

Examiners' Report  
June 2018

GCE Religious Studies 9RS0 4B

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# Introduction

This was the first examination of Christianity as part of the new GCE A Level Religious Studies specification. Admirable work was clearly evident from many candidates and the standard of responses, generally, was pleasing and reflected a range of skills employed across all the questions. Candidates and teachers embraced the demands of the new specification in terms of the assessment criteria. It was a joy to read the responses from candidates and these clearly reflected the tremendous effort that centres expended over the two years of delivering the new specification.

The examination paper's compulsory questions proved to be accessible and yet at the same time, challenging for candidates. Candidates who could write succinctly had the prospect of reaching marks at the top of the band levels indicated in the assessment criteria, especially for questions 3(b) and 4.

There are 80 marks available across three sections. Section A consists of two, open-response questions with a total of 20 marks available; Section B is a two part structured essay question derived from material contained in the Anthology and has 30 marks available; Section C has one 30 mark essay question providing an opportunity for an extended response that enables candidates to offer sustained analysis and evaluation. The paper's content is focused on an in-depth study of Christianity in terms of Religious beliefs, values and teachings; Sources of wisdom and authority; Practices that shape and express religious identity; Social and historical developments; Works of scholars; Religion and society.

Most candidates were usually consistent throughout the paper in demonstrating sound knowledge and understanding such as:

Question 1 - ability to explore the various aspects that contribute to the concept of 'pluralism' and most accurately referenced Hick's approach

Question 2 - 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

Question 3a - was a positive experience for candidates as it was generally felt by the examiners to be an approachable and accessible text that was universally well engaged with; the **clarification of issues** identified in the text was sound as was the ability to understand the extract commensurate with the quality of the response

Question 3(b) - candidates clearly enjoyed getting to grips with McGrath's arguments

Question 4 - some excellent evaluation evident of the significance of modern views on the Trinity for Christianity, with some of the better responses incorporating the perspectives or positions of relevant scholars into their treatment and making explicit links to either Philosophy of Religion or Religion and Ethics

Less successful candidates lacked the ability to develop their answers, especially in questions 3(b) and 4. The following weaknesses were evidenced:

Question 1 – some candidates struggled with the definition of the term 'pluralism' and confused it with 'multi-faith society' whilst others seemed to struggle to write enough material solely on pluralism, and instead focused on the differences between pluralism, inclusivism and exclusivism

Question 2 – weaker candidates focused on the view that science had replaced religion without evaluating why, how and consequences arising or simply offered an antagonistic view of science and Christianity

Question 3(a) - weaker answers relied on simply re-stating or paraphrasing the extract rather than developing and applying the key points; a tendency of some candidates was to write a summary of the extract point by point over the course of a page and a half rather than clarify the points identified

Question 3(b) - weaker responses focused heavily on Dawkins' views in this question rather than McGrath's and thus limited the marks that were awarded

Question 4 – weaker candidates struggled with the evaluation of the issues, not going into enough depth and analysis; some struggled with the concept in the question, only restating that the trinity is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, without linking to modern views and/or making the 'link' to either Philosophy of Religion or Religion and Ethics

Candidates need to understand that examiners cannot make assumptions about what they are writing, they can only mark what candidates have actually written. It should be noted that candidates need to understand what the questions are asking for in terms of the trigger words 'explore, assess, clarify, analyse and evaluate' in order to offer responses that achieve high marks.

Centres for GCE Religious Studies 9RS0/4B need to ensure the whole of the specification is taught because there are no 'options' or 'choices' of questions available and so candidates could be asked a question from anywhere within the specification.

The remainder of this Examiner Report will focus on each individual question and specific examples with the aim of highlighting areas of good practice which can be used to help prepare candidates for future 9RS0/4B examinations.

## **Question 1**

Overall many candidates answered this well and made effective use of the scholar John Hick. Answers reflected a sound understanding of Hick's ideas with some even able to explain influences on Hick, including his life experiences (his move from being evangelical when a student at university through to the influence his philosophical training had that led to him becoming sceptical about various aspects of Christianity) and Kant's distinction between noumena and phenomena. Some explored the argument that other religions were as equally valid in their distinct paths to God as that of Christianity. Some responses pointed out the contradictory issue of a supposedly omnibenevolent God sending adherents of other religious persuasions such as Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists etc to hell while at the same time saving Christians just because they believed in Jesus. Good responses contrasted pluralism and different paths to God with exclusivism.

Centres could remind candidates that they should provide developed responses rather than bullet points or single sentences to demonstrate their understanding.

1 Explore key ideas associated with pluralism.

Pluralism is the view that all religions of the world (Christianity, Islam) have equally valid interpretations of God; they are all authentic.

John Hick is the most passionate advocate of this view. Hick draws on Immanuel Kant's concept that we ~~have~~ never have directly knowable knowledge (of God) which Kant called the 'thing in itself' - our view of the thing in itself is coloured by our subjective experiences. In the same way, Hick stated that we can never know 'The Real' as religions are simply human responses to what we believe we desire to be - essentially, Hick says that religions are coloured by the historical and culture backgrounds of the writers' and therefore Scripture (understanding) is a human document.

Hick argued that Christianity needed to step away from the dogma that Christianity ~~was~~ is at the centre and all other religions ~~revolve~~ revolved around it; we needed to move from a Christocentric approach to a Theocentric approach - describing this change as a 'Copernicanism revolution'. Hick's views can be described as a 'global theology' because it attempts to draw together ideas of all religions and allow for meaningful interfaith dialogue. (Total for Question 1 = 8 marks)



A confident response that engages well with John Hick's material. The attention to detail in terms of the influence Kant had on Hick and the role of the 'Real' in Hick's thinking has been handled very well. Reference to and understanding of Hick's concept of 'global theology' reflects a well informed and competent candidate. The material is clearly detailed and directly answers the question as set. Deservedly this candidate achieved the full 8 marks available for this question.



If a candidate decides to offer a narrow response by focusing on one aspect or scholar (as in this case) then they should do as this answer has done and demonstrate very clear evidence of depth with the material given and thus present a full account to enable achieving the higher marks.

## 1 Explore key ideas associated with pluralism.

Pluralism is the belief that all religions are equal and should be treated equally. Pluralism comes from the concept of pluralism and diversity within religions as there are many different aspects such as exclusive and inclusive that are included in this. Secondly, pluralism is the belief that all religions should co-exist as there should be no dominant religion. For example, a non-pluralist approach would be exclusivism which is considered as a Christian only religion that would contrast with the pluralism approach as it does not accept other religions. Furthermore, pluralism allows religions to be accepted in society which ever belief people have. It accepts all forms of religious beliefs such as Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and many more which show that pluralism is used to unite religions and not discriminate against each other. Finally, pluralism allows people to share their belief without being told they are wrong as it lets people practice their religion and not be ashamed of it. A concept of exclusivism would be that you had to believe in Christianity to go to heaven, whereas pluralism states that you don't. A famous quotation that outlines this is "In my father house there are many rooms" meaning that all religions can exist together.





This is a good example of a candidate who has offered a wide range of relevant material on Pluralism without specifically mentioning John Hick and in doing so has managed to achieve the highest mark available for this question. The material has been handled confidently with the 'explore' aspect of the question explicitly evident along with accurate and detailed knowledge and understanding present. Mark awarded Level 3/ 8 marks.

## **Question 2**

This question was clearly well done by the majority of candidates and nearly all comfortably managed to get full marks for AO1 content. AO2 saw some quality 'assessing' of both scientific and Christian interpretations reflecting how well informed candidates were in terms of both scientific and religious arguments. A range of varied and relevant material was employed including historical and contextual details of Galileo and the Copernican revolution; differing interpretations (literal and metaphorical for example) of Genesis; the Big Bang and evolution; Dawkins and even Behe and Gregor Mendel featured in some responses. There was some pleasing use of more sophisticated ideas such as different aspects of the universe that might require different models of explanation in the 21st Century. There was evidence of thoughtful and at times pertinent rebuttals of some of the scientific and religious argumentation along with careful assessment and analysis of scientific theories, for example Behe's irreducible complexity ideas. Some interesting answers clearly demonstrated how science and religion could be on the same path whilst others argued that science confirmed what Christianity had said about the order of creation. There were many that came to the definitive conclusion that science had replaced religion.

A minority of candidates digressed from the demands and intent of the question and gave a discussion on issues arising in a multi-faith society and how if science replaces religion it will cause conflict. Consequently this line of argumentation was not answering the question and therefore hindered achieving the higher marks available.

Overall the quality of arguments offered was high.

Despite significant advances in modern scientific understandings of the Cosmos, it should not be held that scientific ~~interpre~~ findings would, or even could replace Christian interpretations. This is because Christian interpretation deals with fundamentally different issues ~~than~~ <sup>to</sup> science. This hypothesis is illustrated by Stephen J. Gould's theory of 'non-overlapping magisteria', ~~the only~~ which teaches that religion and science hold different domains of expertise and so cannot conflict. This can be seen by the ~~discovery~~ <sup>theorising</sup> of the 'Primal Atom' by George Lemaitre. When Edwin Hubble proved the Big Bang Theory through the discovery of universal expansion star by red shift, Pope Pius XII said that this was science bearing witness to the 'primordial fiat lux'. Science therefore proved Christianity's view of Creation as outlined in Augustine's interpretation of Genesis. Science therefore could not replace this understanding of the Universe as they do not conflict. Science deals with the 'how' of creation, whereas religion deals with the 'why'. The only conflict therefore would occur, when one discipline infringes upon the other such as through fundamentalist interpretations of Genesis which see it as literal truth. This is however, no longer as widely accepted

Christian interpretation, an allegorical view therefore must not be seen as conflicting with science.

There have been examples of scientific-religious conflict in the past, however these must not be seen as science replacing religion. For Galileo's heliocentrism for example, conflicted with religion as the Church subscribed to the contemporary view of geocentrism which was enshrined in the science of the time. <sup>and has since been accepted by the Church.</sup> Likewise Darwinian evolution has been <sup>reconciled</sup> with cosmologies such as the Design Argument through F.R. Tennant's Anthropic Principle (it sees natural selection as evidence of order and regularity). Here too therefore, science does not conflict with religious ideas about ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> existence of God and the Universe. Religion <sup>remains</sup> offers a different distinct purpose to that of scientific explanations of the Universe. It provides a world view and purpose rather than an explanation and therefore cannot ~~replace~~ be replaced by science. Science finds it very hard to find meaning in life <sup>and our reason for existence within the Universe</sup> for example, whereas Augustine teaches us that our purpose is to achieve our telos of eudaimonia through contemplating God: 'our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee'. This is therefore yet another example of the differing ~~but~~ purposes of religion and science, and how they cannot replace each other due to these distinct roles in interpreting and understanding the Universe.



This candidate makes a good start by immediately getting to the intent and demands of the question and indicating the direction intended. Referencing Gould's theory of 'non over-lapping *magisteria*' the response is confident and begins to explore effectively the implication of the theory. The candidate then makes some very effective use of Lemaitre, Hubble and even Pope Pius XII. There is sustained and focused 'assessing' evident as the response engages with whether science replaces Christianity's interpretation of the universe. A wide range of relevant and scholarly material is presented in a lucid and insightful manner in relation to perceived scientific and religious conflict.

This response was undoubtedly worthy of the top mark of 12.



Candidates should be aware that the trigger 'assess' also involves identifying and breaking down and exploring the key elements of a position/concept such as the assumptions or justifications that support it as well as inquiring into the implications of it. To 'assess' can also include why a position is important or not important and not just a listing of strengths and weaknesses.

2 Assess the view that science may replace a Christian interpretation of the universe.

(12)

Ever since the ~~ancient~~ scientific revolution initiated by Copernicus and continued by Galileo, which proved that the ~~old~~ <sup>Ptolemaic</sup> ~~view~~ view of the universe is incorrect, and that the Sun is at the centre of the universe, the validity of the Christian interpretation of the universe has been questioned. This is because the Church's desire to maintain complete authority meant that Galileo was silenced. However, as claimed by Galileo, "the church's job is to tell people how to go to Heaven, not how the Heavens go!"

To some extent, it could be argued that the threat of science replacing a Christian interpretation of the universe is continually present. This is because while the traditional Christian view states that "God created the Heavens and the Earth..." (Genesis 1:1) and the human race came from the loins of Adam, ~~scientific~~ <sup>scientific</sup> developments have rendered this improbable. In particular, the Big Bang theory, arguably proved by the evidence of Red Shift, suggests that God did not create the world, but instead it could be deemed a natural occurrence as a result of <sup>the</sup> expansion and heating of particles. Also, Darwin's theories of evolution and natural selection, which Dawkins described as "blind" and "automatic", arguably eradicates the need for a creator God, and perhaps removes the need for God to control humanity. Also,

modern developments, such as steady state theories and the multi-verse indicate that the universe has always existed, and the universe is self-producing, respectively, thus invalidating the Genesis argument.

Despite this, it can also be argued that the Christian interpretation of the universe, <sup>may</sup> need not be replaced by scientific explanations. This is because of the rejection of infinite regress, which means that the universe has a definite cause. As discussed by Vilenkin, "scientists must face the problem of a cosmic beginning" and, due to God's omnipotence, it is possible that He began the process of creation. Indeed, John Polkinghorne argued that while evolution and natural selection explain the order the universe, God may be involved as the "conductor of the improvised events of the natural world", meaning that the existence of God remains a valid assertion. The scientific belief that there was a definite cause to the universe coheres with the Christian belief that the universe was made ex nihilo (out of nothing) and, as discussed by Tertullian, God <sup>freely</sup> chose to make the ~~world~~ universe, <sup>meaning that the</sup> ~~but of his free~~ description of ~~the~~ the universe as "good" in Genesis is coherent. <sup>Also,</sup> ~~the~~ the Christian belief that God was like a potter working clay (Genesis 2:7) <sup>as pictured</sup> ~~also coheres~~ by Plato, also coheres with the scientific belief that the universe has always existed. Therefore, despite the appeal of science, it is coherent to argue that it may not replace the Christian interpretation of the universe because of the similarities of the two ideas, which ~~also appear to support the other~~.

(Total for Question 2 = 12 marks)



This candidate takes a different approach than the previous exemplar and arrives at a considered conclusion that science may not replace the Christian interpretation of the universe. There is evidence of appropriate use of scholars such as Darwin, Dawkins, Vilenkin, Polkinghorne and even the early church's Tertullian. Starting with Copernicus and Galileo the answer moves through a systematic identification of relevant and, at times, detailed material that pitches the traditional Christian understanding of creation with that of scientific development including steady state theory, evolution, multi-verse approaches etc. This response is an informed and credible attempt to engage with the issues indicated by the question. The answer was awarded the top mark of 12.



### Question 3 (a)

The importance of the trigger word 'clarify' cannot be stressed enough. The question is calling for more than a paraphrase or regurgitation of the extract. What is required are answers that 'clarify', in other words a candidate takes some of the issues contained in the extract and unpacks them by making them easier to understand. This is achieved by explaining them in more detail. This skill was evident in a lot of the responses that examiners saw. However, weaker responses suffered from a lack of explaining the issues from the extract in more detail. It was pleasing to see that many candidates did indeed identify a range of issues from the extract and focused on ideas about 'faith' as demanded by the question. Issues such as the lack of evidence for faith, science disproves the existence of God, religious adherents are deluded, having faith is infantile, faith is a process of non-thinking, faith as a form of evil and faith in a 'God' as irrational etc.

Overall the vast majority of candidates presented answers of a very high quality.

#### 3 (a) Clarify Dawkins's ideas about faith illustrated in this passage.

*You must refer to the passage in your response.*

(10)

Richard Dawkins is an anti-theist, who believes that ~~abhor~~ religion leads to evil, war and general bigotry. In this passage, Dawkins presents the idea that faith is for 'deluded' people. In his book 'The God Delusion', Dawkins outlines his argument that religious believers are 'psychologically needy' and so create God to ~~to~~ satisfy this ~~need~~ neediness.

His argument surrounding the fact that faith 'flies in the face of evidence... even in the teeth of evidence' is that our modern world and science has offered answers that 'disprove' the existence of God. His

metaphor of 'in the teeth' shows that <sup>he believes</sup> faith is irrational, as it has ~~hard~~ nearly been extinguished.

Dawkins also argues that faith is a 'process of non-thinking', thus 'infantile'. He likens faith ~~later~~ in his book, to the belief in Father Christmas or the Tooth Fairy in adult life, as there is little or no evidence for both God and the aforementioned fictional characters. He also argues <sup>in his book</sup> that conditioning children to be brought up with 'God faith' is a form of 'evil', and child abuse, as we are encouraging this 'process of non-thinking' and brain-washing them.

Dawkins frequently uses examples of religious extremists, which could be where he argues that faith is dangerous as 'it requires no justification'. Moreover, McGrath writes that these ideas are 'obsessively repeated', highlighting how strongly he ~~feel~~ feels on the irrationality of faith. Ultimately Dawkins believes that science in our modern world has answered so many of the questions that religion sought to answer thousands of years ago, that ~~to~~ faith in a supreme being and creator is completely unfounded and irrational. Thus, religions

believers are those who have 'lost touch with reality', and are completely 'deluded'.



This candidate, following an opening context-setting sentence, immediately gets to the intent and demand of the question by focusing in on Dawkins' use and perceived understanding of 'faith'. The response is articulate, succinct and at the same time an accurate reflection of Dawkins' position. The candidate makes excellent use of quotes from the extract and makes explicit and implicit reference to other material that is relevant (from the full extract used in the Anthology as well as Dawkins' own writings). The candidate moves seamlessly through a number of salient issues that Dawkins has engaged with and then arrives at a thoughtful and apposite final concluding sentence. Full marks deservedly awarded.

3 (a) Clarify Dawkins's ideas about faith illustrated in this passage.

You must refer to the passage in your response.

(10)

Dawkins holds an absolutist stance that faith is a "delusion". He opens his anthology with his argument about God: he is a "delusion - a psychotic delinquent". The fact that he has capitalised this suggests <sup>that</sup> ~~very~~ he has very strong beliefs that people who have a belief in God are fooling themselves which also has an implication of ~~someone~~ <sup>him causing</sup> mental illness in individuals.

He points out very clearly that God is not "grounded by evidence" and faith is "blind trust... and a process of non-thinking". This implies, unlike science, that ~~the~~ <sup>faith is</sup> subjective which means that it cannot have any a priori or posteriori reasoning which means that if we apply Flew, it would be almost impossible

to falsify which is possibly why Dawkins favours science over religion.

Finally, Dawkins reiterates his position by arguing that those who believe in God are "deluded" and have lost touch with society". This can be seen in his etymology when he says that a belief in religion is like having a belief in the tooth fairy and Santa Claus. This indicates that Dawkins has very strong perspectives that those who believe in religion are childish and are possibly not as evolved as much as those who do not live by faith.

To conclude, although Dawkins' position would be considered very offensive to those who hold a faith, Dawkins believes that faith is none other than a 'delusion' which should be dismissed due to lack of evidence and if that individual were to gain their "touch" back into society.



This response offers a fair summation of the extract. The attention to detail is limited but the candidate has focused on some of the issues identified in the extract and in particular the concept of 'deluded'. The answer is competent and reflects the thrust of the passage but is narrow in terms of 'clarifying' the identified issues. Nevertheless a Level 3 response (8 marks).



Remember this question is only looking for evidence of AO1 material (knowledge and understanding) and so candidates need to ensure they do not offer evaluation at the expense of clarification as this might detract from the overall answer and reduce the potential to attain the very top marks.

### **Question 3 (b)**

There were many excellent and, indeed, outstanding answers to this question. Many showed detailed knowledge of McGrath's arguments and were equally prepared to engage willingly with the material beyond a mere recounting of McGrath's position versus Dawkins. Many responses demonstrated a good ability to not only explain and evaluate McGrath's key points but also offer some critical analysis to further elucidate the arguments being discussed. Some structured their answers effectively by taking each of the points made by Dawkins and immediately explained and developed McGrath's response to that specific point. Successful answers had candidates providing objective and thorough unpacking of the key arguments and the possible issues arising along with evidence of a comprehensive reading/understanding of the anthology. Many candidates arrived at a conclusion derived from the argumentation offered and then took a position in which most agreed with McGrath.

(b) Analyse the strengths of McGrath's arguments in response to Dawkins.

(20)

McGrath gives a holistic criticism to Dawkins ranging from Dawkins' belief that religion (faith) is evil, to Dawkins' memes and how Dawkins claim that religion is "childish" because children grow out of it - just like how children grow out of Santa Clause and The Tooth Fairy (Dawkins' own examples).

Firstly, McGrath argues against Dawkins' claim that faith is evil. McGrath points out to us that Dawkins picks on a very minority of people who become evil due to faith in Scripture - these people, often extremists and fundamentalists, do not accurately represent the whole of the Christian faith. Therefore, here, McGrath would claim that the example of all is not applicable.

This argument of McGrath's is a strength because McGrath effectively outwits Dawkins and suggests to us that faith is not evil on a general whole, those minority who become evil due to faith do not reflect other believers and their beliefs cannot be validly generalised to the rest of Christian practice.

Secondly, McGrath argues passionately about Dawkins' claim that religion is a 'meme' - how religious beliefs are passed on from generation to generation.



through families and is harder to stop than small  
pox. Melbrath's counter here is that, if Dawkins'  
claim that religion is a ~~meme~~ meme, then so too  
would ~~be~~ Dawkinism / Dawkins' atheism because there is  
no ~~a~~ justification, as Melbrath would claim, that  
atheism is superior to Christianity - and atheism can  
also be passed on from generation to generation  
~~to~~ - thus is why it is a meme. I cannot say  
that Melbrath's argument in response to Dawkins is  
a strength because on a personal standpoint, I do  
not see atheism to be a ~~meme~~ meme just as  
religion is, because religion is (in my view), essentially  
an invention of the ~~mind~~ mind; It is an extra element  
to our culture and lives effectively - an 'add on'  
which would otherwise not exist if humans did not -  
this is why religion is a meme. On the other hand  
Dawkins only argues against religion - atheism attempts  
to correct this 'add on' element to our cultural;  
which otherwise would continue to be the way it is  
if humans did not exist (that there is no supernatural  
element), so here, Melbrath's argument is not a  
strength because Dawkins' atheism is not a meme -  
Dawkins only attempts to remove what would be even  
if we ~~we~~ weren't here! Melbrath here makes  
a fundamental mistake in understanding Dawkins'  
concept of a meme.

Thirdly, McGrath argues against Dawkins' claim that religion is ~~childish~~ childish. McGrath gratefully accepts the claim that believing in Santa and fairies is an irrational approach taken by young children as is wishful, comforting thinking. However, McGrath would go on to disagree that the same could be said for religion. McGrath gives the example that, even in adulthood or people entering the autumn years of their lives - continue to experience mystical conversions into Christianity. McGrath gives the example of Anthony Flew - life long atheist (or even anti-theist) some would say, converted into Christianity in his 80's - very old indeed! This shows that Christianity is not merely a childish game. I accept McGrath's claim here, his counter argument is a strength because McGrath effectively shows Dawkins to be wrong in his assumption - we do not see old men converting into believing in Santa but we do see them convert into Christianity, presumably after prolonged periods of thought either through a rational or irrational approach. McGrath's argument is a strength in response to Dawkins because it simply shows that Dawkins was wrong in his assumption too.

It seems to me that McGrath's arguments in

response to Dawkins is overall strong. They effectively show Dawkins' assumptions to be flawed - of course except the idea of memes as analysed.



This answer is focused and well-balanced, providing a detailed, and in places, a critical analysis of arguments from both McGrath's standpoint and that of Dawkins. The candidate demonstrates a good awareness of the range of arguments and criticisms that McGrath engages with. The response is well-organised and structured and the candidate embeds justified mini conclusions within each of the arguments under discussion and in each case takes a position that is derived from the preceding material. A particular strength of this response is that the candidate indicates what they consider to be the strengths from both McGrath and Dawkins and that McGrath is the stronger overall and he '...effectively show[s] Dawkin's assumptions to be flawed - of course except the idea of memes as analysed'. The candidate was awarded full marks.

(b) Analyse the strengths of McGrath's arguments in response to Dawkins.

(20)

McGrath wrote in his book 'The Dawkins Delusion' many responses to the Dawkins' clearly atheistic views on God and McGrath attacked every key point Dawkins referred to including the arguments for the existence of God and the improbability of God.

Firstly Dawkins talks about religious beliefs as deluded as seen in the extract. He calls God in his book 'The God Delusion' a 'pernicious delusion'. Dawkins criticises the way in which religious believers live their lives as shaped by evidence-less views. McGrath responds to this by agreeing that the beliefs are critical and he even refers to a young man who was utterly distraught that McGrath had made him question his atheism after following Dawkins for many years. Although beliefs are critical, it doesn't mean they are deluded, if anything, the fact that beliefs shape lives is evidence for the significance of these beliefs.

This links to R.M. Hare's view of 'bliks' saying religious beliefs are meaningful because they change the lives of people so significantly. This is a strength of McGrath as it is logical to say that if a belief changes the way we live then it must have some significance. Also it is supported by the lives of those who argue that religious language is meaningful because this is therefore

religious people are not deluded. However one would agree with Dawkins and say that just because a belief changes how you live your life it doesn't make it any more factual. For those in his view of beliefs suggested there were insane beliefs himself. Dawkins would argue that religious beliefs are insane beliefs that are purely untrue and are meaningless. How can McGrath decide what is a sane critical view and an insane one?

Another argument McGrath criticises is the view that faith is infantile. Dawkins likens belief in God to a belief in Santa Claus or the Tooth Fairy. Dawkins suggests we should grow out of these beliefs once we can <sup>rationaly</sup> think as intellectual adults. Dawkins also criticises the indoctrination of children and views bringing up children to believe one faith as correct and never question it is a form of child abuse. However, McGrath criticises Dawkins first point with a particularly strong argument; what about all those who come to faith later in life. McGrath himself only became Christian at the age of 21 and McGrath talks about famous atheists like Antony Flew converting to Christianity when he was 40 years old!

This is a strong argument for McGrath as it is evident in the world that not all religious people <sup>are</sup> ~~become~~ religious from a young age and so how does Dawkins justify the idea of religious people being manipulated by adults or children who people become religious when not even living with their parents when they had



reason. Dawkins tried to use reason as a way of enhancing his point that faith is irrational as he said Luther believed faith and reason were incompatible whereas McGrath corrects him. This immediately reduces the validity of the argument as Dawkins is seen to not understand his sources and misuse sources when making points. The fact that McGrath pointed these flaws out is a strength of his as to it is obvious he is ~~considered~~ considered and credible, formulating arguments rather than writing incorrectly and haphazardly.

Finally Dawkins refers to the arguments of the existence of God.

McGrath views Dawkins back - 'The Blind Watchmaker' is the best in print however he believes Dawkins knows science well but misinterprets religion completely. McGrath argues that Dawkins confused a posteriori arguments with a priori ones.

McGrath argues that a posteriori arguments are meant to persuade not to prove and so Dawkins misinterprets this. However you could argue that if an argument is only meant to persuade then it surely doesn't have enough evidence to prove and hence Dawkins is correct in pointing out their flaws.

To conclude, I believe that McGrath's responses were well formulated and considered. I believe the strengths of his argument are his testament to his well considered arguments. The idea that atheism is all child abuse is especially strong as it seems logically paradoxical to say bringing up

a claim with no firm belief is different to another. The lack of invalidating Dawkins claims and vice versa shows a strength in McGrath's study. McGrath is intelligent and considered the formulation superb, which is more than it can be said for Dawkins in the God Delusion.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This is a carefully argued response that demonstrates the candidate's familiarity with the anthology. The candidate has structured it effectively in a coherent and logical manner and illustrated throughout with appropriate quotes from the anthology and beyond (there is some evidence of impressive use of other scholars for eg Hare). Subject specific terminology is precise and used appropriately. It is focused and well-balanced and provides a detailed critical analysis of McGrath's arguments; the candidate identifies key points made by Dawkins and McGrath's treatment of these points and presents them in a thoughtful and, at times, insightful way. The conclusion arrived at reflects the overall reliability of the evidence presented. The answer achieved the maximum marks available.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

A good understanding of what is expected when the trigger word 'analyse' is in the question is important. In light of this when responding to this type of question it can be useful to incorporate the perspective of other scholars/concepts but this must be done in a manner that supports the immediate demands of the question itself. Some candidates will make use of other scholars but then fail to reflect on them in relation to the argument(s) being discussed. Analysis is not 'response by illustration' as candidates fail to actually reflect on them in relation to their own understanding of the material being discussed. Nor is analysis, 'response by association' where the candidate may identify something connected to the issue and describes it accordingly. To analyse is to unpack and deconstruct the salient information.



## **Question 4**

This question was well tackled with the majority of candidates able to give a good account of Barth's and Rahner's contribution to modern thinking on the Trinity. Good candidates were able to demonstrate how both these giants of twentieth century theology stressed the personal aspect of the triune self-communication of God. Many candidates offered a detailed discussion on the pithy adage coined by Rahner 'The "economic" Trinity is the "immanent" Trinity and vice versa'. Some fine responses showed how Rahner and Barth may have differed in their understanding of reason and revelation and yet at the same time both were in agreement in rejecting the traditional approach to trinitarian theology. It was pleasing to see some responses that attempted to link a theology of the Trinity with a range of other issues such as suffering, forgiveness and authority and make connections with liberation and feminist approaches etc, for example, Moltmann on suffering; McFague's feminist thinking of God as Trinity not reinforcing the traditional patriarchal understanding but advocating the subjectivity and personhood of women.

Weaker responses gave an account of the emergence of trinitarian thinking of the Early Church and their creeds such as Nicea. These candidates failed to address all elements of the question and specifically the term 'modern' and consequently did not receive marks at a high level.

Another pleasing aspect was the ability of most candidates to explicitly make sustained links with either Philosophy of Religion or Religion and Ethics.

4 Evaluate the significance of modern views on the Trinity for Christianity.

In your response to this question, you must include how developments in Christianity have been influenced by **one** of the following:

- Philosophy of Religion + religious experience + mod. / post-mod. is modern
- Religion and Ethics. + other

(30)

The Trinity is a highly controversial doctrine that many find difficult to understand. It is thought that many people who believe they understand fully the meaning of the Trinity yet they misinterpret teachings on it. The Trinity means three in one separated into the words 'Tri' meaning a three and 'unity' meaning one. There is much debate over the significance of the Trinity as some view it as actually significant whereas others see it as a way to know God through the world. Modern Theologians have attempted to modernise views on the Trinity to increase its significance. Karl Barth and Karl Rahner were both key scholars who aimed to do this however they interpreted the Trinity in very different ways.

Karl Barth was a modern scholar who viewed the Trinity as being the only way we can know God. He penned a particularly unique quote 'God reveals himself, through himself. He reveals Himself.' This is the idea that through the Trinity the all 3 persons of

The ~~the~~ <sup>God</sup> Trinity are revealed to humanity. Without the Trinity humanity would be deprived of God and His nature. This is significant as it shows how important the Trinity still is in modern society. Karl Barth is noted to have re-emphasised the Trinity's significance in a modern age and allowing a new age of humanity to appreciate the works of the Trinity. However, some would argue that the Trinity is simply an outdated concept that isn't necessary to fully reveal God. Scholars such as William Paley would argue that nature is the component <sup>God</sup> uses to ~~see~~ reveal Himself ~~through~~ <sup>to</sup> us. St Thomas Aquinas also advocated for the use of nature in God's revelation. Other scholars of the like, would argue that perhaps the natural world is a lot more reliable of a method of revealing God than the complicated doctrine of the Trinity. ~~But~~

Another contradictory idea against Barth's view on the Trinity is the idea of tradition and using God's special revelation in things such as the Bible and religious experience. This links to the religious experience topic in Philosophy of Religion as it is thought by many that the Holy Spirit, a person of the Trinity is involved in religious experiences. This shows God revealing Himself through the spirit through these experiences. The idea of William

Jones and his mystical approach and his characteristic of ineffability links to the idea of the Holy Spirit filling people with God's Grace and it is indescribable in ordinary language. Also the Holy Spirit is seen in Pentecost where it allowed Jesus' disciples to speak in many tongues as Jones' Noetic Quality was observed.

However some view the need for Barth's Trinitarian views to be unnecessary and confusing. Scholars often suggest that an emphasis on ~~revelation~~ <sup>the</sup> natural world and on God's special revelation is much more important than an outdated concept even after the modernisation of Barth.

Another modern approach to ~~describe~~ the Trinity was established by Karl Rahner. Karl Rahner differentiates between two forms of the Trinity; the immanent and the economic. The immanent Trinity is the one in Rahner's view that is beyond human understanding and is outside of the earthly realm. This view of the Trinity is coherent with views by Pseudo-Dionysius that humans are limited in our understanding as we are mortal and sinful. The economic Trinity in Rahner's view is the Trinity that is ~~beyond~~ known by humans through salvation and other events in the world. He believed that these separate Trinities were both of the same Godhead not separate ones and he believed the immanent Trinity was the economic Trinity.

and vice versa. In terms of significance in a modern age for Christianity, I think that Estner's view can be seen as being significant in that he recognises human inability to know everything. In his immanent Trinity, Estner recognises that it is beyond our experience but doesn't ~~to~~ undermine its importance still in the life of Christians. Scholars all though the ages have often deemed that humanity can understand these other worldly things through reason and inspiration etc however Estner is recognising our limitations. It therefore suggests that this modern view on the Trinity is significant as it allows Christians to view the Trinity in a different way than ever before. They can view it as something highly incomprehensible yet guiding and loving. We can never fully understand it but we can be guided by it and our lives can be fulfilled with it. However a criticism of Estner's view is the idea of humanity never fully knowing the Trinity. As much as it has its advantages, the idea of a doctrine that will never be understood seems futile. Estner suggests in his Treatise on Trinity that even eschatologically we will never truly know the Trinity. If this is the case, the whole premise of the Trinity seems flawed and the significance for Christians diminishes. Many Christians believe that they will be truly enlightened at Judgement Day of all these ~~various~~ unanswered questions but if the concept of the Trinity

in Rahner's view is never ~~going~~<sup>going</sup> to be explained or understood. Thus it is surely insignificant for the life of rational Christians.

Linking back to Barth and his <sup>modern</sup> view on the Trinity, he is a firm believer in the Trinity being the tool to reveal God to us. The Father (the revealing God) is revealed to us by the Son (the self-revelation of the father) and our ~~we~~ <sup>we</sup> are able to understand this through the spirit. However in Barth's book Church Dogmatics, he seems to suggest that there was a time when humanity was deprived of the revelation of God when Jesus was not on earth. This criticises the significance of the Trinity today as it suggests an idea of unfairness or injustice that somehow those after Jesus are more important than those before Jesus. This seems immoral and therefore lessens the significance of the Trinity in modern day because of those without the knowledge of it.

Also there is the traditional idea of a Trinity which undermines the significance of modern views. Many scholars today believe that the traditional models of the Trinity are still significant in modern Christianity just like traditional views on Atonement, Salvation and Original sin are significant. Traditional views like ~~Perichoresis~~ Perichoresis, view that the Father and Son and Holy Spirit are involved fully in the work of the other; the idea of mutual interpenetration; each person

penetrates the works of the other; A community of being. This seems more significant than the modern view of the Trinity as it seems to be comforting for Christians knowing that all 3 persons are directly linked to each in the world today, perhaps even in our own lives and so this lifts the significance of a traditional view of the Trinity over modern ones. However Perichoresis suggests nothing about the Trinity revealing anything to us unlike Barth's modern theory as so if the Trinity is present in the world today but doesn't enlighten us to the nature of God or his plan, then this traditional view could be seen as insignificant for Christians today.

The second view of the Trinity in traditional terms is Appropriation. This is the view that although each person of the Trinity is involved in the works of the other, it is appropriate to ascribe to some work as being distinct for each person for example Jesus and Salvation or God the Father and Creation. This view seems more significant for Christians than Rahner's modern view for example as it allows humans to understand the Trinity and to appropriate them like we would in society however one could argue that is this merely anthropomorphising the Trinity and so is in actuality Rahner's idea of an Immanent Trinity is more suited to a limited humanity.

To conclude, I think that the modern views of the Trinity are significant for Christians. Although the doctrine of the Trinity is hard to comprehend, Rahner shows that although we are limited we can still understand somewhat though <sup>salvation</sup> ~~salvation~~ which I think is strong in reflecting, humanity flows but still relating to significance the Trinity can have in our life where that be though salvation or by revealing God to us in Barth's view.



The candidate engages with all the elements of the question and explicitly identifies aspects of trinitarian thinking that is significant and other aspects that are less significant. There is clear evaluation throughout the response following a good introduction that unpacks the term 'Trinity' and then indicates direction by identifying Barth and Rahner as the focus of 'modern' thinking on the Trinity. The candidate has an excellent grasp of Barth's and Rahner's approaches (eg for Barth the role of revelation and for Rahner the distinction between economic and immanent Trinity) and proceeds to explore similarities and differences between the two scholars. The link to Philosophy of Religion is that of religious experience and this is given more than just a passing reference with some good discussion surrounding the role of the Holy Spirit in religious experiences. There is evidence of critical thinking and analysis along with a good contrast with some of the more traditional and orthodox approaches to trinitarian thinking. This response demonstrates detailed knowledge and understanding and presents a coherent and logically structured discussion that is developed effectively especially in the synthesis attempted between Barth and Rahner. This candidate deservedly achieved full marks.



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Write your answer in the space provided.

4 Evaluate the significance of modern views on the Trinity for Christianity.

In your response to this question, you must include how developments in Christianity have been influenced by **one** of the following:

- Philosophy of Religion
- Religion and Ethics.

(30)

Many Christians are taught about the trinity which is the notion that the father, son and Holy spirit are one being. However it is clear the father is not the son, the son is not the holy spirit and the holy spirit is not the father. For many Christians the Trinity is separate but equal. Eastern teachings of the Trinity teach that there are 3 persons in 1 yet the son and the holy spirit are created by God. However western teachings suggested that they are 3 persons in 1 God head. Western teaching has been a basis for modern views on the Trinity as scholars such as Karl ~~Ragnar~~ Rahner and Barthus, have developed ~~other forms of the Trinity~~. This essay will argue that modern views on the Trinity are significant for Christianity because of the biblical support and it is easier for many to understand which makes the church more accessible.

One factor which makes modern views on the Trinity significant is Karl Barth's argument. Barth dismisses the notion of 3 persons as he argues that "persons" ~~pro~~ provides "self-consciousness". He believed that the father,

The son and the Holy Spirit were better defined as 3 ~~modal~~ modal beings. Barth believed that salvation was only received through God. Therefore God was the only suitable sacrifice for human sin and therefore had to come down as man. This links to Barth's argument for atonement, as he believed that God used Jesus as a penalty for human salvation because humans ~~were not~~ could not pay the price. This plays a significant role for Christianity because it allows the church to interpret biblical texts to support the idea of salvation through Jesus.

Another factor which makes modern views on the Trinity significant is Karl Rahner's argument. Karl Rahner argued for economic and immanent Trinity. This provided another interpretation of the Trinity ~~but~~ <sup>that</sup> was easier for people to understand. Rahner pushed for the notion that the economic Trinity was the immanent Trinity making them the same thing. This has significance for Christianity because it challenged arguments such as Augustinian Trinity as it made the father, the son and the Holy Spirit all equal. Both Barth and Rahner's view on the Trinity increased the importance of Jesus and the Holy Spirit which used to be viewed as significant but less important than God.

Barth and ~~Rahn~~ Rahner's view on the Trinity was

supported by philosophical arguments such as religious experience. This is because by Barth and Rahner increasing the importance of the Holy Spirit it allowed for the Trinity to be more prominent within Christian societies. As the Holy Spirit was God's way of communicating to his creations.

However, the significance of modern views on the Trinity for Christianity is challenged by biblical scriptures. Within the old and new testament the Trinity is not mentioned as the Trinity. This weakens the significance of modern views of the Trinity because the bible is the word of God and therefore if God did not mention the Trinity is it of any significance? Moreover the Arian Heresy challenges the Trinity as a whole as it argues that Jesus is not God and therefore the notion of the Trinity cannot be fact. For Arian, Jesus was superior than man but not superior or equal to God. He uses scripture to show that Jesus asks for God's permission as if God was his father. By this people who support Arian would argue that the Trinity, in modern form and traditional form is wrong and that we should take on an Augustinian version of the Trinity because it shows God as superior to Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

~~Moreover~~ Furthermore, Moltmann challenges both Barth's and Rahner's argument as he says they are insufficient in arguing for the Trinity. Many traditional Christians

such as Catholics may reject Barth and Rahner's view on the Trinity because it fails to show the significance of God as a divine being. Additionally as Catholicism is a large denomination within Christianity it shows that modern views on the Trinity do not play a significant role.

In contrary, arguments that modern views on the Trinity are significant are supported by Protestant teachings such as Calvinism and Luther's teachings. Calvinism suggests, that Jesus is the mediator between man and God. This supports many arguments for of atonement which are based on views of modern Trinity. Many Christians would support the notion of modern Trinity because it ~~shows~~ accentuates God's omnipotence. Moreover many evangelical Christians would argue that modern views of the Trinity is significant for Christianity because it is the most effective way of reaching large groups of people. For evangelical Christians, by Jesus dying for our sins he allowed for the relationship between God and man to be strengthened via the Holy Spirit, showing the significance of the Trinity as all 3 persons are needed to reach God.

Lastly, biblical scriptures support the belief of the Trinity without actually saying the word Trinity, for example in the book of Matthew during Jesus' baptism ~~the notion of people being baptised with~~ it was said that you are

baptised "in the name of the father, the son and the holy spirit" furthermore in second Corinthians there are many passages that end with "the love of the father, the son and the sweet fellowship of the holy spirit."

In conclusion ~~the~~ Trinity the modern views of the Trinity do play a significant role for Christianity as it develops the understanding of Jesus as God and makes it easier for Christians and non-Christians to understand the Trinity. However, it can be argued that the Trinity does not play the most significant role in Christianity as it only contributes to teachings of the eucharist and atonement.



This is a sound and solid answer that opens with an informed introduction and makes an emphasis immediately on the significance of the Trinity in modern thinking. The main protagonists are Barth and Rahner and there is evidence of the candidate's ability to present a coherent and competent treatment of the key ideas from both these scholars (eg for Barth the 'three persons' discussion and atonement and for Rahner the economic v immanent discussion and Rahner's challenge to Augustine's understanding etc). The answer attempts to integrate a range of knowledge and challenges including, for example, Moltmann, biblical understanding and Reformation thinking of Luther and Calvin. Evaluation is evident and good work is made in contrasting and developing various points of view. There is an explicit link to Philosophy of Religion and religious experience (although this might have been developed further). Overall the answer reflects secure knowledge and understanding of the material that goes beyond the mere citing of isolated, fragmentary or irrelevant points and thus is a comfortable Level 5 (30 marks) response.



At this level ensure answers do not become a series of anecdotal ramblings or an exercise in telling the examiner all you know but that a careful note of the wording in the question is evident and that the answer reflects the full range of elements contained in the question. Also remember to make the link to either Philosophy of Religion or Religion and Ethics, an effective link rather than just a passing reference.

## Paper Summary

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 'explore', 'assess', and 'analyse' and 'evaluate' etc
- Ensure answers do not give a partial or limited response, especially for the assess/analyse questions where often the AO1 material has failed to be evaluated and no focused consideration offered on the issues identified
- Try to avoid making assertions or assumptions without offering supporting reasoning and/or examples
- For Question 4 candidates might consider coming to a judgement or take a position in the conclusion
- Try and ensure that sufficient detail is present in the 8 mark assess and 10 mark clarify responses to reach the higher marks

## Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>





