

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCE Religious Studies
6RS02_1F
The Study of the New Testament

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AREA 1F - New Testament

Introduction

General Comments

The Investigations Paper of June 2011 demonstrated a high level of scholarship evident across all areas of study and many responses 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 responses that were truly academic in their approach. 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. It is important to stress again that the 'Investigations' unit has a definite academic purpose. The aim is to involve candidates as active participants pursuing open-ended enquiries with an emphasis on independent learning. Questions were designed to be inclusive of all possible approaches to various topics and all valid answers were considered.

Whilst most centres had entered their candidates for the correct option there were still a few entries for particular areas of study where consideration regarding entry for a different area of study may have been beneficial to the candidate. It is important to ensure candidates know which areas 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. Examiners were encouraged to mark positively. 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.

Variation in achievement was related to the two assessment objectives. These objectives should receive prominent attention in the process of the investigation. Each question consistently referred to the assessment objectives with the trigger word 'Examine' for AO1 and 'Comment on' for AO2. These dictated the structure of the question and helped candidates to plan their answers. It would be advisable for candidates to pay regular attention to the level descriptors for these assessment objectives as a way of monitoring their development and progress during their investigations. The phrase 'with reference to the topic you have investigated' will always appear in the question to ensure that the generic question can be answered with material from any appropriate investigation. The mark scheme itself is generic to all questions. 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, success can be undermined by writing up a rote-

learnt answer which was not adapted to the question set or by answering a question that has been written for a topic they have not studied.

6RS02 reports features work produced by the candidates in the actual examination for candidates in Area 1A, 1B and 1C where possible. Areas 1D, 1E, 1F and 1G have smaller entries and the style of report is briefer for these areas of study.

Area 1F The Study of the New Testament

The overall standard of the responses to these questions were scholarly. Candidates drew on a range of interesting material.

At the top end, many responses were excellent. 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.

In the middle range, candidates were less comfortable with New Testament theology and tended to concentrate on re-writing the textual narrative and then developing ideas from it. Quite a number concentrated on tangential issues. In the 'moral teachings' question a number of answers used GCSE-type material and in the 'Life after Death' question, many candidates wrote a philosophical account with little reference to the New Testament.

At the lower end, candidates concentrated largely on re-telling Bible stories or offering generalized philosophical/ ethical accounts with little scholarly analysis.

Question 1 Religion and Science

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. Successful responses had a solid grasp of New Testament scholarship and how this related to the religion and science debate.

Question 2 New Testament Ethics and Morality

At the top end, the 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.

In the mid-range level of responses, many concentrated a little too heavily on Situation Ethics and Natural Moral Law at the expense of New Testament exegesis. Responses tended to be 70% Ethics, with New Testament material added as something of an after-thought. Greater parity between New Testament and Ethics content within the response would raise achievement.

At the lower-end, a number of students concentrated on a GCSE-style analysis of marriage, abortion and homosexuality, lacking any real depth of discussion or scholarship.

Once again, as noted last year, 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.

Question 3 Life after Death

Responses at the top end were excellent with a clear and concise analysis of New Testament teachings, coupled with philosophical debate. The range of scholarship and textual analysis was impressive and candidates were comfortable with handling their material to answer the question.

In some responses there was too much emphasis on the philosophical arguments about life after death, with the New Testament used as an after-thought. Also, many concentrated solely on Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians 15 or on the dilemma of the empty tomb, but lacked the depth of detail and scholarship required for the higher level marks. At the lower end, candidates tended to re-write the biblical narratives and loosely link philosophical arguments to them.

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