



GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**A LEVEL
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - COMPONENT 1
OPTION A: A STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY
A120UA0-1**

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. Examiners should not seek to mark candidates down as a result of small omissions in minor areas of an answer.

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.

A Level Generic Band Descriptors

Band	Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions 20 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	17-20 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 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. • Insightful connections are made between the various approaches studied. • An extensive range of views of scholars/schools of thought used accurately and effectively. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
4	13-16 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 demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples. • Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Purposeful connections are made between the various approaches studied. • A range of scholarly views/schools of thought used largely accurately and effectively. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	9-12 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 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. • Sensible connections made between the various approaches studied. • A basic range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	5-8 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. • 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. • Makes some basic connections between the various approaches studied. • A limited range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
1	1-4 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. • 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. • Little or no use of scholarly views/schools of thought. • Very few or no connections made between the various approaches studied. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary. N.B. A maximum of 2 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'
0	• No relevant information.

Band	Assessment Objective AO2- Part (b) questions 30 marks <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
5	25-30 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. • Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • The views of scholars/schools of thought are used extensively, appropriately and in context. • Confident and perceptive analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
4	19-24 marks • Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue. • The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed. • The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Views of scholars/schools of thought are used appropriately and in context. • Purposeful analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	13-18 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. • Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence. • Views of scholars/schools of thought are generally used appropriately and in context. • Sensible analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	7-12 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. • A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence. • Basic use of the views of scholars/schools of thought appropriately and in context. • Makes some analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
1	1-6 marks • A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue. • 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. • Little or no use of the views of scholars/schools of thought. • Limited analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary.
0	• No relevant analysis or evaluation.

**GCE A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES – COMPONENT 1 OPTION A
A STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY**

SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

To be read in conjunction with the generic level descriptors provided.

Section A

- 1. (a) Examine the prosperity gospel of the Word-Faith movement. [20]**

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

- The prosperity gospel of the 'Word-Faith' movement promotes the teaching that Christians have the right to expect wealth and good health.
- Those who follow the aims of the prosperity gospel are encouraged to make a positive confession of faith. They must profess out loud that one has health and wealth.
- Biblical passages of support for this come from James 4:3 "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasure." and Matthew 17:20 "He replied because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed you can say to this mountain, 'move from here to there', and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."
- This type of evangelism became popular through TV evangelists such as Oral Roberts at the end of the twentieth century. It has a major following in Pentecostal and charismatic churches.
- The movement claims that 'seeds of faith' are sown through the payment of tithes and support for religious causes. Even those who are struggling financially are encouraged to give.
- You need to proclaim or profess out loud the healing that has occurred even before it is realised.
- Prosperity preachers claim that asceticism is not desired by God. This is based on the view that God made a covenant with Israel and this covenant included a bestowing of blessings upon the nation. Deuteronomy 28: 2,11
- The Patriarchs experienced great wealth – Genesis 13:2
- To the Hebrew people God promises a land 'flowing with milk and honey' Exodus 3:17, if they follow Moses and leave Egypt under his command.
- Candidates may refer to the popular book based on the prayer of Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:9-10) as a prayer which can be said to receive blessings from God.

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

- (b) **‘The ascetic ideal is incompatible with Christianity.’
Evaluate the view.**

[30]

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

- Candidates may question what is meant by asceticism – there are various scales of this – abstinence from food, sex etc. Therefore, it is important to qualify exactly what is meant by asceticism before evaluating the statement.
- Christians would say that care needs to be taken in how much one participates ‘in’ the world. Therefore, some Christians would say that a certain amount of asceticism is important. Jesus fasted and prayed and lived an itinerant lifestyle. Therefore, following Jesus, in this sense, has to be compatible with Christianity as it is emulating Christ.
- Asceticism was widespread amongst early Christians. For example, Origen (185-254) dedicated himself to a lifestyle of voluntary poverty.
- John the Baptist led a stricter ascetic lifestyle. He had a diet of locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3: 4) and was commanded not to drink wine or any other fermented drink.
- Jesus, on the other hand, ate and drank and had been referred to by the Pharisees as a glutton and a drunkard (Luke 7: 33-34). Although, there are also passages of scripture which refer to Jesus fasting and praying. This may well have been because of Jesus’ own eschatological expectations.
- There are passages in scripture which support the notion of asceticism. Acts 24: Paul refers to ‘striving’ so that he can live in such a way that ensures that he has a clear conscience towards God and others.
- Riches can lead a person away from God. For example, in Mark 10, we read of the dangers of wealth and the request, by Jesus, to the rich young ruler to give away all his possessions and follow him.
- Materialism, greed and love of money is incompatible with Christianity but giving away all of one’s possessions to live an ascetic lifestyle may not be something that is commanded of everyone. With regards to the rich young ruler, to whom this command was given, Jesus knew that his possessions were the things that stopped him from truly loving God.
- There is a vast difference between living an ascetic lifestyle and following the command to be good stewards of possessions. Many Christians ‘tithe’ following the principles of the Old Testament whilst others take vows of poverty. There may not be one ideal; the Bible assumes private ownership, but stewardship is all important.

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

OR,

2. (a) **Examine the contribution made by Rosemary Radford Ruether to feminist theology.** [20]

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

- Rosemary Radford Ruether was a Catholic feminist theologian who believed that freedom from sexism within the Church is possible, but the causes of these sexist attitudes need to be rooted out and eliminated.
- She called for a radical change within the Christian Church. This change involved an elimination of the sexism that exists within it.
- Ruether shared the view of Mary Daly that sexism plays a large role in the Bible, Christian theology and in the rituals and practices of the Church.
- Ruether wanted to see a reformation of the language, rituals and theology of Christianity.
- She claimed that the negative reactions within the Church to the use of female pronouns when referring to God is the result of androcentric attitudes prevalent in Christianity.
- Ruether believed that the Bible is responsible for much of this androcentric approach and is responsible for presenting women as 'possessions' of men or being subject to men.
- Ruether claimed that both Old and New Testaments are responsible for this and passages that could be referred to include Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:24 (accept all relevant passages)
- In addition to this, Christian theologians such as St. Thomas Aquinas, were influenced by philosophers such as Aristotle who regarded women as 'misbegotten males' and this compounded the androcentrism within the Church.
- Ruether refers to the salvific concepts of atonement through a male creator and saviour God as a 'sin of idolatry', as it places males as being closer to God than females.
- Ruether declares that humanity's nature is androgynous and the only difference between men and women is the ability to reproduce.
- The Church's association of sin and carnal desires with Eve and the passivity, gentleness, meekness and obedience with the purity of Mary (perpetual virgin), has led to the unfair treatment of women. She goes as far as to say that the castigation of women as witches came from this type of religious stereo typing.
- Ruether claimed that this type of stereotyping has become part of the reasons why women have been refused ordination into the priesthood. Ruether cites the 1976 Vatican declaration against women ordination which states that there must be a physical resemblance between the priest and Christ.
- Ruether referred to marginalised forms of Christianity such as Montanism and Gnosticism as well as the Quakers and Shakers, as movements that have presented the view that women and men share the same views regarding the equal status of women.
- Ruether saw feminist theology as part of the prophetic tradition of the Bible which stood against oppression of the marginalised. See Isaiah

10:1-2 and Luke 4: 18-19. She sees the Jesus movement as being counter cultural and aligned with this tradition.

- The four themes of this prophetic tradition include (i) God's defence and vindication of the oppressed. (ii) a critique of dominant systems of power and powerholders (iii) a vision of a new age where injustice ends under the reign of God and (iv) a critique of the religious ideology maintaining injustice.
- Ruether believed that Jesus distanced himself from patriarchal terms regarding God.
- Despite several unsuccessful attempts to liberate women in the twentieth century – Romanticism, Liberalism, Marxism – Ruether hoped that a reformed theology and Church can provide a truly liberating setting for women.
- Ruether claimed that in this reformative period women will need support in the form of female base communities.
- Ruether calls for an inclusive approach to leadership within the Church and she questions the patriarchal values of clericalism.
- A new use of language along with a new understanding, accompanied by new rituals will be a part of making the Church a liberating community.

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

- (b) **‘Men and women are not equal within Christianity.’
Evaluate the view.**

[30]

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

- Feminist theology has gone some way to countering the inequalities between men and women.
- Theologians such as Sally McFague, Rosemary Radford Ruether have all contributed to promoting the case for equality.
- There have been significant developments within the Christian Church regarding leadership roles for women.
- A better understanding of men and women as created ‘*imago dei*’ has emerged. Many churches have taken on the view that the New Testament describes that, “all are one in Christ Jesus”, regardless of sex, social status, or heritage – the implication is that all should be viewed equally, and there should therefore be no discrimination on the grounds of gender.
- It is widely recognised that women played an important role in Jesus’ ministry (such as being the first to witness Jesus after the resurrection) and took leadership roles in the early church. This has influenced decisions made by Churches which have ordained women as ministers, priests and bishops.
- There has been an emphasis in the twentieth century on the fact that early church gave credence to women in terms of believing the women’s testimony about the resurrection of Jesus, which would have been invalid in any court at that time. This implies that their equality was protected in the Gospels recounting those events rather than air-brushing the women out.
- Furthermore, Churches that accept equality in terms of leadership refer to passages in the New Testament, such as Galatians 3:28 which illustrate the belief that men and women are equal.
- The ordination debate could also be referred to as demonstrating that inequalities still exist in the universal Church. In particular, the arguments used from within Catholicism, Fundamentalist Protestant Churches and Orthodox churches.
- In support of these positions, a variety of biblical quotes can be provided to make a case from Genesis onwards that women have never been equal to men.
- It has been argued from within the Church that Jesus clearly has a dominant role – as a man – in that it is his ministry, death and resurrection which confirm him as the Son of God, the Redeemer of the World and so patriarchal views are consolidated.
- Some feminist theologians such as Mary Daly suggest that the original ‘Fall’ in Genesis was not the eating of the fruit but the dominance of one gender over another. Daly believes that the Church is too bound to patriarchy to ever become a place where women can find the transformation they need. The only option is to be ‘anti- church’.
- Rosemary Radford Ruether’s suggestion of ‘androcentrism’ dominating Church thinking i.e. the cultural view that men are more authentically human than women may be referred to.

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

SECTION B

Either,

3. (a) **Examine the need for forgiveness as a Christian moral principle. [20]**

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

- The basis for Christian belief about forgiveness is based on the teaching that God forgives humanity for sin through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. John 3:16 'For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son.'
- Jesus' teachings about forgiveness stress why it is important to forgive. In answer to a question about how many times one should forgive, Jesus replies not seven times but seventy times seven. (Matthew 18:21-22) In other words, it is important not to forgive just once but to keep on forgiving. Christians must spend a lifetime forgiving.
- Jesus taught that 'forgiveness' is an integral part of what it means to be a Christian. It is good for community living as well as for mental, emotional and physical health. If Christians do not forgive then that could cause them to become unwell.
- In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6 :14-15) Jesus told his followers that if they do not forgive, they themselves will not be forgiven.
- Jesus' teachings in the Lord's Prayer suggest that forgiveness is a prerequisite for personal forgiveness from God. Jesus says, 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.' Christians cannot expect forgiveness if they are unprepared to first of all forgive others.
- Parables that Jesus taught also emphasise the importance of forgiveness. Candidates may cite any appropriate parable.
- With regards to building the Christian community and supporting one, Paul teaches that Christians should 'Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive.' (Colossians 3: 12-13)
- Being forgiving, for Christians, a means of emulating Christ and therefore a means of evangelising too.
- Forgiveness is a means of demonstrating agapeic love for God and for one's neighbour.

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

(b) 'The behaviour of God towards humanity cannot be the basis for Christian morality.'

Evaluate this view

[30]

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

- Christian morality is based on the teaching and example of Jesus who is God incarnate. The incarnation of God, in Christ, demonstrates the unconditional and agapeistic love of God. Christians are called to 'love one another as I have loved you.' This then sets Christians apart as they are called to demonstrate a self-sacrificial love which puts others first.
- The command by Jesus to 'take up your cross and follow me' can be difficult to emulate in terms of morality as it is highly demanding and perhaps some would say only possible for God. Yet, it could be argued that if that was true then Jesus would not have commanded it.
- In Exodus 3:4 God reveals himself as merciful and gracious, long-suffering and patient. God is active in his love for Israel, demonstrating loving faithfulness.
- The Torah law, which is revealed by God, sets out the moral laws for the Israelites to follow. Many of these laws are not reflective of God's behaviour but sets out a number of rules and regulations which must be addressed. Many of these rules are not followed by Christians.
- Most Christians choose to follow principles such as that set out in Leviticus 19:34 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'
- It could be argued that to base morality only on positive aspects of God's behaviour is 'cherry picking'. Many have questioned the behaviour demonstrated by God on a number of occasions, such as the punishment of plagues on the Egyptians when the Exodus took place. In particular the harsh treatment of the first-born sons who had little to do with Pharaoh's disobedience.
- Some might question why punishment for the iniquity of parents should be cast upon children to three or four generations (Exodus 34:7).claiming that this is unjust.
- Others might question whether there is an incompatibility with the legalism of the Old Testament and the call for demonstrating agapeic love in the New Testament.
- Furthermore, by condensing the whole of the Law into two commands – love of God and neighbour some might question why there is a need for 613 mitzvot in the Old Testament?
- The agapeic love demonstrated by Jesus on the cross is what Christians are called to do – 'take up your cross and follow me' is the calling for Christians. Many would find the extremity of this request perhaps too demanding.
- Can we truly know what God's behaviour is? God is transcendent and therefore it could be argued that God cannot be fully known. However, Christians could argue that God is fully known in Jesus. Therefore, it is the person of Jesus who needs to be focused on and all Christian morality should be Christocentric rather than theocentric.

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

Or,

4. (a) **Examine the case for believer's baptism, with reference to Karl Barth.** [20]

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

- During the Protestant Reformation objections to infant baptism were raised by those who questioned the causative nature of infant baptism as a means of effecting salvation.
- Instead of infant baptism support grew for believer's baptism. Those advocates of believer's baptism stated that the dominical sacrament should be 'declarative'. In other words the candidate for Baptism should be able to declare their faith in salvation as something that had already happened.
- Those who supported this position were referred to as 'Anabaptists' or re-baptisers. They based their views on passages of scripture which lend support for believer's baptism (Karl Barth did not hold an Anabaptist position, but he did support believer's baptism).
- In Acts Chapter 8 we learn about those (the Samaritan and the Ethiopian eunuch) who believe after hearing the good news and are then baptised.
- In Acts 9 we learn of the conversion of Saint Paul who is then baptised.
- Reference could also be made to Acts 10 and Acts 16 where Cornelius and Lydia as well as their households are baptised after they have shown faith.
- In the twentieth century, one of the most influential theologians, Karl Barth, promoted Believer's baptism. He stated that Baptism cannot effect salvation, rather it demonstrates the faith that already exists. (The teaching of the Church regarding Baptism 1948)
- Barth argued that paedobaptism has no basis in Scripture. He suggests that infant baptism devalues the grace of God and reduces Christianity to a purely social phenomenon.
- Barth emphasises the link between Christian discipleship and Believer's baptism. He suggests that baptism is a witness to the grace of God.
- Baptism in water is a response to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit that has already occurred. It seals the reality of God's grace.
- Unlike infant baptism, Believer's baptism is done in obedience to the dominical command.
- Unlike infant baptism, which is coercive, Believer's baptism is done out of free-will and therefore more meaningful.
- Believer's baptism is an image of salvation which recognises the sacramental gift of God in Jesus Christ.

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

- (b) **‘Baptism is no more than a symbolic act.’
Evaluate this view.**

[30]

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

- Being baptised means that the disciple is following the dominical command. In this sense it is more than a symbolic act it is a duty.
- Those who hold fast to a sacramental view of baptism consider that baptism is ‘an outward sign of an inward grace where the risen Jesus has been encountered. Therefore, baptism will be regarded as more than a symbolic act, it is a real opportunity to experience Christ.
- Oscar Cullmann (Baptism in the New Testament 1950) stated that receiving God’s grace through baptism does not depend on the recipient’s faith
- After the Reformation, baptism as well as participating in the eucharist were seen as necessary for salvation. This makes the act more than symbolic it is an act of initiation into the Christian faith. Peter Brunner (Worship in the name of Jesus 1968) stated that in baptism Christ unites people in his body, regardless of whether they are infant or adult.
- Christians who accept that baptism is a means of washing away ‘original sin’ will declare that there is an ontological change in the person who has been baptised. This view is based on 2 Corinthians 12:27 where the baptised person is referred to as a ‘new creation’.
- It could be argued that the baptismal act is declarative as it is an outward symbol of what has already taken place, that is a conversion of faith in Christ. The baptism itself merely symbolises that this has taken place.
- Some argue that baptism is a symbolic picture of what it means to have accepted faith. Especially baptism through total immersion which symbolises the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- Whether baptism is considered as declarative or causative with regards to grace being received, the symbolism is deeply meaningful. It is a means of demonstrating that in Christ a new life has begun. This new life is a life that has been wrought through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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

Or,

5. (a) **Explain the responses of the Roman Catholic Church to South American liberation theology.** [20]

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

- Liberation theology is a movement developed by Roman Catholic thinkers and activists in Latin America in the 1960s that viewed freedom from social oppressions as a key area of Christian concern.
- Responses to the movement have been mixed, with some Catholics demonstrating total support for the movement, others regarding it as too politicised and still others failing to support initially but then changing their mind.
- Those who have given their support to the movement include priest and theologian Gustavo Gutierrez who in his work entitled 'A Theology of Liberation' claimed that when Christians take seriously the oppression that surrounds them, they will be moved to fight for justice. Basing his views on Jesus own ministry, he claimed that faith in action must have a political dimension.
- Candidates may cite other famous supporters of liberation theology who have 'fought for justice' in various ways. For example, Archbishop Oscar Romero who spoke out against the injustices of oppression and repression in El Salvador, Bishop Helder Camara who through peaceful means demonstrated his support for the movement in Brazil and Father Camilo Torres who joined a guerrilla movement in Columbia and took up arms against the government. Torres was de-frocked for his participation in an unlawful war demonstrating the disdain of the Catholic Church towards such action – credit any relevant examples.
- During the Second Vatican Council (1962 -65) the issue of the poor was raised and it was emphasised that concern for the poor should be made a priority in the Church.
- In 1968, Latin American Bishops met in Medellin and issued a statement which urged action by the Church on behalf of the poor. Only a dramatic change to the political and social conditions of the poor will be effective in combatting oppressive and repressive regimes.
- The phrase 'preferential option for the poor' began to be used by liberation theologians in the 1970s and was embraced by the Catholic bishops in Latin America.
- Liberation theology gained further support when the Latin American bishops convened in 1979 in Puebla.
- Additionally, Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI used the term. It is now used as an integral aspect of Catholic social teaching.
- The Vatican accepted as a valid expression of the Church, Base ecclesial communities as long as they focused on the word of God, avoided an overly critical attitude of the wider Church and remained aware of the benefits of their link to the Church of Rome. Pope Paul VI Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975)
- Leonardo Boff posed the question of whether the entire Church would benefit from being transformed into these base communities but concludes that the larger and smaller church communities are needed.

- However, at the Vatican, liberation theology has had a mixed reception. In the document, *Evangelii Nuntianti*. Pope Paul VI warned against ignoring the spiritual and eschatological dimensions of faith. He also condemned the use of violence to bring about political and social change.
- Cardinal Josef Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) expanded on this criticism of liberation theology in the document 'Instruction on Liberation theology' (1984) in which he makes several criticisms. He challenges ideas that economic or political change can bring about salvation.
- Additionally, he criticises the atheistic Marxist influences on Liberation theology. He claimed that truth cannot be aligned with an atheistic ideology, truth transcends this. Marxism encourages violence and Christianity should not align itself with this. If the Bible is interpreted in only a political sense, then this misinterprets the relationship of God with His people.
- Initially, Pope Francis was a harsh critic of liberation theology, however, his attitude softened. Some of the Pope's statements reflect his apparent influence by a similar kind of social awareness as expressed in *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) and in 2015 he invited Gustavo Gutierrez to the Vatican as a guest of honour.

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

- (b) **‘Liberation theology failed to offer a successful cultural challenge to the Roman Catholic Church.’**
Evaluate this view. [30]

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

- The intention of Liberation theologians was to influence the Roman Catholic Church and to embrace the poor and suffering in Latin America.
- It could be argued that the responses from the Catholic Church, in particular Pope Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI wrote at length about Liberation theology. This demonstrates the seriousness of the challenges posed by Liberation Theology to address poverty and put people rather than church doctrine first. The term ‘preferential option for the poor’ became a focus for Church.
- However, it could be argued that the Church began to address the problems caused by poverty much earlier at the Second Vatican Council, and in particular through the document ‘Gaudium et Spes’ (1965), which urged world leaders to address the widening gap between the rich and the poor.
- It could also be argued that Liberation theology was heavily criticised by Pope Benedict for its Marxist influence as well as its placing political and economic salvation above spiritual salvation. Liberation theology has been accused of being a dangerous influence, leading the Church away from its true calling.
- In addition to this, the Vatican silenced Leonardo Boff in 1985 and formally investigated the theology of Gustavo Gutierrez on several occasions.
- On the other hand, this may have paved the way for liberation theology to be warmly received at the bishops’ conference in Medellin in 1968 and again in Puebla in 1979. The challenge to the church to change attitudes and place orthopraxy above orthodoxy was taken seriously.
- In 2018 Archbishop Oscar Romero was canonised by Pope Francis, thirty-eight years after his martyrdom. This demonstrates recognition for what he achieved in El Salvador in terms of bringing to the attention of the world the need to effect change amongst the poorest nations and the Church’s responsibility to end suffering.

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