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Examiners' Report
June 2017

GCE Religious Studies 8RS0 02

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Introduction

The first sitting of the new specification AS paper in Religion and Ethics offered opportunities for centres and examiners to see how candidates would handle the new format examination and the new demands it places on them. Key lessons could be learned and applied in future sittings in terms of tackling the new style questions and the mixture of content which draws from the legacy specification as well as introducing new topics.

The most important lessons include:

1. Centres must teach the whole specification and should not make assumptions about what may or may not be tested on the exam paper or in what combination. Some candidates were forced to leave whole questions unanswered, thus significantly capping their mark.
2. 8 mark Explore questions should be answered succinctly without discussion or analysis. Candidates will benefit from practising writing these answers under timed conditions, ensuring they focus solely on the factual information required to gain full marks.
3. 9 mark Assess questions can only gain full marks if there is evidence analysis or evaluation. Pure narrative responses will hit an available ceiling of marks.
4. The 20 mark essay question (4b) represents a significant proportion of the marks for the whole paper and it should be given sufficient time and attention. Centres may consider advising candidates to answer this question first whilst keeping a careful eye on timing. Ultimately, overly brief and rushed responses to this question can significantly derail an otherwise successful paper. Centres who are familiar with the legacy AS paper will be aware that AS candidates have successfully written three 30 mark essays and the same principles should be applied here and candidates cannot afford to spend too long on questions 1-4a.
5. A number of examiners observed that the quality of spelling and grammar was particularly low this year. Effective communication of ideas is greatly enhanced by high quality writing.

Question 1

It was clear that many candidates were not able to respond to this question due to lack of appropriate preparation and some simply left it blank. Others were unclear as to what concepts constituted religious approaches to conservation and described secular approaches or seemed to interpret the question as asking for religious and ethical responses. Other candidates were able to refer clearly to biblical teaching on humanity's relationship with the natural world and their duties of stewardship and caretaking of the environment. Some candidates referred to Rapture Ready teaching on the environment and how the imminent parousia precluded the need to conserve the natural world, and may even demand that we hasten its destruction. There was little, if any, evidence of religious scholarship or of biblical references beyond Genesis.

Some candidates referred to Islam and discussed khalifa. Others chose to incorporate Sikhism. Stronger candidates who focused on Christianity explored perspectives by denomination where relevant.

Many candidates seemed more prepared to discuss secular views. There were plenty of references to shallow and deep ecology. Stronger candidates were able to incorporate this into their exploration of religious views to make the theories relevant, but weaker candidates left them to stand alone.

There was some exploration of intrinsic and instrumental value and discussion that some destruction to the environment may be acceptable if it is of benefit to humans.

Some candidates asserted that conservation was a secular ethic only and proceeded to answer the question referring to secular views only – no reference to religion in any way. For these candidates it was not possible to award credit despite the content being accurate, as it in no way addressed the question which asked specifically about religious perspectives. Similarly, if candidates listed ways of working to conserve the environment, such as recycling, but without making reference to religion, there was limited opportunity to apply credit.

1 Explore religious ethical perspectives on conservation.

Conservation is attempting to help keep the environment thriving and healthy. In the typical Christian belief, God created the universe and the planet earth and formed a contract. This contract is that if we worship God as the creator, he will sustain life. This contract extends to the environment and lead to two ways of considering our dominion over nature. One is domination that we have been given the natural world by God and we are to do with it as we please. This belief does not promote conservation, whereas the other perspective, stewardship, does. Stewardship

follows that mankind is the peak of God's creation but we also have various responsibilities. These involve holding the sanctity of the environment so that it can properly respond in worship to God as per the aforementioned contract. There is also the belief that the story of 'The Fall' in which God created Adam and Eve, sinning humans, a Paradise but they betrayed his trust and damaged our relationship with God. We must now work to repair that relationship. There is also Teilhard's concept of 'Gaia' which is the belief that the natural world is governed by an entity and that we must conserve the environment in aid of it.



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Examiner Comments

A clear and direct route to full marks for this candidate. They include appropriate technical language and allude to relevant texts and beliefs. They have not fallen into the trap of examining secular theories or giving them a religious spin.



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Examiner Tip

Keep focused and keep to exam timing.
Practise writing up answers to time.

1 Explore religious ethical perspectives on conservation.

One of the main religious perspectives on conservation is Dominion. This is the view that the world is under the control of humans and God gave them the right to treat the environment and animals that live in it how they wished. "I will give you dominion ^{over} the fish in the sea..." This approach is very anthropocentric ~~anthropomorphic~~ however meaning that humans are very much the center of the universe and they have the view that animals have no intrinsic value. Using the perspective of dominion it would be acceptable to kill animals for its fur and entertainment purposes. Although St Augustine agreed with dominion some would argue that Jesus felt that all the things in the universe had intrinsic value and St Francis himself was very attached to the environment and held a more anthropomorphic approach called Stewardship. This view states that humans are simply caretakers of the Earth and that God loves all his creation "And it was good". This view is supported by the Old Testament story about Noah's ark where God clearly cares about his creation and so tells Noah to save every animal in his creation. Another perspective is called the end time theology. This states that the environment shouldn't be conserved as the earth will end anyway and as they even feel excited about the apocalypse and even support destruction of the earth as they will go to heaven.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

A concise and well focused response to this question.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Don't write more than you need to convey the main ideas.

Question 2

The majority of responses to this question focused on Martin Luther King as their leading figure in the fight for equality, although others wrote about Emmeline Pankhurst or Malala Yousafzai. A few used the example of Jon Earckson Tada. Responses on Martin Luther King ranged significantly in competency, from candidates whose knowledge seemed to be limited to his 'Dream' speech, to candidates who offered so much historical and biographical information they effectively failed to assess his work in the fight for equality. Responses on Emmeline Pankhurst were, interestingly, more competent in this regard, and offered more analysis.

It was clear that many candidates struggled to grasp the requirements of the Assess question. The best answers were able to comment on King's influence at the time and also reflect on issues of equality in the modern day - for example concluding that King was not successful because of police brutality in America, disproportionate prison numbers, continued racism and the Black Lives Matter movement. Similarly, although Emmeline Pankhurst was part of a movement integral in women's emancipation, candidates were able to cite examples of ways in which this success was qualified.

However some candidates made no attempt at analysis at all and the majority of candidates struggled to get into A02 Level 3.

There were considerable factual inaccuracies throughout the papers. For example, students were confused about King's relationship to Rosa Parks, and the order in which events occurred.

2 Assess the work of **one** leading figure in the fight for equality.

Martin Luther King is a key figure in the fight for racial equality. He demonstrated his beliefs through the practice of active pacifism, this was the idea that protests should be performed peacefully and when standing against something there should be no need for the act of violence. For example, King demonstrated active pacifism through the march on Washington, where around 250,000 people joined him on his quest for civil rights. This march was then highly successful as it led to the passing of the civil rights act, making Martin Luther

King responsible for change in racial equality in America. In addition, before the march on Washington MLK started the Montgomery bus boycotts following the incident of Rosa Parks in 1955, where she was told she had to give up her seat for a white person on the bus and refused. King, for over a year led the boycotts leading in many African Americans using alternatives to public transport. The boycotts were ~~strictly~~ also an act of active pacifism as no harm or violence was being performed, just the disregard for public transport. The boycotts led to the introduction of desegregation on buses which then spread to other places like toilets and cafes, causing a domino effect. Finally, King was inspired by Gandhi, whom protested peacefully against the British empire for Indian independence, King took his ideas of pacifism when leading expeditions like the bus boycotts and marches. Yet, Malcolm X whom was an activist that did not use the ideas of pacifism criticised King's approach.

for being too weak,

(Total for Question 2 = 9 marks)

as at the start little change was happening. Malcolm believed violence could help and was much more significant than pacifism as it showed threat.



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Examiner Comments

An extensive and well organised response gaining full marks. The candidate uses their factual information effectively. They also tie in analysis of King's influences and the effect of his work.



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Examiner Tip

Don't try to write all you know about your chosen individual.

Question 3

This was the weakest of all questions answered, and many candidates relied on repetition of material from Question 1, and failed to offer any genuine assessment.

Candidates predominantly highlighted intrinsic and instrumental value and discussed anthropocentrism and the religious claim that the earth is made for human benefit.

Some candidates referred to Aristotle and Aquinas' Primary Precepts, applying a Natural Moral Law approach. However, some candidates forgot to include assessment of religious approaches.

Overall responses to this question were not particularly successful, lacking analysis and missing the opportunity to observe that the weaknesses of the religious approach were its basis in negative theology, and that ill-advised pro-action in the created world that resulted in more damage in it or that our disregard for it reflected secular attitudes that supported materialism and gain.

3 Assess the weaknesses of religious approaches to environmental issues.

One weakness to the religious approach to environmental issues is that we as humans are ~~usually~~ ~~also~~ considered higher beings that the environment around us and so with this comes a responsibility to care for the planet. ~~James Lovelock argued that in the Gaia hypothesis~~ ~~the philosopher~~ ~~Næss~~ argued that both deep ecology and shallow ecology are present in the world. The idea that ~~idea~~ of deep ecology is that everything in the world is interlinked and every object and animal (human included) are on the same moral level. Therefore it can be argued that if we are on the same moral level as objects around us why do we have a duty of care? A counter-argument to this is that we as human beings are part of ~~the~~ ~~large~~ world and that everything in the world is connected ~~order~~ for it to function. Therefore by destroying the environment we are removing some of these 'links' in the world and it can no longer function.

Christians also argue that God gave man stewardship through the creation of Adam and Eve. This is the belief that Adam and Eve existed in the Garden of Eden and that it was ~~their~~ their duty of care to protect, preserve and maintain the garden. And so Christians apply this to humanity arguing that it is our duty of care to protect and care for the environment as it is God's perfect creation. However a weakness of this is that Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden because they ate ~~for~~ an apple from the tree of knowledge. Therefore as God expelled ~~us~~ from the garden Adam and Eve (therefore humanity) from the garden of Eden why should we as humans have here to care for the world (when compared to the Garden of Eden an equivalent wasteland) if we no longer live in God's perfect garden. ~~But~~ However some Christians may argue that because ~~we~~ ~~was~~ Adam and Eve were given knowledge from the tree and so by God we were given the knowledge as humans to care for the world today.



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Examiner Comments

Although there were few stronger answers to this question, this answer offers an opportunity to see how more prepared candidates were able to remain focused on the topic and offer clear assessment of the material.

3 Assess the weaknesses of religious approaches to environmental issues.

The Christian Church has a number of views concerning environmental issues. Namely, men and women were created "in the image God". Their reflection of God is distinct from animals and implies a superiority, ~~however~~ thus humans have been given dominion over nature.

Although Christians suggest that having dominion, or even more so stewardship, allows them to care for the rest of God's creation, these ideas still promote the superiority and thus instrumental use that the environment has for humans. Surely, God's creation is intrinsically valuable and thus any form of human superiority debases this?

Moreover, the prominent uses of animals and nature throughout the Bible, such as the serpent in the Garden of ~~the~~ Eden, again ~~imply~~ imply the importance and value that God places on nature. In the eyes of Jesus who was a loving man, it seems strange to suggest that humans have any dominion or power over a creation created equally by God, thus the idea is a weakness in Christian approaches.

//Another Christian approach to environmental issues is 'Rapture Theology', this states that humans should use the environment

as they please. ~~and~~ the world will be destroyed and Jesus will battle the anti-christ before re-greening the planet for all of Christ's followers. This theory shows no respect for the environment as it suggests the ~~point~~ futility of caring for it. However, as there is no time-scale for the rapture or any guarantee of this event, behaviour like this may lead to irreversible damage to God's creation before Jesus can save us, thus the theory is weak.

In conclusion, Christian approaches are plagued with ideas of human superiority like ~~the~~ dominion and stewardship. These ideas contrast the ideas of respect and reverence for God's creation that Jesus taught and is expected of Christians.

(Total for Question 3 = 9 marks)



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Examiner Comments

A useful example of how a candidate can be well prepared for the question asked.



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Examiner Tip

Find out real information about religious approaches to conservation and challenges to them.

Question 4

It was a great surprise to the examiners that many candidates seemed to know little about Situation Ethics. This topic has been well served on the legacy specification so it was unexpected to find such lack of confidence in dealing with both 4a and 4b. The 8 mark explore question seemed to be challenging in its requirement that candidates write concisely, including the most relevant and scholarly material. The strongest answers referred to Robinson and Fletcher, and even Bultmann, Tillich and Bonhoeffer; some were able to make links with the ministry of Jesus and the cultural background to the development of the theory. Errors abounded: some candidates claimed the theory was deontological, making no reference to agape at all.

The analysis in 4b was most successful where candidates used Barclay and Singer to criticise the ethical theory, but some candidates who had a reasonable knowledge of the theory chose to answer on the strengths instead. It was difficult awarding credit to these candidates particularly in cases where they made no reference to weaknesses at all. However, several scripts identified a number of weaknesses of the ethic. The most commonly discussed included the ambiguity of the concept of agape which some candidates argued meant the ethic is impractical. Another was the demands the ethic placed on the moral agent to calculate outcomes impartially. A lot of candidates made reference to Barclay's criticism that Fletcher used extreme examples to illustrate the ethic and his criticism that rules contain wisdom from the past which possess intrinsic value. The better scripts were able to evaluate the extent to which the arguments were coherent and offered problems with the proposed weaknesses and balance these with strengths of the ethic.

→ fletcher
→ antinomianism

SECTION B

→ presumptions
→ principles

Answer ALL questions. Write your answers in the spaces provided.

4 (a) Explore the key concepts of Situation Ethics. ~~→ appropriate~~ (8)

Situation ethics is a teleological relative ethical theory, meaning that it does not focus on actions and the idea that they hold an absolute truth to being right or wrong, but instead it bases the morality of an action on the likes of the outcome, in situation ethics, the action can be justified only if it produces the most amount of love. Fletcher saw that there was no ethical system that

was christian, he felt the new and old testament contradicted each other and therefore looked at Jews' universal law of love. He saw it as the middle way between antinomianism, which was the idea of a lawless society, and legalism, which was the idea of a strict rule based society. Situation ethics was in the middle as it held no strict absolute laws to follow apart from Jews' universal law of love, meaning christians should only do what's most loving in a situation. He derived 4 presumptions from the theory, one being pragmatism, the idea that the action had to be practiced in producing the most love.

(b) Analyse the weaknesses of Situation Ethics as a method of resolving moral dilemmas.

(20)

Situation ethics is a teleological theory which focuses on the consequences that an action may have instead of the absolute rightness or wrongness it may hold. The theory is seen as a christian or ethical theory developed by fletcher whom created it & due to outdated teaching from scriptures. The theory is relevant and revolves around the idea of agape love, unconditional christian love given by god,

therefore the theory states that Christians should always do the most loving thing within a situation. Fletcher stated that there are extreme circumstances that any other Christian authority cannot give guidance for, hence the creation of the theory. Fletcher put forward many of his own examples to prove this & of extreme scenarios, one revolving around a pregnant woman whom asked a guard to impregnate her so she will be able to be sent home to her family. It can be argued in Christianity that adultery is wrong, and an absolute wrong action, but situation ethics allows you to bend the rules to suite specific scenarios and in this case, the woman being sent back to her family would have produced the most love, as and this can be measured by using one of Fletcher's six principles, 'love is the only norm', meaning that she is allowed to break the Christian rule of adultery as it is being done to justify love. However, Barclay finds Fletcher's scenarios too extreme and highly unlikely to happen. In A. In regards to the principles

they can also be used to go against the rule of God as marriage is a contract in the church given by God and if love is the only norm then surely it can outweigh many traditional Christian rules presented by God, an example may be the 10 Commandments, as a rule given by God is 'one shall not kill', which is an absolute rule, yet through situation ethics you can go against God and justify killing, like euthanasia, and use one of Fletcher's principles to back it up. This argues that situation ethics couldn't even be Christian as it can easily bend the rules of Christianity.

and what's the point in following a religion edited by humans.

The theory is also subjective, as we all have different experiences and views on love, for example Hitler thought the most loving thing for the German people was to wipe out the Jews in order to enhance a supreme race. This also allocates the idea that the theory can justify horrid situations as shown from the example above of Hitler performing genocide.

Overall, I believe the strengths outweigh the weaknesses as a strong absolute rule based society is ignorant to individual situations and can therefore cause injustice and suffering. Situation ethics, as promoted by Robinson brings an idea of the 'man come of age' and allows humans to develop independently in their moral thinking.



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Examiner Comments

4a offers a good example of a concise response to the 'explore' demand.

4b is of a reasonable length (most candidates did not write more than this) and offers assessment and analysis of the weaknesses of the theory.



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Examiner Tip

This question is the most valuable on the paper. Consider doing it first in the exam.

4 (a) Explore the key concepts of Situation Ethics.

(8)

~~The~~ Situation Ethics was created ^{as a} ~~in order to~~ middle way between antinomianism and legalism.

It has one rule which is to ~~follow~~ do the most loving thing in each situation. This concept was largely based off of Jesus' teachings who constantly taught to do the most loving thing and to 'Love thy neighbour, love thyself'. Situation ethics has 4 presumptions, in order to help the person decide what the most loving outcome would be. For example; Pragmatism. This means that the solution to producing the most amount of love should be practical to the situation. ~~but~~

Personalism is another one which suggests to put people before the law. ~~This is~~ An example of this would be that if a person was captured by a terrorist group, the most loving thing would be to give them money in order to save the person. Even though it is against the law to give money in that use within the UK. Situation ethics has these in order to form guidelines ~~about~~ what is the most loving thing. They don't need to be followed. Finally, Situation ethics is a teleological argument which focuses on the consequences of the actions rather than the original act itself.

(b) Analyse the weaknesses of Situation Ethics as a method of resolving moral dilemmas.

(20)

Situation Ethics is the act of trying to look at doing the most loving thing in each given situation. I will be talking mostly on the view that Situation ethics ^{has} mostly a ^{weaknesses} ~~strengths~~ to this concept.

A weakness of Situation Ethics would be in resolving moral dilemmas would be that the idea of what is loving changes and depending on who you are as love is not a universal concept.

An example would be that a soldier's idea of love would be to protect their country. However, a pacifist may argue that the most loving thing would be not to fight at all as violence creates more violence. Suggesting that the idea of love is not the same.

On the other hand, an argument against this would be that no situation ethics has guidelines in producing the most loving thing or explains what love is through the '6 principles' such as love is intrinsically good.

This idea suggests that no matter where you are, or who you are, you can still determine what is good through the guidelines presented by situation ethics.

However, humans are greedy and cannot be trusted in making the correct decisions in each given situation. By giving ourselves the option to freely

choose, we would most of the time choose something that benefits themselves.

~~that~~ Another weakness to situation ethics is largely determined by the fact that we don't know what the most loving thing in each given situation is. And we need laws in order to help guide us in creating the most loving thing in each given situation. This is because as humans we are incapable of making our own decisions.

On the other hand, by following Jesus and how he decided to go by in each given situation, you can then you will be able to solve any moral dilemmas. This is supported by the fact that Jesus went against the rules of the bible and forgave the adulteress for her sins. Suggesting that in each situation we should do the most loving thing.

In contradiction to this, the Bishop at the time completely disregarded situation ethics at the time and said that it is not a Christian theory, and to this day is not allowed to be discussed within the Church.

In addition, St Augustine proposed that the only religious Christian ethics available were deontological arguments for example ~~that~~ natural moral law which focuses on the actions rather than the consequences.

To conclude, Situation ethics is not very strong in solving moral dilemmas due to the inconsistencies presented within the argument itself. It is impossible to determine what is truly loving and is not very practical to use in everyday given situations as we don't know what the most loving thing in every given situation is.



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Examiner Comments

Good use of technical language and analysis.



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Examiner Comments

For the 8 mark question structure technical terms must be used.

Paper summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- They should practice writing up the different questions in time conditions to ensure that they can meet the demands of the whole paper
- Make sure they do not run out of time before completing the 20 mark essay question.
- They should be able to access a range of scholarly material to enable them to answer at the highest level.
- Communicate ideas effectively
- Monitor their spelling and grammar closely

Grade Boundaries

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