Here are two example answers from the AS-level Exam practice questions on page 41.

2a Explain why some Christians disagree with embryo research. (15 marks)

Mark scheme

- Acceptance of the strong Sanctity of Life principle is supported by biblical texts.
  - Human life has intrinsic value.
  - Sanctity of life always has priority over quality of life.
- No research that is not directly aimed at benefitting the embryo concerned.
- A person has full moral rights, including right to life, from conception.
- Destruction of embryos is tantamount to murder.
- Seen as exploitation of a vulnerable human.
- Good intention of research does not justify it.
  - In natural moral law, both the intention and the act must be good.
- Some of the possible purposes of embryo research are morally unacceptable.
  - For example, designer babies.

Model answer

The Catholic Church and some other individual Christians are totally opposed to embryo research as it breaches the strong Sanctity of Life principle. This principle states that human life is holy and has intrinsic value, since it has been given by God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) states clearly that the embryo ‘must be respected and protected absolutely from conception’ and Dignitas Personae says that from that point it must be treated as a person, enjoying ‘the inviolable right of every human being to life’. The Church appeals to the Bible in support of its view: ‘before you were born I knew you, before you were born I set you apart’ (Jeremiah 1:5).

There are no grounds, then, on which innocent human life may be deliberately destroyed. The destruction of embryos at 14 days or, in the case of therapeutic cloning, at five to six days, is tantamount to murder, which means it breaks the sixth Commandment. It also contravenes the first primary precept.

Furthermore, embryo research is an act of exploitation. It treats the embryo as ‘disposable biological material’ (CCC). It takes advantage of the embryo’s vulnerability as it conducts research without the embryo’s consent. The research being conducted, however good the intention, does not directly benefit the embryo concerned. Good intentions alone are not enough to justify it. According to Aquinas, both the intention and the act must be good. In the case of embryo research, the act is not good since it results in the embryo’s harm and death.

Embryo research is carried out in order to develop a range of treatments. Some of these are morally unacceptable to many Christians. For instance, pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) is a technique developed by embryo research that enables embryos with the potential for genetic defects to be identified and destroyed. A further possible development would be the ability to create designer babies with characteristics desired by their parents. Such research is prohibited in the UK. The Catholic Church would oppose it along with PGD as being discriminatory.

Commentary

Appropriate use of quotation and scholarly reference is used in development of points, which are fully focused on the question. There is effective use of specialist terminology and the response is coherently structured.

2b ‘The Just War theory has no relevance in a world that possesses weapons of mass destruction.’ Assess this view. (15 marks)

Mark scheme

In support:

- The Just War theory was developed in the context of medieval wars; modern warfare using weapons of mass destruction (WMD) would be of a totally different order.
- The use of WMD would make protection of civilians impossible.
- The future would be infinitely worse after their use than any prior situation.
- There would be no winners in a nuclear war; it would have catastrophic results for the whole of the world.
No situation could be so bad as to make the use of WMD proportionate.

The possession of WMD by many nations acts as a deterrent to major wars, so this means that the Just War theory is not needed.

Other views:

- Because of nuclear proliferation and concerns about rogue states acquiring the technology, the Just War theory is more relevant than ever.
- Many of its conditions are aimed at limiting war and if recognised internationally, could prevent the use of WMD.
- The condition permitting use in self-defence discourages invasion or attack.
- The increasing sophistication of WMD means that they can be precisely targeted to avoid civilian casualties, e.g. ‘theatre’ nuclear weapons.
- The last resort condition encourages other methods of sorting the issue, for example, by dialogue or sanctions.

Model answer

As an attempt to limit war, the Just War theory is predominantly a product of medieval thinking. Because the nature of fighting modern wars has changed now that there is the possibility of using weapons of mass destruction, the Just War theory can have no effective application in the twenty-first century. The military and political scenarios are essentially different.

In the past, there has been general acceptance of the need to avoid harm to civilians, but the use of WMD would make this impossible to implement and therefore the Just War condition might seem irrelevant. Even strategic use of ‘theatre’ nuclear weapons would adversely affect the environment as a whole. The use of airborne viruses might be targeted at a particular area, but a sudden change in wind direction could lead to thousands of civilians being killed. The effects of chemical weapons on innocent people have been seen in Syria.

However, it could be argued that the possession of WMD makes the Just War theory more relevant than ever before. It is intended to limit and even prevent war and one reason why these weapons have not been used by most of their possessors is concern about civilian casualties. This, though, highlights the real problem with the theory. It is effective only if it is implemented internationally.

If nuclear war was to break out, the condition that refers to likelihood of victory would be meaningless. Although there might technically be winners and losers, in actual fact all would be losers. The environment would be affected for thousands of years and many species, including Homo sapiens, might be unable to survive.

There have been no major wars since 1945 and from this it might be argued that possessing WMD makes countries less likely to seek violent solutions to problems. In this case, the Just War theory is no longer needed. However, a more persuasive argument in my view is that the proliferation of such weapons increases the distrust that makes a slide into war more likely. The Just War theory affords a better protection, so is still relevant, but it needs international recognition and application.

Commentary

The chains of reasoning are coherently expressed and are supported by appropriate evidence. Both sides of the debate are carefully considered and lead naturally to the concluding evaluation.
Here two example answers from the A-level Exam practice questions on page 73.

1a Examine how Darwin’s theory of evolution influenced nineteenth century Christian thought. (10 marks)

**Mark scheme**

- Key points made by Darwin’s theory:
  - Long period of gradual development.
  - Development of complex from simple life forms.
  - Concepts of natural selection and the survival of the fittest.

- Elements of Christian belief that were challenged by Darwin’s theory:
  - Belief that the Genesis creation stories were true.
  - God’s purposeful creation of the universe.
  - The idea of humans as essentially different from other animals and created in God’s image.
  - The anthropocentric view of the world.

- Negative influences of theory on nineteenth century Christian thought:
  - Many lost their religious faith.

- Rejection of theory of evolution:
  - By fundamentalist Christians.
  - By some Church leaders, for example, Bishop Wilberforce.

- Acceptance by more liberal thinkers
  - Not seen as a challenge to Christian belief.

**Model answer**

As the result of his journey on the Beagle and his observations of life on the Galapagos Islands, Darwin developed his theory of evolution. His observation of what in fact was common farming practice when breeding animals reinforced him in his conviction that his theory of natural selection was accurate. He claimed that species which survived did so because they possessed the characteristics necessary for survival. Those best adapted to survival passed on their characteristics to their offspring and so gradually more complex life forms emerged. It was a case of the survival of the fittest.

His thinking had a profound influence on nineteenth century Christians. It was said that church pews emptied overnight. It seemed to many that Darwin’s theory was right but was incompatible with Christian teaching.

At the other end of the Christian spectrum, fundamentalist Christians rejected Darwin’s theory. Convinced that the Bible was absolutely and literally true, they dismissed it as an erroneous product of a fallible human mind.

Many influential Christians also rejected the theory. Bishop Wilberforce was renowned for his skill in public speaking. Though not a scientist, he was also a member of the Royal Society. In a notable debate in 1860 Wilberforce opposed the theory of evolution largely on philosophical and scientific grounds. Darwin later admitted that Wilberforce had addressed the less secure aspects of his theory. The debate, however, is famous for the dispute between Wilberforce and Huxley. Exactly what was said is not known for sure, but according to the popular version of the debate, Wilberforce asked at what point apes appeared on the Huxley family tree, to which Huxley countered that he would rather have an ape as an ancestor than a man who misused his high intelligence and influential position. Whatever the truth of this, Wilberforce also challenged the theory because of its assertion that human beings were simply evolved animals rather than having been specially created in the image of God.

More liberal Christians, however, who had long rejected a fundamentalist approach to the Bible welcomed Darwin’s theory. Charles Kingsley stated his support for the idea of God creating living beings that were capable of self-development rather than having continually to intervene. Gore’s essay on the Incarnation in Lux Mundi incorporated evolutionary thought.

**Commentary**

A range of views are accurately and coherently presented. There is appropriate reference to scholarly opinion and effective use of specialist terminology. This is a Level 5 response.
2b ‘Biblical views on creation are totally incompatible with modern scientific thinking.’ Evaluate this claim.

**Mark scheme**

**In support:**
- As the word of God, every word of the Bible is true.
- Where Genesis 1 and 2 conflict with modern science, the latter is mistaken.
- There are many irreconcilable differences between the two approaches.
- Atheists such as Dawkins would agree that the two are totally incompatible.
- The Bible is the product of irrational superstition and has no value for the twenty-first century.
- The two are totally incompatible.
  - Science alone communicates the truth.
  - The Bible is the product of irrational superstition and has no value for the twenty-first century.
- The Bible is the product of a pre-scientific age and although some parts, for example the teachings of Jesus, may have value, those that purport to be scientific are completely meaningless in the twenty-first century.
- Genesis 1 and 2 as apparently factual descriptions of the origins of the universe and of life are therefore irreconcilable with modern scientific thought.

**Other views:**
- Old earth creationists see the difference between modern science and the Genesis stories as chiefly one of language.
  - Genesis 1:1 is a poetic (though factually true) reference to the very beginnings of the universe which science more prosaically explains in terms of the Big Bang theory.
  - Some accept a modified version of evolution as in accord with Genesis 1, but the claim that humans are simply evolved animals conflicts with the Genesis statement that humans are created in the image of God.
  - Since the Bible is inerrant, conflicting scientific views must be rejected as erroneous.
  - The two are therefore partially but not totally incompatible.
- The two are not incompatible because their purpose is totally different.
  - The Genesis stories were never intended to be viewed as factual or scientific but suggest answers to ultimate questions.
  - In Genesis 1 and 2, teachings on the significance of the universe are clothed in mythical language to make them more memorable.
- The two approaches need one another in order to be fully understood.

**Model answer**

If Genesis 1 and 2 are thought to give a scientific account of the origins of the universe and of life, then it would indeed seem just about impossible to reconcile them with scientific theories such as the Big Bang and evolution. In some states in the USA, science lessons about the beginnings of the universe are based on the biblical accounts. The reasoning behind this is that, unlike scientific theories, which are the product of human thought, the Bible is the inerrant word of God. It is therefore true in every particular. The universe was created in six days rather than over billions of years, and humans were a special creation, essentially different from the animal kingdom.

However, the evidence of the world in which we live suggests something very different. Fossil evidence points to life having begun on earth millions of years ago, and the red shift and cosmic microwave evidence supports a dating of 13.8 billion years for the start of the universe itself. Some Christian fundamentalists would counter the fossil evidence by saying it was placed there by God as a test of our faith, but this does not seem reasonable. It portrays a very insecure God not worthy of worship.

Many fundamentalists, though, are not literalists and they have a more positive attitude to modern science. They regard the creation of light in Genesis 1 as a reference to what science refers to as the Big Bang. Some of these fundamentalists accept a modified version of evolution, though they insist on humanity as a special creation. They would therefore reject the word ‘totally’. A problem here, though is that if evolution was God’s chosen method for much of the millions of years of life on earth, it is hard to accept a radical change of method in the final stage.

One flaw in both types of fundamental viewpoints lies in their insistence on Genesis 1 and 2 as concerned with fact. This does not do justice to the text. Viewing these chapters as myth and interpreting them as conveying beliefs about the nature of God and the universe gives them much greater value. It allows the Genesis stories to be understood in their proper context, which was that of a pre-scientific world. Such an approach means that there is no incompatibility in claiming that the Genesis stories contain invaluable truths and accepting the findings of modern science.

- For example, the understanding of what it means to be stewards of the universe is intensified by the insights of modern science.
- The theological and ethical implications of the Genesis creation stories are essential, as, on its own, modern science gives no guidance about the meaning of its findings for humanity.
Of course, Christians such as Michael Behe are not the only fundamentalists. Fundamentalism is found in atheism also, for example in the writings of Dawkins. His contemptuous dismissal of biblical texts is reminiscent of the literalist dismissal of science. For him, as for Christian literalists, biblical views on creation and modern science are totally incompatible. Dawkins views this as the only possible approach for an intelligent and rational individual. However, the work carried out by scientists such as John Polkinghorne on the interface between religion and science suggests that this is not a valid conclusion to draw.

Overall, it seems that the statement is true only for those who make extreme claims for either biblical texts or for modern science. Those who think that one of these contains all the answers to the exclusion of everything else are bound to see the two as wholly incompatible with one another. Many Christians, however, find no problem in adopting the findings of science while at the same time deriving great value from the Genesis creation traditions.

**Commentary**

A wide diversity of views is considered and assessed. The supporting evidence for these views is accurate and detailed. The final evaluation is consistent with the reasoning of the previous paragraphs.