



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Religious Studies (4051/4052)
Full or Short Course
Specification A

Unit 1 Christianity (405001)

Report on the Examination
2010 examination - June series

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Unit 1 Christianity

General Comments

This was the first year of entry for the new specification. The standard of scripts seen were representative of the full range of ability and there were a few excellent scripts. The new format of the paper appears to have worked well, although a handful of candidates ignored the instructions and attempted both rather than one question from Part B. Many candidates were able to show their knowledge and understanding of the specification and demonstrated their skills in evaluation using evidence and argument. Several less able candidates left a number of questions blank, particularly Question A2, or left out key parts of questions. Some also failed to complete all four parts of their chosen Part B section question.

Question A1 *Worship*

In part (a) a common error was to confuse the Christian observance of Sunday with the Jewish Sabbath. Candidates who did so received no credit as indicated by the mark scheme. The mark scheme required reference to Sunday as being the day of resurrection for one mark and some further point of explanation or development of this answer to gain the further mark available.

Part (b) proved accessible to most candidates, although several repeated the point about Bible readings rather than thinking about other ways the Bible is used in public worship. A small number of candidates confused public worship with private devotion. Candidates attaining the top level were able to describe four clear ways in which the Bible is used in public worship, for example, readings, as a basis for prayer, the basis of a sermon, the use of psalms and the use of the Bible as a basis for hymns or developed more than one of these ways.

In part (c) most candidates knew the terminology used in the question and wrote balanced answers which considered more than one point of view. Few accessed Level 6 which required 'a well argued response with evidence of reasoned consideration ...' In this and in the other six mark AO2 questions candidates often adopted a very basic approach, both agreeing and disagreeing with the statement and supporting with simple reasons or a small amount of development; such answers could not progress beyond Level 4.

Question A2 *Beliefs and Sources of Authority*

Part (a) presented few problems for those candidates who attempted the question. Most understood the term fundamentalist and could explain clearly how fundamentalists interpret the Bible, with many giving some very clear exemplification with reference to biblical material, particularly accounts from Genesis 1-11.

Part (b) was either done well or very poorly. Poor answers were typified by basic and generalised statements such as 'the New Testament is more important because it is newer'. Such responses received little, if any, credit. Top answers were often very well developed and easily attained all of the three marks available.

Part (c) was one of the few questions on the paper where the majority of candidates scored full marks. All made clear reference to atonement for human sin and God's love for humanity.

There were some fair answers in part (d) and several easily attained the top level. Weaker answers were often vague, did not specifically answer the question asked or showed little understanding of the concept of 'the world to come'.

Question A3 Holy Communion

Answers to part (a) fell into two very clear categories: those who made reference to both words and actions and could recall the information accurately, and those who concentrated on either words or actions. Both words and actions were required for full marks. Several less able candidates failed to take note of the word 'consecrates' and many described the administration of communion rather than the prayer of consecration. Others wrote at some considerable length about 'doing transubstantiation'.

Most candidates were able to score at least 2 marks in part (b). Some of the reasons offered by less able candidates were, however, somewhat strange, including that the candidates were guessing the answer. Although there was no requirement in the question to name those denominations which do not celebrate Holy Communion many were able to do so with accuracy.

There was some confusion in weaker answers about what part (c) was asking. Several candidates suggested that specific parts of the communion service were more important than others and failed to engage with the target of the question. At the top end there were some very good evaluations of the role of a priest, and this proved to be one of the best answered evaluation questions in Part A.

Question A4 Places of Worship

Part (a) posed few problems to candidates providing they knew an important feature of an Orthodox Church. However, despite the stimulus, there was some confusion over Orthodox Church buildings amongst less able candidates. Most candidates were able to identify one important feature of an Orthodox Church; considerably fewer went on to briefly explain its importance.

Failure to note that the question referred to two other denominations, Anglican and Baptist, was the biggest problem for candidates in part (b). As a result there were some weak attempts to answers to this question. Responses referring to the size of the buildings or the number of windows received no credit. Those candidates who could correctly identify the differences in interior features of the named denominations and explain them were in the minority.

Part (c) was often the best part of this question, and candidates often wrote at length and with considerable accuracy and thought on this. Most answers scored at least Level 4.

Question B5 Festivals

Responses to this question were often weaker than those to Question B6.

Part (a) asked candidates to explain how Christians use the season of Advent to prepare for the coming of Jesus. There were very few Level 6 answers in evidence here. The least able candidates confused Advent with Lent and wrote at length about Christians giving up something to copy Jesus fasting in the wilderness. Even where candidates did understand the significance of Advent as a time of preparation for Christmas, several produced very basic answers that explained little about the ways Christians use the season of Advent. Credit was given for reference to Advent calendars, provided that there was a clear link between them and the idea of counting down to Christmas. Sadly there were many secular responses regarding Advent calendars and chocolates. Others focussed on the writing of Christmas cards, or Christmas

shopping. The able candidates were able to focus specifically on Christian customs, for example, the Advent wreath, special Advent services, Christingle services, etc. Where they did so with precision and provided a good explanation of at least one custom they were able to access the top levels.

Despite the confusion that had occurred in part (a) most candidates were able to produce reasonable, and in some cases very good, evaluations in part (b).

The biggest problem for candidates in part (c), even those who had scored well in the previous parts of this question, was the lack of basic knowledge of what constitutes 'Holy Week'. Several answers included Shrove Tuesday or Ash Wednesday, others included Easter Day, and candidates spent a considerable amount of time describing Christian customs for these days. Where candidates did correctly understand the days of Holy Week, there were some excellent explanations offered. The most popular days were Palm Sunday and Good Friday, although there were several very clear and expansive explanations of Christian observance of Maundy Thursday.

In answer to (d) most candidates achieved the lower levels in this question, but some were able to provide sufficient depth and reasoning to construct a well argued response and the top level.

Question B6 *Commitment*

Most candidates managed to score at least half marks in part (a), and many accessed the top level with a thorough and detailed account of what was both said and done. Reference to both was required for the top levels. Good answers highlighted the key points of believers' baptism, age of candidate, candidate's testimony, renouncing sin, baptism by total immersion, etc. and explained them clearly. There were, however, a significant number of candidates who wrote at considerable length about infant baptism and sadly received little credit.

Part (b) was an evaluation question which allowed all candidates to produce satisfactory arguments and debate. Less able candidates tended to give rather one-sided responses, but the content of all answers to this question was generally good.

The answers to part (c) often got as far as explaining that confirmation was a sign of adult commitment and continued that which was begun at baptism. Only a few actually went on to develop key points about receiving the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, although where they did so, this was exceptionally well done with clear explanation and understanding. At the lower end of the spectrum, weak answers went little further than suggesting confirmation was important because the Bishop comes to do it.

There were some very strong answers to part (d), and there was clear debate about those who are baptised as a child and then turn away from the faith as opposed to those who believe and lead a Christian life without the need for outward signs of commitment, etc. Clearly candidates had been well prepared for this type of question.