



General Certificate of Education

Religious Studies 1061

RSS06 Old Testament

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - January series

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Dr Michael Cresswell Director General.

RSS06 *Old Testament*

General comments

There was a very small entry for this unit, but scripts nevertheless covered the full range of attainment. All candidates observed the rubric, answering two out of the four questions available. The standard of written communication was good and handwriting was legible.

Question 1 (Topic 1 *An Introduction to the world of the Old Testament*)

This was the most popular choice of question on the paper, having been answered by almost all candidates.

Part (a)

In part (a), most candidates answered the 'why' part of the question confidently. The reasons behind the transition to the monarchy were well known. A small number of candidates interpreted the question as asking why Saul in particular was chosen to be the first king of Israel. They received credit where appropriate. The 'how' part was not quite as successfully answered by candidates. Some gave a highly descriptive account of the story of the lost donkeys and the subsequent meeting with Samuel, but little else of relevance. Most also made some reference to the people's insistence on having a king despite Samuel's warnings. None, however, referred explicitly to the use of the sacred lot, though there were a few allusions to that narrative, and none considered the possibility of there being more than one tradition of the institution of the monarchy.

Part (b)

There were some very thoughtful responses to part (b); the best of them considering just what was needed to make Israel an effective nation.

Question 2 (Topic 2 *Old Testament views of God's relationship with the people*)

Part (a)

Most candidates who attempted this question showed awareness, in part (a), of some similarities and differences between the two covenants, though the Abrahamic covenant was known in more detail than the Mosaic covenant. The promises made by God in the latter covenant were barely referred to. One or two candidates referred to the influence of secular covenants on both.

Part (b)

Answers to part (b) varied in quality. A number of candidates failed to read the question with sufficient care, considering the relevance to the 21st century of the Abrahamic traditions generally, rather than the ideas about God that are contained in these traditions. Others centred their discussions around atheism and agnosticism, which feature strongly in the modern world. Many struggled to come up with arguments in support of the continuing relevance of ideas about God. There were some thoughtful responses, however, that assessed the relevance to the 21st century God as omnipotent and in control of events, as provider or as testing faith.

Question 3 (Topic 3 *The phenomenon of prophecy*)

This was by far the least popular of the questions on the paper.

Part (a)

In part (a), candidates made effective use of the Mount Carmel narrative, depicting Elijah as an independent prophet who was promoting Yahwism and describing in detail the ecstatic behaviour of the Baal prophets. None, however, made any reference to 1 Kings 19 or 21. It appeared as if candidates were only familiar with the Elijah text that was also set in the first topic in the Specification.

Part (b)

In part (b), candidates produced thoughtful, but mainly one-sided, assessments. They might have commented on the ways in which rulers' attitudes have been influenced or changed by prophetic individuals throughout history. They might also have commented on the account of Ahab's repentance at the end of the Naboth incident.

Question 4 (Topic 4 *8th century prophecy – Amos*)

This was another popular question.

Part (a)

There were some sound answers to part (a), with detailed examination of Amos' criticisms of Israel's social life. Some candidates failed to gain marks, however, through making no reference to political issues. They showed no awareness of the oracles denouncing atrocities committed by the surrounding nations and Israel's overweening self-confidence. Many candidates also wasted valuable time by referring to the hypocrisy of Israel's worship and describing what went on in the sanctuaries.

Part (b)

A number of candidates understood part (b) to be questioning the extent to which Amos was concerned about the religious practices of the people, or whether his major concern was with social injustice. Credit was given, where appropriate, for such an interpretation. There was some thoughtful consideration of the emptiness of the cult and of the hypocrisy of many worshippers.