



GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES B

8063/1: Catholic Christianity
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

This year it was pleasing to see how well centres had prepared their students, both in terms of course content and in addressing the style of the questions asked. The full range of ability was entered and most students found the paper accessible. There were some outstanding responses from students, particularly in the 12 mark essay questions. Some students struggled because they did not understand key terms in the specification such as ‘natural law’, ‘Eucharistic adoration’, ‘marks of the Church’ or ‘dramatised prayer’.

All questions were well attempted although parts of each proved a stumbling block for some. Least well known were the topics assessed in 01.4, the concept of natural law; 02.3, the application of belief in the Trinity to the interpretation of Genesis 1:1-3; 03.3, the contrasting ways in which Irenaeus and Anselm described salvation; 03.5, the relative merits of Eucharistic adoration and Mass; and 04.4, the ways in which justice is considered a sign of the Kingdom of God.

Some students referred to the bullet points that form part of the rubric of the essay question to show they have done what was expected, this practice is not necessary. For example, some wrote, ‘I have given a reasoned argument to support my statement, quoted Christian teaching and reached a justified conclusion.’ Examiners will be assessing whether students have done so from the content of their answers.

Many students made good use of Christian teachings in their responses, but others merely inserted a quotation without linking it to the argument. For example, ‘A quote to support this is, ‘Love your neighbour’ means nothing unless the student explains its relevance to the argument which has gone before it.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar has continually improved and this year was no exception, although capital letters and spelling of key terms continues to challenge some. The level of English is best on questions where students were confident about the topic, particularly question 01.5, and since it was the first essay question on which SPaG marks are applied, it meant a reasonably high standard was achieved.

Question 1: Creation

In Question 01.1, most students knew the definition of ‘transcendent’.

In Question 01.2, most could give two beliefs about the creation of humanity, eg humans were created by God, made in the image of God, depended on God, desired a close relationship with God, etc. Those who did not gain full marks gave two beliefs about God rather than humanity, eg transcendent or omnipotent, which perhaps they took from the choices given in Question 01.1.

Question 01.3 was very well answered. Many could explain the influence belief in God as creator has on the way Christians treat other people, eg God created humans in his image, therefore Christians should treat others with respect for their dignity. Others linked sanctity of life with the practical implications of not harming others. Some failed to gain marks here by saying the same thing twice, eg ‘treat others with respect’ and ‘respect others’. Some failed to gain marks for not referring to the treatment of people, and instead concentrated on how Christians should treat the natural world or environment. Others failed to gain marks by ignoring ‘God as creator’ and put general maxims such as ‘treat others as you wish to be treated’.

Question 01.4 was rather challenging for students. The most successful answers came from those who said that natural law refers to the idea that people were born with moral principles which could be summed up in the phrase ‘to do good and avoid evil’ and that people instinctively knew what was right and what was wrong because they are all created in the image and likeness of God. The implications of belief in natural law, that all life is sacred and should be preserved, were also credited. Others rightly said that natural law was insufficient, that Catholics need also to be guided by the Bible and teachings of the Church. Some knew that it concerned knowing right from wrong but then concentrated on giving explanations of conscience and free will, a digression which did not give them any further marks. Many responses implied students were unclear what natural law was. For example; some referred to conserving nature and others simply did not attempt an answer.

In Question 01.5, the most effective answers argued that caring for the environment was an important way to show love of neighbour because it helped one’s present neighbours and also future generations who would be affected by climate change. On the other hand, there were other ways to show love of neighbour that had a more immediate impact, eg direct help to people in the local community and in the developing world, referencing *Laudato Si* and the parable of the Sheep and the Goats. It was impressive to see how many students knew practical ways to reduce pollution, reduce consumption and live more simply. Many cited CAFOD as an important campaigner in this field.

Some tried to reverse the question and argue that the best way to care for the environment was to love your neighbour, but this was difficult to argue and took students down the wrong path. Others failed to gain marks by writing about love of neighbour and caring for the environment but not linking the two.

Question 2: The Triune God, Mission and Prayer

Most students were able to identify prayer as a ‘raising of the heart and mind to God’ In Question 02.1.

Question 02.2 was intended to test knowledge of Mass settings, the parts of the Mass often set to music. In addition to the traditional Mass settings, the Responsorial Psalm and the Lord’s Prayer were also accepted as these are often set to music in Mass. Those who did not know said ‘hymns’ or ‘music during communion’, etc. but these were not accepted. The question was not about when music is used during Mass but which parts were set to music.

Question 02.3 was a difficult question for many students who did not limit their answers to an interpretation of Genesis 1: 1-3. The most successful answers came from those who said that the Trinity was present at the Creation because in the passage, God the Father created the heavens and the earth, through his ‘word’ (God the Son) when he said ‘Let there be light’, and the Holy Spirit was also present as the ‘wind’ from God who ‘swept over the face of the waters’. Those who talked about the Holy Spirit breathing into Adam’s nostrils (Genesis 2) failed to gain marks, as did those who just talked generally about the Trinity without relating beliefs in Father, Son and Holy Spirit to the passage cited.

Question 02.4 was well done. Some students referred to the Creed and were able to explain two beliefs about the Trinity found there, and if they quoted the words of the Creed, they were making a useful reference to a source of Christian belief as the question demanded. Most students had some understanding of the Trinity, which could be found in the Creed, and if they explained them,

were able to gain some marks even if they did not know the words of the Creed that could illustrate the beliefs. All other sources of authority that supported their explanations were accepted too.

Most students could attempt Question 02.5 reasonably well. The most effective answers came from those who gave well-developed reasons for baptism's importance in the life of a Christian, but then argued that baptism alone was insufficient for a person to be a true Christian. Other sacraments, faith, following God's commandments, etc. were also important. Some pointed out that infant baptism does not allow a free choice on the part of the child, therefore Confirmation is needed to show the person's commitment to the faith. Others rightly argued that some Christian denominations do not practise baptism and their members live perfectly good Christian lives. A few students were under the impression that a Catholic had to receive all 7 sacraments to be considered a Christian, an impossibility. It was difficult to argue that one needed the Sacrament of the Sick to be a good Christian, since it is generally received late in one's life. Some tried to argue without success that marriage was needed to be a Christian since many do not marry yet lead good Christian lives.

Question 3: Redemption

Question 03.1 was well-answered as most students knew that the Ascension referred to the event when Jesus was taken up into heaven after his resurrection.

In Question 03.2, most could give at least one reason for the significance of the altar: as a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice, a reminder of the Last Supper, as the place where the bread and wine are consecrated, as the focal point in the church, etc. Some confused the altar with the lectern and said it was where the readings and sermon took place, but these answers were not accepted. The specification requires knowledge of 'how the lectern, altar, crucifix and tabernacle express different aspects of the mystery of redemption and facilitate worship'. Although some Catholics might speak of the 'altar' as the whole of the sanctuary in a church, for the purposes of this specification the 'altar' refers to the table where the consecration takes place, so creditable answers were confined to this understanding of the term 'altar'.

Question 03.3 was a good discriminator. Those who had studied the metaphors used by St Irenaeus and St Anselm could gain all four marks by explaining the former's 'tree of knowledge of good and evil' and 'tree of the cross' comparison or Jesus as the new Adam, and the latter's teaching about Jesus paying the ransom for human slavery to sin. Some very able students did not mention the metaphors but talked about general ideas of salvation as an ongoing process versus a 'once for all' event. These are valid ideas regarding salvation but could not be attributed specifically to St Irenaeus and St Anselm so were not credited. The confusion may have arisen because there was a question on one of the specimen papers that asked for two contrasting ways in which Catholics understand salvation. The specimen mark scheme included contrasting ideas about salvation in general as well as the metaphors of St Irenaeus and St Anselm. However, this year's question was specific to the latter rather than general contrasts. Quite a number of students left the question blank.

In Question 03.4 the most effective answers explained that Jesus' resurrection destroyed the power of sin and death, quoting Paul that if Christ had not been raised, faith was in vain and people were still in their sins. Others said that the resurrection was proof that Jesus was the Son of God, and that it removed the fear of death as it gave hope to Christians that there was life after death. Students who failed to gain marks referred instead to Jesus' suffering and death rather than his resurrection or did not include a reference to a source of Christian belief and teaching.

Question 03.5 was the most challenging of the essay questions. Many students did not know what 'Eucharistic adoration' was, despite the explanation of the term in the question itself. They thought it was either praying at home or praying during the Eucharistic prayer in Mass, so their arguments tended to be one-sided or incorrect. Some credit could be given for reference to the importance of belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but this argument lost focus when applied to the 'agree' side and became a support for Mass. Most could give a good account of why Mass was important to Catholics, so were able to gain at least half the marks. The most effective answers emphasised the value of silent meditation and opportunities for personal prayer given by Eucharistic adoration and the blessing given in Benediction. This was contrasted with the communal aspect of Mass, the opportunity to learn more about one's faith via readings and homily and the more important aspect of physically receiving Christ in Holy Communion. Quite a few did not attempt to answer the question. This was a pity as they would have gained some credit for explaining the importance of Mass.

Question 4: Church and the Kingdom of God

In Question 04.1, many correctly identified the Stations of the Cross as an example of 'dramatised prayer'. However, those who did not know chose all the other options and much crossing out was evident on some scripts where students changed their minds, which demonstrates lack of knowledge.

Some students gave two marks of the church in response to Question 04.2. Others failed to gain marks because they thought it had something to do with church architecture or teachings about love and kindness.

Question 04.3 There was a good level of response to this question. Contrasts were most often drawn between the global work of CAFOD and the local / national work of agencies like the SVP or DePaul UK. Others gained full marks for contrasting different types of work done by agencies, eg emergency aid and long-term development, or between volunteering in the field and fundraising at home. Those who obtained less marks used non-Catholic agencies such as the Red Cross or Salvation Army.

Question 04.4 provided a challenge to many students. The most successful answers explained that the Kingdom of God is perfect, a time when all barriers to peace and harmony amongst people are removed. This means justice is needed as it ensures equal rights for all. Justice guarantees human rights to people regardless of race, colour, gender or religion, therefore Catholics should work to promote justice to bring the Kingdom of God closer. Some very effective answers quoted the Catechism: that goods created by God for everyone should in fact reach everyone. Credit was also given to answers that spoke of the last judgment when people would receive justice for their actions during their lives and be sent to heaven or hell.

Question 04.5 seemed to stimulate students as there were some excellent answers here. The most successful of these argued that drama provided a most engaging, interesting and emotionally affecting way of bringing the message of Jesus to the modern world, especially to young people. Many cited the films 'The Mission' and 'Les Miserables' and were able to draw out the religious messages from each. Other ways of bringing Jesus' message to people such as mission, evangelism, music, art or the personal example of living a Christian life were also considered better than drama. Other views included the problems with various interpretations of drama, the distortion of its message or its emphasis on production values that could take away from the real message of Jesus. It was recognised by examiners that it was more difficult to include Christian teachings in

this question, although some students quoted *Inter Mirifica 14* that the production and showing of films that have value...especially when designed for young people, ought to be encouraged. Others included references to Jesus' command to preach to all nations and said that since the Bible is the word of God, it is better left to preachers than to filmmakers.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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