



HWA CHONG INSTITUTION
JC2 Preliminary Exam
Higher 1

**CANDIDATE
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General Paper

8807/02

Paper 2

4 September 2013

1 hour 30 minutes

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INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

This Insert contains the passages for Paper 2.

Passage 1
HOLY MATRIMONY

- 1 Admittedly, different cultures have treated marriage differently. Some viewed it as an essentially economic investment by means of arranged marriages tied to dowries, others saw marriage primarily as a political relationship through which they could forge family alliances. But all these variations still embraced the fundamental, immutable essence of marriage as a public, lifelong partnership between one man and one woman for the purpose of begetting and raising children. The so-called enlightened and progressive lobbies who now want to either abolish or mutilate the institution beyond recognition are not only blind to the time-honoured and tested merits of marriage, but also in grave danger of pushing us off a moral precipice that will cast society into a maelstrom of decadence and disarray. 5
- 2 Marriage is not essentially about validating two people who love each other. Marriage primarily serves a much broader social function – the legal union between one man and one woman is likely to result in a permanent household with progeny. Since all governments are deeply interested in the stabilization and propagation of society, they naturally promote and regulate this specific type of relationship above all others. To put it simply, marriage is not about adults; it is about children. And if marriage revolves around procreation, it makes perfect biological sense to restrict it to one man and one woman. As such, claiming the “right to marry whomever I love” ignores the true emphasis – indeed fundamental purpose – of marriage. 15
- 3 Above all, marriage is a public institution, and any redefinition of it would have severe societal repercussions. First, it would emasculate the institution itself. After same-sex marriage was legislated in Spain in 2005, marriage rates plummeted. The same happened in the Netherlands. Redefining marriage obscures its meaning and dilutes its purpose, thereby discouraging people from taking it seriously. Moreover, if we redefine marriage as simply a loving, romantic union between committed adults, what principled reason do we have for rejecting polygamist or merely polyamorous (multiple-person) relationships as marriages? This isn’t just scaremongering or a hypothetical slippery slope – such after-effects have already been observed in countries that have legalized same-sex marriage. For example, in Brazil and the Netherlands, three-way relationships were recently granted the full rights of marriage by the courts. What next? 25
- 4 Social science research has confirmed the practical experience of countless societies over the millennia. By all measurable indicators, children flourish when raised by their married biological parents. The principle of traditional marriage has always been to provide a well-anchored home for the rearing of children. Marriage has proven to be the most effective way to transform a man into a responsible husband and father, and a woman into a nurturing wife and mother, ensuring that a child will bond with his biological parents. Research has shown that co-habitation does not give a child the same psychological security. Moreover, the married parent-children relationship is the best way to guarantee that children will be provided with the basics of life and be raised in ways that are more likely to mould them into model citizens. Married people and their children also tend to be happier, wealthier and more productive members of society, benefiting them as individuals as well as the nation as a whole. 35
- 5 In addition, despite a whole generation of a movement that has misled women into thinking that marriage is not necessarily in their interest, the evidence proves otherwise: married women are less prone to chronic illness than single women. And the life expectancy of married women is considerably higher than single women. Traditional marriage also serves as a civilizing influence on men. Notably, single men have almost six times the probability of being incarcerated as married men, and men who live with their biological children are more involved in neighbourhood improvement projects and charitable organizations, more attached and attuned to their own siblings, adult children, and aging parents. 40
- 6 Marriage is the ideal culmination of a loving relationship and natural desire for a family. It is not only a venerable and sacred institution but also one of the keystones of a stable and morally upright society. As such, we all face a crucial challenge to preserve, as well as a compelling responsibility to promote, such a tried and tested, time-honoured institution. That is exactly why the government should encourage healthy traditional marriages, not open the flood gates to a welter of misguided alternatives that would result in our society being inundated by moral chaos. 45

Algernon Tobias

Passage 2

WHOLLY ACRIMONY

- 1 Every spring, the dreaded envelopes start to arrive. Ornate, embossed letters adorning expensive cream-coloured paper requesting “the pleasure of your company” summon us to attend another meaningless ritual – another wedding ceremony. Apart from weddings being commercialised, exorbitant, formulaic, and often fraught rites of passage, marriage itself has also become a broken social institution in dire need of reform. The dwindling numbers who continue to self-righteously trumpet the virtues of ‘traditional’ marriage are finding it increasingly difficult to disguise the fact that they are simply moral scolds with Victorian values. Extremely uncomfortable with gender equality and positively squirming at the very notion of gay rights, they vehemently oppose divorce and same-sex marriage, fighting the good fight under the ragged banner of moral rectitude and social stability. But they are losing the war – and they know it. 5
- 2 Marriage is an institution that endorses and perpetuates archaic gender stereotypes, forcing women to conform to the expectations of a patriarchal society. Traditionally, married women were merely domestic drudges while their male partners were ‘gainfully employed’. For our grandparents’ generation, marriage was about the performance of different roles in separate, specialized spheres. The family was an economic institution – a bit like a small firm that employs people with different skills to produce both income and a well-run household. From this standpoint, the joining of husband and wife yields a more productive firm because it allows one spouse to bring home the bacon, whilst the other, shackled to the stove, cooks it. 15
- 3 Women today, however, have been brought up by more liberal parents to expect an egalitarian adulthood. They are more educated and have more control over their fertility. Legal changes have broken down many of the barriers that kept them out of the labour market and explicit discrimination has declined. Empowered economically, the modern woman has not only been socially emboldened, but also historically enlightened with regard to her previous state of servitude. With traditional marriage finally exposed as no more than institutionalised slavery, being tied to the kitchen sink has lost what little appeal it ever had. 20
- 4 It is a standing joke today that marriage can be defined as that brief transitional stage between a cordial pre-nuptial agreement and an acrimonious divorce. But contrary to the apocalyptic prophecies of the champions of traditional marriage, its plummeting popularity does not spell either moral or social anarchy. Ironically, the constraints of marriage may cause either partner to feel trapped, thus compounding their problems. A study of the Scandinavian countries where a majority of children are born out of wedlock found that children actually spend more time with their parents than American children do. In every case, a stable co-habitation situation is far better for a child than an unhappy marriage – and rocketing divorce rates are testimony to the fact that if a relationship is doomed to fail, the institution of marriage in itself will not save it. 25 30
- 5 In modern secular societies, the religious arguments for marriage are palpably untenable. Now that God is out of the picture, there is nothing ‘holy’ or remotely sacred about the institution of matrimony anymore. As one critic wryly observed, marriage today is nothing more than the state sanctioning of romantic love. Speaking of the state, there is also no legitimate basis for government to limit the freedom of an individual to structure his family in unconventional ways that he finds more satisfactory and satisfying than those imposed by existing institutions. The appeal to tradition, extolling marriage as a tried and tested, time-honoured practice, is equally specious. Before its abolition in the eighteenth century, slavery had also been a commonly accepted and well-respected institution for thousands of years. 35
- 6 It is also presumptuous (and arguably offensive) to insist that the institution of marriage should continue to permit only heterosexual partnerships on the grounds that only this type of union can provide a stable home environment for a child to grow up to become a ‘normal’, well-balanced adult. Gender is not the issue: what is most important is the relationship between the two parents and the loving care they give their child. There is also a constitutional issue here. From a human rights perspective, it is equally unacceptable that another person’s moral views should justify an infringement of the rights of homosexuals to marry and raise children. And when children are not an issue, it is even harder for opponents of homosexual unions to defend their position. 40 45
- 7 As far back as 1911, Ambrose Bierce caustically defined marriage as: ‘A community consisting of a master, a mistress, and two slaves – making two in all’. Before we can revise this painfully recognisable and realistic assessment, we must first redefine the institution itself. First, we have to remove existing legal barriers that restrict individual choice and discourage family diversity. In their place, we need to introduce new legislation that fully recognises the validity of both domestic partnerships and same-sex marriages. Once statutory rights have been accorded, social stigmas will gradually disappear and public acceptance will inevitably follow. 50

Jane Paul

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