



GCSE

Religious Studies B

8063/1

Report on the Examination

Version: 1.0
June 2025

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General Comments

The paper was generally accessible to a wide range of abilities, with most students able to engage meaningfully with the questions. The structure of the paper allowed students to demonstrate both factual knowledge and analytical thinking, and many showed a good understanding of key Catholic and Christian beliefs, practices, and teachings.

Students performed well on short-answer questions, many were able to accurately identify Christian symbols, sacramental practices, and moral teachings. They could explain beliefs using clear and concise language such as pilgrimage, reconciliation, and vocation to show understanding of Catholic life. However, some students missed out on full marks in the five-mark questions especially, by not including a source where required. It is important that students not only name a relevant and appropriate source but say what it says and ensure it is linked to the point they are making. Some students included quotes or named sources, but these were not linked to the points made, nor were they or their relevance explained. On occasion these were written in isolation as a single bullet point either before or at the end of the rest of the answer and were not connected in any way—these floating quotes or sources cannot be credited, as stated in the Mark Scheme, unless they clearly support the points made. AQA have some excellent guidance available for the 5-mark questions with exemplar responses on the subject webpage that centres and students might wish to refamiliarise themselves with.

Evaluation questions were generally well attempted, and students across all ability levels were able to express a point of view. Stronger responses presented balanced arguments, considering more than one perspective. Students used religious examples, such as the role of Mary, the meaning of Jesus' resurrection, or the symbolism in Michelangelo's *The Last Judgement*. Students also referred to scripture, Church teaching, or Catholic doctrine to support their reasoning. Some students, however, gave descriptive answers without evaluating or did not develop their points fully.

Overall, students responded well to the paper, showing a good level of understanding and engagement. With continued focus on developing answers, using sources effectively, and evaluating with balance, students will be well placed to achieve even higher marks in future assessments.

Question 1 - Creation

1.1

The majority of students successfully identified the correct meaning of the word 'transcendent' as 'beyond the universe.'

1.2

A high proportion of students achieved full marks on this question, demonstrating a clear understanding of the Christian concept of stewardship. Most responses were concise, accurate.

Students who gained full marks typically gave two distinct and relevant examples, such as: Recycling and reducing waste, using renewable energy sources, participating in church-led environmental campaigns, and educating others about climate change from a faith-based perspective.

1.3

Many students performed well on this question, with a significant number achieving full marks. These students were able to identify specific features of the painting and clearly explain how these features might influence Catholic religion and beliefs. However, a notable proportion of students described the painting in detail without linking it to any influence on Catholic individuals, communities or societies. Students who achieved full marks gave examples such as: the image of God reaching out to Adam may influence Catholics to believe that life is a gift from God, encouraging them to value and protect all human life, and the closeness of God and Adam's fingers may influence Catholics to feel that God is always near and wants a personal relationship with them. These responses not only referenced the artwork but also demonstrated an understanding of the influence.

1.4

Students demonstrated a sound understanding of Christian beliefs about creation, with a good number achieving full marks. High-scoring responses clearly identified two distinct beliefs and supported them with relevant references to Genesis 1 and 2. Students who achieved full marks typically identified a belief and supported it with a relevant reference from Genesis 1 or 2. For example, Christians believe that God created the world out of nothing, which shows His omnipotence. In Genesis 1, it says 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,' showing that God is the source of all life.

1.5

While some students produced well-structured and thoughtful responses to this question, a significant number struggled to develop their ideas into coherent arguments. Stronger responses demonstrated clear reasoning, used relevant religious examples, and considered more than one point of view. They used specific religious examples, such as fundamentalist Christians who reject the Big Bang theory or evolution due to a literal interpretation of Genesis, Catholic perspectives which accept both science and faith, often citing Pope Francis, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, or Fr Georges Lemaître. Less successful answers tended to be vague or descriptive, lacking the depth and structure required for higher-level marks. For example, students might have stated that some Christians believe in science or that science and religion are different, but without explaining why or how. There was often little or no use of religious sources, or sources were used incorrectly or not linked to the argument. Students should be encouraged to develop their points with reasoning and examples, not just state them.

Question 2 - The Triune God, mission and prayer

2.1

This proved challenging for many students. While a large number correctly identified Irenaeus as the source of the quote, a wide range of incorrect options were selected, including Catherine

LaCugna, St Augustine, and St Matthew. This suggests that students were often unfamiliar with the specific teachings of Irenaeus or confused his work with more commonly studied figures. Students should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with key figures referenced in the specification.

2.2

The majority of students performed very well on this question, with most achieving full marks. A small number of students gave an incorrect symbol first followed by Alpha and Omega on the second line. However, as stated in the Mark Scheme, only the first two responses can be credited. Centres may wish to reinforce the importance of response order in short-answer questions where only the first two answers are marked.

2.3

While many students demonstrated a basic understanding of the incarnation, only a portion developed their answers fully enough to access higher marks. Stronger responses clearly explained the dual nature of Jesus as both human and divine, referencing his lived experiences such as hunger, suffering, and death, contrasting this with Jesus as fully divine, often citing his acknowledgement of being the Son of God during his trial before the high priest. Many students used theological titles such as Son of Man to describe Jesus' humanity and Son of God to describe his divinity. There was however some misunderstanding of terminology. Several students confused incarnation with reincarnation, leading to inaccurate or irrelevant answers.

2.4

In general, this question was answered to a high standard. Many students demonstrated a clear understanding of Catholic teaching by selecting two sacraments and explaining the Christian beliefs associated with them. Responses often focused on sacraments such as Baptism and the Eucharist. While many students gave accurate and relevant answers, some did not achieve full marks due to the lack of reference to a source. Some responses could have been improved by adding phrases like "In the Bible, Jesus said 'Do this in memory of me'" or "The Catechism teaches that sacraments are necessary for salvation."

2.5

Overall, this question was answered to a very good standard. Many students demonstrated a strong understanding of various titles for Jesus and were able to present balanced arguments. Most responses included references to scripture and Christian teaching, showing thoughtful engagement with the topic. Students who achieved higher marks typically supported the statement by explaining how the title Son of God reflects Jesus' divine nature. They provided examples such as Jesus' trial before the high priest where he affirms his identity as the Son of God and Jesus' baptism where God declares, "You are my Son, the Beloved." Stronger responses explored contrasting views, particularly using the title Son of Man, especially in contexts of service, suffering, and future glory (e.g., seated at the right hand of God). Other titles explored included Messiah showing Jesus as the anointed one sent to save, as the Word of God referencing John 1:1 to show Jesus' divine origin, Lamb of God symbolizing sacrifice and redemption, and teacher reflecting Jesus' role in guiding and instructing his followers.

Question 3 - Church and the Kingdom of God

3.1

This question produced a mixed set of responses. While many students answered correctly, a significant number selected incorrect options, most commonly 'Jesus meets his mother.' This suggests that some students may have misread the question or lacked familiarity with the full sequence of the Stations. Advice for future assessments is to encourage students to read questions carefully, especially when they include negative phrasing such as 'which one is **not**...'

3.2

Most were able to identify two clear and relevant teachings, demonstrating a good understanding of reconciliation as both a sacrament and a moral principle in Catholic life. A large proportion of students achieved full marks. Students who gained full marks typically gave answers such as, Reconciliation is a sign of the Kingdom of God, it brings people together who have fallen out, Reconciliation brings peace and justice, or it is a sacrament that restores a person's relationship with God.

3.3

The question was answered to a very good standard by the majority of students. Most demonstrated a clear understanding of the term vocation and were able to provide two distinct and contrasting examples, showing how Christians may respond to God's call in different life paths. Students who achieved full marks explained religious vocations, such as becoming a priest, nun, or monk, highlighting the commitment to serve God and the Church through ministry, prayer, and community life. Many contrasted this with lay vocations, such as being a parent, teacher, or doctor, showing how Christians can live out their faith through service, compassion, and ethical work in everyday life.

3.4

Most students were able to identify and explain two Catholic beliefs about the importance of pilgrimage, with many achieving high marks. Many students showed a clear understanding of pilgrimage as a spiritual journey and a means of deepening faith. Students who achieved higher marks explained that pilgrimage allows Catholics to grow closer to God, often describing it as a time for focused prayer, reflection, and repentance. Students often referred to pilgrimage sites linked to Jesus' life, such as Jerusalem, where Catholics can walk in the footsteps of Christ and visit the site of the crucifixion. This then enabled for Jesus or the Bible to be used as the source, linking life events of Jesus as described in the bible to directly support the point made. Many others however commonly used YouCat, 'Pilgrimage is praying with your feet' as the source to support their point.

3.5

This question was accessible to all students, with a wide range of responses reflecting varying levels of depth and development. Most students were able to engage with the topic meaningfully, and many achieved mid to high-level marks. The question allowed students to draw on both biblical knowledge and contemporary examples, encouraging thoughtful evaluation. Students who achieved the highest marks often argued that Mary is the perfect disciple, highlighting her complete obedience to God's will, her presence at key moments in

Jesus' life, and her sinless nature (as taught in Catholic doctrine). Students referred to key events such as the Annunciation and Mary's presence at the foot of the cross, showing unwavering faith and loyalty. Alternative views often considered Peter as the leader of the apostles, chosen by Jesus to build the Church, or Paul who was dramatically converted and became one of the most influential Christian missionaries. Modern-day disciples, such as Pope Francis, who live out Jesus' teachings in today's world were also credited.

Question 4 - Eschatology

4.1

This question produced a mixed range of responses. While many students correctly identified incense as the item not used in the Last Rites, a significant number selected Holy Communion, which is in fact a central part of the rite when the person is able to receive it. This suggests a misunderstanding of the components of the Last Rites. Students may have confused it with other rites, such as the funeral liturgy where incense is more commonly used.

4.2

Most demonstrated a clear understanding of the parable and were able to extract two distinct and relevant teachings about life after death. Students who achieved full marks typically included teachings such as, heaven and hell are outcomes based on earthly actions, those who live selfishly and ignore the needs of others (like the rich man) may face eternal separation from God, those who suffer but remain faithful (like Lazarus) are rewarded in the afterlife, and the finality of judgment after death as the outcome cannot be reversed.

4.3

This question was answered to a good standard by the majority of students. Most demonstrated a solid understanding of the significance of the resurrection and were able to explain how it influences Christian hope and belief in eternal life. Students who achieved full marks typically included key ideas such as Jesus' resurrection as proof that death is not the end, which gives hope and reassurance about what happens after death. Also, sin and death are defeated, which reinforces the belief that through faith in Christ, believers can share in this victory and be saved. Weaker responses gave general answers about life after death without linking them specifically to the resurrection of Jesus, which limited their marks. Some responses lacked development, stating a belief without explaining its significance or influence. A small number of students confused the resurrection with the ascension or reincarnation.

4.4

This question was answered to a good standard by most students. Many demonstrated a clear understanding of Catholic beliefs surrounding the dignity of the dying and the importance of compassionate care. Students who achieved full marks typically included key ideas such as dignity and respect for the dying which is rooted in the teaching that all human life is sacred. Also, opposition to euthanasia, as it goes against the belief in the sanctity of life and God's authority over life and death. Some students also highlighted the importance of palliative care as a way to relieve suffering without hastening death, aligning with Catholic values of compassion.

Students often supported their answers with references to relevant sources such as Mark's Gospel, 'Love your neighbour as yourself', which supports the moral obligation to care for others. Also, teachings from the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the dignity of the dying. However, A small number of students confused care of the dying with funeral practices, showing a need for clearer understanding of end of life care.

4.5

This question was accessible to all students, and responses showed a wide range of outcomes, with many students engaging thoughtfully with the topic. Most students were able to identify key Catholic beliefs represented in the painting such as Jesus as the central figure of judgement, the presence of Mary shown beside Jesus symbolising her intercessory role and importance in Catholic theology, and clear visual representation of heaven and hell, aligning with Catholic eschatology. Links to the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25) were also made, where the righteous are separated from the wicked based on their earthly actions. Students who offered a balanced evaluation often included thoughtful arguments such as the painting not depicting Purgatory, a key Catholic belief about the purification of souls before entering heaven. Some students also argued that the painting's dramatic and fearful tone may not reflect the hopeful and merciful aspects of Catholic teaching. However, some students confused the Last Judgement with other religious artworks or misunderstood its context.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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