

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCE Religious Studies 6RS04

Paper 1J

Implications – New Testament

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Paper Introduction

General introduction

1. It was fundamentally important to examine the passage itself. All the level descriptors in the indicative mark scheme for AO1 begin with reference to the passage. There are a variety of ways this may be done. Some candidates presented a detailed exposition of the passage. This has much to commend it, including those who used this technique to explore the context of the wider source. One possible drawback was that this could become a simple comprehension exercise. This can be overcome by placing the passage in a context and showing an understanding of a detailed analysis of the more important terms and ideas. Another popular method was to present an overview of the whole source from which the passage was derived in order to examine the key points from within the passage. This method was useful in enabling candidates to show their understanding of the ethos of the passage. However, a potential weakness was that such an overview may be completed without sufficient focus on the passage itself.

2. Similarly, it was essential to answer the full demands of the AO2 part of the question:

do you agree with the idea(s) expressed

justify your point of view

discuss its implications for understanding religion

discuss its implications for understanding human experience.

It was important that these demands were addressed in an explicit manner rather than implicitly.

3 This unit is the synoptic part of the GCE RS course. In that respect candidates are expected to link their answers to related parts of their studies. Sometimes this may be achieved by relating work to one or more of the other sources in the anthology and also by drawing on material from any of the other three units. This enabled some candidates to compare and contrast a variety of possible responses.

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 the scripts:

Candidates took many different approaches in their examination of the passage. The best engaged directly with the extract and showed knowledge of the passage as a whole and related the issues to both biblical and doctrinal matters and made good use of scholarship to enhance their answers.

The better quality scripts addressed the range of issues raised by Bowker. The most successful candidates were those who were able to concentrate on the questions surrounding the divinity/ humanity of Christ and the problems raised by the various references to the nature and depiction of God in the Old and New Testaments. These students offered clear and scholarly analysis, well-supported by good scholarship and preparation. There were some excellent evaluations of the arguments and the implications were varied and imaginative. The best answers tended to draw on their gospel knowledge, sometimes using other NT texts as well that were off the syllabus such as Paul. Quite a few drew out from their knowledge of the wider passage and NT studies related to this. Others drew on their philosophy. Problem of Evil, Logical positivism were again drawn on in philosophy and there were some even partially successful uses of the latter. There were some particularly impressive uses of Anti-realism in relation to Don Cuppit.

A number of candidates did not refer to the passage, whilst others failed to address the main issues raised. For the most part, candidates in the mid-range did not discuss the main issues highlighted above. The majority tended to seize on one particular theme or aspect, such as 'salvation' or 'covenant' and concentrated solely on that. In doing this they tended to re-vamp the material from their Unit 3 paper, rather than offering an informed exegesis of Bowker. Potentially material on the covenant could have been significant. This theme was often identified and unpacked, putting Bowker's ideas into the context of previous covenant with especially Abraham and Moses. Many covenant related ideas such as continuity such as the significance of the lamb as the seal were explored, although sometimes things were dragged out a little too much before honing in on the relevance to the 'New' covenant.

Some questioned whether Christ existed at all, and devoted their entire essays to this point. A number seemed to resort to re-writing their 'Conflict' essays seemed to have limited understanding of the passage as a from their 'Luke' and 'Fourth Gospel' examination.

A few candidates wrote about passages from previous years, particularly Morison's 'Who moved the stone?' and Keith Ward's 'Guide for the Perplexed' and used them to discuss a range of periphery topics – missing the point of this passage altogether. Other candidates resorted to philosophical arguments to prove that Christ really existed.

At the lower end, candidates had no idea what the passage was really about and tended to write out the passage in their own words or offer sweeping generalisations about the divinity of Christ with no reference to scholarly evidence.

Some were overtly confessional and missed the point of the academic debate. Confessional responses, as worthy as they are, cannot gain high marks, since this is not the appropriate arena for this kind of self expression.

Exemplar

This extract focuses on part (a). This received full marks. The candidate displayed a competent understanding of the Bowker article. The answer kept closely to the selected passage and elaborated on this with a good mastery of scholarship.

ESSAY PLAN

30001a

20001b

- God the same in NT as OT - Law (10 Comm / 613 = LOVE by Jesus)
- Great Banquet
- Jesus' relationship w God - Son. Personal = prayer, 'Fa Rev':
- Eschatology - C.H. Dodd - Realised eschatology, fulfilling Isaiah's 'sight + blind' / 'good news':

a). Arguably, Bowker's passage aims to examine the nature of Jesus and his relationship with God, particularly focusing on the influence of Old Testament scripture and ideals upon the New Testament authors' depiction of Jesus.

Clearly to the Christian believers, the idea of God being portrayed in the New Testament in the same manner as he is in the Old Testament (then the Jewish Torah) is completely acceptable - it is an accepted virtue of God that he is 'everlasting' and 'unchanging'. We can see that the traits of God described - 'merciful and just', 'peace', 'hope' and 'comfort' are accepted traits which one might attribute to the Christian concept of God. However, the most definitive feature here, arguably, is that of 'love'. In an argument based around Jesus' likeness to God, one cannot deny this feature in common. Indeed, Jesus' compassion and love for others, displayed through his miracles - when he ~~healed~~^{healed} the bleeding woman in Luke, we read that he was 'filled with compassion', and he even had the love

to reach out to ten lepers who were outcasts from society, not to mention their Samaritan background - is widely studied and such love, or 'agape' - a love for All - has been examined in great depth. Jesus' teachings on love were of course seen as revolutionary - he urged his followers to 'love your enemy' and the 'Golden Rule' he preached was to 'love your neighbour as yourself'. The ideas of 'turning the other cheek' and 'giving your neighbour your coat' were unheard of at the time, not even among the various miracle-makers of the era such as Honina Ben Dosa. To his spectators, the love Jesus displayed could arguably be only compared to that of God himself - thus heightening their relationship.

Of course, all the while, Jesus explicitly stuck by the traditional Jewish law - while the Jewish Chief Priests might have seen him to be blaspheming in his claims against God's 'oneness' as described in Deuteronomy, and his healing of the man's hand and picking corn on the Sabbath, Jesus himself stated at the Sermon on the Plain that he had not come to 'abolish the law'. One might note that Jesus' central theme of love throughout his ministry completely summarised God's Old Testament nature and commands. After all, the Ten Commandments and further 613 Commandments of Exodus could all arguably be boiled down to love for one another, whether it be refusing to murder or steal or love for God, through such commandments as eating kosher food.

Clearly, we can see in Jesus' teachings that, if we are to believe that he really was God, he showed no real inconsistencies to God's nature, and, when we look closer, we can see the similarity of this New Testament to the 'Lord' of the Old Testament.

Bowker's remarks on the sitting down at a 'meal prepared with poison' can lead us to note the Parable of the Great Banquet, in which Jesus described a grand banquet to which all are invited - of course, many would choose not to come, based on foolish excuses, while others simply expected an invitation based on their worldly standing. Nevertheless, the party's master would send his men to gather those on the streets, and in the 'highways and byways', giving a place in this Great Banquet for those least expected - while others who rejected it would sit down at a 'meal prepared with poison' in the form of worldly idolatry. Once again, this idea of love at the centre, accepting all - not just the worldly upright and high standing - is important to note when we consider Jesus' relation to God.

Of course, Bowker notes the 'unique way' in which Jesus and God are connected, according to the New Testament authors, equal to the 'absolute sovereignty and uniqueness of God' - right from the beginning of his life, recorded in the first chapters of both Luke and Matthew's Gospels, Jesus was hailed as the son of God. At just seven or so years old, a young Jesus would be found at the Temple, where he

'amazed' the priests. Meanwhile, we read in the Gospels that Jesus would often during his ministry, 'retreat into the wilderness to pray'. We read in the Passion narrative that Jesus prayed on his knees in the Garden of Gethsemane, exhibiting true passion, while he constantly referred to God as 'Father'. Such factors display a relationship that was indeed truly 'unique', and one which does indeed require much examining.

Bowker further notes the New Testament writers' highlighting of Jesus' fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies - indeed, the idea of eschatology played a huge part in Jesus' ministry, and further heightens his relationship with God - figures such as C.H. Dodd speculate that Jesus was fulfilling God's promise and establishing a present Kingdom through his miracles. This concept of 'realised eschatology' is supported by Morris and Schweitzer, who believe that Jesus was establishing an immediate Kingdom. Of course, others, like Sanders, speculate that the Kingdom Jesus spoke of was one of the future which would arrive after a Second Coming.

Regardless, Marshall states, that whenever the Kingdom arrived, past, present or future, it would be relevant to all ages and eras, and so is ambiguous. Marshall too stated that, ~~(however)~~ 'the coming of the Kingdom is firmly tied historically to the ministry of Jesus'.

~~(The)~~ According to the Gospels, Jesus did indeed fulfil many Old Testament prophecies, not least those of Isaiah which spoke of 'sight for the blind', 'good news', and even explicit

details of guards casting lots for his clothing and offering him wine vinegar. Clearly, if we are to accept the New Testament authors' accounts of Jesus, we cannot doubt his significance as an eschatological fulfilment of God's Old Testament promises and prophecies. Once again, we are exposed to nature of Jesus and his 'unique' relationship with God.

Bowker's idea of the New Testament writers imposing 'their own meaning on texts in the past' is, of course, also acceptable and could be seen as a detailing of this unique relationship. Indeed, Scripture can be highly misinterpreted and misquoted - in the film 'The Priest', two opposing sides of a congregation are depicted using the same verse to support their opposing views. Therefore, one might note, that such fulfilments of the Old Testament through Jesus are perhaps not what they seem?

However, Bowker himself goes on to state that Jesus, to many, will, and always will be, the 'continuation and fulfilment of the purpose of God throughout the whole Biblical period'. We can indeed see references ~~(all)~~ in the Old Testament which can be tied to Jesus' life and ministry - for example, Abraham's test of -almost- sacrificing his Son, Isaac, on Mount Carmel, depicted in Genesis, could be seen as a direct mirroring of God's own sacrifice thousands of years later, of his own son. Of course, in Abraham's case, his Son was not killed - but God provided a ram stuck in thorns to replace Isaac as a sacrifice to God. Was Jesus this ram of

burns! - God's provision to be sacrificed in our place?

Interestingly, some scholars believe that Mount Carmel, upon which Abraham's ordeal occurred, would later be renamed Golgotha - where God would sacrifice his own son millennia later.

As we can see, there are clear references throughout the Old Testament which could be seen to be directly foreshadowing of Jesus' life and death, thus furthering the concept of his unique relationship with God and his Messiahship, and perhaps increasing the legitimacy of the New Testament writers' essays on Jesus.

Ultimately, it is clear to see when we read the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament, for that matter, that Jesus certainly had a unique relationship with the God of Israel which would in turn lead to salvation for all. To one who is uncertain of the legitimacy of such New Testament claims, however, the idea of Jesus' messiahship will always be disputed.

This extract focuses on part (b). This displays good practice in terms of its arguments and debates. The candidate considers the implications of alternative stances and supports these views with part comendable use of scholarship.

(ii) Parker aims to describe Jesus as an incarnate God as well as the Son of God. Some people argue that this is wrong as to think ~~that~~ way of God in human form would be anthropomorphising God and therefore God cannot be all that great if he takes human form as Jesus. However ~~however~~ Parker suggests that it is "never doubted that there is one and only God." At the same time, Parker suggests Jesus was co-equal to God. I would agree with Parker by saying that God has omnipotence and is a superior being therefore he probably can exist as three characters - the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. ~~It~~ Even though we do not understand how this is possible, it does not mean it is impossible just in the way that religion believers may not understand and non miracles happen but still believe God is capable of these miracles.

However, the implications of this extract are huge. If it was confirmed Jesus was

in fact the Son of God and fulfillment to the Purpose of God, many things would change.

First and foremost it could be said that trust in science would be reduced significantly. Scientific theories such as ~~evolution~~ ^{the Big Bang Theory} would be rejected as the proof that the Son of God existed, indicates the existence of God and therefore more people would trust in the idea that God created the world ~~as opposed to the~~. As Baltmann said "we must demythologise" as modern science and spiritual beliefs found in the Bible clash. Through this he implied ~~the~~ in the event that God's existence has proven, the conflicting arguments between science and religion would be answered.

Secondly a rise in Christian followers may occur, perhaps due to conversion of ~~other~~ from other religions that had not been undermined. The undermining of these other

religions may ~~cause~~ cause implications for international relations. There are two paths it could follow - there may be peace as religious conflicts would be answered or unfortunately more conflict could occur. For example extremists lives are scripted around their religion and for something to weaken or disprove their beliefs could cause upset and potentially an increase in terrorism. You would argue that the disproving of a religion could lead to mental illness as religion for some people is their identity and therefore without it, they would be lost and confused.

On the other hand, if Jesus' work and identity was proved to be false, it could cause an amplified fight in science and other religions. But for some religions such as Islam, who regard Jesus as a prophet, what would this cause? Would they reject Jesus as a prophet or would they

instead just accept laws was associated with God, just not as closely as was previously believed.

Attitudes towards laws may also change. The Bible and its teachings are moral foundations for modern law and therefore the rejection of ~~the~~ the Bible may cause rejection of law. Dostoyevsky argued that "without religion, anything is permitted." Marx also said that "religion is the opiate of the people" suggesting distrust in a religion as widely spread as Christianity may prove to be chaotic. Maybe laws would not be disregarded and instead views on laws may be altered. For example in Job 1:21 it says "God gives life and only God can take it away." Now the Bible has become meaningless, possibly people may not depend upon it when setting their moral boundaries. If Job 1:21 had not considered or the commandment 'do not kill' perhaps views on abortion may change.

In conclusion I think the implications of the proof for or against the existence of God, depending on Jesus' identity being proven, are widespread. Not only would they affect global relations but also personal relationships. Anti-realists argue that something is meaningful if it impacts someone and religion certainly impacts many people. We should not be concerned with what the existence/non-existence of religion causes, instead we should evaluate the implications it has on individuals. These implications are still great as religion defines many people and can change people for better or for worse.

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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