
GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES B

8063/2A: Perspectives on Faith (Themes)

Report on the Examination

8063

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General comment

Centres are to be commended for having prepared their students carefully for this examination. There were some excellent answers to all questions and the appropriate use made of material that students would have studied for Paper 1 was particularly pleasing. Although responses revealed a wide range of ability, few questions seemed to pose major issues. Those that provided the greatest challenge were the questions on Holy War (2.3) and human dignity (3.4).

Theme A was the most popular option and Theme C the least popular, but many students answered all three questions in breach of the rubric. Centres should ensure students are aware of the rubric requirements for this paper so they do not penalise themselves during the examination.

Some students failed to gain marks in the 4 mark questions through not taking note of the instruction in the question, which states that in their answer, they must refer to Christian belief. Answers that do not contain any indication of being from a Christian perspective are capped at 2 marks.

Some also failed to gain marks in the 5 mark questions through not referring to a source of authority. Again, this requirement is clearly stated.

Most students made a real attempt to argue from more than one point of view in the 12 mark questions and to include Christian content. Often what dictated the mark attained by the more able students was the quality of the evaluation and of the conclusion. Where genuine argument had taken place throughout the essay, the conclusion might be brief. For Level 4 to be reached, however, some evidence of a judgement being made is needed.

Students with virtually illegible handwriting penalise themselves as sometimes key words cannot be deciphered. This may affect marks for content. Some students would certainly have benefitted from access to a computer or a scribe.

One final general point concerns the use of additional pages. Some students who used these wrote their answers to both papers, ie Themes and Islam or Judaism on the same sheet. Please would centres remind students not to do this. They should use separate additional pages for the two papers they take.

Theme A: Religion, relationships and families

Most students answered 1.1 correctly.

Most students were able to give two Bible teachings in answer to 1.2. Quotations or paraphrase were acceptable. The most common were taken from Genesis, eg both males and females were created in the image of God, they were told to 'be fruitful and multiply'. A minority of students did not read the question with sufficient care and gave Church teachings which could not clearly be seen to reference Bible teachings.

Students often answered 1.3 at considerable length. Different views as well as directly opposing views were accepted, but they did need to be quite clearly different. Many used the gender pay gap to point to the unequal treatment of women in contemporary British society. Other responses explained the belief that equality does not mean uniformity but may include different roles, illustrating this from the Catholic Church's restriction to males of ordination to the priesthood. Yet other answers gave the belief that equality meant equal opportunities and equal access to all roles.

Many students were able to explain two Christian beliefs about the role of parents in the upbringing of their children (1.4). Answers often referred to the need to keep children safe, to giving moral guidance and to the duty of Catholic parents to have their children baptised and then encouraged to practise the Christian faith. A fairly frequent quotation or paraphrase came from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which states that parents are the first educators and teachers of children. Paul's instruction to parents not to goad their children to anger was also used. Some answers started off well but then drifted into the roles of children and there were many quotations of the 4th Commandment, which needed to be made relevant to the focus of the question to be appropriate.

There were some highly sensitive and mature answers to 1.5 from both more able and less able students. This is a topic that seemed to have engaged their interest. Very sound understanding of Catholic beliefs about the nature of marriage and of Catholic views on remarriage after divorce was shown. This side of the debate was often well presented. Some students showed accurate understanding of the annulment process, using it sometimes in support of remarriage (arguing that the process was unduly lengthy) and sometimes against.

There were, however, two significant weaknesses in many of the answers. Firstly, many students focused more on the pros and cons of divorce than on the issue of remarriage after divorce. Many stated incorrectly that the Catholic Church does not recognise divorce. Secondly, the reasons given as justifying divorce and remarriage were often ones that would qualify for an annulment, eg forced marriages. Most of the arguments supporting the statement tended to expand on the reasons for a marriage breaking down and to end with a brief statement such as that God wants everyone to be happy, so the divorced person should be allowed to remarry. More effective responses were those that considered human weakness and the possibility of forgiveness and a fresh start, as reflected in the life and teaching of Jesus, or those that appealed to the need for compassion.

Theme B: Religion, peace and conflict

Almost all students answered 2.1 correctly.

Most also gained both marks for their answers to 2.2. The reasons most commonly given were that torture is inhumane and harms another human being. The focus was entirely on the victim. Answers might also have referred to the harm done to the torturer.

1.3 was not, on the whole, well answered. Those who had revised the topic carefully gained full marks with ease. Some explained support for Holy War from a Christian perspective. Others explained why most Christians reject Holy War and then contrasted that with Islamic views. There were many references to the views of Pope Francis on war. Many answers referred to the views of pacifism, which meant that all wars, including Holy Wars, are unacceptable. There were, however, some very vague responses and there was much confusion with the Just War theory. Over 11% of students did not attempt this question.

Over 8% of students did not attempt 1.4, and of those who did, some did not read the question carefully, explaining instead why war is never justified. Most, however, saw this as relating to the Just War theory, and were able to give two of the criteria. Others wrote more generally about situations when war might be justified. A reason often given for a war being regarded as just was when it was a last resort. This was often explained in some detail, occasionally with exemplification. Students often also referred to the importance of not attacking civilians. Many referred to the importance of proportionality, but there was much misunderstanding of this. It does

not mean, as some students stated, that both sides must have equal numbers of weapons or the same number of people fighting. It refers to the idea that the methods used must be in proportion to the nature and severity of the conflict, and the more effective answers developed their points about proportionality with reference to the use of nuclear weapons. Textual references were not always acceptable. An ‘eye for an eye’ and ‘let him who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one’ could be credited only if they were applied relevantly to the belief being explained. Some students quoted from Youcat or the Catechism of the Catholic Church. A few gave Paul’s teaching on obedience to civic authorities.

There was a very wide range of quality in the answers to 2.5. There were some thoughtful arguments in support of the statement, eg the nature of modern warfare, the motives of greed and lust for power, the desire for retaliation and the decline of religious influence. Some students pointed out that many of today’s wars involve those of other religions, who would not appreciate Christian input. Others said that in certain situations the justification for going to war is so strong that it is both pointless and wrong to try to stop it. There were many references to the initiatives taken by Pope Francis, with varying assessments of their success. Those who had clearly studied the work of Pax Christi wrote effectively against the statement. Some responses considered the range of work carried out by organisations such as CAFOD, arguing that this might not stop a current war, but that it could reduce the risk of future conflicts. All too often, however, answers were vague and ill-thought out. Some thought that Christian organisations could not achieve anything unless they had the same access as military powers to weapons of mass destruction.

Theme C: Religion, human rights and social justice

A surprising number of students thought that the answer to 3.1 was materialism and only around 55% gained a mark. Many of those who answered this incorrectly showed in their answers to 3.5 that they did in fact know that stewardship is concerned not just with environmental issues, but with the responsible use of wealth. The duty of stewardship of wealth is set for study in dialogue 2.

3.2 was answered well by the majority of students.

Those who understood sexuality in terms of gender were given credit for their answers to 3.3, but the most effective responses came from those who interpreted the question as relating to same-sex relationships, which was the intended focus of the question. Most gave at least one Christian view. Some referred to the more fundamentalist approach that adopts the stance taken in Leviticus. Others, distinguishing between orientation and practice, explained the view that those with homosexual orientation must be treated with absolute respect and on a par with heterosexuals, but that relationships between homosexuals should be celibate. This view means that gay marriage is out of the question. Yet others presented the Christian view that all humans, regardless of sexuality, should be treated equally, since all are in the image of God. This means the access of all to the same legal rights, eg to marry.

Many students did not understand the phrase ‘human dignity’ (3.4) and either left it blank (around 13% of students) or wrote about something unrelated to the concept. It is referred to in dialogue 1, so students should have been familiar with it. Those who did understand the term generally gained at least 2 marks or 3, if they referred to a source of authority. Many, however, struggled to give a second belief and repeated the first point they had made. Most explained the significance of all being created in God’s image. A few considered the implications of Paul’s teaching on everyone’s body being a temple of the Holy Spirit. There were occasional references to ‘The Theology of the Body’, which was highly appropriate to this question. Others explained attitudes to human slavery and trafficking in the light of Christian beliefs.

Most students made a reasonable attempt at 3.5 and answers were generally well focused on the statement. There were some detailed arguments in support of the statement that made effective reference both to New Testament and to Church teaching. There was sound understanding of the concept of the Preferential Option for the Poor. A range of ways was suggested in which Christians might exercise this duty. There were also varied arguments against the statement. Some pointed to the complexity of the problem as requiring expertise that only the combined efforts of governments could produce. Others, focusing on poverty in the UK, said that the government should bear the responsibility, since its citizens had fulfilled their duty by paying income tax. Others said that charitable organisations should take responsibility, though the more able students also pointed out that to do this, charities rely on the donations of individuals. There were many references to the view that the poor should help themselves out of poverty and to concerns that money given to them might be misused or encourage dependency. Linked to this argument there were often references to Paul's teaching in 1 Thessalonians about laziness.

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.