



General Certificate of Education

Religious Studies (2060)

RST3H World Religions 2

(either Christianity

or Judaism

or Islam)

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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General Comments

There were very few candidates for the sections on Christianity and Judaism; Islam remains by far the most popular option.

Section A Christianity

Question 1 *Origins and development of Christian vocation and service*

Part 01

Few candidates attempted this question, but there was, in the main, a good understanding of the nature and roles of religious orders in Christianity today. The best were able to use a range of ideas with appropriate exemplification.

Part 02

This question was addressed poorly. There was a disappointing lack of consideration of the word 'vital' in the statement which led to some unbalanced responses.

Question 2 *Christology*

Part 03

Candidates examined the central issues of the Christological debate and many did very well, addressing the problem for the Church on defining who Jesus was, God or man or both, as well as looking into the continuing debate today.

Part 04

Candidates tended to respond well to this covering a range of viewpoints and responding in a balanced and informed way.

Question 3 *Christian action*

Part 05

This was the most popular of the Christianity questions. Most candidates who responded to this question found it fairly straightforward and were able to offer relevant teachings about the duty of the individual supported by a good range of knowledge and understanding.

Part 06

Candidates tended to respond well to this, covering a range of viewpoints and responding in a balanced and informed way, dealing effectively with issues of belief and lifestyle.

Question 4 *Christian spirituality*

There were no candidates for this question.

Section B Judaism

Questions 6 and 7 were the most popular in this section of the paper.

Question 5 *Origins and development of Zionism*

Part 09

A few candidates attempted to cover the origins of Zionism when examining the development which was fine as long as they were able to link this directly to the focus of the question on the 19th century. The question was generally well answered, with references to Palestine, thinkers such as Herzl, the Dreyfus affair and the 1st Zionist conference. The quality of some of the answers revealed a very thorough treatment of the topic which was pleasing.

Part 10

This was a stimulating question, very well answered on the whole.

Question 6 *Holocaust issues and theology*

Part 11

Answers were centred around theological responses to the 'challenge' and better answers tended to use the theological responses within a framework of a response to the idea of being chosen people, worshipping a loving God and the issue of punishment for sins.

Part 12

Answers were characterised by balanced views in response to the evaluation statement with most candidates suggesting that the Holocaust, because of the nature of the event, is an issue for many Jews today.

Question 7 *Bar/Bat Mitzvah, marriage and divorce*

Part 13

Bar and bat mitzvah answers contained detail in terms of practices but did not always develop the teaching related to these rites of passage. There were some good descriptive answers reflecting a solid understanding. Responses were mostly of a good quality and were characterised by clarity, focus and direction proving this to be a very accessible question.

Part 14

Candidates gave generally good, considered responses to 14, but sometimes did not consider the word 'significance' and such responses lacked some depth and often vague ideas were offered with little discussion. Few responses seemed to say anything about it being a major family event.

Question 8 *The Hasidic traditions*

Part 15

There were very few responses to this question, but these were well focused on nature and influence.

Part 16

Overall, there were good evaluative responses with good ideas being presented showing some balance and perception alongside some supporting evidence.

Section C Islam

This was, by far, the most popular section, with Question 9 and 12 being the most popular questions.

Question 9 *The Shari'a and the Muslim way of life*

Part 17

Some answers were very comprehensive. Many candidates chose to outline the nature and formation (Qur'an, Sunnah, Consensus, Analogy, law schools, 5 categories) and comment on how these aspects demonstrated the authority of Shari'a. Other candidates just looked at how it worked for Muslim life such as family law, religious guidance and examples of different levels of authority in different countries. The best answers combined the two approaches.

Part 18

Some excellent answers which discussed ijtiḥad well. Many of the better responses from candidates indicated the inherent nature of ijtiḥad to Shari'a and there were other good answers contrasting the views of traditionalists and modernists. The best responses offered plenty of examples of how this has worked in the past (the coffee debate) but also how it applies today with some modern and technological issues such as abortion, euthanasia and embryology etc.

Question 10 *Shi'a Islam*

Part 19

There were some reasonable responses to this question. Reference to the 'party of Ali' with accompanying story, the Imamate and Ashura were the most popular focus points of discussion. Very few indicted the more subtle distinctions of practice such as difference in specific pillars and the practice of them, temporary marriage, the denial of Islam if under threat etc. Higher marks were awarded for those that did bring out the full extent of the distinctive nature of Shi'a.

Part 20

Many answers repeated material from part 19 to demonstrate a contrast with Sunni, although the better answers from some candidates did this concisely and effectively, focusing on evaluation rather than explanation. Many conclusions were weak pointing out the obvious that there were differences but yet the central principles remained unified. More could have been made of the conclusions through development of the political and religious distinctions. The best answers did focus on a specific argument that either Shi'a was too far away from Sunni for some so as to be unrecognisable, or, that it was only in the outward expression of Islam that it had considerable difference.

Question 11 *God and humanity*

Part 21

Very few answered this question but they were generally very competent. The best answers used a full range of examples and technical concepts. Some weaker responses focused on a range of aspects of Sufism, but not sufficiently on the concept of God.

Part 22

The best answers explored the idea of God as immanent against the transcendence and teased out the implications for life in terms of fear, awe and respect in contrast to a more personal approach like that of the Sufi way but also the idea that God is merciful within the Sunni tradition.

Question 12 *Women and family life*

Part 23

This was a popular question that was done well by most candidates who attempted it. The best answers pointed out the strength of the extended unit as a microcosm of the Ummah and Islam. Good answers also discussed the idea of religion being part and parcel of life and that is why the family unit has designated roles for husband/father, wife/mother, children and elders. The delivery and support of Islam was explored within these contexts. Weaker answers just managed to point out that men and women have specific roles.

Part 24

Many of the responses from the more able candidates pointed out the positive treatment of women in Islam from a theoretical base grounded in Qur'an and the example of Muhammad. Many referred to Khadija and other wives of Muhammad. Western society was often contrasted to traditional Muslim countries, but generally all answers indicated that extreme treatment of women was un-Islamic and cultural. The best answers used examples of punishments, clothing and roles within the family.