

GCE



Revised GCE Specification
Religious Studies

A2 Synoptic Assessment
Support Materials



GCE Religious Studies

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1.1 Frequently asked Questions and Answers

1 In what ways is the Synoptic Assessment different in the new specification?

In the first place the weightings are substantially different from the previous specification: **AO1 will now be worth 40% (20 marks)** and **AO2 will be worth 60% (30 marks)**. In addition, in part (a) there is prescribed content in the form of the listed theme to be studied.

2 What counts as the units of study?

In AO1 (part a) candidates are expected to make at least one connection (or link) with at least one other unit of study from either AS or A2 and this choice can be from any part of the unit chosen, **including Synoptic Assessment in A2**. Candidates are free to choose a connection and then explain and elaborate on the nature of that connection.

3 What is being assessed in the AO1 (part a) synoptic task?

The primary focus of the AO1 task is to investigate and analyse the set question. The question will be based on one of the three strands (or bullet points). It might indeed straddle elements of the three strands of the set theme. While a connection to another unit of study is necessary, the main thrust of the answer should be a response to the question asked. The connection to another unit of study should be **meaningful and developed**, though it has to be remembered that candidates have roughly **15 minutes** to respond to the AO1 task. The chosen connection to another unit of study could either be integrated into the body of the answer or could be left to the end, but inevitably it is up to the candidate to decide where the connection is most appropriate. A **minimum of one link** must be attempted and Bands 4 and 5 can only be accessed provided there is a connection to another unit of study.

4 In AO2 (part b) what counts as ‘other aspects of human experience’ (OAHE)?

AO2 will be based on **OAHE** and this can be defined as anything that is **not** ‘taught course’ (or prescribed content) in either AS or A2 units. The OAHE can be **historical and/or contemporaneous** and may examine the **impact and implications** of what has been addressed in part (a). It is certainly possible that the same content could equally be appropriate in both part (a) and part (b). **But it is important to note that students cannot be credited twice for the use of the same content in part (a) and part (b). It is also important to stress that in terms of content there must be clear distinction of content between the part (a) and part (b).** Further in part (b), in order to access Bands 3-5, it is vital that candidates engage with OAHE.

5 What is being assessed in the AO2 task?

The primary requirement in the AO2 (part b) task is to **address the question asked**; to offer real and **meaningful critical assessment** and to engage with **other aspects of human experience**. It should also be pointed out that the time spent by candidates on the synoptic AO2 task should be in the order of **25 minutes**, since

60% (30 marks) are being awarded for the AO2 task. Candidates are **not** expected to make any connection with another unit in part (b).

1.2 Answering a Synoptic Assessment Question

What will be expected from candidates for each part of the question?

Part (a) of the question will test the **skills of Knowledge and Understanding** and should take the candidate roughly **15 minutes** and will be directly based on some aspect(s) of theme listed.

- **It should be stressed that the bulk of the answer should flow from content that is listed in the Synoptic Assessment theme. This content will of necessity be different from the rest of content in the taught unit.** The reason for this is that there could be an overlap of content between the main body of the unit and the Synoptic Assessment theme and crucially candidates cannot be credited twice for the same information.
- Candidates and teachers have **considerable freedom in the interpretative direction** that they may wish to take regarding their unpacking of the theme. Some suggestions as to possible directions that teachers may wish to take in the development of the Synoptic Assessment theme are provided.
- Examiners will be principally concerned with the ability of the candidate to answer the question. The question instruction demands that candidates should provide evidence that ‘the answer must be supported with reference to another unit of study’. **Given that part (a) of the answer can only take roughly 15 minutes, this connection (or link) cannot dominate the answer** and because of the time limitation only **one connection with another unit of study** will be required. **The suffix in Question 4(a) will read: “You must support your answer with reference to at least one other unit of study” (only one connection (link) will be required).**
- At the beginning of the connection (link), candidates should **state their other unit of study**.
- Because of the time constraint due to the new weighting of **40% (20 marks)**, the question will be tailored to reflect the time constraint.

Part (b) of the question should take approximately **25 minutes** and will test the **skills of critical evaluation** and will engage with ‘**other aspects of human experience**’ (OAHE), i.e. the question will require an **evaluation of content that lies outside the taught AS/A2 specified content for this unit.**

- The ideas generated should flow naturally from issues and ideas that have been raised in part (a) and candidates are free to develop their own ideas.
- Part (b) is very similar to the legacy specification, but one major difference is the considerable change to the **mark weighting of 60% (30 marks)**.
- In part (b) it is essential that candidates engage with **OAHE**, which explores the **impact and implications** of the answer to part (a)
- It is important to note that **none of the ideas/content that candidates use in part (a) can be repeated in part (b)**. The reason is that candidates cannot be credited twice for content that has been studied elsewhere in the unit.

- Candidates are **not** required to make any connection with another unit of study in part (b).
- Critical evaluation demands an awareness of contrasting points of view and candidates are at liberty to offer their own point of view provided they do so by supporting their views with reference to **argument** and/or **relevant evidence**.
- The new weighting for part (b) is **30 marks** and will of necessity demand a **reassessment of teaching and learning methodologies**. Quite obviously more delivery/teaching time will be required than was hitherto the case with earlier specifications.

1.3 Overview of Synoptic Assessment for Students

Underlying principles:

There **cannot** be **double credit** awarded in an exam paper – so you **cannot draw from taught course material (Section A content)** from **that unit of study** for your AO1 response.

Also, the material/content used in your Synoptic **AO1 task cannot be reused in the Synoptic AO2 task**.

AO1 Task (Part a)

The answer should:

Deal with **the identified synoptic theme**. There are three points listed for each synoptic theme. It is up to the teacher and you to interpret these points and cover material relevant to this.

In doing so you should **draw on new material** which is not covered by the AS or A2 Specification for this unit of study.

This will take up the majority of your answer to the synoptic AO1 question.

A connection should be made with at least one **other unit of study** i.e. the other module/paper being studied. This part that deals with the connection being made could take up 25% - 30% of the entire answer. This is all that is possible in the time permitted.

AO2 Task (Part b)

The answer should not depend on taught course material.

It should not reuse any of the material drawn on in the Synoptic AO1 task.

It should focus on Critical Assessment and use Other Aspects of Human Experience to defend the arguments being presented.

The question will be drawn from the wider theme named in the Specification.

1.4 Do's and Don'ts of Synoptic Assessment for Students

Synoptic Assessment is an important part of your overall assessment; it cannot be ignored or underestimated as it carries one third of the total marks.

AO1 Task

Do's

- Do deal with the set task directly – you only have 15 minutes to complete it – get down to answering the task from the beginning.
- Do keep your answer focused throughout.
- Your *primary* purpose is to draw on the material you have studied for your synoptic assessment theme to address the question.
- Your *secondary* purpose is to make a connection with at least one other unit of study – you should flag up what this unit of study is – it needs to be clear for the Examiner.
- This connection with your other unit of study should be purposeful and meaningful, it should be explained and elaborated on, clearly informing the discussion you are engaged in.
- You must support your answer with reference to at least one other unit of study to access Bands 4/5.
- You should ensure as far as possible that your answer has clarity and coherence.

Don'ts

- Don't ignore the set task – you will not maximise your mark if you do so.
- Don't provide context or background that is not dealing directly with the set question.
- Don't make multiple links between your two areas of study, this is **not** required and not really possible in the time permitted.
- Don't refer to scholarship for the sake to it, any reference must be relevant.

AO2 Task

Do's

- Do deal with the set task directly using your allocated time of 25 minutes to offer a well-developed response.
- Do offer real and meaningful critical assessment – use the language of debate.
- Do engage with other aspects of human experience – a fundamental requirement as you must engage with other aspects of human experience to access Bands 3-5.
- Do make effective use of any examples/evidence used.
- Do ensure your answer reflects different and contrasting ways of looking at the task with balanced consideration evident.

Don'ts

- Don't repeat content from your AO1 response – you cannot get double credit.

- Don't let your answer be narrative driven.
- Don't list examples without offering real critical assessment.

2 Synoptic Assessment Units 1–8

2.0 Important Guidance for Synoptic Assessment Units 1–8

Teachers and students are at liberty to develop their own ideas in relation to the content that they may wish to study. In part (a) students are limited to approximately **15 minutes** in their answer and thus a limited amount of content should be studied. What is offered in the guidance material that follows for each unit is a variety of possible directions that the content might take, but by no means should all that has been suggested be studied, given the time constraints. Once again, it is a matter of choice as to what teachers and students wish to study.

A2 Scripture Units 1, 2, and 3:

In **AO1 part (a)** as is illustrated by the accompanying guidance material, students must draw on **biblical content and/or sacred scriptures** (e.g. The Qur’an, Bhagavad Gita etc.). Crucially, it is important to note that biblical content must **not** be taken from any part of the taught course in the AS/A2 units that has been or is presently being studied.

A2 Church History Units 4 and 5:

In **AO1 part (a)**, as is illustrated by the accompanying guidance material, students must draw on content that is taken from **church history**, but crucially, not content from the church history of the AS/A2 units of the taught courses that has been or is presently being studied.

A2 Islam Unit 6:

In **AO1 part (a)** as is illustrated by the accompanying guidance material, students must draw on content that is taken from **religion**, but crucially, not from the religion of Islam which has been or is presently being studied on the specified AS/A2 taught courses.

A2 Ethics Unit 7:

In **AO1 part (a)** as is illustrated by the accompanying guidance material, students must draw on content that is taken from **Ethics**, but crucially not from any of the content areas that are offered on the AS/A2 Ethics units of the taught courses.

A2 Philosophy of Religion Unit 8:

In **AO1 part (a)** as is illustrated by the accompanying guidance material, students must draw on content that is taken from **Philosophy**. Crucially, none of the content should be studied that has been or is presently being offered for the Philosophy of Religion AS/A2 taught courses.

AO2 part (b), Critical evaluation and Other Aspects of Human Experience:

This part of the question unpacks the **impact and implications** of the issues that may have been raised in part (a). Students are free to pursue issues and ideas that interest them and they must engage in real and meaningful **critical assessment** which must be derived from **Other Aspects of Human Experience**. The choice of content can be

historical and/or contemporaneous. Obviously, issues and ideas that arise out of the content in part (a) may be pursued, though again it is crucial that this part of question must differ from the content being offered by the student in part (a).

2.1 Unit A2 1: Themes in the Synoptic Gospels

Synoptic Assessment Theme: Religious Texts, Authority and Interpretation

In exploring their AO1 content, students should draw on examples from Biblical content or other Sacred Scriptures (e.g. the Qur'an, Bhagavad Gita etc.). A list of possible examples is provided below. It should be stressed that not all these examples can be covered since students have only 15 minutes to answer the question. Teachers are also free to explore other relevant examples.

The issues of the interpretation of religious texts: e.g. **(1)** the impact and implications of theories and types of interpretation (hermeneutics), including literalist-fundamentalism, historical criticism, feminism, the hermeneutic of suspicion, and the liberationist approach **(2)** the proposition that ancient religious texts come from very different historical, social, cultural, and scientific contexts, and should be treated with caution in relation to interpreting issues such as same sex relations, gender identity and equality, capital punishment etc. in the modern world **(3)** the tension between revelation and reason as the basis for interpretation, including discussion of the authority of scripture and the possibility of reinterpreting its meaning in light of new discoveries (e.g. the work of the 'magisterium' of the Catholic Church expressed in Papal encyclicals) **(4)** the tradition of religious texts used to both critique and support power (Isaiah 14:3-12; Jeremiah 26:1-17; Daniel 5:1-30; Revelation 17:1-18; Romans 13:1-7; 1st Peter 2:13-21) **(5)** different perspectives on inclusion (Isaiah 19:18-25; Ezra 9:1-10:17; John 14:1-7; Acts 10:1-48; 2nd Corinthians 6:14-18; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 2:11-18) **(6)** the interpretation of messianic thinking and utopianism, including whether radical change can happen in this world or must await the world to come (Isaiah 32:1-8; 25:6-8; 65:17-25; Micah 4:1-5; Revelation 21:1-5) **(7)** how people reading the same religious texts from a faith perspective can interpret them differently, and the hermeneutical reasons for this (e.g. a literalist-fundamentalist hermeneutic may condemn homosexuality [Leviticus 20:13] while a hermeneutic of inclusion [Isaiah 56:1-8 reinterpreting Deuteronomy 23:1-8] may reach a different conclusion) **(8)** the role of religious texts linked to the sanctity of life (e.g. Deuteronomy 5:17; Psalm 139:13-16) and how these have been interpreted in the pro-life/pro-choice debate **(9)** the perspective of other Sacred Scriptures (e.g. the Qur'an, Bhagavad Gita etc.) on these, and related matters.

The role and interpretation of religious texts in understanding the problem of suffering and evil: e.g. **(1)** Augustine's theory of original sin (derived from Genesis 3), related to the concept of the Fall, as the ultimate source of all suffering in the world (i.e., evil as the misuse of human freedom) and how persuasive this is (e.g. in the case of natural disasters) **(2)** Calvin's doctrine of 'total depravity', understood as inherent corruption of the will affecting (and infecting) even the best of actions and motivations with a degree of distortion and evil **(3)** related to these two sources, the idea that people deserve to suffer, God is always just, and the universe is morally coherent (e.g. the theology of Job's Comforters [Job 4:1-21; 5:17-27; 34:1-12]) **(4)** debates about whether God is responsible for suffering and evil (Isaiah 45:7) and the problem of unjustifiable suffering (the story of Job) **(5)** the perplexing example of Israel staying true to the Covenant, but suffering and being abandoned by God (Psalm 44:4-26) **(6)** the issue of

theodicy (i.e., if God is strong and loving, why do good people suffer and the wicked prosper? [Psalm 62:11-12; Jeremiah 12:1; Job 21:7]) **(7)** suffering arising from ‘breaking the rules’, e.g. violating Torah/Law instruction (Deuteronomy 30:15-20) **(8)** the prominent concept of the power and presence of God to deliver from suffering (Exodus as the central narrative of Israelite faith, and Resurrection as the key aspect of Christianity), including when people acknowledge wrongdoing (e.g. Psalm 32:3-5; 34:19) **(9)** suffering and evil resulting from oppression and injustice, prophetic denunciation of this (Isaiah 1:1-17; Micah 2:1-9; 3:1-4; Amos 5:21-24; Revelation 18:1-17), and the argument that faith challenges people to change the world and alleviate suffering (James 2:14-19) **(10)** texts used to create passive acquiescence in suffering (e.g. 2nd Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 1:29; 1st Peter 3:14; 5:10; Romans 8:18), and the Marxist critique of religion as ‘the opiate of the people’ **(11)** the example of suffering on behalf of others (Isaiah 53:1-12; John 10:1-18; 1st Peter 2:21), and viewing suffering as having a purpose (Romans 5:3-4) **(12)** the concept of God in the midst of suffering to bring hope and transformation (Psalm 139:1-12; Romans 8:28-39; Revelation 7:9-17; 21:1-5; Isaiah 25:6-9).

The role of leadership within society and faith communities and the continuing debate about this role: e.g. **(1)** the tension between univocal and plurivocal readings of religious texts (looking for one meaning rather than accepting the possibility of several) and how this affects leadership and the nature of religious communities **(2)** leadership and how religious texts have been used to justify unacceptable perspectives and practices (e.g. slavery [Ephesians 6:5-8; 1st Timothy 6:1-5], racism [Genesis 9:18-25 and the ‘curse of Ham’; Genesis 11:1-8], ethnic cleansing/Holy War [Numbers 33:50-56; Deuteronomy 9:1-6]) **(3)** how in antiquity religion and the organization of society were inextricably linked, and that this is very different from modernity **(4)** the concept of theocracy (see Deuteronomy 4:1-14; 31:12-13; 33:1-5; Judges 8:22-23) **(5)** religious texts linked to hierarchical, monarchical societies, with leadership by ruling elites (Genesis 47:13-26), and how the Exodus narratives envision a more egalitarian society (Deuteronomy 15:1-11) **(6)** the concept of election and how texts (e.g. Exodus 23:20-33) have been used to support apartheid, U.S. exceptionalism and the destruction of native peoples etc. **(7)** the role of faith in relation to ecological and environmental issues (see Psalm 8, plus the tension between dominion and stewardship models in Genesis) **(8)** debates on how far faith should be brought into the workplace and influence leaders in their decisions (Acts 5:29) **(9)** Religion and violence (see Judges 4:1-22; 5:24-31).

Other Aspects of Human Experience

The task will be rooted in the overarching theme. Students are free to pursue material that interests them and engage in real and meaningful critical assessment, but must not use any material already covered in their AO1 response. Numerous historical and/or contemporary examples can be drawn on: e.g. **(1)** Gandhi, religion, resistance, and non-violence **(2)** Martin Luther King, Jr., anti-racism, and a vision of an inclusive world **(3)** Oscar Romero as the voice of the voiceless **(4)** Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church **(5)** Pope Francis and his fresh vision for Catholicism **(6)** William Wilberforce and evangelicals against slavery **(7)** women in the church **(8)** different types of church and state relations **(9)** clerical influence in Irish society, north and south **(10)** sectarianism in Northern Ireland and elsewhere **(11)** Hindu nationalism in India **(12)** ISIS as an expression of fundamentalism **(13)** the Marxist critique of religion **(14)** the Enlightenment and religion as a private matter **(15)** faith in a secular world (e.g. Asher’s Bakery) **(16)** C.S. Lewis and suffering as a ‘severe mercy’ **(17)** aid and development

agencies changing the world (e.g. Trócaire, Christian Aid, Tearfund) **(18)** the church as an oppressive institution, the church involved in human liberation **(19)** debates around whether religion in society is declining or is still too influential.

2.2 Unit A2 2: Themes in Selected Letters of Paul

Synoptic Assessment Theme: Controversy, Division and Reconciliation

In exploring their AO1 content, students should draw on examples from Biblical content or other Sacred Scriptures (e.g. the Qur'an, Bhagavad Gita etc.). A list of possible examples is provided below. It should be stressed that not all these examples can be covered since students have only 15 minutes to answer the question. Teachers are also free to explore other relevant examples.

The problem of controversy in religion, including the response of the church to conflict and controversy: e.g. **(1)** controversies often arise from the interpretation of biblical texts, and how this is often related to the impact and implications of theories and types of interpretation (hermeneutics), including literalist-fundamentalism, historical criticism, feminism, the hermeneutic of suspicion, and the liberationist approach **(2)** the tension between univocal and plurivocal readings of religious texts (looking for one meaning rather than accepting the possibility of several) and how this contributes to the response of churches in situations of controversy **(3)** how the church can encourage passivity and acquiescence (Romans 13:1-7; 1st Peter 2:13-17) **(4)** alternatively, the prophetic church can use religious texts used to critique power (Isaiah 14:3-12; Jeremiah 26:1-17; Daniel 5:1-30; Revelation 17:1-18) **(5)** charismatic religious leadership, including how this can be attractive, divisive (Matthew 10:34-36) and generate controversy (Luke 2:26-56; 4:13-37) **(6)** note how biblical texts can often be found to support different sides in a controversy (e.g. different perspectives on inclusion [Matthew 11:28-30; John 14:1-7; 2nd Corinthians 6:14-18], purity [Leviticus 19:1-2; Matthew 15:1-20], violence [Isaiah 10:5-19; Matthew 5:9, 43-48] etc.) **(7)** the concept of intra-textuality (i.e., how the Bible changes a position and how this challenges proof-texting [e.g. Isaiah 56:1-8 reinterprets Deuteronomy 23:1-8] to favour inclusion in the post-exilic era while Ezra 9:1-10:17 and Nehemiah 13:1-31 maintain exclusion) and how this may contribute to debates between 'conservative traditionalists' and 'liberal progressives' **(8)** contemporary issues that have their roots in biblical texts, including the role of women (in leadership [Judges 4:4-23; Luke 2:46-55] and prohibited from leadership [1st Timothy 2:11-15]), war (the tension between God as a warrior [Exodus 15:3] and prince of peace [Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:79; 2:14]), riches, poverty and the prosperity gospel (Deuteronomy 8:18; Proverbs 22:7; Luke 6:20; 18:25) **(9)** the perspective of other Sacred Scriptures (e.g. the Qur'an, Bhagavad Gita etc.) on these, and related matters.

Critically evaluate the potential areas of moral conflict between religion and secular society: e.g. **(1)** the tension between revelation and reason as the basis for morality, including discussion of the authority of scripture and the possibility of reinterpreting its meaning in light of new discoveries (e.g. the work of the 'magisterium' of the Catholic Church expressed in Papal encyclicals) **(2)** the role of the church as moral conscience of society, but how historically and contemporaneously religion has been morally inappropriate (e.g. supporting slavery [1st Peter 2:18-22; 1st Timothy 6:1-5], racism [Genesis 9:18-25 and the 'curse of Ham'; Genesis 11:1-8], ethnic cleansing [Numbers 33:50-56; Deuteronomy 9:1-6]) **(3)** the proposition that ancient religious texts come from very different historical, social, cultural, and scientific contexts, and should be

treated with caution in relation to modern understandings of moral issues such as same sex relations, gender identity and equality, capital punishment etc. **(4)** how different people reading the same religious texts from a faith perspective can reach different moral positions, and the hermeneutical reasons for this (e.g. a literalist-fundamentalist hermeneutic may condemn homosexuality [Leviticus 20:13] while a hermeneutic based on the inclusive practices of Jesus [Matthew 9:9-13; 21:31-32] may reach a different conclusion) **(5)** the role of religious texts linked to the sanctity of life (e.g. Deuteronomy 5:17; Psalm 139:13-16) and how these have been used in the pro-life/pro-choice debate **(6)** discussion of moral absolutism and moral relativism (e.g. in relation to assisted dying and euthanasia) **(7)** an exploration of the moral legitimacy of violence in situations of oppression and invasion (e.g. resistance movements in Europe opposing the Nazis and Third World liberation movements opposing colonialism; see Judges 4:1-22; 5:24-31; Revelation 18:11-24).

The role of religion in fostering reconciliation: e.g. **(1)** an understanding of *sitz im leben*, related to a recognition that both Israel and the early church lived in the context of Imperial rule (Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Rome) to which they were opposed, and how this created a desire for destruction rather than reconciliation (see Isaiah 47:1-11; Revelation 18:1-10) **(2)** the idea of the oppressed becoming the oppressor, subjugating and dominating enemies, and how this relates to reconciliation (see Isaiah 14:1-2; 49:22-26; 60:1-16; Psalm 72:1-11) **(3)** Exodus as the central narrative of Israelite faith is one of confrontation with little room for reconciliation (though note Isaiah 19:18-25; Amos 9:7-15) **(4)** violence in Elijah (1st Kings 18:18-40) gives way to reconciliation in Elisha **(5)** the importance of reconciliation with God (Romans 5:6-10) as part of the salvific purpose in Western Christianity with a predominant emphasis on sin and guilt **(6)** the societal (2 Corinthians 5:16-21) and cosmic (Colossians 1:15-20) dimensions of reconciliation, and the implications of these **(7)** Liberation Theology and its view that true reconciliation must address the effects of structural sin, including, exploitation, consumerism, and ecological degradation **(8)** the biblical theme of reconciliation with the natural world and the ecological implications of this, including care of the earth as an imperative (Psalm 8; Isaiah 11:6-9).

Other Aspects of Human Experience

The task will be rooted in the overarching theme. Students are free to pursue material that interests them and engage in real and meaningful critical assessment, but must not use any material already covered in their AO1 response. Numerous historical and/or contemporary examples can be drawn on: e.g. **(1)** Gandhi, religion, resistance, and non-violence **(2)** Martin Luther King, Jr., anti-racism, and a vision of an inclusive world, as opposed to Malcolm X and his analysis (i.e., ‘Martin’s Dream vs Malcolm’s Nightmare’ **(3)** Oscar Romero as the voice of the voiceless **(4)** Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church (noting how Bonhoeffer is the Western theologian most highly regarded by liberation theology because he was willing to take violent action to oppose Hitler) **(5)** Pope Francis and his fresh vision for Catholicism **(6)** William Wilberforce and evangelicals against slavery **(7)** women in the church, historically and currently **(8)** different types of church and state relations, including establishment religion, the dissenting tradition, the persecuted church (e.g. the Penal Laws in Ireland) **(9)** clerical influence in Irish society, north and south **(10)** issues related to Zionism, Palestine and the state of Israel **(11)** sectarianism in Northern Ireland and elsewhere **(12)** ISIS as an expression of fundamentalism with an apocalyptic perspective **(13)** the Marxist critique of religion **(14)** the Enlightenment and religion as a private matter **(15)** moral conscience

in a secular world (e.g. Ashers Bakery) **(16)** the search for peace, justice and reconciliation after conflict (e.g. the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland and Post-Apartheid South Africa) **(17)** the church as an oppressive institution, the church involved in human liberation **(18)** debates around whether religion in society is declining or is still too influential.

2.3 Unit A2 3: Themes in the Old Testament

Synoptic Assessment Theme: Leadership, Text and Alienation

In exploring their AO1 content, students should draw on examples from Biblical content or other Sacred Scriptures (e.g. the Qur'an, Bhagavad Gita etc.). A list of possible examples is provided below. It should be stressed that not all these examples can be covered since students have only 15 minutes to answer the question. Teachers are also free to explore other relevant examples.

The role of religious texts and leadership in religion and society: e.g. **(1)** the impact and implications of theories and types of interpretation (hermeneutics), including literalist-fundamentalism, historical criticism, feminism, the hermeneutic of suspicion, and the liberationist approach **(2)** the tension between univocal and plurivocal readings of religious texts (looking for one meaning rather than accepting the possibility of several, and how this affects leadership and the nature of religious communities) **(3)** how in antiquity religion and the organization of society were inextricably linked, and that this is very different from modernity **(4)** the concept of theocracy (see Deuteronomy 4:1-14; 31:12-13; 33:1-5; Judges 8:22-23) **(5)** religious texts linked to hierarchical, monarchical societies, with leadership by ruling elites (Genesis 47:13-26), and how the Exodus narratives envision a more egalitarian society (Deuteronomy 15:1-11) **(6)** the tradition of religious texts used to critique power (Isaiah 14:3-12; Jeremiah 26:1-17; Daniel 5:1-30; Revelation 17:1-18) **(7)** charismatic religious leadership (Luke 2:26-56; 4:13-37) **(8)** different perspectives on inclusion (John 14:1-7; Acts 10:1-48; 2nd Corinthians 6:14-18; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 2:11-18), purity (Leviticus 19:1-2; Matthew 15:1-20), violence (Isaiah 10:5-19; Matthew 5:9, 43-48), and where God is encountered (Genesis 28:10-19; Exodus 3:1-6; Ezekiel 10:1-19; 43:1-12; Mark 1:1-12) **(9)** the ideal of the perfect king linked to messianic thinking, utopianism, and the search for a better world (Isaiah 32:1-8; 25:6-8; 65:17-25; Micah 4:1-5; Revelation 21:1-5).

The validity of religious texts as a guide for contemporary ethics: e.g. **(1)** the tension between revelation and reason as the basis for ethics, including discussion of the authority of scripture and the possibility of reinterpreting its meaning in light of new discoveries (e.g. the work of the 'magisterium' of the Catholic Church expressed in Papal encyclicals) **(2)** how religious texts have been used as the justification for ethically unacceptable perspectives and practices (e.g. slavery [Ephesians 6:5-8; 1st Timothy 6:1-5]), racism [Genesis 9:18-25 and the 'curse of Ham'; Genesis 11:1-8], ethnic cleansing [Numbers 33:50-56; Deuteronomy 9:1-6]) **(3)** the perspective of other Sacred Scriptures (e.g. the Qur'an, Bhagavad Gita etc.) on these, and related matters **(4)** the proposition that ancient religious texts come from very different historical, social, cultural, and scientific contexts, and should be treated with caution in relation to modern understandings of issues such as same sex relations, gender identity and equality, capital punishment etc. **(5)** how different people reading the same religious texts from a faith perspective can reach different ethical positions, and the hermeneutical reasons for this (e.g. a literalist-fundamentalist hermeneutic may condemn homosexuality [Leviticus

20:13] while a hermeneutic based on the inclusive practices of Jesus [Matthew 9:9-13; 21:31-32] may reach a different conclusion) (6) ethical issues arising from some peoples believing themselves to be 'elect' and basing their behaviour on that of ancient Israel (see Exodus 23:20-33), and how such texts have been used to support apartheid, U.S. exceptionalism and the destruction of native peoples etc. (7) the role of religious texts linked to the sanctity of life (e.g. debate (8) the relationship between ethics and the biblical concept of justice (Deuteronomy 16:18-20), including discussion of moral absolutism and moral relativism (9) how religious texts are still relevant to ethics in direct and meaningful ways (e.g. Leviticus 25 and the Jubilee 2000 campaign) (10) an exploration of the ethical legitimacy of violence in situations of oppression and invasion (e.g. resistance movements in Europe opposing the Nazis and Third World liberation movements opposing colonialism; see Judges 4:1-22; 5:24-31; Revelation 18:11-24) (11) biblical perspectives on care of the earth as an imperative (Psalm 8).

The theme of sin, including alienation, from the self, others and God: e.g. (1) sin as deficit, failure, or mistake (2) as recalcitrance and rebellion (3) as moral violation, especially in the Old Testament as breaking Torah/Law instruction (4) while the Old Testament takes sin seriously (see Psalm 51), its primary focus is on the sovereign graciousness of God to forgive (Psalm 130; Isaiah 57:14-19) (5) Augustine's interpretation of original sin (derived from Genesis 3), related to the concept of the Fall and the understanding of humanity being born with a sinful disposition as part of human nature (6) Luther's definition of sin as *homo incurvatus in se* and so the idea of being alienated from the true self, conceived of as created for living in relationship with neighbours and God (7) Calvin's doctrine of 'total depravity', understood as inherent corruption of the will affecting (and infecting) even the best of actions and motivations (8) the dominance of sin and guilt in Western Christianity as central to the need for salvation, and how this diminishes salvation as healing (Exodus 15:22-26; Luke 7:11-23) and deliverance (Psalm 50:1-15; Psalm 107:1-32) (9) how different faith traditions understand forgiveness of sins, including religious-institutional ways of providing expiation and rehabilitation (see Leviticus 4:1-7:10) (10) the efficacy of confession (see Psalm 32; James 5:16) (11) the concept of grace (*prevenient, operative, and co-operative*) and justification by faith (13) the role of good works and merit (14) debates about the extent of salvation (Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 13:22-30; 14:15-24; 1st Corinthians 15:20-28) (15) Liberation Theology and the concept of structural sin, including, exploitation, consumerism, and ecological degradation.

Other Aspects of Human Experience

The task will be rooted in the overarching theme. Students are free to pursue material that interests them and engage in real and meaningful critical assessment, but must not use any material already covered in their AO1 response. Numerous historical and/or contemporary examples can be drawn on: e.g. (1) Gandhi, religion, resistance, and non-violence (2) Martin Luther King, Jr., anti-racism, and a vision of an inclusive world (3) Oscar Romero as the voice of the voiceless (4) Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church (noting how Bonhoeffer is the Western theologian most highly regarded by liberation theology because he was willing to take violent action to oppose Hitler) (5) Pope Francis and his fresh vision for Catholicism (6) William Wilberforce and evangelicals against slavery (7) women in the church (8) different types of church and state relations (9) the divine right of kings and the role of the monarchy in the modern world (10) clerical influence in society (11) issues related to Zionism, Palestine and the state of Israel (12) sectarianism in Northern Ireland and elsewhere (13) Hindu

nationalism in India (14) ISIS as an expression of fundamentalism (15) the Marxist critique of religion (16) the Enlightenment and religion as a private matter (17) conscience in a secular world (e.g. Ashers Bakery) (18) the church as an oppressive institution, the church involved in human liberation (19) debates around whether religion in society is declining or is still too influential.

2.4 Unit 4: Themes in the Early Church and the Church Today

2.5 Unit 5: Themes in the Celtic Church, Reformation and Post-Reformation Church

Synoptic Assessment theme: Faith, Morality and the State:

In exploring part (a) AO1 content, students must draw on examples from areas in church history which have not been taught at AS or A2 level. A list of possible examples is provided below. It should be stressed that not all of these examples can or should be covered since students have only roughly 15 minutes to answer each question. Teachers are also free to explore other relevant examples.

Relationship between religion and the state, e.g. (1) The problems for the German Churches under the Nazis (1933-1945). Political, moral and ethical issues for the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches. The reasons for and the impact of the Concordat (1933) and the intentions of Pius XII. The reasons for many in the churches siding with the Nazis – the role of Reich Bishop Müller in the German Evangelical church. The importance of issues like the status of the Old Testament, Jesus the Jew and anti-Semitism in the churches. Opposition from Christians to the Nazis, e.g. Lutheran objectors like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Niemöller, Friedrich von Bodelschwingh and the Catholic farmer and conscientious objector, Franz Jägerstätter who was beheaded for his opposition to the Nazis. Also, the positions adopted by Cardinal Faulhaber and Bishop von Galen of Münster both of whom opposed the Nazis. Also the impact and importance of Pius XI's encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* in 1937 and the position adopted by Pius XII. What are the implications and lessons of the experience of Christians in the Third Reich? What does this period tell us about the risks and dangers of relations between church and state? (2) Church and state in Ireland between 1850 and the present: The place and power of the Anglican Church of Ireland until 1870 and the effects of disestablishment. The impact of the powerful position of the Catholic Church in Southern Ireland after 1921; The RCC's position in the constitution and how its position affected other Protestant churches; ramifications and effects on education, social, medical and welfare policy, moral governance and oversight etc. What do incidents like the Mother and Child Scheme and the Fethard-on-Sea boycott tell us about the position of the Catholic Church? The position, power and importance of someone like the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid. (3) Issues in connection with religion and the state in Northern Ireland from 1921. The effects of religious and theological teaching on relations between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. The roots, nature and impact of sectarianism in Northern Ireland. (4) The US constitution and the separation of church and state. Comparisons are possible with states that are constitutionally allied to a particular religion or denomination, e.g. England or Iran. Possible comparison with (5) below. (5) The unique position of the Queen as Head of State and Head of the Anglican Church in England; also her position in relation to the Church of Scotland. The notion of an Established Church with the right of 26

Anglican bishops who as of right sit in the House of Lords, including the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. Is this an anachronism in the 21st century? Are there any benefits in having an Established Church? The functions of an Established Church. The issues surrounding the establishment and disestablishment of the Church of Ireland (1870). **(6)** Consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of a theocratic state like Iran. Possible comparisons with the relative success of atheist states like the Soviet Union and North Korea.

Current and historical examples in relation to ethical and moral issues: e.g. **(1)** The position of the churches in relation to the ethical and moral policies of the Nazis; issues like Christian support for total war, the Nazi euthanasia and sterilisation programmes, eugenics, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. **(2)** The effect of leaving the Church in charge of the moral sphere of life in Ireland after 1921; the impact of Catholic control of education, hospitals, laundries, orphanages and homes for unmarried mothers etc. Evaluation of the argument that condemnation of religious influence and practice is easy with the benefit of hindsight? Also, is it possible to judge the ethics, culture and beliefs of one generation with the values of another or should people of faith have known better? **(3)** The ongoing debate about the definition of marriage and then the issues surrounding the legality of same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland and its opposition by a number of the churches with the support of the DUP. Should the Churches support the right of LGBT people or should political parties take their ultimate authority from a literal biblical reading of prohibitions against homosexuality? Also, consideration of the issues of faith, morality and the judiciary in the Ashers bakery case. Was it a case of freedom of religious belief and rights or a case of homophobia? The connection between ethics and law in relation to the High Court decision. **(4)** The ongoing issue of whether religious ideas should be reflected in state law, e.g. the view that abortion should be illegal because many Christians, Moslems or some Hindus feel strongly that abortion is murder. Some reflections about this in relation to Britain, the US, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Where does freedom of minority views and democracy come into the argument, though some have argued that murder would always be wrong, even if it was the result of a democratic decision! **(5)** A consideration of the issues surrounding Liberation Theology in Latin America which on Christian, moral and ethical grounds opposes endemic and widespread corruption by a number of states with the result that some Christians have viewed the armed struggle as a Christian duty. Consideration of the reasons for opposition to LT from the Vatican in the 1980s. What should be the response of Christians to corruption by the wealthy few who use power, usually in the form of totalitarian, military governments to suppress the poor? The example of Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador who opposed the corruption in his country and paid for it with his life.

Contribution of religion in resolving conflict and controversy: e.g. **(1)** The part played by the churches historically in providing a religious basis for sectarian division in Northern Ireland which was then reflected culturally in various parts of life including the education system. The notion of a Protestant state for a Protestant people etc. Alternatively, in recent decades, the decisive role played by the churches in Northern Ireland in bringing about the peace process which led to the Good Friday agreement. The main figures involved and the reasons for their pursuing the peace process, e.g. Fr. Alec Reid, the Rev Harold Good and the Rev Ken Newell and others. **(2)** Apartheid in South Africa and the part played by the churches in bringing about talks, reconciliation and peace. The importance of Bishop Desmond Tutu, Bishop Trevor Huddleston and others. **(3)** The part played by the Christian Education Movement in Northern Ireland

over a period of thirty years in bringing Protestant and Catholic schools together for conferences to discuss conflict resolution led by Sr Rose Devlin. **(4)** The work of the Corrymeela community in Northern Ireland founded by Rev Ray Davy. **(5)** Some consideration of the opposite view where religion can be the cause of conflict and controversy should be considered, e.g. the Muslim Rohingya of Rakhine province in Myanmar who are being ethnically cleansed by the Buddhist majority in the country. **(6)** Consideration of a smaller denomination like Westboro Baptist Church in the US which seems to relish heightening tension and causing conflict. This denomination is strongly islamophobic, anti-Catholic, ecumenical Protestant, dislikes Protestant liberals, anti-Orthodox and homophobic. Evaluation of the reasons for and the consequences of these positions.

Other Aspects of Human Experience:

The AO2, part (b) task can be handled similarly to part (b) in the A2 legacy specification. This task will be rooted in the overarching theme, though students must not base their response on content that they have used in part (a) of their answer. Whereas in part (a) the response may have been largely historical, in part (b) the response could be contemporaneous, though a response is possible which considers different historical content from that used in part (a). Students are free to pursue material which interests them and engage in real and meaningful critical assessment which considers different sides to an argument. Candidates are also free to pursue a personal position provided they also show awareness of different arguments and evidence. It is possible to use suggestions as they have been set out in part (a) above and use some of this content in part (b) provided the content and information have not been used in the written answer in part (a). It should also be noted that because examples of content have been listed below, this does not mean that teachers and students are not free to consider content and ideas of their own which they may deem more appropriate and which is not listed anywhere else in this paper. During the delivery of part (a) a contemporaneous example (OAHE) of something may suggest itself to students or teachers and it would certainly be an idea to discuss such a lead, since questions in part (b) will normally reflect ideas that have been raised or are associated with part (a) of the question. What are provided below are some suggestions which may be worthy of consideration in relation to part (b). Students and teachers should only select topics which they deem to be appropriate to the theme being studied. **(1)** Themes like Liberation Theology considered in relation to ethical and moral issues and the state; the pioneering work of people like William Wilberforce and other evangelicals who opposed slavery; church and state considered through the Divine right of kings as it was understood by figures like Henry VIII and the consequences for church and state in England. **(2)** The application of the 'new broom' and the issues being reassessed during the present pontificate of Pope Francis and the consequences for personal and social morality. **(3)** Consideration of some of the historical, philosophical and sociological reasons for the declining influence of religion in society and what if anything is taking the place of traditional religion. **(4)** The role of Zionism from the 19th-21st centuries and the consequences that have followed in the wake of the foundation of the state of Israel, especially in relation to the Palestinians. **(5)** The present moral and religious flux that is so obvious in the Republic of Ireland which was evident in the referendum result on same-sex marriage and the impending referendum on the prohibition of abortion in the Republic's constitution. **(6)** The ongoing sectarianism and racism which is still a feature of Northern Ireland and the reasons for it and the nature of the challenge to get rid of it. **(7)** ISIS and the implications for faith, morality and the state; ISIS as an expression of Islamic identity and

extreme fundamentalism and its total opposition to everything that emanates from Western culture and secular values. (8) The Marxist critique of religion which sees it as a drug for the pain of the suffering masses; religion considered in relation to Marx's view of the state; the communist experiment in post-revolutionary Russia where there wasn't just separation of church and state, but a serious attempt to extirpate religion entirely and the aftermath of this position today.

2.6 Unit A2 6: Islam in a Contemporary Context

Theme: Conflict, Freedom of Belief and Orthodoxy

In exploring **part (a) AO1** content, students must draw on examples from areas in the Islam in a Contemporary Context which have not been taught at AS or A2 level. A list of possible examples is provided below. It should be stressed that not all of these examples can or should be covered since students have only roughly 15 minutes to answer each question. Teachers are also free to explore other relevant examples.

Debates relating to orthodoxy and heresy within religious communities e.g. (1) defining the terms orthodoxy, heterodoxy, heresy; the nature of Orthodox Christianity (the Orthodox Church) as against non-Orthodox Christianity (e.g. views on the Bible, faith, sacraments), Roman Catholic as against Reformed views (e.g. views on the Bible, faith, sacraments), the relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxis; (2) heresy within the Christian Church (e.g. the trial of Galileo by the Catholic Church in the early 17th century, the case of Giordano Bruno in the late 16th century, the heresy trial in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in the early 20th century involving Rev Ernest Davey, differing views on the Trinity within the Christian Church, the controversy surrounding David Jenkins, Bishop of Durham (1984-1994), issues surrounding American Evangelism e.g. market evangelism, (3) how debates surrounding orthodoxy and heresy have contributed to religion being seen in an unfavourable light, the relevance of such language (orthodoxy, heterodoxy, heresy) in the contemporary world (4) Islamic perspectives on Apostasy, Heresy and Freedom of Belief (5) Sufism.

An investigation of human rights, freedom of belief and the significance of community in maintaining faith e.g. (1) the appeal to human rights in relation to freedom of religious expression, violations of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religious expression e.g. the experience of Yazidis in Iraq, the experience of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, the experience of Base ecclesial communities in Latin America, the experience of Christians in North Korea and/or China, the experience of Christians in western society in relation to aggressive secularism; (2) the significance of community in nurturing and maintaining faith e.g. the role of the Orange Order in Protestantism, the role of Religious Orders within Catholicism, the role of the Church Army within the Anglican Church, the role of the Iona Institute in Ireland, the role of faith schools; (3) the positive and negative effects of all of these on religion and society (4) Islamic perspectives on Human Rights – are human rights as articulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights compatible with Islam?

The challenge presented by reformation and change: the positive contribution of religion in resolving conflict and controversy e.g. (1) the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, the Second Vatican Council in the Roman Catholic Church, *ecclesia semper reformanda est* (Karl Barth), the work of Pope Francis, issues pertaining to the role of women and the laity, issues pertaining to homosexuality and same sex relationships, democratic as against more autocratic church structures; (2) the contribution of religion

in resolving conflict and controversy e.g. the role of Christian Ministers in the Northern Ireland peace process, the role of the Corrymeela Community, the work of the Lamb of God community in North Belfast, the work of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Bishop Trevor Huddleston in South Africa; **(3)** the failure of religion in relation to conflict and controversy e.g. the sex scandals in the Catholic Church in Ireland; the Confessing Church, conservative elites and the Nazi State; religion as a cause of conflict, sectarianism and division, **(4)** the work of Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon on the nature of the church and its relationship to surrounding culture – the idea of “Resident Aliens” **(5)** Islam and reform e.g. the views of the Muslim Reform Movement **(6)** the views of Ayaan Hirsi Ali on Islam and Reform.

Other Aspects of Human Experience

This task will be rooted in the overarching theme. There are any number of examples (historical and/or contemporaneous) e.g. interpreting the teaching of Leviticus e.g. on homosexuality; the Westboro Baptist Church, Postmodernism and the Emerging Church, the Asher’s Bakery Case, the World Meeting of Families Congress in the RC Church, how globalisation is shaping religious practice e.g. can engender religious tolerance, can benefit from technological advances (positive), can lead to economic marginalisation of communities (negative); religion and the vernacular, the role of religion in the issue of slavery – the contribution of William Wilberforce, the contribution of Ian Paisley and religious fundamentalism to religion and politics in Northern Ireland, challenges presented by atheism e.g. the views of Richard Dawkins, Stephen Fry.

2.7 Unit A2 7: Global Ethics

Theme: Conscience, Freedom and Tolerance

In exploring **part (a) AO1** content, students must draw on examples from areas in Global Ethics which have not been taught at AS or A2 level. A list of possible examples is provided below. It should be stressed that not all of these examples can or should be covered since students have only roughly 15 minutes to answer each question. Teachers are also free to explore other relevant examples.

The nature and role of conscience, including religious and secular views and the notion of moral duty e.g. **(1)** views of conscience as held by various writers (both religious and secular – is important in both traditions) such as St Paul, St Augustine, Aquinas, Butler, Newman, Fletcher, Kant, Freud, Fromm, Utilitarian, Nagel; the primacy of conscience, the authority of conscience in the Christian tradition, how conscience is dependent on knowledge of the good and personal freedom, the link between conscience and religious belief, the link between conscience and morality (possible exemplification e.g. divorce and remarriage, healthcare rationing and justice, the just distribution of the world’s resources), is conscience innate or acquired? The relative nature of conscience, the duty to educate your conscience (important in the RC tradition); **(2)** the notion of moral duty e.g. Kantianism (a deontological ethic), W.D Ross (notion of prima facie duties), Paul Ramsey (Christian Ethics as a deontological ethic), how duties could conflict with one another (e.g. the duty to care for one’s children, yet the duty not to steal), **(3)** how reliable is conscience as a guide to morality?

The role of the state, including the protection of the common good and personal liberty and the issue of prisoners of conscience e.g. **(1)** examination of the role of the state perhaps looking at different views of the state such as Aristotle (the state as a

community of persons), John Locke and John Stuart Mill (classical liberalism), Hobbes (rights of individuals should be protected by the state), Marx (the state as an oppressor), St Paul (divinely ordained), how the Mennonites (the Amish) view the state, **(2)** is the common good more important than individual freedom or privacy? Issues surrounding censorship, the Devlin/Hart debate (law, liberty and morality), the particular problems raised by terrorism; **(3)** researching prisoners of conscience such as Hakimeh Shokri, Aung San Suu Kyi, Bertrand Russell, Mordechai Vanunu, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Suffragettes, how in China prisoners of conscience are being literally butchered for the harvesting of organs (December 2016), **(4)** the suggestion that the state has failed in relation to the common good e.g. Pinochet and the military dictatorship of Chile 1973-90, the recent financial crash and subsequent austerity agenda in the UK.

The capacity for religion to promote both tolerant and intolerant attitudes e.g. **(1)** tolerance as a virtue, the arguments for tolerance such as respects the value of autonomy and encourages diversity, what values underpin tolerance? The teaching and example of Jesus, how the Christian is called to see God in everyone, the impact of individuals such as Dr Martin Luther King, Bishop Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama, Pope Francis, the Corrymeela Community; **(2)** problems presented by religious fundamentalism, the views of Richard Dawkins on religion, issues relating to women and minority groups, the Westboro Baptist Church, should we tolerate the intolerant? **(3)** The significance of compassion and mercy for the religious believer **(4)** A possible critique of tolerance as a virtue.

Other Aspects of Human Experience

The task will be rooted in the overarching theme. There are any number of examples (historical and/or contemporaneous) that can be drawn on such as Nazi Germany (state imposed morality), the case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Peter Singer's label as "the prophet of the global conscience" (views on environmental ethics), the Asher's Bakery Case, the debate in the ROI over St Vincent's Hospital and the debate on the 8th amendment, the debate in the Church of Ireland on same sex marriage (recent meeting in Limerick), the ethics of Donald Trump, the Pillow Angel Case, the Charlie Gard case, the Ku Klux Klan.

2.8 Unit 8: Themes in the Philosophy of Religion

Synoptic Assessment theme: Faith, Freedom and Atheism In exploring part **(a)** AO1 content, students must draw on examples from areas in the Philosophy of Religion which have not been taught at AS or A2 level. A list of possible examples is provided below. It should be stressed that not all of these examples can or should be covered since students have only roughly 15 minutes to answer each question. Teachers are also free to explore other relevant examples.

The relationship between faith and freedom, including a consideration of atheistic and theistic responses: e.g. **(1)** Consideration of faith and freedom as they were explored extensively in the philosophy of Kierkegaard in the 19th century. **(2)** Classical Calvinism (Predestination) which denies freedom ("you will or you won't, you do or you don't, you're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't"). According to this view faith is also compatible with freedom as well as a form of Determinism, though Aquinas would have denied this and also most Presbyterians today. **(3)** Sartre's attack on religion as an assault and denial freedom (*mauvaise foi*). The notion that religion

masks the truth about the absurdity and meaninglessness of human life (4) Nietzsche's view of religion, freedom and atheism: The idea that religion is a failure of nerve and fear of life and an attempt to live beyond our psychological means; atheism and nihilism. (5) Christian Existentialists like Gabriel Marcel and their view that true freedom is living in accord with the nature and values of human life in a moral universe. (6) A very useful link (connection) here could be made with the theme of Freewill and Determinism in A2 7.

Religion as world evading, perpetuating humanity's oppression and alienation:

e.g. (1) Possible exploration of thinkers like Ludwig Feuerbach and especially Karl Marx. The latter most of all explored the theme of alienation. Human beings were alienated by the economic and political conditions of Capitalism and arguably Neo-Liberalism today. Religion was part of this conspiracy. This could be contrasted with the notion of sin which is the Christian view of alienation. (2) Liberation Theology, in some ways is a fusion of Marxist economics, socialism and radicalism. Consideration of some liberation theologians in Latin America and what they were endeavouring to do in countries where there were appalling disparities in wealth and living conditions. The reasons for the Vatican's condemnation of LT in the 1970s and 80s, stressing that alienation is ultimately alienation (sin) from God. (3) There is also an element of religion as world evading in the work of more recent atheistical thinkers like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens; the idea e.g. that religion habitually endeavours to prevent progress of any sort, the idea that it is an enormously conservative and oppressive force in society. (4) Some attempt to answer the accusation of religion as world evading, e.g. that the employment of isolated historical examples masks the positive impact of religion – charity and the Christian impact of morality and moral responsibility – “I am my brother's keeper” or an example like Newton who was a great scientist but also a man who held deeply religious convictions or that the root cause of human evil is not religion but the fallen or toxic nature of the human condition itself. Also atheistical experiments in e.g. Stalin's Russia, Hitler's Germany or Mao's China which gave the lie to the liberating and emancipating benefits of atheism.

Humanist principles and ideas both inside and outside religion: e.g. (1) Some historical review of the rise of Humanism, e.g. Protagoras, Epicurus, Lucretius; the humanism of the Renaissance, Erasmus and the nature of the new thinking. The gradual eclipse of religion since the Enlightenment and the volte-face from faith in God to faith in man (humankind) and thus the features of Atheistical Humanism emerge. Obviously a new ethics follows not based on 'revelation' but on 'reason' – utilityarianism (Bentham, Mill and Singer). See also the principles of the British and Irish Humanist Associations. (2) The view of Christian Humanism – “that the glory of God is Man fully alive” (Irenaeus). Also aspects of this in Aquinas. (3) Possible reference to Jung and the notion of God as an archetype and what this means. (4) The evidence of Humanism in religion today. (5) Is Humanism a serious contender to replace religion in society? (6) Some comparisons and contrasts with religion; what e.g. do religion (Christianity) and Humanism agree and disagree on, e.g. ethical differences? (7) The issue of to what extent Humanism is a faith based position itself.

Other Aspects of Human Experience:

The AO2, part (b) task can be handled similarly to part (b) as it was understood and delivered in the legacy specification. The task will be rooted in the overarching theme, though students must not base their response on content which they have used in part

(a) of their answer. Whereas in part (a) the response was largely philosophical, in part (b) the response could also be philosophical with wider consideration of contemporaneous implications, though as has been pointed out, a response is possible which considers different philosophical content from that listed in part (a) of this paper. Students are free to pursue material which interests them and engage in real and meaningful critical assessment which considers different sides to an argument. Candidates are also free to pursue a personal position provided they also show awareness of different arguments and evidence. It is possible to use suggestions from part (a) above in part (b) of the answer provided the content and information have not already been used in the written answer in part (a). It should also be remembered that because examples of content have been listed below, this does not mean that teachers and students are not free to consider content of their own which they may deem more appropriate and which is not listed anywhere in this paper.

Some of the suggestions as they are set out below may be worthy of consideration in relation to part (b):

(1) Faith and freedom could be considered in relation to aspects of contemporary fundamentalism in e.g. ISIS or other fundamentalist religious or Christian denominations. Consideration of how far there may be an element of ‘brain-washing’ in an organisation like ISIS or how far a literal interpretation of a sacred text may be mistaken and how if possible this could be remedied. Also consideration of the idea that people should be permitted to believe whatever they wish, even ideas which are held by others to be disagreeable, dangerous or even toxic. **(2)** Consideration of faith and freedom as understood by liberal Christians like John Shelby Spong in the US who would argue for a synthesis of contemporary moral ideas based on e.g. utilitarian or situation ethics principles and yet who reject strict biblical or traditional church teaching as it has been handed down for millennia. A contrast with the approach of biblical fundamentalism might also be appropriate. **(3)** The theme of religion as world evading could be considered in relation to the fate of religion in Russia after the 1917 revolution, which for the next fifty years strenuously endeavoured to suppress religion, but after the collapse of communism, the Russian Orthodox church has made a remarkable resurgence; a consideration of the reasons for this? **(4)** Consideration of the views of C G Jung who argued that God is an archetype; that the idea of God is one that cannot be escaped and even if traditional religious belief is abandoned, something else becomes God, “something that only an enlightened mind could hatch forth”; thus he held that both Nazism and Communism filled this vacuum with calamitous consequences. **(5)** Consideration might be given to the areas of fundamental disagreement between contemporary Humanism and Christianity, e.g. areas like ethics and morality in areas like abortion, the sovereignty of the individual, homosexuality, euthanasia and population control etc. Also consideration of areas of agreement, such as support for the moral position, ‘do unto other as you would have them do on to you’, democracy and the freedom, happiness and good of the individual etc. **(6)** The question of whether or not Humanism is a pseudo-religion? Whether, indeed Karl Rahner’s principle of the ‘anonymous Christian’ could be applied to humanists and further if such an idea is an offence to humanists who might regard such an idea as offensive and paternalistic.

3 Appendices

3.1 Noteworthy Features of GCE Religious Studies Revised Specification

- There are now three specified content areas listed in the Specification for Section A of the examination paper with two sub themes in each.
- The three questions on the examination paper in Section A will be rooted in each of these three specified content areas.
- Synoptic Assessment remains a significant part of the assessment. In this New Specification there is specified content listed, with three points of study listed for each unit.
- The Synoptic question is compulsory with the AO1 task (part A) rooted in one of the three strands listed for study.
- At A2 level there will be greater variety in the command words and the type of question stem used. The AO1 skill is still designed to assess KU while the AO2 skill will continue to assess that of CA. At least one AO2 task in Section A will deal with ongoing significance/relevance.
- As with AS level there will be use of more open-ended questions with a quotation being used as a stimulus, where appropriate.
- As with AS level *straddling* will be a feature in questions (only where it is appropriate) – in either AO1 or AO2.
- The most notable change is the 20/30 split in questions (AO1 20, AO2 30). This will have a significant bearing on time management within the examination. It is recommended that students spend no more than 15 minutes on their AO1 task and no more than 25 minutes on their AO2 response.
- Every attempt will be made to ensure that the AO1 task on the examination paper will be as focused as it can be to reflect the limited time the student now has to fulfil this requirement. The AO2 task will also be framed in such a way as to reflect the mark weighting it now carries.