



**General Certificate of Education**

**Religious Studies (2060)**

**RSS04 Religion, Philosophy and Science**

**Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination - June series*

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## General Comments

The overall standard of scripts this session was good. There was widespread evidence of good preparation and a significant number of candidates responded accurately to the questions set. It was also pleasing to see more attempts at Question 4 than in previous examination sessions.

There is some evidence that more candidates are beginning to understand the difference between AO1 and AO2. Even so, it is also noticeable that many candidates are still content to describe and explain for AO2 instead of evaluating. Evaluation in AO2 can be simply expressed by such phrases as 'This argument is stronger because...' or 'The point of view does not successfully address the challenge of...'. Where candidates set out the terms of the debate in AO2 but do not weigh up the arguments on both sides of that debate, they restrict themselves to Level 4 in the mark scheme.

### Question 1 *Miracles*

#### Part 01

The best answers recognised the importance of the words 'religious understandings' and 'violation'. This question invited candidates to use examples of miracles which appear to break the laws of nature and then to reflect on how these events develop a religious view about the deity. Many candidates used Holland which was irrelevant. Hume made a frequent appearance and could only be credited if the material was related to religious understandings.

#### Part 02

In 02, very few candidates picked up on the use of the word 'simply' and chose instead to argue about the reasonableness of belief in God based on miracles. Such a discussion was perfectly in order but candidates were unlikely to gain the highest marks. Here, Hume was relevant insofar as his views were used in an evaluative manner.

### Question 2 *Creation*

This was a popular question.

#### Part 03

It was pleasing to see the depth of knowledge displayed by the better candidates. There seemed to be a widespread appreciation of both the content and the context of Darwinian thinking. It is also noteworthy, however, that many candidates included inaccurate material in their outline of evolution, believing Darwin to have known about genes or to have agreed with Lamarck. There was plenty of description of the evolution of various animals from giraffes to moths to finches. Marks could not be awarded for candidates who described how evolution did not challenge religious belief.

#### Part 04

04 was well answered by most, who were able to evaluate the claim successfully. Weaker answers presented a one-sided response.

### **Question 3 *The design argument***

Again, this was a popular question.

#### **Part 05**

Many candidates did not simply describe Paley's watch analogy but took the time to explain how the analogy worked. This was a pleasing development. Swinburne was less well covered on the whole but there were also some outstanding answers here.

#### **Part 06**

The main problem occurred in part 06. Candidates imagined Swinburne not to have thought of many of the criticisms which they raised. The key to the question was the identification of the criticisms of the design argument which were relevant to Swinburne's argument. Many candidates simply reverted to Hume who, for the most part, wrote a critique of the type of design argument proposed by Paley. It is not accurate to assert, for example, that Swinburne does not take the theory of evolution into account. It is precisely because of the developments in science that Swinburne develops a different type of design argument from the traditional kind favoured by Paley.

### **Question 4 *Quantum mechanics and a religious world view***

#### **Part 07**

There were more answers to this question than in previous years and this is encouraging. For the most part, those candidates who attempted the question did so from a sound basis of knowledge. Indeed, some answers were outstanding. Candidates clearly had a grasp of some of the physics which goes well beyond the requirements of the specification. Credit was given for any two ideas in quantum mechanics and was not limited to the ideas outlined the specification. The main issue in 07 was the conflation of religion with mysticism. Clearly, the mystical traditions are to be found within religious traditions but the exact identification of the one with the other is not correct.

#### **Part 08**

In 08, credit could be gained for a wide range of material including that which made no direct reference to quantum mechanics. This broad question attracted some very good responses.