

# Getting Started

## GCE Religious Studies

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in  
Religious Studies (8RS01)  
First certification 2014

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced GCE in Religious Studies  
(9RS01)  
First certification 2014

Issue 2

# Contents

## Getting started for teachers

Introduction	1
Unit overviews	3
Course planner	5
Model Answers	14

## Getting started for students

Student Guide	48
Select glossary	50
Student Revision Guide	55

## Introduction

This Getting Started book will give you an overview of the GCE in Religious Studies course and what it means for you and your students. The guidance in this book is intended to help you plan the course in outline and to give you further insight into the principles behind the content to help you and your students succeed in the course.

### Key principles

#### A coherent course

Edexcel's GCE in Religious Studies follows a carefully devised sequence of units that allows students to build up their understanding and knowledge.

The four units form a coherent and satisfying course:

- Foundations - in Unit 1 students will explore the basics of their chosen subject areas.
- Investigations - in Unit 2 students choose a topic to study in more depth, helping students develop research and evaluation skills.
- Developments - Unit 3 builds on Unit 1 and helps deepen understanding.
- Implications - Unit 4 is a synoptic unit that draws previous learning together.

#### The choice to follow your interests

Edexcel's GCE in Religious Studies offers a wide range of study options and combinations. The wide range of options gives you the opportunity to tailor the course to suit your students.

Classic combinations of options are:

- The study of Philosophy and Ethics
- Faith based studies such as:
  - Buddhism
  - Christianity and New Testament
  - Hinduism
  - Islam
  - Judaism
  - Sikhism

The specification is flexible, so the choice of what to study is yours.

### The chance to delve deeper

QCA now requires that there is no longer any coursework in GCE in Religious Studies. Instead, Edexcel offers an enquiry based assessment in Unit 2 that will allow students to study an area of interest in depth and then answer a question on it in the exam.

### Assessment overview

All the units are externally assessed as follows:

Unit Title	Assessment	Level
Unit 1: Foundations	1 hour 45 minutes; three essay questions	AS
Unit 2: Investigations	1 hour 15 minutes; one essay question	AS
Unit 3: Developments	1 hour 45 minutes; three essay questions	A2
Unit 4: Implications	1 hour 15 minutes; one essay question	A2



## Unit overviews

Here is a brief description of the content of each unit so you can see at a glance what students may choose to study.

### Unit 1 - Foundations

Students will study the foundations of **two or three** of these nine areas:

- Philosophy of Religion
- Ethics
- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism
- New Testament

Students will answer **three** questions from either two or three subject areas in the exam.

### Unit 2 - Investigations

This unit is an enquiry-based approach to teaching and learning, based on seven areas of study:

- The study of Religion
- The study of Philosophy of Religion
- The study of Ethics
- The study of World Religions
- The study of the Old Testament/Jewish Bible
- The study of the New Testament
- The study of Christianity and the Christian Church

Each area of study offers **three** different topics.

Students study **one** topic from any of the seven areas and, in the examination, answer the question that relates to the topic they have studied.

### Unit 3 - Developments

This unit builds on the knowledge, understanding and skills developed in Unit 1: Foundations.

Students must study **two or three** of the following nine areas:

- Philosophy of Religion
- Ethics
- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism
- New Testament

Students will answer **three** questions from either two or three subject areas in the exam.

### Unit 4 - Implications

This is a synoptic unit that focuses on the implications of beliefs and values for religion and human experience, through the study of texts provided in an anthology published by Edexcel.

Students will answer one question based on a text from this anthology in the exam.

## Course planner

This course planner has been developed to help you plan the organisation and delivery of the course. There are two versions of the planner:

1. The general version looks at outline timings for each of the units when you teach them consecutively.
2. The exemplar planner then gives an example using specific units.

## AS general course planner

**Tutor:**

**Subject and Level: AS Religious Studies**

**Subject areas:**

**Exam Dates:**

### Autumn Term

Week No.	Specification Section
1 - 3	<i>Unit 1: Foundations - first area, section 2</i>
4 - 6	<i>Unit 1: Foundations - first area, section 2</i> Begin work on <i>Unit 2: Investigations</i>
7	<b>HALF TERM</b>
8	<i>Unit 1: Foundations - first area, section 2</i> <i>Unit 2: Investigations</i>
9	<i>Unit 1: Foundations - first area, section 1</i>
10 - 11	<i>Unit 1: Foundations - first area, section 1</i> <i>Unit 2: Investigations</i>
12	<i>Unit 1: Foundations - first area, section 2</i> <i>Unit 1: Foundations - second area, section 1</i>
13	<i>Unit 1: Foundations - second area, section 1</i> <i>Unit 2: Investigations</i>
14	Revision <i>Unit 2: Investigations</i>

### Spring Term

Week No.	Specification Section
1	<i>Unit 1: Foundations - second area, section 1</i> <i>Unit 2: Investigations</i>
2	<i>Unit 1: Foundations - second area, section 1</i>
3 - 4	<i>Unit 1: Foundations - second area, section 2</i>
5	<i>Unit 1: Foundations - first area, section 2</i> <i>Unit 2: Investigations</i>
6	<i>Unit 1: Foundations - first area, section 1</i> <i>Unit 2: Investigations</i>
7	<b>HALF TERM</b>
8	<i>Unit 2: Investigations</i>
9 - 10	<i>Unit 1: Foundations - second area, section 2</i>
11	<i>Unit 2: Investigations</i> tidying up Revision
12 - 13	Revision

### Summer Term

Week No.	Specification Section
1 - 9	Revision and Exams



## A2 general course planner

**Tutor:**

**Subject and Level: A2 Religious Studies**

**Subject areas:**

**Exam Dates:**

### Autumn Term

Week No.	Specification Section
1 - 2	<i>Unit 3: Developments - first area, section 2</i>
3 - 6	<i>Unit 3: Developments - first area, section 1</i>
7	<b>HALF TERM</b>
8 - 9	<i>Unit 3: Developments - first area, section 1</i>
10	<i>Unit 3: Developments - first area, sections 1 and 2</i>
11	<i>Unit 3: Developments - first area, section 2</i> Revision
12	<i>Unit 3: Developments - second area, section 1</i>
13	<i>Unit 3: Developments - second area, section 2</i>
14	<i>Unit 4: Implications - anthology text 1</i>

### Spring Term

Week No.	Specification Section
1 - 2	<i>Unit 3: Developments - second area, section 1</i>
3 - 4	<i>Unit 4: Implications - anthology text 1</i>
5	<i>Unit 3: Developments - second area, section 1</i>
6	<i>Unit 4: Implications - anthology text 1</i>
7	<b>HALF TERM</b>
8	<i>Unit 3: Developments - second area, section 2</i>
9 - 10	<i>Unit 4: Implications - anthology text 2</i>
11	<i>Unit 3: Developments - second area, section 1</i>
12	<i>Unit 4: Implications - anthology text 2</i>
13	Revision as needed

### Summer Term

Week No.	Specification Section
1	Mocks
2 - 4	<i>Unit 4: Implications - anthology text 3</i>
5 - 9	Revision and Exams

## Exemplar course planner

This exemplar course planner is an actual scheme of work used by an experienced teacher of GCE Religious Studies based on the subject areas of Philosophy of Religion and Ethics. It may need to be adapted for use in your centre but should prove a useful starting point for planning your delivery.

## AS course planner

**Tutor:**

**Exam Dates: June**

**Subject and Level: AS Religious Studies**

**Subject areas: Philosophy of Religion, Ethics and Investigations**

AUTUMN TERM		
Week No.	Specification Section	Term Dates
1	Concepts of God - mind map identifying attributes of God of Classical Theism; discussion Miracles - definitions and problems arising	
2	Miracles - arguments in support of miracles; arguments against, esp Hume	
3	Miracles - video (Benny Hinn) Overall evaluation	Revision tests start
4	Miracles completion, essay planning Introduction to Unit 2 topic	
5	Problem of Evil - outlining the problem, types of evil Beginning Unit 2 Investigations	
6	Problem of Evil - Augustinian Theodicy, Irenaean Theodicy Investigations	
7	HALF TERM	
8	Problem of Evil Conclusion Investigations	Revision tests
9	Cosmological Argument	
10	Design Argument Investigations	
11	Design Argument Conference	
12	Overview of Design and Cosmological Arguments Video God and Morality - relationship between religion and morality	Revision tests
13	God and Morality - continue Investigations	
14	Revision Investigations	End of term

SPRING TERM		
Week No.	Specification Section	Term Dates
1	Utilitarianism - introduction, social background Bentham's approach Investigations	Term starts
2	Utilitarianism - Mill and other forms	Revision tests
3	Situation Ethics - social background Fletcher and Robinson's forms Investigations	
4	Situation Ethics - evaluation, esp Barclay Investigations	
5	Sexual Ethics - basic principles and biblical approaches Video	Revision tests
6	Sexual Ethics - homosexuality Absolute and relative morality Investigations	
7	HALF TERM	
8	Investigations	Timed assignments start
9	War and Peace - pacifism Just War	
10	War and Peace - just war evaluation	Revision tests
11	Investigations tidying up Philosophy Revision	
12	Revision	
13	Revision	End of term

SUMMER TERM		
Week No.	Specification Section	Term Dates
1	Mocks	Mock Week
2	Revision from now on	
3		
4		
5		Week 1 exams
6		Week 2 exams
7	HALF TERM	
8		Week 3 exams
9		Week 4 exams

## A2 course planner

**Tutor:**

**Exam Dates: June**

**Subject and Level: Religious Studies A2**

**Subject areas: Philosophy of Religion, Ethics, Anthology**

AUTUMN TERM		
Week No.	Specification Section	Term Dates
1	Life after Death - reasons to believe/ not believe Immortality of soul	
2	Life after Death Resurrection of the body	
3	Religious Experience The nature of religious experience Types of religious experience	Revision tests start
4	Religious Experience Religious experience as an argument for the existence of God	
5	Ontological Argument - principles of the argument with special reference to Anselm and Descartes	
6	Ontological Argument - Evaluation of the argument	
7	HALF TERM	
8	Atheism and Critiques of Religious Belief Sociological arguments	Revision tests
9	Atheism and Critiques of Religious Belief Psychological Arguments; Moral Arguments	
10	Critiques - Richard Dawkins Religious Language - problems of religious language as critiques of religious belief	
11	Religious Language - finish if necessary Revision	
12	Ethical Concepts Absolutism, relativism, objectivity, subjectivity, review of Utilitarianism and Situation Ethics	Revision tests
13	Ethical Language Problems of good, naturalistic fallacy, solving problems of ethical language	
14	Anthology Work Ethics Text 1	End of term

SPRING TERM		
Week No.	Specification Section	Term Dates
1	Deontology Categorical Imperative, universalisability; formula of right action; prima facie duties; evaluation	Term starts
2	Deontology continued Emotivism	Revision tests
3	Anthology Work Ethics Text 1	
4	Anthology Work Ethics Text 1	
5	Natural Law	Revision tests
6	Anthology Work Ethics Text 1	
7	HALF TERM	
8	Justice, Law and Punishment Objectivity, Subjectivism and Relativism	
9	Anthology Work Ethics Text 2	
10	Anthology Work Ethics Text 2	Revision tests
11	Critiques of the link between religion and morality	
12	Anthology Work Ethics Text 2	
13	Revision as needed	

SUMMER TERM		
Week No	Specification Section	Term Dates
1	Mocks	Mock Week
2	Anthology Work Ethics Text 3	
3	Anthology Work Ethics Text 3	
4	Anthology Work Ethics Text 3	
5	Revision from now on	Week 1 exams
6		Week 2 exams
7	HALF TERM	
8		Week 3 exams
9		Week 4 exams

## Model answers

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This section contains model answers for Unit 2 and Unit 4 examination questions.

The model answers have been written by an experienced teacher and examiner so that the standard is higher than will be achieved by the majority of students. However, by providing model answers, we hope you will understand more clearly the demands of the new exam papers for Units 2 and 4.

A variety of answers are included, all using questions from the Sample Assessment Materials.

There are five model answers for each of Unit 2 and Unit 4:

- Philosophy of Religion
- Ethics
- World Religions
- Christianity
- New Testament

The answers are provided in the same order as in the Sample Assessment Materials. At the end of each model answer there is a brief commentary from the examiner to give you a better insight into what will be expected of students in the examination.





## Unit 2 model answers

### Philosophy of Religion - Question 4

**Examine what a study of religious experience may indicate about human nature. Comment on the significance of this study, with reference to the topic you have investigated.**

*'I wish I could give a description of at least the smallest part of what I learned, but, when I try to discover a way of doing so, I find it impossible...'* - St Teresa of Avila

A religious experience is an encounter with the divine. It is non-empirical, a personal occurrence that brings with it an awareness of something beyond ourselves. Those who have had such an experience count it as the ultimate proof of the existence of God. For believers, this makes religious experience the most convincing proof of the existence of God. St Teresa of Avila:

*'God establishes himself in the interior of this soul in such a way, that when I return to myself, it is wholly impossible for me to doubt that I have been in God and God in me.'*

Testimonies of the occurrence of religious experiences can be found throughout human history - but what do they tell us about human nature? If they are true, then does humanity really have a link with God and if they are untrue, why are we so ready to believe them?

Most experiences tend to occur to individuals in private, though some are 'corporate', when a large number of people share the same experience together, such as the 'Toronto Blessing'. There are a wide variety of religious experiences. The dramatic or conversion event, described by Rudolf Otto in 'The Idea of the Holy' (OUP 1923) as the *numinous*, refers to a religious experience that offers evidence of the 'wholly other' nature of God. Often the person sees a vision, accompanied by feelings of awe, wonder and humility before the power of God. A mystical experience occurs when a person experiences the ultimate reality, which brings with it a sense of unity with the divine, separateness from the divine and dependence on the divine. More gentle indirect experiences occur, for example, as a result of prayer or other communication with God, when believers claim that God enables them to make sense of their lives and the world.

Scholars have disagreed over what a religious experience actually is. *Schleiermacher* in 'On Religion: Discourses to its Cultural Despisers', defined it as a sense of the ultimate and an awareness of wholeness, a consciousness of the infinite and an absolute dependence. Paul Tillich in 'Systematic Theology' (Nisbet 1951) said that a religious experience was a feeling of '*ultimate concern*', a feeling that demanded a decisive decision from the one receiving it. He described it as an encounter, followed by a special understanding of its religious significance. In a similar vein, Ninian Smart in 'The Religious Experience of Mankind', (Fontana 1969) wrote that:

*'A religious experience involves some kind of 'perception' of the invisible world, or a perception that some visible person or thing is a manifestation of the invisible world.'*

But what do the thousands of testimonies concerning religious experience tell us about human nature? Psychologist Carl Jung had no doubt that those who had received such an experience had encountered something very special:

*'Religious experience is absolute...it cannot be disputed. Those who have had it possess a great treasure, a source of life, meaning and beauty which gives splendour to the world.'*

Certainly, those who believe in religious experiences look at the subjective testimonies of individuals who claim to have had to find similar characteristics and then infer that the experiences must be real. Indeed, Richard Swinburne in 'Is there a God?' (OUP 1996) argued inductively that it is reasonable to believe that God is loving and personal and would seek to reveal himself to humanity to enable people to bring about the good:

*'An omnipotent and perfectly good creator will seek to interact with his creatures and in particular, with human persons capable of knowing him.'*

Swinburne believed that humans have a kind of 'religious sense' helping them to feel religious experiences, empirically, through their senses. Thus, he argues, if we are told that someone has had a religious experience, then we should believe that experience has taken place. He claimed that it was in human nature to tell the truth and under his 'principle of testimony', he argued that, unless we have evidence to the contrary, (such as when a person is under the effect of alcohol, drugs or is known to be lying) then we should believe what people say when they claim to have had a religious experience:

*'In the absence of special considerations the experiences of others are (probably) as they report them.'*

He believed that since so many thousands of people have had an experience of what seems to them to be of God, then it is a basic principle of rationality that we should believe them, for they cannot all be lying. He called this the 'principle of credulity' - unless we have overwhelming evidence to the contrary, then we should believe that things are as they seem to be:

*'I suggest that the overwhelming testimony of so many millions of people to occasional experiences of God must, in the absence of counter evidence, be taken as tipping the balance of evidence decisively in favour of the existence of God'.*

In support of this view, in 1969 the Religious Experience Research Unit in Oxford undertook extensive empirical research with results indicating that as many as 40% of people have had a religious experience.

However, other scholars are less convinced. The main difficulty with religious experiences is that they cannot be verified by objective, empirical testing and some have suggested that they are, at best, ambiguous and can be interpreted in a number of different ways. Peter Vardy observed:

*'The argument from religious experience is, I suggest, going to depend to a very large extent on one's presuppositions. If one's preconceptions favour particular types of experiences, one is likely to be convinced by reports of them. If one is a sceptic, one will need a great deal of convincing.'*

Wittgenstein used the notion of *seeing-as*, suggesting that, in fact, human nature allows each person to see their experiences differently; some may think they have experienced God, others may think they have experienced something else. Hick in 'The Existence of God' (Macmillan 1977), observed that testimonies of religious experiences might be equally well interpreted in non-religious ways:

*'...any special event or experience which can be constituted as manifesting the divine can also be constituted in other ways, and accordingly cannot carry the weight of proof of God's existence.'*

In a similar vein, R M Hare thought that religious experiences were '*bliks*' - that is, an unverifiable and unfalsifiable way of looking at the world. It is in the nature of a believer to see or feel something and claim it comes from God. It is their personal interpretation and they believe it to be true. But it cannot be proved true for everyone else and therefore the testimony is unreliable. Richard Dawkins in 'The God Delusion' argued:

*'If we are gullible, we don't recognize hallucinations or lucid dreaming for what it is and we claim to have seen or heard a ghost; or an angel; or God...such visions and manifestations are certainly not good grounds for believing that ghosts or angels, gods or virgins are actually there.'*

Others have suggested that religious experiences could have a natural explanation - for instance, they could be brought on by drugs or alcohol or they could be, as Freud suggested, a psychological reaction to the hostile world - in our human nature we feel helpless and so create God in our minds as a great father and protector.

Richard Dawkins is claiming that testimonies of religious experiences have nothing to do with God and, instead reflect the mental or psychological needs in human nature. For instance, in the aforementioned 'Toronto Blessing', large numbers of people seemed to experience God at the same time. This included people shaking uncontrollably, weeping, laughing hysterically and making unusual sounds like the barking of dogs. Critics claimed that, in fact, people were simply swept along with the crowd in a tide of emotion and hysteria. For Dawkins, such an experience would be an illusion created by the mind to enable people to cope with their fear of the unknown:

*'If you've had such an experience, you may find yourself firmly believing that it was real. But don't expect the rest of us to take your word for it, especially if we have the slightest familiarity with the brain and its powerful workings.'*

In a further critique, Anthony Flew argued that the testimony of religious believers was biased, irrational and questionable and could not be regarded as meaningful because there was nothing that could count against it. He said that it was in the nature of religious believers to be so convinced of the truth of their religious statements, that they refused to consider evidence to the contrary. Flew:

*'What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or the existence of, God?'*

This apparent irrationality in human nature was supported by Sam Harris who wrote in 'The End of Faith' (Norton 2004):

*'We have names for people who have many beliefs for which there is no rational justification. When their beliefs are extremely common we call them 'religious', otherwise they are likely to be called 'mad', 'psychotic' or delusional... while religious people are not generally mad, their core beliefs absolutely are.'*

However, is this fair? Is it in the nature of those who claim to have had a religious experience to tell lies? In 'Religious Experience' (Hodder 2004), Peter Cole thought not, pointing out that, in the Roman Catholic Church, testimonies of religious experiences are strictly tested to ensure that they are in line with the teachings of the Church and that the person making the claim is telling the truth:

*'Only after thirteen years of examination by a commission comprised of clergy, physicians and scientists, did the Catholic Church pronounce the Fatima apparitions as worthy of belief.'*

In the same way, those who claim to have had a religious experience as part of a near-death experience have been dismissed by critics as suffering from some kind of mental phenomenon, possibly caused by a lack of oxygen to the brain, particularly the temporal lobe, which is the centre of emotion. However, the evidence concerning near-death experiences is far from certain and recent scientific opinion remains divided and research published in the highly respected medical journal 'The Lancet' in 2001 concluded:

*'Our research shows that medical factors cannot account for the occurrence of near-death experience.'*

Although it may be possible for experiences to be open to both religious and non-religious interpretations, it is illogical to assume that all religious interpretations are incorrect. On the contrary, it might be said that religious believers are more able to testify to the validity of a religious experience than a non-believer because they know what to expect.

Of course, it all depends on whether or not God exists - if he does then in a sense, we could expect experiences of God to meet our psychological and emotional needs. As Swinburne suggested:

*'An omnipotent and perfectly good creator will seek to interact with his creatures and in particular, with human persons capable of knowing him.'*

In conclusion, a religious experience is too personal and subjective to be anything other than convincing to the one who has experienced it and bewildering for those who have not. For supporters like Swinburne and Otto, religious experiences are perfectly possible and recognized by our human nature - our direct intuition that means we just know that God is there. Yet, for opponents, there is no such thing as a religious experience - it is just an expression of our psychological needs. Richard Dawkins:

*'The argument from personal experience is the one that is the most convincing to those who claim to have had one. But it is the least convincing to anyone else, especially anyone knowledgeable about psychology.'*

#### Commentary on Philosophy of Religion - Question 4

**The candidate has demonstrated that they have done some thorough research, not only into the nature of religious experience, but also into the views of scholars. They have put this to good use in addressing the question title. They have also shown that they have some knowledge of current philosophical debate and applied this to real life testimonies and to philosophical discourse. The candidate also sticks closely to the question titles and does not get side-tracked into irrelevant issues.**

**The candidate demonstrates impressive skills of reasoning and an awareness of the debates behind the issues, as well as the need to provide evidence in support of views offered. Excellent use of religious language and quotations from scholars shows that the candidate is basing their answer on well-researched material.**

#### Ethics - Question 7

***Examine and comment on the view that the principle of the sanctity of life should always be considered of first importance in medical ethics, with reference to the topic you have investigated.***

The principle of the sanctity of life is based on the teaching of **Genesis 2:7**: "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being." This statement reinforces the Christian concept that God is responsible for the existence of all human life. God is Omnipotent, and only He is capable of creating or destroying life. Furthermore, only He, as an Omniscient Being, has the knowledge to decide whether a life should be created or destroyed.

There are generally two schools of thought regarding the sanctity of life. Conservative thinkers hold an extreme sanctity of life position and think it is wrong in all circumstances, arguing that life should be preserved even if it involves the use of continuing aggressive treatment. There is however a differing position. Some people think that in special circumstances, some killing may be justified. In 1997 the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health in Britain published guidelines on withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining treatment in children. It proposed five cases in which this might be considered: brain death, PVS, severe disease where treatment only delays death, where survival would leave the child with severe impairment and unable to make future choices and where further treatment is more than the child or family can bear. But even those who do not think killing is always wrong invariably think that a special justification is needed. The assumption is that killing can at best only be justified to avoid a greater evil.

Religious believers, with reference to religious principles, commonly hold the notion of the sanctity of life as a moral absolute: *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you."* (**Jeremiah 1:5**) They would reason that if life is sacred (set apart for God's purposes) and created by Him, then by definition He must be the one who has control over its end as well as its beginning. Once God has set a life in motion, only He can end it. The believer would argue that an illness that ends in natural death represents a complete life, as God brought about the end within His own timing and purpose.

However although there is a belief upheld by believers that life is precious to God, it can be argued that there are some inherent contradictions. The atheist or non-believer would argue that the theist contradicts him/herself in proclaiming that all life is precious to God yet adopting the view that whilst human beings have the right not to be deliberately killed i.e. involuntary euthanasia, nor should they seek to end their life i.e. voluntary euthanasia, it is also not necessary to preserve life at all costs i.e. with the use of prohibitively expensive and ultimately futile medical care. The atheist might go on to suggest that it is a logical impossibility for believers to believe that life is precious to God and should be preserved for only God's disposal, yet maintain the contradiction that the preservation of life at all costs is not a necessity.

There is strong evidence to support the view that principles on the sanctity of life are not just exclusively religious concepts and can indeed be considered important by both religious believers and non-religious thinkers. **Jonathan Glover** in his book 'Causing Death And Saving Lives' gives an excellent example of the way in which moral philosophy can illuminate, and be illuminated by, practical problems. In the book, Glover presents two situations that consider the principle of the sanctity of life in a non-religious interpretation. In the first account, Glover identifies that *"Many of the possible reasons for not killing someone appeal to side-effects."* He goes on to suggest that *"When a man dies or is killed, his parents, wife, children or friends may be made sad...the community loses whatever good contribution the man might otherwise have made to it...an act of killing may help weaken the general reluctance to take life or else be thought to do so."* The principle of the sanctity of life must therefore be maintained and upheld as taking someone's life *"may do a bit to undermine everyone's sense of security."*

However, in the second account Glover presents a situation in which the principles of the sanctity of life as a moral absolute may cease to be relevant. He suggests that supposing he was in prison with an incurable disease, and the man who shares his cell is bound to stay in prison for the rest of his life, as society thinks he is too dangerous to let out, he has no friends and all his relations are dead, then it would be reasonable to poison the man with an undetectable poison. In the second account, Glover presents a situation in which *"The objections to killing that are based on side-effects collapse"*. His reasoning is based on the fact that *"No one will be sad or deprived. The community will not miss his contribution. People will not feel insecure, as no one will know a murder has been committed."* Glover also presents a strong argument to support his poisoning of the prisoner because, as he suggests, *"The possible argument based on one murder possibly weakening my own reluctance to take life in future carries no weight here, since I shall die before having opportunity for further killing."*

If the sanctity of life should be the central issue in all matters of medical ethics then it must be a moral absolute and evident to believers and non-believers. Moral absolutism is the position that there are absolute standards against which moral questions can be judged and suggests that morals are not determined by societal or situational influences. According to moral absolutism, morals are inherent in the laws of the universe, the nature of humanity, or some other fundamental source □ for example, the Christian view that right and wrong are not arbitrary because God wills what is good in accordance with his own good nature. Moral absolutism holds that there is one universal moral code and does not acknowledge even the possibility of there being more than one set of morals. In general, the alternative position is relativism, the view that moral principles should be adapted to circumstances, and that good cannot be defined by always doing the same thing. Theories such as Utilitarianism and Situation Ethics fall into this second category, whilst the first position is characteristic of Deontology.

It is not unreasonable that sanctity of life issues such as euthanasia may be better solved in a relativist way, for example, it may be seen as inherently more 'loving' to allow someone who is in constant excessive pain by being kept alive to die, and indeed death would be merciful. Thus even though the theist might present an overwhelming argument that the sanctity of life should be treated as a moral absolute, they would perhaps need stronger to resolve issues such as abortion, euthanasia, suicide, distribution of resources and genetic engineering which all raise questions of rights over life, authority and autonomy.

Thus the problem regarding the question of who has rights over life arises when public reactions to issues such as abortion, euthanasia etc, seems to suggest that it is for everyone to express an opinion. In 2004 the UK Government proposed the Mental Capacity Bill which would mean that doctors could not refuse to withhold treatment or ignore a request not to resuscitate a patient. Thus although the theist would acknowledge that God has rights over life, the realist might challenge this reasoning by suggesting that in reality, 'God's rights' are challenged by law, medicine and even the individual.

Another key related issue is when does life begin and what constitutes personhood? In other words when exactly does life become sacred - at conception, viability, birth, full sentience? At what point do humans no longer have the right to interfere with its process? Thus as **Dr. C. Everett Koop**, a former Surgeon General, observed *"There is no way that there can be a set of rules to govern this circumstance. Guidelines may be possible, but not rules."* In 'The President of Good and Evil' Peter Singer cites George W Bush's position on stem cell research, which also raises the question of the status of life: *"I worry about a culture that devalues life, and believe as your president I have an important obligation to foster and encourage respect for life in America and throughout the world."* Even Singer writes *"They are certainly human...we can tell when they are alive and when they have died. So as long as they are alive, they are human life."*

However the atheist, like the author, might challenge Bush's assumption that embryos are *"something precious to be protected"*. They might extend their argument to the fact that up to three million embryos are lost naturally every year and in most cases without the woman even knowing she has conceived. Furthermore, just like Singer, the atheist might observe that if they are "precious" and "to be protected", then this natural loss should be a cause of great unhappiness. However, it is not. Thus the atheist might share **Singer's** viewpoint that *"The truth is, politics aside, virtually no one, except couples who want to have a child, really cares about the loss of embryos."*

The news regularly features stories which raise questions of when a patient should be 'allowed to die' and although the phrase 'sanctity of life' tends not to be used specifically, the implication is the same. Baby Charlotte Wyatt, 15 year coma patient Terry Schiavo and 30 year old Kelly Taylor who asked, unsuccessfully, for doctors to put her into a coma, all raise important moral and spiritual questions for society. And already doctors have the power to do much more than could be done 100, even 50 years ago. Is it 'playing God' to enable premature babies to live rather than die? If so, then are we right to value the sanctity of life so highly that medical practitioners are obliged to keep alive a brain damaged baby even if it were against their parents' wishes - the sanctity of life goes both ways, and both are troubling.

It seems, therefore, that issues in medical ethics are definitely seen to revolve around the principle of the sanctity of life, whether it be from a religious or non-religious perspective. Although it leads to demanding questions and challenges about the scope of medical care, treatment of the dying and the unborn, it is important that we do raise these questions. Unless we are continually concerned, for whatever reason, about the value of life, then we are in danger of reaching a slippery slope which will ultimately lead to life having little or no intrinsic value at all.

### **Commentary on Ethics - Question 7**

**The candidate has demonstrated that they have done some thorough research on the Sanctity of Life during the course of the year and has quickly been able to apply this to the question title, using biblical source material. They have also shown that they have some knowledge of how this may relate to real life issues by making reference to the 1997 decision made by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health in Britain.**

**The candidate demonstrates good skills of reasoning and an awareness of the philosophical debates behind these issues, as well as the need to provide evidence in support of views offered. Excellent use of technical language and quotation from scholars shows that the candidate is basing their answer on well learned and researched material.**

**The candidate has made use of the opportunity to appeal to cases of abortion and euthanasia, and has used genuine events from current affairs. They reach a clear conclusion which uses technical terminology to the end.**

### **World Religions - Question 11**

**'A study of religion in society raises contentious issues of debate.'**

**Examine and comment on this claim with reference to one or more religion(s) you have investigated.**

The demands of society's laws and an individual's religious obligation have long been a contentious issue of debate in British multicultural society where the laws are related to a secular democracy. This can be noted, from the issues for Sikhs involving motorcycle laws that demand the wearing of helmets, to Christians' wearing of crosses in the workplace. However, in a different kind of society where the laws are based upon a particular religion there may be more limited discussion.

Nowadays it is clear that a large part of the British public has become involved and influenced by the constant reporting in the press and on television of issues relating to Muslim dress codes, arranged marriages and terrorism. The evidence of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalist extremists, as demonstrated in the July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005 bombings has also confirmed these perceptions. To a degree, the misrepresentation of Islam's teaching and moral codes by this minority has damaged the relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims which is ironic, for both Muslims and non-Muslims have suffered from extremists. However, the issues of debate are also due in part to a non-Muslim's lack of understanding of the nature and power of Islam itself and its concept of what society ought to be.

Alfred T. Welch claims in *The Penguin Handbook of Religions* that each society provides unique problems and opportunities for Islam. In this essay I shall examine and comment on how a study of Islam in British society raises issues of debate for both Muslims and non-Muslims. I shall look at Islamic social values and moral codes using the examples of Islam's attitude to society; the importance of dress laws; marriage and finally jihad in order to evaluate if and why these may be considered to be contentious and to whom.

A practicing Muslim's life is centred upon the teaching and demands of Allah found in the Qur'an and the Shar'iah laws set out by the prophet Muhammad. 'Do not follow paths that will separate you from the path.' (Qur'an Surah 6). Every Muslim must live in accordance with these ancient teachings and rules, in order that society may function as a whole and also benefit individuals. Since Muslim society is centred upon Allah it is different in nature to a secular society. It is not linked by race, nationality, status or wealth and therefore its ideology does not fit closely with that of a secular society with its drive and praise for individual wealth and power. In the ummah everything belongs to Allah and everyone is equal. Members therefore provide comfort and help for each other in times of need and the rich share their wealth with the poor. This is an important aspect of a Muslim's life and is demonstrated in various rights of passage, festivals and the five pillars.





The nature of the Muslim ummah is an issue for some non-Muslims in Britain who question whether its requirements are more important than citizenship within the country. This in turn leads to the argument that Islam prevents its followers becoming integrated citizens and such thoughts breed fear and suspicion. Some may claim that if Islam places such importance on its differences, how can it inculcate a united spirit and sense of respect towards the host country with its different values and attitudes.

For Muslims themselves the main issues are to do with how they may be able to practice the strict commands of Islam in a non-Muslim country. Daniel Brown in *A New Introduction to Islam* claims that there are issues related to how much diversity can be allowed within the Muslim society itself and how the ummah relates to other faith communities and ideological systems. Times of prayer for example, may not fit easily with the working day and employers may feel little need to provide a suitable area for this practice. Also, during the month of Ramadan the demands of the work place may make fasting difficult or even impossible.

Some Muslims feel that the lack of consideration and provision for their needs reflects that they are not valued as citizens, whereas it is not the same for Christians who have provision for Sunday worship, Bishops in the House of Lords and a number of Christian schools. This is the case, but Britain has attempted to deal with the issues by allowing more faith schools and holding wider debate with interfaith groups.

The issue of dress may be seen as more contentious when applied to women because whilst men have strong rules to follow relating to modesty, many Muslim women wear a Hijab and some, the more extreme Chador where only the eyes may be seen. This has led to much debate and challenges from employers and schools in Western Europe, as well as racial antagonism. For the Muslim the wearing of such dress is a demonstration of religious devotion, modesty and the desire to be valued for their intellect and character rather than their physical appearance. However it is often seen by non-Muslims as either the result of oppression or a lack of willingness to conform to social norms, whilst employers and those in authority may see it as hazardous and unhelpful.

Muslims have responded to this criticism by raising the issue that respect for women's modesty in our society has in fact, been eroded over the years as advertising has increasingly used sex to sell a wide range of products. They also have strong concerns relating to non-Muslim dress codes and liberal actions in our society. Young Muslims therefore have to balance the strongly held beliefs and dictates of their families with the lifestyles of their friends.

Practices and beliefs relating to marriage also emphasise contentious differences between Muslims and non-Muslims. Though many would argue that arranged marriages are a cultural practice rather than religious, the prevalence of such marriages and the fact that more than one wife is allowed in Islam, is the subject of much debate since it goes against the laws and practices of modern British society. Most Muslims only have one 'wife' in our society today because more wives are only permitted by the religion if they can be treated equally and the financial burden of having more than one wife in a country that recognises only one precludes this. In early Islam more wives were taken in order to protect widows and vulnerable women but in British society there is not the same need for this practice because to a large extent help is provided by the state.

The roles of the man and woman in the family are strictly laid down in Islam where the woman is very important within the home and in the upbringing of the children, whilst the man is the provider and leader. These roles may be similar to those in many families but other beliefs and practices are different and regarded as contentious within British society. Surah 4 teaches that since a man is superior to his wife, he has authority over her and may punish her if she is disobedient. However, she may only ever defy him if he goes against Islam. The evidence of women being mistreated in this country and around the world is publicised on television and the 'net' and certainly regimes such as those led by the Taliban do nothing to allay concerns.

For non-Muslims whose marriages have occurred as a result of choice and love, the issue of arranged marriages is contentious as is the feeling of lack of equality and freedom for the woman within a formal Muslim marriage. Muslims however will have issues with the high divorce rate that accompanies marriages based upon love and will debate the freedom that allows young people of the opposite sex to form relationships that are often sexual in nature because this goes against the teaching of Islam.

Whilst non-Muslims may not like promiscuity that is sometimes prevalent amongst young people today, they will nevertheless be disturbed by the perception that the country is immoral and to be condemned. This view is sometimes expressed by Muslims and often included in the rants of extremists. Such confrontational and dogmatic criticisms can only damage a sense of trust and unity.

One of the most contentious issues raised by Islam in society is that of jihad. To a Muslim, jihad represents the great struggle within a person to serve Allah and overcome evil. The 'greater jihad', praised by Muhammad takes place within the heart of Muslims through obedience and discipline demonstrated by the following of the five pillars. However, the 'lesser jihad' where Muslims fight those who threaten the cause of Islam is that recognised by most of western society and the fundamentalist extremists.

Whilst the 'lesser jihad' has strict rules that must be kept which are similar to those of the Christian Holy War, the belief that martyrdom results for the participants has led many young Muslims to commit terrible actions in the name of jihad. The teaching of the Qu'ran concerning not taking innocent lives has been rejected by extremist Islamic clerics who have convinced both sincere and disaffected young Muslims that murder in the name of Allah is justified. The London bombings in 2005 have resulted in a terrible backlash towards Islam as a whole and this is a tragedy, for Islam is at its heart a peaceful religion.

In conclusion, it is possible to see that Islam does raise contentious issues, for the beliefs and practices of its followers are at variance with the customs and practices within our society. This leads to the claim that some Muslims may choose not to integrate and hence view their culture as superior to that of their neighbours. However, Azim Nanji writes in *A Companion to Ethics* that Islam is going through a transitional phase and is responding to the challenges of new ethical and moral discoveries. It is clear nevertheless that there is a wide gap developing between moderate and extremist Muslims and the fundamentalist regimes around the world and extremist groups in our society provide a challenge to Nanji's view.



Muslims are concerned about the liberal attitudes and the excessive freedoms that accompany them in the west because it is against Shar'iah law and must therefore deal with the contentious issue of how to cope with the ideas within the society framework that they cannot support. Young Muslims have the issues of how to reconcile their family culture and practices with that of their non-Muslim contemporaries, how to interpret the ancient Shar'iah laws in relation to modern society and how to feel valued and become integrated in a society to which they belong.

As noted at the beginning of this answer, Welch claims each society provides unique problems and opportunities for Islam. However, he believes it to be a vibrant living force that will continue to hold its own against the socialist, and secularist pressures of modern society. In spite of evidence of so many contentious issues and in spite of some of Islam's beliefs and actions being considered to be severe, many non-Muslims will agree with Muslims that the social and moral codes at the heart of Islam are ultimately good and worthy of respect.

### **Commentary on World Religions - Question 11**

**This essay shows a reasonable way in which a candidate selects and adapts their investigations and applies the material under examination conditions. There is a range of information with some analysis, including attitudes to society with well-selected examples such as gender issues. There is a clear structure that the candidate develops, keeping the key issue of the question firmly in focus.**

**The candidate considers alternative views by marshalling material from Islamic and non-Muslim perspectives. The candidate has clear views and substantiates these by use of evidence and reason. The material comes into level 4 for both assessment objectives. The material for AO1 could be further improved by more explicit analysis of the underlying reasons for contentious debates, together with a more explicit attention to a structured evaluation of the material. This type of improvement does not require an increased wordage, but an editing of the material.**

### **New Testament - Question 18**

***'The New Testament narratives conclusively prove that there is life after death'.***

***Examine and comment on this claim, with reference to the topic you have investigated.***

Life after death is central to the teachings of the New Testament. It is based largely on the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus and on the hope of resurrection for all who believe in Him: *'For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life.'* (John 3:16)

The New Testament writers describe the appearances of Jesus in physical terms. In John 20:27, Thomas is invited to place his fingers in the marks of the nails and the spear in Jesus' hands and side. In Luke 24:39-43 the disciples are given the opportunity to touch Jesus' flesh and he eats fish before them, proving that he is not a ghost.

The emphasis in the gospels is on the relationship between salvation and eternal life. Thus, John teaches that as soon as a person makes that decision to follow Jesus they enter into eternal life. The transition from death to life has already taken place, and thus Jesus can say: *'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die'* (11:25-26).

Eternal life transcends physical death and nothing can separate humankind from the communion it has with God: *'I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.'* (10:28-29).

St Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians that the resurrection body will be just that - a body. It will be a spiritual body, transformed from contingent corruptibility to imperishable incorruptibility (1 Cor. 15:52), and as different from the physical body as a seed is from the plant into which it grows (1 Cor.15: 37, 42-44).

However, there is some room for doubt. Although Paul clearly finds the term 'body' to be the most appropriate to describe the form it is to take, there is a tension between the fleshly body that the risen Jesus seems to have in the passages in Luke and John above, and the rather more mystical form he has in the Matthew's account, where the disciples, both men and women, *worship* him, rather than attempt to cling to his physical form. Moreover, in John 20:17, Jesus seems to be able to appear and disappear in locked rooms and he instructs Mary not to hold on to him before he has ascended to *'My Father and your Father, my God and your God.'* The physical and the spiritual resurrection body of Jesus present different challenges to those who see him.

The biblical evidence for life after death rests on the accounts of the resurrection. Jesus not only predicts his resurrection on a number of occasions (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:34 & //s), he also warns the disciples to *'Tell no one until the Son of Man should have risen from the dead.'* (Mark 9:9) However, none of the predictions attempt to explain *how* Jesus' resurrection would be accomplished. The evangelists were not concerned with the mechanics of God's miraculous activity, but the reality of it. Therefore, the gospel accounts of the resurrection do not attempt a description or analysis of what happened. The resurrection is not narrated, but proclaimed: *"Look at my hands and my feet...touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."* (Luke 24:.39)

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul teaches on the resurrection and its significance for all Christian believers. His view is based on his conviction that: *'If Christ be not risen, then your faith is in vain.'* (15:17)

He offers four key proofs of the truth of the resurrection:

- Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures (15:3b)
- He was buried (15:4a)
- He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures (15:4b)
- Then he appeared to... (15:5-9)

R H Fuller commented: *'The presupposition of Paul's argument is that there is a constitutive and organic relationship between the resurrection and the future resurrection of believers... Christ's resurrection was the beginning of the eschatological process of resurrection... When, therefore, Paul goes on to define the nature of resurrected existence, what he says about it will apply equally to Christ.'*



Paul clearly seems to use the appearances - to Peter, the disciples and to 'more than 500 brothers and sisters', to James, to 'all the apostles', and 'last of all... to me' - to 'prove' the resurrection happened. Paul speaks of a resurrection of believers which, like Christ's resurrection, will involve the resurrection of a body. However, the corruptible and perishable flesh will be transformed into something incorruptible, something that can only be created by God in the miracle of the resurrection. The resurrection of the body relies on an act of God's divine love. It is the re-creation by God of the person, not as a physical being but as a spiritual being. *"For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality."* (1 Cor. 15:52)

So does the New Testament provide convincing proof that there is life after death? This ultimately depends upon what is meant by being human. Human beings have a physical body and a spiritual soul. The physical body can be seen and identified but the soul cannot be identified in the same way. The question is whether or not the soul and the body are of the same nature (monistic) or have two natures (dualistic). The heart of the problem is what constitutes personal identity?

If a person is limited in their identity to their body, then is a resurrected body the same person or a copy? If it is a copy, then continuity is lost. Moreover, will the resurrected person be the same in every way - or are things changed? For instance, can the blind see and are the old made young? If so, is this still the original person? If not, then bodily continuity is lost and the resurrection of the body must be rejected.

Moreover, it is not inconceivable that a belief in life after death need not include belief in the historical resurrection of Jesus. If life after death is a logical possibility then in philosophical terms it need not depend on the resurrection of Jesus and John Hick in his 'replica theory' argued that life after death - in the form of a replicated body - is not inconceivable.

The New Testament writers make clear why life after death, rooted in a relationship with Jesus is a desirable goal - it is the only way that humankind can avoid the inevitable consequences of sin and separation from God. For the philosopher, however, it may be necessary to find some other reason to justify post mortem existence. If it is possible to conceive of the logical possibility of life after death without belief in the resurrection of Jesus, then life after death need not acquire its significance from Jesus' resurrection either. In effect, life after death might be desirable simply because it is hard to accept that this earthly existence is all that there is - there must be something beyond earthly life which gives meaning to it. Furthermore, we place such a high value on life that it is hard to conceive of it ending, even if its continuation demands that we postulate some alternative mode of existence. Human potential is rarely completely fulfilled in this life and John Hick suggests that: *'If the human potential is to be fulfilled in the lives of individuals, these lives must be prolonged far beyond the limits of our present bodily existence.'*

However, whilst these notions do not depend on the resurrection of Jesus, or of a life after death that is exclusive to religious believers, or even on the existence of a divine being who will bring it about, the New Testament writers clearly think otherwise. For them, only the supreme God of love can have the incentive and the ability to bring about life after death. Without God, we are left to ask why human potential should be fulfilled beyond the grave, why should good be rewarded, and why should the value of human life be recognised post mortem? If it is only because we think it should, then it reflects nothing more than humanity's inflated sense of their own importance, and a tendency to exaggerate humankind's ability to influence and shape their own destiny. The New Testament writers would argue that post mortem existence must be firmly placed within the hands of God, and that the resurrection of Jesus, and the promise that his resurrection offers to all believers, guarantees its reality.

The New Testament writers confidently believe in the reality of life after death and have accepted and incorporated it into their belief system without question. But how can anyone be so sure? John Hick resolves this with the principle of *eschatological verification*. He envisages two travellers walking down a road, one of whom believes it leads to the celestial city, and one who believes that there is no final destination. Which one of them is right will not be verified until they reach the end of the road, although their particular positions will have a vital influence on the way they experience and interpret what happens to them on the road. In other words, one day we shall know.

Martin Dibelius observed that, though the resurrection narratives do not provide conclusive empirical evidence of life after death, yet, he admits, even the most sceptical historians have to acknowledge that something happened on that first Easter Sunday, something very special indeed.

### Commentary New Testament - Question 18

**The candidate has demonstrated that they have done some thorough research, not only into the New Testament scriptures, but also into the views of scholars. They have put this to good use in addressing the question title. They have also shown that they have some knowledge of current theological debate and applied this to real life and to philosophical discourse.**

**The candidate demonstrates impressive skills of reasoning and an awareness of the debates behind the issues, as well as the need to provide evidence in support of views offered. Excellent use of religious language and quotation from scholars shows that the candidate is basing their answer on well-researched material.**

### Christianity and the Christian Church - Question 19

***Examine the key ideas of either a theologian or movement you have investigated. Comment on the contribution of this theologian or movement to the development of Christianity.***

Feminist theology has its origins in the work of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who published 'The Woman's Bible' in 1895/8. She believed that the key to change lay in a new approach to biblical interpretation and criticism and the development of a feminist interpretation as an alternative assessment of biblical evidence as seen through the eyes of women.

Feminist theologians have sought to prove that hostility towards women and the low estimation of them derives not from the Bible, but from the long-standing historical interpretation of it, stemming, for instance, from a masculine interpretation of scriptures such as I Timothy, which seems to highlight the creation narrative in a way which is clearly detrimental to the subsequent view of women in the church and the world and to the way their stories are interpreted: *'For Adam was formed first, then Eve, and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived, and became a transgressor.'* (1 Tim 2:13-14)

Mary Daly characterises radical feminism. She rejects the Bible in favour of an alternative, feminine, religious experience observing. Thus, she questions the place of Mary in Catholicism which, she claims, has been manipulated by male theologians to become a means of female subjugation. She claimed that Judeo-Christian tradition is a structure in which 'God is male and the male is god' and that God should be understood as 'Being'. She maintained that only lesbian radical feminists could rise above male patriarchy and she subsequently broke completely from Christianity and Christian Feminism. However, this approach rejects the Bible as a source book and the alternative, feminine religious experience of the radical feminists leaves no room for the Bible, inspired or not.

Rosemary Ruether, Phyllis Trible and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza are less extreme. They read the text with feminist eyes and criticise the accepted interpretation of it, and as such it is compatible with most recent developments in biblical literary criticism. For example, rather than interpreting it as a cause of the subjugation of women, instead reading it as one of equality in which both man and woman share in sin and punishment. In the same way, the Virgin Mary serves as a model for discipleship for all humankind, and displays a courageous faith comparable with that of Abraham and in accepting God's plan for her, she does not accept in submission, but asserts her autonomy. Fiorenza claims that female subjugation is not part of the original gospel, but the result of the church's compromise with the Graeco-Roman world.

More conservatively, Elaine Storkey explains the Bible in a positive light for contemporary women. For instance, she interprets Paul's use of the concept of 'headship' (Ephesians 5:22ff) to mean 'source of life' rather than authority, and she observes that when Eve is described as Adam's 'helper', the same noun is used to describe God in relation to Israel.

Feminist theologians such as Ruether argue that human experience is the starting and ending point of all interpretation, and since scripture must have arisen out of human experience, all interpretation of it must continue to be guided by it. Symbols, laws and traditions must be re-authenticated by a new generation or be discarded. This is exactly what feminist theologians are doing - testing their experience against received tradition. Ruether claims that the experiences of women have been: *'...created by the social and cultural appropriations of biological differences in a male-dominated society.'*

This makes biblical interpretation crucial and feminists assert their right to make critical evaluations based on recognising that oppression of women is wrong. However, opponents claim that feminist criticism places an external norm (women's experience) above the Bible itself. And argue that the authority of women to interpret in this way challenges the authority of the Bible. Reformists argue that they *use* the Bible as the basis for their insights. Sarah Heaner Lancaster observes: *'(Is) there any way to bring the fundamental commitments of feminist theology into dialogue with an equally fundamental commitment to the Bible as the word of God?'*

At the heart of feminist theology is the concept of divine inspiration and the question of whether or not the whole Bible has its origin in God itself. It is the main source of truth about God and, as described in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is: *'Profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness'*. Similarly, 2 Peter 1:20-21 declares that: *'Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.'*

The dilemma concerns whether the scriptures, other post-scriptural and extra-canonical writings and the teaching of the church are the word of God, or the interpretation of that word by men. Words are very powerful tools, and the wrong word, or the wrong interpretation of a word, can lead to a quite unintended interpretation of the concept. Is it, as Origen said, that the Holy Spirit has given God's inspiration to the writers and interpreters of the scriptures, or are the scriptures truly open to a range of interpretations? Sarah Heaner Lancaster: *'If God's dictation does not violate the human author's style, neither does it violate their situation ... Though the impulse for the will to write comes from God, this impulse seems to coincide with that is also compelling about the author's particular situation.'*

In modern times, critical approaches to biblical interpretation have revealed the humanness of the writings and various responses to the problem attempted to restate the doctrine of inspiration. Feminist criticism questions the nature of inspiration head on, specifically since it faces the challenge of placing women's experience above the Bible itself.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton believed that the key to legislative reform lay in a new approach to biblical interpretation, and that the development of higher criticism, which was already debating the status of the Bible as the infallible word of God, supported her approach. The subsequent development of feminist interpretation has provided an alternative assessment of biblical evidence as seen through the eyes of women readers and theologians. Feminist theologians argue that human experience is the starting point of all interpretation of scripture and must continue to illuminate it and the scriptures, like all literature which contains symbolism and tradition, must be constantly monitored. In effect, the traditions of the Bible should be re-evaluated in the light of contemporary culture and the roles of the sexes in the modern era.

Feminist theologians are not challenging the biblical material but the interpretation of it. Whilst scripture may or may not derive directly from God, interpretation of it derives from human beings, and if this needs to be reappraised and corrected, then it should in order to help believers to get closer to the original, inspired word, not further away from it.

It may be that the inspiration view suits some books, for example, prophetic literature, more than others - i.e. those which are narrative based and which involve human speakers, as well as the divine. Different levels of inspiration clearly seem to be evident in different books of the Bible. Moreover, what constitutes the Bible? The decision as to which books were to make up the canon of scripture was not taken at the same time and unanimously accepted by the whole church and disputes followed for several centuries.





Furthermore, most Christians read the Bible in translation, and no translation can be infallible, even if it were possible to argue that the original Hebrew and Greek texts were. In any case, before the books of the Bible were written at all, the materials which they contain had gone through many formulations, including oral transmission. The words of the prophets were preserved in the memories of their disciples, and the books of both Old and New Testaments are products of compilation, selection, arrangement and revision. It is, therefore, impossible for any interpreter to maintain the notion that the inspiration of scripture guaranteed it free from error. Sarah Heaner Lancaster: *'The doctrine of inspiration guaranteed that scripture could be trusted but also forced Protestant scholastics to deny error of any sort. This position bore serious consequences later as (they) struggled to account both for internal and external challenges to the truth of scripture.'*

Perhaps the reformist feminist theologians have a point by going directly to the text rather than through the history of interpretation and read the text with the eyes of a female and criticise the accepted interpretation of it, and as such it is compatible with most recent developments in biblical literary criticism.

Of the many ways of understanding the inspiration model, the concept of *inspiration without inerrancy* may fit feminist interpretative methods best. Alfred Loisy observed that inspiration was a matter of the importance of the Bible in matters of morals and faith, but did not mean that every word, and every book in the Bible was perfect. Instead, he argued that each book should be seen as being a work of its own time and necessarily affected by errors of fact and opinion. In any case, a 'perfect' book, valid in every respect for every period of history was a logical impossibility, even for God, since it would have to be constantly changing, and could not therefore be, *a priori*, perfect. Feminist interpretation offers an interesting and illuminating tool to unlock truths in the biblical text which appear to have been obscured by many years of male interpretation. In this way, it may be said therefore to unlock concealed and forgotten inspirations in the text.

### **Commentary on Christianity and the Christian Church - Question 19**

**The candidate has demonstrated that they have done some thorough research on the controversial issue of feminist theology. There is excellent exegesis of textual source material and the candidate has been able to apply this to the question title, using biblical evidence supported and contested by the views of scholars. A range of views and opinions are expressed, together with the historical and theological perspective.**

**The candidate demonstrates good skills of reasoning and an awareness of the complex, and often emotional, debates behind these issues, as well as the need to provide evidence in support of views offered. Excellent use of religious language and quotations from scholars shows that the candidate is basing their answer on well-researched and carefully thought out material.**

## Unit 4 model answers

### Philosophy of Religion - Question 1

**(a) Examine the argument and/or interpretation in the passage.**

**(30)**

**(b) Do you agree with the idea(s) expressed? Justify your point of view and discuss its implications for understanding religion and human experience.**

**(20)**

**(Total 50 marks)**

*Enter Hume and Kant. Their combined critique of the ontological, cosmological and teleological proofs of the existence of God was a devastating blow to the many forms of both the scholastic and the deistic projects that built on the foundation of those proofs. The widespread (if temporary) belief that Hume and especially Kant had said the last word on the subject is what Hegel referred to as the assumption that we cannot know God and must therefore only talk about religion. The pressing issue became: what can philosophy say about the religious dimension of human life now that the metaphysical proofs of God's existence have been taken away?*

*Enter Hume and Kant, again. It is not surprising that two thinkers who were as concerned as they were about the religious dimension of human life and who were as convinced as they were that the metaphysical foundations of scholastic and deistic philosophical theology had crumbled should point in new directions. But how different are those directions!*

From Westphal, M.

*The emergence of modern philosophy of religion* in Quinn, P. & Taliaferro, C. (eds)  
*A Companion to Philosophy of Religion* (Blackwell, 2002)

#### Answer 1(a)

In this passage, Westphal traces the comparatively recent history in the philosophy of religion, which, he argues, has moved away from debates about the existence of God to debates about religion in general. The reason for this, he claims, is that Hume and Kant had served to offer sufficiently decisive blows to the classical arguments for the existence of God as to render them totally ineffectual. As a result, he argues, 'the metaphysical proofs of God's existence have been taken away.'

David Hume is, of course, well known for his incisive critiques of the classical arguments. In *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* he aims a decisive blow at the Design Argument, undermining the foundations of the analogical form of the argument and rendering it useful only in so far as it highlights the appearance of apparent design in the world, but in no way proving the existence of the God of classical theism. Like Bertrand Russell two centuries later, he dismissed the central premise of the Cosmological Argument - the need for a necessary being which underpins the universe and provides the explanation for its existence. Similarly he found the Ontological Argument wanting for its reliance on the incoherent concept of necessity, maintaining that any being that could be conceived to exist could also be conceived not to exist, and that it was a 'great partiality' to claim that God was so completely different that his non existence was inconceivable.

Kant famously rejected all the classical arguments for the existence of God, arguing that only the existence of morality could point towards the existence of God who acted as a guarantor of the *summon bonum*. He attacked Anselm's and Descartes' presumption that existence could be predicated of a thing or being, arguing that it added nothing to our understanding of something. £100 in the mind was still £100 in reality, thus God in the mind and God in reality would be the same - existence is not a great making property.

Westphal claims that once these classic arguments had been destroyed there was no longer any room for, or need for, philosophers to debate God's existence or pursue the arguments further. He alludes to Hegel's claim that since God cannot be known all that can be discussed is religion. The view that God cannot be known is not unfamiliar in the philosophy of religion. The religious language faces this problem constantly; how do we speak of the transcendent God in the limited language of humans? The *via negativa* offered one way around this: we speak of God in terms of what he is not rather than what he is and thus avoid the problem of it being impossible to say what God is. Non cognitive language has also served to deal with this problem. The use of mythological and symbolic language serves to express the unexpressible, since speaking of God as a rock or shepherd is evidently not literal, and yet somehow conveys attributes of God which we somehow cannot otherwise express. We cannot fully know God's attributes, but we can come close to them by clever use of language.

However, the logical extension to the view that we cannot know God is that we cannot speak of him at all, the view which was at the heart of the Logical Positivists' critique of religious language. The early philosophy of Wittgenstein had proposed that 'Of that which we cannot speak, we must remain silent', and the work of the Positivists seemed to succeed in making clear that God could be neither known since there was nothing to know, nor spoken of.

Radical critiques of religious language of this kind expose an atheism rooted in a scientific method which focuses on the belief that nothing which cannot be empirically verified or proved to be analytically true can be meaningful. Thus, since it is impossible to prove the existence of God, it is meaningless even to ask questions of God's existence. To this way of thinking, to ask whether the Design Argument serves to prove the existence of God is itself a meaningless question, since proving the existence of a non-empirical being is impossible - there are no observations that can be made.

However, as Westphal suggests, there are other directions in which the philosophy of religion can go. Rather than discussing the question of God's existence, it is possible to analyse the manifestations of belief in God. Identifying the purpose and function of religion, leading in many cases to a thorough going critique of it has come to dominate a good deal of contemporary studies of religion, most particularly the popularist approaches offered by quasi-philosophers such as Richard Dawkins. And interestingly, it is not just academics who have begun to explore the 'religious dimensions of human life.' We live in an age where there is an intense interest in spirituality of all kinds, whether it be rooted in theistic beliefs or not. New Religious Movements, psychics, mediums, alternative and holistic medicine, angels, guiding spirits, crystals, even unicorns, are seen to offer a legitimate way of exploring human spirituality. Many of these approaches incorporate an idea of God, explicitly or implicitly, but not because they are based on any of the classical ideas of God evident in the traditional arguments.

Nevertheless, it is open to question whether Westphal is right to say that philosophy has nothing left to say about the existence of God and still less that the metaphysical foundations of deistic philosophy have crumbled. As I will explore in the next answer, I believe that the emergence of an overwhelming interest in the religious experience and dimension of mankind has not disposed of it altogether.

### Answer 1(b)

I believe that it is self evidently not true that Hume and Kant had the last word on arguments for the existence of God. Certainly, their work has been enormously influential and their criticisms strong enough to force the proponents of the classical arguments back to their desks for another round, but this is not to say that those arguments do not continue to have life.

Firstly, it is quite evident that the arguments still draw a considerable degree of scholarly interest. Predominant among theistic philosophers of religion who return to the arguments today is Richard Swinburne who claims that the probability of the existence of God is rendered highly likely on the basis of several factors including the appearance of the world - in other words, a form of the design argument. He supports a cumulative case for the existence of God, incorporating miracles and religious experience, so perhaps it is true to say that the three classical arguments are not *sufficient* to prove the existence of God. However, they continue to go some way in pointing in the direction of God. Although it may appear that science has undermined the Design and Cosmological Arguments, alternatively, we may argue that they are enhanced by an appreciation of what science has revealed about the world. Although the Ontological Argument is no more than a word game which tells us nothing about the reality of things, it is popular (convincing?) enough to continue to be revisited by modern scholars, Plantinga and Malcolm among them.

However, I think it is true to say that those who have genuine belief in God do not do so because they have found these arguments convincing. Belief in God arises out of personal experience, upbringing, circumstances, culture, even coincidence, but I don't think it arises out of a review of the classical arguments. It may well be true to say that metaphysical proofs of God's existence no longer have any meaning to the believer, even if Anselm was so inspired by the Ontological proof that he no longer feared any challenges to his faith.

Furthermore, I think Westphal is right to say that an interest in the religious dimensions of human life has become the primary direction in which philosophy of religion has travelled. But interestingly, it is in atheism that interest has predominantly arisen. It is a regular occurrence to see leading articles in the national newspapers from outspoken atheists (with Richard Dawkins at the helm) condemning the outdated, extremist, violent, delusional beliefs of the inadequate, dangerous and uneducated religious believer in the modern world. Some respond - Alister McGrath and Keith Ward have both recently produced direct responses to the attacks of Richard Dawkins - but the public interest and awareness is aroused far more by the irate attack rather than the reasoned response. In *'The God Delusion'* Dawkins does attempt to offer a critique of the classical arguments, for example, calling the Ontological Argument 'infantile' in its reasoning, and suggesting that Aquinas's Fourth Way (From the Gradation of Things) could as easily prove that God was the smelliest of all beings as it aims to prove that he is the highest in all goodness.

Dawkins' attacks are unrefined and aimed to ridicule rather than to offer substantial philosophical critique, but although I believe that it is wrong to say that metaphysical arguments for the existence of God have lost ground completely, it is true to say that for most people interested in religion, they have long ceased to be the primary focus.



## Commentary on Philosophy of Religion - Question 1

This is a passage which can lead to a range of legitimate responses, in which candidates may choose to focus very closely on Hume and Kant, and even Hegel, if their studies have taken them in that direction, or to respond more broadly. This answer has done a bit of both and done so with great confidence. The candidate has taken the wording of the passage very much to heart and has alluded directly to the exact words on a number of occasions, but without ever falling into repetition of chunks of the text for lack of anything else to say. Whilst they have kept the focus initially on arguments for the existence of God, they have also drawn on their studies of religious language and shown some broader understanding of spirituality in the modern world. Reference to scholars is frequent but not unreasonably dominating - we are clear that the candidate has their own understanding of the passage. In all an exceptional response.

## Ethics - Question 2

**(a) Examine the argument and/or interpretation in the passage.**

**(30)**

**(b) Do you agree with the idea(s) expressed? Justify your point of view and discuss its implications for understanding religion and human experience.**

**(20)**

**(Total 50 marks)**

*In my view moral theorising is something that real people do in everyday life. It is not just the domain of professors, expounding in their lecture halls. Moral theorising can be found on the highways and byways, practised by everyone from bartenders to politicians.*

*In everyday life it is common for people to apply role reversal tests, to appeal to possible outcomes of actions or policies, or to point to special responsibilities and obligations. This is the stuff of moral persuasion, reasoning and education. For example, we ask children how they would feel if they were treated as they have treated others. To an acquaintance we point out that it would not cost much to visit a sick parent, and that it would do the parent a world of good. We condemn a friend for not acting as a friend.*

*When we ask why we should be moved by such considerations, or we test them to see whether they hang together with other beliefs and commitments that we have, we are engaging in moral theorising. However, the result of this theorising hardly ever leads to the creation of a full blown moral theory. Generally, we are pushed into theorizing by pragmatic considerations rather than by the disinterested search for truth. We are usually pushed out of it by conversational closure - one of us gets our way, or we agree to disagree. Moral theorising typically emerges when there is a conversational niche for it to fill.*

*From Dale Jamieson, Method and Moral Theory, in A Companion to Ethics, ed Peter Singer*

**Answer 2(a)**

In this passage, the author puts forward the interesting observation that the whole process of moral theorising - developing moral theories and analysing questions such as 'what is good?' or 'what constitutes a good action?' - is a process which is not confined to academia, but which is a regular, universal and common activity. By suggesting that this practice is to be found amongst 'everyone from bartenders to politicians' the author is suggesting that it is not even an exclusive or elitist practice, but one which is genuinely universal, and which is therefore not dependent on education, moral training or intellectual sophistication.

The author develops his theory by referring to situations in which we commonly engage in moral theorising. He suggests that humans are able to create scenarios against which they distinguish between possible actions, and which enable them to identify special responsibilities which will help to guide moral actions and choices. Interestingly, the methods of moral reasoning which the author suggests are common practice are close to the formal moral theories which have been developed by moral philosophers. We appeal to 'possible outcomes', observes Jamieson, which suggests that we appeal to consequentialist and teleological approaches to moral decision making, weighing up a range of possible outcomes to decide which is, for example, more likely to generate happiness or good will or to benefit those most in need. We may not call this Utilitarianism, for example, but the approach is essentially the same, suggesting that we recognise the consequences of an action to be important when weighing up possible options. Jamieson's reference to 'policies' also hints at the use of Utilitarian principles when devising public policies, such as the Smoking Ban which will become policy on 1 July 2007. Traditionally, Utilitarian principles have influenced public policies, emerging as it did in an era which had seen tremendous social change through the Industrial Revolution.

Jamieson also identifies '*special responsibilities and obligations*' which influence our personal moral decision making. This suggests that when we weigh up moral choices we take into account those people and situations to which we have a prior or overwhelming obligation. It is something of a given in ethical decision making that we treat loved ones and close associates differently to strangers and that we fulfil obligations to keep promises or to care for those who are dependent upon us before we exercise our own preferences or minister to the needs of others with whom we don't have a prima facie relationship. For the Deontologist, obligations are the stuff of morality and must take precedence in every case of moral decision making, but Jamieson suggests that we do this anyway, even if we don't call ourselves deontologists. Special responsibilities may not just be to people, but to the group to which we align ourselves, be it political, religious, national or cultural.

Jamieson suggests that these processes are part of our moral education and the means by which we persuade others to make moral decisions. His implication, therefore, is that we are not afraid to be morally persuasive, which suggests that we feel we have some degree of moral authority to persuade. We appeal, he argues, to empathy - '*we ask children how they would feel if they were treated as they have treated others*' - and to obligations that friends and relatives have to each other. There is, it would appear, some moral counsellor in us all which gives us the power to guide the moral behaviour of others. We assume that parents, children, loved ones and friends *should* act in particular ways and we make sure that others know that. And we do so without necessarily having an academic knowledge of moral philosophy, even though the methods we adopt are surprisingly akin to those principles.

This process of real life moral theorising, Jamieson suggests, is seen when we ask moral questions of ourselves and others, test them against our pre-existing beliefs and commitments and evaluate the reasons for which we act. But here the similarity to formal moral reasoning ends since '*this theorising hardly ever leads to the creation of a full blown moral theory.*' Although we may act in a consequentialist way, we don't formally identify it as such, setting it up as a means of governing our moral choices in future. We may act on principles which we believe to be absolute, without devising a formal deontological system of ethics. Rather, Jamieson suggests, we are governed by pragmatism - we make decisions on the basis of what we think is practical, workable, appropriate to our situation and that of others, irrespective of whether in so doing we are actually seeking the answer to that eternal question 'What is truth?' Interestingly, he suggests that we don't get that far in moral theorising. The argument or discussion ends by mutual agreement, we move on to something else, we compromise. We decide that we have theorised enough to be pragmatic, and to pursue it further would be gratuitous or insulting. The '*conversational niche*' has been filled and we get on with living out the result of our moral theorising.

### **Answer 2(b)**

I believe that Jamieson is right when he suggests that all moral decision making is based on a process of moral reasoning which we engage in, albeit outside of the classroom or lecture hall. We do not need to be engaged in academic moral philosophy to see that moral decisions need to be reasoned and that there are moral incentives to pursue. In doing so we develop a basic kind of ethical theory or basis on which we act, and, if we are in a position to do so, we aim to pass it on to others. A parent who makes moral decisions by consulting religious texts will encourage their children to do the same; they may even insist that they do so for as long as they have the authority to insist.

The fact that we engage in moral reasoning at all, however, suggests that we recognise that we are faced with moral dilemmas which lead us to be torn between a reluctance to lay aside all moral absolutes, and a paradoxical fear and attraction of the consequences of our actions. If we knew for certain what to do every time we were faced with a moral dilemma there would be no need for moral reasoning - it grows out of the need to find answers to questions and dilemmas which are not immediately self-evident.

But the ethical dilemmas that confront us on a daily basis are rarely of great magnitude such as those which occur, say, in a professional medical environment in which formal ethical theories and guidelines are necessary. The ethical dilemmas we face every day are usually so minor that we barely recognise them as such. Whether to give £1 to a young man and his dog sitting mournfully outside the tube station, or whether to help a friend with a piece of examined coursework are moral dilemmas with which we might easily identify - and do we utilise ethical theories to help us reach the right conclusion? Almost invariably, no; they are too time consuming and would require us to obtain too much background information in order to reach an appropriate decision. Instead, we tend to act *instinctively*, not after the long and drawn out processes which ethical theories effectively demand. The process of reasoning is usually brief.

We are naturally suspicious of moral reasoning that favours strangers rather than close associates, and so we reject examples such as the burning house and time to rescue only one person - your father or a doctor researching the cure to cancer - or other hypothetical problems. We know that in reality we would save our father and would think it irrational or counter intuitive to do otherwise and the discussion would come to a rapid conclusion.

Even if we do debate more complex moral issues which may offer a genuine range of alternatives, often we do so already having our own moral agenda. We have decided how to act, but want reassurance. We want those who influence us to approve of our actions. Interestingly, however, we often do not allow them to influence us because we have already worked through the process of moral reasoning ourselves and have our own reasons for deciding how to act. Sometimes, as Jamieson suggests, we invite moral discussion of our own dilemmas simply because *'there is a conversational niche to fill'* and not because we really want guidance. Still less do we want to be invited to apply an ethical theory which works only on paper, not in practice.

*Note: See Advanced Religious Studies by Sarah K Tyler and Gordon Reid, Philip Allan Updates 2002, 'Applying Ethical Theory to Moral Dilemmas' for some useful source material on this topic.*

### Commentary on Ethics - Question 2

**This answer is less lengthy, but no less astute than that for question 1, showing that the candidate has fully understood the issues raised in the passage, expressing it in their own words supported by quotation from the text when it is most helpful. The candidate uses technical language and is able to link the issues raised in the text with their knowledge of formal ethical theories and meta ethics. Again, there is no idle use of case studies although this passage could have easily led to a tedious string of examples which would have gained very little credit. A very sophisticated piece which includes no half connected points or artificial links.**

### Buddhism - Question 3

**(a) Examine the argument and/or interpretation in the passage.**

**(30)**

**(b) Do you agree with the idea(s) expressed? Justify your point of view and discuss its implications for understanding religion and human experience.**

**(20)**

**(Total 50 marks)**

*While the Buddha often emphasized the social dimensions of ethics, he also saw it as a personal quest marked by leading a good life, practising virtues and following meditational exercises. The practice of meditation emphasized the importance of paying attention to whatever one is doing while doing it, without the intrusion of distracting thoughts. Developing awareness of this sort laid the foundation for meditational exercises with specific objects for concentration. The development of meditation promoted its expansion into daily activities and enhanced individual morality. Thus in Buddhist ethics there is a close integration of the ethical as a rational engagement of analysis and argument, as a normative recommendation of conduct and a way of life, as a social expression and as an intense personal quest and mode of character development.*

*From De Silva, P. Buddhist Ethics in Singer, P. (ed) A Companion to Ethics (Blackwell, 2001)*



### Answer 3(a)

The key idea expressed in this passage is the integration of ethics with meditation in Buddhism. The implication of this cohesion is its effect on the way of life encouraged within Buddhism. There is a rich background to these ideas in Indian thought. For example, within Hindu beliefs about dharma there is the notion of important links between the correct cultivation of the mind and conduct. A specific case is Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita whereby he sees the significance of devotion to Krishna and his social responsibilities. Within Buddhist thought a very important context for an understanding of this passage is the Four Noble Truths. In particular, the Noble Eightfold Path links together wisdom, ethics and meditation. It is the final two themes of ethics and meditation that are important in examining this passage.

There are key terms and expressions in this passage that are important to understand. Within Buddhist ethics there are distinctive virtues such as those related to the five precepts. These include respect for life, honesty, correct attitudes to sense pleasures, truthfulness and maintenance of a clear mind free from intoxicants. The key emphasis in these precepts is on avoiding harm either to oneself or to others. Significantly, the aim is to create conditions that favour a better state of mind.

Meditational exercises tend to focus on calming the mind and insight. Samatha meditation aims to develop higher states of consciousness by means of purifying the mind from distractions, typically by means of breath control. Insight or vipassana aims to produce a greater awareness of mental and physical phenomena, this may be achieved by a certain degree of detachment coupled with equanimity. An important feature of Buddhist meditation is a balance between samatha and vipassana. In addition, there are various types of meditational techniques specifically linked to moral development. One such case is metta meditation that strives to improve loving-kindness (metta) by means of the right type of mental culture that promotes ways of developing acts of kindness to others.

An important phrase in the passage is 'normative expression'. This means the link between ethics and meditation is a standard underpinning Buddhist beliefs about these topics and this carries with it a strong recommendation for practice. An example of this, in the set texts for Buddhism, comes from the Questions of King Milinda concerning the Five Cardinal Virtues. This refers to 'wholesome dharmas' such as morality, faith, vigour, mindfulness and concentration. This group combines Buddhist teachings on ethics together with meditation. The author of the Questions of King Milinda illustrates this by reference to the growth of plants being dependent on the soil. Likewise, the Yogin with morality as the support cultivates the five cardinal virtues. Similarly, a successful builder creates a clear site for subsequent development. The basis of morality provides the successful Yogin with the correct foundation for character development. A key example of this approach can be found in the Sangha within Theravada Buddhism in which there is the emphasis on the Three Jewels. This refers to taking refuge in the Buddha, Sangha and Dharma and an important aspect of this is the interdependence between meditation and morality.

These ideas reflect aspects of Theravada Buddhism. It can be noted that similar views about the integration of ethics with morality are found in other Buddhist traditions. A classic case is the Bodhisattva tradition in Mahayana Buddhism. This tradition is based on the resolve to attain Buddhahood and this is achieved by developing the 'perfections'. These include moral virtues such as generosity and patience coupled with meditation alongside various important features such as 'skilful means'. This coupling of the finest moral development with sublime mental wisdom leads to the transfer of karmic merit whereby the bodhisattva passes on the store of accumulated merit to benefit other devotees. This amounts to a very important example of the links between meditation and ethics with highly significant implications for Buddhist practice.

So this passage encapsulates some key Buddhist ideas about the links between ethics and meditation. This is a prominent theme in Indian thought and is significant in Buddhist teachings. Dr. Saddhatissa illustrates this theme by referring to the story of Sigala. This character worshipped the various quarters of the world each day. The Buddha taught him that rather than worship the natural world each day Sigala should revere significant people in his life such as parents, family, friends, employees and religious teachers. In this story the Buddha brings together meditational techniques and the good life in terms of relationships.

### **Answer 3(b)**

It is not straightforward to say immediately that I agree with the ideas expressed. The reason for this is that as seen in the first part of the answer there is much evidence in Buddhism to support the interpretation about the fusion between ethics and meditation. However, there is debate about this topic across Buddhist views. For example, Ashoka was a significant figure in the development of Buddhism. In his Edicts the use of the term 'dharma' is important. Some interpret this expression to refer to his 'social welfare scheme' whereby there is emphasis on the improvement of public life for the good of the majority with an emphasis on non-injury to living beings. However, there is little evidence about emphasis on wisdom or meditation in these Edicts. It is as though ethical teachings become more prominent than meditational skills.

On the other hand there is evidence of a separation between ethics and meditation with an emphasis on meditation, for example in parts of Pure Land Buddhism. The focus on the nembutsu and in some cases the nembutsu alone leads to issues about the place of a moral life in these traditions. There is a saying from Shinran that 'even if a good man can be reborn in the Pure Land how much more so a wicked man.' The fact that there are debates within the Pure Land tradition about the possible lack of significance of correct moral behaviour, illustrates the view of a separation between ethics and meditation.

These two examples are important aspects within the development of Buddhism and they indicate that it would be simplistic to conclude there is a clear policy of fusion between ethics and meditation in Buddhism. The overall evidence is ambiguous and it indicates that any firm decisions would need to be rooted in particular Buddhist traditions because the cohesion between ethics and meditation varies from one school to another.

In terms of the implications for an understanding of religion this passage shows the way in which the correct cultivation of the mind has an impact on character development. Within many aspects of Buddhism there is a distinctive emphasis that moral development has a peculiar feature in terms of its basis in meditation. Although this may be found in a number of religious traditions it is a distinctive emphasis in much of Buddhism and certainly highlights one of the significant interpretations about morality compared to non-religious approaches.

As far as the implications for human experience are concerned, there is a debate about whether or not this fusion between morality and ethics makes sense. Within a study of ethics there is considerable debate about the 'is-ought' issue. This centres on the view that ethical obligations are not reducible to matters of fact, they are autonomous. We have seen there is evidence that Buddhist ethics may link together ethical codes with appropriate mental development. This amounts to a fusion between is-ought statements. It may be argued that Buddhism presents interesting evidence to counter this view of ethics or on the other hand there may be an argument about the sense of ethical language in Buddhism.



The implications of this passage raise significant points about distinctive features of Buddhism as a religion but also debates about the contributions of Buddhism to an understanding of the features of ethics within human experience. This passage provides a number of interesting and contentious views about the 'good life'.

### Commentary on Buddhism - Question 3

The material in this answer shows the way a candidate adapts relevant material from their Buddhist studies in other units. For example, there is reference to meditation from unit 1 and aspects of the development of Buddhism together with set texts from unit 3. This answer meets the requirements of both AO1 and 2 at level 4. There is a comprehensive understanding of the interpretation of this passage. This is seen for example in the way the candidate places the material in context. There is a clear and critical analysis of concepts and key terms. For example, the candidate has a sound understanding of Buddhist ethics and meditation.

The candidate evaluates the debates in a judicious manner, weighing up the complexities of the issues and is mindful of the alternatives. The candidate explores the implications for both religion and human experience in an explicit manner. There is firm control of the material leading to justifiable points of view at key points within the essay. Overall, the candidate has a consistent focus on the key issues in the passage about the relationship between ethics and meditation.

### Christianity - Question 4

**(a) Examine the argument and/or interpretation in the passage.**

**(30)**

**(b) Do you agree with the idea(s) expressed? Justify your point of view and discuss its implications for understanding religion and human experience.**

**(20)**

**(Total 50 marks)**

*'Whilst religious communities still flourish, they are rarely advocated to-day, even by their members... Still another way is to make a sharp separation between the realm of love in the Church and the stern realm of justice and order in the world, or to say that the purpose of Jesus' radical ethic is to convict us of sin and prevent the development of spiritual pride. None of these attempts will do. The radical elements in Jesus' ethic are an authentic corollary of the radical stance of the Kingdom of God, calling us past the necessary struggles with justice to a fuller realization of love. It is the more challenging because the more serious sins feed on moral achievements not on the more coarse and flamboyant ones. Both with individuals and collectives corruption can feed on moral achievement, so if there is a moral collapse it can be greater than if the achievement had been less. Nazi Germany is the great example of this in the twentieth century. Hence the question has been raised. Is there any point in such a radical ethic which is always being ignored? Would not a less drastic and more practical one be better? It is a question which is being frequently asked in this century by adherents of other faiths.'*

From Preston, R. *Christian Ethics* in Singer, P. (ed) - *A Companion to Ethics* (Blackwell, 2001)

**Answer 4(a)**

This work concerns the nature and outworking of the ethical teaching of Jesus Christ and, in particular, his radical teachings on the nature of love in the Sermon of the Mount, with its requirements to love enemies, give to the poor, forgive adversaries, and not to lust, kill, judge others or store up treasure on earth. Instead, Jesus advocated that his followers:

*'...do to others what you would have them do to you..' - Matthew 6:12*

The Christian Church has always had trouble understanding the teaching, because it is such a radical view of love - where enemies are forgiven, old scores forgotten, and wounds are healed. Sometimes the Church has given way and softened the commandment - for example, by saying that this radical teaching was only for that moment in time, with the early Christians expecting the imminent end of the world. More recently, such radical morality, or 'counsels of perfection' were left to religious communities, such as monasteries and nunneries, where vows of poverty, chastity and obedience are more readily made. Meanwhile, the rest of Christendom tries to follow the basic precepts as best it can. Such communities continue today, though fewer and fewer seek to join their ethical brand of living.

Christian ethics has its roots in the ministry of Jesus, most significantly in his teachings on the establishment of the kingdom of God, which he exemplified in his own life and teaching. It is concerned with the way in which God exercises his kingly rule and how his people should respond to it. Jesus teaches not by doctrine, but through parables, sayings and his own actions, which exemplify how God's kingdom can be seen in everyday experiences. Most significantly, Jesus portrayed God's rule not in terms of punishment for wrongdoers, but in God himself bearing the consequences of human wrongdoing - it is a paradoxical teaching: *'For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'* - John 3:16. So how should a citizen of the kingdom of God behave? At the most basic level, in accordance with the so-called 'Golden Rule' laid down by Jesus in Matthew 7:12: *'Always treat others as you would like them to treat you.'*

This is, in a sense, a 'natural' ethical teaching, found in so many ethical theories and notions. Thus, the good receive rewards and the bad are punished. But there is more to Jesus' ethical teaching than this - in particular, Jesus takes a radical step beyond common morality by requiring people to forgive, and to continue forgiving without limit (Matthew 18:21) because this corresponds to God's forgiveness of humanity. Thus, the believer is urged to forgive their enemies (Matthew 6:14), to love their neighbours (Luke 10:29) and not to be anxious over their needs, because anxiety is a sign of a lack of trust in God (Matthew 6: 19-34). Instead, the believer is urged to be like Christ and live in faith and trust.

Christ's ethical teaching goes far beyond everyday human ethics, which tend to go along the lines of 'do good turns for those who do good turns to you' - the so-called ethic of reciprocity. Christ goes much further, warning against loving only those who love you and instead he advocates loving enemies and, indeed, all of fellow humanity (Matthew 5:45). However, this is not easy, particularly in international situations. Whilst in human social life a person can expect a certain amount of mutual reliability, this is not so in affairs between sovereign nations - for instance, Neville Chamberlain's 'piece of paper' guaranteeing peace with Nazi Germany.

Similarly, Christ goes beyond the ethic of behaving well in order to get a reward. In the kingdom of God there is only one reward - eternal life. Jesus talks about what Preston calls: *'...self - forgetfulness which results in unselfconscious goodness.'* What he means is that the reward Christ speaks of cannot be sought or pursued - the rewards happen when people turn their backs on the worldly way of living and live in the way of Christ, for love's sake, not for reward's sake - then they will have *'treasure in heaven.'* (Luke 18:22)

Interestingly, Jesus never gave precise rulings on ethical issues, preferring to speak in general terms. Richard Robinson in *'An Atheist's Values'* observes: *'He does not pronounce about war, capital punishment, gambling, justice...tyranny, freedom, slavery, self-determination or contraception. There is nothing Christian about being for any of these things nor about being against them if we mean by 'Christian' what Jesus taught...'*

Love is the heart of Christ's ethical teaching - and this love has two aspects - to 'love God and to love one's neighbour as oneself.' (Matthew 22:34) It means being responsible for fellow human beings, because they are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:22). This is not about treating everyone equally, nor being exploited. Nor is it about self-sacrifice. It is about serving our neighbour whilst affirming ourselves. The end result is that love for one's neighbour leads to the love of God and a fellowship of forgiveness and reconciliation. In this respect, having love as the motivation for action does away with ethical content in decision making.

This is not without its problems, as the Christian Church has found out over the centuries to its cost. The Church has often found it difficult to interpret the teachings of Jesus in the modern world and the only members who seem to take Christ's teachings literally and completely are monks and nuns, with their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The majority of believers must make do with following more basic ethical precepts, such as trying their best to be just, caring and loving.

Yet this is insufficient, for the radical elements of Jesus' teaching demand his followers to strive for justice in order to find a fuller realization of God's love, yet they are reluctant to do this in a world of secular values - where the material is seen as much more important than the spiritual. This means, as the passage highlights, that people can sometimes mix up moral achievements with corruption and justify doing great harm in the name of good - for example, the extermination of the Jews in Nazi Germany. It begs the question, if humanity cannot live up to Christ's ethical values, then is there any point in having them? Might it not be better if humans settled for less, more practical values?

#### **Answer 4(b)**

There are certainly those who agree with this, though personally, I do not. Joseph Klausner in *'Jesus of Nazareth'* argued that Christ's teachings were impossible and were for the days when the Messiah would come. He said that to strictly obey Christ would result in injustice, the break-up of families and the disruption of social stability. Instead, he advocated following ethical rules, the *'practical, corporate ethic of Judaism'* with ethical rules to cover every situation.

Others have argued that Christian ethics breed intolerance and use the examples of the persecutions of minorities by the Church in ages past. Equally, Christian ethics are themselves seen as immoral because they stress a system of rewards - the good go to Heaven and the bad go to Hell. Such ethics, say the critics, are repressive because they lead to defensive and restrictive behaviour and to static conformism - for instance, the confused Christian stances regarding women priests and homosexuality.

Moreover, Christian ethics keep people at an immature level - leading them to blindly follow moral teachings without question, often with harmful results, for instance, the atrocities committed in the name of religious fundamentalism.

I disagree, and support the view, long argued by Christians, that traditional teaching actually requires believers to think and to justify their moral position and that proper reason and discernment are the real guides to understanding and applying the teaching of Jesus to moral decisions. The Christian community, far from being immature, seeks to have an informed and sensitive conscience.

In the same way, I would suggest that it is actually a good thing that Christ did not give precise ethical rules, for this prevents people having to try to relate them to very difficult and changing social and cultural values and perspectives. More importantly, Jesus' teaching is hard because it forces believers to face the depth and range of love that is needed and so they are more conscious of the gulf between what they do now and what they ought to do in the light and requirements of love. In other words, the 'impossible ethic' should be something that spurs humanity on to a higher level - to create, in the words of William Manson in 'Jesus the Messiah': '*...a tension which has transforming results.*'

#### Commentary on Christianity - Question 4

**This is a first class response in which the candidate has fully understood the issues raised in the passage, comprehensively explained the arguments in the passage and supported viewpoints with textual quotations and scholarly analysis. The level of religious and theological terminology used is very high and the candidate is able to link the issues raised in the text with their theological and religious knowledge. The candidate uses a range of sources and the work is crisp and easy to follow and the candidate has been careful to avoid long and unnecessary anecdotal comment. In (b) the candidate offers a clearly developed evaluation of the argument in the passage supported by appropriate examples, supported by well-thought out opinion, balanced with the views of scholars. A very well expressed and cleverly researched piece with a high level of sophisticated argument and scholarly analysis.**

#### New Testament - Question 9

*You may answer this question using material from the Gospel you have studied.*

**(a) Examine the argument and/or interpretation in the passage.**

**(30)**

**(b) Do you agree with the idea(s) expressed? Justify your point of view and discuss its implications for understanding religion and human experience.**

**(20)**

**(Total 50 marks)**

*'This concept is not about God being a judgmental figure demanding death as a punishment for sins, but is about the nature of love. God cannot just dismiss sins any more than a doctor examining a patient with a life-threatening illness can just say 'forget it and it will go away'. Sin must be dealt with and this must be done through an act of punishment. However, humanity cannot itself take the punishment because it is too great. Humanity needs help and this is what Jesus gives.'*

From Reid, G. and Tyler, S. *Advanced Religious Studies - 'Why did Jesus have to die?'*  
(Philip Allan Updates, 2002)

### Answer 9(a)

The Bible teaches that humanity lives in a state of sin that separates us from God. As a result, humanity cannot live up to the standards of God and cannot enjoy all that a relationship with God has to offer. It comes from the 'original sin' of Adam and Eve's disobedience towards God (Genesis 3), which affected all humanity, for all carry 'the seed of Adam.' The gospels tell us that Jesus' ministry was concerned with the struggle against sin and evil - either as the forces of darkness or, more usually, as the power of sin in people's lives. Through His love, which the Bible calls grace, God himself reaches out to humanity and offers salvation through the death of Jesus. This is the doctrine of atonement - Christ stands 'at one' with humanity and dies in the place of sinful people:

*'Just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.'* - Romans 5:21

It is God's nature to be righteous and just. He cannot, therefore, simply ignore sin. This causes a powerful moral dilemma - humanity is trapped by the power of sin and people cannot be freed from it by their own actions - they need God's help. So, to satisfy the need for justice, and, at the same time, show love for his people, God takes the unique step of incarnation - he becomes human, as Jesus Christ, to die in the place of humanity. In this way, the need for justice is satisfied and humanity can be forgiven and the relationship with God restored.

*'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds we are healed.'* - 1 Peter 2:24

Why was this necessary? It was because sin could only be dealt with through an appropriate act of punishment. However, humanity cannot itself take the punishment because it is too great. Humanity needs help and God, in His love, gives that help through Jesus, who dies to take the punishment for humanity, thus freeing people from power of sin:

*'The Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ...became a human being amongst human beings, capable of being seen and touched, to destroy death, bring life and restore fellowship between God and humanity.'* - **Irenaeus**, 'Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching'

This is firmly linked to the biblical notion of sacrifice. In ancient times, peoples made sacrifices to the gods to obtain forgiveness and blessing. At the time of Christ, the Jews followed an elaborate system of sacrificial procedures:

*'If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord's commands...He is to bring to the priest as a guilt offering a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. In this way, the priest will make atonement for him for the wrong he has committed.'* - Leviticus 5:17-18

Animals were killed as a reminder to the people that they were sinners who deserved to die and the blood of the animal represented the sinner's life being given up to God. - the animal died in the place of the sinful human and so, in this way, the punishment due for the sins had been carried out. Of particular significance to the Jewish people was the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, remembering the time when the people of Israel were saved by the sacrifice of a lamb, whose blood was put on the doors of their houses to save them from death (Exodus 12:13).

Jesus becomes the ultimate sacrificial lamb, dying in the place of human sinners and taking their punishment. In this way, sins are forgiven:

*'For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.'* - 1 Corinthians 5:7

The death of Jesus Christ, therefore, is the heart of Christianity. It is of paramount importance to believers and the Christian faith stands or falls by it. Historically speaking, Jesus was executed by the combined actions of the religious and political authorities. Jesus angered the Jewish religious leaders in several ways. In their eyes, he seemed to disregard the Law of Moses, particularly with his healings on the Sabbath. Jesus condemned the Pharisees as hypocritical and angered them with his claims concerning his relationship to God:

*"Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogue and greetings in the market-places. Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it."* (Luke 11:43-44)

They saw Jesus as a threat to the purity of the Jewish religion and the covenant with God. In particular, the cleansing of the Temple market and the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem led them to see Jesus as a great danger to their own status and position and to the religious faith of the people:

*'Here is a man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.'* - John 11:48

The Jews were not prepared to accept that Jesus was the Messiah and, therefore, had to executed him for what they thought was the good of the people:

*'...Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, 'You know nothing at all! You do not realise that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.'* ( John 11: 49-50)

At the trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus was found guilty of blasphemy - for claiming to be the Christ, the Son of God and, therefore, equal to God himself. He was sentenced to death for the ultimate religious crime.

The political authorities, the Romans, were not concerned with the Jewish religion. They simply wanted peace and order in the land, so that they could govern peacefully and collect the taxes. In common with the Jewish authorities, they would punish anyone who might cause civil unrest. They would have seen Jesus as a threat to peace and the established order. Pilate condemned Jesus to death because, as Roman procurator, he wanted to ensure peace and order in the land and he did not want to risk trouble by upsetting the Jewish leaders. Jesus died as a matter of religious and political expediency:

*'How could Jesus have been brought to the cross by people who were blessed by his signs and wonders?'* - J. Jeremias, 'Unknown Sayings of Jesus'.





### Answer 9(b)

However, it is the religious, rather than the historical context of the life of Jesus that is most important here. The earthly ministry of Jesus was depicted in the scriptures as a struggle against evil and the power of sin in peoples' lives. With his death and resurrection, Jesus is seen as having defeated the power of evil and sin forever.

His death was, in certain respects, akin to a ransom - an offering made to someone to free someone else. Just as it was possible to pay a ransom to set a slave free, so the gospels talk of people being helpless slaves to sin, and Jesus' death as the payment of a ransom to secure freedom from this slavery:

*'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'* (Mark 10:45)

The prophet Isaiah foretold this in the Old Testament. He spoke of the Suffering Servant who would take the punishment due to the people of God (Isaiah 53). This was later emphasised in 1 Peter 2:24:

*'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds we are healed.'*

This is the nature of atonement - that Christ died so that humanity could be set free. The punishment due for the sins of God's people had been carried out by the death of Jesus. God, in accepting Christ's sacrificial death, forgives human sin. God is loving and accepting of sinful humanity, rather than judgemental, for Christ stands at one with God's people and offers salvation and eternal life to all believers:

*'If there is anything distinctive about the teaching of Jesus, it has to be the way he redefined God, replacing the harsh, confrontational image of judgement and condemnation, with the language of family love and acceptance.'* - **John Drane**: 'Introducing the New Testament'.

### Commentary on New Testament - Question 9

**This is a sophisticated response in which the candidate has clearly explained the argument in the passage and offered a comprehensive understanding of the complex theological concepts involved. The candidate identifies important issues clearly and concisely and refers directly to the wording of the biblical text in order to make their meaning clear. The candidate makes excellent use of religious and theological terms, and sticks very closely to the passage and does not get distracted into side issues and anecdotes. The views of scholars are nicely linked to scripture. In (b) the candidate offers a clearly developed evaluation of the argument in the passage supported by biblical text and relevant scholarly opinion. This piece is a fine example of how a passage can be discussed clearly and precisely, without the reader being taken off at a tangent. It is sharp, concise and, most importantly, addresses all the main issues and arguments.**

## Student Guide

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### What do I need to know, or be able to do, before taking this course?

This course requires you to have an enquiring mind, an interest in religion and a desire to examine some of the biggest questions in the universe!

What you do not need is a religious belief (though it's fine if you do have one!). It is NOT a course for training would-be monks and nuns. Nor do you need to have a GCSE in Religious Studies.

You will need to be able to read quite challenging texts, take notes, discuss and examine a range of different issues and write a good examination answer!

### What will I learn?

You are offered a choice of several different subject areas within Religious Studies. You can choose to study:

- Philosophy of Religion
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Ethics
- Islam
- Sikhism
- Buddhism
- Judaism
- New Testament.

If you go on to the A2 qualification you can study these subject areas at a more advanced level.

### What skills will I develop?

Religious Studies is designed to encourage you to do the following:

- Investigate, study and interpret significant religious, philosophical and ethical issues
- Think rigorously and present widely informed and detailed arguments with well-substantiated conclusions
- Reflect on, express and justify your opinions
- Relate your study to issues in the wider world
- Know and understand key concepts - including beliefs, teachings, the contribution of significant people, religious language, major issues and doctrines and how these are expressed in texts
- Interpret and evaluate religious concepts, ideas, arguments and the views of scholars.

## Is it the right subject for me?

Hopefully, your AS and A2 studies will be more than a means to an end for you. This subject has something extra - real 'value added' features:

- Exploring the mysteries of human existence
- Analysing and evaluating the views of others and substantiating your own
- Being challenged to seek answers to the mysteries of life and death
- Looking at such issues as 'Does God exist?' and 'What happens when we die?'
- Testing the views of others, including scholars, challenging the evidence and the testimonies
- Being aware of the historical, social and cultural influences on the way ideas have developed and of how the past influences the future
- Facing the challenge of exploring questions that have no answers.

## How will I be assessed?

Assessment is by written examination with essay-style questions.

Unit	Method of assessment	Exam length
1	Answer three questions - either two from one subject area and one from another subject area, or three questions from three different subject areas.	1 hour 45 mins
2	Answer one question on a topic that you have researched as part of the course.	1 hour 15 mins
3	Answer three questions - either two from one subject area and one from another subject area, or three questions from three different subject areas.	1 hour 45 mins
4	Answer one question on a text from an anthology you have studied as part of the course.	1 hour 15 mins

## What can I do after I have completed the course?

If you want to go on to study the subject at university, there is a huge range of courses available, including Philosophy, Ethics, Theology, Biblical Studies, Abrahamic Religions, Islamic Studies, Jewish Studies, World Religions and Anthropology.

Other related degrees favouring Religious Studies Advanced level include History, Psychology, Social Policy, Social Work and Education.

## Next Steps

- Talk to your teachers and the careers staff, and to other students
- Check useful websites, including:

[www.guardian.co.uk/religion](http://www.guardian.co.uk/religion)

[www.cwmission.org.uk](http://www.cwmission.org.uk)

[www.miraclestudies.net](http://www.miraclestudies.net)

[www.academicinfo.net/religindex.html](http://www.academicinfo.net/religindex.html)

[www.theologywebsite.com](http://www.theologywebsite.com)

[www.jewishstudies.org](http://www.jewishstudies.org)

[www.jewfaq.org](http://www.jewfaq.org)

[www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

## Select glossary

This glossary provides definitions of the key terms that are used in the Philosophy of Religion and Ethics subject areas from GCE Religious Studies.

<b>A posteriori</b>	On the basis of experience
<b>A priori</b>	Without, or prior to, experience
<b>Abortion</b>	The termination of the life of a foetus in the womb
<b>Active Euthanasia</b>	Taking active steps to end the life of a patient, e.g. a lethal injection
<b>Adultery</b>	Sexual relationships with someone other than their marriage partner
<b>Aesthetic Argument</b>	The argument that beauty in the universe requires an explanation
<b>Agnostic</b>	A person who is unsure that there is sufficient evidence to prove the existence of God
<b>Agnosticism</b>	Literally, without knowledge
<b>Analogy</b>	Making a comparison between two objects or situations in order to emphasise the similarities between them
<b>Analytic Statement</b>	A statement which contains its full meaning within the word or phrase
<b>Anthropic Principle</b>	The reason and purpose of the universe is to support human life
<b>Anthropocentric</b>	Centred around the needs and interests of man
<b>Anthropomorphism</b>	Likening a non-human being to man
<b>Anti-Realist</b>	Subjectively true
<b>Aseity</b>	Possessing the essence of existence within itself
<b>Atheism</b>	Literally, without God
<b>Atheist</b>	A person who does not believe that God exists or that there is a convincing case for the existence of God
<b>Authority</b>	Reliable, orthodox and truthful; power bestowed through receiving a divine commission
<b>Benevolent</b>	Loving
<b>Big Bang Cosmology</b>	The theory that an enormous explosion started the universe around 15 billion years ago
<b>Bliks</b>	Unverifiable, unfalsifiable ways of looking at the world
<b>Categorical Imperative</b>	An action performed for its own sake, out of duty, and not for any other motive or outcome: e.g. 'Be kind.'
<b>Causation</b>	The principle that everything is caused by something else
<b>Cognitive (realist) language</b>	Assertions which make factual claims about an objective reality
<b>Cognitive Language</b>	Claims which refer to matters of factual, objective truth
<b>Cohabitation</b>	A man and woman living together as a married couple but without legalising their union through marriage
<b>Conscience</b>	The inner aspect of the life of the individual where a sense of what is right and wrong is developed

<b>Contingent</b>	Liable to decay; dependent
<b>Contraception</b>	Describes a range of methods that may be used to prevent conception
<b>Conversion</b>	Transferring commitment from one religion to another, or from non-belief to belief
<b>Corporate</b>	Experiences which are shared by a group, usually those who share a common religious belief
<b>Cumulative Argument</b>	Several arguments for the existence of God put together to create a stronger case
<b>De dicto</b>	Of words
<b>De re</b>	In the nature of things
<b>Demythologise</b>	Remove the miraculous or mythological elements from narratives
<b>Design</b>	The principle that things that have a purpose and function have been designed for that purpose
<b>Discrimination</b>	Treating people less favourably, and considering them to be less worthy, on the grounds of their sex, race, education, disability, or any other aspect which may set them apart
<b>Divorce</b>	The legal termination of a marriage
<b>Dualism</b>	The view that there are two natures to everything, a physical (seen) and spiritual (unseen)
<b>Empirical Evidence</b>	Evidence confirmed by use of the senses
<b>Epistemic Distance</b>	A distance of knowledge, dimension, or awareness
<b>Equality</b>	Treating people in the same way irrespective of sex, race, education, disability, or any other aspect which may set them apart
<b>Equivocal</b>	Same word use with different meanings
<b>Eschatological</b>	Concerned with the end of time
<b>Eternal</b>	The belief that God exists without beginning and end
<b>Euthanasia</b>	Literally a 'good' or 'easy' death - usually refers to mercy killing, or prematurely ending the life of a terminally ill patient
<b>Euthyphro Dilemma</b>	The problem of whether something is good because God commands it, or does God command that which is good
<b>Evolution by Natural Selection</b>	The scientific theory that the individuals within a species that are best adapted to their environment will survive to produce offspring, passing on favourable hereditary characteristics. All organisms share common ancestors and the universe as a whole is evolving
<b>Ex nihilo</b>	'Out of nothing'. Used to refer to God's activity in creation
<b>Exclusivism</b>	The view that only those who belong to one particular faith can be saved from condemnation
<b>Faith</b>	Assumptions and a way of life not based on certainty gained from empirical testing or scientifically provable testimony
<b>Faithfulness</b>	Maintaining a sexual relationship with the same person
<b>Falsification</b>	The means of proving a statement false
<b>Hard Determinism</b>	The view that all freedom is illusory
<b>Heterosexuality</b>	Sexual attraction to members of the opposite sex

<b>Homosexuality</b>	Sexual attraction to members of the same sex
<b>Hypothetical Imperative</b>	An action performed in order to bring about a specific or general goal: e.g. 'If you want to be liked, be kind to your friends'
<b>Immanent</b>	God known in his activity within the world
<b>Immortal Soul</b>	Soul which can live on after the death of the physical body
<b>Immortality of the soul</b>	The belief that the soul belongs to the realm of the eternal and can therefore exist after the death of the contingent body
<b>Immutable</b>	Unchanging and unchangeable
<b>In intellectu</b>	In the mind
<b>In re</b>	In reality
<b>Incarnate</b>	Becoming flesh
<b>Inclusivism</b>	The view that all religions have some truth and should be able to teach and practice without restriction or prejudice
<b>Inconsistent Triad</b>	The philosophical problem of evil posed as a logical impossibility. God cannot be both all-powerful and all-good and evil exist
<b>Induction</b>	The method of reasoning which leads us to draw conclusions about the future on the basis of what we know of the past
<b>Infinite</b>	Without limitations of time, space, knowledge, freedom or power
<b>Interventionist</b>	An act which intervenes in the regular or expected pattern of things
<b>Involuntary Euthanasia</b>	Ending the life of a patient when they are not able to make the request for themselves
<b>Logical Impossibility</b>	Something which is impossible because it defies reason
<b>Logical necessity</b>	Something which must be the case or must apply
<b>Logical Positivism</b>	A school of philosophy which argues that something which cannot be verified or falsified by the use of sense experience, maths, or logic is meaningless
<b>Materialism</b>	The belief that mind and body cannot be separated and that each influences the other
<b>Metaphysical Freedom</b>	Being responsible for one's choices
<b>Miracle</b>	An event which violates a law of nature and which has a beneficial outcome
<b>Moral Evil</b>	Evil acts performed by man
<b>Moral Responsibility</b>	Having an obligation to help other people, but which law cannot enforce
<b>Mystical Experience</b>	Hearing God's voice or seeing a vision of a religious figure
<b>Mysticism</b>	An experience in which the ultimate reality is vividly encountered
<b>Myth</b>	A symbolic, approximate expression of truth
<b>Natural Evil</b>	Events in the natural world that cause suffering
<b>Natural Law</b>	That which happens regularly within nature
<b>Near Death Experience</b>	An experience after clinical death when a patient may see bright lights, a religious figure, and sense of being sent back to earth
<b>Necessarily existent</b>	Cannot not exist



<b>Non-cognitive (anti-realist)</b>	Language which serves other functions which are made meaningful by their context and other statements within that context
<b>Non-cognitive Language</b>	Non-factual claims
<b>Non-realism or anti-realism</b>	The truth of our assertions about the world is not independent of our relation to the world and whether our claims are true or false is connected with how we establish whether they are true or false
<b>Numinous</b>	An experience that conveys a sense of awe and wonder
<b>Objective</b>	Claims which refer to external facts or values
<b>Objective Moral Laws</b>	Codes of morality which have an empirical or factual basis
<b>Ockham's Razor</b>	The principle that the simplest explanation is the most likely
<b>Omnipotent</b>	All powerful
<b>Omniscient</b>	All knowing
<b>Ontological</b>	Concerned with being
<b>Paradigm</b>	Prevailing way of interpreting the world
<b>Passive Euthanasia</b>	Withdrawing medical treatment or nourishment to hasten the death of a patient
<b>Post mortem existence</b>	A continued life after the death of the physical body
<b>Practical Freedom</b>	Freedom to do what one wishes
<b>Predicate</b>	An attribute or characteristics belonging to the description of a thing
<b>Principle of Credulity</b>	We should believe what people say unless compelled to do otherwise
<b>Principle of Testimony</b>	That people generally tell the truth
<b>Privation</b>	An absence or lack
<b>Probability</b>	The relative frequency or likelihood of an event taking place, or of circumstances unfolding in a particular way
<b>Proof</b>	Incontrovertible evidence that something is the case
<b>Providential</b>	A universe in which God foresees and controls future events in order to care for his creation
<b>Qualification</b>	Redefining the nature of God in order to avoid the implications of the problem of evil
<b>Rational argument</b>	Argument based on empirical evidence or reason
<b>Realist</b>	Objectively true
<b>Reductio ad absurdum</b>	To reduce to an absurdity
<b>Summum bonum</b>	The perfect state of affairs; virtue crowned with happiness
<b>Religious ambiguity</b>	The view that the universe does not provide overwhelming evidence of God's direct involvement, so it can be interpreted religiously or non-religiously
<b>Religious Experience</b>	An experience which conveys a sense of the presence of God
<b>Religious Freedom</b>	Members of all religions are free to worship and have equal political rights
<b>Religious Pluralism</b>	An acceptance of all faiths as having an equal right to co-exist
<b>Resurrection</b>	The recreation of the physical body

<b>Revealed theology</b>	A system of theology based on God's revelation to humankind and not on what humans can deduce through logic and reason
<b>Scepticism</b>	An attitude of philosophical doubt; questioning the nature of reality or of language claims
<b>Scientific realism</b>	Science provides us with a true picture of an independently existing reality
<b>Secular</b>	A non-religious view, society, or organisation
<b>Sexism</b>	Judging a person less favourably on the grounds of their sex
<b>Subjective</b>	Claims which are based on personal preference
<b>Symbol</b>	A pattern or object which points to an invisible or metaphysical reality and participates in it
<b>Synthetic Statements</b>	Those which require further clarification or explanation
<b>Teleological</b>	Concerned with end or purpose
<b>The Sanctity of Life</b>	The principle that life is sacred (holy) because God created it
<b>Theist</b>	A person who believes in the traditional concept of God
<b>Theodicy</b>	A defence of God that offers reasons why God should permit evil to exist whilst not qualifying his nature
<b>Tokenism</b>	Including a minority figure simply to ensure that there can be no claim made of racism
<b>Transcendent</b>	'Being beyond'. In the context of God, it is used to describe his being beyond and outside the world
<b>Unchanging or Immutable</b>	The belief that God's nature and characteristics do not change
<b>Univocal</b>	Same word used with the same meaning
<b>Verification</b>	The means by which the truth of a statement is proven
<b>Verified</b>	To prove something to be true
<b>Via Negativa</b>	Assertions which emphasise what God is not rather than making positive claims about him
<b>Voluntary Euthanasia</b>	Ending the life of a patient at their request





## Student Revision Guide

This guide is specifically aimed at helping you in your revision of AS and A2 material for the examination in Religious Studies.

### Assessment Objectives

Assessment objectives fall into two categories:

- AO1 - Knowledge and understanding
- AO2 - Critical argument and justification of a point of view.

At AS, 70% of assessment is concerned with AO1 and AO2 is worth 30%.

At A2, 60% of assessment is concerned with AO1 and AO2 is worth 40%.

You will demonstrate that you have fulfilled the objectives by the acquisition of knowledge and the deployment of skills. Hence, you need to develop the following abilities:

- recall, select, and deploy knowledge
- identify, investigate and analyse questions and issues arising from it
- use appropriate and correct language and terminology
- interpret and evaluate relevant concepts
- communicate, using reasoned argument substantiated by evidence
- make connections between areas of study and other aspects of experience.

As you move from AS to A2 you will be expected to demonstrate a wider range and depth of knowledge and understanding and a greater maturity of thought and expression, so the weighting of the objectives shifts as you move to A2 and more marks are proportionally credited to AO2 than AO1.

## Trigger words

The use of **trigger words** in questions enables you to identify the particular skills you are required to deploy. AO1 trigger words invite you to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding, whilst AO2 trigger words invite you to evaluate that knowledge. Words you might expect to see in questions may include:

### AO1 trigger words

Advanced Subsidiary	A2
Compare	Analyse
Describe	Compare and contrast
Examine	Differentiate
Give an account of	Distinguish between
How	Define
Identify	Examine
Illustrate	Explain
In what ways	
Outline	
Select	
What	

### AO2 trigger words

Advanced Subsidiary	A2
Comment on	Assess
Consider	Consider critically
How far	Criticise
To what extent	Discuss
Why	Evaluate
	Interpret
	Justify
	To what extent
	Why

You need to be aware of the difference between AO1 and AO2. The former requires you to look at the issue and explain the facts, issues and arguments. The latter requires you to weigh these matters up and evaluate them - are they right or wrong, strong or weak? There are certain phrases that you may find useful to do this:

- 'This is important because'
- 'The most significant is...because'
- 'However...'
- 'On the other hand...'
- 'It is likely that...because'
- 'Therefore...'
- 'Nevertheless...'
- 'The implications of this are...'

As you work, keep asking yourself 'why is this relevant to my answer?' and 'what are the implications of this view/issue?'



## Revision techniques

As you prepare for your AS and A2 examinations, there are stages which your teacher will directly help you with, and stages which you must be prepared to work on alone. In the end, your teacher cannot go into the exam and do it for you. Whilst he or she can give you information and guide you in the best practice for utilising it in the exam, you have to make sure you have learned it and developed an effective examination technique. This means:

- Develop good classroom habits - come fully prepared for the lesson.
- Ask questions about the material. Questions can help you to clarify what you have just heard as well as clearing up misunderstandings.
- Ask questions about the implications of the material and about how it relates to other aspects of the specification.
- Practice the vital skill of evaluation. Be prepared to discuss issues.
- Be prepared in turn for your views to be evaluated by others, and to explain why you hold them.
- Practice past questions.
- Read articles, watch useful television programmes to increase your knowledge and understanding of a topic.
- Prepare thoroughly for the examination by making concise revision notes, learning quotations, and making essay plans.

### What the examiner is looking for ...

- An answer to the question that has been set
- Relevance
- Coherence
- Accuracy
- Precision
- Readable and presentable answers
- Use of the knowledge and skills that you have learnt on your A/AS level course.

### What the examiner is not looking for...

- Perfection
- Everything you know whether or not it is directly relevant
- More than is realistic to expect of a sixth form student.

### How you should approach the exam...

- With confidence
- Knowing that you have done everything you can do
- Knowing what to expect on the paper
- Having had lots of practice.

**How you should approach revision...**

- Simply
- In your own words
- By getting rid of unnecessary material
- With a pen in your hand
- Actively.

**Revision killers...**

- Reading through your file without engaging with the content
- Working with music or the television on in the background
- Working without a schedule
- Working without reference to past questions.

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