

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE PART 2 REVISION (PART Bs)

Write a list of any questions you think you could be asked for a B question on religious experience:

B) Religious communities are dependent on religious experiences (30 marks)

Draft Mark scheme:

On a scale of 1-10, how do you feel about answering a question on this topic?

B) Religious communities are dependent on religious experiences (30 marks)

YES: Religious Experiences are often the foundation of the faith:

EXAMPLES: Revelation of the Qur'an, resurrection of Jesus, revelation of the 10 commandments to Moses via the burning bush.

Festivals are often based on past religious experiences. These establish a common identity amongst a religious community and reaffirms faith.

EXAMPLES: Christmas based on the religious experience of the Virgin Birth and revelation of angels to Mary.

Pilgrimages are often based on visiting places of importance due to religious experiences. These help to build a greater sense of community and unity amongst believers and strengthen the faith of a believer.

EXAMPLES: pilgrimage to the 'dome of the rock' by a Muslim to remember Muhammad's ascension to Jannah. Pilgrimage during Hajj involves running between the two mountains (Safa and Marwa) to remember Hagar's experience of receiving water from a spring given by God.

Giving testimonies of religious experience can encourage others and validate the faith.

EXAMPLES: Giving a testimony is an important part of a baptism. Normally a believer shares that they felt 'called' or encountered some sort of religious experience to confirm that baptism was right for them.

Giving testimonies of miracles was often used during the Toronto Blessing to reaffirm belief.

Private religious experiences (through prayer) are central to a religious community.

EXAMPLES: Jesus stated that 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I with them'. This suggests that religious experiences through prayer can strengthen a religious community. Similarly, Sufis gather regularly to experience God as a community which strengthens their bonds to the brotherhood and their beliefs.

NO: Many religious experiences have been challenged or doubted and yet religious communities still exist.

EXAMPLE: Bishop David Jenkins referred to the resurrection of Christ as a myth yet still retained his own faith and maintained the faith within his congregation.

Religious Experiences can be divisive to a community:

EXAMPLE: There is disagreement within Christianity as to whether it is possible for a believer to speak in tongues as the apostles did in the New Testament. Those who have experienced the divine may be elevated to a status above those who have not had a religious experience.

Religious Belief can be the result of rational enquiry

EXAMPLE: The cosmological and teleological arguments for the existence of God seek to prove God from empirical evidence in the world around us. For example, Paley's eye analogy. Therefore religious experience is not needed to prove a faith claim.

Religions have conflicting claims

Believers are well aware that within religions there are conflicting claims of miracles as Hume also points out. For example, the resurrection of Christ. However, they still maintain their faith as the experiences are not the most vital element and do not seek to prove the faith (Swinburne)

B) MIRACLE DEFINITIONS ARE NOT ADEQUATE (30 marks)

Draft Mark scheme:

On a scale of 1-10, how do you feel about answering a question on this topic?

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Draft Mark scheme:

Definitions that involve a break in the laws of nature: HUME, AQUINAS; FIRST TYPE

NOT ADEQUATE: Hume's Regularity Thesis/Voltaire/Flew

ADEQUATE: Swinburne's principle of credulity/Ockham's Razor

Definitions that do not involve break in law of nature: HOLLAND

NOT ADEQUATE: Too subjective—what is a miracle for one may not be a miracle for another. Some prefer objective criteria. Miracles would be happening all the time which makes them ordinary and therefore not miracles at all.

ADEQUATE: Consistent with a world view of a non-supernatural universe., with this definition miracles become relevant to all people whether religious or not.

It allows for subjectivity which means that people themselves can decide whether something is miraculous to them without relying on others to confirm this.

Definitions that include God/deity: AQUINAS

ADEQUATE: Consistent with traditional ideas of a miracle and supported by scripture (Give Biblical examples)

NOT ADEQUATE: Not relevant in a society in which religious belief is declining as seen in the 2011 census.

The three examples of divine intervention that Aquinas gives (the sun going back on its course, resurrection and an instant cure of an illness) can all now be explained through laws of nature rather than needing divine interference.

Definitions that involve miracles being done through humans beings: AQUINAS (double agency)

NOT ADEQUATE: Could it not simply be the human being that has performed the miracle rather than a supernatural being. Medical miracles (Greg Thomas healed from cancer while repairing church)

Definitions that include an interventionist God working for the benefit of the recipient: SWINBURNE

NOT ADEQUATE: Wiles—'one single act of God' God would be malevolent if he allowed some to have miraculous intervention and others not to (Auschwitz and Hiroshima)

On a scale of 1-10, how do you feel about answering a question on this topic?

B) Miracle definitions are contradictory (30 marks)

Draft Mark scheme:

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Draft Mark scheme:

NOT CONTRADICTORY: Laws of nature: several include miracles as a **break of a law of nature**: Swinburne and Hume's definition.

CONTRADICTORY: Holland—natural courses of events. Aquinas doesn't believe LONs can be broken '*it is not against the principle of craftsmanship...if a craftsman effects a change in his product*'.

NOT CONTRADICTORY: Simply describing different types of miracles ie. Holland—'contingency miracles' **Norman Griesler**—would call a contingency miracles a 'class two miracle' as opposed to a 'class one miracle' which could be seen to break a law of nature. Not contradictory but just different.

NOT CONTRADICTORY: Several involve the inclusion of an **interventionist God**. Aquinas—all 3 type, involve 'divine agency' Hume—'deity or supernatural being'. '*A miracle occurs when the world is not left to itself, when something distinct from the natural order as a whole intrudes into it*' (**J. L. Mackie**)

CONTRADICTORY: There are others that do not have the inclusion of God—Holland.

John Macquerie: *Why is it that one person interprets an event as an act of God and another does not?*

NOT CONTRADICTORY: several definitions allow **humans to have some involvement** in the creation of miracles— Hollands 'coincidence', Aquinas' 'double agency' and Wiles' understanding that a miracle can simply be a person changing for the better.

CONTRADICTORY: Aquinas' involves God working through human agents whereas for Wiles and Holland it is simply humans doing it themselves.

CONTRADICTORY: Disagreements over **the extent as to which miracles can actually happen**.

Hume's regularity thesis, especially when it comes to his understand of '**hard**' miracles (that violate LON which cannot be altered—not possible). However his '**soft**' version (LONs can be altered but evidence needs to be credible and convincing) can allow for miracles to take place but not to be proven. Furthermore, Swinburne claims they can happen but are 'rare'.

NOT CONTRADICTORY: The purpose of miracles often has to be **something that is beneficial** to the recipient—Holland '*a remarkable and beneficial coincidence*'. Aquinas accepted that a miracle is an act of God, which is beneficial to the recipient, which may break a natural law but does not necessarily have to.

CONCLUSION; No contradictions—they merely focus on **different aspects and types** of miracles. Its an advantage that miracles are subjective and therefore each person can interpret events in their own way depending also on their own level of religiosity. Therefore, their 'contradictory nature' means that they can appeal to people from all background, religious and non religious alike. Einstein "*There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle*"

B) Challenges to miracles are not effective (30 marks)

Draft Mark scheme:

On a scale of 1-10, how do you feel about answering a question on this topic?

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Draft Mark scheme:

Hume's challenges:

Challenge using regularity thesis—

EFFECTIVE —Other philosophers support the idea that laws of nature cannot be transgressed similar to Hume's hard view. Spinoza/Voltaire. Flew's argument is also very similar to Hume's regularity thesis.

INEFFECTIVE—Swinburne's principle of credulity supported by Ockham's razor.

The regularity thesis and other challenges tend to only apply to miracles that break a law of nature. What about contingency miracles—Holland? Many are happy to accept these and therefore challenges re ineffective.

Difficult to define what it means to transgress a law of nature—Swinburne re-defines this to a 'non-repeatable counter-instance to a law of nature'. Other scholars such as Hick argue that laws of nature simply need to be re-defined if something seems to transgress them.

Challenge to testimony—

INEFFECTIVE— Swinburne's principle of testimony

Swinburne's challenge that Hume never states what he would deem to be a satisfactory level of education to make a reliable witness. For example, in France miracles that occurred during Hume's lifetime were acknowledged by Hume to have been witnessed by people of unquestioned integrity yet he still would not accept the occurrence of miracles.

Also, Paul in the Bible states that 500 people witnessed the resurrected Jesus—surely this is enough evidence for something to be considered miraculous?

Testimony is not the only claim to miracles. Hume seems to make little or no comment about other evidence for miracles ie. medical evidence. Even medical professionals at points credit things to be miraculous as they cannot be understood any other way—medical miracles.

EFFECTIVE—Hume may be right in arguing that those who claim to have a miracle had some kind of 'vested interest'. For example, the 500 who claimed to have witnessed the resurrected Jesus may have done so to prove their claims to the validity of their faith.

Challenge to conflicting claims—

INEFFECTIVE—Swinburne points out the inadequacy of Hume's challenge by stating that conflicting claims do not invalidate miracles or undermine religion as miracles do not seek to prove a faith claim.

EFFECTIVE— Lots of evidence of conflicting claims ie. resurrection of Christ. Several of these miracles are the basis of a faith and so Hume's challenge is effective.

General arguments

EFFECTIVE— Wiles would agree that arguments against miracles are effective as a God who would perform miracles for some and not others would be a malevolent God. Therefore, God is not an interventionist God as he did not intervene in Auschwitz and Hiroshima.

EFFECTIVE—Miracles contradict Science ie. the creation story. It could be argued that miracles are simply down to a 'god of the gaps' and therefore criticisms against them are valid.

B) The extent to which Swinburne's response to Hume is valid (30 marks)

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Swinburnes' use of Hume's definition:

NOT ADEQUATE: Swinburne interprets Hume's definition as the 'soft' interpretation which is probably not what Hume had intended. 'there is a firm and unalterable experience that has established these laws' (Hume)

IS ADEQUATE: Hume did go on to criticise testimonies of miracles. If he truly did believe in the 'hard' version he would have had no need to do this as miracles breaking laws of nature would be enough for them to be invalidated.

Swinburne's criticism of Testimony:

ADEQUATE: Swinburne is right to question Hume's use of testimony—when Hume did criticise testimony he did so on the grounds of 'the absolute impossibility or miraculous nature of the events which they relate'. Therefore, he would not accept miracles regardless of evidence in their favour despite being an empiricist. For example, in France miracles that occurred during Hume's lifetime were acknowledged by Hume to have been witnessed by people of unquestioned integrity yet he still would not accept the occurrence of miracles.

We have evidence of testimonies from highly educated and forward thinking nations—Toronto Blessing. Therefore, Swinburne is right to question Hume by asking what would it take for him to recognise someone as educated. Hume never states this.

NOT ADEQUATE: Many question Swinburne's principle of testimony—there are lots of occasions when people lie. As Hume points out leaders may make up miraculous events to gain followers which certainly could be argued to be the case when many cults are formed. For example, Joseph Smith, leader of Mormonism calls miracles 'fruits of faith' although there is little evidence to prove he was telling the truth when he claims to have had miraculous experiences. In the Bible, the Roman Rulers believe that the disciple stole the body of Jesus to try and indicate that a resurrection had taken place. Therefore, there are lots of reasons why people would make up miracles.

Swinburne's response to conflicting claims:

ADEQUATE: Frank Hugh Foster points out how miracles in the Bible were sometimes a hindrance to Jesus' message which is the vital part of a religion. Therefore the fact that there are conflicting claims, as Swinburne points out, is not a huge criticism and does not disprove miracles in themselves. This is a valid response to Hume's criticisms.

Swinburne points out that not all religions do indeed have conflicting claims. There are examples to support this such as Jews, Christians and Muslims all agreeing on the parting of the red sea by Moses and again all three religions having a similar creation story. Therefore perhaps some miracles can be trusted under Swinburne's principle of credulity and his criticism of Hume is valid.

INADEQUATE: Swinburne argues that it does not matter that miracle claims conflict as miracles do not seek to prove a religion. This is inadequate as in many cases miraculous events are the foundation of a faith (revelation of Qur'an/resurrection of Jesus) and so the fact that they conflict can be a huge problem for believers and non-believers alike possibly disproving miracles.

Swinburne's response to Hume by including religious significance as an important aspect of a miracle:

ADEQUATE: means that ordinary events that seem to break laws of nature are not automatically recognised as miracles.

INADEQUATE: Miracles are no longer relevant to the non-religious and miracles become too subjective. The same event can happen twice which breaks a law of nature yet we would only call it a miracle in one instance—if it was interested to have significance—this is inconsistent.