

General Ordination Examination 2012

Set 1: Liturgy and Church Music

LIMITED RESOURCES: A printed one-volume annotated Bible, a printed 1979 Book of Common Prayer, a printed Book of Occasional Services and printed authorized Episcopal hymnals but no electronic or Internet resources.

The proper liturgies of the Paschal Triduum – Maundy Thursday evening, Good Friday and Easter (Great Vigil of Easter and Easter Day) – are often said to be one liturgy celebrated in three segments, like three acts of the same play. As rector of a parish that observes the Triduum, you will need to plan these liturgies.

In an integrated 1,500-word essay:

Using the rites themselves, explain what the paschal mystery is and how it is brought to life through your choices of music, movement, symbols and use of space.

Explain how your choices communicate both the unity of the three days and the distinctiveness of each liturgy.

Set 2: Church History

NO EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Throughout the history of Christianity, both civil governments and religious forces have played active roles in shaping the character of “Christian” society. In a 1,500-word essay:

1. Choose two of the following historical examples. Explain the social and political issues that lay behind each of them and the respective roles played by “church” (Christian leaders, institutions, movements) and “state” (the civil government) in the resolution of each.
 - a. Constantine and the Council of Nicaea (325 CE)
 - b. The Elizabethan Settlement (England, late 16th century)
 - c. The abolition of slavery in the United States (mid-19th century)
2. How do the issues of the relative roles of “church” and “state” raised by the examples chosen in Part 1 continue to play out today in the United States or in another country where The Episcopal Church is present?

Set 3: Christian Ethics and Moral Theology

LIMITED RESOURCES: A printed one-volume annotated Bible and a printed 1979 Book of Common Prayer but no electronic or Internet Resources

One definition of Christian ethics is, “how to think about how to act, as a baptized person.” In many parts of the world, Christians are becoming increasingly concerned about the impact of our

actions upon the natural environment in which we live. This concern has led to considerable reflection on how we think about the world around us and on how our thinking shapes our actions in relation to it.

In 1967, Lynn White published an interpretation of how the Christian understanding of nature has contributed to environmental problems. In "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," White identified himself as a church member. An extract of this article appears below.

In an essay of not more than 1,500 words:

- Explain how the following extract from White's essay does or does not fairly present a Christian ethical perspective on the stewardship of creation. In your essay, provide an analysis of White's views, paying particular attention to the concepts and principles he identifies and discusses. Identify other significant points in both Scripture and Tradition and show briefly how their inclusion would provide a more comprehensive presentation of a Christian understanding of the stewardship of creation.

(For the purpose of this question, please overlook the author's use of non-inclusive language.)

An extract (~ 1750 words) from "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis" in *Ecology and Religion in History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974):

Until recently, agriculture has been the chief occupation even in "advanced" societies; hence, any change in methods of tillage has much importance. Early plows, drawn by two oxen, did not normally turn the sod but merely scratched it. Thus, cross-plowing was needed and fields tended to be squarish. In the fairly light soils and semiarid climates of the Near East and Mediterranean, this worked well. But such a plow was inappropriate to the wet climate and often sticky soils of northern Europe. By the latter part of the 7th century after Christ, however, following obscure beginnings, certain northern peasants were using an entirely new kind of plow, equipped with a vertical knife to cut the line of the furrow, a horizontal share to slice under the sod, and a moldboard to turn it over. The friction of this plow with the soil was so great that it normally required not two but eight oxen. It attacked the land with such violence that cross-plowing was not needed, and fields tended to be shaped in long strips.

In the days of the scratch-plow, fields were distributed generally in units capable of supporting a single family. Subsistence farming was the presupposition. But no peasant owned eight oxen: to use the new and more efficient plow, peasants pooled their oxen to form large plow-teams, originally receiving (it would appear) plowed strips in proportion to their contribution. Thus, distribution of land was based no longer on the needs of a family but, rather, on the capacity of a power machine to till the earth. Man's relation to the soil was profoundly changed. Formerly man had been part of nature; now he was the exploiter of nature. Nowhere else in the world did farmers develop any analogous agricultural implement. Is it coincidence that modern technology, with its ruthlessness toward nature, has so largely been produced by descendants of these peasants of northern Europe?

This same exploitive attitude appears slightly before A.D. 830 in Western illustrated calendars. In older calendars the months were shown as passive personifications. The new Frankish calendars, which set the style for the Middle Ages, are very different: they show men coercing the world around them—plowing, harvesting, chopping trees, butchering pigs. Man and nature are two things, and man is master.

These novelties seem to be in harmony with larger intellectual patterns. What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny—that is, by religion. To Western eyes this is very evident in, say, India or Ceylon. It is equally true of ourselves and of our medieval ancestors.

The victory of Christianity over paganism was the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture. It has become fashionable today to say that, for better or worse, we live in the “post-Christian age.” Certainly the forms of our thinking and language have largely ceased to be Christian, but to my eye the substance often remains amazingly akin to that of the past. Our daily habits of action, for example, are dominated by an implicit faith in perpetual progress which was unknown either to Greco-Roman antiquity or to the Orient. It is rooted in, and is indefensible apart from, Judeo-Christian theology....

What did Christianity tell people about their relations with the environment?

... Christianity inherited from Judaism not only a concept of time as non-repetitive and linear but also a striking story of creation. By gradual stages a loving and all-powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally, God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man’s benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man’s purposes. And, although man’s body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God’s image.

Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. As early as the 2nd century both Tertullian and Saint Irenaeus of Lyons were insisting that when God shaped Adam he was foreshadowing the image of the incarnate Christ, the Second Adam. Man shares, in great measure, God’s transcendence of nature. Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia’s religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.

At the level of the common people this worked out in an interesting way. In Antiquity every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own *genius loci*, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men, but were very unlike men; centaurs, fauns, and mermaids show their ambivalence. Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to

placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation, and to keep it placated. By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.

It is often said that for animism the Church substituted the cult of saints. True; but the cult of saints is functionally quite different from animism. The saint is not in natural objects; he may have special shrines, but his citizenship is in heaven. Moreover, a saint is entirely a man; he can be approached in human terms. In addition to saints, Christianity of course also had angels and demons inherited from Judaism and perhaps, at one remove, from Zoroastrianism. But these were all as mobile as the saints themselves. The spirits in natural objects, which formerly had protected nature from man, evaporated. Man's effective monopoly on spirit in this world was confirmed, and the old inhibitions to the exploitation of nature crumbled.

... The Christian dogma of creation, which is found in the first clause of all the Creeds, has another meaning for our comprehension of today's ecologic crisis. By revelation, God had given man the Bible, the Book of Scripture. But since God had made nature, nature also must reveal the divine mentality. The religious study of nature for the better understanding of God was known as natural theology. In the early Church, and always in the Greek East, nature was conceived primarily as a symbolic system through which God speaks to men: the ant is a sermon to sluggards; rising flames are the symbol of the soul's aspiration. The view of nature was essentially artistic rather than scientific. While Byzantium preserved and copied great numbers of ancient Greek scientific texts, science as we conceive it could scarcely flourish in such an ambience.

However, in the Latin West by the early 13th century natural theology was following a very different bent. It was ceasing to be the decoding of the physical symbols of God's communication with man and was becoming the effort to understand God's mind by discovering how his creation operates. The rainbow was no longer simply a symbol of hope first sent to Noah after the Deluge: Robert Grosseteste, Friar Roger Bacon, and Theodoric of Freiberg produced startlingly sophisticated work on the optics of the rainbow, but they did it as a venture in religious understanding. From the 13th century onward, up to and including Leibnitz and Newton, every major scientist, in effect, explained his motivations in religious terms. Indeed, if Galileo had not been so expert an amateur theologian he would have got into far less trouble: the professionals resented his intrusion. And Newton seems to have regarded himself more as a theologian than as a scientist. It was not until the late 18th century that the hypothesis of God became unnecessary to many scientists ...

An Alternative Christian View

We would seem to be headed toward conclusions unpalatable to many Christians. Since both science and technology are blessed words in our contemporary vocabulary, some may be happy at the notions, first, that viewed historically, modern science is an extrapolation of natural theology and, second, that modern technology is at least partly to be explained as an Occidental, voluntarist realization of the Christian dogma of man's transcendence of, and rightful master over, nature. But, as we now recognize, somewhat over a century ago science and technology-hitherto quite

separate activities~joined to give mankind powers which, to judge by many of the ecologic effects, are out of control. If so, Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt.

I personally doubt that disastrous ecologic backlash can be avoided simply by applying to our problems more science and more technology. Our science and technology have grown out of Christian attitudes toward man's relation to nature which are almost universally held not only by Christians and neo-Christians but also by those who fondly regard themselves as post-Christians. Despite Copernicus, all the cosmos rotates around our little globe. Despite Darwin, we are not, in our hearts, part of the natural process.

... What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one.

... The present increasing disruption of the global environment is the product of a dynamic technology and science which were originating in the Western medieval world.... Their growth cannot be understood historically apart from distinctive attitudes toward nature which are deeply grounded in Christian dogma. The fact that most people do not think of these attitudes as Christian is irrelevant. No new set of basic values has been accepted in our society to displace those of Christianity. Hence we shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man.

... Both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not. We must rethink and refeel our nature and destiny.

Set 4: Christian Theology and Missiology

OPEN PRINTED RESOURCES BUT NO ELECTRONIC OR INTERNET RESOURCES

In an essay of not more than 1,500 words:

What is the Episcopal/Anglican theological understanding of the Holy Spirit? For your answer, draw broadly on appropriate sources from the Christian tradition, including (but not limited to) three specifically Episcopal/Anglican sources. What are the marks of the work of the Holy Spirit? Making use of your response in Part 1, choose three examples to show how the Holy Spirit's work informs, shapes, energizes and directs the life and work of The Episcopal Church today.

Set 5: Contemporary Society

NO EXTERNAL RESOURCES

The role of Christianity in civic life and of religion in general, has undergone substantive changes through the centuries. For example, the Anglican Church was the official church in several American colonies prior to the Revolutionary War, only to see its status diminished shortly afterward. In our own age, as another example, the tax-exempt status of the real estate of religious institutions is being questioned by a more secular and pluralistic society. At the same time, some politicians are calling for a greater role for religion in society (sometimes for a greater specifically Christian role).

In such a context and as rector of a local parish, you have accepted an invitation to pray at the inauguration of the town's mayor.

1. In an essay of approximately 750 words, address the changing relationship that the church has with a society that questions the privileged place historically given to religious entities. How has this changing place of privilege both supported and hindered the church's mission "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ"? (BCP, 855)
2. Compose a prayer of approximately 75 words that you will use at the inauguration.
3. In light of your analysis in Part 1, in an essay of approximately 750 words explain:
 - a. Why you accepted the invitation to pray at this civic event, and
 - b. The reasons why you have composed this particular prayer in light of both the church's mission and the currently perceived role of religion in civic life.

Set 6: The Holy Scriptures

LIMITED RESOURCES: A printed one-volume annotated Bible and a printed 1979 Book of Common Prayer but no electronic or Internet resources.

Throughout history, communities have maintained their identity by passing on their traditions (stories, laws, songs, prayers, etc.) from one generation to the next. One of the tasks of a priest specified in the ordination rite is to be a teacher, an educator who passes on and interprets the tradition. The following texts are from the propers for education in the BCP (931):

Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25

2 Timothy 3:14-5

In no more than 750 words, taking into account the historical, literary, and theological background of each passage, briefly identify the important highlights of the tradition – the

community's "story" ~ to be passed on to the following generations of the community to which the passage is addressed. (NOTE: Your answer should demonstrate an understanding of the historical, literary and theological contexts of these passages. It should not include a detailed exegesis of the texts.)

In no more than 750 words, briefly summarize at least two biblical traditions that you consider most important to be passed on to the next generation in The Episcopal Church, drawing on the material you have presented in Part 1 and any other relevant biblical texts. Provide a rationale for each of your choices, including an example of a situation in the contemporary church where this tradition would be especially pertinent and useful.

Set 7: Theory and Practice of Ministry

NO EXTERNAL RESOURCES

You are the new rector of a program-sized parish with many young people. You've noticed that much communicating is done among the youth, youth leaders, and others using Facebook, tweets, e-mails, and other social media. Having just completed the Safe Church training, you are concerned about the use of social media among young people as well as between younger and older church people in your parish. You want to insure that the use of media promotes healthy communication and adequate security for all.

Write a clear official policy of about 500 words that includes at least three guidelines for the use of social media in parish communications.

In an essay of not more than 1,000 words, explain the information, authority, and expertise that contributed to your formation of this policy, identifying the people and the other resources that you have consulted.