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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies A

Paper 1 Study of Religion

1B Christianity

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Introduction

Paper details GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies Religious Studies A Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Study of Religion Option 1B – Christianity

The paper contributes to 50% of the overall award. The assessment consists of four questions and candidates must answer all four questions. The details of the assessment content are provided in the specification. Centres are to use this, rather than other published resources when planning the course content.

This area of study comprises a study in-depth of Christianity as a lived religion in the United Kingdom and throughout the world.

There are four sections:

- Beliefs and Teachings
- Practices
- Sources of Wisdom and Authority
- Forms of Expression Ways of Life

Candidates had studied Christianity within the context of the wider British society. Please note:

AO stands for 'Assessment Objective'

SPaG stands for 'Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar'

Question one

1a Outline three Christian beliefs about what happens after death.

This referred to the specification

1.6* Christian eschatology: divergent **Christian teachings about life after death**, including the nature and significance of resurrection, judgment, heaven, and hell and purgatory, with reference to the 39 Articles of Religion and Catholic teachings; how beliefs about life after death are shown in the Bible, including reference to 2 Corinthians 5:1–10 and divergent understandings as to why they are important for Christians today.

The majority of candidates answered this well. Candidates lost marks by listing in one sentence hell, heaven and purgatory.

Examiner tip:

Candidates should write in three sentences to outline rather than list their answer.

1b Explain two ways the omnipotence and benevolence of God are challenged by the problem of evil and suffering.

This referred to the specification

1.7 The problem of evil/suffering and a loving and righteous God: the problems it raises for Christians about the nature of God, including reference to omnipotence and benevolence, including Psalm 103; **how the problem may cause believers to question their faith or the existence of God**; the nature and examples of natural suffering, moral suffering.

Candidates on b questions should give two developed reasons. The majority of candidates responded well to this question. Candidates who did not do so well could explain the problem but did not link it to how this was a challenge to the omnipotence and benevolence of God.

1c Explain two beliefs about Jesus found in the Nicene Creed. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

This referred to the specification

1.1 The Trinity: the nature and significance of the **Trinity as expressed in the Nicene Creed**; the nature and significance of the oneness of God; the nature and significance of each of the Persons individually, including reference to Matthew 3:13–17; how this is reflected in Christian worship and belief today.

Candidates on c questions should give two developed reasons, and one reason should include a reference to a source of wisdom. Candidates had a mixed response to this question. The best responses quoted from the Nicene Creed things said about Jesus and explained them. The weaker responses did not refer to the Nicene Creed but listed beliefs about Jesus.

1d “Salvation can only be achieved by living a good life.” Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Christian teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

This referred to the specification

1.5 **The nature and significance of salvation** and the role of Christ within salvation: law, sin, grace and Spirit, the role of Christ in salvation, including John 3:10–21 and Acts 4:8–12; the nature and significance of atonement within Christianity and its link to salvation.

The majority of candidates did well in answering this question, they compared salvation being free for all because of Jesus' death to the demands of the parable of the sheep and goats. Some candidates were distracted by the living a good life and discussed what made a good life and what did not.

Question two

2a:

Outline three ways Christians respond to teachings about charity.

This referred to the specification

2.8 The role and importance of the Church in the worldwide community: how and why it works for reconciliation and the problems faced by the persecuted Church; divergent **Christian responses to teachings about charity**, including 1 Corinthians 13 and Matthew 25:31–46; the work of Christian Aid, what it does and why.

Most candidates did well on answering this question listing things Christians do for others and charities. Some candidates listed the teachings rather than giving the response to them.

2b:

Explain two roles of the Church in the worldwide community.

This referred to the specification

2.8 The role and importance of the Church in the worldwide community: how and why it works for reconciliation and the problems faced by the persecuted Church; divergent Christian responses to teachings about charity, including 1 Corinthians 13 and Matthew 25:31–46; the work of Christian Aid, what it does and why.

Candidates on b questions should give two developed reasons. Most candidates seemed not to know about the Church in the worldwide community and responded with things churches do for the poor. Those candidates that did do well responded with examples of work for reconciliation and the persecuted Christians around the world.

2c:

Explain two things pilgrims do in Jerusalem.

This referred to the specification

2.4 Pilgrimage: the nature, history and purpose of pilgrimage, including interpretations of Luke 2:41–43; the significance of the places people go on pilgrimage; divergent Christian teachings about whether pilgrimage is important for Christians today, with

specific reference to Catholic and Protestant understandings; **the activities associated with, and significance of, Jerusalem**, Iona, Taize and Walsingham.

Candidates on c questions should give two developed reasons, and one reason should include a reference to a source of wisdom. The majority of candidates answered this question well. Some candidates were awarded marks for generic things that people do on pilgrimage for example praying. However, very few students were able to refer to a source of wisdom.

2d:

“Celebrating Easter is more important than celebrating Christmas.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Christian teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

This referred to the specification

2.5 Christian religious celebrations: the nature and history of Christian festivals in the church year, including **Christmas and Easter**; the significance of celebrating Advent and Christmas; the significance of celebrating Holy Week and Easter, with reference to interpretations of 1 Corinthians 15:12–34.

The majority of students answered this question confidently, comparing Easter and Christmas and referring to the secular aspects of each as a distraction from the religious celebration. The new d mark scheme allowed candidates to gain higher marks.

Question three

3a:

Outline three ways Christians use the Bible.

This referred to the specification

3.1 The development and structure of the Bible and its unity as the Word of God: Old Testament: law, history, prophets, writings; and New Testament: gospels, letters; divergent interpretations of the authority of the Bible; the Bible as the literal Word of God, the inspired Word of God, source of guidance and teaching, including 2 Timothy 3:16 and Dei Verbum Chapter 3; **the implications of these understandings for Christians today.**

The majority of candidates answered this question well. Very few candidates could not give three examples of how the Bible is used.

3b:

Explain two ways in which the leaders in the Church support and interact with one another.

This referred to the specification

3.7 Leaders and leadership in the Church: the laity, ministers (priests/vicars/pastors), bishops and the pope; the roles and significance of each, including Ephesians 4:11–12 and Lumen Gentium Chapters 4 and 5; **divergent ways in which the leaders support and interact with one another** in different denominations; divergent understandings of the importance of each of these leaders in different Christian traditions.

Candidates on b questions should give two developed reasons. Candidates answering this question tried to give more elaborate answers than were needed and confused the question to ask about the roles of the laity, ministers (priests/vicars/pastors), bishops and the pope. Candidates who wrote that they talk to each other; work together, have meetings and send letters were awarded the marks.

3c:

Explain two important events in the development of the Church. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

This referred to the specification

3.6 The growth and **development of the Church**: the establishment, development and growth of the Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches; changes in the Church as the Body of Christ, including interpretations of 1 Corinthians 12, the Filioque controversy and the Reformation; and divergent understandings of the significance of the development of diverse denominations within the Church today.

Candidates on c questions should give two developed reasons, and one reason should include a reference to a source of wisdom. The majority of candidates answered this well referring to the Filioque controversy and the Reformation. Candidates struggled to supply a source of wisdom for their answers.

3d:

“Showing forgiveness to others is the best way to follow Jesus’ example.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Christian teachings
- refer to different Christian points of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

This referred to the specification

3.4 Jesus as the Word of God (including John 1) and a role model: beliefs and teachings about Jesus as the Word of God; divergent understandings of his role in modelling practices, including Mark 8:34–38; the divergent implications of **Jesus’ example in showing love for others, forgiveness**, servanthood, reconciliation and social justice, and in establishing the Kingdom of God, the significance of these beliefs for Christians today.

Candidates answered this question by referring to Jesus’ action of forgiveness during his life and death and compared it to what Christians should do today. Some candidates missed the part of the question where it is said ‘refer to different Christian points of view’. The new d mark scheme allowed for higher marks to be awarded.

Question 4

4a:

Outline three reasons why there may be paintings within a church.

This referred to the specification

4.1 The meaning and significance of paintings and drawings within Christianity with reference to two specific pieces and Catechism of the Catholic Church 2502–2503: the way these are used to express belief by the artist and those who observe the art, **and the divergent ways in which paintings and drawings may be used in church** and other settings.

Most candidates could give three reasons why a painting would be in a church.

4b:

Explain two reasons why drama is used in churches.

This referred to the specification

4.5 The meaning and significance of drama: mystery plays, passion plays. The way drama is used to express belief and events, including, for example Matthew 26–28, and the divergent ways in which drama may be used in church and other settings.

Candidates on b questions should give two developed reasons. The majority of candidates were able to give two developed reasons why drama is used in churches, using examples such as nativity plays. There were some examples of street drama which could not be awarded, as they were not in a church.

4c:

Explain two purposes of icons within Christian worship.

This referred to the specification

4.2 The divergent meaning, significance, and **purpose of icons within Christianity:** specific reference to the use of icons within Orthodox Christianity and in denominations that may reject their use; the way icons are used to express belief and as a focus for devotion, and the divergent ways in which they may be used in church and other settings.

Candidates on c questions should give two developed reasons, and one reason should include a reference to a source of wisdom. Candidates are still confused about what an icon is and referred to generic paintings. Many candidates understood the significance of them as a route for prayers. Very few candidates were able to give a source of wisdom.

4d:

“The best way to express belief is through symbolism and imagery.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against. In your response you must:

- refer to Christian teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

This referred to the specification

4.4 The purpose and **use of symbolism and imagery** in religious art: the Cross, including reference to Ephesians 2:10–19, fish, and symbols of the four evangelists. The

way this symbolism is used to express belief, and the divergent ways in which it may be used in church and other settings.

The better responses here used the ideas of symbolism and imagery from within a piece of artwork and explained the way belief was expressed through it. The majority of candidates wrote about symbols within Christianity and the way they were used to express belief. Overall candidates did well with this question despite the different approaches.

Paper Summary

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

- Do not attach extra sheets to your examination paper. Write within the scannable pages using the blank spaces
- When answering the (a) items use three full sentences
- The source of wisdom offered to support answers in (c) items must be relevant to the question and support the reason given
- The (d) items ask for evaluation after considering the evidence. The higher grades are achieved if the evidence/reason given is 'considered' or appraised for its value as an argument towards deciding the evaluation
- On (d) items the bullet points indicate the viewpoints that can be awarded in the answer
- Candidates should read the questions carefully, and answer the question asked fully
- Candidates should attempt every question.