



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

Religious Studies

RST4B

(Specification 2060)

Unit 4B Topic I Religious Fundamentalism

**Topic II Religion and Contemporary
Society**

Topic III Religion and the Visual Arts

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

There were many excellent scripts which showed clear evidence of thorough preparation on the part of both centres and candidates. There were maximum-mark answers to each part of each question. However, on occasion answers did not focus on the question set, and candidates appeared to be giving a prepared answer to a different question. In some cases candidates did not appear to recognise some of the key terms used in the question even though they were taken from the specification. Most, but not all, candidates answered both parts of their chosen question. A very few answered the AO1 part of one question and the AO2 part of another, while others answered more than the one question required. The majority seemed to manage their time well, but some clearly rushed the second part of the question.

Section A Religious Fundamentalism

The two questions in this section were equally popular.

Question 1

- 01** The best answers linked the development of fundamentalism to its reaction against science and secularism, and used specific examples of the ways in which specific religious fundamentalist groups reacted against specific developments in science and secularism. Some weaker answers gave an outline history of fundamentalism and made only limited reference to science and secularism, while others described conflicts between fundamentalism and science and secularism, but made only limited reference to any part such conflicts may have played in the development of fundamentalist movements. In some cases there were lengthy, and largely unnecessary, introductions to the answer which explored the meaning of fundamentalism.
- 02** The best answers considered how fundamentalist movements could be relevant and the various types of society in which they might be relevant. There were many different but equally valid responses, sometimes within the same answer, depending upon the specific fundamentalist movement being considered and the nature of the society within which it is found. In general fundamentalist movements were considered as relevant in liberal secular societies as in societies with a 'heavy emphasis on science'.

Question 2

- 03** There were some very well informed answers to this question. Most candidates focused on the issues, and movements, identified in the specification and most were, at least, able to summarise their views. When movements other than those listed in the Specification were chosen, some candidates struggled to write enough and sometimes an account of the 'attitudes' of a movement became only a description of its lifestyle.
- 04** Some well-informed answers were able to contrast the active campaigning of some groups on social and moral issues with the disengagement of others to argue that the statement for discussion has some truth, but is too sweeping. Many carefully considered what would count as a 'contribution', pointing out, for example, that silent witness to a particular moral stance can be influential if the media draws attention to it. The best answers drew on a range of examples. Weaker answers tended to be vague generalisations or more like a 'list' of reasons in support of and/or against the statement given.

Section B Religion and Contemporary Society

This was the most popular section on the paper.

Question 3

05 There were some very good answers to this question, but in some cases the range of choices considered was rather limited – for example to a few examples of issues concerning religious dress. Better answers considered a range of choices and explicitly considered both the values and practices of society. In some of the better answers, candidates described the choice to be made and then considered its significance. For example, the choice about whether or not to wear religious dress was considered less significant in some cases than decisions concerning mixing with the opposite sex or drinking alcohol. While many chose to consider the choices facing those who followed a non-Christian religion, some answers considered the situation of Christians living in the UK today.

Some candidates took this question to be about the challenge of living in a secular society and ignored its particular emphasis on choices. A few appeared not to understand the term 'religious adherence' although it is in the specification.

06 The most successful answers tended to focus on the experience of different people or groups to argue that the experience of living in a secular society was positive for some but negative for others. Such answers were often able to draw on a range of examples. Some answers showed a limited, or simply confused, understanding of 'secular'. Other weaker answers tended to offer simple arguments to agree or disagree with the statement made – this both over-simplified what is a complex issue and ignored the focus of the question which was 'How far do you agree?'

Question 4

07 There were three aspects to this question: structure, nature and role, but many candidates ignored at least one of the three in their answer, and some appeared not to understand the meaning of 'structure' although the exact phrase can be found in the Specification. Worryingly some reported that their chosen faith community, for example Islam, 'has no structure'. In fact there is much that can be said about the structure of the Muslim faith community in the UK, not least because it is so diverse, but by dismissing this candidates limited what they could achieve in this part of the question and could not respond to the AO2 part of this question at all. Other candidates offered a detailed description of the structure of a community but did not develop any of their ideas.

08 This issue arises directly from the Specification content but many candidates found it difficult to focus on it, possibly as noted above because they had a limited understanding of 'structure'. Better answers tended to focus on the individual worshipper's situation to argue that each individual needed the community and its structure for guidance and support, even if some levels of organisation appeared to be remote or irrelevant at times. For example there was discussion of the importance of the General Synod for the individual Anglican and of the local Council of Mosques for the individual Muslim.

Section C Religion and the Visual Arts

There were some outstanding answers to the questions in this section, which were tackled by only a minority of candidates. Weaker answers, on the whole, tended to describe the chosen works rather than answer the specific question set.

Question 5

- 09** There were some excellent answers. Some candidates referred to works which expressed religious ideas and discussed the strengths and weaknesses of that expression, particularly for the present day. Many commented on the problems in presenting God in human form, others on the weaknesses of detailed symbolism when symbols change or lose their meaning over time. In contrast weaker answers described some works and some of the religious ideas they expressed but made little or no comment on that expression, or described works such as Michelangelo's David without linking them to any religious ideas.
- 10** In the best answers the candidates considered what impact a work of art might have and how long that impact has to last for it to qualify as 'lasting'. For some the question meant does a particular work still have an impact on those who see it today? – with Michelangelo's work in the Sistine Chapel often being quoted. Examples of ephemeral modern art were also quoted as evidence that some art has a strong but short lived impact. In fuller answers, candidates discussed whether religious art has ever changed anything and whether we still feel the effects of changes brought about by religious art, and critically analysed the effect of religious art on some combination of individuals, society, the art world and religion itself.

Question 6

- 11** Some of the best answers to this question traced the different approaches to these themes taken at different stages in the history of the Church. The answers were focused and well-informed, and covered all three elements – judgement, heaven and hell. Others dealt with each theme in turn and considered how different artists had portrayed them, and some candidates usefully compared and contrasted approaches taken in Christian art with Buddhist approaches. Weaker answers tended to describe some of the works of one or more artists on these themes but seemed to have only a fairly limited selection of works to refer to.
- 12** There were some excellent discussions of the intended audience for, and purpose, of depictions of judgement and hell based on some excellent examples. Many argued that the intended audience was the worshipping community and that the depictions only had force for those who understood the implications of what was being shown. Weaker answers tended to generalise and to offer little or nothing in the way of supporting evidence.

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