

Candidate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate's Home Tutorial Class: \_\_\_\_\_

**CATHOLIC JUNIOR COLLEGE  
JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2009**

**GENERAL PAPER  
PAPER 2**

**8806/02**

WEDNESDAY 2 SEPTEMBER 2009

1 hour 30 minutes

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

This paper contains the passages for Paper 2 and the Answer Booklet.

Write your Name and Home Tutorial Class in the spaces at the top of this page.

**Answer all questions.**

Attach this cover sheet to the completed Answer Booklet.

If you remove the passages for easy reference, please reattach them to the back of the answer booklet before handing it up.

**INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

The number of marks is given in brackets [    ] at the end of each question.

**EXAMINER'S USE ONLY**

Content	/35
Language	/15
Total	/50

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This paper consists of **10** printed pages including this page

**PAPER 2 (50 marks)**

Read the passages and then answer all the questions which follow below. Note that up to fifteen marks will be given for the quality and accuracy of your use of English throughout this paper.

Note: When a question asks for an answer IN YOUR OWN WORDS AS FAR AS POSSIBLE and you select the appropriate material from the passage(s) for your answer, you must still use your own words to express it. Little credit can be given to answers which only copy words or phrases from the passage(s).

**Questions on Passage 1**

1. What does the “line of least resistance” tell you about the writer’s view of agnosticism in paragraph 1 (line 2)? ***Use your own words as far as possible.***

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..... [2 m]

2. Why does the author say that an agnostic’s reputation for cleverness is ‘unearned’ (line 6)?

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.....[2 m]

3. What is ironic about how “modern society simply invites us to replace one form of faith with another” (line 19)?

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..... [2 m]

4. What does the word 'disproportionately' tell you about secular fundamentalists (line 21)?

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..... [1 m]

5. From paragraph 6, why has no atheistic society ever been known to survive beyond the third generation (line 32)? **Use your own words as far as possible.**

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..... [2 m]

6a. Identify and explain one metaphor from line 37 to line 38 in Paragraph 6.

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.....[1 m]

6b. What is the writer's intention in using the metaphor?

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.....[1 m]

7. Explain why the word 'inclusive' is in quotation marks (line 42).

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.....[1 m]

**Questions on Passage 2**

8. Why does the writer introduce the concept of logic at the beginning of the passage?

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.....[1 m]

9. From paragraph 3, what are the examples of Guyana, Cyprus, Sri Lanka and Fiji intended to demonstrate? ***Use your own words as far as possible.***

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.....[2 m]



**Questions on Passages 1 and 2**

- 11.** Give the meaning of the following words as they are used in the passage. You may write your answer in one word or a short phrase. [5 m]

*From Passage 1:*

- (a) passenger (line 18) .....
- (b) spectacularly (line 34) .....
- (c) intermittent (line 39) .....

*From Passage 2:*

- (d) mathematical (line 3) .....
- (e) pushing (line 14) .....

- 12.** Passage 1 argues that religious rituals should be allowed in the public sphere while Passage 2 argues for secularism. Should your society make it impossible for religion and politics to mix? What is your own personal considered response?

Justify your views with reference to the points made by the writers and your experience.

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[illegible]

..... [8 m]

**END OF PAPER**



### Passage 1: John Waters writes...

- 1 Agnosticism\* is a position that has been arrived at mainly as a reaction, without much thought, by following the line of least resistance. If one does not go about the place asserting belief, agnosticism is assumed, which is to say that it is taken for granted that one agrees with the prevailing consensus against the idea of God.
- 2 There are a number of benefits the individual stands to gain from this, the most important of which is an unearned reputation for cleverness. To volunteer statements indicating belief in God is to risk being seen as being simple minded or worse, by a culture in which these reflexes are built into the fabric of public thought. To be agnostic is to be smart by default, because other agnostics tend to promote your cleverness in return for your promoting theirs. To believe and to state your beliefs publicly is to have to stand on your own two feet, to have everything you say on whatever subject coloured and diminished by virtue of your known belief in God. 5 10
- 3 In truth, there is no such thing as a completely rational human being, because rationality seems to demand total knowledge and understanding. Even if we could calculate the totality of human knowledge, it would still amount to but a tiny fraction of what may (or may not) be knowable. And each human being, regardless of achievement or brilliance, has access only to an infinitesimal amount, even of what is already known. Anyone who lives in an advanced Western society is dependent to a high degree on scientific advancements he does not understand, and is therefore a passenger on the knowledge and achievements of others, living and dead. What is rational or scientific about that? Modern society simply invites us to replace one form of faith with another, and this could lead to another form of fundamentalism. 15 20
- 4 Secular fundamentalists may exist disproportionately as a symptom of lapsed religiosity. Its primary symptom is a refusal of the authority of God, less because self-styled secularists have discovered God to be implausible than because they resent the idea of divine authority. The issue is not rationalism, but arrogance, or, more specifically, lack of humility. It is not that secularists are convinced that God does not exist, but that they cannot bear to think of being subordinate to a deity who made their lives possible. It is hard to imagine anything less rational. 25
- 5 It is true, of course that the inability of science to explain everything does not legitimize religion. But it surely cautions modesty on the part of those who propose that science is the best, if not the only, way forward.
- 6 Faith is eminently rational, not because its tenets are empirically demonstrable, but because it has worked for millennia in providing meaning in a reality that might otherwise have been insufficient to sustain human life. No atheistic society has ever been known to survive beyond the third generation, which indicates that materialism is insufficient sustenance for the human spirit. Usually, such societies fail spectacularly, declining into mass depression, addiction and spiritual malaise. In deciding that agnosticism can work for the individual, we may frequently overlook the extent to which that individual is buffered and protected by the level of transcendent beliefs surviving in the surrounding culture. In this sense, the secular- agnostic may be piggy-backing on the scientific achievements of others and leeching on the faith of the very believers he derides. 30 35
- 7 The main basis for these intermittent objections to religious rituals in the public sphere is that they are 'sectarian'. Because rituals belonging to a specific religion are deemed not merely to exclude others but even to insult them. The time has come, someone asserts, to replace them with a more 'inclusive' ritual. The trouble is that, when the question of what is meant by 'inclusive' is pursued, the only definition that emerges is one implying a necessity for some vague ritual that will be equally meaningless to everyone. 40

*Excerpt from Lapsed Agnostic*

*\*Agnosticism – whereby one cannot be sure God exists and is thus inclined towards non-belief*

## Passage 2: Kishore Mahbubani writes...

- 1 I discovered the power of logic when I served at the United Nations. Logic travels well across cultures and languages. A logical argument in one culture is equally logical in another culture, just as mathematical truths are equally valid in all cultures. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Cuba supported it; Singapore opposed it. Hence, we had fierce arguments with Cuba in numerous multilateral fora. In the end, what helped us was a simple rule of logic: All specific propositions can be universalised. Hence, if you argue a specific case, you have to accept the universal rule that goes with it. 5
- 2 The same power of logic can be applied to all other disputes. For example, some members of a religious group in Singapore have argued that it is legitimate for their members to take over a secular organization because it was supporting activities they considered to be against their religious principles. 10
- 3 The universal application of this argument is that it is legitimate for religious organisations to take over secular organisations if these secular organisations violate their religious principles. The people who led the takeover of a secular organization did not realize that they were pushing a rule that could undermine the delicate social and political fabric of Singapore. There is one simple political reality that many Singaporeans have not fully absorbed. It is not normal for multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious societies to live in relative harmony. Indeed, virtually all the multi-ethnic former British colonies have failed to preserve ethnic harmony after gaining independence. Look at the cases of Guyana, Cyprus, Sri Lanka and Fiji. 15
- 4 Singapore is the exception to the rule. What principles explain its success? One key principle has been the principle of secularism. There is a place for religion in society and there is a place for politics in society. Both should stay in their respective spheres. Many societies have come to grief because religion has been used as a force in politics. And Singapore will definitely come to grief if religion enters the political sphere here. This is why we should be aware that it is the larger principles that allow Singapore to survive and not fall into the same fate as other failed multi-ethnic communities. 20 25
- 5 One simple solution for Singapore's long-term survival is to create a firewall—a thoroughly impregnable firewall—between the religious space and the secular space in Singapore society. If we fail to build and maintain such a firewall, dealing with the consequences of allowing religion to enter the secular space here will be more difficult. 30
- 6 In some areas of life, there are no easy solutions. There may only be solutions that require vision, courage and wisdom to implement. Hence, we should not underestimate the challenges of preserving secularism in Singapore.

*Excerpt from The Virtues of Secularism*