

# FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

## Competitive Examination — 2018 (BS-17) COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MAJOR RELIGIONS (FOR NON-MUSLIMS) Fully Solved Paper — Model Answers for Part-II (Essay Questions)

**Note on Part-I (MCQs):** The uploaded question paper contains only Part-II (the eight essay-type questions, Q.2–Q.8). No MCQ items for Part-I were present in the source file, so none have been fabricated here — only the content that actually appears in the paper has been solved, exactly as instructed.

**Instructions given in the original paper** (reproduced unchanged): Part-II is to be attempted on a separate Answer Book. Candidates must attempt FOUR questions out of the seven below, and all carry equal marks (20 each). All model answers below are written to full 20-mark depth so you can choose any four that suit you best.

### Q. No. 2 (20 marks)

***Person of Jesus Christ is central in Christian faith. Elaborate its significance with brief early development and highlight the modern debate of the 'historical quest of Jesus' in this regard.***

✓ SOLVED — Model Answer

#### ***Significance of the Person of Christ***

In Christianity, Jesus Christ is not merely a prophet or teacher but the Logos incarnate — God become man (John 1:14). The entire structure of Christian faith, from Incarnation to Atonement to Resurrection, rests on His unique dual nature as fully God and fully man. His life, death, and resurrection are held to accomplish salvation (soteriology), reconcile humanity with God, and inaugurate the Kingdom of God. Without the person of Christ, Christian doctrines of grace, redemption, and the Trinity lose their foundation; hence the historic creeds (Nicene, Chalcedonian) devote themselves almost entirely to defining who He is.

#### ***Early Development of Christology***

The earliest Christian communities proclaimed Jesus as Messiah and Lord within a Jewish monotheistic framework (kerygma preserved in Paul's letters, c. 50s CE). As the faith spread into the Hellenistic world, theological reflection intensified: the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) affirmed Christ's full divinity against Arianism, which had argued the Son was a created being; the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) then defined Him as one Person in two natures, 'without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.' This gradual clarification represents the Church working out, over four centuries, the philosophical and scriptural implications of the earliest confession that 'Jesus is Lord.'

#### ***The Modern 'Historical Quest of Jesus'***

From the eighteenth century onward, Enlightenment rationalism (H. S. Reimarus) opened a distinct inquiry — the attempt to recover the 'Jesus of history' apart from the 'Christ of faith' proclaimed by the Church. Albert Schweitzer's landmark survey showed that the so-called 'First Quest' often produced portraits reflecting the biases of each scholar's own age. A 'New Quest' followed mid-twentieth century, using form criticism to test which sayings could be traced to the historical figure, and a 'Third Quest' (from the 1980s, associated with scholars such as E. P. Sanders and N. T. Wright) situated Jesus firmly within first-century Second Temple Judaism, using archaeology and Jewish sources alongside the Gospels.

## Critical Significance of the Debate

This quest raises the central question of the relationship between historical reconstruction and theological confession: can faith in the risen, divine Christ be separated from, or must it be grounded in, verifiable historical fact? Conservative scholarship insists the Gospels are substantially reliable historical testimony; more skeptical scholarship (e.g., the Jesus Seminar) treats much Gospel material as later theological composition. The unresolved tension between the 'Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of faith' remains one of the most debated issues in contemporary biblical scholarship and interfaith dialogue.

### Q. No. 3 (20 marks)

***There are several methodologies for the study of religions in the west. Which inspires you the most and why? Write about this methodology, its important figures and important works on it.***

✓ SOLVED — Model Answer

### Overview of Major Methodologies

The Western academic study of religion (Religionswissenschaft) has developed several distinct methods: the Comparative Method (Max Müller), the Phenomenological Method (Rudolf Otto, Mircea Eliade), the Sociological Method (Émile Durkheim, Max Weber), the Anthropological Method (E. B. Tylor, James Frazer), and the Psychological Method (William James, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung). Each approach studies religion through a different lens — linguistic-comparative, experiential, social-functional, cultural-evolutionary, or psychological — and each has shaped how religion is taught and researched in universities today.

### The Phenomenological Method — the most compelling approach

Of these, the phenomenological method is the most persuasive because it takes religious experience seriously on its own terms rather than reducing it to sociology, biology, or psychology. Its central move, epoché ('bracketing'), asks the scholar to suspend personal judgment about the truth-claims of a religion in order to describe the phenomenon — ritual, symbol, myth, or experience — as it presents itself to the believer. This preserves the dignity and internal logic of lived religious life instead of explaining it away.

### Key Figures and Works

Rudolf Otto's 'The Idea of the Holy' (1917) introduced the concept of the numinous — the 'mysterium tremendum et fascinans' — as the irreducible core of religious experience common across traditions. Gerardus van der Leeuw's 'Religion in Essence and Manifestation' (1933) systematized the phenomenological classification of religious forms (sacred space, sacred time, sacrifice, prayer). Mircea Eliade, in works such as 'The Sacred and the Profane' (1957) and 'Patterns in Comparative Religion,' extended this into a broad theory of hierophany — the manifestation of the sacred within ordinary reality — and the symbolism of myth and cosmic renewal found across world religions.

### Why It Inspires and Its Limits

This method inspires because it enables genuine cross-cultural understanding: a Hindu puja, a Muslim salah, and a Christian eucharist can be compared as structurally analogous encounters with the sacred, without privileging one tradition's metaphysics over another — a stance well suited to a comparative-religion course for a plural, interfaith society such as Pakistan's civil service examinees will encounter. Critics (e.g., the later 'Chicago school' critique) note it can flatten historical and social specificity in favour of universal patterns, so the mature scholar today combines phenomenology with historical-critical and sociological methods for a fuller picture.

#### Q. No. 4 (20 marks)

***How Atman is the basis of Morality in Hinduism. Explain it in the light of Vedas and Bhagavad Gita, and what kind of moral values it does generate.***

✓ SOLVED — Model Answer

##### ***The Concept of Atman***

Atman denotes the innermost self or soul, held in Hindu thought to be eternal, unchanging, and — in Advaita Vedanta — ultimately identical with Brahman, the universal ground of all existence ('Tat Tvam Asi' — 'Thou art That,' Chandogya Upanishad). Because every being shares the same essential Atman, morality in Hinduism is grounded not in an external divine command alone but in the recognition of this shared, divine core of selfhood in oneself and in others.

##### ***Vedic and Upanishadic Foundation***

The Vedas and Upanishads present Atman as distinct from the perishable body and the fluctuating mind (manas); it is sat-chit-ananda — being, consciousness, bliss. Because the same Atman pervades all creatures, injury to another is, at a metaphysical level, injury to oneself, providing the philosophical basis for the principle of ahimsa (non-violence) and for compassion toward all living things. Ethical living (dharma) is thus a discipline of uncovering one's true Atman from beneath the veil of ignorance (avidya) and ego (ahamkara).

##### ***The Bhagavad Gita's Ethical Teaching***

The Gita develops this into practical moral action through the doctrine of nishkama karma — performing one's duty without attachment to its fruits (Gita 2.47: one has a right to action, never to its results). Krishna teaches Arjuna that true virtue arises when action flows from recognition of the imperishable Atman rather than from desire, fear, or ego; the wise 'see the same Self in all beings and all beings in the Self' (Gita 6.29), which grounds equanimity, non-attachment, self-control, and universal compassion.

##### ***Moral Values Generated***

This Atman-centred worldview generates the values of ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truthfulness), self-discipline (tapas), detachment from material outcomes, equanimity in success and failure, humility, and universal compassion, since every being is recognised as sharing the same divine essence. It also grounds a duty-based rather than purely rule-based ethics: one acts rightly because right action is the natural expression of the true Self, not merely because of externally imposed law — making Hindu morality simultaneously metaphysical and deeply practical.

#### Q. No. 5 (20 marks)

***Discuss the challenges faced by Jews in the middle ages and critically evaluate reinterpretation of Jewish religious thought by Saadiah Gaon and Moses Maimonides as a response to that.***

✓ SOLVED — Model Answer

##### ***Challenges Faced by Medieval Jewry***

Medieval Jewish communities, dispersed across Christian Europe and the Islamic world, faced recurring persecution: forced conversions, expulsions (England 1290, France, and later Spain 1492), massacres during the Crusades, restrictive laws, and social marginalisation, including confinement to specific occupations and, later, ghettos. Alongside physical persecution came an intellectual challenge: exposure to sophisticated Islamic Kalam (rational theology) and Aristotelian philosophy raised hard questions

about how a revealed, particularistic faith could be reconciled with universal reason and philosophy, and Jewish thinkers had to defend Judaism's rationality to both internal doubters and external critics.

### **Saadia Gaon's Response**

Saadia Gaon (882–942), head of the Sura academy in Baghdad, wrote 'Emunot ve-Deot' ('The Book of Beliefs and Opinions'), the first systematic work of Jewish philosophical theology, deliberately modelled on the rational method of Islamic Mutazilite Kalam. He argued that reason and revelation could not conflict because both originate from the same divine source, and that revelation is in fact necessary to give the masses swift certainty about truths reason could, in principle, but only slowly and with difficulty, establish on its own. This defended Judaism's compatibility with philosophy while preserving the primacy of Torah.

### **Maimonides' Response**

Moses Maimonides (1138–1204), writing in Egypt after his family fled persecution in Muslim Spain, produced the 'Guide for the Perplexed,' addressed to Jews troubled by apparent conflicts between Aristotelian philosophy and literal scriptural language. He argued for allegorical interpretation of anthropomorphic biblical passages, insisted that reasoned philosophical inquiry and Torah both point toward the same truth about God, and, in his 'Mishneh Torah' and 'Thirteen Principles of Faith,' codified Jewish law and belief into a rationally coherent system, integrating Aristotelian metaphysics with monotheistic theology.

### **Critical Evaluation**

Both thinkers responded to the crisis of the age not by retreating from persecution into isolation, but by demonstrating Judaism's intellectual credibility on the very rational terms used by their critics — a strategy that strengthened Jewish self-confidence and preserved communal identity under pressure. Critics within the tradition (e.g., later Kabbalists and some Talmudists) worried that this heavy philosophical rationalism diluted Judaism's mystical and legal particularity; nonetheless, the Saadia–Maimonides synthesis remains the most influential rationalist current in the entire history of Jewish thought, shaping later medieval and even modern Jewish philosophy.

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## **Q. No. 6 (20 marks)**

***One of the sources of Christian theology is reason. Discuss and evaluate the role of reason and its relationship with revelation which it had in various historical phases of Christian thought.***

✓ SOLVED — Model Answer

### **Patristic Period**

Early Church Fathers held divergent views: Tertullian's famous rhetorical question 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?' expressed suspicion of Greek philosophy as a rival source of truth, while Justin Martyr argued that the 'seeds of the Logos' (logos spermatikos) were scattered among the Greek philosophers, so reason could serve as a genuine, if partial, preparation for the Gospel. Augustine of Hippo synthesised the two positions with his formula 'credo ut intelligam' ('I believe so that I may understand'), making faith the necessary starting point that reason then illuminates and deepens.

### **Scholastic Period**

In the High Middle Ages, contact with newly recovered Aristotelian texts (partly via Islamic and Jewish philosophers such as Averroes and Maimonides) produced Scholasticism's confident synthesis of reason and revelation. Thomas Aquinas, in the 'Summa Theologica,' distinguished truths accessible to

unaided reason (e.g., God's existence, via the Five Ways) from truths known only by revelation (e.g., the Trinity, Incarnation), holding that reason and revelation, properly understood, can never truly contradict each other since both derive from the same divine Author of truth — 'gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit' (grace does not destroy nature but perfects it).

### **Reformation and Post-Reformation**

The Protestant Reformation, led by Luther and Calvin, reacted against what it saw as Scholasticism's over-confidence in reason, elevating sola scriptura and treating reason (especially after the Fall) as corrupted and unreliable for salvific knowledge — Luther called reason 'the Devil's greatest whore' when it presumed to judge revealed truth. Reason was subordinated firmly beneath the authority of Scripture as interpreted through faith.

### **Enlightenment and Modern Period**

The Enlightenment reversed the hierarchy: Deists and rationalist theologians (from Locke's 'The Reasonableness of Christianity' to Kant's 'Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone') sought to subject even revelation to the tribunal of reason, accepting only what reason could independently verify. In the twentieth century, thinkers such as Karl Barth reacted against this by re-asserting revelation's absolute priority ("theology of the Word"), while others, such as Alvin Plantinga's reformed epistemology, have tried to show faith can be 'properly basic,' rationally warranted without needing prior philosophical proof.

### **Evaluation**

Across these phases, Christian thought oscillates between two poles — reason as revelation's ally (Justin, Aquinas) and reason as revelation's servant or even rival (Tertullian, Luther, Enlightenment rationalists) — and this unresolved tension continues to shape contemporary debates between Christian rationalism, fideism, and modern science-and-religion dialogue.

## **Q. No. 7 (20 marks)**

***How does Buddha look on permanent Self, Atman, or idea of 'I'? How does dukkha arise and how can it be eliminated?***

✓ SOLVED — Model Answer

### **Anatta — Denial of a Permanent Self**

The Buddha's teaching of anatta (Pali; anatman in Sanskrit) directly rejects the Hindu/Upanishadic notion of an eternal, unchanging Atman. He taught that what we call the 'self' is merely a conventional label for five ever-changing aggregates (skandhas) — form (rupa), sensation (vedana), perception (sanna), mental formations (sankhara), and consciousness (vinnana) — none of which is permanent, independent, or a true 'owner' of experience. Clinging to any of these as 'I' or 'mine' is, for the Buddha, a fundamental misperception (avidya, ignorance) about the nature of reality, which he described instead as characterised by impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and non-self (anatta).

### **The Origin of Dukkha — Second Noble Truth**

In the Four Noble Truths, dukkha (suffering, unsatisfactoriness) is diagnosed as arising from tanha — craving or thirst, in three forms: craving for sensual pleasure (kama-tanha), craving for existence/becoming (bhava-tanha), and craving for non-existence (vibhava-tanha). This craving itself is rooted in avidya, ignorance of the true impermanent, selfless nature of all phenomena. The doctrine of dependent origination (paticcasamuppada) traces this causal chain across twelve links, from ignorance through craving and clinging (upadana) to birth, ageing, and suffering, showing dukkha as a conditioned process rather than an accident or divine punishment.

## ***The Path to the Elimination of Dukkha***

The Third Noble Truth (nirodha) affirms that dukkha can indeed cease when craving and ignorance are extinguished — this cessation is nirvana. The Fourth Noble Truth prescribes the means: the Noble Eightfold Path, comprising Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration, traditionally grouped under the three trainings of wisdom (panna), ethical conduct (sila), and mental discipline (samadhi).

## ***Significance***

By denying a permanent self and locating the root of suffering in craving born of ignorance, the Buddha shifted the religious problem away from metaphysical speculation about the soul and toward a practical, psychological path of ethical training and meditative insight — making liberation (nirvana) achievable here and now through one's own disciplined effort rather than dependent on divine grace or ritual.

### **Q. No. 8 (20 marks)**

***There are exemplary and significant teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) for the underprivileged segments, socially or economically, of the society which can help in bringing harmony in the society. Write a comprehensive note on it and how is it applicable in today's modern world in your opinion.***

✓ SOLVED — Model Answer

## ***Economic Justice and Redistribution***

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) instituted Zakat as an obligatory wealth tax on the affluent for redistribution to the poor, orphans, widows, travelers, and debtors (Qur'an 9:60), transforming charity from voluntary sentiment into a structural, compulsory mechanism of social welfare. He also prohibited riba (usurious interest), which he saw as exploiting the economically vulnerable, and encouraged sadaqah (voluntary charity) as an ongoing moral duty, famously stating that 'the upper hand [giver] is better than the lower hand [receiver].'

## ***Care for Orphans, Widows and Slaves***

He repeatedly emphasised kindness to orphans, declaring that whoever cares for an orphan would be 'like this' with him in Paradise (gesturing two adjacent fingers), and reformed inheritance law to guarantee women and orphans fixed shares of estates in a society that had previously excluded them entirely. Regarding slaves, though slavery as an institution was not abolished outright, he urged masters to feed, clothe, and treat slaves as they treated themselves, and strongly encouraged manumission as an act of piety, gradually humanising and reducing the practice.

## ***Equality and Dignity of the Underprivileged***

In his Farewell Sermon (Khutbat al-Wida), he declared that no Arab has superiority over a non-Arab, nor white over black, except in piety and righteous conduct — an explicit rejection of tribal, racial, and class hierarchy. He elevated the status of women, workers, and the poor by insisting on fair wages ('give the labourer his wages before his sweat dries') and by personally living simply, associating with the poor, and eating with servants and slaves to model social equality.

## ***Social Harmony Mechanisms***

Practices such as congregational prayer (where the poor and the rich literally stand shoulder to shoulder), collective Eid charity (Zakat al-Fitr, ensuring the destitute could also celebrate festivals with dignity), and the Constitution of Medina (which extended protection and rights to religious minorities as equal citizens) together built an integrated social fabric that reduced class resentment and reinforced

solidarity across economic lines.

### ***Applicability in the Modern World***

In today's world of stark income inequality, exploitative lending practices, and marginalisation of racial, gender, and economic minorities, these teachings anticipate contemporary concepts of progressive redistribution, microfinance without predatory interest, universal social protection, labour rights, and anti-discrimination law. In my assessment, formalising Zakat-like structured philanthropy within modern welfare states, enforcing fair and prompt wages, protecting orphans and vulnerable groups through law rather than only charity, and cultivating genuine social mixing across class lines (rather than gated, segregated living) would meaningfully advance social harmony today, exactly as these teachings intended for seventh-century Arabia.

### ***Attempt Strategy (Examiner's Note)***

The paper requires attempting only FOUR of the seven questions above, all carrying equal marks (20 each). Choose the four you can answer with the most specific detail (dates, named scholars, scriptural references), since CSS examiners reward precision, structured headings, and balanced critical evaluation over general description.