



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies A

Paper 3 Philosophy & Ethics

3B Christianity

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Introduction

The paper contributes to 25% of the overall award. The assessment consists of two questions, candidates must answer both questions. There are two sections: Arguments for the Existence of God; Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century. 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 paper allows an in-depth study of Christianity within the United Kingdom, focussing on its beliefs and teachings. The unit engages the interest of candidates, as it addresses many Christian beliefs and teachings in addition to some issues affecting young people today. The standard of candidate responses was similar to last year. Candidates' knowledge and understanding of the specification content was demonstrated well, however, candidates need to be fully prepared to evaluate and appraise arguments on the (d) questions.

Question one

Outline three features of a religious upbringing which may lead someone to believe in God.

1.8 Religious upbringing: Christian teachings about raising children to believe in God, including reference to Proverbs 22:6; features of a Christian upbringing and why they may lead to belief in God; Christian responses to non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments about why a religious upbringing may result in a rejection of God's existence.

Candidates were required to give three sentences each containing a feature of a religious experience. A list can only be awarded 1 mark. The majority of candidates gave a full mark response to this question, demonstrating knowledge of what the features are of a religious upbringing.

1b Explain two beliefs about the nature of a religious experience.

1.4 Christian attitudes towards religious experiences and their use as a philosophical argument for the existence of God: **the nature of a religious experience** and why it might be regarded as revelation, including reference to Exodus 3; Christian responses to non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments that religious experiences do not provide proof that God exists.

Candidates are expected to give two developed reasons. Many candidates gave excellent descriptions of the nature of a religious experience. Where some candidates did not do so well they gave examples of a religious experience rather than describing the nature of them.

1c Explain two things the cosmological argument may show about the nature of God. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

1.7 Cosmological argument: the cosmological argument for the existence of God and its use by Christians as a philosophical argument for the existence of God; divergent understandings about **what the cosmological argument shows about the nature of God** for Christians, including Thomas Aquinas' First Three Ways of showing God's existence; Christian responses to non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments against the cosmological argument as evidence for the existence of God.

Candidates are required to give two developed reasons with reference to a source of wisdom. Candidates were able on this question to describe the cosmological argument, however, only a minority could relate it to the nature of God. Most candidates struggled to give a source of wisdom.

1d "Visions are nothing more than hallucinations."

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

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

1.2 Visions as proof of the existence of God: the nature and importance of visions for Christians; biblical and non-biblical examples of visions, including Genesis 15 and Matthew 17:1–13; reasons why they might lead to belief in the existence of God and Christian responses to non-religious arguments (including atheist and Humanist) which maintain that visions are hallucinations and provide no proof that God exists; divergent understandings of what visions show about the nature of God for Christians.

The question was answered well. The majority of candidates could give a good for and against for the statement and referred to non-religious points of view.

2 (a) Outline three Christian attitudes towards sexual relationships outside of marriage.

2.2 Christian teachings about the nature and importance of sexual relationships: divergent Christian teachings about sexual relationships; **Christian attitudes towards sexual relationships outside of marriage** and same-sex sexual relationships, including interpretations of 1 Corinthians 6:7–20; divergent Christian and nonreligious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to sexual relationships, including the acceptance of sexual relationships outside marriage and same-sex sexual relationships and Christian responses to them.

The majority of candidates could give three attitudes towards sexual relationships outside of marriage. The stronger answers included sex before marriage as well as extra marital sex.

2b b) Explain two reasons why support from the local parish is important for Christian families today.

2.4 Support for the family in the local parish: how and why the local church community tries to support families, through family worship (including Matthew 19:13–14), rites of passage, classes for parents, counselling and groups for children (including Sunday schools); **the importance of the support of the local parish for Christians today.**

The question was asking about the importance of the support of the local parish for Christians today not why the local parish supported families. Some candidates did not understand the question. Most candidates could list the ways the parish supported families and were awarded marks.

2c(c) Explain two Christian responses to non-religious attitudes to cohabitation. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

2.1 The importance and purpose of marriage for Christians: Christian teachings about the significance of marriage in Christian life; the purpose of marriage for Christians, including Mark 10:6–9; divergent Christian and **non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to the importance of marriage in society, including the sanctity of marriage, a lack of importance, cohabitation and Christian responses to these attitudes.**

This question was answered well by the majority of candidates, some candidates were able to identify the non-religious attitudes and give a Christian response but did not develop the response so were limited in the number of marks that could be awarded.

d) “The Church does not discriminate because of gender.”

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.

2.8 Christian teachings about gender prejudice and discrimination: Christian opposition to gender prejudice and discrimination, including Galatians 3:23–29; examples of Christian opposition to gender prejudice and discrimination; divergent Christian attitudes to gender differences, including the role of women in the Church, prejudice and discrimination and Christian responses to them.

Time seemed to be an issue for this question as many candidates did not finish their answers. The majority of candidates understood this question to be about the role of women in the church and how this matched with teachings about gender prejudice and discrimination. A minority of candidates misunderstood it to mean people whose gender was changing, or those who identify as the opposite sex. The question asked for different Christian points of view and some candidates referred to non-religious points of view which could not be credited.

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 asks for evaluation, after considering the evidence. The higher grades are achieved if the evidence/reasons given is 'considered' or appraised for its value as an argument as part of 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