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Examiners' Report June 2010

GCE Religious Studies 6RS03

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Introduction

As ever, the standard of the Developments paper, which is largely unchanged from previous years, remains generally high, with strong candidates taking the opportunity to write at length and to show a wide range of knowledge and a confident understanding of complex topics. The majority of candidates opt for two philosophy questions and one ethics question, with a minority opting for two ethics questions and one philosophy questions. New Testament continues to draw a significant number of high level responses, particularly to questions on the Fourth Gospel. Interestingly, it was often the case that when candidates combined New Testament with another option, they chose to write two New Testament answers, and the numbers for this option indicate its continuing interest for several high performing centres. Smaller, but not insignificant, numbers answered questions on Islam (the most popular of the World Religions), Hinduism and Buddhism, with decreasing numbers opting for Christianity questions. Minimal numbers chose to answer on Judaism and Sikhism.

This year questions were divided across AO1 and AO2 demands, for example:

- (i) Examine the strengths and weaknesses of the argument for the existence of God based on religious experience. (18)
- (ii) 'The argument merely indicates the probability of God and this is of little value to the religious believer.' Discuss. (12)

Some candidates appeared to be unprepared for this, opting to write an undivided answer, whilst others wrote very brief responses to the second part. However, in other cases, perhaps most notably question 2(b) (ii) [Religious Language], responses to the second part of the question were fuller than might be expected which suggested that they identified an area with which candidates felt particularly confident. For all the (ii) answers, however, (except perhaps religious language) candidates rarely managed to come to any conclusions or show that they had a point of view. The answers were quite descriptive, perhaps a result of time constraints and this being the first year that teachers were preparing students to tackle two part questions.

The numbers of candidates who failed to use the answer book correctly was still significant and centres are encouraged to ensure that their candidates are aware of the need to begin each new question on the appropriate page of the answer booklet and indeed, centres should ensure that the correct answer book is available for their candidates.

Some candidates, inevitably, mismanage their timing in the exam and fail to produce a third answer. It is worth centres reminding candidates that two long essays will rarely gain the candidate more marks than three carefully timed and fully completed shorter essays. In many cases candidates are clearly well trained to deal with the demands of the examination, but it does appear that some candidates would benefit from more in-school preparation in terms of timed examination practice.

It is encouraging to see candidates continuing to make good use of the Edexcel text books as a primary resource. It is also worth noting that whilst teachers often feel that high level reading and access to primary sources is necessary to achieve high marks, there was little indication of this filtering through to the candidates' answers. Whilst candidates perform at different levels, the best candidates are not typically those who have accessed, understood and applied material beyond the demands of the A level specification, but who have made good, relevant and accurate use of materials appropriate to this stage of learning and assessment.

Comments on Individual Questions

This report will provide exemplification of candidates' work, together with tips and/or comments, for a selection of questions. The exemplification will come mainly from questions which required more complex responses from candidates

Question 1(a)

Religious Experience

A large number of candidates addressed Religious Experience and there were two clear approaches to this question: one approach where types of religious experience were outlined and discussed in much the same manner as the Religious Experience question in 6RS02 Area 1A Q1 and a second where the focus on philosophy was more evident and more closely fitting the requirements for the 6RS03 specification (Arguments for the existence of God).

The first approach tended to be descriptive: all the types of religious experience were outlined plus an allusion to Swinburne's five categories and/or William James's four characteristics of religious experience without any attempt to make it relevant to either the question or its use as material within an inductive argument for the existence of God. It is fair to say that candidates included a range of scholarship relevant to the topic but this was often done at the expense of engaging with the underlying philosophical issues that the question demanded be addressed.

Very few candidates examined their material from the perspective of argument, for example, a paragraph on the research undertaken by the Alistair Hardy Centre for Religious Experience could be linked to the notion of how this a posteriori evidence for the existence of the phenomena of religious experience can in turn be inductively concluded to the existence of God. The best candidates, however, included an expected range of material but used it fully to argue for and against the existence of God. They were confident in the use of technical vocabulary and did not miss any opportunity to present a persuasive case either for/against the existence of God.

Overall, however, there seemed to be a shared expectancy that (i) would require the student to write about the key concepts of the argument from religious experience and a significant proportion of candidates wrote a couple of pages before specifically commenting on the strengths or weaknesses of the argument. Many wrote at length about the different types of experiences and gave many definitions. The most popular scholars to be cited were Swinburne and Dawkins and many candidates were able to show understanding of how they added to the debate. There were some very good quality answers that included a range of scholars and examples to give a full response to the task and structured their work well.

Few candidates (apart from the top band) in part (ii) discussed effectively the philosophical difference between probability and proof. Many students wrote very little on this part of the question, seemingly flawed by it in terms of being able to discuss, for example, a posteriori vs. a priori arguments.

In the box, state whether you are answering part(a) or part(b). a

Religious experience is an a posteriori experience, therefore it relies on evidence and experience. ~~It is a sign~~ Additionally it is a synthetic and inductive argument. A religious experience is generally understood to be an encounter with the divine as a result of a extraordinary experience which has been interpreted religiously. Schiermacher stated that a religious experience "offers a sense of the ultimate and a feeling of the wholeness." Generally they have a deep effect on the experienc and although they may not be able to absolutely comprehend what the experience meant, it has a profound affect on the individual as they create a sense of 'awe and wonder' (James) and have 'numinous', ~~wholly other~~ qualities of the 'wholly other."



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Examiner Comments

This opening paragraph sets the tone well for this essay. The candidate has immediately made clear that they understand the focus of the question.

Question 1(b)

The Ontological Argument

This was a very popular choice and there were many good responses to the question and a clear structure was discernible in most answers. There were also a large proportion of candidates who wrote a standard, perhaps pre-prepared, essay that started with Anselm, then Descartes, Malcolm, Platinga, and then went on to talk about Aquinas, Kant in part (ii). Although the answers did show good knowledge, the expression 'key features' was scarcely mentioned in these types of answers and it could well have been that students were writing everything they knew about the ontological argument rather than selecting key information in order to give a full and coherent answer to the set question.

For (ii) the best answers were those who showed understanding of a priori, deductive reasoning and analysed how the outcome is not a logical consequence of the definition of God. The majority of candidates focused more on the criticisms rather than directly focusing on the demands of the question but some of these included good analysis, suggesting that they had hoped for a 'strengths and weaknesses' version of this question and answered accordingly. Candidates seemed to feel more at home with part (ii) and were much more secure discussing what 'incorrect' might entail, e.g. in a realist or anti realist sense. Less able candidates struggled as they thought they had said it all in the first part of the question whilst some limited themselves by a narrow range of material.

Question 2(a)

Life After Death

The instruction to compare and contrast two types of belief about life after death provided a good selection of examples. Unfortunately, a few chose to compare “unbelief” (hard materialism) with a belief that there was a life after death. Even if this is accepted as a valid example, it made it difficult to use this example for the second part of the question in providing much evidence for/against “credibility”. Another example used by others in the first part was near-death experiences, which might provide material to support argument in the second part, but is in itself not an example of belief about life after death although it might suggest it to be likely.

Interestingly, examiners found that this question gave rise to the most varied answers within the Philosophy section. Candidates chose to write about dualism, monism, near death experiences, mysticism, behaviourism, materialism, as well as the more traditional reincarnation, rebirth, immortality of the soul and resurrection. Some candidates seemed to change their choices within the essay and many then became unstuck when they reached the second part of the question. Stronger answers did give a broad or in depth coverage of two beliefs in life after death but fewer were able to do this within a structure that allowed them to compare and contrast them.

Part (ii) answers were dependent in the choices for (i), although many candidates had already spoken about the weaknesses of, for example, immortality of the soul or reincarnation and were inclined to repeat themselves a little in part (ii). Typically candidates found it easier to explain why it made life after death less rather than more credible.

Some candidates who presented the Christian and Islamic views about life after death, with one position (possibly their own religious position) emerging as better than the other. These students appeared not to be even handed in their evaluations wishing to get across their point of view rather than present both sides of the argument. However, at the higher end of the ability range there were some very interesting answers by candidates with knowledge of Buddhism and Hinduism skillfully presented and the differences between these views were well distinguished. The best candidates obviously had a good range of relevant religious terminology that was coherently used in their answers.

In contrast to this, advocates of resurrection argue that the body needs the soul. Aquinas argued that the body and soul are necessary to each other and that one can not be, without the other. He stated that "the natural condition of the soul is to be united with a body." for Aquinas, ~~the only~~ the concept of an after life could only be plausible if the body was present along with the soul.

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Examiner Comments

What a lovely paragraph, beginning with one of the key words from the question '-contrast'. The candidate also includes pertinent quotation and makes fluent use of language, most particularly the phrase 'could only be plausible...'

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Examiner Tip

Make sure you respond to the wording of the question so if you are asked to compare and contrast, make an effort to do so, otherwise you may hit a self imposed ceiling of marks.

Question 2(b)

Religious Language

The strongest answers to this question largely came from those who chose analogy and language games. The majority of students answering on language games had a sound understanding of it whilst analogy was also mostly well done with reference to Aquinas. A handful of answers betrayed some confusion over analogy, citing Paley's watch or even Jesus' parables as examples. Fewer students were able to answer confidently on myth and symbol and some candidates covered only one or the other. Although some candidates had clearly grasped what these areas were about, it appeared that others had chosen those options because they were unable to write about anything else.

Many candidates wasted time explaining the religious language debate and ran out of time in which to discuss a specification contribution as per the question. Time is short for each question and a reminder of examination technique would help improve achievement for some candidates.

The second half of the question was mostly well done - it appears that almost everyone was comfortable with the challenges to religious language from verification and falsification and were mostly able to address the question as they possibly knew this material better.

Some students had clearly pinned their hopes on a question entirely based upon verification and falsification, and for these candidates their part (i) was very short and (ii) was much stronger. Nevertheless, some candidates did not interpret this question as an opportunity to discuss verification and falsification, but instead, discussed the strengths and weaknesses of their chosen theories of religious language. This was perfectly appropriate when done well and with an eye to the wording of the question.

However, the verification principle can be criticised as it does not pass itself, meaning the principle cannot be verified. Additionally, Steward Sutherland claimed "the theory is conceptually restrictive and intellectually

empiricist in character," indicating that the theory restricts too many other areas of language like art and beauty and hinders us from progressing intellectually.



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Examiner Comments

As the candidate reaches the end of their answer to part (ii), they make clear that they have recognised the need to evaluate their material and the use of a well chosen quotation to help them to do so does the job for them.



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Examiner Tip

Use of a few, well chosen and relevant quotations lifts your essay into a higher level. Make sure you have one or two good quotations for each topic you write about in the exam.

Question 3(a)

Religion and Morality

This question attracted responses that spanned the full ability range. Some excellent answers gave meaningful discussion whether they focused on Euthyphro's Dilemma or Richard Dawkins's anti-theistic approach as well as some strong answers (although only a few attempted) that critiqued a sociological (Marx et al) and/or psychological (Freud et al). Some of the weaker answers that took the psychological critique tended to get muddled when discussing Freud and Jung, and there were some descriptive answers without any development/discussion on Richard Dawkins.

A number of candidates approached the title by combining more than one critique, which was justifiable as long as they made clear about the way the critiques supported each other. A list of various critiques with little substantive detail cannot yield the higher level marks. On the other hand, candidates who focused on the wording of the question and answered on only one critique did not always achieve an in depth exploration of the topic. They had obviously prepared for a broader approach to the topic. Others did not focus on the demands of the question and wrote everything they knew on the topic. This had an impact on part (ii) when candidates were left with little to say and tended to attempt a discussion of the material they had presented earlier but without an understanding of the relevant arguments.

~~King~~ Although, ~~is~~ Danish philosopher Kierkegaard argues that we should not confuse ethics or morality with doing the will of God, and that as humans we cannot truly comprehend God's reasoning to morality and his view on the controversial story of Abraham and Isaac is that ~~God~~ Abraham was called to a level of obedience beyond our comprehension.



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Examiner Comments

The misspelling of Kierkegaard will not affect the candidate's final mark for this essay. This is not a perfectly constructed sentence, but the examiner will still get the sense of an argument being developed and supported.



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Examiner Tip

Use of biblical examples to support critiques of religious morality are more helpful than attempting to construct imaginary or hypothetical scenarios.

Question 3(b)

Ethical theory

This was overwhelmingly the most popular question and candidates appeared to benefit from the option of writing about Deontology OR Natural Moral Law and both theories were equally represented. Consequently, there were a lot of good answers to this question but also some very weak responses. Better answers engaged at some depth with the Kantian approach to Deontology by analysing salient features without descending into regurgitating Kant's own examples - certain examples had obviously stayed with the students - the scenario of the shopkeeper and people with red hair came up frequently but did not really convince or come to terms with the question. The best answers did not merely dwell on Kant's Categorical Imperative but sought to evaluate the role that the synthetic- a priori had as well as unpacking 'duty' and 'absolute' concepts.

Better responses to Natural Moral law developed the theory from Aristotle and demonstrated how Aquinas encompassed these ideas into his own theory. For example they stated that everything has a purpose given to it by God and fulfilling that purpose was 'good'. They focused clearly on the deontological aspect of Natural Moral Law referring to aspects of the theory including the precepts and the four types of law. There were some good answers that were able to distinguish and explain the difference between real/apparent goods and interior/exterior acts. Weaker responses simply were a listing of all they knew about the theory without any meaningful analysis or contextual application. Several had difficulty linking the primary precepts with the secondary ones.

Candidates often structured their answers to part (ii) in terms of a list of strengths then a list of weaknesses, followed by a brief conclusion (often opinion based rather than argument based). Few candidates discussed what would make a theory persuasive and then related this to the chosen theory. Few candidates evaluated what was and wasn't persuasive about the chosen theory. Some candidates did include scholarly opinion to support the points they made and some drew on material from AS as a contrasting approach. A number of candidates mentioned Virtue Ethics and linked it in with Natural Moral Law. However the detail on Virtue Ethics is still rather poor in comparison with other theories.

Immanuel Kant is one of the most influential philosophers of all time, some claiming he is the greatest. Born in the 18th Century, Kant's work was during the German Enlightenment. His theory is Deontological, meaning a 'science of duty' + some have said that 'if the people of Prussia knew what was going on in ~~his~~ head, they would run with fear.'

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Examiner Comments

Be very careful of opening paragraphs like this. Although this candidate did go on to score well for part (i) of the essay, some of this information is anecdotal and if you struggle to complete your paper in the time available, this could lose you vital seconds. We don't really need to know what the people of Prussia said about Kant - it's a fun comment to observe in class but leave it out of the essay if time is pressing.

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Examiner Tip

Don't forget Kant's four principles of right action in an essay on Deontology.

Question 4(a)

Justice, Law and Punishment

This question has provided the widest spectrum of answers once again this year, with some candidates (but fewer than in previous sessions) approaching it as a last ditch attempt to score marks and others making extremely positive and enlightening contributions to discussions on the nature of justice, law and punishment. Some candidates were pleasingly scholarly in their approach and used arguments from Rawls, Locke, Plato and Bentham. Several candidates engaged with various versions of the Social Contract to good effect.

The majority of responses dealt with the ideas on law and punishment and how law can be seen as objective, whilst punishment is generally subjective. Stronger responses discussed these ideas using examples drawn from other disciplines, e.g. sociology or history, and debating the changing nature of law and punishment across societies and generations. Many candidates highlighted the issue of capital punishment in the UK and USA in particular, but only a few explored corporal punishment, instead focussing on the financial differential between capital punishment and life imprisonment. A number of candidates ignored justice all together and concentrated on law and punishment. Key scholars mentioned were Bentham, Hobbes, Moore, Dawkins and Newman. AO2 contained some of the weakest responses on the paper with many candidates repeating material from AO1 and confusing subjectivism and objectivism and mainly talking about relativism (which has appeared on many more answers this year).

Question 4(b)

Ethical Language

An increasing number of candidates tackled this area this year and many responses were very credible. The best answers here did exactly what the question asked for - an analysis of the contribution that 'emotivism' made to debates about ethical language. The vast majority of answers explored issues around emotivism along with the debate on the value of Logical Positivism in particular. Weaker responses failed to understand the demands of section (ii) and many repeated material from AO1 particularly on intuitionism. Some even chose to angle the question towards intuitionism to the extent that their answers to (ii) suggested that it had asked how far intuitionism had solved the problems of ethical language. Some candidates who made an effort to focus on the wording of the question often were not able to explore the topic in depth - they knew how emotivism fitted into the debates but didn't analyse the debates fully. Some candidates gave an over view of the debates about ethical language but only mentioned emotivism rather than focusing on it. That is most had prepared for a broader question on ethical language. Unfortunately, some candidates had not been able to distinguish between religious language (e.g. God) and ethical language (e.g. good) and an opportunity to score above level three in AO1 and 2 was missed.

Responses to this question were generally answered with the use of including/citing scholarship more than any of the other questions. Key scholars from the Vienna Circle and especially Moore were quoted, but higher achieving candidates mentioned more modern contributors like Singer and Vardy as well as increasing mention of Tyler!

In the box, state whether you are answering part(a) or part(b). b

Plan - need understand ethical lang. - emotivism

conclusion - meaningless.
Open question argument

Firstly, in order to understand the contribution made by emotivism to debate ethical language we need to understand the problems in ethical language that emotivism tried to address.

As, metaethics focuses on examining ~~the~~ what we mean when we say something is good, bad, ~~is~~ right, wrong, moral, immoral. Its primary consideration is in ~~the~~ discovering if ethical language holds any meaning as if we don't understand the ethical term how can we make authoritative claims ~~of~~ on the morality of the action?



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Examiner Comments

Many candidates started their essays on ethical language in this way. Even though the focus of the question is on emotivism, it is legitimate to start off by raising general issues about the ethical language debate.



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Examiner Tip

Make sure you are prepared to write specifically about emotivism in an essay on ethical language as it is named in the specification as a particular focus of this topic.

Question 5(a)

The life of Asoka

Many candidates struggled with the first part of this question. Many simply wrote biographical information from Asoka's life. The best answers referred to the religious and social influences upon Asoka's upbringing; including the religious plurality and statecraft. This they compared to Asoka's reign after Kalinga. The second part of the question was answered very effectively, candidates focused on the impact of Asoka's missionary enterprises, his effect on Buddhist councils and social welfare. The role of popularising Buddhism was considered from various scholarly viewpoints.

Question 5(b)

Zen

Few candidates answered this question, but those who did so answered competently. Candidates often focused on key practices and then drew out the relevant beliefs. The second part of the question was not answered as thoroughly although the best answers focused on the ability of Zen to appeal and adapt Buddhism according to social circumstances.

Question 6(a)

Dukkha and Anatta

This was a popular question and on the whole was answered very well. A surprising number of students confused anatta with anicca. Candidates used a range of set texts to support their answers, including the Deer Park sermon and King Milinda. These were used very effectively. Set texts were used to anchor the key aspects of the two doctrines being considered and afforded the essays an effective structure. Some students debated whether or not dukkha makes Buddhism a pessimistic religion. Many students were able to describe the three types of dukkha. However, few students explained what the Buddha was actually rejecting when he taught anatta. In the second part of the question many candidates focused on the '3 marks of existence' and the pivotal role of anicca in understanding both dukkha and anatta.

Question 6(b)

Bodhisattva Doctrine

This was a popular question and answers ranged in quality. Some candidates tended to focus almost exclusively upon the Mahayana concept of the Bodhisattva doctrine and failed to compare and contrast this with the features of the Theravada. Others wrote lengthy generalised answers which failed to address the answer to the Bodhisattva doctrine. Some candidates were extremely effective in diagnosing the radically different paths to liberation. Such candidates made effective use of set texts such as the Lotus Sutra. The second part of the question was competently answered, many candidates making reference to the Bodhisattva Path and primacy within the tradition of compassion. However, few students were able to link this primacy and the path itself: namely that a fully enlightened Buddha affords the best possible position from which to put this compassion into practice. Compassion is this motivation which drives the Bodhisattva path. Candidates are recommended to refer to Mahayana Buddhism by Paul Williams (Routledge).

Question 7(a)

The teaching and work of Bonhoeffer

Many answers tended to deal with the historical aspect of Bonhoeffer's life and work, mentioning his teaching only briefly. Most were able to say that his teachings were a response to the persecution of the Churches by the Nazis whilst better responses had included a range of his teachings such as Cheap Grace, Religionless Christianity, Jesus the Man for Others. Often the teachings were not as linked as they could have been to his actual work. Candidates found it difficult to make the link between Bonhoeffer's view that humanity should be more concerned with the crucified Christ who had served and died for us so that we could find his real presence in the world today, as opposed to the view that the Church was too closely tied to the State. As regards the significance of Bonhoeffer's teachings most were able to make simple statements explaining the meaning of his teachings. Few were able to consider critically the fragmentary nature of the teachings or the influence his work had on others and answers were often characterised by a distinct lack of scholarship.

Question 7(b)

The practice of Christianity in the modern world

The majority of candidates wrote about the development of the Ecumenical Movement and their answers concentrated on the setting up of the World Council of Churches and the responses of the Roman Catholic Church leading to the Churches Together Movement. Candidates however spent most of their time on historical detail which although accurate did not enable them to attain higher levels because they did not demonstrate how this is a practice of Christianity in the world today. This was also a feature of responses to part (ii) where candidates did refer to the benefits and disadvantages of unity but only on a superficial level. Few made any reference to relevant scholarship. Better responses did consider why the Catholic Church had been slow to join as it sees itself as the True Church.

Question 8(a)

Atonement

This was the least popular question. Better answers explored the issue of why humanity needed salvation and discussed the process of redemption in Jesus. Reference to Sacrifice, Satisfaction, Substitution, Victory and Ransom were considered as the means to restoring the reciprocal relationship of love between God and human beings. Atonement as pathway to God and as a necessity for salvation was also discussed. Weaker responses gave a simplified account of why Jesus died. Responses to part (ii) considered the problems of the process of salvation highlighting the problems raised by traditional terminology. Responses here were quite brief, not least because candidates seemed to put AO2 comments amongst their AO1 material.

Question 8(b)

The Trinity

The majority of responses were good with many referring to relevant scholarship concentrating on Modalism and Tritheism. Candidates considered how the apparent paradox of One God in Three Persons has been interpreted by Chalcedon and by scholars such as Barth, Rahner and Macquarrie. Better candidates were able to compare the three modes of the self revealing Trinity (Barth) with unity in Plurality (Rahner). The filioque controversy was also discussed. AO2 responses to part (ii) were often disappointing as candidates had spent too much time on AO1. Hence answers tended to be generalised discussions on why it is important for Christians to believe that Christ is God for Salvation.

Overall, candidates responded well to the questions set with some having a much better grasp of the material than others. This paper requires in depth factual knowledge and the ability to interact with the material when analysing significance of teachings/issues affecting the Christian Church. Differentiation was most evident when candidates had to assess/analyse in A02. Some candidates wrote very little and centres should be reminded that to achieve higher levels at A2 requires breadth and depth in writing as well as length.

Question 9(a)

Selected Figures in Hinduism

This was the most popular question out of this section and was generally well answered by candidates who displayed good knowledge on their chosen Hindu reformers. Ramakrishna and Dayananda were more popular choices for candidates than Sri Radhakrishnan. The best candidates offered strong conclusions and evidence of scholars in their evaluation, but some candidates did not address the question and simply listed stories about the life of the reformers and failed to understand the question, whilst some weaker answers mixed up features of Ramakrishna and Dayananda Sarasvati. A few candidates wrote too much for part (i) and appeared unprepared for part (ii).

Question 9(b)

M K Gandhi

This popular question produced variable responses. Some students merely wrote about M.K. Gandhi's life and omitted information on his key teachings but the better candidates offered clear understanding of his teachings, together with the views of scholars and were able to make some good responses challenging M. K. Gandhi's teachings and philosophy. For part (ii) weaker answers were characterised by regurgitation of (i) without targetting the question whilst some candidates relied on prepared essays and overlooked the question altogether, often re-telling the life of M.K. Gandhi and his teachings with little attempt at critical evaluation.

Question 10(a)

Atman and Brahman

This attracted very good answers with excellent use of the set texts. Stronger candidates knew the Hindu scriptures well and were able to offer an interesting analysis of atman using the set text. Scholarship was evident and generally well-used although some candidates did not write enough about Atman and focused on Brahman. The demands of AO2 attracted some good discussions with candidates discussing the relationship of Atman and Brahman using different schools of thought.

Question 10(b)

Samsara and Moksha

This was a less popular question, although the stronger candidates had been well-prepared and understood the material well and could support their ideas using the Bhagavad-Gita and Upanishads. Interestingly, some candidates this year quoted from The Law of Manu. It was notable that some candidates wrote far more for (ii) than (i), sometimes opting to answer (ii) before (i). Stronger responses to (ii) included detailed knowledge of the main yoga's together with different Hindu schools of thought, whilst weaker responses were characterised by a tendency to list everything known about Samsara and Moksha

Question 11(a)

Sunni and Shi'ah Islam

All Candidates showed an awareness of the Sunni/Shi'ah split and this was reflected in both parts of the question. The work of those candidates achieving the higher levels reflected a good knowledge of similarities and differences in practices and beliefs and provided details of reasons for and implications of these. Work achieving marks in the lower levels often listed the differences rather than examining them. Some candidates simply gave a potted history of the Caliphs. Only a small number of candidates achieving marks in the higher levels were able to discuss the significance of the historical division for understanding Islam in the contemporary world, making reference to expansion and the belief and practice of Islam in particular countries. Many candidates described the effect the division had upon Islam around the period of the Caliphs whilst others made statements suggesting that it had either had great or little significance upon contemporary Islam.

Question 11(b)

Islamic beliefs and practices in Islamic states

This question was answered by only a small number of candidates and there were very few answers that competently examined the key Islamic beliefs and practices in one or more Islamic States. Some candidates described some Shi'ah or Sunni beliefs and practices generally, without really relating them to a specific State. A few candidates referred to Iran under the rule of the Shah and mentioned how it had changed after the revolution but gave very few specific details. Part (ii) was answered competently by relatively few candidates who discussed different ways that Muslims deal with a diversity of beliefs both within and outside of Islam.

Question 12(a)

Beliefs about Allah and the Qur'an

The standard of answers to this question was variable. Some candidates achieving marks in the higher levels demonstrated an excellent knowledge of the Qur'an's teaching about Allah and a very good understanding of His authority. They used their knowledge of the Qur'an itself to quote verses in order to support their answers and some also referred to the five pillars and other beliefs explaining their importance as a response to the implications of Allah's authority. Other candidates provided descriptive answers about Allah and the Qur'an that failed to 'examine the significance of beliefs... for an understanding...about authority'. For part (ii) the most competent answers dealt with the different attitudes held towards authority by the Sunni, Shi'ah and Sufi followers whilst others considered the difference between the authority of the Qur'an and Sunna of the Prophet and the authority of Mohammad and the other prophets.

Question 12(b)

Sufism

Most candidates produced answers that reflected a sound basic knowledge of the beliefs and practices of the Sufis. Those gaining marks in the higher levels examined thoroughly their distinctive emphases, structuring their answers well and giving a wealth of relevant detail. For (ii), few candidates answered this part of the question well and discussed various viewpoints concerning the positive and also negative attitudes towards Sufism's contribution to Islam. Many candidates simply wrote a few sentences stating either the positives or negatives of Sufism without discussing them.

Question 13(a)

There were insufficient responses to this question to be able to make any helpful observations.

Question 13(b)

There were insufficient responses to this question to be able to make any helpful observations.

Question 14(a)

There were insufficient responses to this question to be able to make any helpful observations.

Question 14(b)

There were insufficient responses to this question to be able to make any helpful observations.

Question 15(a)

There were insufficient responses to this question to be able to make any helpful observations.

Question 15(b)

There were insufficient responses to this question to be able to make any helpful observations.

Question 16(a)

There were insufficient responses to this question to be able to make any helpful observations.

Question 16(b)

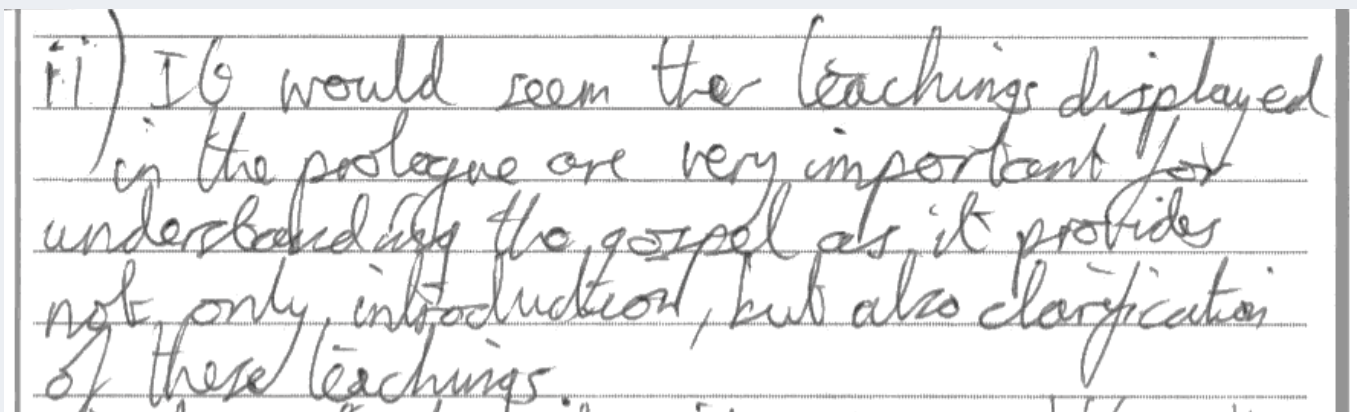
There were insufficient responses to this question to be able to make any helpful observations.

Question 17(a)

Kingdom of God OR Prologue

There were some excellent responses on Kingdom of God that clearly demonstrated knowledge of text, scholars and OT background, however some struggled with part (ii) interpreting 'the gospel' as the Christian gospel (rather than Luke) and sometimes lapsed into preaching. Those writing on Kingdom of God in Luke could have been more familiar with parables that teach about the Kingdom. Significantly, they were often better at differentiating the varying eschatological arguments of scholars such as Schweitzer and Cullman etc. It was almost as if they had spent more time reading the commentaries than the Gospel.

The question on the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel was well answered on the whole with scholars' views (key/lens) being effectively employed in either part of the question. In some cases, however, candidates did not always address the particular two-part question as set, offering a very competent standard Prologue essay, but missing out on higher marks through lack of direct focus.



ii) It would seem the teachings displayed in the prologue are very important for understanding the gospel as it provides not only introduction, but also clarification of these teachings.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

Good technique shown here as the candidate makes it clear to the examiner that they have read the question and are going to observe its demands. The key now is for the candidate to ensure that in the rest of their answer they actually do what they have promised!



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

It is never wasted time to use the wording of the question in your answer, even if it feels artificial to you it sends a clear signal to the examiner.

Question 17(b)

The purpose of the gospel (Luke or Fourth Gospel)

This proved to be the most popular question in the New Testament section. The best answers recognised the implications of the question and responded to the quotation by discussing the nature of Jesus as the Christ and offered a clear demonstration of how this appeared in gospel themes in part (ii). However, for some it was clear that concept of Christ/Messiah was misunderstood. There was a tendency to provide a single answer addressing parts (i) and (ii) together and this often reflected the use of pre-prepared answers delivered regardless of the question format. While this was successful to some extent, this kind of response did expose a lack of understanding by some candidates. Similarly few candidates for the Fourth Gospel were able to analyse the importance of 20:30-31, yet they knew many other sub-purposes rather well. So, the best advice that can be given is that candidates, in the first instance, must be wholly familiar with the text.

Question 18(a)**Conflict**

Here there were some excellent responses that displayed textual knowledge and background to the situation with reference to scholars but too many responses were particularly general, to the extent that no reference was made to which gospel was being discussed. Candidates tended to know much more about the opposition of the Religious than the Political Authorities and there was some confusion about the role of Pilate in each specific gospel with Matthean material offered by some. The strong responses to this question are worthy of note, however, as they were characterised by excellent use of the gospel text and of supporting scholarship. This is clearly a topic dear to many centres' hearts, and when done well is most impressive.

Similarly, it can be argued that the political authorities saw Jesus as a threat as well. The religious authorities made 'charges that were malicious & deliberate in ver-
sion of the truth' (G.B. Caird). They portrayed Jesus as a King to both Herod and Pilate. Giving Jesus this position could potentially make him a threat to Caesar's throne, something that would not be tolerated by the Roman Empire.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Comments

The candidate makes good use here of text knowledge which is implied rather than narrated, supported by use of a scholarly quotation.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Tip

Make sure that in an essay on conflict you have something to say about political as well as religious authorities. Sometimes they are under-represented by candidates.

Question 18(b)

Crucifixion and Resurrection

Most responses included good reference to religious symbolism and many offered a range of views concerning their meaning. A few candidates considered the trial as part of the crucifixion narrative and some were unable to relate the resurrection narrative to the rest of the gospel, although relation to 'the Christian gospel message' was often indicated with some recourse to preaching. On the topic of Crucifixion, candidates need to differentiate between what is an example of symbolism, and the more important themes (e.g. Glorification and Exaltation, Sacrifice, Replacement Theology etc.) that permeate so symbolically the Crucifixion narratives. Candidates could be encouraged to appreciate where an episode begins and ends, e.g. Resurrection in Fourth Gospel includes chapter 21 with the important reconciliation of Peter. Similarly very few Luke candidates referred to the story of the journey to Emmaus in Luke 24. Surely this is a pertinent part of the Resurrection story in Luke's gospel. It was notable that many candidates were quite perplexed when they approached the resurrection narrative, which suggested that some centres had not covered this aspect of the gospel at all.

i) The resurrection narrative is key to the ^{understanding} rest of John's gospel for many reasons. One such reason is the fact that it brings together many of the ideas/symbols used by the Evangelist throughout his Gospel, for example it is a woman who first discovers Jesus' empty tomb, just as it was a woman to whom Jesus revealed prophecy as 'when Jesus calls her by name, she ~~replies~~ ^{replies} 'Rabboni' which is recognition of who he is. This allows the reader to see that John includes several accounts of Jesus fulfilling Old Testament passages ('he shall call his sheep by name...').

In John's resurrection ~~story~~ account, two men witness the empty tomb (fulfilment of scripture yet again) and the 'disciple whom Jesus loved.' "Saw and believed" when looking into the empty tomb. Both these passages reiterate John's aim; 'so that you may believe'.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

Few answers to this question, whether focussing on Luke or the Fourth Gospel, started with this confidence. It is clear that the candidate knows exactly how to draw out the meaning and significance of the resurrection narrative.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

You must not overlook the resurrection narrative in your study of the gospel for this unit.

The Developments examination offers candidates the chance to shine across a range of topic areas and with clear attention to the new divided question format at A2, the standard can continue to rise. The very best candidates produce three extensive, but sharply focussed, well informed essays, clearly targeted toward the question and show an obvious development from AS. Links can be usefully made with the Implications paper, which may help centres and candidates achieve a greater sense of integration across the whole A2 examination.

Centres are to be congratulated on the good work they are doing for this unit. Room for improvement is, in many cases, a matter of small details rather than a complete overhaul.

Grade boundaries:

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Raw boundary mark	90	70	64	58	52	46	40	34	0
Uniform mark scale boundary	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	0

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