



Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Unit RST3D Old Testament

June 2011 Examination Candidate Exemplar Work



2011 (June) Unit RST3D Old Testament

Example of Candidate's Work from the Examination

Grade B

- 03 Examine the views about the nature of God found in the passages you have studied in Genesis and the Psalms. (30 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

Within the Bible specifically with the Genesis accounts, it is clearly indicated that God created the world and every living thing within it. He is portrayed as being omnipotent, omniscient, benevolent and transcendent.

Whenever God created something 'He thought it was good' indicating the fact he was pleased with his creation.

Genesis 1-2 v4 was written by source P within the time of the Exile; it is generally ordered and in a list-like formation. Genesis 2 v5-3 v24 was scribed by source J which has a more storyline like element towards it. However, in both accounts God is completely in control and omnipotent e.g Genesis 1 v6 'Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water' and it was so.

Moreover, there is debate as to whether God created the world ex-nihilo (out of nothing) or whether he created order out of chaos (water was seen as chaotic at the time of creation and early life).

The fact that God had pre-determined life is evident within Genesis 1-3 as he ordered his creations and ensured they had everything they could possible require to live life. For example, within Genesis 1-2 v4 God created a harmonious and structured world before creating man; whereas in Genesis 2 v5-3 v24 man was created first and the universe was designed around their specific needs/requirements.

God appointed man to be his stewards and rule over the earth. Genesis 3, which can be regarded as Post-Fall shows the fact that God is true to his word and just yet he is still benevolent. For example, God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden due to their sinful ways, but he made them clothes from skin to hide their naked bodies (Genesis 3 v21).

Following on from this within Genesis 6-9, God created 'The Flood' in which he flooded the Earth for 150 days. He was displeased by the fact the Earth was still inheritantly sinful due to Adam and Eve and 'the fall of man'. However, God spared Noah and his family along with two of every species of animal. He is shown as anthropomorphic due to the way he provided Noah with precise instructions on how to build an Ark.

Following the flood, God was remorseful indicating he may not be omnibenevolent and omniscient. He made a covenant with Noah to never show such destruction again, and the sign of this promise is a rainbow.

Psalms 8, 104 and 105 are hymns of praise and thanksgiving. All of them indicate God is the creator and sustainer. Psalm 8 shows the idea that people are in awe and wonder of his creation 'what is man that you are mindful of him?' Psalm 8 v4. Also, it could be stated that God is numinous – he is beyond human comprehension.

Additionally, Psalm 8 shows how God is dominant and superior to all human beings 'you made him a little lower than the heavenly beings' Psalm 8 v5. God is the creator and therefore has superiority to his creations.

Psalm 104 outlines the fact that 'without God's spirit the earth would collapse' (Anderson). God is the sustainer, if he is taken out of the equation we will cease to exist 'He set the earth on its foundations it can never be moved' Psalm 104 v5.

Also, this Psalm shows creation in the present tense and uses the word 'moves' to show creation is continuous and ongoing God is still in the world.

Psalm 105 shows God is capable of bad thing: plagues and gnats etc.

Commentary

This response covers a range of ideas about the nature of God. Most of the points made are relevant, developed with comment and supported with exemplification from the text. Awareness is shown of source critical insights relating to the creation stories, though the candidate might have examined the difference in portrayal of God as well as commenting on views they have in common. There is technical terminology throughout, although the candidate does not appear to have understood how to use the words 'anthropomorphic' and 'numinous' and the second sentence reads like a list. Overall, the response just makes level 6.

Level 6 24 marks

- 04** 'Ideas about the nature of God in Genesis and the Psalms have no value in the 21st century.' Assess this view. (20 marks) AO2

Candidate Response

My initial idea is that God in Genesis and the Psalms may still have some value in the 21st Century.

To begin with, many Conservative Christians read the Bible to be literally true and therefore Genesis is the exact way the earth was made, making Genesis of high relevance today.

Also, within Psalm 104, the word 'moves' is used very frequently which suggests that God is still within the Earth. Anderson stated that 'without God's spirit in the Earth, it would collapse' showing some individuals believe strongly God still has value today.

Additionally, there has been archaeological evidence to suggest the Flood as scripted in Genesis 6-9 did actually occur as pieces of what is presumed to be the Ark have been found frozen in glaciers. Does this suggest Genesis 6-9 should be read as historical evidence?

However, it could be argued God is only relevant to religious believers and as there is a growing number of secular believers within the 21st Century, these ideas may be disregarded. Also, if you are not religious you are unlikely to read the Bible and therefore the Genesis accounts and Psalms would not be relevant today.

It has been suggested that 'God of the gaps' was used where people used God as an explanation for things they had not yet grasped the concept of. However, as a result of the Big Bang Theory and Wheelers Oscillating universe alongside Darwin's proposal of evolution – there is less necessity for God. Ayers verification principle could also be examined as he believes something has to have proof in order to have meaning. The only potential proof found within Genesis is the pieces of the Ark, however it has not been officially verified whether this was the actual Ark documented within Genesis 6-9. Therefore, Ayer would state Genesis and Psalms are meaningless as there is no solid evidence to suggest anything occurred as science has undermined it potentially.

Psalms can be regarded as 'The Old Testament in miniture' – McKeating. There is an issue of poetic license, are certain events exaggerated? For example 'He spoke and there came swarms of flies' Psalms 105 v31. This could have been exaggerated to make it more interesting to be passed on to future generations.

In conclusion, it depends whether people are religious or not in order to ascertain whether Genesis and Psalms are still relevant in the 21st Century.

Commentary

This is a satisfactory response to the issue. The candidate attempts to do justice to both sides of the debate, giving several arguments, and the conclusion follows on naturally from what has been said. The candidate did not appear to have been well-informed about the so-called pieces of the Ark, however, and this weakens the argument. Some of the references to scholarly views lack development and give the impression of being included simply to show the ability to give names, e.g. the reference to McKeating.

Level 5 15 marks

05 Examine the views on right living that are found in the wisdom literature and in the Law. (30 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

Wisdom Literature and Law could be stated as highly important for right living. The Law consisted of the 10 Commandments which were seen as 'central to the Israelite faith' (Anderson). The majority of the Commandments were apodictic and therefore, straightforward to understand and non-negotiable for example Exodus 20 v7 'You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God'.

Blenkinsopp stated that the laws were updated in order to ensure they were understood and followed to keep the covenant. The 10 Commandments were adapted and expanded into 613 Laws which formed the Covenant Code, thus showing the extent of their importance as the Israelites knew it was essential they did not break the Holy Covenant they had with God.

The Israelites were given the incentive that if they kept the Covenant they would be rewarded: Exodus 19 v3-6. They would be God's treasured possessions and holy nation. 'Holy' can be defined as 'different and set apart' – Dyrness – indicating they were a unique society.

Barton opposes the view that the 10 Commandments were the origins of the law, he believes the Israelites were in fact given 613 Laws at Mount Sinai and during their time in Exile they produced 10 main Commandments as a summary to keeping the Torah. The Torah can be viewed as guidance for the eternity of the Israelite's lives. They must always live by it.

It has been suggested by Drane that the Torah has undertones of syncretism and use of laws from other religions in order to keep the Covenant. For example, to rest the land and livestock every 3 years. The law covers every aspect of daily life. Everyone is under it. Within Deuteronomy 17, the King is given strict guidelines to live by e.g 'he is to read it all days of his life' Deuteronomy 17 v19. There is a mix of social and religious laws which is unique within the Ancient Near East (ANE) there are 6 social laws as opposed to 4 religious laws. By following these laws the Israelites will maintain their suzerainty covenant with God and will not be punished.

Wisdom Literature is also largely significant with regard to how to live a good life. Wisdom of Solomon chapters 1-5 outline the importance of living a good life as life after death depends on it (2 v10) if they oppress the righteous, then they shall be punished. Wisdom Literature outlines the Characteristics of the wise as opposed to the foolish. The wise are described as those who are righteous and follow the law of God as well as trying to spread the message about God to others. Proverb 9 states that 'Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom'. In order to have wisdom and be wise, you must have reverent fear of the Lord. Psalm 14 states that 'The fool says in his heart that 'there is no God' and this is the beginning of foolishness.

Wisdom Literature outlines the fate of the righteous 'But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God and no torment will ever touch them'. Wisdom of Solomon 3 v1. However, the foolish will be punished due to the fact they are ungodly 'through the devil's envy death entered the world' Wisdom of Solomon 2 v24. Dell states this is the first time the devil is mentioned by name. Proverbs apply to everybody 'they are a collection of wisdom by ordinary people' Drane. Proverbs give advice for daily life and how to live a good life e.g. 'Give a cup of water and you will receive a cup of water in return'. Proverbs 11 v25. They also indicate how not to behave: 'Hatred stirs up trouble, love overlooks the wrongs that others do'.

Commentary

This is a satisfactory response to the question. Most (though not all) of the information is accurate and relevant. There is an attempt to include scholarly reference, although it is not always fully understood or pertinent to the question. The candidate has included relevant reference to and some comment on a range of texts, going beyond those set for study.

Level 5 23 marks

06 'The views on right living expressed in the Wisdom literature are more important than those expressed in the Law.' Evaluate this claim. (20 marks) AO2

My initial idea is that wisdom literature and law are of equal importance on the right way to live.

Firstly, wisdom literature and law is applicable to everyone, regardless of wealth, status or power. The law is the word of God, given exactly by God to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, suggesting it is of extremely high importance. The 10 Commandments are seen as 'central to the Israelite faith' – Campbell and the 'genuine core of their history' – Anderson.

However, Wisdom Literature provides people with how to live their daily life whilst reminding them God is in control e.g. 'In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps' Proverbs 16 v 9. God has the final say.

Ecclesiasticus outlines God created the whole of humanity and they are in his own image ch 17 v3.

Wisdom of Solomon outlines the necessity of being righteous with regard to the afterlife, if people are ungodly they will be punished (2v10). Wisdom of Solomon tends to focus on the afterlife and death, whereas Ecclesiasticus is more optimistic and outlines God disciplines and rebukes his people. Ecclesiasticus 18 v13 – He teaches them.

Overall, both Wisdom Literature and the Law are essential in stating how to live correctly. They go 'hand in hand' – Wisdom helps to keep the law and provide incentive for keeping it. Therefore, they can both be deemed as having equal importance.

Commentary

The candidate has tried to respond to the statement, although the focus is lost in the third and fourth paragraphs and the arguments put forward contain little development. The brief conclusion shows an attempt at an overall assessment. The response sits securely in level 4, but lacks the focus and development of arguments required for level 5.

Level 4 11 marks

Grade A

- 03 Examine the views about the nature of God found in the passages you have studied in Genesis and the Psalms. (30 marks) AO1**

Candidate Response

The view of the nature of God found in passages in Genesis and the Psalms is one of an omnipotent God who is also omniscient, omnibenevolent. In Genesis 1-2 v4a (the Priestly source circa 500 B.C.E, God is seen to be very powerful and in control. This is shown by the beginning of the passage saying that 'in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' i.e he is the creator. The passage is very orderly, constantly describing what was created on each day. This emphasises his power and control and would have probably been included in the passages to provide hope for his people. Although the Priestly source come first in terms of chronological order in Genesis, it is actually a younger source than the Jahwistic/Elohistic account of Genesis 2 v4b-3. Using source criticism (which Joyce says 95% of scholars support) these chapters of Genesis can be separated. While this might not seem that important, in terms of views of the nature of God, it is. The view of God depicted in the Priestly source is much more separate from creation, possibly transcendent, although still able to do things in the world. The view of God in the Jahwistic/ Elohist source is different. In chapter 8 verse 8 it says, 'they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze'. Therefore this view of God is that he is anthropomorphic. Scholars who support the popular source criticism dating of these passages (that the Jahwistic/ Elohist account is dated circa 800/700 B.C.E) often say that the reason that God is depicted as anthropomorphic in this passage is that the source that it is taken from is earlier and therefore the view of God was more basic or 'immature'. The Priestly source would have been written in the Exile during the 6th Century B.C.E. when the Israelites would have needed much hope and comfort. Therefore the view of God depicted in the Priestly source shows God to be in control of creation, different from humans but still able to act in the world. Although both passages do show that there is meant to be a link between God and humans i.e in the Priestly source humans are made in God's image and in the Jahwistic/ Elohist source, God's breathes the breath of life into Adam. This shows that not only is God the creator of humanity, but he has a special, personal relationship with humanity.

The view of God found in Genesis 6-9 is slightly different. In these passages the story of Noah and his ark is depicted. This shows that God has the ability to be angry and punish people (although this was also shown after Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge and arguably lost the possibility of immortality or some other quality that made them more like God, which then resulted in God banishing them from the Garden of Eden and making their lives harder in that they would have to work the land filled with weeds and that women would have pain in child birth). Genesis 6 depicts how God is angry that the angels have conceived with humans are created the Nephilim. It is said that 'the Lord was sorry that he made humankind on the earth'. This shows that God, like humans, is able to regret his decisions and actions. This then results in showing that God is able to punish humans for their actions, further asserting his power over his creations as shown by the words, 'he blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the earth and all human beings' (apart from anything that was in the ark). God's ability to regret his actions is once again shown by the words, 'I will never again curse the ground because of humankind...nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.'

Genesis chapter 11 depicts the story of the Tower of Babel. Whybray talks about this story as being about human ambition to try to become better or stronger and almost infringe on the sovereignty of God. God is almost depicted here to be jealous or threatened by the humans and therefore chooses to scatter 'them abroad from there over the face of the earth'.

The nature of God depicted in Psalms 8, 104 and 105 is much more poetic and evocative. Broyles said that the psalms are one of the best ways to find out about the practice of ancient Israelite worship. Psalm 8, like the Genesis view of God shows that he is creator as shown by the words, 'when I look at the heavens, the work of your fingers'. The idea that humans are less powerful or below God is also mentioned by the words, 'yet you have made them a little lower than God'. The psalm is one of praise, as our most psalms and is addressed to God which Barton and Bowden said is common for psalms in the Psalter. It is addressed to God as shown by the words 'O lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all earth'.

Psalm 104 depicts God's nature as a being that is so great that humans should be in awe of him and that his majesty to a certain extent is beyond our comprehension. The idea that beings are at the mercy of God and that he is involved in his creation (showing that the Old Testament view of God does not see him in the view of deism, is shown by the words. 'these all look to you to give them their food in due season'. Psalms 105 is also similar is describing the nature of God as amazing. It mentions his ability to act in the world and perform 'miracles' but also talks about 'the judgements he has uttered' hinting that God is also a judging figure, which links to the ideas of judgement day depicted in Amos and God being the soul important judge. It also talks about the covenant which he is 'mindful of' forever, showing that humanity has a special place in God's heart and implying that God does not forget his promises and therefore people should praise and worship him.

Overall, the views about the nature of God found in the passages in Genesis and the Psalms is that God is a loving, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient God who's image humans are made in. Like humans, God has regrets and has the ability to get angry and jealous as shown in Genesis 6-9 and Genesis 11. He is a God that we should be in awe of as shown through the poetic and evocative way that his nature is expressed in the Psalms and is a being that we should obey and understand that we are lesser than. Some Christians see a depiction of the Trinity in Genesis (God the Father = the creator, God the Son = God speaking and putting things into action and God the Holy Spirit = the wind).

Commentary

The candidate's style of writing lacks sophistication, but this is a thorough response that contains mainly relevant material. The use of form critical views in the first paragraph makes a valid link to the first topic in this unit. It is just unfortunate that the candidate did not understand how to use the term 'anthropomorphic'. Throughout the paragraph, it is God who is anthropomorphic. (This misunderstanding occurred in a number of responses to this question.) The candidate refers to several scholars, but only what is said about Whybray adds anything to the answer. Overall, the response lacks the maturity and the depth for level 7.

Level 6 26 marks

04 'Ideas about the nature of God found in Genesis and the Psalms have no value in the 21st Century.' Assess this view.

(20 marks) AO2

Candidate Response

The ideas about the nature of God depicted in Genesis and the Psalms are not fact. As Davidson says, chapters 1-11 of Genesis can be seen to be in the 'realm of story myth'. This means they are an aetiological explanation of the universe – they are not based on fact but are a poetic explanation and not an accurate description. While the ideas about the nature of God would have had value in biblical times when people were not as educated and we did not have very much knowledge about science or other explanations of the creation of the universe such as the Big Bang, the idea about God being the creator the universe is depicted in Genesis and the Psalms would have had value. In the 21st Century not everyone believes in God as shown by the fact we have people who are atheists. At the same time, not everyone in our society subscribes to the Judea – Christian religions and therefore do not see Genesis and the Psalms as part of their religious scripture. The idea that God is a God who punishes and heals and can therefore bring about earthquakes and miracles can now arguably be disproved using scientific evidence. The ideas about God depicted in Genesis and the Psalms, that he is omniscient and omnipotent are, some would argue, irrelevant now as we can, arguably see they contradict, for example the idea that God is in control and knows everything and yet did not prevent humans from possibly not attempting their actions in Genesis 11 that could have impinged on his sovereignty, nor did he stop the actions of the angels and the humans.

However, the ideas about the nature of God in Genesis and the Psalms do still have some value in the 21st century. This is because there are Jews and Christians in the world who see this as holy scripture and the ideas about the nature of God do have value to them. Some would argue that they do not have to take a literal interpretation of God, but instead, using reader-response criticism (the strong version of which is associated with the scholar Fish) can take a more poetic interpretation and therefore these passages and the ideas in them can still have value. At the same time, the ideas about the nature of God in Genesis and the Psalms do still have value as they teach as more about ancient Israelite worship. The ideas about the nature of God depicted in the psalms show just how much religion and worship was important to the Israelites as God is depicted as being majestic and sovereign. These ideas help us to understand how much of an influence these ideas could have had on culture and society at that time and help us to understand more about worship and prayer during that time (Gunkel feel the psalms are based on prayers used in liturgical worship whereas Mowinckel feel the psalms are the actual texts themselves that were used in worship). Ideas about the nature of God therefore help us to understand a bit about ancient history and when we compare the ideas that are depicted in the Psalms and in Genesis with other scripture from different cultures in the Ancient Near East we can see how different cultures may have been influenced by other cultures. Also, these passages about the nature of God show us about the development of the religion, by comparing and contrasting the development of ideas in different passages which helps us to understand how religion can evolve and possibly why (depending on the time e.g if they were being persecuted).

Overall, ideas about the nature of God in Genesis and the Psalms do still have value in the 21st century because we still have religious believers who holds these ideas dearly and because they help us to understand ancient culture and religion and about Biblical explanations for occurrences in the world (in that they were attributed to God).

Commentary

Again, the answer lacks sophistication of style and the conclusion is ineffective. However, there is very good application of form critical insights to argue both for and against the statement and also an attempt to use the reader response theory. This is a well focused response that just makes level 7.

Level 7 19 marks

05 Examine the views on right living that are found in the Wisdom literature and in the Law.

(30 marks) AO1

The Wisdom literature and the Law depict much on 'right living'. The wisdom literature is much more about guidance than the law is. In Wisdom of Solomon Chapter 1 v11 it says that 'a lying mouth destroys the soul' which expresses the view that 'right living' does not involve lying or slander. Wisdom of Solomon talks about the 'ungodly' who invited death saying that 'God did not make death'. Wisdom of Solomon recognises that one of the frailties of the human condition is fear of death. He says 'do not invite death by the error of your life' implying that 'right living' is about being free from error or at least atoning and repenting for your sins and intended to live a godly and religious life in order to prevent death. Wisdom of Solomon Chapter 3 verse 1 says, 'But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them'. In chapter 2 it says, 'righteousness is immortal' implying that through praising, believing, worshipping God and asking for his forgiveness, people will be part of the 'righteous' and therefore will be partaking in 'right living'. Solomon reminds the people that if they partake in 'right living' and keep the Mosaic covenant they will be protected as God 'watches over his elect'. Solomon emphasises that 'right living' involves not giving into temptation as Adam and Eve did as shown by the words, 'for blessed is the barren woman who is undefiled'. Wisdom of Ben Sirach mentions that part of 'right living' is almsgiving as shown by the words, 'one's almsgiving is like a signet ring with the Lord.' This reiterates that 'right living' is God and makes a person more pious and in God's favour. As Irenaeus said, we are made in God's image but are working towards his likeness, the wisdom literature is saying that right living is about obedience but it also about trying to positively reflect God. As you are made in his image you are almost a metaphor for him or have some special link with him and therefore have a special duty, especially with the Mosaic covenant to live according to wisdom. Brachter says that a fool is one who does not follow wisdom or believe God to be creator. These wisdom passages reiterate this saying that it is foolish not to follow wisdom, wisdom is for those who are pious and less impure. Sirach chapter 42 emphasises that it is important to believe and praise God as shown by words, 'glorify the Lord and exalt him as much as you can, for he surpasses even that' showing that this is part of right living and is of the utmost importance.

Exodus 20-23 contains the Book of the Covenant which contains many significant laws in the Old Testament. The beginning of Exodus 20 contains the Ten commandments. These are seen to be as almost the core of 'right living' in the Old Testament. Niddich says they are 'a brief statement of the ethical obligations of an Israelite'. Drane says that they are almost like a policy statement, 'a bill of rights'. The Ten Commandments says that 'right living' involves belief in God as shown by the words, 'I am the Lord your God...you shall have no other gods before me'. These commandments show that right living involves, as shown in the wisdom literature, not giving into temptation e.g. not committing adultery, not stealing and not murdering all of which for some might be acts of temptation. The Law, like the Wisdom literature, recognises that 'right living' is not just about God but also about relations with humanity. Most scholars would say that the first four commandments are about our relationship with God and the next six are about our relationship with other humans.

It therefore says that 'right living' involves respect for God i.e. believe in him and not trying to portray him with idols and as well as respect for humans i.e. respect for human property, life as well as respecting your parents and obligations of marriage. The rest of the Book of the Covenant shows that the view of 'right living' involves making things fair, meaning that punishment should not be more than injury. This is shown by the words, 'an eye for an eye', which was meant to show punishment should equal injury. The law depicted the Old Testament is different than a lot of law in Ancient Near East in that there is not a separation of moral, ethical, religious and judicial law. They are interwoven showing God's interest in all different realms of the world. The right living expressed in the Law is about keeping the Ten Commandments but also recognising that humans are not perfect, they are not God and therefore they will sin, even if its unintentional. The law recognises how people can make restitution to others who have wronged but at the same time what punishment await them if they sin.

Overall, the views on right living that are found in Wisdom literature and the Law are about believing and respecting God and his creations. They are about trying to live a pious life and help others to do so as well as learning about what awaits a person who does not 'live right' and why this should make them want to 'live right'. These views show that 'right living' brings a person closer to God and keeps them in his favour and this is the best way to lead and live a good life.

Commentary

This is a fairly thorough response to the question, which includes occasional reference to scholarly views and makes effective use of the set texts in support of the points considered. The information is accurate and relevant. The candidate might have included some discussion of the dating and context of the texts in relation to the content. Greater use of paragraphing would have improved the overall structure. As it stands, the response falls into the lower end of level 6.

Level 6 25 marks

06 'The views on right living expressed in the Wisdom literature are more important than those expressed in the Law.' Evaluate this claim. (20 marks) AO2

'The views on right living expressed in the Wisdom literature are more important than those expressed in the Law'. This is because the wisdom literature arguably has a more religious nature and has been expressed by the pious sages and elders who were knowledgeable about the right way to live whereas the Law appears to be more secular. The wisdom literature has a more personal element, they are being preached by Solomon etc and therefore it feels more direct, personal and evocative. Brachter says that one who does not recognise wisdom and that God is the creator 'is a fool'. The views on right living expressed in the Wisdom literature are also of importance because, as Charpentier says, 'wisdom is universal and timeless'. Law it can be argued, can change and develop. While ideas of wisdom may evolve, old wisdom still remains important relevant and therefore the views on right living expressed in the Wisdom literature can possibly be seen to be more important than those expressed in the Law. The wisdom literature accepts human frailty. While the Law tells a person what to do to punish themselves or make retribution, the wisdom literature says that a person can be granted forgiveness and change by following wisdom. It is almost as if Law is about what happens after the fact as a punishment whereas wisdom shows a person how to get back on the right track.

However, the views on right living expressed in the Law is just as important and possibly even more important than those expressed in the Wisdom literature. This is because the views on right living in the Law contain the Ten Commandments which most western cultures' laws are based on and which Nidditch says are 'a brief statement of ethical obligations of an Israelite'. The Ten Commandments are a summary of the 613 mitzvot and of God's law. Drane has pointed out that most crimes in the Bible that result in death relate to the Ten Commandments. In order to not be put to death therefore, the Ten Commandments and therefore the Law are extremely important to right living. The views on right living expressed in the Law are legalistic and this is not necessarily a bad thing. It also is important because it teaches us much about ancient Israelite law codes (which can be compared to Ancient Near Eastern Law codes of other nations) and therefore the views expressed here might, to a certain extent, be seen to some to be more important than the views expressed about right living in the wisdom literature. The views of right living expressed in the Law also are incredibly important as they stress, more so than wisdom literature, that people should be treated equally in that everyone should be equal before the eyes of the law the slave being killed should not be seen as a lesser crime than a property-owner being killed. This therefore expresses an important view on right living that we should not judge people on the basis of their status in society.

Overall, the views on right living expressed in the Wisdom literature and the law cannot be seen to be more important than the other. The ideas of right living expressed in these passages go hand in hand. In order for a person to live a good pious life they have to abide by wisdom and the more formal laws of God that are mentioned in Exodus. To say that one is more important than the other is difficult. It can be argued that who are we to say which one is more important as they all relate back to God and God's commands and advice on how to live.

Commentary

Despite a slight drift from the point in the second paragraph, this is on the whole a well-focused response, with sound reasoning on both sides of the debate. The conclusion shows an attempt to tie the whole answer together with a reasoned overall assessment.

Level 6 16 marks

Grade A*

- 01 Examine different ways in which the Old Testament is read and explain how these affect the authority attached to it.

(30 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

Plan: Doctrine dogma of 'inspiration'. Product of culturally specific time and place (comparative methods) / Word of Moses, divine word of God / As theology, expression of faith / as literature / as history, of a nation and people.

- Dogma of inspiration, holy word of God.
- As Law (Torah) for continued Judaic faith
- As theology (ways of understanding God)
- As history
- As comparative document
- Literature
- As anticipation of Christ, Christian readings

For those who ascribe to the dogma of 'inspiration', that is, in complete belief in the infallibility of the Old Testament as the divinely inspired word of God, clearly the authority such texts holds is total and unchallengeable. For some sections of both the Jewish and Christian faiths, this submission to the unquestionable authority of the OT (or Hebrew bible) is a central doctrine and thus entails placing statements concerning the nature of creation, the age of the world and the creation of living beings, over and against all modern developments in knowledge within the sciences and biblical scholarship. The Pentateuch is viewed as the 'work' of Moses who received the word of God, and through this, we learn the history of the patriarchs and the birth of Israel as a nation. The authority for this is not based upon the historian's methods of source analysis, but faith or belief in the truth of what has been transmitted.

For Judaism the Old Testament is the continuing guide as to how they should live their lives and how their faith should be enacted, practised in the present. The Torah is usually translated as the 'Law' but it is better thought of as 'guidance', 'instruction', or even 'revelation through history'. Although there are specific practices contained in the Torah which continue to inform modern Judaism and hold a lasting authority (the idea of the clean and unclean animal for example) equally important are the narratives which provide a collective consciousness of God's activity in history and the theology which may be extrapolated from these grand narratives. The authority of the Torah, however, is not unchallengeable, or beyond human 'interference' as the dogma of inspiration would have it. The traditions of Judaic hermeneutics of Talmudic scholarship, shows Judaism actively questioning the authority of the word of their God.

The OT has come to be viewed as an incredibly important text for gaining an insight into the nature of societies of the ancient world. For many centuries it was one of the few windows into that time for historians and considered an invaluable source of knowledge. As archaeology has developed and historians have acquired a far more complex idea of the biblical period, the OT's authority 'as a work of history' has diminished somewhat, while still remaining a touchstone for comparative methods.

Analogous to reading the OT as history, it has also come to be read 'as literature'. Discoveries made in the ancient mesopotamian regions have given rise to a comparative methodology whereby founding narratives of the OT – the creation, the flood, the Fall – are contextualised by comparison with Ugaritic, Babylonian and Egyptian texts that demonstrate striking similarities. Clearly such comparative analysis has had a major impact on ideas of the authority of the OT. Such research which seemingly shows a common reservoir of images, myths and stories upon which these ancient peoples drew to create their culturally specific religious text, has revealed the OT to contain huge amount of intertextuality. The idea of the divine word of God struggles to survive against such evidence for the OT as a complex, composite work, developed over many centuries and influenced by other cultures.

Commentary

Only two candidates attempted this question, which might suggest that centres are not studying this topic. This outstanding response to the question might encourage more centres to include it in their delivery of the course.

Right from the start, by looking at the short essay plan, it can be seen that the candidate is thinking in a structured manner. Several points are made and developed from different angles. The response flows naturally from one paragraph to the next, and the final sentence ties the whole together. The candidate's command of technical terminology is most impressive and the style of writing is lucid and mature.

The chief flaw in the response was a lack of specific exemplification from text. The statement about the similarities between Genesis 1-3 and 6-9 and other Ancient Near Eastern literature might have been supported with a detail in Genesis that is found also elsewhere. For instance, when Noah disembarks after the flood has receded and offers a sacrifice, God smells the pleasing aroma and promises never again to destroy humanity. In the Epic of Gilgamesh, when Utnapishtim offers a sacrifice after the flood has ended, the gods are attracted by the sweet smell and Ishtar denounces the action of the god who caused the flood, promising never to forget what had happened. Had there been some clear exemplification, this response might well have been awarded full marks.

Level 7 28 marks

02 'Jewish approaches to the Old Testament have nothing in common with Christian approaches.' Assess this view. (20 marks) AO2

It is fair to say that the process of hermeneutics which biblical scholars undertake is one shared by Jew and Christian alike. Obviously in many instances the conclusions drawn from such analysis becomes dependent upon certain traditions within their respective faiths. In terms of the search, however, for source material, of source analysis, of form criticism and of linguistic enquiry, such approaches are not confined to either Judaism or Christianity.

What is also shared is approaching the OT as the witness both to God's activity throughout history and the nature of God. In other words, both Jew and Christian look to the OT as a way of understanding God, his relation to humans, and the theologies which one may draw.

Both Christian and Jewish approaches also may entail the ascription to belief that the OT carries the divinely inspired word of God and hence its message and narratives are to be taken quite literally.

The biggest divergence between Christian and Jewish approach is the former's attempt to read prefigurations of Christian beliefs, as well as specific prophecies of Christ's coming, in the OT. Such approaches, which go back to the birth of the Christian faith as Jews who had begun to follow Christ tried to reconcile their pre-existing faith with this new message, are clearly culturally determined, religiously biased one may say. The Talmudic approach which seeks to understand the word of God to an ever greater pitch of subtlety and complexity, while not diminishing the grandeur and fundamental properties of these visions of God and the philosophy of God, is antithetical to this Christian manipulation and crude interpretation whereby minor (inconsequential) details are read as symbols of Christ (any mention of 'red' is Christ's blood etc.)

Commentary

This fulfils most of the criteria for a level 7 AO2 response. It is well-focused, developing thoughtfully several arguments on both sides of the debate. As in the first part (01), more effective use might have been made of textual evidence, for example in the second paragraph. The one specific illustration, given right at the end in brackets, is not the best. It may have been that the candidate was running out of time and referred to the first idea that came into his/her mind. The Exodus might have provided a fruitful source of exemplification. Just occasionally there is a lack of clarity, perhaps another sign that the candidate was working against the clock. Nevertheless, this is a highly competent piece of work.

Level 7 19 marks

07 Examine the main teachings in Exilic prophecy with reference to passages you have studied from Isaiah.

(20 marks) AO2

Candidate Response

Plan: The everlasting word of God – materialism vs the divine. Forgiveness for sins. Power of God (Babylonian challenge). Servant – takes on the sins. People regathered. Monotheism emphasis. Anointing of Cyrus.

The words of Deutero – Isaiah arise out of a very specific historical moment – the exile of the ‘Jews’ to Babylon – and as such are designed to provide not only comfort in this period of uncertainty, but the vision of a new future where Yahweh’s covenant with his people will be renewed.

Isaiah from the start (C.40) seeks to comfort those in exile by setting up a contrast between the perishable, transitory nature of man and the everlastingness of God. This will then later be redeployed to expose the folly of those who create man-made gods. God is described as a Shephard who will care for his flock; the power of this and its practicality is then emphasised or validated by the doxology which follows: who can you liken to God? Yahweh is incomparable, above the comprehension of man, and yet still actively concerned with his chosen people’s welfare. One of the concerns for those exiled, who witnessed the wealth and power of Babylon and the splendour of their religious festivals and idols (opening of C.46) was that Judah’s God had been overthrown by the Babylonian counterparts. Isaiah insists such comparisons are senseless, and that God does not grow weary, it is man and all his material wealth which shall decay and prove unreliable.

Isaiah 40-55 contains some accusation but it is largely concerned with stressing God’s forgiveness for past sins. Even though Isaiah draws on a shared consciousness of Yahweh’s past activities in Israel’s history in order to recall Yahweh’s power, the prophet then makes clear that Yahweh intends something completely new (43:18-19). Yahweh is presented primarily as a God of saviour, one who will rescue a people who have suffered enough.

Isaiah affirms that the scattered people of God will be regathered, but this will be facilitated by the anointed one, Cyrus of Persia. Cyrus is not the cause of Judah’s deliverance, but the historical agent of Yahweh’s eternal purpose, just as Nebuchanezzar was the agent for Yahweh’s judgement against Jerusalem and Judah.

Commentary

This is a generally thorough response to the question. The material is relevant and there is some effective reference to the text, particularly in the second paragraph. That paragraph is very well constructed, demonstrating confident handling of the material. Had this standard been sustained, this answer might have been awarded level 7. The third and final paragraph are not of the same quality, however. The opening clause of the third paragraph is not immediately clear. Moreover, given the excellent use of technical terminology in the previous response (01), use of terms such as ‘the new Exodus’, Yahweh as Israel’s go’el might have been expected. The final paragraph relating to the role of Cyrus might have been developed more effectively.

Level 6 27 marks

08 'The Exilic prophet Isaiah's teaching on the nature of God is the most important element in his prophecy.' How far do you agree? (20 marks) AO2

For those in exile it was terribly important to conceive of a God who was transcendent, infallible, and thus incapable of being overthrown by rival Babylonian deities, but at the same time one who worked actively in history, who provided and cared for his chosen people. In Isaiah we get both: the God who is beyond human understanding, his word everlasting where man and his works fade like flowers, and the God who is a Shepherd, who will not forget his people and who will save.

The monotheism in Isaiah is repeatedly emphasised, acting as opposition to Babylonian polytheism, and as the natural extension or implication of this, Yahweh becomes the God of all nations. The importance of this is that God's power, the evidence of God's power, is no longer contingently tied upon the rise and fall of competing empires in a politically volatile region. Yahweh is no longer to be thought as only present, active in the institutionalized works of man – namely the Jerusalem temple, now destroyed – but present wherever the believer continues to maintain faith. Supplement to this, God 'dominion' is not dependent on the continued line of Davidic kings. Although Jerusalem is God's city, and the royal king in some way his representative, the destruction of such things does not equate with the destruction of God.

Although such teachings on God's nature were clearly important, such was their emphasis, Isaiah also holds out the promise of imminent political change which will free the people from captivity. Cyrus, the head of the rising dominant power in the region, is described as the anointed one, God's chosen and hence God's active agent for the benefit of Judah. Furthermore, Isaiah introduces a concept, or vision, perhaps unique in OT prophecy and the main claim for the originality of this text, of the servant of God who will 'take on' the iniquities of the people and thus deliver them from God's judgement. There is much debate surrounding who this servant was actually meant to mean, but as a messiah figure, he represents great hope to the exiles that they will be redeemed and the devastation they have witnessed of their cherished institutions and confidence in Yahweh will never be inflicted again.

Commentary

What the candidate has written in support of the statement is quite outstanding, despite the occasional spelling and grammatical errors. The final paragraph, presenting an alternative viewpoint, is thoughtful, though not quite as well structured. A short conclusion, homing in on the adverb 'most' might have resulted in this response being awarded full marks.

Level 7 19 marks