

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Unit 4B Topic II *Religion and Contemporary Society*

Example of Candidate's Response



**GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION
ADVANCED LEVEL**



**RELIGIOUS STUDIES UNIT 4B
Religion and Contemporary Society**

RST4B

EXAMPLE OF CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE

For this paper you must have:

- a 12 page answer book.

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes

Instructions

- Use black ink or ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book.
The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is **RST4B**.
- Choose **one Section** only.
- Answer **one** question.

Information

- The maximum mark for this paper is 75.
- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- In each question, part (a) tests your knowledge and understanding, while part (b) tests your skills of reasoning and evaluation.
- You will be marked on your ability to use English, to organise information clearly and to use specialist vocabulary where appropriate.

RST4B Topic II Religion and Contemporary Society

- 1 (a) Examine the difficulties faced by members of religions in participating in worship in the UK today.

(45 marks)

AO1

Candidate Response

Within the UK there are different areas where it is possible to argue that there are different difficulties, thus in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland there are some similarities and some differences in the difficulties which can be experienced by those who choose to participate in worship. It is also of some value to bear in mind there are essentially two styles of worship in most religions, public and private. In all four areas there is the state church, the Anglican church, which thus establishes that there is a state religion too, Christianity. Whilst it might be held to be generally true that the UK has come to be recognised as one of the world's leading multi-cultural territories this may not really be the case in a number of the separate territories. It might still be argued that Northern Ireland with its long history of division between Roman Catholic and Protestant churches has certainly not moved much beyond either side seeing the other as now at least another branch of Christianity which might just be regarded as legitimate let alone move towards a view that there are other religions beyond Christianity which might be seen to be acceptable.

There is an argument which says that essentially the UK has become a secular society and figures from population census confirm the majority of people in the UK do not worship at all. This is not to say that they are anti-religious, but rather that they are indifferent. However clearly if the majority do not do something then the minority who chose to act may well find that there some difficulties. Many suggest that changes in the law from the middle of the twentieth century onwards reflect this indifference to religion and thus have helped to create a society where practising a religion is a minority activity and thus this requires a person to have a sufficiently strong character to be able to act outside the 'normal' box. Laws like Sunday trading, the right to abortion, the right to perform homosexual acts are but three examples which demonstrate how the state now legislates even to accept issues which the state church itself does not approve of. Does this make worship more difficult? For some people the answer is yes, since the very act whether private or public requires them to act outside the norm. In these circumstances it might well be argued that private worship is easier in that it does not require that a person makes a public declaration, thus the difficulties might be restricted to the many distractions which are offered to make private worship more difficult.

There is a view that public worship is more difficult when it is the state church in that public worship has to be approved by the state, this has two effects, the first is that that the need to legislation prevents the state church from being as spontaneous as it might wish to be with regard to public worship. Secondly a greater difficulty is that the majority of MPs who will vote on such legislation are not practising members of the state church and in some cases not even Christians. This may well mean that subtle differences which are well understood by adherents may well be missed by those who are not. Again this may well prevent worship being developed in the way the adherents wish.

In a number of areas in the UK there is a strong social element to a particular style of worship. Thus in a number of rural regions the Church of England is seen to be the church where those with power and social standing attend and thus those who seek to be part of this social group see that they forced to attend the Church of England in order that they can be part of the 'right social group'. In these circumstances attending a non-conformist church would be seen to be mixing with the wrong social class, a simple example of this would be that when there are civic services these will be held in the Church of England. As we have noted there is a similar approach in Northern Ireland where there remains an expectation that people will be either Roman Catholic or Protestant depending upon where they live and the tradition into which they were born. Thus in most parts of Northern Ireland places are still known as either Roman Catholic or Protestant places or districts. Thus western Belfast is still seen to be predominately Roman Catholic whilst eastern Belfast is largely considered to be Protestant. Whilst worshipping in a way that is different from the majority in these districts is not impossible and until relatively recently might well have led to persecution if not murder, nevertheless can still cause social ostracization.

If we turn to a different religion we can see that there are equally difficulties which arise from participating in worship. Judaism is a good example of this. A religion which has been part of the UK since the middle of the seventeenth century. We have already noted the difficulty of practising something which is not part of the norm and in the case of Judaism the requirements for Shabbat are an excellent example of this. In Judaism worship take place almost in equal measure between the home and the synagogue, thus for the Shabbat the Jew must be at home before sunset for the start of Shabbat worship. This alone poses a problem especially during the winter months in most parts of the UK since sunset may well start well before the working day has ended on Friday. Similarly as part of participating in Shabbat worship the Jew must not work, as defined by Judaism, this places particular restrictions upon the Jew, for example not using anything associated with work, not kindling a light. Shabbat public worship being on Friday evening and Saturday morning through to Saturday sunset can also place difficulties for the Jew, for example the school boy who wants to play football with his gentile friends on Saturday morning or even Saturday afternoon. One further major difficulty for an Orthodox Jew is that they must live within walking distance of a synagogue since they are not allowed to drive a car or use public transport on the Shabbat. Finally one other difficulty faced by Jews in the UK is fact of anti Semitism, thus almost all synagogues have an high level of security to prevent attacks upon the building or worse the congregation.

Commentary

A very well informed answer, with a sound 'breadth' approach by dealing with Christianity and Judaism. In the Judaism section in particular there needs to be a sharper focus upon worship - there is a tendency to slip into practice which could be relevant if there was a little more attempt to draw the material into the aspect of worship. Some of the supporting material needs a little more depth with a little more focus upon 'members of religions' - that is the personal element. Nevertheless, a very sound answers overall.

Level 6 (36 marks)

(b) 'Anyone is free to worship in whatever way they choose in the UK today.'**Assess this claim.****(30 marks)****AO2****Candidate Response**

The first part of this statement is largely correct but the comment, 'in whatever way they choose' is not correct, especially when concerned with public worship. There are numerous laws which largely apply to the whole of the UK which restrict what can or cannot be done even in the name of worship. Thus laws about public decency, about not inciting people to religious hatred, and laws about public disorder all could potentially be seen to restrict public worship. Equally there are often local laws about using buildings as places of worship, for example in London there are concerns amongst a number of popular evangelical and pentecostal Christian churches that they are not being allowed to either move into larger premises to accommodate their growing congregations or to extend their present buildings.

With regard to private worship it is probably true to say that there are few if any restrictions upon the style of public worship and in the UK many religions do have house based worship groups where two or three families join each other for worship in their homes. The House Church movement in Christianity is an example of this, there is no organisation and no formal structure with no agreed style of worship. All these aspects are determined by the members of each particular House Group. Similarly there are small Jewish groups who are too removed from any of the major Jewish populations in the UK like Leeds, Manchester, and London but where there are enough men to form a Minyan who with a Torah scroll meet in a Jewish house for public worship. Other religions, especially Hinduism, lend themselves to the home style of worship, thus Puja in the home is a characteristic of Hinduism.

Whilst there are examples of places of worship being built for religions other than Christianity, the Mosque in Hyde Park London or the Hindu Temple in North London, there also examples of difficulties. For example recently in Oxford an application was made for the Muslim Call to Prayer to be made aloud publicly on a Friday. This aroused much discussion and a certain level of opposition. Whilst it was accepted that it was an integral part of Muslim tradition for the Call to be made, and it was equally accepted that the Call was no more intrusive than church bells being rung on a Sunday, nevertheless the opposition argued that the UK it not a Muslim country and thus the Call was not something which should be permitted since this would be a very public event every Friday. This is a good example that the freedom to worship does have a number of restrictions.

However, it is apparent that in the UK generally there is considerable toleration of religious diversity and in many large conurbations it is possible to find a wide variety of public places of worship, the most popular being Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Unlike many parts of the world people in these areas generally feel quite free to attend public worship, there are no government checks, no monitoring of the style of worship and in the population it is probably true to say that there is an acceptance of this diversity of religious worship.

Commentary

A good introduction with a clear indication about ways of considering 'freedom' - that is the law and society approach adopted in the answer as ways of measuring whether there is freedom to worship as one might choose. However, there are rather too many statements without being fully supported by evidence this is especially the case in the last paragraph which should have been developed much more. Without this the answer is rather too short and thus cannot be placed in the higher levels.

Level 5 (23 marks)