



General Certificate of Education

Religious Studies (2060)

RSS06 Old Testament

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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General Comments

Although this was a small entry paper, a very wide range of ability and maturity was reflected in candidates' responses. By far the most popular question, as in previous examinations, was question 2. Question 1 was the least popular overall, although in the case of one or two centres, almost every candidate answered it. There was no widespread misunderstanding of questions. In their answers to questions, a few candidates included in the second part of questions material that would have been creditable had it appeared in the first part, but on the whole responses were more focussed and relevant than in previous examination sessions. Most candidates also attempted to give two-sided assessments, which enabled some to achieve at least Level 5 in that part of each question they answered. Centres might wish to continue to remind their students that to reach Level 5 in the first part of each question, there must be exemplification of points made. They should use the Bibles available in the examination for finding material to support their answers, but without resorting to purely narrative responses.

Question 1 *An introduction to the world of the Old Testament*

Part 01

For the most part, candidates noted the two prongs to this part and there were some very competent responses. It was a pity, however, that in considering the factors, one centre in particular wrote with impressive detail and maturity on the issue of syncretism but made no reference to the immediate crisis resulting from the policies of Ahab and Jezebel or to the drought. Few candidates made well-informed comments on the significance of the contest, contrasting the short term effects with the long term. There were very few purely narrative answers.

Part 02

There were many very thoughtful responses to this part of the question. Most argued that on the one hand the influence of Canaanite culture was inevitable and in some cases proved to be enriching, whilst appreciating the claim that such influences posed a real threat to Israel's covenant faith. The more able candidates gave detailed exemplification in support of their arguments.

Question 2 *Old Testament views of God's relationship with people*

Part 03

In previous examinations when questions were set that required reference to both the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants, many candidates concentrated on the former, showing very limited knowledge of the latter. It was therefore pleasing to see that candidates had studied the set Exodus texts in detail. Many candidates examined the similarities of the covenant to ANE vassal treaties. The best responses unpacked in detail Exodus 19:4-6 and commented on the significance of the purification rituals, the nature of the theophany and the nature of the Decalogue. Less able candidates either concentrated on the theophany or the Decalogue.

Part 04

The quality of responses varied enormously, but most were focussed fully on the question. The best responses assessed critically the influence of many of the Ten Commandments on laws and social norms. A number of candidates argued that laws relating to murder, theft, etc. were 'dictated' by society rather than religion. Many candidates distinguished between the

theological/ritual and the social/moral commandments. Good use was also made of the Book of the Covenant. Less able candidates did little more than point out that the Commandments were still relevant to Jews and Christians, but that they have no meaning to atheists.

Question 3 The phenomenon of prophecy

Part 05

Many candidates attempted to answer the question set, which related to the development of prophecy. Less able candidates, however, simply wrote all they knew about different types of prophets, sometimes with very little exemplification. A few wrote about Elijah and Amos as 10th and 9th century prophets respectively. As in the past with general questions on prophecy, a weakness in many responses was the limited understanding shown of Elijah and of his place in prophetic development. There were, however, a few very detailed and perceptive answers, examining prophecy's development with appropriate exemplification of a range of types.

Part 06

Although in they had shown some knowledge of the traditions relating to Samuel, many candidates struggled with this assessment. This question was taken from the relevant Issues box, but few seemed well prepared for it. Candidates were free to write answers that compared and contrasted Samuel with 10th century or with later prophecy.

Question 4 8th century prophecy – Amos

Part 07

This was a very popular question, which elicited mostly relevant responses. The more successful answers covered a wide range of relevant texts, grouping them into topics such as the Day of the Lord, the end of the covenant relationship, etc. and commenting on them in detail. Many referred to the long-standing debate about Amos 9:11-15 though not to more recent challenges to the authenticity of Amos 4:4-5. One candidate, however, did point out that 3:12 could be interpreted in more than one way.

Part 08

Less able candidates tended simply to repeat information that they had already given in the previous part, making very limited assessment. The more able candidates often introduced additional textual material and used critical scholarship to develop reasoned arguments on both sides of the issue.