



## AP<sup>®</sup> World History 2002 Sample Student Responses

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The major Christian and Islamic states which flourished in the Middle Ages often interacted with each other, sharing the same markets and customers. From the Middle East to North Africa (and even European and Asian markets) these merchants battled over the sale of their wares almost as often as they clashed over their faith. The faiths themselves both offer unique and evolving opinions on the merchants and indeed trade as a whole. By examining the provided documents, one can see that both Christianity and Islam differed in their original treatment of trade yet evolved to accommodate the different aspects of the exchanges.

The first document, taken from the Gospel of Matthew, demonstrates the early Christian beliefs on the difficulty of rich merchants in entering heaven. It is stated by the religion's founder, the rich would find it nearly impossible to gain entry to eternal paradise. Similarly, the second document, which is taken from the Muslim Qur'an, establishes an early yet different view of merchants. Proclaiming the goodness of honest merchants, the ~~document~~ document shows that early Muslims believed that trade between honorable persons was itself honorable and admirable, leading to great rewards.

Later in history, we begin to see changes in both belief systems' views on trade. The document discussing the life of a Christian saint by one of his contemporaries shows that this man, though formerly wealthy, had achieved true happiness through his submission to God by selling all of his assets. This third document also shows that, by the first millennium after the death of

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Jesus, Christians were beginning to lessen their dislike and distrust of the wealthy. The next document, also from a Christian scholar, shows that Christianity did not condone unfair business practices yet would allow for the trade ~~practices~~ consisting of fair and honest practices, a ~~belief~~ belief which has been shown to exist in the Islamic faith for centuries in Document 2. Using the Bible as his basis, the scholar condemns trade for a profit as a sin yet also shows the change in theological thought by condoning fair trade.

In contrast to ~~the~~ contemporary Christian thought, Muslims began to change their views on trade and merchants in a less than positive way. Though still maintaining the legitimacy of honest trade, the fifth document shows a Muslim scholar pointing out the faults of trade from a theological standing. ~~Examining~~ Examining the traits of a merchant, the scholar condemns them as negative effects on the soul. Less than a thousand years after its founding, instances such as the reopening of trade with the West after the Crusades clearly affect the Islamic view of trade.

The last document, also of Islamic origin (yet dating from several centuries later) demonstrates that as trade became ~~more~~ increasingly cut-throat, Muslim merchants began to show disapproval ~~and~~ of new ~~aspects~~ aspects of trade even amongst themselves, basing their arguments ~~on~~ on the old religious traditions of the past.

The sixth document, containing various letters from merchants and those dealing with them, shows the almost total embracing of

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trade by Christians. These letters, which document the increase of trade between Europeans, show ~~that~~ that the Italian merchants (those who had had the most contact with Muslim merchants) used Christianity as a stepping stone to ~~their~~ increased wealth; by trading with other Christians and believing that their success was due to their god, these ~~traders~~ traders show the influence of earlier Muslim merchants in their dealings. However, without a document detailing direct trade between Christians and Muslims, it is difficult to analyze the extent of this influence.

As seen in the writings of Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo, both Christians and Muslims used their faith as a means with which they could judge the actions and practices of other groups. Christianity and Islam, the two largest religions of today's world, both held unique views on trade as a whole.

Through examination of the aforementioned documents, we have seen that both religions evolved along with trade to accommodate the ever-changing world. The belief systems of the two similar yet different religions are a direct comparison to the trade carried out in the Middle Ages. By showing these similarities and differences, we can better understand the ideas which sparked so much change in the world that was, just as they do in the world that is.

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Both Christianity and Islam have ~~some~~ negative attitudes toward some aspects of trade. However, other aspects of trade ~~are~~ <sup>were</sup> viewed positively ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> one point <sup>in their</sup> history.

In the earliest years of Christianity, about 70-80 CE, it was written in the New Testament that "a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Doc. 1). It is obviously viewed as a negative thing to be made wealthy by trade. A poor writer might be biased in making this statement against his rich counterpart. It would be helpful if we ~~knew that~~ it was a wealthy man writing this down. Document 3 describes a man who has worked arduously and accumulated a great deal of wealth as a merchant. While this was previously seen as a sin, this man chooses to spend his wealth on "Charity, to God's honor and service." Such a noble gesture was surely <sup>should be</sup> seen as a positive by the Christian church. This is a very accurate statement because it is given by a monk. In 1273, Thomas Aquinas, leading Scholastic

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theologian, expressed his thoughts on a re-iteration of the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. He ~~at~~ rightfully denounces trading craftily and criminally. He does not condemn commerce as a whole, just the traders in the way of evil. <sup>(Doc. 4)</sup> Unfortunately, by the 1300s God is for sale, much to the disappointment of the Church. (Doc. 5) A letter placing an order for English wool even goes so far as to say "in the name of God and profit." The Church's negative attitude <sup>towards merchants</sup> is easily reasoned when it is being selfishly used to turn a profit. This would have been a good place for a Church official to speak.

In the earliest times of Islam, about 620-650 CE, the Qur'an states the "truthful Muslim merchant will take rank with the martyrs of the faith." Obviously, merchants are held in very high esteem. (Doc. 2)

However, by the 14th century, Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldun denounces merchants saying "the manners of tradesmen are inferior to those of rulers, and far removed from

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manliness and uprightness." Khaldun goes on to rant that traders decrease the virtue of man, and consequently, his acts negatively affect the soul. It is presumed that Khaldun is not a trader in his spare time and probably has an unfair bias against these traders he speaks of. (Doc. 5) By the 17th century, the Islamic courts were having to handle commercial disputes. Although profitable, commerce became a burden on Islamic society. (Doc. 7)

Unfortunately, in both Christianity and Islam, merchants appeared to be burdensome and destructive in relation to both faiths religious values, more so throughout the course of time. The information would have been better presented had there been a chart of how much of the merchant's profits were given to the church on an annual basis. The Islamic faith appeared to be initially receptive to the system of trade, whereas the Christians thoroughly condemned it most of the time since the beginning of their history.

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The religions of Christianity and Islam have different views toward merchants and trade. Though both religions accept it, they hold different restrictions on both. According to their beliefs, Christians and Muslims look at trade and merchants from different points of view.

Then in its beginnings, the Christian religion did not approve of economic prosperity among its believers. According to document 1, being rich does not let you go to heaven: "Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." Being poor meant being closer to God, and therefore being closer to heaven. As seen in Document 3, St. Godric gave up all his wealth, and decided to follow God: "He sold all his possessions and distributed them among the poor. For above all things, he coveted the life of a hermit." The Islamic religion had different beliefs in this field. The Muslims were



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very often merchants and traders. The Qur'an gives the Muslims instructions about fair trading. Document 2 says "If the two parties speak the truth and make it manifest, their transaction shall be blessed, and if they conceal and tell a lie, the blessing of their transaction shall be obliterated." God fully supports fair trade and merchants: "On the day of judgement, the honest, truthfull Muslim merchant will take rank with the martyrs of the faith."

The ~~all~~ Christian attitude toward trade changed as the time passed. Buying and trading became common. Document 6 states "You know God has granted you to acquire great riches in this world, may He be praised, and you have borne, and are bearing great burdens." But religion did not support and punished cheating. In Document 4, it is written that "no man should sell a thing to another man for more than its worth." People began to believe that God wanted them to trade and guided them along the way. As said in document 6: "With God always before us,

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we will carry out your bidding."

Islam developed trading and made it very common and almost necessary to survive. The economics of trade became much more sophisticated. ~~Old laws~~ were created in order to keep trading fair and honest. According to Ibn Khaldun, trade became very tricky and ~~full of~~ complicated. "As for Trade, although it be a natural means of livelihood, ... people's goods!" In document 7, we see conflict occurring b/c of a trading transaction. The Muslim trade became corrupt and no longer followed the writings of the Quran.

Although both Christianity and Islam accepted trade, there were many differences among them. Trade in both religions progressed at different speeds creating differences among the ways of trading. In the beginning, both religions followed the writings of God, but failed to continue due to changes and demands of the market.