



Examiners' Report

June 2010

GCE AS Religious Studies 6RS02 1C



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Introduction

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Investigations Paper of June 2010 demonstrated an encouraging level of engagement with a wide range of topics by candidates who demonstrated a superb level of scholarship across all areas of study. The enthusiasm for and knowledge of the chosen topic was clearly conveyed in many answers that were truly academic in their approach. Some Centres chose to focus on the same or similar topics for all their candidates, whereas other Centres permitted considerable choice for individual candidates. Candidates were very well prepared for the examination and it was evident that Centres used their specialist resources and interests to encourage candidates to research in depth a particular area of study. It is important to note that the overall title of this unit 'Investigations' has a definite academic purpose. The aim is to involve students as active participants pursuing open-ended enquiries with an emphasis on independent learning. Questions were designed to be inclusive of all possible approaches to various topics and all valid answers were considered.

Most centres had entered their candidates for the correct option but there were still a few entries for particular areas of study where it might have benefitted the candidate more to consider entry for a different area of study. It is important to ensure candidates know which area of their investigation is the best fit for the question they answer on the paper. Candidates were not penalised if correct entries were not made or a cross was put in a box that did not match the answer. Examiners were encouraged to mark positively. Centres should ensure that candidates are entered for the option that matches their area of study.

Variation in achievement was related to the two assessment objectives. These objectives should receive prominent attention in the process of the investigation. Importantly, in the exam itself there must be explicit attention to these objectives in the examination answer. Each question consistently referred to the assessment objectives with the trigger word 'Examine' for AO1 and 'Comment on' for AO2. These dictated the structure of the question and helped candidates to plan their answers. It would be advisable for candidates to pay regular attention to the level descriptors for these assessment objectives as a way of monitoring their development and progress during their investigations. The phrase 'with reference to the topic you have investigated' will always appear in the question to ensure that the generic question can be answered with material from any appropriate investigation. The mark scheme itself is generic to all questions. In preparation for this examination candidates may find it useful to write up their investigation under exam timed conditions to a variety of different possible questions. They might build up a number of different essay plans to different possible questions. The important point in these activities is to enable candidates to develop their management of material such as how to best structure their content to answer the specific question. However, success can be undermined by writing up a rote-learned answer which was not adapted to the question set.

This report features work produced by candidates in the actual examination for Area 1A, 1B and 1C where possible. Areas 1D, 1E, 1F and 1G have smaller entries and the style of report is briefer for these areas of study. Full Results Plus reports will be available in future examination sessions if the entry is larger.

Question 1

MEDICAL ETHICS

It seems such a shame that the real potential of this topic is still not being explored. With virtually 90% of these essays being on abortion or euthanasia, the same, predictable material is repeated from essay to essay with little or no originality or real development. The best students managed to achieve marks in the low 40s but many were inevitably stuck in the high 20s to mid 30s. The clear majority of candidates addressed abortion. Most chose to deal straightforwardly with traditional issues about the sanctity of life, when the foetus becomes human, women's rights in regard to abortion, etc. A few chose to compare religious views and there were contributions from Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism as well as from Christianity. It was interesting to see how many candidates thought it unjust that a 'powerless' woman might be forced to go through a pregnancy and give birth, but few applied powerlessness to a foetus or injustice to woman's right to choose. Also with abortion in mind, plenty of candidates were quite happy to deal with the ethics of abortion as "What should the woman do when she has been raped or otherwise abused?" or referring to the violinist, when the vast majority of unwelcome pregnancy is due simply to failed or absent contraception. Very many candidates chose to spend a page or more explaining what abortion or euthanasia is, and many more resorted to lengthy pieces of narration about case studies. On the note of key terms it is essential that candidates do know their terms as a small spelling error gives a completely different meaning:

'Roman Catholics are against abortion, they believe life is a gift from God, and an innocent life should be protected from the moment of contraception.'

About half of the candidates did not seem to come to any obvious conclusion at the end of the essay, and a significant minority seemed to come to a conclusion which was not particularly well related to the body of the essay. It is also important to understand clearly what a scholar is really saying when explaining their position.

'Peter Singer is known to be one of the most dangerous men in the world today. the reason is because of his strong ethical views on and against the sanctity of life. He says that if the parents dont want a disable child, they dont have to have it.'

The quality of life response and aspect of medical ethics could be more clearly defined and supported. And is noted that 'It's all up to you. It's all a question of whatever suits the greater good. It's not for us to interfere!' is not the strongest of conclusions.

Religion was commonly seen as the ogre when it comes to ethics, and science the saviour. Hardly any candidate showed an awareness of science's potential for harm, or indeed its record, and one candidate even thought that we should leave it all to science, and ignore religious, philosophical and other ethical concerns. Far too many candidates, while recognising the absolutist position of the Roman Catholic Church on these issues, attributed to Anglicanism a uniformity which simply isn't there. At the other end of the content scale some candidates posited hundreds of positions within Christianity as to why there is a difficulty in choosing an ethical path to follow! See extract below:

'It can be difficult for religious believers to keep up with medical ethics as there are so many different beliefs encapsulated in just one religion. In Christianity there can be hundreds of different points of view and reasons why something is or is not right. This could mean that there are so many different options for them to follow that it can make it almost impossible for them to choose what works for them.'

Even the interesting contemporary debates about euthanasia and assisted suicide were reduced to the banal and bland. Religious approaches to these issues were invariably over simplified and application of ethical theory was trivialised. A minority of candidates risked examining another area - stem cell research, genetic engineering, organ donation, IVF, and one - innovatively - on cosmetic surgery. Centres are encouraged to go beyond the predictable and candidates have simply to resist churning out pre-prepared answers referring to differing methods of abortion and then listing the varying Church responses at the expense of answering the question. Furthermore, just as the essays on abortion and euthanasia were often predictable so were the resources and materials used. Interestingly, and perhaps even significantly, some of the better responses to the question on medical ethics were on the slightly more unusual topics. Organ donation, genetic engineering, invitro-fertilisation were often more successfully researched than responses on abortion and euthanasia. There was some evidence of an interesting approach to stem cell research through the use of scholarly research and the film Gattaca.

Many other candidates chose euthanasia, again mainly approaching this topic from the point of view of the sanctity of life. Many chose an explicit approach in the area of value versus quality of life. A great many candidates chose to give the example of Tony Bland, though other case studies were also used. This can successfully be tackled without the need for over-long anecdotes about the devastating rugby-injury and the trials and tribulations of journeying to Switzerland. There were no distinctions made between assisted suicide in Switzerland and euthanasia in Holland, and also no mention of the fact that in Holland they deal only with Dutch nationals whereas Switzerland takes foreigners. Very few candidates suggested that a right to die may soon become a duty to die. One person arguing that euthanasia is right does not make it an argument as others in the same situation may not want the same as those wishing to die. Candidates were not penalised for incorrect sources but might cause a small chuckle if they make them up as in the following extract which has a quote from Humans 14: 8:

'In Humans 14:8, it states 'so whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.'

Finally, only a few candidates picked up on what could be said of 'developments in medical ethics'. The best candidates identified important religious principles in the material they had investigated and discussed thoroughly the implications of these religious principles to developments in medical ethics. Some candidates also applied Aristotle's virtue ethics and Aquinas' natural law convincingly. There was also evidence of candidates who appeared to be answering question 1 and 3 together, with reference to abortion, and only a few of these approaches really worked. Candidates are only required to answer one question on the paper. Candidates' chronology in some cases needs some attention as it was not clear in some responses that Peter Singer came a long time after Thomas Aquinas, who came a long time after Aristotle. Apparently Aristotle was against embryo research, and many 18th and 19th century philosophers had waxed lyrical on abortion! Although it is also clear that those with a little more finesse interpreted from their writings what they would have said about modern issues. This clarity obviously raises achievement. The following extract gives some information about Aristotle that is clearly chronologically challenged.

'Aristotle set up a Christian Aid campaign called CARE. This was for all Christians who were trying to help the world and were trying to fulfill God's task for us, to help our world by everyone doing their bit recycling etc.'

The extract below is from an essay that is a fine example of a skilfully argued response. The candidate fluently argued a case for euthanasia with substantial knowledge of both secular and religious arguments.



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Examiner Comments

The introduction begins with clarifying a modern misconception through a definition and explanation of a more compassionate understanding of euthanasia. This was supported by a known scholar who was quoted with ease and in a manner that enriched the introduction.

Euthanasia has been a heavily controversial topic for centuries, since it attracts both criticism and support in a variety of words; secular and religious. ~~Euthanasia~~ ~~is~~ ~~defined~~ Euthanasia is "a deliberate intervention with the express intention of taking life, to relieve intractable suffering", as defined by the House of Lords Select Committee of 1994 on medical ethics. This clarifies a common misconception; euthanasia

is strictly speaking not dying for the sake of it, but to alleviate oneself from the misery of a painful and prolonged death; as the etymology of the word suggests (Greek, literally a good death), euthanasia offers people the chance to end their lives with dignity intact. Fielding said that it is not death which is terrible, but dying. Hence surely something which prevents the terrible nature of dying is good?



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Examiner Tip

It is good to reflect on how far you think a definition is useful for supporting your view. Often one view can be contrasted with another to demonstrate a range of understanding and sources.

Question 2

THE NATURAL WORLD

A disappointingly small number of candidates attempted this interesting area and not all were particularly well prepared to tackle the question for example some essays were on animal rights/welfare and struggled to apply this to stewardship. The range of interesting areas that could be explored was just not exploited: recycling, vegetarianism, genetic engineering, habitat conservation and the marine rights bill.

The following extract shows a simple attempt to discuss the damage caused by egotistical attitudes to the environment - however, it is to be noted that stewardship extends far beyond the selfish action of throwing litter out of a car. This is why it is important to engage with scholarly works on the issue.

'Looking into me core of me sphere of ethcial concern is an Egoist. This can be seen as a selfish approach as it's priority is itself. For instance a man throwing rubbish out his car, he hasn't considered any consequences but only thought of him and how me act'

There were some essays on the current oil disaster and this was related to the idea of dominion versus domination quite successfully with candidates displaying fairly keen appreciation of this pertinent issue. There is of course the question of whether political and expediency arguments are ethical and it was obvious in some candidates' responses that they had not worked out all that thoroughly what an ethical answer should look like. Some candidates tended to write a lot about current trends in environmental issues with often very little ethical/religious content at all. An exemplar of a full essay which showed competent scholarship in this topic is quoted in the Examiner Report of June 2009. This shows some of the possibilities for exploring this question.

This response is full of scholarship in that within the first four pages a range of approaches to stewardship are stated and explained with enough depth to demonstrate a clear understanding of these views. These include situation ethics, St. Francis of Assisi, Singer, Spinoza, Robinson and Revelation, not to mention a further range of sources that appears in the rest of the essay. The candidate also argues clearly within the context of each source.


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Examiner Comments

The introduction sets out some key ideas related to stewardship and how the candidate thinks an ethical theory might contribute a useful working principle for developing good stewardship.

'The clearance of naturally occurring forests by the processes of people's logging and/or burning of ^{the} ~~trees~~ in a forested area'. This definition depicts the modern reality of deforestation. An issue at the forefront of religious and secular society due to its moral implications. Many people believe we should be stewards of the environment, thus providing a considerate interaction alongside nature. I believe one of the fair fundamental principles of situation ethics (proposed by Joseph Fletcher) may be applicable to ^{this ethical} ~~this ethical~~ dilemma concerning stewardship of the natural world. Relativism means there are no absolutes such as 'never' or 'always' and I ~~to~~ would say here, deforestation ~~is not~~ ^{cannot} always deemed wrong or right. Depending on the context of the situation there are many ~~no~~ religious and moral significances of stewardship of this world.

across
There are 570 million indigenous people spread ~~across~~ ^{across} 70 countries worldwide, so-called because these ethnic groups inhabit a geographic region and hold the earliest known historical connections with this area. I would argue ^{moral} ~~an~~ implication of deforestation is that their homes are being destroyed as we fail to be stewards of the environment and thus they cannot retain their unique cultures. This

is significant because those who cut down the rainforests often add personal gain at the forefront of their minds, supported with evidence that logging companies are extremely wealthy, yet the countries in which the takes place become poorer. I would say there are also conservationists who work hard, protesting against deforestation in order to be stewards of the environment and lessen these selfish forces, therefore morally realising the significance Stewardship may have in protecting the lives of the indigenous people.

Plus, religiously ~~the~~ St. Francis, the Roman Catholic Saint of Ecology said deforestation is wrong as 'we are' plants and animals 'kindred' as they are also a part of God's creation. I believe Peter Singer's views are ^{accurate with} ~~accurate with~~ regards to Christianity. He said Christians presume the world from an androcentric (man is at the centre of the universe) perspective. In his case, Christians presume the world to protect the vulnerable lifestyles of the indigenous people and as we diminish the world the significance of this is that areas of outstanding beauty that are left develop a 'scarcity' value. I would argue this should be ~~the~~ allowed to remain as a legacy to future generations of the beauty of our planet because the religious significance of Stewardship. Certainly for Christianity is that we must look after God's people.

Furthermore, Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) was a

post-cartesian philosopher who identified God with nature, incorporating the two as one and the same. This was prevalently expressed in his phrase 'deus sive Natura' meaning 'God or Nature'. As a Christian, I believe that spiritual religious significance of stewardship and thus caring for the planet was that God and nature are divine powers. Therefore, to abuse nature in any way is, in effect, a violation of God and so deforestation is ethically impermissible. In the case of the time may certainly stimulate Christians to realise moral implications of their actions as stewards (or failing to be stewards) and so wish to protect the environment. This is further supported with biblical evidence where Jesus taught in the parable of the Good Samaritan to 'love my neighbor'. In the case of the indigenous people's this would be to let their environment be. The fact rates of deforestation are increasing means we do not follow his teaching and so religious significance for stewardship may be that Christians are aware they must ^{curb} deforestation but do not do much to stop it.

I would say that one of the four fundamental principles of ~~deforestation~~ christian ethics, personalism should be applied when realising the moral significance of stewardship. Personalism means we should put people first. In T.A.T. Robinson's 1963 book 'Honest to God' he said 'people are more important than standards' which I believe means in the case of indigenous people, rather than take advantage of their lack

of power within Modern society to destroy their homes ~~must~~ ~~instead~~ to meet materialistic needs of society, we must rather look after these people first. Thus the moral significance of Stewardship is to permit equal human rights to the forest dwellers ~~as~~ as they are too part of creation.

The ^{the religious} ~~theological~~ significance of deforestation may be expressed by the Roman Catholic Church in their catechism (teachings) of the Church. These rely upon deontological ethics. This is the notion we complete an action for no other reason than it is morally right. 'Man's dominion over inanimate and other living creatures, as granted by the creator, is not absolute but limited with concern for the quality of life of his neighbour'. Even though some people may say man's 'dominion' over nature means we may treat it how we like I believe this catechism 196 refers to Genesis 1:26 (Creation story) and reverses this opinion. Rather, mankind has a greater responsibility to care for nature and so deforestation is ethically intolerable because ~~we are not~~ realising moral significance of Stewardship ~~is~~ to accept man has the greatest impact on the earth. We must use technology to care for rather than destroy it.


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Examiner Tip

Know why you are selecting your material and how it might reinforce your view or explain an alternative approach to the issue you are discussing.

Question 3

EQUALITY IN THE MODERN WORLD

At least 10% of the responses for this question were actually responses more suited to question 1 on medical ethics. Several candidates decided to write about abortion or euthanasia from the position of equality - clearly because they didn't recognise their question - and most failed to make this link coherent or sensible. It must be stressed that candidates must answer the question they were prepared for. Those which were correctly addressed dealt in the main with Martin Luther King, Malcolm X or homosexuality, the latter generally being more successful than the former. There were some very good essays on specieism and animal rights. There were very few answers dealing with women's rights: either most candidates feel that the battle between the sexes is over, or society itself is being brainwashed into thinking of homosexuality as the main issue and religion as the main hindrance to moral progress. It would be good to see some real case studies being used with some exploration of recent legal developments that might stimulate the debate. A few candidates sought to approach abortion as an issue of equality but struggled to balance the demands of this material.

There were a few really good answers, and the weak ones tended to conflate question 1 and 3 and had an introduction which was simply too long with some taking almost two pages of introduction before moving on to the 'nitty gritty' of solid knowledge and analysis. As with abortion answers, there was a distinct tendency for candidates to see personal choice as not up for negotiation. It seems to be becoming more popular to attack religious ethical views and especially those that are more conservative, without any obvious alternative basis for ethics. Some of the less discerning candidates, within this, seemed to see 'ancient' or 'old fashioned' as a matter of moral deficiency, and many candidates held personal autonomy as self justifying, without seeming to realise that unfettered, it very rapidly leads to, at its worst, a chaotic state of affairs on many levels. One danger inherent in question 3 is the possibility that emotional advocacy becomes a substitute for ethics scholarship and background information. It is important that candidates are concerned by gender, race, and sexuality, but the passion and interest needs to be tied to genuine knowledge content.

An exemplar of a full essay which showed competent scholarship in this topic is quoted in the Examiner Report of January 2010. This shows some of the possibilities for exploring this question

The essay below shows a sound range of material that has been investigated and how the candidate has used it to answer the question.

~~Religious principles are significant in establishing equality~~
~~Teaching / more liberal church / foundations of our equality views~~
~~" " aren't "~~
~~Division from church towards women + homosexuals / secular world /~~
~~some OT commands.~~

Quotes such as "We are all one in Christ", by St. Paul in Galatians, would seem to suggest that religious principles have a very significant role to play when it comes to establishing equality in the modern world. However religion has not always been helpful in attempts to establish equality over the years and there are certainly grounds to suggest that it is unimportant in establishing equality in the modern world.

Indeed religion has promoted a curious amount of discrimination over the decades and centuries. This is most notably true in the case of gender equality. The Church has notoriously stood in the way of equality for women with the Roman Catholic Church still desiantly preventing women joining its priesthood. Some of the most famous



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Examiner Comments

Every page of this essay contained scholarship integrated into the narrative with the use of key words that indicated what the candidate thought about it. We can see this on the first page where the word 'notoriously' introduces the Roman Catholic Church's view on women and priesthood and why this is an issue of inequality.

Church figures of the past have been famously opposed to women in their views. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, wrote in his 'Summa Theologica' that "woman is defective and misbegotten". To use an even more extreme example, the 584 Church Council of Macon voted on whether or not women should even be considered human; women were voted human, by one vote. F.X. Murphy states that churchmen have for centuries "delighted in denegrating womanhood as the source of humankind's downfall", a view that originated from the role of Eve in the Creation story. It is hard to see how religion, which has helped strengthen inequality between the sexes for so long, can be a significant force in establishing equality in the world today. It is important to remember that religious organisations also cause huge problems for the homosexual community. Even the fairly liberal Church of England ~~recently~~ failed to follow through the appointment of Jeffrey John, a homosexual, to the post of the Bishop of Reading after a huge array of calls from within the Church for him not to be allowed due to his sexuality. It should also be remembered that the Nigerian Church's split from the Anglican Church came over a row about allowing homosexual priests; the Nigerian President said it was "a...a tendency that is unbiblical, unchristian and definitely unafrikan". It seems as if outdated thinking within religion leads to inequality. Thus how can it be seen as significant in establishing equality today?

It is important to note, however, that the Church has become significantly more liberal in recent times. Religious principles have seen people around the world further efforts to gain a degree of equality. Many poorer countries around the world have begun to realise that, for example, "women's equality is a prerequisite to development", according to Kofi Annan. As many of these developing nations feature strong, dominant religions it would seem that religious principle is assisting a worldwide drive for equality. Closer to home the Church of England is notably far more focused on equality than ever before. From November 1992 the Anglican Church has openly accepted female priests and the fact that it was prepared to promote Jeffrey John to Bishop of Reading should be seen as a further example. It may have sailed but it is clear that as an organisation the Church of England is trying to push for equality. In addition to this many charitable groups, such as CAFOD and Amnesty International, were founded upon religious principles. Such groups actually do far more in the sight for equality than most governments. It appears from this evidence that the more caring principles of religion are becoming crucial in pushing for equality.

On the other hand it is important to be examining the issue in specific regard to the modern world. The fact that the secular route is becoming increasingly popular within the societies of the world today would

seem to suggest that religion cannot prove that significant in establishing equality in the modern world. The trends certainly seem to suggest that the world is becoming less and less enamoured with religion and its steadfast principles. Less people go to Church in the Western world and, perhaps most obviously, there is an increasing lack of care when it comes to obeying religious rules on sex: in Britain, sixty years ago sex before marriage was frowned upon whereas now the average age for people to lose their virginity is just ~~the~~ seventeen. People are far more eager to listen to politicians and celebrities than prominent religious figures. Theodore White claims that "Politics is the binding secular religion in America". The increased secularisation of the world suggests that religion has not got a significant role to play in contemporary attempts to study equality.

Despite this many of the pillars of modern society originate from religious teachings. There are many religious principles that are upheld by most of society, no matter what their opinions on faith. Christianity's Ten Commandments, for example, provide many of the building blocks of the law. "Thou shalt not kill" the Bible commands and so one of the fundamental rules of our world is that killing is wrong. In the USA the principles of religion have influenced the

constitution and Bill of Rights. The American Declaration of Independence stipulates that "all men are created free and equal". So many religious principles are still influential and so many instruct on how to live life in a way that supports equality, whether it is realised by people or not. Therefore religious principles can still be significant in establishing equality.

Conversely there are some religious principles that help prevent equality even in the modern world. It is undeniable that many people are strongly influenced in their views on homosexuality, for example, by such passages in the Bible as "Do not lie with a man as with a woman; that is detestable" (Leviticus 18:22). The principles of religion in many cases are such that they are focused on by some merely to provide an excuse for continuing discrimination. For example, in Ephesians it is declared that "wives should submit to their husbands". It is obvious that many people around the world, the more misogynistic of men, still see this as something that should take place. Once again here religion is proving itself a bad influence on establishing equality and thus insignificant in making it a reality.

However, above all perhaps, the religious principles of Jesus in the Gospels can be used in order to help

the establishment of equality in the modern world. It is from Jesus that the "love thy neighbour" principle originates from and this can still be applied in the modern world if the effort is put in. Furthermore Jesus displayed a notably equality based attitude throughout the Gospel. Countless examples can be found of him treating women with respect and as equal members of society or his approach towards those who helped the Romans; one of his disciples, Paul, was even a tax collector. Jesus frequently warned against setting up hierarchies: "Many who are first will be last, and many who are now last will be first" (Mark 9:31). If the teachings of Jesus were used to help establish equality in the modern world then religious principles could have the most significant role of all in establishing a caring, equal world.

Overall religious principles are significant in attempts to establish equality in the modern world. Although religion has previously been unhelpful in this field it may well now be able to "bring together into a unified group", as Norman Perrin observed that Jesus wanted. Bob Dylan claimed that at the moment "the only thing we all got in common is that we're all going to die". With the help of other institutions, religion can change that.

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Examiner Tip

Build up a range of A02 vocabulary that works for your style of writing. This is an effective way of raising your achievement.

Grade boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Raw boundary mark	50	39	34	30	26	22	18	0
Uniform mark scale boundary	100	80	70	60	50	40	30	0

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