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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/01

Paper 1

General comments

Of the candidates who entered for the examination this year, some were very well prepared and performed to a high standard; others seemed to have made limited study of the syllabus content and may have hoped to manage on Christian-based general knowledge, omitting questions about Islam and Judaism. Needless to say, these candidates performed poorly. Some other candidates demonstrated confusion between the technical terms appropriate to Islam and Judaism, for example, placing a rabbi in a mosque.

A significant number of candidates made rubric errors, attempting more questions than required and often, as a consequence, running out of time. Weaker candidates did not appreciate the importance of answering the question as it is asked, and often responded to 'Explain the importance' with simple description, which did not allow them to meet the assessment objective assigned to these questions. Many candidates did not realise that the wording of **Questions 7 and 8** which asked 'for two of Christianity, Islam and Judaism...' meant that they should restrict their answers to two of these religions.

In more than one instance, the entire cohort of candidates from a Centre responded with the same inaccurate information; teachers should take care to ensure that what the candidates learn is from impeccable sources and that it is factually correct.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) This was very well known.
- (b) This was often interpreted as asking about ways of celebrating Christmas nowadays rather than the events associated with the story of Christmas i.e. the birth of Jesus in the stable, the appearance of the angels and the visit of the shepherds, and so on. Strictly speaking, the events of the Epiphany (the appearance of the star and the visit of the wise men) were not appropriate, but the two stories have become so intertwined that they were accepted.
- (c) Again many answers focused on methods of modern celebration rather than explaining the importance of the festival to Christians, which required an answer based on religious aspects of the significance of the Incarnation.

Question 2

All parts of this question were well known.

Question 3

- (a) A surprising number of candidates failed to associate the escape from Egypt with the festival of the Passover.
- (b) Even those successful in (a) did not always identify three *important* things done at the festival, or made vague references to 'attending the synagogue' or 'eating a meal at home'.
- (c) Some candidates successfully attempted to explain the importance of celebrating the festival, in terms of reinforcing Jews' gratitude to G-d for saving them from slavery, and their sense of being His chosen people.

Section B**Question 4**

- (a) This question asked for Christian symbols in general, not features found in a church or aspects of Christian belief. Answers which mentioned the pulpit, bible, lectern and confessional were therefore not meeting the requirements of the question. Most candidates did not understand the origin of the fish symbol as deriving from a Greek acrostic, and some were unclear about the origin of the dove as the symbol of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Jesus' baptism.
- (b) Weaker candidates did not attempt to explain, merely repeating or adding to their earlier descriptions.

Question 5

- (a) The features chosen were not always as important as those omitted, and the Qur'an and Imam are not really 'features of a mosque' in the implied sense of articles found there and distinctive of their location. The list of features given in the syllabus is a reliable starting place for this topic.
- (b) Most candidates failed to attempt to explain how the chosen objects reflected Muslim beliefs, falling back on describing the importance from a functional perspective.

Question 6

- (a) Weaker candidates found this question challenging, and often Christian elements of the Holy Land were included. It should be understood that Masada was the scene of a battle with the Romans in the first century CE, and is not, in this context, a Jewish publishing house in Tel Aviv.
- (b) Well-prepared candidates were able to give good explanations of the importance of their chosen places.

Section C**Question 7**

- (a) There was some confusion about how to interpret 'leader' so any reasonable response was accepted; however the second part of the question, asking about their main duties, should have alerted candidates to the inappropriateness of answers such as 'God', 'Jesus' or 'Allah'. Those who did answer about the minister/pastor/priest/imam/rabbi often omitted any mention of their duties in leading regular worship.
- (b) This part was often not well done, with many candidates simply repeating or expanding their factual descriptions from (a) rather than attempting to explain the importance of the leaders' work to the communities of believers.

Question 8

- (a) This question was, in the main, attempted by well-prepared candidates, who had no difficulties in answering it. Occasionally weaker candidates described two different religions rather than two groups within religions.
- (b) The differences were often well described.

Paper 0490/02

Paper 2

General comments

Candidates were in general, well prepared for this paper. They showed an impressive knowledge of the different religions studied. Usually, questions about Islam and Christianity were better answered than those about Judaism. Often, candidates were more confident in answering part **(a)** of the questions, where they were asked to provide description, and were less confident about tackling part **(b)**, where they had to explain the importance of various practices for religious believers. Most candidates answered the correct number of questions and coped well with the time allocated for their answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most candidates tackled this well, and were able to give accurate descriptions of birth ceremonies in the religions. Some did not understand the question completely, and wrote about all three religions instead of choosing two. Candidates were able to identify correctly the customs associated with each religion, and did not confuse one with another. Many were able to show knowledge of key vocabulary in their answers. In part **(b)**, although some candidates simply gave more detail about the various practices in birth ceremonies, the majority gave clear explanations of the importance of birth rites in welcoming babies to the community and involving them from the beginning in the faith of their parents.

Question 2

Part **(a)** of this question was usually answered well. Candidates were often able to explain the funeral rites of the different religions, and with considerable detail; very few candidates became confused between the different religions. Some, however, concentrated more heavily on the social aspects of funerals, such as wakes and shared meals, and gave little time to the religious aspects of a funeral ceremony. Part **(b)** was generally answered less well. Some missed the reference to life after death altogether, while others were confused about the teachings of different religions and gave wrong information. The candidates seemed to be most knowledgeable about Muslim beliefs about life after death.

Question 3

This question met with a mixed response. There were some candidates who wrote about festivals in general, and explained how members of a religion would treat a festival as a happy time and a holiday and so on, without specifying any festival in particular. Others chose special days that were not strictly festivals, such as Lent. Most candidates were able to choose and describe the celebration of particular festivals in the religion, although the level of detail provided was not as impressive as in answers to some of the other questions. The importance of festivals in religious life, for part **(b)**, also met with a wide range of responses. Some wrote about the importance of the particular festivals they had described in part **(a)**, and others wrote about the function of festivals more generally as reminders of the past, ways of teaching children and ways of uniting a religious community.

Question 4

Answers to this question tended to be weaker than other answers. Candidates often found it difficult to make a distinction between private and public worship, and sometimes imagined that a service with other members of the religion in a place of worship was private because it was behind closed doors, whereas a service in the open air was public. Better answers contrasted individual prayer and 'quiet time' with corporate worship, and were able to explain the distinctive features of these in the different religions studied. The quality of answers to part **(b)** depended on whether candidates had understood part **(a)**. The best answers included ideas about supporting one another in faith, sharing concerns, being united and celebrating together.

Question 5

This was the least popular of the questions, but the candidates who chose it usually answered it well. They did not tend to concentrate on a major division between different groups within a religion, such as the Reformers. Instead, candidates tended to choose a particular issue, such as the ordination of women, and explained why some members of the religion wanted to keep with the traditional ways while others wanted to be more progressive. This was a perfectly acceptable interpretation of the question. The quality of part (b) answers depended on how the candidate had chosen to answer part (a).

Paper 0490/04

Paper 4

General comments

Some candidates either failed to read the questions or did not attempt to answer them. Questions such as **Question 1** and **Question 2** are seeking answers closely based on the set passages, and answers which do not address the sources cannot score high marks. Relevant supplementary material can contribute to the overall worth of an answer, but must be supplementary and not the main focus. It is important that candidates write about every source specified in the question, and do so in a way which answers the precise question set.

Writing in continuous prose is not a requirement of the syllabus, but answers which consisted of a list of bullet points were often incoherent and showed no development of ideas. Examiners cannot be expected to make the links in the candidate's thinking for him/her. Some candidates had significant difficulties in expressing themselves in English and, despite the Examiner's best efforts, where meaning was unclear, marks inevitably suffered.

Most of the sources have an overtly religious aspect, but, even when this is absent, candidates should bear in mind the overall topic of the paper, which is always 'The teaching and practice of the religions studied in relation to...'. The best answers will bring a religious aspect to comments on sources such as H and K which are essentially sociological.

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

Candidates were usually able to make a successful attempt to explain these rights, but some ignored the passage altogether and wrote answers which did not relate to it.

Question 2

Most candidates had little difficulty with this question.

Question 3

The question asked candidates to go beyond the set passages to write about Jewish and Christian attitudes to divorce in general, so more was required than just explaining the passages.

Question 4

Candidates should be aware that 40% of the paper's marks are allocated to this question, so they should make a proportionate effort and take sufficient time to write a full answer, considering and *explaining* each source specified in the question. It is equally acceptable to take each source in turn, or write an extended answer which covers every source in a coherent essay. However, in either approach, the best answers make cross-references and comparisons between the sources in considering the overall topic of the question holistically and in the religious context of the specified topic. Here candidates could fruitfully have contrasted the Roman Catholic view on contraception expressed in Source G with the socio-economic and health aspects raised by Sources H, J and K.

Many candidates did not seem familiar with the Roman Catholic teaching on sexual intercourse and artificial contraception, or did not consider it to be important or significant for the overall topic. A number of candidates were confused about the difference between contraception/birth control and abortion.

Question 5

Some candidates ignored the precise wording of the question, and wrote directly about divorce and contraception rather than considering whether religious rules concerning them were out of date. 'Give reasons for your answer' requires evidence and argument for the candidate's views, which can be taken entirely from the sources on the question paper or expanded with other relevant material, and should show that candidates are at least aware of different points of view.