# An example of a 15 Mark Question Response J625/01

## November 2020 Q1e

‘Only people who attend church regularly should be allowed to have a Christian marriage ceremony’.

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

* Analyse and evaluate the importance of points of view, referring to common and divergent views within Christianity.
* Refer to sources of wisdom and authority.

A Christian marriage ceremony is one where the couple being married are bound together legally and in front of God. The ceremony is a Christian one with prayers, reading from the Bible and vows based on Christian teaching. In particular, Jesus’ words about how in a marriage the couple are joined together and that no person should break that up, are a feature of the event. So, should the couple be regular worshippers at the church if they are going to go through such a significant ‘Christian ceremony’?

Christians differ about this. Some take the view that getting married in church and making promises in front of God can only be done by people who really understand the meaning of the things that are said and done during the ceremony. The Roman Catholic church would probably take the view that the couple should have attended mass regularly. Other denominations take the same view. By attending church regularly, the couple will enjoy the support of the community of the church. Through regular worship the couple’s Christian faith will be strengthened and they will feel closer to God so they will really understand how important the promises they make in the ceremony are.

If on the other hand the couple do not attend church regularly or even at all, they may not be considered devout enough to be allowed a church wedding. Are they really Christians? Some denominations might take the view that the couple are taking the words and the promises made during the marriage ceremony too lightly. This will not please God. This is a kind of fraud and undermines the value of the ceremony for those who really take it seriously.

Other Christian groups and denominations would take a different view and accept that people’s understanding of the vows and commitments are not the concern of the church but are between the couple and God. In the Roman Catholic tradition marriage is a sacrament and an opportunity to receive the grace of God. It is wrong to put barriers to people who wish to make their commitment in a church ceremony just because they have not attended regularly. Anyway, there could be many good reasons why a person is unable to attend church regularly. For example, they may be disabled and can’t get to church or have to work on Sundays. The C of E has very simple rules about this which make church wedding easier. For example, since 2008 as long as one of the couple have lived in the parish for six months, they can be married in a church ceremony by the vicar.

Also, at the beginning of the ceremony the priest or vicar always reads words from a prayer book about the what the reasons for getting married are and how it is a commitment before God. So, couples who do not go to church regularly will still know what the ceremony means and then the question of are they devout enough, because they don’t go to church too much, is not up to the church but up to them and God.

A Christian marriage ceremony is also a cultural thing and some Christians believe that people should be allowed to take part in rituals that are a feature of life in Britain as a mainly Christian country.

In conclusion, it seems that some denominations could find reasons for refusing to marry people who have had little to do with the church but for many Christian groups, if the couple are sincere and listen to what is being said, they think it would be wrong to refuse them the chance to make the legal commitments under the eyes of God. It’s not up to churches to judge, Jesus told us not to judge. Only God can do that.

### Commentary

Taking account of the of age the candidate and the time constraints of the exam, the response matches the description of a good response for both AO1 and AO2. The response fulfils the requirement of the question rubric, to consider the issues from the point of view of common and divergent views within Christianity and to make reference to sources of wisdom and authority.

### For AO1

There is a good understanding of the issue in the stimulus and there is appropriate knowledge and understanding of different views and attitudes amongst Christian groups. about the concept of marriage and attitudes towards it. Sources of wisdom and authority are offered and used effectively. For example, Jesus words about divorce which are acceptably paraphrased; reference to the Roman Catholic attitude towards marriage as sacrament land in the last few lines of the response reference to the cultural aspects and significance of Christian marriage in Britain. The importance of the issue to individuals, communities and society generally is demonstrated for example paragraph 4 where the difficulty of regular church attendance for some individuals (which should not preclude the opportunity of a church wedding for those people) is mentioned and the importance of Christian marriage for the cultural life and therefore British society in Para 6. All the bullet points for AO1 level 3 are addressed, not necessary equally well but the best fit overall is level 3.

### For AO2

This is a good attempt to respond to the stimulus. After the first paragraph where is issue in the stimulus is clearly explained, the response acknowledges that Christians differ on this issue,

Several viewpoints are then explored and there is some evidence of comparison and critical evaluation.

The first argument is that many Christians, for example Roman Catholics, expect the couple to be regular attendees at church or mass is presented. Regular attendance has the benefit of offering community support for the couple and it also helps to strengthen their faith, leading to a deep understanding of the significance of marriage as a permanent commitment in church, before God.

In the paragraph 3, a second view held by some Christians is explored, that people who don’t attend church regularly but demand to married in church are being frauds. They are pretending to be Christians by saying all the right words but have little to do with the church community, or with regular worship. Perhaps they don’t really have any faith at all.

In paragraph 4, the view that it’s a matter between the couple and God and not the concern of the Church is expressed along with the view held for example by Roman Catholics that as marriage is a sacrament, it is an opportunity for the couple to enjoy the grace of God and none should be refused that opportunity

In paragraph 5, there is the view that the words about marriage said during a wedding by the priest must remind the couple of its significance so, whether they are regular attendees at church or not, they will still be exposed to the serious nature of the occasion and to what the commitment before God is. So even without regular church attendance, the couple will know what they are doing and if they are really are being frauds, it is up to them and their conscience and not up to the church to judge them. This view forms much of the summing up and brief conclusion which is supported with a reference to Jesus’ words on the Sermon on the Mount.

In expressing the various views, there is evidence of analysis and evaluation, reasoned argument and some discussion and comment on the views. The arguments are balanced against each other by the presentation in the response and there is some comparison. There is a sustained line of reasoning which is summed briefly up in final paragraph. This is not a personal view but a balanced judgment on the issue which relates well to understanding of the issue in the introductory paragraph.

The response fully addresses all the bullet points at Level 3 and at Level 4 but to a lesser extent. There is however sufficient achievement at Level 4 for the response to be placed in that Level. The final mark to be awarded in an exam session would reflect the decisions about performance of candidates across the cohort, after consideration of a substantial number of responses at the standardisation meeting.

If this had been Question 2e rather than 1e we would immediately see that the strap line for quality of extended response for level 4 applies: ***There is a well-developed and sustained line of reasoning which is coherent, relevant and logically structured***

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