

# **Religious Studies**

Advanced GCE **2794**

Connections in Religious Studies (Routes F, M, Q, T)

## **Mark Scheme for June 2010**

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**Route F Philosophy of Religion with Islam****1 Assess the view that the Bible and the Qur'an are both God's word.****AO1**

Candidates might begin by considering the nature of revelation and the way in which Muslims and Christians have explained it. Although both agree that God reveals himself through his word, an important distinction is that for most Christians Jesus is the incarnate Word of God whereas for Muslims the Qur'an is a record of God's speech. The Bible, therefore, is for many Christians a witness to the Word (either to the pre-existent Word or to the historical Word) whereas the Qur'an might be considered to be the direct word of God via Muhammad for Muslims.

Some might point out what the Qur'an itself says i.e. that it was sent down on the heart of Muhammad (Surah 2:97) from where it was delivered under guidance by the 'Agent of Revelation' - or the angel Jibril.

Some might point out what the Bible says itself in 2 Timothy 3:16 that 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.'

**AO2**

Some candidates might assess what is meant by inspiration. Some might argue that the Gospels (for example) are much closer to the Hadith than to the Qur'an. Therefore as the Hadith is extremely important in understanding how Muhammad understood God's word, this does not have the same authority as the Qur'an which is the 'Speech of God' as sent down by Allah.

On the other hand some might argue that as God is ineffable, his revelation must always be through a medium of some kind – both Bible and Qur'an give considerable weight to the role of the prophet.

Some candidates might argue that whereas Satan has tampered with earlier revelations of God's word, the Qur'an more truly represents His word. On the other hand some might argue that just as the Qur'an was revealed over a period of some 23 years, the Bible was also revealed over a long period of time on different occasions; there is little distinction between the Qur'an and Bible from that point of view.

**2 'Only the Qur'an, not religious experience, tells us anything about God.' Discuss.****AO1**

Some candidates may wish to explain the difference between religious experience and revelation. Whereas God is the active agent of revelation, religious experience is subjective and human.

Candidates may outline, briefly, the way in which the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad. They might explain how he was at first resistant to God's revelation but that God's word was more powerful than his own word or speech. Surah 96 might be used to illustrate the notion that the Qur'an teaches what humans cannot know by themselves.

Candidates might also explain and outline some of the 'varieties of religious experience'. These might include the sense of the numinous, mystical experience, the sense of presence etc. The characteristics of these include the sense of being at one with the Divine (and loss of identity), noetic or knowledge-giving moments and ineffability. Some might point out that Islam has a long tradition of the value of religious experience (taqwa) through prayer, meditation, fasting, pilgrimage etc.

**AO2**

Some might argue that although religious experience might lead someone to experience the divine, as the experience is essentially subjective it acts only to confirm revelation and cannot be a substitute for it. Revelation (i.e. the Qur'an) is by definition knowledge of what God lets be known of Himself (propositionally).

On the other hand, some might argue that in the Sufi tradition religious experience is knowledge (non-propositionally) of God. Muhammad's ascent (the Night Journey) for example illustrates the way in which the soul can acquire insight and understanding into the nature of God.

**3 'The Islamic view of afterlife is more credible than the belief in rebirth.' Discuss.****AO1**

Candidates may begin by outlining Islamic teaching on akirah eg. barzakh, interrogation by Munkar and Nakir, general resurrection, judgement at the end time according to the Books of Life followed by heaven/paradise (al-Jannah) and hell (al-Jahannam).

Candidates may then outline what is taught about rebirth in Buddhism or possibly Hinduism (eg. reincarnation). This need not be very detailed but it may refer to the relationship between a person's present actions and subsequent status at rebirth (samsara). Some might explain that rebirth in many traditions does not mean rebirth as the person one is now but rather the elements which constitute the self. Those who outline a Hindu version of rebirth might explain it in terms of the continuation of atman according to the laws of dharma.

**AO2**

Some candidates might argue that the Islamic view of after-life deals better with the question of personal identity in the post-mortem state. They might, for example, suggest that the 'new bodies' given at the general resurrection (Surah 56:60-61 butterfly-caterpillar metaphor) enable the continuity to be maintained between body and soul.

On the other hand responses might consider that the metaphor of the caterpillar-butterfly does not deal adequately with the problem of continuity of personhood. If the body is substantially different then it might be considered as a new person; therefore the person whom God judges is not the same as the one whose deeds were accumulated on earth.

Some therefore might consider that rebirth offers a better solution because the body is in the same material order as the previous body. They might argue that of the two notions of rebirth Hinduism is better because the soul as a single entity is identifiably the same, whereas in Buddhism the doctrine of anatta makes this very difficult.

Candidates may consider both Islamic notions of after-life and theories of rebirth all to be philosophically unsound.

**Route M Religious Ethics with Islam****4 Assess the view that Islamic ethics permit some forms of moral relativism.****AO1**

Candidates might wish to define ethics in terms of Shari'ah. They might explain that Shari'ah is not an arbitrary law invented by Muhammad or his followers but divinely given and intended to offer the path to salvation through obedience to its laws and obligations. Some examples of Shari'ah law might be given (eg. sexual ethics, war, property etc).

Candidates may wish also to explain what is meant by moral relativism. In its most extreme version, moral relativism denies all absolute and objective values. This might refer to a radical subjectivism where values are entirely personal and can be held without reason. Others might argue that moral relativism need not be as radical as this but can describe the way in which ethical values change over time in accordance with society's changing needs.

**AO2**

Some might argue that Islamic ethics are incompatible with moral relativism. Shari'ah is objective and eternal whereas moral relativism changes. They might argue that moral relativism lacks rationality and is arbitrary whereas Shari'ah through the Qur'an, Hadith and Sunnah has developed a coherent account of moral behaviour.

On the other hand some may argue Shari'ah does allow for some elements of relativism; it has changed to some extent over time as new situations have arisen and as scholars have developed their opinions. They might argue that those who hold a fundamentalist view of Shari'ah are very much a minority in Islam and that insight into Shari'ah enables Muslim ethics to adapt. They might for example illustrate how the kosher laws given to Moses have been adapted in halal. They might refer to the well-known Hadith in which the Prophet approves of a judge's (qadi) decision that if the Qu'ran and Sunnah do not provide answers, then he should use his own opinion.

**5 'The concept of Ummah does not mean that all people are equal.' Discuss.****AO1**

Candidates might begin by explaining what Ummah means. It refers to the world-wide community of believers and is reflected in the way in which local communities develop their own sense of belonging and responsibility from the family upwards.

Candidates might explain how Ummah upholds a sense of kinship in times of trouble, war, persecution etc. They might show how it is supremely expressed on the Plain of Arafat during Hajj. Ummah is therefore the basis of welfare ethics which determines responsibilities to the elderly, sick, poor etc.

**AO2**

Candidates might first consider what is meant by equal. Some might argue that equality does not mean all people are to be treated the same but is contingent on their needs and desires. Equality might be defined in terms of proportion and distribution of goods.

Some might argue that if this is the case then Ummah does treat all people as equal because it distinguishes between needs, desires and appropriate distribution of goods.

On the other hand, some might argue that Ummah does not treat all people as equal because it only applies to faithful members of the Islamic world-wide community. It does not extend to humanity as a whole. They might add that Islam does not discriminate against humans as such, but Ummah is a specific doctrine which places the faithful first.

**6 Compare and contrast Islamic teaching with Utilitarianism on sex and relationships.**

**AO1** Candidates might begin with an outline of the chief characteristics of Islamic teaching: general attitudes include modesty, self-control and respect for one's body. In puberty boys and girls are segregated in terms of education, sleeping and recreation. Sex before marriage is haram. Men and women should not appear naked in front of each other except to their husband/wife.

Some might discuss marriage as 'half your religion' and explain this in terms of life-long commitment and the fulfilment of one's role as God's loving servant on earth. It is also the place to develop taqwa, proper sexual relationships and duties of responsibility. Some might consider the regulations (eg. talaq and 'idda) concerning divorce as a last resort after reconciliation has failed.

Some might wish to consider issues of gender and homosexuality. Male homosexual acts are forbidden in the Qur'an (7:80-84) but some accept that whilst homosexual orientation is not chosen a person still has to exercise self-control and avoid homosexual practice.

**AO2** Evaluation will probably consist of comparing and contrasting Islam with act utilitarianism (although other forms may well be discussed). Some might argue that the advantage of utilitarianism is that it aims for freedom to express oneself in ways to achieve the greatest wellbeing. This need not be contrary to Islam.

Some may argue that Islam and religion in general have generated taboos which have caused more harm than good. Repressed sexuality and feelings of shame do not lead to happy and fulfilled people but unhappiness.

On the other hand some might argue that utilitarianism's instrumental notion of ends/means trivialises human relationships; fails to consider actions in terms of respect to

persons and ultimately actions which will be judged as to the purity of intention by God on the Day of Judgement.



**Route Q Developments in Christian Thought and Islam****7 'Feminism has posed more problems for Islam than for Christianity.' Discuss.****AO1**

Candidates might begin by considering what is meant by feminism and how this has been incorporated into Christian and Islamic theology. Some may explain that there is a variety of feminisms; liberal feminism has emphasised equality of rights whilst reconstruction has developed more complex views of liberation in terms of social structures, consciousness and psychological views of self. Some may consider radical feminism and its emphasis on body, motherhood and identity.

Candidates might then consider how these types of feminisms have been adapted by Christian theologians. For example Jesus' treatment of women was to challenge existing taboos and include women amongst his followers. Some scholars have suggested that Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God offered a more radical view of society which also included a shift in consciousness about the very nature of God.

Candidates might review how some Muslim feminists have argued that the Qur'an should be read for its spiritual values and its rulings should be seen in their historical context. For example when the Qur'an forbids a woman to give a testimony by herself but only through a friend or helper, this is because in those days women were not literate and needed someone to protect them in the law court. Reconstructionist Muslim feminists, for example, have looked at Muhammad's life in Madinah and considered it far more radical than the conservative period of the Abbasid period which followed.

**AO2**

Some candidates might agree with the statement. They might consider that early Christianity illustrated the radical way in which Christianity liberated women (eg. Fiorenza's analysis) which later tradition appeared to 'bury'. Some might consider that the Trinity naturally lends itself to a male/female image of God which incorporates gender. They might argue that Islamic law does not give women the same rights as men, and although it might suggest that women are 'equal but different' in terms of roles in the household, dress-codes and sexuality, Islam resists the liberalising tendencies of feminism.

On the other hand, some might argue that Muhammad never addressed God as 'father', to avoid human and sexual connotations. The challenge of feminism about the nature of God has therefore been anticipated and although Muslims are aware of God in an intimate and personal way, they think of Him as Creator rather than Father. They might conclude that Islam can develop its own form of feminism more easily than Christianity.

**8 'The aims of Liberation Theology and Islamic Ummah are very similar.' Discuss.****AO1**

Candidates might begin by explaining what Ummah means. It refers to the world-wide community of believers and is reflected in the way in which local communities develop their own sense of belonging and responsibility from the family upwards.

Candidates might explain how Ummah upholds a sense of kinship in times of trouble, war, persecution etc. They might show how it is supremely expressed on the Plain of Arafat during Hajj. Ummah is therefore the basis of welfare ethics which determines responsibilities to the elderly, sick, poor etc

Candidates might explain that Liberation Theology is largely a Latin American movement within the Catholic Church from the 1970s which looked to reform the notion of Church and to give a 'preferential option for the poor'. Its proponents were not aiming to undermine the catholicity or universal nature of the Church but rather to remind it that the proper object of its purpose was the poor as subjects, not objects, within the Kingdom of God. Making the poor their own subjects requires a shift in consciousness and a renewed sense of what justice means materially and spiritually.

**AO2**

Some candidates might argue that the aims are very different. Whereas liberation theology is a reformist movement seeking to challenge the doctrine of the Church in its pastoral and political responsibilities, especially amongst the poor, the Ummah is a concept of brotherhood which is not a reforming idea.

Some might argue that the notion of 'Church' (ontologically and sacramentally) is very different from Ummah which has no metaphysical dimension.

On the other hand some might point out the affinities eg. the political nature of Ummah with the way in which base communities work for and with the poor especially against exploitation. Some may wish to consider how far Ummah permits a Marxist interpretation and compare this with the way liberation theologians have used a radical political/sociological analysis of society.

- 9 Assess the view that Muslims and Christians both agree that there can only be one true religion.**

**AO1**

Candidates might first consider the 'exclusivist' views of Islam and Christianity. The Islamic view might begin with the notion that as the Qur'an is the final most complete revelation of God, then other previous revelations must be insufficient for salvation. Candidates might stress that the doctrine of tawhid rejects Christian claims of the divinity of Christ and the Trinity and that as Muhammad was the 'seal' of prophets, iman (faith) in the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet alone provide the sufficient condition for God's mercy at Judgement. Paradise is only for Muslims; unbelievers are 'scattered' (Qur'an 14:18).

Candidates might outline a typical Christian exclusivist position which focuses on 'one, only and sufficient' sacrifice of Christ as atonement for sin and in which only those who believe are 'justified'. Some candidates might discuss the normative position of the Roman Catholic Church as outlined in *Dominus Iesus* and the significance of the Church as the only mediator of God's Grace.

**AO2**

Candidates might argue that both Muslims and Christians have inclusivist and pluralist views of other religions. Some might argue that Muslim views of Isa as inspired prophet are very close to John Hick's pluralist Christian view. Furthermore the Qur'an contains many passages which have favourable views of 'people of the Book' (inclusivist) and that Islamic criticisms are really against 'unbelievers' and those who reject belief in judgement and the Last Day.

Candidates might argue that Christian exclusivism is a later development when Christians were defending their faith against external hostility and that passages such as Acts 17 and Rahner's 'anonymous Christianity' better express the Christian notion that anyone of 'good will' who is 'open' to God's Grace will receive salvation.

Candidates might conclude that inclusivism and pluralism are modernising tendencies in both religions and that the more accurate view is that both religions are exclusive by nature.

**Route T New Testament and Islam****10 Compare and contrast the concepts of sin and eternal life in the New Testament with Islam.****AO1**

Candidates might explain sin in Islam as something which undermines tawhid. Tawhid is summarised in Surah 112 as 'God is One, the Eternal God. He begot none, nor was he begotten. None are equal to Him.' As God is closer to humans than we even know ourselves, the presumption of knowing God, to equal him in any way through association is 'shirk', that is, sin.

Islamic teaching on eternal life might focus on akhirah, referring to the Last Day and includes Judgement and the rewards of heaven and hell. Islam teaches that we only have one life and that this life is, therefore, a test of one's character to win a place in Paradise.

Candidates may approach the New Testament either from the perspective of the Gospels or Acts/Paul or both. Sin in the Gospels is presented as punishment through illness, being outcast, falling short of God's covenant and therefore contrasted with 'metanoia' or repentance. Some candidates might discuss how Jesus' death is portrayed as a sacrifice for sin and consider the atonement language which is especially prevalent in John's Gospel (e.g. 'Lamb of God'), and the Suffering Servant/ransom motif in Mark's Gospel.

Eternal life is used in the Gospels sometimes as equivalent to Kingdom of God and sometimes as an expression of God's revelation/action in the world. Some may discuss how eternal life is associated with the resurrected state as a post-mortem state; others that it describes the realisation of the Age to Come through repentance.

In Acts/Paul sin is closely associated with baptism. Candidates might discuss sin/baptism/Holy Spirit in Acts (eg. Acts 2:38, 3:19; 5:31) and the relationship of sin, covenant, Law and righteousness in Paul (e.g. Galatians 5:1-12). Eternal life is most clearly outlined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15) and candidates will probably wish to discuss it in relation to baptism.

**AO2**

Candidate might argue that sin in Islam and the New Testament mean very different things. Whereas in Islam it is a failure of the individual to understand the majesty and uniqueness of God, in the New Testament it describes the fallen state of human nature and its failure to maintain the God-human relationship of the covenant. Some may discuss the nature of the Fall and 'original sin' (Paul in Romans) and the express rejection of the 'Fall' in the Qur'an. Some might argue that the ontological nature of sin is necessary to explain Jesus' sacrifice which again is resisted by the Qur'an.

On the other hand, candidates might argue that teaching on eternal life is much closer. Resurrection is a shared notion between the New Testament and Islam, as is the teaching on bodily transformation and judgement. However, there are many differences such as the role of Jesus as mediator, barzakh etc. Those who argue for a realised eschatology in the New Testament might feel that eternal life has very little to do with after-life.

- 11 **'The status of Muhammad for Muslims is the same as the status of Jesus in the New Testament.' Discuss.**

**AO1**

Candidates might begin by outlining the status of Muhammad as implied in the Qur'an, the Hadith and in the biographical traditions (sira). They might argue that Muhammad was the last of the prophets and the one to receive the final and complete revelation of God. They might explain that as the Qur'an is a revelatory text, the teaching of the Prophet suggests that his teaching and example are vital in the exposition of the Qur'an and its application.

Candidates may approach the New Testament either from the perspective of the Gospels or Acts/Paul or both. In the Gospels Jesus' miraculous birth is referred to in Matthew and Luke, his ability to perform miracles is a characteristic of his ministry and his death and resurrection are the focus of all the Gospels.

Candidates may explain that although not much is said about Jesus as a person, Paul presents him as the second Adam, the one who brings the new Law/covenant and through whom the Spirit of righteousness is revealed.

**AO2**

Candidates might begin with the important debate about the Qur'an's portrayal of Jesus' crucifixion in Surah 4:157 ('And they crucified him not, but only one who was made to appear to them like Jesus ('Isa)... They did not really kill Jesus, but God took him up to Himself.') They might argue that it seems to suggest that God took Jesus into heaven before he died. Jesus did not die on the cross, but only one who looked like Jesus. Therefore Jesus' death was neither a sacrifice nor an atonement for sins. This would seem to be in disagreement with the Gospels and Paul - although some may discuss a possible docetic/Gnostic interpretation of John's Gospel. To this end Jesus is a significant prophet but not one to be worshipped. Candidates therefore might conclude that from the perspective of the Qur'an (and from modern scholarship) the status of Jesus and Muhammad is the same, but that as Muhammad received a fuller revelation his significance might be greater.

On the other hand candidates might argue that although Jesus' role as the one who succeeds Abraham is shared by Paul, the Gospels and the Qur'an (eg. John 8, Acts 2:22, Galatians 3-4 and Romans 4) nevertheless Jesus' divinity and his role as redeemer allows him to be the object of worship.

Some may discuss to what extent Muhammad is venerated to the point of being worshipped by some Muslims; they might consider whether this is right.

**12 To what extent is it true to say that the Qur'an is the word of God and the New Testament is a witness to the word of God?**

**AO1**

Candidates might begin with the traditional view by explaining that the Qur'an was revealed in Muhammad's heart on the Night of Power (Qur'an 2.97) which he then spoke as the words of God under the guidance of the 'Trusted Spirit' (i.e. the angel Jibril). Candidates might discuss whether the revelation occurred all at once or over a period of time.

Candidates might then explain that for many Christians the New Testament cannot be the word of God in quite the same sense as the Qur'an because Jesus is the Word (or Logos) of God (John 1:1 and 14) and therefore the writers/evangelists 'bear witness' to the Word (a constant term used in the New Testament). Some have argued that the New Testament is therefore more like the Hadith, in Islamic terms.

**AO2**

However, some candidates might argue that Islam has not always regarded the Qur'an as the word of God in a literal sense. They might refer to the Mu'tazila who argued that reason should come prior to revelation but that the Qur'an supplements, motivates and guides people. Furthermore that as the Qur'an was created in time, using the language of the time, it has not existed eternally and importantly God could not have predestined the events of the universe. This freedom is essential if people are to make their own choices and interpret the Qur'an appropriately according to situation.

Some might argue that many have regarded the New Testament not merely as the witness to God's word but as the word of God because the inspiration of the New Testament writers was under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Contrary to the Islamic view that revelation has become confused or distorted in the New Testament (e.g. as four Gospels), each of the evangelists offers another dimension of God's ineffable revelation. Some might refer to Paul's claim that he had received special revelation ('For I did not receive it [the gospel] from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.' Galatians 1:12) from Christ himself initially on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).

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