



2015 specification
first exams in 2017

Revision Summaries for A Level OCR Year 2

Component 3: Developments in Christian Thought

zigzageducation.co.uk

POD
8012

Follow us on Twitter @ZigZagRS

Publish your own work... Write to a brief...
Register at publishmenow.co.uk

Contents

Thank You for Choosing ZigZag Education.....	ii
Teacher Feedback Opportunity.....	iii
Terms and Conditions of Use	iv
Teacher’s Introduction.....	1
Religious Pluralism – Theology and Society	2
Exclusivism	3
Inclusivism.....	8
Pluralism	11
Multifaith Societies/Interfaith Dialogue	15
Practice Exam-style Questions	19
Gender and Society.....	20
Gender Roles in Christian Thought	21
Gender Roles in Secular Thought	25
The Feminist Reinterpretation of God	30
Practice Exam-style Questions	35
The Challenge of Secularism	36
Christian Thought and Secularism	37
Society, Christianity and Secularism	41
Practice Exam-style Question	46
Liberation Theology and Marx	47
The Relationship between Marxism and Liberation Theology	48
Practice Exam-style Question	55
Mark Schemes	56
Levels of Response (A Level).....	56
Indicative Content	57

Teacher's Introduction

The revision summaries in this series are designed to support your students as they study the OCR A Level Religious Studies specification, and have been designed to cover the major themes and concepts of each topic point accordingly. This revision summary supports the A Level Year 2 Developments in Christian Thought part of the specification.

All students, whether they are academically strong, average or weak, can benefit from a concise and clearly explained set of notes to revise from, both as they work through the OCR course and also when preparing for their end-of-course exams. It is recommended, therefore, that students be given each relevant summary after learning a topic so that they can clearly understand the summaries and refer back to them when needed. However, the summaries can also function well as a pack given to students in the run-up to their exams.

Each topic follows a set structure detailed below:

- ✓ **Glossary:** A clear list of important terminology students need to know when studying the topic.
- ✓ **Overview:** A look at the major themes of the topic, with a brief introduction to the major points of discussion and disagreement.
- ✓ **Key Points:** The main body of the summaries for each topic, providing a clear and concise set of notes that help students support their own knowledge and understanding of the topic.
- ✓ **Key Figures:** An important overview of any major philosophical or theological figures students are required to know.
- ✓ **Key Texts:** A set of notes around any important theological or biblical texts students may require background information and understanding of.
- ✓ **Student Checklist:** A helpful guide to what students need to know by the end of the revision summary and a way to check their understanding and progress through a particular topic.
 - ! **Note:** The checklist is presented in question format and these questions would be ideal to set for homework or revision so that students can build the skills they need in order to progress to longer exam-style questions.
- ✓ **Exam-style Question:** A practice essay question with helpful assessment objectives, complete with levelled mark schemes and indicative content at the end of the resource. These are useful for students approaching their end-of-year exams or wishing to improve their essay technique on a particular topic.

NB Depending on the figures studied and the required reading, not all topics will have a Key Figures or Key Texts section.

This structure clearly ensures students have not only a grasp on the key themes of each topic, but also a way to understand their place within the specification as a whole. Students who may have missed lessons or not made detailed notes may benefit greatly from these revision summaries, especially in helping their recollection of key topics closer to their end-of-course exams.

Note: Please note that the Gender and Society topics in the OCR A Level Course contain some sexist and potentially upsetting language, which you may wish to review before using with your class. For example, Aquinas describes women as 'defective and misbegotten' and Daly uses strong terminology such as 'total rape victim'. Such language is reflective of the thinkers' views only, and in the case of older theologians represents an era when ordinary culture was more sexist and misogynistic in its outlook.

December 2017

Free Updates!

Register your email address to receive any future free updates* made to this resource or other RS resources your school has purchased, and details of any promotions for your subject.

* resulting from minor specification changes, suggestions from teachers and peer reviews, or occasional errors reported by customers

Go to zzed.uk/freeupdates

Religious Pluralism – Theology and Ethics

G₂ L₁ O₁

INSPECTION COPY

Anonymous Christians	A term Rahner suggested for people who possibly share the Christian faith but do not directly affirm him as saviour or absolute path towards God.
Asylum Seekers	People fleeing their home countries because of persecution, war, oppression or other reasons.
Biblical Realism	The view that the Bible is an authentic source of true knowledge.
Christomonism	A term levelled at theologians who put too much emphasis on Jesus for salvation, ignoring the work of the Holy Spirit.
Demythologisation	The process of analysing the historical Christ and his teachings, stripping away the myth built up since his ministry and death.
Dominus Iesus	A theological declaration by the Catholic Church which affirmed its exclusive claim to the knowledge of salvation, while acknowledging the value of other religions.
Exclusivism	The belief that only one religion is authoritative in teaching the truth.
Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus	A phrase meaning 'outside of the Church there is no salvation', emphasizing the importance of the Church in allowing humans to achieve salvation.
Global Theology	Hick's vision of a theology that fairly discusses and weighs the merits of all religions, free of inherent bias towards Christianity or other religions.
Historical Jesus	The figure and truths of Jesus that can reasonably be historically verified, as opposed to the theological truths of faith later affirmed by the Christian Church.
Inclusivism	The belief that, while one religion is authoritative or true, other religions may also contain elements of truth.
Inter Faith Network	A UK organisation established to help facilitate interfaith dialogue between different religions.
Interfaith Dialogue	A process of discussion, debate and engagement between different religions to understand differences of their teachings.
Kantian Epistemology	A field of epistemology developed by Kant that, among other things, divides the world into noumena (things-in-themselves) and phenomena (things as they appear to us).
Multifaith Societies	Societies that have people living within them of numerous, different religious backgrounds.
Nostra Aetate	An important 1965 declaration of the Catholic Church aiming to promote understanding between Catholicism and other religions.
Noumena	A 'thing-in-itself' that exists behind knowledge obtainable by the senses.
Partial Replacement	A model of exclusivism/inclusivism which suggests other religions may contain truth or revelation, but not all salvation or complete truth.
Phenomena	The objects that appear to oneself through one's senses and are therefore knowable.
Pluralism	The belief that no religion has a monopoly on absolute truth and that all religions have equally valid claims to truth.
Redemptoris Missio	A 1990 encyclical by Pope John Paul II detailing how the Catholic Church should engage with other people's beliefs during missionary work.
Scriptural Reasoning	A practice of communal textual analysis used by theologians from different faiths to come to a greater understanding about the world by looking at the similarities between their respective beliefs.
Sharing the Gospel of Faith	A 2010 report by the Church of England focusing on the best ways to share the good news while being aware of other people's beliefs and values.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Solus Christus	A Protestant belief, meaning 'by Christ alone', that holds only Christ can achieve salvation.
The Mystery of Salvation	A Church of England report released in 1995 that sets out a belief that maintaining salvation is primarily obtainable through Christ.
The Real	The ultimate reality, truth or God that John Hick argues lies behind all religions. The term is primarily used to include other religions, such as Buddhism, in the existence of a Greater God.
Total Replacement	A model of exclusivism where the beliefs of a particular faith replace all other religions being false.



Exclusivism

Overview

Exclusivism in Christianity is the belief that only faith in Jesus Christ can lead to salvation and eternal life. Accordingly, other religions erroneously present themselves as paths to salvation, but depending on the form of exclusivism espoused, may well lead to condemnation. Christianity has endorsed a strict exclusivist attitude. This was in great contrast to other religions as Roman-oriented paganism was decidedly more pluralist in its approach, often incorporating religious beliefs of other cultures into its own during the conquest of other lands.

In modern times, the wider range of beliefs many people are exposed to, along with a greater understanding of the world, mean that many Christians are reluctant to endorse exclusivism, which may be seen as intellectually arrogant or intolerant. Nonetheless, there are some Christians influenced by Calvinist thinking, such as Hendrik Kraemer, who advocate exclusivism. Exclusivists argue that broadly inclusivistic or pluralistic approaches devalue the revelatory truth presented to the world during the mission of Jesus Christ.

Key Points



General Points

- Exclusivism in Christianity has often been criticised for the implicit idea that those who do not believe in Christ will be punished, regardless of the lives they have led. However, in line with the doctrine of predestination, many have defended exclusivist theology, arguing that it does not condemn those unwittingly outside of the Christian faith.
 - R C Sproul makes this point strongly, arguing that God does not punish those who do not believe, but willingly turn their backs on Jesus as the path to salvation.
 - Equally, however, what counts as rejecting Christianity is a contentious issue. For example, Judaism, which shares many teachings with Christianity, it is difficult to say if Jews are rejecting Christ and salvation completely.
- Exclusivism generally focuses on the Bible as a written record of God's will and a source of true knowledge of God. Such a view is often referred to as 'Biblical Realism' and many exclusivists see it as the inevitable conclusion of accepting the Jesus Christ in the Bible as the true God.
 - While the Bible does mention at times of God's involvement in history, it also contains many passages that deny exclusivism in Christianity is often seen as to deny the universality of God's love and the scriptural basis for it.



**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Church, Doctrine and Exclusivism

- Exclusivist attitudes are often associated with Calvin and Luther, especially in their view of human beings as wholly corrupt and only able to achieve salvation from a free God.
 - In particular, Luther affirmed the doctrine of justification by faith; that it is faith and it is faith ultimately that makes one righteous.
 - Many exclusivist attitudes also emphasise the importance of Jesus as God incarnate and so carrying the full deity of the divine. It is from this unique role as mediator between God and earth that exclusivists assert that it is only through Jesus that one can achieve salvation.
 - It is also often noted that within exclusivist attitudes that the Church plays an essential role in the Christian path to salvation, with the doctrine 'extra ecclesiam nulla salus' ('outside the Church there is no salvation') being common.
 - This is reaffirmed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, where it is declared that salvation comes from Christ (the head) through the Church (the body).

Different Models of Exclusivism

- Paul Knitter divides between two different models of exclusivistic Christianity.
 - **Total replacement:** This model can be identified within the work of Karl Barth, that, if Jesus is the only path to salvation, then the idea of religion itself has no inherent value.
 - **Partial replacement:** This model, arguably closer to inclusivism, does not deny that other religions might have shared partially in God's revelation and have important truths. However, it holds that they provide no way to reconciliation and salvation in God, and are identified within the position of the Catholic Church.
- Gavin D'Costa proposes a similar distinction between two different forms of Christianity.
 - **Restrictive Access Exclusivism (RAE):** This emphasises traditional Christian doctrine of election; that salvation only comes to the elect, who hear the Gospel, and are united to God.
 - **Universal Access Exclusivism (UAE):** This focuses on Jesus's atonement for all human beings, implying that God may will the redemption of all people through Jesus or the Gospel.

What is important to note overall is that there are numerous ways of understanding exclusivism in relation to the traditional Christian doctrines of election and reconciliation.

Karl Barth and Exclusivism

- To what extent Karl Barth completely endorsed exclusivism in Christianity is still debated within theology. Some believe his strongly Christological approach inevitably led to an understanding of salvation, whereas others see the possibility of inclusivism within the freedom of God's grace.
 - One of the main difficulties is that Barth does not strictly deny the value of other religions, but argues that religion itself is human work and contrary to revelation, which is from the Triune God.
 - This revelation is a dynamic event, springing from God, sent through Jesus Christ. Where humanity can find salvation, therefore, is only through the Word as Christ himself, scripture and ecclesia (preaching).
 - Religion, or the human hand, concerns itself with sanctification and justification, but to understand God. However, revelation is never senseless; in natural points of contact with the divine, it is only freely given by God through the revelation of the incarnation.
 - Therefore Christianity is naturally no different in type to other religions, but as it is the faith that God has chosen to reveal himself through.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Is Barth Exclusivist or Inklusivist?

- On the one hand, Christ as the only means to salvation naturally lends of any other points of contact with God suggests that there is little truth in other religions.
- However, it can equally be suggested that Barth emphasises the freedom of God to the extent that it is both unknowable who he chooses to be saved and possible through other religions. Especially if, as some of his critics suggest, Barth's universalism, it is difficult to argue that other religions are excluded from salvation.

Issues with Exclusivism

- Christian exclusivism has been argued to cause conflict and division between religions, as it promotes an idea that anyone outside of Christianity is fundamentally wrong and in need of salvation. Exclusivism as a whole has historically been used to justify persecution and forced conversion.
- Many argue the idea of a loving God who punishes people for simply being born into a different culture is inconsistent. If God were truly benevolent he would will the reconciliation of all people, especially if they had lived virtuous lives.
- Critics disagree with Barth's emphasis on the mystery of a transcendent God who is beyond the natural world. Many would argue that this leaves no justification for any religious claims, leading to agnosticism.
- Other religions do seem to share fundamental beliefs with Christianity. If one accepts the existence of no truth, it calls into question the shared beliefs Christianity has with other religions like Islam, and to what extent Christianity can be thought of as a completely isolated faith.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Key Figures

Hendrik Kraemer

- Kraemer was a Dutch theologian in the twentieth century, who put forward an understanding of Christianity at a time when more liberal theologians were moving towards inclusivism.
- In particular he was sceptical of the idea that there were 'lines of similarity' between any religion cannot be divided and compared by its constituent parts, rather that each is unique. However, religion is just a human phenomenon. One can only achieve real knowledge of God through the Bible, which is aided by the Church as the agency through which this knowledge is passed on.
- This forms the basis for his exclusivism and Kraemer affirms a strong theocentrism. The source of revelation is God, not God. The insight one might get from other elements of culture or common sense cannot give true or consistent knowledge of God's being and nature.
- He argued that mankind as a whole is fallen and corrupt, and has lost its ability to achieve knowledge of God. It requires God's grace and God's mediation through Christ to achieve this.
- However, faith is not a completely subjective process, rather through its direct relationship with God it possesses objectivity in facilitating one's reconciliation with God.

Key Texts

Dominus Iesus (2000)

- This is a declaration by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that was issued in 2000.
- It covers a number of theological issues, but is most well-known for its reiteration of the Catholic position that the only Church to fully lead to salvation through Christ is the Catholic Church.
- It also rejects firmly any religious relativism, while accepting 'what is true and good in other religions'.
- Some see this as an explicit endorsement of exclusivism. While the declaration explicitly denied to non-Christians, it describes them as 'gravely deficient' in their knowledge of God, and to Catholics who follow the Church's teachings.
- However, others see the Catholic Church as more inclusivists. Pope Francis in 2013 stated that God's mercy is universal and may well extend to those responding just to the Gospel in their own way.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹
How has Christianity traditionally been interpreted as exclusivist and why have many theologians moved away from this understanding in the modern era?	
What are the key Christian beliefs that lead to exclusivism?	
Why do many Christian exclusivists support the idea of biblical realism?	
What role does the Church play within models of Christian exclusivism?	
Which theologians are commonly associated with exclusivist beliefs within Christianity?	
How are there potentially different models of exclusivism within religious belief?	
Is the Roman Catholic Church more exclusivist or inclusivist in its perspectives and beliefs?	
Why does Kraemer argue that Christianity has to be understood as having an exclusive claim to truth and salvation?	
How does Barth believe salvation is mediated through Jesus Christ?	
Does Barth's insistence on human faith being separate to human religion support or forward an exclusivist model of Christianity?	

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Inclusivism

Overview

Inclusivism in Christianity refers to the belief that, although salvation is possible for other non-Christians to go to heaven and that strict faith to Christianity is necessary for a person to achieve salvation. It is often seen as a middle ground between exclusivism and pluralism. Christians see as contradictory to the idea of a benevolent God, and pluralism, the objective truths that Christianity puts forward.

Furthermore, it aligns with the idea that Jesus died for all of humanity's sins, not just those who perform good works in their path to salvation of itself. This is in contrast to exclusivism, which is often focused more around predestination and limited to the possibility of a working system of natural theology, as multiple points of contact could allow for salvation through other religious beliefs. There are many Christian theologians, such as Karl Rahner and Friedrich Schleiermacher, who have advocated broadly inclusivistic positions. England's position closely leans towards inclusivism as set out in their report *The New Evangelisation for the People of Today*.

Key Points

General Points

- It is possible to see an inclusivist attitude as important when considering Christianity in relation to other religions.
 - Many Christians would be reluctant to deny the validity of the Old Testament, as Judaism shares many of its teachings with Christianity. Arguably without an inclusivist position one would be forced to admit, to some extent, that Judaism is misguided in its use of the Old Testament.
 - A similar issue arises with Islam and ideas from Platonism. The former regards Jesus as a prophet, and the latter church down to Aquinas incorporated many Greek philosophical ideas. An exclusivist would be required to exclude these influences to some extent in their theology to maintain the strict belief that only Christianity holds the path to salvation.
 - Inclusivism is also seen as a more tenable position when engaging in interfaith dialogue, as it admits the possibility of at least partial truth in other religious beliefs.

Early Church Perspectives

- Some early Church Fathers considered inclusivism within their Christian beliefs.
 - Justin Martyr, for example, presents the idea that those who participate in the Christian faith without knowing can arguably be considered to be on the path to salvation.
 - Tertullian also presents the idea that for a culture to deny influence from Christianity is itself a tacit admission of its influence. Philosophy and theology do not exist in a vacuum, it is impossible for Christianity as such to argue it has an exclusive monopoly on truth, as it has been so broadly influenced by Greek and Judaic cultures.

Karl Rahner and Inclusivism

- Rahner develops an inclusivist understanding of Christianity, with Christ retaining God's self-realisation while acknowledging that faith in him may not be the only way to God.
 - Human beings, for Rahner, encounter God when they existentially transcend their being. During this process, one realises that one's own existence and essence are a mystery, and in this mystery one is exposed to God's grace as a possibility of salvation.
 - Rahner still adheres to the principle of 'Solus Christus', arguing that it was through Christ alone that people to be saved through God's grace. However he argues that other religions can be seen as paths to God, not just Christianity.
 - God is revealed not just in Christ as a historical moment, but also in creation. Rahner refers to Paul's sermon in Acts 17 at the Areopagus, where he appeals to the Athenians to recognise God as Creator. Therefore, a difference between the human recognition of God as Creator and the Christian recognition of God as Father.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



- Rahner treats the pre-history of Christianity, therefore, as important developing throughout history towards its final end as God's complete world. Christ is the focal point of this historical journey, but is not the experience or have revelation of God.
- Therefore non-Christians can share in God's grace and develop knowledge. He argues people who adhere to other religions can be identified as 'anonymous Christians' as they are adhering to God's grace without necessarily realising it.
- The Church, then, is not simply the community built up around those who profess Christianity through its visible signs, but everyone who practises its teachings and lives by its moral principles. Other religions can encourage poor ethical behaviour and this, along with other factors, means the Church, however, still has a duty to proselytise.

What are the Issues with Rahner's Inclusivism?

- While it tries to include the absolute truth of salvation in Christ present in other religions from pluralism, it is possible to see Rahner's position collapsing into an understanding of Christianity, as fundamentally it still asserts that it is the only true religion with other religions simply conforming to the grace mediated by Christ.
 - Other religions are not recognised for the truths they present independently but are simply regarded as unwitting extensions of Christ's grace. Many adherents may well argue this position is distorting their ideas and is patronising.
 - Some have argued, however, that Rahner's inclusivism simply reduces religion to living well. This means that being saved can be seen to have no relation to specific beliefs. However, this sidesteps Rahner's idea that, within those unwittingly conforming to Christianity, there is the possibility of salvation through implicit grace.
 - Many have also questioned whether the idea of 'anonymous Christians' is realistic. A member of a religion usually requires consent to a set of particular beliefs without being aware of them.

Key Figures

Gavin D'Costa

- D'Costa argues that seeing only Christ as the path to salvation (Christomonism) neglects the role of the Holy Spirit.
- Salvation has to be approached in a Trinitarian manner instead, especially if the Christian community is to be formed. Beyond the figure of Jesus, the Holy Spirit may work through other means and so other religions may possess truths Christianity can learn from.
- Revelation is, therefore, not completely exclusive, instead it is normative. The Church can dictate how one should live, but does not possess this knowledge necessarily. There is the possibility that the Holy Spirit acts elsewhere in history.
- This avoids the issues with Rahner's 'anonymous Christians' and opens other religions to truths that connect to, but are different from, Christianity.

Key Texts

The Mystery of Salvation (1995)

- *The Mystery of Salvation* was a report by the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England on traditional beliefs about the afterlife and salvation.
- In particular it maintained the existence of heaven and hell and the absolute truth of Christianity.
- However, it equally affirms the universal possibilities of salvation in God and does not reject others of different religious beliefs. Rather, their salvation simply lies in common ground beyond the Christian faith.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹
Why have many Christian denominations increasingly moved to models of inclusivism when discussing truth and salvation?	
Why does Christianity's close relationship with Judaism, Platonism and other beliefs support an exclusivist perspective on truth and salvation?	
What was the view of early Church theologians on exclusivism and inclusivism?	
What is the Church of England's position on inclusivism as set out in <i>The Mystery of Salvation</i> ?	
How does Rahner adhere to the principle of 'Solus Christus' while acknowledging the possible truths in other faiths?	
How does the unknown God in Acts 17 provide evidence for an inclusive Christianity?	
What is the importance of the Church in Rahner's inclusivism?	
Why should the Church still proselytise if people of other faiths can achieve salvation without being Christians themselves?	
Why does D'Costa criticise Rahner's theory as being overly Christ-centric?	
What role might the Holy Spirit have in salvation beyond Christ?	
Does Rahner's inclusivism eventually collapse into exclusivism?	

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Pluralism

Overview

Pluralism in Christianity refers to the belief that salvation does not come through Christ, and other religions also possess equal knowledge or truth about different aspects of God. Traditionally it has been a rare belief in Christianity, which from identifying Christ as the only way to God to veer towards more exclusivist positions. However, with John Hick's publication of *Faiths* in 1973, pluralism in Christianity has been discussed in greater depth, if not by most theologians. In fact, many critics have accused pluralistic beliefs of being little more than modern, secular ideas masquerading within the boundaries of the Christian faith.

However Hick himself has argued that pluralism is not relativism, which some critics claim it is. He provides a rational basis for claims between religions, which are often difficult to reconcile between different faiths. One important idea here is that all religion is not final. As Hick argues, we are in a process of growth and evolution, for while disagreement exists, if they are all pointing to the same source for salvation, God, then a religion with no internal or external conflicts.

Key Points

John Hick and the Grounds for Pluralism

- Hick initially looks to identify how people come to their religious beliefs and what makes a belief valid. In particular, is there any way to rationally justify one religion's claims over another?
 - He argues that natural theology fails to fulfil this task. In arguments for the existence of God, there is no way to dispute any claims made for his existence.
 - Rather, the grounds for religious belief come through religious experience. While there are generally involving a divine being, there is no rational way to discern the truth of religious experiences, which are often private and ineffable or incommensurable with any metaphor or other artistic language.
 - However, Hick contends that all these experiences originate from the same source. A term Hick uses to encompass non-theistic, or polytheistic, ideas about the divine is 'the Real'.
 - A difficulty with this is that differences between religious experiences are the result of human factors such as culture, upbringing and experiences. Importantly, Hick rejects the idea that religious experience is projection, the ultimate cause is 'the Real', just that in our experience it is influenced by subjective elements.

Realism, Non-realism and Kantian Epistemology

- Hick explicitly rejects other philosophers and theologians such as Don Cupitt who argued that talk of God should only be understood as human experience. Rather, he employs Kantian categories to place the source of religious experience as 'the Real' beyond human experience.
 - Kant distinguished between the noumena, the 'thing-in-itself' or the existence of objects beyond human perception, and the phenomena, the things that appear to human beings through their ordinary senses. 'The Real' or God exists on the noumenal level but religious experience occurs on the phenomenal level.
 - This means that, while God's being is inaccessible, world religions experience him through his causing of human religious experience, which occurs as phenomena. For Hick this explains how different religions refer to the same God or 'Real' but have different interpretations of what he is or signifies.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Global Theology

- One of Hick's aims within his pluralism is to build a 'global theology'. This was an open, more balanced, methodological approach to religion and truth.
 - To this end he puts forward the idea of a 'Copernican Revolution' where he compares in this exclusive religious claims as being equivalent to the geocentric system, in which the sun and planets revolved around the earth, where religions analogously would revolve around 'the Real'.
 - This revolution in his eyes shifts theology away from having a Christological means Christianity only explaining other religions in the light of Christian ideas they directly or indirectly derive from.
 - Since there is no rational basis to claim Christianity's accuracy, such an approach would have no dogmatic or polemical basis, but also help Christianity to overcome its faults born out of human misunderstanding and the important message of the faith.

Demythologising Christ

- While Hick identifies the divine as being something real, he argues that much of the New Testament is based on human perspectives at the time it was written, such that essential truths were obscured by myth rather than propositional truths.
 - He argues, therefore, in order to reach the core messages of the Gospel, he must demythologise the stories around Christ. This is a similar project to the Barmen Declaration, which was focused greatly on scriptural study with the purpose of finding the 'historical Jesus' free from all possible embellishments made by the Gospel writers.
 - These studies indicate to Hick that the historical Jesus did not teach or believe in Christian doctrines, such as the Trinity or Incarnation, which rely on eschatological myths about Jesus's life that cannot be accurately authenticated in the historical teachings might.
 - In fact Hick argues Jesus's humanity is the most important aspect and that his moral teachings are more morally inspiring than if he were divine.
 - This means that Jesus Christ is not unique in Hick's eyes and the fundamental message of Christianity that he is the Son of God and the only path to salvation are undermined.

Other Features of Pluralism

- Hick's form of pluralism has been thought by some critics to focus too much on a consensus of religions. Many contend there is too much disagreement to form a true consensus of reality in the noumenal world.
 - Paul Knitter instead focuses on a 'soteriocentric' pluralism, arguing a pluralism developed from the shared beliefs religions have about helping one's neighbour to live an ethical life.
 - Keith Ward argues that there is no one authentic Real, but rather there are many different realities differently by each religion which inform their interpretations of salvation and therefore, fundamentally contradict each other and disagree, but still be true in their own right, sometimes called pluriform theological pluralism, as opposed to Hick's uniform pluralism.

Criticisms of Hick's Pluralism

- On the one hand, critics from more conservative Christian positions argue that Hick's pluralism devalues the Bible and removes its eschatological significance, especially with the resurrection. While other miracles might be dubious, there are numerous eyewitness accounts and so the resurrection was not a mere faith, and so with faith one should view Jesus as a historical figure.
- On the other hand, some secularists argue that Hick does not go far enough and that 'the Real' is not the noumena whatsoever. Rather, everything is simply phenomenal and can be regarded as simple projection. The process of demythologising is incomplete and so under Hick's system undermine his claims for an existing ultimate reality.
- Others contend that Hick provides no valid connection between 'the Real' in the noumenal world and the experience. Alasdair McGrath argues, for example, that its unknowability makes it impossible to have any knowledge of it.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



determine what constitutes a meaningful religious experience. Similarly, S Mark is closer to inclusivism as his authentic religious experiences would not extend to non-believers.

- Some critics even argue that Hick's pluralism collapses into exclusivism, as it devalues all religious experience and then judges and measures all religions according to the standards of religions such as Buddhism deny the existence of a God or unchanging reality.

Key Texts

John Hick – *God and the Universe of Faiths*



- Published in 1973, *God and the Universe of Faiths* is the book in which Hick set out his 'Copernican Revolution' in the way people understand and view religious claims.
 - Hick contrasts his pluralistic understanding of Christianity with the traditional view which affirms Christianity as the only true path towards salvation.
 - However, others have criticised this understanding of religious thought as it ignores the various incompatible claims that religions make of God, or as Hick

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹
Why is religious pluralism seen as an answer to the competing truth claims of different religions?	
What does Hick claim are the primary grounds for religious belief?	
What does  identify as the source of all religious belief and faith?	
Why might there be differences in religious interpretations of God or 'the Real'?	
Why does Hick advocate a realist perspective on religious experience?	
How does Hick employ the categories of noumena and phenomena to understand how each religion may be perceiving the same God, or ultimate reality?	
What is meant by Hick when he argues for a 'Copernican Revolution' in religious belief?	
What is meant by a global theology, and why Hick does propose it as part of his religious pluralism?	
Why, in Hick's view, does the demythologisation of Christ need to occur?	
How does identifying the historical Jesus support a pluralistic form of Christianity?	
Why might  theologians disagree with the process of demythologisation?	
What problems might there be in Hick using Kantian epistemological categories?	

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Multifaith Societies/Interfaith

Overview

With the increasing ease of travel and communication in the modern world, people are forced to not only encounter each other more in everyday life, but also develop relationships. This involves preaching and spreading the messages of their own faith. As such, being a part of a multifaith society involves being part of a multifaith society and while, for many countries, there have been major religions existing alongside one another, in many others, much of its religious history is Christianity.

This means both the Catholic Church and Church of England have been pushed to dialogue and work away from possible conflicts with other religions, instead working towards social harmony. This has not only come through practical discussions with representatives from other religions, but also through changes in doctrine and potentially difficult practices such as preaching or conversion.

Key Points

How Have Multifaith Societies Developed?

- Multifaith societies on the whole have increased in number in the modern age due to several factors that contributed to this development.
 - **Migration:** As travel and communication have become easier with technology, more people look to move to other countries for a change in lifestyle and environment, either short-term or long-term but, with greater increases in education in many countries, the desire to learn and explore other regions has led many people to migrate from their original birthplace.
 - **Labour, development and the free market:** The emergence of more international trade has also freed up labour across the world, and the necessity of skilled and unskilled labour in major cross-country projects has pushed people to seek employment opportunities in foreign countries.
 - **Refugees and asylum seekers:** The continued presence of conflicts around the world means that many people are displaced from their homes by surrounding violence. This can push people of different faiths to live and work together in more peaceful countries until it is safe for refugees to return to their own country.

Christian Response to a Multifaith Society

- In the last 50 years especially, many Christian denominations have undertaken interfaith dialogue, often through official changes to doctrine.
 - In the Catholic Church, a number of important declarations have been published in 1965 by Pope Paul VI, was seen as an important turning point for the Catholic Church and Judaism, as well as a number of other religions. The *Missio*, published by Pope John Paul II in 1990, details how Catholics can work while at the same time being sensitive of others' religious beliefs.
 - The Church of England in 2010 published *Living the Gospel of Faith*, where the Church approached preaching the gospel in a new way while at the same time acknowledging the religious landscape of Britain. In particular it promoted four dialogues where religions can come together, and how those following different faiths can live together.
 - **The dialogue of daily life** (ordinary encounters and conversations)
 - **The dialogue of the common good** (joint efforts to help the community)
 - **The dialogue of mutual understanding** (formal discourse, such as academic study)
 - **The dialogue of spiritual life** (joint prayer and worship)

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Other Religions and Interfaith Dialogue

- While there have been many Christian initiatives to promote interfaith dialogue with other religions' activities and letters.
 - In 2007, 138 Muslim scholars published a letter towards Christian churches titled 'Common Word between Us and You'. This set out a number of key beliefs in Islam and Christianity and called for each religion to reflect upon these beliefs in order to promote dialogue and understanding between both religions.
 - Similarly, in 2000, a statement 'Speal the Truth' was signed by over 100 Jewish rabbis and asked Jews to look at the views of many Christians across the world in order to promote reconciliation.

What is the Value of Interfaith Dialogue?

- Many Christians see interfaith dialogue as a vital part of Jesus's call to reconcile with our neighbours. Furthermore, it has the benefit of helping resolve any tensions between different faiths and truth claims, allowing them to enjoy diversity and learn from each other's beliefs.
 - Practically, in any country with different faiths, many people see effective interfaith dialogue as a way of promoting cohesion and preventing tensions, conflicts and even violence between different faith groups. In particular, since the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) to improve the relations between the Catholic and Jewish communities, and many believe that specific efforts to engage in dialogue, especially by Pope John Paul II, have helped bring these religions closer together.
 - Many believers in interfaith dialogue argue that religions often have a tendency to focus on more extreme ends of religious engagement can obscure the common ground. Critics might suggest that many religions are exclusivist in their outlook and that any agreement ignores irreconcilable issues that have led to religious conflict.
 - The Inter Faith Network is an organisation set up in the UK to specifically promote dialogue between religions through advocacy, education and information.
 - Many see it as an important part of evangelism, as many Christian churches believe that while from a secular point of view this is often opposed as an act of proselytism, Christians and people of other faiths, missionary work is a process of sharing the faith and involving the community and charity rather than an act of encroachment. For many, conversion to be a practice that is accepted by all religions and interfaith dialogue arguably is essential.

Different Approaches to Interfaith Dialogue

- Depending on how one theoretically approaches other religions, and to what extent one is willing to share truths and insights with one's own religion, arguably affects the way interfaith dialogue is conducted.
 - Exclusivists may simply use interfaith dialogue as a way to avoid conflict and to focus on converting others, as they believe only their religion has real insight into the truth.
 - Inclusivists, on the other hand, may engage in interfaith dialogue to acknowledge the value of Christianity being too domineering or imperialist. Furthermore, they may focus on shared values between Christianity and other religions, recognising the common ground of God and salvation.
 - Pluralists, however, may freely call for critical judgement of their own religion and believe that all religions have potentially equal insight into God and salvation. Therefore, they may use interfaith dialogue to develop a 'global faith' or 'global theology'.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



The Scriptural Reasoning Movement

- Originally confined to academic groups, scriptural reasoning is now a practice of religious groups aiming to come to a greater understanding of each other's faith through communal responses to contemporary social issues.
 - Generally it involves a small group of people from different faiths meeting to discuss a specific topic, and attempting to understand each other's perspective.
 - Many religious communities have attempted to work towards social issues through scriptural reasoning.
 - Many basic guidelines are often in place, such as focusing on a topic of mutual interest, meeting in a neutral space and encouraging honesty and openness during discussion.
 - Some have seen it as a 'post-modern' theological movement, rooting Christianity in a culture or language within a historical context, where mutual understanding is the goal. However, others have simply viewed it as a practical tool for individuals but also in the wider religious institutions of a particular faith.
- Some theologians have criticised the movement, particularly on whether it relies too heavily on the Bible in the process of engaging with other religions.
 - The neutral approach towards all scripture, studying without assumptions, is seen as misleading within Christianity, which from revelation through Jesus shows a clear position towards the Bible.
 - However, others argue that such an emphasis on putting Christ first is a result of misunderstanding when engaging in scriptural reasoning, and that when all parties leave out their presuppositions during study.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Key Texts

Redemptoris Missio

- A 1990 encyclical published by Pope John Paul II which deals with how Christians work while being respectful of other religious beliefs.
- However, it also still asserts Christ as the only path to salvation and largely de-emphasises evangelism in the modern era, in response to the increasing number of people who do not belong to the Church'.

Nostra Aetate

- An important declaration of the Catholic Church, published in 1965, that sought to engage with other religions and their beliefs.
- In particular, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism are addressed, and the Church's acceptance of truths in other religions is affirmed.
- Post publication, it has been identified that the *Nostra Aetate* led to many centuries of Christian–Jewish understanding.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹
How have multifaith societies developed and what factors have contributed to people of different faiths increasingly living alongside one another in the modern world?	
How has the Catholic Church taken actions to promote interfaith dialogue?	
What has the Church of England's response to the wider variety of faiths present in the UK?	
Why have many theologians and religious people seen interfaith dialogue as important?	
How does the practice of scriptural reasoning between different religions help to encourage constructive interfaith dialogue?	
Why have some theologians perceived scriptural reasoning as emblematic of post-liberal theology?	
What issues may there be within modern evangelism and proselytism?	
Why have some theologians criticised scriptural reasoning as 'flattening' or relativising engagement with the Christian faith?	

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Practice Exam-style Question

1. Assess whether inclusivism fairly accommodates religious views other than Christianity.

HINTS

In your answer you should:

show a consistent knowledge and understanding of the different ways Christianity has been interpreted as exclusivistic, inclusivistic or pluralistic, including:

- the significance of many Church denominations' movement towards inclusivism
- the reasons why theologians disagree about whether the history and nature of Christianity is naturally inclusivistic as a religion
- different perspectives and approaches to the question of whether Christianity can fairly accommodate different religious perspectives and whether this is a fair and realistic approach

Analyse and evaluate different approaches to the questions surrounding inclusivism and consider there may be for appreciating other religious views to Christianity.

2. 'Scriptural reasoning relativises and flattens Christian belief.' Discuss this statement.

HINTS

In your answer you should:

show a consistent knowledge and understanding of the different ways Christianity has been interpreted within the context of multifaith societies, including:

- the significance of analysing the Bible in the light of other religious texts
- the reasons why theologians disagree about the way scripture should be interpreted and how other religious views might have an influence on Christian belief
- different perspectives and approaches to the question of whether the use of scriptural reasoning is more than simply the Christian Church and tradition

Analyse and evaluate different approaches to the questions surrounding scriptural reasoning and consider there may be for giving other religions a voice of insight into Christianity.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Gender and Society

G₂ L₁ O₁

INSPECTION COPY

Gender Roles	The view that there are separate natural or God-given roles for men and women.
Patriarchy	A system or systems within a state or society in which power is reserved for men.
Misogyny	Deep prejudice, hatred or contempt against women.
Liberal Christian Feminism	Within theology, a field of feminism that aims to show how patriarchal or misogynistic and within the Bible and Christianity there is the potential for religious gender equality.
Reconstructionist Feminism	A field of feminism that argues granting women the same rights as men is sufficient to erase patriarchal elements of religion or culture and to dismantle and reconstruct the patriarchal structures to enable permanent change and true gender equality.
Radical Feminism	Within theology, a field of feminism that either explicitly rejects gender equality within Christianity, or argues elements of Christianity are required to dismantle patriarchal structures within society.
Marginalisation	The treatment of a group of people, e.g. women, as being on the edge of attention.
Mulieris Dignitatem	An apostolic letter by Pope John Paul II, published in 1988, which outlines the Church's views on the roles and dignity of women according to the nature of gender within society.
Theotokos	A title given to Mary within some Christian denominations, meaning 'God-bearer'.
The Other	The term De Beauvoir uses to describe how women are perceived and defined throughout history.
Naturalistic Feminism	A field of feminist thought that emphasises the differences between men and women, and the importance of natural elements of life, such as arguing roles such as childbearing and motherhood are essential for women to achieve fulfilment.
Naturalistic Fallacy	The philosophical fallacy that describes the issues with naturalism, good or bad, based upon its natural properties.
Hermeneutic Of Suspicion	A term used by Paul Ricoeur to describe the process of interpreting the understanding of the author's intentions or motives.
Diachronic Exegesis	The study of the Bible as it developed over time and how it is observed as it exists in the present.
Sophia	The goddess of wisdom, often worshipped within early Greek religion and paganism. In traditional Christianity she is understood as God's wisdom, with some identifying her as synonymous with the Holy Spirit of the Trinity. She features prominently in the wisdom literature of the Bible, such as Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, as well as apocryphal texts like the Book of Solomon.
Total Rape Victim	A term used by some to describe Mary as the person, devoid of agency, who was part of the virgin birth.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Gender Roles in Christian Theology

Overview

While many Christian denominations in recent years have sought to rethink their thought on gender roles, feminist critics still identify many traditional teachings that are patriarchal within Christianity. These have been identified as coming from a long history of being largely male-oriented, such that early Church theologians entrenched the ideas of the biblical authors.

While some have pointed out that there is a wide range of authors and times in which both the Old and New Testament were composed, in response to this suggestion, feminist theologians argue that there is a broad gender bias in the depiction of women in the Bible. Despite there being some exceptions, such as Deborah in Judges, the majority of the time women are generally portrayed as seducers and temptresses, when virtuous, often meek and submissive. This means that through the Bible, patriarchal attitudes of the time have been simply accepted as theological and fundamental ideas within Christianity itself. Over time, gender roles have been established, which may not reflect the will of God and so established woman as a secondary role. This, within many modern attitudes is regarded as both scientifically and morally wrong.

However, some female scholars have argued for more moderate positions on these structures existing during much of the history of the early Church, there was at the same time a sense of equality of men and women under God. In this line of thought, the idea of gender roles is seen as an incentive towards a radical reconstruction of Christian theology, but rather a prompt to the light of new realisations about gender and understand its real message beneath its traditional structures.

Key Points

General Points

- One important consideration when studying the Bible from modern perspectives is that a modern perspective creeps into one's interpretation. For example, some theologians have argued that Mary Magdalene may have played a much greater part in Jesus's ministry, with the intention of not intentionally or unintentionally marginalising her role.
 - However, this process of 'reading between the lines' can at times be influenced by the perspectives or morals of an individual influencing their interpretation rather than being historically determined from the text itself.
 - One important method that has been employed in an attempt to counter this is feminist hermeneutics, which, through reanalysing small parts of the Bible with a focus on meaning and context, looks to discern exactly what may be the inadvertent patriarchal authors creeping in.
- Critics have also asked that, if people find Christian teaching sexist or wrong, is Christianity still Christian?
 - One response is that, from proper historical analysis, a conception of God that is free of patriarchal structures that mirrors women's experiences of God and the world is possible.
 - Another response is that Christianity is part of the cultural fabric of the world and cannot be ignored. Elizabeth Cady Stanton made this point, arguing that, so long as women remained relevant in the world, it is vital that feminists critically engage with the tradition.

Gender Roles in the Bible

- Theologians have often noted the egalitarian nature of much of Jesus's ministry, with no division between men and women and, although none of the 12 disciples were women, it is mentioned throughout that Jesus had female followers.
 - However, there are a number of problematic teachings within Paul's letters that have shaped Christian doctrine that there are specific gender roles and even hierarchies between men and women.
 - Ephesians 5:22–23 has often been seen as a particularly difficult passage, 'submit yourselves to your husbands as you are to the Lord' (NRSV), strongly implying that men are of greater importance than women.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



- Similarly 1 Corinthians 11:7, in dealing with how Paul argues women's 'woman is the reflection of man' (NRSV).
- Feminist theologians have argued such passages have helped contribute to the direct image of God, woman is a secondary or lesser image, just as the Christian grounds throughout history.
- Despite these issues within Paul, there are other passages which indicate an equality between men and women.
 - Galatians 3:28 declares 'there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave and free, male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (NRSV), which indicates that, underneath the historical context, there is a New Testament to suggest that equality of men and women is a Christian ideal.
 - However, in the *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Pope John Paul II argues that this is not in essence, women and men are the same, simply that they both can be different.

The *Mulieris Dignitatem*

- The *Mulieris Dignitatem* is an apostolic letter, written by Pope John Paul II in 1988, that sets out the Catholic doctrine on the dignity of women, and their relation to men as 'equal, but different'. It covers a number of different themes, looking at the women in the Bible and Catholic tradition and drawing on the example of Jesus as a promoter of women's dignity and importance.
 - One concept analysed is that of Theotokos (God-bearer) for Mary. As the person who has been most intimately connected with God in history, she possesses a role only suitable for a woman, as well as symbolising the relationship with God humanity should hope to achieve.
 - It also looks at women as created in the image of God, arguing that both men and women are equal in this image. Eve's creation out of Adam by God was from suitability due to their complementary nature, not due to the primary identity of humankind being man, or the superiority of the male essence. This means for Pope John Paul there is the universal creation of humankind in Genesis 1 and the more specific creation of man and woman in Genesis 2.
 - However, some have criticised this letter for still adhering to certain 'feminine' characteristics, or the importance of motherhood and virginity. It also looks at the 'feminisation' of women and the 'emasculinisation' of men, ideas which suggest equal gender roles implicitly if not explicitly.

Women in the Early Church

Augustine

- Discussion around Augustine's perspective on women has varied greatly, with Radford Ruether arguing he develops a strong patriarchal theology, while others see him as closer to sexual equality than many of his peers.
 - The main difficulties occur in his views on the Fall, where humanity was created in the image of God, but through concupiscence. Eve, who was created, in Augustine's interpretation, as part of God's man for humanity to procreate. Women in this view are subordinate to man, who was created a deliberative creature.
 - After the Fall, however, man becomes 'master' over woman and subordination is not through love but rather through the body. The true relationship is only through love, not through the body.
 - Ruether reads into Augustine through this misogynistic portrayal of women, that women are only secondarily in the image of God compared to men, who are in the image of God. As Augustine states in the *De Trinitate*, 'Woman, together with her own God, is not in the image of God, she is outside of marriage. For Ruether this subordination is the way the patriarchal Christian Church has engaged with questions of its history.
 - However, other feminist theologians have argued that Augustine isn't as misogynistic as Ruether makes out. Genevieve Lloyd argues that Augustine actually sees women as rationally equal to men, only bodily inferior, in contrast to traditional views.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Women in the Medieval Church

Aquinas

- Aquinas in many ways builds upon Augustine's conception of gender roles, identifying women's main purpose as helping with procreation.
 - He argues it was appropriate to make man first, to give him the dignity. The other hand are created second, out of man. Aquinas argues this makes man the helper, and symbolically complements man's role as head of the woman.
 - Beyond how some theologians have interpreted Augustine, however, subordinate to man by intelligence. Man, in being created for a great purpose, naturally has authority over woman by way of reason.
 - This authority is linked to how Aquinas perceives the image of God in man. It consists in the intellectual natures of both man and woman, but is beyond that of woman, as he states in the *Summa Theologica* 'of man or woman; as God is the beginning and end of every creature'.
 - One of his most contentious sayings in the *Summa Theologica* is 'Woman is misbegotten'. Ruether argues this commits Aquinas to a false account of inferiority both in mind and body, and exposes his deep-held misogyny. However, if this quote has to be understood in the context of medieval biology, a man's reproductive capabilities, in perfect context, should produce children. It was willed in nature for women to give birth to female children from the man.

Luther

- Luther, in contrast to Catholic theologians at the time of the Reformation, did not see marriage as a sacrament and argued against celibacy, saying it simply made a person liable to sin. Instinctively this emphasis on the acceptability of natural relations between men and women. Luther may have had more progressive ideas about gender roles. However, the problematic teachings he advocates in the light of modern feminism.
 - He still argues that the main purpose of marriage is for marriage and procreation, arguing that they do not have mastery of themselves. Within marriage they have a duty to have sex and procreate with their husbands. The idea of a celibate woman was disregarded. Motherhood was seen as the most important role for a woman.
 - In this sense he is still similar to his contemporaries, arguing that men were logically built for both intelligent and manual pursuits in contrast to women, whose role was motherhood for women.
 - However, he in contrast argues that women are subordinate because they bore the brunt of the responsibility for man's wounded state for decades.

Were Augustine, Aquinas and Luther Misogynistic?

- By modern ethical standards it can be easy to identify misogynistic thinking in these theologians. However, many argue their arguments have to be understood in their context. If theology simply reflects the prevailing social attitudes of their time, then it is possible they were possibly more egalitarian than they appear at first glance.
 - For example, other theologians of the early Church arguably took a different view to Augustine. For example, in the *Confessions* his respect for his mother is compared to earlier thinkers such as Tertullian and Philo, who placed the Fall, his views are more moderate.
 - However, more radical feminists such as Ruether and Daly point out that these views simply reflect the social attitudes of their time, but created theological doctrine that they are responsible for maintaining misogynistic attitudes.
 - In contrast, Jesus, compared to the broadly egalitarian perspectives of Jesus, his teachings do not live up to his example, instead drawing on Genesis and the Old Testament. If there was a feminist message within the Gospels, they either missed it or chose to ignore it.
 - Some, however, still pick up some good teachings, such as all three's teaching that man and woman were made in the image of God. Whether such teachings originated or were established within Christianity, however, is a more difficult question.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Key Texts

Mulieris Dignitatem

- The *Mulieris Dignitatem* is an apostolic letter by Pope John II, published in 1988 in response to the rise of feminist thought, focusing on the role and dignity of women within the Church.
- In particular it focuses on the roles of women as mothers, teachers and daughters, containing the essence of womanhood in her role as a mother.
- However, it also maintains the importance of male priesthood, and feminist reinforcement of traditional gender roles as well as its warning against the 'feminist revolution' means that it still presents conservative and regressive views of women.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹
How has feminism, both secular and theological, raised discussion around the roles and equality of women in Christianity and the Christian Church?	
How has feminist hermeneutics and other forms of biblical analysis interpreted the Bible differently?	
Might the authors of the Bible deliberately or unwittingly have downplayed the roles women played in Jesus's ministry?	
Why do feminists still seek to engage with the Bible as a document?	
In what way does the Bible present women as inferior, and how has this translated into modern Christian thought?	
Are there passages in the Bible that support gender equality?	
How does the <i>Mulieris Dignitatem</i> address the dignity and roles of women in the Catholic faith?	
Why is understanding the figure of Mary key to understanding the essence of women as a whole for many Christians?	
What does Augustine teach about the roles of women, and how have modern feminists interpreted his theology?	
Can Augustine be considered progressive for his time, or is he responsible for generating much of the lingering misogyny in Christian thought?	
How does Aquinas build upon Augustine's teachings on the roles and place of women in Christianity?	
What does Aquinas mean when he states woman is 'defective and misbegotten'?	
How does Luther differ in his theology on the purpose and roles of women?	
To what extent can Augustine and Luther be regarded as misogynistic, or just products of the cultural landscape they were part of?	
Should early and medieval theologians be held morally responsible for their theology surrounding women, or have they contributed positive teachings on the nature and roles of women?	

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Gender Roles in Secular Theology

INSPECTION COPY

Overview

Particularly in the last one hundred years, the traditional roles that have been challenged on numerous fronts. At the beginning of the twentieth century women began to demand equal legal rights, campaigning for not only the right to vote but also equal pay and job opportunities. However, as women began to step into a more prominent role in society, they also began to identify a more systematic, psychological and patriarchal structure that simply could not solve. This was particularly noticeable in the ideas of family and motherhood. Many women, even those with religious inclinations, saw that the major purposes of a woman's life was to be a mother, a traditional reading of the Bible as part of the biological functions that only women could perform.

Nevertheless, this came under challenge in numerous ways. There were critics, of course, who argued that motherhood had been assigned as a method of control by patriarchal society and that equality could only be achieved by eliminating the cultural importance of motherhood. On the other side, there were those who argued that, while motherhood and reproduction were essential to a woman, these processes had been manipulated and controlled by male elements in society. Women had been prevented from true fulfilment in their lives, both as rational beings and as mothers. These strands of thinking naturally oppose traditional theological categories, which have sought to place women as man's intellectually inferior helper, and there has been a struggle to find a balance between secular insights and the traditional teachings of Christianity. Modern theologians identify different roles for men and women, while reaffirming their equality under God.

Key Points

General Points

- Compared to the liberal feminism of the early twentieth century, much of feminism from the 1960s onwards was concerned with how women could become fully autonomous, after the manner of men, and physically denied freedom to express themselves in a patriarchal society.
- Simone De Beauvoir provided much inspiration for second-generation feminism, especially with the publication of her 1949 book *The Second Sex*.
 - She explored ideas of how oppression against women had manifested itself in society and become so pervasive in society. In particular, it identifies how women are constructed as 'the Other', by a false mystification of their thoughts and ideas such that their autonomy and freedom is denied to them by man and the patriarchy.
 - Furthermore, she put forward that throughout history women have tacitly accepted 'the eternal feminine': the false view that there are essential female characteristics that define the purpose and roles of women. Many women are trapped in a 'false consciousness', an illusory and contradictory state that renders women unable to realise their own autonomy and beliefs.
 - De Beauvoir had much also to say about motherhood and family. She argued that it left a woman 'riveted to her body' and allowed her to be dominated by men. She could perceivably be a time when women would have free choice over their bodies, but in the present day she regarded it to be a role pressure that women had succumbed to rather than chose. Women, for De Beauvoir, against what she saw as an innate instinct towards being mothers. Motherhood for her, therefore, was a choice by the woman herself.
 - Her arguments also led to different thoughts about family. While some theologians maintain the idea of motherhood as an essential part of being a woman, De Beauvoir ignores the greater value of reproduction and the creative work of motherhood itself.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Naturalistic Feminism

- Naturalistic feminism begins with the idea that there are essential human differences between men and women, biological or innate, such that both sexes not only approach the world differently but also have different paths to fulfilment.
 - Therefore, for naturalistic feminists, the ideal is to find what the essence of each sex is and explore how this is best engaged with on its own terms, rather than trying to conform to the norms who have historically defined women's role and nature for them. This involves looking at the experiences of women and determining the core essence beneath the surface.
 - This means that many naturalistic feminists have identified motherhood as a role unique to women, and in encouraging the differences between men and women to cultivate their own, how best to find fulfilment in these concepts with women.
 - O'Brien, in particular, criticises De Beauvoir's theories on motherhood. She argues that for the value of children towards women themselves and how they can be used. Rather, the focus De Beauvoir places on the exploitation of women for the sake of children can be an essential and fulfilling part of a woman's life, providing a sense of purpose.
- On the other hand, there have been numerous critiques on naturalistic feminism and motherhood. Ann Oakley, for example, argues that the concept of biological determinism is based upon the ideas that all women need to be mothers and both mothers and children are essential to women's identity.
 - Other feminists have criticised O'Brien, arguing that functionally compulsory motherhood is misguided as the idea of women being mothers is patriarchal and should be reclaimed as empowering.
 - It is also possible to identify within such arguments the naturalistic fallacy, where the fact that one can biologically reproduce does not mean it is necessarily good.

Radical Feminism

- In contrast to naturalistic feminism, strains of radical feminism have sought to 'liberate' women from the oppressive and patriarchal ideas of motherhood and the family. Simply because women possess the ability to be mothers does not necessarily mean it is good for them to occupy this role and throughout history women have been a method to oppress women and make them dependent on men.
 - Shulamith Firestone argues in this way that the fundamental origins of women's oppression are biological and, similarly to how Marx envisioned the workers enacting a revolution by seizing the means of production, she argues women should seize their means of reproduction.
 - This includes taking control of the process of childbirth. Firestone envisions in the rise of modern reproductive medicine the ability for babies to be grown artificially, removing the need to burden the mother and allowing women to reclaim biological power.
 - Furthermore, she argues the idea of the nuclear family is not a natural phenomenon but a cultural construct developed through societal and patriarchal needs. Rather than it being the only ideal environment, there are other healthy ways to raise children, and Firestone argues that radical feminism should avoid overparenting and eliminate privilege through inheritance.
 - All this would aim to remove the cultural differences of gender ingrained from childhood, leading to a society where there are no expectations attached to gender.
 - However, some feminists disagree with Firestone's suggestions. And that technology is more likely to lead to further gender imbalance, as it relies on extended reproduction with women to have children. They could be seen as a means to a men's eyes.
 - It is important to note, though, that Firestone did not set her ideas in stone. In her proposals she attempts to stimulate discussion rather than dictate the path that should be taken.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Alternative Conceptions of Family

- Despite Firestone's redeveloped model of the family being primarily intended to argue that such perspectives seek to move focus away from all traditional concepts, many have explored alternative models traditionally marginalised by Christian thought that offer benefits to children.
 - For example, children might be raised in environments with multiple parents of different sex. These are not identified as correct models within a biblical context, but those attached to men and women are sidelined. They arguably are just as valid as traditional models, and children can be raised with a sense of stability.
 - Many Christians, however, criticise such suggestions, and while some parents, though more critical of models of family life that stray from traditional norms, still point to the nuclear family's success throughout history, others contend that an extended family can easily be formed from a network of relationships. To societal attitudes about misogyny and sexism (liberal feminism) can be more harmful than women than radically undermining successful ideas about the concept of family.

Christian Responses to Secular Gender Theory

- For the most part, Christian thought has held firm to beliefs about gender roles, but culturally many perspectives have changed and generally emphasising compatibility with secular theory in principle.
 - Some have argued that within certain strains of feminist thought there is a direct opposition to Christian teaching directly opposes radical feminism encouraging and promoting equality between men and women, it may have similarities to naturalistic feminism in emphasising the natural differences between men and women.
 - However, many naturalistic feminist theories still oppose traditional models of family life, often arguing they encourage natural repression of women's roles.
 - Christians, on the other hand, at a minimum often see Genesis as a symbol of the relationship between men and women, and God's command to 'go forth and multiply'. However, for secular feminists, if this teaching ties woman into an extension of male, beyond a biological role, then it is inherently wrong or even misogynistic.

The Catholic Church and the *Mulieris Dignitatem*

- In Mary, Pope John Paul II saw the archetype of the ideal woman. As the theologian of motherhood not simply biologically but spiritually, and so possesses a union with God that is ideally feminine and dignified is therefore exemplified in Mary.
 - However, he in particular argues that in reproduction the man owes a debt to the woman, and that although women are physically and psychologically predisposed to motherhood, men must take this for granted.
 - Despite this, secular feminists would argue that assigning women only a role in reproduction is arbitrarily limiting their capabilities and meaningfully reducing their status. With the insistence that women are not suited for priesthood, it still implies that women are of different rational or spiritual significance to men.
 - There are also other perceptible conflicts between Christian teaching and secular feminism. John Paul II's emphasis on the value of virginity is separate to motherhood, and an extension of patriarchal control over women's sexuality.
 - Similarly, fears over the 'marginalisation' of women would imply to many that the role of women is defined by male interpretation, or that this feminine, whether or not that correlates with biological reality, is defined by male interpretation.
 - Mary Daly criticises this point in particular, arguing that women's identity is defined by a distorted and by patriarchal elements, such that the free will of women is defined by any system of thought that prioritises male interpretation.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Has Secular Feminism Undermined Traditional Christian Beliefs?

- Within the political sphere much more emphasis has been given to secular ideas than to traditional Christian conceptions, so within wider society it can be argued that Christianity has been undermined.
 - One of the main difficulties is that traditional Christian teaching draws on biblical perspectives on women, and many critics argue that Jesus's message should be prioritised above views from the Old Testament.
 - Increasing historical analysis of the Bible also demonstrates that traditional Christian teaching may have been more and more a reflection of patriarchal attitudes. This can be particularly analysed in the prevailing morals of historical periods put forward in the Bible.
 - Nevertheless, there are also many reconstructionist theologians who argue that Christianity emphasises the importance of women, both within the community and the Kingdom of God. Whether Christianity is compatible with feminism, or the interpretation of Christian teaching beyond the views of various Christians, is a matter of debate.

Key Texts

The Second Sex

- *The Second Sex*, first published in 1949, is one of the most important contributions to feminist thought in the twentieth century. Written by Simone De Beauvoir, it details the structures of oppression that women have faced throughout history and why women still struggle to enact themselves as truly free, autonomous beings.
- In particular, it argues women have been defined throughout time as the privileged sex, but simultaneously held in the highest regard yet demeaned in their capacities and autonomy.
- In particular it argues that, through most of Christian history, both the religious and secular worlds subordinate women, beginning with the work of John the Baptist.
- Lots of feminist thought, including feminist theology, has been influenced by the deconstruction of the patriarchal structure of everyday society. It was even banned from the list of banned books in 1956.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹
How has secular feminist thought evolved through the twentieth century?	
How did De Beauvoir frame women as the privileged 'Other' throughout history? What repercussions does this have for theological beliefs about women as mothers?	
How have naturalistic feminists sought to frame motherhood as a unique and fulfilling process within women's lives?	
Why do naturalistic feminists criticise De Beauvoir for her views on motherhood?	
What criticisms does Ann Oakley make of naturalistic feminism?	
Why do radical feminists seek to liberate women from concepts such as motherhood and family?	
What are Shulamith Firestone's views on motherhood and family?	
Is the nuclear family a natural or artificial invention?	
Why do feminists disagree about the potential for technology to liberate women from traditional gender roles?	
What alternative conceptions of familial structures are proposed by radical feminism?	
How has the Catholic Church responded to these criticisms of conventional motherhood and gender roles?	
Can it be argued that modern secular feminism has undermined traditional Christian beliefs?	

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



The Feminist Reinterpretation

Overview

In line with the developments of secular feminism in the twentieth century, there was an equal rise in feminist theology, which has over time broadly critiqued what have been patriarchal and misogynistic elements of the Church but also of Christian thought. There have varied as to the solutions to this issue. Liberal and reconstructionist feminists have sought to locate the real, egalitarian Christianity by going back to the distorted perspectives of the authors and early Church theologians and, as such, have aimed to produce a new female experience as much as it does a new male.

On the other hand, there have been more radical feminists who have argued that theology is fundamentally flawed, and the only way to approach religion itself is to look at it completely from a female perspective. Towards the deeper underlying truths of faith and spirituality. Therefore, feminist theology has cast a critical gaze at the Bible from the feminine experience, they draw on the fact that it is still a matter of debate to what extent these are differences in interpretative process. Some are willing to argue Christianity potentially embodies real equality for women under the current system.

Key Points

Rosemary Radford Ruether

- Ruether is an American feminist theologian, who greatly developed critical and feminist elements of Christian theology in the 1960s and beyond.
 - While her early work draws on the liberal feminist tradition, she later became a reconstructionist in her views, looking to redevelop ideas of Christ and the Church from the perspective of women's conceptions of their 'maleness'.

Feminist Hermeneutics

- Feminist hermeneutics was a method of analysis employed by Ruether to analyse how Christian principles might exist outside of the patriarchy that influenced them.
 - In particular, she incorporated the 'hermeneutic of suspicion' from Paul Ricoeur, which involves questioning how people might have previously interpreted the Bible by looking at it from a different perspective. This involves questioning the assumptions gained from interpreting them a certain way.
 - In the case of the Bible, it can be suggested that its interpretation has been influenced primarily from the male perspective and, as such, Christian theology has benefited men the most within a culturally patriarchal environment.
 - Ruether, therefore, considers the Bible a historical document, not the word of God. Her interpretations are subjective and from a particular context. The tradition of the Church has led to a false symbolic hierarchy of 'God-male-female' in Christianity.
 - She argues that her use of diachronic exegesis, looking at how this hierarchy has changed over time, justifies her belief that, from a lack of documented female conception of God in Christian thought, there is room for an overall reinterpretation of God and the Church to describe them.

The Historical Jesus and Messianic Expectations

- Ruether analyses the figure of Jesus, not through the lens of traditional Christianity but through the Jewish conception of Messiah, which would more accurately befit the time of his ministry.
 - However, in contrast to what might have been the male, warrior-type expectations of much of the Jewish population as a figure to liberate them from Roman rule, Jesus was seen in a radical 'prophetic liberating tradition' which took form in the rejection of Roman rule, criticism of legalistic religious practices and equal treatment of all people.
 - Ruether argues particularly that these elements are the underlying assumptions of God within the Bible that had been dressed in the patriarchal tradition of the Church.
 - Jesus in this sense was not someone who fulfilled male expectations, but someone who sought to establish a new egalitarian social order that promoted the equality of all people.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



- This can partly be seen in areas of the Bible such as the conversion of Paul (Acts 16:13–15). While some critics such as Daly would argue this process is not a successful woman by the early apostles, it is also possible to read this as a sign of equality Jesus preached within his ministry that might have been typical of the Gospel authors.

Jesus, God and Non-essential Maleness

- If Jesus was this sort of figure, then, Ruether argues, his maleness is 'accidental' rather than essential.
 - This means that maleness is not an important part of Christ's character and is used to reinforce traditional patriarchal hierarchies.
 - Ruether also argues similarly that God has often been talked about in male terms. Yet at the same time the exclusive use of male terms has contributed to damaging marginalisation of feminine perspectives in the church.

Reconstructing God

- Ruether contends that female language was historically used to describe God, but was marginalised by male terms and perspectives.
 - She identifies within the Jewish wisdom tradition the title of 'Sophia' as a female metaphor for the Logos before the maleness of Jesus brought forward to describe the Trinity.
 - Jesus in this way may have originally been a prophet of Wisdom in the tradition of The Wisdom of Solomon, carrying or mediating Sophia before all things came into precedence.
 - Therefore, Ruether argues the radical, egalitarian Jesus should be salvaged from traditional male terms and used as the basis for a redeveloped Christianity that equally incorporates female experience.

Janet Soskice and the Trinity

- A revised view of God and language in the Trinity can be supported by Soskice's work. She argues that in the incarnation there has always been the combination of male and female, that, while Jesus was male, God cannot be regarded as Jesus alone. There is something about God not fulfilled by Christ's maleness. In this way Jesus is fundamentally human, not essentially male.
 - But she makes the point that the Trinity has been interpreted along male dynamics, with the Father–Son relationship. If these male terms are not indicative of their essential characteristic, however, it is important they are recontextualised to include female or neutral language structures.
 - However, such a process has a number of risks. One doesn't want to lose sight of God and Jesus's relationship with purely neutral terms, but equally not to define God as mother, as that relegates women's essence to that of Mary.
 - Rather, one should seek to supplement male language with a range of female terms so that God becomes represented by both genders. In this way the grammar and the Trinity are not limited by aspects of male cultural interpretation, but by a range of perspectives and ideas.

Mary Daly

- Mary Daly was an American feminist theologian who described herself in particular as a radical feminist. While her work initially was more liberal/reconstructivist, her later work became increasingly radical and expressed severe criticism of patriarchal structures that occur within Christian theology.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Christianity and Male Superiority

- From the very outset of her thought from *The Church and Second Sex* in 1968, Daly contends that Christianity presents an illusion of gender equality as all being one under God, but in reality, women are excluded from such a theory and prevented from real spiritual participation of self-fulfilment.
 - This can be seen, for example, in Luke 24:9–12, where Mary, Mary Magdalene's experiences of the risen Jesus are disregarded until Peter goes to look for him.
 - She particularly contends that God and Jesus' maleness are highly privileged, 'the male is God'. Rather than simply reconstructing the Trinity, she has to get rid of them altogether.
 - As such, she argues for 'degrading God' and reinventing God not as a male figure, but as a female one. Women do not have to embrace the possibility of being in the Trinity, but rather, they have to realise the possibility of complete self-fulfilment.
 - In particular, as the uniquely male saviour, represents the legitimisation of patriarchy. Whether or not he was egalitarian and for gender equality, his needs and views of the present. Christianity, despite his example, has created a 'scapegoat psychology' that women ought to be meek, the meek have inherent value.

Morality and the Unholy Trinity

- In contrast to the views of traditional theology, Daly argues that morality has not been derived from the Bible or revelation, but rather has been constructed by men.
 - For women this takes the form of a 'morality of victimisation', while for men it is the establishing of male entitlement, giving them the psychological space they see fit.
 - This concentration of 'phallogocentric power', as she sees it, gives rise to the 'Unholy Trinity' of rape, genocide and war that Christianity has both overtly and covertly supported throughout history.
 - Ultimately, whatever female perspective there might be has been constructed by men, and institutionalised Christianity has failed to provide support for women.

Christianity and Mythology

- In her book *Mythology and Ecology*, Daly's radical position is fully realised and she argues that the myths of Christianity are stolen from pre-Christian myths in other ancient religions.
 - Further still, she contends that Christianity in particular is based upon the stories of the Trinity, identifying the Trinity as arising from the Triple Goddess figure found in African cultures.
 - To this end she describes herself within her feminist theology as a 'pagan' who has reclaimed traditions that had been taken from women by patriarchal Christianity.
 - She in particular attacks elements of Christian theology that make women victims. For example, she argues the virgin birth strips Mary of her agency and makes her a person spiritually invaded but giving little resistance. This makes her a vessel exploited within the Christian tradition, and sets up the rest of her life as a symbolic fate.

Spirituality and Nature

- Daly developed the concept of biophilia with her new concept of female-oriented spirituality, arguing that human beings naturally seek connections in nature, and, for women, these connections can bring them closer to self-being, the reinvention of God.
 - However, Daly argues that such spirituality is not open to men, due to their 'phallogocentric' nature, which are manifested in the Unholy Trinity.
 - In contrast to the patriarchal belief system of Christianity, she argues that women should look towards authentic, spiritual self-liberation and rediscover themselves and their insights in the natural world.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Can Christianity be Reconciled with Feminism?

- Ultimately, despite both criticising the patriarchal elements, Ruether and Daly perspectives. The former argues that the language of Christianity can be reworked whole given a new lease of life incorporating female perspectives. On the other hand, she hopes for Christianity, and a post-Christian spirituality is the way forward, removing the patriarchy.
 - Much depends arguably upon the figure of Jesus and the prominence of his ministry. Ruether argues that its nature, as 'accidental' gives rise to the possibility of a new ministry, Daly argues his masculinity can never be separated from the message. She argues, whether Jesus promoted women's rights or not, the entire example is problematic in emphasising a slave-oriented mind-set, similar to the church. For Daly here, self-liberation cannot occur while one bows to a male saviour. More, for Daly, a male saviour can never save women.
 - Similarly, there are difficulties within many Bible stories. While Jesus is seen as a bridge between men and women, the Bible itself is largely still a document dominated by men. That end it is questionable whether Ruether can find the liberating tradition she contended that her hermeneutical approach itself is highly speculative. She would argue it is impossible to adequately replace the entire Christian vocabulary with female-oriented terms without losing aspects of traditional theology.
 - On the other hand, Daly herself notes she is extremely sceptical of religious and religious criticism. But such an approach also leaves her open to the charge of myth. Many would argue that, if one extends comparison enough, an origin can be traced back to another origin, but the best-fitting context for Jesus's life is within Christianity and not within pre-Christian myth. Similarly, others might argue more than there are central moral elements that are inspired, innate or objective, they have been fallible throughout history.
 - Many would also argue that Daly only focuses on a small subset of women, mostly heterosexual and educated, ignoring the needs of different ethnicities, class and those who may be guilty of alienating the very women she seeks to elevate through her work. Many argue she is dismissive of other religions, such as Buddhism and Islam, and her analysis of their beliefs or teachings.
 - A major criticism of Daly is her argument that only women can develop a new spirituality. This suggests that there are no distinct essences that define men or women. She sees men as naturally evil and defective, tending towards destruction and violence. She argues primarily through analysing men's behaviour throughout history, yet she believes that through re-education, and greater significance given to the female experience, male impulses could be extinguished and the spirituality Daly envisions become a reality.

Key Texts

Beyond God the Father

- Published in 1973, *Beyond God the Father* is the point at which Daly's thought begins to cast aside the belief that Christianity can ever move beyond its patriarchal roots.
- In it she discusses the possibility of androgyny, the theological discussions of gender, and the renaming of God as Be-ing.
- However, in later works she moves away from this position, towards a reclaiming of the feminine.

Gyn/Ecology

- The realisation of Daly's shift to radical feminist theology, *Gyn/Ecology*, published in 1978, sees the wild, untamed female as the ideal, unconstrained by the patriarchal structures of society.
- Moreover, it seeks to strip, in discussions of female gender, the male-constructed elements that have dominated such discourse.
- This, beyond regressive practices by men, is instilled in language and so, linguistics. She argues that to develop new systems of discourse, free of traditional gender constraints.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹
How does Ruether approach the Bible as a historical and cultural document?	
In what way does Ruether challenge the idea of Jesus as male, and the warrior/messiah connotations surrounding his gender?	
How does Ruether perceive the underlying morality in her historical analysis?	
Why is Jesus's maleness accidental and not essential?	
How does Ruether approach the task of reconstructing God?	
What role does Sophia have in this reconstruction?	
In what way does Soskice's theology and deconstruction of the Trinity support Ruether's arguments?	
How can women develop their own spirituality in the light of this deconstruction of the Bible and its authors?	
Can it be reasonably argued that Jesus sought the equality of genders within his ministry?	
Why does Daly argue that the reconstruction in gender-equal terms of the Christian faith is impossible?	
What does Daly mean when she argues there is a 'phallogocentric power' within Christianity and the Church?	
How does this power lead to the Unholy Trinity of rape, genocide and war?	
To what extent should women be pirates, reclaiming spirituality and life from patriarchal structures of control?	
How is Mary the 'total rape victim' in the narrative of the virgin birth?	
Is there room in conventional Christianity for gender equality or does the whole religion have to be abandoned?	

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



INSPECTION COPY

HINTS

- the significance of and / or Christian theology from a modern feminist perspective
- the reasons why theologians disagree about the way early Church theologians approached women's ministry
- how progressive in their theological approaches towards women were different perspectives and approaches to the question of whether there should be female ministers
- the theology of many early Church theologians in the light of modern feminist thought

HINTS

- the significance of secular feminist criticism in identifying key areas of modern Christian theology
- the reasons why theologians converge on or disagree about the possibility of a truly feminist religion
- different perspectives and approaches to the question of whether there is a feminist Christianity, or an abandoning of it for modern feminists

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



The Challenge of Secularism

G₂ L₁ O₁

INSPECTION COPY

Secularism	The belief that religion should be separated from political and equal under law, with no special preferences given to those of
Ego	The organised, rational part of the human mind that mediates one's perceived re
Superego	The cultural, critical part of the human mind that reflects a per
Id	The instincts and drives of the human mind towards baser ple
Wish-fulfilment	Freud's view that human religious beliefs (and dreams) are repressed by ordinary thought (the ego and superego).
Guilt	For Freud, an emotive struggle between the ego, superego and ordinary actions and often results in anxiety. It is often present in Christianity.
Neurosis	An excessive, irrational obsession often resulting in depression, and
Totemism	The process of worshipping or elevating a sacred object or be
Totem-feast	Ceremony driven around consuming, or other taboo acts around surviving in present-day thought within Christian communion.
Memetics	A theory describing how units of culture (memes) can be repeated person to person via evolutionary mechanisms.
God Hypothesis	The term Dawkins uses to describe the views as a scientific or non-existence of God
Genetic Fallacy	A fallacy where the truth or falsity of an argument is based on premises other than on the merit of the argument itself.
Creationism	The belief that the world was caused by an act of divine creation. Theories about the origins of life and the world are conclusive
Selective bias	The selection of arguments or data for a proposition that does not cover the full possible range of information or perspectives.
Psychic Determinism	The view that all human mental actions are determined by previous
Illusion	A false idea, appearance or understanding of an ordinary experience

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Christian Thought and Secularism

Overview

With the rise of modern science and psychology, there have been attempts to reduce religion, and so Christianity, to a series of psychological processes or cultural instincts. The spiritual is seen to be no more than a particular set of thoughts or emotions that encourage people to figure greater than themselves for their problems or anxieties. More than this, however, some figures have argued that religion itself is a social construct, responsible not only for a lack of progress but also as a cause of conflict, violence and war around the world.

Therefore, secularism typically involves seeing the world in a material way and as having no scientific or moral basis and as of no moral worth. Especially in the case of the Bible, typically, the doctrine of original sin, it is argued that religious beliefs are taught from an early age in Christian belief that humankind is wounded and rather than rational and intellectual instincts, one is encouraged to look towards an unprovable God for help. For many argue, causes humans to identify such baseless thinking as a virtue and, rather than situations on evidence, encourages human beings to rely on emotions and religious beliefs.

On the other hand, there have also been many defences of Christianity from such claims. The Christian doctrines of compassion, love and sacrifice encourage good moral behaviour and itself cannot be reduced so easily to mere psychological properties.

Key Points

General Points

- The majority of Christian theologians would not deny that faith or religious beliefs are not based on evidence, rather simply that such belief cannot be reduced purely to the physical. On the other hand, they contend that religious belief is best explained by psychological processes, without the need to refer to a divine being for its generation or causation.

Sigmund Freud

- Freud was a strict atheist who viewed religion as a series of psychological processes. He saw human religious beliefs as a response to their anxieties about the natural world. It is not in the nature of a false idea, but as a form of wish fulfilment based on how humans subconsciously want the world to be. Therefore, the idea of the universe and God can be understood as a fulfilled wish, not as a real evidential claim.
 - This wish for Freud has its roots both in the history of humanity and in the experiences of each individual. How it arises, therefore, can be explained both as a general principle and as a set of experiences and anxieties unique to each individual.
 - One way of understanding wish fulfilment is as a response to unconscious desires being repressed by the ego and the superego. Such responses manifest themselves in dreams, but also in fantasies, neurosis or even psychosis, and it is in this way that Freud identifies the religious impulse.

Humanity, Nature and Religion

- For Freud, religion is the response to the brutality of nature and he points out that, unlike Greek paganism, there is a distinct appreciation of nature and its force.
 - It is in the face of uncontrollable and unpredictable nature that humans seek to understand and, more importantly, control it.
 - This is where the idea of God has its origins, as a being who has power over nature. The belief in him transforms humanity's idea of the universe and its place within it.
 - Once God is identified, humans can find ways to align themselves with his will, thus saving them from the blind powers of nature. It gives them control over things like natural disasters, which otherwise humans would feel helpless against.
 - This alignment, therefore, allows people to feel safe against the seemingly overwhelming power of nature. This safety can take numerous forms; for example, praying to God or being assured that one will achieve eternal life after one has died.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



God and the Judeo-Christian Tradition

- On an individual level, the wish for God manifests itself during childhood, when the dangers of the world and is completely dependent on others for one's survival.
 - Just as, therefore, one relies on one's parents growing up, as an adult one relies on God.
 - This is where, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the idea of God as a Father figure emerges. God in a personal sense as the being to take care of oneself as a parent.
 - Therefore, for Freud, the ideas within Christianity, about God are ones that reflect the wishes one has about the outside world. For a person, beyond whether or not there is a psychological motivation or not, the need for such religious ideas to be true is a natural one.
 - Freud contends that, in reality, psychological experiences or ideas about God cannot be used to demonstrate his existence. Rather, it would have to be proved that God exists, which is largely regarded as an impossible task.

Guilt, Christ and the Resurrection

- Freud identifies one of the overarching emotions guiding humanity to be guilt. It comes from society to their parents, either in bad moral actions or simply not living up to expectations. The result is that it drives much of human action, often unconsciously.
 - In more primitive societies, the death and atonement of Jesus was a central part of the faith of his followers. His redemption of mankind was one that many people would believe in, and the consequent Christian obsession with sin is indicative of both the power of the faith and the human need to validate or punish themselves.
 - Christianity, therefore, both exemplifies the guilt human beings naturally feel and the need to redeem that guilt through sacrifice.
 - Freud identifies in Christian communion in this sense, a revival of the ancient totem-feast. This takes the form of a sacrifice of something sacred from which the community absolves its guilt by all sharing in its consumption. What is sacrificed is originally was an animal, Christianity introduced Christ as the object of shared sacrifice.
 - However, this phenomenon of sacrifice, sin and guilt is ultimately unsatisfying, especially when it sits subconsciously in the mind as a repression. It often leads to unhappiness and neurosis in human beings when they cannot appreciate the real cause of their actions.

Issues with Freud's Model

- Despite Freud being highly influential, many of his arguments have been criticised by the scientific and psychological community. In particular, while his theories provide explanations for many things, they generally fail to predict it, and a marker of what makes a good scientific theory is that it can describe a situation but also to predict its subsequent behaviour or effects.
 - Many religious critics have pointed out that, simply because Freud provides a psychological explanation for religious belief, doesn't mean that there is not necessarily a God. This way Freud advocates psychic determinism, but fails to make a connection between his theories and their causes.
 - As such it can be argued that, if a God did exist, he would likely create a world where people would be able to perceive him or act in religious ways. This is beyond the realms of psychology and so what Freud perceives as wish fulfilment in humanity is correcting with its creator.
 - Furthermore, Freud's examples of guilt within Christianity are highly specific and do not cover a wide variety of Christian beliefs. For example, Barth distinguishes between natural morality and Christianity, arguing the former is the human-made construct Freud is based on and the latter is the human-made construct of Jesus Christ and salvation in Jesus Christ.
 - The rites and rituals of communion are arguably non-essential to Christianity. For many, the Eucharist is a manifestation of joy in Christ's resurrection and atonement.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



What can Christianity Learn from Freud?

- While Freud's models might ultimately seek to undermine Christianity as a valid religion, his model of psychological determinism might be ultimately flawed in its assumption of a psychological determinism. There are possibly things to be learnt from his arguments.
 - In particular, it can be argued that Freud seeks to identify the reasons for human actions and it can be useful to Christians to understand when they are driven by compassion, but guilt and neurosis.
 - This notes that, simply because one is a Christian, one is not psychologically determined. Subconscious desires might influence actions. As Jesus taught right moral action, it can equally be argued it is important for Christians to improve themselves and engage with the world and cultivate positive intentions.

Richard Dawkins and Religious Belief

- Dawkins famously argued against the rationality of religious belief in his 2006 book *The God Delusion*. He not only argues that religion is a delusion compared to healthy atheistic attitudes, but also that human goodness can be understood without reference to religion.
 - He strongly argues as a starting point that it is not possible to infer God's existence from the world itself, and that natural selection and other scientific theories are superior to religious claims concerning the cause of the world.
 - Beyond this juxtaposition, however, he argues that the theory of religion is a 'by-product' of the way the mind intentionally considers the world around it. Without a scientific explanation, a person will seek to provide answers for what appears to be meaningless, even if such answers are wrong or unnecessary.
 - This process occurs through memetics, a field of study that uses models of cultural evolution to explain how ideas and culture spread throughout a population. It is, therefore, not with whether an idea or argument is true or false, but with the success of an idea in a population as a whole.

Religion and Memetics

- The idea of memetics proposes that the fittest ideas within a human culture survive and pass on from one generation to another.
 - The ability for an idea to survive, however, is not necessarily rooted in its truth, but in how it corresponds with the human desires to perceive and understand the world.
 - Christianity, therefore, for Dawkins, in being simple at its core with its clear command to make disciples, is a perfect example of an idea that easily spreads. On the other hand, faith also makes it difficult to reject. Followers are taught to leave their lives in powers beyond their control.
 - Therefore, Christianity as an idea is determined to spread, regardless of its truth or falsehood. It is important to note, however, that such an idea does not spread because it is true, but rather that, even if it is not true, one can easily see how its beliefs could spread. There is no mystery to the success of Christianity and it can be understood in terms of social attitudes.

Christian Responses to Dawkins

- Similarly to Freud, however, it can be pointed out that the memetic nature of Dawkins' argument against Christian beliefs themselves is limited. Theological arguments such as Alvin Plantinga's understanding of theology are limited, and Dawkins confines his argument forward by people such as Alvin Plantinga without comprehending how modern theology can accommodate such arguments.
 - Some, therefore, while there may be value in Dawkins' theories for understanding how their faith spread so quickly, there arguably is less to learn in Dawkins' theories which make numerous assumptions about human beings' psychological and social attitudes.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Key Texts

Sigmund Freud – *The Future of an Illusion*

- *The Future of an Illusion* is one of Freud's most significant works on religion as to why it should be considered a false belief system, based upon human wish fulfilment.
- It is through this desire for things to be a certain way that the illusion of religious fulfilment is a factor in one's motivation for believing in something, it can't be verified to facts about the world, even if the illusion might be true at some point in the future.
- However, critics have argued that his arguments in *The Future of an Illusion* are a charge of the genetic fallacy – that simply because one can explain the origin of an idea does not mean this origin is the only one, or that the idea is true or false.



Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹
What do secularists often seek to reduce religious belief to?	
Why does Freud identify religious belief as wish fulfilment and what is this wish in response to?	
How does wish fulfilment arise from the ego, superego and id?	
What does God mean within the human psychological condition for Freud?	
How is God as a wish fulfilled within the Judeo-Christian tradition?	
Why does Christianity play into the mental complexes of human guilt?	
How does communion emerge as a continuation of the ancient totem-feast practice?	
Why might Christianity's obsession with guilt, sacrifice and sin be ultimately damaging?	
What issues are there with Freud's model of religion?	
How might Christianity learn from Freud's models of human psychology?	
Why does Dawkins argue religion is a delusion?	
In what way do religious ideas potentially spread throughout a population according to memetics?	
Why is Christianity in the UK a good example of a religion suited to spread throughout a population?	
How might Christians respond to Dawkins' criticisms of religion?	



COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Society, Christianity and Secularism

Overview

Many critics of religious belief have also put forward arguments both on society and the individual. Often the focus has been on violent, destructive behaviour by religious belief, but critics have also argued that an atheistic position, in its nature, is a more reasonable position to hold. For Freud, an individual's religious reaction can become a repressed guilt that causes them unhappiness, at best and at worst can lead to immoral and erratic behaviour. Despite this, therefore, for Freud, religion can hold civilised society together under common moral law, it can generally be unhealthy, and also can lead to extreme intolerance for those outside a particular faith.

In this series, religious belief has often been argued to be the cause of many social problems. Modern atheists such as Richard Dawkins have argued that it should be removed from government and social life altogether. For Dawkins, while Christianity still plays a role, religious conflict will still happen and the violence associated with it will never cease. However, many Christians would argue that people engaging in violent conduct are fundamentally misunderstood the teachings of Christianity itself. In this sense they are responsible for immoral conduct. Instead, the ordinary vices and immoral tendencies that have always spoken against, are responsible.

Key Points

General Points

- When considering how Christianity and religion in general might cause immoral behaviour, determine whether the truth of the teachings and existence of God should play a role in existence in public life.
 - For many Christians, the spreading of the good news in evangelism is central to Christian faith. If salvation is only achievable through Jesus Christ, then it is important in public life, whether the individual person or culture responds positively or negatively.
 - On the other hand, for atheists, the truth values of Christianity are irrelevant to the secular world. While there might be an argument for tolerance, religious conflict is a natural phenomenon, many argue that in fact the opposite is true and that religious evangelism are inherently harmful and dangerous to humanity's well-being.
 - Many people have argued that in the modern Western world there is a process of secularisation; a transformation of society from having religion at the heart of life to one where religion has much less power and cultural influence.
 - Secularists argue such a process is a positive and natural aspect of progress as people become more rational and focused on science, technology and the material world.
 - Religious people, however, may argue that secularisation is a negative process as it removes religion from offering insights into ethics and culture to wider society, leading to a loss of life spirituality, which helps promote well-being and happiness among people.
 - In recent years especially, religious figures have argued that secularisation is a too materialistic a perspective on life, which not only causes anxiety and depression but means people lose sight of important questions and ethical considerations in the modern world and social life.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Different Forms of Secularism

- While secularists are generally united in arguing for religion having little to no influence on society, the approaches to this aim can vary.
 - **Procedural Secularism** – this puts forward that religion should not be a part of public life. It is the responsibility of the state to recognise the interests of all citizens, whether they are religious, but there is nothing guaranteeing particular rights and protection for religious groups.
 - **Programmatic Secularism** – this puts forward that all state affairs should be based on secular principles, with religion being excluded and its influence minimised in politics, education and public life.

These two approaches are often the result of the different value secularists give to religion. Those who favour procedural secularism are more likely to see religion as causing social harm and see its exclusion from public life as a necessary step for a more just society, while those who favour programmatic secularism might recognise the positive influence of religion on society as it does not interfere with the welfare and freedom of others.

Dawkins and the Wrongs of Religion

- In the second half of *The God Delusion*, Dawkins argues that religion is responsible for many of the social ills and attitudes that can be perceived in modern society. Beyond exclusionary attitudes, he argues that it encourages violent, fanatical behaviour and bigotry against minorities.
 - He documents in Chapters 9 and 10 especially a number of examples of the mental abuse of children by evangelical preachers scaring them through the issues mentioned that Dawkins claims religion has held regressive attitudes towards issues such as female circumcision, the criminalisation of homosexuality and apostasy, and access to abortion and euthanasia.
 - While cases of individuals acting on potentially regressive interpretations of religious texts on key social issues might be excusable against a wider background of poverty and ignorance, Dawkins argues that religion fostered widespread immoral and prejudiced attitudes. The lack of ability for many religious people to consider objective evidence means that, unless religion is removed from public life, social harm will continue.

Dawkins and Christianity

- Dawkins's analysis of religion has been criticised, both for overstating the extent to which religion is responsible for the social issues he identifies, and in his selective bias towards the negative aspects of religion.
 - However, Dawkins argues as an example, that the beliefs within Christianity are not inherently evil, but have an unhealthy fixation on death, suffering and punishment.
 - He identifies many stories in the Old Testament, such as Noah and Abraham, which he argues that beyond how they are religiously interpreted they are broadly horrible, even sadistic, stories. Furthermore, there are many crimes in the Old Testament which are thought to be punishable by violent retribution or death. The principle of an 'eye for eye' as stated in Deuteronomy 19:21 is not one many people would endorse as compassionate, but it is prominent through many of the Old Testament's teachings.
 - The New Testament, on the other hand, with its emphasis on the death of Jesus as atonement, encourages a collective guilt within Christians and an obsession with sacrifice, cruelty and suffering, similar to that of cults.
 - Even teachings such as 'love thy neighbour' have been distorted to only apply to specific groups and, despite the emphasis on compassion, the exclusionary nature of Christianity encourages the ill-treatment of those outside the faith.
 - In contrast, Dawkins argues that people have a natural moral sense for which it is possible to identify Darwinian origins for altruistic behaviour without recourse to a spiritual or religious origin.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Freud and the Place of Religion

- While Freud sought to identify the natural causes behind religious belief, he felt that religion itself was responsible for social ills. For in his view, man was naturally aggressive and religion was a convention and organisation in which, throughout history, religion has been used to control man. Freud's thinking there is a goal attached of explaining religion away, and without it, we can see various ways in which Christianity might have a negative impact on human life.
 - The mind's need for security in religion often leads to faith being excluded by aggressive and hostile attitudes to anything outside of an individual's religion and conflict.
 - The Christian obsession with sin and so guilt is one that is naturally prone to neurosis. While religion might have functionally hard role in stabilising nations, if one can now identify the root of religious anxiety, it is possible that it is needed to maintain peace. If this is true, then removing religion from people's lives would lead to people to be happier and freer in their lives.

Should Christianity be a Part of Public Life?

- If one accepts the arguments by Dawkins and, to a lesser extent, Freud, it is very likely that religion should be kept out of public life at the very least.
 - Dawkins in particular opposes teaching Christian beliefs in schools, as well as unscientific creationism and encourage indoctrination in children too. In the context of religious belief. This in turn, Dawkins argues, propagates religion by religion, as children internalise potentially negative religious attitudes.
 - Others argue that Christianity has historically propped up ethically wrong things to be a positive moral influence on society. Throughout history, critics of religion include slavery, colonialism, oppression of women and violence in the Crusades and support of capital punishment.
 - Similarly in the present day, many argue that modern religion still opposes important issues. For example, the Christian Church is still largely against the Catholic Church opposes the use of contraception, requesting medical advances such as stem-cell research. Critics, therefore, argue that religion has a strong influence on public life, people's access to these important services is restricted, restricting the welfare and prosperity of ordinary people.
 - Western states already enact a strict separation between religion and the state. The Church and political state separate, and the argument can be made that those that encourage harm to those outside of a particular faith, should not have influence on political procedure, which should seek to legislate for the common good.

Should Christianity be a Part of Public Education?

- In the UK it is still compulsory for state-funded schools to provide religious education. Furthermore, there are many faith schools across the country which have religion as a central part of their overall curriculum.
 - Supporters of faith schools argue that they offer a distinctive education for the families of a particular religion. Furthermore, they argue that education should teach important moral and spiritual values in children, which helps develop a sense of community and welfare in local communities.
 - However, thinkers such as Dawkins, Freud and believing religious education in faith schools actually do the opposite. Instead of integrating religious education further from the general secular society in the UK.
 - Furthermore, critics argue faith schools can leave children open to racial and religious hatred, especially in the scientific parts of the school curriculum.
 - Finally, some secularists might contend that religious education should be taught as long as all major world religions are taught and critical analysis is provided. However, necessarily grow up assuming that religious truth claims are essential to their faith.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Christian Responses

- Despite Dawkins identifying and analysing many social ills seemingly encouraging Christians to have argued that many issues, such as female circumcision, are contrary to Christianity. However, moderate Christians argue that, while they might hold beliefs that do not support same-sex marriage, they do not believe this should entail violence or condemnation against homosexuals. They themselves, as this would go against Jesus's teachings on compassion and non-violence.
 - Some have pointed out also the contribution Christianity has made, not only in the field of science, but to art, culture, philosophy and even scientific enquiry. Under this view, even secular governments and the positives have to be weighed against the negatives.
 - Furthermore, the Christian ideals of sacrifice and compassion are ones that benefit society and bring happiness. Where bad actions have occurred, Christians might argue that self-interest or selfishness taking precedence over the teachings of Christianity.
 - Christians might even argue they can recognise how specific Christian practices, such as abortion, should not have priority or direct representation in parliament. The Christian Church can help illuminate whether a particular practice might be better or worse than previously considered by a secular party or government.
 - To this extent also, many Christians argue that Dawkins is highly selective in his criticism of religion, ignoring the many situations and circumstances where religion has brought peace and prosperity.
 - Therefore, many Christians might see current moral thinking as having lost sight of Christian teaching and so argue that it should still have a role in education.

Are Secularism and Secularisation Opportunities for Christian Ways of Thinking?

- The possibility for a secular Christianity has been posited by theologians before. For example, from prison, for example, expresses doubts as to the moral efficacy of religion. However, it is indicative of the moral demands Christianity truly places upon the individual. It can be noted he views faith in Christ as superior to that of the human world.
 - Therefore, in line with Dawkins's belief that study of the Bible and growth in moral growth in society, it is arguably possible to have a secular Christianity that approaches political and societal engagement that avoids issues such as abortion or gay marriage, and instead that looks at how to improve society from the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels.
 - For example, newer Christian-rooted religions such as the Unitarian Universalist Church have commitments to intellectual freedom and religious pluralism. While it is argued such groups have abandoned far too much of the original beliefs, others may equally argue that the Christian Church has held onto too many traditions that do not necessarily be directly supported from the words of Jesus himself.
 - Therefore, secularisation may mean that Christianity might develop into a form that recognise not only the truths of the Bible, and Church and tradition, but also the insights of other religions and thinkers, as well as secular critics of religion.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Key Texts

Richard Dawkins – *The God Delusion*

- *The God Delusion* is one of Richard Dawkins' most famous books, published in 2006. It is an emphatic rejection of arguments for God's existence as well as its insistence that religion is an illusion, but also damaging as a whole to human society and culture.
- However, he does not argue he can disprove God, rather when considering the world we always find simpler and better explanations for natural phenomena and even for the existence of God.
- He also criticises many religious practices, which he argues have the aim of social control as well as encouraging division between humanity as a whole. It is these exclusive attitudes, bigotry and hatred of others, leading to violence and other negative social ills.
- However, he also argues that morality has a genetic origin and as a whole has been created by Religion, despite arguing it has presented universal moral truths has simply taken the consensus from an increasingly rational society. This means that the moral truths from the Bible are simply reflections of the ethics of society at the time rather than truths contained in the Bible itself.
- Christianity, therefore, has not become good or moral through itself, rather it is the growth present in human society, realising the natural origins and reasons for actions occur.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹
How might religion, despite often preaching peace, be the reason for conflict and war in the world?	
How have various religions disagreed with missionary work and evangelism, especially in schools?	
Why does Dawkins believe religion has contributed and still contributes to violent and intolerant attitudes in the modern world?	
Why might various biblical stories support violent attitudes on behalf of Christians?	
How does guilt or neurosis caused by Christianity possibly contribute to social ills?	
Why does Freud identify the exclusionary attitudes of many religions as a possible cause of violence?	
Why does Dawkins argue for a reduced role of Christianity in public life?	
Why should religion potentially be kept out of political decision-making?	
How might Christianity lead to accusations of violence and intolerance in other religions?	
Why can difficulties be identified in judging a religion simply based on the actions of its followers?	

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Practice Exam-style Question

5. 'Religion is nothing more than wish fulfilment.' Discuss. (40 marks)

HINTS

In your answer you should:

show a consistent knowledge and understanding of the different ways secularists have understood religion, including:

- the significance of and for Christianity and other religions from a secularist perspective
- the reasons why theologians diverge or disagree about whether religion is a sociological phenomenon or causes sociological phenomena
- different perspectives and approaches to the question of whether we can describe why individuals look towards religion for answers about the meaning of life

Analyse and evaluate different approaches to the questions surrounding the reasons critics might have for believing religious belief is little more than wish fulfilment.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Liberation Theology and M

G₂ L₁ O₁

INSPECTION COPY

Liberation Theology	The Christian movement that developed primarily in Latin America which uses Marxist and other political theories focusing on social justice and a preferential option for the poor.
Ecclesial Base Communities	Semi-autonomous congregations or groups of Christians. In addition to meeting for Bible study, they focus on their local communities.
Evangelii Gaudium	A 2013 apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis detailing the religious and social obligations the Church and its members have to the poor and the focus of modern missionary work.
Preferential Option for the Poor	A Catholic social doctrine which emphasises the need for a radical example in focusing on those who are marginalised.
Alienation	A Marxist concept that described how people become alienated from their work and the fruits of their labour.
Exploitation	The unfair treatment of someone so that one person benefits from the work or efforts of another.
False Consciousness	A term retroactively applied to Marx, describing a state of denial about their exploitation by their employers.
Proletarian Revolution	The revolution by the proletariat (poor) against the bourgeoisie for the realisation of their exploitation.
Underside of History	A term used to describe how the poor have been marginalised from political life throughout the history of the world.
Orthopraxis	A branch of theology that focuses on the right actions and practices to perform in their lives.
Orthodoxy	An area of theology that focuses on the right beliefs and doctrines that Christians should focus on in their lives.
Capitalism	A system of governance and economics that emphasises that individuals should control major areas of trade and industry.
Socialism	A model of political and social organisation that states that trade and industry should be state controlled, with a greater redistribution of wealth between the rich and poor.
Communism	A model of political and social organisation that states that the state should be controlled, with workers receiving only the fruits of communally owned enterprise.
Latifundia	The traditional semi-feudal system of agriculture that existed prior to the modern age.
Structural Sin	The sin that is present in and arises as a result of the economic and social structures of a society.
Reversal	A Christian concept that details how in the coming Kingdom of God there will be a shift in wealth and fortune.
Lay Catechist	A non-ordained, baptised individual appointed to teach groups of Christians without a parish or local church.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



The Relationship between Marxism and Theology

INSPECTION COPY

Overview

Liberation theology is a Christian movement that emerged primarily in the 1950s and 1960s as a response to the economic and social oppression many poor people faced in Latin America and other regions. In particular, it emphasised the 'preferential option for the poor', a social theology, focusing more on the application of Christian teaching through social action and looking to explore the sources of sin within a political and social context as well as the individual.

This led to many liberation theologians drawing on Karl Marx as an inspiration. Marx was a philosopher and political economist in the nineteenth century who developed ideas of a systematic class struggle that led to the development of communism. One of his best-known works is *The Communist Manifesto*, which analyses historical patterns of political struggle before arguing that a communist society would eventually be achieved by a revolution of the working class.

Marxist ideas were attractive to those engaged in liberation theology as they provided a context to the injustice many people were facing around the world. In addressing social issues, but as a situation to be overcome, they provide a methodological starting point for how to enact Jesus's teachings in the modern world and allow those poorer people to be liberated not just in the afterlife. In particular, many liberation theologians argued that traditional Catholic doctrine had lessened and devalued the figure of Jesus as a liberator in the Gospel, focusing on the political context of his ministry and overlooking his passionate call for liberation from sin.

Despite these good moral intentions, liberation theology has often been criticised within the United States at a time when the Cold War meant communism was seen as a threat to capitalism. Even the Catholic Church at various times has admonished Marxist communism as focusing on institutionalised sin, which they argued served as an excuse for immorality. However, despite criticism, strains of liberation theology have survived and continue to be influential today in academic theology.

Key Points

General

- An important point to initially consider is that liberation theology does not adopt a Marxist view over Christian theology. Rather, Marx is used as a methodological tool to develop a way of understanding the ways poverty forms and manifests itself in society. The Bible remains the central text, but it can be analysed within a present-day political context.
 - Many liberation theologians also identify a Marxist society as closer to the ideal than a capitalist one. The former has a greater focus on community, sharing, and the latter arguably supports an obsession with the material and encourages competition.

The Methodology of Marx

- Marx draws great inspiration from Hegel, who had analysed history as a progression towards a spiritually complete society. This progression for Hegel occurred through anthesis and the two compromising to form a synthesis of theory, culture and society.
 - Marx, however, approached these changes in society from an economic perspective, arguing that societies had moved through different political and economic stages of living and struggles by ordinary people.
 - Societies as such had begun as primitive, before moving towards feudalism and capitalism. But while capitalism improved upon previous economic systems, it still relied upon the exploitation of the workers (proletariat) by a wealthy ruling class (bourgeoisie).
 - The exploitation would increase, as the growth rate of capitalist societies became less abundant. Employers, valuing growth would continue to take measures and new technology, resulting in a reduced number of workers and severe economic inequality.
 - For Marx, the realisation by the workers of their oppressed status would lead to a revolution, and a new societal synthesis would be formed where everyone would be free from labour and exploitation would be absent from all economic interaction.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Exploitation and Alienation

- Of particular interest to many liberation theologians is how Marx explores the how human production under a capitalistic economy might naturally lead to
 - For example, Marx argued that any person working for a wage is inherently exploited. If an employer is to make a profit, they have to pay their workers less than the value of the goods they are tasked to produce.
 - Therefore, no matter how wages are structured, they are always exploited. Exploitation through wage labour is intrinsic to the system itself. There is no end to an employer's desire for profit, and are treated effectively as machines rather than human beings with desires and autonomy.
 - Another concept Marx addresses is alienation. Many workers in the industrial revolution felt that they use themselves and so do not naturally find meaning in their work. They are forced to compete with others and are denied autonomy in their working patterns. This all adds up to a person being alienated from the fruits of their labour and creating a lack of self-worth in their everyday lives.
 - Many liberation theologians, especially in Latin America, identified these concepts in the poorer population. The traditions of the latifundia, where many people worked for a wealthy person on their land for comparatively small amounts of money, fit Marx's model. As such the Christian teaching to help those in need in liberation theology became inextricably tied up with Marxist theories on exploitation and alienation.

How can Exploitation and Alienation be Avoided in Liberation Theology?

- Marx saw the solution to exploitation and alienation to be for workers to own the means that in producing goods and food. Workers could communally own and run the offices, rather than them being owned by a small number of wealthy people.
 - Ecclesial Base Communities were developed in Latin America as a response to this. They were originally begun due to a lack of priests in many regions meaning 'lay people' took on a union among a parish.
 - However, as time went on they often developed their own identity apart from the Catholic Church as a whole. Focusing on an egalitarian model, they began to interpret the Bible eisegetically, looking to people's own readings of the Gospels.
 - There was greater emphasis on the social aspects of Jesus's message rather than eschatology as realised within the world. Overall, these teachings led to people being more directly involved in their religious belief and practice and not to arise from being within a hierarchical Church.
 - EBCs also helped organise and implement numerous benefits in local communities, such as development projects to access to better healthcare and education. In Brazil, EBCs, along with Caritas and parts of the Catholic Church, helped to bring doctors in the 1970s in the region.
 - However, many EBCs were also involved in local politics, often campaigning on various issues of corruption and governmental inaction. This was often done with significant conflicts such as in El Salvador.
 - While some argue that EBCs were not authentic reflections of Catholic teaching, the emphasis on social justice, orthopraxis and community meant that the needs of the poor people were arguably better served than within the traditional Church.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Reversal, False Consciousness and the Gospel

- Marx thought that a classless society would only come through a proletarian revolution where workers seized the means of production and set up a system of redistribution of the wealth of society and only received what they needed.
 - Marx believed the bourgeoisie would not willingly give up their wealth and so the revolution is likely to be violent and involve a protracted struggle by the workers.
 - However, it was also the case during the time of writing *Das Kapital*, that Marx did not consider that they were oppressed or even the victims of structural power. Rather, they simply believed that the system they were brought up in was the way things were. This has become known as 'false consciousness'.
 - In order for a revolution to occur, it would be necessary for the consciousness of the workers to reach a level at which they became aware of their oppression and the need for change.
- Many liberation theologians advocated a similar revolution to Marx. While they called for widespread social change through insight from both theology and the social sciences.
 - The concept of reversal in the Gospels is particularly seen to support the idea that Jesus has come to 'free the oppressed' and bring 'good news to the poor'. In 20:16 Jesus preaches that the 'last shall be the first'.
 - These passages, along with the depiction of Jesus as a possible social revolutionary, support the idea of a revolution as reversal along similar thematic lines. The poor and oppressed are an example of the sort of liberation that should be sought in the world.

Capitalism, Socialism and Institutions

- Capitalism is a model of political and societal organisation that discourages state intervention and forward that private interests should control the primary sectors of trade and industry. It also encourages those interests to generate profit as a mark of growth of a particular country. It is this emphasis, as Marx and other left-wing socialist theorists have typically argued, that leads to widespread wage labour, exploitation and alienation.
 - Generally, it has been argued that capitalism puts profit before consideration of the needs of particular structures of oppression to form, which liberation theologians would argue is a sin.
 - This can be understood as the collective sins of human beings forming a structure of sin. While individuals benefiting from the exploitation of others are sinning by participating in the system, it is not simply individual actions that can be related to sin, but the structure of the system that occurs.
 - This particularly occurs when collectively sins are enshrined in law. For example, if one individual is racist, then that sin only reflects on them, but when an entire country legalises certain forms of racism, then the sin becomes collective and structural.
 - For liberation theologians, it is not simply enough to tackle or preach against individual sins, rather revolution or reversal has to occur to eliminate structural sins from society.
 - Liberation theology often argues that capitalism propagates certain forms of structural sin, particularly economic systems that encourage exploitation and alienation in ordinary workers, and as such a move to a socialist society, where redistribution of resources is greater, and people share in the wealth of society is necessary.

Liberation Theology and Capitalism

- Liberation theologians share with Marx the belief that human beings are created in the image of God, but they also have a particular focus on passages such as Genesis 1:28. However, many liberation theologians have expanded on Marx's work, arguing that theology as a whole can fill in the critique of capitalism, especially in its critique of capitalism.
 - For example, José Porfirio Miranda highlights the destructive way private property can lead to certain individuals to objectify and denigrate others. However, he also provides a much more radical way of understanding how this process occurs, arguing that the system of capitalism is a sin against God and humanity.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



- In particular, he puts forward that an understanding of human beings' nature can explain why some human beings exploit others, and how this leads to sin.
- Furthermore, idolatry, and the idolising of the material by human beings, capitalism as a whole and an entrenching of the structural sin it entails. If the commandment to not objectify God truly followed, this worship of capital and the material would not have occurred.

The Catholic Church's Response to Liberation Theology and Capitalism

- Traditionally the Catholic Church has criticised liberation theology's notion of structural sin, while there are unfortunate circumstances and systems in the world that the Church identifies, identifying or attempting to change the structures is the wrong approach.
 - This is because, in the view of the Catholic Church, this allows individuals to avoid their sins. The idea of structural sins implies tacitly that it is not individuals who are accountable for sin, rather the structures. For many, therefore, acknowledging the structures of sin allows individuals to avoid their sin.
 - Cardinal Ratzinger in the 1980s particularly criticised liberation theology. He argued that Marx and ignoring his thoughts on religion as another form of social criticism. Furthermore, Ratzinger argues Marxism directly puts forward the idea of structural sin, which is inherently un-Christian. Instead Christ calls for the betterment of individuals as a response to sin, not encouraging further structural sin.
 - However, Pope Francis in the *Evangelii Gaudium* comes closer to acknowledging the structures of sin, but still criticises liberation theology, criticising the 'crony capitalism' that is spiritually deadening. He argues that capitalism is not achieving fulfilment and autonomy in their lives. However, despite this, he does not advocate revolution, and falls short of identifying capitalism as an evil.

Orthopraxis and Orthodoxy

- Liberation theology has often argued that in the Christian Church too much emphasis is placed upon orthodoxy (the right forms of belief and ritual), and instead Christians should be more concerned with orthopraxis (the right kind of actions), especially in countries where a significant number of people are impoverished or oppressed.
 - All of this orthopraxis can arguably be seen in Jesus's ministry, where he not only heals the sick, but calls upon others to give up their wealth and feeds those who are hungry. In contrast, the depiction in the Gospels of groups such as the Pharisees are often of religious authorities too concerned with ritual, purity and observance, which can arguably be interpreted as an overestimation of the importance of orthodoxy.
 - Some liberation theologians have even criticised elements of the Catholic Church concerned with orthodoxy, to the extent that they have failed to act in the world, and even tacitly maintained the socio-economic order that keeps people impoverished.
 - In this regard, liberation theologians argue that Christianity has to often fail to help those who are oppressed. Simply reinforcing a hierarchy in the Church that keeps the poor in poverty and capitalism will leave ordinary Christians unable to seek help for the poor.
- The liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez envisioned praxis happening in two stages:
 - The first act was to stand alongside the poor and oppressed, experiencing their struggles and suffering with them during difficulties in their lives.
 - The second act was then drawing on these experiences in developing a Christian praxis. Gutierrez argues that 'theology and ethics come from an understanding of and solidarity with the poor. Theology is not a set of abstract ideas, but a response to the history of the world'. This is a term explicitly used by Gutierrez to describe how the Church should respond to the history of representation throughout the history of theology and the world, and the case that theologians do not seek to live richer lifestyles than the people they are trying to help to save.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Leonardo Boff and the Three Mediations

- There is still considerable debate on how to fully realise and enact the two act identifies. One theory is put forward by Leonardo Boff, who argues for what This would enable liberation theologians to develop what Boff called 'a new radical way, not chained by the past traditions of Christianity developed in the
 - The first is the **socio-analytic mediation**, which focuses on using the philosophy, political theory and economics to examine and analyse why poverty and oppression, focusing particularly on the historical causes.
 - The second is the **hermeneutical mediation**, which argues for using the in particular the Bible to understand the experiences of the poor as for parallel biblical accounts to see how theology can also give insight into poverty and oppression.
 - The third is the **practical mediation**, which focuses on action, particularly Communities and groups dedicated to building and developing societies both the socio-analytic and the hermeneutical mediations help liberation right kinds of positive action to take and enact social change to help the oppression and difficulty.
 - These mediations, therefore, not only provide a framework for understanding economists such as Marx can be used within liberation theology, but are central to the goals of liberation theology, such that all academic insight understanding of how it can be used to improve the lives of the poor.

The Preferential Option for the Poor

- Liberation theology often adheres to the doctrine of the preferential option for Christians have a responsibility to first care for those who are marginalised or those who are privileged or wealthy.
 - This is often seen as vital as part of Christianity's goal of justice and fairness. The privileged have the time, space and money to find fulfilment in their lives, struggling inevitably through their treatment or marginalisation cannot. Even keeping religious devotion as a part of their daily lives may be difficult.
 - Liberation theologians in particular see as part of the moral life siding with the poor. It often is the case that those benefiting from capitalism are not the poor, but the rich, who has to live a poorer life to ensure the wealth of the rich. In liberation theology that, in this unfair system, it cannot be moral to care for the wealthy and means to invest in their religious lives.
 - It can possibly be argued, however, that Christianity, with its emphasis on caring for the poor, not focus on one group in particular, even if they are in material need. *Evangelii Gaudium* reaffirms the importance of the preferential option for the poor as an essential vocation for any Christian to help those in need, and it is the poor who need greater time given to spiritual care, as they will be preoccupied with day-to-day survival.

The Preferential Option in the Bible

- The doctrine of the preferential option for the poor can be seen to have its roots sided with those who were sick, poor or marginalised in society instead of the rich.
 - This is particularly seen in the Gospel of Luke. The 'mission statement' of Jesus is that he has come to bring 'good news' to the poor and 'let the oppressed find freedom'. This is a direct affirmation of his preference for those who are impoverished and marginalised.
 - The Parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matthew also reinforces Jesus' preference for the poor. In Matthew 25:35–36, he affirms the goodness of those who help the poor. However, there are also plenty of Old Testament examples of the preferential option for the poor. Amos regularly called out the hypocrisy of the religious authorities of his time. Jesus's criticism of the Pharisees. In Amos 9:10, he even affirms that the poor who have oppressed the poor, and throughout the book of Amos criticises the rich and the poor in Israel present during his life.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



- Similarly, Exodus describes how Moses, with God's assistance, frees the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and leads them out of Egypt.
- Equally, the doctrine of the preferential option for the poor is critical to liberation theology. It is the view that the poor are inherently blessed, a view that, in the eyes of critics, is as a form of social control over ordinary workers and people.

Reversal, Revolution and Development

- Liberation theology and Marx agree on the need for a widespread revolution and a way of ensuring that the poor and oppressed can be free of the economic and social conditions that oppress them. While they disagree on the political methods involved in this revolution, both agree that the poor require radical change to realise their economic and social circumstances that they are in.
- This is where liberation theologians often criticise the simplistic emphasis on development promoted by the Catholic Church and other charities. Development for the poor, both short and long term, through material means such as aid, is seen as insufficient. In particular, they argue that development only temporarily helps the poor and inevitably any aid or money only helps people for as long as it lasts, leaving them in a state of dependency on capitalism ensuring they have no guaranteed, permanent way of improving their own self-fulfilment and autonomy.
- In the case of certain forms of development, such as loans to poorer countries, this can turn into long-term debt to wealthier countries, which can at times be used to exploit the receiving country even simply trap the receiving country into long cycles of debt they cannot escape.
- Therefore, liberation theologians argue that along with development, there must be a focus also on social change, and an ending of the structures of capitalism. Development from being effective in the communities it is attempted in. The traditional forms of Christianity espoused are not as effective at dealing with long-term problems of poverty and the structures of inequality that Marx originally identified.

Has Liberation Theology Fully Engaged with Marx?

- While liberation theology has arguably successfully criticised elements of Christianity and well as the structural sins of society, it can be contended that it does not go far enough in its appreciation of Marx.
- One major criticism is that the concept of reversal in liberation theology is not as radical as the notions of revolution in Marx. While Marx believed workers could overthrow the bourgeoisie, he still believed that the bourgeoisie would never willingly give up power, and that a potentially necessary violent revolution would be necessary to enact change. The weaker principle of reversal, which does not want to espouse violence due to Christian principles, suggests that a change towards a Marxist system would occur without a potentially violent revolution.
- It can also be argued the revolution Marx seeks is an economic one, while the liberation theologian's aims may ultimately be compassionate, the Marxist is more about justice, and these competing ideologies can clash, especially when seen as a means to an end.
- Lastly, Marx criticises religion as 'the opium of the people', arguing it dulls the people's consciousness rather than letting people appreciate their oppressed status. Therefore, that liberation theology, so long as it holds onto Christianity, cannot fully motivate people towards the reversal and revolution it desires.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Key Texts

Karl Marx – *Das Kapital*

- *Das Kapital* is a major text of philosophy, economics and politics by Marx that discusses the economic and social basis of capitalism.
- It is composed of three volumes. However, only the first was ever published in its entirety.
- In particular, it focuses on the various contradictions within the structure of capitalism, the tensions and disputes between wage labourers and the owners of the means of production, leading to the eventual collapse of capitalism itself.
- Since its publication it has greatly influenced political theory, leading to many of the Marxist frameworks that have been used to analyse numerous other concepts, including modernisation.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹
How did liberation theology develop from Marxist theory and the economic/political struggles many ordinary people faced in early twentieth-century Latin America?	
Why do liberation theologians see a Marxist society as closer to a Christian society than a capitalist one?	
How does liberation theology use Marx to develop a critique of both conventional religious practice and the structural sins that underlie modern capitalism?	
What are the Marxist concepts of alienation and exploitation?	
Why have EBCs possibly failed to alleviate alienation and exploitation in many Catholic communities?	
How are workers possibly trapped in a false consciousness?	
How are the Marxist concept of revolution and the Christian concept of reversal similar?	
Why do liberation theologians view capitalism as flawed, and why did Marx envision that one day it would fail?	
What is structural sin? Why does the Catholic Church criticise it as a concept?	
What is the difference between orthopraxis and orthodoxy?	
How did Gutierrez envision orthopraxis happening in two stages?	
What are the three mediations of Boff?	
How is the preferential option for the poor possibly enshrined both in the Bible and Marxist thought?	
Why do liberation theologians criticise the theological support only for ordinary development work, and why do they argue social revolution must happen for real change in the fortunes of the poorest members of society?	

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Practice Exam-style Question

6. Assess whether liberation theology successfully engages with Marxism

HINTS

In your answer you should:

show a consistent knowledge and understanding of the different ways liberation theology develops its ideas on sin, exploitation and universal, including:

- the significance of Jesus for Christianity through alternative secular readings
- the reasons why theologians diverge or disagree about whether the ideas of Marxism can be incorporated into Christian theology
- different perspectives and approaches to the question of whether liberation theology can appreciate the difficulties in reconciling theology with Marxism

Analyse and evaluate different approaches to the questions surrounding the theology, and the reasons critics might have for being cautious about incorporating Marxist ideas into Christian belief.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Mark Schemes

Levels of Response (A Level)

Level	Levels of Response (AO1)
6 (14–16 marks)	The student's answer will display excellent knowledge and understanding of the question, and will contain a pertinent and applicable content applied with full understanding. It will show a very detailed understanding of the relevant issues with very good breadth or depth. There will be a rigorous use of technical language and a good number of references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
5 (11–13 marks)	The student's answer will display very good knowledge and understanding of the question, and will contain a great amount of applicable content applied appropriately. It will show a good understanding of the relevant issues with very good breadth or depth. There will be a good use of technical language and substantial references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
4 (8–10 marks)	The student's answer will display good knowledge and understanding of the question, and will contain a good amount of applicable content generally applied. It will show a solid understanding of the relevant issues with moderate depth. There will be a mostly precise use of technical language and a good number of references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
3 (5–7 marks)	The student's answer will display adequate knowledge and understanding of the question, and will contain a fair amount of applicable content and show a general understanding of the relevant issues, though without depth or breadth. There will be some technical language and some references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
2 (3–4 marks)	The student's answer will display a rudimentary knowledge and understanding of the question, and will contain some applicable content and show a limited understanding of the relevant issues. There will be some technical language and a few references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
1 (1–2 marks)	The student's answer will display a poor knowledge and understanding of the question, and will contain little applicable content and show a very limited understanding of the relevant issues. There will be minimal technical language and very few references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.

Level	Levels of Response (AO2)
6 (21–24 marks)	The student's answer will give an excellent analysis and evaluation. It will have a persuasive and coherent argument, with clear, well-developed and in-depth justification and evidence for the views presented, and will thoroughly and skilfully answer the question. There will be an extensive use of technical language and significant and substantial references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom which enhance the answer.
5 (17–20 marks)	The student's answer will give a very good analysis and evaluation. It will have a persuasive and coherent argument, with well-developed justification and evidence for the views presented, and will fully and skilfully answer the question. There will be a precise use of technical language and substantial references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
4 (13–16 marks)	The student's answer will give a good analysis and evaluation. It will have a coherent argument, with some well-developed justification and evidence for the views presented, and will pertinently address the question. There will be a mainly precise use of technical language and some references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
3 (9–12 marks)	The student's answer will give an adequate analysis and evaluation. It will have a coherent argument, though it will lack full justification and evidence for the views presented, and will generally address the question. There will be some well-used technical language and some partly effective references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
2 (5–8 marks)	The student's answer will give a rudimentary analysis and evaluation. It will have a coherent argument, but with minimal justification and evidence for the views presented, and will only partly address the question. There will be some technical language and some effective references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
1 (1–4 marks)	The student's answer will give a poor analysis and evaluation. It will have a coherent argument, lack justification and evidence for the views presented, and will not address the question. There will be minimal technical language and very few, if any, references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Indicative Content

1. Assess whether inclusivism fairly accommodates religious views other than Christianity

(AO1) Students may describe and explain the ideas below:

- The inclusivist Christian maintains that Jesus is unique, and provides the only path to salvation, but that other religions may share in, or have partial insight into this truth.
- Traditionally, Christianity was considered to be exclusivist, but recent approaches to scripture and revelation have highlighted not only similarities between Christian and other religions, but also the influences of Judaism, Greek philosophy and other beliefs on Christianity.
- Inclusivist Christianity develops a form of inclusivist Christianity, focusing on how those of other religions could be considered 'anonymous Christians', leading a life according to the Christian ethic without realising it.
- Inclusivist views in this way acknowledge that people of other religions could receive God's grace, although living a Christian life is the only guaranteed way of achieving reconciliation with God.
- Pluralistic Christians have contended that inclusivist forms of Christianity do not fairly accommodate other religious views and ideas, contending that, if pluralism is taken as a practice, major religions could be considered to have equal insight into the divine.
- Exclusivist Christians have equally argued that it is not the responsibility of Christianity to have unique access to the divine, to accommodate other religious views, and include the differences between major world religions.

(AO2) Students may analyse and evaluate the question through the arguments below:

Students may agree with the success of inclusivism with the arguments below:

- It would be misrepresenting Christianity to say that Jesus was not unique, or that he was just one of many paths into God and the world, yet it is not a mistake to argue this necessarily excludes other religions sharing in important truths.
- It would not be true to say that a benevolent God would deny salvation to those who have not historically been able to access Christianity, therefore there must be other ways for humans to be saved.
- Humans can experience God the Creator separately to the God of revelation, and other religions may have partial insight (Rahner, Acts 17 'unknown God').
- The Gospels and the New Testament place a strong emphasis on the importance of living a virtuous life. It would be inconsistent for a benevolent God to deny salvation to those who had lived their life according to the Christian ethic without worshipping the Christian God.
- Acknowledging other religions' insight into God the Creator is enough to find common ground between them and Christianity, while keeping Christian theology and ethics central.

Students may disagree with the success of inclusivism with the arguments below:

- If it is possible to comprehend how human knowledge of God and the world works, then Christianity cannot claim that Jesus is unique or Christianity has the only path to God, as this leads to all religions being equal, rather than sharing in Christian truths only.
- Considering those of other religions to be Rahner's 'anonymous Christians' overlooks their specific views and claims. Arguably, this fails to acknowledge the importance of religion and sticks too closely to an exclusivist understanding of Christianity.
- It is possible to contend that inclusivism fails to consider that Christianity, in claiming to be the unique saviour, makes a claim that fundamentally contradicts the views of other religions, with no possibility of reconciliation (John 14:6, 17–18).
- Historic views of religious experience orient all religions around a conception of God, and within Christianity to independently claim its sole access to salvation.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



2. 'Scriptural reasoning relativizes and flattens Christian belief.' Discuss

(AO1) Students may describe and explain the ideas below:

- Scriptural reasoning is a movement and process that encourages people of different faiths to come together, analyse scripture and provide critical insight from their own perspective.
- There are a number of guidelines and rules surrounding the process to encourage it is not intended to be an exercise in finding common ground.
- Some have argued scriptural reasoning helps build insight into Christian theology against the claims of other faiths, especially Abrahamic ones such as Judaism and Islam.
- Furthermore, it has been argued scriptural reasoning helps build a more stable faith society, allowing the exchanging of ideas about God and salvation.
- In particular, it has been argued to contribute to the growing of wisdom in Christianity in the context of inclusivism, in understanding not how Christianity arose, but how the community relates to other religious communities.
- Many theologians advocate that understanding Christianity from its historical context and scriptural reasoning movement helps build such historical knowledge.
- Some critics have argued that it 'relativises' Christianity, with scriptural reasoning reducing the study of the Jesus of the Christian faith, instead subjecting the eternal truths of Christianity to unnecessary intervention by competing religious beliefs.

(AO2) Students may analyse and evaluate the question through the arguments below:

Students may agree with the quote with the arguments below:

- The only starting point in Christian biblical study is faith in Jesus as the unique Son of God. Other religions' time to criticise and analyse scripture simply threatens the necessity of the Christocentric way Christians read the Bible.
- The scriptural reasoning movement is an accommodation of the different ways people might read scripture, and forces a model of analysis upon biblical study that prevents real Christian insight.
- There is too much emphasis on placing the teachings of Jesus within a historical context, losing sight of the theological significance eternal truths might have for ordinary Christians.
- Christian views are presented within the Bible regarding conversion (The Great Commission). Christianity should be focused on spreading the message of salvation, not allowing other religions to critically analyse Christian scripture.

Students may disagree with the quote with the arguments below:

- Many Christian denominations have taken important steps towards multifaceted dialogue (e.g. *Aetate*, *Sharing the Gospel of Faith*). Scriptural reasoning simply encourages a deeper understanding of the Bible from other faiths' perspectives, and does not encourage flattening of the Gospels.
- Hauerwas – it is necessary to understand Christian theology in the light of the world it was developed in. Scriptural reasoning helps understand the communal and historical context of the Bible, giving extra insight into Christian theology itself.
- What is perceived as relativising is simply realising the potential errors of the past in interpreting the teachings and revelation of Christ. Scriptural criticism is a healthy process for appreciating the nuances in the ministry of Jesus.
- Scriptural reasoning only flattens in the sense that common ground is realised between Christianity and other religions, allowing communication and development of Christian belief.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



3. Assess whether Augustine's theology should be regarded as misogynistic

(AO1) Students may describe and explain the ideas below:

- Christian feminist views on Augustine have varied greatly. Some see his theology as a contributor to misogyny in the Christian Church, others argue he was progressive for the cultural environment he lived in.
- Augustine describes women as subordinate to men, and that the Fall intended women to be obedient helpers to men. However, there is debate as to whether this subordination is physical, or includes women's intellect and rationality.
- Ruether notes that Augustine argues that woman is secondary to man, except insofar as only man is in the image of God. This idea has persisted throughout history, and women are viewed as inferior to men.
- Some feminist thinkers have argued that Augustine can be viewed in a more progressive light, arguing that he maintains women have spiritual equality, if they still are naturally subordinate to men.
- Augustine does not equate the mind with male nature, but still identifies reason and other attributes as masculine, with women being less able than men in these areas. This arguably presents an unfair dichotomy between men and women that marginalises women's intellect.

(AO2) Students may analyse and evaluate the question through the arguments below:

Students may agree that Augustine is misogynistic with the following arguments:

- It is not simply the case that Augustine parroted the cultural views of his time, but that he combined them with Christian theology and influenced the growth of misogyny within the Church.
- Any separation of the male and female, where the male is prioritised in some way, or more capable, is misogynistic, especially where women are described as being inferior to men.
- Augustine purposely chose to follow the traditions of both Paul (Corinthians) and Genesis, which present a world view where men are naturally superior, rather than emphasising men and women being equal in the image of God as affirmed in Genesis 1.
- Augustine regularly overlooks the equality between men and women in Jesus' teachings, relying on secondary scriptural sources to the Gospels to justify his world view, which is best complicit in the misogyny of his time.
- Broadly, it can be argued that failure to challenge misogyny is misogyny itself.

Students may disagree that Augustine is misogynistic with the following arguments:

- Augustine was more progressive than many other early Church theologians, who were much more disparaging about women, and viewed them as rationally equal, but physically subordinate to men.
- There was a large degree of cultural misogyny in early religious views. The church cannot necessarily be pressed against a person who fails to completely challenge the status quo.
- Augustine, in the *Confessions*, displays a great deal of respect for women close to him, such as his mother Monica, an attitude not consistent with someone with a wholly misogynistic view.
- Augustine maintains that women are spiritually equal – building the ground for later feminist thought, even if this was not picked up by later theologians.
- Some students may contend Augustine is misogynistic by today's standards, but that it is not an accurate measure of his role in the development of historical views.

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



4. 'A feminist religion can never have a male saviour.' Discuss. (40 marks)

(AO1) Students may describe and explain the ideas below:

- Feminist critics such as Daly argue that it is not possible for women to regain equality and autonomy under Christianity, and that a complete split with the religion is necessary.
- Christianity, for Daly, with its emphasis on obedience to God, leads to a masculinity in its followers, from which women can never find their freedom.
- God in particular is referred to as Father and Jesus as Son; for Daly 'If God is Father, is God' – God therefore necessarily has to be reimagined as Be-ing, outside of Christianity altogether.
- A male saviour arguably has encouraged the idea of separate roles for men and women throughout history – Christianity historically emphasising men as rational leaders.
- For Daly, so long as Christianity has a male saviour, men will feel legitimised and means the Unholy Trinity of rape, genocide and war will continue to be proper to a religion that has a male saviour.
- For other secular feminists, a male saviour simply means the consistent 'other' where the female experience is routinely ignored.
- Other Christian theologians such as Ruether have argued that it is possible for equality in the Christian faith, as long as the categories used to describe God and the radical elements of Jesus's ministry emphasised.

(AO2) Students may analyse and evaluate the question through the arguments below:

Students may agree with the quote with the following arguments:

- Christianity has never managed to shed its patriarchal structure throughout history, unconsciously due to the idea of male strength being reinforced by the male saviour. Maleness as such cannot be separated from male supremacy.
- A male saviour ignores other important sources of spirituality such as nature, and religion is to be truly feminist only if it incorporates other natural sources of experience or revelation.
- Any male saviour encourages viewing God also as male, when God should be viewed as neither, or even regarded as female.
- A male saviour excludes true female participation in salvation, and encourages the marginalisation of female experience if it contradicts the teachings of the male saviour.
- Whether or not a male saviour is egalitarian does not matter, it is only the enlightened men, who will end up viewing his gender as important.

Students may disagree with the quote with the following arguments:

- A male saviour can still represent equality, just as a female can represent male and revolutionary in his treatment of women (e.g. Mary and Martha) and this is most when considering whether a male saviour can be feminist.
- Ruether – Jesus directly challenges the first-century Judaic expectation of a male saviour, allowing for the possibility of the participation of women in a new Christian community.
- There are no essences that define men or women. Therefore it is possible for a male saviour to challenge patriarchy and form a new egalitarian community under a male saviour that respects female experience.
- It is possible to have a male saviour but still challenge patriarchy and a religion in gender terms. The gender of a male saviour is accidental, not essential.
- The development of the male saviour throughout history is a cultural or biological phenomenon, which is often universal in scope, cannot always be held responsible for the patriarchal structure of Christianity.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



5. 'Religious belief is nothing more than wish fulfilment.' Discuss. (40)

(AO1) Students may describe and explain the ideas below:

- Christianity has traditionally believed that it is inspired, not just by the words of prophets and Jesus, but also by religious experience caused by God himself.
- Freud argues that religion as a whole, both experience and thought, is a result in response to the natural anxieties human beings face in a random and uncertain world.
- This is both a general principle of psychology that manifests in each individual person's world. Human beings unconsciously craft God as a being who has control over the world that they are in.
- Human beings then try to influence this God through prayer and sacrifice to gain control over the forces of the natural world that appear random.
- Secularists often argue similarly to Freud that a rational, physical way of looking at the world does not require spiritual forces. What appears to be random is simply explained by nature and other scientific insights.
- Other factors influence the way religious people view God. Christians model God on their fathers, which for Freud is a result of human beings seeing safety in their parents, and then after these parental relationships.
- Religious people, however, argue that it is not possible to reduce religious belief to psychological phenomena, and Freud lacks real scientific evidence for his view.

(AO2) Students may analyse and evaluate the question through the arguments below:

Students may agree that religious belief is wish fulfilment with the arguments below:

- Freud's theory explains why religious belief forms from natural phenomena and not an unprovable divine being. If there is a simpler, scientific argument it should be preferred over a mystical one.
- Religion as wish fulfilment explains why people pray and give sacrifices in order to control the world, and why many gods throughout history have mirrored important human beings (e.g. sun, harvest, warriors, etc.).
- Psychological research has shown how many human actions are the result of unconscious processes. This is enough to suggest why religion cannot be seen in the same way as other human actions.
- Many religions such as Christianity have manifested themselves in violent behaviour, despite professing peace, show they are forms of neurosis and not rational thought.
- It is possible to see certain similarities between different religions that show a common source; for example, communion in Christianity being a revival of ancient rituals.

Students may disagree that religious belief is wish fulfilment with the arguments below:

- Freud's psychological explanation is unconvincing. There are many aspects to Christianity which acknowledge the ways in which faith is built on reason, and it is appreciated that the transcendent Christian God does not intervene against human beings.
- The issues of the argument from psychology – just because there is a psychological basis for religion does not mean that there is not a God. It is reasonable to suppose God would be a way for human beings to at least partially comprehend him.
- Rites and rituals are inessential to Christian belief, and Freud is highly selective in the religion he chooses to focus on in order to support his theory.
- Freud's theory fails to predict how human beings will behave in response to religious beliefs. People are not continually anxious, or violent or irrational; behaviour may be influenced by numerous other factors.
- There are many beliefs that cannot be reduced to psychological phenomena. If religion is a basic or natural part of the primary working mind, Freud is wrong to categorise it as a neurosis.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



6. Assess whether liberation theology successfully engages with Marx

(AO1) Students may describe and explain the ideas below:

- Liberation theology is a Christian movement that seeks to address the poverty that many people face around the world, by using secular political theory such as Marxism to show how Christianity could fulfil Jesus's call to help the poor.
- It incorporates important Marxist ideas such as exploitation and alienation, where individual people may be exploited by their poor working conditions and their spiritual life by their poor working conditions.
- Liberation theology also recognises the prevalence of structural sin in modern society, and how modern political and economic authorities may reinforce oppression through their systems.
- Marxist ideas such as revolution are tied into Christian ideas about reversal, but it does not to emphasise the use of violence in achieving social change.
- Both Marx and liberation theology see the poor as the 'underside of history', where a combination of oppression and false consciousness has prevented them from achieving freedom and liberation from unjust systems.
- Some Christian theologians argue that liberation theology takes bits of Marxism and does not appreciate the ways that Marxism opposes religious thought, and encourages sinning to exempt themselves from judgement or reflection.
- Liberation theology argues it is wrong for Christianity not to open up and learn from theories that have important implications for the way Christians around the world address poverty.

(AO2) Students may analyse and evaluate the question through the arguments below:

Students may argue for liberation theology having successfully engaged with Marx with the arguments below:

- The traditional understanding of sin and poverty in Christian thought fails to address how modern political and economic systems work. Liberation theology uses Marxism simply to highlight how Christians can effectively engage in praxis.
- The preferential option for the poor in the Gospels means that Christians are always, especially in an increasingly secular society, of helping those affected by poverty, which may involve using Marx.
- Liberation theology successfully uses Marx to critique the traditional Christian understanding of development – showing how reversal/socialism is necessary to end poverty.
- The overemphasis on orthodoxy in many Christian denominations is exposed by liberation theology and it demonstrates why greater attention is needed on orthopraxis.
- The success of EBCs in many communities demonstrates how the principles of liberation theology and Marx can make a direct difference in many people's lives.

Students may argue against liberation theology having successfully engaged with Marx with the arguments below:

- Liberation theology does not appreciate the difficulty of reconciling theology with Marxist thought, which declares religion to be the 'opiate' of the masses.
- It fails to deal with the Marxist concept of revolution requiring force or violence, which goes against the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels.
- Marx was dealing primarily with economic questions, not moral ones, and Christians are concerned with how people morally live their lives, not secular issues.
- Liberation theology fails to appreciate the difficulties in structural sin – that it exempts individuals from responsibility for their actions if done under oppression.
- Christianity is a universal religion, whereas Marx is only concerned with a particular society.
- Some Christians contend liberation theology succeeds in some use of Marx, but

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**

