



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Religious Studies (4051/4052)
Full or Short Course
Specification A

Unit 2 Christianity: Ethics (405002)

Report on the Examination
2010 examination - June series

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Unit 2 Christianity: Ethics

General Comments

In this first examination for the new specification there was a wide range of ability, including some responses that went far beyond the standard expected of GCSE candidates. The more able candidates demonstrated accurate knowledge, depth of understanding and mature evaluative skills. Less able candidates showed some knowledge and understanding in response to many of the questions. They were also often able to justify their own opinions and could sometimes give a brief explanation of a different view.

Many candidates performed well in the AO1 questions that tested knowledge and understanding. A significant number, however, did not read the questions with sufficient care, sometimes giving irrelevant information. Although this did not affect the mark awarded for the relevant material, candidates risked penalising themselves in terms of time management. The same was the case with those candidates who, ignoring the marks allocation and the inclusion of the word 'briefly', wrote far more than was required in response to some of the Part A questions.

The three mark AO2 questions are new to GCSE Religious Studies, and for these only the candidate's own viewpoint, supported by evidence and/or argument, is required. Credit was given to two-sided arguments, but in presenting more than one viewpoint, some candidates again wrote far more than was needed for three marks. Candidates need to bear in mind the balance of the paper in terms of mark allocation and leave sufficient time for Part B.

There were many competent responses to the six mark evaluation questions. Many candidates followed the two paragraph structure, presenting first one and then another viewpoint supported by evidence and argument. To reach Level 6, a conclusion is not essential, nor does it need to be personal, but if one is given it should do more than simply repeat points already made. An effective conclusion might develop one viewpoint further or explain what is judged to be the clinching argument.

Centres might like to remind their candidates that in the six mark AO2 questions, responses that contain only one viewpoint cannot achieve more than Level 4. Some candidates wrote one paragraph on Roman Catholic arguments for a particular viewpoint followed by a second that gave arguments used by another denomination, but unless the actual viewpoint was different, the fact that two denominations had been mentioned could not count as 'more than one point of view'. So, for instance, Roman Catholic arguments against euthanasia using one set of biblical texts and/or Church teaching followed by Anglican arguments against it, even if using different biblical texts and/or Church teaching, count as one viewpoint. Other candidates made the briefest of allusions to a different viewpoint, but Level 5 requires 'reasoned consideration'. There need not be balance between the viewpoints for either Levels 5 or 6, but more than a passing phrase is required.

Wholly secular responses cannot achieve more than Level 3, and Levels 5 and 6 require specifically Christian arguments as opposed to more general moral principles. On the whole, candidates did attempt to include recognisably Christian argument. The new Christian Ethics specification, unlike the corresponding legacy one, does not require set biblical texts to be studied. This means that centres are free to approach the religious content as they see fit and include any relevant biblical material or Church teaching. The result was a wide diversity of approach. 'Love your neighbour' was not the standard response to every question, though understandably it did appear quite frequently. It was most effectively used in conjunction with reference to Christian versions of situation ethics. Many candidates used a wide range of biblical texts, and many referred to particular Church teachings (often giving their source).

Some candidates tended to quote a number of biblical texts one after the other, but only limited credit could be given if they were not applied to the issue under discussion. For Level 6, the Christian content should be an integral part of the argument, though it does not have to be included in both viewpoints given.

Most candidates presented their information legibly and with sufficient accuracy not to pose a problem when it came to AO2 assessment. There were just a few, however, whose handwriting was very poor. Centres might like to remind their candidates that examiners cannot credit what they cannot read. In some circumstances, a request for an amanuensis may be appropriate.

Part A

Question 1 *Personal Responsibility*

Most candidates gained full marks for the first question, showing a sound understanding of the term 'adultery'.

More than half of candidates also gained full marks for part (b), often referring to adultery as a breach of the Ten Commandments and quoting the relevant one. Reference was also made to the intended nature of marriage and to particular vows that were broken by adultery. Some candidates referred to the effects of adultery on the marriage and on children. As with all three mark AO1 questions, Level 3 could be gained by making three separate points or by making one or two points with development.

The statement in part (c) was deliberately open, enabling candidates approach at it from a variety of angles. Many continued with the topic of adultery, making effective use of the stimulus material. Others referred to drug abuse or to environmental issues. Candidates often discussed free will as given to humanity by God and then went on to argue that for Christians there were limits imposed by the Ten Commandments and other biblical teaching, and that even if no humans were harmed, it was wrong to transgress God's rules. Other candidates applied Paul's teaching about the body being a temple of the Holy Spirit to the argument that Christians regard it as sinful to harm oneself. Arguments relating to freedom and responsibility were particularly well developed by a number of candidates who made use of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians that, although all things are permissible, not all things are beneficial.

Question 2 *Global Concerns*

Almost all candidates gained full marks for part (a), though some wrote more than was required given that there was only one mark available for each reason.

Candidates approached part (b) in a number of ways. Some stated that, in view of the enormity of the problem, one person's impact would be minimal. Others pointed out that nothing would ever be achieved if everyone adopted the view stated and argued that by setting an example, encouraging others or campaigning, individuals could make a real difference. There were a number of references to Martin Luther King, whose actions as an individual inspired many and so 'moved mountains'. Although his concerns were not environmental, it was valid to use him to exemplify the potential of individuals. Many suggested practical ways of protecting the environment, applying the concept of stewardship. At least one candidate argued that nothing could be done since tsunamis, hurricanes, etc. were divinely appointed apocalyptic signs.

Except for those candidates who thought that emergency aid referred to paramedic response to a traffic accident, most gained at least one mark for part (c) and over half scored full marks.

Of all the six mark evaluation questions, part (d) elicited perhaps some of the most thoughtful responses. Many candidates wrote highly focussed answers, considering, sometimes at length, the issue of giving aid to a country with a corrupt head of state and displaying political awareness. Those answers which consisted simply of arguments for and against giving aid to other countries were less successful, but gained some credit. It was a pity that a number of very mature responses included no religious content and so could be awarded no more than three marks.

Question 3 *The Use of Medical Technology*

For centres that have in the past entered candidates for AQA Specification A, this is a new area of study. Most candidates seemed to have been well prepared for the questions that were asked.

Almost half the candidates gave a full explanation of cloning. Many explained cloning as the scientific production of a genetically identical copy of a living organism. Some explained the difference between reproductive and therapeutic cloning, and others gave Dolly the sheep as an example.

Again, almost half gained full marks for part (b). Many different points were made, such as the blasphemous challenge to God's role as life giver, the potential for destruction of embryo, the likelihood of many failed attempts as seen in the prequel to Dolly, or the huge risks involved.

Almost all candidates were able to give at least one argument in support of fertility treatment part (c). A significant number wrote lengthy and partially irrelevant responses, as they explained arguments against fertility treatment.

There was a wide diversity of approach to part (d). Some candidates focussed solely on the element of research, often referring to the use of animals and embryos. Others based their views more on the basis of consequences, and this was equally valid. There were references to Pope John Paul II's assessment of embryonic research as a form of 'biological slavery'. Some candidates applied the principles of situation ethics, whilst others referred explicitly to possible utilitarian views. At least one candidate referred to the principle of non-maleficence. Most answers incorporated reference to Christian principles such as compassion, sanctity of life and quality of life, and many included 'love your neighbour'.

Question 4 *Personal and Social Responsibility*

In order to gain full marks for part (a), candidates were required to explain with slight development two of the vows made in a Christian marriage ceremony. The stimulus was given to assist candidates in selection and for the most part, good use was made of it. Centres might like to advise their candidates against only repeating the wording given. For example, a number of candidates selected for comment the phrase 'to love and cherish', but then simply stated that this meant couples should love and cherish one another.

For part (b) candidates were able to gain full marks for detailed responses to one or both sides of the argument relating to the use of contraception. Many candidates gave Roman Catholic views in accurate detail, including reference to the rhythm of the menstrual cycle as a natural and acceptable form of family planning, although some erroneously stated that for Roman Catholics, procreation was the only purpose of sexual intercourse. A significant number also included the views of other denominations, sometimes pointing out that, for many Christians, their views on contraception were to some extent determined by the type of contraception being used. A few candidates confused contraception with conception.

The quality of responses to part (c) varied widely and, as in Question 2(d), some candidates penalised themselves by omitting Christian arguments. There was, however, some effective Christian content in many answers. Many candidates quoted from Galatians, and some discussed differing attitudes among 21st century Christians to the statements contained in Ephesians that the husband is the head of the wife and that wives should submit to their husbands as the Church submits to Christ. Answers referring to the Christian family, i.e. those that discussed the role of women within the Church, were also credited.

Part B

By far the majority of candidates answered Question B5, although of those who answered B6, a higher number gained between 16 and 24 marks than was the case with B5.

Question 5 *The Right to Life*

Most candidates answered part (a) by explaining circumstances when abortion might be accepted by some Christians. Less able candidates simply listed these. More able candidates gave detailed explanation relating to two or three acceptable circumstances such as risk to maternal life, pregnancy resulting from rape or the probability of severe disability, and often applying the Christian principles of love and compassion. Some candidates wrote more generally, explaining the view that the status of the embryo/foetus and its rights are linked to its development. A few explained and applied the principle of double effect. Others applied the insights of situation ethics or Christian utilitarianism or explained abortion as in some cases being the lesser of two evils. A significant number of candidates included, sometimes in great detail, Christian arguments against abortion.

Most responses to part (b) were thoughtfully considered, including Christian arguments on both sides of the debate. The most frequently considered alternatives were adoption, fostering or seeking support from Christian and other support agencies. As with Question 2(d) and Question 3(d), there were a number of totally secular responses, but these came chiefly from less able candidates writing about the pros and cons of adoption.

There were many informed answers to part (c). Candidates, apart from those who confused the word 'hospice' with 'hostel', referred to many aspects of hospices' care for the terminally ill and their families.

There were many detailed and highly sensitive responses to part (d). Even less able candidates wrote confidently on both sides of the issue, incorporating Christian views into their argument. Again, a variety of biblical and Church teachings were presented. Some candidates applied the slippery slope argument and, in relation to this, brief reference to non-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia was relevant. A few candidates distinguished between active and passive euthanasia, referring to the principles of double effect and ordinary/extraordinary means.

Question 6 Conflict

Most candidates answered part (a) by discussing different aims of punishment in relation to imprisonment. Less able candidates did little more than give a brief explanation of the aims with minimal application to imprisonment or they simply claimed that prisons were too soft. More able candidates attempted to explain aims of punishment that might be acceptable to Christians, e.g. reform and rehabilitation, and the extent to which imprisonment might enable these aims to be achieved. A few candidates considered Christian views on forgiveness and showed awareness of Christian involvement with offenders.

The quality of responses to part (b) varied considerably, but able candidates argued persuasively on both sides of the debate. Most answers included Christian argument, though the weakest responses tended to include little more than the Old Testament 'an eye for an eye', a statement that was sometimes attributed to Jesus.

Many candidates knew several of the criteria contained in the Just War theory in part (c). There were some highly confident responses from able candidates, who explained in considerable detail the thinking behind the criteria. Some very sound understanding was displayed.

In response to (d), most candidates considered the pros and cons of pacifism. A few, however, focussing on the verb 'fight', argued that Christians should never use violence to achieve their aims but that it was right to fight morally. Many candidates included the example of Martin Luther King in their answers.