



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2011**

**Religious Studies A (4050)**

**Unit 2: Christianity: Ethics**

**405002**

***Report on the Examination***

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## Unit 2: Christianity: Ethics

### General Comments

As expected, the entry was significantly larger than last year, with scripts covering a very wide range of ability. Most candidates had been well prepared in terms of specification content coverage. The standard of some candidates' responses was well beyond that expected at GCSE; these students were clearly being stretched and encouraged to achieve their full potential. Less able students were for the most part willing to attempt answers in a way that earned some credit. There were few unattempted questions, and there was no evidence that candidates were not taking the examination seriously.

One significant difference in content from Unit 2A in the old specification is the lack of set biblical texts. Evidence from candidates' answers suggests that centres have seen this as an opportunity rather than a problem. Although less able candidates relied heavily on 'love your neighbour' and the Golden Rule, many answers went far beyond these, exemplifying their points from a wide variety of biblical texts and Church teaching. Most candidates included specifically Christian views in answer to questions asking for Christian attitudes or teaching.

Many responses to AO1 questions revealed sound breadth of knowledge and understanding, but flawed technique meant that marks were often lost in A3(a) and B5 and B6 parts (a) and (c). In order to reach the higher levels, depth of knowledge and understanding must be evident. Centres might wish to ensure that their candidates are able to develop in detail the points they make in the longer questions. They might at the same time encourage their candidates to give concise answers to the shorter AO1 questions (those worth two or three marks).

Perhaps the biggest change from the old GCSE Religious Studies specifications is the requirement to allocate 50% of the marks to evaluation (the AO2 criterion), which has inevitably made a deep impact on both question papers and on the preparation of candidates for the examination. Slightly different techniques are required for the two 3-mark questions to be found in Part A and the five 6-mark questions set in both Parts A and B, and centres might wish to ensure that their candidates are aware of this.

Although in the 3-mark AO2 questions many candidates did manage to obtain full marks from answers that used only the lines allocated to the question, far too many produced very lengthy responses that either included every argument they could think of in support of their views or gave two-sided arguments. Candidates are not penalised for excessively lengthy answers or for giving more than one viewpoint when only their own is asked for, but some of them penalise themselves by having insufficient time to complete the whole paper.

In the 6-mark AO2 questions, thanks to careful training and preparation from their teachers, most candidates did attempt to argue from more than one viewpoint, and this is essential if candidates are to achieve the higher levels. However detailed and perceptive they were, answers that gave only one viewpoint or only a bare statement of another were capped at Level 4.

Another requirement for accessing the higher levels is the inclusion of Christian views. Again, centres had clearly emphasised the importance of this, as many candidates did include relevant Christian teaching. A significant number, however, quoted or paraphrased biblical passages without putting them in context, which inevitably affected the mark they were awarded. A number of candidates gave religious teaching in a separate paragraph.

These candidates answered in four paragraphs: arguments in support of the statement, general arguments against, religious teachings without comment or development, and then the personal view of the candidate. These responses did not fulfil the level 6 criterion of ‘ability to apply knowledge and understanding of religion effectively’. Some candidates answered in bullet points, which meant there was little development in and no flow to their answers. One possible way of improving AO2 answers is to give candidates examples of good and not-so-good technique for them to mark and assess.

A concern raised by a number of examiners was poor handwriting. This does seem to have become an increasing problem, and is perhaps because many young people communicate chiefly through computers and text messaging. Centres might wish to give candidates regular practice with timed, hand-written responses.

## **Part A**

### **Question A1 Personal Responsibility**

The opening question was intended to give candidates confidence by its accessibility, and almost all candidates were awarded full marks. Part (b) was also answered very well, with over 60% of candidates gaining full marks. Most candidates considered the differing purposes of drugs, and many quoted or paraphrased biblical texts such as 1 Corinthians.

Almost 75% of candidates gained full marks in part (c), but some did not read the question carefully and as a result wrote totally irrelevant responses. Candidates generally referred to maturity and responsibility. Some considered concerns about possible exploitation of younger adolescents or pointed out that sixteen is the age at which marriage is permitted with parental consent.

There were some very competent responses to part (d), with at least one candidate contrasting natural law approaches with those of situation ethics. Candidates approached the question in a number of ways, some focusing on pre-marital sex and/or cohabitation and others on adultery. Many argued that, while adultery was wrong, consensual pre-marital sex within a loving relationship was acceptable. Biblical teachings were for the most part well applied, although a significant number of candidates cited God’s willingness to forgive sin as support for the statement. A few showed excellent understanding of Roman Catholic and Church of England views, quoting from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and referring accurately to the Church of England’s statement on cohabitation. Many candidates, however, seemed to think that, for Roman Catholics, reproduction is the only purpose of sexual relationships and displayed an equally simplistic understanding of the Church of England’s view. There were some detailed, two-sided responses that were capped at Level 3 because no Christian arguments were considered.

### **Question A2 Conflict**

Part (a) was answered well. Many responses showed sound understanding of ways in which the use of nuclear weapons contravenes the Just War theory. Part (b) was also answered quite well. Many candidates again made use of the Just War theory, showing how it might be used to support the use of nuclear weapons in some circumstances. Others argued their value as a deterrent, referring to the doctrine of MAD (mutually assured destruction).

Part (c) proved to be a very straightforward question, with over 75% of candidates gaining maximum marks. Part (d) produced some very thoughtful responses. As with A1(b), there was some excellent use of biblical texts

### **Question A3 The Right to Life**

Of all the Part A AO1 questions, part (a) achieved the greatest differentiation. Although many answers gave several different views on the beginning of life, failure to develop any of them meant that only 35% gained full marks. Most candidates knew that the Roman Catholic view is that life begins with conception, but only a few expanded on this with comment, and even then some of the development related more to abortion issues than to the question asked. A few candidates wrote about baptism, the Big Bang or Darwinian views on evolution.

Not surprisingly, part (b) proved to be the most accessible of all the 6-mark evaluation questions, although a significant number of candidates penalised themselves with very coherent but one-sided arguments. Nevertheless, more than 20% reached Level 6. The statement was deliberately open, and many relevant areas were explored, such as war, capital punishment, murder, abortion and euthanasia. There was excellent application of biblical texts and Church teaching on both sides of the debate. A few candidates discussed what was meant by 'kill' in the 6<sup>th</sup> (5<sup>th</sup>) Commandment, and at least one made the point, supported by reference to the Good Samaritan parable, that inaction was also sinful. Reference was made to the principle of double effect, and one candidate referred accurately to one of the analogies used by Judith Jarvis Thomson in her essay.

### **Question A4 The use of Medical Technology and Social Responsibility**

Although there was some confusion of AID (DI) with IVF procedures in part (a), more than 50% of candidates gained full marks. Many showed sound understanding of the Roman Catholic objection that the procedure introduces a third person into the marriage. Other candidates justified the procedure with reference to situation ethics.

There was considerable uncertainty about civil partnerships in many responses to part (b). A significant proportion referred to them as 'gay marriages', and there was also some confusion with cohabitation. Centres might wish to ensure that their candidates know that in the UK, civil partnerships are not marriages. Despite the inaccuracy, however, over 50% of candidates gained full marks by stating that the term refers to a legally recognised relationship between two individuals of the same sex.

Part (c) was the only 3-mark AO1 question where less than 50% of candidates were awarded full marks. There were also more blank answers for this question than for any other on the whole paper. Some candidates clearly did not understand the term 'surrogacy' and so could not give any creditable explanation of Christian attitudes to it. There were, however, some very full responses.

Although 36% of candidates reached Level 5 or 6, part (d) was not answered quite as well as A1(d) or A3(b). Many understood the question to refer to gender change rather than gender selection, and as a result some of the arguments were muddled. There were, however, some very thoughtful answers that pointed first to the possibility of sex selection leading to gender discrimination. Many of these responses commented on Galatians 3:28. Others used the slippery slope argument, referring to the undesirability of designer babies and the creation of a two-tier society determined by wealth. On the other side of the debate, many candidates argued for sex selection in families where there was a sex-linked genetic disorder, and a few referred to the Masterson case. Here, the biblical requirement to show kindness and compassion was often quoted.

## **Part B**

Most candidates obeyed the rubric, answering only one of the two questions. Some, however, ran out of time, paying dearly for unduly lengthy answers to the shorter questions in Part A. The majority of candidates answered Question B5.

### **Question B5 Social Responsibility**

The quality of answers to part (a) varied enormously. Some candidates had been very well prepared, displaying both breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding and excellent focus on the question. There were, however, some very vague, muddled and inaccurate answers. This should have been an opportunity for less able candidates to pick up marks, but many, including even the more able, struggled. The most popular figures by far were Martin Luther King and Desmond Tutu. A number of candidates selected Jean Vanier, Mary Verghese, Oscar Romero, Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa. Centres might use this question in the future as a means of ensuring that their candidates are sufficiently well informed.

In part (b) some candidates wrote very thoughtful responses from more than one viewpoint, applying biblical passages most effectively. There were some highly perceptive examinations of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Many, however, found it difficult to present another viewpoint. A significant number of answers simply equated punishment with discrimination; only a few related the question to the issue of how some, for example sex offenders, might after punishment have continued restrictions on their liberty that some might see as discriminatory. Some counter-arguments considered the issue of institutional discrimination in the Church, seeing it as the inevitable outcome of centuries of western culture that was biased towards European males, or discussed views on Roman Catholic and some Anglican attitudes to the ordination of women as priests or bishops. A few wrote about the Ku Klux Klan or the South African Dutch Reformed Church. There were also some excellent counter-arguments relating to positive discrimination as exemplified in university admissions policies and in employment.

In part (c) those candidates who kept their focus on the question, which related to marriage, wrote with great maturity. Many candidates wrote about the sacramental nature of Christian marriage, and there was particularly good development of concepts such as 'exclusive', 'life-giving', 'life-enhancing' and 'permanent'. A significant number of responses, however, were more focused on the issue of pre-marital or extra-marital sex, repeating what had already been written in A1(d), on divorce or on remarriage, which was the focus of (d). Some simply described the marriage ceremony itself. Centres might wish to remind their candidates of the importance of reading the question carefully and ensuring that their responses are relevant.

Those candidates who understood the Roman Catholic position on remarriage produced developed arguments in support of the statement in part (d). There were also some thoughtful counter-arguments, focusing largely on forgiveness or on the innocent party in an abusive or adulterous relationship. Occasionally, the more able candidates discussed the teaching contained in Mark 10, considering whether it came from Jesus or the Early Church and, if from Jesus, whether he was laying down a law or stating an ideal. Unfortunately, many responses fell far short of this standard. There was a great deal of confusion about the Anglican view, which is certainly complex, and a significant number of responses cited widowhood in defence of remarriage. Other arguments were focused more on divorce than on remarriage.

### **Question B6 Global Concerns**

There were some detailed answers to part (a) that revealed a sound knowledge and understanding of the work carried out by the chosen aid agency. Some included details of actual long term aid projects. All too often, however, responses were vague and very

general. Few referred to the work of these organisations in creating awareness through education or in campaigning for justice. Even fewer showed any awareness of the fact that these organisations work through partners, describing instead how they worked several decades ago.

Although part (b) was potentially the most straightforward of all the 6-mark evaluation questions, relatively few competent answers were seen. Although most candidates picked up and commented on the 'everyone', many candidates showed only limited awareness of the fair trade movement, producing very weak arguments on both sides. A significant number of responses were wholly secular.

There were some detailed responses to part (c), concentrating chiefly on the Genesis creation stories. More able candidates examined differing interpretations of Genesis 1:28. There were, however, a number of answers in which it was stated that God created all living things in his image. Less able candidates tended to write at length on the importance of recycling, walking rather than driving etc.

Part (d) was a challenging question, but it produced some excellent arguments on both sides of the debate with clear reference to Christian teaching. Less able candidates tended to list arguments on either side but omitted the comparative element, which was integral to the statement.

The overall impression given to examiners was that candidates, whatever their level of ability, had found the topics set for study both interesting and stimulating. Centres are to be commended for engaging their students to such a high degree.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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