



General Certificate of Education

Religious Studies (2060)

RSS10 World Religions 2

(either Christianity

or Judaism

or Islam 1 *The Way of Submission*)

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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General Comments

A few candidates seemed unaware of the requirement to answer **two** two-part questions.

As in previous sessions, there were relatively few candidates for the sections on Christianity and Judaism; Islam was the most popular section of the paper.

Section A *Christianity*

Question 1 *Some beliefs about God: Trinity and salvation*

Some candidates appeared to struggle with this question and needed stronger links to the specific demands of the question.

Part 01

Some made little reference to the creeds and there was often little depth and discussion in responses. Others had a very good understanding of the Christian beliefs about God found in the creeds, and were able to explain these well.

Part 02

This part of the question produced weaker responses on the whole. Many did not sufficiently address the issue of the tension between the ideas of the Trinity and monotheism.

Question 2 *Christian Scriptures: nature and purpose*

Part 03

The concept of the 'word of God' in the question demanded consideration of the various views of the status of the Christian scriptures. Few candidates addressed this element in sufficient detail, but there were some good responses.

Part 04

Some candidates responded well to this covering a range of viewpoints in a balanced and informed way. Others merely repeated the different views on the Bible that they had covered in part 03, and thus gained limited marks.

Question 3 *Aspects of Christian worship*

Part 05

This was the most popular of the Christianity questions. Most who responded gave examples of public worship and then examples of private worship with a comparison that was sometimes short and which lacked development. Some were able to offer explanations about beliefs and practices showing a good range of knowledge and understanding. To gain the highest marks it was important that candidates focused on differences. The question afforded opportunities for well-informed candidates to write interestingly about different forms of liturgy.

Part 06

Candidates tended to respond well to this, covering a range of viewpoints and responding in a balanced and informed way. Weaker responses were along the lines of 'you get distracted in crowds of people, especially where there are guitars and flashing lights'.

Question 4 *A Christian way of life; initiation, marriage and death*

Part 07

It was clear that some candidates were expecting a question on baptism and tried to use this material for confirmation. Some merely gave examples of practices; the question demanded attention to beliefs associated with confirmation.

Part 08

Those who were trying to answer a different question on 07 were naturally somewhat restricted here. However, there were a few good answers which evaluated the claim in the question effectively.

Section B *Judaism*

Question 5 *God and his people*

Part 09

Many candidates' responses were excellent, showing precisely and intelligently how specific factors challenge traditional Jewish theological principles. The quality of some of the answers revealed a very pleasing and thorough treatment of the topic.

A few candidates misread the question and tended to ignore the key point of the question about challenges to the traditional Jewish ideas about God.

Part 10

This was very well answered on the whole with almost all candidates using the same examples, usually relating to the Holocaust. Weaker answers tended to be one-sided.

Question 6 *Scripture*

This was not a popular question.

Part 11

There were several poor responses with no reference to the status of Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim. There was little recognition of differing views on the authority of Scripture.

Part 12

Answers were characterised by largely one-sided views in response to the evaluation statement. It should be noted that the command to 'assess this claim' requires that candidates consider the reasons why statements might be true **and** also give alternative views.

Question 7 *Aspects of worship and festivals: Shabbat, Yom Kippur and Pesach*

Part 13

There were some good answers which contained good descriptions, although some candidates only discussed the role of the rabbi and others tended to generalise a little. That said, generally, some reasonable understanding was shown so responses were mostly of a good quality and were characterised by clarity, focus and direction on the role of men in Jewish worship.

Part 14

Candidates gave much weaker responses to this part of the question in general and appeared to struggle with the issue of 'vital for the survival'. Answers lacked depth and often vague ideas were offered with little discussion. Few responses seemed to say anything about worship and focused more on the role of men in Judaism generally.

Question 8 *Styles of Judaism: Orthodox and Reform beliefs and practices*

Part 15

There were some excellent answers which gave thorough responses on both Orthodox and Reform beliefs and gained full marks. Candidates in the main offered good answers, although many dealt exclusively with Orthodox Jewish beliefs. The best answers were very focused and direct.

Part 16

Overall there were some reasonably good answers to this part of the question with good ideas being presented. Many candidates explained articulately both support and refutation of the claim that the similarities unite the two branches of Judaism. It was refreshing to see balanced and reasoned responses from the more able candidates and some supporting evidence used by the remainder of candidates although a significant minority missed the point of the question. Many answers contained some factual inaccuracies.

Section C Islam 1 *The Way of Submission*

Question 9 *The Qur'an*

Part 17

This was a popular question that was well received by the candidates. Although candidates were instructed to 'Explain', many preferred to concentrate on the description of legends about the receipt of the Qur'an with the consequence that important points were overlooked. For example, Muhammad being illiterate may be taken to prove the authenticity of a revelation of which he was but a channel - since he could not have made it up and composed literary Arabic. Hardly anyone drew out this implication. On the whole, candidates' responses to this question were excellent, though sometimes candidates just discussed the authority or importance of the Qur'an rather than writing about the revelation of it. Whilst there were some implicit links drawn, the direction of the question required a different response. As with comments made in previous reports and again here, it would be helpful if centres stressed to candidates of the importance of addressing the actual question set.

Part 18

Few discussed the problem of appealing to ancient texts as authorities. Some appeared reluctant to enter into debate about the authority of the Qur'an today, and thus produced rather one-sided answers. There were some answers which were well balanced and well argued.

Question 10 *The Five Pillars*

Part 19

This was the most popular question with candidates on this section of the paper and the question tended to elicit long and detailed answers. Most candidates tended to separate each pillar rather than discuss the significance of the pillars as a whole. Some candidates gave good descriptions of the Five Pillars but failed to concentrate sufficiently on the significance. A typical lower level response might outline the Five Pillars and conclude that they are significant because 'if you don't follow them, you can't call yourself a Muslim'. The more able candidates were able to discuss ways in which following the Five Pillars shows submission. There were, however, some excellent responses that dealt with the pillars individually and explained the significance specific to each, as well as adducing some more general considerations.

Part 20

All too often candidates started their response with: "I agree with this statement because....." and then half way through suggested that they "disagreed because..." Nevertheless, many sensibly concluded that in most circumstances both act and intent are needed with the more able candidates explaining why. Some candidates construed niyyah quite specifically as meaning an explicit statement of intent prior to the performance of a religious act. This tended to generate confusion, because they then had problems distinguishing between act and intention. As always with evaluative responses, the stronger candidates managed to look at both sides and assess effectively.

Question 11 *The doctrine of God*

Part 21

Many candidates found it difficult to maintain a focus on the judicial aspect, drifting off into beliefs about God. Few made the basic points that we are talking about an absolute, divinely commanded morality, and what the implications of this might be. Most appear convinced that Islam is a recipe for a successful life, culminating in a post-mortem reward but not many seemed to mention that it was about unselfishness and submission to God's will. There were few references to mercy which was surprising. Both areas of lawgiver and judge were not always covered.

The weaker candidates tended to look at the concept of God as a whole. There was a tendency to focus on the laws given and the idea of judgement became an afterthought if appearing at all. It seemed to be a question that some candidates were not expecting.

Part 22

Few candidates attempted to analyse the notion of description and almost all confused it with imagination. Surprisingly, a lot of candidates did not mention the 99 names of Allah. The more able candidates said that our concepts do not apply to God, but the notions of mercy and justice point us in the right direction. There were, however, some very good responses to this evaluation question with the very best being both balanced and thoughtful. Many looked at whether it is possible to *begin* to describe Allah. Some candidates were a little more simplistic in their response looking at the 99 names of Allah and the sense of Allah as beyond human comprehension.

Question 12 *Key Beliefs*

This was a popular question that produced stronger and more detailed responses.

Part 23

Candidates seemed to cope well with the nature and the role of angels so both aspects tended to be covered well and candidates knew their material.

Most candidates said that angels are sexless, made of light and lack free will. A few attempted to spell out implications and unexpectedly not many said that they are messengers – i.e. instruments of the expression of the divine will. The more able candidates explained roles by referring to the functions of particular intermediaries. An interesting approach to the topic from one candidate asked how it came about that Iblis 'fell' if he didn't have free will. If he had free will, he was not an angel in the first place.

Part 24

Candidates still like to use the usual 'for' and 'against' rather than well-formulated argument and therefore some responses became rather narrow. There was also a typical pattern of reasoning here: 'it's unreasonable to believe in something you haven't seen though we believe in an unseen God, so it's alright to believe in what you haven't seen'. Alternatively: 'if we did not believe in angels, the moral framework of rewards and punishments would collapse'. It would be rewarding to read some discussions of the concept of rationality, but stronger candidates said that since the belief was integral to the Islamic outlook, it was reasonable for those following that way of life to accept the reality of angels as part and parcel of the whole package. Some very good candidates observed that it was a question of whether you thought that the only possible modes of existence were ones familiar to us.