



UNIT 4

Overview and Comparison of Challenges

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**Highlighting
terminology in the key
knowledge Unit 4**



Challenges - Definitions

“A challenge is a situation that stimulates a response from society and/or religious traditions”

*“A challenge can have a **positive or negative effect** on a religion”*

A challenge can provoke:

- Questioning of aspects of the religion (call them into question)

- Engaging in conflict

- The demand for a response

- The demand for an explanation / justification

A challenge is also able to:

- Threaten the beliefs (theology) of the religion

- Threaten or compromise the principles & behaviour (ethics) of the religion

- Threaten to destroy the religion's continuity or its adherents' survival

Stances - Definitions

“A stance is a principled perspective which may be expressed in various responses that support the stance.”

The ability of a religious tradition or denomination to adopt different stances is variously determined by beliefs, authority structures, official teachings, rulings of religious law, tradition, key individuals and attitudes within the religious and wider communities.

The purpose of stances is:

- To retain religious truths**
- To ensure that the religious tradition holds the relationship that it wants with adherents**
- To ensure that the tradition holds the relationship that it wants with wider society**

Stances are positions taken that lead to a response. These can involve:

- **Adaptation**
- **Discussion**
- **Reflection**
- **Develop a position**
- **Public statement**
- **Support**
- **Raising awareness**
- **Use media**
- **Use of Technology**
- **Lobbying government**
- **Prayer**
- **Research**
- **Evaluation**
- **Compromise**
- **Providing guidance**
- **Debate**
- **Ignore the challenge**
- **Condemnation**
- **Demonstration/protest**
- **Confrontation**

Responses - Definitions

[Stances are themselves initial or overall responses]

Responses are *actions* which:

- may resist the challenge and attempt to retain the status quo
- embrace change and affect wider society and/or the religious tradition itself.
- may involve advocacy and/or reaction by the religious tradition or denomination at various times.
- may not always accomplish the desired results

When asked to answer questions for particular challenges:

Name the issue/challenge

Discuss the nature of each challenge.

Nature = theological, ethical, or continued existence?

Set up the context

Background details - Who? Where? What happened?

Discuss the level of significance of each challenge.

Very important: major change, schism. Why?

Explain the stance/s taken by the tradition to each challenge.

What **positions** did the religion/ denomination make about the challenge

Explain the supporting response/s of the tradition to each challenge.

What **actions** did the religion/ denomination take about the challenge

Discuss the aspects involved in each challenge

Which **aspects were challenged** and **which aspects assisted** the tradition in its response.

The importance of the introduction to the Outcome.

Unit 4: Religion, challenge and change

This unit focuses on the interaction over time of religious traditions and the societies of which they are a part. For a large part of human history religion has been a truth narrative, offering a means for finding answers to the big questions of life. Religious traditions are in a dynamic process of engagement and negotiation with members individually and collectively, as well as with other key institutions in wider society associated with power, authority and credibility. Religious traditions are living institutions that participate in and contribute to wider societies – both positively and negatively. They stimulate and support society, acting as levers for change themselves and embracing or resisting forces for change within society.

Religious traditions are in a constant state of development as members apply their talents and faith to extend the intellectual and aesthetic nature of the beliefs, of their expression and of the application to their lives. In the interaction of religious traditions and society there are also opportunities for development from significant challenges including the needs and insights of their membership, and of people and groups within wider society. These challenges and the religious tradition are influenced by broader contexts such as changing economic, political and social conditions.

A challenge is a situation that stimulates a response from society and/or religious traditions. Religious traditions take stances for or against challenges, or they take a stance of indifference. Consequently, actions are implemented which involve different aspects of the religious tradition. These actions may resist or embrace change and affect wider society and/or the religious tradition itself. A key aim beyond resolution of the challenge itself is for the religious tradition to retain integrity, authenticity and, ultimately, identity. However, the interaction between religious traditions and society may not always achieve these aims and there may be a series of interactions as a challenge is negotiated.

In this unit students explore challenge for religious traditions generally over time and then undertake a study of challenge and change for one or more than one religious tradition or denomination. Religious tradition/s or denomination/s are to be selected from one or more than one of the following: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism.

Students consider the aspects on [page 9](#) in their investigation of selected religious tradition/s or denomination/s and religion in general.

Area of Study 1

Challenge and response

In this area of study students investigate how and why religious traditions as a whole, or their denominations, have taken steps from their inception to the present to respond to challenges in the categories of theology, ethics and continued existence.

Religious traditions or their denominations are in a continual process of engagement and negotiation with challenges that may influence them to adopt various stances for, against or of indifference. A stance is a principled perspective which may be expressed in various responses that support this stance, including the option not to respond in any practical or discernible ways. A stance can itself be enough to respond to the challenge and to retain integrity, authenticity and identity for the religious tradition's or denomination's leadership and adherents. With various stances there will be a mixture of supportive responses that attempt to bring about change or attempt to retain the status quo, though these may not always accomplish the desired results.

The impetus for religious traditions or denominations to take a stance can come from a variety of sources. The ability of a religious tradition or denomination to adopt different stances is variously determined by beliefs, authority structures, official teachings, rulings of religious law, tradition, key individuals and attitudes within the religious and wider communities.

Unit 4 : A Kahoot for terms in the first paragraph of the outline of the outcome.

1. The title for Unit 4 is:

- Religion, challenge and change
- Challenging religions
- Religion and Society
- History and religion

2. This unit focuses on the interaction over time of religious traditions and the societies of which they are a part.

What does “INTERACTION OVERTIME” mean?

- An examination of the relationship between different religious traditions and the societies in which they existed, across their history.
- The impact society has had on religion throughout history
- The impact religion has had on society throughout history
- Looking at the past, present and future of a religious tradition.

An activity to clarify the terms in the second paragraph of the outline of the outcome

Your task is to offer a real life example that shows the veracity of the statement made in the Study Design.

You may refer to examples from the history of your tradition, examples from other religious traditions, or examples from your knowledge of religious issues presented in the media today.

An activity to clarify the terms in the third paragraph of the outline of the outcome.

Construct a diagram / flow chart that shows the process outlined in the paragraph below

- A) *“A challenge is a situation that stimulates a response from society and /or religious traditions. Religious traditions take stances for or against challenges, or they take a stance of indifference. Consequently, actions are implemented which involve different aspects of the religious tradition. These actions may resist or embrace change and affect wider society and / or the religious tradition itself”. (Study Design Religion and Society)***
- B) Write a short paragraph explaining how this helps a religious tradition to:**
- a) *Retain integrity***
 - b) *Retain authenticity***
 - c) *Retain identity***

**Comparing challenges
and drawing conclusions**

KEY SKILLS:

- analyse and compare challenges to specific religious traditions or denomination
- analyse and compare stances and supporting responses to challenges taken by a specific religious tradition or denomination

Themes that could be used for the comparison:

CONTEXT of the challenge – Historical setting, social and cultural context

NATURE of the challenge - THEOLOGICAL, ETHICAL OR TO CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF THE TRADITION

STANCES and **SUPPORTING RESPONSES** by the tradition

INFLUENCES of the stances and supporting responses on the religious tradition or denomination to the wider society`

OR

Compare and contrast **THE EXPECTED OUTCOMES** of the stances and supporting responses to each challenge

WHO in the tradition took the stance? **WHO** determined and enacted the response – authorities involved in decision-making, social groups affected? Did different streams in a tradition take different approaches? **WHO** was their primary advocate?

WHAT – What was the stance? What was the catalyst that caused the challenge? What was the supporting response? What role did the aspects play?

WHEN – historic context; chronological order of responses

WHERE – was the geographic location of the challenge or the respondents significant in the response to the challenge? Were there variations to the response within different localities?

WHY – reasons behind this challenge e.g. a major disagreement within a tradition over beliefs or structures or authority; a social movement outside of the tradition that is impacting on the world view of adherents and determined what sort of response was issued to the challenge.

Some vocabulary for discussing the SEVERITY OF THE CHALLENGE:

- **a major disruption**
- **an interruption to growth**
- **the cause of a schism**
- **a factor that leads to demise of a denomination in a specific geographical location**
- **a catalyst for development of a new stream of ideas**
- **stimulus for a more diverse membership**
- **an impetus for reform of a tradition**

Vocabulary that can be used within a comparison:

Phrases to discuss **similarities** include:

similarly, likewise, in the same way, also, along similar lines, in the same fashion, as well as, both,

Phrases for discussing **differences** include:

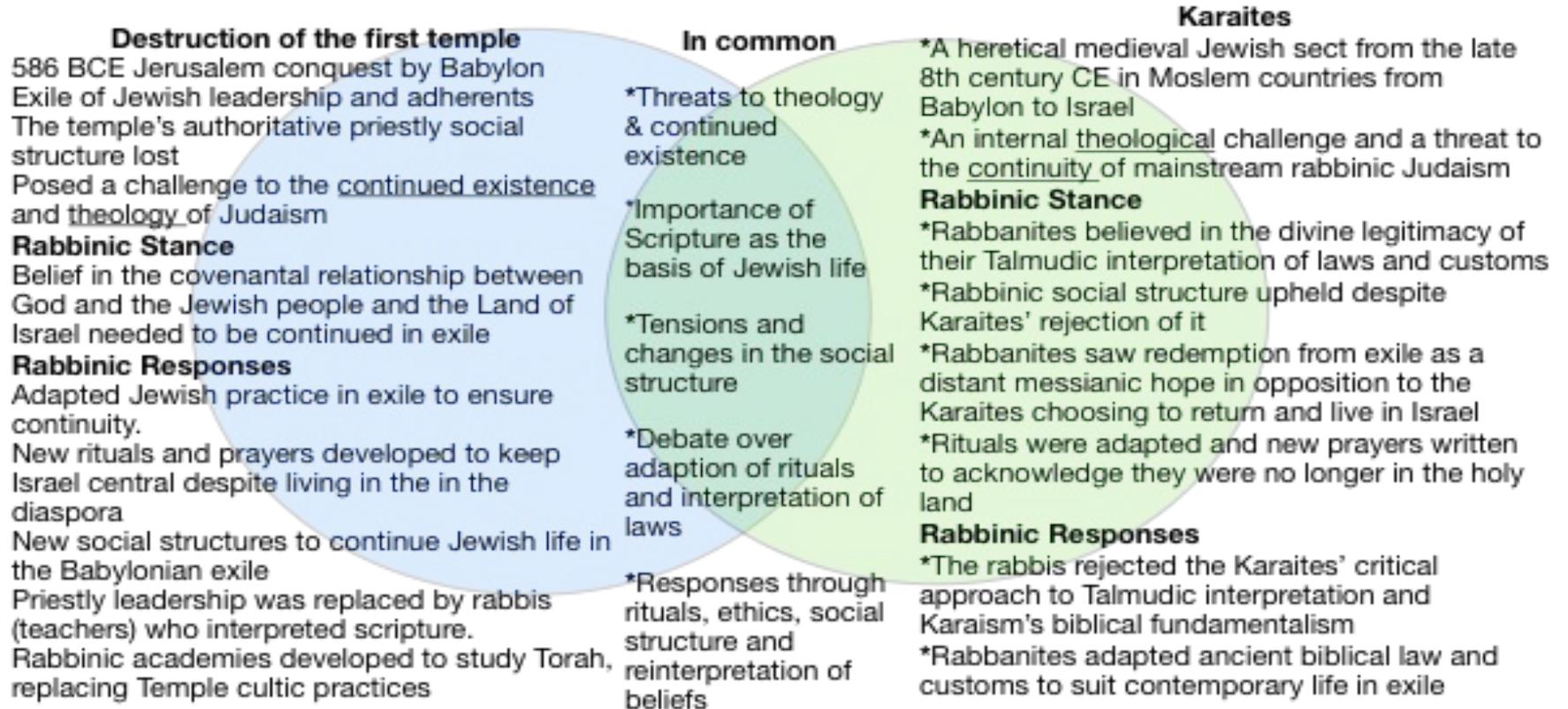
in contrast, on the other hand, unlike, regardless, however, conversely, on the contrary, nevertheless, although, differ, most important , least important,

**How to construct an
extended response in a
'analyse and compare...'
question.**

1. **The block approach:** Devote a **paragraph or two to each challenge** examining the ways each of them addresses the ideas raised by the topic. The **final body paragraph pulls this material together by discussing the similarities and differences** between the challenges explored in the body of the response. Careful use of linking words is essential to ensure that the answer is cohesive and the **comparison remains the focus** – the final paragraph must be done well for good marks.
2. **The woven approach:** Using a more sophisticated structure, the woven approach **draws evidence from each challenge within each body paragraph**. The paragraph's **focus is on the key words used in the topic**, requiring the student to explore material from both challenges in each paragraph. It can be challenging to move between two challenges, although with practice, this will become easier. The **paragraph must end with an overall position statement**. This approach allows the student to move between the challenges by engaging in deep analysis of them – but it can be difficult for the student to control the discussion.

**Three examples of using a Venn
Diagram to compare challenges**

Comparison of the Jewish challenges of the destruction of the Temple with the rise of Karaism



A comparison of the challenge of demands to “Boycott the Haj” with calls to “Address the Rohingya Crisis” In the Islamic Tradition.



BOYCOTT THE HAJ

Type of Challenge: Theological and Ethical

Stance: AGAINST because:

- * the Haj is a pillar of Islam
- * The Haj is a traditional religious observance

Stance: FOR because:

- * the money generated from the Haj by Saudi Arabia is being used to support the oppression of 24 million people in Yemen - including Muslims
- * over 3 million children are suffering from malnutrition due to the conflict

Supporting Response: Statements by the Grand Mufti of Libya encouraging action.

IN COMMON

- * both are ethical challenges
- * both concern the protection of life
- * Both concern Zakat - for Yemen and for Bangladesh
- * Both concern religious liberty



ROHINGA CRISIS

Type of challenge: Ethical and Continued Existence

Stance: FOR because:

- * the maintenance of Islam’s ethical role in International legal forums
- * the right to take violent action against oppression

Stance: INDIFFERENCE because:

- * it is argued that Malaysia, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia are indifferent due to the need to protect the economic interests for the sake of their Muslim communities.

Supporting Response: The organisation for Islamic Cooperation has issued a joint statement against the genocide calling on international action.

A comparison of the challenge of calls for “an end to priestly celibacy” and the introduction of “women’s ordination” in the Roman Catholic Tradition



In Common

END OF PRIESTLY CELIBACY

Type of Challenge: Ethical and Theological

Stance: AGAINST because:

- * Jesus was celibate
- * Celibacy has a long tradition in the church
- * Marriage to the church allows for a closer relationship to God and greater commitment to the priest’s pastoral role
- * Celibacy is a gift of the Holy Spirit
- * Practical problems with structures of parish ownership and the economic implications for an archdiocese
- * Would need to define the role of the priest’s wife

Stance: FOR because:

- * Clear historical and Scriptural precedents
- * Married priests are within the tradition already with the acceptance of members of the Anglican priesthood at the time of the ordination of women in that denomination and priests who married under the communist regime in Eastern Europe.
- * Ruling in the tradition - celibacy is not dogma
- * Would be of a cultural advantage in Africa, Latin America and Asia

Supporting Responses: * Synod discussions calling for this in Latin America, Germany and sections plenary in Australia

- * Papal statements rejecting this proposal

Stances FOR:

- * Concern about the lack of Eucharistic and other sacramental practices
- * the fall in Church attendance
- * Both seen as a remedy to the child sex abuse problems in the Church
- * Both influenced by gender debates in society

Stances AGAINST:

- * the sanctity of Tradition
- * The model set by Jesus Christ
- * *the impact of a misguided, individualistic world

Supporting Responses: * Use of papal power

- * Commonality in reactionary and progressive stances and supporting responses
- * Both influenced by debates about human rights
- * Both influenced by psychology

WOMEN’S ORDINATION

Type of challenge: Ethical and Theological

Stance: AGAINST because:

- * the scriptural basis for this is unclear
- * Jesus was male and at the Eucharistic table the present embodied Christ
- * Undermine the role of a woman in family life
- * The model for women in the Church should be Mary

Stance: FOR because:

- * the gospel teachings on the Reign of God are good news about equality of all
- * There’s evidence of women have a key role in all aspects of the early Church
- * The model of a male only priesthood reflects a cultural imposition not the teachings of Jesus Christ

Supporting Responses:

- * synod discussions that are demanding a sacramental role for women
- * Papal statements rejecting the proposal - popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis I
- * Restrictions on debate
- * Excommunication of clergy who have ordained women

