



GCSE

Religious Studies B

8063/1 Paper 1 Catholic Christianity

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

The standard of scripts seen was generally high. The paper seemed accessible to a wide ability range as most questions were attempted. It was noticeable how many students made notes on the paper or highlighted key elements of the question before answering. Standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar were relatively good. Some centres made good use of arrangements for a scribe or the use of a laptop to ensure that all answers were completely legible, and students could be fully credited for their performance.

In five-mark questions there has to be an attribution of the source of authority, not merely a quotation. Some very good students lost a mark for quoting accurately but failing to say where the quotation came from. The standard of these questions has improved over the years and this year there were many relevant sources identified and used effectively to gain full marks. It is worthwhile to remember that quotations from sources of authority need to be used to support the beliefs / reasons / ways the question demands and not appear as an afterthought.

The most successful evaluation answers (for the 12-mark questions) came from those who argued for one point of view supported by relevant and accurate religious beliefs and teachings, then argued for a different view or other perspectives (also with religious references), and finally wrote a conclusion based on the evidence presented in their arguments. These answers showed the logical chains of reasoning and high level of religious understanding that merits Level 4. Weaker responses came from those who put arguments for and against the statement, but then came up with a conclusion that did not flow from what they had just written.

Some responses followed a different method. These stated a viewpoint and immediately argued against it, followed by a brief 'conclusion'. They did the same for each point they were making, and this did not help students draw up a logical and well-reasoned conclusion at the end. As so many brief 'conclusions' after each viewpoint and its counterargument had been made it was unclear what the overall evaluation was. Other, less successful, answers evaluated after each argument made. Unfortunately, this was often repetition which added nothing to the answer.

It is clear that less able students need a structure when answering evaluation questions. Some teachers use 'PEEL' (point, evidence / example, explanation and link to the question). They advise their students to try to include religious teachings in the first paragraph to encourage them to stay focussed on the religious aspect of their answer. Of course, even when this structure is followed, marks can still be limited by insufficient development of examples or evidence.

1. Creation

1.1

The question asked students to identify which of the options was not a Eucharistic acclamation. This was generally answered well by majority of the students. Those that were incorrect tended to be D) 'they prove that the theory of evolution is wrong'.

1.2

Students were asked to give two ways in which Christians can show care for the environment. This question was answered well by majority of students; a wide range of examples were given, picking up

litter, using public transport, supporting charities and organisations which support sustainability. The majority could competently give two ways in which Christians can show care for the environment.

1.3

This question was generally answered well. Many made good links between the belief that people are made in the image of God and how it influenced Catholic views about the sanctity of life and achieved full marks. Students gave a wide response of answers which included the dignity of the human person, life has meaning, and purpose, abortion and euthanasia are not acceptable. Weaker responses explained the belief but did not connect with how it influenced Catholic views.

1.4

The majority of students answered this question on ways Christian works of art showed the creation of God very well. Many students were familiar with Christian works of art eg Michelangelo and Meière. Students were clearly able to identify features of the artwork and explain how it showed the creation by God. The best 5-mark answers had clear understanding of creation by God and were able to refer to scripture or Christian teachings. Many students gave two different examples of artwork, although this was not necessary. It was possible to achieve full marks with just one piece of artwork. This has been clearly taught well in centres. Where students confused some artwork, they spoke about the Final Judgement, Christ the Redeemer or the Sacred Heart.

1.5

This question concerning the Bible as the word of God presented some difficulties for many students and therefore elicited a range of responses. Arguments and evaluation were often very superficial and limited. Terms like ‘fundamentalist’ ‘liberal(ist)’ were used but often not really understood. Some students, however, could explain these terms coherently and gave correct examples and explanations to support their viewpoints. Some of the best answers referenced specific Catholic teaching in Dei Verbum, Gaudium et Spes and the Magisterium. Many students mentioned the different literary genres within the Bible as a way of explaining how the Bible should be read. Equally, they included the examples of the big bang and evolution in relation to Dei Verbum and the non-literal interpretation of the Genesis accounts.

2. Triune God, mission and prayer

2.1

The question presented some difficulties since many students did not know which one was not a eucharistic acclamation.

2.2

A

variety of examples of Christian mission were given- caring for others, donating or working for charities, witnessing the gospel etc. This question was answered well by the majority of students.

2.3

This question asking for ways in which traditional prayers were different from spontaneous prayers was answered well by many students. They understood what the two types of prayers were and could explain clearly how they are different. Many students included examples of traditional prayers, Our Father/Hail Mary/Rosary to support their explanation. Some students however, confused prayer with music. Perhaps they were not reading the question carefully and confusing the two as they are sometimes taught together.

2.4

This question was answered very well by many students. They could identify two Christian beliefs about the Trinity, the three persons in the One God, each person of the Trinity has a distinctive role, they are co eternal and equal. Students included a variety of different sources of authority- the Creed, Genesis, Baptism of Jesus (Matthew), Galatians, Deuteronomy, St Augustine and Catherine LaCugna. Many of these sources were very well developed, and clearly linked to the question. It is evident that this has been taught well in centres. Some students, however, merely told the story of creation or Jesus's baptism without linking to the belief. Again, some students did not state the source of Catholic belief and teaching.

2.5

This was a straightforward evaluation question on the relative importance of Baptism as a sacrament, which elicited some excellent responses. There were some very well-argued responses which showed reasoned consideration of different points of view. Students knew and understood the importance of baptism, making links to the Baptism of Jesus, Catechism teaching and the final commission in Matthew. They knew the purposes of Baptism and beliefs about the removal of original sin and the necessity of Baptism for salvation etc. On the other side of the argument, students argued why other sacraments may be considered more important: marriage and the sacramental uniting of two people for life, confirmation to confirm the promises made at baptism, eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life etc. These were comprehensively explained showing the students knowledge and understanding of the sacraments as a whole.

3. Redemption

3.1

The question asked which of the follow statements best expressed the Catholic belief in the 'Real Presence' for which the answer was A 'Christ is truly present in the consecrated bread and wine'. Students gave mixed responses, many students choosing C- the bread and wine as symbols of Jesus' body and blood'.

3.2

Many students did not know what the Agnus Dei is. Some gave very general responses attempting to guess, for which they sometimes gained some credit. Students either knew it or they did not. It is important that students understand technical terms which appear in the specification.

3.3

Contrasting views about salvation were generally known by the students, most making reference to past, present and future. There were some excellent answers included reference to St Anselm's and Irenaeus' metaphors of salvation.

3.4

There were some excellent responses in this question on the importance of conscience. Students knew what conscience was – the voice of God in the hearts which guides people to make the right choice - and could make links to free will and natural law. Sources tended to be from Gaudium et Spes, YouCat and the Magisterium. The belief that a conscience needs to be educated and how this can be achieved was not prevalent in many answers.

3.5

This question was answered well. Many students could explain, some in great detail, the significance and the importance of the altar in the church: central feature of the church, recollection of the Last Supper, the place of consecration. On the other views, the most common features were the tabernacle, crucifix, lectern and stained-glass windows. Again, many of these features were explained in some detail. Some misconceptions were that the priest reads the gospel/readings from the altar. There were some who mentioned a table- perhaps confusing with different Christian churches. Some students mentioned the pews; these would not be considered a main feature and were not worthy of credit.

4. Church and the Kingdom of God**4.1**

The majority gave the correct answer Jerusalem - to this question asking for the pilgrimage site where Jesus died

4.2

This question asking for two Catholic social teachings from the Magisterium proved difficult for some students. There are two parts to this question: the Catholic social teachings and the Magisterium. Some students either misread or focused on the Magisterium part of the question. Many students made links to Vatican II and the documents, perhaps because they had mentioned them in previous questions eg Dei Verbum, Lumen Gentium.

Some referred to Laudato Si or Gaudium et Spes. Answers tended to be very general but did allow many students to gain up to 2 marks.

4.3

This question asking for two ways in which the Second Vatican Council had influenced the Catholic Church was answered quite well. Many students referred to the physical changes brought about in Vatican II - the change of altar, priest facing the congregation, language changed to the language of the country and how this influenced individual participation in the Mass. The best responses referred to

some of the documents produced by Vatican II (Dei Verbum, Gaudium et Spes etc) and made good connections to how these influenced the Church.

4.4

Students found this question about the four marks of the Church difficult even though an explanation 'the qualities or characteristics of the Church' had been provided in brackets. Those who understood the question made links to the Creed, YouCat and the Great Commission in Matthew as the source of authority. They could confidently explain what the four marks of the Church were. "Holy, Catholic and Apostolic" were explained better than "One". Many students spoke about "One" meaning monotheistic faith rather than its meaning as the unity of the Church, the "Body of Christ", receiving the eucharist unites them to Christ etc. Those who did not know the four marks, spoke about prayer, pilgrimage and sacraments as marks of the Church.

4.5

This question asked for evaluation of the statement: 'Catholic agencies should care for people in their local areas rather than in other parts of the world'. It was answered well by many students who showed excellent knowledge and understanding of what Catholic agencies do. Higher level answers demonstrated good evaluative skills, which made judgements about both local and global work and how both were necessary in the world. Religious teaching was wide and varied- eg The Good Samaritan, The Sheep and Goats, love one another etc. More able students mentioned the Preferential Option for the Poor and Caritas, CAFOD and SVP. Simple responses only stated what the charities did, which showed good knowledge, but were unable to argue the question, or if they did, the arguments were limited.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.