

DOT POINT

PRELIMINARY STUDIES OF RELIGION

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Notes

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Introduction

What the book includes

In this book you will find typical examination questions and suggested answers for each dot point in the Board of Studies syllabus for the following topics in the Year 11 Studies of Religion course:

- Nature of Religion and Beliefs (both 1U and 2U)
- Australian Aboriginal Beliefs and Spiritualities – The Dreaming (both 1U and 2U)
- Buddhism Religious Tradition (1U any two religion studies and 2U any three religion studies)
- Christianity Religious Tradition (1U any two religion studies and 2U any three religion studies)
- Hinduism Religious Tradition (1U any two religion studies and 2U any three religion studies)
- Islam Religious Tradition (1U any two religion studies and 2U any three religion studies)
- Judaism Religious Tradition (1U any two religion studies and 2U any three religion studies)
- Religions of Ancient Origin (2U only)
- Religious Expression in Australia pre-1945 (2U only)

Format of the book

The book has been formatted in the following way:

1. Main topic statement.

1.1 Syllabus requirement.

Note that the numbering of these statements is the author's choice and has been used to make referencing questions and answers clearer. The individual requirements are not numbered in the syllabus, they are simply bulleted – hence our use of 'dot points' when we refer to them.

1.1.1 First typical question which could be asked in an examination for dot point 1.1.

1.1.2 Second typical question which could be asked in an examination for dot point 1.1.

The number of lines provided for each answer gives an indication of how many marks the question might be worth in an examination. As a rough rule, every two lines of answer might be worth 1 mark.

How to use this book

Completing all questions will provide you with a summary of all the work you need to know from the syllabus. You may have done work in addition to this with your teacher as extension work. Obviously this is not covered. You may need to know this additional work for your school exams, but not for the external examinations.

When working through the questions, write the answers you have to look up in a different colour to those you know without having to research the work. This will provide you with a quick reference to work you should spend more time revising later, and allow you to spend your study time more productively.

Verbs to Watch

account, account for

State reasons for, report on, give an account of, narrate a series of events or transactions.

analyse

Identify components and the relationships among them, draw out and relate implications.

apply

Use, utilise, employ in a particular situation.

appreciate

Make a judgement about the value of something.

assess

Make a judgement of value, quality, outcomes, results or size.

calculate

Determine from given facts, figures or information.

clarify

Make clear or plain.

classify

Arrange into classes, groups or categories.

compare

Show how things are similar or different.

construct

Make, build, put together items or arguments.

contrast

Show how things are different or opposite.

critically (analyse/evaluate)

Add a degree or level of accuracy, depth, knowledge and understanding, logic, questioning, reflection and quality to an analysis or evaluation.

deduce

Draw conclusions.

define

State the meaning of and identify essential qualities.

demonstrate

Show by example.

describe

Provide characteristics and features.

discuss

Identify issues and provide points for and against.

distinguish

Recognise or note/indicate as being distinct or different from, note difference between things.

evaluate

Make a judgement based on criteria.

examine

Inquire into.

explain

Relate cause and effect, make the relationship between things evident, provide why and/or how.

extract

Choose relevant and/or appropriate details.

extrapolate

Infer from what is known.

identify

Recognise and name.

interpret

Draw meaning from.

investigate

Plan, inquire into and draw conclusions about.

justify

Support an argument or conclusion.

outline

Sketch in general terms; indicate the main features.

predict

Suggest what may happen based on available data.

propose

Put forward (a point of view, idea, argument, suggestion etc) for consideration or action.

recall

Present remembered ideas, facts or experiences.

recommend

Provide reasons in favour.

recount

Retell a series of events.

summarise

Express concisely the relevant details.

synthesise

Put together various elements to make a whole.

Nature of Religion and Beliefs

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2.2 Principal beliefs.	127	4.2 Principal beliefs.	135
2.3 Supernatural powers and deities.	127	4.3 Supernatural powers and deities.	135
2.4 Sacred spaces and beliefs.	128	4.4 Sacred spaces and beliefs.	136
2.5 Rituals.	128	4.5 Rituals.	136
2.6 Influence in the society.	129	4.6 Influence in the society.	137
2.7 Human search for meaning.	129	4.7 Human search for meaning.	137
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Nature of Religion and Beliefs



1. Religion as a worldview.

1.1 Supernatural dimension.

1.1.1 Define the supernatural dimension.

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1.1.2 Describe beliefs associated with a supernatural dimension.

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1.2 Transcendent religious worldview.

1.2.1 Define a transcendent religious worldview.

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1.2.2 Discuss characteristics of beliefs associated with a transcendent religious worldview.

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1.3 Immanent religious worldview.

1.3.1 Define an immanent religious worldview.

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1.3.2 Discuss characteristics of beliefs associated with an immanent religious worldview.

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2. Characteristics of religion.

2.1 Beliefs and believers.

2.1.1 Define beliefs and believers as a characteristic of religion.

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2.1.2 Explain the ways in which beliefs and believers interact with other characteristics to create a dynamic, living religion.

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2.2 Sacred texts and writings.

2.2.1 Define sacred texts and writings as a characteristic of religion.

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2.2.2 Explain the ways in which sacred texts and writings interact with other characteristics to create a dynamic, living religion.

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2.3 Ethics.

2.3.1 Define ethics as a characteristic of religion.

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2.3.2 Explain the ways in which ethics interacts with other characteristics to create a dynamic, living religion.

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2.4 Rituals and ceremonies.

2.4.1 Define rituals and ceremonies as a characteristic of religion.

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2.4.2 Explain the ways in which rituals and ceremonies interact with other characteristics to create a dynamic, living religion.

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3.2 Contribution of religion to society and culture.

3.2.1 Analyse the contribution of religion to society and culture.

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3.2.2 Evaluate the importance of the contribution of religion to society and culture.

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Answers



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- 1.1.1** The supernatural dimension is beyond the reality of taste, touch, smell, sight or hearing. It is a spiritual realm not limited by the physical constraints of volume, mass or time.
- 1.1.2** Some beliefs associated with a supernatural dimension include the concept of God, a powerful divine spiritual entity that created the known Universe. Beliefs about angels or devils who interact with humanity to produce good or bad actions or results and the human spirit which may exist on Earth after the death of the physical body are also associated with this dimension.
- 1.2.1** A transcendent religious worldview has the supernatural dimension or God as being greater than any imaginable limit, external to the human person and interacting with humanity from afar. The idea of a god in Heaven is an example of a transcendent concept.
- 1.2.2** Some characteristics of beliefs associated with a transcendent religious worldview are that a god or the spirit world is separate from humanity and can be invoked or reached through some human activity. Such activities can include prayer (both personal and group), sacrifices (of time, attitude or material substance) and ritual or specific practices focused on the deity.
- 1.3.1** An immanent religious worldview has the supernatural dimension or god as being part of or closely associated with the human person and interacting from within. The belief of a god seen in the actions of humanity is an example of an immanent concept.
- 1.3.2** Some characteristics of beliefs associated with an immanent religious worldview are that the god or the spirit world is integrated with humanity and can be invoked or reached through personal reflection or inward activity. Such activities have included meditation, various rituals or specific practices focused on the human expression of the deity within.
- 2.1.1** Beliefs as a characteristic of religion can be defined as ideas associated with the transcendent realm which are held or be true by a specific group of people called believers. In general these beliefs are about the nature of the god or deity, the nature of the transcendent realm, the process of creation, the process of interaction with humanity and the concept of some end time.
- 2.1.2** Beliefs determine what was originally written in the sacred texts and over time these writings themselves determine the beliefs of later generations. To overcome the concern that this is circular logic, it is often accepted that the sacred texts and writings are revelations from God and therefore God's word or instruction to his people.
- Beliefs further determine the ethical instructions for life and the rituals appropriate for interaction with the transcendent realm. Beliefs therefore determine all religious behaviour or attitudes and this behaviour reinforces the knowledge and understanding of new generations of believers. This maintains continuity within the religious community.
- 2.2.1** Sacred texts and writings give a written (hard copy) and therefore 'fixed' historical record of beliefs and actions. Sometimes they are human responses to spiritual experiences and sometimes written as revelations from God or the Divine. Some sacred texts describe behaviour as an example or to describe ethical expectations and others are poems or songs full of metaphor and pictorial language.
- 2.2.2** Sacred texts and writings interact with other characteristics to create a dynamic, living religion by giving instructional, historical or exemplary behaviour.
- The date of writing is the fixed point and often these texts are the written records of previous oral stories and traditions. The context of the author and audience, style of writing and purpose of writing is very important in understanding the impact of such text on the modern world.
- Sacred texts and writings support understanding and help inform and develop the beliefs of believers. They give information about rituals and rites and help teach personal and community ethics. These ethical expression are described as belief in practice.
- 2.3.1** Ethics is the word used for the reasoning behind why certain behaviours or attitudes are considered right or wrong and religion has traditionally played an important role in determining this. Sometimes various ethical guiding statements are explained as the will of God, other times they are used to bring about maximum good in a society or to allow an individual to become more like God in behaviour.

- 2.3.2** Ethical teaching is often found in, and through reading of, the sacred texts and is developed from the fundamental beliefs of a religion. How humans react to other humans, the living world and the rest of creation is part of the main belief structure adhered to by believers. Sometimes decisions are made without direct guidance from the ancient texts but these are focused and guided by comparing historical precedent and the theological wisdom of teachers from earlier as well as present days.
- Sometimes with some ethical decisions there are associated rites and rituals. One example is marriage which is an important rite of passage associated with specific public ceremony. One of its roles is to allow for ethical sexual practices within a relationship.
- When ethical teachings follow from the beliefs described in the sacred texts and writings, sometimes the rites or rituals are also described in the text.
- 2.4.1** Rituals and ceremonies prescribe the form and process of performing worship services or other important acts in a particular place such as a church or temple or time such as Sabbath or Ramadan.
- 2.4.2** Rituals and ceremonies have importance beyond the actual physical activities. They allow members of the faith to transcend from normal life into the spiritual therefore it is important that the correct process is carried out. Sometimes this process is described in the texts and developed over time through historical traditions. Other times they develop as a way of making the activity more meaningful to a new generation of believers.
- Rituals and ceremonies interact with other characteristics to create a dynamic, living religion by allowing a formal transcendent relationship. The physical act of Christian Baptism associated with the transcendent involvement of God is one example. Rituals and ceremonies are determined by belief and defined as appropriate behaviour of believers for specific purposes in specific situations. Often their process supports ethical behaviour. One example of this is the wedding ceremony used for the rite of passage of marriage.
- 3.1.1** Religion contributes to the life of individuals in a number of different ways. Most of these are related to the concept of relationship. Religion gives people a relationship with the transcendent realm, whether it is called God or The Divine or simply the spiritual realm.
- Secondly there is a sense of relationship with time. Through religion, people are connected to the past – their ancestors, of course but also the history of their faith and the trials and tribulations they face are those faced through time. For most people, time goes in two directions and the future concepts of hope are associated with the spiritual sense of belonging to the future. For many Indigenous Australians time is associated with a constantly revitalised past and secured future through rituals in the present.
- Religion offers a sense of wisdom and understanding of the big picture of life which is beyond the latest computer game, phone technology or consumer bauble.
- 3.1.2** The contribution of religion to individuals is very important because of the ways in which the relationships offer hope beyond the present.
- Religion gives people a relationship with the transcendent realm, whether it is called God or The Divine or simply the spiritual realm. It allows this connection between life as we know it with all the physical limitations and processes and, on the other side, a sense of relationship with the spirit. Whether this ‘spirit’ is one’s own or of other individuals in society or the entity known as God, it is this relationship that gives importance to life.
- The sense of relationship with time is important because the future concepts of hope are associated with the spiritual sense of belonging to the future. The future is created in the present and present spiritual activities are therefore of vital importance. Without hope a person is not fully human. Hope is the sense that tomorrow’s life is worth living. The positive correlation between religion and wellbeing exists regardless of whether we measure religious satisfaction, the frequency of prayer or other religious acts, the type of transcendent or prayer experience, or simply the relationship with a god or religious dimension. This relationship is for both men and women and young and old.
- It is important that religion offers a sense of wisdom and understanding of the big picture of life. Our lives would normally be limited by food, clothing and shelter and while the fulfilling of these needs is important, the extensions of junk food, designer clothes and wasteful consumerism are not. Religion encourages people to look beyond the latest computer game or phone technology or consumer bauble. Religion offers people the most important hope that this is not all there is and humanity, the human soul or spirit or person underneath the external physical body is important and has value.
- 3.2.1** The contribution of religion to society and culture is based on how religion improves or enhances communities. This is done by improving or enhancing the relationships between people. Religious individuals and communities make large contributions to the general society. This support of the community is observed through donations of time, effort and money to charity and social groups. Some examples include the volunteers for homeless shelters, scouts, guides and youth sporting clubs. The religious nature of the club or group is not what is important it is the fact that even in secular societies, a significant proportion of religious people are involved in the important club activities.

3.2.2 The importance of the contribution of religion to society and culture is great because of the continued participation of religious people and groups in advancing the humanity of all people in our society. Today the term 'quality of life' is commonly used to summarise aspects of the general wellbeing, health and happiness of individuals. More than this, wellbeing exists when we feel our life has purpose and that we are doing something worthwhile. It is not just the simplistic feeling of pleasure. We all want to be physically and mentally well, happy and healthy and to live useful lives. From social research, we know that a number of different aspects of life contribute to improved wellbeing and various negative aspects can reduce it. One of the positive aspects of life is religious belief.

Researchers have found that not only is general wellbeing increased or improved by religious involvement but recovery from accidents or operations is enhanced, prescribed drug use in medical procedures is reduced and social problems such as divorce, involvement with the courts and incidents of mental illness is lessened in severity and frequency within a society. It is these aspects of society's health that support the importance of religious belief within a community. The advantage of religion is also obvious when we consider the use of services within society. Regardless of the opinion that people have of religion, they will tend to trust, and use the services of religious schools, hospitals, aged care facilities and other religious organised activities and structures.

The importance of religion is very clear when research is carried out on the other aspects of life which produces wellbeing. Surprisingly to some, money is not as important for wellbeing as love and connectivity with other people.

3.2.3 The Christian church has played an important influential role both historically and currently in a number of different areas of Australian society.

Firstly, the Christian church had great effect on the education system in Australia. The Schools Estates Corporation Charter established in 1825 guaranteed colonial land for Anglican schools. This act also meant that the Anglican Church had control over schools in the early colony schools. While this initially caused conflict with the Catholic Church leading to the *Public Instruction Act* of 1862, today's society has a large number of religion-based schools. Most support the Catholic tradition but there are also Anglican, Uniting and other Protestant church schools and Islamic and Jewish schools

Religion in general and Christianity in particular has also played a major role in the provision and development of the social welfare structure in Australia. The NSW Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Benevolence was first to care for poor and disabled people. Since then, the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul Society, Anglicare, Sydney Rescue Work Society, Wesley Mission which originated from the Methodist Church, and its modern-day Uniting Care positively and prominently played roles in the provision of social welfare for our society.

Christianity also played a prominent role in the Constitution leading to Federation. Many of the statements in the constitution had Biblical connotations. The opening of Federal Parliament in 1901 included the singing of psalms, hymns and the saying of prayers. This symbolised the importance of Christianity in the new nation of Australia.

The three examples above show just some of the ways Christianity in particular has impacted on Australian society. Today, examples of public holidays, school and business opening and closing hours, rules related to alcohol, drug use, gambling, prostitution and other social issues are all related to the important effect of Christianity on our lifestyle.

