



AS & A2
Philosophy of Religion & Ethics

Summary of scheme of assessment

The Advanced Subsidiary (AS) consists of two units:

- one unit assessed by written examination (Unit 1) with a total examination time of 1 hour 45 minutes
- one enquiry based unit (Unit 2), where students choose a topic out of a choice of seven to research. Students will then sit an external examination of 1 hour 15 mins, where they will answer the question related to their researched topic only.

The A2 consists of a further two units:

- two units (Unit 3 and Unit 4) assessed by written examinations with a total examination time of 3 hours. The first is similar to the AS examination (1 hour 45 minutes); the second paper is based on an extract from seen anthology

The AS and A2 each constitute 50% of the total assessment of the Advanced GCE in Religious Studies. It is expected that the AS units will normally be assessed at the end of the first year of a two year course. Separate certification for AS will be available for those who do not go on to take the full Advanced GCE.

Unit 1: Foundations

This unit explores the foundations of Philosophy of Religion and Ethics. Students must answer **THREE** questions from a choice of **EIGHTEEN**.

Philosophy of Religion

1 A study of philosophical arguments about the existence of God:

- Design — key ideas, strengths and weaknesses
- Cosmological — key ideas, strengths and weaknesses.

2 A study of selected problems in the philosophy of religion:

- Problems of evil and suffering, different types of problems and solutions
- A study of philosophical debates about miracles: concepts of miracle; reasons to believe in miracles; philosophical problems with reference to Hume.

Ethics

1 A study of ethical concepts:

- The relationship between religion and morality
- Utilitarianism
- Situation ethics.

2 A study of ethical dilemmas:

- Issues of war and peace
- Sexual ethics.

Unit 2: Investigations

This unit has an enquiry-based approach where students are invited to research one of the following topics:

- Religious Experience
- Mind & Body
- A study of a key philosopher(s) and their views on the philosophy of religion
- Medical Ethics
- The Natural World & Morality
- Equality in the modern world

Unit 3: Developments

This unit has been designed to build on the knowledge, understanding and skills developed in *Unit 1: Foundations*.

Students must answer **THREE** questions from a choice of **EIGHTEEN**.

Philosophy of Religion

Candidates may answer with reference to any religious or non-religious stance, provided the material is relevant to the question.

1. A study of philosophical arguments about the existence of God:

- Religious experience — key concepts, strengths and weaknesses
- Ontological — key concepts, strengths and weaknesses
- Non-existence of God and critiques of religious belief.

2. A study of selected problems in the philosophy of religion:

- Beliefs about life after death: reincarnation; rebirth; resurrection; immortality of the soul
- A study of religious language: analogy; language games; myth and symbol; verification and falsification debates.

Ethics

1 A study of ethical concepts:

- Critiques of the relationship between religion and morality
- Deontology, natural moral law, virtue ethics — key concepts, strengths and weaknesses.

2 A study of selected problems in ethics:

- Meaning and definition of ethical terms with reference to 'is/ought' and debates about 'good', emotivism
- Objectivity, relativism, subjectivism
- Justice, law and punishment.

Unit 4: Implications

Students must answer **ONE** question from a choice of **NINE**. Questions are based on an anthology published by Edexcel. The anthology consists of approximately 20 pages of excerpts from two or three well known texts. The exam board will then choose just one section (normally about three paragraphs) of the anthology from which you must base your response. In other words you must familiarise yourself with the entire anthology and its related themes to be fully prepared.

At CCHS we will normally concentrate on the Philosophy of Religion section. Most of the studying for this will be through reading and discussion in class and wider reading around the issues at home. Below are the themes that will be explored:

1. Philosophy of Religion

- Religious language
- Religious experience
- Emergence of modern philosophy of religion.

AS Sample Questions:

Answer **THREE** questions

Philosophy

1. (a) (i) Examine the main strengths and weaknesses of the cosmological argument for the existence of God. (28)
- (ii) Consider the view that the weaknesses are more convincing than the strengths. (12)

OR

- (b) (i) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the design argument for the existence of God? (28)
- (ii) Comment on the view that the weaknesses are more convincing than the strengths. (12)
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2. (a) (i) What is meant by the problem of evil and suffering? (8)
- (ii) Give an account of two solutions and consider the view that they fail to solve the problem of suffering. (32)

OR

- (b) (i) What is meant by the term 'miracle'? (8)
- (ii) Examine and comment on the view that arguments against miracles are stronger than those arguments in support of them. (32)

Ethics

3. (a) (i) What are the advantages of utilitarianism? (28)
- (ii) Identify the main problems of utilitarianism. To what extent do these make utilitarianism unacceptable? (12)

OR

- (b) (i) For what reasons may situation ethics be regarded as a useful ethical theory? (28)
- (ii) Outline the main weaknesses of situation ethics. To what extent do these undermine the theory? (12)
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4. (a) (i) Examine what is meant by just war and pacifism. (28)
- (ii) To what extent is pacifism compatible with a just war? (12)

OR

- (b) (i) Outline the view that there are no rights and wrongs in sexual ethics. (28)
- (ii) To what extent, if any, is it reasonable to claim that sexual ethics should be linked to religious beliefs? (12)
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A2 Sample Questions:

Answer **THREE** questions

Philosophy

1. (a) Analyse the key concepts of religious experience as an argument for the existence of God and evaluate the view that this argument supports the probability of the existence of God. (40)

OR

- (b) Examine the major features of the ontological argument for the existence of God. To what extent do the strengths of the argument overcome its weaknesses? (40)
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2. (a) Compare and contrast reincarnation and immortality of the soul. Consider critically arguments against belief in life after death. (40)

OR

- (b) 'Religious language raises very difficult, if not impossible problems.'
Discuss this statement by examining two of the following: analogy, verification or falsification. (40)
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Ethics

3. (a) Analyse and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of deontology. (40)

OR

- (b) 'A study of key ideas of natural moral law will lead to the view that it is of little value as a practical ethic.'
Clarify and assess this claim. (40)
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4. (a) Examine **two** of the following: objectivity; relativism; subjectivism. Consider critically the contributions of one of these to **one** of the following: justice; law or punishment. (40)

OR

- (b) Examine the view that it is more reasonable to separate morality from religion.
Discuss this view in relation to emotivism. (40)
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Question 1 – Philosophy of Religion

- (a) Clarify the argument and/or interpretation in the passage. (24)
- (b) Do you agree with the ideas(s) expressed? Justify your point of view and discuss its implications for understanding religion and human experience. (16)

A01 = 24 and A02 = 16

Why all this talk about arguing from religious experience? someone may be asking. 'If you really experience God you don't have to argue, you *know* he's real, and that's all there is to it.' So if we are trying to do justice to the varieties of religious experience, we must take very seriously this particular type, the sense of knowledge arising out of inner conviction.

It is a risky business, of course, to claim to know something and to act as though one knows for sure, if one can't give much by way of reasons for one's claim. People have claimed to 'just *know*' (as they put it) all sorts of things. Even the most irrational and misguided things have been said and done at times with apparent certainty and complete conviction by tyrants and dictators, and by ordinary people confused by ignorance or blinded by prejudice. To have no doubts at all about one's beliefs may sometimes be more a symptom of insanity or arrogant irresponsibility than of sound thinking. Yet believers, aware of all these risks, may still feel they have a right to say they know because they experience God's reality for themselves.

From Donovan P *Can we know God by experience?* in
Davies B (ed) – *Philosophy of Religion: a guide and anthology* (OUP, 2000) p370