

Examiners' Report

Summer 2012

GCE Religious Studies (6RS02)

Paper 1E The Study of Old

Testament/Jewish Bible/Jewish Bible

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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.

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

The potential of this topic is not really explored by many candidates; there were few answers to this question. In the strongest essays the issues were firmly located within contemporary scholarship from within the religion and science debate and coupled with appropriate knowledge of the Old Testament/Jewish Bible.

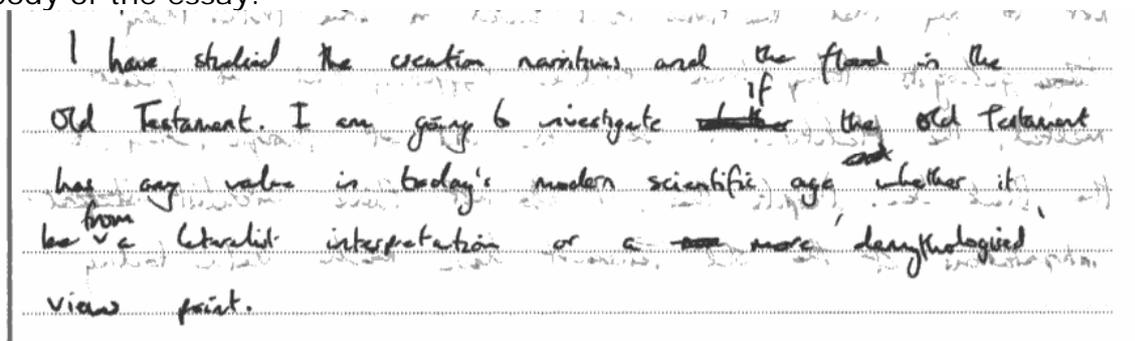
Weaker responses generally struggled to relate issues within the religion and science debate to a study of the Old Testament/Jewish Bible. Some candidates were rather one-sided in their approach to the religion and science debate and opportunities to refer to the Old Testament/Jewish Bible narratives were generally missed. Scholarship in the Old Testament/Jewish Bible is extensive and is best deployed with the relevant textual extract from which the theological issues emerge; some candidates had no difficulty handling their material with this point in mind.

Example 1

The following extract from an essay is useful for some comment on essay style.

Examiner Comment

The introduction demonstrates a basic approach to an essay. The 'I have studied' and the 'I have investigated' style of two sentence introduction does not always add much to the overall content of the essay as they are stated rather than explained. The phrase is repeated later in order to elaborate on it in the body of the essay.



Examiner Tip

Every word counts when you are writing under pressure. Do not waste time with 'I have studied' or 'I have investigated' phrases.

Question 2 The Nature of God

Candidates offered a range of convincing views about the nature of God that were coupled with good exegesis of the biblical text and useful scholarship. Many candidates answered this question with a high level of insight and were well equipped to examine the notion of God as personal whilst backing up their views with a wide range of very useful and contrasting biblical quotations, both from the Law and the Prophets. The various attributes of God were understood in detail and discussed through the use of scholarly opinion backed up by the Prophets and the Psalms. Evaluation was interesting and varied in approach, from the evangelistic notions of God's embracing agape love, through pre-destination, heaven and hell to philosophical notions of free will and epistemic distance.

There was much evidence of Dawkins' analysis of the psychotic nature of God at the expense of reference to classical Old Testament/Jewish Bible scholarship. Dawkins was too often quoted as an Old Testament/Jewish Bible scholar whilst negative issues about God were discussed in a polarised fashion. More scholarly analysis would have added a qualitatively academic edge to the discussion.

Some responses concentrated on re-telling Bible stories with little scholarly analysis and some demonstrated little knowledge of the Old Testament/Jewish Bible.

Example 2

The extract from the essay shows a plan plus the beginning of a narrative that maintained the same style throughout. The question is written out after the plan as the beginning of the body of the essay.

Examiner Comment

Candidates must show they have knowledge of the Old Testament/Jewish Bible; this is essential for this unit. The plan does not indicate where the Old Testament/Jewish Bible might be used and although the Problem of Evil might throw up valid material for this unit it must be remembered that the unit is entitled: A Study of the Old Testament/Jewish Bible. This means that the focus of study **is** the Old Testament/Jewish Bible. Candidates are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the Old Testament/Jewish Bible and Old Testament/Jewish Bible scholarship.

Chosen question number: Question 1 Question 2 Question 3

(Plan)

Paragraph 1 - Introduction ✓

Paragraph 2 - Moral and natural evil ✓

Paragraph 3 - 4 main distinctive problems ✓

Paragraph 4 - Test of faith ✓

Paragraph 5 - Evil punishment for sin (Augustine) ✓

Paragraph 6 - Irenaean ✓

Paragraph 7 - Ivan ✓

Paragraph 8 - loss of an answer ✓

2.) 'The nature of God as portrayed in the Old Testament/Jewish Bible is difficult to believe in today.'

It is no untruth to declare that evil and suffering is a huge problem effecting our lives today; whether we are theist, atheist or agnostic, suffering has a great impact upon each of our lives and we do not know what the cause of suffering is or why we suffer. Many people struggle to accept the nature of an all-loving (omnibenevolent) God especially in relation to the classical concept, as to the vast amounts of suffering ~~that~~ even innocent people experience today.

St Augustine stated that there are 2 forms of evil

Examiner Tip

The Old Testament/Jewish Bible is a specific area of study and candidates are advised to ensure they do not omit studying the Old Testament/Jewish Bible throughout their research. Links can be established between the Old Testament/Jewish Bible and a variety of topics and in this unit candidates are well advised to ensure these Old Testament/Jewish Bible links are explicit.

Question 3 Job and The Problem Of Evil And Suffering

By far, this question was the most popular with most candidates handling it really well. Candidates were able to examine skilfully, with clarity and coherence, the problem of suffering in Job and compare it with textual narratives elsewhere, most notably the Genesis myths. Many then went on to look at philosophical notions, particularly the Augustinian Theodicy and natural and moral evil.

Scholarship was clearly evident and impressive references were made to the redeeming and atoning love of Christ. Candidates really did explore issues deeply within this question, and most answers were full of scholarship, good learning and interesting evaluation.

However, some weaker response re-told the Job narratives and philosophical notions, but were unable to relate the two in a very meaningful way. Some candidates tended to concentrate on the philosophical arguments concerning suffering and tended to use Job as an example (or an after-thought). This results in some uneven answers. This question demands detailed knowledge of the Book of Job and achievement is directly related to a working knowledge of this material.

Example 3

The essay shows secure knowledge of the Book of Job and appropriate Old Testament/Jewish Bible scholarship that was fluently deployed throughout the essay.

Examiner Comment

The candidate writes clearly and concisely throughout and covers a very good range of material in eight pages. Scholarship is integrated into the line of argument and the essay finishes with continued clear reference to the Book of Job and relevant scholarship.

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

The Book of Job has often been used by religious believers to be answer to the problem of evil which leads to a depth in analysis of the book to try and show why, God, the omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent being allows evil and suffering to exist in the world. With reference to the quote, 'The Book of Job shows that the justice of God can never be understood' it can be said that the usual unsatisfactory answer to the problem of evil shows that it could be true that the book of Job does show that ~~the Book of~~ the justice of God can never be understood. The book is written in prose which could show that it is not to be taken too literally. I personally believe the book tries to show ~~the~~ importance of faith in God. Though I do believe it is about faith, it is clear that the book could show the justice of God can never be understood.

Three philosophers come up with ideas to solve the problem of evil and in doing so manage to explain God's justice. Augustine says that everything is inherently good and ~~evil~~ ^{evil} is a defect of ~~good~~ ^{good} whilst also maintaining that ~~God~~ the Genesis story that evil comes from Satan, the fallen angel. Irenaeus answers the

problem by saying that we are all immature beings created in the 'image' of God, who are developing to become into the 'likeness' of God. Process theodicy by Whitehead and Griffins states that God uses persuasive power rather than controlling power and also that God isn't in full control over the world and that he's 'a fellow struggler who understands'

All these theodicies are different and essentially can not all be used to answer the problem of evil but some elements link in to the book of Job which could show that possibly the book is about the problem of evil. In the beginning of 'Job' the devil is the one who inflicts the damage upon Job which could agree with Augustine that the fallen angel is what creates evil. The friends in Job could represent the 'immature beings' that exist as stated in Irenaean theodicy. The reward at the end given to Job could show that God does use persuasive power because it shows that faith is rewarded which could persuade people to do good rather than evil. However due to the fact we can not understand by the end of the book ~~overcome~~ why God has inflicted such damage upon Job we are more inclined to question him and

It does show that his justice can never be understood.

At the beginning of 'Job', God appears to almost start the challenge by saying to the devil, "have you observed my servant Job? He is one of the finest" commending Job as a good believer and human being. Satan though, as the accuser and adversary, accuses God saying that Job only behaves well because he lives a good, easy life. God accepts that it could be the case and tests out the theory by allowing Satan to ~~take~~ do whatever he wanted to Job, with the exception of taking his life.

Phillippe Nemo's book, 'Job and the excess of evil' comments on this saying, "Who is there to see this accusation of God? Who is there to judge God? The fact God accepts the challenge made by the devil allows the reader of Job to raise more questions about God, rather than answer any questions." This comment by Nemo and also the dialogue between God and Satan highlights the fact that the justice of God can never be understood.

J.L. Mackie comments on Job saying that the problem of evil seems a logical problem at first. However in Job a particular perspective is formed when an omnibenevolent and omnipotent God places harm

upon the quintessential innocent and blameless figure of Job. The book of Job can be seen as the equally quintessential reflection of the problem of evil. With reference to the ~~question~~ ^{key} quotation in question it can be said that what Mackie says about people forming a different perspective once Job is named shows that the justice of God can never be understood. This also reflects on the problem of evil because if one can never understand God's justice, how can one understand the problem of evil.

A quote by Colin E. Gunter can also show that the justice of God can not be explained or understood. Gunter says, "evil is irrational, therefore we can never understand it." God in the story of Genesis is shown to have created the world, this is also back up in the book of Job where God says to Job, "where were you when I made the Earth? Where were you when I made man?" etc. With this being the case God must be responsible for the creation of evil, if evil is "irrational", according to Gunter, then only God must know what its purpose is. We can not comprehend why there is evil and why we ~~created~~ ^{do} evil but the creator of evil does know. This again shows that the justice of God can never be understood by mortals.

Karl Barth says something which to some extent opposes the understanding that evil can not be understood. He says: "Once one understands evil, it ceases to be evil." This may be true but due to unsatisfactory answers about evil, including within the book of Job it is clear that evil will always exist because we will never get a clear understanding of evil.

Peter Kreeft uses a firefighter analogy to show that the Book of Job is more to do with faith than the problem of evil. Kreeft says that in a scenario where a boy is in a burning building with firefighters at the bottom with a safety net and smoke separating them so the boy can not see, the boy represents the human race, firefighters represent God, fire represents evil, the smoke represents our ignorance and the safety net represents Christ. In this situation the boy has to have faith in the firefighters when they tell him to jump in order for him to save his life. This is much like the book of Job as Elisha says to Job, "no mortal is greater than God, we must not question him, though we may not be able to see or hear him, he speaks in other ways." This is much like the fire situation the boy can not see the firefighter but he must co-operate to save

himself much like Job. has to co-operate and not lose faith in God. This could maybe explain the nature of God's justice that evil is there to possibly test faith, which is ultimately what I think the book of Job is about however it doesn't necessarily solve the problem of evil because all the evil inflicted upon Job was out of God's hands to a certain extent, it was in the hands of Satan. This does make us question God and shows we do not understand the justice of God.

The friends in Job represent those in the past, present and those in the future who question God and try to present a problem about his justice, judgement and how it works. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar all come up with reasons as to why Job is suffering. Their main answers were that Job was sinful but by the end of the book of Job God intervenes and condemns the friends saying, "I am not happy with you are your two friends because you do not speak the truth about me." God does not then come up with an answer as to what the friends and Job were questioning but he exalted Elihu, the youngest of the friends for his response when he says, "no one is greater than God, we shall not question him." This shows that God doesn't

want us to understand his justice, he just wants us to get on with our lives in a good way, keep faith and rewards will follow. This shows the justice of God is not to be understood by anyone but God. Neil Shenvi comes up with a comment on the book of Job saying, "that if God is powerful enough to end evil in an instant, he is therefore also transcendent enough to have a reason for the existence of evil that we cannot comprehend. To try and explain God's motives (just as the friends in Job did) shows arrogance and not spiritual maturity. This sums up the book well and seems clear that God must have a reason for evil and with him being omnipotent, he must have a reason for evil existing that we can't comprehend therefore we will not be able to understand his justice but possibly understand that justice does exist."

When the book of Job was written in 1700-1900 BC it would have been written for Jewish people of the time and their philosophical knowledge may not be of the level that we are at now, therefore the book of Job may not be of the level of sophistication in comparison to our knowledge philosophical knowledge. This however doesn't take away the clear fact that the book is about faith because Job

shows faith and is rewarded for doing so. It also ~~the~~ tells us one thing about God and that is that what he does must not be questioned but also what he does should not be explained.

Overall due to God's reaction at the end of the book of Job it shows that the book is about faith but also through this it shows that the justice of God can never be understood and isn't meant to be either, according to God's reaction towards Job and friends at the end. Those who use the book as a solution to the problem of evil are only disappointed by the outcome because there is no reason as Nemo states why God should have provoked an argument with Satan which lead to Job losing family members and material wealth? The only possible answers could be that God isn't the omnibenevolent being that we know him as or simply after centuries of opinion we simply will never be able to understand the justice of God. As Kreeft says we are the ignorant who need to be lead by God who is not visible to us, in order to escape evil we must follow the voice that tells us to jump out of that burning building in order to be saved. The answer of why the building burned in the first place is not important and shouldn't be answered, much like evil, God's justice can't

be comprehended

Examiner Tip

Know your topic! Hard work always pays off and fluent knowledge of the distinctive nature of the material helps the candidate to manage a range of views within a clear line of argument.

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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