

GCSE

GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES

High Standard Responses to (d) Questions



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(d) 'The Theory of Evolution is the best explanation for the origin of humans.'

Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religious and non-religious beliefs, such as those held by Humanists and Atheists, in your answer.) [15]

Marks for spelling, punctuation and the accurate use of grammar are allocated to this question. [6]

I mostly agree that the Theory of Evolution is the best explanation for the origin of humans.

This is because, science has proven ~~that~~ through fossils that humans have evolved from ^{four} other species over billions of years. Popes Francis, Pius VI and John Paul II have stated that science and religion are not in conflict and the Big Bang Theory is proof of this fact. The Theory of Evolution states that through a process of mutation and natural selection, there has been a change in species over time to suit certain conditions in the environment. St. Aquinas said that God's power and plans don't exclude chance and that random processes like evolution run according to the internal laws God has placed in them.

Fundamentalist Christians ~~believe~~ ^{disagree} with evolution because they take the Genesis stories literally true so they believe that the world was created in six days and is only about 2000



years old. They believe that fossils were planted by God. Unlike fundamentalists, Catholics believe that the Genesis tells us the theological and aetiological truths rather than facts. ^{eg God created everything} Besides, GK Chesterton stated that the creation is like a story which develops so humans have also developed over time.

Humanists do not believe in God so they believe in the Theory of Evolution and not that God created humans. ^{however} They believe that humans are purely physical / material with no soul. Although Catholics and Humanists believe in the Theory of Evolution, Catholics believe that humans are material and spiritual as ^{we} they were created by a special act of creation as God breathed into us and made us in His image. Catholics also believe that spiritual things are not provable or disprovable by science therefore humanists cannot outrightly deny that humans have souls which make their evolution different from other animals. St Catherine of Siena's teaching on Imago Dei also show that God is our source and origin. This cannot be disputed.

Ultimately, I ~~do~~ agree with this statement because ~~although I accept that the Theory of Evolution is~~ this Theory explains our physical origins and there are facts which prove that we are not made ~~out~~ out of dust literally. Believing the Genesis stories literally would be a category mistake. However, humans have a unique character - our souls.

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(d) 'Funerals are pointless in Buddhism.'

- Theravadin: merit ^{Samsara} ^{is very} ^{important}
 - Mahayanin - Tibetan

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Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view.
 (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)

[15]

A Theravadin may ~~strongly~~ disagree with this as many of their funeral practices are very important. For example, they make offerings to a shrine of the person Buddha, which builds good karma for the next person in their new rebirth within Samsara. ~~It~~ They may also be important as monks give sermons of anicca (impermanence), which helps people mourn and reflect on their own mortality. A Mahayanin may also disagree as at their funerals, the cremated ashes of the person is buried, which is an important practice. They also honour their person and the Buddha, cultivating metta. The funerals are held a few weeks after the death, to let the person enter the first stage of rebirth (Bardo). Therefore, funerals aren't pointless.

However, a Theravadin may also agree with this as they often hold animal and cheap funerals. They then use the money saved to instead donate to the monastery: dana, on the deceased behalf. This is believed to give them good karma in their next life in the cycle of samsara. Therefore, compared to this, the funeral isn't important: it should be sacrificed. A Mahayanin believes the period just before death is more important than after, as they ~~stand~~ say the Buddha's name repeatedly in the dying person's ear, so it is the last name they hear, helping them through rebirth. This is believed to be more important than the funeral, as at the funeral,



The person has already died and entered *Bardo*. Therefore, a Buddhist may agree.

A Tibetan Buddhist may disagree as their mourning techniques are vital. Often, they use a 'Sky Burial', in which the body is left in the mountains to be eaten by vultures. This is important as it is a final act of *dana* for the person, potentially giving them a good karmic rebirth, and it reflects the Buddhist beliefs of *prethya* and *anra*. This is an incredibly important *paradise*, therefore a Tibetan Buddhist would disagree with Mu.

Overall, I believe that most Buddhists do believe funerals are partially important as they are a chance to perform *dana* on the person's behalf, and help the *monks* reflect. However, it could be argued that compared to the person's actions and understandings in life, they are not important, as only in life can they become enlightened, and be a good person. Therefore, I don't agree with this statement, but I do understand that compared to life actions, funerals are minimal.

2d: 15



(d) 'Reform is the main aim of punishment.'

Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view.
(You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.) [15]

On the one hand, religious believers such as Christians certainly agree on reform being the main aim of punishment. Christianity is a religion of forgiveness, therefore forgiving those who have wronged it is vital. It follows the example of Jesus who said - 'Forgive them, they know not what they are doing' despite facing torment on the cross. Christians see the importance of enabling criminals to change their ways in a system of restorative justice. That entails a criminal apologising to the victims of their atrocities. The focus on rehabilitation aims to show compassion to others. Moreover, religious believers will also consider meeting the spiritual and religious needs of criminals; ~~as~~ that can be seen in the work of prison reformers such as Elizabeth Fry, who started in changing the ~~too~~ harsh conditions for women in prison - enabling them to reform. Overall, these are very very strong arguments highlighting that showing mercy and compassion is crucial in reformation, as well as the fact ~~that~~ prisons in Britain ~~are~~ aim to reform criminals.



nevertheless, it ~~can~~ can be argued that retribution should be the aim of punishment. A criminal should get what they deserve in punishment, through harsh sentencing. That follows the Old Testament's idea of an 'eye for an eye' wherein punishment gives a harsh treatment. ~~So~~ Other religions however may argue that deterrence ~~is~~ should be an aim of punishment, in an effort to deter people from committing similar crime. This can be seen in aspects of Shariah law, which aims to deter the Muslim ummah, through harsh punishments such as the chopping of limbs. Punishments should also aim to protect society from dangerous criminals, who are a threat to others. Overall, these are valuable arguments as reformation is not always a successful ^{aim} ~~aim~~ of punishment, ~~as seen in the~~ ~~disastrous~~ ~~state~~ ~~of~~ ~~affairs~~ ~~in~~ ~~British~~ ~~prisons~~ and retribution and deterrence may ~~be~~ seem more befitting.

3d: 15



(d) 'Everyone should obey the laws of a country.'

Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view.
(You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.) [15]

It can be argued that everyone should obey the laws of their country, for the sake of leading good and moral lives. By abiding by the law, religious believers can live in ~~at~~ a state of peace and harmony. Christians value the significance of following the Old Testament's 10 commandments, which hold similar rules to legal laws, such as 'Do not kill' and 'Do not steal'. Therefore, Christians see the significance of being law-abiding citizens, as many rules are considered God's rules. Moreover, the failure to obey the laws of a country has negative impacts on society - theft, murder and other crime are truly damaging to society as a whole. Religious believers ~~see~~ consider the significance of their human rights and actions that could ~~transgress~~ transgress other people's rights, such as the right to 'free speech'. Religious believers will not abuse their rights, by making comments considered considered obscene and offensive - or that which is 'Islamophobic' or anti-semitic. These are valid arguments, showing that religious ~~the~~ ^{people} people



aim to live in a society of peace and harmony.

Nevertheless, breaching the laws of a country may be justified in an effort to tackle injustice and inequality in society. Christians may ~~totally~~ look up to the example of Martin Luther King Jr., the baptist minister who was crucial in the fight for civil rights in America. His work was vital in tackling racist laws, that were considered as unfair and discriminatory. Martin Luther King Jr. said - 'I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but the content of their character'. This emphasizes his aim of fighting for equality. Other Christians have strived in ~~the~~ emphasising liberation theology, despite transgressing against the rules of their respective nations - that this included the archbishop of St Salvador, Oscar Romero, who spoke out for ~~the poor~~ against the ine-

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| Question number | Additional page, if required. Write the question number(s) in the left-hand margin. | Examiner only |
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| 4. d) | <p>inequality prevalent in his nation. Thus, these are are strong arguments, as it may be justified to to break the law in an effort to strive for peace and equality.</p> <p>In conclusion, religious believers will usually strive to adhere to the 'laws of the land', following a strict moral and legal code. Yet, if the judicial powers in question and government have laws that breach the human rights of people, it can be just justified to break the law; that is an effort to change the inequality and not injustice of some laws.</p> | 4d: 14 |

Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than viewpoint. You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.

The following response is an example that does not fit the typical 'for/against' structure often seen in responses to d. questions. The candidate has not given arguments as to why pilgrimage could be considered the most important, but instead, has evaluated the opposing arguments i.e. that other practices are more important. Opportunities are missed for developing and clarifying some points (e.g. the penultimate paragraph) and for including sources of wisdom and authority, but the evaluation is clear to see and the statement has been analysed well.

In this essay I will argue against the statement. I will refer to sacraments, prayer and communion.

One reason why pilgrimage is not the most important Christian practice is sacraments. As sacraments were outlined by Jesus as what Christians should complete in their lifetime. However, there is differentiation between denominations as Protestants believe in only 2 sacraments where Catholics believe in 7. This is still a strong argument as both denominations agree upon the importance of the sacraments. This makes it a strong argument due to the denominations agreeing upon the most significant practices in life. This affects British Christians today as they may strive to fulfil the sacraments to be the best person they can be in the eyes of God.

Prayer is also a more important practice than pilgrimage. As Christians use prayer to get closer to God and to keep them through tough times. There are different forms of prayer such as set prayers which come directly from Jesus (the Lord's Prayer). This is a strong argument as it is agreed upon by all Christians about the importance of prayer. This makes it a strong argument as it shows unity and community, signifying its importance. Prayer is important to Christians today as it helps them get through tough times such as the pandemic.

A final reason why pilgrimage is not the most important practice is because of communion. As communion allows Christians to get closer to Jesus in following in his footsteps. This is a weak argument due to the differences of importance different denominations put on communion as Catholics believe it transforms into the body and blood of Christ, whereas Protestants don't believe in transubstantiation and believe it is purely symbolic. This makes it weak as it shows incompleteness and unclarity of its importance.

Overall, pilgrimage is important in allowing Christians to feel closer to their religion, however there are more important things for Christians to feel closer to God. Most Christian pilgrimages are usually dedicated to saints or messages rather than the worship of God, making them less important when it comes to being close to God.

(d) 'Evolution proves that God does not exist.'

Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religious and non-religious beliefs, such as those held by Humanists and Atheists, in your answer.) [15]

Marks for spelling, punctuation and the accurate use of grammar are allocated to this question. [6]

Evolution is the process of random mutations and natural selection over time leading to gradual changes in species.

A Catholic would disagree with this statement because they believe that God is omnipotent. This is supported by St Augustine who said "he [God] created this thing out of nothing". This means that if God has the power to create from nothing, there is nothing stopping him from using science to create humans, God is beyond our understanding so Catholics shouldn't try to limit him. This is a strong argument because it also shows reason behind evolution, not just that it happened but also why it happened, strengthening faith.

However, an atheist might ~~disagree~~ agree with this statement because it means God doesn't need to exist for humans to exist. This is supported by Richard Dawkins who described life as "happen chance"; this means that there was no inevitability for humans life, it appeared randomly and so God



was needed for this to happen. This is a weak argument as it encourages worthlessness, if there is no reason behind life then why should it be valued?

A Catholic would also disagree with the statement because they believe science doesn't contradict God. This is supported by St Pope John Paul II who said "there is no conflict between evolution and the doctrine of faith". This means that Catholics can believe that the theory of evolution is true while still believing in God because there is nothing stopping God creating humans through evolution. This is a strong argument because it encourages Catholics to value life, because it was created so meticulously for them.

However, an atheist would agree with the statement because evolution was random, not orderly. This is supported by Charles Darwin's book 'Origin of the Species'. This means that it was random mutations that lead to the evolution of humans, not an orderly creation of beings as described in Genesis. This is a ~~strong~~^{weak} argument as it contrasts God to the writers of the bible, when in fact he is omnipotent & we cannot comprehend how he works.

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| 1d. | <p>Overall, I disagree with this statement because it confines the nature of God to believe he couldn't have been the cause of evolution and also explains why humans have reason animals do not, whereas evolution is simply a theory relying on randomness, it is given priority to belief in God.</p> | |

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