



Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Unit RST4B Section B Religion and Contemporary Society

June 2011 Examination Candidate Exemplar Work



2011 (June) Unit 4B Section B Religion and Contemporary Society

Example of Candidate's Work from the Examination

Grade B

- 05 Examine some of the choices religious believers face between religious adherence and conformity to the values and practices of the societies in which they live.

(45 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

Religious adherence in contemporary society may be difficult when trying to integrate and live in a secular society.

The first example of difficulties believers may have is working on a Sunday. Whilst, by law, employees cannot be forced to work on a Sunday, other candidates may be chosen if they are visibly more flexible for employers. Sunday Trading Laws outline that no one can be forced to work upon their Sabbath day (Sunday for Church of England believers). Therefore, this presents a dilemma for believers because they must choose between keeping their day of worship sacred, or conforming to British society and work on a Sunday in order to gain employment. Despite the protection that the Sunday Trading Laws should give its employees, it is difficult to enforce because employers have the ability to come up with other constructive reasons to choose another candidate. Therefore, in the most serious cases some believers must choose between honouring the Sabbath to making themselves available to work.

Another issue some believers face is the issue of integration. Muslims have been widely criticised in the media for continuing to wear the hijab or burka. Jack Straw formally criticised the Burka by discussing the intimidating barriers it creates between Muslims and the rest of society. Muslims believe that wearing the hijab or burka which covers the whole body (the burka covering the whole face as well) will prevent them from being judged by men simply on their appearance. In France, the burka has been banned in public places, a controversial decision which has however been popular with non-believers in France. Therefore, especially in France, the wearing of the burka is a decision that Muslims must make when living in contemporary society, religious or cultural adherence in this case may incite racism or violence because of terrorist stereotype associated with the burka. However, choosing to conform to the practices of our society may cause upset in the home and perhaps judgement from other members of the religion.

Another choice that religious believers must make is again in the case of Muslims, but during the festival of Ramadan. During this time believers must not eat during sunlight hours. This is one of the pillars of Islam and is therefore as important as prayer and procreation. However, when living in contemporary society fasting in daylight hours can be increasingly difficult especially as we are surrounded by food advertisement and restaurants in today's society. Another issue for Muslims at this time is their health; as the festival is during summer the daylight hours are increased and the days are warmer. This means that lacking in sustenance may cause health issues for Muslims. Thus, they must make a choice during Ramadan to adhere what is undoubtedly an important part of Muslim life, or to conform and choose the easier, perhaps healthier route.

Ramadan is a festival of understanding for Muslims, it shows their empathy with those who cannot easily access food. Therefore, to make the choice to abandon this festival could be seen as disrespectful and ignorant.

Furthermore, another religion facing difficult decisions is the Rastafarian movement. They believe that smoking Marijuana allows them to see things clearly and removes haze from their eyes allowing them to have a clearer and close relationship with God. However, as this contradicts British drugs misuse law it presents a problematic choice for Rastafarians. Whilst some members of authority may be aware of the practice and are willing to turn a blind eye when it is done in private, others are not aware of the religion and may apprehend Rastafarians found practicing with the drug. Therefore, a choice is presented to Rastafarians about whether to sacrifice the coherence and value of their relationship with God or choose to break the law and values of their country and have and pursue this relationship.

Buddhists are also a religion that may face difficulties in worship and religious adherence in society today. The aim of Buddhism is to achieve enlightenment in death and follow in the path of Buddha. However, to achieve psychological enlightenment a Buddhist must surrender their physical values. In today's society this is increasingly difficult because of the materialism and value that we place upon possessions over the spiritual value of life. Conforming to our value system may mean that a Buddhist will not achieve enlightenment and may become further away from it. However, adhering to their religious beliefs may mean that they do not fit in with their society and they lead uncomfortable and segregated lives. Buddhists may argue with this by saying the rewards are worth the struggle.

Another religion that must make a difficult decision about expressing their faith is Hinduism. They may find it difficult in openly adhering to religious symbols that they value. An example of this is the Hindu Swastika which is a symbol of peace and prosperity for believers. However, it is more commonly known as a symbol of hatred and racism from the era of Nazi Germany. This has caused problems in cases such as one in Australia where a Hindu man chose to display the Swastika on the roof of his home. However, a former war prisoner who lived nearby was deeply offended and did not understand the true meaning behind the symbol. Therefore, when making choices about religious adherence, Hindus must consider the education and understanding of those around them before simply showing their symbol. However, to remove this completely would be to ignore the popular God, Ganesh. Therefore, conformism is not the answer to the choices Hindus may face.

In conclusion I believe that there are difficult decisions that must be made for all religions in today's society, whether a majority or minority adherence may always cause issues of discrimination.

Commentary

This response lists a number of issues where specific beliefs or practices conflict with the values or practices in contemporary society. For each one, there is some explanation of the precise nature of the conflict, the choice the believer must make, and possible consequences. The information given is mostly accurate and relevant.

In the second paragraph, it is only implicit that the religious believers in question are Christian – only the Church of England is mentioned. In the fourth paragraph, the choice is not between religion and society but between religion and health, and the discussion of Buddhist enlightenment addresses challenge rather than choice. The example of the Hindu swastika is, as it stands a weak one, and would need further explanation to constitute a good example. Each example is described in general terms but there is little additional evidence to illustrate or explain points made.

The overall impression is that the candidate demonstrates a reasonable understanding using some evidence and examples, a “satisfactory treatment of the topic”. The writing is mainly clear, coherent and adequately organised.

Level 5, 31 marks

**06 'Living in a secular society strengthens religious faith.'
How far do you agree?**

(30 marks) AO2

Candidate Response

On the one hand, secular society may not strengthen faith, as its lack of comprehension means that religious believers may be prosecuted or discriminated against in all aspects of life.

Firstly, the lack of understanding of the beliefs of minority religions in the UK today means that some religions are discriminated against. For example, within Sikhism there are 5ks that a Sikh man must wear at all times. The 'Kesh' is uncut hair which represents the value Sikhs put on remaining as God created them. Whilst in Sikh society this is the norm, in a western world they choose often to wear turbans to keep their hair controlled. Due to the lack of education in a secular society this often means Sikh men are associated with Islam and by some they are generalised as terrorists. An example of this was at ground zero in New York where a Sikh was mistaken for a Muslim and assaulted. This shows how even in a modern society, secular ignorance can make showing and valuing your faith more difficult.

In addition, the secular work place has become a challenge to many religious faiths in allowing staff to worship. The issue of favourable selection of staff willing to work on Sundays is a problem as it means many of those with a strong faith may lose valuable career opportunities. Whilst there are charities such as 'help Sunday Special' who fight against this discrimination, it is difficult to prove in many cases.

Furthermore, Muslims may have difficulty in a secular workplace when wishing to pray 5 times a day. Whilst this is a minority of Muslims who honour this tradition it may be a problem for employers to provide facilities for this to happen. Furthermore, many employers are unaware of the importance of Friday prayer to Muslims and may not make allowances for those who wish to attend. This shows how a lack of education and understanding in a secular society may cause issues in the workplace.

On the other hand, secular society has strengthened religious faiths in some cases. The state of the art mosque in Bradford provides facilities for atheists and believers to use as a community. This allowance and liberal view means secular people not only gain from the building but may also wish to then learn and understand religion more. Therefore, the faith may become more understood and accepted in society meaning that secular society will not judge Muslims and the faith of the religion is then strengthened by acceptance into its community.

Furthermore, in some cases secular society may cause religious beliefs to come together, perhaps even despite their supposed differences. Secular society means that religious families will be able to come together in small groups to discuss their religion and improve their understanding of their own religion. Furthermore, interfaith societies are sometimes created because of secular society and the need to integrate with other believers. The three Abrahamic religions may perhaps come together to realise that their beliefs are in fact quite similar, thus strengthening faith through understanding and celebration and similarities and differences. In some cases members of minority religions may find each other through religions and marry, which means a bond of two families, not just two people of the same religion. This means there is companionship and support from others as well as your family, strengthening faith through the reassurance of others apart from the family.

In conclusion, I believe that whilst secular society may be seen to ignore and occasionally discriminate against religion, there are positives of secular society also in cases of finding companionship and having an open mind towards learning and understanding other faiths and your own thus strengthening your beliefs and faith in religion. Despite this, there are still issues in today's secular society of comprehension which need to be addressed.

Commentary

This is a satisfactory response to the issue, but it lacks a sharp focus. Arguments in support of the proposition (e.g. Sikh men being mistaken for Muslims) are generally clearer than arguments against it, but there is more evidence of some underlying critical analysis in the arguments against the proposition (Atheists welcome in a Mosque).

The discussions of Sunday working and Islamic prayer do not explicitly tie in with the proposition, and it is not clear how the argument at the start of the sixth paragraph relates directly to strengthening/weakening faith. More, or clearer, explanation of how these views relate to the proposition are needed to strengthen the argument.

There is a concluding evaluation consistent with some of the reasoning, but it is not sufficiently focused on the question to be a “well-focused response”.

Level 5, 22 marks

Grade A

- 05 Examine some of the choices religious believers face between religious adherence and conformity to the values and practices of the societies in which they live.**

(45 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

One of the most highly debated topics is that of the issues faced by religious believers when trying to engage in both their society and religion. This is a particular issue within Britain which prides itself on both its national heritage and on being multicultural.

There are currently 2 million Muslims within the UK and particularly for the orthodox Muslim, it can be said that their values do not reflect those of the British society. In England the 1962 Sexual Offences act legalised private homosexual acts between two men over the age of 21. In 2000 this was revised and changed to the age of 16 years. Therefore in the UK homosexuality is permitted and the 2007 equality act made it as acceptable as a heterosexual couple. Muslims strongly condemn homosexual activity, the Prophet Muhammad spoke against it and so they see it as being unacceptable they believe relationships should only consist of a man and a women. This creates issues for adherents of Islam in the UK because their state law and faith are at loggerheads as to their beliefs on the practice of homosexuality. They cannot abide by both their religious and state law, they must choose.

On the topic of homosexuality it is not just Muslims that have an issue, conservative Christians, e.g. Catholics, also condemn the act. Catholics see homosexuality as sinful and against the tradition of Christianity. They use biblical references such as 'A man should not lie with another man as he does with a woman, it is an abomination', - Leviticus to support their views. They believe that the intended role of a relationship is to create a family 'be faithful and multiply', this is something that homosexual couples cannot offer. A recent case concerning the idea that sometimes religious adherents have to choose between their faith and their societal values was that in 2008 a Christian couple who owned a bed and breakfast were taken to court for turning away a homosexual couple. The couple were given £3500 compensation from the Christian B&B owners because under the Sexual Equality Act the Christian couple had been unfair and prejudice towards the homosexual couple. This is a good example of where a religious adherent has had to choose and has chosen their faith above society's values.

Another issue faced by Muslims in the UK today is that unlike Christianity whose values and teaching are reflected within the state law, Islamic values are not. Islam is associated with Sharia law which is a religious law which offers alternative values. In Saudi Arabia Sharia law is the law of the land and places such as Luton who have a high percentage of Muslim population have tried to implement it in their areas. Sharia law consists of controversial values such as 'an eye for an eye' approach, meaning the punishment for death would be death also. The issue that this creates for Muslims in the UK is that this contradicts the law of the land which is based more around Christian teachings of 'turn the other cheek'. This puts Muslims in a difficult position as they have to choose between the Sharia Law which represents the values of their religion and the state law which arguably represents the values of the rest of society.

Another major issue faced by religious believers is their ability to express their religion through their identity. France are considered to be an almost secular country where religion is more of a private thing and is not made public. In 2008 France banned the wearing of any religious identity in schools, this included crucifixes and Muslim headscarves. Even though this alone caused a huge outcry from the religious communities Nicholas Sarkozy then went on to ban the Islamic Burka and all other headscarves in public with penalty fines of up to £150. For religious adherents this created a huge dilemma as they had to choose between the traditions of their religion and the practices of where they lived – France.

This approach some may argue has extended to Britain. In 2007 the Education Secretary Alan Johnson said that he advised headteachers to ban headscarves in schools for 'safety reasons'. This caused controversy with Muslim communities who felt that they were being singled out. This however wasn't the case, infact Christian communities were also affected. In 2008 a girl of 16 took her school to court after they asked her to remove her chastity ring which represents her purity. In court she lost the case and they claimed that schools could implement whatever rules on religious identity they wish.

For all of the religious believers affected by this crusade against religious identification they would have to make the conscious decision to abide by either their religion or by their societies values.

One issue that Muslims also face is to meet the demands of their religion whilst also meeting the demands of the society in which they live. Though unemployment is rife amongst Muslim communities in the UK with 68% of Muslim women unemployed and 14% of Muslim men, some do have jobs. These jobs can require a whole working day, some from 9am to 5pm. It is important within the Islamic faith to pray 5 times a day for a working Muslim this may require them taking extra breaks or compromising some of their prayers during the day. The area in which they pray needs to also be clean as they undergo a cleaning ritual before prayer known as a wuzu. This poses an issue to Muslims as many places cannot provide such facilities meaning that they cannot undergo their prayer. This may be one of the reasons for the high unemployment rate amongst Muslims because they have to choose between having a job like other members of society and their ability to practise their religion to the extent to which they desire.

To conclude, there are many choices that a religious believer has to make between adhering to their religion and conforming to the society in which they live. There will always have to be a compromise.

Commentary

Although this essay does not cover a large number of issues where choices must be made, it examines a smaller number of choices in some detail, and this is consistent with the level descriptor "a generally thorough treatment of the topic which may be in depth or breadth". The information used is almost all accurate and relevant. For each example, there is clear explanation of both the religious perspective and the society values, with reference to specific information, and the candidate uses relevant illustrative examples, e.g., the silver ring and the B&B dispute. The outcome of the choices made is referred to.

The essay is a little patchy in terms of detail and focus. The accurate use of figures, dates and statistics give an impression of "clear understanding demonstrated through relevant evidence", but the link between some of this information and the point being made is sometimes unclear. For example, unemployment among Muslims is attributed to the requirements for daily prayer, but the only link between the two is the candidate's speculation that "this may be one of the reasons".

This is "a generally thorough treatment", but the general patchiness and the loose connections keep this below the midline of the level.

Level 6, 37 marks

**06 'Living in a secular society strengthens religious faith.'
How far do you agree?**

(30 marks) AO2

Candidate Response

Some may argue that 'living in a secular society strengthens religious faith'. It is firstly important to examine the definition of secular which Wilson described as 'the removal of religious influence on societies institutions'. This essay shall address the idea that secular societies can strengthen religious faith.

France is considered to be a secular society and this was supported in 2008 when the French president Nicholas Sarkozy banned the Muslim Burka in public places. He placed a penalty of fines up to £150 for women caught wearing it and up to £3500 for men found to be forcing women to wear it. Thousands of Muslims were angered by this decision and several hundred went out on the streets in their burka in protest. Though this can be seen as an action which intends to weaken religious faith some may argue the contrary, that the ban resulted in the coming together of people within the Muslim community to unite against the external threat. These Muslims would argue that they have been strengthened by the threat of the secular society.

On the other hand some would say that secular societies threaten the very existence of religion. They would argue that in a secular society religion would be replaced by other institutions such as science or spirituality. The Kendal Project found that there were 62 places for spiritual worship and that in Kendal people were more likely to be practising spirituality than religion. They would say that if religion isn't being expressed at the same level within society it will lose significance and almost be forgotten.

However, in contrast some religious adherents believe that the movement to secular society can actually strengthen and increase faith because people with the strongest and most sincere religious faith will remain. Some religious groups fear that the UK is becoming a secular society and this fear has brought about a rise in religious organisations that promote the values of their religion. One such group is called 'the silver ring thing' which emphasises the importance of the chastity ring within Christianity which represents sexual purity. The organisation encourages its members to maintain their appreciation of the meaning behind the chastity ring. They aim particularly towards younger generation people who may feel threatened by the secular society it tries to show them they are not alone in their beliefs, that other people still remain dedicated to their religion. Another group is the 'Not Ashamed Campaign' which ran in December 2010 and was a Christian based organisation. This campaign was aimed at religious people who felt that their faith was threatened by the idea of a secular society and its purpose was again to remind them that they are not alone.

In both these examples the members of the organisations were all strong faith adherents, so to them secularisation didn't weaken their religion it has just concentrated the people with the strongest affiliation with their faith together.

In contrast, some would argue that the whole concept of secularisation of a society means the weakening of religious affiliation. Evidence for a secular society is based upon facts and statistics that demonstrate religion being in decline, so this can only reflect the weakening of religious faiths. One such statistic is that though 1000 members join a Christian church each week 2500 members leave. This is showing the decline in Christianity and it is almost possible for some people to see how such statistics could actually strengthen religious faith.

Some may argue that by living in a secular society faiths are encouraged to work alongside one another in interfaith work. Interfaith Network for UK works with members from hundreds of different faiths and they all unite together and learn about each others faiths. Some would argue that faiths coming together like this can only strengthen the bonds of religion as they unite together as one.

However, some may argue that such interfaith work in fact leads to the dilution of faith as religions become more accepting of one another's values they lose the sense of what they believed in.

To conclude, there are many strong arguments both in favour and against the idea that secular societies can strengthen religious faith. Personally I believe that secular society diminishes the influence of religion on society as a whole but that it can result in the people being left in a religion as the people with the strongest religious affiliation and faith.

Commentary

This response is at least “satisfactory” because it clearly addresses the question and suggests arguments both in support of, and contrary to, the proposition. There are two key things in this which make it a “well focused”, rather than merely a “satisfactory” response.

The first is the level of critical analysis. There are several instances of views that are discussed and critically analysed. The discussion of the Burka ban and the subsequent protest, and the fourth and fifth paragraphs on the concentration of adherents, show a level of discussion beyond “some critical analysis”.

Also the concluding evaluation is “supported by reasoned argument”, not just “consistent with some of the reasoning.” The conclusion, though short, shows evidence of independent thought and brings the preceding discussion back into a sharp focus on the original question.

The quality of written communication is weaker than the content, but on balance, this is a well-focused response to the issue with a reasoned argument leading to an appropriate evaluation.

Level 6, 25 marks

Grade A*

- 07 **Examine the structure, nature and role of one faith community within the United Kingdom (UK).** (45 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

The Roman Catholic church is the largest Christian denomination in the world with over 1 billion members. The founder of the church was Paul. Within the church there is a structure which consists of a hierarchy. Within each level of the Roman Catholic church there is a specific role to be carried out. The Roman Catholic church consists of magisterium within which teaching rules are set. It also believes in the communion of saint which means Christ's followers those who are dead and alive are united as one. Below I will expand on the structure and role at each level of the Roman Catholic Church.

The structure consists of a hierarchy, the person at the top is the Pope who is classed as the head of the church, is also seen as the spiritual leader of the church. A conversation at breakfast with Jesus and Paul (1st Pope) where Jesus asked 'do you love me' Paul said 'yes' Jesus said to him 'feed my lambs', 'tend my sheep' and 'feed my sheep'. The role of the Pope in a sense is to act as a shepherd to the followers of Christ. He also has to pass on Christ's message to the world, talk about the Gospel. He is from an unbroken line of Apostles leading back to the original Apostles. The current pope is Benedict XVI. He is also infallible when he is speaking, however not always only when speaking ex cathedra, before he does this must consult Cardinal and Bishops. The Pope also has the 'power of key' he can absolve sins. The Pope is on an international level, but is looked up to as head within the UK.

After the Pope are the Cardinals which are the hands through which the church runs through. Currently there are 199 cardinals in Roman Catholic Church. The cardinals are also referred to as 'The Princes of the Church', they are to advise and help the Pope on a daily basis. One of their main roles is to elect a new Pope, this is done in concave (sealed meeting) only cardinals under 80 are eligible to vote. If a new pope is elected white smoke comes out from the Sistine chapel. If no Pope is elected then there is black smoke which comes from the Sistine chapel.

The Archbishop and Bishops are also advisors of the Pope. In the UK each Bishop is in charge of a Diocese which is a large area. A Bishop's role would be to pass on teaching of the Christ, they also perform Eucharist. Bishops do play a big role in the UK as they set standards of teaching in Roman Catholic schools as what should be taught and what can not be taught. They should also help people that need help or to act as a Shepherd of the area of which they are in charge of. 'To teach and sanctify'.

Each diocese is subdivided into parishes which consist of Parish Church. This is run by a Priest they carry out many roles. They must carry out Eucharist and must lead in mass prayers. They also carry out many of the sacraments such as holy matrimony, performs baptism, the Priest also has the power to forgive sins when people come to him for confessions (reconciliation). A priest may also be there at funerals. They are actively involved in schools, teaching and passing on the message. In the UK it is said that a Priest is actively involved in families life as they are from the start to the end.

Deacons are not fully ordained, however some may be in training to become priests and will later be ordained. They are those that don't have full ordination though. The role of a Deacon is to help the priest perform prayers may also help in Eucharist but cannot carry it out. They are also to help the sick and the poor. Deacons can get married, because of this many people choose to stay a Deacon and not go on to become a Priest. The laity are at the bottom of the Roman Catholic Church – and are not under no holy orders. However they are to talk about Jesus Christ, and spread his teachings. Also act in a good manner. Laity may do a lot of

community work in the UK may also do charity work.

All of the points outlined above are of the structure, role and the nature of the Roman Catholic church. The main head being Pope Benedict XVI who also visited the UK in 2010. However the church would not run smoothly if the Cardinals, Bishops, Priest and Deacons were not to carry out their roles.

Commentary

This is a clear and confident examination of the structure and role of the Roman Catholic Church. Minor errors apart (Paul for Peter in paragraph 2), it is a generally thorough treatment with mostly accurate and relevant information. The structure of the essay works well in explaining the structure of the church, and the roles of individuals and members of the church are clearly explained.

The response demonstrates a clear understanding of the church, with a good level of explanation and exemplification. For example, the dominically-ordained authority of the Pope is elaborated with reference to John 21. The contribution of all levels of the church, including the laity, to the organisation is well demonstrated.

There is little attention given in this essay to the nature Roman Catholic Church as a faith community. This omission means that the response cannot be considered more than “generally thorough”. For that reason, this has been given a mark at the top limit of Level 6.

Level 6, 40 marks

- 08** 'The structure of a faith community is more important for the religion as a whole than for the individual.' How far do you agree? **(30 marks) AO2**

Candidate Response

The structure of a faith community whether is more important for the religion as a whole than for the individual is a debateable matter. Some may argue that it does hold importance for the individual, however some may argue that it does not.

The structure is more important for the religion, to keep it sustained and fully maintained. For example people hardly ever meet the Pope may not even be significant in their lives and may just be there to represent the church but not very important for the individual. Also the Cardinals and Bishops who advise the Pope they set rules for the religion and Bishops would agree to what is suitable in education, therefore this suggests that the importance and structure is more for the religion to keep it in order and may be to help people and make it easier in their religion.

For many people also they may not even consider the structure as may believe that their faith is more personal and is connection with Christ himself, so may act in accordance to what they want. As a whole if the structure of the Roman Catholic church was to collapse may mean that people may not know what to do people may not have faith, therefore could be more important to the religion.

However if a person's faith could be at risk if the structure collapsed this suggests that it is important for the individual. Many would say that because of its structure it is the worlds largest Christian denomination. If there was no structure there may not be no priest, a priest carries out a lot of important roles and is actively involved with families lives. Hears confessions which to an individual is highly important, the roles are in accordance to the structure of the Roman Catholic church and so are important to the individual. A priest also enters schools and talk to children about Christ. However a lot of people may not go to church so do not see any importance in the Roman Catholic church.

Also a lot of people may look up to the Pope as he is seen as the spiritual leader of the church so may hold importance for them as an individual. Also the recent Pope visit may have increased his importance to some. Many may have also met Bishops who are in charge of their diocese, may be important to them as they set education standards in the schools and teach how catholics act.

Overall 'the structure of a faith community is more important for the religion as a whole than for the individual' – is only true to a certain extent and is difficult to come to a conclusion. As the structure may hold importance for some at an individual level and for others may have no significance in their lives at all. Therefore to the religion would be considered more important.

Commentary

This is a very well-focused response to the question, which examines two views in reaction to the proposition. There is critical analysis, both of the view that the structure of the church is significant for the church itself, and also of the view that the individual depends on the structure of the church to provide the rites and spiritual leadership they need. The argument shows a clear understanding of the close connection between the faith of the individual and the security of the structure of the church.

The argument is sustained by the effective use of evidence, especially in relation to the role of the priest. The concluding evaluation is fully supported by the reasoning, but it is a little weak compared to the rest of the essay, and for this reason, the mark given is not quite at the top of the level descriptor range.

Level 7, 29 marks