



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June**

Religious Studies

RST3F

(Specification 2060)

Unit 3F Religion and Contemporary Society

Report on the Examination

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General comments

There was a small entry for this unit, but this included some very good work. The best candidates showed good knowledge, and a real understanding of the topics under consideration. They were able to enter into thoughtful discussion of the issues in the AO2 sections. Some weaker candidates are tending to present AO2 material in the AO1 part of the question, and vice versa. Unfortunately, there can be no 'cross-credit', and thus candidates penalise themselves if material does not appear in the right place. Brief but careful planning of answers would avoid this problem.

Question 1 *Religion responding to the challenges facing the world*

This was by far the most popular question, and was often well done.

01 The focus here was most frequently, but by no means exclusively on Christianity. Many candidates were able to give examples from Biblical teaching. Most of these were from the teaching of Jesus; it would have been helpful if candidates were also able to draw on, for example, material from the Old Testament prophets. Some gave good examples of positive attitudes to poverty from monastic orders. 'Actions' often cited the work of organisations such as Christian Aid and CAFOD, and better answers were able to consider a broad range of actions, to show these as not just being about charitable giving, but also about campaigning and awareness raising. Similar approaches were adopted by those who wrote about Islam. Some candidates answered in depth about one religion; some tried to survey the views of all religions. At this level, when the question says 'one or more religion(s)' candidates are best advised not to try to deal with six religions, as a few did, since the approach then becomes very superficial.

02 Here, the best answers were those where the candidates had read the question carefully, and thought through their response. Such answers showed awareness of the range of factors which might contribute to poverty, and considered the potential role of religion in trying to address these. The conclusion reached was often that the problem cannot be solved, but that at least help can be given. Weaker answers tended to be more along the lines of assessing the work of particular organisations, or to be very one-sided responses.

Question 2 *Challenges to religion in contemporary society*

03 There were some very good answers here. Several candidates had very good knowledge and understanding of Shiner's categories of secularisation; others drew well from the work of Wilson and Martin among others. The important thing here was not that candidates could list all possible meanings, but that they could discuss something of the range of meanings. Thus those who only wrote about decline were limited in the marks they could gain. Surprisingly, one or two responses which were otherwise very thorough, omitted any reference to decline. Some weaker candidates wrote about the evidence for decline. This was not what was required in the question.

04 This part of the question focused on an assessment of the term secularisation given its broad range of meaning. Some candidates approached this well, and tried to assess the usefulness of the term, and considered what these might have in common. Others misread the question, and simply tried to assess whether or not the process is happening. Such answers could gain limited credit.

Question 3 *New forms of spirituality both within and outside religions*

05 This question attracted some interesting answers, and some candidates were able to write well about forms of spirituality both within and outside religion. Some were able to give very specific examples of different forms of spiritual practice, for example, those within religious communities. When writing about spirituality outside religion, they were able to talk about 'holistic' approaches, mind, body and spirit, and meditation. Too many answers remained at a rather general level, and lacked the specific detail which would be necessary for a good answer at this level. A few wandered onto the topic of New Religious Movements, and seemed to be confusing these with New Age Spiritualities.

06 There were some good responses here which started either from the premise that spirituality is basic to humanity and that religion is a particular form of this, or that religion is the root of spirituality, and thus this must be the most important. Some made a good argument that spirituality within religion has a structure and a goal which is missing from that outside religion. In this part of the answer some were opposing religion and spirituality. This is an approach found in one of the works which they may have encountered, but spirituality within religion is a recognised topic area, and candidates need to address the question set.

Question 4 *Religion and national identity*

07 It was disappointing here that quite a few candidates were simply not well-prepared for this question, and they did not know the phrase ‘civic religion’. This is a well established phrase, and is referred to in the Specification. It refers to the various ways in which religion plays a role in public life at local and national level. Classic examples involve religion in parliament, coronations, Remembrance Day, and events such as royal weddings. Some did write well about this, and made good use of the recent royal wedding. Far too many candidates, however, saw this question as being about the established Church, and proceeded to write at length about Henry VIII and some of the structures of the Church of England. Wherever it was possible to credit material from such an approach, this was done, but obviously, the credit which could be gained for such an approach was limited.

08 Where candidates understood civic religion, there were some thoughtful and reasoned answers and the majority seemed to feel that there is still a place for this. Where candidates were answering with respect to the role of an established Church, credit was given where appropriate.

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