



## Teacher Resource Bank

GCSE Religious Studies Specification A

AO2 Sample Answers



## Introduction

The following pages give examples of answers to specimen AO2 questions together with brief comments on how these would be marked. The document **Notes on Levels of Response**, also published in the Teacher Resource Banks gives further explanation of how the level descriptors are to be applied. Although examples of answers from all units have not been included in this booklet, it should be possible for teachers to apply the same principles when marking responses for all units.

## UNIT 1 – CHRISTIANITY

### **‘Teenagers should have their own services of worship.’**

I myself agree as I'm a teenager and I would prefer a service with just other youths of my age. I wouldn't feel as intimidated with people of my own age which are going through the same things as I am.

On the other hand, I think that some services should be held together as it's a bit like separating the church community and excluding others. In my opinion the whole idea of a church is that everyone is welcome and if it's being separated up into different age groups, that means that some people are being excluded. It is important the church is kept together like a family.

*Level 5. This response just reaches Level 5. The arguments are fairly sociological, but do include references to the church community and an understanding of the church as a family. Good understanding is shown in the second viewpoint, which pulls this into Level 5.*

### **‘The Bible has little meaning for people today.’**

No, I disagree. I think Christians such as fundamentalists believe the Bible is the ‘Word of God’, no matter what is written in it. It is true, as God wrote it himself, therefore they respect it as their holy book and follow the teachings inside it.

However for some Christians such as liberals, the Bible doesn't have that much meaning to it, as they don't believe it is the ‘word of God’. Liberals feel that it should not be taken word for word as it has symbolic meanings which need to be understood. Liberals think of the Bible as the holy book but they do not believe that it is all true, as it has been passed down.

*Level 5. Two sides are given with development and reasoned consideration. The response is not entirely focused on the question as set.*

## UNIT 2 – CHRISTIANITY: ETHICS

### **‘Challenging prejudice and discrimination is the most important issue for Christians today.’**

Some Christians would agree as it is one of the biggest issues of today, for people suffer and die because of discrimination. Christians are taught a lot about equality and that we are ‘all one in Christ’ and so they should be active in trying to get the world to also see and adopt this view. By also tackling this issue it would bring peace to many countries or just cities which fight because of prejudices. If this issue is overcome, then it would be easier to tackle other issues, for everyone would be able to work together, instead of not being able to because of colour or religion.

On the other hand some wouldn’t agree as it’s almost impossible to change many people’s prejudices, for they are ideas that have been imposed on them since an early age. They also believe that other issues such as poverty are more important, as more people suffer and die under this.

I think that it’s a very important issue, as people everywhere are affected by this, but I think Christians should try to work on multiple issues at the same time, for they are all pressing matters.

*Level 6. The first viewpoint is well argued. Several points are made and justified, and there is some Christian argument. The second argument is not quite as well developed, but again there is just enough to call it ‘reasoned consideration’. The conclusion is brief, but takes the argument further and counter-balances the weak second viewpoint.*

### **‘All Christians should be pacifists.’**

Some Christians would agree, as in the Bible it says that peacemakers are ‘the sons of God’, meaning they are true to God and living the life he wants them to. One of the 10 Commandments is ‘do not kill’ and being a pacifist follows this, for war and violence bring about death. Jesus also taught that violence leads to violence, and wouldn’t let his disciples draw their swords at his arrest because of this. Therefore people believed Jesus was pacifist, so we should follow his example.

On the other hand, some would disagree as even if all Christians were pacifists, the whole world would still not be and so Christians would be easy targets for attack. They also believe that Jesus might not be pacifist, for in a temple he acted violently by turning over tables. So in some cases violence is needed to achieve good.

I believe that Christians should be pacifist, for that’s what Jesus taught and they still can achieve good like Martin Luther King who ‘met hate with love’ and finally achieved equality for blacks, without violence.

*Level 6. This ticks all the boxes for the level 6 criteria. It is well argued, gives reasoned consideration of two different viewpoints and deploys Christian arguments effectively.*

### UNIT 3 – ROMAN CATHOLICISM

#### **‘A Christian can never be as good as Mary.’**

Some people agree with this because Mary had the Immaculate Conception and we can't all follow that. She ascended into heaven and we cannot do that either. She was the Mother of God which we cannot be.

On the other hand some people might disagree and say that by fulfilling the commandments we are doing all we can for God and by following Mary's example we can by being true to our cause be just as good as her.

In conclusion I agree with the statement because she was unique and special as the Mediatrix and the Mother of God.

*Level 5. The first paragraph is not good, and the candidate's use of terminology such as 'had the Immaculate Conception' and 'ascended into heaven' is loose. The conclusion in the last paragraph raises this to a Level 5, although it is not argued well enough for Level 6.*

#### **‘It is not necessary for Christians to receive Holy Communion.’**

Some Christians believe in this statement, for example the Quaker church. They believe that Jesus is already inside of us and is expressed in how we act. Some people believe that the commandments and beatitudes are enough and that the important thing is how you treat other people. Jesus said 'treat others as you would be treated yourself.'

On the other hand during the Last Supper Jesus gave us the new covenant to do this in memory of him. By receiving communion we follow his covenant. Some people also believe that by taking the bread and wine we are inspired to become the body of Christ and perform good deeds. By taking Holy Communion once a week we are renewing our spiritual bond with Jesus (receiving spiritual food).

In conclusion I disagree with this statement because we are following the instruction of Jesus who told us that the bread and wine would become his body and blood.

*Level 6. Both viewpoints are well developed and there is a good conclusion.*

## UNIT 4 – ROMAN CATHOLICISM: ETHICS

### **‘Reconciliation is the most important sacrament in the Roman Catholic Church.’**

Reconciliation is a very important sacrament. God rates people very highly but forgives people who have sinned but repented their ways. Reconciliation can be one of the hardest sacraments to fulfil, because you are admitting you are wrong, which people find hard to do. Other people may see other sacraments such as confirmation where you are becoming a fully fledged person of the church important, but for me it is reconciliation because you are admitting you’re wrong and turning your back on your old way and starting afresh. The ability to have a second chance is what defines the Catholic church from others, the trust and forgiveness no matter what.

*Level 5. The second view is not fully developed: the only development is the clause ‘where you are becoming a fully fledged person of the church’. Without this, this would be a Level 4 response. As it is, the response just reaches Level 5.*

### **‘Euthanasia (mercy killing) should be allowed if people are in pain.’**

This statement above may be accepted by some people but rejected by others. It is a very topical issue. Some Christians believe that euthanasia is wrong as you are breaking one of the Ten Commandments, thou shalt not kill, also the fact that if such a law was to be passed in favour of euthanasia, there could end up being grave misuse of it by some people, such as infant euthanasia. Others would agree that if a person was in such pain and that treatment will not help the sick person, then as a last resort euthanasia is allowed. This is the Church of Ireland teaching on the issue. Most Roman Catholics are against euthanasia as they see the suffering as bringing you closer to God but I agree with the statement as they shouldn’t have to suffer.

*Level 4. At first glance this response could appear better than it is. The first viewpoint is quite well developed. The second is a list of statements with no development. Some of the statements are not entirely accurate. The last statement is poorly phrased.*

## UNIT 5 – ST. MARK’S GOSPEL

### **‘What Jesus said and did in Gethsemane sets a good example for Christians today.’**

On the one hand Jesus was human and so of course had doubts about being horribly executed: ‘Take this cup of suffering from me.’ But in the end he said, ‘Yet not my will but yours.’ Even though he had doubts, he agreed to do as God wanted in the end. This sets a good example for Christians, since the Bible teaches that we should have faith in what God wants us to do.

On the other hand, some might argue that Jesus was in fact going against his own teaching – to trust in God and obey him without questions. And so therefore he is not setting a good example, because he is being hypocritical.

I think that Jesus was human and showing doubt was fine so long as he did as God said when the time came. This is a good example, because it is extremely hard not to feel doubt, but to make the right decision in the end is the important thing.

*Level 6. This is well-argued and well-structured with two reasoned points of view and a conclusion, and clearly reaches Level 6.*

### **‘Son of God is the best title for Jesus.’**

Some Christians may agree because in parables and incidents such as Jesus’ baptism and in the transfiguration God directly talks to Jesus and says ‘This is my own dear son.’ Christians believe that Jesus’ death and resurrection was a big part of Christian faith, and when Jesus died a Roman centurion said ‘That man really was the Son of God.’

However some may disagree as there are many other worthy titles of Jesus such as Son of David, Messiah, Saviour. Jesus is all of these. Jesus’ favourite title for himself was Son of Man which he calls himself 13 times in the gospel and so this could also be a good title for Jesus.

*Level 5. There are two points of view and the candidate shows good knowledge of the titles of Jesus. The second point of view is somewhat list-like and not fully developed.*

## UNIT 7 – PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

**‘Even if you can prove that God exists, it will not make other people believe in God.’**

I do agree that even if you could prove that God exists, it will not make other people believe in God simply because they don't want to. If you are half way through your life, why should you have to change it just because of God? Even if it could be proved some people would still just deny it and say that the evidence/proof was false. Some people would say that if it could be proved everyone would believe in God because it would be such amazing and breathtaking news everyone would want to believe in such a phenomenon.

*Level 4. Here are two points of view, but the second is weaker with not much in the way of development. Rather, there are lots of simple reasons.*

**‘The Design (Teleological) argument is more successful at proving the existence of God than the First Cause (Cosmological) argument.’**

No I don't think that the Design argument is more successful at proving the existence of God than the first cause argument. This is because although we know the big bang caused the start of the world, what was there in the first place to cause the bang? I think that is a lot stronger than the design argument. The world could have just advanced and adapted into the way it is today. It isn't so amazing that something incredible must have made it this way. Some people would say that science will one day work out exactly what was there before the bang and it's only a matter of time and that God must have therefore designed the world.

*Level 3. This is a confusing response: it is not clear which argument supports which viewpoint. There are, however, several simple reasons.*

## UNIT 8 - ISLAM

**‘Festivals are an excuse for Muslims to have a good time, so the religious meaning is often forgotten.’**

No I don't agree. Every festival in the Muslim calendar is not celebrated to have fun as an excuse; it's there for a purpose, a religious reason. For example Eid ul Fitr is celebrated to mark the end of Ramadan, the hard work that was put into fasting and so on. Some Muslims may see the festivals as just having fun or as an excuse to enjoy themselves because they don't really care about the religious meaning.

*Level 3. Simple reasons only are given in this response.*

**‘Men are superior to women in Islam.’**

I personally think that men are not superior to women; women are just as important and strengthen men. Women carry lots of roles. One of the most important is that they are a mother and have to bring up their children, feed them and tell them about their faith. As the prophet Muhammad said, 'Heaven lies under your mother's feet'. A woman is more important therefore than a man.

*Level 3. As above, simple reasons are given but not developed.*

## UNIT 9 – ISLAM: ETHICS

### **‘Poor people have a right to share the wealth of rich people.’**

No I don't agree, someone who has earned money for a living has the right to do as they wish; after all they have earned it, they might have spend all their life earning money and feeding their family whereas the people who are poor for a reason as they didn't work and earn money when they should have. But poor people should have the right to some of the wealth of the rich; they have families to feed. They need a helping hand to survive, so they should be allowed to share the wealth of others.

*Level 3. There is no reference to religion, so the maximum mark is Level 3 despite the fact that there are two developed reasons.*

### **‘Jihad is a struggle for peace.’**

Yes I do agree as jihad is struggle for peace. There are two sorts of jihad. One is greater jihad and one is lesser jihad. Lesser jihad is personal struggle and greater jihad which is where you fight for your country, which is known as holy war. So I agree with the fact that jihad is struggle for peace as in other words it's known as greater jihad, fighting for peace or holy war, where you fight for your country.

*Level 2. Much of this response is AO1. The explanation of jihad is not used to support an opinion.*

## UNIT 10 – JUDAISM

### **‘The Torah is no longer relevant in today’s world.’**

I agree with the statement given above to a certain extent. The Torah contains teachings of the past and old prophets that were relevant for that time. Time and technology have moved on drastically since then. This is the reason why there are discussions of the Torah to make it relevant for today’s world.

However, the Torah is the word of God and will remain that way forever. God will know how times have changed; he is omniscient. Therefore he must have known what was going to happen when he sent the Torah.

*Level 4. There are two points of view. The first is weak with limited development, but the second paragraph is more coherent. There is little informed insight into religion.*

### **‘What Jews believe is more important than what they do.’**

I agree with the statement given above to a certain extent. Jews do not have to constantly go to the synagogue and pray. As long as their belief in God is strong, then what you do doesn’t matter. This is because you believe in the basis of the religion, which is the Shema, so what you do to show you are Jewish doesn’t matter. Certain ceremonies such as the Brit Milah won’t have to be done, as long as you believe in the creed, as they are just the religion in more detail.

However, the Brit Milah is a commandment from God. It was the covenant between Abraham and God. So Jews are ordered to follow this. God told Jews to try and follow the whole religion, not just the creed. Also by doing actions you will pass them on to future generations and it will help sustain the faith. With the practices gone, you will only have the basic belief that nobody can physically see and follow.

*Level 5. This is not well argued – the candidate is side-tracked into a discussion of Brit Milah. However, there is reasoned consideration of two points of view so the response fulfils the criteria for level 5.*

## UNIT 12 - BUDDHISM

### **‘Using violence is the best way to solve problems.’**

Violence may be the easiest way to deal with problems, in my personal opinion but it is the completely wrong way to go about this situation. Problems should be deal with skilfully and violence is definitely an extremely unskilful act which would accumulate bad karma. Ahimsa should be abided by at all times; ahimsa means harmlessness and non-violence. One of the five precepts is also does not destroy life, which is usually done by an unskilful and violent act. In my personal opinion, while it may seem an easy way to deal with problems, violence can have repercussions; that makes me believe that it is the wrong thing to do in such a situation. Violence is unskilful and ultimately wrong.

*Level 4. This is one-sided with lots of repetition. A second point of view is not given, which means this answer cannot be awarded above Level 4.*

### **‘To be a true Buddhist, you need to spend most of your time in a temple.’**

On one hand, a person would think that in order to be a true Buddhist one would have to spend most of their time in a temple but I personally disagree. You can gain a large amount of good karma and merit from worshipping in a temple but that is not, in my personal opinion, what you absolutely must do to be a true Buddhist. I believe that if a Buddhist were to follow the middle way, to abide by the five precepts and follow the Noble Eightfold Path, they are surely a ‘true’ Buddhist. I do believe however that a Buddhist who wishes to eventually become enlightened should be definitely inducted into the monastic sangha.

*Level 5. There are two points of view. Both are reasoned, but the second, the Noble Eightfold Path, is better developed, putting this response into Level 5.*