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# A-LEVEL **RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

7062/2B Study of religion and dialogues: Christianity  
Report on the Examination

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7062/2B  
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## **General comments**

All questions were marked with direct reference to the published Level Descriptors for AO1 and AO2.

There were some very accomplished scripts for this paper, and some outstanding individual answers. Students demonstrated AO1 knowledge and understanding of topics generally comparable to previous years, and most were able to discuss alternative views for AO2 answers. A few students seem to have struggled this year to identify the focus of some questions, or to understand specification language.

Answers to dialogues questions were, in general, more accomplished than single assessment objective answers by the same student. Dialogues essays were, often, more likely to show evidence of planning, and were structured more coherently.

There were noticeably more examples this year of students choosing to answer questions in a different order to the examination paper. This is wholly acceptable and allows students to navigate through the exam in a way that accommodates their own particular strengths and needs. It has no effect on the way marks are awarded.

### **1.1 Examine why there are different Christian views about dominion and stewardship. [10 marks]**

The best answers considered how different creation narratives, different ethical frameworks and/ or different understandings of the purpose of life lead to different understandings of how humans should relate to the environment and animal life. Some answers considered the historical context, with particular reference to current concerns about climate change. Such answers showed a clear understanding of the difference between dominion and stewardship. Some students were clearly uncertain about the differences between dominion and stewardship, and this made it harder for them to examine reasons for differences. Weaker answers often missed the focus of the question and merely described the meanings of the two terms without addressing reasons for the differences, and such answers were limited by the mark scheme to maximum level 3.

Note: All assessment Objectives are examined in every exam series. AO1.3 requires students to “Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief including cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice”. This question was clearly focused on the cause of differences.

### **1.2 ‘The doctrine of the Trinity does not make sense.’ Evaluate this claim. [15 marks]**

In general, this question was done well. Almost all students were able to articulate reasons why the doctrine of the Trinity might be seen as not making sense, and reasons why Christians might disagree, thus achieving at least level 3.

The best answers drew on biblical material and church teaching, and referenced scholars to support their arguments, often showing excellent critical analysis. Some students agreed so strongly that the doctrine is nonsensical that they were unable to offer any alternative view, and such wholly one-sided responses could not achieve higher than level 2.

This year, an increased number of students had clearly been taught that critical analysis could be achieved by adding on to each paragraph “This is a weak/ strong argument...”. Where this led to genuine critical analysis, this was, of course, credited. However, some students who used this formulaic approach did not understand that there needs to be some meaningful reflection on the evidence or argument presented, in the context of a dialogue between alternative viewpoints. Simply saying ‘this is a weak argument because some people disagree with it’ is not critical analysis.

### **2.1 Examine how Christianity responds to materialistic secular values. [10 marks]**

There were some excellent answers to this question, which reflected on Christians who reject materialistic secular values, often referencing the Bruderhof communities, and Christians who embrace these values, with many references to prosperity theology. Some excellent answers also discussed the response of liberation theologies.

By contrast, there were also significant numbers of students who did not appear to understand the phrase ‘materialistic secular values’ (taken directly from the specification), and focused on secularism in general, discussing the declining role of religion in politics and society. These answers showed only basic or limited understanding of the topic, and so achieved only level 1 or level 2. A few students completely misunderstood the question as referring to physical resurrection, and were thus unable to achieve any marks.

It should be noted that students are expected to be familiar with all terms used in the specification as well as the published subject specific vocabulary lists.

### **2.2 ‘Christianity responds successfully to issues raised by genetic engineering.’ Evaluate this claim. [15 marks]**

The most notable observation about responses to this question was that many students had only a vague or confused understanding of genetic engineering. Any accurate understanding, even if partial, was fully creditable, since the question was focused on Christian responses, but the students who answered with reference only to assisted conception or cloning were unable to show sufficient focus on the question to go above level 3.

Mid-range answers often focused on whether or not Christianity responds *positively* to genetic engineering, rather than whether or not it responds *successfully to issues raised by* genetic engineering. Such an answer usually constituted ‘a general response’ rather than ‘a well-focused response’, and so was limited to level 3.

The best answers identified a range of specific issues, sometimes focused on the effects of genetic engineering (possible harm, increasing crop yields, potential to eliminate genetically-linked illness), and sometimes on theological implications, including whether or not genetic engineering was an attempt to thwart God’s will for individuals or the world in general, and whether or not it was an acceptable use of God-given human abilities. They then critically analysed the success of different responses in terms of effectiveness and/ or coherence.

As in Q1.1, the formulaic approach to attempting critical analysis was not always successful.

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**3.1 ‘Philosophical arguments for the existence of God show that Christian beliefs about God are not coherent.’****Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Christianity and philosophy. [25 marks]**

This was the more popular of the philosophy dialogues options, chosen by almost three quarters of students. There were some excellent answers which fully deserved full marks. Most students were able to demonstrate relevant knowledge and understanding and discuss two views. Few students chose to put the AO1 content first and then construct an argument; most integrated AO1 and AO2 content. Both approaches were equally successful for accessing the full range of marks.

AO1 element: The best answers to this question considered at least two from the design, cosmological and ontological arguments, and used them to debate whether a range of Christian beliefs about God (eg, existence, omnipotence, benevolence, personal, providential) were supported or challenged by each argument. Weaker answers tended to focus more on the arguments and their critics, with limited consideration of beliefs about God. The mark scheme mandated a cap for answers that did not include both philosophy and Christianity, but this was very rarely necessary.

AO2 element: Most answers included two different views, even those which drew on limited knowledge and understanding. The majority made an evaluation, either at the start or at the end of the essay. The best answers showed excellent critical analysis, setting views of philosophers in perceptive discussion with one another and with Christian beliefs. This kind of argument usually led to a wholly appropriate evaluation fully supported by the arguments presented. Many less successful students were still able to offer different views that focused well on the question with some criticality, and thus achieved level 4.

Some students misunderstood the question, and considered whether philosophical arguments for the existence of God were *coherent with Christian beliefs*, rather than whether they challenge *the coherence of Christian beliefs*, and such answers were at best general responses (level 3). Weaker answers sometimes attempted to insert a formulaic attempt at critical analysis by adding on to each paragraph “This is a weak/ strong argument” with little or no supporting content. Weaker evaluations were sometimes little more than partially reasoned opinion.

**4.1 ‘Philosophy does not support belief in the authority of the Bible.’****Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Christianity and philosophy. [25 marks]**

This was the less popular philosophy dialogues option, chosen by a little over a quarter of students, but many who chose it produced strong answers. Most students were able to demonstrate relevant knowledge and understanding and discuss two views. Few students chose to put the AO1 content first and then construct an argument; most integrated AO1 and AO2 content. Both approaches were equally successful for accessing the full range of marks.

AO1 element: Students drew on a wide range of philosophical thinking, including ideas about religious language, miracles, life after death, religious experiences and the problem of evil. The best answers showed a sound understanding of a range of issues with the authority of the Bible in different Christian traditions. Some answers focused on ‘science’ as their only reference to ‘philosophy’ and this approach mostly led to level 3 responses. Some students seemed to mix up

scholars: credit was given where there was clearly a mistaken name, but ideas were accurately described. The best answers ascribed ideas to the correct scholars meticulously. The mark scheme mandated a cap for answers that did not include both philosophy and Christianity, and this was applied to the few answers which rehearsed different Christian views about the authority of the Bible and the Church with no reference at all to philosophical ideas.

AO2 element: Most answers included two different views, even those which drew on limited knowledge and understanding. The majority made an evaluation, either at the start or at the end of the essay. The best answers showed excellent critical analysis, setting views of a wide range of philosophers in perceptive discussion with one another and with Christian beliefs about the authority of scripture. This kind of argument usually led to a wholly appropriate evaluation fully supported by the arguments presented.

A few answers offered only one view, most often in support of the statement, with limited evidence or argument to support the student's opinion, and such answers were limited to level 2. Weaker answers sometimes attempted to insert a formulaic attempt at critical analysis by adding on to each paragraph "This is a weak/ strong argument" with little or no supporting content. Weaker evaluations were sometimes little more than partially reasoned opinion.

### **5.1 'Natural Moral Law gives Christians clear guidance on issues surrounding wealth.'**

#### **Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Christianity and ethical studies. [25 marks]**

This was by a small margin the more popular ethics dialogues option, chosen by 55% of entries, and many of those who chose it produced strong answers. Most students were able to demonstrate relevant knowledge and understanding and discuss two views. A few students chose to put the AO1 content first and then construct an argument; most integrated AO1 and AO2 content. Both approaches were equally successful for accessing the full range of marks.

AO1 element: The majority of students were able to give a satisfactory or better account of Natural Moral Law, and apply it to some aspects of issues surrounding wealth. Weaker answers tended to focus on the personal ownership of money, but there were many who considered issues such as the distribution of wealth in society, the exploitation of people and resources to create wealth, and issues of wealth belonging to churches.

A few included consideration of liberation theology. A small minority of students mixed up Natural Moral Law and other ethical theories, and these were unable to go above level 2 at best. The mark scheme mandated a cap for answers that did not include both ethics and Christianity, but this was applied to very few answers, since most students were clear that Aquinas' Natural Moral Law is rooted in Christian thinking.

AO2 element: Most answers included two different views, even those which drew on limited knowledge and understanding. The majority made an evaluation, either at the start or at the end of the essay. The best answers showed excellent critical analysis, using a good understanding of different Christian beliefs about wealth to analyse critically the effectiveness or usefulness of Natural Moral Law as a source of guidance. This kind of argument usually led to a wholly appropriate evaluation fully supported by the arguments presented.

A few answers offered only one view, either wholly in support of the statement, or wholly in disagreement, often with limited evidence or argument to support the student's opinion, and such

answers were limited to level 2. A number of answers dismissed the usefulness of Natural Moral Law early in the essay, and then gave more or less comprehensive accounts of one or more other ethical theories. This strategy was not successful, and in general limited the marks to level 3, 'a general response' at best. Weaker answers sometimes attempted to insert a formulaic attempt at critical analysis by adding on to each paragraph "This is a weak/ strong argument" with little or no supporting content. Weaker evaluations were sometimes little more than partially reasoned opinion.

### **6.1 'Bentham's consequential ethics have no value for Christians.'**

#### **Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Christianity and Bentham. [25 marks]**

This was by a small margin the less popular ethics dialogues option, chosen by 45% of entries, and many of those who chose it produced strong answers. Most students were able to demonstrate relevant knowledge and understanding and discuss two views. A few students chose to put the AO1 content first and then construct an argument; most integrated AO1 and AO2 content. Both approaches were equally successful for accessing the full range of marks.

AO1 element: The majority of students were able to give a satisfactory or better account of Bentham's Utilitarianism, and to consider whether it has value for Christians. Weaker answers tended to focus on a superficial understanding of Utilitarianism as actions leading to the pleasure of the majority, but there were many who considered the hedonic/ felicific calculus, Bentham's social attitudes, and similarities to Situation Ethics.

Most students were able to discuss influences on Christian moral attitudes to some extent, and the best showed a broad understanding of Christian ethics and metaethics. A small minority of students mixed up Utilitarianism and other ethical theories, and these were unable to go above level 2 at best. The mark scheme mandated a cap for answers that did not include both ethics and Christianity, but this was applied only to the very few answers which merely discussed the general usefulness of Utilitarianism without reference to Christianity.

AO2 element: Most answers included two different views, even those which drew on limited knowledge and understanding of Utilitarianism. The majority made an evaluation, either at the start or at the end of the essay. The best answers showed excellent critical analysis, using a good understanding of different Christian views about good moral conduct to analyse critically the value of Utilitarianism to Christian moral thinking, on a personal and institutional level.

The very best answers included metaethical consideration of Bentham's ethics as a naturalist ethical approach and compared it with divine command theory and intuitionism/ religious conscience. This kind of argument usually led to a wholly appropriate evaluation fully supported by the arguments presented. A few answers offered only one view, either wholly support of the statement, or wholly in disagreement, often with limited evidence or argument to support the student's opinion, and such answers were limited to level 2.

A significant number of answers dismissed the usefulness of Bentham's ethics early in the essay, and then gave more or less comprehensive accounts of one or more other ethical theories. This strategy was not successful, and in general limited the marks to level 3, 'a general response' at best. Weaker answers sometimes attempted to insert a formulaic attempt at critical analysis by adding on to each paragraph "This is a weak/ strong argument" with little or no supporting content. Weaker evaluations were sometimes little more than partially reasoned opinion.

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

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.