

Religious Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 7877**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS 3877**

Reports on the Units

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2760 Foundation for the Study of Religion (AS)

General comments

As ever there was a very large entry for this paper. Similarly there was a very wide range of ability demonstrated in the scripts seen. The time constraints of the paper seem to be posing less problems than they have in the past but the move towards 1½ hour papers for the new specification will, nevertheless, be welcomed by teachers and students.

Many answers were well thought through and well-argued with excellent demonstration of the two assessment objectives, however, there were many weak scripts which showed little understanding of the subject area.

Part 1 – Philosophy of Religion

- 1 (a) **Explain what is meant by the idea of creatio ex nihilo.** [33]
There were some excellent responses to this question considering the theology and philosophy of the issue raised. However, many candidates, although able to express the idea in English appeared not to have considered the concept and were unable to make any coherent statement about it.
- (b) **'If God did create the world then God is responsible for it.' Discuss.** [17]
This question was accessible to candidates whether they had fully understood part (a) or not. As a consequence there were many more good responses which were able to consider the statement. Some limited their responses to the 2760 content which is all that is required whilst others drew on their wider knowledge of 2761.
- 2 (a) **Explain Plato's concept of 'Forms' and the particular importance of the Form of the Good.** [33]
This was a very straightforward question which elicited some good responses, however a significant number of candidates wrote that Plato identified the form of the Good with God.
There were a number of strange answers which either wrote about Griesbach and Form criticism or else about the Form of the four causes.
- (b) **'Plato's concept of Forms is simply a theory with no basis in fact.' Discuss.**[17]
This was generally well-answered with due consideration being given to the theory and to the criticism of it, particularly those of Aristotle.

Part 2 – Religious Ethics

- 3 (a) **What is the difference between meta-ethics and normative ethics?** [33]
There were some excellent responses to this question. However the majority of candidates seemed confused by the difference. Responses about meta-ethics were generally much better than in previous sessions but a very large number of candidates had no idea as to what normative ethics were and either made something up or simply said that they were different.
- (b) **'Understanding ethical language can help in making moral decisions.' Discuss.** [17]
There were many good and thoughtful responses to this question with good arguments being advanced both for and against the statement.

- 4 (a) **Explain the difference between moral relativism and cultural relativism. [33]**
There were a few good responses to this question. The majority, however, appeared unclear as to what was meant by either moral relativism or cultural relativism. Some confused moral relativism with meta-ethics whilst others thought moral relativism was a theory of which named theories such as Natural Law were aspects called cultural relativism.
- (b) **'Relativist theories are always unfair because they do not apply to everyone.' Discuss. [17]**
This statement generally provoked good responses. However, there were so quite angry answers which contended that relativist theories can apply to everyone if they want them to in which case they are clearly fair.

Part 3 – Jewish Scriptures

- 5 (a) **Explain, with examples, the different types of evidence which might be used in dating the main events of the Jewish scriptures. [33]**
The three suggested methods of dating: historical, archaeological and literary were well-explored by many candidates. A significant number of responses felt that anything which disagreed with a revealed text must be wrong and that even if one piece of archaeological evidence disputed a date it proved that all the archaeological evidence was suspect. There was little use made of sources such as ANE.
- (b) **'None of the evidence used in dating the events in the Jewish scriptures is convincing.' Discuss. [17]**
Many drew on their responses to (a) in answering this question and were able to produce reasonably cogent arguments generally concluding that the traditional Jewish dating was clearly the most reliable because it came from a revealed source.
- 6 (a) **Explain the use of the term 'liturgy' when describing some of the writings in the Jewish scriptures. [33]**
Liturgy is one of the forms required for study. However, it was clear that a number of candidates did not know what liturgy was and produced very general answers on Form Criticism. Those who did focus on the question were usually able to produce competent answers, often with good examples.
- (b) **'Liturgy should be regarded as the most important part of the Jewish scriptures because it is about worshipping G-d.' Discuss. [17]**
There were many responses in agreement with the statement but a number argued that there were other ways of worshipping G-d which therefore reduced the absolute importance of liturgical writings.

Part 4A – New Testament – Early Church

- 7 (a) **Explain how the travels and activities of Paul recorded in Acts relate to the Epistles. [33]**
- (b) **'The epistles were written by Paul himself so must be more reliable than the Acts of the Apostles.' Discuss. [17]**
There were too few responses to this question to produce a report.
- 8 (a) **Explain the origins of the Pharisees and Sadducees. [33]**
Many answers failed to focus on the 'origins' or even mention them in some cases. Answers tended to focus on religious practices and beliefs and, as such, could gain little credit.
However, there was a significant number of good responses.

- (b) **'For most first-century Jews neither the Pharisees nor the Sadducees had any impact on their lives.'** Discuss. [17]

This part of the question was much better answered. Candidates seemed fairly divided as to their conclusions about the impact of these groups and whether there was impact from one, both or neither.

Part 4B – New Testament – Gospels

- 9 (a) **Explain Source Criticism in relation to the gospels.** [33]

There were many very good answers to this question and some good use of diagrams with explanation which is, in many ways, a more appropriate way of addressing aspects of this question than long prose passages.

- (b) **'Source Criticism helps people to understand the message of the gospels.'** Discuss. [17]

Responses here were divided. Many felt that the gospels stood by themselves and did not need source criticism to clarify their meaning whilst others considered that a good understanding of source criticism helped to address some of the anomalies in the texts.

- 10 (a) **Explain the origins of the Pharisees and Sadducees.** [33]

Many answers failed to focus on the 'origins' or even mention them in some cases. Answers tended to focus on religious practices and beliefs and, as such, could gain little credit.

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- (b) **'For most first-century Jews neither the Pharisees nor the Sadducees had any impact on their lives.'** Discuss. [17]

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Part 5 – Developments in Christian Thought

- 11 (a) **Explain Fundamentalist and Liberal approaches to an understanding of the inspiration of the Bible.** [33]

There were some very good responses to this question with detailed analysis of the two interpretations cited. However, as always, there was considerable confusion amongst some candidates who clearly did not know what these interpretations meant.

- (b) **'Neither a Fundamentalist nor a Liberal approach is of any real help in understanding the Biblical texts.'** Discuss. [17]

This produced some rather polarised responses which, in some instances, tended to reflect personal faith positions rather than academic discussion. However, there were some good answers which considered the complexity of the debate.

- 12 (a) **Explain Biblical teaching about members of other faiths.** [33]

- (b) **'Biblical teaching about other faiths is unacceptable.'** Discuss. [17]

There were too few answers to this question to produce a report.

Part 6A – Eastern Religions – Buddhism

- 13 (a) **Explain the importance for Buddhism of the traditional stories of the Buddha's early life.** [33]

There were many interesting answers to this question. Some managed to argue convincingly about the importance of the stories for Buddhism without actually going into long narrative accounts of the stories concerned. More predictably there were many accounts of the stories themselves with generally less consideration of their importance.

- (b) **'The example of the Buddha's life is more important than his teachings.'** Discuss. [17]

Most candidates were able to argue successfully against the statement and establish that although the stories might help illuminate some of the teachings and certainly their origins, the Buddha himself had made it clear that it was his teachings which were important for life.

- 14 (a) **Explain Hindu teachings about atman and karma.** [33]
(b) **'Buddhism was a complete rejection of Hindu teachings.'** Discuss. [17]

There were too few responses to this question to produce a report.

Part 6B – Eastern Religions – Hinduism

- 15 **When they divided Man, Into how many parts did they divide him? (Purusha Sukta)**
(a) **Explain what the Purusha Sukta teaches about the central role of sacrifice in creation.** [33]
(b) **'The stories in the Purusha Sukta are myths and tell us nothing about the world or the gods.'** Discuss. [17]

There were too few responses to this question to produce a report.

- 16 (a) **Explain, with examples, the difference between sruti and smriti.** [33]
(b) **To what extent do the Vedas have authority for Hindu life today?** [17]

There were too few responses to this question to produce a report.

Part 7 – Islam

- 17 (a) **Explain why, for Muslims, Muhammad is the last prophet.'** [33]

This was the most popular of these two questions and there were some good responses based on the teachings of Islam and the Prophet himself. Most candidates were able to explain Muhammad's role and also to show how this was different from the other Prophets of the Qur'an.

- (b) **To what extent is Islam a rejection of the religious beliefs of pre-Islamic Arabia?** [17]

This was generally less well done. As is often the case, candidates seemed uncertain of the religious beliefs of pre-Islamic Arabia but there were a few good, well-argued answers.

- 18 (a) **Explain the social and religious conditions in al-Madinah at the time of the arrival of Muhammad Δ.** [33]

The question focused on al-Madinah though many candidates appeared to want to write about Makkah instead. Similarly many answers considered the religious conditions at length and tended to ignore the social ones.

- (b) **'Without the emigration to al-Madinah, Islam would probably not have been established.' Discuss.** [17]

There were many better answers to this part of the question. There were some thoughtful responses which, although some became sidetracked into the Prophet or Statesman debate, nevertheless were able to produce good answers.

Part 8 – Judaism

- 19 (a) **Explain why the phrase a 'chosen people' is often misunderstood.** [33]

This was the more popular of the two questions and there were some excellent responses which gave full consideration to the term and the various reasons for it being generally misunderstood.

- (b) **'Being Jewish is a blessing not a burden.' Discuss.** [17]

Although perhaps not as well done as part (a) there were nevertheless good responses to (b) which were able to weigh up the argument.

- 20 (a) **Explain the use of the Tenakh in daily life and in worship.** [33]

Only a few answers were confused as to what the Tenakh was. Most candidates were able to write clearly about the parts of the Tenakh and the different ways in which they are used in life and worship.

- (b) **'People cannot live their daily lives by following a book which is thousands of years old.' Discuss.** [17]

Again, here, there were good balanced responses which gave consideration to both sides of the argument and generally concluded that the statement had merit even though there was much to say against it.

2761 Philosophy of Religion 1 (AS)

- 1 There were many poor attempts to answer the questions on this paper some candidates addressed the questions well, with only a minority addressing them very well and a significant number failed to give a satisfactory response; the latter candidates showing little evidence of knowledge of the course contents. A majority of candidates answered the questions 'generally' rather than focusing on the specific requirements of individual questions, thus denying themselves the opportunity to achieve the highest bands; this was the case with some obviously high calibre candidates who it would seem had not practised targeting answers with relevant information. The evaluation parts of each question drew some very poor responses; many candidates seemed unsure about the way to gain credit in evaluation questions tending to recording rather than considering viewpoints.

Question No

- 1 (a) This was a surprisingly popular question. Weaker answers did not concentrate on Kant's Moral Argument; instead they simply explained his ethics. Many candidates had good understanding of Summum Bonum and Categorical Imperative; others however saw the 'summum bonum as a reward for living a good life. Better answers explained the 3 postulates of practical reason in detail and recognised how Kant postulated the existence of God. Other good responses were also able to explain the importance of reason or of the Good Will.
- (b) Some candidate's misread 'immorality' for 'immortality' which made for some very confused answers. Others gave a general answer about human morality, often using material they had revised for the problem of evil which was given credit at the appropriate level of response. Only a minority recognised and explored the link with Kant's moral argument.
- 2 (a) A number of candidates made good and relevant use of Anselm's first and second arguments to highlight the context Gaunilo's response. Most candidates knew Gaunilo's island example. Weaker answers merely stated it, whereas stronger answers could clearly demonstrate how and why the argument countered Anselm. The best answers were able to go on to discuss the difference between a contingent island, which has no intrinsic maximum, and the understanding of God as having necessary existence as explained in the Proslogion 1 to 3.
- (b) This question tended to lead candidates away from the ontological argument and into Aquinas' 3rd way and Copleston's cosmological argument. Fewer (higher band) answers made the link between a necessary God and contingent beings, most instead tended to focus on contingency within the universe and the need for a cause.
- 3 (a) This was a very popular question where many higher band answers showed a clear understanding of the different approaches of Augustine and Irenaues. Weaker responses had difficulty with the concept of natural evil and focussed on moral evil, its causes and effects or simply described one of the theodicies. Unfortunately some candidates confused Augustine and Irenaues, while others failed to address the issue of natural evil and gave general descriptions of the 2 theodicies. The weakest answers showed no sign of having read any of the theodicies and simply listed anecdotes about evil with some personal views on what God ought to do about it.

- (b)** Generally, this question was well answered giving the candidates lots of scope for general discussions on the problem of evil. Higher band responses tailored their answer to the question and discussed whether this made it impossible for God to exist. This question also attracted those weaker answers where candidates state rather than argue their personal views which make it difficult for examiners to find philosophical analysis worthy of credit.
- 4 (a)** Fewer candidates chose this question. Those who did tended to focus on either religious experience or Marx' sociological challenges so could not achieve the higher bands. Some explanation of both sides was required. Those who produced the best answers demonstrated a sound understanding of how Marx could be used as a critique of the argument from religious experience.
- (b)** Most candidates tended to state an opinion but seemed to provide little evidence to support their views. Often answers were limited by candidates reading of the question - some only using criticisms of Marx's approach to religion rather than concentrating on his effect on the argument from religious experience.
- 5 (a)** This was probably the most popular question on the paper. Aquinas' Ways 1 and 2 were clearly explained. Way 3 was less well understood. Weaker responses were limited to a description of Aquinas' argument, which in this case could only achieve a mark in the general topic band. Better answers also explained some strengths and weaknesses to a greater or lesser extent. Many candidates used Hume to highlight the perceived weaknesses in the argument with some giving a sophisticated account of the weaknesses inherent in Hume's position as well.
- (b)** Although this was a fairly straight forward critique of the Cosmological Argument, some candidates failed to present a clear argument. Many linked the statement to Russell but only the better candidates could fully explain what was meant; namely arguing that the universe required no explanation or First Cause and how this could undermine Aquinas' argument.
- 6 (a)** The question misled a number of candidates who did not understand the expected focus on Jung and those psychologists with a more positive view of religious belief. Hence, weaker candidates focussed on Freud's theory and gave a negative view of religion. Some more able candidates showed adequate knowledge of Jung using technical terms such as archetype and collective unconscious correctly, with fewer having a complete understanding of how and why religious belief was essential to individuation and a psychic reality.
- (b)** Most candidates seemed to be pleased to be able to talk about psychology generally rather than being tied down to the view of psychologists such as Jung. However many just asserted very general view in an unsupported manner. Better responses were able to point to the lack of scientific evidence for this view, arguing that views which Jung claimed to be psychic facts cannot be proved through scientific experiments. Others also pointed to the danger in Jung's position that God seems to be simply a creation of the human mind which is a significantly different view from Judaeo-Christian philosophers.

2762 Religious Ethics 1 (AS)

General Comments

Most candidates performed well and rose to the challenge of the paper. However, those questions that asked candidates to relate ethical theories to medical ethics were not so well answered, as they either wrote about the ethical theory or about the medical ethical issue.

Candidates managed the time well.

1 (a) **Explain the differences between Bentham's and Mill's versions of Utilitarianism.**

This was the most popular question, and most candidates did well. Generally there were clear descriptions of Bentham and Mill, with better candidates explaining the differences between the versions, and why Mill attempted to improve on Bentham's version of Utilitarianism. Very few candidates gave good examples in their answers.

(b) Most did, however, refer to quantitative/qualitative, act/rule in their answers.

'Utilitarianism is the best approach to euthanasia.' Discuss.

Many stock answers taking account of the feelings of the family where Utilitarianism would justify euthanasia as the family outnumbered the patient. Some tended to apply Utilitarianism to euthanasia without assessing whether it is a good approach or not.

Good responses discussed justice and rights. The best candidates were able to refer to differences in approach between act and rule and the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches.

2 (a) **Explain how the ethics of the religion you have studied might be applied to genetic engineering.**

This was not a very popular question. Good answers used Natural Law and Situation Ethics as examples of religious ethics, but many answers were rather vague, with a knowledge of genetic engineering limited to IVF. They also tended to limit answers to 'the ten commandments say do not kill.'

(b) **'Religious ethics are not consequentialist.' Discuss.**

Even if candidates had not mentioned Natural Law or Situation Ethics in part a) they used them effectively in part b).

Weak candidates did not understand 'consequentialist', or thought that all ethical theories were religious.

3 (a) Explain how a follower of Virtue Ethics might respond to the issues raised by abortion.

Most candidates seemed to understand Virtue Ethics, but had difficulty applying it to abortion. Some students talked about either abortion or Virtue Ethics, but not both.

There were, however, some excellent discussions of how to apply the virtues and what was the Golden Mean. Good candidates explained that there would not be one set response.

(b) 'Virtue ethics is not the best response to ethical decision-making.' Discuss.

If candidates understood Virtue Ethics there were effective answers, sometimes with good comparisons to other ethical theories.

Weaker candidates struggled with Virtue Ethics but did manage to include other ethical theories.

4 (a) Explain the main principles of Kant's theory of duty.

This was another very popular question. Good candidates wrote straightforward and logical responses, exploring the link between good will and duty and contrasting the Hypothetical and Categorical Imperatives.

Some candidates got confused and wrote at length about duty, not grasping that the Categorical Imperative is all part of Kant's idea of duty.

(b) 'Duty does not help when making decisions about abortion.' Discuss.

Some very good responses here, but again many candidates made the same error as in 1(b) – writing about how to apply Kant to abortion, with little if any analysis.

Most candidates did make the link to universalisability and the fact that Kant took the emotion out of making the decision.

5 (a) Explain how a follower of Kant would approach the issues surrounding the right to a child.

This was not a very popular question, and many of the candidates who answered this did not understand the issue of 'right to a child'. Many argued from the point of view of divorce and who the children should live with, finding it difficult to apply Kant.

Some candidates interpreted 'right to a child' as abortion, and so produced weak responses.

(b) 'The right to a child is an absolute right.' Discuss.

There were many weak responses to this question, especially if they thought the 'right to a child' referred to abortion. Few students seemed to understand the demands of the question.

6 (a) 'Explain how a follower of Natural Law might approach the issues surrounding embryo research.'

The responses here were varied, the best candidates explained that Natural Law would be against embryo research and gave clear reasons, but also commented that some might say that it could justify embryo research through improvements in knowledge leading to the preservation of life.

Most gave satisfactory responses based on the preservation of life demanded by the five precepts.

However, there were still too many candidates who said that embryo research is not allowed by Natural Law simply by virtue of being not natural as it does not follow natural laws!

(b) 'Natural Law is the best approach to embryo research.' Discuss

Even if candidates struggled with part (a) they were often able to give good responses to this, as they were able to analyse the opposition of Natural Law to embryo research.

Lots of contrast with Utilitarianism, simply because it would provide the greatest good for the greatest number!

2763 Jewish Scriptures 1 (AS)

General Comments

There were less than 100 candidates for this paper but a wide range of ability was represented and the questions seem to have been not only of equal parity but to have been accessible whilst achieving the intended differentiation. There were very few rubric infringements and most candidates managed to complete the paper within the one hour time limit. Good candidates addressed the questions according to the two assessment objectives and most were careful not to repeat material. Cross accreditation was given where appropriate. There were some excellent responses which quoted the set texts appropriately, made reference to issues of date, authorship, purpose and historicity when relevant and were a pleasure to read. Most candidates of all abilities seemed to have enjoyed their studies and to have benefited from them.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 (a) Describe how the covenant with Moses was different from previous covenants. [33]

Candidates who chose this question tended to begin with a summary of the life of Moses and then to list the Ten Commandments. A few scholarly responses made reference to these as apodictic laws and explained that Exodus 20-24 included other laws besides the Decalogue for the newly formed nation of Israel. Some candidates went on to explain that, like the previous covenants with Abraham, the Mosaic covenant is specific to the Jewish people. Quite a few explained also that all Jewish people ever since those times are expected to agree to the conditions of the Sinai covenant, mediated by Moses, just like, as descendants of Abraham, the Jews agree to circumcision because of the covenant with Abraham.

What differentiated between the responses to this question was the extent to which the candidates knew anything about the previous covenants. The earlier covenants in the specification are those that G-d made with Adam, Noah and Abraham. The covenants with Adam and Noah were with the whole of humankind. Responses did not work very well when comparisons were made with, for example, the Davidic or other later covenants.

(b) To what extent did the covenant with Moses replace all previous covenants? [17]

Candidates who were confused about the 'previous covenants' in the first part of the response were unable to discuss sensibly the extent to which the Mosaic covenant superseded or built upon and incorporated previous ones. Obviously, arguments need to be based on correct facts to be fully effective.

Good discussions tended to build on the idea that God's promises and covenants such as the commission to Adam and the Noahide laws were for all humankind whilst those with Abraham, such as the covenant of circumcision, and the Mosaic Torah had specific significance for Judaism. Some candidates saw the covenant with Moses as part of the whole covenant story and explained that the Jewish nation were accepting their role as a kingdom of priests to lead humankind back to the blessings promised to Adam.

2 (a) Describe the main differences between the covenants with Abraham and with Moses. [33]

Most candidates who chose this title gave fairly good summaries of the covenants with Abraham and Moses in that they emphasised circumcision in the Abraham story and the Law in the Sinai covenant as two distinctive and therefore different features

which were obviously main differences. Some went on to demonstrate understanding of the significance of both the covenant of circumcision and of the role of the Torah in Judaism to the present day. Problems came for quite a number of the candidates when they tried to develop the themes. They did not seem to have enough knowledge of the set passages and some resorted to finding the requisite differences in facts such as Abraham had left Ur and Moses had left Egypt though both were making for the Promised Land.

- (b) 'The stories of the covenants with Abraham and with Moses lose all significance unless they are accepted as historically true.' Discuss. [17]**

Discussions of types of literature found in the Jewish Scriptures and the purposes and integrity of editors and compilers led to some excellent considerations of the extent to which historicity might or might not be of significance. There were some good discussions also from candidates who were familiar with recent evidence used in reputable historical and archaeological debates and television programmes but some candidates argued illogically, as if proving the existence of camels etc. also proved the existence of Abraham and Moses. As usual some candidates were content to explain, simply or quite eloquently, that religion is all about faith or about trust in revealed books or that the long history of Judaism provides enough validation without consideration of the historicity of the origins.

- 3 (a) Explain what G-d required of the Jews in the covenants you have studied. [33]**

This was the least popular of the three options in part 1 possibly because the question obviously required familiarity with the set texts but the full range of ability was evident in the responses. Some candidates went through the set texts giving a brief account of each covenant and indicating the required response each time. Other candidates began with a general introduction about covenants before going through the texts and tried to distinguish between covenants and contracts and how far covenants by their very definition might be assumed to include stipulations. Some made comparisons with suzerainty treaties in the ancient near east. Reference was made by many to the command to Adam and then to Noah to be stewards of the earth, the obedience of Abraham in leaving one land for another and instituting circumcision and the acceptance of the Mosaic Law by the Jewish nation. Candidates were not expected to provide comprehensive accounts but some actually did manage to include 'they shall each know me' from Jeremiah. Some managed to resolve how to include David by using this covenant as proof that G-d did not always require anything but rather bestowed blessing and promises.

- (b) 'The covenants show a developing relationship between God and the Jews.' Discuss. [17]**

The specification encourages study of the way in which the idea develops through the texts from a largely single-sided agreement on the part of G-d to a two-way agreement between G-d and humanity and the candidates who chose this option seemed to have some awareness of this. They mainly used the covenants they had explained in the first part of the question but often argued that the covenants between God and the Jews remains basically the same covenant ever since the time of Abraham. God promised a people and a land and to fulfil this promise to Abraham the Jews needed to be enabled to become a political nation under the Mosaic Law. Other candidates, equally effectively, then placed the discussion of the role of the Jews into the wider context of the covenant with the whole of humanity.

4 (a) Explain why and when the book of Jonah might have been written. [33]

This was a popular question but quite a few candidates simply used it as the opportunity to tell the story of Jonah presumably to address ‘why’ the book was written. Some candidates did explain that one main purpose of the story is to show that Jonah was in the wrong when he refused to preach to the Ninevites and also later when he was angry because they repented and were forgiven by G-d. The candidates went on to explain that this is meant to show that G-d forgives people if they are sorry, even Gentiles. Some thoughtful candidates homed in on the theme of universalism for clues as to both ‘why’ and ‘when’ the book of Jonah might have been written and discussed whether it was before or after the destruction of Nineveh in 612 BCE.

Some, however, never got beyond simple lessons drawn from the story (e.g. the book advises you to do what G-d tells you and not to run away and to remember that G-d knows best) and gave very little explanation of the time when the book might have been written. Some candidates wrote that Jonah must have been the author because nobody else would know some parts of the story. They identified Jonah with the prophet in 2 Kings in the reign of Jeroboam II (eighth century BCE) and then added that Jonah was the prophet sent by Elisha to anoint Jehu.

(b) ‘The book of Jonah is of less importance today than when it was written.’ Discuss. [17]

It seems that it was this part of the question that had attracted some of the apparently weaker candidates and they did engage with the question. With enthusiasm many disagreed with the statement, repeated the lessons about the inability to hide from G-d or resist G-d’s wishes which they had covered in the first part of the question and asserted that these are either even more important today or that they will always be important. Some argued that the book is less important today because we do not believe people can be swallowed by a big fish like they believed in the past.

Those candidates who had concentrated on universalism and/or lessons about justice and mercy usually acquitted themselves well. There were some interesting points raised about themes which are always relevant because they are true but are particularly meaningful at different times of history, yet often in diverse situations never dreamt of by the original author. Some candidates made the connection with the variety of types of literature found in the Jewish Scriptures and argued that a story does not even have to be literally true to fulfil the purpose for which it was written and to have enduring importance.

5 (a) With reference to Job 1-14, explain the points of view expressed by Job’s friends. [33]

Candidates usually began with a detailed account of Job’s sufferings and the arrival of his “comforters”. Some candidates also told the story of the scene in the heavenly court in some detail. Others gave no real account of what the friends said then rapidly went on to explain that Job was not comforted because the arguments did not apply to his situation and that he continued to refute the arguments and to protest his innocence. The main weakness was not engaging properly with the points of view expressed by Job’s friends. Some candidates provided extremely general outlines of the traditional Jewish view of reward and punishment rather than supporting their explanation with any reference to the arguments in the set text.

Material selected from commentaries gained some credit but the best responses tended to be from the few candidates who demonstrated knowledge and

understanding of the points of view in the first round of arguments offered by Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar with details of what the “comforters” actually said.

(b) ‘The book of Job raises more questions than it answers.’ Discuss. [17]

Some candidates seemed more comfortable with this part of the question but responded by simply reiterating that the book suggests the traditional reasons for suffering are wrong in the case of Job because he was innocent as we can see from the scene in the heavenly court. A few thought to challenge the portrayal of G-d and question the unfair treatment of Job. Most agreed that the book does not answer why the innocent suffer but there were some good discussions about the nature of the book and the extent to which the writer was exploring rather than explaining the problem of suffering. A number of candidates acknowledged that the book seems to opt out of providing answers except that trust in G-d is essential.

6 (a) Explain what Jonah and Job each learned about G-d. [33]

Question 6 was marginally less popular than the other two options in part 2 but was addressed fairly well by those who chose it. Most dealt with Jonah and then with Job. Once again, some candidates simply used the opportunity to tell the story of Jonah and the ‘whale’ etc. but they did manage to address the question by explaining that people cannot hide from G-d and that Jonah learnt about G-d’s omnipresence as well as G-d’s omnipotence. Some went on to describe how Jonah ended up having to preach to the Ninevites and grew angry because they repented and were forgiven by G-d. Some candidates explained that this shows that G-d forgives people if they are sorry whilst others included the theme of G-d’s concern for the Gentiles. Most candidates managed to describe what happened to Job and some commented on the fact that he never learned, as the reader did, the role that the Satan played in testing him. Some explained that, like Jonah, Job experienced the futility of trying to resist the power of G-d and that, in the end, he came to terms with his suffering and he learned to trust G-d, which is the only sensible response.

(b) ‘The books of Jonah and Job are similar types of literature.’ Discuss. [17]

Most candidates thought the books were similar and some referred back to the teaching in both books about, for example, the power of G-d. Others argued that the content and purpose are similar in that both books are about people who suffered and both are valuable to believers who read them.

There were some scholarly discussions especially where the candidates identified the categories into which the books might fall. Some candidates referred to Job as Wisdom literature which explores universal questions but acknowledged its specifically Jewish theological dimension and argued that this made it more similar to Jonah and they championed Jonah as far more profound than the fairytale which people often take it to be.

2764 New Testament 1 (AS)

General Comments

The general performance of candidates was satisfactory. There were fewer candidates for alternative A – the Early Church than for Alternative B – The Gospels.

Answers showed a wide range of ability and maturity but the main weakness, overall, was a lack of sufficient detail or evidence from the prescribed texts to support interpretations of meaning or evaluative opinions.

Comments on individual questions

Alternative A – The Early Church

Part 1 and Part 2

Questions 1-6

There were responses to all these questions but overall too few candidates to make a subject report on each question.

Alternative B – The Gospels

Part 1

- 7 (a) **Compare the accounts of the arrest of Jesus in the gospels of Mark and John.** [33]

This was a popular question and the best responses demonstrated accurate knowledge and interpretation of the meaning of the differences and similarities in the two accounts. There were also some perceptive reflections on the motives of the gospel writers in the presentation of their account of the arrest. Weaker answers showed a lot of confusion in the retelling of events and missed out details of significant conversations and actions.

- (b) **'According to the gospel accounts, Jesus expected his arrest but not his death.'** [7]

In general, the performance on this question was pleasing, with some excellent answers, which achieved the highest level of marks. Some interesting responses evaluated the difference in the two gospels in the portrayal of Jesus at his arrest and death and reached conclusions about the different literary styles and purposes of Mark and John. However, a straightforward assessment of the evidence with consideration of different points of view also produced some successful answers.

- 8 (a) **Explain why Jesus had more than one trial.** [33]

There were some good answers to this question but in the majority of cases answers were marred by confusion about the details of the different trials in Mark and John. Only a few saw this as an opportunity to write generally about the situation of Roman governance in Palestine and the relationship between the Jews and the Romans or about the motives of the different parties involved.

- (b) **'Jesus was killed for purely religious reasons.'** Discuss. [17]

Answers were generally better in part (b) of the question than in part (a). Those who had demonstrated confusion in part (a) were able to offer a number of arguments both in support of the statement and against it. The best answers showed a sophisticated assessment of the Jewish and Roman verdicts balanced against God's plan of sacrifice and redemption.

- 9 (a) **Explain the different endings of Mark's gospel.** [33]
(b) **'It would have been better to leave the gospel with the shorter ending (Mark 16:1-18).'** Discuss. [17]

Too few candidates answered this question to produce a subject report.

Part 2

- 10 (a) **Explain why the Passover was an important event in the Passion narratives.** [33]

This was the most popular question in Part 2. The majority of candidates answered it but the level of achievement was immensely varied. Some excellent responses understood the significance of the Passover as a Jewish festival and the symbolism drawn upon by the gospel writers in their presentation of the Passion narrative. The best of these also acknowledged the meaning of this symbolism for Christians today. The majority wrote about the Last Supper as a Passover meal and the symbolism of sacrifice. However, in some responses there was a weakness of detail and confusion between Sabbath and Passover and little evidence of any real understanding.

- (b) **'It is important for Christian teaching that Jesus was killed during Passover.'** Discuss. [17]

The response to this question was generally pleasing. There were some perceptive assessments as to the way in which the Passover symbolism is used by Christians (e.g. in liturgy) balanced with arguments about the resurrection and Easter and whether the timing of the death of Jesus had religious significance or was an historical coincidence. On the whole, candidates engaged with this question and offered relevant arguments at different levels of sophistication, which reflected their ability.

- 11 (a) **Explain the issues connected with the ending of John's gospel (John 21).** [33]
(b) **The last chapter of John's gospel is the least important one.'** Discuss. [17]

Too few candidates answered this question to make a subject report. There were some instances of responses solely about Chapter 20 without reference to Chapter 21.

- 12 (a) **From John's gospel explain the significance of the presence of the Beloved Disciple at the empty tomb and by Lake Tiberias.** [33]

Some very good answers, which showed, detailed knowledge of both events and the significance of the Beloved disciple in John's gospel. Selection and deployment of information from the texts discriminated between answers. There were only a few weak answers. Those who attempted this question were mostly confident of the material even when some details were omitted.

(b) 'The Beloved disciple was the only disciple who understood the resurrection.'
Discuss. **[17]**

This was also well answered by candidates who were confident about the accounts of the resurrection in John. Most offered different point of view although the coherence of the arguments differed according to the depth of understanding of the accounts. Generally, arguments compared the different reactions of the other disciples e.g. Peter, Mary Magdalene, Thomas and those fishing by Lake Tiberias with those of the Beloved Disciple. Some responses assessed the evidence about the identity of the Beloved Disciple and his connection with the gospel.

2765 Developments in Christian Thought 1

General Comments

All questions were attempted; questions 3 and 6 were the least popular. There were plenty of opportunities for candidates to show off their knowledge but too many answered in general terms without focussing on the question. Some of the best answers were not long but were succinct and precise.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question No

- 1 (a) This was quite a popular question and evinced some good answers. Many candidates displayed an in-depth knowledge of key Pauline texts and were able to account for the seeming contradictions in Paul's thought.
- (b) Candidates argued this question well and blamed the Old Testament or later writers such as Aquinas for sexist attitudes.
- 2 (a) Many candidates merely recounted the Genesis stories and those who did refer to Augustine confused aspects of his thought with Aquinas. Few displayed a precise in-depth knowledge of Augustine but there were some notable exceptions particularly by those who were able to discuss his Platonic roots and the obedient and deliberative aspects of the soul.
- (b) This question was well done. Candidates recognised that although Augustine was influential other factors such as the Bible, Aquinas and patriarchal societies were also to blame for sexist attitudes in Christianity.
- 3 (a) Although some candidates were able to talk in general terms about radical feminism few were able to develop precisely the range of ideas in radical post-Christian feminism. Only a few had an accurate feel for either Daly's or Hampson's work and very few were able to expound their ideas in any depth.
- (b) Many mistook feminist theology for feminism in general and talked about women's rights at lengths without mentioning a theological approach. Of those who did discuss feminist theology the consensus seemed to be that it had had its day, however a few did consider the continuing contribution of reconstructionist feminist theology and womanism.
- 4 (a) This was a popular question but generally not well done. Nevertheless there were some good answers which were able to talk about Marx and relate his ideas to different ideas of sin and social justice in the Bible. Many just described Liberation Theology in general.
- (b) There were many good answers to this question and candidates were able to see the positive and negative affects of capitalism. Only the best gave any sort of theological perspective.

Report on the Units taken in January 2008

- 5 (a)** Candidates managed this question well and recounted key features of first and second act praxis, although surprisingly many failed to outline the three mediations.
- (b)** This prompted some good debates though some had little idea what theology meant. Jesus' action in the Temple and his healing miracles featured largely.
- 6 (a)** This was not a popular question and it was generally not well done. Few could distinguish in any depth what these terms meant. However, those who did answer well were able to consider the evolution of the ideas from the conferences at Medellin and Puebla and then relate orthopraxis with key Liberation Theology themes such as justice and the preferential option for the poor.
- (b)** Some ably discussed the Roman Catholic Church's attitude to action and theology but many fudged the question through misinterpretation of theology.

2766 Eastern Religions 1

General Comments

Questions 1 and 6 were the most popular questions. Stronger responses tended to address all aspects of the questions set, whereas weaker responses tended to address one aspect at the expense of other areas of the question.

Some candidates wrote responses which would have been more suitable as answers to questions in previous exam sessions. Centres may wish to remind candidates of the importance of addressing the question set.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question No

1 (a) This was the most popular question in this section.

A number of weaker responses seemed limited to explaining that kamma meant that every action had a reaction, and made little effort to explore the nature of kamma, its links to other Buddhist concepts such as dependent origination, or most crucially its importance to Buddhists.

The best responses had a clear understanding of the importance of kamma either as a motivation for good behaviour, or as an integral factor in the system of samsara.

(b) The best responses tended to offer a comparison with other Buddhist concepts, such as dukkha, nibbana or dependent origination, before reaching a conclusion.

Weaker responses tended to state that kamma was the most important concept in Buddhist thought without offering any evidence to support this view.

2 (a) Some candidates offered superficial statements explaining that the amount of good or bad kamma accumulated by a person determined their next rebirth.

The best responses usually focused on an exploration of the role of kamma in the cycle of dependent origination, and the effect of kammic habits on the thought processes at the moment of death.

(b) Candidates appeared to struggle with this question, often demonstrating poor knowledge of the processes involved at and following death within Buddhism.

A few were able to explore the processes involved at the moment of death and explore whether the term rebecoming was appropriate. Some of these considered whether the term was appropriate for the rebirth process, but inappropriate when pari-nibbana was achieved.

3 (a) Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

(b) Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

- 4 (a) Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
(b) Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

- 5 (a) Weaker responses tended to be limited to an assertion that the monastic sangha preserve the Buddha's teachings.

The best responses often considered the Buddha's creation of the monastic and fourfold sangha. They then explored the role of the monastic sangha in exemplifying, preserving and perpetuating the teachings of the Buddha.

- (b) There was a wide variation in the quality of responses to this question. Weaker candidates tended to disagree with the statement, but were often unable to provide evidence to support their position.

Better responses tended to explore other purposes of the monastic sangha, such as providing an ideal lifestyle for the bhikkhus, before reaching a conclusion.

- 6 (a) There appeared to be a tendency in this response to use preprepared material better suited to a more general question on the nature of the three marks of existence. Centres may wish to remind candidates of the need to answer the question asked.

Weaker responses tended to outline the three marks of existence, but often failed to address the ways in which believing in them might affect the life of a Buddhist. A few candidates were unaware of the distinction between anatta and anicca.

The best responses tended to offer specific example of the ways in which believing in the three marks of existence might affect the attitudes and/or behaviour of a Buddhist.

- (b) Weak responses tended to assert views, without offering evidence to support them.

Better responses tended to explore reasons for the importance of all three marks, before reaching a conclusion.

- 7 (a) Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

- (b) Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

- 8 (a) Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

- (b) Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

- 9 (a) Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

- (b) Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

Report on the Units taken in January 2008

- 10 (a)** Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
- (b)** Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
- 11 (a)** Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
- (b)** Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
- 12 (a)** Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
- (b)** Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

2767 Islam 1

General Comments

A wide range of ability was represented but overall the quality of the essays seemed less impressive than in previous years. Some candidates had prepared well for this examination and their scripts were a pleasure to read. The quality of English used by some candidates was poor though very few seemed to have difficulty in understanding the questions. One or two candidates seemed to misunderstand the rubric, answering only one part of each of the two essays chosen.

The three question options were virtually equally popular in Part 1 and elicited the full range of responses. Question 6 was the least popular question in Part 2. The most common combination was Question 1 and Question 5.

In addressing the evaluative questions, many candidates managed to support their opinion and sustain their presentation of evidence but were apparently reluctant to consider or anticipate the existence of other points of view in the discussion. Some candidates, however, seemed to think that discussion was required in the AO1 task and their essays usually demonstrated a surprising lack of basic knowledge, not only about the topics on the specification but about Islam in general.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 (a) Explain why salah is an essential part of Muslim life. [33]

Most candidates began with an introduction about salah as one of the Five Pillars and included the preparations. Some gave a summary also of the procedures, wrote about the example of Muhammad Δ and took the opportunity to explain the specified times within which Fajr, Zuhr, Asr, Maghrib and Isha are performed. The best candidates tended to include the Qur'anic commands concerning salah and made reference to Salat-ul-Jumu'ah.

The main weakness in a number of responses was addressing the question as if it had merely asked for the importance of salah rather than why it is essential.

(b) 'There are more important things in life than prayer.' Discuss with reference to Islam. [17]

Most candidates took the opportunity to offer the well rehearsed essay discussing the relative importance of each of the five pillars but some did it very well. The most effective discussions were those where candidates, in trying to present a balanced argument, developed points made earlier about the essential things in a Muslim life of submission and worship.

2 (a) Explain why the text of the Qur'an is regarded as infallible by Muslims. [33]

Most candidates gave quite detailed accounts of how Muhammad Δ received messages from 610 CE till 632 CE and some candidates showed knowledge and understanding of the concept of revelation. They made it clear that the authority is not just of Muhammad Δ the last prophet but of the very words of Allah. Candidates who chose this question seemed to be those who were confident they knew something substantial about the topic and some went on to include the guidance of Allah in the compilation of the Qur'an and to provide comments about the inspired beauty of the text. Very few mentioned 'the mother of the book'. The main weakness

in some scripts was a tendency to parade reasons why the Qur'an is important for Muslims rather than to focus on the infallibility of the Arabic text.

(b) 'The Qur'an can be properly understood in modern translations.' Discuss. [17]

To argue against the stimulus, some candidates moved seamlessly from (a) to (b) efficiently developing and applying the points they had made about infallibility in the first part of the question. Quite a few, however, almost contradicted their earlier explanations by extolling the virtues of translations. Some resorted to discussions about the difficulties of translation in general.

3 (a) Explain the theological significance of the design of a mosque. [33]

Some candidates attempted successfully to address the word 'theological' from the very start of the question. They tended to concentrate on religious purpose, symbolism or meaning in terms of worship including the significance of the Qiblah facing the Ka'bah which is said to be directly underneath the throne of Allah and is the very place where Allah began the creation of the world. Some candidates wrote well about features that help the community to function in purity and submission. Others decided to write about the mosque in general and ignore the actual question.

(b) 'The fact that there are no statues or pictures is the most significant feature of a mosque.' How far do you agree with this statement? [17]

Most candidates explained that Muslims do not have statues and pictures of Allah because Allah is beyond imagining or is too great to be portrayed by humans. Some said statues would be a distraction. Others went on to explain that only Allah is to be worshipped and that making an image or picture or any representation would be shirk. Responses were less confident when it came to suggesting the extent to which this is the most significant feature or suggesting alternative features beyond the fact that the mosque is a place meant for prayer.

4 (a) Explain how the rules for the payment and distribution of zakah reflect Muslim beliefs. [33]

Most candidates gave an introductory description of zakah as one of the Five Pillars and explained that payment of zakah is compulsory, usually two and a half per cent of surplus income paid annually. Only a few volunteered further explanatory details about the collection of zakah and explanations about distribution tended to be extremely superficial. Very few candidates made reference to the categories in the Qur'an. In addressing how the rules reflect Muslim beliefs most candidates managed some general remarks about Muslim attitudes to wealth and to sharing with the poor. There were some competent responses which explained that zakah is one of the basic economic principles in a Muslim state for social welfare and fair distribution of wealth and some candidates managed to include the fact that usury is forbidden.

(b) 'Zakah is meaningless without the right religious intention.' Discuss. [17]

Some candidates, with scenarios about poverty, simply argued that the recipients would never think zakah was meaningless. A number of candidates ignored the word 'religious' or did not get to grips with the stimulus. One or two managed successfully to argue that the right intention does not necessarily have to be religious. Some made use of the fact that zakah is said to purify the remainder of the owner's wealth and that the giver is purified from greed and avarice to argue that zakah is never meaningless. There were some excellent responses, however, which developed

points made in the first part about zakah being an act of ibadah and submission and an acknowledgement that everything belongs to Allah and that all people are equal as part of Ummah. Some, commenting on the importance of intention in Islam, concluded that Zakah is never meaningless but with the right religious intention it is more meaningful.

5 (a) Explain how sawm might strengthen Ummah. [33]

This popular question elicited the full range of responses. Most began with a description of sawm as one of the Five Pillars and demonstrated understanding that it entails fasting during the hours of daylight in the month of Ramadan. Some explained that the Qur'an was first revealed to Muhammad Δ in Ramadan and that it is the month when Allah looks with special favour on humanity. Those who concentrated on addressing the question about the potential for strengthening Ummah often produced thoughtful responses which considered the effects in practical and spiritual terms within the family and the community as well as worldwide. A number of candidates made reference to Zakat-ul-Fitr.

(b) 'Sawm is more about an individual's relationship with Allah than about being part of Ummah.' Discuss. [17]

Responses usually were based on points made in the first part of the question and quite a few candidates produced balanced discussions that demonstrated some understanding of the relationship of the individual and the community in Islam. One weakness was the tendency to simply try to compare the importance of keeping this Pillar for the individual's spiritual growth with the importance of the Pillar in strengthening Ummah rather than addressing 'being part of Ummah'. A few took 'more about' as an invitation to launch into 'all of the Five Pillars are equally important to the individual and to the Ummah' and did manage to make some of the discussion relevant to the topic.

6 (a) Explain what Surah 4 teaches about dealing with orphans. [33]

This was not a popular question probably because it required some knowledge of the set text. The few who attempted it tended to concentrate on generalisations about the treatment of women and orphans in pre-Islamic society and to contrast the equality found in Islam. The responses usually included the fact that Surah 4 is called al-Nisa (the women) and the first part of Surah 4 deals with women, orphans, inheritance, marriage and family rights. Most candidates explained that Muhammad Δ cared about orphans because of his situation as a child.

(b) 'Surah 4 is mainly concerned with protecting the weak.' Discuss. [17]

Candidates tended to use general Islamic teaching about equality of all Muslims in the eyes of Allah rather than referring to the actual teaching from Surah 4 but they did manage to address the question. Some simply gave an outline of the contents of the Surah in order to support the statement and others cited the context of the reforms at the start of Islam which were designed to protect the rights of the weak and the vulnerable. Some candidates did not use the opportunity given by the word, 'mainly' to widen the discussion whilst others addressed it by writing that Islam protects the rights of every Muslim not just the weak.

2768 Judaism 1

General Comments

There was generally a good performance on this unit. It was noticeable that some candidates were more successful in the selection and deployment of information in part (a) of questions than they were in using analytical skills in part (b).

The levels of understanding demonstrated in this unit were diverse and ranged from answers that contained comprehensive, accurate detail to ones which were inaccurate and uninformed. The selection and deployment of relevant information was a definite discriminating factor. There was evidence that some candidates were unable to distinguish between the important and the superficial aspects of some topics.

Comments on individual questions

Part 1

1 (a) **Explain the importance for Jews of the Law in Exodus 20.** [33]

(b) **Judaism could not survive without the Law.** [17]

Too few candidates answered this question to make a subject report.

2 (a) **Explain the purpose of mitzvot for Jews.** [33]

Answers to this question referred to the 613 mitzvot in general and then often gave examples of specific mitzvot to illustrate points about total commitment to God in Jewish life and practise. However, often the selection of material was random and eccentric and the interpretation of the meaning of carrying out mitzvot lacked sufficient depth. Selection and deployment of information discriminated between the good and weak candidates.

(b) **To what extent is it necessary for Jews to keep all mitzvot today?** [17]

There was a satisfactory performance on this question with the majority of responses showing awareness of the ambiguity of the Temple mitzvot for Jews today. Some answers, with varying success, evaluated the attitudes of the different traditions. The majority ascribed to the view that Jews should keep as many of the mitzvot as humanly possible. However, only a few answers developed their arguments sufficiently to gain the higher level of marks.

3 (a) **Explain the how principles of kashrut are applied in Jewish life.** [33]

There were some excellent answers to this question where examples of the principles of kashrut, as applied to e.g. food, clothes and money, were comprehensively explained. Unfortunately, some candidates saw this as an opportunity to write only about food and so limited their achievement.

(b) **'Kashrut divides not unites Jews.' Discuss.** [17]

This question was also well answered and approached in a variety of different ways. Some responses explored both unification and division among Jews over kashrut, including the social and religious anomalies, which can arise between Jewish groups according to different levels of observance. Other answers argued successfully about

the unifying influence of kashrut within Judaism but also assessed its role as a necessary division from non-Jews.

Part 2

- 4 (a) **Explain the significance of the various forms of Jewish worship in the home.** [33]

This was a fairly popular question. However, some candidates limited their achievement by confining their answer to prayer alone. The most successful responses were the ones that adopted the position that all Jewish life is a form of worship and explained the many aspects of this. There was plenty of material to write about and selection and deployment of information discriminated between the good and excellent answers.

- (b) **Worship in the synagogue should be more important to Jews than worship in the home. Discuss.** [17]

The best evaluations provided evidence and argument to show that worship in the home or synagogue is not a matter of relative importance but rather that the nature of the worship is different. There were some weak answers to this question that showed a lack of understanding of the role of the synagogue in Judaism.

- 5 (a) **Explain the religious purpose of Shabbat.** [33]

There was evidence that some candidates were unsure about the phrase 'religious purpose' and avoided using it in their answer. However, most responses that were a comprehensive explanation of the origins, significance, performance and observance of Shabbat did in fact serve to answer the question of religious purpose implicitly. In explaining that everything about Shabbat is religious, they adopted the position that its entire purpose is religious. Weaker answers were descriptive only.

- (b) **'Observing Shabbat is the most important aspect of Judaism.' Discuss.** [17]

Generally, this evaluation question was not answered with any great success. The best answers developed arguments from the information in (a) to support the statement and candidates balanced their views with other opinions about important aspects of Jewish religious life. In many weaker answers there was a tendency to only repeat information from (a) and attempt to make other arguments based on inaccurate or superficial knowledge of festivals etc.

- 6 (a) **Explain the religious significance of the Pilgrim Festivals for Jews.** [33]

The evidence was that this question presented few problems for the candidates who chose it. The three festivals and their religious significance were well known and, on the whole, candidates engaged with the material providing some interesting answers. Weak answers were in the minority but there were some responses that were full of inaccuracies or incomplete.

- (b) **'Shavuot should be the most important of the Pilgrim Festivals.' Discuss** [17]

Most responses attempted to present a balanced argument as to the relative importance of Shavuot and the other festivals. Candidates' performance usually reflected the level of understanding demonstrated in part (a) of the question, so there were some very good answers and some weak ones.

2769 Philosophy of Religion 2 (AS)

General Comments

The entry for the unit was slightly increased this January and most of the candidates showed at least reasonable knowledge and understanding of the subject. There were a few excellent scripts but a number of candidates let themselves down by a failure to focus on the question. A common problem in this paper seems to be candidates giving general topic answers that are knowledgeable but not focussed on the question. Some candidates were not taking sufficient notice of the trigger words and were assessing in part a) or explaining in part b). A surprisingly high proportion of scripts were unbalanced, having a very good answer to one question followed by a much weaker answer to the second. This may suggest that candidates have engaged in selective revision and had not prepared themselves sufficiently. This also came through in the lack of awareness of technical terms on some answers. There were no real favourites in terms of questions answered. All the questions seemed equally popular.

Comments on individual questions

Part 1

- 1 a) **Explain how an experience of the numinous may lead to an understanding of the nature of God**

Candidates answering this question tended to know in general terms what a numinous experience was. A few candidates explained clearly the implications for understanding God. A number of candidates lacked any detailed knowledge of Rudolf Otto, and for some this meant that they filled out their answer with much material of a general topic nature.

- b) **'Only numinous experiences should be accepted as veridical.' Discuss**

Candidates by and large did not understand the word veridical, however this did not prevent them giving a reasonable answer to the question. A common approach was to contrast the numinous with corporate experience or conversion experience. This was done with some success.

- 2 a) **Explain how God can be revealed to humanity through myth**

This question was popular. Better candidates were able to define what myths were and give clear examples of how they might reveal God. There was good knowledge of the creation stories which was the example that most candidates gave. A few candidates confused myths with parables and this led to poorer marks in those cases.

- b) **'Myth reveals more about God than analogy does.' Discuss**

Candidates were generally able to express and justify an opinion on this regardless of whether they had successfully answered part a. Some candidates began their answers by giving very detailed explanations of analogy. This was not necessary and was often at the expense of argument. However the knowledge and understanding was such that it may have been better had they done question 3.

3 a) Explain how different theories of analogy express the nature of God.

This question yielded some good answers. Most candidates were aware of the analogy of attribution and the analogy of proportionality from Aquinas and were able to explain these giving clear examples. Some candidates gave answers that featured Paley's analogy of the watch. Although this was not anticipated, credit was given when candidates linked this to the nature of God. Some candidates wrote at length about Plato's analogy of the cave; it was difficult to link this to God and these candidates did not do as well.

b) 'Despite the attempts of philosophers, religious language is still meaningless.' Discuss

Candidates answered this well often by explaining the problem of verifying religious statements and considering whether solutions such as analogy and symbol provided believers with a way of speaking meaningfully about God.

Part 2

4 a) Explain what is meant by the concept of resurrection.

Candidates' answers showed a range of approaches to this question. The concept of resurrection was explained from scripture using either the resurrection of Jesus or the teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. Other candidates used the thinking and examples of John Hick. Some candidates were confused in their understanding of resurrection and wrote responses that incorporated a range of different theories of life after death.

b) 'The concept of resurrection is incoherent.' Discuss

Candidates were able to make reasonable responses to this but there was little focus on the idea of coherence. This tended to be answered in terms of arguments for and against life after death. With a little more focus on the question, some candidates would have made excellent responses.

5 a) Explain why some philosophers argue that belief in an afterlife solves the problem of evil.

Some candidates failed to get to grips with the demands of this question and focused their answers on either the problem of evil or life after death. Candidates who performed well on this question brought in a range of responses including Irenaeus/Hick's ideas of universal salvation, Kant's Summum Bonum and the Hindu teaching on Karma. Some candidates attempted to use Plato's theory of the forms but were unsuccessful in linking this to the problem of evil.

b) 'The promise of an afterlife is an inadequate response to the problem of evil.' Discuss

Most candidates were able to provide arguments in response to this question often developing themes that they had raised in part a. A few candidates were able to engage in a sophisticated discussion that went beyond putting a few arguments.

6 a) Give an account of how God reveals himself to the world through miracles

Some candidates interpreted the question as 'Give an account of a few miracles' and as such there were several descriptive storytelling type answers. Better candidates were able to explain what these accounts teach about the nature of God and draw theological conclusions. Candidates illustrated their answers by reference to Biblical and more modern accounts. Credit was given for both of these approaches

b) 'All criticisms of miracles have proved to be invalid.' Discuss

This was well answered and enabled candidates to engage in discussion of the criticisms given by Hume and Wiles. A few candidates put both sides of the argument but did not seem to come to any clear conclusions.

2770 Religious Ethics 2

General Comments

Overall the candidates managed to access and address the questions set to a good standard. Many candidates demonstrated a high level of knowledge and understanding of the specification content and many showed that they had studies beyond the specification confines and had a real understanding of the complexities to the issues concerned. The answers which attracted the better marks were always the ones which addressed the exact wording of the question and presented clear explanations of their ideas. In particular the Ao2 questions where candidates were asked to discuss an issue, the better marks came from those who had clearly explained why a theory is good or bad/ strong or weak or why it was or was not a good theory to apply to an ethical issue. However, there are still a number of candidates who misread questions or give answers which are too general and these candidates are unlikely to attract the higher marks. This is particularly true of questions on Utilitarianism where candidates treat it as one ethical principle and discuss it as a whole rather than looking at the various formulations of Utilitarianism such as Act, Rule or even Preference Utilitarianism. Topics which cover a range of ethical issues such as sex and relationships also fall into this trap.

Comments on individual questions

- 1 (a) This question was generally well answered. Candidates demonstrated very good knowledge of determinism and free will and used this knowledge to explain how actions can be seen to be determined. However, some candidates failed to mention God in their answers and many spent too much time explaining determinism and not focusing on ideas of predestination. The better answers used the views of Paul, Augustine and Calvin to explain the ideas.
- (b) Candidates addressed this question well, many showing the variety of ways in which actions can be determined by either outside causes or by God. A range of evidence was used by candidates many of whom used Darrow as the focal point of their argument.
- 2 (a) This question was not well answered. All but a very few candidates gave very general answers. Many candidates used the principle of 'the greatest happiness to the greatest numbers' to discuss in very general terms sex and relationships, very few distinguished between act and rule utilitarianism. Very few candidates chose a specific topic, the ones that did discussed divorce and homosexuality and they generally gained the higher marks.
- (b) This was answered in a similar way to part a. Candidates gave very general answers again using general principles and general topics rather than specifics. The better answers used aspects of Utilitarianism (such as act or rule) and showed how this might be applied to specific issues such as divorce and homosexuality. These answers tended to attract higher marks.
- 3 (a) This question was generally well answered. Candidates had a very good understanding of Aquinas' view on conscience. Almost all candidates knew and used Aquinas' ideas of synderesis and conscientia, although some did mix up the definitions. Only a few candidates made reference to Aquinas' idea that people naturally tended towards good and away from evil. However, this did not adversely affect candidates marks.

- (b) Candidates gave a variety of answers to this question. Almost all candidates could explain that many have argued for conscience being innate but some took their evidence from Aquinas, Butler and Newman others from Freud. The majority of candidates used Freud's arguments.
- 4 (a) Questions about religious ethics are generally answered poorly and this question was no exception. The few candidates who did answer it well applied Christianity to the issue of justice in times of war. These candidates used Biblical references as a starting point and then discussed ethical theories such as Natural Law and Situation ethics (pointing out that these are ethical theories written by Christians and not Christian ethical theories). This question also caused problems for candidates who did not read the question. The question wanted candidates to focus on how wars should be fought rather than just describing the just war theory as too many candidates did.
- (b) This question was well answered especially compared to the part a. Candidates used a variety of different evidence to show how behaviour in war time can be different to behaviour during peace time. Many candidates focused on the idea of killing and discussed the ethics of killing during war and peace.
- 5 (a) Very few candidates attempted this question. Those that did were far too general in their explanations of moral relativism to attract the higher marks. Candidates did however, have a good understanding of euthanasia and the issues surrounding it.
- (b) Again this was not well answered because candidates gave very general discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of moral relativism.
- 6 (a) This question was generally well answered. Most candidates focused on the second formulation of the categorical imperative 'treat humans as a end in themselves and not a means to an end' rather than on the ideas of duty or as stated in the marking scheme whether pacifism is advocated based on the kingdom of ends.
- (b) Candidates answered this question well. Most candidates used the lack of consideration for consequences and the conflict of principles to show the weaknesses of Kantian ethics. Most also showed the counter argument by focusing on Kant's absolutist principles which stop it from being subjective.

2781 Philosophy of Religion 2 (Extended Essay)

- 1 Although there were, as always, sound responses, it was notable that many candidates struggled with answering the precise questions set, writing instead general essays about miracles, the afterlife or religious language without the necessary focus. Candidates would be well advised to study the published levels of response criteria used by examiners, perhaps paying particular attention to the credit given to candidates who genuinely consider philosophical arguments rather than thinking that a list of the views of others, with the occasional 'however', constitutes an argument. A disappointingly large number of candidates wrote formula essays, following patterns given by teachers rather than taking the opportunity to develop their own research and thinking skills. At this level, the best answers demonstrate philosophical skill which goes beyond rote learning. Examiners look for those able to engage philosophically rather than merely descriptive work. Some candidates failed to recognise that this is a philosophical paper – statements of personal belief, however sincerely held, do not constitute rigorous argument.

A growing problem is the number of candidates who simply believe that a close paraphrase of an item on the internet or in a textbook is a substitute for demonstrating their own skills in argument. Particularly evident was how few candidates were prepared to engage with the original – even very brief – texts by thinkers. As a result, these essays lacked the insight and subtlety of those prepared to examine critically even brief sources. This is a particular problem in areas, such as verification and falsification, where secondary sources are often very unreliable, repeating each other's errors. Problems of interpretation would have been dealt with effectively by recourse to the original.

Most candidates managed to stay within the word limit for their essays, though a few still ignore the instruction on occasion writing up to 10,000 words. This meant that only the first part of their essays was assessed as examiners do not read beyond this word limit.

2 Comments on Individual Questions

Question No

- 1 This was a popular question, but often responses were mediocre. Many candidates wrote what amounted to two essays, one on the problem of evil and another about life after death without effectively linking the two. It was not necessary to rehearse every theory of life after death or mind-body dualism in order to answer the question – those who did so rarely gained the highest marks as their essays lacked focus. Many candidates made reference to Dawkins incorrectly i.e. as he is a materialist there is no life after death and so this doesn't solve the problem of evil. Many failed to recognise that non-belief in God generally eradicates the theological problem of evil. Some excellent responses recognised the difference between the experiential and the theological problems of evil, while other centres failed to understand the theological problem, rather disturbing as this is AS level material. The best essays dealt effectively with the relationship with some excellent points about whether an afterlife answered the extent of evil suffered at the point of innocent suffering.
- 2 This was the least popular of all the questions. This was a very straightforward question, yet surprisingly many centres exhibited a serious lack of understanding. There were some good answers from candidates who had taken the trouble to read the original texts, but there was much avoidable misunderstanding of the topic. Few had read either Chapters 1 and 6 of Language, Truth and Logic, nor the four or five

pages of the Falsification debate. Many candidates were very muddled about Ayer's views on verification. As has been pointed out on previous reports, the falsification principle was developed by Popper as the criterion of whether a proposition was genuinely scientific, not as a test of meaning. The few candidates who had read the (very brief and much anthologised) debate recognised that Flew's challenge was whether believers were making genuine assertions, asking whether they accepted any evidence against their beliefs. Hare was much misunderstood, and few were aware of the criticisms of him by Flew in the debate or subsequently by Hick. Many candidates maintained the strange view that eschatological verification means that after death we will know whether our belief was true or false. That position would be, as Hick repeatedly acknowledges, absurd: life after death is verifiable in principle if true but not falsifiable if false.

- 3** Many candidates chose to write an essay on whether miracles happen, but there were also some excellent, focused answers. Many candidates made use of Wiles, occasionally describing that distinguished Anglican clergyman as a 'Dominican monk' (sic.) or an atheist. Some candidates seemed wholly unaware of Wiles' work which made answering the essay much more difficult, though not impossible. Those candidates, who misunderstood Wiles, implied that God was not an omnipotent God rather than describing a God who was restricted due to his own choice. Some candidates handicapped themselves by simply listing every miracle they had heard about from raising Lazarus to statues oozing milk. Many essays that contained detailed reference to Hume failed to show how this related to the question. A misunderstanding of material from some websites was often to blame. Quite a few candidates seemed to use quotations from Hebblethwaite and others without fully understanding the points being made. Some responses gave Holland's example of the boy on the railway tracks as an example of something that could not happen within the course of nature. Process theodicy was often misunderstood. Many good responses looked to the different definitions of 'miracle' to add depth to their answers.

2782 Religious Ethics 2 (Extended Essay)

General Comments

Most candidates produced essays of a good standard and of the required length, but the general standard was average to good, rather than very good to excellent. However, there were some outstanding candidates.

A small number failed to identify their sources. There were a few centres with poor essay structure, limited understanding of key concepts and even factual errors. Some did not even attempt to answer the question. Some candidates exceeded the word limit by some considerable margin, and centres need to be aware of this as candidates do not do as well as they might have done.

There were many examples of excellent work, with the best essays combining the issues raised in the questions

1 **'The ethics of genetic engineering are more than a matter of individual conscience.'** Discuss.

This was the least popular question and answers were mostly satisfactory to good, with some outstanding responses.

Many candidates did not do well on this question because they either wrote a conscience essay with genetic engineering attached, or went of at a tangent and spent long sections of their essay describing examples of genetic engineering, without really addressing the question.

The best essays avoided these pitfalls and synthesised the two issues' genetic engineering and conscience, into a mature and thoughtful discussion. Excellent answers appreciated the fast moving and complex problems of genetic engineering .

2 **'Religious ethics are not the best approach to environmental issues.'** Discuss.

There were some weak responses which did not really apply religious ethics well. However, most responses to this question were very good, addressing the issues and how they do or do not respond to religious ethics well.

Most focused on the Judeo-Christian tradition and showed evidence of reading and research, well beyond the text books.

The candidates who included material from other religions, mostly Hinduism and Buddhism, did not always really grasp the different world-view encompassed by these religions in relation to the environment over against views expressed within the Christian tradition. But it was good to see, and candidates generally rose to meet the challenge

3 **'For issues surrounding sex and relationships, the demands of conscience should override other ethical considerations.'** Discuss.

The responses here were varied. Many candidates tried to tackle too many different sex issues, which led to vague responses. The best answers just concentrated on one or two issues.

Report on the Units taken in January 2008

Good candidates showed indications of scholarly research and focused on the question, weaker responses still struggled to answer the question set and delivered a conscience essay with some sex and relationships attached.

Many candidates just made a list of what the various Churches, scholars and ethical theories had said, which produced safe, but hardly inspirational answers.

2783 Jewish Scriptures (Extended Essay)

General Comments

Less than a hundred candidates submitted essays but the full range of ability for this level of examination was represented. The three essay titles were virtually equally popular and all achieved the intended differentiation.

Some candidates seemed to appreciate that the essays provide the opportunity to spend more time studying and thinking about the set texts in more depth than they might when sitting for a limited time in an examination room. Choosing appropriately from the set texts required for study is in fact an important skill. Some candidates made sensible use of footnotes. Many candidates had made a serious effort to make the material their own response by carefully addressing the actual wording of the question.

Essays from some centres were a pleasure to read. It was clear that, for some candidates, exploring the historical and literary background had added an extra dimension to their understanding and appreciation of the texts they had studied.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 **'Prophets were more concerned about the Messianic kingdom than Messianic figures.'** Discuss with reference to the texts you have studied.

There were some interesting overviews from candidates who had looked back for developments from material they had studied at A/S level especially covenant promises to the Jews of a land and kings. Some candidates had thought about the effect on the prophets of seeing the waywardness of the covenant people and the failings of the Monarchy whilst foreseeing it would lead to punishment. Gradually, according to some essays, the hopes and prophecies turned to the future and even to the End Times.

In addressing the actual question many candidates concluded that the two themes are inter-linked and that the prophets were interested in both the Messianic kingdom and Messianic figures but that, overall, the stimulus quotation was probably true.

The most effective essays were those which made good use of textual material. Most candidates used the set texts in the A2 specification on the Messianic hope. In particular they used the book of Micah, especially 5:1-5 and 7:1-10, and Isaiah 40-43. The latter was often linked with Isaiah 53 from the reward and punishment section to discuss the identity of the servant. Some candidates then turned their attention to the Kingdom and apocalyptic scenarios about 'that day' as Amos called it and others brought in Daniel 12 as well.

Some credit was given to essays that included references from Malachi though it is not a set text. Most candidates commented that the prophecy of G-d's kingdom in Micah 4:1-5 is repeated in Isaiah 2:2-4. Some interpreted that fact as proof that the theme must be important in the Jewish Scriptures. Whether it was Davidic Messiahs or Messianic kingdoms that were the predominant concern of prophets, the characteristic features of both themes of prophecy were the promises of justice and mercy. There were some thoughtful historical vignettes in some essays which pointed to times when that lesson has been forgotten.

2 To what extent is the idea of covenant found in the texts you have studied about reward and punishment?

Some candidates began their essays with a description or definition of the concept of covenant and its significance in the Jewish Scriptures. They usually drew on the covenants in the specification. These include the covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham (12&17), Moses, David and Jeremiah whilst the specification texts for reward and punishment are Isaiah 53, Jeremiah 7, Ezekiel 18, Job 19, Daniel 12, 2 Maccabees 7. Candidates were being given the opportunity to think about the textual material and to pull together all they have studied into a coherent whole.

Candidates from some centres saw the relevance of date, authorship, purpose and historicity in exploring how far texts concerning reward and punishment might be related to the idea of covenant which has always been such a key theme in the Jewish Scriptures. Most candidates wrote that prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah condemned the breaking of the Sinai covenant but had experienced the presence of G-d in Exile in a foreign land and they prophesied the future emphasis on personal religious experience and individual, as opposed to corporate, responsibility. Some candidates argued that covenant seems not to be so dominant in the later set texts. Some commented that the scriptures, the synagogue, the sabbath and separatism had helped Judaism survive the Exile but by the time of 2 Maccabees 7 and Greek rule, theological ideas had developed further. Beliefs in reward and punishment were beginning to focus on the future and the after-life. One or two candidates made some interesting points about G-d's plans for humanity and the role of the Jews. They concluded that the disobedience of the Jews to their Sinai commission led to punishment and Exile and the Diaspora and is still part of the working out in history of the original covenant story.

The main weakness in some essays was the lack of knowledge and understanding of the concept of covenant in the Jewish Scriptures, let alone the set texts. Candidates who took 'covenant' simply to mean, though on one level it is obviously true, the relationship any Jew had and has with G-d did not have any depth of historical, literary and theological perception to bring to the concept. One or two never even mentioned the word 'covenant' nor any related concepts and simply provided brief commentaries on each of the reward and punishment set texts, presumably assuming that these would address the question.

Another weakness was that some candidates gave a summary of covenant (mainly about Abraham and Moses) and knew something of the reward and punishment texts, verse by verse, but had no overview of history so had no grasp of possible contexts to enlighten their study. Others decided the question was ambiguous and opted for writing about reward and punishment in the covenant texts. Credit was given for any relevant perceptive remarks.

3 How far are date, authorship, purpose and historicity important in understanding the books of Jonah and Job?

There was the full range of opinions as to the extent to which date, authorship, purpose and historicity are important for understanding the books of Jonah and Job and the essays displayed the full range of ability.

Some candidates used the title as an excuse for telling the stories and did gain some credit. Others launched straight into the clues as to when and by whom the books might have been written. Some candidates identified Jonah as the prophet who prophesied (2 Kings 14:25) in the reign of Jeroboam II in the eighth century BCE. Some candidates ran through the usual list based on the 8 suggested times in the Talmud of when Job might have lived. Other candidates classified either one or both books as a parable and not

historical as if that made the date of writing irrelevant. There were some analyses, however, where the scholarship made the essays a pleasure to read.

Once they reached 'purpose' many essays tended to display more confidence. Some simply explained that the story of Jonah shows that he was in the wrong in refusing to preach to the Gentile Ninevites and in being angry when they repented and were forgiven by G-d. Others concentrated on the theme of universalism and ran all aspects of the question together by including ideas about times in the history of the Jews when a writer would find universalism, the main theme of 'Jonah', to be worth exploring. The book suggests new perceptions of the nature of G-d, the covenant and the role of the Jewish people in world history. Some argued that the eighth century (before the fall of Israel to Assyria) might be the most likely time of composition.

There were some lively discussions which demonstrated some understanding of the types of literature found in the Tenakh and the possible purposes of the writers and editors whilst recognising the enduring status of sacred texts. Such candidates also tended to know that the book of Job is classed as wisdom literature because it deals with a universal theme about suffering. Some wondered why Job is often said to be an Edomite yet the book is so obviously rooted in Judaism. Others commented on the form and structure and the efficacy of using poetry for the discussion within the framework of a traditional story to explore the theological questions raised by the suffering of the innocent about, for example, the omnipotence and the compassion of G-d. Some interesting essays concluded that the date, authorship, and historicity were insignificant as such but the study of them enhanced the understanding of the purpose of timeless and inspired classics.

2784 New Testament (Extended Essay)

General Comments

Generally, candidates performed well. There were some excellent essays displaying a high level of understanding and sophisticated analytical skills. There were also some very good and good performances and the majority of candidates showed awareness of the views of scholars from a wide range of up to date and classical sources.

Most candidates were successful in the selection of relevant material and were able to use the wealth of scholarship available to inform and make pertinent their own opinions and arguments. The weaker responses struggled to sustain a coherent argument.

It was pleasing to note that annotation and attribution of sources has now reached a high level of competence and accuracy in this examination. However, there are still some instances of a lack of original thought in the construction of some essays with, sometimes, a whole Centre using the same material, making awarding individual achievement difficult.

Comments on individual questions

Alternative A - The Early Church

- 1 From the texts you have studied, examine how issues of historicity and purpose might affect the interpretation of Paul's letters.**

Too few candidates attempted this question to produce a detailed subject report.

- 2 From the texts you have studied, critically examine whether Paul's teaching on justification was a radically new teaching.**

This was the most popular question and there were some excellent responses. Some candidates were much better than others in understanding the background to Paul's teaching and the reason for his discourses on the purpose of the Law. The best performances displayed skill in selection of material from the set texts to argue that an acceptance of Paul's gospel might be a radical rejection of Judaism.

- 3 'In order that in Christ Jesus the blessings of Abraham might come to the Gentiles.' (Galatians 3:14)**

There was evidence in answers that Galatians 3-5 had been comprehensively studied and the set text was quoted and explained at some length. The best answers developed arguments about the language and style of the passages and the effectiveness of Paul's analogy of slavery (under the Law) and freedom (in Christ). Some showed an awareness that different conclusions might be reached about Paul's success.

Alternative B – The Gospels

- 4 From the texts you have studied, compare the theology of the parables in Mark and Luke.**

This was the least popular question. Some candidates struggled to understand the demands to the question. Other responses used parables from Matthew and elsewhere in the gospels and in some cases omitted parts of the set texts from Mark and Luke. The most successful answers were those which considered the set texts.

For the majority, the evaluation was the weakest point of the essay and Some answers showed only a superficial understanding of the differences and similarities of the theology of the Kingdom in the two gospels. Those that demonstrated a deeper comprehension of the purpose of the parables in Mark and Luke, often showed skill in clear and coherent analysis.

5 From the texts you have studied critically examine how the gospels develop the concept of judgement.

Amongst the answers to this question there were a few excellent responses but the approaches to the question were too varied for the examiners to make a detailed report on general performance. The main weakness, in the less successful essays, was a failure to explore the theme of judgement from the set texts in all three gospels. The best answers offered a thoughtful and comprehensive analysis of the parables in Matthew and Mark, the healing miracles in Mark and the Parables of the Lost in Luke.

6 'To what extent was the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) intended to be a distinctive ethical teaching for all people?'

This was a popular question on a well-known area of study. There were some excellent responses which covered, in depth, all aspects of the question. Some, however, missed the opportunity to properly explore the content of the Sermon and address all aspects of the question. Some otherwise good attempts concentrated solely on audience and omitted any reference to the distinctiveness of the ethics contained in the teachings. Some relied heavily on cutting and pasting opinions and conclusions from scholarly works, to the exclusion of any personal contribution.

The majority showed an ability to write, with some success, about audience and evaluate the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount in promoting universalism. The best answers were also able to assess the distinctiveness of the ethical teaching for Christians and Jews, as interim-ethics awaiting the Parousia and for Christians today. In most cases, evidence from the text and the views of scholars were well used. There were some perceptive reflections on the Sermon as an ethical teaching in relation to other theories of religious ethics.

2785 Developments in Christian Thought (Extended Essay)

1 General Comments

Although the questions may have been a bit more demanding this year the standard was generally good and there were a gratifyingly good number of excellent answers, some of which were outstanding. The best essays showed evidence of individual research and personal reading of source materials.

However, some candidates split their essays into sub headings which, although clear, stifled the development of arguments.

Candidates and centres should avoid presenting their work in plastic or cardboard folders and make certain that essays are fastened together and each page is named.

Some candidates failed to supply bibliographies and footnotes. Many failed to attribute sources for quotations and some copied sentences from websites without acknowledgement. This last practice is very dangerous and comes very close to plagiarism.

2 Comments on Individual Questions

Question No

- 1 This was a popular question. It was very pleasing that a number of candidates had spent some time reading those black theologians who have been actively critical of capitalism notably Cone, West and Hopkins. Many grappled with the ambiguity of globalisation and discussed it positively in relationship with Martin Luther King's eschatological vision of the beloved community.

Weaker answers assumed that globalisation was just another term for capitalism but hadn't sufficient knowledge of black theology to understand its criticisms of Western thought and 'white theology'.

- 2 Many candidates completely ignored the quotation from *Dominus Iesus* and wrote a standard essay describing exclusivism, pluralism and inclusivism.

But the best answers took the quotation in the question as a starting point and measured the main theories against it. The very best contrasted Rahner with official Church teaching although only very few excellent answers actually knew of the significance of technical words such as 'objective', 'gravely deficient' and 'fullness' from the quotation. Some very good answers were able to discuss and develop the subtleties of 'revelation inclusiveness' and 'stereological exclusiveness'.

- 3 There were some strong answers to this question, though for many it turned into a 'write all you know about Barth' question. The best were able to focus on his criticisms of the phenomenon of religion (rather than religions), the dialectical relationship of revelation and election.

It is particularly encouraging to see how many candidates are now broadening their understanding of Barth and his place in the development of theological and secular ideas.

2786 Eastern Religions (Extended Essay)

1 General Comments

In general the quality of the work presented by candidates appeared to have deteriorated this year.

It was particularly disappointing given the time candidates have to prepare for the extended essay that so many appear to have used such a limited range of resources. Many candidates listed books in their bibliography which they have clearly not read or made reference to within the essay. Other seem to rely extensively on web-based resources, and do not seem to view them with a critical eye. It was common for mistakes on websites to be repeated in candidates work, when reference to even basic scholarly texts would have made clear these errors. Many candidates also struggled to meet the evaluative element required in AO2. They often had extensive knowledge, but failed to use it to effectively address the question.

A larger number of students failed to stick to the word limit, and this seriously disadvantaged them, since examiners only read the first part of the essay in overlong submissions.

There were however some excellent responses, and these tended to refer to a range of scholarly sources, and to actually engage with the question.

2 Comments on Individual Questions

Question No

- 1 Weak responses to this question tended to describe various parables within the Lotus Sutra, without exploring their teachings.

The best responses had a clear idea of the teachings within the Parable of the Burning House, such as upaya and ekayana. They were then able to compare these with other teachings within the Lotus Sutra such as the multiplicity of Buddha's. They were then able to effectively evaluate whether the teachings in the Parable of the Burning House were the most important within the Lotus Sutra or not.

- 2 This question tended to be answered very well or very poorly.

Weak responses often had little grasp of the structure, contents or importance of the Pali Canon, and thus were unable to effectively engage with the question.

The best responses tended to analyse the importance of the vinaya for the bhikkhus, or the importance of the sutta-pitaka for either bhikkhus or the laity. In either case they usually gave specific examples to demonstrate the importance of the Canon. Some candidates explored whether the Canon could be seen as the basis for all Buddhist scriptures, and thus whether this afforded it a high status within Buddhism.

The best answers often considered whether the Canon was of more importance for some Buddhists than others, for example whether it held a higher status for Theravada Buddhists than Mahayana Buddhists.

Report on the Units taken in January 2008

- 3** This question was often answered poorly. Many weak responses made limited references to kamma, and essentially agreed that this statement was true. Some candidates did not focus on the question, and explored a range of ethical systems and philosophical approaches rather than the appropriateness of the statement as a description of Buddhist ethics. Centres may wish to remind candidates to answer the question set.

The best responses explored the nature of kamma, samsara and dependent origination before reaching a conclusion about the aptness of the statement. Most seemed to conclude that statement was true but good responses explored how far this should be accepted at a superficial level, and the implications of this belief.

- 4** Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
- 5** Most responses tended to explore the four purushartas and their importance for the householder before reaching a conclusion. The best responses tended to give specific examples to support their arguments, and offered a well-thought out conclusion. Weaker responses tended to explore the four purushartas, but often failed to address the issue of the importance of kama for the householder.
- 6** Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

2787 Islam (Extended Essay)

General Comments

The majority of candidates answered question 1. The least popular option was question 3. There were only just over 30 candidates but a wide range of ability was represented. Some candidates had prepared carefully and had obviously consulted a variety of resources. However, there continues to be a tendency to 'cut and paste' material from the internet without checking the validity of the source. Though candidates are not obliged to provide a bibliography, they are still expected to acknowledge material they copy, otherwise the work is simply plagiarism. There was some sensible use of footnotes by the better candidates.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 How far would you agree that all Muslim life and teaching is a preparation for the last day?

This was by far the most popular essay title. The majority of candidates began by attempting a definition of the last day and asserting that all people must be judged by Allah on Yawmuddin. Some went on to explain that Muslims believe life on earth is temporary whilst Akhirah is never ending and a few indulged in graphic details of the afterlife.

A variety of equally acceptable examples were given in the essays to show the importance in both Muslim life and in Islamic teaching of preparation for the Day of Judgement but some candidates did not address the actual question. They ignored 'how far' and simply affirmed ad infinitum the importance of Akhirah.

Good responses concentrated on trying to assess the extent to which all Muslim life and teaching is a preparation for Judgement. A few excellent candidates quoted al-Fatihah to show that Muslims are encouraged from the start of the Qur'an to follow the straight path to avoid 'wrath' at the Last Day.

Some candidates tried to balance the importance of Akhirah with Tawhid and Risalah usually arguing that Allah is central to Islam and Judge is only one aspect of the Attributes or characteristics or Names of Allah.

2 Evaluate the claim that Shari(ah is not as important for Sufis as for other Muslims.

Only a few candidates chose this title but they tended to engage well with the question. Essays usually began with definitions of Shari(ah and of Sufism.

Most explained that Shari(ah is Islamic law based on the authority of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and that it covers every aspect of human life, legal, moral and ritual. Most candidates made reference to one or more of the categories of behaviour: fard, madub, mubah, makruh and haram. Some discussed the extent to which there is a range of attitudes within all Islam to Shari(ah before addressing Sufi attitudes.

Sufism was usually competently given a paragraph about its supposed origins and identified as a tradition within Islam which emphasises mystical experience and a relationship with God. Some commented that, nevertheless, there is a wide variation in Sufi thought and practice.

A few candidates demonstrated understanding of some aspects of the history and practice of Sufism particularly relevant to the question. One or two essays deteriorated into a

polemic against Sufis as a corruption of Islam whilst others championed Sufism as getting to the heart of what religion should be about. The best responses attempted a balanced discussion.

3 To what extent do Sunni, Shi'ah and Sufi Muslims agree about the status of the Sunnah of the Prophet?

The few who attempted this title tended to address the actual question and some handled it well. They began with an introduction explaining that the Sunnah, the sayings, practices, and customs of Muhammad ﷺ, is the perfect example for Muslims and some quoted the last sermon of Muhammad ﷺ as well as the Shahadah.

In assessing the extent to which there is unanimity, most candidates explained that Sunni Muslims are named after the Sunnah. The fact that they accept ahadith based on transmission from the four Rightly Guided Khalifas whilst the Shi'ah Muslims have authoritative sayings from Imams who speak with special authority was used in various ways in the discussions.

As for Sufism, some candidates explored the idea that Sufis follow the example of Muhammad ﷺ more than other branches of Islam. Most essays, however, managed to return in their conclusion to the fact that all Muslims agree that, after the Qur'an, the Sunnah is the second most important source of authority in Islam.

2788 Judaism 2 (Extended Essay)

General Comments

As ever there were some very good essays in this session. However, a combination of what appeared to be lack of subject knowledge together with misinterpretation of the questions led to some rather poor marks.

Although the specification allows for any reasonable interpretation of the question, some of the responses submitted did not fall into this category.

There was some excellent use of resources and, in particular, good use of internet resources which showed that they had been selected and considered before being deployed in the essays.

Comments on specific questions

1 'The passage of time has changed Jewish understanding of the concept of the Promised Land.' Discuss. [90]

The question was concerned with the Jewish understanding of the concept of the Promised Land and how that may have changed over time. Therefore, it was a question about a theological concept not about a geographical one.

Many answers faltered because, with varying degrees of accuracy, they considered the history of the 'land' of Israel over thousands of years. However, they dealt with the theological concept in only the most fleeting way. Therefore, much of content of the answers focused on Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel rather than how Jews understand the concept of the land promised to them by G-d.

2 'Progressive Judaism is no longer a radical option within the faith.' Discuss. [90]

There were some very good responses to this question. A surprising number of candidates were unaware of the meaning of 'radical'. Some tried to begin their essay by defining 'radical' but failed to do so in any recognisable or academic way. As a consequence some of the essays made little sense.

However, there were some excellent responses which looked closely into the teachings, ideology and theology of Progressive Judaism and made very interesting points about Orthodoxy, also seen as a radical option.

3 'Jewish faith and practice are in a state of crisis in the United Kingdom today.' Discuss. [90]

Here again there was considerable misinterpretation of the question. The focus of the statement is 'Jewish faith and practice'. Many decided that it was asking about 'the Jewish faith' meaning the community. As a consequence of these there were essays on demography and historical development over the last two hundred years. Very few were able to comment on the content of the statement and its relation to faith and practice.

2789 Philosophy of Religion (Extended Essay)

General Comments

The general standard of response to the questions was good but there were fewer outstanding scripts this year. Some candidates made genuine attempts to develop interesting arguments, but many were content to follow a formula based on popular textbooks or websites. Inevitably the better candidates were those who demonstrated an ability to engage with the arguments and consider their merits rather than reciting a list of strengths and weaknesses. Some essays were merely paraphrases of textbooks or entries in Wikipedia. These candidates did not perform as well and in a few cases seemed to be guilty of plagiarism. A particular problem was that often a secondary source was either unreliable or misunderstood – reference to the primary source would have avoided many inaccuracies and led to higher marks.

A few candidates submitted essays which were too long, thus penalising themselves, occasionally severely when they had not made their point by the time the permitted limit was reached. This limit is the point where examiners stop reading so that no advantage can be gained by infringing the rubric regarding length. Referencing was a problem for some, and there was much abuse of quotation, with paraphrased passages from textbooks given as the original words of the source.

Some candidates lacked basic philosophical skills, unaware of the meaning of technical terms. The differences between refutation and denial, proof and argument, analytic and analytical, *a priori* and *a posteriori* were common areas of misunderstanding. To say that a certain philosopher disagrees with another does not succeed in counteracting the original argument.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 ‘Malcolm has produced the strongest version of the ontological argument.’ Discuss.

Candidates’ answers to this question were generally pleasing and showed a good level of knowledge. On some occasions candidates failed to do themselves justice by giving accounts of all they knew about the subject. The argument about which was the best version was sometimes little more than an assertion. Better candidates were able to present an argument as to why a certain argument was the best version. There was some inaccuracy as a result of ignorance of primary texts. Malcolm and Anselm’s versions of the argument are brief and the primary texts are readily available. Candidates disadvantaged themselves by not reading them. There were still many committing the error of assuming Proslogion 3 to be Anselm’s response to Gaunilo, demonstrating the lack of careful reading. A few candidates demonstrated the advantages of real engagement with the texts.

2 ‘Durkheim’s analysis of religion is better than that of Marx.’ Discuss.

Some candidates clearly benefited from their knowledge of sociology, although a few treated this as a purely sociological essay, not developing some key philosophical issues. Several candidates used extensive sociological knowledge of Marx and Durkheim as the basis of sound philosophical argument. Some attempted a deal with Marx by the ‘it didn’t work in the Soviet Union’ criticism, which is of limited value for the theory of Marx. One or two criticised the methodology of Marx – this might have been further developed along Popperian lines by arguing that Marx was not genuinely scientific, but this was rarely developed. A welcome few made some good use, either by name or implication, of H.H. Farmer’s criticisms of Durkheim, as developed by Hick in his *Philosophy of Religion*.

Weaker candidates tended to list the strengths and weaknesses of each thinker before asserting a conclusion as to which was best.

3 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the classic theodicies of Augustine and Irenaeus.

By far the most popular of the three questions, this provided most candidates with an opportunity to show at least a reasonable knowledge of the two thinkers. The focus of the question, the strengths and weaknesses of each, was often underdeveloped or tagged on by weaker candidates. Candidates focusing on the question tended to be aware of the main strengths and weaknesses; fewer candidates were able to genuinely consider these and advance a clear position. Genuine evaluation was difficult for many – knowing how to weigh and consider criticisms, in themselves and against each other, is a skill shown by the best candidates. Some candidates missed the opportunity to separate Irenaeus from Hick's development of his theory. Some candidates – more than in previous years – were aware of D.Z. Phillips' criticism of instrumentalism in theodicies such as Irenaeus/Hick, though mainly from *The Concept of Prayer* rather than his developed account in *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God*.

2790 Religious Ethics (Extended Essay)

General Comments

Most candidates produced essays of a good standard and of the required length, but the general standard was average to good, rather than very good to excellent. However, there were some outstanding candidates, particularly on question 2.

A small number failed to identify their sources.

Few candidates seemed put off by the scope of the questions, and many were well constructed with a mature style, showing good scholarly research.

A small minority really struggled and tended to opt for question 3.

1 **Discuss critically the ethical concerns raised by embryo research.**

This question was a popular question and good candidates showed both a grasp of embryo research and the ethical concerns.

The question did, however, highlight the difficulty in defining embryo research, and weaker candidates skated over the surface of the topic, finding it difficult to discuss the ethical concerns in any depth, except for the Sanctity of Life. Some candidates ignored completely the demands of the question 'discuss critically'

Most candidates did answer the question well, discussing issues such as when life begins, personhood, the problem of spare embryos and even hybrid embryos, using a variety of ethical theories to examine these issues.

2 **Compare and contrast religious ethics with the ethics of Kant..**

This question was very popular and produced some outstanding responses.

Candidates showed a good knowledge of Kant and religious ethics – almost exclusively Christian ethics. There were good links to the use of reason in both Kant and Natural Law, and parallels with Jesus' Golden Rule, and the importance of freedom.

But also good contrasts with Kantian deontology and Jesus teaching that the Sabbath was made for man, and so law can be seen as guidance and needs interpreting.

3 **'The right to a child is an absolute right.' Discuss.**

This was the weaker question and some attempts did not manage to produce a good response.

Those that did answer well considered what rights were and how they could be applied to having a child. There was consideration of whether it was only a 'right' for those who could afford it.

There was good application of ethical theories, and good use of examples ranging from Diane Blood to saviour siblings. Most essays concentrated on IVF but some also considered custody battles after a divorce and who makes a suitable parent.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Religious Studies 3877 and 7877
January 2008 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2760/11	Raw	100	69	60	51	42	33	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/12	Raw	100	72	63	54	45	36	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/13	Raw	100	74	66	58	50	42	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/14	Raw	100	68	58	48	39	30	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/15	Raw	100	76	64	53	42	31	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2761	Raw	100	70	60	50	40	30	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2762	Raw	100	75	64	53	43	33	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2763	Raw	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2764	Raw	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2765	Raw	100	76	66	56	46	36	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2766	Raw	100	75	65	55	46	37	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2767	Raw	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2768	Raw	100	78	68	58	49	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2769	Raw	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2770	Raw	100	75	66	57	48	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2781	Raw	90	64	55	47	39	31	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2782	Raw	90	76	67	59	51	43	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2783	Raw	90	69	60	52	44	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2784	Raw	90	72	63	54	45	37	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2785	Raw	90	67	58	50	42	34	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0

2786	Raw	90	70	61	52	44	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2787	Raw	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2788	Raw	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2789	Raw	90	70	61	52	44	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2790	Raw	90	80	69	59	49	39	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
3877	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
7877	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3877	15.5	43.8	70.4	89.8	97.9	100.0	546
7877	21.4	57.1	82.1	96.4	100.0	100.0	29

575 candidates aggregated this series.

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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