



GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES B

8063/1 Paper 1: Catholic Christianity
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

This year it was particularly pleasing to see how well centres had prepared their students considering the difficulties the pandemic has caused over the past few years. No doubt students were helped by advance information of the topics to be examined. Nevertheless, many answers showed a good deal of thoughtfulness and ability to apply what they had learned in answer to evaluation questions.

The paper seemed accessible to a wide ability range as most students attempted all questions. Weaker students were at times let down by their linguistic ability, either because they did not understand what the question meant, or because they did not understand key terms such as 'incarnation' and 'sacrament' or concepts such as 'image of God', 'contemporary worship songs' or 'source and summit' as applied to the Mass.

Standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar were relatively good, but some students had such poor handwriting that it seemed a shame they had not been provided with a scribe or the use of a laptop.

In all five-mark questions there had to be an attribution of the source of authority, not merely a quotation. Many very good students lost a mark for quoting accurately but failing to say where the quotation came from. Centres need to encourage students to say, 'the Bible says...' / 'the Catholic Church teaches...' / 'Jesus taught that...' / 'the Catechism states...' or at least to put the source of the quotation in brackets, for example, 'God created humans in his image' (Genesis).

Question One Creation

In Question 01.1, most students knew the definition of natural law: that everyone is born knowing right from wrong.

Question 01.2 was a general question about the Church's teaching regarding the relationship between science and religion. Many correctly understood that science and religion need not conflict, but answer different questions (how and why). Some thought the question wanted one scientific belief about creation (evolution or the big bang theory) and one religious belief (the seven-day creation). These statements did not gain credit unless intrinsically linked to the relationship between science and religion, for example, 'The Church sees no conflict between the big bang theory and belief in God.'

Question 01.3 was well done. It was gratifying to see how aware young people are of environmental concerns. Most could think of at least two different ways of carrying out the Christian duty of stewardship and could explain or further develop each. Many chose the contrast of local actions (e.g. recycling, reducing car use or avoiding littering) with global or national responses (protesting, campaigning or supporting environmental charities). Some chose to contrast actions that helped people with those that helped conserve nature. Some students gave more of the rationale for being a steward than practical ways, but as long as two different ways were considered, the rationale was credited as development.

In Question 01.4, many could explain two beliefs about God from the 'Creation of Adam' by Michelangelo. The most popular choices were the similarity between God and Adam showing that God created humans in his image, and the transcendence of God shown in his being carried by

angels. There were some interesting interpretations of elements of the painting, although these were not always accurate. For example, some thought the fact that God and Adam were not quite touching showed that Adam had sinned or that humans could never reach God. Others mentioned a belief about God but referred to an aspect of the painting that did not demonstrate it, for example, that God was transcendent because he was pictured as muscular. Some confused the painting with that of the Last Judgement and talked about people being condemned to hell. Unfortunately, many students correctly quoted from the creation accounts but failed to attribute their quotation to Genesis or the Bible and lost a mark.

Question 01.5 differentiated well between those who understood the concept of being 'made in the image of God' and those who thought it was about humans physically resembling God. The latter argued incorrectly that if we were all made in God's image we would all look alike. Perhaps the previous question about the painting 'Creation of Adam' had put visual imagery of God represented in human form in their minds. Therefore, some reversed the question and talked about whether it was right to picture God as a human, rather than whether humans were made in God's image. Others mistakenly argued that because Jesus was both divine and human, that proved that humans were made in the image of God. However, this argument relates to God revealing himself in human form, not creating humans in divine form. The best answers concentrated on whether or not humans shared God's qualities, and argued that although humans could never be totally like God in omnipotence and transcendence, humans could nevertheless show compassion, act as stewards, desire justice and know right from wrong. The most sophisticated arguments came from those who explained that being made 'in imago dei' did not mean that humans resembled God physically or equalled God's powers, but meant that humans were holy, deserving of dignity and capable of showing God-like qualities of love and compassion to others.

Question Two Incarnation

In Question 02.1, most knew that Ichthys was the symbol used by persecuted Christians.

In Question 02.2, most named Baptism and Marriage as two sacraments. A minority confused sacraments with commandments, teachings or documents of the Catholic Church.

In Question 02.3, those who gave the titles of Jesus, 'Son of Man' and 'Son of God', and explained their meaning gained full marks. Other descriptions were accepted such as 'Messiah' or 'Good Shepherd' (and others listed in the mark scheme), because these were Jesus' own descriptions of himself recorded in scripture. Students who lost marks here gave a variety of answers that were not how Jesus described himself but rather were Christian beliefs about Jesus, such as the 'Word of God' or 'Lamb of God'. Some accurately described the contrasting interpretations of the single title, 'Son of Man', which could describe both 'a man' and someone with special authority from God (to forgive sins in the case of the paralysed man). This response was fully credited.

In Question 02.4, the best answers began with a definition of incarnation, that God became man in Jesus and the implications of that for human salvation. 'Incarnation' is a technical term, and the title of this section of the specification, so it was surprising that more students did not begin their answer with a clear explanation of its meaning. There were some very good responses that quoted both *Dei Verbum* 4 ('Jesus Christ, therefore, the Word made flesh, was sent as "a man to men"') and *Verbum Domini* 12 ('...the eternal word became small- small enough to fit in a manger'). Unfortunately, not everyone attributed these quotations to Church teaching or those particular documents and did not gain the fifth mark. Most concentrated their responses on Jesus being fully

God and fully human. A few focussed on Jesus saving people from sin by dying on the cross and rising from the dead, which was accepted if there was some indication in the answer that they knew what the Incarnation actually meant. Others lost credit because they confused 'incarnation' with 'reincarnation' or 'resurrection' and life after death.

Question 02.5 differentiated well between those who actually knew the Beatitudes and those who thought they were some sort of rules laid down by Jesus. The latter argued generally or else confused the Beatitudes with teachings elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount or with the parable of the Sheep and Goats. Nevertheless, those who were unfamiliar with the Beatitudes could gain credit if they acknowledged that they were important for Christian life because Jesus taught them, but then made a good case for following the Ten Commandments which were more specific and had been around for longer. A number of other alternatives to following the Beatitudes such as devoting one's life to mission and evangelism, following teaching in parables or going to Mass and the sacraments gained marks for the 'other views' on this issue. The best answers understood that the Beatitudes called for a change of heart rather than following rules, that Jesus had come to perfect the law, and that the Beatitudes gave comfort to those who were undergoing persecution or mourning their loved ones. These responses were followed by a very good case for the alternative ways of living a Christian life mentioned above and gained full marks. Some lost marks if they tried to contrast following the Beatitudes with following 'Jesus' teachings' or 'the Bible', not realising the Beatitudes were taught by Jesus and are in the Bible.

Question Three The Triune God, mission and prayer

In Question 03.1, most knew that the Alleluia was a Mass setting.

In Question 03.2, most could give the teaching that the Trinity was God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit but some were not sure how to follow that with another teaching. Those who simply said 'The Father is God' and 'The Holy Spirit (or Son) is God' were credited for each. Other popular responses were that all three persons were equal, distinct from each other and that Jesus was consubstantial with the Father.

Question 03.3 was generally well done. Most could give two ways that spending time in prayer might affect a person's life such as developing a close relationship with God, finding forgiveness or comfort when in need, learning God's will, or in the case of public worship, helping to unite the community of Christians.

In Question 03.4, the best responses analysed the account of the baptism of Jesus and cited the presence of the Trinity in the voice from heaven (the Father) and the appearance of the dove (the Holy Spirit). Some knew well the quotation, 'This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased', but did not attribute it to one of the gospels or 'the Bible' so did not gain the fifth mark. Those who failed to gain any credit here were those who talked about Christian baptism in general rather than Jesus' baptism in the Jordan.

Question 03.5, out of all the essays, inspired the best responses from students of all abilities. Everyone had an opinion about the relative merits of contemporary versus traditional music for worship. It was more difficult in this question to reach the highest level by applying specific religious teachings to the issue. However, those who did mentioned Church teachings from the Catechism and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the liturgical changes instituted by the Second Vatican Council which encouraged modernisation. Most were able to argue successfully that

contemporary worship songs were upbeat, engaging to younger people and linguistically more accessible than traditional hymns which might contain old-fashioned language or obscure ideas. On the other hand, tradition should be respected, the hymns stood the test of time, were known by everyone and could be more awe-inspiring in their use of an organ with its majestic sound. All of these ideas were credited, although it has to be admitted they perhaps tended towards stereotypes and did not reflect the excellent contemporary music created for worship. Credit was lost when responses suggested that contemporary worship songs were pop songs that were not religious or approved for use in church, or when they suggested that all traditional hymns were written in Jesus' day.

Question Four Redemption

In Question 04.1, most worked out that the appearance of Elijah did not take place when Jesus was crucified.

Question 04.2 asked for ways in which the decoration in a Catholic church can help people to worship. Architectural features as well as church furniture were also accepted. Popular answers were a crucifix or the Stations of the Cross which reminded Christians of Jesus' suffering and death, stained glass which helped people reflect upon Biblical stories, and statues of saints which inspire emulation or seeking help when in need. Some students merely named items found in a church, such as the altar or lectern, without giving ways in which they helped people to worship. These received no credit. Others gave ways that were very vague and did not necessarily relate to decoration or architecture.

Question 04.3 posed quite a challenge. Many knew something about the story of redemption (how Jesus saved humanity) but not all were able to link it to the Mass. For an 'influence' question, the 'influence' of the way must be included for the answer to be considered a 'detailed explanation', therefore many were limited to two marks out of four here for not making the connection between Jesus' sacrifice and what goes on at Mass. The best responses said the Mass re-enacted Jesus' death and resurrection and reminded believers that Jesus saved them from sin; believers received Jesus' body and blood in Holy Communion filling them with the presence of Christ and making them thankful for his redemptive act.

Question 04.4 posed an even greater challenge than the previous question as only the most well-prepared students knew the concept of 'source and summit' as applied to the Mass. This question directly reflected the phrase in the specification, 'The Mass as the 'source and summit' of Christian life...' The responses here were extremely varied and did not always conform to the mark scheme. As a result, some leeway was given in crediting interpretations that were not strictly speaking from *Lumen Gentium* 11 or the Catechism 1324. The best answers mentioned receiving Holy Communion as the 'source' of Christian life as it fed the soul just as food gives life to the body; the Mass is the 'summit' as it is the highest form of prayer because it re-enacts Jesus' sacrifice. It was not necessary to explain 'source' and 'summit' separately to gain full credit. The phrase was taken as a whole. Some mentioned that attending Mass was the perfect way of 'keeping holy the Sabbath', and it was the 'summit' because it was the high point of the week when the Christian community came together in prayer. Others said that the Mass was a 'source' of Christian spiritual life through the scripture readings and homily given by the priest. Although the latter was not specifically in the documents to be studied it was accepted as a valid interpretation of a 'source' of Christian life. Students who stated that the Catechism described the Eucharist as the 'source and

summit' of Christian life gained the mark for an attributed source of authority. A few confused 'summit' with 'submit' which led to loss of marks.

In Question 04.5, most argued successfully that the conscience was the voice of God, universally given through natural law, and by listening to it, people could choose good over evil. On the other hand, the conscience needed to be educated through teachings from the Bible (for example, the Ten Commandments) and from the Magisterium. Some added that parents, priests and the law of the land could also inform conscience. The fact that many people did not follow their conscience was further evidence that the conscience needed the support of other sources of guidance. Some very good responses referred to the teaching from the Catechism that conscience should not be set in opposition to the moral law or the Magisterium of the Church. They went on to explain that Church teaching held moral authority for Catholics as it was infallibly guided by the Holy Spirit. Some lost marks by arguing that instead of using their conscience, people needed God's guidance (particularly that of the Holy Spirit). They did not seem to realise that God's guidance would come through one's conscience itself, so was not an alternative source of guidance for Catholics.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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