



MARKSCHEME

May 2013

WORLD RELIGIONS

Standard Level

Paper 2

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Markbands

	AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4	Paper 2 Marks
Level descriptor	Knowledge/understanding	Application/analysis	Synthesis/evaluation	Skills	0–20
A	No relevant knowledge	No evidence of application; the question has been completely misinterpreted	No evaluation	None appropriate	0
B	Little knowledge and/or understanding; largely superficial or of marginal relevance	Very little application; important aspects of the question are ignored	No evaluation	Very low level; little attempt at organization of material	1–4
C	Some relevant knowledge and understanding	Some attempt at application; answer partially addresses the question; there is no or little analysis of the key concepts	No evaluation	There is some evidence of an attempt to follow a structured approach	5–8
D	Relevant knowledge and understanding, but with some omissions	Some attempt at application; competent answer although not fully developed, and tends to be in parts descriptive; there will be some analysis of the key concepts	Some evaluation or unsubstantiated evaluation	There is a clear attempt to structure answers in line with the question	9–12
E	Generally accurate knowledge and understanding, but with some minor omissions	Appropriate application; developed answer that covers most aspects of the question; there is a developed analysis of the key concepts; using both secondary and/or primary sources	There is evaluation of all major areas of the answer; answers demonstrate a consistently analytical and/or a critical approach	Answers are well structured; ideas are organized in a clear, coherent and balanced essay	13–16
F	Accurate, specific, detailed knowledge and understanding	Detailed application; well-developed answer that covers most or all aspects of the question; the answer demonstrates an in-depth analysis through effective use of ideas drawn from a wide range of secondary and/or primary sources; there is evidence of rigorous analysis of the key concepts	Good and well-balanced attempt at evaluation; arguments are clear, coherent, relevant and well substantiated where appropriate, there will be a successful challenge to the assumptions implied in the question	The specific question is addressed in a clearly structured and focused essay that indicates a high level of awareness of the demands of the question.	17–20

SECTION A**Hinduism****1. To what extent is puja central to Hindu ritual?**

Candidates should show awareness that ritual is a central feature of Hinduism. Candidates should show awareness of the common forms of puja and their universality in Hindu religious life (for example, worship of a murti, repetition of a God's name, singing of devotional songs, arti, prasad). Better candidates should know that it has two sources: Vedic and Agamic/Puranic.

Vedic ritual derives from the classical sacred texts and is rooted in a theology of sacrifice that explains everything as ritual. Such rituals have to be carried out absolutely correctly and are performed on behalf of the householder by brahmins. Offering such sacrifices remains part of Hindu dharma and can be extremely large public events when carried out by wealthy patrons. Exceptional candidates should be aware that in such rituals the gods (devas) are controlled by the ritual act when it is carried out correctly.

This ancient Vedic system has nothing to do with the devotion to deities or gurus that is commonly carried out by most Hindus today. This more popular form of Hinduism has its origins in other sacred texts, notably the Agamas and Puranas which recount the legends of the many deities. It is this popular form of worship in temples dedicated to many deities (murti) that has transformed the religious landscape of Hinduism although the sacrificial rituals of the brahmins are still carried out on formal or ceremonial occasions. Worship of these popular gods is known as puja. This act of puja is rooted in bhakti. The majority of Hindus today follow some form of bhakti defined as worship or devotion toward a deity. Puja is regarded as central to bhakti.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

2. Evaluate the significance of the Hindu classification of sacred texts.

Candidates should be aware of the binary classification of Hindu sacred texts into shruti and smriti. They would show their knowledge of this division and its significance. For example, they should be aware that shruti means perceived through hearing and is regarded by brahmins to constitute revelation. They should know that shruti consists of the Vedic texts (Samhitas, Aranyakas, Brahmanas and Upanishads). These collections are the instruments for the Vedic rituals of sacrifice and remain denied to the common people and are accessed even today through the Sanskrit language. The essential point is that students should be aware that not all the sacred books of Hinduism possess the same degree of revelation. Hindus developed a categorization system in which all sacred texts were classified. Good students should know that this is not universally accepted but varies according to schools of thought. Vedantins, for example, included the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Brahmasutra as shruti but the Mimamsa school only accepts the four Vedas, and their developments into the Aranyakas and Brahmanas. Smriti literature signifies that which is remembered and constitutes the authority of tradition. Smriti literature is also disputed. Good students should be aware that it can be further divided into the Dharmasastras, in which rules of conduct were elaborated for brahmin families or regulations for other castes. These books may not have significant impact on the majority of Hindus who are more likely to be influenced by the Puranas or the great epics, the Mahabharata and Ramayana. These legendary tales of gods and avatars are known throughout the Indian masses and form the constituents of popular culture. Most Hindus would consider this literature to be part of smriti. Although acknowledging the binary division, the latter form of smriti texts have far greater influence. Good students should be aware that the Puranas are written to attest the supremacy of a particular deity and are therefore significant in Hindu sectarianism. Exceptional students should also be aware of a third category of sacred texts known as Nyaya or pramama; these are writings that provide logical or rational arguments to demonstrate or provide valid proof for religious knowledge. They are accessible only to the learned.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

Buddhism

3. Evaluate the importance of ritual within Buddhist monastic life.

Candidates should demonstrate awareness that ritual is an important part of monastic life but also that it is not the only component. On the basis of this, they should evaluate how important ritual actually is within monastic life. Candidates may indicate that for some monastic orders meditation is more significant than ritual.

Buddhist monks and nuns take part in rituals that are restricted to the monastic community and also rituals that involve lay people. The former include: entering a monastery as a novice; higher ordination; reciting their rule of discipline and confessing their faults; communal chanting of texts. The latter include: leading lay people in the chanting of the refuges and the five precepts; preaching to lay people; the pirit ceremony through which texts are chanted to bring blessing to lay people; funeral ceremonies and the transferring of merit to those who have died; the kathina ceremony when lay people offer new robes to monks at the end of the rains retreat.

Monastic life also involves: the practice of meditation; the study of Buddhist texts; learning to live harmoniously as a community of monks or nuns; receiving food from lay people, sometimes through participating in alms rounds; ordinary practices such as sweeping the compound, gardening, washing clothes. Some monks and nuns are also involved in social work, particularly in situations where the lay people are poor or affected by war.

Candidates should be given credit if they show awareness that the Buddha did not form his orders of monks and nuns for the purpose of ritual. They were formed to offer men and later women the chance to practise meditation diligently and to reach nibbana more quickly. It was as Buddhism attracted more and more people and became more institutionalized that rituals arose.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

4. Discuss the experience of meditation in Buddhism, including the differences between the experience of monks/nuns and lay people.

Candidates should demonstrate awareness that meditation is central to the experience of being Buddhist but that there are differences in the practice of meditation by ordained and lay people. Students should be given credit if they also recognise that, in contemporary societies, the practice of meditation by lay Buddhists (and non-Buddhists) is increasing.

Meditation is central to the experience of being Buddhist because it features in the Noble Eightfold Path as Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. It is through meditation that the Three Poisons (ignorance, desire and aversion) can be eradicated from the mind, leading to the end of dukkha (suffering or unsatisfactoriness) and the attaining of nibbana.

Candidates should mention some of the following points: there are two main forms of meditation, tranquillity meditation (samatha) and insight meditation (vipassana), both of which involve sitting with back erect, in quietness, and developing mindfulness; watching the breath as it enters and leaves the nostrils is one of the most common forms of meditation; meditation can lead to states of joy and peace; meditation is a form of mind culture through which those meditating see more clearly how desire and aversion arise in the mind; meditation can be hard work, and involves much effort and discipline.

Buddhist monks and nuns have more time to practise meditation. They are on the fast track to nibbana because they have left home and family, and have therefore reduced their attachments. Some monks and nuns live in forest monasteries to aid the practice of meditation.

Most lay Buddhists in Asia place more emphasis on morality and devotional practices than meditation. They venerate the Buddha, offer gifts of food to monks and nuns, and strive to follow the Five Precepts. However, increasingly, in contemporary societies, lay people are also meditating. Meditation centres for lay people are present in Asia and the West.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

Sikhism**5. “The Guru Granth Sahib is by far the most important of the Sikh scriptures.” To what extent do you agree with this statement?**

Candidates should be aware that the Guru Granth Sahib contains the teachings of the ten human Gurus and is therefore the only repository in which Sikhs can discover and interpret the tenets of their religion.

They should also be aware that the Guru Granth Sahib does not provide information on the Gurus’ lives. Considering the centrality of the Guru in the Sikh relationship with God, Sikhs use events in the Gurus’ lives to illustrate teachings and bolster faith. These hagiographical accounts are found in the Janam Sakhis, which are part of the Sikh collection of sacred texts. Bright candidates might be aware of the controversy concerning the historicity of the Janam Sakhis as they weren’t written down until the eighteenth century. Some candidates should be aware of the Dasam Granth presumed to be written by Guru Gobind Singh. They might consider Owen Cole’s and Piara Singh Sambhi’s observation that this literature could be classed as “occasional”, that is, literature that was significant at the time of compilation and publication but whose appeal diminishes with time (1995:56).

However, the key point has to be the awareness that the Guru Granth Sahib is more than a canon of teachings but is considered by Sikhs to consist of the living word of God. Sikh understanding of the “word of God” is incorporated in the terms “bani” (the spoken word of divine truth) and “shabad” (the written word of divine truth). The presence of bani was enough for the fifth human Guru to bow before the Book which he had installed in the Golden Temple in 1604. Candidates need to be aware that the last human Guru, Gobind Singh, named the Book as the final Guru on his death. Consequently the Book is the spiritual guide of Sikhs and dominates Sikh practice and doctrines. The Guru Granth Sahib has replaced the human Gurus.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

6. Examine the Sikh doctrine of the Guru and its centrality in Sikhism.

Sikhs believe that Guru Nanak (1469–1539), the founder Guru of Sikhism, received from God, the original Guru, a revelation. As a consequence of this he absorbed the divine spirit and became himself the Guru. Nanak then appointed a successor prior to his death. This succession of human Gurus lasts until Guru Gobind Singh (1666–1708), the final human Guru. Gobind Singh declared that there would be no more human Gurus and that the divine authority would go into the last and final Guru, the Guru Granth Sahib.

For devout Sikhs, the Guru is an aspect of God. All the things one would expect God to do are ascribed to the Guru. In the Sikh term “Gurmukh” (follower of the Guru) we find the clarification of this relationship as it signifies that the person who is attuned to the voice of the Guru, is one who is devoted to God. The Guru is described as sinless, a saviour, an enlightened being who is as perfect as God and able to transfigure a person through grace. In the Guru the Creator has manifested His own spirit. On the other hand, these ten Gurus were clear that they were not incarnations.

Good answers might examine the Guru’s relationship with God, the Guru’s character and the Guru’s mission. Others might focus on Sikh practice and the centrality of devotion to the Guru. This is expressed in Sikh veneration of the Guru Granth Sahib in the gurdwara. Others might focus on the very strong salvation role given to the Guru. Very good answers might focus on the ambiguity between the humanity of the Guru as written in sacred writings and popular piety.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

Open-ended question

7. To what extent can a war be considered “just”? Answer with reference to *either* Hinduism or Buddhism or Sikhism.

Candidates should clearly state what they understand by a “just war”, that is a war which, under certain circumstances can be considered as justified or justifiable. The answer and arguments presented will depend upon the specific religion chosen.

Hinduism and Buddhism

Candidates need to introduce and explain the importance in Indian religions of the principle of ahimsa (non-violence). This involves not harming by act or thought any living being. Not to follow this would accrue negative karma.

Hinduism

In Hinduism killing and acts of war could be part of fulfilling one’s duty as determined by a particular caste (varna). In particular, this is explained in the Bhagavad Gita by the narrative of Arjuna and the argument presented by Krishna. Warfare can be seen as an obligation and fulfilling the dharma of individuals belonging to the kshatriya (warrior) caste.

Candidates could also mention Gandhi as a more modern Hindu example of the teaching and practise of non-violence, although ahimsa is also mentioned in some ancient Hindu texts.

Buddhism

In particular, in Buddhism, ahimsa is the first of the Five Precepts. However, there are different understandings of and responses to the application of this principle. In Theravada Buddhism non-violence is an essential practice, a principle, but not necessarily a rule. Therefore Theravada Buddhists have justified the act of waging war in self-defence. Similarly in Mahayana Buddhism war can be justified in cases of self defence and to save others.

Credit should also be given to answers that recognise that the use of violence in Buddhism is highly contested as many Buddhists today would argue that warfare can never be considered just.

Sikhism

Candidates should discuss the concept/theory of dharam yudh (a righteous/just war) which was particularly developed by Guru Gobind Singh (10th Guru) and be aware of the concept of Sant – Sipari (warrior saints) developed by the earlier Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh set out specific criteria to ascertain whether a war can be justifiable: that war, as an option, is only undertaken as the last resort; that the motives are pure and not selfish or for territorial or other gain; that soldiers are Sikh and behave honourably; that the use of force is kept to a minimum. Therefore, if all these criteria are met, war, especially war against aggression and tyranny, can be considered “just”. These are theoretical guidelines and principles based on the authority of the Guru. In practice it will be for the Khalsa to provide moral guidance and assessment of cases of “just war”.

All in all, a war can be considered “just” in almost all Indian religions, especially under specific circumstances such as self-defence and against acts of aggression and tyranny. The extent of such justification depends on the particular religions and specific interpretations.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

SECTION B

Judaism

8. Assess the extent to which marriage customs in Judaism have changed.

Marriage is at the centre of Jewish life and is seen as an obligation as is also the duty to have children. Traditionally, marriages took place anywhere except in a synagogue, the sole requirement being the chuppah (bridal canopy) which was originally a tallit held up by its four corners. Nowadays in western Europe, most weddings do, in fact, take place in the synagogue though in Israel and elsewhere the tradition of weddings in the outdoors continues.

The unveiling of the bride by the groom continues in most traditions. The seven berachot and the smashing of the glass by the groom are still widely practised. In Orthodox Judaism the ketubah is signed by the groom in the presence of two male witnesses whilst in more liberal traditions the bride also signs. After the ceremony it was traditional for the bride and groom to withdraw to a private room to consummate the marriage. Although many couples still withdraw this has become largely ceremonial.

Before the wedding the bride and, in many cases, the groom would visit the mikveh so that they were ritually pure at the time of the wedding. Although not as widely practised as before, the use of the mikveh in liberal traditions is reviving.

“Marrying out” is an increasing occurrence which, of course, is against traditional Jewish teachings, particularly for men. In the past, this would have resulted in Jewish parents declaring their child to be dead to them and this still continues in some communities. In order for the marriage to be permitted a significant number of people convert to Judaism, the practise is still not welcomed.

Credit should also be given to answers considering divorce. Divorce remains a major issue in Orthodox Judaism. In liberal traditions either party can apply for a get. However, in Orthodoxy, only the husband can apply and is entitled to refuse. In this case the wife remains agunah and any subsequent children of hers are viewed as illegitimate and not part of the Jewish community even if their father is Jewish.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

9. To what extent do you agree with the idea that shechitah (ritual slaughter) is cruel and should be banned?

Answers should show good understanding of Jewish dietary laws from Deuteronomy and Numbers as well as an awareness of Talmudic instructions in Shulchan Aruch on ritual slaughter.

According to the Torah, Jews are not permitted to consume the blood of an animal. There is also a requirement that the animal should be slaughtered by one cut to the throat whilst a prayer is said. Pre-stunning is not permitted. Jews argue that shechitah is the most humane way of slaughtering animals as well as being in accordance with God's will. There are many additional conditions which also have to be met such as ensuring that no other animal can see what is happening. Many scientific studies have been carried out to determine how fast the animals lose consciousness and whether this is, in fact, humane or whether it causes suffering. There should be a consideration of the importance of the dietary laws and instructions and whether these outweigh considerations about animal welfare.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

Christianity

10. To what extent might it be true to say that Christian monks and nuns contribute nothing to the life of the wider community?

Answers need to look beyond stereotypical ideas of monks and nuns and could include different interpretations of the wider community.

Both monks and nuns may live in open or closed communities. There are many examples of, for example, the good work done in society by orders such as the Missionaries of Charity. There are also teaching, nursing and missionary orders who contribute to the world at large.

However, there are many enclosed orders such as Cistercians, Carthusians and Trappists for men and Augustinian, Carmelite, and Poor Clares for women, amongst many others. Whilst it cannot be denied that there is a contribution to society as a whole from many open orders, the question remains as to the value of the enclosed ones. Points made in support of enclosed orders include the effect of their constant worship and also the power of prayer, in particular vicarious prayer and the availability of retreats in enclosed communities.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

11. Compare the strengths and weaknesses of the claims of creationism and evolution.

The strength of Creationism, a largely unknown concept before the end of the nineteenth century lies in its total reliance on the Creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 (primarily Genesis 1). A completely literalist approach to this text, together with a belief in a dating of creation to around six thousand years ago (based partly on the 4004BCE date from Bishop Ussher), means that once the absolute literal truth of the Bible is accepted then further discussion is not needed.

Its weaknesses lie also in the heavy reliance on this text. It is difficult to marry the two Genesis accounts with each other and also difficult to ignore the weight of archaeological and scientific evidence.

Evolution, on the other hand is based on science even though it can be argued that it cannot be proven. It is important here not to get confused between evolution and natural selection and cosmology.

Some Creationists have produced a theory called Intelligent Design which argues that the design of the world is too complex to have come about by chance and therefore there must have been an Intelligent Designer.

The majority of scientists, religious or not, and the bulk of Jews and Christians would argue that the scientific evidence heavily outweighs a need to accept the Bible as literal truth. This does not mean that it is untrue or that there is a necessary conflict between the Bible and evolutionary theory.

However, such an interpretation does require that the accounts in Genesis are not viewed as historical narrative.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

Islam

12. **“My Lord, eyes are at rest, the stars are setting... The doors of kings are locked and guarded by their henchmen. But Your door is open to whosoever calls on You. My Lord, each lover is now alone with his beloved. And I am alone with You.” (female Sufi mystic Rabia al-Adawiyya, d. 801)**

The above passage is an expression of love of the divine in Islam. Examine the extent to which personal devotion, dhikr and meditation are legitimate means of worshipping Allah.

Candidates may attempt to answer this question by applying their knowledge of the key practices of Islam in the context of personal devotion to Allah. Exceptional candidates will show a clear understanding of the role of personal devotion, dhikr and meditation in Islam. They could address the question by examining doctrinal or historical issues related to Sufi practices and the extent of their “legitimacy” for some Muslims. They could address tensions between Sufism and Wahhabism/Salafism in contemporary contexts. Alternatively, candidates could examine the text more closely and provide an evaluation of Rabia or of love mysticism.

The passage conveys some of the themes of love mysticism in Islam: the symbolic use of the language of sexual love to convey the relationship with the divine, the experience of the unity of nature as divine creation (night, stars and humans are at peace, all enveloped in love), Allah as the Beloved and the creature as the lover, Allah as King and Master but, unlike human kings, Allah’s door is always open to humans.

The “love” language conveys doctrines such as that of tawhid (oneness of Allah and of creation), of submission of the creature to the Creator (Islam) as an act of love, of compassion of the Creator towards Its creatures (“the door is open to whoever calls on Allah”).

Sufi practices such as personal prayer (du‘a) and devotion to Allah, repetition of Allah’s names (dhikr) as well as meditation are legitimate means to worship Allah for most Muslims. They are means of experiencing the presence, omnipotence but also compassion of Allah. The passage indicates a direct relationship between the creature and the Creator. Muslims support this argument by indicating that Muhammad himself had mystical experiences when he was alone in the cave of Hira to meditate.

It is when Sufi practices are seen as becoming too intense and replace or sideline the traditionally sanctioned rituals such as salat, hajj, that tensions arise as to the legitimacy of such practices. It is especially when individual mystics are seen as more than just creatures and become themselves object of prayer and veneration (Sufi saints, Sufi shrines). Practices linked to them, and not dedicated exclusively to Allah, arouse the suspicion of some Muslim scholars.

The passage by Rabia shows the universality and a-temporality of mystical love as individual experiential “encounter” with Allah (“and I am alone with You”). This could sideline or render superfluous the authority of the interpreters of the message of Allah (ulama) who would raise objections about the validity of such non-mediated practices. In Rabia’s passage the Beloved is still a separate entity (You), it is when the union between the lover and the Beloved occurs and the two entities merge that such practises are seen by some as dangerous or even heretical.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

13. Using specific examples, discuss *two* main functions that the Hadiths serve in Islamic doctrine and/or practice.

Candidates should be able to demonstrate knowledge of what hadiths are and also to identify and elaborate upon two functions the hadiths serve. These include:

- The formulation of the law (shari‘a) by being the second source of legal authority after the Qur’an and introducing specific legal issues and cases
- Explaining Qur’anic passages which by themselves are general or too concise
- Contextualising Qur’anic verses by providing references to the time and occasions of revelation (Mecca, Medina) and therefore indicating whether some Quranic verses are superseded by others
- Providing the specific information and details about Islamic rituals such as prayer, hajj *etc.* which are mentioned in the Qur’an with no specific details
- Being one of the sources of biographical details on Prophet Muhammad, hence providing content to the Prophetic sunna, which most Muslims strive to live by
- Explaining specific doctrinal points, especially for Shi’i hadiths on the doctrine of the Imamate.

Once the two functions are identified, the candidate should support their choice by appropriate evidence.

For instance, to argue for the function of legal formulation, evidence is provided by hadiths introducing details on the punishment for adultery and fornication (stoning to death is a punishment indicated in the hadith but not mentioned in the Qur’an). To illustrate the function in detailing Islamic ritual, the example could be given of hadiths explaining the sequence of prayer positions, who can be an imam, when to start fasting.

Shi’i hadiths provide explanations and esoteric interpretations of Qur’anic passages about the excellence of the Ahl al-Bayt (people of the house of the Prophet) to do with authority and succession to the Prophet Muhammad in leading the community. Because Shi’is believe that the imams know the inner meaning of the Qur’an, Shi’i hadiths are usually transmitted on the authority of one imam.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

Open-ended question

14. With reference to *one* rite of passage in *either* Judaism *or* Christianity *or* Islam, evaluate the link between the significance of the rite for the individual and for the community of believers.

The choice of the rite of passage will influence the evaluation of the link between the significance for both the individual and the community of faith.

Candidates should define “rite of passage” and clearly indicate which rite they choose from which tradition (ideally from which denomination within the religion, for example: Orthodox Judaism, Catholic Christianity *etc.*).

Judaism

Appropriate rites of passage include: circumcision (brit milah), bar and bat mitzvah, marriage, death rituals.

Bar Mitzvah (son of the commandment) in Orthodox Judaism: at the age of 13 a Jewish boy, on the authority of Scripture, especially Mishnah and Talmud, attains the age of Jewish adulthood, that is he is obliged to fulfil the Jewish law by observing the 613 mitzvot. It is a rite of passage because it marks a change in status of the individual from childhood into adulthood and, with it, religious/legal responsibility. The significance for the bar mitzvah of this ritual is that it indicates that he is now an adult who can participate fully in religious ceremonies and appreciate their meanings and that he has to take responsibility for his own actions in relation to his religion. In particular, the bar mitzvah needs to learn a passage of the Torah, read it aloud and comment upon it thus showing his knowledge of the sources. The rite holds also a great communal significance in that the boy is now officially a member of the minyan (quorum for prayer) and can perform rituals in congregation.

Christianity

Appropriate rites include: baptism, communion, confirmation, conversion, taking holy orders, marriage and death rituals.

Confirmation in Roman Catholic Christianity: on the basis of the interpretation of scripture (John 14.15–20 and Acts 2.37 ff) and of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, adolescent boys and girls usually receive the ritual of confirmation. It is a rite of passage because it marks a change in status of the individual into one with a renewed spiritual awareness of the meaning and workings of the Holy Spirit (God). When a Christian child is baptised, usually (s)he is too young to be aware of religious identity and doctrines; confirmation is the ritual which renews the vows of Baptism, this time taken in the first person. The significance for the individual is therefore that of awareness and personal choice of religious identity and commitment. The confirmed individual believes in being nurtured and enriched by the Holy Spirit, thus becoming a “witness” of Christ and responsible to live by the faith, to spread it and defend it. For Catholics Confirmation is a sacrament, that is a channel of God’s grace to the recipient, who, in the case of confirmation has the knowledge and state of faith/ intention for the sacrament to be valid. The central element of the ritual is the anointing of the person with oil, given by a priest or a bishop. The significance of confirmation for the Catholic community is such that the confirmed person is by his/her own choice an active member of the congregation, and of the Church as an institution, and is therefore responsible and “bound” to live according to faith.

Islam

Appropriate rites include: male circumcision (khitan), naming ceremony, conversion, marriage, performing hajj, death rituals.

Conversion in Sunni Islam: Muslims tend to talk about “reversion” rather than “conversion” because they believe that all humans are born “Muslim [meaning submitted to the will of God/Allah]” and, accordingly, to convert means to go back to the natural and original state of humankind. Conversion or reversion is a rite of passage in the sense that it sanctions a [apparent] change of status by becoming a full member of the Islamic community (ummah).

The ritual of conversion consists above all of pronouncing the Testimony of Faith (shahadah) with understanding and conviction, usually in front of one or more witnesses. The formula should be recited in Arabic as this is the ritual language of Islam in which the Qur’an was revealed. The formula (There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) states the main belief in the oneness of God and in the role of Muhammad as Allah’s Prophet. The convert often adopts a traditional Muslim name. By becoming a Muslim, an individual acquires awareness of religious identity and of what is required in faith and practice. This includes performing the daily prayers, fasting during Ramadan and the other Pillars of Islam. For the individual, conversion or reversion signifies the renouncing of old ways of living and beliefs in other gods and striving for a life of virtue along the path indicated by the message of the Qur’an and the life of the Prophet Muhammad. For the ummah, conversion is the ritual that sanctions the receiving of a new brother or sister in faith and succeeding towards the achievement of the divine plan for humankind to submit to the will of God.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.
