



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Religious Studies 4050

Unit 2: Christianity: Ethics

405002

Report on the Examination

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Unit 2: Christianity: Ethics

General Comments

As in 2011, there was a wide range of performance. At the top end, students displayed excellent examination technique and maturity of thought. There were, however, a significant number of blank spaces in certain questions. It is essential that all students have sufficient knowledge and understanding of all the topics listed in the specification to enable them to write something creditable, however brief. It is also essential that they write legibly; there were many instances of handwriting that was almost impossible to read.

Some students did not achieve the marks they might have done because they ran out of time in Part B. Careful timing in Part A is important. Students might benefit from regular practice in writing timed responses to 3 mark questions.

Schools and colleges are to be commended for their sterling work on AO2 skills. Most students attempted to give more than one viewpoint in the 6 mark answers. It is, however, essential for level 5 that they write more than a brief sentence on the other view. The two sides of the argument need not be balanced, but level 5 does require 'reasoned consideration of more than one point of view', so sufficient needs to be written to qualify as 'reasoned consideration'.

Two particular areas of concern were reported by examiners. One was a weakness in AO1 technique. Questions worth 4 marks or more require development, but many students gave responses that amounted to little more than a list of points, occasionally with slight elaboration. Others treated AO1 questions as if they were 6 mark AO2 questions. Schools and colleges might wish to work on AO1 skills with their students.

The major weakness, however, lay in the inability of many students to make effective and appropriate use of religious teachings. Schools and colleges are free to use biblical texts and / or Church teachings, and paraphrase is acceptable. Paraphrase of parables needs to be recognisable and reasonably accurate. The use of biblical texts also needs to be appropriate to the issue. There were in the exam paper several questions requiring students to 'explain Christian teachings' on a particular issue. Far too many students simply listed several teachings with no application or made a statement that was so vague that no credit could be given. Such answers could be awarded no more than 3 marks. In answer to the 6 mark AO2 questions, most students gave sufficient religious content to merit Level 4, but in a number of cases, it was very general. Level 5 requires students to show 'knowledge and understanding of religion'. Only a limited number of students displayed the Level 6 demand for the 'ability to apply knowledge and understanding of religion effectively'.

Part A

A1: Social Responsibility

A1(a) Students who noted the stimulus and read the question with sufficient care gained full marks with ease, either listing or developing such points as the couple not having religious beliefs or wanting remarriage after divorce. Those who gave general reasons for getting married, e.g. to show love for one another, gained 1 mark. There were a few students who confused civil marriage with civil partnerships.

A1(b) There were some excellent answers to this question that focused on the statement and made effective use of wedding vows, scripture and Church teaching. There were some very coherent responses that showed a mature understanding of both sides of the debate. Roman Catholic, Church of England and Methodist views were for the most part explained accurately.

A1(c) This was a very straightforward question for which most students gained the available mark. Some students, however, wasted time by giving a cause, e.g. stereotyping, and then developing their answers with exemplification or reasons why Christians did not agree with prejudice. There were just a few students who did not note that the question asked for a cause of racial prejudice, as opposed to prejudice in general.

A1(d) This was not particularly well answered. A number of students gave examples of Christians opposing prejudice rather than of teachings and many answers gave the bald statement that 'everyone is equal'. It would have been better to write something such as 'everyone is equal in the sight of God', backing this up with reference to an appropriate biblical text or Church teaching. There were, however, some competent answers, where the relevance of the parable of the Good Samaritan was explained or where Jesus' warning against passing judgement on others, Paul's teaching in Galatians 3:28, or the Genesis reference to humans being created in the image of God was carefully applied. One student who had perhaps studied Unit 5 made appropriate use of the parable of the mustard seed, referring to the interpretation of the birds as Gentiles. A few applied the story of Jesus healing the Greek woman's daughter.

A2: Conflict

A2(a) Apart from a few students leaving this blank and one or two answers that confused retribution and reformation or that debated types rather than aims of punishment, this was fairly well tackled by many. A few otherwise excellent responses were capped at Level 3 because there was no religious content, but most students were able to refer to and often apply appropriate teaching such as Jesus' teaching on forgiveness, his response to the adulterous woman and the relevant sentence in the Lord's Prayer. Schools and colleges might, however, wish to ensure that their students are aware that Jesus rejected the 'an eye for an eye' principle (the *lex talionis*); a significant number of students attributed it to him. Particularly impressive were those answers that quoted from an Anglican report on punishment and its aims.

A2(b) A surprising number of students left this question unanswered or did not know the meaning of the term 'pacifists'. Many of those who did know, however, gained full marks with ease.

A2(c) This was answered well by almost all students. The vast majority argued forcibly that Christians should never agree with terrorism. Just a few gave two-sided responses that considered also situations when terrorism or freedom fighting might be deemed necessary.

A3: The Right to Life

A3(a) Many students answered this well, though there was some confusion of euthanasia with assisted suicide and a number of students wrote about the difference between voluntary and non-voluntary or involuntary euthanasia. Since passive euthanasia may be voluntary, as in the case of Miss B, this distinction on its own could not be credited.

A3(b) There were some very sensitive and thoughtful responses, though some of those agreeing with the statement gave a rewording of it as one of their reasons. Almost all answers in support of the statement concentrated on voluntary active euthanasia. Only a few considered passive euthanasia. The best arguments against the statement referred to the hospice movement with its emphasis on making terminally and incurably ill people feel valued right to the end and providing care for the families.

A3(c) A significant number of students gained only one mark because they failed to read the question with sufficient care. This required explanation of one reason in support of abortion rather than giving students the option of listing two reasons or developing one. Those who did read the question gained maximum marks with ease. Most focused on risk to maternal life, pregnancy resulting from rape or the likelihood that the child would be born severely disabled.

A3(d) Most students performed very well. There was an unexpected but valid application of the miracle of the calming of the storm: however difficult continuing with a pregnancy might be, the story of the calming of the storm shows that what is needed is faith and the will to 'brave the storm'. This was much more acceptable than the attempt to apply Jesus' teaching on marriage.

A4: The Use of Medical Technology

A4(a) Most students answered this question well, focusing on the separation of the unitive from the procreative aspects of procreation and the artificial nature of the process or on the destruction of spare embryos.

A4(b) Those who knew what a saviour sibling is and what the procedure entails found this a very accessible question. Students were free to give positive or negative views or a mixture of both and some referred to Kant when explaining the view that it is never right to use someone solely as a means to an end. There were, however, a number of blank spaces and the answers of some students showed that they knew nothing at all about the technology, claiming as a reason for supporting it that IVF is not used. Others had strange ideas about the demands that would be made on the saviour sibling. Some clearly thought that the sibling would die to save the sick child or that organ donation would be required. The novel and film 'My Sister's Keeper' are useful in the ethical concerns that they raise, but students should be aware that they are fiction, and that the procedure is carried out to use cord blood and sometimes bone marrow and not to remove one of the baby's kidneys.

A4(c) Not surprisingly, this proved to be an effective differentiator. Students who knew the arguments for and against cloning wrote very mature responses, though only a limited number considered therapeutic cloning. A wide variety of Christian teaching was deployed by the more able students, including Paul's statement that although everything may be permissible, not everything is beneficial.

Part B

It was pleasing to note that only a very few students attempted both questions. The vast majority answered question 6.

B5: Global Concerns

B5(a)(i) Although there was sometimes slight confusion with typical characteristics of world poverty, most tackled this question reasonably well. Many had clearly been taught about corrupt governments. There were also many references to natural disasters, debt, unfair trade and war. Those who developed their responses gained level 4 with ease. Many, however, gave a list of reasons with at best very slight elaboration.

B5(a)(ii) In answering this question students often struggled to give any clear Christian teaching, and those who did came up with undeveloped reference to the Golden Rule, 'Love your neighbour' or a mixture of the two. Some students made use of the parable of the Good Samaritan, but it was not well applied. A few students attempted to apply the parable of Dives and Lazarus, but the success of those attempts depended on whether or not they knew its content. A few referred to the parable of the sheep and goats, generally quoting 'I was hungry...' and occasionally also 'Whatever you did/did not do for the least of these...' One or two excellent responses paraphrased and then applied the teaching from 1 John 3:17-18.

B5(b) This was well answered only by a few students. Again, many students gave either secular responses or made extremely limited use of Christian arguments. Many answers were very general, failing to note the question's reference to emergency aid and a significant number of students gained only limited credit through their inability to argue another viewpoint. Those who did produce sound responses mostly developed the argument that 'charity begins at home' or expressed concerns that the emergency aid might be diverted and not reach those in need. Those who used arguments relating to long term aid were given credit, if it was relevant to the question.

B5(c) Although some students gave undeveloped lists of ways in which people are working to protect the environment, there were a significant number of answers that displayed excellent development of points. Many approached the question by referring to individual actions, to local and national initiatives and to the work of international voluntary and political bodies. There was no requirement to deal with ways in which Christians are tackling environmental issues, but a number of students referred to the solar panels in the Vatican, to the increasing number of eco churches and to the work of Arocha, which is an international Christian environmental charity. The impression given was that most students were well prepared for this question.

B5(d) Many students were restricted to Level 4 through their inability to give two viewpoints. Despite occasional confusion over the meaning of stewardship, most students who were able to develop the argument that the earth does not exist for humans to use as they wish, made effective reference to the Genesis creation stories in particular. A few students were aware of modern Church teaching. Those who were able to develop another view tended to discuss the possible implication of Genesis 1:28 and the significance of humans being created last according to Genesis 1 and of the naming of the animals by man in Genesis 2. There were some outstanding responses by some students who were clearly both able and well prepared.

B6: Personal Responsibility

B6(a) Providing that students read the question carefully and did not write about illegal drugs, their answers were competent and often well developed. This proved accessible to students across the whole ability range.

B6(b) All students were able to give reasons for agreeing with the statement, usually pointing out the harm to the smoker and also to others. There were a few secular responses, but most quoted Paul's statement that the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. The better responses went on to say that harming one's body by smoking showed disrespect and ingratitude. Weak responses stated that by smoking, one was killing a part of God. Some students stated that smoking clouds the mind; this is an Islamic rather than a Christian argument. Many students, however, gained no more than 4 marks as they gave only one side of the argument. Those who did give another viewpoint justified smoking as relieving stress. Religious arguments generally centred on God's gift of free will. Many students claimed that it was acceptable for Christians to smoke since the Bible says nothing about smoking and Jesus himself never smoked. Given that tobacco did not come to the western world until centuries after the biblical era, this was a weak argument.

B6(c)(i) Most responses were detailed, though according to a significant number of students, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that sexual relationships are intended only for procreation, an error that has appeared in previous examination sessions. There were also a number of answers that referred to Pope Benedict XVI's statement about a year ago in relation to the use of condoms in Africa.

B6(c)(ii) This was very poorly answered and a significant number of students did not attempt it. Many did not understand the term 'heterosexual' or misread it as 'homosexual'. Many responses from those who did understand the term were very basic, often consisting of a reference to God's creation of Adam and Eve, his command to 'be fruitful and multiply' and little else. Some of the better answers explained the views of most Churches on pre- and extra-marital sex and the importance of chastity. A few paraphrased Paul's teaching that if one burned with passion, then it was advisable to marry. Only a handful pointed to the highly positive attitude to heterosexual relationships seen in the Song of Songs or to the significance of Adam and Eve being naked but not ashamed. Likewise only a few considered the wider significance of heterosexual relationships as entailing the kind of love mirrored in the love of Christ for his Church and as involving companionship, mutual self-giving etc. The overall impression given by the responses was that the students thought the Bible and the Church tolerate heterosexual relationships as necessary for procreation, but that they do not celebrate them.

B6(d) This question produced some highly sensitive and thoughtful responses. Most students had their own views on this, but many were able to present the other side of the argument in sufficient detail to move them beyond Level 4. The better answers showed awareness of the teaching in Leviticus and Romans, assessing its significance for and relevance to today. They also discussed the issue of same sex couples rearing families, whether through fertility treatment or adoption. Weaker responses tended to quote the inability to fulfil 'Be fruitful and multiply' as an argument in support of the statement and against it, 'love is the greatest' (presumably a paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 13:13). Countless numbers quoted 'God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve', sometimes claiming that it came from the Bible. In this question, many students wrote at great length, and it was the coherence of the argument and the quality of the religious argument that differentiated those at Level 6 from those at Level 5.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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