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# A-LEVEL

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

7062/2B – Study of religion and dialogues: Christianity  
Report on the Examination

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## **General comments**

There were some outstanding scripts and there were some full mark answers to every question for this component. Few, if any, appeared to have difficulty completing the paper in the time available, although it was obvious that the handwriting deteriorated in the final question attempted on a number of scripts. There were some scripts where handwriting was a major issue, but on the whole the answers were legible. As is always the case under examination conditions, attention to the exact wording of the question varied considerably so answers were more or less relevant accordingly. This was particularly true, on some scripts, for AO2 questions, where some students lost sight of the issue they were supposed to be evaluating. Many students used technical terms accurately and effectively, but there were some errors which led to considerable confusion in the answers. There were also some pleasing references to scholars, but also some answers which seemed to name scholars at random, including scholars who had nothing to contribute to the discussion. The new-style dialogue questions appeared to cause no particular problems for most. The way these questions were approached varied considerably and some of those strategies were much more successful than others as will be evident from the comments below.

## **Section A: Study of Christianity**

### **Question 1**

#### **Part 01.1**

Some of the best answers to this question were clearly focused on the content specified for study and considered both the anthropomorphic and gender specific terms used in relation to God. There were informed discussions about the meaning of Father, and King and about God as Love. Some excellent answers unpacked the meaning of these terms in the light of the parallel belief that God is transcendent. Some answers showed a rather vague understanding of 'personal' and made general comments about 'God as personal to me'. Clearly this had some relevance, but such answers rarely achieved much depth.

#### **Part 01.2**

There were some excellent answers to this question that considered if the claim that there is 'little' agreement matched the evidence, or whether it would be more accurate to claim that there is no agreement or general agreement. However, other answers were mostly summaries of a wide range of different Christian beliefs and, while such answers were often well-informed, they did not always address the issue. Some simply completed their summary with a statement such as 'this shows there is little agreement', others did not actually state a point of view. The maximum reward possible for an answer which simply explains reasons / presents evidence to support one point of view is Level 2. An answer which does not state a point of view can achieve a maximum of Level 1, which gives credit for awareness of relevant information but recognises that the response has demonstrated no AO2 skills. A few answers referred to Plato or other non-Christian thinkers, but this material was irrelevant.

### **Question 2**

#### **Part 02.1**

There were excellent answers which clearly focused on the reasons why there are different views and supported the ideas with evidence and examples. There were also many answers that

described different views, but paid little, or no, attention to the reasons for them, and that limited the marks that could be awarded. Some of the explanations of those different views were very detailed, and the answers would have taken a good while to write, but unless the answer focused on the question asked it could not be highly rewarded.

## **Part 02.2**

There were some outstanding answers to this question and many were clearly very well informed about Christian perspectives on the two issues, although some had relatively little to say about attitudes to transgender people. Some weaker answers tended to summarise arguments for the view stated, followed by arguments against, without any critical analysis, comment or evaluation, beyond choosing to 'agree' or 'disagree' at the end of the response. Such answers could only be awarded a maximum of Level 3.

## **Dialogues**

There were many excellent answers to these questions. Some wrote separate AO1 and AO2 sections. This was a perfectly valid approach but it resulted in quite a lot of repetition, because some of the information was then needed as evidence for the AO2 section. Also, the AO1 material, when presented separately, tended to be rather general and broader than required and was not always focused enough to be useful for AO2. Some took a 'write all you know approach', and did not select what was relevant to the issue. The better answers tended to combine AO1 and AO2. There were some signs of planning, which was often very effective. A minority of students did these questions first. This was another perfectly valid approach and seemed to have no impact on their ability to complete the whole paper. In some cases the answers to the dialogue questions were by far the best answers on the paper, but this was not consistent. On the whole, weaker answers tended to have the same weaknesses as answers to the structured questions in Section A such as a failure to develop and support the AO1 content and a failure to critically analyse and evaluate the arguments presented. A very small number of students wrote three dialogue answers or answered both questions from the same section instead of one from philosophy and one from ethics.

## **Section B: The dialogue between philosophy and Christianity**

### **Question 3.1**

There were some excellent answers to this question. Many recognised that some Christians base the authority of the Bible firmly in the religious experiences of those who wrote it and believe that scripture was revealed by God. Some also focused on the authority of religious experiences recorded in scripture, such as God apparently speaking to the Prophets. The ways in which philosophy challenges the claim that these were religious experiences was then discussed and evaluated, with particular reference to the problems of subjectivity, interpretation and alternative natural experiences. Some useful discussions of Swinburne's principles of credulity and testimony were often included, as well as references to the work of Persinger and Ramachandran. Some also approached the question by discussing whether the experiences matched the definitions offered by Stace or James, for example. This was also a valid approach, but generally did no more than establish that the recorded experiences could, or could not, rightly be called 'religious'; it did not establish whether they do, or do not, have authority. Some answers conflated discussion of religious experience and miracles, but, in general, this was not a helpful approach and the answers were confused. Some discussed whether religious experience had greater authority than the Bible, but this approach made little reference to philosophy so had limited relevance. As part of their

conclusion, many argued that for some Christians the authority of the Bible does not rest on religious experience so cannot be undermined by doubt about the authenticity of such experiences.

#### **Question 4.1**

This was the more popular of the two questions in this section and there were some outstanding answers which pitched the arguments from David Hume, and to a lesser extent from Maurice Wiles, against the claims made by some Christians that interventionist miracles do happen. Those who wrote separate AO1 sections often introduced their answer with explanations of realist and anti-realist understandings of miracles, but there was considerable confusion about the meaning of anti-realist and the relevance of that concept to the debate. At times this did look like an attempt to write about 'everything I know' rather than to respond to the issue presented. There was also a tendency to list Hume's 'four arguments' against miracles with, in weaker arguments, little in the way of critical analysis, comment or evaluation, and the use of examples to debate the issue was surprisingly limited in some answers. Many argued that, even if the arguments did show that it was impossible to identify a specific event as an act of an interventionist God, it was possible to argue that miracles in the sense of an event of religious significance did 'happen', because some events were interpreted or experienced in that way by some people. The reasoning supporting that conclusion was sometimes very clear and sometimes very muddled.

### **Section C: The dialogue between ethics and Christianity**

#### **Question 5.1**

This was, by far, the most popular question in this section, and there were some excellent answers. Many of these compared the attitude to animals reflected in Aquinas' natural moral law to broader Christian views and, in particular, contrasted the ideas of dominion and stewardship. There was considerable confusion in some answers which began with the assumption that Aquinas's first precept applied equally to animals and humanity, there were also some very broad generalisations about Christian attitudes to the use of animals in scientific procedures and as a source of organs for transplants. Some students confidently reported what Aquinas had said about these issues rather than showing his attitude to animals may have led him to respond to them, had he thought they were a possibility. Some limited their discussion to the debate about eating meat, and some wrongly treated Peter Singer as a Christian thinker. Almost all answers argued both 'for' and 'against' the view but some were one-sided, often because their understanding of the attitude to animals in natural moral law was rather limited. Most argued that Christianity was divided over its attitude to animals and therefore while some thinking was consistent with the views of natural moral law, some was not. In answers that presented a separate AO1 section there was often a broad and largely irrelevant summary of the precepts of natural moral law, double effect and proportionalism. Some answers attempted to build in reference to all of these in the debate but they were not always made relevant, and were not always accurate.

#### **Question 6.1**

There were some excellent answers to this question. In general, Bentham's theory, and how it could be applied to the issue of freedom of religious expression, was better understood than Christian responses to the issue. Not all answers showed a clear understanding of freedom of religious expression, nor unpacked it in the context of a multicultural society which is where the specification places this issue. Some argued, for example, that adherence to a particular set of values or beliefs limited one's freedom, for example that a Christian was not free to murder, rather than discussing whether, for example, the right to wear distinctive religious symbols or use

violence in the name of free religious expression could be justified. Better answers tended to debate whether there was a matter of principle within Christianity in favour of unlimited freedom which would pitch it against Bentham's utilitarianism in certain cases because of the likely consequences of that freedom. Some good examples were used to debate the issue, but in general examples were lacking. The most common conclusion was that neither Christianity nor Bentham would allow complete freedom but would recognise the possible negative consequences of limiting it.

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

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