AS LEVEL

Exemplar Candidate Work

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

H173
For first teaching in 2016

H173/03 Developments in Christian Thought
Summer 2017 examination series
Version 1
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Introduction

These exemplar answers have been chosen from the summer 2017 examination series.

OCR is open to a wide variety of approaches and all answers are considered on their merits. These exemplars, therefore, should not be seen as the only way to answer questions but do illustrate how the mark scheme has been applied.

Please always refer to the specification (http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce-religious-studies-h173-h573-from-2016/) for full details of the assessment for this qualification. These exemplar answers should also be read in conjunction with the sample assessment materials and the June 2017 Examiners’ Report to Centres available on the OCR website http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/.

The question paper, mark scheme and any resource booklet(s) will be available on the OCR website from summer 2018. Until then, they are available on OCR Interchange (school exams officers will have a login for this).

It is important to note that approaches to question setting and marking will remain consistent. At the same time OCR reviews all its qualifications annually and may make small adjustments to improve the performance of its assessments. We will let you know of any substantive changes.
Question 1

Critically assess the view that in Christian teaching all people will be saved.

AO1 – 10 marks   AO2 – 10 marks

There are many different teachings about heaven and hell, salvation and redemption. Christians believe that we are all born with original sin because of the fall. We are born with a sinful nature, meaning we need to be saved. The Bible speaks in depth about salvation: who will get it and who it concerns. Many Christians have different views about who will be saved or if salvation is universal, but the view that in Christian teaching all people will be saved is not correct.

Although one of the arguments is that God loves everyone, it says that in the Bible many times for example John 3:16, "God so loves the world he gave his one and only Son." The argument is about how could a loving God who loves us not let some of us into heaven but send some people to eternal punishment? This is supported by John Hick who believes in...
Universal salvation, in which everyone is saved. This is a weak argument because it clearly says in the Bible that you can only get to the father through Jesus Christ and that you must accept Jesus and the cross and redemption to be saved because this means you are forgiven. This is a much stronger argument because it clearly states it in the Bible that you have to accept Christ. Augustine would agree with this because he believed you need God’s grace to be saved and you can only do this through accepting Jesus as saviour. This is a strong point because if we have original sin we must repent of it before we can be saved.

Another line of argument is that Jesus is not exclusive, he died for everyone and that is clear when he died on the cross, so this must mean that all people are saved, but this is a weak argument because once he died for them the people they have to accept him and repent of their sins, also the most Christians would argue if everyone gets saved then what is the point of being...
A Christian. Christianity loses its purpose once you take away salvation only for Christians so the view that Christian teaching says everyone will be saved is false and a weak argument. Calvin believed in election, that Jesus died for those who were elected, and in predestination. If Jesus knew that everyone has going to be saved then his death and resurrection doesn’t matter and is taken way less seriously by Christians if you are saved anyway, this is a weak argument.

In conclusion I think the view that in Christian teaching all people are saved is incorrect. It says clearly in the Bible that you have to accept Jesus as God, even though he died for everyone, he died for everyone who believes him. It is a weak argument to say Christian teaching says all people would be saved.

Also why would God talk about heaven and hell in the Bible if everyone was going to heaven, he would just talk about one place not two. This is a strong argument because God makes the clear distinction that some people are
Examiner commentary

The response begins with a statement that in Christian teaching, there are a number of teachings about heaven and hell as well as salvation and redemption. The examiner's immediate reaction would be that this essay might be about to focus on the wrong material for the question. In this new specification with a lot of content and 35 minute essays, tightly-addressing the question can make a huge difference to marks.

The essay, however, then goes on to focus on the correct part of the topic, although the introduction is rather long and does not really contribute to the final mark the candidate achieves.

The first main paragraph ('although one line of argument…') shows a feature of some of the better responses seen in the summer: the essay is argument-driven. The best responses really do focus on the question and then on how the question can be discussed (i.e., here broadly, for and against whether all people will be saved). John 3:16 is used as an argument in this paragraph – not a text on the specification, but a very useful one for the candidate to have in their armoury. This is then used as a segue to John Hick's universalism.

The essay does, essentially, test learner response to universalism and it was surprising the number of candidates in the summer who did not recognise this. There is a nice attempt to use counterpoint with phrases such as ‘This is a weak argument’ and ‘this is a much stronger argument’… although in this case, the discussion is rather perfunctory.

The next major paragraph, including the asterisked part at its end, continues in the same vein: focused on the correct topic, but only skimming the surface of material, all of which is essentially accurate.

The conclusion is a statement of candidate opinion, rather than a conclusion out of the force of argument within the essay because the latter is not really present.

In terms of the application to the levels of response, the essay certainly meets the criteria for Level 3 and some of Level 4: there is decent selection of relevant material, applied to the question (Level 4 bullet points 1 and 2). The phrase in Level 3 ‘which might, however, be lacking in depth or breadth’ is a good descriptor of parts of the essay. This means that the essay at AO1 achieves a mark towards the bottom of Level 4 and it is the third bullet point which would need to be worked on to bring it up to a more solid Level 4 mark.

At AO2, again, the response straddles the two levels, which is why it gets a low mark in Level 4. The third bullet point: ‘views asserted by often not fully justified’ (Level 3) is a better description than ‘views well stated with some development and justification’ (Level 4), but equally, the analysis is present and ‘generally successful’ (Level 4) and it ‘answers the question set well’ (Level 4).
Question 1

Critically assess the view that in Christian teaching all people will be saved.

AO1 – 13 marks    AO2 – 14 marks

Much ambiguity surrounds Christian teachings about the afterlife, with scripture containing many contradicting teachings and different interpretations by multiple scholars and theologians. It is understandable why there is much confusion on the subject. One of the most debated areas when discussing the afterlife occurs when discussing who will go to heaven. Whilst some people may take the approach of eternalism, it is a more compelling and convincing argument that all will be saved or if it is more compatible with God’s omnipotence to create ideas about justice.

The teachings surrounding universalism mainly came from theologian John Hick. As a priest in a multicultural parish in Birmingham, Hick strongly disagreed with the notion of hell and instead saw hell as a purgatorial state which eventually all people could redeem themselves from this state and eventually reach heaven where they could be saved. Whilst compatible with God’s omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, there are many issues surrounding the idea of universalism, the most prominent being what happens to justice if all people are assured to go to heaven? Hick argued that hell was infinite punishment for infinite sin; but if everyone is saved, then justice and the need for moral...
behaviour vanishes. Ultimately, people are and ultimately be saved and go to heaven. While, God’s omnipresence is presented in one respect with universalism it is also jeopardised as it would be expected by an all-good, all-loving God would seek by justice rather than in justice. Another issue with Hick’s theology is that it is massively and massively contradictory scripture in the way hell is presented. Hick’s hell is presented as a purgatorial state but scripture says otherwise. In many such as the ‘rich man and Lazarus’, Christians are presented with images of a gruesome and agonising hell full of fire from which the rich man is unable to escape. If all people can go to heaven then Hick’s teachings on hell become unannouncing. It also contradicts Revelation heavily as Revelation 1 suggests that 144,000 are saved. Due to significant contradictions with scripture and the big issue concerning justice, universalism is an unannouncing approach.

Additionally, a further issue with universalism is that if every human being were to go to heaven then what became of Jesus’ death? There would be no purpose for it and it would mean...
that teachings throughout scripture regarding salvation and the restoration of humanity would refute. The persecution of Jesus would ultimately become a nuisance. Universalism becomes flawed at this point, and so because of the sacrifice of Jesus, election is more convincing approach when discussing who goes to heaven.

According to exegetical teaching, there are two kinds of election—limited and unlimited election. Limited election in the approach that it has already been decided who goes to heaven and who goes to hell and it is a not all people. Unlimited election says that although not everyone goes to heaven and it is dependent on the way our lives are led, everybody has the opportunity to go to heaven and live forever after death. Unlimited election is a more convincing approach and is the most convincing out of the three. The issue with limited election is that free will becomes an illusion and God’s omnibenevolence becomes jeopardized. Augustine argued that although the Fall had corrupted humanity, we are still given free will by God in order to aid us in making moral decisions. The basis of teachings on the afterlife is the way in which we act decide where we are destined to go. However, if God has
already decided who is saved and who is condemned then the sudden issue with free will. How can humanity be truly free if all that we do doesn’t count towards the afterlife? Also, God selecting and deciding who is saved and who isn’t is contradictory to his all-loving nature and so God’s actions aren’t limited. Limited election is too problematic so whilst universality is too lenient and unlimited election is too harsh then arguably a ‘hybrid’ of the two – unlimited election is best.

Unlimited election argues that all people have the chance to be saved but not everyone will be and it is dependent on the way our lives are lived. This is correspondant with scripture, notably with the parable of the sheep and the goats where a pure, loving humanity is separated into moral and immoral characters and the moral are saved and the immoral are condemned. This parable illustrates that our decisions and actions do play a role in our fate after death but unlimited election also means that the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross becomes the key, meaningful and purposeful. Unlimited election is also correspondant with the omnipotent, omnipresent nature of God as all people are given the opportunity to be saved although not all people necessarily will be and this is not because of God but rather because of their actions.
Examiner commentary

The response begins with a rather long introduction which is focused on the question but does not necessarily contribute in its length to the final mark. However, the introduction does show that the candidate is taking a stance, which helps the overall thrust of AO2 through the essay.

The candidate identifies correctly that the essay requires a discussion of universalism, which most have studied with reference to the work of John Hick. There is good focus on some of Hick’s core points, though arguably, this paragraph is rather focused on AO2. There is a place for this: if the AO2 is secure then the examiner can assume that AO1 is secure, but there does need to be some explicit exploration of universalism – and, perhaps, the Christian teachings that lead to its espousal by some. It is worth noting that it is entirely possible to explore universalism without reference to Hick.

The next paragraph explores a core criticism levelled at universalism, that of Jesus’ sacrifice becoming redundant. This is explored well and the candidate shows solid understanding of relevant material.

The following paragraph moves on to explore limited and unlimited election. This is very good selection of material. During the summer it was felt that a number of candidates gave equal space to universalism, limited election and unlimited election, thus not quite showing they understood the question to be on universalism. Here, the candidate shows restraint and uses the material effectively to explore the question (the question must always be the driver), although arguably the section on limited election is too long and more on universalism earlier in the essay (or incorporated into this paragraph) would have been more useful.

The conclusion reflects what has gone before and is short, but this reflects the time available in this examination context. It also serves to refocus at the end where the lack of focus might have been a problem.

The AO1 mark of 13 reflects the very good selection of relevant material (second bullet point of the levels of response) and the accurate and detailed knowledge (third bullet point). The focus was perhaps not sustained enough for a solid Level 5 mark. The AO2 mark of 14 reflects the candidate’s clear and purposeful approach to the question. In the examiner’s mind would have been the final line of the levels of response – the ‘Assessment of Extended Response’ and whether the essay was a fully matched to the Level 5 descriptor here – the word ‘sustained’ might not quite be accurate. This is why the essay would not have got full marks for AO2, although its argument is very good indeed.
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