



# **Examiners' Report**

## **June 2023**

**GCSE Religious Studies A 1RA0 3A**

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## Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies Religious Studies A – Area of Study 3 – Philosophy and Ethics – Catholic Christianity

The paper contributes to 25% of the overall award.

The assessment consists of two sets of questions: candidates must answer both sets of questions.

This area of study comprises a study in depth of aspects of Philosophy and Ethics in the context of Catholic Christianity as a lived religion within the United Kingdom and throughout the world.

There are two sections:

Arguments for the Existence of God;

Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century.

Candidates will be expected to study Catholic Christianity within the context of the wider British society, the religious traditions of which are, in the main, Christian.

Candidates should recognise that Catholic Christianity is one of the many religions and world views in Great Britain, which include Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and non-religious views such as Humanism and atheism.

This knowledge may be applied throughout the assessment of the specified content. Candidates should compare and contrast the areas of ethics and/or philosophy within Catholic Christianity with wider Christian perspectives and non-religious views as outlined in the content below. Candidates should also recognise that within Catholic Christianity there may be more than one perspective in the way beliefs and teachings are understood and expressed. Common and divergent views within the wider Christian tradition in the way beliefs and teachings are understood and expressed should be included throughout, including reference to Orthodox, Protestant and other Christian traditions.

The details of the assessment content are provided in the specification.

Centres are to use this, rather than other published resources when planning the course content.

In some questions, marks are available for correct spelling, grammar and punctuation – SPaG

Please note:

AO: Assessment Objective

SPaG: Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

## Question 1 (a)

Candidates are asked to 'Outline' on (a) items. Therefore, lists can reach a maximum of three marks

### **GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a list.**

An example:

Outline 3 characteristics of God:

**God is creator** (1 mark)

**God is creator**, judge and lawgiver (1 mark for list or sentence)

**God is creator**, busy and distant. (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information)

Busy, distant and **God is creator**, (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information)

Creator, judge, lawgiver (1 mark for list)

Creator, busy, distant (0 Marks) (all three elements need to be correct for 1 mark)

Creator, judge, distant (0 marks)

### **Candidates were assessed on Section 1: Arguments for the Existence of God**

Bullet point 1.8. The solutions offered to **the problem of suffering** and a loving and righteous God within Catholicism: biblical, theoretical and practical responses – Psalms, including reference to Psalm 119, Job, free will (St Augustine), as a way for humans to develop (St Irenaeus), prayer, and charity; divergent understandings within Christianity of their success in solving the problem (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was 'Outline three ways Catholics respond to suffering.'

Many candidates were able to outline successfully three ways that a Catholic would respond. Some candidates did not read the question carefully and gave three problems that suffering raises.

This is a good example of a Q01a response.

Candidates should write three sentences containing one piece of information in each. There is no need for development: it will not receive credit

1 (a) Outline **three** ways Catholics respond to suffering.

(3)

Catholics respond to suffering by doing charity work like CAFOD.

Also by believing suffering is a part of God's plan.

Also by having faith and praying to God that everyone will be in peace.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate is awarded marks for outlining 3 correct ways:

- .. charity work (1)
- ...part of God's Plan (1)
- ..praying to God (1)

Total: 3 marks

This is a partially-complete answer.

1 (a) Outline **three** ways Catholics respond to suffering.

(3)

Catholics raise money and give it to those who are suffering. Catholics pray for those who are suffering.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate gives two ways in which Catholics respond to suffering:

- ..raise money for those who suffer (1)
- pray for those who are suffering (1)

Total: 2 marks



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Always try to give three outlines: it is better to try. You might be correct.

## Question 1 (b)

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks.

If three reasons are given, the two best are selected.

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Arguments for the Existence of God. Bullet point 1.4:

**Catholic attitudes towards religious experience and its use as a philosophical argument for the existence of God:** the nature of religious experience and why not all religious experiences are approved by the Church, including reference to Catechism of the Catholic Church 66 – 67; Catholic responses to non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments that religious experiences do not provide proof that God exists. (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was 'Explain two reasons why Catholics believe religious experiences are proof of God's existence.'

Some less-able candidates explained two religious experiences but did not link them, to prove God's existence.

Most candidates were able to explain at least one reason and a significant number was able to explain two reasons. Many responses were linked to miracles, visions and conversion.

This is a good example that includes two developed reasons.

If candidates separate their reasons as in the example it encourages them to give two reasons and search for development.

(b) Explain **two** reasons why Catholics believe religious experiences are proof of God's existence.

(4)

One reason Catholics believe they prove God's existence is because there is no other explanation for so many people experiencing them. If so many people feel as though they have experienced God, they cannot all be lying. Another reason Catholics believe religious experiences prove the existence of God is because they can cause conversion. Some people convert to Christianity after a religious experience so God must have caused them to be able to inspire this which must mean God must exist.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate receives marks for two developed reasons:

Reason 1:

- ..there is no other explanation (1)
- with they all can't be lying (1)

Reason 2:

- they can cause a conversion (1)
- God was the cause that inspired them (1)

Total: 4 marks

## Question 1 (c)

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom a quotes or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked.

The reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development it does not gain a second mark for the source.

### **GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a source of wisdom**

- The candidates do not have to reference a quote or quote it word for word.
- If markers of candidate work in centres are unsure if the quote will be accepted, use a search engine. Enter the gist of the paraphrase and 'Bible' or 'Christian teaching'.
- If the candidate states that it is in John 1:18 and then states another verse from John – then this can be awarded. We are not holding candidate to 'verses' but it must be the correct book.
- If the candidate gives the paraphrase and then puts (John 1:18) in brackets the paraphrase can have the mark and the bracketed reference is ignored.
- If a candidate quotes Jesus and it was Paul or vice versa; and the quote is not accredited to them, it is not awarded.

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Arguments for the Existence of God. Bullet point 1:1: Revelation as proof of the existence of God: the significance of Jesus Christ as the culmination of God's revelation; **what the revelation of Jesus Christ shows about the nature of God for Catholics, including reference to Hebrews 1:1 – 4.** (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was: 'Explain two ways the nature of God is shown by the revelation of Jesus Christ. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

This question was answered successfully by many candidates, who gave at least one developed way. Many responses used subject-specific words such as 'omnipotent' and 'omniscient' to explain the nature of God. A significant proportion was able to use sacred sources to support the ways that they had given.

Some candidates simply explained what revelation is and did not link it to the way the nature of God is shown.

Some candidates did not relate their answer to Jesus and instead gave two reasons why or how God has revealed himself, eg Moses in the burning bush, and as a result they did not answer the question set.

A significant number of candidates connected a source or a teaching to the belief given.

This is an example of one way being developed.

If candidates separate their reasons like the example it encourages them to give two reasons and search for development.

(c) Explain **two** ways the nature of God is shown by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

(5)

one way it is shown as God loves us so much that he gave his only Son showing how he is willing to give his only son to die for our sins.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate is given marks for giving a developed way.

- God loves us so much (1)
- gave his only Son to die (1)

Total: 2 marks

This is an example of a full-mark answer.

(c) Explain **two** ways the nature of God is shown by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

(5)  
One way the nature of God is shown through the revelation is ~~his~~<sup>the</sup> sacrifice of his son for the greater good of humanity. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only ~~son~~ son." This shows that God is ~~omnipotent~~ all loving as he made a sacrifice for ~~ex~~ the benefit of everyone. Another way is that God is omnipotent, as he had the power to become flesh through his son, who is God incarnate. This is a display of power as he had the divine ability to become human.



The candidate is given marks for explaining two correct ways (developed) and a relevant source of wisdom.

1st way:

sacrifice of his son (1)

- 'for God so loved the world he gave his only son' (1) this shows that God is all loving (1)

2nd way:

God is omnipotent (1)

- he had the power to become flesh (1)

Total: 5 marks

## Question 1 (d)

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the (d) items. The candidates are being assessed on AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief. This constitutes 50% of the overall mark.

The question is 'Evaluate' this statement considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion' – there must be some consideration of the arguments (appraise the arguments to gain the higher grades). Many candidates gave excellent answers, giving reasons for and against but did not analyse or evaluate them. Formulas and writing frames frequently restricted the flow of the arguments limiting the candidates' progression to the higher levels. In many cases, the writing frames used encouraged appraisal but the candidates did not understand the demands of the skill. Some candidates wrote: 'This is a strong argument because ...' and repeated the previous point or gave another point.

Candidates were assessed on Section one. Arguments for the Existence of God. Bullet point 1.5 Design argument: **the classical design argument for the existence of God and its use by Catholics as a philosophical argument for the existence of God**; understandings of what the design argument shows about the nature of God for Catholics including Romans 1:18 – 24; Catholic responses to non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments against the design argument as evidence for the existence of God (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was 'The design of the world proves the existence of God.' Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against. In your response you should:

- refer to Catholic teachings
- refer to non-religious points of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

A significant number of candidates knew what the design argument was and were able to use it to support belief in God. However, many became confused and added an argument from causation and the creation account, and God being the unmoved mover.

Some candidates did not read the question and simply gave arguments for the existence of the world, comparing design against science. They did not link to how these did, or did not, prove the existence of God.

This is an example of a Level 2 answer, plus 3 marks for SPaG.

Ask candidates to consider the arguments they give. 'This is a strong argument because...' in many cases did not add anything to the answer. In many answers it was clearly part of a writing frame and candidates used it without understanding what they were trying to achieve.

\*d) "The design of the world proves the existence of God."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Catholic teachings
- refer to non-religious points of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

(15)

Some Catholics may agree because everything needs a designer. This is because of the watchmaker analogy - if you were to see a watch you would know it has complex mechanisms and therefore needs an intelligent designer. This can be applied to the complex universe and the only explanation could be God. This is a strong argument as the science laws (gravity), DNA are so intricate and precise that a creator must of created these fixed logical principles for them to exist. Therefore the statement is true as the more likely would be an ~~intelligent~~ intelligent creator than the universe to exist because of chance (the big bang).

Some non-believers disagree as they would argue who designed God. If every existing being was created then who created God. Although Catholics may argue God

is eternal that would not logically align with the argument that every complex thing needs a ~~creator~~ designer. This is a ~~weak~~ <sup>strong</sup> argument as all the laws of science like gravity and DNA can be explained through ~~science~~ science e.g evolution. Therefore the statement isn't true as complex things like DNA have been seen proved by science.

In conclusion, the weight of the argument ~~leads~~ <sup>leads</sup> to agree because there is more likely to be <sup>an intelligent</sup> ~~an intelligent designer~~ designer than the universe to appear out of chance which to me seems a lot more logical likely, due to the complex things ~~things~~ in existence.



The candidate receives response marks plus 3 SPaG marks:

- The candidate gives arguments for and against the statement.
- Reasons are underpinned by a limited understanding of religion and belief.
- The answer has connections, but they are lacking in depth and superficial.
- There are judgements made but they are superficial
- The conclusion is not sufficiently justified.

The candidate meets the criteria for SPaG 3 marks:

- The candidate spells and punctuates with consistent accuracy.
- The candidate uses rules of grammar with effective control of meaning overall.
- The candidate uses a wide range of specialist terms as appropriate.

Response: 6 marks

SPaG: 3 marks

Total: 9 marks

Level 2

\* (d) "The design of the world proves the existence of God."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Catholic teachings
- refer to non-religious points of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

(15)

On the one hand many Catholics may agree with this statement because ~~the world is~~ there is plenty of evidence the world is designed such as the human body and interdependence, the only way such a complex structure can be made is by a powerful being like God. This is a strong argument because as Paley said if you find a watch on the ground ~~you~~ it is <sup>so complex</sup> ~~made so intricately~~ <sup>complex</sup> that you don't assume it has just formed there. However this argument is significantly weakened by the view of atheists who believe the world came from a big bang and that organisms are so complex because of natural selection. This has been proven to be true due to discovery of fossils here yet it could be argued God designed the world to be able to adapt strengthening the point that the world has been made by a powerful God. So far in my appraisal I agree with the statement because although true animals and humans are complex due to natural selection the complexity of the environment we live in with weather and heat proves the world is designed by a ~~an~~ creator, such a complex structure has never been found anywhere else so it is safe to presume that the world must of been created by God.

On the other hand, Athiests may disagree with this statement because of evil, if as Stephen Fry said if the world is designed why would a loving omnipotent god create evil hence the world cannot be created by god. This is a strong argument because if god is so loving why does he let us suffer in his design meaning he either isn't all powerful or isn't all loving in turn meaning he is not god. This argument is significantly weakened because as St Irenaeus said evil helps us to grow. God has created evil so we understand and appreciate good and god without evil there is no good and hence no god, god of evil allows us as humans to have free will to understand god, evil in the world only further emphasizes how the design of the world is because of god. So far in my appraisal I agree with the statement, while evil is a terrible thing for humans to endure and raises us questions gods love and omnipotence evil in the world is only proof of design, evil has been designed to give humans good because without evil there cannot be good.

To conclude I agree with the statement, although as the big bang and evil are good arguments against creation they work against themselves. We need evil to experience good and the idea that a complex environment such as the world just 'happened' is not logical, while natural selection has been proven it also proves gods design for us to adapt to ~~over~~ our environment to learn strength and courage, ~~free~~ <sup>evil</sup> will was also designed so we could love <sup>the</sup> gift of free will.



The candidate gains Level 3 because:

- The candidate deconstructs the religious information leading to an accurate understanding of religion and belief.
- Connections are made among many, but not all, of the elements in the question.
- The candidate provides evidence suggesting the lowest mark of the level because judgements are supported by limited appraisal of evidence, some of which may be superficial, leading to a partially justified conclusion.

The reason that it does not go beyond the lower end of Level 3 is because connections are not as developed as they could be. Detail in the opposing view is not deep enough to move it up within the level.

The candidate meets the criteria for SPaG 3 marks:

- The Candidate spells and punctuates with consistent accuracy.
- The Candidate uses rules of grammar with effective control of meaning overall.
- The Candidate uses a wide range of specialist terms as appropriate.

Response: 7 marks

SPaG: 3 marks

Total: 10 marks

Level 3

## Question 2 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section 2: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

Bullet point 2.1: The importance and purpose of marriage for Catholics: the significance of marriage in Catholic life; Catholic teachings about marriage, including Not Just Good, But Beautiful by Pope Francis; divergent Christian, non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to the importance of marriage in society, including the sanctity of marriage, a lack of importance, cohabitation and the Catholic responses to these attitudes.

The question asked was 'Outline three reasons marriage is important to Catholics.'

This question was well-received with many candidates being able to outline the importance of marriage, using reasons such as to allow for procreation, to unite and to be until death do part.

Candidates are advised to write separate sentences: starting a new line signposts that three clear points are being made.

2 (a) Outline **three** reasons marriage is important to Catholics.

(3)

One reason marriage is important to Catholics is because it is fruitful. Another reason is that ~~it~~ it is life long. And a final reason is that it is exclusive.



The candidate is given marks for three correct reasons:

- It is fruitful (1)
- It is lifelong (1)
- It is exclusive (1)

Total: 3 marks

2 (a) Outline **three** reasons marriage is important to Catholics.

(3)

One reason marriage is important to Catholics is because it is a sacrament. Another reason marriage is important to Catholics is because it is life-giving. A third reason marriage is important to Catholics is because it is permanent, the couple promise to stay together 'till death do us part'.



The candidate gives three correct reasons:

- It is a sacrament (1)
- It is life giving (1)
- It is permanent (1)

The candidate develops the last reasons with 'till death do us part'.

(a) questions do not need development

Total: 3 marks

## Question 2 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section 2: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century.

Bullet point 2.3 Catholic teaching about the purpose and importance of the family: **Catholic teaching about the purpose and importance of families** including: procreation; security and education of children; Catholic responses to the different types of family within 21st-century society (nuclear, single parent, same-sex parents, extended and blended families), including Familiaris Consortio, 36-85.

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons why the family is important to Catholics.'

Many candidates were able to give two reasons, with a significant number able to develop both reasons. The most common reasons given included how the family is the domestic church and able to teach children about God. In addition, many included that the family was the basic unit of society. A small number gave reasons about marriage and divorce and as a result, did not answer the question correctly.

This is a good example of a Q02(b) response.

Candidates need to be clear about what the Catholic Church teaches, and how it may differ from other Christian teachings, on issues relating to marriage and family.

(b) Explain **two** reasons why the family is important to Catholics.

(4)

One reason family is important is because God said to reproduce and have children. This is a command from God so it must be listened to.

A second reason is to raise holy children. It is the role of the parents to raise their children in faith.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate gives two developed reasons:

Reason 1:

- God said to reproduce (1)
- it is a command from God (1)

Reason 2:

- raise holy children (1)
- the role of parents to do this (1)

Total: 4 marks

## Question 2 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section 2: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century.

Bullet point 2.7: Catholic teaching about the equality of men and women in the family: Catholic teaching about the role of men and women in the family with reference to Catechism of the Catholic Church 2207, including the dignity of work within the home; divergent Christian teachings and attitudes about the equality and roles of men and women in the family and Catholic responses to them.

The question asked was 'Explain two Christian attitudes to the equality of men and women in the family. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

Some candidates did not read the question fully and answered about the roles of men and women within the Church or wider society.

Those who did read the question correctly gave contrasting attitudes to the roles of men and women within the family, and were able to develop at least one of them. Many candidates were able to support the attitudes given with a suitable source, the most frequently-used being the teachings of St Paul.

This is a full-mark answer to Q02(c)

(c) Explain **two** Christian attitudes to the equality of men and women in the family.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

(5)

One Christian attitude is that men and women have different roles within the family, however they are equal in importance and dignity. Men and women are both important as they were both created by God as detailed in Genesis, "In the image of God, man and woman, he created them".

Another Christian attitude is that, ~~see~~ men are made to provide for the family, giving resources, food and safety, whereas women unite the family, providing love and maintaining the environment of the family. Yet both raise the child in the Christian faith.



The candidate is given marks for two developed attitudes and a source of wisdom.

Attitude 1:

- men and women have different roles (1)
- they are equal in importance (1)
- as made in the image of God (1)

Attitude 2:

- men are to provide (1)
- women are to unite and maintain the family (1)



Practise including a source of wisdom and authority in your answers.

## Question 2 (d)

Candidates were assessed on Section 2: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century.

Bullet point 2.6: Catholic teaching about divorce, annulment and remarriage: Catholic teaching on divorce, annulment and remarriage, including Catechism of the Catholic Church 2382 – 2386; divergent Christian, non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to divorce, annulment and remarriage, including the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, and Catholic responses to them.

The question asked was 'Divorce should never happen.' Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against. In your response you should:

- refer to Catholic teachings
- refer to different Christian points of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

This question did not require non-religious points. Many candidates did not read the bullet points and instead of referring to different Christian points of view they referred to non-religious points of view, that could not be awarded.

In addition, many candidates gave in-depth personal opinion on this question. They did not link it to any religious viewpoint: this meant that it was not credited because the question did not ask for opinion and personal views.

Candidates often veered away from divorce and instead explained annulment. Annulment is not divorce, or an alternative, as many responses suggested, and was not credited.

Some candidates, who did refer to other Christian view points, did not support the arguments sufficiently to demonstrate an accurate understanding of religion and belief.

This is an example of a Level 3 answer.

(d) "Divorce should never happen."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Catholic teachings
- refer to different Christian points of view Protestant
- reach a justified conclusion.

(12)

Many Catholics would agree with this statement. Marriage is a covenant between ~~two~~ man and woman and cannot be broken by earthly powers. Catholics believe that one important feature of marriage is for it to be lifelong. This is crucial for many couples as it allows the couple to be together for life and allows them to grow in faith together. However, ~~as~~ the Catholic Church does allow a civil divorce which allows for the separation of a couple without the sacramental nature of marriage being broken. I think this is a weak point because in the eyes of the Lord, you are still married so ~~the~~ both individuals are not permitted to remarry. This can deprive an individual of their happiness as they could be alone for the rest of their lives which leads to the problem of anxiety and depression.

However, the Church of England would strongly disagree with this statement. Protestants acknowledge that relationships fail and that divorce is allowed. They argue that the nature of God is one full of

forgiveness so therefore we should be allowed a second chance. I think this is an extremely credible argument because the effects of a broken down marriage in the family home can often be worse than the divorce itself. ~~There~~ Thus, ~~then~~ Protestants believe the happiness of an individual should be prioritised.

In conclusion, I believe people should deserve a second chance as we are all human and we make mistakes. Therefore, divorce should be an option for struggling couples.



Credit is given because the candidate:

- gives logical chains of reasoning and gives arguments for and against
- makes some reasoned judgements
- considers different Christian points of view

However, the conclusion is not fully justified.

The response is placed at the lower end of Level 3 because the judgments needed to be supported by appraisal of evidence that contributes to a more justified conclusion.

Total: 7 marks

Level 3



Show that your answer is underpinned by an understanding of religion and belief.

## Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Answer (a) items in outlines – this means candidates should write in full sentences
- Provide three sentences for (a) items, each should be on a separate line
- (b) items should have two developed reasons (not more than two)
- Development may be 1) examples 2) quotes 3) extra relevant material
- Development must link to the reason given and the question set
- (c) items are similar to b) items but use a source of wisdom as a fifth element
- A source of wisdom may be a paraphrase but should be identifiable. The source of wisdom must be linked to the reason given
- (d) item responses must show AO2 skills to obtain high marks
- (d) items need to address the bullet points to ensure that they refer to the relevant groups
- (d) items must show an appraisal of the argument, not simply rely on a set format
- Levels descriptors will be used to mark d) items

## **Grade boundaries**

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