



GCE AS MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**AS
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - UNIT 1
OPTION A: AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY**

2120UA0-1

About this marking scheme

The purpose of this marking scheme is to provide teachers, learners, and other interested parties, with an understanding of the assessment criteria used to assess this specific assessment.

This marking scheme reflects the criteria by which this assessment was marked in a live series and was finalised following detailed discussion at an examiners' conference. A team of qualified examiners were trained specifically in the application of this marking scheme. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners. It may not be possible, or appropriate, to capture every variation that a candidate may present in their responses within this marking scheme. However, during the training conference, examiners were guided in using their professional judgement to credit alternative valid responses as instructed by the document, and through reviewing exemplar responses.

Without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers, learners and other users, may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this marking scheme is used alongside other guidance, such as published exemplar materials or Guidance for Teaching. This marking scheme is final and will not be changed, unless in the event that a clear error is identified, as it reflects the criteria used to assess candidate responses during the live series.

Marking guidance for examiners, please apply carefully and consistently:

Positive marking

It should be remembered that candidates are writing under examination conditions and credit should be given for what the candidate writes, rather than adopting the approach of penalising him/her for any omissions. It should be possible for a very good response to achieve full marks and a very poor one to achieve zero marks. Marks should not be deducted for a less than perfect answer if it satisfies the criteria of the mark scheme. Exemplars in the mark scheme are only meant as helpful guides. Therefore, any other acceptable or suitable answers should be credited even though they are not actually stated in the mark scheme.

Two main phrases are deliberately placed throughout each mark scheme to remind examiners of this philosophy. They are:

- “Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.”
- “This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.”

Rules for marking

1. Differentiation will be achieved on the basis of candidates' response.
2. No mark scheme can ever anticipate or include every possible detail or interpretation; examiners should use their professional judgement to decide whether a candidate's particular response answers the question in relation to the particular assessment objective.
3. Candidates will often express their ideas in language different from that given in any mark scheme or outline. Positive marking therefore, on the part of examiners, will recognise and credit correct statements of ideas, valid points and reasoned arguments irrespective of the language employed.

Banded mark schemes

Banded mark schemes are divided so that each band has a relevant descriptor. The descriptor provides a description of the performance level for that band. Each band contains marks. Examiners should first read and annotate a candidate's answer to pick out the evidence that is being assessed in that question. Once the annotation is complete, the mark scheme can be applied. This is done as a two-stage process.

Banded mark schemes stage 1 – deciding on the band

When deciding on a band, the answer should be viewed holistically. Beginning at the lowest band, examiners should look at the candidate's answer and check whether it matches the descriptor for that band. Examiners should look at the descriptor for that band and see if it matches the qualities shown in the candidate's answer. If the descriptor at the lowest band is satisfied, examiners should move up to the next band and repeat this process for each band until the descriptor matches the answer.

If an answer covers different aspects of different bands within the mark scheme, a 'best fit' approach should be adopted to decide on the band and then the candidate's response should be used to decide on the mark within the band. For instance, if a response is mainly in band 2 but with a limited amount of band 3 content, the answer would be placed in band 2, but the mark awarded would be close to the top of band 2 as a result of the band 3 content.

Banded mark schemes stage 2 – deciding on the mark

Once the band has been decided, examiners can then assign a mark. During standardising (at the Examiners' marking conference), detailed advice from the Principal Examiner on the qualities of each mark band will be given. Examiners will then receive examples of answers in each mark band that have been awarded a mark by the Principal Examiner. Examiners should mark the examples and compare their marks with those of the Principal Examiner. When marking, examiners can use these examples to decide whether a candidate's response is of a superior, inferior or comparable standard to the example. Examiners are reminded of the need to revisit the answer as they apply the mark scheme in order to confirm that the band and the mark allocated is appropriate to the response provided. Indicative content is also provided for banded mark schemes. Indicative content is not exhaustive, and any other valid points must be credited. In order to reach the highest bands of the mark scheme a learner need not cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content, but must meet the requirements of the highest mark band.

Awarding no marks to a response

Where a response is not creditworthy, that is it contains nothing of any relevance to the question, or where no response has been provided, no marks should be awarded.

AS Generic Band Descriptors

Band	Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions 15 marks <i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i> - <i>religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i> - <i>influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</i> - <i>cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</i> - <i>approaches to the study of religion and belief.</i>
5	13-15 marks • Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples. • Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language /vocabulary in context. • Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.
4	10-12 marks • Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples. • Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.
3	7-9 marks • Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set. • The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples. • Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.
2	4-6 marks • Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance. • A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set. • Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples. • Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
1	1-3 marks • Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance. • A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question. • Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples. • Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary • Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication. N.B. A maximum of 1 mark should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'
0	• No relevant information.

Band	Assessment Objective AO2- Part (b) questions 15 marks <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
5	13-15 marks • Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue. • A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set. • The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.
4	10-12 marks • Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue. • The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed. • The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.
3	7-9 marks • Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue. • Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed. • The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.
2	4-6 marks • Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue. • A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed. • Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation. • A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
1	1-3 marks • A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue. • Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation. • An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set. • Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary. • Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication.
0	• No relevant analysis or evaluation.

GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 1
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To be read in conjunction with the generic level descriptors provided.

Section A

1 Explain Moltmann's view that God can suffer. [15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- To provide context candidates may briefly refer to the impassibility of God from the Greek (a=without pathos=suffering) which has traditionally been used in Christian theology to show that God is 'unable to suffer' linked to God's immutability i.e. unchanging nature. This in turn is linked to God who is revealed in the Old Testament to be: omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent, who transcends all that exists. While therefore, God acts with love, grief, anger, compassion that may even cause a 'repentance' or 'change of mind' nothing can actually cause a change in God's inner emotional state.
- Jurgen Moltmann is one who with the particular sufferings of the 20th Century e.g. the Jewish holocaust argues that God is passible i.e. He can undergo emotional change and can suffer with humanity.
- 'My God, my God why have you forsaken me comes Jesus' cry from the cross. Moltmann sees the Cross as of great importance not simply for humanity, as Jesus experienced and died, but also for God whose Son died and therefore God experienced death too.
- Christians identify with Jesus as the crucified Christ with who God has also identified. As such Moltmann uses the account of a Jewish boy hanged in Auschwitz as a moment of God hanging with him on the gallows; for God suffers with those who suffer. Christian identification with the crucified Christ therefore means to Moltmann, solidarity with the poor, oppressed and alien. The power of the Crucified Christ comes from the agape love with which Christ suffers.
- Moltmann suggests that some Christians have made the cross attractive by stripping it of its true significance e.g. the concept of the mass as a sacrifice may deny the finality of Christ's death once and for all.
- The mysticism of the cross as developed in the Middle Ages as a popular devotion of the poor also understood that God suffered with the poor and oppressed. This is meant to be the impetus of their liberation.
- This develops into a political theology rather than individual piety.
- The meaning of Jesus' cry from the cross is something that takes place within God Himself for, the cross of the Son divides God (Father) from God (son) to the utmost degree. The resurrection of Jesus unites God (Father) with God (Son) in the most intimate fellowship.
- Moltmann asks – 'What does the cross of Jesus mean for God Himself?'
- Moltmann rejects Docetism i.e. the idea that it was only the human nature of Jesus that suffered while His divine nature was unaffected.
- Moltmann answers that the crucified Jesus is God. God is not greater than He is in this humiliation; not more glorious than He is in this self-surrender; not more powerful than He is in this helplessness; not more divine than He is in this humanity. The Christ event on the cross is a God event.

- Moltmann asserts that 'protest atheism' i.e. the problem of theodicy, is resolved on the cross where God Himself protested against suffering in the death of His 'godforsaken' Son.
- For Moltmann the death of the Son and the grief of the Father led to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- Moltmann does not explicitly quote Noah's Ark as a direct example of God's suffering. Accurate reference to it is an understandable illustration supporting the argument that God suffers as illustrated in God's regret.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

1. (b) **'God cannot possibly suffer'.
Evaluate this view.**

[15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Those who agree with the statement would consider that the impassibility of God is a vital attribute just as it is accepted that omnipotence, omniscience is and consequently God can only be God as traditionally understood if God is above human suffering and emotions and actually untouched by them.
- Yet is not humankind created in God's image and as such we can only reflect characteristics of that image and so God must suffer.
- However, humanity was created perfect in God's image, it can be argued that it is a consequence of the Fall that suffering entered into the world and therefore is removed from God's perfect experience.
- If God can suffer then He loses His transcendence with the consequence that humanity cannot be freed from sin and death and thereby gain eternal life.
- If God can suffer then other traditional characteristics must also be reappraised as His immutability means that He cannot respond to pain as that would involve change. Whereas His omnipotence means that He is not subject to anything, let alone suffering.
- Does not the Bible provide evidence of God responding to people and events either with compassion or with anger or even both emotions e.g. Abraham pleading for Sodom.
- Jesus as the incarnate Son of God is evidenced as experiencing emotion and certainly pain yet this is understood as being an example of Jesus being both fully human and fully divine and so does not affect the impassibility of His divine nature.
- Moltmann amongst others seeks to redefine impassibility saying that for God to maintain the traditional attribute of omniscience then God must be able to suffer and have emotions otherwise there is a gap in His omniscience which is impossible.
- The question can be asked whether upholding impassibility involves a surrender of too much else e.g. God is certainly involved in creation and describes it as 'good' which implies emotion. In this sense God is not removed or remote as the 'Prime Mover' of Aristotle.
- The question can also be asked whether we are defining and understanding all these concepts from a human point of view? They may be quite naturally different for God.
- Does the quality of empathy as a necessary part of God's omniscience provide an adequate answer?

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

2 (a) Explain the Atonement theories which see Jesus' death as:

i) a substitution and,

ii) a moral example

[15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- An understanding that sin is not merely a bad action but separates one from God and so atonement means; to make 'at one', to reconcile humanity and God and how this occurs through two of the following:
- **A substitution**
- **Penal Substitution** as expounded in the 16th Century Protestant Reformation and focusing on God's justice. Jesus set humans free from being punished for their sins by taking that punishment upon himself on the Cross, meeting the justice of God.
- Various biblical references can be employed to support his approach e.g. Isaiah 53, Galatians 3.13. that Jesus died in place of the people to free humanity from sin – God put the sins of humanity onto the sinless Jesus, who took the punishment that humanity deserved.
- The penal substitution theory emphasises God's justice – God has to uphold God's laws and teachings, there is no choice, which means that justice must be served, and sin must be punished.
- **Substitution as Sacrifice** – taking up the practice of sacrifice as detailed and practised in the Old Testament e.g. Exodus 12: 24-27 the Passover Lamb and the connection in the New Testament with Jesus being referred to as 'The Lamb of God' e.g. John 1:29 and so the substitution sacrifice.
- Other New Testament writings referring to Jesus as a sacrifice e.g. the Epistle to the Hebrews.
- These suggest that since the debt of sin is owed to the divine (God) by the people (human), only Jesus (both divine and human) could act as sacrifice by God for the sake of humanity.
- Jesus' death on the cross is therefore an expiation – a removing of guilt by paying a penalty – which brings our atonement with God.
- Some argue that substitution theories also emphasise God's love for humans: rather than punish people for their sin, God gave God's self in the form of Jesus.
- **The Cross as a Moral Example** (also called the "moral influence theory" or "moral exemplar theory") proposed in relation to Anselm's model by Augustine (and later Abelard) whose writings can be referenced.
- Jesus died not as substitute for expiation or propitiation but as the greatest evidence of God's love for humanity (John 3.16)
- The reason for the Cross as an example was to lead people into repentance and a moral life following that set by Christ.
- This moral example inspires humans to overcome sin in their lives and grow closer to God.
- The focus in this theory is wider than just the death of Jesus as it also involves Jesus' teachings and God's redemptive love in Jesus.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

2 (b) 'The Atonement portrays a God of love.'
Evaluate this view.

[15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The atonement, whichever way you look at it shows that God is, in fact, a God of wrath as there can be nothing loving about the reality of being put to death on a cross. If that putting to death is to in some way pay a debt to God, then is not more paid than the debt requires?
- What does it say about the nature of the person who demands such a debt? Does it not speak of love as God is seeking to regain the relationship lost through human sin.
- The moral example model may be argued to illustrate a loving God as Jesus took a voluntary act in dying on the cross, an example to all of how much love can cost. Yet, why was death on a cross required, who else is literally following that example? Yet, does that not prove the unique love of God?
- The theory that Jesus' life and death was a moral example does not strictly require Jesus to die to have been a sufficient example to restore humanity, as death is only part of the story – the fact he was martyred shows God is unnecessarily cruel.
- The Ransom / Satisfaction model suggests a God who, even if not wrathful, is not loving as He is more concerned about Himself than His Son.
- Yet, remembering the doctrine of the Holy Trinity Father and Son with Holy Spirit are united and so if one is caused to suffer all do. The Father paid a price as did the Son.
- A God of Penal Substitution who demands such a price can only be regarded as one of wrath. Penal substitution theory suggests that God is not willing and/or able to simply forgive human sin but must instead ensure someone is punished. This is not a God of love.
- Although the result is death, the theories of atonement actually emphasise God's love when taken in the context of Christian teaching. Remembering the Trinitarian model, Jesus is God, so we can understand the Atonement as God sacrificing God's self rather than punishing humans. This is ultimate love.
- Can the motive of love be weaved into any of these as the foundation element even if other considerations came into play as a consequence?
- Again, the very word 'atonement' is about a reunion / a making one of that which has been broken. God desires that out of love as it is love that is the continuing mode of the relationship once the atonement is made.
- The resurrection also has to be remembered; the Cross was not the end; death did not have the final word. God raised His Son from death, a sign of love as well as of justice.
- Does focusing on one aspect of the atonement produce a distorted view of God either way? The implication that death is the punishment for sin may seem unjust and even cruel to humans, but humans are not able to understand the bigger picture in the same way that God can.
- Just because God requires death as the recompense for sin does not mean that God is indifferent to suffering or takes pleasure in it especially if the very motive is one of love.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

Section B

3 (a) Explain the Bible's use in daily life as:

- i) teaching on the meaning and purpose of life and,
- ii) source of comfort and encouragement.

[15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- An introduction may be provided as to what is / makes the Christian Bible Leading to these or other considerations:

Teaching on the meaning and purpose of life.

- Weaved within the Bible, rather than a systematic argument, from the creation story in Genesis to the promise of the Heavenly Jerusalem in Revelation is the meaning and purpose of life.
- God created all things good but human disobedience introduced sin as committed by each individual since and as is found in each individual through original sin.
- For Christians the meaning and purpose of life is to return to their relationship with God their Heavenly Father which is only possible by following God's rescue plan of sending Jesus who is *The way, the truth and the life* and through whose incarnation, passion, death and resurrection saves all who believe in him and redeems creation.

Source of comfort and encouragement

- The Bible is timeless as it deals with the same human questions as throughout time as those faced today. The stories of failure and hurt can resonate. God's eternal loving response can reassure. The Psalms can speak in love and anger as do all from time to time.
- The Bible may be looked to specifically for instruction on dealing with temptation and sin, suffering, the fear of death, bereavement and social issues like poverty or modern-day slavery.
- The Bible's use in worship can also provide comfort or encouragement especially for baptisms, weddings and funerals.
- Every mainstream Christian denomination has Bible readings in every act of worship that often provide comfort or encouragement or are used by the preacher for the same.

- 3 (b) **'The Psalms studied are a clear guide to Christian living.'**
Evaluate this view.

[15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Candidates should refer to the Psalms listed in the specification in their response: (Psalm 119:9-16; Psalm 119:105-112; Psalm 46:1-3). It could be said that since the Psalms were written thousands of years ago in another socio-economic, demographic, world view, time and place - each aspect of which can be expanded upon - that they cannot provide any guide to Christian living today.
- If this argument is employed, then not only the Psalms but most or all of the Old Testament would need to be laid aside.
- Could the New Testament survive such considerations?
- Yet, many other religions have scriptures that are older and not only revered but considered a guide to living.
- The question needs to be asked whether the Psalms were simply the 'thoughts of the day' written down and useful for that but were never intended to be afforded the importance they have acquired.
- Yet the Psalms found themselves in the place of the Canon and therefore are inevitably viewed as instructive to Christians.
- So instructive that in many churches they are used as the very foundation of prayer e.g. for priests morning and evening prayer and for religious the seven prayer times of each day, where Psalms are read, prayed, chanted in rotation because it is recognized that they present fundamental truths about God and human life.
- Questions such as: Why am I here? What is the purpose of life? What is the nature of God? Why do good suffer? Are as vital today as when the Psalms were written.
- The Psalms instruct us to follow God's word i.e. all the Scriptures and so as a guide point to a yet more comprehensive guide.
- However, this returns to the questions of the relevance of such guides from the past influencing if not instructing Christian living in 21st century world.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

- 4 (a) **Explain how the New Testament community of believers can be used as a model for today's churches.** [15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The Acts of the Apostles provides the earliest coherent account of the formation of the church's life probably written before 70AD. Additional information can be found in the New Testament Letters.
- The question requires the connection between those historic records and life in today's church. The following subject areas may be anticipated:
- **They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.** This is based on the life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ who is seen to have fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies i.e. the Messiah has come, born of the House of David who saves the people not from any political power but from the power of sin and death.
- Jesus is to return as Judge and Saviour and so there is a need to spread / preach (*kerygma*) this teaching (*didache*) so that all can repent of their sins and be baptized. In so doing they become brothers and sisters of Christ and so of each other in the family of the church.
- This remains a model for today's church albeit in more structured ways e.g. the apostolic succession / presence is upheld by ordination. These ordained have a special commission to preach although all Christians have responsibility to spread the good news e.g. Alpha courses, Home / Study / Prayer groups, events to invite people. The teaching is upheld e.g. in the proclamation of the Apostles / Nicene Creed in services.
- **They devoted themselves to prayers.** The early church continued the tradition of men going to the Temple to pray at least three times a day. However, Christians also began to pray at home as Jesus had taught, into which others could be invited, women could be included more easily and as a sign of constant devotion and presence before God. Such prayers included: praise, thanksgiving, petition, confession.
- This remains the model for today's church. Everyone is encouraged to have their own daily prayers encompassing the different aspects and to enable house prayer groups to be used as a mission opportunity.
- **They devoted themselves to the breaking of bread** as Jesus had commanded them to do in remembrance him at the Last Supper i.e. the sacrament of the mass / holy eucharist. It could also refer to fellowship meals which might also be charitable for those who would otherwise be hungry.
- This remains the centre piece of Christian worship for many i.e. weekly or daily mass / holy eucharist. Meals also shared on special occasions, or for mission and / or still for charitable purposes.
- **They had all things in common** in that the early Christians in Jerusalem would sell their possessions and distribute to those in need. This was purely voluntary, an act of devotion not seemingly repeated elsewhere.
- There is little evidence of a 'Jerusalem' model in today's church. Nevertheless, stewardship is an important element for all Christians including giving of time, talent and money so that the community as a whole can exist and benefit.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

- 4 (b) **‘The main role of the Church is to provide religious teaching’.**
Evaluate this view. [15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Surely any organization not only wishes but needs to promote what it stands for and only then can be concerned with implementing activities as a consequence.
- The Church’s main role has to be to provide religious teaching but this is not to suggest that it is more concerned with teaching than people.
- Others would suggest their experience of the Church does not evidence this e.g. the words of scripture in the past have been put above the human reality of slavery, or the actuality of divorce of the consequent position of divorcees within the church, or of gay people.
- The fact that the above groups have also appealed to scripture to support their position only adds to confusion of what religious teaching is supposed to be provided and who in the Church has the final say?
- While there may be differences in moral teaching the Church provides religious teaching about the history of salvation and how that is secured through the incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This is the essential teaching from which everything else flows.
- That teaching is primarily directed at gaining new Christians so some believe that is the true focus on any people concern, not their lives.
- However, religious teaching includes Jesus’ teaching and that illustrates multiple concern for the poor and dispossessed which the church then responds to in many local, national and international ways to assist those in need.
- For some this is more important in itself than religious teaching and hence the rise of liberation theology and the social gospel as such movements reflect the greatest commandment of all, to love one’s neighbour (agape).
- Yet, love of neighbour follows on from love of God and can one love God either without religious teaching or without love of neighbour?
- Is this a false dichotomy as the issues involving the Church’s main role are more complex than this?

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Belief is placed in the validity of baptism as a sacramental act through which God saves human beings from the effects of sin in this life and for the avoidance of the possibility of eternal damnation.
- Augustine was one of the earliest and greatest proponents of infant baptism. His case is that baptism was crucially available to infants as well as to adults and the answer should develop this belief and his reasoning for the same by taking up the biblical support he used such as:
- Circumcision of boys in the Old Covenant which brought them into relationship with God and the community illustrates God's acceptance of babies into a covenant relationship.
- Jesus welcoming children in spite of his disciples trying to keep them away illustrates in action God's acceptance of children without any specific expression of faith.
- Jesus' teaching that all who would inherit eternal life should be childlike compared to his condemnation of those religious authorities of the day who would be able to make and argue faith and dogma.
- Jesus stating the necessity of water for salvation in his conversation with Nicodemus in response to his question of how he can be born again / be saved. Surely this is desirable for infants too?
- The Day of Pentecost and Peter's call to baptism referencing children in response to the crowd's question of what they must do to be saved.
- The Day of Pentecost was not unique as the Apostles are recorded as baptising 'whole households' which inevitably includes children.
- Augustine's own writings stating that baptism is necessary for salvation and that baptism is regenerative.
- That Augustine's view is followed / paralleled in the teaching of other early Church Fathers.
- Early reformers supported infant baptism e.g. Huldrych Zwingli although he did not see it as a means of washing away sin but rather as a sign and seal of the remission of sin by the blood of Christ and our incorporation into Christ by faith which is promised to infants by their parents' promises. The sacrament is divinely instituted and efficacious to confer blessing and strengthen faith.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

5 (b) An expression of commitment is necessary for baptism.

Evaluate this view.

[15]

- Indeed, it can be argued that within the New Testament baptism always followed a declaration of faith, it never preceded it so there should be a conscious acceptance.
- However, there are reports of 'whole households' being baptised and that would suggest the inclusion of babies who could not express commitment.
- Yet, for males in the early Church this would follow on from circumcision on the 8th day in fulfilment of the old covenant; no conscious acceptance of the person receiving that and no argument about its importance or validity either.
- Circumcision was done away with by the Church so why replace it with something else the recipient has no commitment to?
- The priesthood of all believers, men, women and slaves were all equal in virtue of baptism which is a testament of their faith so the very nature of the church assembly is built on conscious belief no matter what one's position in life.
- Does this mean that faith is dependent on a degree of intelligence?
- Baptism follows Jesus' command to 'make disciples of all nations' and that cannot happen early enough given the gift of eternal life that it also brings.
- Some, like Barth, believe that baptism should be consciously accepted by the recipient and so only adults, not babies or children, should be baptised.
- Yet Barth denied that infant baptism was invalid, so what difference does it make with or without commitment by the one baptized?
- Does the answer depend on what you think baptism does?
- If you believe baptism is necessary for salvation then it is wise to baptise babies as should they die they could not be saved.
- Babies are dependent on their families and Christians are dependent on the family of the Church and so it is natural to want to include everyone as part of the family.
- Infants do express a commitment through their godparents who can be very important people in their lives acting as supports and guides to their growth in the faith.
- Infant baptism therefore depends upon the faith of the baby's parents, godparents, and the immediate church family, all of whom express their commitment in the ceremony. Everyone except the one being baptised (who as a baby is unconscious of what is happening and incapable of expressing an commitment) is involved.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.