

G. Worship, Prayer & Ritual | Sample Answer

i. Describe the origins of one traditional Christian prayer and the way it is used in Christian worship today (2019 Section G [a])

The 'Lord's Prayer' is an example of one traditional Christian prayer. It plays an important role in catechesis, as it contains the basic truths about Christianity.

The "Lord's Prayer" originated when Jesus taught his disciples to pray. It became a model for prayers of adoration, confession and petition in Christianity. During the time of Jesus, it was common for teachers to give their followers a form of prayer. The origins of the prayer are in the teachings of Jesus as presented in the Gospels. In the Gospel of Luke, one of the disciples asked Jesus how to pray "Lord, teach us to pray". Jesus responded - "Pray then like this: 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven....'"

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the 'Lord's Prayer' is "truly the summary of the whole Gospel.". There are two versions of this prayer recorded in the gospels. The Gospel of Matthew features a longer form and in the Gospel of Luke a shorter form. However, scholars agree that the prayer presented in Luke is older and therefore probably more authentic.

The Lord's prayer found its way very early on into the life of the Christian community, through the Didache. It stipulates that the prayer be used 3 times a day and that the prayer should end with a doxology of praise - "For yours are the power and the glory forever".

At present, the 'Lord's Prayer' is the most common prayer for Christians. It is used both privately and in liturgical or communal contexts. As such, it is a model of how to integrate private and communal forms of prayer so that there can be a link between the way people worship in private and in public. The Lord's Prayer is also recited during the celebration of all seven major sacraments. Additionally, in the Catholic tradition, it is recited three times daily, at Morning and Evening prayer and at Mass. It is the supreme Christian prayer that Christians recite together.

ii. Compare how Christians worship using the prayer described in *part a i)* above with the way believers pray in one of the following world religions: Judaism

The Shema is a formal prayer of the Jewish tradition which acts as a central prayer in Jewish liturgy. Similar to the Lord's Prayer in the Christian tradition, the Shema lies at the heart of the Jewish tradition.

The Shema consists of three biblical passages and is recited twice daily, once in the morning and once in the evening. In the Hebrew tradition, the word "Shema" translates as 'Hear O Israel'. By 200 CE, the practice was well established of reciting the prayer twice daily. The first verse of the Shema is also recited at the conclusion of Yom Kippur and is included in the Kedusha Service on Shabbat. The Lord's Prayer is recorded in the Gospel and is often recited three times daily, at morning and evening prayer and at Mass. The Lord's Prayer is also recited during the celebration of all seven major sacraments. The recitation of both prayers shows its importance to believers.

The Shema prayer acts as a profession of faith and is also recited just before death. Jews hold the Shema with a deep reverence and affection. They teach their children to say the prayer at bedtime. For Jews it is the most important text in the Old Testament and the first paragraphs of the prayer are written on a piece of parchment and placed inside a wooden box (mezuzah), which is fixed to the doorposts of their homes.

For many Jews, the Shema also expresses the unity of the Jewish community as God's covenant. Similarly, the Lord's prayer is considered a sign of discipleship. The Shema is traditionally recited with the hand placed over the eyes. Christians join their hands together as they recite the Lord's prayer.

In conclusion, both prayers, the Shema and the Lord's Prayer lie at the heart of both religious traditions. Since their origin, both prayers have been the source of devotion and are important in both belief systems.