

Examiners' Report
June 2015

GCE Religious 6RS04 1J

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Introduction

Important information about mark schemes:

- Detailed mark schemes are available on the Religious Studies web site. Examiners at standardisation are reminded that the mark scheme contains

(i) General Marking Guidance:

- This consists of eight bullet points including, 'Candidates must be rewarded for what they have shown they can do rather than penalised for omissions.'

(ii) Generic mark scheme:

- This divides each level across both AO1 and AO2 into three sub-levels – low, mid and high. Each concludes with a statement about quality of written communication.

(iii) Indicative level descriptors:

- These are meant to be indicative rather than definitional of content at each level. The introduction to the indicative level descriptors states.
- 'Examiners should be reminded that any legitimate approach to the clarification and discussion of the passage must be rewarded and there is no need for candidates to cover every idea mentioned in the extract.'
- (iv) In addition, on pages 120-121 of the Spec there is an abbreviated guide of the level descriptors.

Introduction to the paper:

At the highest levels the answers were impressive. There was a clear and detailed understanding of the passage and of the religious and theological meaning behind it. Candidates analysed a range of alternative viewpoints aided by a range of scholars, both ancient and modern. Candidates at this level of success made the best use of the synoptic opportunities from related anthologies in 6RS04 and relevant material in 6RS03, plus, where appropriate, the two AS units: 6RS01 and 6RS02. This included references to conflict and resurrection narratives.

Lower levels of work had a more basic understanding of the passage with limited scholarship to support the claims being made. There were instances of unsatisfactory time management relating to the respective demands of the two assessment objectives. A few spent too long on AO1 with too little attention to AO2 and vice versa. A few candidates merged AO1 and AO2. Typically, these paid scant attention to the issues of the implications of the passage for understanding religion and human experience. Generally, some candidates found the demands of AO2 more difficult than those of AO1.

Question 1

Good practice and areas for improvement

AO1 characteristics of good quality:

- comprehensive understanding of the passage including Old Testament references
- well-managed and coherent answers
- proficient use and understanding of complex theological stances
- analysis of terms including 'salvation', 'sacrifice', 'sin'
- effective use of religious language and symbolism.

AO1 work that requires improvement:

- evidence of extensive reference to passages set in previous years at the expense of the selected passage on the exam paper
- answers were not systematically focused on the passage in an explicit manner
- considerable emphasis on the anthology passages by Bowker and Russell which candidates did not relate successfully to the selected passage
- a simple comprehension task leading to a re-write of the passage and typically short
- a generic account of the whole source from the anthology
- a general account of ideas on conflict and crucifixion with limited ability for drawing out the specifics in the passage
- reference to scholars names but with little analysis of their ideas.

AO2 characteristics of good quality:

- impressive presentations with confident evaluations
- effective selection and management of arguments and implications
- sustained debate of alternative hypotheses.

AO2 work that requires improvement:

- basic points of view with limited use of argument and evidence
- isolated view-points without appropriate exemplary support
- lack of theological understanding of the issues with some duplication of AO1 points in the second part of the answer
- confessional responses lacking academic rigour.
- The following scripts are examples of good practice.

Morrison within this text examines 6 hypothesis as alternatives for Jesus' resurrection. Jesus resurrection is a crucial debate for the grounds of belief in Christianity. It is an extremely divine occurrence which is difficult to understand, and ~~these~~ according to Morrison, there are huge flaws within the argument for Jesus' resurrection. Wilson in 'Jesus - the evidence' also examines ~~before these six hypothesis, Morrison~~ his own alternatives and the ~~resurrection~~ empty tomb is also the focus. ~~The reason~~.

Morrison starts by ~~scraping~~ dismissing the idea that ~~the~~ the disciples moved the body. This is because within the new Testament the disciples seem weak ("they were afraid" - walking on water) and for all eleven ~~to~~ (without Judas) to be in on such a hoax would require a huge implications. Also there seems to

be no strong team leader - Peter denies Jesus three times. Even so - if the disciples had taken the body this would mean that the whole^{of} Christianity had been based on a lie - would the disciples ~~not~~ really suffer and die for this made up faith?

The first official alternative that Morrison puts forward is the man who asked Pilate to move the body into his own did so. This idea isn't implausible at first, ~~as~~ Morrison claims that this tomb would be 'unused and unused'. However, Joseph of Arimathea does not ask for the thieves bodies too ~~as~~ which an extra pious Jew would supposedly do. And it is also clear that if the Sanhedrin were especially angry with Joseph, which within apocryphal literature, they were, would not he avoid taking the body in order to pay debt back. Overall this alternative seems flawed and incredible.

↓
night.

~~Secondly~~ Morrison dismisses the second and third hypotheses fairly quickly, mostly due to the fact that there would be little reason for the Roman or Jewish authorities to move the body - and in consequence, after the disciples had proclaimed the risen Jesus, the authorities would have produced the body. Pilate was an obstinate man (who wouldn't change Jesus' title) and therefore why would he want more than handing the body to Joseph of Arimathea and get rid of the wretched incident? It was stated that the Jewish priests asked for guards to protect Jesus' body in the tomb from the disciples taking the body and making false proclamations - not ^{to} move the body from this tomb.

The ~~best~~ ^{fourth} alternative that is put forward is that Jesus didn't

gali ↙ historical
curiosity

actually die - this is one of
great implications. Morrison
states the idea of Venturini
who suggested that Jesus fainted
and recovered in the cool of the
tomb. In Wilson's discussion, he
puts forth more ideas on this
including Hugh Schonfield's idea
that the sponge was actually
soaked in a drug which caused
the appearance of death
rather than vinegar. Another
was a short story "The man
who died" by DH Lawrence,
claiming that Jesus survived,
fleeing to Egypt and participating
in conjugal relations with
an Isis priest. Lastly "The
Holy Grail and Holy Blood"
claims that Jesus and Mary
Magdalene were lovers and
fled to Egypt to have a family,
however all these theories
seem to be extremely obscure
and incredible even if Jesus
did survive, we know that

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his wounds still hurt ("Do not touch me" John) - would he really have the strength to move the ^{extremely heavy} tomb stone. This idea seems incredibly implausible ~~is~~ both by Morrison, and Wilson.

The fifth alternative Morrison puts forward is that the women went to the wrong tomb (due to dim light) saw the ^{indeed} gardener (not Jesus - but thinking so) and fled. However there are numerous problems with this idea. Why would a gardener be working in such dim light? It was said that the women only ~~had~~ proclaimed this, that Jesus had risen, when the disciples returned from Galilee. There are numerous objections, however, with the idea that ~~Jesus~~ the disciples fled

after Jesus' resurrection. Firstly it is obvious that Peter did not die due to his presence within the trial and his denial of Jesus. Another is that why would the disciples flee leaving the women? Either the women would join them or they would not go at all. If their exiting was due to the danger that they were in, then surely the women would be in danger too? Also many of the women were close (or related) to the disciples, such as Salome - mother of two. Would a disciple really leave their mother at such a dangerous time. ~~By~~ Another criticism to ~~their~~ this alternative is that if they really thought the gardener was the resurrected Christ, and they proclaimed this, the Jewish authorities had no reason not to produce the right tomb, with Jesus' body to prove his death or

even produce the gardener
by mistaken for Jesus.

The last ~~to~~ preposition that Morrison makes is highly discredited "that the grave was not visited at all". Although the ^{apocryphal} Gospels accounts of the resurrection differ enormously, they all include ~~that Jesus~~ ^{the women} ~~that Jesus~~ ^{visiting the tomb} ~~that Jesus~~ ^{rose from the dead}. This increases the historicity of events and proves that although there are huge gaps and doubts within the resurrection, the women did go out on ~~the~~ the dawn of the next morning after Jesus' resurrection to find Jesus' body in the tomb.

Overall, it is then obvious that there are countless alternatives to the resurrection of Jesus, but forward by Morrison, on this idea of the 'empty tomb' - all

which have their weaknesses
- some more than others.

Jesus' resurrection is a topic
that will inevitably be
debated on within the future,
and any way of proving
either an alternative or the
resurrection itself is extremely
unlikely, and due to the
resurrection being a fundamen-
-tal ~~base~~ point to Christian
'kerygma'-either way there
are tremendous implications.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

The candidate created a good balance between AO1 and AO2, There is an easily followed structure. In both parts there are clear introductions with sound conclusions. The introduction in AO1 opens up the key ideas within the passage and Morrison's purposes. There was a careful scrutiny of the alternative hypotheses. In each case the candidate analysed the various views with relevant illustrations, showing a clear understanding of the significance of these views.

AO2 opens with a clear statement of the fundamental importance of this topic followed by a critical scrutiny of the material leading to a cautious conclusion.

PLAN

"Title" - intro. - what happened ^{theology}
- alternative theories - face value
- NT unique - mitigate ^{rational}

why a problem? - inconsistencies
- disbelief + fear
- framework of human
experience

(disciples)

* Stealing theories

* didn't die - least rational - straw

* women criterion

* women importance, saw, emotional, K/S/D/P

conc - Dan Cohn "simple"

belief of disciples - resurrection

B) similarities

reasonable

however

Fitzmeyer

perhaps historical

implication

Essay begins on
next page

The resurrection narratives are the most fascinating and yet most problematic of all the gospel material. If we can get to the heart of their meaning, the message of Christianity would surely be beyond dispute" - Sarah Tyler

The issue regarding what happened between the burial of Jesus and the arrival of the women nearly three days later is not only at the heart of Morison's passage, but at the heart of Christian theology itself. Morison is aware that the inconsistencies in the gospel narratives regarding these events have ~~resulted~~ mitigated against a belief in the resurrection and has led skeptics to decide them, proposing alternative explanations to the empty tomb. These theories, which are listed in his extract, at first appear more rational at face value, yet Morison approaches these theories explaining why they do not satisfy the gospel. As NT Wright observes, "in ^{two} thousand years of skepticism against the Christian witness, no alternative

explanation has been offered that satisfactorily accounts for the empty tomb.

Moison firstly addresses why the question of the resurrection has posed such a problem with gospel readers. The ^{historical} reasons for the passion and why Jesus had to die are clear enough, as his relationship with the authorities made this inevitable, so this does not need to be addressed. The resurrection poses a problem firstly due to the inconsistencies in the gospel narratives regarding the women, the messenger, ~~and~~ the disciples and the resurrection appearances. Surely a message so crucial to Christian theology should be laid out in one coherent story? Secondly, it poses a problem due to the tone of disbelief written in the gospels such as Mark's abrupt ending ^{of the women fleeing} as a note of despair, and John's inclusion of ^{the} doubting Thomas. If the resurrection was so hard to believe for Jesus's close followers, it is easy to see why it is hard for modern followers to understand. Thirdly it poses a problem

due to the supernatural nature of the resurrection. It is natural for humans to create a rational alternative for such a cosmological event, in order to bring it back within the framework of the human experience.

Moison begins his passage with the theory that the disciples stole the body, but Moison rejects his before even putting it in the list of his extracts, meaning he does not regard it as a 'serious alternative to the gospel message'.

I agree with Moison that his argument does not stand as we know the disciples so well to believe they could plan such an elaborate and significant lie as they 'lack the character'. There is no suggestion in Old Testament Prophecy that would lead the disciples to expect a resurrection and the gospel writers make it clear on several occasions that they did not understand Jesus' predictions such as after the transfiguration in Mark 9. When they ask "what does his rising

from the dead' mean?":

The first alternative explanation Morrison addresses in this extract is that Joseph of Arimathea stole the body and moved it to a different tomb. However Morrison argues against this for several reasons. Joseph was a pious member of the Sanhedrin who had already risked his reputation by asking for the body - "Joseph went boldly into the presence of Pilate..." so he would be unlikely to go into more trouble. Similarly, he would have had to move the body at a suspicious time of day due to the timing preserved in the Gospel, as he would not have moved it during the Sabbath, but before the women arrived at the "first streak of dawn".

Morrison addresses the alternative explanation that either the Jewish authorities or the Roman authorities moved the body at the same time. He argues that the Romans had no need to be involved in

the affairs of Jesus any longer, with Matthew emphasising that ~~the~~ Pilate wished to "wash his hands" of the affair. Pilate was content with allowing Joseph take the body, and there is no suggestion he would want it back. Similarly, Manson argues that the Jewish authorities placed guards at the tomb in Matthew's gospel, not because they wanted to steal the body for themselves, but in order to prevent it being stolen elsewhere. Manson concludes that the ~~conclusion~~ of the guards ultimately dismissed any of the next alternatives.

The ~~fourth~~ ^{fourth} alternative, that Jesus did not die, was favoured by the German rationalist Karl Baront and Verucci, however Manson argues that this is really the 'least rational of all'. They believed the sponge was soaked in a drug to create the image of death and that he was taken down too early and revived in the cool tomb. However Manson argues that this ignores the 'deadly nature of Jesus' wounds' and does

not account for the hauling of Jesus' side which he could not have survived. Furthermore, ~~to~~ why would Jesus have decided to endure the difficult task of moving away the stone naked and remove the "viper crowns"? This argument was fully refuted by David Strauss and argued that "it is impossible that a being who crept about half dead seeking medical treatment... would give the impression to the disciples that he was a conqueror of death and the grave, the price of life?"

The film alleges, that the women mistook the grave is an extension of the belief that women were unreliable witnesses. In Jewish law, women's testimony carried no weight or standing as they were believed to be unreliable in 1st Century Israel. However ~~not~~ Morison and Wilson both argue that this always makes the testimony more reliable due to the criterion of difficulty imposed by the gospel writers. If an element is used ~~not~~ makes the account more

difficult to believe, then its reliability is actually increased. Not only do the writers include an anonymous group of women, but all include the named Mary Magdalene - the "apostle to the apostles" (Raymond Brown). This would not have been written if it were not indisputably true. If the gospel writers were making the whole story up, the first choice of witnesses would have been Peter and John, yet John's gospel only includes them to add a weight of male authority.

Similarly, it is unlikely that the women went to the wrong tomb as all the ^{synoptic} gospel writers include how the women observed where the body was buried. Had they gone to the wrong tomb, they would have eventually found the right one as it mattered to them emotionally to bury the body as they were such close followers of Jesus. Markan includes the argument of Kiropp lake and suggests that the women went to the tomb and were told ~~that~~ by a gardener that they had gone

to me wrong me, but misinterpreted his claim that "he is not here" as preannouncing of the resurrection. However, Morison replies to this, on the argument that the gardener was never approached or came forward, unless he had the power to disprove all claims of a resurrection during the early church. Morison implies that the whole theory that the women did not visit the tomb at all has such important implications that they will be discussed later.

As Dan Coen-Sherbok writes "either Jesus was physically resurrected or he wasn't. It's as simple as that". Morison ^{believes} ~~one~~ that whilst we may never know the true account of what happened before the "first streaks of dawn" something of great importance must have occurred that transformed the feeble disciples into great leaders of the early church during a time of persecution and suffering.

(b) I agree with Morison that it is the similarities between the gospel narratives

which are important and some of the differences - ie how many men/angels were at the tomb - are ultimately irrelevant and can be dismissed. The agreement between the narratives formed the basis from which the early church came to believe in the resurrection and constitutes the kerygma, the kernel of religious belief free of any supernatural work. Essentially, the basic tradition agrees that the women were met by a messenger at the tomb, which was empty of Jesus' body. They were instructed to tell the disciples of the resurrection and as with other writers people had 'strange experiences of seeing him'. It was on the disciples' preaching that Jesus died, was buried, etc and appeared to chosen witnesses that belief in the resurrection was sustained.

It is reasonable that the alternative explanations which have dismissed emerged since belief in the resurrection demands an acceptance that something supernatural and against the physical laws of nature occurred. In John's gospel, the character of

Thomas is used to demonstrate how hard a belief in the resurrection would be for some believers who would have to accept it on faith, not on the basis of physical evidence. Rational and natural explanations would have inevitably emerged in response to such scandals and logical claims. Some Muslims and Hindus believe these are ultimately flawed, but it is understandable why ~~them~~^{they} came about.

However it is vital for Christians to find a way around these events as they are crucial to their whole understanding of Jesus and his ministry. The resurrection, perhaps, is more important than resolving issues surrounding the virgin birth, since Jesus can conceivably be the Son of God through other means but can only defeat the power of death through the resurrection. Furthermore, when Paul writes to the Corinthians he makes it clear that if they did not accept the truth of the resurrection then the whole gospel is fraudulent, "for if

Christ has not been raised your faith is futile" (1 Cor. 15). So, it is clear that the Biblical writers maintain a strong use of argument that the tomb was genuinely empty because God did something miraculous - not just a "conjuring trick with bones" (Crausert).

J. Fitzmeyer observed "not to admit the resurrection means that one is not a Christian." Is it possible to be a Christian without a belief in the resurrection? Arguably the resurrection proves everything Jesus did and said throughout his ministry and would come as no surprise, after all he did predict it would happen. Moreover the resurrection must be accepted on faith which can lead to a non-literal interpretation. Liberal Christians believe in its symbolic significance, but still speak of the transforming power of the message of the resurrection. Karl Barth writes "the gospel writers were not looking for an acceptance of a well-

attested historical document but of a decision of faith".

Perhaps too much emphasis is placed on the historical details of the event which is not what the gospel writers were intending. They were not exposing the reliability of their narratives to be questioned. As Tyler and ~~Reid~~^{Reid} argue "the evangelists were not concerned with the mechanics of God's miraculous activity but rather the reality of it".

By way of implication, if Jesus did not rise from the grave then the credibility of Christianity is at stake. If Jesus did rise from the dead, then he is the son of God, but if he did not, then he is just another good man who taught about love and freedom. Without the resurrection, Jesus' authority is questioned and undermined. However it must be remembered that it was Jesus' death that was the important thing - the death that

took away the sins of the world. In this sense, the resurrection can be seen as the triumphant ~~passer~~ 'icing on the cake'. Humanity is saved from sin, but we're in the certainty of a continued presence of Jesus in the world. Wilson argues that the most important element of the resurrection is not ~~at~~ belief in Jesus and the resurrection which holds such a strong grip in the world two thousand years later. As Drane argues "the resurrection, as well as the cross, was an indispensable part of the arrival of God's Kingdom".



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This candidate displayed the significance of this topic, claiming it goes to the 'heart of Christian theology'. The candidate's analysis of the various alternative hypotheses was a good example of effective use of scholarship. The candidate examined a range of scholars with a fine level of understanding.

In AO2 the candidate discussed important issues such as the role of faith compared to rational thought alongside careful attention being given to some implications.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are encouraged to develop important study skills. This unit opens up the possibility of developing a range of study skills applicable to a number of career and HE routes. There are many excellent sources available. One noteworthy edition is:

- The Arts Good Study Guide 2nd Edition 2008 Open University Worldwide
- Chambers, Ellie and Northedge, Andrew.

This includes a scrutiny of:

- a range of reading and note making techniques
- the craft and process of writing good essays
- significance of analysis and evaluation
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