



Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback
Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Religious Studies AS Level
Paper 2: Religion and Ethics

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Introduction

There were fewer than 70 entries for this paper, but candidate answers were sufficient to give a clear impression of how this topic area is being processed by the candidates, what they enjoy and do well and what is more challenging.

Overall, candidates managed their time to enable them to finish the paper and there were few significant gaps in knowledge enabling them to attempt all the questions.

Question 1

Candidates were all aware of the concept of pacifism, although the understanding of the extent the ideology varied. The strongest candidates were able to reference different types of pacifism and offer some textual support by way of illustration. Weaker answers offered little more than a shopping list of two or three versions of pacifism without supporting exemplification. Some candidates chose to reference Martin Luther King as a pacifist, drawing on their knowledge from the Equality topic and this was justifiable.

Question 2

Situation Ethics is perennially popular with candidates, although confidence dealing with the extent of its concepts varied. Strong answers were able to use concepts from Fletcher and Robinson, make effective use of technical language and were not limited to a few sentences about agape. Case studies are always best drawn from Fletcher's own work rather than using generic helping old ladies across the road examples. Over simplification of Situation Ethics is the greatest problem and it is so important that centres ensure that candidates are aware of the extent of scholarly discussion around the theory. William Barclay's article in the Anthology is obviously a good place to start.

Question 3

Candidates generally wrote with confidence about at a leading figure in the fight for equality although the range of individuals was limited. Martin Luther King and Joni Eareckson Tada, as referenced as possible examples in the specification were the most prominent; Malcolm X and Malalah were runners up. Whilst it is not essential to study any other figures, candidates at A level this year offered some very interesting alternative characters. The main limitation was candidates' reactance to assess the work of their chosen figure. Biography and history featured most prominently, but the best answers were those which considered the impact of the work, and offered some consideration of how the work had been inspired.

Question 4(a)

The majority of candidates wrote on the welfare of animals with reference to environmental theories such as deep ecology and biblical concepts of stewardship and dominion. A few were able to write about Peter Singer's beliefs regarding speciesism but overall the sense was that candidates have not delved very deeply into the notion of non-human animals as intrinsically equal to humans. This is a fascinating area of study which is well supported by scholarship.

Question 4(b)

Although candidates were aware of religious approaches to the environment, an analysis of strengths and weaknesses lacked depth and answers were often simplistic and lacked scholarly support. Comparison with secular ethical theories was justifiable and many candidates argued that these offered a better approach to environmental issues. However, candidates will be well served by being equipped to analyse the religious approaches in a systematic manner.

Summary

- Topics were generally familiar to candidates and all invited scholarship, textual reference and understanding to be credited.
- Some candidates were very simplistic in their responses and more in-depth analysis of the topics would enable more candidates to access the top range.