

This essay provides an example of how to write an extended essay in world religions, examining a contested theological question from a perspective **outside** the tradition being studied while meeting the IB's standards for objective scholarship. In this case the student, who is not Roman Catholic, engages in the debate around clerical celibacy in the Catholic tradition. The question is clear and well defined, theologically important, but sufficiently focused to allow examination in the context of the extended essay.

The essay is helped by the fact that the student begins by identifying a number of well defined objections to clerical celibacy, set forth in scholarly studies rather than intra- or inter-church polemics, and then investigates how the Catholic Church addresses the objections. He draws on a wide range of appropriate sources and supplements these with in-depth interviews with Catholic priests and seminarians.

The analysis and argument are well developed, the theological vocabulary mastered, and the writing and presentation solid. The abstract and conclusion both serve their purpose well. It is especially notable that in spite of the extensive research conducted, the student is able to identify ways in which the study might be extended and improved. This is an especially important example since many students choose topics which, while broadly appropriate, cannot be **completely** investigated within the scope of the extended essay. Identifying **specifically** further work that would need to be done in order to actually answer the question posed, in addition to demonstrating scholarly maturity, provides a way for students to engage in the questions that interest them even if they turn out to be a bit too complex to be addressed definitively within the scope of the extended essay.