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| **The Nature of God** |
| Christians believe God is: **OMNIPOTENT** – this means all powerful. Nothing is impossible for God.  The created universe is evidence of God’s omnipotence – only a powerful God could do that Miracles are also evidence of omnipotence e.g. St. Bernadette at Lourdes | Christians believe God is: **OMNIBENEVOLENT** – this means all loving. God is the source of goodness and love in the world.  God’s greatest act of love was sending His Son Jesus to earth. God created humans out of love and this encourages Christians to show love and respect to everyone. |
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| Christians believe God is: **JUST** – this means ‘fair’ (think ‘justice’). Christians believe that God is the giver of justice. He decides what is right and wrong and is our perfect judge. He also does not discriminate, and expects his followers to treat people fairly as well.  Atheists might argue that God is not just, because people suffer when they don’t deserve it.  |  |
| **How these beliefs influence Christians** Beliefs about the nature of God might influence Christians in the following ways: The belief that God is all powerful might lead Christians to believe in miracles, such as miraculous healing. As a result they may pray for God to help people who are sick or dying.  The belief that God is loving might lead Christians to follow his example and love others, even their enemies. This might mean they offer help and support to all people, not just those that they personally know The belief that God is just means that Christians believe that God will judge them fairly based on how they have lived their lives. (the parable of the sheep and the goats) They know that they will be punished for their bad deeds, and also rewarded for their good deeds The belief that God is just, and that God is loving, might mean that Christians volunteer for charitable organisations to help those who are less fortunate. This is a way of practicing agape, and also creating a fairer society.  |

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| **Oneness of God and Trinity** |
|  Christianity is monotheistic – this means they worship only **one God.** God’s nature is understood in three ways:o **God the Father** The creator of the universe. Omnipotent, omnibenevolent, omniscient and omnipresent (present everywhere)o **God the Son** The saviour, who lived, died, and lived again – Jesus. God became incarnate (took on flesh) through Jesus. Christians believe Jesus was fully God and fully human. o **God the** **Holy Spirit** Christians believe that once Jesus had left the earth, God sent the Holy Spirit to guide and sustain the world. The Holy spirit is the unseen power of God at work in the world.  The Trinity is a way of understanding the complex nature of God – God is a Trinity of three ‘persons’  Each person of the trinity is FULLY God but each person of the the Trinity is not the same. Symbols of the trinity show the idea of ‘three in one’. They each symbolise that the three persons of God are part of the same whole. Some examples include:o Equilateral triangleso Shamrock   | **Christian teachings about the Trinity** During the baptism of Jesus, a voice from Heaven states ‘You are my beloved Son’. At the same time, the author describes the Holy Spirit descending ‘like a dove’. All three persons of the Trinity are present at this time.   During baptism services, Christians are baptised ‘in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit’, as Jesus commanded. https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/76/82/c9/7682c94945b359f5c88d62ccd67e02ef.jpghttps://tgc-cache.s3.amazonaws.com/images/uploads/articles/Trinity_knot.jpghttps://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/1f/Holy_Trinity_Template.jpg/300px-Holy_Trinity_Template.jpg The Trinity is also a key part of both the Apostle’s Creed and the Nicene Creed |
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| **Arguments against belief in the Trinity** Atheists, such as Richard Dawkins, might argue that because the Trinity is a complex idea that does not make logical sense, that this confirms the view that religion is outdated and based on superstition, rather than factual evidence.  Some religions would argue that God cannot be one and three persons at the same time. Muslims would say that God has no partners so to say Jesus is the Son of God goes against this belief.  |

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| **The problem of Evil** |
|  Christians believe that God is all loving, all knowing, and all powerful. They also believe that God is fair (Just) The problem of evil is as follows:o A powerful God could prevent sufferingo A loving God would want to prevent sufferingo An all knowing God would know how to prevent sufferingo A just God would not allow sufferingo However, suffering exists. This means that either God does not exist, or he does not have the qualities Christians believe he has.  This is also called the ‘Inconsistent Triad’ – suffering cannot exist if God is both loving and powerful. One of those three things must be false Moral evil = suffering caused by the choices of humans Natural evil = suffering caused by the natural world.  | **Christian teachings about suffering and evil** The story of Adam and Eve teaches how humans disobeyed God. Originally, there was no pain and suffering. Suffering only entered the world because human beings sinned against God. Some Christians believe suffering is a punishment for sin.  Suffering is a form of education for the soul. It helps us grow spiritually/become better people. Suffering is a consequence of free will. Suffering occurs because humans misuse the free will God gave us and make bad choices Suffering brings balance to the world. To appreciate good, we must also experience bad.   Some Christians believe the Devil tempts humans to make wrong choices – this would mean that the Devil is responsible for evil  |

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| **Creation** |
|  The story of creation is found the in book of **Genesis**, in the Old Testament of the Bible Genesis teaches that God created the world in 6 days, and rested on the 7th.  Some Christians believe this story is historically, or factually true because:o The Bible is the word of God. There are no mistakes in the Bibleo God is all powerful, and it makes sense for an all -powerful God to create the universe this way Other Christians believe the story has symbolic, or religious truth. This means that the story teaches about the nature of God and his relationship with humans. They might believe this because:o The Bible needs to be viewed in a modern context – science has proven that the Earth is older than the Bible claims it is.o They may believe that religious truths about the relationship between humans and God are more important than the historic truths of what day God created each part of the universe Some of the religious truths from Genesis include:o God is the creator and sustainer of the universeo The universe is ordered, not randomo God created everything in the universe with a purposeo Humans are created in God’s image, meaning they share some of his qualities e.g. creativity, ability to form relationships, free willo Humans have a responsibility to care for the world God created. | **The role of the Trinity in creation** God created the world, and God is Trinity. Each part of the Trinity has a role in the act of creation “let US make man in OUR image”  In Genesis, it states ‘the earth was formless…and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters’. This is a reference to the Holy Spirit, transforming chaos into order. This image of ‘hovering’ is often compared to a dove, which is a symbol for the holy spirit.  The creative, life giving part of God is usually referred to as the Father. Genesis begins with “In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth”, and the Nicene Creed states “We believe in one God, the Father….maker of Heaven and Earth”.  In **John’s Gospel**, there is reference to ‘the Word’ – “In the beginning, there was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God…through Him all things have been made”. o “Word” refers to Jesus. This shows that Jesus was part of the Trinity long before he became incarnate.  Also God creates the earth by His word.o John’s Gospel states that “the Word became flesh and lived among us for a while”, linking the Word with Jesus. o This passage also shows the importance of Jesus in creation.  |
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| **The afterlife and judgement** |
|  Christians believe in life after death. They believe when they die, they will be judged on how they have lived, and this will affect whether they go to a place of reward called Heaven, or punishment, called Hell God is loving and just. Christians trust that he will be fair when they receive judgement. A loving God is one who punishes those who deserve it, as well as rewards those who have earned it Catholics believe in two judgementso The particular judgement happens immediately after death. Most Catholics believe that the dead wait in either peace of torment, for the final judgement. o The final judgement occurs with the Second Coming (or Parousia) of Jesus. The living and the dead will be judged, and they will be resurrected to live forever with God in Heaven, or away from God in Hell.  Catholics also believe in purgatory. This is an intermediate state, where the soul waits if it is destined for Heaven. This is a state of cleansing and purification.  Some Christians believe that there is no second coming. They agree that humans will be judged based on how they have lived, but that the Bible and Jesus were trying to explain the afterlife symbolically.  | **Christian teachings about judgement** Evidence for the particular judgement comes from a thief who was crucified alongside Jesus, who was told ‘today you will be with me in paradise’, suggesting his judgement would be immediate Evidence for the final judgement comes from **John’s Gospel**, which claims no one has yet entered Heaven – the dead wait for their judgement.  **The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus** warns of a rich man who is sent to Hell, and is unable to cross from there into Heaven. The consequences of human decisions are permanent **The Parable of the Sheep and Goats**also states that Jesus will return to judge the living and dead, and that he will decide based on whether people chose to help others during their lives, or ignore people who were suffering.  |
| **HEAVEN AND HELL** Christianity teaches that Heaven is a place of peace and reward. People often think of Heaven as a place in the clouds. People also think of people as angels, with wings and halos The Bible teaches that Heaven is not a physical place, but a state of being. It is existence with God, outside of time and space – an eternity of bliss.  Hell is described as a place of torment, usually a place of fire. In the Middle Ages, paintings of Hell (called Doom Paintings) were used to warn people of the consequences of living a bad life, with demons torturing humans.  More modern interpretations of Hell have it as a state of separation from God. By not following God’s teachings, humans reject him.  It is therefore human choice, not God’s will, that some humans go to Hell Some Christians believe that there cannot be a Hell if God is loving, asa loving God would not send people to eternal punishment for a temporary sin.  They might also believe that God can forgive any sins, so even a person in Hell can be redeemed. | **RESURRECTION** Christians believe that their body will be resurrected, like Jesus’ was after the crucifixion. They will be given a new, spiritual body, which does not decay, and will live forever.  Belief in the resurrection of Jesus is a core part of Christianity. The resurrection is proof that he is the Son of God. It is also proof of life after death for all Christians. St. Paul claimed ‘if Christ had not been raised, your faith is futile’.  No one really knows what the resurrection will be like – Christians trust that God has the answers |
| **How do beliefs about the afterlife and judgement influence Christians** If Christians believe their body will be resurrected, then they may choose to be buried rather than cremated. Christians who believe in a spiritual resurrection however may not mind.  Christian funerals focus on the next stage of an individual’s existence, praying for their entry into Heaven Christians believe they will be judged on how they have lived, so they will try and follow the teachings in the Bible and care for others so they can go to Heaven Christians who believe in Hell may also be less likely to behave badly, out of fear of punishment.   |

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| **The Incarnation and Jesus, the Son of God** |
|  Incarnation means ‘becoming flesh’. It refers to God becoming human and living on Earth in the form of Jesus Christians believe God is both fully human, and fully divine (God).  This is another concept that is difficult to fully understand and seems to defy logic. However, God is mysterious.  The Bible teaches that Jesus’ mother Mary was a virgin, and only God could create life this way. o Some Christians fully accept this – the Bible is the word of God, and an omnipotent God could easily make someone pregnant!o Others believe that the Nativity stories have religious truths – the events of Jesus’ birth are a mystery, and the Gospel writers created the story to ensure that people understand that Jesus was no ordinary human | **Christian teachings about the incarnation** The Gospel of John refers to ‘the Word became flesh and lived among us’, suggesting that Jesus is God incarnate. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that ‘He is truly the Son of God, who without ceasing to be God and Lord, became a man and our brother’ The Gospel of Luke tells that Mary became pregnant through the Holy Spirit, therefore Jesus did not have a human father. This is further explained in the Apostle and Nicene Creeds.The festival of Christmas is a celebration of the incarnation of Jesus. The belief that Jesus was incarnate makes it easier to accept the truth of his miracles and resurrection from the dead. |
| **Issues with the incarnation of Jesus** No-one has ever before or since had a virgin birth. While it makes sense for Jesus to have one because he is the Son of God, it does make the story more difficult to believe None of the Gospel writers were present at Jesus birth, so any account they have of these events is based on second hand information at best, and simply made up at worst Jesus cannot be both fully human and fully God, because God is omnipotent, and humans are not. He would either be living a superhuman life, or he would no longer have the qualities of God e.g. omnipotence Jesus communicates with God through prayer throughout the Gospels. Why would Jesus need to do this, if he was God incarnate? Wouldn’t this mean he is talking to himself? |
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| **Crucifixion** |
| **WHAT HAPPENED?** Crucifixion is a form of execution used by the Romans. It involved tying or nailing a person to a wooden cross and leaving them to asphyxiate (die from lack of oxygen) The crucifixion of Jesus is generally accepted as a historic event, as it is described in all 4 Gospels, as well as by the Roman historian Tacitus.  Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, after he was betrayed by Judas Iscariot He is taken to the Sanhedrin (Jewish council), who try him for blasphemy (for claiming to be the Son of God) They cannot give him the death sentence, so he is taken to the Roman governor Pilate, under the charge of treason (for being the King of the Jews) Pilate offers the crowd who have gathered a choice, to free Jesus, or the murderer Barabbas. They choose Barabbas Jesus is beaten, whipped, and made to wear a crown of thorns. He cannot carry his cross, so it is carried by Simon of Cyrene He is crucified at Golgotha, meaning ‘place of the skull’. His hands and feet are nailed to the cross As he is being crucified, darkness covers the land for 3 hours Jesus’ last words, according to Mark, were ‘My God, why have you forsaken me?’. According to John, they were ‘Father, I give you my spirit; it is finished’.  The curtain in the Temple that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple rips in half at the moment of Jesus’ death. A Roman officer remarks ‘truly, this man was the Son of God’.  | **Why did Jesus die?** The religious leaders were threatened by his teachings. Jesus ignored many traditional rules of Judaism, and was critical of the way that religious leaders had power and influence over others. Many Jewish people felt that Jesus was a troublemaker, and taught things that went against Judaism and against God himself (blasphemy) They may have genuinely believed they were doing the right thing by having him executed, or they may have been doing this for their own benefit.  Pilate could not allow Jesus to live. As the Roman governor, he was responsible for keeping order. The Sanhedrin made claims about Jesus that Pilate could not ignore; he was accused of treason, of claiming to be the King of the Jews, and of inciting a rebellion against Rome. If Pilate had allowed this, his job and influence would have been threatened The death of Jesus was part of God’s plan for salvation. Without his sacrifice, Original Sin could not be ended (see ‘salvation’) |
| **How learning about the crucifixion might influence Christians** It gives Christians confidence that if they accept Jesus’ sacrifice sin can no longer destroy their lives because God forgives those who faithfully ask for forgiveness.  Learning how Jesus/God suffered and died for humans might influence Christians to put the needs of others before their own. Many Christians even die to protect others e.g. Martin Luther King. It also reminds them that God understands what it means to suffer.  The events of the crucifixion are strongly linked with the idea of salvation and atonement. The tearing of the curtain in the Holy Temple symbolises that the barrier between humans and God has been removed.  The fact that a Roman officer acknowledges Jesus as the Son of God shows that Christianity is a religion for all people, Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) alike. This would have been especially important during the time of Jesus. This might influence modern Christians to try and encourage more people to follow Christianity, and not discriminate against others.  |

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| **Resurrection** |
| **WHAT HAPPENED?** Following Jesus’ death, he is placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimethea, as he had no tomb of his own. Also, it was nearing the Sabbath, and the body needed to be made safe very quickly.  After the Sabbath, his women followers return to find that the tomb is empty. They are told that Jesus has returned to life. In John’s Gospel, it is the risen Jesus who tells Mary Magdalene about his resurrection, and tells her to tell the disciples what she has seen.  Jesus makes several ‘resurrection appearances’ to his disciples. He appears **ASCENSION** Jesus’ ascension is the end of his life when he is taken into Heaven, with his spiritual body intact.  It suggests that he rises up through the clouds until he is out of sight – many Christians believe this to be the case (historic truth) Others suggest that the ascension contains religious truthso It symbolises the finality and end of Jesus’ mission, successfully completedand t symbolises his divinity and his kingship  | to two men on the road to Emmaus, and also to the disciple Thomas, who does not believe it is Jesus until he touches the wounds of the crucifixion.  He also eats with his disciples. St Paul claims the resurrected Jesus was seen by more than 500 people.  The stories stress that Jesus has physically resurrected – he is not a ghost, or a zombie.  |
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| **DID JESUS COME BACK TO LIFE?**  |
| **ARGUMENTS AGAINST**Returning from the dead is impossible – it is far more likely that there is an explanation, for example: The tomb was empty because the women went to the wrong tomb. Jesus was not actually dead when he was removed from the cross – he left the tomb on his own The disciples made up the story to gain prestige, or to create their own religion **Why is the resurrection important for Christians?** Shows the power of good over evil Christians believe that by accepting Jesus, they can also be resurrected in some way. Therefore they have no need to fear death. Jesus’ resurrection assures Christians that God will forgive their sins if they follow the teachings of Christianity. By doing so, they will become closer to God in this life and beyond. Without the resurrection, there would be no Christian faith. | **ARGUMENTS FOR****The arguments against are unconvincing because:** The women had already been to the tomb – they knew which one it was Jesus would not have been able to get out of the tomb when he was so badly injured.  The disciples were mostly executed for spreading Christianity – most people wouldn’t let themselves be killed for a made up story. |

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| **SALVATION AND ATONEMENT** |
| **Sin** – an act against God that separates humans from God. The first human sin is found in the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. **Original sin** – St Augustine said that everyone is born ‘in sin’ – with the urge to do sin.**Salvation** – saving the soul, deliverance from sin and admission to heaven through Jesus.**Grace** – receiving love and forgiveness from God that humans haven’t earned for themselves. (through Jesus) (**G**od’s **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist’s **E**xpense) |  |
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| **Role of Christ in Salvation** The death of Jesus is key to God’s plan of salvation. It was a planned event that would allow for the forgiveness of original sin.  Because sin was brought into the world by humans (Adam and Eve), it could only be removed by a human – this is why God becomes incarnate (Jesus) and is sacrificed on the cross Jesus takes on the sins of the world, and pays the debt of sin with his death. This gives humanity a fresh start as Jesus’ death repairs the broken relationship between humans and God that was caused by original sin. When humans sin, they separate themselves from God. Jesus’ death allowed for **atonement** (making amends for past mistakes), which was necessary as humans were not capable of doing this themselves. Jesus’ death is also an act of **reconciliation** (repairing broken relationships). The relationship between humans and God was so damaged, only a drastic action like self sacrifice could repair it.  | **Christian teachings about salvation and reconciliation** “God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son; that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” – John 3:16. This quote explores the reason behind Jesus’ sacrifice, and also why it was necessary. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that only through Jesus sacrifice, and God’s grace, can salvation be achieved In the Gospels, Jesus states ‘the only way to the Father is through me’ suggesting that the only way to enter Heaven is to accept Jesus as saviour to remove sin.  |

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**Sample questions**

1. Which means that God is all powerful?

A) Omnipresent B) Omnibenevolent C) Omniscient D) Omnipotent (1 Mark)

1. Give two persons of the trinity. (2 marks)
2. Explain two ways belief in Jesus’ resurrection influences Christians today. (4 marks)
3. Explain two Christian teachings about Hell. (5 marks)
4. *‘Jesus was just an ordinary man, not the Son of God’*

Evaluate this statement

 In your answer you must:

* Refer to Christian teaching
* Give developed reasons to support this statement
* Give developed reasons to support a different point of view
* Reach a justified conclusion (12 marks)