

GCE



Revised GCE
Teacher Guidance
Religious Studies

A2 5: Themes in the Celtic Church,
Reformation and Post-Reformation
Church

For first teaching from September 2016
For first award of AS Level in Summer 2017
For first award of A Level in Summer 2018

A2 5, Themes in the Celtic Church, Reformation and Post-Reformation Church

Developments and outreach in Christianity:

(The following are some, but not exhaustive suggestions as to what teachers might research and teach for this topic. Of course teachers and students could find other examples of their own, especially in relation to the impact of the topics which would be useful in part (b). Students and teachers should evaluate the impact and ramifications of the various historical events and be aware of how in many cases we are still living with the legacy of our historical past).

“Controversy and reform through the ages; the impact and significance of the Protestant Reformation, Counter Reformation and Vatican II in terms of church organisation and authority”

Teachers could approach these topics from both a European and local standpoint in terms of the impact and importance of the various movements listed:

1. The **Reformation** while beginning in Germany (1517) had an enormous impact throughout Europe and had a considerable affect on Ireland from a religious, political, social and cultural perspective; an indelible mark indeed that is with us to this day. Consideration of the impact of the Suppression of Catholicism and the Dissolution of the monasteries in Ireland and the establishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland; the effects on the Catholic population and the lack of rights and the division in society which resulted; the historical issues and short and long term impact surrounding the plantation of Ulster and the arrival of Presbyterianism to the island; ‘history casts a long shadow’; how is this reflected in the island, both North and South today? The rise of sectarianism and political divisions which went along largely religious lines and the impact that is reflected before and after the foundation of the state of Northern Ireland to this day.
2. **Counter Reformation** and the central importance of the Council of Trent; the impact and strong reactionary defence of Catholic teaching and especially sacramental practice, though the Catholic Church did see the need for its own structural reforms and changes to the religious orders and spiritual movements; the expansion of the work of the Inquisition to preserve discipline and oppose heresy; the excesses of the secular Renaissance that plagued the Church were countered. The effects in Ireland of a growing and more powerful Catholic Church after Catholic emancipation (1829) and the rise of Ultramontanism in the 19th century which give the Catholic Church an unrivalled position of authority after Irish independence.
3. **Vatican II** which lasted three years beginning in 1962 under John XXIII and ended in 1965 under Paul VI. Pope John had said “it was time to open the windows of the Church and let in some fresh air” Extraordinary changes in the Church, such as in the Mass which could be said in the vernacular with the priest facing the congregation; the move away from the scholastic philosophy and theology and Biblical literalism that had dominated the church for centuries; the decree on ecumenism and much more which had such a dramatic effect in Ireland, e.g. the position of the laity in the Church. All this and more had a profound effect on the Church in Ireland.

“Contemporary missionary outreach, including methods of evangelisation and the impact of the missionary outreach of the different Christian traditions in the 19th and 20th centuries”.

1. An exploration of the wave of Catholic missionary activity that began in Ireland in the 19th century and continued in considerable strength right up until the 1960s; e.g. the Irish mission to Nigeria; the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary who in 1924 began their missionary work in Africa; also the

Columbans and the SMA missions. The SMA fathers were founded by Melchior de Marion Bresillac who died in Sierra Leone in 1859. The sacrifice and danger of missionaries to Africa which because of its untreatable tropical diseases was often called 'the white man's grave'. Irish brothers, priests and sisters went to the mission fields both to spread the Gospel and to bring western medicine and ideas to parts of the world like Africa which by comparison with Europe were still quite primitive.

2. Consideration of a very different kind of mission that could be considered in the work of the Achill mission (Church of Ireland) and the work of the Rev Edward Nangle who set up a mission station on the island in Co Mayo in 1831. Nangle was very much a product of the strictures of the Reformation. He saw the Pope as the anti-Christ and Catholics in need of salvation and conversion of Catholics was the aim of his missionary work. Nangle saw his work as having a civilising influence on the island and began a programme of building, land improvement, the establishment of schools, churches and medical services. He also became the largest landowner on the island. Hostility built up between him and the Archbishop of Tuam, John Mc Hale who said of Nangle's mission "there is no place outside hell which more enrages the Almighty than this Protestant colony". During the famine Nangle was accused of using 'souperism' as a tool of conversion and of course missionary activity in the past often had strings attached.
3. Consideration of Presbyterian missionaries from Northern Ireland who were willing to risk deadly tropical diseases and early death for themselves and their young families in order to spread the Gospel. Notable here is the Rev James Glasgow (1841 – 1864) and the Rev Alexander Kerr who settled at Rajkot, in the province of Gujarat, India and built a school, which is still going to this day and founded a further mission at Probandar.
4. Consideration could be given to the 1910 Edinburgh missionary conference which called for a new approach to and consolation of missionary activity which in time was to lead to the World Council of Churches.
5. Possible reference to the accusation that missionary activity was a tool of the imperial powers, like Britain and France and even earlier, Spain and Portugal. The missionary movement has been accused of being a tool to subdue populations and make them subservient to the occupying power; that further that it was a method of propaganda and a tool to rob the native populations of their indigenous religions and cultures, some of which were ruined as a result.
6. The theological issues for the missionary movement which arise out of ecumenism: Most people no longer believe that other Christian Churches are heretical in the way that Nangle and Mc which dealt with Judaism and other documents, Catholic teaching since the Second Vatican Council no longer holds that God is not to be found in the religious beliefs and practices of those believers who are not Catholic. Where then does that leave the modern missionary movement? We are also more sensitive to the indigenous cultures and religious beliefs of others; we are also less triumphalist and exclusive than was the case of Christians in the 19th century. What then can be said of the missions and their work today?



INVESTORS
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