

## Option A: A Study of Christianity

Theme 1: Religious figures and sacred texts	
Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief	
	Jesus – his birth:
A.	Consistency and credibility of the birth narratives (Matthew 1:18-2:23; Luke 1:26-2:40); harmonisation and redaction; interpretation and application of the birth narratives to the doctrine of the incarnation (substantial presence and the kenotic model).
	Jesus – his resurrection:
B.	The views of Rudolf Bultmann and N.T. Wright on the relation of the resurrection event to history; interpretation and application to the understanding of death, the soul, resurrected body and the afterlife, with reference to Matthew 10:28; John 20-21; 1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 1:21-24.
	The Bible as a source of wisdom and authority in daily life:
C.	The ways in which the Bible is considered authoritative: as a source of moral advice (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Luke 6:36-37); as a guide to living (Psalm 119:9-16; Psalm 119:105-112); as teaching on the meaning and purpose of life (Genesis 1:26-28; Ecclesiastes 9:5-9) and as a source of comfort and encouragement (Psalm 46:1-3; Matthew 6:25).
Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• • The extent to which the birth narratives provide insight into the doctrine of the incarnation.</li> <li>• • The relative importance of redaction criticism for understanding the biblical birth narratives.</li> <li>• • The nature of the resurrected body.</li> <li>• • The historical reliability of the resurrection.</li> <li>• • The relative value of the Bible as teaching on the meaning and purpose of life.</li> <li>• • The extent to which the Psalms studied offer a guide to living for Christians.</li> </ul>	

Theme 1: Religious figures and sacred texts	
Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief	
	The Bible as a source of wisdom and authority:
D.	How the Christian biblical canon was established. Diverse views on the Bible as the word of God: different understandings of inspiration (the objective view of inspiration; the subjective view of inspiration; John Calvin's doctrine of accommodation).
	The early church (in Acts of the Apostles):
E.	Its message and format: the kerygmata as presented by C. H. Dodd, with reference to Acts 2:14-39; 3:12-26. The challenges to the kerygmata (with reference to the historical value of the speeches in Acts and the work of Rudolf Bultmann). The adapting of the Christian message to suit the audience.
	Two views of Jesus:
F.	A comparison of the work of two key scholars, including their views of Jesus with reference to their different methods of studying Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright.

Crossan: Jesus the social revolutionary; using apocryphal gospels; seeing Jesus as a product of his time; what the words of Jesus would have meant in Jesus' time.

Wright: Jesus the true Messiah; critical realism; texts as 'the articulation of worldviews'; seeks to find the best explanation for the traditions found in the Gospels.

Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as:

- • The extent to which the Bible can be regarded as the inspired word of God.
- • Whether the Christian biblical canonical orders are inspired, as opposed to just the texts they contain.
- • The extent to which the kerygmata (within the areas of Acts studied) are of any value for Christians today.
- • Whether the speeches in Acts have any historical value.
- • The validity of using critical realism to understand Jesus.
- • The validity of using apocryphal gospels to understand Jesus.

Theme 2: Religious concepts and religious life	
Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief	
	<p>Religious concepts – the nature of God:</p> <p>Is God male?</p> <p>The issue of male language about God; the pastoral benefits and challenges of the model of Father; Sallie McFague and God as Mother.</p> <p>Can God suffer?</p> <p>The impassibility of God; the modern view of a suffering God illustrated by Jurgen Moltmann (The Crucified God).</p>
B.	<p>Religious concepts – the Trinity:</p> <p>The need for the doctrine of the Trinity: the nature and identity of Christ (issues of divinity and pre-existence) and Christ's relationship with the Father (co-equal and co-eternal). The origin of the Holy Spirit: the filioque controversy.</p>
C.	<p>Religious concepts – the Atonement:</p> <p>Three theories of the Atonement (which are not mutually exclusive): the death of Jesus as Christus Victor (with reference to the liberation of humanity from hostile powers); the death of Jesus as a substitution (both the belief that Jesus died as a substitute for humanity, and the belief that only the divine-human Jesus could act as a sacrifice by God for the sake of humanity); the death of Jesus as a moral example (of how to live and die). The underlying assumptions about the need for divine forgiveness and the conflict between the wrath and love of God in theories of the Atonement.</p>
<p>Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• • The validity of referring to God as mother.</li> <li>• • The theological implications of a suffering God.</li> <li>• • The monotheistic claims of the doctrine of the Trinity.</li> <li>• • Whether the doctrine of the Trinity is necessary to understand the God of Christianity.</li> <li>• • The extent to which the three theories of the Atonement are contradictory.</li> <li>• • The extent to which the three theories suggest that the Christian God is cruel.</li> </ul>	

Theme 2: Religious concepts and religious life	
Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief	
	Religious life – faith and works:
D.	Luther's arguments for justification by faith alone (with reference to Romans 1:17; 5:1; Ephesians 2:8- 9; Galatians 2:16 and Luther's rejection of James 2:24); the Council of Trent as a response to Luther; E. P. Sanders and the role of works in justification.
	Religious life – the community of believers:
E.	The New Testament community of believers as a model for churches today (with reference to Acts 2:42-47); the role of churches in providing worship and sacraments, religious teaching, mission, service and outreach, and fellowship for the community of believers.
	Religious life – key moral principles:
F.	Selected key moral principles of Christianity: the importance of love of neighbour (Leviticus 19:34; Luke 10:25-28); God's love as a potential model for Christian behaviour (Exodus 34:6-7; 1 John 4:19- 21); regard for truth (1 Samuel 12:24; Ephesians 4:25-27); the role of conscience (2 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Timothy 1:5); and the need for forgiveness (Matthew 6:14-15; Colossians 3:12-13).
Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• • The extent to which both faith and works are aspects of justification.</li> <li>• • The extent to which the New Testament letters support arguments for justification by faith alone.</li> <li>• • Whether the main role of the church is to provide religious teaching.</li> <li>• • The extent to which contemporary Christian churches should follow the New Testament model.</li> <li>• • Whether love of neighbour is the most important moral principle in Christianity.</li> <li>• • The extent to which God's behaviour towards humans is the basis for Christian morality.</li> </ul>	

Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought	
Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief	
	Social developments in religious thought – attitudes towards wealth:
A.	The dangers of wealth (with reference to Mark 10:17-25; Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 12:33-34, 1 Timothy 6:10); apparent contradiction between biblical teaching on stewardship and the ascetic ideal; the prosperity gospel of the Word-Faith movement.
	Social developments in religious thought – migration and Christianity in the UK:
B.	The challenges of Christian migration to the UK, with reference to assimilation, provision of worship, style of worship and issues of culture. The reverse mission movement to the UK.
	The relationship between religion and society: religion, equality and discrimination.
	Social developments in religious thought – feminist theology and the changing role of men and women:
C.	The contribution of Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether to feminist theology. The changing role of men and women with reference to the issue of the ordination of women priests and bishops; the impact on the lives of believers and communities within Christianity today.
Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• • The extent to which wealth is a sign of God's blessing.</li> <li>• • Whether the ascetic ideal is compatible with Christianity.</li> <li>• • The extent to which the UK is a modern mission field.</li> <li>• • The relative ease of assimilation of Christian migrants into Christian churches in the UK.</li> <li>• • Whether men and women are equal in Christianity.</li> <li>• • The extent to which feminist theology impacts modern Christian practice.</li> </ul>	

Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought.

The relationship between religion and society: respect and recognition and the ways that religious traditions view other religions and non-religious worldviews and their truth claims.

Historical developments in religious thought – challenges from secularisation:

The conflicting religious and non-religious views on Christianity in the UK (the value of Christian faith schools; whether the UK can be called a 'Christian country'); beliefs conflicting with laws of the country; perceived challenges to Christianity (decline of role and status of Christianity; reduced impact in public life; restricted religious liberty).

The relationship between religion and society: respect and recognition and the ways that religious traditions view other religions and non-religious worldviews and their truth claims.

Historical developments in religious thought – challenges from science:

Richard Dawkins' and Alister McGrath's contrasting views on the relationship between religion and science, and the nature of proof; the limits of science; the 'God of the gaps' argument.

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Historical developments in religious thought – challenges from pluralism and diversity within a tradition:

Difference between religious pluralism and tolerance of religious diversity; the exclusivist and inclusivist views expressed in the Christian Bible (Deut 6:5; Joshua 23:16; John 14:6; Acts 4:12); the contribution of John Hick and Karl Rahner to Christian inclusivism (and the difference between their positions); the differences between Christian universalism and pluralistic universalism.

Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as:

- The effectiveness of the Christian response to the challenge of secularism.
- The extent to which the UK can be called a Christian country.
- The extent to which a scientist must be an atheist.
- Whether science has reduced the role of God in Christianity.
- The extent to which it is possible to be both a committed Christian and a religious pluralist.
- The extent to which the Christian Bible promotes exclusivism.

Theme 4: Religious practices that shape religious identity	
Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief	
	Religious identity through diversity in baptism:
A.	The case for infant baptism by Augustine and Zwingli (the role of baptism in salvation; the role and importance of Christian parents); the case for believer's baptism with reference to Karl Barth (the example of Christ; importance of consent).
	Religious identity through diversity in Eucharist:
B.	The importance of the Eucharist in the life of contemporary Christian communities; selected modern Roman Catholic theories (transignification and transfinalization); selected Protestant approaches (consubstantiation and memorialism); the similarities in Eucharistic practice in Christian traditions.
	Religious identity through diversity in festivals:
	Christmas
C.	The similarities (with reference to the focus on incarnation of Christ) and differences (date of celebration; focus of Advent season; Christmas services) between the Eastern Orthodox and the Western churches' celebration of Christmas.
	Easter
	The similarities (with reference to the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ) and differences (date; liturgical practice at Easter; the diversity within each stream of tradition) between the Eastern Orthodox and the Western churches' celebration of Easter.
Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which both infant and adult baptism are just symbolic acts.</li> <li>• The criteria for expressing the commitment to be baptised.</li> <li>• The extent to which there is any common ground within contemporary understandings of the Eucharist.</li> <li>• The extent to which theoretical beliefs about the Eucharist affect the practice of different denominations.</li> <li>• Whether the different emphases and practices mean that Easter is a different celebration in the Eastern Orthodox and Western churches.</li> <li>• The relative importance of Easter and Christmas.</li> </ul>	

Theme 4: Religious practices that shape religious identity	
	Religious identity through unification:
D.	The development of the Ecumenical Movement since 1910 (World Missionary Conference); the World Council of Churches, its rationale, its mission and its work in three main areas: Unity, Mission, and Ecumenical Relations; Public Witness and Diakonia; and Ecumenical Formation.
How developments in beliefs and practices have, over time, influenced and been influenced by developments in philosophical, ethical studies of religion.	
	Religious identity through religious experience:
E.	The development of the Charismatic Movement post-1960; main beliefs; implications for Christian practice in the experience of believers and Christian communities; philosophical challenges to charismatic experience (verification and natural explanation).
	Religious identity through responses to poverty and injustice:
F.	The basis (political, ethical and religious) of South American liberation theology with reference to Gustavo Gutierrez and Leonardo Boff; Roman Catholic Church responses to South American liberation theology.
<p>Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether the work of the World Council of Churches can be viewed as a success or a failure.</li> <li>• The extent to which the non-membership of the Roman Catholic Church affects the aims of the World Council of Churches.</li> <li>• The strengths and weaknesses of the Charismatic Movement.</li> <li>• Whether a natural explanation for charismatic experiences conflicts with the religious value of the experience.</li> <li>• Whether the political and ethical foundations of liberation theology are more important than any religious foundations.</li> <li>• The extent to which liberation theology offered a cultural challenge to the Roman Catholic Church.</li> </ul>	