

# Examiners' Report

Summer 2012

GCE Religious Studies (6RS02)

Paper 1F The Study of New Testament

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# Introduction

## General Comments

The Investigations Paper provides for a balance of teacher-directed and more independent student enquiry. The aim is to involve students as active participants within a process where they undertake individual research into a topic of particular interest. Questions are designed to be inclusive of all possible approaches to various topics and this is the reason the expression, “with reference to the topic you have investigated” is included in each question. The ability to select and manage individual research to fit the demands of the question is an important discriminator in terms of assessment. The mark scheme is generic and allows for a very wide range of possible approaches – there are no indicative mark schemes for each question because there are so many legitimate ways of answering questions based on independent research. Preparation for this unit is focussed around the two assessment objectives. Candidates are expected to determine whether there is sufficient material to access a variety of appropriate sources (Assessment Objective 1) and to evaluate alternative views (Assessment Objective 2). Candidates may develop their research with reference to the criteria in the level descriptors across both AO1 and AO2. The assessment criteria are typically mentioned in each question through the trigger words, ‘examine’ for AO1 and ‘comment’ for AO2. The candidates work is assessed according to the application of both assessment objectives as in the exam itself there must be explicit attention to these objectives in the examination answer.

In preparation for this examination candidates may find it useful to write up their investigation under exam timed conditions to a variety of different possible questions. They might build up a number of different essay plans to different possible questions. The important point in these activities is to enable candidates to develop their management of material such as how to best structure their content to answer the specific question. However, candidates should be careful not to use a pre-prepared answer in the exam which was not adapted to the question set or by answering a question that has been written for a topic they have not studied.

June 2012 demonstrated once again a very high level of scholarship evident across all areas of study and many answers demonstrated the engagement that candidates had with their area of investigation. The enthusiasm for and knowledge of the chosen topic was clearly conveyed in many answers that were truly academic in their approach. Some Centres chose to focus on the same or similar topics for all their candidates, whereas other Centres permitted considerable choice for individual candidates. Candidates were very well prepared for the examination and it was evident that Centres used their specialist resources and interests to encourage candidates to research in depth a particular area of study. Many responses evidenced a wide range of relevant material with substantial background reading used effectively. A feature of high quality answers was the ability to manage research material to integrate an aspect(s) of the question. Candidates performed well across both assessment objectives with detailed content and insightful, cogent argument. There were

well-structured responses based on the question and candidates used their knowledge to address the focus of the question.

In some cases candidates did not select their material in accordance with the specific question and could have adapted their material more effectively to address the question. The question was briefly mentioned and in some cases there was only reference to the question in the final section. At the lower levels some candidates drew on sources that were below the standard expected for GCE level. These responses tended to be descriptive rather than analytical and in some cases were too short to cover the topic in any breadth or depth; these responses typically lacked elaboration and lacked GCE level substance.

Centres should ensure that candidates are entered for the option that matches their area of study and that candidates are clear about which question they have been prepared for on the paper.

There were still a few examples where consideration entry for a different area of study may have been beneficial to the candidate. It is important to ensure candidates know which area of their investigation is the best fit for the question they answer on the paper. There was evidence of candidates choosing a different question on the paper to the question they had clearly prepared for before the examination. The overall standard of the responses to these questions were scholarly and candidates once again drew on a range of interesting material.

Candidates were not penalised if correct entries were not made or a cross was put in a box that did not match the answer.

### **Question 1 Religion and Science**

There were few answers to this question. Most candidates concentrated on the scientific response to miracles, with varying success and the views of Dawkins were ever present. Candidates were well versed on the scriptures and on philosophical issues but few managed to successfully link the two. There was a need for deeper analysis and a greater range of scholarly opinion. Successful responses had a solid grasp of New Testament scholarship and how this related to the religion and science debate.

There were some excellent responses. There was a clear and detailed understanding of the issues and of the religious and theological meanings behind them. Candidates referred to a range of scholars, both ancient and modern, as well as detailed theological debate and argument. There was proficient use and understanding of complex theological ideas such as 'salvation' and the use of New Testament symbolism was impressive. Some candidates were comfortable with material from either religion or science though some had some difficulty in relating both.

### **Example 1**

The essay introduction shows familiarity with the religion and science debate and the chosen topic miracles provided enough scope to delve into a wide range of New Testament material.

### **Examiner Comment**

The candidate moves very quickly into demonstrating a wide range of knowledge on the topic and situated it very clearly within the religion and science debate. Issues were raised coherently and this standard of debate permeated the rest of the essay.

Chosen question number: Question 1 ✕ Question 2 ✕ Question 3 ✕

Miracles appear frequently in the New Testament, and it is a method which Jesus uses to give people salvation. ~~There~~ Even though Einstein said "Science without religion is lame, and religion without science is blind", scientific discoveries may undermine the teachings of the New Testament. F.R. Hallard uses the example where a child is stuck on a train track and there is a fast train approaching! At that point the driver was a heart patient who had a heavy meal, which caused him to collapse and slam on the brakes. As the child walks away without being injured, the mother views this as a miracle, but the ordinary man would not, because it is still a probability that it could have happened. So there are obvious problems with miracles which is based strongly around the New Testament, and science is giving many give us reasons to alternate our views on it.

Max Planck's bold assertion has proven wrong in the world so far. We look around the world and see that religion is still thriving, and so are miracles. A modern day example would be Lourdes.

### Examiner Tip

Secure knowledge of the topic helps candidates to sustain a line of argument. There is no time to waste words and this essay style shows how much can be achieved in a short space.

**Example 2**

The conclusion for the essay is useful for providing some pointers of good practise.

**Examiner Comment**

The argument in the conclusion is drawn from the New Testament and this New Testament material was juxtaposed appropriately with a number of scholarly comments that showed a clear understanding of the issues already discussed in the body of the essay. The question is answered explicitly and the reader is persuaded by a convincing argument.

Nevertheless the healing of Jairus' daughter and the raising of the widow's son could cause a problem. ~~They~~ In modern day science, we could obviously see them as minor "blackouts", and Jesus using first aid to cure the people or bring them back to consciousness. Jesus may have used first aid to his advantage, which caused a misunderstanding for them to be miracles? Thomas Paine said "the tales of the bible are far imposters to preach, and fools to believe", and it could of been simple explanation of first aid that caused Paine and many of us to come to this conclusion. When Christopher Hitchens was asked what his favourite story in the bible was, his response was "the casting of the stone was a great story, even though we found out how much of it was not in it ~~as~~ in the beginning". This would all suggest that it is up to individuals to decide for themselves whether scientific discoveries undermine the teachings of the New Testament, but all the flaws ~~as~~ combined with the arbitrary and inconsistent God (Wiles), it would be sensible in my opinion to follow science, as it offers more effective and simpler solutions compared to the New Testament, so in effect ~~the~~ Scientific discoveries do undermine the teachings of the New Testament!

#### Examiner Tip

Keeping the question in mind often helps to sustain the line of argument.

## **Question 2 New Testament Ethics and Morality**

Some answers to this question were really excellent, offering detailed ethical analysis of New Testament teachings, coupled with a range of useful scholarship and proficient use of religious language. There were some responses which concentrated a little too heavily on Situation Ethics and Natural Moral Law at the expense of New Testament exegesis. Answers tended to be mostly Ethics, with New Testament material added as something of an after thought. Greater parity between New Testament and Ethics content within the response is needed to access the higher levels of the mark scheme. Some responses were below a GCE standard and focussed more on a GCSE-style analysis of marriage, abortion and homosexuality, lacking any real depth of discussion or scholarship.

There was also evidence of an essay structure which meant that candidates were devoting a significant part of their essay to the Old Testament at the expense of New Testament exemplification. This area of study is explicitly focussed on the New Testament and not the Old Testament; the study of the Old Testament is offered in unit (6RS02/1E).

It must be stressed that some topics share generic ideas across a number of different areas and it is vital that candidates know the **distinctive** features of their investigation for example; there can be overlap with topics addressed in Area 1C and candidates who focussed more on classical ethical theory rather than New Testament ethics might have used the material they investigated more effectively in Area 1C. The same point also applies to the distinctive focus that is required by either a Study of the Old Testament or the New Testament.

### **Example 3**

The essay structure devotes a portion of the answer to the Old Testament. The range of New Testament material offered is very narrow.

### **Examiner Comment**

The fourth page begins with a paragraph on the Old Testament. The point made could have been exemplified with other material from the New Testament.

### **Examiner Tip**

Time is precious in the examination. Stick to the correct focus of your unit of study. Any material used must elucidate the New Testament. It is better in this Area of Study to offer scriptural quotes from the New Testament if quotes are being used to make a point.

The Old Testament clearly teaches that contraception is wrong. For example in Genesis 1:28: "Go forth and multiply. fill the Earth and subdue it" which shows that the only purpose for sex was procreation and ~~the~~ the idea of sex for pleasure is wrong.

However in the New Testament 1 Corinthians 7 states: "let every man have his own wife and every woman her own husband... Defraud you not one another until you give yourselves to fasting and prayer and come together" which suggests that the natural biological urge for sex should be fulfilled by a husband and wife<sup>to avoid fornication</sup>. Therefore, when interpreted with situation ethics the New Testament supports the idea of contraception.

This links nicely to my next topic of homosexuality in sexual ethics. Currently, homosexuality is becoming increasingly acceptable and anti-discrimination laws mean that they have more rights. However, religious views regarding this topic differ.

### **Question 3 Life After Death**

By far the most popular question and excellent at the top end with a clear and concise analysis of New Testament teachings, coupled with philosophical debate. The range of scholarship and textual analysis was impressive and many candidates were comfortable with handling their material to answer the question. There was too much emphasis on the philosophical arguments about life after death in some responses, with the New Testament used as an after thought. Some concentrated solely on Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians 15 or on the dilemma of the empty tomb, but lacked depth of detail and scholarship.

There were some candidates who were less comfortable with New Testament theology and tended to concentrate on rewriting the textual narrative and then developing ideas from it. Quite a number missed the real meaning of the question and concentrated on tangential issues. In the 'Life after Death' question, many candidates wrote a basic philosophical account with little reference to the New Testament. Good responses did more than rewrite the biblical narratives and loosely link philosophical arguments to them. Such responses had continuity and a depth of scholarly argument.

### **Example 4**

The essay covers a good range of material but there are points in the essay where the style of writing is not concise.

### **Examiner Comment**

The first two paragraphs introduce a proficient range of material but it takes time for the pace of argument to pick up as time is spent with phrases such as : 'I will seek to ....' 'I will make reference to.' and 'I will just discuss....'. These phrases do not add to either the rhetoric of content and in some cases can prevent a candidate from finishing their essay as intended.

I will seek to sustain the line of argument that the new testament teachings do not fail to provide a full understanding for life after death. I will make reference to a range of topics such as historicity, personhood, continuity of identity, deism and eschatology. Using a range of new testament teachings such as the resurrection accounts, letters of St Paul and the Phrygians text. I will also include a range of scholars such as Aristotle, Descartes, Russell, Kysar and others.

I will just discuss the topic of continuity of identity for there to be a <sup>full</sup> ~~full~~ understanding of life after death. The new testament accounts must provide evidence for three things in the <sup>resurrected</sup> ~~resurrected~~ spiritual body which are of memory, appearance and character or personality. In Matthew 28 it states 'The eleven disciples went to be with in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go. ~~showing~~ <sup>showing</sup> continuity of memory in Jesus resurrected form. In the Lucan account he had to ~~emphasise~~ <sup>emphasise</sup> that 'Jesus sat ~~down~~ <sup>down</sup> to eat with them he took the bread, ~~he~~ <sup>broke</sup> the bread and gave it to them' this is an <sup>analepsis</sup> ~~analepsis~~ to Jesus'

### Examiner Tip

Work on your style of writing in advance to eliminate time wasting usage of redundant 'introductory' phrases.

## **Paper Summary**

### **Key points to remember:**

- Manage the material to focus on the demands of the question.
- Use appropriate sources and, if possible, include recent scholarship.
- Demonstrate how well you understand the topic by your selection of material.
- Do not forget to comment on your material. Show that you have thought about your research.
- Use your evidence to substantiate your argument.
- Comment on alternative views if you know them.
- Express your viewpoint clearly.
- Practice writing under timed conditions as part of your preparation.
- Do not spend too long writing out your essay plan to the detriment of the essay itself.

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