

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2012

GCE Religious Studies – Investigations
(6RS02)

Paper 1E The Study of the Old
Testament/Jewish Bible

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UNIT 2: Religious studies - Investigations

Introduction

General Comments

This unit provides for a balance of teacher-directed and more independent student enquiry. This 'Investigations' unit offers the opportunity to undertake individual research into a topic of particular interest to the candidates. This is the reason why each question includes the expression, "with reference to the topic you have investigated". The ability to select and manage individual research material to fit into the demands of the question is an important discriminator in terms of assessment.

It is for this reason that the mark scheme for this unit is a generic one. There are no indicative mark schemes per question given the fact that there are so many legitimate ways of answering questions based on independent research.

The two assessment objectives should permeate this whole process. Candidates should determine whether there is sufficient material to access a variety of appropriate sources (AO1) and to evaluate alternative views (AO2). Candidates may monitor their progress with reference to the criteria in the level descriptors across both AO1 and AO2. The assessment criteria are always mentioned in each question. Typically this is achieved with the trigger words, 'examine' for AO1 and 'comment on' for AO2. The assessment of the candidates work is based on the application of these objectives.

Some candidates performed well on this unit. It was clear that some candidates had selected topics of genuine interest to them. There was evidence of substantial background reading which was used effectively in answers. Candidates presented well-structured responses based on the question and were able to use their knowledge to address the focus of the question. A feature of high quality answers was the ability to relate to the question throughout the answer. Candidates performed well across both assessment objectives with detailed content and cogent argument.

Some candidates did not select their material in accordance with the specific question. Some candidates could have adapted their same material so as to use it more effectively to address the question. In some cases the question was only briefly mentioned and in others there was limited reference to the question in the final few sentences. Some responses at the lower levels drew on sources that were below the standard required at GCE level. These tended to be descriptive and more narrative rather than analytical. Some responses at the lower levels were short and lacked elaboration and the substantiation necessary at this level.

Some centres chose to concentrate on the same topic for a number of candidates. This was useful when backed up with relevant sources, whereby candidates could develop their own slant and specialism on their selected topics. Occasionally, some responses became formulaic without targeted attention to the demands of the specific question. A key aim of this unit is to involve candidates as active participants in order to provide possibilities for open-ended enquiry and independent learning.

It is essential that candidates are entered for the area of investigation which is the best fit for the question on the paper. Candidates were not penalised if a cross was placed in a box that did not match the response.

Specific Comments – AREA 1E – The study of the Old Testament/Jewish Bible

6RS02_1E_Q01 – Religion and Science

Question Introduction

Most candidates answered with reference to miracles. Good answers focused on the Old Testament miracles, as the paper requires. There were some good philosophical points made, but the link with Old Testament miracles was not always clear. Limited reference was made in answers to scientific viewpoints or evidence.

6RS02_1E_Q02 – The nature of God

Question Introduction

Candidates considered a range of differing views and were able to offer evidence and well-balanced conclusions. Good answers did more than draw generalised links with the nature of God and attempted to offer a valid and supported argument. Answers offering evaluation, with depth and scholarship, went beyond personal opinions and homilies.

Exemplar 1

This is the first part of a candidate's answer. The candidate continues by examining further attributes of God.

Examiner Comment

The candidate clarifies the area of their investigation. They point out the complexities involved and begin to examine fundamental themes in a clear manner related to the question. There is some evidence of on-going evaluation

and discussion.

The concept of the nature of God is ~~was~~ varied and highly complex. The Old Testament provides a source of rich detail on ideas of God's nature from which many have found inspiration and strength. We can see evidence of an increasingly complex and sophisticated idea of God's nature therefore to say it is possible to know God's nature can arguably be correct if one believes in the Old Testament's portrayal.

The 39 books of Old Testament hold the key to God's nature. By looking at them we can depict God's nature, from what the writers are describing. God's interventions are main areas where we can find knowledge.

The Old Testament stresses God's special relationship with his chosen people the Israelites. The bond is

mediated by Moses and the law is set out. "This covenant which ye shall keep between you and me and thy seed after that everyman shall be circumcised" (Genesis). This shows the obedience that God expects in return for his promises of support and protection. However this covenant shows a God who does not accept all his humanity but only those he choose. Showing God's nature to be based on control obedience and certain people of his creation.

However other themes are present in the Old Testament, such as salvation, redemption, judgement and faith. These convey another side to God's nature. ~~Showing~~ ^{showing} the complexity of the Old Testament's views. The law is firmly set out in the O.T (old testament) in the 10 commandments. These arguably show a loving nature to God as his living standards are showing peace "thou shall not kill" and "thou shall not lie" along with 8 others.

Furthermore The Old Testament ~~also~~ describes God's nature by using titles.

Creator, Judge and Father are just a few, each has connotations to which help provide an image of God's nature. Suggesting we can know the nature of God.

Creator is a positive epithet of God. The God of classical theism is seen to be creator of ^{the} universe, of all existence. God of ^{the} Old Testament created Heaven and Earth. "In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth", ^(Genesis 1:1) ~~The Lord~~ Many believe God created the universe "ex nihilo" out of nothing which is why it's commonly said that humanity is dependent on God. God is said to have created man "in his image", suggesting we can begin to develop an understanding of God's nature by looking at ourselves. The title Creator is of great importance to understanding God's nature and the implications on ~~the~~ religion and on other parts, such as God's omnipotence ~~particular~~ ~~nature~~ are at risk if where to be proved not be the creator of universe.

Saying this, Prof Van Welde did an

indepth study into ~~ancient~~ Hebrew scriptures. Identifying the word 'bara' used in opening sentence of Old Testament, when putting this into context it does not mean to create but to spatially separate. Thus the first sentence should read "In The beginning God separated The Heaven and Earth" suggesting God is not a creator "ex nihilo".
~~Therefore~~ Meaning it is unclear whether we can justify God as Creator, which means we are 'breaking down' the classical theisms view of God's nature, so is it possible to know God's nature?

6RS02_1E_Q03 – Job and the problem of evil suffering

Question Introduction

Good answers were written with clarity and detail on Job and the problem of evil. These answers covered key facts and ideas, linking these well with scholarly argument and debate. A number of different scholars were mentioned, including Augustine and Swinburne. Dawkins received ample coverage. Good answers did more than write generally about Job and evil. Material was generally well-organised, linking Job with philosophical and religious views on evil.

Exemplar 2

This is the full answer to this question.

Examiner Comment

There is a very good standard of work throughout this answer. The candidate highlights key issues and systematically relates the book of Job with philosophical debates about the problems of suffering. There is a clear coherent

structure which debates issues throughout and works towards a clear line of reasoning.

The Book of Job is arguably not relevant to the problem of evil and suffering today as the problem is considered unanswered by many. In particular, noted scholar Bernhard Anderson claims that the problem of evil and suffering is not answered in the Book of Job: 'The Book of Job does not provide a theodicy. Job does not, in the end any more so than the beginning, find out the reasons for his suffering.' Other noted scholars, however, disagree with Anderson, such as Robert Sutherland, John Hick and Ray Steadman; they point to the answers through various theodicies.

The Book of Job appears to answer the problem of evil and suffering through orthodox Israelite teachings, such as the idea of punishment and reward, making it relevant to the theist today. The basis of the Israelite punishment and reward theory is that people who have sinned suffer, and those who have not actively sinned suffer due to the Original Sin in the Garden of Eden, when man fell from grace. This is known as collective responsibility. When Job begins to suffer he seeks comfort from his friends who suggest why he may be suffering and reflect the idea of punishment and reward. Eliphaz says, 'Think back now, name a single case

where a righteous man met with disaster.' Bildad agrees with notions and says, 'Your children must have sinned against God, and so he is punishing them as they deserve.' Other traditional notions on the problem of evil and suffering include the idea that evil is a test of faith, it is inevitable and it is a way of displaying God's love. Job rejects Eliphaz and Bildad's words and says, 'You try to comfort me with nonsense! Every word you say is a lie.' In this sense, it could be viewed that the problem of evil and suffering in the Book of Job is not relevant today as the problem is not answered; Job's words prove to the theist that you needn't have sinned to endure suffering. Therefore, why do innocent people suffer? The Book of Job allows for the inconsistent triad to be considered - if God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent, why does evil exist?

The Book of Job could be considered relevant to the problem of evil and suffering today as answers are suggested through various theodicies, for example the Augustinian theodicy. St Augustine believed that people suffer today due to the Fall and the Original Sin, committed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They abused God's good nature, by giving us free will, and therefore fell from grace due to their disobedience. ~~the~~ There is evil and suffering today due to collective responsibility, as suggested by Eliphaz and Bildad, ~~therefore~~ thus making the Book of Job relevant to the problem of evil and suffering today. Augustine also presented the aesthetic principle, which

is arguably seen in Job, also making it relevant to the problem of evil and suffering today. The aesthetic principle is the idea that goodness and the lack of goodness (privation) heighten the beauty of goodness in the world. This is seen in Job when he describes his former life and current situation. He says, 'When people heard of me, they said good things', this shows he was virtuous and good before God's wager with Satan. He as Job adds, 'Now my dignity is gone like a puff of wind, and my prosperity like a cloud.' Job's revelation makes him appreciate his life before the wager.

The Irenaean Theodicy also goes some way to answering the problem of evil and suffering, and its notions are reflected in the Book of Job, therefore making it relevant to theists today. The main difference between the Augustinian and Irenaean theodicies is that the idea that creation is embryonic. Irenaeus believed that the universe develops over time, and as does man as he strives to develop into the image of God. Whereas Augustine believed man was created in the image of God and fell from his likeness due to disobedience (Adam and Eve), Irenaeus believes that man's moral development leads to being in the likeness of God. ~~This idea is reflected in the Book of~~ He also believed God will judge man's moral development in the afterlife and Job appears to consider this, saying, 'Why doesn't God set a time for judging? A day of justice for those who serve him?' As the Irenaeus theodicy is arguably recognised

in the Book of Job, the Book is arguably relevant to the problem of evil and suffering today as it goes some way to answering it.

Another way of considering the problem of evil and suffering, which is supposedly seen in the Book of Job is Process Theodicy. Hick, who believes in Process Theodicy and is a noted scholar said, 'The universe is an uncreated process which includes the deity. In other words, God is a part of the world and bound by natural laws. His role in created was limited in starting off the evolutionary process.' Considering this notion, it could be said that God allows evil and suffering in the world, and accepts Satan's wager, as he is not omnipotent. However, with this idea, God's nature is questioned as he is meant to be omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent, transcendent, etc, and by missing one of his key qualities, the very nature of God is qualified and this goes against the function of a theodicy. Therefore, Process Theodicy is not arguably not a theodicy at all and so the problem is not answered, making the Book of Job considerably irrelevant to the problem of evil and suffering today.

As the Book of Job appears to contradict the nature of God, it is easily considered not relevant to the problem of evil and suffering today. If God was truly omniscient, he should have known Job would always stay faithful and not allow the suffering he endured. If he was omnibenevolent, the same

idea applies - he should have known Job's faith was intrinsic. If he was all powerful, he would have demanded, rather than request the ~~to~~ Satan did no harm to Job himself. He appears to request this by saying, 'but on Job himself, do not harm', after giving Satan permission to cause havoc to Job. God also ~~God~~ appears ~~to be~~ to not be omnibenevolent when he ignores Job's pleas: 'Why me, O God, when I pray to you, you pay no attention.' God replies, 'Who are you to question me?'

The Book of Job is arguably more a book of faith than a solution to the problem of evil and suffering, thus making it irrelevant to the problem today. Whilst the book shows God testing Job's faith, it answers no questions on the problem of evil and suffering. ~~Furthermore~~ If anything, it raises further questions and problems for the theist - such as the questioning of God's nature. However, the idea of epistemic distance, presented in the Irenaean Theodicy, does present a solution to why God is allowing Job to suffer, i.e.) if God were to intervene, Job could not morally develop and bring him further into the likeness of God. Therefore, perhaps the Book of Job can be considered relevant to the problem of evil and suffering ~~today~~ today as this idea is reflected in the Book of Job and offers a solution.

Sarah Tyler ~~has~~ suggested that Satan saw Job as an ~~easy~~ easy target for evil and suffering to be endured by him.

as his happy, rich, virtuous life is painted in the book before the wager is presented. Satan questions Job's faith by saying, 'Does Job not fear God?' He presents this mystery to God by questioning him and saying, 'Have you not put a hedge around him and all he has? But stretch out your hand and strike him and he will surely curse your face.' By this, Satan meant that perhaps Job is only faithful to God as his life is good and he has not suffered, but if he endured suffering, knowing he had not sinned, would he still be faithful? This God's acceptance of the wager is where the initial problem of evil and suffering is presented to the reader as God's nature is questionable. When Satan questioned God, God should have known, through his omniscience, that Job's faith was intrinsic. Even if he had not known, he ~~should have~~ should not have accepted the wager as he knew Job had not sinned and allowing him to ~~suffering~~ suffer was wrong. He shouldn't have allowed Job to suffer due to his omnibenevolence. Therefore, perhaps the Book of Job is not relevant to the problem of evil and suffering today, as further questions and problems are raised, not answered.

It can be argued that the Book of Job is irrelevant to the problem of evil and suffering today as it does not focus on that, but rather the overwhelming nature of God. By the end of the book, God has still not told Job the reasons of his suffering, yet Job appears satisfied and somewhat overwhelmed by God's

nature as he says, 'I was wrong to have questioned you, I ~~know~~ now see you with new eyes and may I fall before you in ashes and dust.' We can see the overwhelming nature of God in today's world, as ~~many~~ much suffering is derived from religion, such as the Spanish Inquisition or, more recently, the Sectarian strife in Northern Ireland. ~~So~~ This is not even confined to Christianity as suffering has occurred due to the Sunni and Shia muslim conflict. The Book of Job does not appear to answer this problem and, therefore, seem irrelevant to the problem of evil and suffering in today's world.

In conclusion, I believe that the Book of Job is not relevant to answering the problem of evil and suffering in today's world as the problem does not appear to be answered at all, as noted by scholar Bernhard Anderson. I believe that the Book of Job needs to be viewed in a wider context, and its other attributes considered. For example, it is most definitely a book of faith, and also one which suggests more of God's nature. Whilst it may not be relevant when answering the problem of evil and suffering in today's world, it is relevant to educating Heists on the nature of God and the idea of faith. Therefore, in my opinion, the Book of Job is relevant today, in many ways, considering what approach is taken when reading it.

Advice for candidates:

- Manage the material from the investigations to focus on the demands of the question
- Use appropriate sources
- Show an understanding of the topic
- Present a thoughtful analysis of the material
- Make effective use of evidence and argument
- Comment on alternative views
- Show a clearly expressed viewpoint.

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