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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Religious Studies (9RS0)
Paper 4B

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Introduction

There were some notably worthy answers which often demonstrated a good understanding of Christian beliefs, praxis and theology. The overall standard suggests that candidates and centres are confident with the demands and intent of the specification. Many responses reflected relevant use of resources resulting in candidates across the ability range having confidence to tackle this paper in an appropriate fashion. Candidates who exhibited the ability to assess, analyse and evaluate invariably did well. Some of the best responses were usually from candidates who wrote less, but obviously had planned carefully and set out their argument at the beginning of their answer.

It was apparent that consideration by candidates of the precise wording of the question varied significantly especially for Q03 and Q04 where some candidates lost focus on the issue they were supposed to be engaging with, such as 'clarify' (Q03(a)), 'analyse' (Q03(b)) or 'evaluate' (Q04). It was pleasing to note that many candidates used relevant technical vocabulary correctly and effectively.

The references to scholars were generally pleasing, however some responses appeared to randomly name scholars that brought little or even no input to the argumentation and discussion being offered.

Q04, which includes the synoptic element of the course, saw some very high calibre responses. Candidates at the highest level drew on a range of detailed and carefully employed knowledge to deconstruct the issues and offer clear and sustained reasoning and judgement in relation to the question through reviewing and analysing the 'significance' of different views and forming clear judgements. There were some excellent examples of well-crafted and pertinent links made with other components studied and the best ones of these integrated them well within their essay in more than a few sentences, rather than presenting a brief add on sentence. This element is not optional if candidates are to access the full range of the mark scheme therefore centres and candidates need to find a way to employ this in their teaching and learning throughout the course.

The majority of candidates demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding throughout the paper.

Q01 Explore key features of the use of the Bible as a basis for ethical teaching. (8)

Generally, well answered and many candidates were able to explore the bible as a way of ethical decision making using of the Decalogue; the Sermon on the Mount and the

Sermon on the Plain as well as the concept of 'agape' love with reference to Fletcher and Situation ethics. Some very good answers saw candidates engaging with propositional and non-propositional approaches of which some were cleverly worked.

Weaker responses offered a very limited account of the Decalogue and/or a selected parable such as the Good Samaritan. Some weak answers were ineffective and superficial.

Q02 Assess the significance of the role of music for Christian worship. (12)

Most candidates tackled this question well and engaged effectively with an acknowledgement of a range of music types that have been used for worship both traditionally and more contemporary.

Many made the point that music is significant because it has distinctive effects on the human mind as it can transport a believer to the divine and promote a religious experience with God.

Better responses identified that Christian music has a variety of forms, including such diversity as Gregorian Chant and Pentecostal songs and that music remains central to many types of worship, illustrating its continuing appeal as a medium for expressing worship. Many made the point that music appeals to many ages and communities, so it holds Christians together as a community. Very good responses contrasted in assessing their material by demonstrating that different types of creative expression suit different communities or occasions better and therefore the claim that music is significant is not justifiable.

Weaker responses merely offered a brief description of a 'musical' approach to worship rather than 'assess' the significance of 'the role of music'.

Q03a Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. (10)

There were many excellent and, indeed, outstanding answers to this question. Many showed detailed knowledge of Moltmann's arguments.

Many responses demonstrated a good ability to not only explain and evaluate Moltmann's key points but also offer some critical analysis to further elucidate the arguments being discussed. Some structured their answers effectively by demonstrating that for Moltmann the sacrifice of Jesus holds profound significance as a revelation not only for what God has done for man, but more particularly, of who the

God is that is revealed in the event of the cross. Very good answers clarified that Moltmann portrays the sacrifice of Jesus as a dialectic between Father, Son, and Spirit and that for Moltmann the suffering of God is an 'historical event' in that both the Father and the Son suffer.

Disappointingly some weaker responses merely regurgitated the passage without clarifying any of the ideas of the extract and thus scored low marks as a consequence.

Q03b Analyse the view that God suffers in and through Jesus. (20)

The better answers picked out the salient points of Moltmann's view; many identified that Moltmann advocated that God does suffer because 'whoever is capable of love is also capable of suffering' which contrasts with previous teaching that God cannot change or suffer as espoused by Weinandy and his argument that a God who is impassible is more loving and compassionate than a suffering God; that Moltmann denies God suffers passively but argues that God suffers through voluntarily opening himself to outside influences because of his full and free 'love'. Very good answers made some insightful points such as Molymann's belief that God suffers as the Son who is abandoned and dies, or gives himself up, for God's love of humanity and that he suffers as the Father who gives up and loses his Son out of God's love for humankind. Strong responses also identified the aspect of Moltmann's view in that he claimed that God suffers in the Spirit who is the 'giving up', the Spirit of abandonment and self-giving love and thus the suffering of God is a Trinitarian event, both the Father and the Son suffer but experience suffering in different ways and the Spirit proceeds from this event which is precipitated by love. Barth and Hick featured effectively as part of some of the more evaluative responses.

Weak answers only offered a general discussion about the crucifixion as God suffering without engaging with Moltmann's view specifically.

Q04 Evaluate the claim that science has made the Christian interpretation of the universe irrelevant. (30)

This question saw a wide range of responses. There was very good use of scholarship in the best answers and many answers revealed candidates' detailed knowledge and included analysis of the ideas of relevant material such as the fact that many cosmologists contend that there is good reason to think science will ultimately arrive at a complete understanding of the universe and therefore leave no grounds for a Christian interpretation thus rendering it irrelevant; some good responses argued that a complete scientific theory accounts for everything in the universe and therefore

it does not need an external explanation in the same way that specific things within the universe need external explanations.

Darwin's theory of evolution has raised challenges to the biblical creation account of the universe and therefore undermines and/or replaces the relevance of religious belief in God as creator; however, the advance of science over recent decades has revealed powerful new evidence that life and the universe are the product of intelligent design, and therefore this supports the view that science affirms a religious interpretation of the universe.

Pleasingly, some good responses focused on the precise demands of the question and demonstrated how the symbiotic relationship of Christianity and science was acknowledged with some candidates offering a discussion of science and Christianity in their response that was not simply antagonistic.

Weaker candidates focused on the view that science had replaced religion without evaluating why, how and consequences arising from the alleged displacement or simply offered an antagonistic view of science and Christianity