



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Religious Studies (8RS0)
Paper 4B

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Introduction

The general understanding of this paper is improving year on year. The candidates who did well demonstrated a personal engagement with the concepts and were also able to develop their responses well. However, there were some candidates who, although they demonstrated knowledge, did not fully articulate this in order to show understanding.

Once again, this year exam technique has improved noticeably with fewer candidates failing to attempt some of the questions. However, time management is still an issue, and a sizeable number of candidates clearly ran out of time on the final question Q04(b) and thus lost the opportunity to gain marks.

Better responses were able to establish relevance and this in turn enabled examiners to identify why a particular point had been made. Good candidates clearly reflected on issues, rather than merely learning them, thus providing thoughtful insights. In doing so, they were able to offer effective arguments. Successful candidates were consistent throughout the paper in demonstrating sound knowledge and understanding.

Weaker candidates failed to develop their answers beyond mere description. A significant number of responses for questions Q02, Q03 and Q04(b) read simply as unconnected lists of facts learned, without any demonstration of why the points mentioned might be relevant. Poorly focused responses merely outlined ideas, with a few generalised assertions in the final paragraph.

Q01 Explore key ideas about the modern view that God suffers through Jesus. (8)

Moltmann featured in most of the good responses with candidates offering knowledge and understanding of Moltmann's argument that the suffering of God is the direct consequence of God's decision and willingness to suffer. Very good answers also offered a contrast with Weinandy's argument that a God who is impassible is more loving and compassionate than a suffering God.

Weak answers only offered a basic acknowledgement of the crucifixion as God suffering.

Q02 Assess the importance of the Bible's role as a source of authority. (9)

This question received a range of relevant responses in that many candidates offered a variety of considerations about the 'Bible's role as a source of authority'. These included that the Bible was inerrant, infallible, contained the word of God, a compendium of various authors' views, a historical record, a bunch of fairy tales, contained errors etc.

It was expected, and became evident, that answers demonstrated that the Bible arose in an assortment of historical and cultural contexts and contained diverse literary forms: prose, poetry, genealogies, laws, psalms, proverbs, history, philosophy, prophecy, letters, etc. Some argued that Christians believed that the Bible is more than just a book written/compiled by humans, but it is the inspired and authoritative word of God. Some were able to discuss that inspiration means that the Bible is not just a record of religious events or individual experiences of God, but the Bible is God's self-revelation and one of the methods used by God to communicate with human beings and thus a valid source of authority. Equally many claimed that the Bible is just a work of fiction or a collection of myths and fables. Some very good candidates discussed various hermeneutical approaches to understanding the Bible.

Weaker candidates failed to grasp the intent of the question and disappointingly petered out weakly after a few lines. Some argued that errors in the Bible or differences between the Old and New Testaments made it unlikely to be the word of God and left it at that.

Q03 Assess the implications for Christians of their belief in God as personal. (9)

This was largely very well-answered with responses that were focused on the demands of the question. Buber's I-You relationship between two active subjects/persons approach featured heavily along with the relationship aspect of God being personal. Some good answers were able to explore the relevant attributes and characteristics of God that are reflected in a personal way such as love, father etc and these were explained well. Some top responses offered the contrast of anthropomorphising God thus arguing that God as personal is merely a projection of human self-centred longing.

Some candidates' responses at this level tended to offer basic material on communication along the lines of 'prayer' is the way God is personal. Similarly, the presence of the Holy Spirit was identified as being personal. God being personal was seen in creation by some but not developed effectively.

Q04a Explore the role of music in Christian worship. (8)

Most candidates managed to show an understanding of music in the Liturgy with Augustine featuring often with the quote 'he who sings prays twice'. Good responses reflected knowledge of Gregorian chant, Taize, gospel choirs etc as well as some of the current songs and approaches to music in modern day worship such as 'Hillsong'; Pentecostal/Charismatic styles of music used in Christian worship were prevalent in many answers.

Weaker candidates merely offered a brief description of a 'musical' approach to worship with the Pentecostal/Charismatic favoured by many rather than 'assess' 'the role of music'.

Q04b Analyse the significance of creative expression for Christians. (20)

Solid answers offered clear understanding of the question and focused on 'significance'; many were able to demonstrate that creative expression is significant because it can play an essential part for many in Christian devotion; some were able to identify 'significance' in respect of doctrines/beliefs within Christianity, eg nativity/incarnation, crucifixion/atonement, resurrection/life after death etc.

Weaker responses offered merely descriptive material about creative expression in particular Da Vinci's Last Supper being a popular example, or the Creation of Adam fresco painted in the Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo; simple descriptive material about the 'cross' or the 'Madonna and baby'; some offered material used for 4A without developing it further and contextualising it with creative expression generally.

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Take time and care to consider the precise demands of the question by engaging with the relevant trigger words such as '**assess**' and '**analyse**'
- Make use of scholars to support the argument being made and not aimlessly dropped into the answer
- Candidates should try and come to a judgement or take a position in the conclusion
- Candidates need to ensure effective time management, so they do not run out of time before completing Q04(b) and consequently the potential to earn 20 marks
- Select relevant examples to support the points being made.

