



## Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Unit RST4C Section A Religious Authority

June 2011 Examination Candidate Exemplar Work

A close-up photograph of a dictionary page. The word 'resource' is printed in a large, bold, black font. Below it, the text 'or supply of m' is visible. Further down, the text 'adopted in ad' is visible. The page is slightly curved, and the background is a light, textured paper.

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## 2011 (June) Unit RST4C Religious Authority

### Example of Candidate's Work from the Examination

#### Grade B

- 01 Examine the sources of religious authority and how they function in one or more religion(s). (45 marks) AO1

#### Candidate Response

In Islam there are four main sources of religious authority and they are Quran, Sunnah, Ijmah and Qiyas. Quran and Sunnah are the primary sources of religious authority whereas Ijmah and Qiyas are the secondary sources. All four sources of religious authority are used in Islam.

Quran is one of the primary sources and it is a divine source of religious authority as it is the word of God. The Quran was revealed to prophet (SAW) and from then it has not to be changed. It is the one and only book for the Muslims and it was sent so Muslims are able to use the Quran for guidance. The Quran teaches the Muslims what is right and what is wrong as there are many verses in the Quran.

The Quran is exact words of God it can never be wrong or changed. It is a commandment from Allah and it tells them what to do. For example, the Quran says that Muslims have to fast '...and those who have fasted before you...' This shows that the Quran commands a Muslims to do something.

Moreover, another source of religious authority in Islam is the Sunnah and this is also another primary source. The Sunnah is the actions of prophet (SAW). Muslims use the Sunnah to emulate the prophet (SAW) and try to be the best Muslims they can by following his actions.

The prophet (SAW) was the perfect human being amongst God's creation and his actions were also perfect. The prophet (SAW) left his Sunnah for his Ummah for guidance on the straight path. In the final sermon, the prophet (SAW) said 'I have left two things for my ummah, the Quran and the Sunnah...' This shows how important the Sunnah is for Muslims.

The sunnah explains what the Quran says and tells a Muslim how to do it. The Quran says pray 5 times salah whereas the sunnah shows a Muslim how to do it and pray. The Sunnah functions really well in Islam as many Muslims use the Sunnah as guidance to make them go on the straight path. If they need an answer to a problem, a Muslim uses the Sunnah and the Quran for an answer as they are divine sources of religious authority and they will have all the answers.

Furthermore, another source of religious authority in Islam is Ijmah. This is considered as a secondary source as it is the agreement of the companions of Prophet (SAW). The companions of the prophet (SAW) agreed on certain things and used it as a ruling. Ijmah is considered as secondary source of religious authority in Islam because it is a human source, it is not divine.

Muslims use Ijmah nowadays if they are not able to find an answer regarding their issue using the Quran and Sunnah. There are many examples of Ijmah and one example is smoking. In the Quran it does not specifically say that smoking is not allowed, and it says that harming your own body is haraam. The sahabahs came to an agreement on whether smoking is allowed or not.

Qiyas is also a source of religious authority in Islam. It is also a secondary source of religious authority. Qiyas is not used as much: Qiyas is the analogical deduction.

Scholars in Islam only use Qiyas if they have to use it. They use the Quran, Sunnah and Ijmah to make an analogical deduction. It is also a human interpretation and that is also another reason as to why Qiyas is considered as a secondary source of religious authority in Islam.

The Jumma azan is an example of Qiyas as scholars made up an analogical deduction about it. In Islam only scholars are allowed to use Qiyas as they have that authority.

In conclusion, there are four main sources of religious authority in Islam and they are all important in their own ways. The Quran and Sunnah are primary sources and are divine, on the other hand Ijmah and Qiyas are secondary sources as they are human interpretations. They are important for Muslims as these sources help them to be a better Muslim and help them in life.

### **Commentary**

This is a satisfactory treatment of some of the sources of religious authority and their function in Islam. The candidate demonstrates reasonable understanding through the use of evidence and some examples, and shows an awareness of the diversity within Islamic tradition.

Level 5 – 31 marks

**02 'Some sources of religious authority are so remote that other forms of religious authority are essential.' Evaluate this claim. (30 marks) AO2**

**Candidate Response**

There are some people that would agree with this statement and some people would disagree with this statement that some sources of religious authority are so remote that other forms of religious authority are essential. There are many reasons as to why people would agree and there are reasons as to why people would disagree with this statement.

A reason why people would disagree with this statement is because in Islam, the Quran and Sunnah are the primary sources and they were revealed a long time ago. Nowadays Muslims find it hard to use these sources because Muslims live in a difficult world with difficult situations. Although the Quran and Sunnah explain clearly what is right and wrong, Muslims find it hard to use as they think it is more suitable for the people at the prophets time. So they think that using Ijma and Qiyas will help them as they are human interpretations and will be able to solve their problems or come to a solution for it.

Furthermore another reason to why people would agree with this statement is because sometimes the sources of authority are not explained clearly regarding certain issues. Muslims now use Ijtihad which is also another source of religious authority in Islam and it also another form of Qiyas and basically means human's effort to interpret. For example, if a woman is lacking vitamin D and if the doctor tells her that she has to stop wearing the headscarf because she is not getting enough sun, then she is allowed to go to the scholar to get answers on what to do. The Quran, Sunnah and Ijma do not have an answer to this and there is nothing to say so scholars use all four sources of religious authority in Islam to come up with a ruling. This is why people may agree with this claim.

On the other hand, people may disagree with this statement because in Islam, Quran and Sunnah are the most important sources of authority and are essential. They are divine interpretations and also words of God and actions of the prophet (SAW) so there is no need for other forms of religious authority as these sources can never be changed and have remained the same. This shows that any Muslim could use it without any problems.

Moreover, some people may disagree that some sources of authority are so remote that other forms of religious authority are essential is because nowadays it is hard to come up with another form as it is difficult for religious leaders or scholars to agree on something because scholars have diverse opinions. Also, humans are fallible and prone to mistakes whereas the Quran and Sunnah are infallible, they are perfect and have no mistakes so there is no need for other forms of religious authority in Islam.

In conclusion, I disagree with this claim that some sources of religious authority are so remote that other forms of religious authority are essential. This is because I think all sources of religious authority are clear enough for everyone to understand and also there is no need for other forms of religious authority because nowadays people are not capable enough to make other forms of religious authority.

### **Commentary**

The introduction here is simplistic in so far as it states the obvious – that some would agree with the statement and others would disagree, and that there are reasons why some would agree and reasons why others would disagree. Nevertheless the candidate does show some degree of critical analysis, for example in the contrast between the need to make religious decisions in complicated situations today and the need to hold on to the authority of the Qur'an and Sunnah in order to maintain consistency. The first part of the conclusion follows on from the candidate's reasoning.

Level 5 – 21 marks

## Grade A

- 03 **Examine challenges to religious authority and responses to those challenges.**  
(45 marks) AO1

### Candidate Response

Religious authority has been challenged throughout history. Out of those in particular, Islam has been a target since the time of revelation and still in the spotlight of media to this day. The current challenges arise from Islam itself e.g. from liberalists and feminists and also from outside of Islam such as those from secularists and orientalist.

One of the most controversial issues that has caused masses of debates and sparked off many public reactions is the concept of covering for women. According to traditionalist Islam has mandated specific types of clothing, and the majority believe that it is the long piece of clothing known as the 'jihad' and face covering known as the 'niqab'. Allah says in the Quran 'tell your wives and daughters and the believing women to draw their veils and dress modestly'. This tells us that dressing modestly is the command of Allah and he has said in another place 'dress modestly so that you may not be harassed'. Thus, it is a source of protection for women which safeguards her dignity and prevent men from abusing her. However, Nazir Ahmed, a modernist argues that in the West if a women covers fully she is more likely to be harassed. This suggests that reforms are needed to suit the minds of modern day societies. The recent challenge faced by religious authorities was the niqab ban in Egyptian universities. The mainstream public responded by continuous protest and wore niqab near the gates of universities. Nevertheless religious authorities of Azhar in Cairo issued a fatwa stating that niqab is not mandated upon Muslim women. The mufti of Azhar said 'Niqab stems from culture and it was a relic of the Arabs even before the time of Prophet SAW'. This suggests that religious authority simply adapted to challenges and did not take a defensive stance.

Furthermore, in the UK few years ago Jack Straw objected to the niqab and called for a ban. This sparked off many public protests and debates. His argument was that 'the veil hinders communication and interpretation'. However, many female teachers, pharmacists and other women in different professions took a stand to defend their rights. Therefore, this ban was rejected. This shows that the response to the challenge was defensive and firm, causing the opposing challenge to be dismissed.

On the other hand, other religions like Christianity have not successfully responded to this challenge of women covering. Many practising Christian women today say that this concept of the covering of the head was only for women at the time of Jesus, as their new testaments do not command them of specific type of clothing. This indicates that religion changed in a way to adapt to modern societies.

Similarly, the challenge that Islamic religious authority faced by the cartoon drawings of Muhammad S.A.W also caused many debates and discussions. In Islam, as traditionalists affirm, drawing of living things is prohibited. Hence, to carry out this act on the most important person in Islam expressed sheer mockery and insult to Islam and its followers. Sajah Khan writes in her article that these cartoons have lead to polarisation of societies. This is actually true as many Muslims now do not feel comfortable in many parts where they are a minority. The response to this challenge was of a mixture. Many scholars recommended silence and no action as the example of Muhammad S.A.W was observed and carried out, he did not retaliate and attack his enemies. This response was given by Sajdah Khan in that same article. In addition, other responses from mainstream Muslims was to protest and peaceful marches.

Furthermore, the issue of polygamy is a strong challenge to religious authority. Traditionalists believe that in Islam a man can marry up to four wives as they use the verse of the Quran 'marry one, two or up to four...' However, this view is opposed by liberalists, feminists and western scholars as they believe it subjugated and oppresses women. Also, this practice is against UK laws which only recognises monogamous marriages. Thus, the response to this challenge is clear; the law of state one is living in must be abided. Thus, countries with Shariah law like Saudi Arabia, allows this practice of polygamy and its inhabitants practice it.

The issue of homosexuality has also challenged religions authority. According to fundamentalists, this act is sinful, immoral, unnatural and prohibited. They use various evidences to support their claims e.g. a hadith states 'Kill the one who is doing so and the one who it is being done to' this highlights the hatred of this act. However, a modern scholar like the Imam Hussain of South Africa is homosexual and he justifies that people of Lot in Quran were destroyed as Allah disliked it for them, and the hadith above he rejects its authenticity. Also, the first gay marriage in Pakistan was announced and allowed to be celebrated publicly. Similarly, one of the bishops of Canterbury was recently found to be gay, and the Christian authorities did not dismiss him from his job. Thus, it is clear that in this regard, religious authority simply adapted to this challenge.

In conclusion, religious authority faces many challenges particularly Islam as it is comprehensive and covers all angles of life. Currently, many challenges are arising within the religion itself, due to different interpretations. A scholar said 'In Islam there is no hierarchy and this calls for interpretation by everyone'. For this reason, many challenges do not show a defensive response, but rather a neutral stance and simply adapts to it.

### Commentary

The essay is a satisfactory treatment of some of the challenges to Islamic religious authority and the responses to those challenges. The in-depth examination implied by the opening suggestion that challenges come both from within Islam and from outside it does not quite materialise, nevertheless the candidate offers a mostly accurate selection of examples and of the diversity of views. An expansion of the concluding paragraph could have taken the essay to Level 6.

Level 5 – 33 marks

**04 'Religion responds successfully to all challenges.'**  
**How far do you agree?**

**(30 marks) AO2**

**Candidate Response**

Religion has faced ongoing challenges, since centuries and till this present day. The way it responds to challenges is debatable.

Firstly the issue of niqab ban; a rising challenge that is being posed from within Islam and from outside of it. The niqab ban that took place in Syria in this decade resulted in various outcomes. National statistics of employment have stated that more than 2000 Muslim women lost their jobs because they wore niqabs. As religion did not take a firm stance and defend itself against this challenge, economic crisis hit many families who were once stable. This indicates an unsuccessful response by religion.

In contrast, Jack Straw's objection of niqab and his proposed ban resulted in many public marches. One of the protesters stated, 'we are not oppressed by niqab but we are oppressed when our rights and freedom of expression is snatched from us'. This peaceful marching and expression of views from mainstream Muslims indicates a successful response.

The final outcome was that the ban was lifted. Thus, by peaceful response from religion resulted in success.

One of the other most controversial aspects was of the cartoons of Muhammad S.A.W. Reports from BBC news exposed about the event of burning Danish flags in Pakistan. This was not a successful response as it created polarisation between different societies. It also caused hatred by many westerners towards Islam and posed a threat to the Pakistans British Muslims. Also, many traditional scholars recommended boycotting products of Denmark, but whether this issue is successful or not is debatable. Al-Kateb writes in his articles that this is course of action is having impacts on innocent people (workers). Hence, overall religion did not respond successfully, but in end it had to adapt to the challenge.

Furthermore, the challenge from scientists concerning the Big Bang theory and the theory of evolution also lead to a mixture of responses. Islam totally rejects the theory of evolution as Allah states in the Quran that Allah made Adam from clay. However, liberals like Usamah Hassan from London has introduced a new understanding. His view is that everything in scriptures should not be taken literally as everything does have an explanation. Many Muslims responded to his view aggressively and gave him death threats. Whilst others were violent and caused harm to his property. Here, religion did not responded successfully as it used violence. Also, it leads to hatred within Muslims and leads to polarisation.

The practice of usury is extremely popular in modern day economy. Islam has prohibited interest as Allah says in the Quran 'interest is prohibited and trade is allowed'. Thus many Muslims face this challenge and are desperate for a solution. The introduction of Islamic banking with its interest free loans and mortgages has provided Muslims in the west a perfect solution. This shows a successful response by religion.

Another example of a successful response by religion is the establishment of Shariah courts for the Muslims citizens of U.K. As the laws of inheritance and divorce in Islam are different, e.g. a women inherits half of what a man inherits. This has given the Muslims of UK to practice their ideas on a wider scale and made it possible for Shariah to be applied in a secular, western state. This political challenge has been dealt successfully.

In conclusion, religion responds to challenges in various ways. I think that generally it does not show a successful response as it leads to polarisation of societies and individuals to feel as an outcast amongst other races and religions.



### Commentary

On the whole, this response is well-focussed, and offers a range of examples for evaluation. The conclusion expands the examples given by referring to the religious response *in general*, which goes some way towards addressing the reference in the question to all challenges. Also, the conclusion that the (Islamic) response is not successful because it leads to polarisation of societies and individuals is derived from examples in the body of the essay. The candidate is sometimes unclear about the criteria for a successful response, but the focus on the question takes this essay into Level 6.

Level 6 – 24 marks

**Grade A\*****03 Examine challenges to religious authority and responses to those challenges. (45 marks) AO1****Candidate Response**

Religious authority is challenged externally and internally. Externally is from the secular society including female scholars and internally is within the religion. For example, radicals.

First looking internally. Alternative religious groups within a certain religion challenge each other. For example, in Islam Shia and Sunni challenge each other. Shia's believe that Ali should have been the second caliph after the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). They also believe that Sunni Muslims have changed the Quran over time. So therefore there is no response and nothing written about the 12 imams. However in Islam Shia's only make 12% of Muslims whereas Sunni's are 88%. Shia's challenge scripture, leaders and religious teaching because they believe the Quran was created and then changed by Sunni Muslims. Sunni Muslims will respond by saying Shia Islam is an aberration and these are only the minority who believe that religious authority is undermined.

Another internal group would be modernists. These people believe that religious authority needs to be more modern and needs to stop living in the past. For example, Irshad Manji, who is an Islamic modernist would say Islam should now accept homosexuality because it is natural and in the genes. Ishad Manji is an Islamic gay woman. However, religious authority would say divine revelation is forever and can never be changed. For example, the Quran is the word of God sent down to guide humankind and can never be changed.

Another internal group within Islam in radical Muslims. People like Osama bin Laden, who released a fatwa in 1998 saying all Americans, civilians and military should be attacked because they have fought against Islam. Radical Muslims are the minority and seek to undermine Islam, this is what religious people would say.

Revivalists are mainly young Muslims who want to have a clear focus on the Quran and Hadith. They believe that religious authority has moved away from the divine revelation and moved to human involvement. For example, the Shariah law is based on the Quran, Hadith, Ijma and Qiyas. Ijma is analogy, which involves human involvement and so does Qiyas (consensus). Revivalist Muslims believe issues like the Shariah law does not need human involvement and only needs to be based on the Quran and Hadith. The response to these challenges, would be that religious people would think revivalists Muslims are right but to resolve new cases, they would need human involvement. For example IVF.

Feminists also challenge religious authority internally. Females believe that religious authority is patriarchal and males have moved away from the original message, which was from the prophet stressing equality for women. For example, the Prophet in his last sermon said 'women are garments for you, and you are garments for them'. This suggests that the last prophet indicated men and women are equal and women should not be undermined. Females within Islam believe that religious authority is patriarchal. Females would also say, during the time of the prophet, the prophets wives who were Aisha, Hofsa, and Kadisa had very important roles. For example, Aisha was the leader of the war, Hofsa kept the Quran safe and Kadisa was a very successful business woman. Therefore this suggests that males have moved away from the original message. However, the response to this challenge would be that males have more knowledge to interpret scripture and males can have always been more dominant.

Moving onto external challenges Atheists challenge religious authority from the secular society. They believe that there is no God and therefore there is no religion. Atheists would say if God is so loving then why do all these natural disasters occur. For example, the earthquake in Japan. This earthquake killed thousands of innocent people, why did this occur if God is Omnipotent, Omniscient and all loving. Atheists would also say if disasters are supposed to kill evil people then why does it kill innocent people instead. Atheists challenge all types of religious authority because they do not believe in God therefore there is no religion. However, the response to this would be according to all Muslims, this life is a test and if you get punished in this life then the next life will be rewarding. It says in the Quran 'life is a test'. Therefore God tests your faith in many different ways.

Science also challenges religious authority. Scientists like Richard Dawkins believe science has an answer to nearly every question. For example, evolution theory tells humans how they evolved through monkeys and the big bang theory tell humans how the world was created. Scientists like Richard Dawkins believe religion is an illusion and there is no such thing as religion. If science does not have an answer to a question then they will acquire the answer through time. Science challenges all types of religious authority because they believe that there is no religion. The response to this argument would be gaps in life are best filled with belief in God. If the big bang did create the world then what created the big bang? Religious people believe God created the big bang.

Feminists also challenge religious authority externally. Female scholars like Rana Kabani believe religious authority is patriarchal and males have moved away from the original message. Rana Kabani called for gender Jihad in Islam. Feminists believe women in religion are undermined and they lose authority. Feminists challenge teaching, scripture and leaders because they believe that scripture undermines a women and religious leaders have moved away from the original message. The response to this would be in Islam Imams have started creating separate sections for women in mosques and therefore now they can attend mosques.

Rationalists also challenge religious authority externally. They believe everything has an explanation and everything has a reason. For example, a direct experience with God would be seen as a mental and psychological illness by rationalists. They also challenge scripture, leaders and teachings because they believe everything has an explanation and there is no such thing as miracles. However religious authority would respond by saying not everything has a rational experience. For example, the miracles in Lourdes, France did not have an explanation. There were 60 people who got cured and they were examined before and after and there was no rational explanation.

Other scholars from different backgrounds would also challenge religious authority. Scholars like Gerd Puin say that the Quran is not the word of God because it has been changed. In Sana, Yemen Gerd Puin found a earlier version of the Quran. This Quran had vowels and different writing compared to modern versions of the Quran. Gerd Puin challenges the fundamental and basic belief that the Quran has never been changed. He challenges scripture because he says it is not word of God. However Islamic leaders would say people like Gerd Puin are orientalist who seek to undermine Islam.

### Commentary

This is a generally thorough treatment of the topic, and demonstrates clear understanding through the use of relevant evidence and examples. The articulation of the responses to the challenges identified is not as robust as that for the challenges themselves, nevertheless this is a competent Level 6 essay.

Level 6 – 39 marks

**04 'Religion responds successfully to all challenges.'  
How far do you agree?**

**(30 marks) AO2**

**Candidate Response**

Religion has successfully responded to many challenges. For example, modernists who believe the Quran should be changed to cover new issues such as IVF. Furthermore, they believe that the Quran is out of date because it is more than 1400 years old. However religion says that the Quran is the final word of God and can never be changed. This is because the Quran has been sent down from God to guide mankind. It covers all topics. For example, abortion and euthanasia and the Quran is eternal and everlasting. However, modernists would say the Quran does not cover new issues such as IVF and does not allow homosexuality. The world is changing and the scripture needs to change with it. Religious authority has maintained its traditional view.

Religion has also responded successfully to scholars from different backgrounds. Scholars like Gerd Puin say that the Quran is not from God because he found earlier versions of the Quran in Yemen, which had contrasting writings. Gerd Puin challenges the basic muslim belief of the Quran never being changed. The response to Gerd Puin from Islamic religion would be that people like him are orientalist who are trying to undermine Islam. However, this is not a satisfactory response because Gerd Puin has found earlier versions of the Quran, which have contrasts with the modern versions. On the other hand Islamic religion would say the changes are minor and nothing major has been found in earlier versions.

Religion has also responded to science. Science says that humans evolved through monkeys and the world was created with a big bang. Science challenges all types of religious authority because it says that scripture is wrong and the basic fundamental beliefs of religion are wrong. However, Islam would say if there was a big bang then who created the big bang? God did.

However, science would then say the creation of the big bang will be determined through time because scientists are trying to redevelop the situation before and after the big bang. On the other hand Islamic religion would say that the Quran contains miracles and scientific theories which science has discovered now and therefore the Quran is in line with science. I think this is a good response by religion.

Religion also responded to homosexuality but not in a successful way. Homosexuals believe they have a right to be treated equally through their religion like everybody else. However, Islam says homosexuality is unnatural and the Quran and hadith say it's wrong. For example, the hadith says 'kill the one doing it and the one doing to'. This suggests homosexuality is forbidden in Islam. However, homosexuals would say homosexuality is in the gene and God has made us like that. On the other hand the Church of England has accepted Gay people to be Bishops and Priests. This suggests that the Church of England is adopting to the change.

The pope has responded to HIV and Aids in Sub Sahara Africa. People are dying with Aids in Africa because the pope does not allow condom use because it is unnatural. He believes that people should avoid having sex outside of marriage and any form of contraception is against will of God and unnatural. However, this response is not successful because people cannot stop having sex and condoms are there to be used and if this helps people not to have HIV then it should be used.

To conclude, I agree to a particular extent that religion responds successfully to all challenges because religion has found a satisfactory response to all challenges. For example, Islam maintains its original viewpoint on homosexuality and modernists Islam only takes answers from the Quran and Hadith to respond to situations. However I feel the pope needs to reconsider the situation in Sub Saharan Africa and should let them use condoms to stop the spreading of HIV and Aids.

For muslims the Quran is the final word of God, which is eternal and universal and this should guide a person in making a decision.

### **Commentary**

The quality of analysis in this essay is generally good, although it is not always clear as to what constitutes a *successful* response to a challenge. On the other hand, the candidate argues for a balance between challenge and response concerning issues in science, morality, and text transmission – traditionalists and modernists can both find satisfactory responses.

Level 6 – 25 marks