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## **RMPS (Higher)**

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# **Candidate evidence – Question paper**

# Essay question 1

Analyse the relationship between Jewish beliefs about God and the covenant.

One Jewish belief about God is that he is omnipotent which means he is all powerful. Another Jewish belief about God is that he is omniscient which means he is all knowing. Jews also believe that God is the creator of life and is exemplified in the Torah (Genesis 1), 'And God created man in His image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Finally, Jews believe that God is omnipresent which means he is everywhere and watches over all of humanity.

Jews believe that the Covenant is an agreement between the Jewish people and God. The first covenant is with Abraham and the second covenant is with Moses. According to the Abrahamic covenant, God offered protection and land to Abraham and his descendants, but were to follow the path of God. According to the Mosaic covenant, the 10 commandments were given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai after he helped free the Israelites to escape Egypt.

The relationship between beliefs about God and the Covenant are clear for the Jewish people even today. During Passover, the Jewish people remember what God did to help Moses free the Israelites from Egypt by parting the red sea and as a result, God is celebrated during this time. The Mosaic Covenant is also related to beliefs about God as Jews see God as all knowing and by giving the Jewish people the 10 commandments it showed that he was giving them the opportunity to follow the path of God to ensure they do the right thing at all times.

The relationship between God and the Abrahamic covenant is that God has the obligation to keep Abraham's descendants as God's chosen people and to continue to be their God and to date, Jewish boys will take part in the Brit Milah ceremony where newborn boys are circumcised and is part of the covenant when God asked Abraham to remove his foreskin and the foreskin of all Jewish boys after him.

## Essay question 2

Analyse the relationship between Christian beliefs about free will and sin.

Free will is where humans are not forced into a relationship with God, but have the freedom to make their own choices in life. They must be free to choose for humans to have a meaningful relationship with God, so in a sense he has to give them autonomy over the choices they make.

Christians would therefore consider free will to be a gift from God, at the point of creation. This has led some people to question why God would have made such a gift as it would obviously lead to the temptation to sin, especially since it was in his power to prevent sin from happening in the first place.

Christians believe that all humans have the ability to commit sin, which is an act or offence against God's will. "For we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." (Romans 3:23). They believe in Original Sin, which is the belief that the sin committed by Adam and Eve is inherited by all generations of humans afterwards. Free will and sin are connected in that, the major consequence of exercising of free will is that humans can sin against God and risk alienation from God. A further connection is that because humans are flawed and misuse their free will, they need the intervention and forgiveness of God to attain salvation and rid them of sin. These are the consequences of free will – that sin becomes inevitable without God's guidance, leading to suffering and eternal life without God.

## Essay question 3

Analyse religious responses to moral issues arising from the environmental causes of crime.

One environmental cause of crime is poverty. Poverty can be a cause of crime because those living on no or very low income may turn to crime in order to provide for their families. A religious response to this moral issue would come from Christians, who would argue that it is their duty to help the poor in society, like Jesus did. A consequence of this belief is that many Christians will dedicate themselves to working to improve the conditions of poor people so that they do not have to resort to crime.

Another environmental cause of crime is that a young person may have grown up in an area of deprivation with lots of anti-social behaviour and out with parental control. A moral issue arising from this cause of crime is that the young person committing crimes may feel that they have no choice, as they have never been shown an alternative path and experience pressure from peers. An example of a Christian response is the Paulist Prison Ministries, who work with prisoners and detainees, helping to rehabilitate them into society. A consequence of this response is that young people will be shown a different path and helped to get qualifications or training. A further consequence is that these young people can grow up and become role models for other children in their area and help to break the cycle of criminal behaviour.

Another environmental cause of crime is exposure to violence from a young age. A moral issue arising from this is that children who have had abusive parents are more likely to suffer from trauma which could cause them to turn to crime or become abusive in their own relationships. One religious response to this issue would come from CrossReach, which is a Church of Scotland charity that supports people in time of need with services such as family support and counselling, and support for young people who have adverse childhood experiences. A consequence of this response could be that young people at risk of committing violent offences are provided with the right support early on in order to give them the opportunity to live life free from crime.

# Essay question 4

## **Analyse religious responses to the moral issues arising from sexual relationships**

One moral issue arising from sexual relationships is underage sex. The legal age of consent in the UK is 16, so having sex before this is considered morally unacceptable. Many Christians believe that sex should take place within a marriage for the purpose of bringing new life into the world. An implication of this moral issue is that young people, who are generally unmarried, should not be having underage sex as they are not mentally or emotionally ready for the commitment involved in marriage or raising children

Another issue arising from sexual relationships is adultery. Adultery is when a person has a sexual relationship with someone who is not their spouse/partner. Adultery can lead to a breakdown of the family, in terms of financial, lifestyle and emotional upheaval. Most Christians would strongly disapprove of adultery because they believe that marriage is a sacred institution and must be respected as such. One of the Ten Commandments, found in the Old Testament, states, "Thou shalt not commit adultery". A consequence of this response to the moral issue is that Christians are taught when marrying you are making a promise to God, as well as to each other. As a result, by being unfaithful to your spouse you are turning your back on God and devaluing the sacred oath you have made.

A final issue arising from sexual relationships is consent. Consent is legally required before you engage in a sexual act with another person. Most Christians would strongly agree that consent should always be sought when engaging in a sexual relationship, because the act of sex is a way of showing love between two people. An implication of this response is that sex without consent is an act of violence and therefore can never be justified by Christians, who reject violence in favour of loving kindness.

## Essay question 5

'Evaluate the significance of the Three Marks of Existence.'

The Three Marks of Existence, also known as the three universal truths, are part of everyday Buddhist life .

The first Mark of Existence is Anicca which means impermanence and is understood in the Dhammapada, *"When a man considers this world as a bubble of froth, and as the illusion of an appearance, then the king of death has no power over him"* . The second mark of existence is Dukkha. This means that everything leads to suffering and is found in the Dhammapada, *"If a man watches not for Nirvana, his cravings grow like a creeper and he jumps from death to death like a monkey in the forest from one tree without fruit to another."* . Anatta means no soul and is demonstrated in, *'A Still Forest Pool,' We only rent this house, not own it. If we think it belongs to us, we will suffer when we have to leave it. But in reality, there is no such thing as a permanent self, nothing solid or unchanging that we can hold on to.'*

Buddhists believe that by acknowledging the Three Marks of Existence as part of the human condition, it helps them to achieve Nibbana and end suffering . Buddhists are taught that all living things are stuck in a cycle of rebirth and this is called Samsara .

Many Buddhists would argue that the Three Marks of Existence are significant beliefs as they are core to the understanding of what it means to be human. It could be argued that Anicca, (impermanence) is the most important mark of existence as it applies to everything and everyone within the world and permeates all aspects of life . An understanding of impermanence prompts Buddhists to improve their quality of life by aiming to achieve enlightenment to end the suffering they endure on a daily basis .

However, some would argue that within the three marks of existence, Dukkha is a more important mark of existence. This is the idea that there is always a general discomfort or dissatisfaction in life, which makes it a highly significant Buddhist belief because the quicker Buddhists accept that the reality of life is suffering, the more emphasis and time they spend on eliminating the suffering by focusing on achieving Nibbana . On the other hand, Anatta may also be the most significant mark of existence once this is removed, the Buddhist can then begin to extinguish the flames of greed, hatred and delusion towards themselves and others and start to concentrate on their ultimate goal which is to end suffering and reach enlightenment .

Overall, I would say that the three marks of existence are highly significant Buddhist beliefs but they are not the most significant. They are pieces of the puzzle that need solved in order to understand reality by removing those barriers to their ultimate goal which is Nibbana and ending their cycle of life, death and rebirth.

## Essay question 6

Evaluate religious responses to moral issues arising from assisted dying.

One moral issue arising from assisted dying is whether or not human beings should have the right to request help end their own life at a time of their own choosing. Some Christians would argue that we do not have the right to die, and that human life is a sacred gift which must be cherished :

“No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death.” (Ecclesiastes 8:7-8)

This implies that all human life is created by God, therefore it must be preserved, and that only God has the right to decide when life ends. A consequence of this is that these Christians would be very much against assisted dying as it is taking into human hands what should only be controlled by God – the right to die. I disagree with this viewpoint because I do not think that the belief in the sanctity of life should be valued more than people’s right to choose because we live in a secular society, which should not base its laws in religious belief. Furthermore, as free, rational, autonomous beings, people should have a right to request help to die when they choose, especially if they are experiencing unbearable pain and suffering.

Another moral issue arising from assisted dying would be the issue of whether or not there would be enough safeguards in place to protect the weakest and most vulnerable in society. Many Christians would argue that the terminally ill should never be made to feel like a burden or drain on resources, which could happen if assisted dying was allowed:

“The situation must never arise where the terminally-ill or the very elderly feel pressurised by society to end their lives. (Church of Scotland)

An implication of this Christian belief is that we should treat vulnerable people with loving kindness, and it is far more compassionate to show someone love in the final stages of life, than to simply end their life. I agree with this response to some extent, because it is vital that practices such as the Liverpool Case Pathway, which involves long, slow deaths in many cases, are prevented in order to protect the most vulnerable people in society. However, by legalising assisted dying, the government can put important safeguards in place in order to provide appropriate protections for vulnerable people, while respecting their right to die.

A final moral issue arising from assisted dying would be that it is no longer necessary due to the current provision of end-of-life care and the effective pain relief that we have available today. Many Christians would argue that the Hospice movement, started by Christians, is a much kinder and more compassionate way to care for people in the final stages of their lives:

“True compassion leads to sharing another’s pain; it does not kill the person whose suffering we cannot bear.” (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 1995)

An implication of this response is that Christians should be showing loving kindness to people at the end of their lives, rather than simply ending their lives, which is quicker and easier. As a consequence of this, these Christians would argue that assisted dying should not be legalised and that it is far better to sit with people in their final days, showing them love, than simply speeding up their death. I think this response is invalid because hospice care is very poorly funded and not available to everyone, therefore we cannot ensure that everyone will receive the same level of care. Furthermore, modern pain relief can take away some of the physical pain, but not the emotional and psychological pain that comes with loss of dignity and a long, drawn-out dying process.

## Essay question 7

*"Religion offers the best explanation for the origins of the universe." To what extent do you agree?*

Christians would state that the structure and design of the universe demonstrates the existence of a higher power – God - and would look to the Bible and in particular the Genesis narrative to support their belief that God was the origin of the universe:

'Then God commanded, Let there be light...'

The Genesis 1 creation story gives an account of how God created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh. Literalist or Creationist Christians believe that the Bible is God's truth, therefore the creation story is true – exactly as it happened. As a result of this belief, they would argue that the Bible is the inerrant and infallible word of God, and that as it does not mention Big Bang in the Bible, it did not happen. As a consequence of this belief, literal Christians must reject the scientific evidence because it goes against the Bible's teachings, and they must instead hold onto their faith. I personally would not agree with the Literalist point of view because the Bible is not a scientific book, and Christians do not claim it to be, therefore we should use science alongside our religious faith to help us understand our origins. Furthermore, I believe that the more detail that science reveals about the Big Bang, the more amazing God's work is seen to be and the more a Christian's belief is strengthened.

However, not all Christians would view the Bible in a literal way. Liberal Christians are Christians who would interpret the Bible in a symbolic way, and not a book of literal fact. A consequence of this is that they can accept that the Biblical creation story points to God as the creator, but it does so through a story which has to be interpreted through symbolism and myth.

'But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.' 2 Peter 3 verse 8

This biblical quotation implies that a day does not have to mean 24 hours, it could mean millions of years and then the next phase of creation took place. As a result of this, many religious people would argue that religion answers 'why' questions and science answers 'how', but together they can create compatibility.

I would reject the statement to some extent, because only scientists, who have robust testing methods, can truly answer the question on the origins of the universe. Big Bang Theory proposes that approximately 14 billion years ago matter, energy, time and space all began in an instant in a super-hot, super dense mixture of everything. The incredibly dense point became known as a singularity which rapidly expanded. There are 3 key pieces of evidence used by scientists to support their claim that the universe was created through Big Bang. Edwin Hubble, an astronomer at the Mt Wilson Observatory in California, discovered that the light coming from distant galaxies was all shifted towards the red end of the light spectrum. According to Hubble, this red shift must mean that things in the Universe are moving apart. An implication of this observation is that the Universe itself must be expanding, which supports that everything must have expanded from a central point at some specific time in the Universe's past, supporting Big Bang Theory. The second piece of evidence which supports Big Bang is cosmic background radiation, a noisy fuzz which was observed by astronomers Penzias and Wilson, coming from every point in the Universe and was measured as having a temperature of -270 degrees. This supports Big Bang Theory because, through methodical and standardised testing, science is demonstrating that the initial Big Bang had left behind a 'signature' in the form of remaining microwave radiation. The final piece of evidence used by scientists to support Big Bang theory is that the Universe today contains the elements, the basic atomic and chemical building blocks for everything that exists. This supports Big Bang Theory because the amounts of these (their relative abundance) in the Universe today points very strongly towards a particular process of their 'creation' in the past, with scientists claiming that the proportion of Hydrogen in the Universe today is exactly what you would expect if the Universe had been started off by a Big Bang.



In conclusion, I would disagree with the statement above. While the Genesis story is a myth, it doesn't mean that the message isn't true – it was written to explain the origins of the universe and life during a pre-scientific time, and this must be taken into account when reading it. However, liberal Christians also acknowledge the part science plays in providing an explanation for how the universe was created, which the biblical account cannot do.

I would argue that the scientific method is only one way of exploring the origins of the universe. For many people the Big Bang is a one-off random event with no apparent reason behind it and this does not offer human beings any meaning or purpose to their lives. (K) Because scientists do not know what caused the Big Bang, many Christians argue that it may have been part of God's plan. (K) I strongly agree with these Christians that believing in God and believing in the methods and findings of science do not need to be contradictions as they are just different ways of understanding. God is the only complex, sophisticated and supremely intelligent being capable of creating the universe, supporting the view that science and religion work together to explain the origins of the universe. This view is supported by Albert Einstein, who claimed, 'When I see all the glories of the cosmos, I can't help but believe there is a divine hand behind it all.' I agree with Einstein because I believe that science and religion can be both right and compatible about explaining the origins of the universe, but in different ways. The idea of God is outside the reach of the scientific method and so science cannot make any valid claims about God's existence or possible act of creation.

## Essay question 8

**To what extent do you agree that responsibility for suffering and evil lies with both God and humans?**

The problem of suffering and evil argues that the existence of evil and suffering (pain, distress, death, etc) is incompatible with the existence of a benevolent and omnipotent God. A consequence of the Judeo-Christian belief on the nature of God is that his nature becomes inconsistent with the presence of suffering and evil in the world because an all-loving God would not stand back and watch people suffer. I personally believe that the nature of God is inconsistent in a world with suffering and evil because if someone had the power and ability to help those in pain then surely, they would, meaning that God is responsible for suffering and evil.

The Greek philosopher Epicurus, in his Epicurean Paradox, said, "Is God willing but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?" The Australian philosopher J.L Mackie developed the Epicurean Paradox and created the Inconsistent Triad; God is omnipotent, God is benevolent, evil and suffering exists. Mackie claims that if we accept any of the two statements as being true, then the third cannot exist. The implication of Mackie's theodicy is the same as that of Epicurus – an all-loving God would want to get rid of evil and an all-powerful God is able to get rid of evil, so since evil exists, God cannot be all-powerful and all-loving. I personally agree with Epicurus' and J.L Mackie's theodicy because they both bring up a very important question: if God was all-powerful and all-loving he would stop evil, so why doesn't he? This suggests that humans are responsible for suffering and evil since these theodicies suggest that God isn't powerful enough.

Another argument for who is responsible for suffering and evil is the free will defence argument, which states moral evil is not brought about by God but instead by the actions of free moral agents – humans who have free will. Philosopher Richard Swinburne claimed, "The less [God] allows men to bring about large-scale horrors, the less the freedom and responsibility he gives them." One implication of the free will defence argument is that it places the blame of moral evil firmly on humans and makes it clear that if humans were to make better decisions, moral evil may not exist. I think that the free will defence argument is a convincing argument for theists as it defends the God of classical theism, for example, all loving and all-powerful meaning that the foundation of their religion is kept intact as God's nature is not questioned.

Another argument for who is responsible for suffering and evil is the Irenaean theodicy, which states that humans were not made perfect nor were they born into a perfect world. Humans are only able to develop morally in a world where pain and suffering is prevalent. One supporter of the Irenaean theodicy is John Hick, who used the term "soul making" to describe the process of personal and moral growth. I don't think that the Irenaean theodicy is particularly convincing in supporting the claim that humans are responsible for suffering and evil as it does not give an explanation as to why God didn't create humans morally perfect, in fact, it leads some people to lose faith which does not teach a lesson in "soul making."

A final argument for who is responsible for suffering and evil is the Augustinian theodicy, which states that God created the perfect world but because God gave humans free will and when they choose to disobey God, they create an absence of good within themselves. Augustine's theodicy implies that God cannot be blamed for the presence of suffering and evil as he makes it clear that God created a perfect world and humans are solely at fault for misusing their free will. A weakness of this theodicy, raised by Fredrick Schleiermacher, is if God created everything perfect then how could a perfect world go wrong? This is a strong criticism by Schleiermacher as it is logical to suggest that the world wasn't perfect to begin with or God enabled it to go wrong, both of which would mean that God is responsible for suffering and evil.