



Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Unit RST4C Section C Ways of Reading and

Understanding Scripture

June 2011 Examination Candidate Exemplar Work



2011 (June) Unit RST4C Ways of Reading and Understanding Scripture

Example of Candidate's Work from the Examination

Grade B

- 09 Outline the history of the scriptures of one religion from their origin to the 21st century. (45 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

Christian scripture in the form of the Bible has a long history. Since the death of Jesus, which is estimated to be around 33AD history of the scripture begins and carries on until now.

The history of the Bible begins with the time of the Oral Tradition when stories and teachings about Lord Jesus Christ were passed on by word of mouth. The time of oral tradition is significant because it's a time where teachings of Jesus were collected which later contributed to the formation of the Bible. The time of Oral Tradition is between 33AD and 65AD, this is quite a long time but it's allowed the authors of the scripture to collect material for their writings about Jesus. The time of Oral Tradition is not only the time where New Testament scripture was written but also where many heretic writing about Jesus develop.

After the time of Oral Tradition came a time where the Synoptic Gospels and Johns Gospel were written. This time starts approximately from 65 AD and 90 AD. This time is important in the history of the scripture because Gospels are the 'good news' about Jesus. They give us insight to Jesus' ministry and teachings that he left for the world. It is where Jesus promises us an eternal life, and gives us warnings about 'parousia' in other words Judgement Day. From the scripture we learn about the history e.g. Mark's Gospel was written for persecuted Christians just after Jesus' death. John's Gospel as scholars Brown and Martin argue was written to keep the Johannine community (post-resurrected community) who never saw Jesus together in faith. 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe' (John 20:29).

When the Gospels were finally completed by around 2nd century early church Fathers began the formation of Cannon, in other words a list of books that Christian Bible should contain. It was a long process in the history of the scripture but it was necessary to reflect Christians believe about God from the beginnings to the time of Jesus and finally about the church after Jesus who had ascended to heaven. During this process early church Fathers experience many different scriptures that claimed to be the works of one of the 12 disciples. However as Nunn said early church Fathers were the hunters of heresy and they would not allow any heresy book to get inside the Bible. Finally when the cannon of the Bible was formed it contained 56 Books of the Old Testament which were taken out of the Jewish Torah. It was because they contain a history about God, salvation history, as well as about the prophecies of the coming messiah which where the background and fundamentals of the New Testament. The books of the New Testament which were inside the cannon contain 27 books which included the Gospels, Acts, Letters and Revelation books.

After the formation of the Cannon, next event in the history of the scripture is its translation. From Greek to Latin. It was because Greek became a language like English in today a very popular form of communication which majority of educated elite would read and write. In order to do the will of God 'therefore, make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19) Bible needed to be translated in order for people to understand the word of God. Pope Damasus requested Jerome an early church father to make a translation of Latin scripture. The Vulgate version of the Bible was finally completed by 382AD. But Jerome wasn't the only church Father who had translations of the Bible there were many more who followed his footsteps and made translations out of his version or out of the Latin. Thus, translation scripture is part of the history of scripture.

Reformation of Christian church is another event in the history of scripture. Augustinian monk Martin Luther became frustrated with the church who misuse their power and became corrupted by selling indulgences (act which allow sinners to get out quicker of purgatory). Martin Luther wrote 95 Theses which were writings against church authority. As a result Luther was expelled from Christian church but by the time this had happened Luther already had his followers. In consequence Reformation resulted in formation of Protestant church where only 'sola scripture' is the truth, where no authority of the church is above. This belief is based on 2 Timothy 3:17 'All scripture is inspired by God and useful for refuting error, for guiding people's lives, and teaching them to be upright.' This event is significant in the history of the scripture because it had changed the status given to scripture.

In the beginning of the 19th century until this day the history of the scripture is affected by Biblical criticism. Today's scholars are not only allowed to study the Bible but as well criticise it. It was never allowed before such a thing would result in hard punishment or even death no one was allowed to question the Bible. The Bible was taken literal word for word what was written the bible was correct, it was the word of God. However, today scholars all over the world question the Bible. For example the stories about creation are no longer believed by majority to be true rather they tell us why the world was created instead of how. Science were much influence Biblical criticism and change the history of the Bible in the 21st century.

In conclusion, Bible has a long history behind it, it had been influenced by many events in the history such as Oral Tradition, Cannon, Translation, Reformation and finally Biblical Criticism. However despite of a long and changing history of the Bible one thing for Christians never changed the belief that 'Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name' (John 20:31).

Commentary

The essay interprets 'history' in a rather broad sense in the second part, and there are obvious difficulties with spelling and grammar; nevertheless this is a satisfactory treatment of the topic. The candidate demonstrates a reasonable and mostly accurate understanding of the history of the Christian scriptures, shown through the use of evidence and examples.

Level 5 – 31 marks

- 10 Discuss how far beliefs about the status of these scriptures have been affected by events in history. (30 marks) AO2**

Candidate Response

History of the Bible according to some could have influence or change status of scriptures. Others would not agree saying that Bible has the same status since it was formed. This essay would show did events in history of the scripture such as translation and reformation had affected the status of scripture.

When Pope Damasus requested Jerome the early church Father to make a translation of Latin Bible to Greek it was done with time and thought in order to not change the words and meanings that Bible contained. Jerome was well educated and trusted early church Father he had only made a change when it was essential to reflect the true meaning of Jesus' teaching in the Bible. Therefore the status of scripture could not have been affected by translation as the words in the Vulgate version which had been completed by 382 AD would reflect the original version. However if we assume that Jerome got things wrong as he was just a human capable of making mistakes then translations all over the world could have been affected as today's translations are made based on Jerome Vulgate version. In consequence Bible could have dropped in status as the meanings of teaching could have been changed. An example of translation having an affect on scripture is visible when we compare standard English version of Mark 16:8 where it says 'because they were afraid' the original Greek translation says 'because they were afraid for'. This changes the meaning of the story, therefore if Jerome got things wrong and he placed punctuations where he should not have (Greek version did not consist of any punctuations) than status of his version and today's translations could have been affected.

Reformation of Christian church took place in Germany and it had great influence on the status of scripture. Before the highest status was given to Popes as they were believed to be predecessors of Peter who had been given authority to guide the Christian church 'you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church' (Matthew 16:18). But because church had become corrupted and misused its authority. Martin Luther, Augustinian monk published his 95 Theses where he named the misuse of power by Christian Church e.g. indulgences in fact did not offer a quick way of getting out of purgatory. Reformation had caused the reaction of protestant church who believed that scripture has the highest authority and status of all. This belief was based on 2 Timothy 3:17 'all scripture is inspired by God and useful for returning error, for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be upright'. Therefore in consequence Pope is no longer necessary. Thus, by reformation the status of scripture for Protestant church had increased, but this doesn't mean that Catholics do not value scripture it is just for them Pope is just as important.

It could be argued that status of scripture had been affected by Biblical criticism. It could be argued that Biblical criticism drop the status given the scripture as it had criticism Bible for its events and stories, even arguing that some were fabricated or never took place. For example discourses in John's Gospel where Jesus claims 'I am' some scholars argued that how Jesus manage to live after claiming he is God. Jews who consider to be the highest offence of Blasphemy would never have allowed it to happen. Due to Biblical criticism many Christians do not take Bible literally, therefore status of scripture had been affected. Most Christians, even the church nowadays believe that Bible need to be interpreted the Bible can answer questions 'why things are happening or what Jesus was trying to teach' rather than being more description and only facts.

In conclusion, history had influenced the status of scripture, however for those who solidly believe that scripture is the word of God word for word translation, reformation or Biblical criticism wont change the status of scripture. Even the Christian church who believes that Bible needs to be interpreted it still has great status as it still reflect.

Commentary

Again, the presentation of the answer sometimes obscures meaning, but the essay is secure in its main points. Its views are expressed with supporting arguments, and its conclusion follows from the line of reasoning, that despite the problems caused by (for example) the development of biblical criticism, the status of scripture remains intact for the believer, since faith can accept interpretation.

Level 5 – 22 marks

Grade A

- 11 **Examine various approaches used by scholars in the study of the scriptures of one religion.** (45 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

There are a number of approaches used by scholars in the study of the scriptures found within Christianity.

The main scripture of Christianity is the Bible. For any scholar it is important to look at the possible origins of a text. To do this they must turn to both archaeological evidence and historical record. This approach is sometimes called Historical Source theory. By using this method scholars can use what has been recorded and discovered to validate their understanding of the text.

It is also possible to study the scriptures by comparing it to other religious or cultural documents of the same geographical location and time. This can sometimes be challenging as a number of texts from the early history of the Old Testament and even New Testament have been lost. The Old Testament in particular builds upon Jewish religious texts (their version being the Torah) which have greater age and varied document base which may be now available. However, the theory is useful in understanding themes or similarities common with other texts and indeed differences to give us a better idea of the context in which they sit. It is often noted, in particular the Old Testament, that there are themes that stem into other religions of the time. The idea that God provided the harvest is a theme found within Canaanite religion (the God Baal). Also the idea of a messiah being foretold is a Jewish prophecy not dissimilar to Christianity's description. The idea that the Bible might draw upon current literature of the time is not implausible, as they were shaped by the same culture and it is important for scholars to note it.

Another approach that a scholar may use is the modern approach. This approach involves drawing comparisons with modern literature and society. This allows scholars to look at modern reading and thinking of the Bible to deepen their understanding of its impact. Today's scholars look to current thinking on translations and the true interpretation of the document. Reading and interpretations of the Bible is so diverse as different people, churches and scholars place emphasis on different things and vary in their interpretation.

Modern thinkers and believers can be a source of study for scholars. In particular role models of Christian practice such as Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa whose own interpretation and understanding of scripture has been defining for Christianity as a faith. By looking at how readers react in the 21st century, scholars can look at how the text has developed and how it has come to be understood.

Some scholars may consider examining the scriptures by applying a Fundamentalist view. Fundamentalists believe that essentially the message of the Bible is true as it is. They believe that the Bible is the word of God. By applying this view scholars must ignore the implications of human writers and look beyond to the message God tries to display through them. This can be difficult to do, especially as translations differ and many different meanings can be inferred. This approach is most commonly used by scholars who have some sort of belief.

It is important to note that a person's own beliefs and understanding of God can shape the way they view a text. This can either be argued as a bias, that a scholar might apply their own experience rather than look objectively at a possible error or mistranslation. But it can also be seen as a positive as it informs and enriches the scholar's view of how the text may relate to life.

Scholars may also like to look at the way the text has been reviewed and edited over its existence. To do this the scholar would look at the scripture in its form now and compare it to other versions and documents of texts that mention its existence. The church has been a main authority on the reproduction editing and understanding of the Bible. Through many centuries it has shaped and selected what should be included. The New Testament is a good example of this as it is a collection of selected narratives, songs and letters combined into one book over time. The Old Testament is oral tradition and literature unified into another book. The church in terms of the refinement of information has differed in what should be included. As a result we have many different versions, the King James version (often the most popular) Revised version and most recently the International Revised version. All of these copies vary in what they include, updated language and emphasis on different themes. The core theme is there but the format of the 66 books varies greatly. It is a scholars approach to look at all these translations, what has been left out is of as equal importance as what has been left in. A scholar would also look at how it came to be written down in the first place. They would do this by looking at the texts origins as mentioned by historical approach.

A scholar might also look at the linguistic devices used within the text. Imagery and description is an indicator to the scholar of its intended impact and intention. Understanding of a scriptures translation is vital with this approach as words and phrases can change accidentally or for lack of ability to translate. The Bible has been put into many different languages, the Greek format the septuagint, the Latin Vulgate and the indoeuropean form we find it in today. The complexities of how the text is presented can effect how the meaning is conveyed. Scholars by looking at its language and narrative can gain a great deal of insight into its purpose and validity.

There are many different and important approaches that a scholar can use to study the scriptures of Christianity. However, the many interpretations and influences that the scholar is subject to can vary vastly to no end of discussion.

Commentary

The essay is a satisfactory treatment of the topic, and is mostly accurate and relevant, offering some evidence and examples. Some ideas / comments are not developed: for example the suggestion that “what has been left out is ... of equal importance as what has been left in”. On the whole, the range of material is good, and merits a top Level 5.

Level 5 – 35 marks

12 Consider how far the work of scholars is necessary for an understanding of the scriptures. (30 marks) AO2

The work of scholars is both important to some and unnecessary to others. The view is dependant on a persons own individual belief. A more scientifically minded person seeks to validate the scriptures or to disregard them, whereas a believer is more likely to search for the meaning. Scholars are crucial to the pursuit of either as arguably they enrich our understanding of the text. They look at it from some angles that may not have previously been looked at. They also find themes and messages that are intertwined into the fabric of the scriptures. Early readers or audiences of the text, in particular in medieval times would not have been as well educated and would need scholarly understanding to appreciate the scriptures fully. Latin versions and original Hebrew texts would be impossible to decipher, so scholars necessary for our understanding and validation of correct translation. A scholars research and study is often vast and something that may consume time and be challenging.

Scholars often help open readers eyes to areas that have an element of mystery such as the prophesies of the New Kingdom. By scholarly study we can understand what it was intended and clarify its very meaning. It can also help gain a better understanding of how Jesus and God are depicted meaning readers can then get closer to knowing them.

Scholars in their work find explanations for discrepancies and develop theories to fill the gaps of things we may not understand. This is vital to gaining a full and rounded view of scriptures without it arguably the bible would lack authority and status. Archaeological and historical evidence constantly changes our knowledge of this ancient text. Without scholars it would be difficult to draw the same enriched comparisons and to connect the Bible to its past. The work of a scholar can then either validate claims made by the bible or disregard them, therefore their opinion can be very powerful indeed.

However it is arguable that the work of scholars is not necessary for an understanding of the scriptures. A reader may place their own value on the scriptures. Fundamentalists especially take the scriptures to be direct from God and that the only errors are minor ones due to human error. Christians who self study and use their church groups for Bible study formulate their own opinions. The Reformation movement especially encouraged Christians to take control of their Bible study and understanding.

Indeed many scholars are Christian and formulate their own opinion. There is no definitive answer to understanding the scriptures as everyone sees a different view. The authority of one scholar over another is questionable and therefore invalid. Some work of scholars can be seen as casting unnecessary doubt detrimental to the churches aims, if a scholar gets something wrong or disregards something of value to the church then it can disrupt practice and its followers detrimental to Christianity as a faith.

A main theme of Christianity is of God through the Holy Spirit guiding and enlightening readers by faith. With scientific approach it makes it harder for a believer and is arguably by some Christians something that God chooses to enlighten each individual.

I personally believe scholars to be instrumental in the development of understanding the scriptures without them we would be blindly following what is presented to us without trying to truly understand or appreciate the Bible.

Commentary

Some of the ideas in the essay lack detailed exemplification, nevertheless the response is well focussed, considers different ideas, and reaches a conclusion developed from its line of reasoning, i.e. that there may be no definitive interpretation of a text, but the work of scholars is necessary to give people the tools to develop their own understanding.

Level 6 – 25 marks

Grade A*

- 09 Outline the history of the scripture of one religion from their origin to the 21st century. (45 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

The Bible will be outlined for its history in the context of Christianity.

The Bible is separated into two parts, the Old and New Testament. The first pieces of writing in the New Testament are believed to have been Paul's letters to the churches in Greece and Turkey. Following Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus in the year 34 AD, they are considered to be the earliest writings. The gospel of Mark is then considered to be the second oldest scripture in the New Testament. Following the period of oral tradition from 33AD when Jesus died until 60AD when the gospel is supposedly considered to have been written. The date 60AD is believed to have been the time when emperor Nero persecuted Christians for their denial to worship Nero as a god and misunderstandings about the Eucharist of cannibalism. The theme of persecution is prevalent in Mark, like 9:1 'In truth I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Kingdom of God.' However, St Augustine as Hippo believed that Matthew's gospel was written first but modern scholars dispute this claim.

After Mark's gospel came Matthew's and Luke's gospel and then John's gospel. However, Robinson argued that John's was written in 50AD before the synoptics and then the synoptic writers built upon the Johannine account. Brown and Martin disagree and believe that John had to be later because of unique material and a more developed, higher Christology that was present in the Synoptics but was developed by John. Bultmann agrees that the fourth gospel was written later but not in the first century, he believes its final redaction took place in the second century. The book of Revelation has been attributed to John but it was written at the end of the first century.

In 325AD at the council of Nicea, canons were proposed by Marcion, Athanasius and others. The canon was a list of all the books that were to be put into the Bible. The Old Testament or Torah was included to show the coming of the Messiah like Daniel 7:13-14 'I saw, coming on the clouds as heaven as it were a son of man'. Also it was agreed that elements like the ten commandments were good to include particularly for the gentile Christians who did not know the Torah.

The final Canon was still not officially decided until the Council of Trent for the Catholic Church. The church included the Apocrypha or the hidden books into the Canon, however the Protestant groups like the Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists and the Church of England felt that these books did not possess the same criteria necessary for canonical books. Scriptures used for inclusion into the canon had to have been written by the inspiration of God and Protestants felt that this was not so with the Apocrypha.

By this time the Bible had been translated into English by William Tyndale, however there were earlier English versions like the John Wycliffe translation in the 1300s and the Lindisfarne gospels that were translated even earlier. Martin Luther had also translated the Bible into German during the 16th century. However, the first translation was by Jerome in the 400's, whereby the Pope trusted him to translate the Greek into Latin now the universal language of the Church at this time.

After the Reformation came the ages of Biblical Criticism started by Griesbach in 1789 when he published all 3 synoptics in columns and people began to see similarities between scriptures. This led to more examination of other scriptures and intense curiosity as to how the scriptures were composed, by whom and why.

The Bible society, with the help of William Wilberforce began to spread the Bible all over the world with more and more translations appearing.

Another important event that occurred in 1611 was the King James Bible that revolutionised the Church of England and still does to this day. Its use of old English has become synonymous with evangelicals believing it has more authority.

In conclusion, the Bible has influenced many events and used as authority and shaped the western world in particular and is still relevant to many Christians today.

Commentary

This is a thorough and accurate answer to the question, with good use of evidence and examples, and good knowledge of the scholastic debates.

Level 7 – 45 marks

- 10 Discuss how far beliefs about the status of these scriptures have been affected by events in history. (30 marks) AO2**

Candidate Response

The status of scriptures has been a question that shook the very foundations of Christianity, particularly in the Reformation.

The Reformers believed that the authority of the Pope and Bishops was no longer required and that the Bible was the sole authority for the church. Martin Luther called it *Sola Scriptura* on scripture alone. Due to the Bible being in Latin at this time, only a few people could understand it. This ignorance led people to believe that scriptures should be read by everyone in their own tongue so that they could know God better and come to a more intimate relationship with God. However, the Catholic Church would argue that Jesus set up the church before the Bible was written and appointed Peter as the leader. Matthew 16:18 'You are Peter and on this rock I will build my community.' Therefore, a Catholic would see the authority of the Pope as greater than that of the Bible.

Also, the 'sola scriptura' thesis leads people into believing whatever they want because Luther also taught 'sola fide' or faith alone and one day he preached in a church that he could commit adultery 100 times a day and he would still be saved. However, due to the teachings of the church and the interpretation of scripture that Catholics would argue that it is faith infused works that leads to salvation as found in James 2:24 'You see now that it is by deeds, and not only by believing that someone is justified'. The Reformation did begin the age of the status of scriptures being the ultimate authority like nothing that Christians had seen before.

However, during the age of enlightenment and biblical criticism, the authority of the scriptures began to be questioned. Stories like Adam and Eve were no longer accepted as history, particularly with the publication of the *Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin that humans evolved and were not created like the account in Genesis suggests.

However, the churches, particularly the fundamentalists and creationists believe that the creation stories and the Bible as a whole is true word for word. They believe in the literal word of God, so in some respects, the Bible does still retain its status among their groups.

The real crux of this issue is how one interprets scripture. There are three main categories, literalists, conservatives and liberal views on how scripture is interpreted.

Firstly, the literalists believe that everything in the Bible is true, there is nothing that contradicts and if there is then it is our humanity that makes us unable to understand.

The second view, which is held by the Catholic Church, is the conservative view that scripture is true to an extent but science can help fill in any gaps or discrepancies.

The third view is the liberal view that scripture was written by man without the influence of the Holy Spirit like the literalists and conservatives believe. Liberals believe that man interpreted God's actions wrong which accounts for the contradictions.

The Bible was written by many different people in different times with different views and standards. Therefore, the status of scripture still retains its importance but on varying levels of interpretation.

In conclusion, the way in which a person interprets scripture leads to the amount of status it is given, but overall whatever you may believe about it, it is still the word of God and should be respected and understood.

Commentary

The candidate interprets “events in history” to refer to the Reformation, the ‘sola scriptura’ and ‘sola fide’ movements, the age of biblical criticism, etc., and this is a valid interpretation of the question from which the candidate reaches the conclusion that status depends on interpretation. The essay does not have the systematic analysis and reasoning of a Level 7 response, but shows a clear process of reasoning for Level 6.

Level 6 – 25 marks