The Importance of the Worldwide Church

(Including Reconciliation and Persecution)

(Pages 58-61 in the Christianity textbook)

This summary sheet is to help you learn about the worldwide church, reconciliation and persecution. According to the AQA specification you need to know the following things:

The importance of the worldwide Church including:

• working for reconciliation

• how Christian churches respond to persecution

Some terminology is obvious in meaning but in the exam you will be asked to give definitions of words so that is why such key terms are laid out below.

Terminology

**Christian Solidarity Worldwide**  - a charity that helps persecuted Christians

**the Church** - the worldwide community of Christian believers

**martyr** -one who dies for his/her beliefs

**Open Doors** - a Christian charity that helps persecuted Christians around the world

**persecution** – treating someone badly because of religion, etc.

**reconciliation** - 1. when enemies become friends 2. a sacrament of the Catholic Church (same as confession – People confess sins and are reconciled to God.)

**rejoice** - to celebrate and be happy

What is the worldwide Church?

In the summary of the ‘Role of the Church in the Local Community’ the church was defined as a congregation of people. The worldwide Church means **all Christian believers** across the whole world. Christians recognise other Christians from far away countries as **brothers & sisters** in Christ, and feel a special connection to them more than other people from their own country, sometimes.

**I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**

Jesus in Matthew 16:18

Reconciliation

1. According to the Bible, humans were **enemies with God** because of **sin** until God came to die in our place on the Cross.
2. It is now possible for humans to become **friends with God** because Christ has made a way for human **sin to be taken away**. Enemies becoming friends with God is called **reconciliation**.
3. Paul in the New Testament talks about a **ministry of reconciliation** which is the idea of Christians persuading others to be reconciled to God by turning their lives to him.
4. The Catholic Church has a **sacrament of reconciliation** where a person **confesses** their sins to a priest who pronounces God’s forgiveness.
5. Christians are also commanded by Jesus to be **reconciled to other people** by forgiving sins that have been done to them and living in harmony with them.
6. An example of reconciliation was after WW2, the **Community of the Cross of Nails** where Christians from Coventry became friends with German Christians whose country had destroyed their famous cathedral in the bombing and killed their people. Likewise, Britain had killed many Germans.

Persecution (Read the box first.)

**Whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel’s shall save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? ... Whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this ... generation, the Son of Man shall also be ashamed of him [on Judgement Day].**

Jesus in Mark 8:35-38

1. Persecution takes **many forms**, e.g., name calling, unjust laws, exclusion from education, segregation, attacks on property, violence and murder.
2. Jesus tells his disciples that they should **expect persecution** because the **world hated him first** so it will hate his followers too.
3. The disciples (and Christians today) are left with a **choice**:
   1. fit in with God’s ways and be rejected by the world;
   2. or fit in with the world and its ways and betray God.
4. Some **examples**:
   1. A 2012 survey showed **nearly 75% of nations (139)** discriminated against Christians.
   2. In 2018 an estimated **3,000 Christians were murdered** around the world because of their beliefs. The real figure may be higher.

**He is no fool who gives that which he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.**

Jim Elliot

(20th century missionary to the Amazon & martyr)

* 1. In **North Korea** many thousands of Christians are kept in concentration camps. Most will die there. Owning a bible is a crime. Telling others about Christ sometimes results in being shot dead on the spot.
  2. On **Easter Sunday 2019** about two hundred died from bomb blasts in churches in Sri Lanka by IS.

Responding to persecution

1. Jesus says, ‘**Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you**,’ (Matthew5:44).
2. They seek to **be reconciled** with the persecutors.
3. Christians take encouragement that this is **a sign** that they are God’s people.
4. Supporting victims:
   1. **Christian Solidarity Worldwide** tries to influence governments to stop the cruelty;
   2. **Open Doors** helps victims with aid and giving bibles where they are banned.

**Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.**

Jesus in Matthew 5:11-12

Possible Exam Questions

Explain two aspects of Jesus’s role in reconciling people to God. (4 marks)

Explain two ways in which Christian are persecuted. (4 marks)

Explain two ways in which the Church supports victims of persecution. (4 marks)

Explain two ways in which Christians can help enemy groups to be reconciled. Refer to sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)

Explain two teachings about reconciliation. Refer to sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)

Explain two teachings about persecution. Refer to sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)

Explain two reasons why Christians may see persecution as positive. Refer to sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)

‘The Christian Church is doing nothing to support the persecuted.’ (12 marks)

‘It is not possible to rejoice if you are being persecuted.’ (12 marks)

‘There will never be a time without persecution in the world.’ (12 marks)

‘Reconciliation is not important.’ (12 marks)