

C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
MAY/JUNE 2006**

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION
JUNE 2006
GENERAL COMMENTS

A significant feature of a large number of responses in Paper 02 was the seeming lack of familiarity with some areas of the syllabus. Responses to some questions by a number of candidates left examiners with the impression that they had little or no exposure to the biblical text used in relation to the special objectives being tested. The implication here is that sections of the syllabus are either not covered in teacher-pupil contacts or done so superficially.

There was a large number of cases in which candidates seemed completely unaware of what it means to 'explain'. Many restated the words of the text according to another version rather than 'explain' as required. This means that candidates from many centres scored disappointingly on Profile 2 of the question.

Performances on Profile 3 of most questions were generally below expectation. Candidates in many instances showed little imagination in their attempts at using their knowledge of the scriptures to deal with the respective issues raised. Most responses were therefore 'preachy' and restricted in respect of the freedom to use one's own insights rather than be overly restrained by the fear of being disloyal to one's own religious tradition.

By and large, the performance of a number of candidates in this year's examination highlighted the need for greater thoroughness in the preparation of teachers and objectivity in the approach of both teachers and pupils to a subject that is traditionally approached with a great deal of subjectivity and apprehensiveness on the part of most religious persons.

Teachers who are thoroughly prepared for the teaching of the subject and committed to objectivity in their approach could make much difference in respect of the preparedness and overall performance of those who enter as candidates for the examination.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

Performance on this paper was quite satisfactory. Candidates demonstrated sound all-round knowledge and understanding of the content and objectives tested.

Paper 02 – Essay

Question 1 (Human Life Issues and the Bible)

This question tested knowledge of objective 13, Unit 1 which dealt with marital relations.

Most candidates answered part (a) satisfactorily with many responses reflecting deep interest in the issue of justice in gender and spousal relationships. However many of the biblical passages cited were incorrect. Not many candidates gave satisfactory responses to part (b) which required explanation and the reference to biblical instructions.

Anger and resentment were TWO major features of the attitude many candidates expressed in the responses to parts (b) and (c). In this sense the question proved to be cathartic and provides pointers in respect of opportunities to provide guidance to adolescents in this vital area of social and moral development.

A small number of candidates responded satisfactorily to part (c) of the question and this was due largely to lack of knowledge of the biblical text. Many candidates did more to vent their anger than to give a reasoned response to the question.

Question 2 (Concept of Sin)

Most candidates gave satisfactory answers to part (a) of the question. However, many in attempting to give exact quotations, gave wrong references. Part (b) of this question proved to be quite challenging and elicited some rather creative responses from the more creative candidates. The word ‘advantage’ in (b)(ii) was misconstrued by many whose responses showed understanding of the term only in its colloquial sense. Care must be taken to develop complete awareness of the full sense of terms used in this way.

Question 3 (God)

Responses to part (c) of this question were mostly inadequate. Very few candidates showed the ability to distinguish between a biological or earthly father and the Heavenly Father. Most answers were predictably very ‘wordy’ and moralistic and could have been given without any exposure to the syllabus. This inadequacy of most responses might well be due to the vagueness of most candidates’ understanding of the role of father in the context of the family.

Question 4 (Salvation)

This question sought to test the candidates’ grasp of the difference between Christ and God the Father in Christian theology and their understanding of the concept “love of God” or a dimension of the experience of salvation according to Christian theology.

Because of the repetition of a number of words and phrases in the passage quoted, it should have been difficult for candidates not to get full marks for part (a). Despite this however, many candidates wrote the same answer for (i) and (ii) of part (b). This is because they failed to observe that there were two versions of the same passage and not two separate passages.

Many candidates failed to see the difference between the references to ‘no greater love’ in b(i) and the ‘love of God’ for the world, in b(ii) respectively. This was indeed a challenge that only the better prepared and more discerning members of this age cohort would have been equal to. This is why the acceptable answers deserve to be commended.

Most responses to part 3 of this question were superficial. Under-preparedness in this section of the syllabus was very evident in the weaker responses. Many candidates misunderstood the use of the term 'relation' in reference to God. Some even thought that it had sexual connotations. Note needs to be taken here of variations in the understanding of the term 'process of salvation' from one Christian to another. This factor was duly considered in awarding the marks for this profile.

Question 5 (Reign of God)

This question sought to test the candidates' grasp of the popularly known attributes of God and their familiarity with the scriptural references to these attributes.

Most candidates gave appropriate responses to part (a) since identifying them in the passage was presented with little difficulty.

Part (b) of the question presented much difficulty to most candidates. Very few explained the term 'own possession' acceptably. Less than ten per cent of those who attempted this question seemed to have had any exposure to the Judeo-Christian understanding of the terms 'priest' and 'covenant'.

The majority took the term 'priests' to mean the same as 'preacher' or 'pastor'. In just about twenty responses was the term 'covenant' properly explained. Responses to this section of the question were therefore mostly disappointing. This makes the correct responses even more commendable.

With respect to part (c) of this question, most responses exposed the inability of candidates to apply their knowledge of the scriptures to the interpretation of the issues of life. In their responses, too many candidates attempted either to defend the church initially or to dismiss its contribution as being negligible or reprehensible. In very few responses was there evidence of intelligent awareness of either the strengths or weaknesses within the church locally or globally.

Paper 03 – School Based Assessment

As in 2005, the quantity of researched information submitted was commendable. While in some instances, there was good attention to details and presentation, in many others there was evidence of the need for guidance in the arrangement and presentation of material. The skills for writing a research paper need to be taught.

There was evidence in some cases of a seeming failure by teachers to comply with the requirements of the School based assessment. The role of the teacher is critical in ensuring support for students as they work through the research process. Teachers are reminded that 2006 was the final year for the current syllabus. The guidelines in the new syllabus should therefore be used to assess students for the 2007 examinations.

Recommendations to School Administrators and Teachers

1. Religious Education should be seen as vital to the preparation of persons for intelligent and wholesome involvement with others at all levels of communal life especially in a globalised world.
2. Only appropriately qualified persons should be permitted to teach the subject at any level.
3. Adequate resources in the form of books and funding for exploratory trips, must be made available to teachers and pupils in the study of religion.
4. Those involved in the teaching of the subject must retain objectivity at all times and do everything necessary to ensure that their pupils become and remain curious and critical in their approach to the subject.
5. There should be more deliberation in helping pupils to interpret questions and write their answers with precision and creativity.
6. More attention needs to be given to the preparation, presentation and assessment of research projects.
7. Pupils should be persuaded to take the subject even though they may not be offering it for examination since it is so vital to their understanding of the cultural, social and moral context in which they live their lives.