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# 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, even by weaker candidates. It was noticeable how many students made notes on the paper 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 difficulty this year, however, was when quotations were added to answers without linking them to the points being made. Quotations from sources of authority need to be used to support the beliefs / reasons / ways the question demands and not appear as an afterthought. Some were very general statements that could not be verified as coming from the source stated. For example, 'Christians should help people in need and be caring to others. ~ YOCAT'. This was credited for the point made but not for the source of authority.

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 counter-argument 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 candidates 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.

## Question-based comments

### Redemption

#### 1.1

Most students knew the definition of conscience as the 'Voice of God' in a person's heart and soul.

#### 1.2

The responses were divided between those who knew what occurred on Pentecost and those who did not. Those who talked about flames of fire, speaking in tongues, receiving the Holy Spirit or the rush of wind gained two marks. Those who did not know, confused Pentecost with events in the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus and invariably lost both marks.



**1.3**

This question presented some difficulties for students. Many students did not know the technical term 'Real Presence' of Christ in the Eucharist. Instead they offered ways in which believing that God was close to a person might influence their behaviour. Rather than give no marks for answers that did not relate to the meaning of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, it was decided to cap the marks at a maximum of 2, if two valid 'influences' were given.

The best answers showed sound knowledge of the meaning of the term 'Real Presence' linked to the Eucharist or to the hosts reserved in the tabernacle and then described how this belief influenced Catholics. Some responses showed no understanding of the Real Presence or merely described other Christian beliefs without saying how they influenced Christians. These gained no marks.

**1.4**

Most students knew that the death of Jesus was important because 'Jesus died for our sins' and that his death opened the way to eternal life. Four marks could be gained by developing each of these points. Some struggled to think of a supporting quotation from a source of authority. However, those who wrote about restoration of the relationship between God and humanity that was broken by original sin, could reference the Fall in Genesis and gain the extra mark. Others cited Matthew 27: 51 that the curtain of the Temple was torn in two, showing the cosmic significance of Jesus' death. Some very good responses came from those who referred to the metaphors of Irenaeus and Anselm as sources to support their reasons. Some weaker responses came from those who explained why Jesus' resurrection was important rather than his death. However, if they clearly argued that his death led to his resurrection credit was given.

**1.5**

This question allowed for students to write about the impact of church architecture on Catholic worship and also about the interior design and decoration of churches that may aid private worship or celebration of the Mass. Most could do this very well in support of the statement, mentioning the position of the altar, lectern and tabernacle as well as citing stained glass windows, statues, the Stations of the Cross and the crucifix as aids to worship. A number of students mentioned the changes to interior design brought about after the Second Vatican Council and the impact they had on worship. Some struggled to find arguments in support of other views, but many mentioned music, the liturgy itself and the community gathered in prayer as more important influences on worship than architecture or decorations.

A number of students argued rightly that the architecture of a church was not a consideration in some developing countries, or for people who worship at home. They cited the teaching that where two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, Jesus is present, therefore worship can take place anywhere. A few students argued that statues could lead to idolatry which overlapped with arguments made in question 2.5, but if it was part of an argument about negative influences on worship, it was credited.

Weaker responses lost focus on 'worship' and discussed the relative merits of plain versus highly decorated churches from an aesthetic point of view, or criticised spending too much on decorations when money should be given to the poor. This limited the level of response that could be awarded.

**Incarnation****2.1**

This question about the 'sacramental nature of reality' was not as securely known as the answers to the other multiple choice questions on the paper demonstrated.



**2.2**

The belief in Jesus as the 'Word of God' was not universally well known by students. Some saw the phrase 'Divine Word' in brackets and talked about the divinity of Christ. Others gave two Christian beliefs about God, which did not relate to Jesus. Some students simply gave other titles of Jesus, eg 'Son of Man'. Those who knew its meaning wrote well about Jesus as the 'Word made flesh' who was present at creation and who existed before all things (an eternal being). Jesus as an expression of God's love and bringer of God's message were also popular answers that gained the marks available.

**2.3**

This question on ways in which receiving the sacraments influence Christians, was very well answered by the majority of students. They could approach the answer from the perspective of sacraments in general or take particular sacraments and describe their effects. Students who lost marks did not develop the influence the sacraments have on those who receive them, instead they described some sacraments or gave a definition of sacraments without explaining their influence.

**2.4**

The Parable of the Sheep and Goats was reasonably well known. Students lost marks by not reading the question carefully enough because it required teachings from the parable about how Christians should respond to people in need. Some described the consequences of 'turning away from God' without mentioning people in need. Students who focussed on the punishment or reward that could be obtained from following Jesus like sheep follow a shepherd, could be credited if tied to helping people in need.

The responses which just retold the parable (sheep and goats being separated and then rewarded or punished) were capped at a maximum of 2 marks. The parable was rich in content, eg feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, visit prisoners, etc, yet fewer students mentioned these teachings than one might have expected. A number confused the parable with that of the Lost Sheep. Those who did not know the parable wrote very general ideas about helping others that included 'Love your neighbour', usually without attribution to a source of authority.

**2.5**

This evaluation question elicited some very good essays. Most responses showed the many benefits to Christians of having artwork that depicted Jesus, including comforting people, deepening their faith, providing a focus for prayer and conveying ideas in symbolic ways that are otherwise difficult to understand. The faith of the artist was also praised.

Counter-arguments included, Jesus is God, so is transcendent and unable to be expressed in finite ways. Since no one knows what Jesus actually looked like, images of him may mislead or even offend. The commandment not to worship idols was also well utilised in this context.

However, a number of students wrote about the painting 'Creation of Adam', confusing depictions of Adam or of God with depictions of Jesus, so could not be credited.

**The Triune God, mission and prayer****3.1**

Most students recognised 'speaking in tongues' as a form of spontaneous prayer.

**3.2**

Almost all students gained both marks for two postures (positions) which Christians use when praying. Standing, kneeling, sitting and prostrating were most popular.



**3.3**

This question required students to explain contrast in ways music is used in Catholic worship. Many students found it difficult to distinguish between how music is used in Catholic worship and why it is used. Many responses gave reasonable answers that discussed different forms of music, eg traditional hymns, contemporary worship songs, plainchant or acclamations in the Mass, and gave a supporting statement about how they helped worship, eg by unifying the congregation, appealing to young people or creating a solemn, peaceful atmosphere for prayer. Some credit was awarded for general comments about the use of music that showed a different purpose in its use, eg to bring the community together or to praise God.

Unfortunately, some students interpreted the demand for a 'contrast' to mean an opposition to the use of music, arguing that it was distracting for worshippers. This could not be credited as it was not an alternative way in which music is used in worship but a criticism of its use.

**3.4**

This question asked for ways in which the Creation story (Genesis 1:1-3) may show the presence of the Trinity. It posed some difficulties for students who did not limit their answer to the Creation story in Genesis 1: 1-3. Many lost marks for citing the creation of Adam and Eve instead. Quite a few thought the quotation 'In the beginning was the word...' came from Genesis 1 rather than John's gospel. Some thought Jesus and / or the Holy Spirit was represented in the story as the light which God created, rather than the Word of command spoken by God to create (in the case of Jesus) or the wind that hovered over the waters (in the case of the Holy Spirit). Other responses confused the account with the baptism of Jesus, so talked about the Spirit coming as a dove.

The best answers talked about God the Father as creator who commanded by his Word (the Son) when, for example, God said, 'Let there be light' (Genesis). God did this through the power of the Holy Spirit whose presence in the story was shown by the wind that hovered over the waters. Such a response gained the full five marks.

**3.5**

This question about the Nicene Creed discriminated well and almost half the students achieved level 3 answers. Many argued that the Creed contained the most detailed teachings about the Trinity as it described the roles of each of the three persons in one God. These students presented many quotations from the Creed to support their arguments. Some also mentioned its historical context and the reasons for its development, its infallibility as Church teaching, and its importance for being recited each Sunday at Mass. The other views presented included Biblical accounts (eg the baptism of Jesus, the Creation in Genesis 1, and Galatians 4:6), the teachings of Augustine and Catherine LaCugna and prayers like the Sign of the Cross which enlighten Christians further.

Those students who did not know the Nicene Creed as well, made more general statements about the Trinity but were unable to address whether or not it was the best source of teaching. Of all the essay questions, this was the one which a number of students (approximately 10%) did not attempt to answer at all.

**Eschatology****4.1**

Most students correctly chose 'His resurrection' as the event in the life of Jesus which has the most important influence on Christian beliefs about life after death.



**4.2**

Two thirds of students correctly gave beliefs about the ‘particular judgement’, as carried out immediately after death, that it is based on past actions in life and that the outcome could be heaven, hell or purgatory. A few lost a mark saying it would happen at the end of time.

**4.3**

This question was directed at different Christian views about how to care for people who are dying or gravely ill. A surprising number of students did not understand the term ‘care of the dying’. Many students thought it meant whether the dead should be buried or cremated. Some thought it was about the concerns people might have if they knew they were dying, for example their worries about whether they were likely to go to heaven or to hell. Others thought it was about the support Christians should give to people who were mourning a loved one.

The best answers suggested that those who were dying should be treated with care and respect for their dignity because of the belief in the sanctity of life. Medical interventions that prolong life, when there is no hope of recovery, should be avoided in order to spare suffering. Some students suggested that giving the Sacrament of the Sick to the gravely ill was a good way to provide care and comfort to the dying, as these gave an opportunity to make peace with God through reconciliation and receiving communion. Responses that argued for and against euthanasia were also credited.

Responses that failed to gain credit recommended that the dying should be given no medicine because it would allow them to suffer pain and be united to Jesus’ suffering. While some Christians in that situation might well offer their pain and suffering to Jesus, it is not something others should determine for them by refusing to alleviate their pain.

**4.4**

This question required students to give two Christian beliefs about life after death shown in Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*. Many could give two Christian beliefs about life after death, for example, that Jesus would judge humankind, that the decision would result in heaven or hell, that angels blowing trumpets would announce the end of the world, that bodies would be restored no matter how people died, that hell is shown as a place of no light indicating the absence of God, that nakedness indicates equality of God’s judgement, etc. Some students imagined elements of life after death not present in the painting, citing fires in hell or a heaven filled with angels, clouds and happiness. The marks were given for actual Christian beliefs that the painting showed, rather than for descriptions of the painting which did not relate to a belief.

**4.5**

This question asked whether or not Christians should be less concerned about this life and more concerned about life after death. Most students could see that the two concerns are linked- that the outcome of life after death depends on the way people have acted during their lives on earth. The best answers argued that it was right to be concerned about one’s destination as it lasted for all eternity, could not be changed, and was described in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus as something to be feared if one lived a life of selfishness in opposition to God’s will. Judgement could come at any moment so vigilance was recommended.

The other views outlined God’s mercy, the fact that if one concentrated one’s efforts on pleasing God, saving the planet, helping the poor, etc, then judgement was not to be feared. Some students contrasted a ‘live for today as it is the only life you have’ attitude with those who took religion seriously and tried to live in a responsible way. This was credited although sometimes answers along these lines tended to be purely secular discussions rather than ones containing reference to religious beliefs and teachings, so were limited in scope for marks.



### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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