not use this method as a main method of contraception, an unreliable method.

While many Christians agree with artificial contraception, many are opposed to **emergency contraception**. This method of contraception is used after sex, and is designed to delay the ovary releasing an egg, therefore preventing conception. Some people argue that certain types of emergency contraception also have the potential to change the conditions of the uterus, which might mean that an embryo (fertilised egg) cannot be implanted – so the embryo would be destroyed. Many Christians believe that life begins at fertilisation when the sperm meets the egg and becomes an embryo. Some people are likely to oppose emergency contraception in this case, as they think an embryo should be treated as any other human life. The Bible, in the Ten Commandments, important laws in the **Old Testament**, has given embryos souls from the moment of conception.



Pills

'You shall not murder.' (Exodus 20:13 NRSV) [from the Ten Commandments]

Some Christians will allow emergency contraception as being the most loving in certain circumstances; for example, if a woman was raped.

Atheist and Humanist Attitudes to Family Planning and Christianity

Most **atheists** and **humanists** have no problem with artificial **contraception**, believing that sex is at least partly for pleasure, and that there are good reasons why people have children and for being able to choose when it is best to have children (see the reasons given for allowing contraception above). They may have similar views to many Christians.

Some may have problems with hormonal methods of contraception which are similar to **emergency contraception**, if they feel that one should not kill human life, even if it is unborn. However, many will accept all forms of contraception.

Christians who are against contraception might argue against more liberal attitudes to sex, saying that if there would be no need for contraception to stop diseases or pregnancies, people would only have sex with their long-term marriage partner. However, this does not mean that people who do not want children should not have sex with their spouse, or those who want a reliable method of contraception should not have, and of choosing when to have them.

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Application of Ethical Theories and Christian Responses

Situation Ethics

Situation ethics is an **ethical theory** associated with many theologians and Joseph Fletcher. It promotes evaluating individual situations by what is most loving, rather than other laws, teachings or considerations. It is a **consequentialist** ethical theory, being loving consequences, rather than about what actions are carried out. It does care that the intention is also for loving consequences. Loving consequences are those which are best for the people involved.

Many would feel that situation ethics would allow the use of **contraception** in order to be loving to allow couples to be able to have sex for pleasure without the stress of having children. It is also loving to allow couples to plan the timing and number of children. If couples are emotionally and financially able to care for them – this is loving to the children.

However, it might be argued that situation ethics would not allow the use of contraception in situations where people use contraception to have many promiscuous relationships without commitment (contraception) which have the potential to emotionally hurt the people involved. Contraception would not be loving – especially as contraception is not 100% effective and could result within unstable relationships. However, it could be argued that using contraception is universally more loving than the alternative – many people would still have unwanted pregnancies without contraception these would be more likely to end in unwanted pregnancies and STDs.

Situation ethics is supported by many Christians as there are several places in the Bible which teaches that love, and treating others well, are the most important things. When applied with the application of situation ethics to contraception – they feel that using contraception is a loving thing for people who desire to have sex without having children, and that children should be created or not created. They may or may not feel that there are times situation ethics allows the use of contraception.

'[Jesus] said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And as for the second, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' (Matthew 22:37–40 NRSV)

'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the love of God.' (Matthew 7:12 NRSV)

However, many other Christians feel that it is important to follow other laws such as the Ten Commandments. They feel that judging actions by what seems to be a good way of making decisions is not always the best. For example, the Catholic Church feels that the commandment to 'be fruitful and multiply' and allow the possibility of **procreation** in every sexual act is more important than being loving. It is also unfair to condemn people for not having children. However, it is interesting to note that one reason why some Christians feel that sex should be open to the possibility of procreation is because they believe that people who are not loving, as they are using the person someone is having sex with as a means to an end, does not honour their dignity.

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Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is an **ethical theory** associated primarily with philosophers of the 18th and 19th centuries, most notably John Stuart Mill. It holds that an action should try to produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people – producing pleasure and not producing pain makes actions good. It is a **consequentialist** ethical theory as it cares about consequences – pleasure and pain.

In many ways, utilitarianism and **situation** ethics are similar – what makes an action right or wrong for them are often the same thing. They can both be applied in similar situations, such as abortion and family planning. However, there are important differences. Utilitarianism is based on motives (someone could create happiness without meaning to, and this would be wrong), while situation ethics cares that people try to act in a loving way. (Some would argue that this is not always the case when being happy is not what is good for someone or being in pain is not what is bad for someone). If contraception encourages promiscuous sex, those applying situation ethics would condemn it more than utilitarians if they deem that promiscuous sex is not loving. However, utilitarians would support it if it makes people happy, and the happiness it brings may outweigh the distress caused by promiscuity. Some utilitarians do not condemn contraception for this reason.

Most people would feel that allowing contraception and family planning would lead to more happiness than not allowing it. People would be happy being able to have sex without being committed (those who are committed relationships, and those who are not); people would be happy having children when they want them and children would be happy, brought up by loving parents who want them, and are able to care for them. If people have fewer unwanted pregnancies, this would benefit many people if the population is lower and so government resources are saved.

It is doubtful that utilitarianism would be used to argue against allowing contraception. However, you could use the case of someone who has sex because they cannot have sex without it – because contraception is not certain to work, there is a risk they could experience an unwanted pregnancy or STD which would make them less happy than if they had sex in the first place. Utilitarianism could be used to argue against having sex without contraception.

One type of utilitarianism – qualitative utilitarianism – is concerned with the quality of happiness rather than the quantity. It would be possible to use this to argue against the use of contraception in committed relationships (if people would not otherwise have sex), because it is better to have sex with someone that you are committed to, even if you have a committed relationship, than to have lots of sex with people one is not committed to. This is a meaningful (possible argument – not fact).

Some Christians feel that increasing happiness is a good goal, and so might support arguments for (and against) contraception and family planning.

However, many will feel that there are things which are more important than happiness. Following God's teachings, Christians feel that teachings to **procreate**, or to have children, are more important than utilitarian arguments about contraception and family planning. Some Christians support the use of contraception and family planning.

Quick Questions

21. Explain **two** reasons why some Christians oppose artificial contraception. (2 marks)
22. Explain **two** reasons why some Christians allow the use of contraception and family planning. (2 marks)

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Divorce

Keywords:

- ❖ **annulment** – the cancelling of a marriage, saying it never existed
- ❖ **divorce** – the legal end of a marriage
- ❖ **remarriage** – where people who have been married before marry other people (not the same person again)
- ❖ **sacrament** – a particularly important worship practice which has even higher status in religions like the Catholic and Orthodox Churches
- ❖ **separated** – where a couple remain married legally, but do not live together

Christian Teachings on and Approaches Towards Divorce and Remarriage

Some Christians have very different views when it comes to **divorce**. The Catholic Church does not recognise legal divorce (so they would see a divorced person as still married to their spouse). This is because the Catholic Church sees marriage as a sacrament given by God, and Jesus taught that people should not separate what God has joined together. However, Catholics will allow **annulments** in some circumstances, which say that a marriage has never taken place. This is decided by a Catholic marriage tribunal, and reasons for an annulment include: the marriage was never consummated (the couple never had sex), one of the parties was not fully committed, or that (at least) one of the parties was tricked or coerced into marriage. However, Catholics will allow divorce for **adultery** or desertion (when one partner leaves the other and refuses to return).

The Catholic Church will not **remarry** people who are divorced because they have broken the first marriage, so they view it as adultery: cheating on the person's first spouse. To be remarried in the Catholic Church, a person has to get a Catholic annulment and a legal divorce in order to be remarried in the Catholic Church. (Catholics will, however, remarry those whose spouses have died.)

“...what God has joined together, let no one separate.” They said to him, “Why then do you command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?” He said to them, “You were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so.”” (Matthew 19:6–8 NRSV)

“The Lord Jesus insisted on the original intention of the Creator who willed that marriage be indissoluble. He abrogates the accommodations that had slipped into it from later traditions.” (Catholic Catechism 2382)

[Jesus believed that God's original intention should be followed and insisted that marriage is something which cannot be cancelled or dissolved. Jesus (recognising the Jewish law (allowing divorce) as a concession to human weakness) allowed and) removes the adjustment (the original law from God) which had been made.]

While some non-Catholic Christians may also hold strict views on divorce, many will allow divorce in some circumstances.

For example, moderate Protestants may accept divorce in limited circumstances:

- if someone's spouse committed **adultery** against them;
- if they have been physically or sexually abused them; or
- if they have deserted them.

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In these cases, they may feel that the other person broke the **marriage** vow relationship with them is dangerous or practically impossible. Jesus appears in the case of unfaithfulness. Protestant churches and the Catholic Church interpret this here – Catholics follow verses 4–8 – that while Moses allowed divorce, God intended humans, and humans should not divorce. Protestants see verse 9 (below) as saying if a spouse commits adultery, then it is acceptable to divorce them and remarry.

'And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries again, commits adultery.' (Matthew 19:9 NRSV)

'...anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to become an adulteress, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.' (Matthew 19:10 NRSV)



Wedding rings, symbolising the promises made during a marriage ceremony, which are broken by divorce.

Matthew 19 goes on to discuss what Jesus says if they cannot divorce. While it may seem like Jesus is trying to tell Jesus that his teaching is too strict, he responds that for some, it will be better to remain married (however, this implies that most people are not able to remain married for their whole lives, without divorce).

'His disciples said to him, "If such is the case, it is better not to marry." "Not everyone can accept this teaching, only those to whom it is given..."' (Matthew 19:10-11 NRSV)

Moderate Protestants believe that God forgives sins and mistakes, and so will allow divorce, but will allow **remarriage** in Church, for those who have had good reasons (see above) for divorce, though they may choose not to remarry someone who has remarried a marriage by committing adultery or abuse. All Churches will remarry someone who has been divorced.

'...for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.' (Matthew 26:28 NRSV)

Remarriage is up to the individual vicar or minister, and some may not marry someone who has been divorced; did not try sufficiently hard to save a marriage or have had more than one divorce.

More liberal Christians, such as liberal Protestants, will allow divorce for many reasons, such as if a couple decide that they are no longer in love. Some such as the Anglican Church are happy to marry all those who have previously been divorced if they believe they are genuinely making this new commitment. They may remarry people who have been divorced if they believe they have repented (if they were abused in previous marriages if they believe they have repented), and may choose to remarry those who have had several divorces. They believe that everyone always deserves another chance, and Jesus taught that you should continue to love your spouse.

'Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against you, should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but seventy-seven times..."' (Matthew 18:21-22 NRSV)

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Reasons for remarriage may include:

- A divorced person falls in love again.
- A divorced person desires to have a fulfilling sexual relationship and/or should marry their new partner in order for this to happen.
- Marrying a new partner may provide security for existing children.

Non-religious Attitudes to Divorce and Remarriage, and Christian Responses

Non-religious people may feel that getting a **divorce** in any circumstances is no longer wish to remain married, as they may see no reason to stick to such a commitment. Without marriage being a commitment to God's gods, there are no religious obligations.

Non-religious people may also have no problem with divorced people **remarrying**, if they wish to make new promises.

This does not mean that all non-religious people are casual about divorce and remarriage, but they are unlikely to recommend that an unhappy couple stay married.

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Christians might respond that marriage is not only a promise to God, but also to each other. Allowing divorce at all, or allowing divorce for any old reason, makes promises casually, and creates an unstable society. However, while these may be reasonable concerns, people who are not aiming to get a divorce, once a relationship has broken down, may want the chance for a fresh start.

Both religious and non-religious people may feel that there are negative side-effects of breaking promises to God and/or one's spouse. People who get divorced may find it hard to afford living costs on their own. Children of divorce find the break-up emotionally tough. However, some people may feel that unhappy parents are better for their children in the long run, as unhappy parents will also have negative effects on their children.

Not all Christians have the same perspectives on marriage, as this can be a matter of interpretation. Catholics may have more liberal views on divorce than the Catholic Church. Some Christians think that their Churches are too lenient with accepting divorces and allowing remarriage. Some opinions on divorce may change depending on the circumstances, and some people should break their marriage promises to God and their spouse may be forgiven themselves if they feel that their marriage has failed.

Application of Ethical Theories and Christian Responses

Situation Ethics

Applying situation ethics is likely to suggest that divorce and remarriage should be loving to the people involved. It is not more loving to force someone to stay married to someone who had cheated on them. Neither does it seem loving to make a couple who have fallen out of love stay together.

It would be unlikely for someone to use situation ethics to argue against divorce. It is hard to think of a situation where it would be more loving to force someone to stay married than they wanted to divorce, or more loving to forbid someone marrying again. However, it is more loving to the children for unhappy parents to be allowed to remarry and create new family units.

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As seen above, many Christians will agree that it is compassionate to allow people to divorce, and they will feel that God would not want people to be unhappy.

However, many Catholics and some other Christians will feel that what is important is the teaching of God, Jesus, and the Church, and these teach against divorce (and hence more loving to allow unhappy couples to divorce, this is still a sin against God). Some Christians will recommend unhappy couples separate instead, so they are not breaking the law.

Utilitarianism

As with situation ethics, most utilitarians are likely to allow divorce and remarriage, as this will produce more happiness and less pain than the alternative. (People can leave their marriages, and can have a new chance at happiness with someone else.)

It is possible to argue that divorce destabilises society, and means that many people will not have enough access to both parents, and so utilitarians might argue that it is best to stay in a marriage. However, if they are happy, it is likely that they will be happier divorced.

As with situation ethics, many Christians will agree that it is acceptable to divorce if it will make people happy, while others will feel that it is God's law rather than human law. Most Christians would not suggest people abstain from marriage in order to avoid divorce, but they may feel called to celibacy, as they believe marriage is important.

Quick Questions

23. Outline **three** reasons for divorce within Christianity.

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Equality of Men and Women in the Family

There are different opinions within Christianity about whether men and women are equal in the family, and whether they are **equal**.

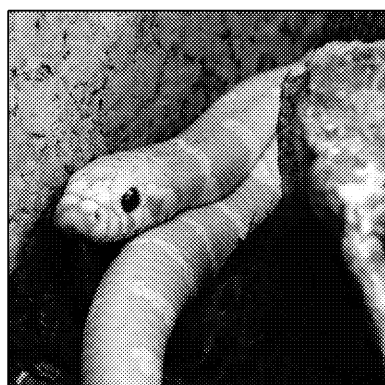
Keywords:

- ❖ **equality** – not necessarily being the same, but being treated with the same level of authority
- ❖ **role** – a part or job carried out

Christian Teachings About and Attitudes to the Role of Men and Women

Many Christian attitudes to the **role** of men and women in the family are based on the Bible. For example, in his letter to the Ephesians, St Paul writes that husbands are to love their wives in the same way that Jesus is the head of the church. This indicates to some Christians that wives are subordinate to, or less important, than men, and are under their charge. If this is the case, then the husband's role in the family is to lead, and to protect his wife. Note: St Paul's teaching does not suggest that husbands can abuse their power. They are to love their wives as they love themselves.

'Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour. Just as Christ loves the church, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives as you love yourselves.'
(Ephesians 5:22–25 NRSV)



A serpent. A serpent tempts woman to mislead man in Genesis 3.

Some Christians also justify different roles for men and women based on Genesis chapters 2 and 3. They claim that in Genesis 2, God creates a woman from a rib of a man, this shows men to be more important. In Genesis 3, the serpent tempts her husband in Genesis chapter 3 to eat the forbidden fruit. Some use this as an indicator that husbands should lead but not lead them.

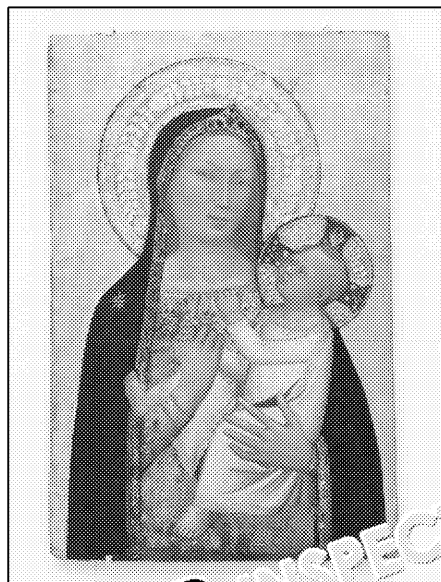
'Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper as himself."'
(Genesis 2:18 NRSV)

Some Christians who believe that husbands should be in charge of their wives and help their husbands, do not think this makes men and women **unequal**. They argue that they are different but have different roles. Important women in the Bible include Eve, Mary, and the Virgin Mary. It can be argued that Mary is one of the most important women in the Bible because of her role as Jesus' mother, particularly in the Catholic and Orthodox churches. They argue that women are not inferior to men.

However, with different roles where the husband is in charge of the wife, it is argued that men and women have **equal** status in the family. Liberal Christians are likely to argue that expecting different roles of men and women are treating them **unequally** by demanding different things of them. They may believe that it is unfair to expect women to focus on motherhood and child care, and to expect that men will take a lesser role in parenting and be the primary breadwinner.

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An image of the Virgin Mary, with the infant Jesus.

On the other hand, some Christians have argued that women should not have different roles from men and disregard the teaching of St Paul in Ephesians, which is originally a letter to a small group of Christians several thousand years in the past. They claim that St Paul was just a human and his teachings may not have been what God intended. Indeed, there is no record in the Gospel that Jesus taught women should have different roles from men. The Bible shows that he had a female follower who he treated kindly, such as the Samaritan woman in John 4, with whom others were not allowed to speak. In Luke 10:38–42, Jesus encouraged Mary to listen to him teaching, while Martha with the traditional female role of serving.

Further, it can be argued that the word for 'helper', in

Genesis 2, is also used on several occasions in the **Old Testament** to describe God, and therefore if a wife is her husband's helper, this in no way makes her less important than him; it would actually indicate that the role of helper is more important. Also, in Genesis 1, there is no mention of man being created before woman, but both being created at the same time in the image of God. This does not imply different roles in the family, but that they are both equal.

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'So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.' (Genesis 1:27 NRSV)

Christians have also argued that biblical teaching must be understood in its historical context, and what may have been good teaching at the time, in a male-dominated society, is no longer relevant in the 21st century. They claim that the core teaching of the Bible is loving to treat men and women equally, as having equal roles in the family. If God created men and women equally, and if he sees them as no different (see Galatians 3:28), then Christians should not treat them differently either.

'...there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.' (Galatians 3:28)

Christians who do agree with different roles will respond that Bible quotes about equality do not mean that men and women should not have different roles. They argue that all teachings in the Bible are there for a reason, and teachings about different roles are not outdated but as they are from God.

Quick Questions

24. Explain **two** reasons why some Christians argue that men and women have different roles in the family.

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Gender Prejudice and Discrimination

Gender **prejudice** is where someone thinks that women or men cannot or are different in an inferior way because of their gender. Gender **discrimination** is put into practice, and someone treats someone differently because of not allowing them to do certain things, or making them do certain things. Most Christians about gender often see women as inferior to men, and gender discrimination disadvantages women; however, it can also disadvantage men.

Women have been discriminated against for years – they could not vote in the past and often earn lower wages than men. In some countries, they cannot get a divorce. **Gender equality** has risen within the last hundred years, but many women are still experiencing discrimination. Most Christians feel that many examples of gender discrimination agree with other types of gender discrimination (see below).

Keyword

- ❖ **discrimination** – treating someone differently or unfairly because of prejudice
- ❖ **prejudice** – a biased belief about someone or a group of people

Christian Gender Prejudice and Discrimination – Teaching and Example

It can be argued that some Christians are **prejudiced** based on gender, and **discriminate** based on gender. It can be argued that this is done by Christians who think there should be, and implement, different gender **roles** in the family – they may expect wives to submit to their husbands, and women to prioritise motherhood (see the section above) – and by Christian **denominations** who will not allow women to perform certain roles, such as becoming a priest in the Catholic and Orthodox churches.

Such Christians and denominations may claim that the Bible provides reasons for performing different church roles; for example, Jesus' closest twelve disciples were all men. Other Bible quotes against women speaking in church and having authority. Christians should discriminate in the same way they believe God does. However, such treatment of women is not prejudiced, because prejudice implies that it is not for a good reason; they believe it is justified by God.

'...women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, as the Lord commands.' (1 Corinthians 14:34 NRSV)

'I permit no man to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to be as the church, which is the body of Christ.' (1 Timothy 2:12 NRSV)

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Christian Responses to Christian Gender Prejudice and Discrimination

Many Christians who feel women should be able to lead in church, and have all the same opportunities as men, argue that Bible quotes which **discriminate** against women were written in a very different time when women were not educated, and therefore might not have been well-placed as church leaders. They also argue that Jesus' main disciples were men because of the society he lived in – he also had female disciples and treated them kindly, so the Church should not assume that women should not be church leaders from this.

Christian Opposition to Gender Prejudice and Discrimination – Teaching and Examples

As seen above, many Christians believe that Jesus treated women well, and approved of female talent for men and women; dying to save everyone. As seen in Galatians 3, some early Christians believed that God does not view men and women differently, and many Christians believe this today. Galatians 3 also provides one solution to the problem of teachings in the **Old Testament** and women should be different, or that women are less important than men: disciplined people, but now that Jesus has brought salvation, people do not

'Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until Christ revealed... But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a discipline of the law, whether Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; we are all one in Christ Jesus.' (Galatians 3:23, 25, 28 NRSV)

Examples of Christian opposition to gender **prejudice** and **discrimination** include the Quakers, who aim to treat men and women equally. They started at Quaker meetings from the beginning of the movement (in the 1600s), giving women equal worship. Apart from arguments for female equality (see above), there are also examples from the early church there were female leaders (such as Phoebe), and female apostles (the gender and apostleship of Junia are debated), therefore female leadership

'I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae... Greet Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the saints in Christ before I was.' (Romans 16:1, 7 NRSV)

Several other denominations have also allowed women to become vicars and priests, allowing that women can perform the same **roles** as men on an equal footing. Some should not, or not not all, allow women to, because of their gender. In the Church of England, women have been able to become priests since 1993, and bishops since 2014.

Christians have also worked against gender prejudice and discrimination in the church. Many Christians have worked to help the (female) victims of domestic violence, and refugees. They have aimed to stop women being trafficked (moved) around the world by donating to existing charities, or working with charities; some Christians have campaigned against inequality against women. Some Christians have also campaigned about pay discrimination against women. This has become more common in recent years as women have political rights. A contemporary issue which Christian women have campaigned against is Tampon Tax – whether women should have to pay taxes on necessary sanitary products.

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Gender Differences

Christians who think that men and women should have different roles might back this up. They might try to argue that differences between men and women have been designed to perform different roles.

However, those who disagree might argue that science and psychology suggest psychological differences between men and women which they are born with. Between men and women can be explained environmentally; unequal social expectations expecting them to perform different roles.

Some Christians who think men and women should be **equal** in the family and have different **roles** as partners, may still accept that men and women are different in the upbringing of small children – for example, men cannot breast-feed, and may see it as the couple's choice how they divide up parenting responsibilities. When trying to take equal responsibility, they may expect a father to do his fair share as well as a mother, even if not all tasks can be divided equally.

Many Christians will note that while there may be some differences between men and women, they should try to avoid making generalisations, or decisions based on generalisations. If a man wants something lifted, there may be a woman there who is stronger than the man, to promote an equal society.

Many of the arguments about and positions on gender equality and gender discrimination are relevant here.

Quick Questions

25. Outline **three** examples of religious gender discrimination.

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Summary of Religious Teachings on Relationships and 21st Century

- **Marriage** is important within Christianity for purposes such as **procreate** a couple, having sex and because Christians believe that God intended for marriage. Some religious people may also see marriage as important, or they might not. Some Christians disapprove of cohabitation, but others accept it as a solution with no problem with it.
- Different Christians have different attitudes to sexual relationships. Some relationships should take place within **marriage**. Others feel that premarital sex is acceptable. Some Christians believe that all sexual activity should be for the purpose of creating new life. Most Christians disapprove of **adultery/extramarital sex**. Christian opinions about whether **homosexuality** is acceptable or not are mixed. It is likely to have a more relaxed attitude to consensual sexual relationships if they should take place within a committed relationship and/or that adultery is not the fault of the spouse who is cheated on.
- Most Christians feel that families are important because God wanted humans to **procreate**. They may feel that it is their duty to educate their children (in their **faith**), and that they should provide security and love for their children. They may enjoy raising a family. There are many different types of families, such as **same-sex parents, extended** and **blended**.
- The local church and community may support the family in a number of ways, such as providing family worship, educational classes, fun activities, rites of passage, classes for parents, and family **counselling**. They may do this because of their faith and because Jesus approved of children.
- Different Christians have different attitudes to **contraception**, family planning and births. Some Christians will not use any artificial contraception, feeling that they should be open to the possibility of new life – the Catholic **encyclical, Human Life**. However, they might use the rhythm method as a way of limiting the likelihood of pregnancy. Others may be happy to use barrier methods or sterilisation. Some will use artificial contraception, but others may not if there is a chance that they could cause a miscarriage. Christians are likely to be more open to contraception and abortion, though they may have different views on different contraception types. Applying **situation ethics** would suggest that using artificial contraception and family planning are advisable – they are the most loving choices in many situations.
- There are also different Christian positions on **divorce** and **remarriage**. Some Christians allow divorce, but only allow an **annulment** in some circumstances. They are divided on whether they may remarry those whose partners have died, or those who have been divorced. Some Christians may allow divorce in limited circumstances, such as **adultery**, as Jesus appeared to allow for divorce in this instance. Some Christians allow divorce for more reasons. Churches which allow divorce may allow people to remarry. Non-religious people are likely to be more relaxed about divorce and remarriage. Applying **situation ethics** would suggest that many divorces should be allowed – this is the most loving thing to do.

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- Some Christians believe that men and women should have different **roles** due to passages in Ephesians and at the start of Genesis. They may still believe men and women are **equal** before God, but the roles they think they should have are not necessarily equal. Other Christians believe that men and women should not have different roles and find such teaching outdated, because they interpret biblical teaching in other passages in the Bible imply that God sees men and women equal and treat them differently.
- Different Christians have different positions on gender **prejudice** and **discrimination**. Some Christians believe gender prejudice and discrimination are wrong, and that men and women should perform all the same **roles**. Christians have also campaigned for **equality** and the end of religious prejudice and discrimination. Some Christians discriminate against women in some ways, because they believe they should perform the same roles as men. For example, women cannot become priests in churches.

Now Try 1



26. 'All sexual relationships outside of heterosexual marriage are wrong.' Evaluate this statement.

Argue for and against this statement. You must give Christian teaching points of view. Reach a conclusion which follows from your argument.



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Arguments for the Existence of God

Question Number	Answer/Mark Scheme
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ That he is compassionate. ◆ That he is powerful. ◆ That he is committed to keeping his promises. ◆ That he is faithful. <p>Accept any relevant point 1 mark per point, maximum 3</p>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Christians believe that God revealed himself to be compassionate when he saved Noah and his family from the flood. ◆ Christians believe that God save Noah and his family, but he made a covenant not to wipe out life on Earth with a flood. ◆ Christians believe that God revealed himself to be compassionate by sending Jesus to teach people how to live and die for humanity's sin. ◆ Christians believe that because of Jesus' sacrifice they are reconciled with God and have a relationship with him. <p>Accept any relevant reason, and any relevant development 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4) One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be relevant and it is supporting <i>and</i> to the question asked.</p>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Moses' vision of the burning bush. ◆ The Transfiguration. ◆ Saul's vision on the road to Damascus. <p>Accept any relevant example 1 mark per point, maximum 3</p>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A non-religious person might argue that visions do not prove the existence of God because they are hallucinations. ◆ If visions have a physical explanation then they do not prove the supernatural. ◆ A non-religious person might argue that visions do not prove the existence of God because visions appear to confirm different religions. ◆ If visions prove a true religion, then visions would only provide evidence for one religion. As visions conflict with each other, they cannot be used to prove the existence of God because they appear to prove different (conflicting) things. <p>Accept any relevant reason, and any relevant development 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4) One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be relevant and it is supporting <i>and</i> to the question asked.</p>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Christians can respond to the non-religious argument that miracles can be explained by natural explanations and do not prove the existence of God by claiming that something having a natural explanation does not mean that it was not seen as miraculous. ◆ They can argue that some things are truly too miraculous to be coincidental and they must be down to God – science cannot explain away everything. ◆ Christians can respond to the non-religious argument that miracles cannot prove the existence of God because some are silly by claiming that 'silly' miracles can prove the existence of God. ◆ They can say that just because some reported miracles are not real, this does not mean that there are not genuine miracles. <p>Accept any relevant reason, and any relevant development 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4) One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be relevant and it is supporting <i>and</i> to the question asked.</p>

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Question Number	Answer/Mark Scheme
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Religious experiences pass, they are temporary. ◆ Religious experiences cannot be fully described. ◆ Religious experiences give people knowledge. ◆ Religious experiences are not controllable. ◆ Religious experiences involve a felt connection with the divine/God. ◆ Religious experiences often make people feel happy / at peace. <p>Accept any relevant point 1 mark per point, maximum 3</p>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Religious experiences may be considered revelation because God or a God is sometimes revealed visually. ◆ Moses saw the angel of the lord in a burning bush, revealing God's glory. ◆ Religious experiences may be considered revelation because God may speak through them. ◆ Christians believe that God reveals his will, and also aspects of his nature through religious experiences. <p>Accept any relevant reason, any relevant development, and any relevant source of wisdom and authority</p> <p>1 mark per simple point, 1 mark per development (maximum 4), 1 mark for a source of wisdom and authority.</p> <p>One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be relevant and it is supporting <i>and</i> to the question asked, as must the reference to a source of authority.</p>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prayer is important to Christians because it allows them to praise God. ◆ Prayer is important to Christians because it allows them to confess their sins and ask for forgiveness. ◆ Prayer is important to God because it allows them to spend time with him and strengthen their relationship with him. <p>Accept any relevant point 1 mark per point, maximum 3</p>
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prayer which Christians feel has been answered may lead to / reinforce their faith because they believe that answered prayer provides evidence for God's existence. ◆ They may feel that answered prayer could only have been answered by God, so God must exist. ◆ Prayer which Christians feel has been answered may lead to / reinforce their faith because Christians feel that God has answered their prayer because he loves them. ◆ They may take answered prayer as a sign that God is involved in their lives and looking out for them. <p>Accept any relevant reason, and any relevant development</p> <p>1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4) One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be relevant and it is supporting <i>and</i> to the question asked.</p>
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Evolution explains the existence of design. ◆ The argument that the world and designed objects is weak. ◆ The world does not seem well-designed as there is evil and suffering. <p>Accept any relevant point 1 mark per point, maximum 3</p>
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is an unmoved mover (God) who caused change to begin. ◆ There is a first cause (God) who started causes and effects. ◆ There is a necessary being who makes sure that all contingent things exist. <p>Accept any relevant point 1 mark per point, maximum 3</p>

Question Number	Answer/Mark Scheme														
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christians may respond to the non-religious argument that the big bang had a physical cause, and so cosmological arguments do not provide evidence for God (needed as a first cause), by claiming that God may have caused the big bang. They may claim that there cannot be a physical cause for the start of the universe and there would be no physical reason for conditions changing to allow life. Christians may respond to the non-religious argument that there is no chain of causes and effects, and of change, going back forever, and that causes and effects and change need causes now, this does not provide evidence for God starting it, by claiming that God is more likely than infinite chains of causes and effects and change. They can claim that if there is not a spiritual unmoved mover and first cause, then having a start of chains of causes and effects and change would violate the law of conservation of energy. <p>Accept any relevant reason, and any relevant development</p> <p>1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4) One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be supported <i>and</i> to the question asked.</p>														
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Features of a Christian upbringing such as reading the Bible and celebrating religious festivals may lead to a belief in God if such features interest a child. If children are interested in the Christian faith and enjoy activities associated with it, they may feel that belief in God is a positive thing, which they desire. Features of a Christian upbringing such as being baptised and taught about God may lead to a belief in God, if children feel that this is what is expected of them. They may find that it is natural to believe in God, because others around them teach them that it is a good thing. <p>Accept any relevant reason, and any relevant development</p> <p>1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4) One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be supported <i>and</i> to the question asked.</p>														
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Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in 1

Question Number	Answer/Mark Scheme
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a gift from God. It is a sacrament. It allows them to have sex. <p>Accept any relevant point 1 mark per point, maximum 3</p>
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many Christians believe that a purpose of marriage is to procreate and This is taught in the book of Genesis, and Catholics feel that all married aim to procreate and all sexual acts should 'open to the possibility of Many Christians feel that a purpose of marriage is to symbolise the relationship between God and the Church. For some this image, the husband is more important than the wife, and the purpose is to have authority over her. <p>Accept any relevant reason, and any relevant development 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4) One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be relevant and it is supporting <i>and</i> to the question asked.</p>
17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many Christians feel that premarital sex is wrong, as Jesus taught that when a man and woman would be physically joined. Many churches back this up – the Catholic Church teaches firmly against marriage. Christians disagree with adultery because it is often painful for the person cheated on, and because it breaks the sacrament of marriage. Adultery is forbidden in the Ten Commandments. <p>Accept any relevant reason, and any relevant development 1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4) One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be relevant and it is supporting <i>and</i> to the question asked.</p>
18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Christians oppose homosexuality because homosexuality is condemned in the Bible. 'You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.' (Leviticus 18:2 NRSV) Not only is homosexuality forbidden, but many Christians feel that couples should marry, and the Bible says that marriage is between a man and a woman. Other Christians do not oppose homosexuality. They feel that teaching about homosexuality in the Old Testament is out-dated. Further, they believe that Jesus' teachings mean that everyone should be treated with love and respect and not judged, as everyone sins, so homosexuals should not be treated badly or differently. 'Or how can you say to your neighbor, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when the log is in your own eye?' (Matthew 7:3-4 NRSV) <p>Accept any relevant reason, and any relevant development, and any relevant source and authority. 1 mark per simple point, 1 mark per development (maximum 4), 1 mark for source and authority. One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be relevant and it is supporting <i>and</i> to the question asked, as must the reference to a source of authority.</p>

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Question Number	Answer/Mark Scheme
19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Christians will admire the single parent in a single-parent family. They will feel that looking after children on one's own is a really hard job, and requires a lot of love and dedication, which are good traits. Some Christians will disapprove of single-parent families if they have had a divorce or casual sex. They may feel that people should only have sex with their marriage partner, and they intend to spend their whole life, and should not have children from casual relationships. <p>Accept any relevant reason, and any relevant development</p> <p>1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4) One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be relevant to the question asked, and it is supporting <i>and</i> to the question asked.</p>
20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The local church can help to support families by providing family worship for children. Children can learn about Christianity in an age-appropriate way. The local church can help to support families by providing counselling for parents with young children. These can provide parents with moral and practical support to make life easier. <p>Accept any relevant reason, and any relevant development</p> <p>1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4) One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be relevant to the question asked, and it is supporting <i>and</i> to the question asked.</p>
21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Christians such as Catholics oppose artificial contraception because they believe that all sexual acts should be open to the possibility of new life. They believe this because God commanded humans to be fruitful and multiply in Genesis, and the Catholic Church has also produced official teaching that artificially prevent pregnancy. 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...' (Genesis 1:28 NRSV) "every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible" is intrinsically evil (Catechism 2370, quoting Humanae Vitae) Some Christians, such as Catholics, oppose artificial contraception because they believe it goes against natural law. They feel that God has designed nature to show what is right and wrong, and because sex is naturally likely to produce children, nothing artificial should be used to try to stop this. <p>Accept any relevant reason, any relevant development, and any relevant reference to a source of wisdom and authority</p> <p>1 mark per simple point, 1 mark per developed point (maximum 4), 1 mark for reference to a source of wisdom and authority One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be relevant to the question asked, as must the reference to a source of wisdom and authority.</p>

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Question Number	Answer/Mark Scheme
22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Christians allow contraception and family planning because they are not expressly forbidding them in the Bible. They feel that as God has not forbidden it, they should be free to use it, as they feel that sex was given for pleasure as well as procreation. Some Christians allow contraception and family planning because they believe it is best for the health, security and happiness of parents and children. They feel that the health of women is improved if they can have fewer children, as fewer children will be better supported if parents can have fewer, and have more convenient times. <p>Accept any relevant reason, and any relevant development</p> <p>1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4) One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be supporting <i>and</i> to the question asked.</p>
23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adultery. Desertion. Domestic abuse. <p>Accept any relevant point</p> <p>1 mark per point, maximum 3</p>
24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Christians argue that men and women should have different roles because of teaching in the New Testament letters. For example, St Paul taught that the husband should be the head of the church, with authority over her. Some Christians argue that men and women should have different roles because of biblical teaching about Adam and Eve. They argue that God made Eve as a 'helper' for Adam, so women should help men, and that women should not lead their husbands, because when Eve ate the forbidden fruit was what made God throw them out of Eden. <p>Accept any relevant reason, and any relevant development</p> <p>1 mark per simple point, 2 marks per developed point (maximum 4) One development cannot be credited twice. Each development must be supporting <i>and</i> to the question asked.</p>
25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women cannot become priests in the Catholic Church. Some Christians expect wives to submit to their husband's authority. Some Christians expect women to prioritise motherhood and see their children at home (while men should work). <p>Accept any relevant point</p> <p>1 mark per point, maximum 3</p>

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Question Number	Answer/Mark Scheme	
26	You must fulfil the criteria for connections AND judgements to get top marks	
	<i>Connections</i>	<i>Judgements</i>
	A <u>few</u> shallow connections between material relevant to question. <u>Very</u> narrow understanding of religion.	Points not well-supported and conclusion does not follow from arguments.
	<u>Many</u> shallow connections between material relevant to question. Narrow understanding of religion.	Some attempt at supporting argument and evaluation, though conclusion does not fully follow.
	Good reasoning and different viewpoints considered. <u>Partially</u> answers question. Good understanding of religion.	<u>Most</u> points are well-supported with reasonable evaluation, leading to a conclusion which is <u>somewhat</u> supported.
	Good critical reasoning and different viewpoints considered. <u>Fully</u> answers question. <u>Very</u> good understanding of religion.	<u>All</u> points are well-supported with comprehensive evaluation leading to a conclusion which is <u>fully</u> supported.
<p>Points and Justification For:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> God instituted marriage for heterosexual couples to have sex within. Jesus implied that sex should take place within heterosexual marriage. The Catholic Church believes that all sex should be open to the possibility of procreation and homosexual sex is not; and it may not be a good idea to have children outside of marriage, as this is a less stable environment for them. The Bible teaches against sexual immorality, and sexual relationships outside of heterosexual marriage may be believed to be sexually immoral. 		
<p>Points and Justification Against:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jesus never said anything against homosexual sex. Teaching against homosexuality in the Bible is outdated. Jesus taught to treat others as you would like to be treated, and saying relationships are wrong is not treating people well / loving. Jesus taught not to judge, and it is wrong to make assumptions about people. Some liberal Protestant couples have sex before married, this may be a good idea to know if they want to be married forever before getting married, meaning people can be more serious / committed before divorce. 		
Accept any relevant point or justification.		



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