

Examiners' Report

Summer 2012

GCE Religious Studies (6RS02)

Paper 1G The Study of Christianity and
the Christian Church

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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 Development of the Church up to and including the Reformation

There were some very good examples demonstrating strong knowledge of the topic studied. Many candidates were very well versed in Church History and the most popular topics, which continue to be diverse, included a study of early Church History and the establishment of the Creeds, the Crusades, Calvin, Luther and Gregorian Reform. A few newer topics appeared such as the Cathar movement, Monasticism (the desert Fathers) and the Anabaptist movement. The most popular topic was the study of Calvin or Luther's ideas. Most candidates paid close attention to the question and used the material they had investigated effectively. They were confident with their knowledge of Christian Theology and were able to draw out the significance of the material they were using. An increasing number of candidates offered a study of St Francis, but need to be wary on over-focussing on biographical detail at the expense of the thrust of the question. There was evidence of candidates who were following the same structure, used the same quotes and who missed opportunities for independent comment on their material. This approach to the Investigations Unit is to be discouraged as accessing higher levels of the mark scheme can be limited if candidates offer AO1 material that is not commented on. Candidates are expected to fulfil the demands of both assessment objectives.

Example 1

This essay is a full response on the topic of Calvinism.

Examiner Comment

This candidate has a very secure knowledge of Calvinism and adapted this knowledge very well to answer the question. This essay is full of well deployed knowledge and critical analysis and worth examining as this form of approach to this unit is to be strongly encouraged.

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

Ernst Troeltsch (German sociologist of religion) has noted: 'to engage with Calvin and his legacy is thus to wrestle with one of those rare moments in history when Christianity moulded, rather than accommodated itself to, society' (McGrath)

His writings were used to mould the thoughts and actions of hundreds of thousands of his fellow believers, both during his lifetime and in the centuries that followed (Rendell). Calvin's Institutes are used as a textbook for Reformed churches, today they give the ordinary Christian a guide to doctrine and to the Bible.

'He has been viewed as the artisan rather than the artist, as the borrower of other ideas rather than the generator of his own' (Rendell). Calvin was influenced by the first generation of reformers - Luther, Bucer and Melancthon, and ~~was~~ 'brought order and coherence' ^(McGrath) to the theology emerging from the first stage of the Reformation, moulding the thoughts of his predecessors into a logical system.

One example of Calvin's influential thinking was his doctrine of the Church. McGrath notes 'if any of the reformers wrestled with the doctrine of the church, it was Calvin. Calvin wanted the church in Geneva to mirror the Early Church as much as possible.

Calvin saw the church as essential in the life of a

believe and cited the ecclesiastical maxims of Cyprian of Carthage, which were 'you cannot have God as your Father unless you have the church as your mother' and 'outside the church there is no hope of remission of sins, nor any salvation'. Commenting on this maternal role of the church, Calvin wrote, 'there is no other way to life unless this mother conceives us in her womb, nourishes us at her breast, and keeps us under her constant care and guidance.'

Calvin also stressed the importance of unity within the church, stressing that 'whenever [a member] withdraws [themselves] from the church is in grave danger of withdrawing the communion of the saints, Calvin*. As the institutional church is necessary both for our vocation and our sanctification.

'If the Lutheran church arose out of a concern for the doctrine of justification, the reformed church was born out of a desire to re-establish the scriptural model of the apostolic church' (McGrath). For Luther, church organisation had simply been a matter of historical contingency, but Calvin felt that there were specific scriptural directions for church organisation.

Mullett writes 'if the Institutes were the muscle of Calvin's reformation, his ecclesiastical organisation was its backbone. Calvin provided a much needed structure for the reformed church, so that the church became not only the spiritual hub of the city, but a way of life for the citizens of Geneva. George comments 'the church is also, in the best sense of the word, a "reform school" complete with specified dress code, censored reading matter, compulsory

attendance at chapel and front offices to deal with recalcitrant students.'

Calvin saw political authority as necessary in maintaining civil order and peace, and Mullett notes that he had 'a deep and abiding respect for the legitimate authority of the state, which was instituted by God'. The magistrates in Geneva fulfilled a twofold role 'they were to maintain civic order and religious uniformity.' (Chadwick)

Another significant aspect of Calvin's church organisation was his fourfold order of the ministry, which George notes was 'the essential component of the Genevan settlement of religion, which bore Calvin back to his adopted city in 1541'. Included in the four-fold order were pastors, elders, doctors and deacons.

Calvin rejected the Roman Catholic teaching on church leadership, arguing that it was pastors (not priests) whom God wished to lead his people. Elders are described by Chadwick as 'the most characteristic of Calvin's institutions' and were 'disciplinary officials' guarding the communion table from those not rightly able to discern the body and blood of Christ.

Calvin's church was an overhanging institution' (Wardell), this had to be the case, as unlike Lutheranism, which advanced with the protection of nobility (due to the doctrine of the two kingdoms) Calvinism advanced in hostile situations, and so the church had to be disciplined and organised.

Doctors were to preserve sound doctrine and teaching, and deacons were to be practical helpers - 'he opposed to the

Roman custom of making the deacon the first step towards priesthood, this, he said, was an invidious undermining of a "highly honorable office". (McGreeb).

Despite all of the rules and regulations, Calvin was not 'the absolute ruler of Geneva pictured by legend and his enemies' (Chadwick) with many of his preferences, such as the frequency of the celebration of communion, being sidelined.

Calvin is famed for his 'institutes of the Christian religion' which Mullett notes 'established him, along with Luther, as the intellectual powerhouse of the reformation'. They are described as 'a work of capital importance by Wendell, and Calvin intended them to be 'a key to open a way for the children of God into a true and right understanding of holy scripture.' They were 'a pre-practised handbook' (Mullett) rather than a combative attack on the Roman Catholic church as Luther's 95 Theses had been.

What began as a six chapter first edition in 1536, based loosely on Luther's lesser criticism of 1529, became an eighty chapter 'textbook for reformed churches' (Green), spanning four books, each focusing on one of the conventional divisions of the apostles creed, which discussed the knowledge of God the creator, God the Redeemer, the means of grace and the external means which God was to bring w to Christ. Between the first and fifth editions came many poorly organised sections and redrafts of which Calvin said 'although I do not regret the labour spent, I was never fully satisfied until the work was

arranged in the order now set forth. The first edition of the Institutes is described by McGrath (using Kristeva's definition) as 'an expression of eloquentia' and ~~the~~ one which 'gave rise to a publishing spin off' (McGrath) of indexes and summaries, such as those by Malortti (1582) and Collado (1586). This first, redrafted, organized version made the Institutes to differ from Melancthon's commonplace which ~~McGrath's~~ comments remained 'clumsy and unorganized'.

The significance of the Institutes is summarised by ^{to the spread of Calvinism} Reardon who points out 'where Calvinism established itself on an institutional level, it had often been preceded by the Institutes on an intellectual level'.

Calvin's view of God is perhaps the aspect of Calvin's religious thinking which had the biggest impact. 'The idea of God, omnipotent and omniscient, pervades everything he ever wrote in a manner to which the history of Christian thought and spirituality offers few if any exact parallels' (Reardon). Calvin stressed the gaping distance between God and man, in that we cannot possibly know everything about Him, and nor should we think it our right to do so. Georse notes that Calvin was 'insistent on the limits of human knowledge and reason' - Calvin taught that 'man's whole existence should be directed at meeting God's will and not his own' (Reardon).

Yet Calvin also stresses the grace of God in that He reveals Himself to us in ways we can understand - otherwise known as the principle of accommodation, which is 'generally regarded as his most valuable contribution to Christian thought'.

(McGrath), this is further illustrated by the twofold nature which Calvin speaks of 'he referred referred to the knowledge of God as Creator, manifested in the fashioning of the universe, and the knowledge of God the Redeemer, seen only in the face of Christ' (Ellen).

George comments that unlike many philosophers and theologians at the time 'the ^{theme} thing which dominates Calvin's Christology is not Christ in His essence, but in His redemptive role as mediator.' Calvin explains this issue in his Institutes, stating simply 'we affirm Christ's divinity so joined with His humanity that each retains its distinctive nature unimpaired, and yet the two natures constitute one Christ.' Wendell comments on ~~the~~ ^{this} focus on the work, rather than essence, of Christ 'salvation is possible only on the personal plane and by the intermediation of Christ.' Calvin described this union, through faith as 'the principal article of our religion.'

One of Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Calvin's theology was his doctrine of predestination, which Chadwick comments would become 'the stumbling block of Calvinism'. Calvin taught that a belief in predestination was simply a consequence of believing the whole Bible to be true and without error 'if God was all knowing, it followed that He must have always known everything that was going to happen throughout the whole universe, if He was all powerful, it must be that He willed it,' (Rendell), this total and unquestioning faith in God's sovereignty gave way to the added sticking point

of double predestination - God not only electing some to everlasting life but actively sending others to Hell. To reject this on the basis that it was 'unfair', was contrary to scripture, and Calvin would have replied 'all men are justly condemned for their sins and beyond that we cannot see the almighty purpose.' (Chedwode).

Calvin's view on predestination differed from the scholastic view that God chose the elect based on his foreknowledge of their works, Calvin violently opposed this, saying 'God's foreknowledge cannot be the basis for our election, because when God surveys all mankind, from the first to the last, He will find them all under the same curse.'

George notes that predestination was not a distinctly Calvinist doctrine, as Luther did not stray from a doctrine of absolute double predestination. Critics tend to centre upon this issue, yet Calvin didn't, in fact, Reardon makes the point that in the first edition of the Institutes 'he did not treat it as a separate doctrine at all, and it is mentioned at two points only.'

Calvin also believed that the sacraments should be practised in a manner which was as close to the Early Church as possible. He said that the sacraments were 'the way in which it was possible to draw closer to Jesus.' (Randall). He could only see two as being explicitly commanded in scripture (baptism and communion) and thought that 'the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church) were a prime example of a theological platform in need of radical pruning.' (McGeoch).

Calvin avoided many of the controversies of the Protestant

of the reformation, in particular the transubstantiation debate, and tended to a middle ground between the Lutheran and Zwinglian view on the issue, Mullett notes 'he was prepared to teach his followers that here was an issue over which they should not become sidetracked.'

It is clear that John Calvin had both a decisive and divisive impact upon the Reformation, Rendall has commented 'his writings were used to mould the thoughts and actions of hundreds of thousands of his fellow believers, both during his lifetime, and in the centuries that followed.' John Knox commented as noted that Calvin's first and foremost source of authority was the Bible and that he 'created the most perfect school of Christ since the days of the apostles', it is a school of thought which still exists today, with Geese noting 'the light from his witness still shines.' Green explains that 'what we call Calvinism was to Calvinists simply the true reformation of Christianity; after Calvin died, Calvinism lived on, using, sometimes rehashing his views into what Chadwick describes as 'one of the most potent religious forces in protestantism'.

* Many would, of course argue that the reformers themselves were guilty of causing division, but Calvin would argue that the Roman Catholic Church did not meet the 'invited and non negotiable marks of a true church' ^(marks) which were firstly that the teaching be based on the Bible, and secondly, that the sacraments be taught and administered according to scripture,

London says that 'this to Celin meant the Roman Catholic Church was beyond the point of Roman redemption, and he was left with no alternative but to rebellion'

Examiner Tip

There is no substitute for secure knowledge of your topic. Research your topic with the breadth or depth that it requires and make sure that you know the scholar(s) in that field.

Example 2

This is a full response on the topic of Monasticism within the context of the desert Fathers who are so well beloved within the Benedictine tradition.

Examiner Comment

The candidate has a wide knowledge of the desert Fathers and managed to draw out the impact of rather obscure early figures on Christian monasticism. Pachomius and Jerome are outlined with accuracy and correctly linked to the development of Benedictine monasticism which still thrives today. Church history is deployed to show how monasticism was vital to the development of the Church.

This essay will investigate monasticism and the influence it had on the development of the church up to and including the reformation. Key ideas ~~was~~ played a substantial role in the growth and spread of Christianity.

The first ideas in the formation of monasticism was ascetic ideas, which derived from vedic traditions and travelled down the Silk routes from India into Egypt and Europe ^{from the 1st Century CE.} ~~these~~ ~~these~~ Ascetic ideas refer to a way of life that is spiritual and pure, and requires the person to renounce all possessions and live in poverty in order to acquire spiritual cultivation. These ideas played influence on St Anthony, a major ~~big~~ individual in monasticism. As written in James Cavass' 'The Desert Fathers' he formed the first area of monastic life, anchorite monasticism. At a young age Anthony renounced all his possessions upon hearing a sermon preaching ascetic ideas, and took to the desert to live a secular life as a hermit in the 3rd century. He soon gained a reputation for his dedication to finding spiritual cultivation and many people followed his lead and set up in caves nearby Anthony. After many years Anthony was persuaded to act as a spiritual guide for these fellow hermits,

but after about six years returned to a secular life alone, where he lived until his death at the age of 105.

St Anthony sparked the beginning of monasticism and due to his belief in ascetic ideas they therefore form the basis of the monastic movement. ^{n Also is the idea of imago Dei that everyone was created in God's image. This undermined the hierarchy of the Roman Empire but supported the masses. After Christianity had spread throughout Europe it was challenged with Pagan beliefs and religions. therefore many people escaped to the desert to live as Anthony did as a way of avoiding persecution from the Roman Empire. This led to a spread in Christianity as this form of monasticism enabled people to live as Christians without being threatened by the Romans. Anthony also made a perfect example of how to live as a Christian and monks that followed his influence were seen as 'spiritual athletes', therefore giving spiritual and moral authority to the Christianity.}

Further influenced by ascetic ideas was Saint Pachomius.

Pachomius had influence in the 4th century, after Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in 313 CE. This widely spread the religion as those under the Roman Empire were expected to practice it and he promised Christians 'favour and protection'. Pachomius, therefore, formalised monasticism through the formation of the cenobite tradition. Pachomius believed that monks should live separately to focus on spiritual cultivation but also that monasticism should be lived through a community of monks. Pachomius set up the first monastery in Egypt and arguably without him

monasticism may never have developed as it did. Monks and nuns were still seen as spiritual athletes and were considered as being closer to God than ordinary humans, so Christianity, due to the conversion of Constantine, further gained reliability and ~~authority~~ influence through the growth of monasticism. Also, the ^{nature} ~~best~~ of certain monastic and communal living meant people were more aware and exposed to it and its ideas, resulting in further growth of Christianity.

A key factor in the growth of monasticism and Christianity is the power of scriptures and writings. In the 4th century Saint Jerome was the first person to fully translate the bible into Latin from Greek, meaning it was now more widely available across Europe and its key ideas became more influential. Next to influence monasticism was Augustine. Augustine formed mendicant monks, ^{whos} ~~the~~ basis of their ~~own~~ lives was ^{to} live as a community and then travel out ~~and~~ into communities, where they conducted charity work and helped build communities. This resulted in widespread moral authority of monasticism and therefore the Christian church as it generated gratitude from the masses as well as making more people aware of Christianity and monastic ideas. There was also a degree of corruption within Europe and Augustine and his ideas and beliefs helped stabilise problem areas. However, ~~the~~ the fall of the Roman Empire was inevitable. There were a number of reasons for the decline of the Empire, such as civil war and the cessation of chaos. There were ~~many~~ extensive invasions from Huns, Vandals, Goths

and Lombards, who created extreme instability within Europe and significantly weakened the Roman defense system. These invasions were particularly successful due to the Justinian plague which emerged in 536 CE and wiped out nearly half the European population due to its strength and frequent outbreaks of it over ^{following} centuries. Further worsening this already chaotic situation was a famine in 536 CE due to a large dust cloud. Due to these three factors the fall of the Roman Empire was unavoidable and led to chaos, however this was not a hindering factor to the growth of the Church and Christianity as through the times monasticism persevered and thrived, providing stability.

Influenced by the decline of the Roman Empire and perhaps most beneficial to formalised monasticism was St Benedict. At the age of 18 Benedict travelled to Rome where he was disgusted at the level of corruption and chaos. In order to escape it he became a hermit for 3 years. After his time spent living a ascetic life he decided communal living would ^{be the} most beneficial form of monasticism and he and his sister Scholastica set-up many monasteries - by the 15th/16th century there was ~~30,000~~ approximately 30,000. Benedict formalised his beliefs in the Benedictine Rule, which became the most widely adopted monastic idea and led to major growth of monasticism. Benedictine monks also carried out charity

work as Augustine did, and his meekness gained Christianity credibility as stabilizing life in time of chaos. ~~At the~~

While Benedict was arguably the major individual in the spread of monasticism another character could be held responsible for the significant growth in Christianity. Pope Gregory the Great was the first ever monastic pope and therefore joined together the church and monasticism formally, while previously they had been linked through Christianity ~~monasticism~~ ^{the church} did not directly grow due to monasticism as they were separate movements. Therefore Gregory provided major ~~credibility~~ moral and spiritual authority to the church as it gained the credibility of ~~monastic~~ monasteries. Gregory set up his own monastery before becoming a monk, the monastery of St Andrew, and during his time there expressed strongly his key ideas. For example he preached the ~~importance~~ importance of poverty, and when one of his monks, Brother Julius, was on his deathbed, he confessed to have been keeping three gold ~~for~~ coins under his pillow. Gregory made an example of him and threw his corpse on a dung heap along with the gold ~~coins~~ ~~for~~ coins. Another factor of Gregory's life was the missionary work he commissioned. Upon meeting the English children he was astounded by their fair complexion and said 'not anglos but angels' if they converted to Christianity, he therefore sent missions to England to convert people there to Christianity, including the growth and spread of the religion and the church.

A reigning character in the church history is King Charlemagne, who was a Frankish king but became Emperor of Western Europe. He had a major impact on culture, arts and education, for example he gained the help of Anglo-Saxon Scholar Alcuin ~~and~~ who created a curriculum for the palace school, which formed the basis for the 7 liberal arts. Charlemagne also standardized medieval Latin and created a standard writing style with both upper and lower case letters as well as spaces between words and punctuation. However beyond this Charlemagne supported Benedictine monasticism and therefore helped spread it. He also promoted many monks to priests giving them authority and more influence. Charlemagne did not just influence the growth of just monasticism but also Christianity as he forced many Germanic tribes to convert or he would kill them. Therefore because of Charlemagne Christianity spread and gained ~~the~~ major authority. All this can be seen in Matthias Becker's book 'Charlemagne'.

When Charlemagne was in power there was very little corruption, however after his death ~~then~~ his land was divided between his 4 grandsons, which caused chaos and much fighting. ~~Vikings~~ Vikings also ~~to~~ had been invading Europe, however by this point had mostly settled and with them brought wealth and power. The Church and Monasticism played a role in this chaos.

by preventing excessive bloodshed. They made warlords, knights and kings promise to not fight, under the promise that they would be prayed for and go to heaven. This was called the Truce and Peace of God and was performed in front of relics and Saints. Due to this the monasteries and the Church was seen as intervening to help everyday life, therefore gained moral authority and a degree of power as the establishment of 'indulgences' took place. This is when War Lords and kings would pay monks to pray for them so they would avoid spending extensive time in purgatory after their death. This led to a steady growth in power and wealth for the church. Later to take place was the Crusades, a series of battles against the spread of Islam, mainly around Jerusalem. The church and monasteries took a significant role here and encouraged many warlords and knights to go and fight in the crusades, in order to remove them from Europe and help stabilize life there. Due to this the church lost some moral authority, however gained much land, wealth and power due to land gained. Evidence of corruption developing here in monasticism is that many monks became warrior monks and fought in the crusades, depicting that they went against key teachings in the bible. However, monasticism still flourished as people were now drawn to the power that could be gained as a monk, and as a result the church also grew.

By the 7th century corruption was rife within monasticism.

due to extreme levels of power and wealth, disobeing the basic ascetic beliefs of monasticism. This sparked the reformation, which took place because of a man called Martin Luther. This can be seen in the BBC documentary on ~~the~~ Luther. He was an Augustinian monk and was very strict and traditional in his beliefs and values. Therefore upon travelling to Rome he was disgusted at the corruption and wrote the 95 theses and called for reformation of the church and monasticism. ~~As~~ he investigated the bible and stated there was no scriptural evidence for monasticism and that it should not have influence in the church and Christianity. Many kings throughout Europe supported his view as they disliked the power held by monasteries and therefore destroyed them to gain wealth. For example in England Henry VIII did similar things to remove monasticism. ~~So~~ So due to the reformation the monasteries did lose their power and wealth so much of their influence, but it also returned to its pure and simplistic roots so regained credibility and moral authority. The Church however did not hinder and ~~prevent~~ the protestant church became widespread along with Christianity.

It is evident that monasticism was vital in the development of the Church and Christianity as its basic ascetic ideas gave much purity and moral influence to the Church. Monks were seen as the perfect way of living

Christian life and were therefore celebrated and acknowledged, meaning more and more people joined Christianity. While in the end Christianity developed further than monasticism due to the Reformation ~~that~~ without it it could be argued that the Church would never have gained so much spiritual and moral authority if it weren't through the example of monastics.

Examiner Tip

Know your topic! Hard work in researching the correct range of sources within the topic will often result in a well rounded balanced essay that answers the question.

Question 2 The Modern Period

There were some interesting studies on Thomas Merton, the Catholic Church in Ireland, Black Theology and Liberation Theology; as also studies on social justice through the perspective of the Rights of Women. The studies on Black Theology and Liberation Theology were well informed. There was a tendency for weaker responses to make sweeping statements about the nature of Jesus as a model for Black Theology and opportunities to contrast this contribution with other theologies were missed, as there is a case for considering the influence on and place for this theology in mainstream Christianity. It was good to see that the majority of responses to this question used a range of material that was well suited for this unit.

Example 3

This is a full response on the topic of Thomas Merton and his contribution to monasticism.

Examiner Comment

This candidate went further from biography to consider Merton's actual writings and clearly knew how influential these works were at the time. There was also useful discussion on Merton's relationship with Eastern Monasticism and especially Thich Nhat Hanh. The candidate was able to critically analyse the impact of this exchange on Eastern and Western monasticism.

Chosen question number: Question 1 Question 2 Question 3

Many individuals have helped develop Christianity over the modern period, one such individual was Thomas Merton. Merton lived in the first half of the 20th century and the impact his progressive ideas on ecumenism, peace and unity are still effecting Christian thought and teaching today.

Merton was born in France to artist parents, he had a turbulent childhood, moving from France to the USA early in his childhood then to England as a teenager. Merton was tragically orphaned by 16 and had little religious influence on his life. In his school and university days Merton lived a wilder life, drinking, going to parties, even fancying a child. He was eventually expelled from Cambridge and went on to Cambridge where he settled down. He met some like-minded people including Bramachari and Hindu monks who encouraged Merton to read St Augustine's Confessions. Merton was consequently converted and baptised at Corpus Christi church. Yet for Merton this wasn't enough and he felt a calling to become a monk. The first monastery he applied to rejected him because of his past wild life. Yet the trappist monastery of Gethsemani

eventually accepted him and he moved to Kentucky. The monastery focused on hard work, prayer and contemplation, and as W.H. Shannon explains 'Merton found peace in the new ordering of his life.'

Upon entering the monastery Merton 'agonized for some time over his obvious talent as a writer and the threat it posed to his contemplative life' - W.H. Shannon. Merton felt, by writing he was no longer a true contemplative, yet the urge to write was overwhelming. Abbot James Fox realized the potential in Merton and encouraged him to write an autobiography which became 'Seven Storey Mountain', it, according to T. Deeson 'expressed traditional Catholic piety'. However it became a huge hit, and was read worldwide, ~~this~~ ^{this} in itself had a huge impact on Christianity as it humanised the life of a monk and made it more relevant despite its medieval traditions. The solitude Merton experienced coupled with the desire to write meant Merton wrote over 3 books over the course of the next few years. Many of these books focused on contemplation and its relevancy to everyone, not only those who were ~~ever~~ called to join the monastery. Merton wrote 'Contemplation does not exist only within the walls of the cloister'. The theme of contemplation remained throughout his life and his desire to see its place in the 20th century, encouraged many in the Christian tradition.

to see its benefits

When Merton entered the monastery it was his desire to remove himself from the rest of the world, and, for the first 16 years he succeeded. However as time went on Merton longed for solitude deepered. Abbot James Fox granted him the use of a tool shed on the grounds of the monastery, ~~which~~ which Merton called St Anne's. This became a place Merton could go to write, pray & contemplate, free from the distractions of the monastery & the world. Yet as Merton removed himself physically from the contacts of others ^{within the monastery,} he gained more contacts from outside. Authors, theologians, students and activists wrote to Merton for answers and discussion of social problems & relevancy of Christianity. Merton received some visitors & it took up alot of his time. However he remained a contemplative, never swaying from his daily prayers or time of contemplation. As A. Arday explains 'it was his Christian Mysticism that he saw as the necessary foundation for anything of value he might say about the suffering of the world or the people of other religions.'

On 8th March 1958 Merton was on a rare visit outside the Monastery when he experienced, what can only be described as a vision, an epiphany, a newfound great understand.

Merton realized the great truth 'my vocation does not make me different from the rest of men' Merton no longer saw the great divide between him and those who were called to be a monk. W. H. Shuman accurately comments 'the monastic walls, figuratively at least, came tumbling down'. Merton wrote of this experience in his book 'Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander' where he relates 'the realization that I loved all these people, that they were mine and I theirs.' Merton now wanted to embrace the common man, the world itself and all its changing circumstances which he had so desperately tried to push away for so long. W. H. Shuman proposes it was his contemplation that 'sparked compassion for the rest of the world. Yet C. Becker claims Merton 'had in a real way, returned to the world he had left when he entered the monastery in 1941'. Whether the reason for Merton's great epiphany it was clearly a turning point in Merton's life that changed his entire outlook, but also his writing intentions. Merton now began to see the part he could play in changing Christianity, to make it more Christ-like. He began by writing letters to influential people, such as the Pope and looked to the social dynamic of 1960s America which was being characterized by the Vietnam War.

The Cold War was one of the greatest events in 1960s

The clash of ideologies between Communist USSR and Capitalist USA led to indirect fighting in Eastern Europe and Asia. The most violent fighting took place in Vietnam where millions were killed. Americans were initially for the war, yet as time went on the Anti-War protest began to build. Merton himself was firmly against the cold and said it was an example of 'Americans seeing their country as the centre of the world that America was essentially preying on weaker nations. Merton went on to create an inter-faith ~~group~~ group advocating peace and non-violence. However the Catholic Church firmly believed in the 'Just War Theory', therefore were supporting what ~~was~~ Merton saw as the murder of millions of innocent people. ~~But~~ Yet Merton continued to speak out against the war, with Shannon cites 'he now felt a duty, precisely because he was a contemplative, to speak out and warn his fellow men and women about what... was the greatest possible danger facing the civilised world'

One of the greatest influences on Merton's views concerning the Vietnam war was Thích Nhất Hạnh. Thích Nhất Hạnh was a Vietnamese Buddhist monk. He and Merton met only once at Gettysburg Monastery yet their meeting was so profound it prompted Merton to write the hugely controversial essay 'Thích Nhất Hạnh is my Brother'. This was ground-breaking for the time. Merton

was no longer writing praises of the Catholic church, his piece would have made Merton few friends.

What Merton would have been viewed as a communist and therefore an enemy of the state. Even more so he was a Buddhist and so worlds apart from Merton's traditional Christian stance. Yet Merton saw the similarity in their interior lives. This contemplative life helped unite them, so much so, Merton ~~wrote~~ wrote in his essay 'I have far more in common with what Hank men I do with many of my fellow Americans! Such was the ~~strong~~ strong line he felt between the two men, his contemplation brought them together. He went on to advocate contempt for the wider world 'perhaps it is important in our era of violence and unrest, to rediscover meditative, silent unitive prayer and creative Christian silence'

Over the course of the Cold War Merton wrote many letters. In total he pleaded with Christians to live up to their Christian beliefs, to stop the passivity by which millions of people were being mercilessly killed. In Merton's books, appropriately titled 'New Seeds of Contemplation' Merton warned 'this is true war-madness, an illness of the mind and of the spirit that is spreading with a furious and subtle contagion all over the world' Merton's open condemnation of how

The war was being fought brought him to the attention of the Catholic Church and he actually faced censorship over what he was writing. It was so progressive and ground-breaking of Christianity at the time. Simsic recalls 'the Abbot General asked him to cease writing about such subjects'. Merton under his vow of Obedience did so. Yet the passion he felt for peace and unity continued undiminished.

Merton had little religious upbringing, yet he remained fascinated by other religions than Christianity. Perhaps untainted by prejudice and bias he was able to study these religions and relate them to his own. Merton's great belief in contemplation, he saw, could bring religions to work together, for unity and peace among them. He wrote 'the contemplation ~~is a real thing~~ provided an opening for 'contact on a deep level between his contemplative and monastic tradition.'

Undoubtedly, one of the greatest influences on Merton's life was Gandhi. He was a constant inspiration and mentor for Merton's ~~non~~ pacifist life. C. Bowen explains 'if through his writing Merton became ~~a~~ ^{a witness} ~~outside~~ for the non-violent way of life, it is because there had already witnessed

to him' Martin Gutschalk began in his school days at Oakenham and remained loyal to his idea. Such was his influence that Martin began to almost mirror Ghandi's stance on pacifism and non-violence, despite their obvious religious differences. W. H. Sherman describes 'Martin read Ghandi's writings carefully and was able to articulate clearly and firmly what non-violence involves.' Yet both Martin and Ghandi encouraged the Christians of the west to understand and carry out the full, true meaning of Christ's teachings, as the ~~new~~ writings of Ghandi and the teaching of Christ weren't dissimilar. Martin's actions were ground-breaking never before had the Christian ~~church~~ church been so closely associated with the religion of the East. Yet Martin took to heart Ghandi's words when he said 'one can find the deep roots of one's own religious tradition, by becoming immersed in another tradition.'

The love and link Martin had always carried for Buddhism and particularly Asia was epitomised in October 1968 when Martin finally travelled to Asia. ~~He~~ Martin tellingly commented 'I am going home, to be home I have never been in this body', notably his 'home' was not Rome. Yet Martin travelled to Asia for a time of ecumenical discussion and to present

several lectures and talks while over there. Yet when he arrived in Calcutta he was shocked by those who were 'learning too fast from the Americans' - Metra was struck by how he was considered a 'rich American,' despite having taken the vow of Poverty.

Undoubtedly one of the highlights of the trip was Metra's meeting with the Dalai Lama, the leader of the Buddhist Buddhist tradition. While only one meeting was scheduled, the talks were repeated twice more as the two men had so much to discuss. Talks were centered on concentration, contemplation, study and freeing of the mind or 'Zen'. Despite their religious differences the two men had so much in common and were able to discuss it freely despite their clear differences. The men even struck up ^{an} ~~a~~ unlikely strong friendship, which culminated in saying 'Metra was ~~extra~~ enriched and enriched by those who were so committed to the interior life' Metra himself was in great admittance of the Dalai, saying 'I have seldom met with anyone with whom I have clicked so well'

There was a great meeting of the Roman Catholic Church in 1960s called Vatican II which was called to establish the Church's relevance to today's society.

Several key new doctrines were established through the Eastern Catholic Church Decree on Ecumenism, encouraging ecumenical work and discussion, which especially gave legitimacy to inter-faith work. This neatly reflected Martin's work of the past 10 years. A. Alamy describes 'Martin's own church was now calling for the kind of dialogue Martin had already been doing for some time'. The Catholic Church recognised the benefits of Martin's work and the value of inter-faith dialogue, and ~~that~~ 'Thomas Martin himself was a seed for that dialogue'.

Martin's influence on Christy in the Modern Period is undeniably great. His prophetic pacifist stance, which was so ~~strong~~ ^{strong}, his faced censorship, was a voice which grabbed the attention of America when all else were ready for peace. This inter-faith dialogue, especially with the Buddhist monks was unheard of during his time. Their Nobel Peace Friendship award with the meeting with the Dalai Lama and vocal advocacy of Ghandi brought to the attention of the ^{large} majority of Martin's followers that now was the time for Christy to take a step forward and develop to ^a new better, more Christ-like Christianity.

Examiner Tip

Topics researched in sufficient depth result in worthwhile investigations that are clearly enjoyed by the candidate. Do not be afraid to embrace your topic!

Question 3 Christian Beliefs and Practice

This session saw the introduction of some original research into Christianity and Sport that were very well researched and fully substantiated by modern examples and references to scripture. There were a variety of other traditional responses to this question such as homosexuality and sexual ethics, and Bonhoeffer as an exemplar of Christian belief and practice. The range of topics studied for this unit remains quite narrow, with the exception of the new studies on Sport. It is good to see, however, the expertise that some candidates have in their investigation and the strong responses are full of contemporary scholarship.

It is worth noting 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 the material on homosexuality could also be used to address Area 1C Question 1. A feature of Area 1G would be the emphasis on Christian Theology and whilst candidates are free to choose their material the answer must show specific knowledge of Christianity and the Christian Church. Candidates who expound ethical theory at the expense of Christian theology are not meeting fully the distinctive demands of this unit.

The Examiners' Report of January 2010 includes a full essay exemplar that shows how a candidate answered the question by analysing Bonhoeffer's Christian belief and practice. The conclusion conveys a genuine attempt to relate the material studied to contemporary Christian belief and practice.

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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