

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel GCE
Religious Studies (6RS02) Paper 1D
The Study of World Religions

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6RS02 1D The Study of World Religions

General Comments

The 2016 examination season is a testimony to the high level of engagement with selected studies drawn from a very wide range of academic fields. Over the life of this specification there has been consistent evidence of superb research on topics that are clearly of great interest to candidates. This legacy of academic achievement has been inspirational for examiners whose privilege it is to see what can be achieved by our candidates. The new specification will provide a different assessment experience and centres will find that their excellent resources can be integrated into future schemes of work.

The high standard of work evidenced in June 2016 was no exception to historical high standards as candidates demonstrated a very high level of independent enquiry which clearly demonstrated what their chosen area of investigation had meant to them as a learning experience. Candidates showcased their knowledge of a particular academic field in the way they identified a line of enquiry, clearly expressed their view, analysed key concepts and deployed evidence with coherent understanding of their task whilst fluently evaluating a wide range of source material that they had at their disposal. The enthusiasm for and knowledge of the chosen topic was clearly conveyed in many answers that were truly academic in their approach. A few centres continue to focus on the same or similar topics for all their candidates, whereas other Centres permitted considerable choice for individual candidates. Candidates were mostly very well prepared for the examination and it was evident that Centres used their specialist resources and interests to encourage candidates to research in depth a particular area of study. The 'Investigations' unit has a definite academic purpose and aims to involve students as active participants pursuing open-ended enquiries with an emphasis on independent learning. Questions were designed to be inclusive of all possible approaches to various topics and all valid answers were considered. At this stage in the life of the specification it is difficult to find new things to report because, in the main, centres possess a very high degree of expertise and this is clearly evidenced in the work that is produced on the day of the examination.

There are still a few areas for development that are reported similarly each year and once again 2016 showed evidence of a small minority of centres that need to take this on board. Centres are encouraged to review their performance in 2016 against all or some of the following points:

- Whilst most centres had entered their candidates for the correct option there were still a few entries for particular Areas of Study where consideration regarding entry for a different Area of Study may have been beneficial to the candidate. It is important to ensure candidates know which area of their investigation is the best fit for the question they answer on the paper.
- A small number of candidates were not entered by the centre for the correct paper.

- There was evidence of candidates choosing a different question on the paper to the question they had clearly prepared for before the examination. In some of these cases the candidate was using material suitable for Question 1 to answer Question 3 (or vice versa) and not really grappling fully with the demands of the question. This practice does not always work to the best effect as the candidate might end up answering neither question as fully as possible. It must be noted that each question was written for ONE of three topics within each particular Area of Study.
- Candidates were not penalised if correct entries were not made or a cross was put in a box that did not match the answer or if no box was ticked at all. However, evidence shows that candidates have decided that the question for a topic that they clearly had not prepared for looked more inviting and selected that question but that did not necessarily mean they were best prepared to answer that question. Whilst it is good to note that less candidates than 2015 attempted this approach there were still some candidates in this session who answered a question they had not prepared for and may need to be reminded which question their material is best directed at and be advised to answer that question.
- Candidates using a pre-prepared essay inclusive of centre selected quotes often ignored the question.

Examiners were encouraged to mark positively and to credit all valid material according to the mark scheme and question paper. Centres should ensure that candidates are entered for the option that matches their Area of Study and that candidates are clear about which question they have been prepared for on the paper. There is still evidence of Centres studying Papers 1B and 1F being entered for 1A. This might be an oversight regarding filling out the form – centres must choose 6RS02 and then identify which of the seven papers from 1A to 1G is the specific entry.

Variation in achievement was related to the two assessment objectives. These objectives should receive prominent attention in the process of the investigation. Importantly there must be explicit attention to both objectives in the examination answer and also to the question that is intended to focus the answer. Each question consistently referred to the assessment objectives with the trigger word 'Examine' for AO1 and 'Comment on' for AO2. These dictated the structure of the question and helped candidates to plan their answers. It would be advisable for candidates to pay regular attention to the level descriptors for these assessment objectives as a way of monitoring their development and progress during their investigations. The phrase 'with reference to the topic you have investigated' will always appear in the question to ensure that the generic question can be answered with material from any appropriate investigation. The mark scheme itself is generic to all questions but the answer itself is not necessarily generic as candidates are *expected* to use their material to *answer the question*. The purpose of the question is to challenge candidates to adapt their material so that at the

highest levels they may demonstrate a coherent understanding of the task based on the selection of their material. Widely deployed evidence/arguments/sources were evident in well-structured responses to the task whereby a clearly expressed viewpoint was supported by well-deployed evidence and reasoned argument. There was skilful deployment of religious language in many answers and the fluency of good essays showed command over the material; such command makes for high outcomes and rewards the amount of hard work done by the candidate. Many candidates had clearly learned much in the process and their overall grasp of the issues involved and command over their material was highly commendable.

Candidates at the lower end of achievement struggled with the demands of the question. These candidates were insecure with their management of material and did not know how to best structure their content to answer the specific question. Success can be undermined by writing up a rote-learned answer which was not adapted to the question set or by answering a question that has been written for a topic they have not studied. In 2016 there was still far too much evidence of rote learned answers using the same structure and material inclusive of quotes; whilst much information was relevant to the topic and consequently was awarded in terms of AO1, there was a significant lack of engagement with the specific demands of the question and consequently marks for AO2 were low, with only generic evaluation provided. This approach is contrasted with excellent praxis whereby candidates were trained to answer the question; arguably, this is evidence of good practice but at the lower end some candidates thought it was sufficient to simply use the question stimulus at the end of each paragraph. The best answers were those which were guided by the statement as opposed to simply '*tagging it on*' to anticipated content. A balanced approach to the question that meets the highest levels of achievement according to both assessment objectives is obviously desirable and the generic question accommodates many possible routes to success whereby any valid approach to the question was credited.

Finally, there is increasing evidence of poorly written scripts that are almost illegible – scripts are scanned onto software for marking and even though the examiner can enlarge the screen many scripts were still very difficult to read. Candidates are strongly advised to develop their practical handwriting skills and then practice writing under timed conditions. Candidates who cannot achieve legible writing may need to consider accessing the facility for word processing their answers according to the regulations. Centres are assured that much time was invested in attempting to decipher illegible answers but there is always the risk that a badly written word/phrase/paragraph could be misinterpreted and it is best to avoid the chances of this occurring. Examiners understand the time constraints that candidates are writing under but this problem regarding illegible handwriting seems to be on the increase. Centres need to address this issue because the current format for examinations requires candidates' ability to sustain handwriting and academic standards under examination pressure.

That said, the excellent work of centres and candidates in 6RS02 bears testimony to the academic potential of candidates that is a joy to behold when it is fully realised.

Specific Comments

Question 1 ETHICAL PRECEPTS & APPLIED ETHICS

The Study of World Religions continues to attract a more sustained academic approach within the quality of investigations for this question. 2016 was no exception as many candidates have really taken on board new ways to improve the quality of their studies. Candidates addressed the range of issues required in question 1. They examined the key ethical teachings in their selected religion(s) and commented on the problems and possible solutions in relation to applying these teachings to ethical issues. In order to achieve higher marks, successful candidates presented material targeted explicitly on this range of demands. The best answers to this question were attempted with an eye to scholarship and candidates had a very wide ranging understanding of the topic and included an in-depth knowledge of a wide range of religious and ethical teachings. The level of detail about religious teachings and traditions was impressive in good quality essays where candidates had studied one or more religious traditions in great detail and were able to support their answers with a substantial amount of religious teachings and relevant scholarship. These studies were confidently expressed and offered a convincing assessment in relation to the question. Candidates were able to apply their knowledge to the question and combine breadth and depth to produce an effective, coherent argument, although other responses only gave a vague indication that the question was there. Candidates on the whole presented comprehensive and detailed responses to the question which showcased their religious knowledge. Strong opinions in the matter of personal choice destroyed weaker candidates' objectivity in writing but it was pleasing to see more able candidates pursuing their own view by fully substantiating this view within the substance of the essay. The best candidates had studied one or more religious traditions in great detail and were able to support their answers with a substantial amount of religious teachings and relevant scholarship.

The challenge of this unit, and with this particular topic, is to ensure that a range of meticulous detail surrounding the issue is coupled with sufficient analysis to achieve high levels of attainment. Candidates studying Judaism presented impressive studies on Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought that evidenced independent research; candidates understood clearly the different positions taken by a group of Jewish theologians from Orthodox, Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism to the ethical dilemma of Nazism. Rubenstein, Fackenheim, Greenberg, Berkowitz, Cohen were placed in the correct context and carefully contrasted against Wiesel's Protest stance and Nietzsche's nihilism. It is refreshing to see work that engages with an issue with such carefully selected detail; the only caveat being that a few candidates missed out on making the most of such rich material to substantiate their own view. Overall, there is no doubt that candidates studying Judaism are thoroughly grounded in Jewish theology and this has a positive impact on the quality of discussion surrounding Jewish beliefs and practices.

Candidates investigating Islam presented essays that have become more scholarly year on year. The strongest essays are full of relevant scriptural references; the use of detailed religious teachings from Qur'anic Suras, Hadith and Fatwa often supported a very well researched argument and higher quality essays made careful use of relevant scholarship to enrich the topic under discussion. This approach is strongly encouraged as candidates can reach the higher levels of achievement if the argument is sustained by a substantial range of sources that are effectively deployed throughout the essay. It is a shame that too few candidates do not explore more fully the distinctive Sunni and Shi'a following as the largest and oldest divisions within the history of Islam, for its relevance to the ethical dilemma under scrutiny. One of the more popular topics was an investigation into jihad. Candidates studied key Islamic teachings on the complex range of topics and distinctions about types of jihad and some candidates made effective use of the ideas of Tariq Ramadan. Bearing in mind the nature of this exam paper, they teased out key ethical factors and their political and social implications. Most incorporated ideas on what was perceived to be misinterpretations of jihad as a source of serious problems together with possible solutions. This included the charge of taking Qur'anic verses out of context and how this type of exposition may be improved. AO2 material was often associated with case studies and subsequent evaluations. The best candidates, however, paid attention to this point and were able to ground their discussion in a thorough exposition of a range of Islamic schools of thought with proficient use of technical terms – there has been much improvement in the academic approach to Islamic studies and this year is no exception. Candidates studying Islam are very well grounded in Islamic thought although weaker studies are often over reliant on a certain well-worn identikit approach clearly evident in Question 1. Candidates rote learn a model answer which they frame to fit likely questions. Although this direction does not negatively impact on examiner marking there should be an awareness that such modelling may lead to constraining the natural and nurtured ability of candidates to produce something original and compelling to read. As such, some candidates missed out on higher achievement despite their ability because this framework limits opportunity to critically appraise their material in a meaningful way.

Candidates investigating Buddhism generally produced higher standard answers and the strongest candidates made a more concerted attempt to discuss alternative views within various branches of Buddhism that were supported by religious teachings. The best answers were guided by the question and grappled with a detailed discussion of how ethical teachings might resolve ethical dilemmas. At the lower end some Buddhism answers lacked depth or breadth regarding their application to a dilemma. These answers confined themselves to outlining the five precepts and four noble truths without drilling down further into why the practice of Buddhism with its particular response to ethical dilemmas emphasises the individual search for liberation from the cycle of samsara. Some candidates missed an opportunity to discuss the differences between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism; this might have raised the level of achievement according to the level of detail.

There were a number of answers that discussed fully the ethical precepts of Islam that were accompanied by excellent information about schools of thought within Islam. There were a few answers on greater and lesser Jihad by more able candidates who were very knowledgeable about their subject whilst less able candidates simply wrote all they knew about Jihad without making reference to the question. The most popular topics included Jihad, homosexuality, capital punishment, suicide and euthanasia with reference to one or two world religions. There was some very interesting work on the ethical teachings of War and Peace that was adapted to Hinduism and Buddhism and also to the debate of sexuality and marriage in Islam. Candidates at the higher end who addressed the issues in these topics with reference to Buddhism presented some very knowledgeable responses that scrutinised closely the ethical precepts of Buddhism. Some weaker candidates failed to address the question and spent most of their time writing about the history of Buddhism and failed to address the question. These responses also made little or no reference to scholarship.

Candidates can improve their answers by demonstrating a much more detailed approach to studying any particular world religion. Weaker answers might contain a few quotes from sacred scripture but fail to include other sources such as relevant scholarship; scholarship is best accompanied in this Area of Study by ethical precepts that are derived from religious tradition and the authority of religious leaders. There is continued evidence of an increased number of candidates from the same centre using the same pre-prepared answers and having difficulty with adapting the selection of material to answer the question. Centres are encouraged to find ways of ensuring that candidates are given the space to do some independent work as the same structure, quotes and content are not always adapted sufficiently to the question. It must be emphasised that candidates are not marked down for this but works of this types are self-levelling if insufficient attention is paid to the assessment objectives.

The following essay illustrates an improved approach to ethical precepts. The candidate explored the key teachings of Islam in relation to the problems and solutions of the ethical issue of abortion. The first line opens with scholarship and this style continues throughout the essay.

The candidate understands the material and presents a clear and thorough understanding of the topic.

Berry writes that "Arabia is a ~~post~~ patriarchal society" and this comment applies to the topic of abortion as most laws and ideologies approved by the Mufti (leaders and scholars) are made by male leaders. This is key as ~~to~~ these laws include abortion laws, which concern the body of a woman. I think this is wrong as I don't believe men should have power over a woman's body. Maxwell would agree with me from him quoting, "A woman should have control over her own body." I have this opinion as I feel men won't have had first-hand experience of abortion like a woman may have, and so for them to dictate whether it should be allowed or not is wrong. However, many Muslims would disagree and most of the Mufti deem abortion

haram (forbidden).

Mawqed says that, "Pre-Islamic Arabia is also known as jahiliya (the age of innocence" and in this time infanticide was a common practice, killing newborn girls. This act could relate to the topic of abortion in the present day Ummah (Muslim Community) as it is the taking of a life, if a foetus is to be considered a life, which it is by most Muslims. I discovered this when presenter Rhuel quoted, "abortion is the murder of a child." This was interesting as the terminology used suggests Muslims ~~teach~~ teach that a foetus is a 'child', which humanises it much more in my opinion which could explain why abortion is generally unacceptable, or even in Rhuel's words, 'murder'.

One other key ethical teaching in Islam regarding abortion would be the ensoulment process. It is a general rule that abortion is forbidden after

this process where the angel Jibril (Gabriel) breathes the ruh (soul) into the foetus, making it human. Before this, there are a significant number of Muslims who will deem abortion permissible under certain circumstances. Scholar Murray writes, "after the 120 day mark, abortion is to be forbidden." In this quote, Murray is suggesting that the ensoulment takes place at 120 days. However, from researching I discovered that ~~the~~ this figure is disputed with a debate being between whether ensoulment is at 40 days or 120 days. Aramesh argues Murray, claiming, "The ensoulment process takes place 40 days after conception." In my opinion, I think it should be agreed that ensoulment should take place at 120 days, as for many women, especially in the event of unpredicted pregnancy, 40 days is not enough time to discover pregnancy. However, others may disagree with me as with modern technology within various pregnancy tests it is possible to detect

pregnancy just seven days after conception. As a rule however, no matter what an individual believes to be the exact day of ensoulment, after this, abortion is haram. A solution to this debate would be to just follow the most commonly referred to date, which from my research appears to be 120 days.

One issue that could occur to a Muslim regarding the aqilaq (ethics) of abortion and ensoulment would be that the UK abortion law permits abortion up to 24 weeks after conception, a date which is significantly longer than both disputed ensoulment dates issued in the Shari'ah law. This could prove an issue to a Muslim living in the UK. In overcoming this issue, scholar Bateman states that, "A Muslim will respect the law of their country, but ~~but~~ personally follow Shari'ah law." I think this is a good way to go about it as in my own opinion,

especially in regards to abortion, one should not push their beliefs on others and just keep to themselves so I think it is good that one key teaching in Islam is to respect your countries law over religious law.

One other key teaching in Islam regarding abortion is what happens in the situation of rape. In this event, some Muslims would see abortion as permissible, especially in the event that the mothers mental health may seriously deteriorate with the continuation of pregnancy. Sharnby writes, "rape is a traumatic experience and the continuation of pregnancy could have a harmful effect on the mother." I agree with this view. In 2004, a controversial law was passed in Egypt by Tantawi that deemed abortion in the circumstances of rape or incest permissible. This outraged many Muslims who believe in the sanctity of life. Al Salami writes, "In Shariah, life has the

same value in all cases." This is an interesting view as I understand what the scholar is arguing, that under no circumstance, such as rape, should a life be considered lesser however I know that in Islam, sex is regarded as an act of love, and in my opinion rape is not an act of love so should this product of conception be treated as such? To an extent I believe that as the ~~the~~ coetus has done no wrong, punishment cannot be brought to them however I also understand why a mother would consider abortion if she was raped.

One thing regarding abortion that is rarely debated, is the rights of the father. Brott writes, "a woman can deny a man his child, or force him to become a father against his will." This is a powerful quote as it is suggesting that a man ~~is not~~ and his wishes

are often overlooked. This would ring true in American Courts where a woman has ~~ultimate~~ the ultimate decision on abortion, and may have an abortion without informing the father. To an extent I think this is wrong as I do not think a fetus is solely the mother's responsibility. In Islam, a patriarchal society, this could be seen as unjust, destroying a man's *Muruwa* (manliness).

Another key teaching in Islam could be one of the Six Beliefs; predestination. This means that Allah has already chosen everyone's path and could heavily apply to abortion as a baby could have been predestined. Azlan writes, "Pre-destination is a solid belief in Islam." However, wouldn't this mean that if a child was predestined, the abortion would fail? Or even succeed, suggesting an abortion should have taken place as the

fetus was predestined to be aborted? Sura 17 states, "kill not your offspring for fear of want." which could solve this dilemma as if you do not want a child, you still should not abort it, this also links to a quote from the Ten Commandments that reads, "Thou shalt not kill". Therefore, many who see abortion as killing, just won't get an abortion. In Shariah, Diya or blood money applies. This suggests that whoever carries out the abortion, owes blood money, so in Islam, if the father did not know of the abortion the blood money/Diya is owed to him. I think this is right. This relates to Pre-Islamic ~~the~~ Arabia where the 'eye-for-an-eye' system was in place. However Armstrong referred to this time as 'God-less' so perhaps he would disagree with this.

The rights of the mother are

a huge teaching in Islam, for example the Sanctity of life and the lesser of two evils. "In the event that the continuation of pregnancy would impact the mother's health, abortion is permissible." - this is a quote by Maqsood. George Carlin says, "If you're anti-abortion, you are anti-woman." This strongly suggests that in the debate on abortion, the mother should come first. I strongly agree with this as I feel that the woman's life is more important than the unborn foetus, and in some cases, such as foetal deformities, the risk of the mother's life and the risk of both lives, is ~~order~~ before ensoulment, Muslims, many in fact will teach that abortion is permissible. One problem with this of course is the right of the foetus. Many Muslims would argue that does the life ~~of~~ of the

foetus not matter? Does it not have rights? One teaching in Islam is the belief of personal hells and that if a woman has an abortion she will be "confronted" by her foetus in Hell and asked "why?" according to Freeman. This could suggest that many Muslims put the right of the foetus before the right of the mother. A solution for this debate would be for a Muslim to stick with what they personally believe. From researching I discovered that individual differences and opinions play a big part. For example, I myself would put the right of the mother before the right of the unborn foetus.

In conclusion, Islam has many ~~the~~ ethical teachings regarding abortion, and there is often

a large debate of on factors, & particularly ensoulment so in final, "Islam can and will permit abortion under circumstances." in the words of Paton. Some may completely regard it haram, some will regard it halal (allowed) however every Muslim has boundaries on abortion. Yet, in almost every situation with a dilemma regarding the abortion, a solution is worked out.

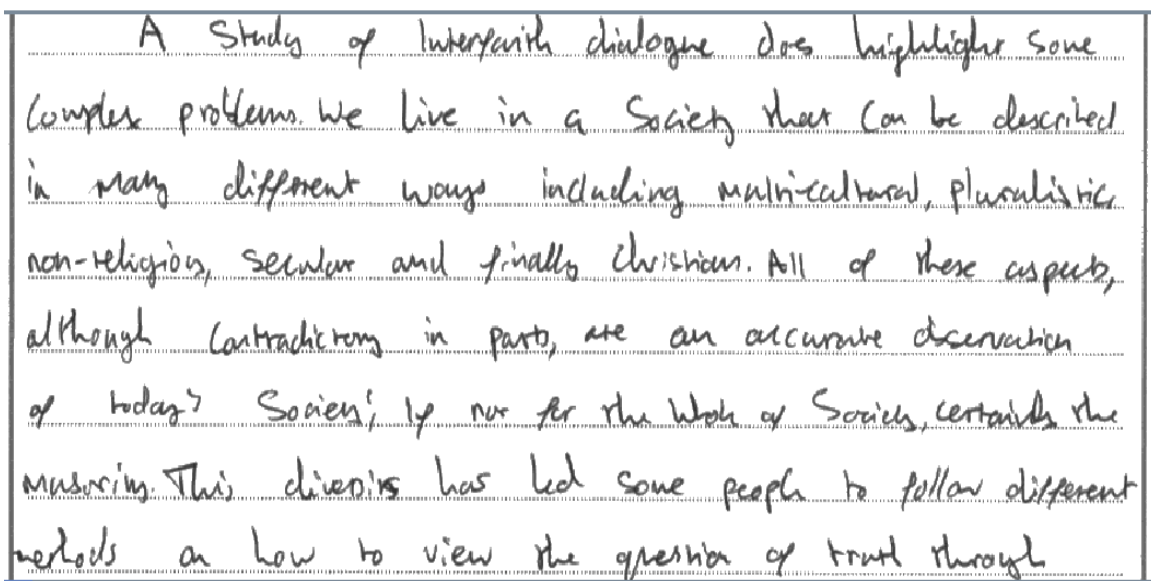
Question 2 RELIGIOUS PLURALISM, INTERFAITH DIALOGUE, and RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

There was a mixture of responses to this question and, as entry numbers are still low, the range of topics offered remains narrow. In order to perform well in this question, candidates needed to understand and communicate key terms and stances, for example pluralism, inter-faith and multi-culturalism. One of the ways of achieving this was via scholarship. Students in this area have a galaxy of eminent scholars such as Barth, Bowker, Cantwell Smith, D'Costa, Hick, Rahner, Smart etc. Candidates have a superb choice of case studies and the Interfaith Dialogue attracted some very good answers which showed secure knowledge of Barth, Rahner and Hick's contribution. This topic can be a little difficult for candidates who have not experienced the excitement and renewal of the Vatican Council era; however, the strongest candidates distinguished themselves by showing secure knowledge of the intricacies of this dialogue through appropriate sources and scholarship. There was evidence of interesting research on pluralism within Hinduism. This approach to the question worked well and demanded an in-depth knowledge of Hinduism that strong candidates could thrive on in their research. On the whole, candidates deployed a wide range of evidence and were able to draw sophisticated conclusions using sound religious terminology. At times however, these were presented in a descriptive manner without the appropriate level of analysis.

Amongst weaker responses; candidates who focused on the role of women in Islam failed to present alternative opinions. Candidates need to include a

range of evidence in their investigation that is supported by sound scholarship and, where possible, to show knowledge of more than one point of view. Answers in the lower levels tended to be brief, descriptive and generalised. Some candidates also relied on pre-prepared essays and failed to understand or answer the question. Answers can be improved by taking decisive views, based on the evidence and also by paying close attention to the demands of the question. There was some evidence of fresh approaches in some answers but clearly there are more candidates that would benefit from treading new, if not deeper, waters.

The introduction to this 8 ¼ page essay indicated a comprehensive grasp of the topic coupled with accurate use of technical terms. The candidate made extensive reference to a substantial range of relevant scholarship. The candidate covered the classical range of thought regarding the inter faith dialogue and this was very well done.

A photograph of a handwritten paragraph on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and matches the text in the third paragraph of the document. The paper has horizontal lines and a dashed midline. The handwriting is clear and legible.

A Study of Interfaith dialogue does highlight some complex problems. We live in a Society that can be described in many different ways including multi-cultural, pluralistic, non-religious, secular and finally Christian. All of these aspects, although contradictory in parts, are an accurate description of today's Society; by not for the whole of Society, certainly the majority. This diversity has led some people to follow different methods on how to view the question of truth through

The next essay adopted a theme and successfully analyses a range of stances on Christian soteriology. The first page sets the context and then Christian salvation is examined from the perspectives of inclusivism, exclusivism and pluralism. The commentary on how far each of these approaches could contribute successfully for interfaith dialogue is explored with precision.

Over the past two censuses, 2001 and 2011, it is clear that Britain has changed both in the ethnicity of its population and the religion of that changing population. It can be seen that Christianity has decreased among the population as a percentage of that population, from 71.7% to 54%.

It can be argued that we now live in a pluralistic, multi-faith society, wherein everyone can worship how and what they would like to. It is therefore imperative that Christians work out where they sit in how they view the truth of other religions.

Secularisation is the gradual decreasing in the significance of religion in regards to social and ~~and~~ cultural influence. Some thinkers would describe Britain as a secular society; such as Taylor who would put it down to our increasing rationalisation and disposable culture - making it easier than ever to be an atheist.

I would disagree with this, instead saying

We live in a multi-faith, pluralistic society. This view is supported by Newbyin. I would say that religion isn't necessarily dying, merely adapting to suit the needs of its citizens in new ways - such as childrens groups being run in the week or food banks for those in need.

Over the course of this ^{essay} I will be looking at three attitudes that can be taken by Christians in regards to salvation; exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism, and which one of these will be best in a modern setting, traditional one and which will be the best for interfaith dialogue.

The first attitude that can be taken is exclusivism. This is the belief that Christianity is the one true religion and that it is the only one that will be allowed to enter salvation. It is therefore important for Christians to convert so that others may also go to heaven.

Exclusivism is the view that was often undertaken historically. The reason for this was for John 14:6 in the bible: 'I am the way, the truth and the life, no one can get to

the father except through me.' Many took this to mean that Christianity is the only true religion. Interestingly, many historical figures thought that you not had to be Christian but also Catholic to enter heaven. This was made by Augustine and affirmed by the first Vatican Council in 1868.

Gavin D'Costa in his investigation of exclusivism identified two distinct branches; Restrictive Access Exclusivism (RAE) and Universal Access Exclusivism. RAE says that only those who accept the gospel in this ~~your~~ life will be able to enter heaven. UAE argues instead that if you weren't able to hear the gospel in this life then you will be presented with it afterwards. God will reach the unevangelized who were destined to be saved.

A modern theologian who believed in exclusivism was Karl Barth in his book 'Church Dogmatics'. He argues that Christianity must be the truth and the truest faith as it was started by Jesus. So, even though religion is principally a human construct, Christianity is unique in that it was given Christianity as a

gift.

I find exclusivism to be a strong argument because of how literal it takes the Bible. If one weren't to take the Bible seriously then the validity of the entire religion comes under question. It is good that this follows it then because the bible preaches that Christianity is the only true faith. This can be seen from the ten commandments, where they're told to have no other God, and from Jesus himself (John 14:6).

However, I do believe that exclusivism has a significant weakness in that of its erosion of God's omnibenevolence. It seems unfair that God would allow some but not others into heaven, as Hick would say. I think there is also a sense of weakness with RAE as it means that someone who hadn't heard the bible never could. Dagg would agree with me that that is unfair and UAE would be the better of the two.

If Christians followed exclusivism interfaith dialogue can still happen as exclusivists can still respect other religions and talk to them about it. But in a sense pluralism and multi-faith

dialogue shouldn't feature too heavily under this as ex-christs would still want to convert others in order to allow them to go to ~~heaven~~ heaven.

The second attitude to look at is that of pluralism. This is the belief that all religions will lead to the same salvation. This came about from John 14:2, where Jesus said: 'In my house there are many rooms,' leading many to speculate that all religions can easily enter heaven.

The largest advocate of pluralism was John Hick. He believed that if God truly was omnibenevolent then he would allow everybody into heaven.

He therefore sought to move from Jesus at the centre to God at the centre ~~of religion~~ (Christocentric to Theocentric.) He did this as this would be a unifier among many religions, most of whom have one God.

He said also, that all religion is essentially the same. It is almost as if several blind people were feeling an elephant and each came to a different ~~conclusion~~ conclusion about what is there.

A separate branch of pluralism is parallelism. This believes that all religions will lead to their own separate salvations.

Fig: Heaven for Christians or Nirvana for Buddhists

It has to be said that pluralism is the most ambitious of the three. It tries to satisfy everyone. However, in doing so it doesn't really satisfy anyone. D'Costa would say that in Hick downplaying Christ, he is essentially downplaying Christianity as Jesus is one of the largest components and his dying was one of the most pivotal moments. Newbigin would agree saying that just because Jesus isn't in all the religions it doesn't guarantee that he wasn't the son of God.

The equal standing of religions can also come under scrutiny. If they're all equal then does that mean cults; such as Scientology, made up religions; such as Jedi or religions followed by one person should be allowed the same standing as the six largest religions?

However, in counter to this though pluralism would

be the most peaceful of the three attitudes. As everyone is going to the same destination there would be little need for dialogue but religious pluralism and practice would flourish under this system as there would be no attempt to change peoples views or convert.

The final attitude to look at is Inclusionism. This is the belief that Christianity is the one true religion but there might still be some good in parts of others. Like exclusionism, this too follows John 14:6 but says that other religions might be able to access it as well.

The largest advocate of inclusionism was Karl Rahner in his four theses. He called Christians from other religions 'anonymous Christians'. He saw that Christianity was a *provisio* so if someone follows some then they might get into heaven. Rahner also saw no difference between a Christian and an 'anonymous one' as they both access God's compassion but it is still worth becoming a Christian so that you can be assured of your salvation.

At the second Vatican Council they too tried to take a more inclusivist approach. Firstly, they said that all denominations would enter heaven. Secondly, Judaism and Islam received high praise and should be treated with respect. Respect should also be given to other faiths as well. It can be seen that no real salvation can come from other faiths but there is a small glimpse of truth that can come from Islam or Judaism. There is seen to be a hierarchy of truth under the Second Vatican Council where other monotheistic faiths receive greatest preference.

I do find inclusivism to be the most convincing. The reason for this is that it stays very true to the Bible whilst restoring God's ~~omnipotence~~ omnibenevolence by allowing some from other religions to enter heaven. I would however agree with D'Costa that inclusivism is merely a milder version of exclusivism as there is still seen to be only one heaven, the Christian one. I would also point out that the Second Vatican Council was more exclusivist as it never officially allowed for other faiths to gain salvation.

Inclusivism would allow for inter-faith dialogue so as to try to convert others, there can be multi-faith practise as there isn't an obligation to convert as some might be 'anonymous christians' and therefore it might be a pluralistic faith.

In conclusion, I believe that pluralism is the best faith to avoid contentious issues of debate and to satisfy the most people. The reason for this is that everyone will be satisfied, as everyone will achieve their own individual salvation. It can be seen that there can be pluralism of faith and multi-faith practise as everybody will be allowed to worship what they want as it will gift you with salvation. Inter-faith can then be achieved with individuals debating over which salvation is better.

However, I would say pluralism for society but for Christianity I would probably pursue inclusivism. That is so that christians can still look to their bible and be strong in their faith whilst having an all-loving God allow some in other faiths into salvation.

Question 3 CONTRASTING STANDPOINTS ON BELIEFS ABOUT GOD

There was admirable and diverse material on this topic. This question attracted a larger number of excellent answers; candidates who wrote about Judaism knew their material well and included a range of sources in their essays. Candidates were very well informed about the different beliefs about God in Islam, however some candidates did not understand fully the Christian teachings on the existence of God and Christian denominations were sometimes confused with each other. Some candidates were not very clear about the differences between the contrasting viewpoints on belief about God they were arguing for. Often candidates selected a major theme and contrasted this across two different religions. For example, the figure of Jesus across Christianity and Islam. At times this proved to be successful. In some cases, however, the quality of argument was limited because the differences were presented almost as a list of points with little evidence of discrimination of the significance of the various topics under discussion. Candidates who wrote about the Sunni and Shia Islam were one sided and unfortunately answers can be one-sided if candidates are not confident about a tradition other than their own. That said, candidates generally appreciated differences in belief and their research conveyed the desire to understand in greater depth a view they did not ascribe to.

Candidates, in most cases, were aware that in this type of topic it is important to create a balance of material between the different traditions under investigation. Candidates, whatever their religious background, should be aware that the Roman Catholic Church is a branch of Christianity, not a separate religion. Natural Law, as propounded by Aquinas, is regarded by Catholics as a separate source of authority, as opposed to scripture, since its basis is in reason not revelation. Likewise, if candidates are going to refer to Islam, they should show some awareness of different traditions within this world religion, as most did for Christianity. These remarks apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to other non-Christian religions. Candidates focusing on Hinduism produced excellent responses to this question. Candidates discussed different beliefs about God using the Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita, Vedas and different schools of thought. The better responses to this question included detailed knowledge of different beliefs about the existence of God; in particular Shankaras Advaita Vedanta and critically compared this with Dvaita Vedanta. The best candidates had very sound knowledge of the complexities of Hindu scholarship. There are a range of perennial problems that are reported on each year and that means the same issues persist; however, it is encouraging to see more evidence this year of candidates exploring the latest scholarship where they can. The strongest studies clearly discriminated the significance of the topic under discussion and presented coherent understanding of the subject matter.

The extract from this essay indicates that the candidate had very secure knowledge of Hinduism and could address the question with a high degree of accuracy and fluency.

'Hinduism is quite free from any dogmatic affirmations concerning the nature of God' Jamison. Hinduism is quite unique as it does not contain a defining scripture of deity, meaning that devotees are quite free to decide for themselves what they believe about God. It can be seen that although there are certainly many similarities within Hinduism with regard to belief about God, the similarities are certainly not more significant than the differences which are large and obvious to see. A Hindu could be told to believe in an imaged Saguna Brahman, which would be considered a similarity between Hindu's as there are many different deities to choose from yet it must be further seen that there is so much diversity within the similar title of imaged Saguna Brahman that the differences are far more striking and significant than the similarities as they range in far greater detail and span.

This second essay extract promises a focussed answer on the on the question as the candidate appears to have a sound grasp of contrasting standpoints with regard to some fundamental beliefs about God and/or existence.

'Hinduism is a jungle of tropical confusion!'- Wangu.
Having existed for over 4500 years it has stood the test of time so it comes as no surprise that there have been many influences on it both geographically and socially. This coupled with the fact that 'there is no single scripture, deity or religious teacher common to all' - Shuttach has led to many differences between the beliefs about within Hinduism. There are differences in beliefs on God concerning 'belief' itself, concerning the both Nirguna and Saguna aspect of God, the portrayal of God as both genders and the differences on beliefs about Siva as 'God of opposites' and the Advaita Vedanta, Sankhya and Yoga school of Philosophy. However, it will become evident that the differences are outweighed by the significant similarities between these beliefs about God which include the fact that they

This essay on Jewish responses to the Holocaust is a very competent study on Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought that evidenced independent research; the candidate understood clearly the different positions taken by a group of Jewish theologians from Orthodox, Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism to the ethical dilemma of Nazism. Rubenstein, Fackenheim, Greenberg, Berkowitz, Cohen were placed in the correct context and carefully contrasted against Weisl's Protest stance. Further critical appraisal with reference to Cohn Sherbok and Wittgenstein rounds off the discussion. It is refreshing to see work that engages with an issue with carefully selected detail;

Within Judaism, particularly within the Holocaust, the systemic persecution of over ~~6~~ six million Jews under the Nazi regime from 1933 to 1945, the issue of evil and how it could occur under the rule of a classically theistic deity, God, has led to many contrasting reports concerning his fundamental nature. Although the Holocaust is not an exclusive Jewish persecution, with prejudice spanning back to the Bronze Age under ^{Saint} Augustine of Hippo (who referred to them as a "wicked sect") and events like 177CE Pogrom of Lyons, the dehumanisation and immense discrimination suffered by Jews during the Holocaust is a driving force for modern religious debate over God's existence, with punishments such as forced tattooing and forced experimentation under scientists such as Dr Josef Mengele leading many to debate whether he exists at all. As such, the horrific persecution witnessed by the Holocaust has led many to adopt their own approaches

to God's nature and existence, prompting a modern revision of classical theism.

Many contrasting viewpoints stem from trying to interpret the cause of evil in itself, with there being much debate over whether evil is a sign of God lacking classical traits or stemming from humanity itself. Some suggest that the existence of evil stems from an inconsistent triad, where it is impossible for God to maintain his traits of omnibenevolence, all-loving, and omnipotence, all-powerful, whilst evil is present - suggesting that in order to explain evil classical theism must be rejected as a whole, as a being loving enough to prevent evil and powerful enough to do so would surely end evil for the sake of saving his chosen people. The existence of evil in itself appears to break the covenant created between ~~God~~ Abraham and God, with God appearing to not fulfil his promise of protection despite the devotion of the Jewish people. Conversely, some would argue that the reason why the covenant was broken is because of humanity's inherent

immorality, with evil being introduced solely because humanity used the free will awarded by God to make evil choices over good - with the original sin having occurred due to humanity's own corruption when defying God during the fall. From this perspective, God's fundamentality can indeed be maintained, as ~~the~~ it is free will that evil stems from rather than a lack of classical traits - but there is further debate over this as some express that evil as a result of free will does not always appear logical, with John Mortimer stating "Children who die of leukaemia, or perish in floods... are unable to exercise free will." As such, contrasting beliefs over the nature of evil's existence itself has led to contrasting standpoints over God's ~~own~~ fundamental nature in light of ~~the~~ ^{the} suffering of the Jewish people throughout the Holocaust.

One example of a theologian who offers an approach to understanding God's nature after the Holocaust is Hungarian-born theologian Eliezer Berkovits, who fundamentally believes

that belief in God can be maintained after the Holocaust. Evil, Berkovits argues, is not a new issue, and thus shouldn't be used as a driving force for debate, with the ^{question of} ~~question~~ ^{over} ~~the~~ ^{the} persecution of Jews spanning back to the Sages of Talmud who sought God in order to respond to the issue of evil. As such, it is not just to suggest that the Holocaust is evidence for ~~God~~ the rejection of classical theism, but instead displays how God hides himself from the agony humanity creates for itself - being the El Mutsater, the God hidden from agony. Berkovits believes that God has to allow evil to occur, stating "He had to create the possibility for evil if he were to create the possibility for ~~its~~ its opposite", and affirms that God is omnibenevolent and compassionate, but merely hides ~~his~~ his face from humanity - a state Berkovits refers to as Hester Panim. Furthermore, Berkovits believes that this hidden presence is demonstrated by the spiritual resistance of many Jews during the

Holocaust, with the continuation of Jewish festivals like Rosh Hashanah and the secret studying of the Torah from memory even under persecution demonstrating how his classical presence was felt even in the presence of immense evil. Thus, Berkovits affirms that the existence of evil and the persecution of the Jews in the Holocaust are not indications of the fundamental characteristics of God being absent, but instead highlight his compassion and love for humanity, as he is strong enough to ~~not~~ undergo a divine paradox of abandoning victims whilst tolerating sinners - with Berkovits stating "His very love for man necessitates his abandonment."

However, despite the viable theodicy Berkovits presents for those who wish to continue believing in God after the events of the Holocaust, critic Dan Cohn-Sherbok criticises the idea of evil being a necessity under free will - stating that a world without evil would be preferable even if it

means doing without "the heroic accomplishments" demonstrated by spiritual resistance. Sherbok argues that it is impossible to suggest that evil is necessary for God to allow humanity's free will, pointing out that free will could be based on an inclination for good over evil, or a more positive approach could be adopted for moral development as achieving is also a method of establishing morality - fundamentally undermining Berkovits' theodicy and thus limiting the extent to which it is convincing. Also, ~~St~~ Berkovits fails to explain why God appears to have ~~been~~ selectively hidden himself during the Holocaust, as God did not exist in Hester Panim when he intervened at the Red Sea and Mount Sinai, which would indicate, in contrast to Berkovits, that God's traits are selective and are thus not that of classical theism. However, Berkovits' argument can be deemed convincing as it appears to coincide with the concept of ~~Teimtzum~~ *Teimtzum*, a concept from Lurianic Kabbalah that indicates

that the first act of creation was God ~~plac~~ creating an epistemic distance from humanity - thus making the standpoint strong from a religious perspective.

In contrast to Berkovits, theologian Elie Wiesel argues that classical traits must be challenged in order to provide a viable explanation for the existence of evil under God. Wiesel, unlike Berkovits, actively witnessed the Holocaust when imprisoned within the Auschwitz concentration camp, and from his experiences concluded that God does not possess his fundamental traits, ~~as~~ and is instead compassionate towards the Jewish people. Wiesel challenges God, illustrating within his novel 'The Trial of God' that whilst belief should be maintained, we should challenge God's lack of intervention - with the character of Benish stating that God is "more guilty than ever. Whilst ~~not~~ like Berkovits Wiesel believes traditional

Judaism should be continued, he suggests that due to God's absence we should focus on the unity and virtue traditions carrying over actual celebration of God's characteristics, maintaining Judaism, as Benish states "I was born a Jew and it is as a Jew ~~that~~ I shall die", but refusing to accept God as the Guardian of Israel - with Jakob Joz referring to him as the "Job of the twentieth century". Wiesel believes that the occurrence of the Holocaust has created a justifiable 'crisis' in belief surrounding God, with many losing faith due to the inability to justify God's characteristics in light of evil, and as such believes a revision of fundamental news is necessary, contrasting with Berkovits' staunch belief in classical traits being credible in light of the Holocaust.

Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of Wiesel's theodicy is that it allows disillusioned Jews to continue their faith whilst

accepting that evil is unjust, but forcing the acceptance of all of God's fundamental nature but creating a viable theodicy for the disillusioned, ~~like~~ such as Holocaust survivors like himself. However like Berkovitz, although Shebelle commends his commitment to belief, he also heavily criticises his ~~own~~ seeming duplicity, as within late works Wiesel appears to infer that God continues to feel pain for his people during the Holocaust, but also being compassionless, as ~~the~~ in Night Wiesel suggests the God to was "hanged on the gallows" the seemingly bipolarity of his viewpoint thus makes it appear less convincing, as it lacks clarity on what aspects of God's nature should and shouldn't be accepted in light of the Holocaust.

~~Similarly~~ In contrast to Wiesel and Berkovitz, American-born Jewish theologian Richard Rubenstein affirms that it is

impossible to maintain after the evil displayed during the Holocaust, arguing that the immense persecution of the Jewish people infers a detachment from the God of classical theism. While, like Buber he still maintains that traditional faith can have virtuous value, Rubenstein rejects the notion that Jewish people must maintain absolute faith, having been shocked by the proposals of Holocaust survivor Heinrich Gruber, who suggested to him that the Nazis were used as an intended 'whip' against the Jewish people. Instead Rubenstein affirms Buber's idea of a 'void', stating that "the ties between God and Man, Heaven and Earth^e have been severed", affirming that the God of classical theism is no longer existent. However in the revision of his beliefs in the book "Approaches to Auschwitz" with John Roth, Rubenstein

infers that despite the lack of God there is a spiritual existence that he refers to as the 'Holy Nothingness', believing that despite God not being transcendent he is immanent within the Earth and human nature. Instead of proposing an absent God, Rubenstein now believes that God may be superfluous in being, stating "God is the ocean and we are the waves... no wave is distinct from the ocean that is God"; thus affirming that he believes after the Holocaust news on God's fundamental characteristics need to be revised after the Holocaust.

One of the ~~strong~~ praises of Rubenstein's theodicy, which also applies to Wiesel, comes from Eckhardt, as both views coincide with his belief is the "death of all theodicy." As Rubenstein, like Wiesel, infers that the Holocaust is evidence for rejecting classical theism, his viewpoint may be

considered strong in Eckhardt's view as Eckhardt affirms that no theodicy involving a classically theistic God in light of the Holocaust. However, perhaps one of the most powerful criticisms of Rubenstein's viewpoint is the religious view that he does not offer a viable theodicy for those who want to continue believing God via his total, extreme rejection of God's proposed fundamental traits. Unlike Weiss and Berkovits who leave opportunity for faithful Jews to retain their belief in the God of classical theism, Rubenstein's hardline approach means that if one is to follow it a classically theistic God must be rejected outright. Furthermore, another criticism that limits that limits the extent to which Rubenstein convincingly affirms whether the God of classical theism exists is from Sherbok, who believes

that the continuation of faith by revising ~~his~~^{God's} characteristics is an illogical fallacy, as despite Rubenstein's claim of rejecting the God of classical theism he contradicts himself in his revision of theodicy.

In conclusion, within the context of struggling to explain the fundamental nature of God during the Holocaust, there are a variety of different religious standpoints that lead to much debate over whether a revision of classical theism is necessary to explain evil in the modern era. However, it has been suggested by philosopher Wittgenstein that the use of the Holocaust as a case study to determine the true nature of God is morally

objectionable, as "Of what we cannot speak we should remain silent." The persecution experienced during the Holocaust is simply incomprehensible to those who

did not witness it, and as such Wittgenstein believes that evil experienced during the Holocaust is not a justifiable means through which a viable theodicy concerning God's ~~character~~ nature can be formulated. Furthermore, Wittgenstein argues that by studying and analysing the Holocaust as a means of supporting contrasting viewpoints over God's ~~or~~ fundamental nature we detach empathy, turning it into an intellectual case study rather than the humanist topic the Holocaust truly concerns. As such, debate over the fundamental beliefs in God, such as his classical traits like omnibenevolence, ~~it~~ has led to a variety of contrasting viewpoints ~~at~~ within Judaism due to trying to explain evil under God's presence throughout the Holocaust.

Advice for candidates:

- Do not ignore the question; manage your material to focus on the demands of the question.
- Use appropriate sources and, if possible, include recent scholarship.
- Demonstrate how well you understand the topic by your selection of material.
- Do not forget to comment on your material. Show that you have thought about your research.
- Use your evidence to substantiate your argument.
- Comment on alternative views if you know them.
- Express your viewpoint clearly.
- Practice writing under timed conditions as part of your preparation.
- Do not spend too long writing out your essay plan to the detriment of the essay itself.
- Spell key terms and key scholars correctly.
- Write legibly.

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