# GCE

# Religious Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 H572**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H172**

# OCR Report to Centres

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## Advanced GCE Religious Studies (H572)

## Advanced Subsidiary GCE Religious Studies (H172)

## OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

# Overview

Teachers and candidates are encouraged to read the relevant Unit reports carefully. Although the reports highlight perennial problems and mistakes, they also draw attention to good practice and give advice on how particular topics might be tackled.

Senior examiners noted an apparent over reliance on class notes. Whilst these can be extremely helpful, it is essential that candidates learn how to adapt the information to address the specifics of the question.

Finally, candidates are encouraged to make better and more accurate use of scholars. Scholars do not necessarily need to be named but more detailed reference to scholarly ideas would certainly help candidates write more specific, detailed and focused answers.

# G571 Philosophy of Religion

**General Comments**

Generally, candidates fared well provided they answered the question which had been set and not the one they hoped would be set. Candidates need to be reminded to read the question and then answer the question. Words which seemed to have been ignored (or misunderstood) are 'universe', 'inconsistent' and 'biblical'. Some candidates appeared to have attempted to learn theories, leading to less successful responses: more able responses showed evidence of reflection of theories, with the best showing the benefits of original thought. It cannot be too often stressed that examiners – and the nature of the subject – expect candidates to demonstrate that they have *considered* and *reflected* on ideas and not merely learned them.

Those candidates who answered questions 1 and 3 tended not to perform as well on these as they did for their other choice of question. Handwriting was thought to be deteriorating in some instances making it very difficult to give credit to the whole response. Despite good AO1 performance, AO2 skills were often lacking. It continues to be the characteristic of many candidates to believe that just because a number of philosophers have criticised a theory, it must be wrong, and when evaluating a question, you simply need to count the philosophers who make points on each side of the argument and see which side has more in it.

Some candidates mixed up the chronological order in which the key theologians and philosophers were alive, eg some saw Aristotle being a contemporary of Aquinas and Anselm responding to Kant's critique. Unfortunately, there are still candidates who attempt this examination with insecure knowledge of basic philosophical concepts and terminology. Many remain unaware of the correct meaning of terms such as 'empirical', 'logical ', 'refute', 'metaphysical', '*a priori*' or '*a posteriori*'. Especially common errors were 'analytical' for 'analytic' – especially in question 1 and 'scientifical' for 'scientific' in question 4. The term 'predicate' was widely misused: it is not the same as the quality of a 'thing'. This subject presupposes familiarity with basic philosophical notions and some candidates have paid too little attention to these. Some candidates struggled with the fundamental skill of constructing arguments, especially in part b) of questions. A *statement* of a viewpoint is not an *argument*, and argument by assertion is inappropriate in philosophical writing. Many responses simply presented alternative viewpoints but made no attempt to use these to work to their own conclusions. Candidates would benefit from thinking through the implications of the descriptors in the published levels of response used for marking – these are invaluable for explaining precisely those abilities rewarded by examiners.

**Comments on Individual Questions**

1   **(a)**   This question was not the most popular with candidates. It produced similar responses from the majority. Weaker responses treated this as a 'tell me everything you know' style question and gave an historical overview of the ontological argument (without any real depth) and then either claimed that Kant's criticisms were Gaunilo's or could state little more than existence was not a predicate.

Average responses explained the notion that existence was not a predicate with examples. Candidates were happy to mix up Russell's cows and unicorns stating they were Kant's. It seems obvious that the vast majority of candidates struggled to identify exactly what Kant had said on the issue. The best answers got into the analytic/synthetic distinction with very clearly explained examples of what Kant meant by existence not being a predicate.

A significant number of responses demonstrated no understanding of Kant's critique and simply attempted, unsuccessfully, to suggest that Kant's moral argument was his critique of the Ontological Argument.

**(b)** Responses were often dependent on how successfully a candidate understood Kant as seen in part a). However, credit was also given for those answers which used the arguments of other scholars to either support or criticise Kant.

Weak answers were descriptive and so scored very poorly. They tended to state what Gaunilo or Descartes said as an attempt to create an argument. Better responses were able to engage with Kant and make an attempt at assessing his criticisms using material from the specification, though these often went little further than 'so existence is not a predicate'. The best answers, of which there were few, were able to use the work of Norman Malcolm or Alvin Plantinga to critically attack Kant's work through the notion of God's unlimited nature or maximal greatness to support Anselm's claim that God is a special case. More observant candidates were able to identify that Kant's criticisms were not as successful against Anselm as they were in the case of Descartes. Chronology got in the way of understanding for a number of candidates.

**2** **(a)** This was an extremely popular question and good marks were awarded for candidates who were able to demonstrate control of the material as well as being able to give examples from the biblical text to support their explanations. The question was answered well by many candidates where the focus was on a range of attributes, lawgiver, immanence, transcendence, omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence and craftsman. Many good examples from the Bible were used to help illustrate these attributes. Some candidates had a tendency to ignore the question and write more generally about the problems of different models of God. Weaker responses had limited knowledge of the divine attributes and could give very few examples, making the answers Level 2 or just into Level 3. Better answers were able to work through the attributes methodically giving examples as they went. The best answers were notable by the excellent depth and range of biblical examples showing a rich understanding of the attributes demonstrated throughout the Old and New Testament.

Some candidates felt that they had to draw on their lessons on either the idea of God the creator, or the idea of the goodness of God, and nothing else. There was too much criticism of the attributes of God, for example pre-prepared answers on the problem of evil. There was some misunderstanding of the word 'attribute', for example the suggestion that 'free will' is an attribute of the Judeao-Christian God. However, some very good answers were able to apply Biblical evidence philosophically to produce a comprehensive overview of the topic area.

**(b)** This question was not well answered as candidates failed to focus on the issue of inconsistency of moral teaching, instead focusing on inconsistencies of God or the Bible in general. This left an implicit feel to many answers. The problem of evil was raised by a few, gaining little credit, since they tended to become very descriptive and more 'general topic' than question focused. Better answers were able to identify the similarities and differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament, offering reasons for why this might be the case, or concluding that the text is too confusing to be used for moral teaching as it is outdated. Better answers were able to illustrate their argument by using good examples from biblical beliefs about homosexuality to beliefs about divorce and killing. Other good responses used the idea of the inconsistency of Genesis to challenge the literal truth of the Bible from the outset, and explore possible implications for the modern believer's attempts to make moral decisions.

**3** **(a)** Very few candidates answered this question. Candidates who attempted the question fell into two main categories. Some unsuspecting candidates thought it was a better second choice question. They knew very little about Copleston and asserted that his argument was the same as Aquinas' First, Second or Third way. The notion of cause of the universe was regularly discussed, demonstrating incorrect knowledge. A list like approach to the question was often present as many candidates seemed to give the history of the argument. A good number of candidates evidently knew the debate, and some even answered from aspects of the debate which are not on the specification, which received due credit. However, many candidates failed to respond appropriately by simply recounting the debate – there was no attention given to the question, which was on Copleston's arguments. The question required an explanation of his views, not a restatement.

The best responses were able to explain Copleston's argument based on contingency and necessity and link this to Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason. Some candidates chose to include more Russell than Copleston at times which undermined their work. Some candidates gave general 'the world must have come from somewhere' type answers.

**(b)** This question was not generally answered well. Few candidates were able to correctly identify Russell's ideas. They stuck with 'the universe is a brute fact' and 'Russell wouldn't argue so lost' as their main points. Better responses were able to identify the fallacy of composition raised in the debate and make good use of this in their answer. Sadly, Russell's viewpoints were swiftly dismissed by many candidates, and they effectively refused to "sit down themselves at the chessboard" of question 3 b). A number of candidates re-told the debate in outline, adding at each point who they thought was 'winning' or how they 'felt' about each philosopher at such points. Some better answers considered Russell's view in the light of other philosophers, usually Hume, and made some useful suggestions about philosophical methodology.

**4** **(a)** There was a range of responses to this question. Answers regularly had Plato, Aristotle, Cosmological, Teleological and even Moral arguments at times. This approach led to candidates casting their nets far too wide, meaning that they failed to answer the question with any real depth. Other problems were that candidates focused too much on the science element and failed to mention the philosophical views. Better responses were able to identify that this was a science and religion question within the origins of the universe part of the specification. They were able to select and deploy relevant material and the best answers made clear comparisons.

Candidates often strayed too far into the evolution section of the specification and made their answers feel general in response. Henry Morris and various views of creationism were surprisingly few in mention, though James Ussher was used well to demonstrate the different beliefs surrounding the age of the universe. Some candidates were able to explore areas such as the search for the Higgs-Boson particle or the Scopes trial but, unfortunately, weaker responses offered vague statements such as 'scientists don't believe in philosophy.' The comparison invited by the question was by and large carried out by juxtaposition. One issue which was surprisingly common was that the Big Bang was brought about by two particles colliding. This confusion seems to be brought about by a misunderstanding of the Large Hydron Collider experiment.

**(b)** Some excellent responses to this question analysed arguments effectively, with candidates bringing their responses alive with scholars, such as Atkins, Dawkins, Polkinghorne, and so on. Some candidates explored the implications of saying that we don't know what happened between the Big Bang and $10^{-43}$s after the Big Bang, and contrasted this with the particle accelerator. However, many responses uncritically threw around the words 'proof' and 'evidence', for example suggesting that philosophy has no interest in 'evidence'. There were some interesting responses which took a valid answer to 'why' as 'chance'. Sadly, the vast majority of answers simply restated the problem from the statement. References to Gould and NOMA were surprisingly rare. A tendency to argue by assertion was unfortunately common.

# G572 Religious Ethics

**General Comments**

There were a number of good, very good and excellent responses from candidates. The candidates were well prepared and most responded well to the part b) questions.

Weaker candidates tended to write as much as they knew without focusing on command words such as 'explain'. Some candidates continued to use dubious examples to support their explanations and many not even ethical ones, as well as the usual 'helping an old lady to cross the road' and the 'stealing to feed a starving family'.

Some candidates are still writing considerably less for part a) than for part b), hampering overall performance.

**Comments on Individual Questions**

**1 (a)** This was one of the most popular questions, and most candidates were able to respond well. The two most common differences explained were quantative and qualitative and Act and Rule, with a significant number explaining that these terms were applied retrospectively. Most candidates were able to give clear accounts of Bentham's Utilitarianism and were able to explain the hedonic calculus. Mill, however, was less well dealt with apart from the 'higher' and 'lower' pleasures.

Better candidates were able to interweave the different views, but the most common approach was to explain Bentham, then Mill and conclude with a paragraph showing the differences. This second approach often resulted in good answers, but failed to achieve the top Level. Weaker responses simply described the differences without any explanation of the reasons behind them. There was also very little high level explanation of the focus on an individual's happiness versus community pleasure, the protection of human rights and liberties or on the role of the competent judge.

Good responses used ethical examples which actually related to the question.

**(b)** A number of candidates simply put a lot of knowledge and understanding into this question without evaluation. In some responses, material which should have been in part a) was explained in part b). Centres should be aware that examiners cannot credit AO1 material in part b) AO2 questions. However, good candidates focused on the question without needing to retell the points they had previously made.

Candidates who had little knowledge of Mill, apart from higher and lower pleasures, had little on which to base their responses, so seemed to simply state that Mill was 'snobbish' or that his Utilitarianism was 'easier to apply' or 'less complicated'.

Very good responses often included evaluation of the 'no harm' principle and the protection of minority rights.

**2 (a)** This was not a popular question and in general was not well answered. Many candidates seemed to have little idea as to what 'concepts of personhood' might mean and so wrote general responses on ethical approaches to abortion or simply discussed the question of when life begins with a paragraph on each of the stages of pregnancy.

By contrast, some candidates had clearly studied the concept of personhood and were able to discuss the concept with reference to Mary Anne Warren, ideas of ensoulment, and the point at which personhood might begin.

Often, this question was approached through the incorporation of the elements of personhood by a number of different ethical systems, such as Natural Law and Utilitarianism and occasionally Kantian ethics. Those who approached the question using this method usually wrote good responses.

**(b)** Generally this question was well answered. Candidates were able to discuss the right of the foetus to life (and even if a foetus had any rights) compared to the right of the mother to life. Some candidates were able to make useful assessment of the right to life compared to the right to a good quality of life, and even discussed what is meant by the right to life and considered whether the mother's right to a career amounted to the right to having a 'life'.

Weaker responses tended to argue for and against the 'right to life' rather than discussing whether it was the most important issue.

**3** **(a)** Unfortunately, many candidates seemed to have only a very basic knowledge of what genetic engineering involved but were able to explain, mainly from a Christian perspective, the concepts of sanctity of life, ensoulment and interfering with nature as reasons for prohibiting genetic engineering. Many candidates only focused on human genetic engineering without mentioning animals or plants.

Some candidates focused entirely on IVF treatment without discussing issues such as genetic selection or testing for disease, resulting in a limited viewpoint.

However, there were also some excellent responses with candidates showing detailed knowledge of human, animal and plant genetic engineering with clear structured knowledge of how religious ethical principles could be used to assess the possible advantages and disadvantages of these approaches.

**(b)** Some candidates simply stated that it was obvious that conservative religious approaches would consider genetic engineering as interfering with God's creation and so would prevent progress. This produced a one sided argument. Those who confused genetic engineering with IVF in part a) were generally not able to produce successful responses to this question.

Some responses, however, were able to make detailed use of the arguments of thinkers such as Richard Dawkins regarding the interference of religion in science and gave a real assessment of the extent to which religious ethics actually prevented progress. There was some good discussion of the loss of funding for stem cell research in the USA because of religious right-wing political considerations, countered with the fact that the research simply moved elsewhere and so was not restricted.

**4** **(a)** This was also a popular question and it was clear that candidates had a good understanding of Natural Law. Many were able to refer to the origins of Natural Law in Cicero, Aristotle and Augustine before focusing on Aquinas and many were able to make reference to more modern forms of Natural Law theory as found in Proportionalism. Key features such as the concept of telos, eudaimonia, the Primary and Secondary Precepts, apparent and actual goods and intentions behind actions were often highlighted.

Good candidates kept the question in mind throughout as they explained the way the theory worked, but poorer responses left any consideration of how Natural Law might be used to decide the right course of action to a brief final paragraph. Poorer candidates tended not to choose good examples to illustrate their responses.

In general, this year, there was a much improved understanding of Natural Law with far fewer candidates responding along the lines of the action being natural or unnatural.

**(b)** There were a number of excellent responses to this question with candidates discussing whether it was the 'best' approach. These responses were able to compare and contrast Natural Law with the approaches taken by Kantian ethics or Utilitarianism. Better candidates cited Neilson and Rachels in their responses.

Poorer candidates simply listed the strengths and weaknesses of Natural Law with little discussion of the question.

# G573 Jewish Scriptures

**General Comments**

Questions 2 and 3 were the most popular.

Rubric infringements were rare and most candidates managed to complete the paper within the one hour 30 minute time limit. Most candidates addressed the questions according to the two assessment objectives, but there are still some candidates who seem to think that they have to debate the a) parts of the questions. The main weakness was a tendency to regurgitate lesson notes without due regard to engaging with the wording of the questions. Many candidates relied on story telling and general knowledge. It remains disappointing that candidates do not make much reference to wider historical and literary critical scholarship and, in a few cases it appeared as if candidates had not read the set texts. There were, however, some excellent responses which showed depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding, quoted the set texts appropriately, made reference to issues of date, authorship, purpose and historicity when relevant and were a pleasure to read.

**Comments on Individual Questions**

1    (a)    Responses launched, with enthusiasm, into accounts of 1Kings 18. Most candidates seemed familiar with details of the text. Some dealt with 'how' and 'why' together and others separately whilst a few forgot to address either aspect of the question. Only one or two candidates thought to include this 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE incident in the wider context which, ever since the settlement in Canaan, had plagued the covenant people; the need not simply to refuse to worship the Canaanite agricultural fertility nature gods but also to reject syncretism.

     (b)    Some candidates were stumped by the fact that they had chosen the question without knowing the story of Naboth's vineyard. They simply argued that nothing could be more significant than proving that G-d is the Lord of Nature. There were some excellent responses, however, which tended to argue that both incidents had theological significance and demonstrated different aspects of the power of G-d. Some candidates saw the Naboth's vineyard incident as the transition to the social message of the eighth century prophets who championed the rights of the poor and the marginalised.

2    (a)    This popular question produced the full range of responses. Some candidates simply retold the story or regurgitated notes with a general reference to the themes. There were others, however, who utilised the text effectively to address the question, often demonstrating not only knowledge but mature understanding of the traditional views about suffering with thoughtful explorations into the implications of Job's response to the theophany in chapter 38.

     (b)    Some candidates made the historicity of the story or of Job's existence the main thrust of the discussion but the better responses tended to concentrate on the intention of the book in the context of the types of literature found in the Jewish Scriptures. Most identified the book as Hohma/Wisdom Literature.

3    (a)    The specification includes Genesis chapters 12, 15 and 17. The better responses tended to be those which demonstrated familiarity with the details of these set texts. Some candidates, however, did manage to identify some 'significant features' from a more general life story of Abraham.

**(b)** Candidates who had studied the set texts were at an advantage in responding to this question. Some excellent scripts compared different types of covenant in the Ancient Near East before discussing the covenants with Abraham in the context of G-d's plan for the history of the covenant people and/or the world.

**4** **(a)** Most candidates who attempted this question knew the contents of Jeremiah chapter 31 and some included snippets from the actual text in their explanations. Weaker candidates seemed somewhat confused about the time in which Jeremiah lived though they had some understanding of his prophecy about the new covenant.

**(b)** A few candidates did not quite get to grips with the wording of the actual question but still made some valid observations. As usual, in Religious Studies, candidates are free to approach questions from 'any or none' religious points of view. A few candidates explained the views of both Jews and Christians about this chapter, and one or two did it well, though this is not necessarily essential for successful performance. Most of the responses tended to conclude that Jeremiah's new covenant was meant to be a continuation rather than an attempt to supersede the Mosaic covenant and like all the other previous covenants links back to Adam and the plan that G-d has for humanity.

# G574 New Testament

## General Comments

The overall performance this session was very good. There were some excellent responses to questions one, two and three, with candidates presenting accomplished responses to both parts (a) and (b) of these questions. Question four did not elicit the same high standard of response and candidates who chose this question appeared less sure in their knowledge of events. Most candidates appeared to take full advantage of the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the gospels and the first-century background and at all ability levels there was engagement with the material and with wider scholarship.

Mostly, in part (a) of questions, the candidates' ability to deal with the task covered the range from excellent to satisfactory and there were very few who made only a weak or basic attempt. This was also the case, for the majority, in part (b) questions. Some candidates might have improved their performance in part (b) responses with a more detailed development of different views. Candidates should be aware that a range of evidence and analysis of different viewpoints is necessary for a response to achieve the highest level.

The selection, construction and organisation of material are high-level skills, essential to the clear communication of information and ideas and gaining good marks. There was a tendency among some candidates to prioritise the display of extensive (but sometimes irrelevant) knowledge above these other skills. Also, the use of abbreviated forms of expression and language and common words incorrectly spelled was prominent in the extended writing of some candidates who, otherwise, used and spelled technical terms accurately.

## Comments on Individual Questions

**1 (a)** There were many enthusiastic and knowledgeable answers to this question. Many candidates wrote confidently about the religious importance of the Temple. Common to all answers was a focus on worship and sacrifice in the Temple and its theological significance. Often candidates achieved the higher levels of marks through a selection of information from the wealth of material on first century Judaism and the link between the restoration of Israel and the Temple. Many candidates used evidence from the gospels and Jesus' actions to explain further their points. This question appeared to give all candidates the opportunity to gain appropriate credit.

**(b)** The majority of candidates interpreted the question straightforwardly as one which provided the opportunity to evaluate the extent to which Jesus did condemn Temple practices and how this might reflect his wider criticism of some of the Judaism of his day. Most responses attempted to maintain a balanced view of Jesus' actions and attitude towards both the Temple and eg the Pharisees and hypocritical, religious practices. A minority of candidates offered arguments from only one point of view. The general performance on this question, as a whole, was very good.

**2 (a)** There were some very good and excellent answers. Most candidates covered the events of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus in a comprehensive way, with attention to the detail of the account in Mark and the emphasis in his Passion narrative on prediction and inevitability. Some candidates showed a high level of ability to select intelligently the most pertinent material in Mark 14 and explain its significance. Other candidates used both Mark 14 and earlier material to very good effect to explain their points. Most candidates who attempted the question produced a successful answer and gained the higher levels of marks.

**(b)** Because good understanding had been demonstrated in part a), the majority acquitted themselves well in their answer to this part b). There were some perceptive points of view about Mark's motives in the way his Passion story is presented and the counter arguments in favour of his sources as eye witness accounts. Some candidates in this and other part b) questions made a number of valid statements either in favour or against the claims in the question but needed to develop supporting arguments to gain higher marks.

**3** **(a)** There were some excellent and very good attempts to explain the theology of Mark's presentation of Jesus' death. Some candidates showed a thorough understanding of the topic and wrote at length with explanations from their study of the gospel and Old Testament motifs. Some candidates who demonstrated a more superficial understanding of the topic, attempted to show that the passivity of Jesus' behaviour during his arrest and trial reflected his knowledge of his destiny and sacrifice, but did not then develop their response to include the evidence in the crucifixion scene.

**(b)** There was a variety of approaches and interpretations of this question. A number of candidates interpreted it in a literal way and asserted that Jesus could not be made to appear too human as he was in fact human (as well as divine). Others made a straightforward contrast between the harrowing description of Jesus in pain and the supernatural events that occurred and came to a justified conclusion about Mark's motives. Some responses were excellent with detailed arguments from either side of the debate. Most responses gained a satisfactory or good level of achievement. Others needed to develop their arguments further.

**4** **(a)** Candidates needed to have an accurate knowledge and understanding of the resurrection appearances in Luke in order to answer this question. The main confusion which occurred was with the resurrection appearances in John's gospel, which is not a part of the specification. This affected attempts to explain both the physical and spiritual aspects of the appearances in Luke. There were some satisfactory explanations about the Road to Emmaus or Jesus eating broiled fish in his appearance to the disciples. In the main, candidates' achievement was limited and only partially accurate.

**(b)** This evaluation also depended upon some accurate knowledge of the resurrection stories in Luke's gospel. Arguments as to how convincing Luke's resurrection accounts might be were most effective if supported by evidence of the symbolism and key themes in the stories, and the physical reality of the appearances. If they were based on some confusion or wrong information shown in part a) the achievement tended to be limited.

# G575 Developments in Christian Theology

**General Comments**

Most candidates had a reasonably good working knowledge of the questions they tackled. Few candidates, though, had learnt enough detail to secure the very top marks. Almost no one quoted relevant biblical passages or was able to refer to quotations from specific scholars to support their arguments.

Centres might like to refer to the recently updated reading list on the OCR website which contains more recent publications suitable for candidates and teachers.

http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gce/hss/rs/documents/index.aspx

**Comments on Individual Questions**

**1**   **(a)**   Most candidates had a reasonable knowledge of Augustine and were able to describe in good detail about the relationship of men and women before and after the Fall. However, some candidates were a little confused over the place of concupiscence, weakness of will and the theory of akrasia; many treated them as one idea. Most knew about the deliberative and obedient aspects of the soul although no one referred to Augustine's use of Paul's explanation of why women should wear veils.

    **(b)**   There were some interesting and thoughtful answers to this question. Many questioned the usefulness of the Fall if history and science have dismissed it. Some candidates considered the Fall in existential and psychological terms and developed some subtle arguments.

**2**   **(a)**   Typical arguments ran through the usual list of fundamentalist, conservative (or 'traditional'), liberal approaches to biblical authority and interpretation. Knowledge of scholars and specific biblical texts would have helped make for more focused answers. Had candidates dealt with the issue of authority and revelation first, then issue of interpretation would then have followed more easily.

    **(b)**   There were a wide variety of good responses to this question. Some candidates clearly enjoyed the playfulness of the question and successfully replied in kind.

**3**   **(a)**   There were many very good answers. Most were able to distinguish between personal, social and structural sin and went on to show how these types of sin are necessary when applying the mediations. Some candidates also used Marxist analysis when exploring structural sin and also discussed the problems of capitalism and developmentalism.

    **(b)**   There were a good variety of thoughtful answers to this question. Many candidates concluded that all sin is a failure to carry out God's will, others argued that types of sin depend on different levels of intention which might be collective or individual.

**4**   **(a)**   Most candidates understood the basic ideas of alienation and false consciousness. Better answers considered what these ideas might mean in Marxist (and Hegelian) terms. Very few were able to expound the terms in detail and almost no one explained why private ownership of property and religion are major sources of alienation in Marxism. Although the question could equally have been tackled in non-Marxist terms very few did so.

**(b)** There was a range of interesting answers to this question. Some began by considering poverty as a sign of the weakness of capitalism others took 'poverty' in its widest meaning to refer to all oppression. Very good answers considered further what alienation might mean in its secular and theological forms.

# G576 Buddhism

**General Comments**

There were very few rubric errors. Those which were found primarily consisted of candidates who had often provided a weak response to one question not completing a second question at all. This did not seem to be a result of timing issues in most cases.

The quality of answers varied greatly. Some candidates gave detailed and thoughtful responses showing a good awareness of Buddhist concepts. A few candidates gave very brief responses, and seemed to have little knowledge of Buddhism. A minority of responses mixed up Buddhist concepts, for example, the three marks of existence with the three poisons or dependent origination with the realms of rebirth.

A significant number of candidates produced a much better response for one question than for another. The better responses related to different questions across centres and candidates. This may show evidence of candidates selecting material for revision by trying to question spot. This is not a conducive approach to examination preparation and centres may wish to remind candidates to prepare for questions covering all of the material in the specification.

Centres may also wish to remind candidates of the assessment objectives in part a) and part b) of each question. Some candidates unnecessarily repeated all their material from part a) in part b). Others produced very brief responses to part a) showing little knowledge and understanding. They then, in part b), included material which demonstrated the knowledge and understanding required in part a). As material cannot be cross-credited between questions and Assessment Objectives this meant that the knowledge they had was not credited as it was demonstrated in the wrong part of the question.

There was less evidence of candidates writing prepared answers on a topic in this session. Centres should emphasise to candidates that not producing pre-prepared answers in general improves performance. It is more important to answer the question directly even if the material used is less polished.

**Comments on Individual Questions**

**1  (a)**  This was the least popular question.

Some weaker responses used the Tibetan Wheel of Life as a springboard to describe every picture within it, with little focus on dependent origination itself.

Other candidates were able to explain at least some of the links within dependent origination and explore the nature of the virtuous/vicious cycle. There were more attempts, this session, to explain rather than simply describe the link.

The best candidates had a clear knowledge of all twelve links, but they were also able to explain how they worked together and explained the cycle of re-becoming in this life and between lives.

**(b)**  Many responses to this question were disappointing. Some addressed the issue of whether it was difficult for non-Buddhists to understand rather than Buddhists. Others stated that it was difficult but they should try anyway, without forming an argument as to why. Some of those who referred to the Tibetan Wheel argued that it was difficult or easy because it was all pictures and no text to explain it.

There were some good responses which argued that it was difficult to understand in isolation, but when linked to other Buddhist concepts could be made more accessible.

**2**   **(a)**   This was the most popular question and often the one which elicited the most confident responses from candidates.

Most candidates were able to explore the three marks of existence with some accuracy, and even somewhat weaker candidates often tried to address the relationship between them in a paragraph at the beginning or end of their response.

There was more evidence of candidates addressing the relationship between the three throughout their responses, and focusing their material on answering the question more directly.

The best candidates had a comprehensive understanding of the three marks, and were able to explore how different types of dukkha were caused by a failure to understand anatta and anicca, and how an understanding of them could then reduce dukkha.

**(b)**   Part b) was answered less confidently than part a), however, most candidates were able to produce material related to the question. Candidates in the middle range tended to use (and benefit from) a comparison of the importance of each of the three marks leading them to a conclusion about why dukkha was or was not the most important mark.

Very good responses also adopted this structure at times, however, they were more likely to focus solely on dukkha. They often made links to other areas of Buddhism and argued that dukkha was most important because an understanding of it was essential to so many other concepts.

**3**   **(a)**   There were some candidates who focused tightly on the task and therefore achieved well.

Many candidates, however, included information which was superfluous to the question. This took a variety of forms including the origins of the sangha, and the rules of the sangha as well as the somewhat predictable exploration of how the laity support the sangha. In the weakest responses this 'padding out' made little difference to the mark awarded. For those candidates who had included relevant material, however, it at times detracted from their answer as it could not be claimed that they had selected irrelevant material.

Candidates might note that some of the shortest responses gained the highest marks.

**(b)**   Some candidates had put material relevant to this question in part a) and often repeated it without adding an evaluative approach. Others felt that they could not repeat the same material and this then left them with little to discuss.

Centres may wish to remind candidates to take the time to read both parts of the question and plan how to use their material appropriately.

Responses which did well often explored whether tangible or intangible benefits were of more value to the laity and the monastic community, before reaching a conclusion. Some focused on particular benefits for each side and assessed their relative value to Buddhists, sometime commenting that a Buddhist perspective is different to that of many Westerners.

**4** **(a)** Although this was a relatively straightforward question a significant minority of candidates seemed not to grasp what was required. They often produced responses which discussed Theravadin and Mahayanan responses to a whole variety of issues with no specific focus on the way the Buddha is viewed. In those responses, which did address the way the Buddha was viewed, imbalance between the two views was common with a paragraph on one approach and a much more detailed response on the other.

There were some strong responses which offered clear comparisons between the two traditions. These often included a confident and clear exploration of the trikaya doctrine within Mahayana Buddhism and a good understanding of the Theravadin understanding of the bodhisattva path and frequency of Buddhas.

**(b)** Some candidates repeated knowledge from part a) stating that this did/did not show respect for the Buddha with no clear argument as to how or why it did so.

Better responses tended to explore whether viewing the Buddha as a celestial or divine being was more or less respectful than viewing the Buddha as an extraordinary human being with very special achievements.

# G578 Islam

**General Comments**

Some scripts were a pleasure to read but there were others which gave the impression that the candidates were somewhat poorly prepared for an examination at this level.

The four questions were virtually equally popular and differentiated well. Unfortunately, there were one or two candidates who seemed to misunderstand the rubric and only answered two subsections of the questions rather than two whole questions.

**Comments on Individual Questions**

**1** **(a)** Most candidates began with an explanation about the Imam being in the front leading prayers in the mosque but only a few thought to explain that the role is not that of a priestly hierarchical authority though some did contrast the Imamate of Shi'ah Islam. There were some excellent accounts of Jumu'ah prayers and the Imam giving the Khutbah. Daily life supporting the Muslim community was often described graphically, including reference to the Madrassah.

   **(b)** There was a wide variety of approaches to this question and some thoughtful discussions about the function of a mosque, the role of the Imam and what constitutes functioning 'properly'. Some candidates used the opportunity to adapt an all purpose mosque essay, sometimes doing it quite well, and others pointed out, quite sensibly, that the Imam has all kinds of practical responsibilities including sorting out the plumbing so people can perform their preparations for prayer.

**2** **(a)** There was a tendency to treat the question as 'write all you know about the hajj'. Some candidates did not seem to understand the word 'origins' and addressed the significance and/or the meaning of each part of the hajj, usually gaining some credit by default having strayed into historical or religious areas of relevance. There were some excellent responses, however, which quoted the Qur'an as well as the opinions of scholars and text books.

   **(b)** Discussions tended to amass the case for both opinions and then tried to balance the weight of the arguments. Many came to the conclusion that both positions had substantial evidence and, as some pointed out, this is typical of Islam where the whole slots in together as Allah intended.

**3** **(a)** Some weaker responses took the opportunity to write all about the start of Islam from the moment when Jibrail brought the first revelation to Muhammadﷺ and they threw into their response some occasional background information. There was a surprising lack of historical and geographical background, or even trade routes, in some of the better responses and sociological material about tribal practices in 7<sup>th</sup> century pre-Islamic Arabia, though relevant, seemed to be used as a substitute. There were, however, some excellent explanations that even managed, besides the usual polytheism, animism, pantheism, Judaism and Christian sectarianism, to include Zoroastrianism in the religious background.

**(b)** There were some excellent though varied discussions. The story of the Jibrail revelations to Muhammad ﷺ was retold by some candidates before explaining that there had been previous revelations which had been corrupted. Some candidates argued that the revelation could never in any sense be new because the original Qur'an exists in Paradise. Others explored the extent of the link between Judaism, Christianity and Islam as the three Abrahamic monotheistic faiths and some quoted scholars and text books to support their case.

**4** **(a)** A few weaker responses took the word 'Shirk' simply to mean 'bad things' or 'sins' which, as colloquial usage, was acceptable but limited the potential level of attainment.

There were, however, some excellent explanations which tended to include the practical examples of the lack of statues and paintings in the mosque and the significance of the context of Tawhid in the Muslim monotheistic belief system. The cleansing of the Ka'bah by Muhammad ﷺ also featured in many responses.

**(b)** Many responses indicated that Shirk is relevant in all life irrespective of the country in which one lives. Some candidates used the opportunity to write predominantly about the problems of living in a non-Muslim country arguing that shirk is not particularly relevant but is one of the many problems. The cult of celebrities was mentioned by a number of candidates who felt that it and the love of money was a greater problem than the sort of idolatry that tempted people in pre-Islamic Arabia.

# G579 Judaism

**General Comments**

In the best answers, candidates demonstrated an impressive range and depth of knowledge; unhappily, a minority of candidates appeared to reproduce the same or similar class notes which they had learned by heart but which were not always relevant to the question. The examiners were pleased to see an overall improvement in standards of spelling and grammar, although some candidates wrote responses without using paragraphs. All questions on the paper were attempted with Questions 3 and 4 proving the most popular choices.

**Comments on individual Questions**

1    **(a)**    All candidates identified Tu B'Shevat as the New Year for Trees. Answers focused on the origins and observance of the festival in equal measure. It was pleasing to see evidence of wide reading on the topic, including good knowledge of the sources. There was useful discussion of the reasons for the popularity of Tu B'Shevat in Israel, and the significance of the festival for Jews living in the Diaspora. Candidates showed some awareness of the importance that Judaism attaches to trees as a symbol of life.

     **(b)**    Candidates generally agreed with the opinion that observing the festival demonstrates Jewish faith in the future of Israel. Some focused discussion on the agricultural aspects of Tu B'Shevat, arguing that the main idea of the agricultural laws is to practise for a return to Israel. Surprisingly, little was made of the readiness of Jews living in the Diaspora to give the new state their support, evidenced in numerous contributions for tree-planting projects on Tu B'Shevat.

2    **(a)**    All candidates identified the Tenakh as the tripartite division of the Hebrew Bible: Torah, Neviim and Ketuvim. In general, candidates explained the traditional view of origins; a few displayed good knowledge of the Documentary Hypothesis for the Pentateuch. The majority of candidates were able to summarise the contents of the Torah; however, knowledge of the Neviim and Ketuvim was often sparse. Some candidates confused Samuel with Saul in the first four books of the Neviim, and Ezekiel with Ezra in the books of the Latter Prophets. Weaker responses frequently included lengthy discussion of the Oral Torah.

     **(b)**    The majority of candidates agreed with the opinion that Torah is of greater importance for Jews than the rest of the Tenakh. Most argued that, for Orthodox Judaism, the Torah was dictated by G-d to Moses and therefore its authority is unchallenged. Others maintained that because the material in the Neviim is divinely inspired, it too, must be considered the will and teaching of G-d. All supposed the books of the Ketuvim to have less authority than the books of the Torah and the Neviim, even though they were written under the guidance of the divine insight.

3    **(a)**    Candidates generally explained the purpose of prayer in terms of developing and strengthening one's connection with G-d through acts of petition, praise, thanksgiving and confession; strong candidates often cited instances of prayer in the Scriptures, notably intercessions offered by the Patriarchs and Moses. The majority explained that synagogue and home are the main locations for prayer, and there was the general understanding that prayer can be offered at any time and place. Most candidates showed good knowledge of the three daily services, and many explained the link between prayer times and the Temple procedure. Some highlighted the Amidah as the central core of services. Some concentrated discussion on prayers offered on Shabbat and the High Holy Days.

**(b)** The question elicited a number of excellent responses. Many candidates argued that prayer alone is insufficient but that to have a meaningful relationship with G-d, it is necessary to obey His commandments, especially the moral and ethical laws. Some argued that nothing brings men and women closer to G-d than prayer. Some argued that prayer must go hand in hand with regular study of the Scriptures if men and women are to grow in holiness.

**4** **(a)** All candidates showed awareness of the mikveh as a ritual bath or pool of water used to restore purity. Strong responses frequently explained that its use is based on stipulations in the Torah, and several made good reference to halakhic requirements for the mikveh dealt with in the Mishnah. Most candidates were able to explain that the impurity of persons is spiritual and not hygienic, and that immersion is used to restore ritual purity to both persons and objects. Weaker responses often supposed that use of the mikveh is restricted to women.

**(b)** Discussion was often very good. Many candidates were aware of the tradition that a congregation without a mikveh does not possess the status of a community, and argued accordingly. Some argued that services do not have to take place in a synagogue but that there are specific requirements for a mikveh. Others argued that the synagogue is the major religious institution in modern Jewish life and that its several functions serve a range of people's needs.

# G581 Philosophy of Religion

**General Comments**

The overall standard of responses was slightly disappointing. Many answers were general in nature and failed to address the specific question set. A significant number of candidates seemed to be incapable of identifying which area of the specification was being assessed. It was not always that candidates' material was completely irrelevant; rather that the relevance was not made clear. Paragraphs on new thinkers or ideas would appear in many responses suddenly and without explanation.

It continues to be the characteristic of many candidates to believe that just because a number of philosophers have criticised a theory, it must be wrong, and when evaluating a question, you simply need to count the philosophers who make points on each side of the argument and see which side has more in it.

Timing did not seem to be an issue for most candidates. Most candidates answered two questions, the most popular of these were questions 1 and 2. A few weaker candidates thought that these questions required the same material, conflating miracles with religious experience and failed to see the different elements required.

Some candidates handicapped themselves by poor, and occasionally very poor, use of English: muddled expression too often points to muddled thought. Some still believe that there is a verb 'to of'. A particular problem for many was inadequate grasp of the grammar of philosophy, with terms such as 'prove' used as a synonym for 'argue'. Some would say of each thinker cited that he had 'proved' his view, even when it was controversial or opposed by other alleged 'proofs'; 'refute' used to mean 'deny'; *a priori* often mistakenly used for 'innate'; *a posteriori*, 'analytic' and 'metaphysical' were commonly misunderstood. This is an examination in philosophy of religion, and understanding the conventions of the subject is as significant as understanding correct notation in mathematics. Some candidates attempted, normally unsuccessfully, to answer philosophical questions with theological or scriptural assertions.

**1**    This question was attempted by many candidates with mixed results. The weakest answers were not able to identify what a corporate religious experience was or could not write more than one or two paragraphs on corporate experience, so migrated onto all other types of experience. Answers were largely uncritical in their discussion which left them as general topic responses and basic in their analysis. Some responses went into life after death or near death experiences rather than addressing 'corporate'. Analysis was often limited to superficial discussion of psychological explanations. The best answers were able to analyse the experiences critically, giving a variety of examples. Successful analysis employed good use of psychological evidence such as 'mass hysteria' to challenge whether these experiences were even veridical or plausible at best. There was good use of Feuerbach, Freud, James and Swinburne as well as awareness of modern scientific research such as the 'God helmet.'

Often there was a suspicion that the question really being addressed was whether religious experiences were from God rather than whether they could be used as a proof of God. There were some very long responses where examiners suspect that, sadly, a candidate may think that they have done well when they have in fact simply produced a general response on religious experience.

There was some misunderstanding of James, who was sceptical about corporate experiences and certainly did not argue that religious experiences proved the existence of God. A few argued, unconvincingly, that the numbers involved in the Toronto Blessing increased the likelihood that this was from God.

**2**     This was a very popular question with a variety of successful answers. Weaker answers used this as an opportunity to shoehorn in Hume's reasons for rejecting miracles at any point largely ignoring the omnibenevolent section of the question. Often, candidates tended to cover all possible thinkers on the topic, with reference to Wiles being purely coincidental. This meant that any attempt to move towards an answer to the question was assessed as simple assertion.

Better candidates were able to identify that this was a question on Wiles, or at least the issues raised by him, and so made good use of examples accordingly. A thorough discussion of biblical miracles usually followed, although most candidates failed to recognise the major assumptions about the accuracy of the biblical stories in their argument. This was linked well to the problem of evil and a partisan or arbitrary God. Some candidates were then able to address the problem of evil by successfully deploying material from the theodicies. A number of candidates made good use of Swinburne's analogy about the role of a parent and argued that a benevolent God may occasionally bend the laws of the universe to benefit his children. The best candidates were able to take the discussion to a greater depth by providing a structured approach to the question. Some, for example, explored how different definitions of miracles might still support the omnibenevolence of God (Aquinas or Holland). Others used the likes of Bultmann to highlight the significance or symbolism of the events rather than the actual events themselves. Good answers were also able to demonstrate thinking about different models of God, in a focused manner, to address whether miracles would pose a threat to God's omnibenevolence.

**3**     A less popular question, although relatively straight forward. Some candidates used the question as a platform to relate everything they knew about Religious Language without specifically directing the argument at either Falsification or the challenge to religious belief.

It was clear that few candidates had read the University Debate. Had the debate been read, many errors of understanding could have been avoided. The debate is readily available on the Internet and in anthologies, and is almost entirely ordinary language.

Very few candidates were closely aware of Flew's introduction to the debate, in which he does not assert that believers do not permit evidence to count against their beliefs. He says that it sometimes appears as if they do not. He asks a question of his fellow symposiasts – he wants to know what they would say constituted a disproof. The grammar of his introduction is central to accurate understanding.

A significant minority of candidates assumed that falsification meant that a sentence was true until proven false. This is a misunderstanding, as is the equation of falsification with *via negativa*. It was refreshing to note that increasing numbers of candidates were aware that falsification is the demarcation between scientific and non-scientific, not between the meaningful and the meaningless. Many, however, misunderstood Hare's concept of *bliks*, and too many still think that Mitchell argues that faith pays no attention to disconfirming instances. His argument is exactly the opposite. If it does not see the weight of the contrary evidence, faith becomes vacuous.

A number of candidates could not resist dipping their toes into the waters of verification in the course of their answers. However, many did show a sound understanding of the approach of Flew, based on Popper's scientific understanding, and were able to use the gardener parable and the quote "the death of a thousand qualifications", to argue for or against its challenge to religious belief. Some made good use of Wittgenstein's language games and a significant number also skilfully noted that not all religious language is propositional.

**4**     This was a popular question, but produced some responses which were attempts to use pre-prepared answers. For some candidates it was the opportunity to write at length about Boethius or to use general Problem of Evil essays. Many candidates wrote about the alleged dilemma of an omnipotent God creating a stone too heavy to lift, sometimes paying scant attention to the part of the question about evidence from the universe rather than logical puzzles. Some candidates simply wrote out proofs for the existence of God, ignoring 'omnipotent' in the title. Some candidates suffered because they did not know what omnipotence meant, confusing it with omniscience, benevolence or omnipresence.

Many candidates were able to go through the variety of different views on omnipotence with critical success. Useful discussion of 'where' God may be situated in relation to the spacio-temporal universe gave candidates a deeper basis for discussion in some cases although not all candidates were able to establish relevance.  Most candidates were able to identify that this question could require a discussion of the problem of evil and so were able to provide a variety of levels of discussion on this front. A few weaker answers ended up discussing some of the classical arguments in a very shallow way making the essay a hybrid between the problem of evil and the classical arguments for the existence of God.

Few candidates identified the difficulty of providing evidence of a non-physical being through the universe. Hick's notion of epistemic distance or the religiously ambiguous nature of the universe were rarely discussed.

# G582 Religious Ethics

## General Comments

Most candidates were obviously very well prepared for the examination and aware of the demands of the questions, but others were not so well prepared and their writing lacked the skills of evaluation, with the result that they wrote everything they knew on the topic without focusing on the question.

In general, however, many candidates were able to attempt to analyse and evaluate elements within the main argument rather than tacked on as a paragraph at the end of their response.

## Comments on Individual Questions

**1**   This question was generally well answered with most candidates able to give a clear description of the various approaches within metaethics and a good assessment of the level to which ethical language could be described as prescriptive.

Most candidates focused on the issue of prescriptivism and managed to avoid falling into the trap of simply writing about how meaningful or not ethical language might be.

Naturalism, emotivism and intuitionism were clearly understood by many candidates, though of the different approaches, it was naturalism which was the least well understood. Candidates did, however, grasp the idea that for a naturalist 'good' corresponded to some kind of objective reality.

Many candidates were able to refer knowledgeably to Hume, Ayer, Moore, Pritchard, Ross and Stevenson. Some candidates used this knowledge to present excellent responses to the question and better responses actually addressed the issue of whether *all* ethical language is prescriptive or merely persuasive, descriptive or indeed something entirely different.

Some very good candidates used the ideas of Mackie and Charles Pigden using error theory to argue that there are no moral facts so prescriptivism is wrong and we can only use ethical language in an agreed social contract which makes it convenient for use to prescribe certain moral actions as right and wrong. Many responses also discussed the idea that apart from this social contract who is to say that the moral actions prescribed by one person are good or not.

**2**   This was the most popular question, and was generally well answered with the majority of candidates constructing some interesting responses.

Some candidates displayed a comprehensive understanding and familiarity with the terms compatibilism and incompatibilism with regard to the free will and determinism debate. Many responses were able to keep the focus on whether the two are compatible. Weaker answers simply listed everything they knew on the different approaches to determinism and libertarianism and then attempted to answer the question in the last paragraph.

As previously, there was less secure knowledge on libertarianism beyond a simple reference to Sartre. Better responses also used Mill and Campbell to support libertarianism.

Much use was made of Hume and his various ideas in the field of compatibilism itself, and candidates were able to make a good case based on his concepts.

Locke's analogy of the locked room provided some candidates with good discussion material given the range of possible interpretations. Others, however, were unsure as to how the analogy might apply to the discussion.

Kant appeared as both a compatibilistit due to the concept of noumenally free and phenomenally determined, and a libertarian due to the expression of autonomy within his ethical theory which was supported with a quote where Kant rejects compatibilism. Credit was given for either approach where it was used to answer the question.

3    The majority of candidates were able to give a clear explanation of Virtue Ethics as formulated by Aristotle. Some candidates, though understanding Aristotle's theory in general, tended to see it as overly individualistic and selfish without giving sufficient weight as to how the polis might flourish.

Also, although the specification refers to knowledge of modern virtue ethicists some candidates were hampered in their attempts to answer this question as they knew little beyond the theory of Aristotle.

Good responses used a variety of modern thinkers with Foot and MacIntyre being the most popular, however, Anscombe, Slote, Hursthouse and Taylor were also used. There was also some successful discussion of feminist approaches which were seen as an improvement.

Some responses showed knowledge of these different thinkers but struggled to know how these modern thinkers addressed issues within Aristotle's ethic.

4    This question was answered very well by some candidates, whilst other responses showed little actual knowledge of any theories of conscience and rather too much on the issues surrounding sex.

Usually responses gave a brief overview of the different views of conscience which were then loosely related to issues surrounding sexual ethics before being contrasted with one or more of the major ethical theories, usually Natural Law or Utilitarianism. Most candidates did this well.

Some candidates, as in previous years, seemed unsure as to how to differentiate between the concepts of conscience, provided by Butler and Newman, whilst others were insecure in their knowledge of Freud's model. Often candidates assumed that because Freud was more modern he had to be a better approach to the issues surrounding sex, with little appreciation of the nature of the influence on the super-ego.

Some very good responses actually asked what 'other ethical considerations' might be and used the harm principle to good effect.

# G585 Development in Christian Theology

**General Comments**

There were very few candidates who sat this paper. Comments, therefore, are necessarily concise.

Centres might like to refer to the recently updated reading list on the OCR website which contains more recent publications suitable for candidates and teachers.

http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gce/hss/rs/documents/index.aspx

**Comments on Individual Questions**

**1**    Most candidates had a reasonable knowledge of Cupitt's basic position – some were able to refer briefly to his idea of solarity. However, few really understood his non-realism or his relationship to other post-modernist religious thinkers. Some compared him to Feuerbach and Smart but without a more detailed knowledge of his ideas success here was limited. Some might find the final chapter of *Sea of Faith* helpful when preparing Cupitt in the future.

**2**    This question invited a wide range of possible responses. Most, as one would expect, chose to discuss Rahner. Successful answers were able to set out his four theses and consider the mix of existential and historical experience to support his notion of the anonymous Christian. Other responses could have considered Barth or the Church of England's *Mystery of Salvation* or possibly the Catholic *Dominus Iesus*. There were some valiant attempts to address the essay claim that inclusivism is 'fundamentally flawed'.

**3**    Pleasingly, most candidates were able to distinguish reasonably clearly between secular feminists and feminist theologians. Most focused on Cady Stanton as their theologian and often compared her to de Beauvoir. Some candidates were able to produce some reasonable arguments why religion does not offer liberation, but almost no one tackled the issue of what 'genuine' liberation might mean in terms of religious or spiritual fulfilment.

**4**    This was not a popular question although it could have been tackled in many different ways. The few who did answer it discussed Mary Daly adequately although they were less sure about the place of body and androgyny in radical feminist theology.

# G586 Buddhism

**General Comments**

Most candidates were able to answer two questions with some material relevant to the question. There were very few poor responses in this session.

Even so, the quality of answers varied. Some candidates gave detailed and thoughtful answers showing a good awareness of Buddhist concepts. Others were able to produce material related to the questions, but did not always focus tightly on the question asked.

There was evidence in some responses of candidates writing prepared answers on a topic, rather than addressing the question asked. This does inhibit candidates' ability to access the higher levels as they are not selecting relevant material.

A few candidates tried to use the concept of sunyata in relation to every question, often inappropriately. They tended to use it to avoid addressing the question asked by stating that it did not matter due to sunyata. Other candidates answered the question appropriately and then added a line at the end about how none of this mattered because of sunyata. This added nothing of value to their response.

**Comments on Individual Questions**

1   This was a very popular question.

    A small number of weak candidates talked about The Lotus Sutra and the Heart Sutra rather than focusing on the Pali Canon.

    Most candidates were able to outline the main foci of each pitaka. Those in the middle range often included information which implicitly addressed the issue of whether the vinaya pitaka was the most important part of the Pali Canon.

    The best responses had a detailed knowledge and understanding of the contents of the Pali Canon. Candidates were able to construct arguments focused on whether it was more important to understand the teachings than to enact them, or to follow them even if we did not fully understand them.

2   This was the least popular question.

    Good responses had a sound knowledge of the teachings and practices of Tibetan Buddhism. They were able to explore its origins and its different varieties. Most focused on the oracles, tantra or the teachings about Bardo. Using this, candidates were able to construct arguments about whether these differences from Indian Buddhism were a betrayal of Buddhist origins or not. Most candidates offered some comparison with Mahayana Buddhism and considered whether the changes in Tibet were more or less different than those other schools. Most candidates offered some exploration of the validity of altering Buddhism in order to ensure success in different cultures.

3   Weaker answers tended to try and describe as many meditation practices as they could remember with limited focus on their aims. Analysis of whether all meditation had the same aim was often limited to a paragraph at the end of their descriptions.

Most candidates tried to explore the aims of meditation to some extent. There was occasionally confusion about what constituted meditation, with ko'ans, mondo and puja being included in some responses. Some candidates also tended to drift into a 'compare and contrast Rinzai and Soto Zen' type response. These often included some material which implicitly addressed the question, but did not aid candidates in reaching the higher levels of response.

The best responses tended to explore fewer meditation practices in a more analytical way.

**4** Very few attempted this question.

A significant number of candidates seemed to want to use this question as a springboard for comparing and contrasting the aims of Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism. Often this included limited information about the differences or similarities between nibbana or parinibbana. Centres may wish to remind candidates to answer the question asked as closely as possible.

Other candidates were confused about the difference between karmic formations and karmic consequences, or the status of the body when nibbana or parinibbana are attained, and thus although they tried to offer analysis linked to the question, it was not always successful.

The best responses analysed the similarities in terms of the cessation of dukkha and the three poisons and karmic formations. They were aware of the differences in the status of rupa, and the freedom from samsara and were able to discuss whether these were significant in determining whether nibbana and parinibbana were identical or not.

# G588 Islam

**General Comments**

The full range of ability was represented. In general, the standard was somewhat of an improvement on last January's entries and more candidates seemed to refer to text books, resources such as television programmes and the opinions of scholars. Question 4 was marginally the least popular but the questions differentiated well. There was a tendency from some candidates to try to repeat responses to past topics without focusing on addressing this session's actual questions. There were, however, some excellent responses which were a pleasure to read.

**Comments on Individual Questions**

1    **AO1** There were some excellent responses and it was noticeable that candidates of all persuasions made efforts to be scholarly in their approach to the topic. The majority of candidates began with an account of the situation after the death of Muhammad ﷺ and the better responses tended to continue with the history up to the battle near Karbala and the death of Husayn. Differences of belief and practice, which divide Sunni and Shi'a Islam in the present day, were incorporated at various points in most responses and usually made relevant.

    **AO2** The election of Abu Bakr instead of 'Ali was seen by most candidates as the catalyst for the split and some argued that the actual division became historical reality at the death of Husayn. Most candidates, therefore, simply concurred that history was the root cause of the division. Other candidates developed the argument further to include beliefs in that these have, over time, come to be a main cause, particularly because of the authority given to the Shi'a Imamate. Therefore, they concluded that both history and beliefs could be identified as the main cause of the division. Some candidates added the rider that it was the clash between belief that Muhammad ﷺ wanted elections in issues of leadership and belief in family descent which could be said to be at the root of the original historical dispute.

2    **AO1** Most candidates managed some explanation of the meaning of Tawhid, usually as an introduction. One or two candidates took 'articles' in the general sense of things that Muslims believe but still managed to gain some credit. The majority of candidates who addressed this question included the articles referred to in the specification but a few seemed confused about the divine decree (al Qadr).

    **AO2** Most responses explained that Allah is the starting point and central to the Muslim faith then worked through the Articles demonstrating how Tawhid was integral to each. In some cases 'To what extent' was either ignored or addressed in a simple conclusion that to every extent Tawhid was crucial. Some of the most articulate responses came from candidates who had grouped the Articles of Faith under the three headings: Tawhid, Risalah and Akirah.

3    **AO1** Some candidates relied on regurgitation of notes rather than the set text but there were some excellent attempts from candidates who not only knew the surah but also the background of the fledgling community in Madinah, including the aftermath of the battle of Uhud.

**AO2** The more comprehensive responses not only covered the teachings about women but also about other situations facing Muhammadﷺ as Prophet and Statesman in Madinah which led to his teachings about the Articles of Belief, Jews and Christians, hypocrites, enemies and jihad. Some candidates made a competent case in favour of the women being the most important theme. Mostly candidates argued that Surah 4 changed society from pre- Islamic ways and the teaching is still significant for family life and the roles of men and women and practical issues such as inheritance and the treatment of orphans in a socially responsible Ummah.

**4** **AO1** A few candidates tried to apply an all purpose essay on the problems for women and some took the opportunity to write about the difficulties of keeping the Five Pillars in a non-Muslim country and gained some credit. The more competent responses came from candidates who defined the sacred Islamic law based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah and gave a synopsis of the history of the law schools and/or showed some understanding of wahy, fiqh, ijma, qiyas and, particularly, ijtihad.

**AO2** Discussions tended to focus on the arena in which the individual candidates had set their response. It was impressive to see that many weaker responses used topical factual worldwide evidence of particular issues relating to Shari'ah Law even though some found difficulty coming to a conclusion and a few had forgotten the question.

# G589 Judaism

**General Comments**

There was a small entry for this paper but the questions proved successful in allowing candidates to respond at their own level and most were able to provide full answers. In the best responses, candidates often demonstrated evidence of wide reading and wrote with fluency and accuracy. Weaker responses tended to introduce material with less understanding and often with a 'write all you know' mentality. All four questions were attempted with questions 3 and 4 proving the most popular choices.

**Comments on Individual Questions**

1    All candidates included discussion of the anti-Jewish policies of Nazi Germany and the murder of the six million. Several candidates made reference to racist pronouncements in Mein Kampf and Hitler's conception of the Jews as an inferior race. Some candidates discussed whether historic Christian anti-Semitism had effectively prepared the way for the Holocaust. Other candidates discussed recent outbreaks of anti-Semitism in Europe, particularly those in France. Weaker candidates often lost sight of the question and discussed the attempts of post-Holocaust theologians to make sense of the Holocaust.

In their evaluation, most candidates maintained that the Holocaust was the direct result of the racist doctrines of the Nazi Party; in particular, Hitler's vision of a 'racially free' Aryan society. Many argued that Hitler made no distinction between observant and non-observant Jews in pursuit of his objectives: assimilated Jews and religious Jews alike were murdered. Some argued that religious prejudice had provided the seed-bed of racial prejudice.

2    Candidates generally identified kibbutzim as farming settlements in Israel based on the socialist ideals of equality and collective ownership. Several discussed the development of kibbutzim from agricultural communities to a combination of agriculture and industry. Surprisingly, there was little discussion of the role of kibbutzim in immigration, defence, and the country's political life. Weaker responses tended to give a brief description of kibbutzim before concentrating their efforts on Zionism.

In their evaluation, most candidates argued the importance of kibbutzim in establishing Jewish settlement and agricultural development in Israel, functions which were then transferred to the state. One candidate argued the vital defence role of kibbutzim prior to the formation of the Israeli army.

3    The majority of candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the historical origins of Neo-Orthodox Judaism and Hasidism, and the aspirations of Samson Raphael Hirsch and the Baal Shem Tov. In most answers, discussion centred on a range of issues, including: the respective approaches to the Torah and Talmud, observance of the mitzvot, attitudes to Zionism and the State of Israel, relations with other Jewish groups and the secular world, the nature of the rabbinate, education, marriage, and the distinctive clothing of the Hasidim. In the best responses, candidates discussed diversity of practice *among* the groups.

In their evaluation, most candidates argued that insofar as the two movements are characterised by a Torah-true approach to life, then they have more in common than differences. Some candidates argued that the Hasidim are more careful in their observance of the mitzvot than Neo-Orthodox Jews. Some appeared over-optimistic regarding the recognition of Neo-Orthodox Judaism by the Hasidim.

**4**    The majority of candidates began their response with some discussion of the Biblical teaching of the Messiah and the Messianic expectation. Many candidates then concentrated their efforts on how Messianic hope is understood in the teachings of Maimonides and the Maharal of Prague, and the relevance of their teachings for Jews today. In the best responses, candidates discussed a range of viewpoints, including those of Orthodox Judaism, Reform Judaism and secular Zionism.

In their evaluation, the majority of candidates argued that Messianic hope continues to be of importance for Orthodox Jews today, evidenced in prayers for the coming of the Messiah. Many candidates cited the example of the Lubavitch Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who urged his followers to do everything possible in their own lives – and in the lives of others – to hasten the Messiah's coming.  Some candidates argued the example of Jews who leave lives of relative comfort and move to Israel in preparation for the Messiah. Others argued that the establishment of the State of Israel has decreased the importance of Messianic hope for modern Jews.

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