



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

Religious Studies

RSS05

(Specification 2060)

**Unit E The History of Christianity OR
Religion, Art and the Media**

Report on the Examination

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General comments

As in previous years, the great majority of entries for this unit came from the second section, Religion, Art and the Media, although there were some good responses from the few entrants for the first section of the paper. Whilst the responses covered the full range of ability, it was pleasing to note the high level of knowledge and understanding displayed by a significant number of students. The great majority of students used their time well, and were able to balance the amount of time given to the two questions. As ever, there were some scripts which were very difficult to read. There is a risk that students may not gain full credit for material which cannot be deciphered.

Section A The History of Christianity

Question 1 *The Celtic Church*

- 01** The few responses here were able to show understanding of Celtic art, although the success in making links to Celtic spirituality, which was necessary for the higher levels, was more variable.
- 02** The responses here were thoughtful and generally able to argue a good case for the distinctiveness or otherwise of Celtic spirituality.

Question 2 *The Protestant Reformation*

This was the most popular question in this section.

- 03** There were some answers here which showed that students had good knowledge about Calvin. Unfortunately, a number gave a lot of biographical details, or wrote at length about his teachings, with very limited attention to the organisation and practice of the Church. Such answers could gain limited credit.
- 04** Here, even those students who had provided the wrong sort of information in 03 were on safer ground, and there were some thoughtful responses. Some made contrast with the effects of the work of Luther, others with other reformers, and some looked at the wider political circumstances of Europe at the time.

Question 3 *The Catholic Reformation*

There were very few responses here.

- 05/06** The few answers seen showed an effective understanding of the place of the Oratory of Divine Love within the Catholic Reformation, and were able to make an assessment of its effects.

Question 4 *The rise of Methodism*

- 07** Answers here showed a reasonable knowledge of John Wesley's work. Whilst a few students tended to narrative approaches, most were able to address the demands of the question successfully, and to focus on methods and teaching.
- 08** This question could be approached in different ways, and examiners credited either. Students could debate the emphasis on preaching, or they could debate the role of John Wesley, as opposed to others within (or outside) the movement. Most of the few students who answered this question took the latter approach, and argued their case successfully.

Section B Religion, Art and the Media

Questions 5 and 6 *The nature and purpose of religious art*

Questions 5 and 6 are both on the topic of the nature and purpose of religious art, so whilst the importance of answering the question set is stressed for every question, it is especially important here, and there was a limit to the credit which could be gained for general answers to either question.

09 There were some very good answers to this question, in which two appropriate forms of art were chosen, for example, paintings, stained glass, or architecture. Students used these well to formulate their responses. Other forms of art which could have been employed included icons, woodcuts and wall paintings. The best answers exemplified ideas well, by reference to specific works, and to show how these presented the teachings of the religion. Thus, for example, some students were able to discuss ways in which stained glass not only ‘tells a story’, but also about ways in which the particular medium can evoke a sense of the numinous relevant to the particular teaching. Weaker answers tended just to present some rather general material on their chosen forms, with insufficient attention to the presentation of teaching.

The question asked for two forms of religious art. A small but significant number of students ignored this demand, and thus penalised themselves. Whilst examiners tried to credit the best two forms in such cases, discussing more forms inevitably meant that students dealt with the two in less depth than they could otherwise have done.

10 There were some good and thoughtful answers to this question, which were able to argue for the balance of the didactic purposes of religious art versus other purposes, and to draw an appropriate conclusion. Weaker answers tended either to present a one-sided argument, or to make very generalised statements.

11 In response to this question some students tended to produce a prepared answer on some aspect of religious art, with insufficient attention to the demands of the question. The question asked for the importance within one religion, which some did very well, writing about the functions, and showing how these contributed to the importance. Some students were also able to look at varying levels of importance within one religion, which was of course credited, although credit could not be gained for references outside the chosen religion. Weaker answers tended to give prepared material on the functions of religious art, which although of relevance could only gain them limited marks, without reference to importance.

12 This was a straightforward area for debate, and one where differing religious perspectives could be deployed. There were some good answers, but quite a number of students did not focus on the central issue in the question, and spent a lot of time on rather peripheral issues of potentially offensive representations, rather than looking at religious subjects in general.

Question 7 *Religion, art and popular culture*

13 This question asked for reasons for the popularity of using religious themes in fiction. The best were able to pick up the significance of such factors as universal themes like death and suffering, interest in particular aspects of the Church and commercial success of previous works, and to link these effectively to appropriate works of fiction. Too many students, however, just wrote rather general answers on religious themes within fiction, and some only gave summaries of the narrative of texts. Such answers could gain limited credit. ‘Fiction’ was interpreted fairly broadly to include novels, films and plays, but those

who answered purely from 'sit-coms' could not really engage with the question in sufficient depth. Centres are reminded of the point made in the report two years ago, that the choice of fiction affects students' ability to address questions on this topic in sufficient depth. That report also drew attention to the need to look beyond children's fiction. Far too many answers this year were still using Harry Potter and other children's books.

- 14** There were some good answers to this question, and students were able to deal with issues such as the trivialising effects of fiction, and the risks of causing offence, as well as considering the ways in which religious themes in fiction reflect the realities of life.

Question 8 *Cyber religion and TV religion*

- 15** This was a popular question and students produced some very good answers. The best answers showed a good awareness of factors such as the distinction between religion online and online religion, and were able to explore a range of uses from within one religion. Such answers were characterised by selectivity and the awareness of the variety of uses. Some were able to make comment on the different approaches found within the named religion. Weaker answers tended simply to list types of websites, without appropriate comment on what the various sites were trying to do. Some entered into debate about the merits of religion and the internet, and within an AO1 answer, this could not gain credit.

- 16** There was some lively debate in this question, with students showing awareness of the issues, and able to tease out points on either side. The best students were able to address the 'must embrace' within the claim made in the question. Weaker answers tended just to list some of the points for and against.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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