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GCSE

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES A

8062/13: Christianity  
Report on the Examination

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**Question 01.1**

81% of students chose the correct answer to this question on the means of salvation and the vast majority followed the rubric (by only ticking one box).

**Question 01.2**

Most students achieved 2 marks by outlining the persons of the Trinity, either answering (1) Father (2) Son or (3) Holy Spirit (in any order). Having said that, marks were gained for a variety of different valid points, for example that the Trinity is God in three parts / Trinity represents one God / Trinity was present at creation / Trinity shows God's all-powerful nature (omnipotence) / the Trinity shows God's all-loving nature (omnibenevolence), etc.

Some students offered more than two answers, trying to hedge their bets in the hope that two were correct. This is not effective exam technique, since examiners mark only the first two responses for 2 mark questions. Some students wrote far too much for a short answer question and ended up getting the same marks as someone who wrote only concise answers.

**Question 01.3**

This was an 'influence' question. Answers which responded with a list of teachings about judgement therefore rather missed the point and were unable to demonstrate the detail required to reach full marks. Some students misread the question and wrote about the belief, ignoring the influence it had on Christians. 93% of students achieved at least 2 marks with 57% achieving full marks. Many of those gaining full marks did so by comparing the positive aspects of judgement i.e. reward in heaven with actions being judged and wanting to please God to avoid punishment – hell. A lot of students successfully referred to the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats to explain belief in judgment, even though a relevant source was not needed in this question. Many students listed 'good' deeds for example, praying to God, going to Church, following the Golden Rule by giving to charity, and seeking forgiveness, etc. Some students answered the question from a different perspective stating that, in order to avoid damnation or hell, negative actions should not be done, which was also a valid response to the question.

**Question 01.4**

This question produced some excellent answers based on good knowledge of the crucifixion. The key word in this question was 'beliefs about crucifixion' although some students ignored this specific requirement and wrote more widely about the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, which unfortunately were not valid responses to the question and were not credited. For those students who focused on crucifixion, there were a variety of answers with many writing about Jesus dying for humanity's sins (linking to original sin in the best answers). Responses also included successful reference to the suffering of Jesus, the humanity of the Son of Man, that Jesus knew it was part of God's plan and that he had to die. Students gained marks by stating that Jesus died on a cross, was crucified in between two thieves, took many hours to die, etc. Describing Jesus' words during the crucifixion was creditworthy and was a common way to respond to this question.

Many students were able to identify a Christian source or writing and reference it. Biblical quotes from Jesus were regularly used in this question, for example "Father forgive them". As with question 02.4 it is apparent that not all students are aware that they must identify their Christian source or writing. Some used quotes from the Bible but they did not reference the source for these

and were therefore not awarded the mark for a source of authority. Answers did not need to include chapter and verse indication, but did need to clearly state their source.

### **Question 01.5**

The 'essay' questions this year showed that many students had been well prepared in how to be properly evaluative. For question 01.5, 55% of students reached Levels 3 and 4, and much of the writing was perceptive and varied.

Many students were able to use reasoned consideration of how the Genesis creation story can be seen as literal, a metaphor, or a story of its time which contains the truth. The link with John 1: 1-3 was used well by some, particularly those who skilfully drew in the idea that this spiritual interpretation complements scientific theories of the modern age. Many were able to reference the creation story to evidence their points and were confident in quoting directly from the Genesis story and also John's Gospel. The general consensus was that Christians can have a literal or non-literal belief about creation but that God's involvement was central and crucial in creation. Many also wrote about how some Christians will look at God's omnipotence and argue that he can do anything hence a reason why the creation narrative in Genesis should be taken literally. This was often accompanied by reference to the fact that Christians do not want to question the literal words of God as stated in the creation stories.

Responses at Levels 1 and 2 tended to be general arguments with little or no reference to religion beyond a retelling of the Genesis creation story. Weaker responses were those that 'reported' different viewpoints with no attempt at evaluation. A number of students had not taken note of the key words "For Christians" in the statement and wrote about the views of other faiths and/or atheists on creation, limiting the effectiveness of their response. Students who also offered simple reasons on both sides of the argument without development rarely went above Level 2. Level 3 responses had clear references to religion, but these tended sometimes to be inserted into the essay at random points, with no obvious link to the logic of the argument. Level 4 responses used biblical and/or other references as part of the argument. For example, some were able to link the teleological argument to argue an alternative to the Genesis story to prove God's involvement in creation.

Some responses simply expressed statements about Fundamentalism versus scientific theory. In many cases, these type of answers failed to link scientific theory to Christian non literal beliefs, leaving God out of arguments like the Big Bang Theory. Some answers were strong on literal versus metaphorical arguments but not always a focus on it being "true for Christians" and how metaphorical truth is as valuable as literal truth, sometimes it was evaluating whether the creation story was true or not.

Most answers in Level 3 and 4 reached a conclusion that arose from the thread of the argument. Although this is a common way to approach a 'justified conclusion', other ways were credited. Some very effective answers began with their conclusions or placed them throughout their response.

### **Question 02.1**

86% chose the correct word, 'Persecution', and the vast majority followed the rubric (by only ticking one box).

**Question 02.2**

Like question 01.2, many students were able to score full marks on this question about the importance of church growth. Some identified individual benefits of church growth which were credited as well as the majority of students whose typical responses included reference to the great commission, allows more people to be saved, it spreads the teaching of Jesus, evangelism, more churches mean more money for charity, to stop the religion dying out, etc.

**Question 02.3**

This question was answered in a variety of different ways. Some students referenced specific Christian organisations, individuals, and groups who work for reconciliation, for example, the Corrymeela Community, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and the Community of the Cross of Nails. These responses tended to be awarded full marks based on incisive explanations linked directly to the question. Equally, many students chose a different way to answer this question, focusing on individual acts of reconciliation. Many talked about asking God (and others) for forgiveness and repentance. These individual acts of reconciliation were credited.

However, many failed to understand the term 'contrasting' and therefore added two reasons which were too similar. It was also clear that some students were unconfident in defining the key term 'reconciliation', which resulted in some students leaving this question blank or having responses focusing on other areas of Christian beliefs and teachings. Some students responded by explaining God's role in reconciliation rather than 'Christians'.

**Question 02.4**

The focus of this question was on 'why' Christians celebrate Easter, and not simply on describing what happens during the celebration. Some students did not score well as they wrote 'how' Easter was celebrated. References to secular traditions associated to Easter were also found in some responses. Some students wrote about chocolate and eggs, but not with reference to the "why" which would have allowed examiners to award marks.

However, many students were able to write confidently about the importance of the resurrection, with references to sacrifice, atonement and eternal life amongst the most popular. In addition, many wrote about the crucifixion narratives and events and how these are 'celebrated' by Christians. Other key events in 'Holy Week' were also referred to and some students were able to link these to why Christians celebrate Easter. Marks were given to students who successfully linked events in Jesus' life after the resurrection (including the ascension) to why Christians celebrate Easter.

Although better than question 01.4, it is apparent that not all students are aware that they must identify their Christian source or writing. For this question, more students used quotes from the Bible but many did not reference the source of these and were therefore not awarded the mark for a source of Christian writing.

**Question 02.5**

This question was answered well by many students and they did better on this question compared to Q1.5. 73% gained at least half marks, with 60% achieving Level 3 or 4. 20% of students achieved within the top Level 4 band.

Many achieved Level 3 or 4 and could confidently evaluate the significance and importance of both Infant and Believer's Baptism. Many had excellent knowledge of both forms of Baptism. Many of the responses in Level 3 and 4 were able to link Biblical stories like the Baptism of Jesus to this question. In addition, many of the Level 3 and 4 responses linked baptism to the removal of 'original sin' for some Christians, with successful links to the Genesis story and the life of Jesus. These responses showed reasoned consideration of both Believer's and Infant baptism, debating issues such as free will, understanding, Jesus' baptism, sacramental theology, God's grace, Christian family membership, etc.

Responses at Levels 1 and 2, similar to question 01.5, simply stated a reason for one or the other without an evaluative attempt. Some described one or both types of baptism without evaluating whether one is more important or suitable than the other. A number of responses focused on the issues surrounding 'forcing' children to be baptised, rather than the idea of nurture and parents doing what they think is best for their child. Some weaker responses said the child would be scared as they (children) are pushed under the water and this could scar them for life.

In some cases, there was a sense that less time was given to this question compared to question 01.5. This may well be based on a timing issue for some students. Again, weaker responses were those that 'reported' different viewpoints with no attempt at evaluation. Advice from teachers about response technique would allow more students to access the higher response levels.

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

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