



General Certificate of Education

Religious Studies (2060)

RSS05 **either** The History of Christianity
 or Religion, Art and the Media

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

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General Comments

There was a significant increase in candidates sitting this module compared to January 2009, more pleasing and encouraging was the upturn in the overall standard in the majority of scripts submitted.

There were very few rubric infringements in this sitting – only one candidate wrote answers to all four questions in their chosen option rather than two questions as directed by the instructions to candidates. A small number of candidates did not attempt both parts of the questions chosen. Timing proved to be an issue for a significant number of candidates, many wrote at some considerable length on one question leaving very little time to complete or provide a developed answer for their second question. Timing is an issue which centres should be encouraged to address, as it was clear that in some instances candidates had a good grasp of the material but were prevented from developing this, particularly in the AO2 levels, by the lack of time.

The standard of the answers to the AO2 questions showed a welcome move away from basic and limited 'GCSE style' answers, in many cases candidates were able to attain at least Level 5, Level 6 was not uncommon, and the top Level 7 was achieved by a few. Clearly the majority of centres are providing clear and accurate guidance to the writing of the AO2 answers and this is a practice to be encouraged and continued.

Section A: History of Christianity

Only two centres offered the History of Christianity option at this series and the standard varied markedly between these centres.

Question 1 The Celtic Church

This question was attempted by only one candidate. In part (a) the answer written showed clear understanding of the unique characteristics of the saints in Celtic Christianity and the distinctive and wider nature of sainthood within Celtic Christianity. Clear and appropriate exemplification was evident through accurate use of named examples.

In part (b) the answer provided a relevant and reasoned argument in response to the question asked and offered evidence of clear, though rather too general evaluation in response to the question that lacked further development. More development and focus in the answer with more critical analysis would have placed the answer firmly in the top level.

Question 2 Protestant Reformation

This question was attempted by all candidates who sat the History of Christianity option. Candidates who had planned their answer carefully were those who succeeded in addressing the question set. Several candidates took the question to be; 'Outline the state of the Catholic Church on the eve of the Reformation' rather than '**Examine** the state of the Church....', those who did so produced answers that were little more than lists of the perceived common abuses with no further examination of, comment on or reference to, specific theological problems, with the result that their answers were usually Level 4 at best or often lower. In such answers key facts and ideas were sometimes evident, but understanding of the issues was often lacking or only partial.

In part (b) the question asked for an **evaluation** of the extent to which the need for reform was political rather than theological, thus **both** aspects needed to be considered. The majority of answers provided general observations rather than evaluations, and there was very little evidence of an attempt to sustain a line of clear argument even on one side. Only one candidate provided any real attempt to engage with both aspects of the evaluation.

Question 3 Catholic Reformation

This question was attempted by a very small number of candidates and was generally poorly done. The common fault lay in failure to engage with what the question was asking, i.e. **Examine** the attempts by the **Catholic Church to reform the Papacy**. Several answers went off at a tangent to the question, listing attempts to find reconciliation between Protestant reformers and the Catholic Church. Occasionally some answers made valid passing references to, rather than an examination of, movements within the Catholic Church e.g. The Oratory of Divine Love; Fifth Lateran Council etc. but reference to the effects of these movements on reform of the Papacy or the attitude of Renaissance Popes towards reform were notable by their absence; no answer provided sufficient depth or accurate knowledge to progress beyond Level 3 - 'A summary of key points. Limited in depth and breadth.' and the majority fell below this.

Part (b) followed in a similar vein with no answer progressing beyond Level 3. Again the main fault was the lack of ability by candidates to engage, even at a basic level, with what the question was asking.

Question 4 The Rise of Methodism

No candidate attempted this question.

Section B: Religion, Art and The Media

Question 5 The nature and purpose of religious art (1)

This proved to be a popular question and was usually well executed; it was encouraging to see that some centres chose to write their answers from another perspective other than Christianity. A few candidates failed to engage accurately with what the question was asking and wrote specifically about the purposes of religious art rather than the nature of religious art. Most answers were clear and revealed satisfactory understanding of the topic and included reference to examples to illustrate their answers. However, some candidates need to provide greater accuracy in referring to examples to ensure full credit for their efforts, in some cases works of art were attributed to the wrong artist or wrong place, e.g. Coventry Cathedral was described as containing 'Bible windows' from the medieval period, Bernini was claimed to have painted the Last Judgement in the Sistine Chapel, Durham Cathedral said to have three spires, and icons were on more than one occasion described as being peculiar to the Catholic Church. Some answers revealed that candidates were writing to a pre-prepared formula.

The answers to part (b) were usually well written – relevant material was selected and debated in response to the question set, although a conclusion based on the reasoning outlined was not always evident. There was some clear exegesis of the notion of inspiration and how this may or may not be applied to religious experience, and clear examples were used by way of illustration in virtually all cases. To gain the top levels candidates should come to a firm conclusion based upon reasoning of the views expressed, this is an area that candidates should work on.

Question 6 The nature and purpose of religious art (2)

This question was popular. However in some cases candidates did not fully engage with what the question was asking, and there were several instances of repetition of material from the earlier question that was not applied with sufficient accuracy to the thrust of this question. The best answers showed evidence of thinking widely and provided clear responses that showed good structure and coverage of a variety of key points; *art as a vehicle for conveying religious truths, the importance of architecture to delineate religious space, the importance of religious art for aesthetic and institutional purposes.*

Candidates who were able to do this succinctly and support their answers with accurate reference to clear examples invariably fell into the top levels of response. There were a few answers where candidates had failed to take note of the instruction 'in **one** religion you have studied' and wrote about the use and importance of religious art from the perspective of more than one religion.

For part (b) there were some very satisfactory answers to this evaluation question. In some instances shortage of time was clearly an issue, usually when this was the last question of the paper. Candidates who did well on this part of the question provided a clear balance of views and made clear distinction between preserving religious works of art in their context and preserving works of art in galleries or museums. There were some perceptive answers to this question.

Question 7 Religion and humour

After the problems with this topic in the June 2009 series, it was good to see candidates actually engaging with what the question was asking rather than what they hoped the question was asking! There were some very good answers to part (a) of this question which demonstrated both depth and breadth and clear understanding. Many answers demonstrated more of a bias towards humour about religion or religion being used as the basis of humour, but there were some perceptive answers which addressed the use of humour by religion across a variety of valid and well explained examples. Lower scoring answers were somewhat pedestrian in their selection of material, for example 'The Vicar of Dibley', 'Father Ted' and the 'Simpsons' were very much to the fore; the answers which showed depth and breadth were usually those who could push beyond the more obvious TV examples and embrace a variety of media which used religion as a basis of humour.

Part (b) was tackled confidently by many candidates and a good variety of argument was evident. The candidates who scored well on this question were those who demonstrated the ability to provide clear exemplification on **both** sides of the argument. Many found it easy to exemplify that religion was not a legitimate topic for humour; those who could exemplify the alternative view accurately were the answers which stood out. The top answers demonstrated a more philosophical / theological approach in their evaluation.

Question 8 Television broadcasting and religion

The question asked for a range of television programmes to be examined. Candidates who confined their answers to a narrow choice failed to supply sufficient depth or breadth. Rather than going into considerable detail about specific programmes and characterisation of religious figures ('The Simpsons' and 'East Enders' were typical examples here), candidates should be encouraged to think more widely. Very few candidates considered the use of TV broadcasts of major religious festivals, special religious services which have been broadcast, or documentary programmes about religion/religious issues. There was an obvious division between those candidates who merely listed the ways in which religious ideas were portrayed in TV broadcasting and those candidates who made a clear attempt to **examine the significance** of

religious broadcasting, it was the former which were more numerous, but the latter who were credited with more marks. Only one centre tackled the issue of the amount of time given over to religious broadcasting and here candidates wrote some very good answers which demonstrated the ability to fully engage with detail of the question. Some candidates attempted to make reference to Smart's 'Seven dimensions of religion' in their answers. Whilst these could contribute positively to an answer if used effectively, several answers merely included them without demonstrating sufficient understanding of them or examination of how they might be relevant to the question asked.

In part (b) some good answers were written in response to the question asked. With few exceptions candidates provided answers worthy of Level 4 and many were able to meet the criteria for Levels 5 & 6. Perceptive candidates were able to push beyond the contribution of religious broadcasting to disseminating religious ideas or teachings and were able to consider the extent to which television broadcasting was an asset to religious practice.