



## GENERAL COMMENTS

Student responses to the 2013 Religion and Society examination indicated a good understanding of the aspects of religion, the vision for society of religious traditions and the key terms and concepts in the study. Many students attempted to incorporate relevant quotations into their responses.

Three main areas of concern arose from this paper.

- Answering the question asked: In Section A, students should write responses that are general to religions without referring to a specific religious tradition. In Sections B and C, students should read questions carefully to discern the key terms that indicate the focus of the question.
- The ability to discuss a question was not apparent in most students' responses. Essays often comprised overstated, one-sided arguments containing overgeneralisations and unsubstantiated claims. While there was improvement in the breadth of references used in the research of topics, apparent in the presence of supportive quotations and examples, this was still not present in the majority of responses. Students should learn quotations and examples to be used for evidence.
- An awareness of historical context was largely missing from responses. The placement of historical challenges to a religious tradition in time, place and circumstances needs to be greatly improved. Few students considered the impact on the wider society of the responses of the religious tradition to a historical challenge. These students repeated obvious and overstated effects of the responses within the tradition. Awareness of the interaction of religion and society, positive and negative, is an important part of the Areas of Study.

### Other areas of concern

- Generally, students needed a more thorough grasp of the key knowledge and key skills in the context of the Area of Study introductions and unit introductions.
- Students' written expression needs to be improved. Many students confused their points in overly long, disconnected sentences.
- Alternative vocabulary for key terms needs to be developed by many students. Key terms such as 'express', 'reaffirm', 'reformulate', 'challenge', 'continuity' and 'maintain' are used repeatedly in student responses without conveying a sense that the students understand their meaning.
- Students need to practise writing different types of responses: short answers relevant to religions generally; precise, tradition-specific extended responses and essays, especially introductions that respond to stimulus material and the question based on that material, and the continued engagement with the question and stimulus material throughout the essay.
- Students' understanding of the vision for society still needs intensified work to enable them to see its connection with the religious beliefs of a religious tradition.

## SPECIFIC INFORMATION

**Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.**

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

### Section A

#### Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	9	36	35	20	1.7

Possible responses could have included the following: For a religious tradition to have a vision for society, that tradition has hope for a better world. It envisions an ideal with principles and practices that can produce a better society. It means that the tradition sees that there are things wrong with society as it is and in the vision of the tradition it offers ways to right those wrongs. It means that the tradition's beliefs about humanity, Ultimate Reality and the natural world are brought together in the description of the world as they believe it could and should be. It means that religious traditions contribute to the development of society to make it better according to the beliefs of the tradition. Some religious traditions may have a vision for themselves, but this self-perception is not the same as the tradition's vision for society and this may create some tension.

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The strongest responses included many of the above points about religious traditions in general. The weakest responses answered from within the students' studied tradition, referring to what the vision meant for the members of that tradition without sufficient reference to wider society.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*A religious tradition may have an ideal vision for society according to its beliefs and values. For example a religious tradition may require its adherents to be respectful, tolerant and compassionate of all people; models for a way to unity of all people/religions. Other religious traditions may not allow its adherents to involve themselves with the wider society in which they live or with other cultures and religions. So their vision for the ideal society is confined to the society of their religious tradition and its adherents. If traditions with such different understandings of what makes the good society are part of the same society conflict may arise between them and contribute negatively to the well being of that wider society. However it may also bring people together who recognise they share the same vision even if they do not share the same religion.*

## Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	14	27	34	26	1.7

Possible responses could have included the following: A life experience that is significant for a person's religious beliefs has the characteristics that it highlights, confirms, challenges or contradicts the held religious beliefs about that area of life. It calls the beliefs into question in such a way as to require theological reflection or research, which may lead to a change in belief or understanding of an existing belief. Thus, the experience can make a profound, even dramatic, change to a person's religious beliefs or it can reaffirm current beliefs.

Some excellent responses noted that some experiences can become significant after time, gathering momentum to bring about important realisation, changed attitudes, understanding and behaviours. Weak responses discussed the consequences to beliefs as being characteristics that make an experience significant. Other weak responses listed life experiences or events, which was not necessary.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*If a life experience is significant for an individual or group, it will have a dynamic relationship with their related religious beliefs that compels them to reflect on their beliefs. This is because such experiences touch on fundamental understandings about the meaning and purpose of life and death. These significant experiences will have a challenging characteristic to them. They will stimulate, or provoke the person to think, question, research, discuss, ponder their beliefs as ways of understanding and dealing with their experience.*

## Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	8	14	27	31	19	2.4

Possible responses could have included: Historically, religious traditions have responded to challenges by conferring meetings, conferences, committees or councils to engage in consideration and debate, and make united decisions that may be guidelines, rules or doctrine, even dogma, for the members of the religious tradition. There might also be denial or resistance towards the challenges. The leadership of the religious tradition may condemn ideas and prohibit practices, perhaps leading to exile, excommunication, violent suppression or persecution, even execution of recalcitrant members. There may be a change to the social structure of the tradition, especially in the type of leadership or in the particular people.

Successful responses consisted of various combinations of the above. Weaker responses identified the methods used to maintain the continuity of beliefs, but did not make a distinction between those methods.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Sometimes religious traditions stay quiet about a challenge, seeming to ignore it, but usually watching until action cannot be avoided. Such delay may worsen the problems created by the challenge, but they may also provide space and time for the challenge to weaken without drastic action being taken. Some of the actions that traditions may take involve excommunication of the challengers by claiming that their teachings or viewpoints are heresy. This may also involve extermination such as burning at the stake. Along with this, religious traditions may reaffirm their challenged beliefs or practices by reiterating them or clarifying them through new language, reinforced by new religious writings, reinvigorated rituals, symbols, codes of behaviour or restructured ways of participation of ordinary membership or leadership.*

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## Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	21	29	27	13	4	2.4

Religious traditions offer ethical perspectives to guide society's values and behaviour, which emphasise harmony and justice. They offer systems of beliefs that convey meaning and purpose for existence and an explanation of the complexities and mysteries of life. They provide welfare service to the whole community, such as hospitals and nursing homes, various types of counselling, relief for the poor at home and in other countries. Religious traditions are patrons for intellectual research and the creative arts. Religious traditions can be the basis for the laws and governance of society, albeit not always positively. Not all contributions are positive; at times religious traditions can contribute to tension, even conflict, with secular society, other religious traditions in the society or other groups within their own tradition. At times, religious traditions can become dominant and autocratic, potentially leading to disharmony and injustice in their society.

Better responses included both positive and negative contributions of religious traditions to society over time. Weaker responses focused on either positive or negative contributions, often referring only to contemporary society, and tended to use tradition-specific examples for their answer.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*A religious tradition's ethical principles and codes of behaviour contribute to the laws and various codes of behaviour of the society in which the religion exists. They may contribute to the social cohesion of the society, supporting peace and security in the community and beneficial use of the resources for the whole society. But such involvement could also bring about restrictions and injustices. Religious traditions also provide many of the means and organisations that offer welfare, health and education support for those in need. This is a significant role of religious traditions in a sort of partnership with the secular governments. Religious traditions may be catalysts for change in society, both positive and negative.*

## Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	21	20	21	20	11	7	2

Religious traditions translate beliefs into actions, providing the members with religious experiences to build their understanding of the beliefs and their commitment to them. They do this through the seven other aspects of religion. Religious traditions remind, emphasise, interpret and celebrate the beliefs through rituals and symbols. They convey the beliefs through stories and texts that remind, teach and explain the beliefs. They translate the beliefs into the values and principles that guide daily life, helping members to live their life according to the beliefs of their tradition. They provide places for worship and community life gatherings that enable celebration, solace, reflection, discussion and renewal of the beliefs. Based on understanding of beliefs, religious traditions structure membership through initiation ceremonies, different ways of participation and leadership to promote the beliefs as lived experience for members.

Most responses showed how beliefs were expressed through a number of the other aspects. The more successful responses discussed all other aspects and showed how through various ways of expression they provided an interconnected framework for the beliefs of religious traditions. Weaker responses named tradition-specific examples without explaining what the example showed.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Religious traditions express their significant aspect of beliefs through a framework of integrated aspects such as rituals, symbols and religious writings. Each of the seven other aspects of religion provide a template through which a belief can be given further credibility and meaning, ensuring its significance in the life of the adherents. Rituals for example, are a series of repeated ceremonies of words or actions that verbalise, visualise and act out a belief to communicate its meaning and to reaffirm the belief as relevant in adherents' lives. Symbols may use visual imagery to easily communicate an otherwise complex belief, which too can aid its interpretation. Religious traditions utilise all the aspects of religion to express and develop a framework for their fundamental teachings.*

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## Section B

### Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	1	10	26	34	21	8	2.9

The cartoonist seems to be suggesting that experiences one encounters along life's journey are very varied. Some students saw the journey as symbolic, involving many who have diverse experiences or just one person who has varied experiences throughout their life. Below are other possibilities.

- Some seem reluctant to begin the journey, possibly afraid of what may happen.
- Others undertake the journey with strength and determination, striding out confidently.
- Some seem to experience help or some sort of enthusiasm as they start to run up the hill of the human journey.
- Others experience a setback and stumble.
- Some appear to be frustrated or exhausted by their life experience and may be considering giving up.
- Others experience joy, jubilation and success.
- For others there is mishap, disaster, perhaps death or suffering.
- Gradually, it appears that experiences become more of a drain, with individuals accepting their fate with resignation.
- There is also the individual who turns back, trying to avoid the end of life, death, perhaps trying to endure life without acknowledging its realities.

Many responses recognised the beginning, the climax and the end of the journey but not the detail in between. Responses that addressed all the imagery noted many of the following attitudes and experiences of determination, rejection, resilience, exhilaration, shock, despair, jubilation, surprise, questioning, perseverance, pondering, reminiscing, reflection, weariness and acceptance.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*The cartoon suggests that the journey of the human life consists of many significant experiences of a challenging nature represented in the steep climb to the top of the mountain and a less energetic, sometimes harmful descent to death. The experience shown in the ascent of the mountain involve several bumps in the path, experiences that test the person's endurance, commitment and resilience until experiencing the intense joy having achieved the top, a breakthrough, a revelation? The cumbersome, confusing or tragic experiences of life are suggested in the descent figure's fall from the top of the mountain and degenerating health and quality of life as it takes up a crippled stance to the grave. The effects of the journey as seen in the figures may also suggest that significant life experiences in the human lifespan have the capacity to shape and influence the individual.*

### Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	9	20	28	26	14	4	2.3

In keeping with the last figure in the cartoon, religious traditions often have a comforting effect on members as they near the end of their life's journey. They can also provide support in understanding a meaningful purpose in the particular life experience, enabling the person to walk, talk and act confidently through life, in contrast to some of the images in the cartoon. But the religious traditions may also fail their members, completely or partially, proving inadequate in their answers and methods of response as suggested by the images on the down side of the journey.

Students should have compared their case study with the attitudes in the cartoon and referred to the cartoon details to illustrate their points. They needed to establish the degree of similarity and/or difference in an overview of the way in which their case study encountered the particular life experience.

Some students noted that the comparison is unequal as their case study is but one point in life's journey, not the entire journey as suggested in the cartoon. The comparison varied, according to whether the student interpreted the cartoon as symbolic of many or the life of one.

The more successful responses noted the points of similarity and difference between the experience of their case study and the experiences depicted in the cartoon, with specific reference to parts in the cartoon. Weaker responses ignored the cartoon and described their case study. Some students misread the question and attempted to use the whole religious tradition in their answer.



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The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*German Lutheran Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) was a man of letters, faith and reason whose significant life experiences in the midst of a crisis situation in Nazi Germany showed him to have indomitable courage and a believing soul rallying against injustice. Throughout his experiences in war time Germany his attitudes of courage, resilience and unwavering faith are similar to those depicted in the cartoon figure's enthusiastic, energetic and committed ascent of the mountain. However the gloomy descent to death in the cartoon would be unlikely shared by Bonhoeffer. He saw death not as an end but 'the beginning of life' (Letters and Papers from Priest). Bonhoeffer believed he was to receive 'eternal life with God' (John 3:16) and felt secure in facing death.*

## Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	30	30	21	12	7	1.4

This question required more than simply naming the religious beliefs. Students needed to include a clear statement with some extension of the detail of the belief. The theological teaching of the religious tradition was required, not the way the case study person/group understood it. Anything that referred to the change in the belief of the case study person/group was irrelevant.

The more successful responses showed clear understanding of the relevant beliefs of the religious tradition that were involved in the students' case study. Excellent responses included quotations from sacred texts or official documents of the religious tradition.

Weaker responses gave incomplete statements of the belief or beliefs. Some misread the question and referred to the belief(s) as understood by their case study person/group.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Christianity's belief in the oneness of humanity before God, found in Paul's teaching that in Christ there is no longer male or female, Gentile or Jew, master or slave, was one of the beliefs underpinning the thinking and actions of Bonhoeffer during World War II. This belief is expressed in the code of behaviour of the Beatitudes, part of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel chapter 5. Christianity teaches that these Beatitudes are to be lived out as a charter for life. Yet to Bonhoeffer the scandal of Christian fighting Christian did not reflect the belief in the oneness of humanity and the moral guideline to 'love one's neighbour as oneself' (Mark 12:31). Also the coequal love based relationship within the concept of the Triune Godhead of Christianity was the model for Bonhoeffer's relationship with others. This relationship of love invoked the teachings of the Ten Commandments that emphasise love and respect for God, self and others and life itself.*

## Question 1d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	18	20	19	19	14	7	4	2.3

Students could relate how the significant life experience studied influenced the beliefs of the case study person/group. Responses should have clearly shown the before and after of the religious beliefs related to the life experience. Responses needed to show how the change was achieved: theological reflection, study of texts, guided counselling, religious community support, following religious tradition practices, praying, rejection, isolation, separation or conversion.

Successful responses did all of the above and many included quotations from the reflections of their person or group. It was obvious that the less successful students did not have a clear understanding of the religious beliefs involved and this weakened their ability to show the nature of the change in understanding of their person or group. Some went into biographical detail of their case study, which was unnecessary.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Bonhoeffer's involvement as courier in the plot to kill Hitler meant there was tension between his beliefs in the Decalogue commandment 'you shall not kill' and the moral responsibility for the well being of all expressed in the Beatitudes and the love based relationship of the persons within the Triune God. He had chosen the good of all and this meant he had to reflect on his understanding of many of his beliefs. His subsequent experience of harsh and isolated imprisonment with penalty of death reinforced his belief in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ who 'came for us and our salvation' (John 3:16) so that humanity 'may have life and have it to the full' (John 11:10). Faced with death by hanging, Bonhoeffer sought solace in the knowledge that God was light and 'the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out' (John 1:5). He reaffirmed his belief in eternal life and salvation, 'all shall be made alive in Christ' (1 Cor. 11:22) confident his life had been lived out with a 'servant heart' (Acts 2:44) as required of a disciple of Jesus. Bonhoeffer did however drop his belief in Luther's dualistic teaching that*





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*Heaven and Earth were in separate spheres. Rather Bonhoeffer came to believe that God was for the here and now and shared in his suffering as in the suffering of all, through Jesus as 'the Word made flesh' (John 1:4).*

## Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	6	20	30	28	16	2.3

Students needed to give a clear statement of the religious tradition and the particular challenge, identifying which aspects of religion were challenged.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*The 1859 challenge of Charles Darwin's theory of Evolution confronted Catholicism as it came at a time when the political landscape, formerly ruled by literalist thinking Western Christianity, began to agitate against this literalism and Christianity was gradually losing power and prestige in Western society. That the theory itself was devised by a Christian scientist exacerbated the confrontation. The theory was seen to attack a number of the aspects of religion such as beliefs, and social structure in the authority of scripture and the teaching tradition of the Church.*

## Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	10	13	15	16	15	12	10	6	3	3.4

Students should have

- used more than one aspect in their response
- referred to the aspects correctly
- clearly showed how the particular aspects were challenged
- shown any change to the aspects brought about by how the religious tradition responded to the challenge.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*The sacred text, the Catholic Bible and its Genesis 1 and 2 creation stories were challenged by the theory, but the literal credibility of Genesis was supported by the initial response of Catholicism. Despite consistently affirming the Nicene Creed statements that God is the giver of life and the maker of all things seen and unseen, credibility and acceptance of these beliefs and of the authority of the teaching of the Church about the origins of life were diminished and for many completely destroyed. Eventually in the 1907 document Pascendi, the Church did attempt to come to terms with the theory by reformulating the understanding that the creation process had been one complete act, a static creation. The belief in a merciful and loving God had always been affirmed in all the Church responses, despite what the Church saw as the cruel principle of the survival of the fittest in Darwin's theory of evolution. But the theory itself relies heavily on chance, conflicting with the Catholic belief of divine providence. Whilst gradually coming to accept the scientific understanding of the origin and development of the world, the Church response has continued to reinforce belief in a benevolent Creator who has ongoing involvement in creation, as seen in the writing of Charles Kingsley in 1996 'creation unfolding gradually from primal forms points to a more noble creator than would a non-evolving world.'*

*Darwin's theory of evolution was also seen by the Church to exclude the idea of Original Sin, therefore negating the need for a saviour. The confrontation of this belief had potential repercussions for many other beliefs and sacramental rituals such as Baptism and Confession (Reconciliation). In this matter the Church chose only to reaffirm their beliefs in the face of a theory that opposed sacred scripture and faith, (1860 council of German bishops). And in the 1893 Providentissimus Deus the Church states 'it is impossible that God, the supreme of truth, could utter that which is not true.'*

## Question 2c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	17	22	21	20	13	6	2.1

The effects and consequences were the focus of this question, not the change itself. The impact could involve an increase in number of adherents, schism, loss of power for the religious tradition or sections within the tradition, indifference by members to the tradition's response, renewal of commitment, formation of new religious movements or religious orders.

The more successful responses gave the historical context of their case study, identifying place, time and actual happenings and consequences with some quotations to support their claims of the nature of the impact of the response on the religious tradition.

Weaker responses offered no historical grounding or supportive evidence for their overgeneralised claims.



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The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*The initial response of total reaffirmation of existing beliefs (1860 Council of German Bishops, 1870 Vatican I, 1893 Providentissimus Deus and 1907 Pascendi) alienated a proportion of academic or scientifically minded Catholics and made a clear distinction between science and faith. The eventual and current response of reformulation (1950 Humani Generis, 1956 publication Chardin's book 'The Phenomenon of Man', and Pope John Paul II 1990 Chicago Declaration) reunited science and faith, allowing scientists to be Catholics and vice versa. Such reformulations reunited Catholicism with modernist Catholic Orders such as the Jesuits and with modernist Christian Churches such as Anglicanism. However it also resulted in a loss of credibility for some believers, particularly fundamentalist Catholics who moved to other Christian denominations who remained literal in interpreting scripture.*

## Question 2d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	31	35	23	11	1.2

Responses needed to indicate a sense of the effect and/or lack of effect of the response of the religious tradition upon the wider society and explain this.

Students could have considered the following questions in their responses.

- Were the responses of the religious tradition appropriate, adequate and successful such that it gained power, and received confidence and respect from the wider society?
- Were the responses inadequate, misguided or unsuccessful and produced negative attitudes and action from the wider society?
- Were the responses successful in terms of the tradition but negative in terms of the tradition's relationship with the wider society?
- Was there a mixture of effects on different parts of society?

If the student claimed there was no impact on the wider society then reasons for this needed to be explained.

Successful responses dealt with some or most of the above and used supportive evidence and quotations. There is a need for students to have some understanding of the whole society of the time of the historical challenge studied. In weaker responses there was little evidence of such knowledge. This meant that these students had no facts upon which to base an evaluation of the effect on the wider society of the religious tradition's response to the historical challenge. Their attempt at such evaluation was overgeneralised and often fictional.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*In general, the Church response to the theory of Darwinian evolution coincided with race based killings throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including the attempted genocide of the Australian Aborigines and the Jews in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In theory the reaffirmed beliefs about a benevolent creator God should have helped to counter such race hatred but the Church had sustained a loss of power and credibility in society, weakening its influence on the morality of society presented with many different ways of understanding the world.*

*The Catholic Church's sustained reaffirmation of the tradition's beliefs about origins resulted in the Church receiving the scorn of much of the scientific world and accusations of being out of date with the modern world. The gradual process of reformulation of the creationist beliefs into beliefs about creation reconciled science and faith enough that the Vatican now has its own space observatory and scientists and society in general may participate in discussion with Catholicism without fear of alienation or violating Catholic doctrine or dogma.*

## Section C

Question chosen	0	1	2	3
%	1	23	15	60

## Questions 1–3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	2	2	3	5	8	6	8	8	9	8	6	6	8	6	5	3	2	2	1	1	1	8.6

## Question 1

Students should have referred to the statements throughout their response. The points in each body paragraph should have related back to the statement(s), showing support, disagreement and rejection or perhaps a mixture of these.

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Responses should have shown how the strategies of authoritative statements, counselling, guidance, rulings, restrictions, chastisements, condemnations, expulsions, exiles, councils, research, discussion, discarding and other supportive or corrective strategies have been used to achieve the various methods of affirming beliefs in order to maintain continuity.

Responses should have discussed why authenticity is held to be vital to the religious tradition. The most successful responses included awareness that not all efforts to maintain continuity are wise or appropriate, and that the understanding of what is authentic can be in error.

The particular example(s) studied may not show all of the above but should have been considered in the general study of the methods for maintaining continuity and be used in discussion of the two statements in this question.

The more successful responses took the discussion of the statements beyond their case study and were able to select parts of their case study in their discussion. Their responses showed that students had studied references offering different viewpoints about their studied example. They effectively used evidence and quotations.

Weaker responses noted the stimulus statements as part of the introduction, which was then followed by a rewrite of the learned case study with varying levels of supportive evidence and/or quotations. Some students ignored the stimulus material and the question and wrote an overgeneralised and unsubstantiated account of their studied example.

#### Cases studied

- Trinity
- Arius
- Roman Persecution
- Sunday Sabbath
- Holocaust
- Industrial Revolution
- Eucharist
- The Nature of Jesus Christ

#### Question 2

This question invited students to consider what the beliefs of a particular religious tradition mean for the way its members live their lives. Students needed to engage the statement throughout the response.

Students mentioned particular beliefs and discussed what difference having such beliefs meant to a member living their life but few delved into the philosophical perspectives of the quotation.

Responses should have acknowledged, from the perspective of the religious tradition identified, that there is an ultimate reality believed in. They then should have shown how important that foundational belief is as they explained how it leads to other key beliefs about humans, the world, relationships, responsibility and behaviour. This was sometimes extended to demonstrate the level of importance through other aspects of religion such as ritual, text, symbol, stories and religious experience.

Successful responses showed clear understanding of the importance of a religious tradition's beliefs about ultimate reality for the identity, purpose and functioning of the tradition and supported their argument with varying levels of quotations from sacred texts and official teaching documents. Weaker responses tended to ignore the statement and the question and outlined the beliefs of the tradition about ultimate reality.

#### Cases studied

- Archbishop Oscar Romero
- Cardinal Joseph Bernadin
- Kelly Rae
- St John of the Cross
- Saul of Tarsus
- Fr Damien



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## Question 3

Students needed to engage the statement throughout their response. Terms needed to be clearly and correctly defined and consistently used.

While the challenge may have a history, it needed to be discussed in its current situation and characteristics. Applicable ongoing rulings and texts were appropriate to refer to but there must have also been detailed reference to current statements and actions.

Responses needed to show how the issue was an obstacle to the religion's efforts to fulfil its vision for society. The relative details of that vision should have been explained.

Excellent responses discussed the general ways and types of responses of religious traditions and then used an example from a particular religious tradition to illustrate what they have claimed generally. These responses incorporated the general and the specific throughout the response. Weaker responses restated the question and referred to part of the statement but did not engage with the question.

Most students unquestioningly accepted the contention of the stimulus statement. One approach to the question could have been to challenge the adjective 'major' or to recognise that obstacle can also create the potential for positive opportunity for the religious tradition.

The more successful responses teased out the theology behind the tradition's vision for society and effectively used quotations to support their claims. However, in general, those who answered this question treated it like an outline of a one-sided ethical issue.

## Cases studied

- Asylum Seekers
- Poverty
- Abortion
- Contraception
- Modernism
- Technology
- Same-sex Marriage
- Homosexuality
- Euthanasia
- Ecological Crisis
- Women's Ordination

The following is excerpt from a high-scoring response.

*Contemporary moral or social issues often express views and ideals that conflict with those held by a religious tradition within that society. The vision for society of a religious tradition will usually have an ideal of mutual care, concern and responsibility so that all may experience well being in a peaceful, secure environment. So beliefs and practices within society that violate the basic human rights of individuals or groups, creating situations of injustice will be issues that engage religious traditions in interaction with the wider society to address what the religion sees as a conflict with its view of the way society should be. Such an issue that engages the Anglican Christian tradition is the existence of extreme poverty, exacerbated by climate change and large scale people movement around the world. This issue has been a major obstacle for the Anglican Church as it challenges the whole call of the Gospel message to be as one before God, as Paul says, 'no longer Jew or Gentile, male or female, master or slave, rich or poor.'*

*The Anglican vision for society is one that encompasses unconditional love, equality and justice for all. The Christian concept of ultimate reality as a triune God of three persons who are coequal, coeternal and consubstantial (homoousios) means that believers know they are obliged to make use of freedom with a deep sense of responsibility. This is expressed by the Prophet Micah, 'live humbly, walk justly and love tenderly' and in the Gospel of Mark 'give riches to the poor'. Christians believe in 'Imagino Dei' that humankind being made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and therefore to treat everyone with the dignity and sanctity of human life (Gen 2:15) as 'in union with him all things have their place', (Col 1:15). These beliefs as part of the Anglican vision for society are in tension with political policies, economic theories and financial and business practices that create and support extreme poverty. Extreme poverty involves as many as 1.3 billion people subsisting on less than US \$1.25 a day (Global Poverty Project). Moreover such extreme poverty is aggravated by the effects of climate change that reflects a wide scale lack of care for the world which God so lovingly made. Unstable climates 'create severe implications for the poorest and most vulnerable' (Dr Jim Yung Kim, President of World Bank) meaning that 'the poorest will pay the most as usual' (Anglican Archbishop Freier, the Melbourne Anglican 2010). At present 607 million people experience daily chronic hunger and 6000*

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*children under the age of 5 die a day from drinking tainted water (World Vision, Water for Life campaign). With these facts in mind many Christians have come to understand that 'poverty is the greatest social and moral crisis of this time' (Reverend Tim Costello, 2009), and the Anglican Christian tradition has taken seriously its role in modelling and teaching the importance of loving 'your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 10:21) in order to live its vision for society.*

This essay continues, discussing why extreme poverty is a major obstacle to having any success in achieving goals that will move society closer to the vision for it held by Anglican Christianity. It includes consideration of the internal debate and tension, within Anglicanism and the external tensions of the tradition with secular concerns and powers. The response consistently emphasises the conflict in beliefs, values and moral behaviour.

It concludes with the following paragraph.

*In the face of the contemporary challenge of extreme poverty, which in its extreme nature constitutes a major obstacle to the realisation of the values and ideals of the Anglican Christian tradition's vision for society, many contributing obstacles have had to be faced and overcome at least to some degree where it is possible to move forward. Though the scope and complexity of this great moral and social crisis may have disheartened some believers, for others it has strengthened many of their foundational Christian beliefs and energised their commitment to community life as they embody 'costly love' and the Beatitudes as a charter for life.*