

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCE Religious Studies 6RS04

Paper 1D

Christianity

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## Question Introduction

AO1 features of good quality

Candidates:

- presented well-informed answers focused on the passage. Those candidates who referred to the source as a whole or to related ideas managed their answers in such a way as to demonstrate their understanding of the passage. There was effective use of scholarship.
- structured their answers in a coherent manner, with evidence of analytical thought across the answer.
- were clear about the synoptic features of this unit relating their answers to other sources and related material in other units.

AO2 features of good quality

Candidates:

- displayed effective use of argument
- referred to scholarly opinion
- displayed a thoughtful evaluation of alternative views
- were explicit in their material on implications for understanding of religion and human experience
- constructed well-justified arguments leading to a coherent conclusion.

AO1 features that require improvement

Candidates:

- tended to present a basic examination of some ideas but the answers were not well-focused on the passage. Some treated the passage like a simple comprehension exercise.

- sometimes had a problem with unsatisfactory allocation of time, related to the two parts of the question. For example, some candidates spent too much time on part (b) in spite of the mark allocation. There were a few candidates who combined (a) and (b) but with those who did there was a tendency to have insufficient material given the range of demands in AO2.
- presented a generic account of the whole source from the anthology or a general account of related teachings at the expense of a focus on the selected passage.

#### AO2 features that require improvement

##### Candidates:

- presented basic points of view with limited use of argument.
- displayed limited explicit focus on implications.

#### Observations from scripts

Some candidates focused on the key issues in the passage and for example made effective use of Tertullian's threefold objections. The candidates were able to present a context to this passage from the whole article by Wainwright. There was good quality work, looking at interpretations of this passage and of Tertullian.

The good quality work in AO2 was characterised by candidates following up key ideas and points of view from the passage. One technique that worked well was to take one or two themes from the threefold objections and use these for further argument and debate.

#### Exemplar

This is an example of an answer gaining high marks. In part (a) the candidate presented an intelligent examination of the selected passage. There was evidence of substantial scholarship and also a breadth of relevant material used to enhance an understanding of the passage. Part (b) continued the high quality of this work.

10) The passage given refers to the wider article entitled "Christianity" by William Wainwright; a prolific philosopher of religion. The article in question deals with the "problems associated with Christianity" (Wainwright), when it comes to philosophy. He points out that there is tension between Christianity and philosophy as Christianity "[rejects] reason" (Wainwright). In this particular passage, Wainwright mentions Tertullian's belief that reason can lead to "heresy", this idea that "submission and obedience" are necessary for Christians, and the idea that reason is "fallible and corrupt". These are used by Wainwright to aid his argument.

Tertullian was a Christian during the patristic period and his reaction to philosophy was openly hostile. His question of "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" is one that deals with the idea that faith occurs completely separate from reason. This view is called fideism. A famous advocate of fideism, who Wainwright also mentions earlier in his article, is Søren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard characterised the value of faith as being "inward" and as a "passionate commitment to God." ~~This~~ To try to reason and rationalise belief in God (such as the Islamic school of 'Kalām' does through cosmological arguments) is to remove the value of faith. This links with the idea

that there should be "no inquisition after enjoying ~~the~~ <sup>Terullian</sup> God" (Wainwright). It refers to a transcendent, immaterial joy felt through faith which N. Smart dubs as the reaching or experience of the "invisible world." However, we can repute this idea of that reason has no place with faith, as a more "widespread view" (Wainwright) is that faith and reason can be reconciled. St. Aquinas <sup>(a Christian theologian)</sup> for example, talks about how due to our limited intellect we need faith as "faith goes where reason cannot" (Lacey). This therefore suggests that what is actually necessary for a believer is a synthesis of reason and faith. Thus, when Wainwright highlights the schism between faith and reason, we can say that this tension need not exist, as what Christianity looks for is "right reason," (Wainwright) that is divinely aided reason, as opposed some of the pagan, less compatible with Christianity views that Greek philosophers harboured.

Furthermore, Wainwright gives the argument, posed by Terullian, that "Christianity is a revealed hypothesis that demands submission and obedience." This idea of revelation and of obedience can be found in several religions - not merely Christianity. For example, Islamic orthodoxy and orthopraxis ~~on~~ seeks to establish the idea

of submission. Islam itself means peace through submission to God. The act of salah (prayer) is also literal submission, as when Muslims prostrate in prayer, they submit to Allah's wishes. Similarly, in Christianity, there have been cases where believers have submitted to God's will, such as Bonhoeffer who in trying to achieve costly grace <sup>and oppose the Nazis, party,</sup> ended up becoming a martyr. However, the problem here is extremism. For example, the Westboro Baptist Church, teach due to Paul's teachings in the Bible that you should "obey your God" or else suffer "eternal fire". They also demonise homosexuality - which Jesus did not comment on - and use slogans ~~such as~~ "condemning homosexuality etc." ~~If they were to use reason, this would be a different story.~~ This clearly demonstrates the tension between faith and reason, as it portrays submission (a key part of faith and revelation) as dangerous to progressive and free society. Therefore, it supports Wainwright's view. However, as Wainwright himself states later in the passage, ~~says~~ that it is more widely accepted ~~that~~ reason should be employed by believers.

The last concept we will explore is the idea of "fallen and corrupt reason." In the modern, scientific age, the idea that reason is corrupt seems

both non-sensical and threatening to modern ways of thinking. ~~However~~ Descartes, a Christian philosopher, in his third meditation identified that our senses are often wrong/mistaken. He uses Plato's example of a stick in a running stream. It looks bent and rippled however it is not. Thus we can assert that reason is fallible. However whether we can say it is corrupt is not so easy to discern as can a 'benevolent' God really judge and punish people for reasoning wrongly when He made them as "rational creatures" (Aristotle). Ironically though, Descartes used epistemology (reason) as opposed to theology (faith) to reach his conclusion, and actually used and supported reason to compliment his faith. Again this refutes the idea that there must necessarily exist a tension between reason and faith. Rather it is the failure to reach the full "truth" (Benedict XVI) that conflicts with philosophy, thus repeating, at least partially, Wittgenstein's claim.

In conclusion whilst there has been much conflict between "Western philosophy" and Christianity, we can claim that it is only reason that is not "right reason" (Wittgenstein) that is not divinely aided that causes such problems. ~~Christianity~~ It is a lack of

human understanding that alienates <sup>faith</sup> ~~us~~ from reason. Any reason which is flawed will contradict the truth, therefore it is reasonable that Christ. Thus the claim that there are tensions necessarily between faith and reason can at least be partially negated.

1b)

I disagree partially with Wainwright that reason and faith must and do have tensions between them. This is because, whilst some persons ~~do~~ are fideists, the vast majority of religious believers rationalise what they believe. For example, ~~eg~~ conversions to religion often encompassed thorough inspection beforehand. Maryam Francis-Cerrach, for example, said that it was only after researching of Islam etc that she converted.

Likewise, C.S Lewis became the most "reluctant convert" after researching Christianity, and since has written vast volumes of work on theology, applying reason to revelation in order to help us to access what William James called the "higher Universe." (This is also mentioned by Wainwright early on in the article.) However this belief, or lack of belief in this, complicates the wider world.

For the individual believer, the idea that reason can complement faith and co-exist with it is particularly significant as it ~~allows~~ does not disregard the individual

experiences and journey of the believer. For example, if reason were prohibited then Saul of Tarsus may not have ever converted to Christianity and become Paul. His <sup>religious</sup> personal experience, and struggle meant that he experientially (through synthetic reasoning) gained faith in God. Therefore his idea that reason works with faith allows for individual conversion, and thus development of religious institutions to good, despite Hainwright's view that the two cannot foster an amicable relationship.

catalyst for  
This conversion and understanding of what faith is means that religious bodies such as the Church or the Muslim concept of "Ummah" can stand up as a united force, against ideas or forces that work against them. For example, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI stated that secularism that is non religious ideas, are a "threat to the church. If Christianity really is the true way" (Benedict XVI) then the use of reason - "right reason" (Hainwright) would lead to greater levels of religiosity and a decrease in secularism. It would also avoid the previous problems where the Church sought to repress science and philosophy - for example the execution of Giordano Bruno who made major contributions to astronomy. In this regard, the problems between philosophy and Christianity

as Wainwright highlights, can be resolved, and can actually serve to improve the status of science and philosophy, etc.

This striving for unity under "right-reason" (Wainwright) therefore can lead to global unity. If it so happens that Christianity is the "one truth" (Smart), then the ecumenical movement (that is unification of the 'whole inhabited earth' (Kid) could occur). Even if this was not the case, unity under the whole truth, could mean an end to inter-belief wars and lead to harmony. However, we all have our own opinions and beliefs - this is fostered by our rationality and therefore, as Smart comments, it is possible that there is "no one truth." This idea of global peace, of wider society, is not plausible. As a result we can argue that a synthesis of reason and faith ~~can~~ can lead no further non-uniformity, ~~has~~ and thus further division. This could decrease the standard of living and peace of the whole of humanity.

In conclusion whilst I hold the view that reason and faith is compatible and tensions between the two, as Wainwright insists there are, is due to a lack of ~~mutual~~ understanding between

believers and non-believers, ~~in the words~~ a synthesis of reason and faith doesn't really ~~improve~~ mean a definite mass conversion ~~of the same~~ to the same belief-system. We are individuals who think separately and in our own way, ~~they say~~ These tensions of Christianity and Philosophy, therefore, as Nietzsche commented, is because we are taught that ~~our beliefs are better than~~ to "think less of" those who have other beliefs to us. Actually, mutual understanding and tolerance can resolve such tensions and allow both philosophy and Christianity to flourish along with other theological systems.

### Paper Summary

There are four aims in the Religious Specification. This paper encourages students to:

- Develop their interest in a rigorous study of religion and relate it to the wider world. To succeed in this paper candidates must show evidence of a thorough study of the selected passage and fulfil the demands of A02.
- Treat the subject as an academic discipline and this paper requires specialist study, drawing on their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Adopt an enquiring and critical approach whereby they may reflect on all their previous units.
- Develop their own values and views in the light of their learning. A02 in particular enables candidates to engage in this creative process.

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