

Examiners' Report  
June 2014

GCE Religious Studies 6RS04 1J

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## Introduction

1. The question in AO1 says, 'Examine the argument and/or interpretation in the passage.'

All the level descriptors in the mark scheme for AO1 and AO2 begin with reference to the passage. There are many techniques which candidates used to demonstrate their understanding of the passage and examiners were alerted to this range in order to credit various methodologies. The essential point is that whatever approach was adopted the passage must be central and pivotal.

Some candidates presented a basic summary of the whole article, in this case Reid and Tyler, with limited reference to the passage in the question. Where material was applicable, candidates were credited but in some cases the passage received only scant attention. In many other cases candidates used the passage as the focal point, analysing it further with reference to the overall article and this method, used correctly, may be seen as an example of good practice.

2. Candidates have improved in answering all the range of demands within AO2:

- Do you agree with the idea(s) expressed?
- Justify your point of view
- Discuss its implications for understanding religion and human experience.

In some cases candidates failed to address one or more of these requirements and presented partial answers and this was reflected on their level of achievement.

3. A feature of good practice was that most candidates made effective use of the synoptic requirements of this paper. In AO1 levels 3, 4 & 5 of the Mark Scheme there is reference to crediting answers that demonstrate the application of different elements of their course of study in this paper.

4. The question was divided into parts (a) and (b): AO1 and AO2 respectively. This was done to help candidates answer the whole question rather than bypassing elements within an assessment objective. Over the years most candidates have followed through the structure of the question but some have conflated these two parts and this has often affected the standard of the work where relevant material in AO2 has been omitted. Exceptionally, a few using this holistic approach have succeeded and produced good quality answers. There was some evidence that the quality of work was higher in AO1 compared to AO2.

5. A number of candidates developed commendable styles of writing including a commanding and confident tone with ownership of the text.

## **Question 1**

Good practice and areas for improvement

AO1 characteristics of good quality:

- well-informed answers focused on the passage
- comprehensive understanding of the passage
- reference to the article as a whole or to related ideas and managed effectively in order to demonstrate an understanding of the passage
- structured answers in a coherent manner.
- effective use of scholarship.

AO2 characteristics of good quality:

- effective use of argument and sustained debate
- material related to other anthology sources and to relevant material in the other three units
- explicit attention to the implications for an understanding religion and human experience.
- AO1 work that requires improvement:
- not focused on the passage in an explicit and systematic manner
- basic and too short in the analysis of key points and ideas
- a generic account of the whole article or a general account of related teachings at the expense of a focus on the passage in the question
- scattered references to the names of scholars but without further analysis of their work.

AO2 work that requires improvement:

- largely unsupported by evidence or argument
- limited explicit focus on the implications demands of the question.
- poor paragraphing techniques that restricted the quality of evaluation.

## Observations from the scripts

It was pleasing to read the considerable numbers of very well-written answers to this question. This was helped greatly by an effective stimulus passage, enabling candidates to explore a whole range of theological and Christological approaches. Some candidates chose to adopt an adversarial stance against the authors' supposed argument, whilst others understood that the passage was essentially descriptive of the presentation of the events which lead up to Jesus' death as suggested in the NT and by later commentators. The scope for debate lay in what could be considered the more significant causes for Jesus' death. Teachers are to be warmly congratulated for the excellent preparation of their students, the vast majority of whom were able to engage fully with the passage and in the spirit of the exam.

Candidates at the highest level of part (a) were able to offer a plethora of different approaches - using the biblical text, including both the Old and New Testaments and diverging into philosophical and Christological arguments to support their viewpoints. Scholarship abounded and most students were well-supplied with useful and relevant quotations from original texts and established scholars. Some candidates made very good use of Ellis Rivkin's *What Crucified Jesus?* showing a good understanding of how the situation at Jesus' time directly impacted on his ministry and his death. In part (b) candidates were able to offer both supportive and alternative evaluation of the issues raised by the passage, together with realistic - and sometimes quite imaginative implications. Even though it was a fairly non-controversial passage, which enabled candidates to concentrate more closely on the theological aspects some candidates took a critical and argumentative approach.

Mid-range candidates in (a) tended to concentrate more on re-telling biblical narrative, particularly the events leading to conflict between Jesus and the Authorities. Better answers related this information to Old Testament prophecy and supported with modern scholarship. Answers tended to be a little shorter and lacking depth. In (b) many candidates resorted to a personal response, giving their own opinion, but often unsupported by evidence or text. Some, unfortunately, adopted a more confessional approach. Overall, answers were solid but lacked the depth of the higher level.

Weaker candidates in (a) tended to offer narrative re-telling of isolated incidents in the life of Christ with little support or obvious structure. Some presented all they knew about Jesus. Most found (b) almost impossible and resorted to writing about their own faith or religious viewpoints. A large number of candidates offered an extensive and rather imaginative introduction to the authors of the passage which was unnecessary.

Overall, a good examination with an accessible stimulus passage to which candidates responded with confidence.

This was an elegant and scholarly piece. Scholarship and text were used to great effect. The essay was well prepared and flowed effectively in the exam – no crossings out or false starts. The candidate knew what they intended to do and used the time really well.

2. In the passage, Tyler and Reid present the problem of Jesus' death: 'Understanding the death of Jesus is a problem that has puzzled both believers and scholars.' Initially, Jesus' death can be viewed as a sacrifice which is effectively presented by Anselm in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. He attempts to answer why God chose this particular method of redemption in 'Cur Deus Homo?' Anselm suggests that Jesus' death was necessary due to the enormity of sin in the world. With sin, there comes a lack of eternal life and this sin cannot just be wiped away in an instant. Therefore, Jesus' death and resurrection was made necessary by sin. Anselm defines sin: 'nothing other than to not render God his due'. He implies that a 'satisfaction' is required for this sin. As God is infinite, so must this satisfaction be infinite. As we are finite, we cannot pay this. Thus, Jesus' death and incarnation present itself as a way of dealing with this since he is a 'god-man'. As God he has the ability to pay it and as human, he is obliged to. Yet, Aquinas disagrees with Anselm and suggests that the incarnation and death of Jesus was not necessary for the forgiveness of sin: 'It was not necessary, since through his infinite

power, God had many other ~~the~~ ways of accomplishing this end.

Jesus' death can also be seen as a defeat of evil. This is presented by Gregory the Great who suggests that Anselm's satisfaction should be paid to the devil. He uses the analogy of a great fish being caught by a baited hook. Satan was tricked since Jesus' humanity appears as the bait, yet in reality, his divinity is the hook. The idea of Jesus' death being a defeat of evil is also illustrated by McGrath who likened Jesus' death and resurrection to 'D-day' in June 1944. This was a turning point in the war; they essentially won the war on this day even though it was not official until VE-day a year later. Similarly, Jesus' death and resurrection can be seen as a promise of what is to come; evil will eventually be defeated. Furthermore, Jesus' death can be linked to 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' by C.S. Lewis where Aslan defeats the evil forces by resurrecting from the dead. Subsequently he breaks into the white witch's castle (hell) and frees the slaves who had turned to stone, therefore appearing victorious over Satan and the forces of evil.

Yet, Jesus' death is not always viewed in a theological light. As Tyler and Reid put it: 'The New Testament addressed the issue in two different ways - one that is based upon the historical events of the time that led to Jesus' death, and the other

which offer religious and theological reasons for his death: Jesus came into contact with the religious and political authorities, as stated by Tyler and Reid. The political religious authorities were known as 'the Jews' which, according to Brown is a term used more than 70x almost always negatively. However, Grässer seems to think that it means 'The Judeans' in general, yet most people in Judea were Jewish anyway. Jesus first came into contact with the religious authorities at the 'cleansing of the Temple' in Chapter 2 of the Fourth Gospel. J. Mateos and J. Barreto state that: 'He denounces the Jewish system as institutionalized lying and crime'. He came to fulfil the messianic prophecy of Malachi 3:1: 'Zeal for your house will consume you'. Thus, Jesus presents himself as messianic. N.T. Wright said: 'He saw himself... as messianic and could thus become a focus of serious revolutionary activity'. The Cleansing of the Temple is placed at the beginning of the Fourth Gospel and J. Barreto and J. Mateos see this as Jesus substituting ~~his body for the~~ the Temple for his body; 2.21 says: 'The Temple he spoke of was his body'. This was seen as highly blasphemous because the Temple was the means for communication with God. E.P. Saunders said: 'Some saw Jesus' behaviour in the Temple as denigrating and thus blaspheming God'. Furthermore, Leviticus



24:16 said: 'Whoever blasphemes ~~the~~ the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death'. Jesus called the Temple 'My father's house' and thus by claiming to have a unique relationship with God can be seen as a false prophet. Deuteronomy 17 said that if a false prophet appears among you: 'the Lord is testing you that prophet must be put to death'. If the religious authorities had found Jesus guilty of these crimes and had not done anything about it, then they too would be performing a crime.

Jesus also came into conflict with the religious authorities at the Triumphal Entry in Chapter 12. Jesus implicitly declared himself to be king. Jesus entered through the Eastern gate which links to Ezekiel 44:1-3

which states: 'Your Lord is coming, seated on a donkey's colt'. Furthermore, Jesus can be seen to be linked to Judas Maccabeus who was welcomed with palm branches in 164 BC. Judas liberated the Jews from Greek oppression under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In addition, Levi was handed palm branches as a sign of authority over Israel. The religious authorities therefore felt threatened by Jesus and did not understand what he was saying. As Tyler and Reid put it: 'they feared that the people would accept the teachings of a false Messiah'. In addition, Jesus came into conflict with them over his

teachings at the Temple where he points out that circumcision is permitted on the Sabbath but he is not allowed to heal a whole man. Moreover, Jesus heals the lame man at the Pool on the Sabbath in Chapter 5, which according to J. Calvin and R. Brown is a deliberate act so that Jesus can show his relationship to the Sabbath. This is confirmed by Tyler and Reid: 'Jesus angered the Jewish religious leaders with his teachings, his healing on the Sabbath and his interpretation of the Law of Moses.'

Jesus also came into conflict with the political authorities who were the Roman Emperor or Roman authorities. Bultman suggests that Jesus disrupted the whole order of society through his implicit claim to be messiah. Moreover, Ben Witherington III ~~the~~ presents the idea that in his statement about his kingdom not being of this world, Jesus was refusing to acknowledge the authority of Rome. In addition, Jesus may have been seen as a threat to Tiberius Caesar himself. Yet Pilate says three times: 'I find no charge against him'. Thus, it appears more likely that Jesus came into conflict with the political authorities due to his conflict with the religious authorities.

Tyler and Reid also state that there were: 'religious and theological reasons for his death.'

Jesus can be seen as a sacrifice and that his death was inevitable. This is also evident in the Fourth Gospel due to the fact that the Cleansing of the Temple is placed at the beginning, ~~therefore it~~ and he makes a comment about the resurrection, therefore implying that his ministry is aimed towards his death and resurrection. The inevitability of Jesus' theological death is seen through parallels between himself and the Passover lamb. In 1:29 and 1:36 of the Fourth Gospel, John the Baptist states: 'This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'. Furthermore, at 19:14, the evangelist makes a time marker at the point which Jesus was crucified, linking it with the slaughter of the Passover lamb in the Temple. This highlights Jesus' role as the ultimate Paschal lamb. Moreover, in 19:29 there is a reference to the hyssop plant which was also used to dip into the blood of the Passover lamb's blood and sprinkle on the doorposts.

Thus, it is hard for us to understand the death of Jesus, yet when looking at the historical reasons it becomes clear that he came into contact with the whole of society. J. P. Meir states: 'One reason why Jesus met a swift and brutal end was simple, he alienated so many individuals and groups in Palestine, that by the time the final clash came in 30 AD, he had nobody especially of influence on his

side? There are also many theories for the religious and theological reasons for his death which certainly include Jesus as a sacrifice or a defeat of evil, yet we cannot know for sure and therefore this comes down to a matter of opinion.

b. Tyler and Reid put forward the viewpoint that it is unclear whether Jesus died simply due to 'historical events', or whether he died due to 'religious and theological reasons'. Effectively, they imply that Jesus 'was sentenced to death for the ultimate religious crime' and due to his conflict with the religious and political authorities. I do ~~not~~ agree with them in the sense that this is the reason historically for Jesus' death, yet it becomes more obvious when looking at links between the Old Testament and Jesus' life in the New Testament, that his death was <sup>theologically</sup> inevitable and he died in order to save us. This is clear by looking at Jesus as the ultimate paschal lamb. When it was slaughtered, the blood of the lamb had to pour out onto a specific place on the altar. Jesus' blood poured out onto the earth, thus

Implying that the whole world is his altar and that his sacrifice forgives the sin of the world and sets us free in contrast to the pasover lamb which was sacrificed only for Israel.

If Jesus' death was in order to save us from sin and it was proved that he died in place of humanity. This has huge religious implications. Initially, this could prove that God loved humanity for him to send his only son in order to die for us. Furthermore, this ~~might~~ would prove other religions wrong since Christianity would appear to be correct. Therefore, religions such as Islam and Judaism would be proved wrong and this may lead to a rise in Christian followers. This could also lead to further world peace as there ~~is~~ would only be grounds for Christianity and therefore larger religious unity. However, this may appear unreasonable since there are a large amount of groups within the Christian faith. One only has to look at the Lutheran and Calvinistic religions against Catholics in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century to prove this. Moreover, there would be no grounds for atheism or agnosticism as G. Beasley Murray believed. Docetism would be proved wrong as God would have had to have interacted with the life and resurrection of Jesus in order for Jesus to save us from sin.

Furthermore, if Jesus' death was proved in theological terms it could be suggested that there is no reason to doubt that God created

the world. Therefore, there would be a lack of trust in science and the Big Bang theory would be ignored. Furthermore, through ~~the~~ Jesus' death and resurrection in religious terms, life after death would be proven as St Paul suggests in 1 Corinthians 15, if Jesus is risen then we will be risen to live a Christological life. This could lead to people living greater moral lives as they would want their souls to go to heaven.

Moreover, the religious side of Jesus' death would imply that God existed and as a result there would be greater satisfaction in life since people would not feel so alone.

However, if Jesus' death was purely historical and it had nothing to do with a theological death then there would also be huge implications for understanding religion and human experience. Initially, Jesus might not be viewed as more than an example to follow. This was presented by H. van Dyke in 'the Moral Influence theory'. This implies that ~~God~~ ~~the~~ Jesus came into the world simply to show

God's love for us. Moreover, this is also presented by Abelard: 'The divine Logos made manifest to the world, incarnate that he might show us the path of righteousness.' It might also be suggested that if his death was not theological that we would still be in sin, as St. Paul said: 'If Christ is not risen then your faith is in vain.' This would mean that we would need another method to

stone for sin.<sup>2</sup> We might need the Temple for the scientific system. Yet, this would lead to a huge amount of conflict because the al Aqsa mosque on the Dome of the Rock would need to be brought down. In addition, if Jesus was a man who was simply sent into the world as an example and died heroically due to conflict and did not come out of the grave and did not rise from the dead then it might appear that the New Testament was a lie and 2000 years of Christianity was a 'joke'. A more reasonable interpretation of Jesus' death and resurrection might be found from Venturini who thought that Jesus did not actually die but fainted and recovered in the cool of the grave. This appears to be the least rational argument says Straw: 'It is impossible that a being stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre,

who crept about weak and ill, could give to the disciples the impression of the conqueror of the grave, the Prince of Life.' Moreover, if Jesus did not die for us then that might have consequences for international relations.

This may cause conflict since, as Jung thought, religion is for some people that identity and this could therefore lead to mental illness. Life after death would not seem like a possibility and therefore, what would be the point in living a good life if there was nothing to aim for?

Thus, there appear to be a vast number of implications towards whether Jesus' death was simply historical or whether it can be viewed theological. It appears more likely by looking at the parallels between the OT and Jesus' deeds in the NT that he was sent into the world to save us. He purely came into contact with the political and religious authorities because they did not understand him. If Jesus was not a theological saviour this could have major implications in the sense that we would still be in sin. Furthermore, if he was simply a theological saviour and died to save us then this proves Christianity and everyone should be Christian.



## **Paper Summary**

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are encouraged to:

- develop their interest in an academic study of religion
- develop study skills that reflect these academic demands such as thorough study of the texts, the ability to analyse complex ideas and to manage their material in order to answer the question in an explicit manner
- adopt a critical approach which reflects on their prior learning in the other RS units
- engage with the implications of their studies.

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