

Religious Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 7877**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS 3877**

Report on the Units

June 2006

3877/7877/MS/R/06

OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations) is a unitary awarding body, established by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and the RSA Examinations Board in January 1998. OCR provides a full range of GCSE, A-level, GNVQ, Key Skills and other qualifications for schools and colleges in the United Kingdom, including those previously provided by MEG and OCEAC. It is also responsible for developing new syllabuses to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers.

The mark schemes are published as an aid to teachers and students, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which marks were awarded by Examiners. It does not indicate the details of the discussions which took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking commenced.

All Examiners are instructed that alternative correct answers and unexpected approaches in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the relevant knowledge and skills demonstrated.

The reports on the Examinations provide information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Mark schemes and Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this mark scheme or report.

© OCR 2006

Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annersley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 870 6622
Facsimile: 0870 870 6621
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

REPORT ON THE UNITS

Unit	Content	Page
2760	Foundation for the Study of Religion	5
2761	Philosophy of Religion 1 (AS)	12
2762	Religious Ethics 1 (AS)	15
2763	Jewish Scriptures 1	19
2764	New Testament 1	24
2765	Developments in Christian Thought 1	30
2766	Eastern Religions 1	32
2767	Islam 1	37
2768	Judaism 1	41
2769	Philosophy of Religion 2 (AS)	43
2770	Religious Ethics 2 (AS)	46
2771	Philosophy of Religion 2 (AS)	49
2772	Religious Ethics 2 (AS)	51
2773	Jewish Scriptures 2	53
2774	New Testament 2	55
2775	Developments in Christian Thought 2	58
2776	Eastern Religions 2	59
2777	Islam 2	62
2778	Judaism 2	65
2779	Philosophy of Religion 1 (A2)	66
2780	Religious Ethics 1 (A2)	67
2791	Connections in Religious Studies	69
2792	Connections in Religious Studies	71
2793	Connections in Religious Studies	74
2794	Connections in Religious Studies	76
2795	Connections in Religious Studies	78
*	Grade Thresholds	81

2760/11-15: Foundation for the Study of Religion

General Comments:

The paper allowed good candidates to show excellence whilst also permitting weaker candidates to show their ability in the best light possible. Those who did not do well had seemingly revised inadequately. There were also some truly excellent answers that showed the specifications of the course were being very well covered. A considerable increase in numbers appeared to show to some extent an influx of less able candidates.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Part 1

- 1 (a) **How do the writers of the Bible attempt to explain the creation of the world?** [33]

Those who attempted this question generally did better than many of those who attempted, the perhaps more initially attractive, Q.2. There were some very good responses from those who had clearly studied the relevant texts.

- (b) **'God created humanity for a purpose.' Discuss.** [17]

Answers to this question tended to wander over a wide range of material but often without any real focus or understanding of the issues involved. Some of the better responses considered the question and then pointed out that, as there was no God, he or she did not create humanity at all, let alone for any particular purpose.

- 2 (a) **Explain Plato's analogy of the cave.** [33]

This was, not surprisingly, the most popular question on the whole of the Foundation unit. There was a huge variety of answers, many of which left examiners rushing back to dusty copies of Plato to remind themselves of what Plato actually wrote. For some candidates their imagination knew no bounds. The amount of new detail included rivalled even that of GCSE answers on the Good Samaritan. There were many really excellent answers which showed very thorough preparation and mature understanding of the concepts involved.

- (b) **Discuss Plato's idea that most human beings can never really know the whole truth.** [17]

This question did not so easily lead itself to the flights of fancy of part (a). As a consequence it differentiated very well between those who had a general, if basic, understanding of the Cave but were unable to consider Plato's thinking within the analogy.

Part 2

- 3 (a) **What is the purpose of using ethical language?** [33]

The question invited candidates to discuss meta-ethics in general and many, able candidates did this with great clarity and detail. Unfortunately, there were many weak and rather disappointing answers from those who clearly had little grasp of the topic and wrote generally, and at not inconsiderable length, about 'good', 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong'.

- (b) **'Ethical language is largely meaningless. Discuss.** [17]

Some of the answers appeared to reflect how difficult candidates had found the topic and the some of the weakest responses commented that it was meaningless because they could not understand it.

- 4 (a) **Explain what it means, in ethics, to call a theory 'relativist'.** [33]

This was the more popular of the two ethics questions. Some, rather surprisingly, struggled with the concept and wrote about almost any absolutist theory rather than considering relativism. However, there were many good and excellent responses.

- (b) **Assess the strengths and weaknesses of relativist views of ethics.** [17]

This question produced generally better responses than (a). Most candidates were able to consider some of the strengths and weaknesses whilst many also sought to compare these with those of other theories.

Part 3

- 5 (a) **Explain how scholars have attempted to date the events of the Jewish scriptures.** [33]

This was not particularly popular. Many candidates appeared unsure of the material and some did not appear to know anything beyond textual evidence which therefore produced some very weak responses.

- (b) **'The destruction of the Temple in 70 CE is the first date in Jewish history which is not in doubt.' Discuss.** [17]

Whilst there were some very good answers to this question dealing with extra-Biblical material etc., a significant number of candidates appeared to think that the first indication of the dating of 70CE was by the use of Carbon 14. The majority failed to see the significance of 'first' and so focussed purely on 70CE rather than considering other events which they had studied.

- 6 (a) **Explain how Form Criticism might help in the understanding of the Jewish scriptures.** [33]

There were some very good responses to this question but many appeared confused about what Form Criticism is and wrote, instead, about Source Criticism, Redaction Criticism etc.

- (b) **'Wisdom literature is one of the most important parts of the Jewish scriptures.' Discuss.** [17]

Those who fully understood the nature of Wisdom literature produced some very good responses but many wrote very generally about the literature of the Scriptures as though they were all considered to be Wisdom.

Part 4A

- 7 (a) Explain the origins and beliefs of the Pharisees. [33]**

It was surprising how little candidates knew about the origins of the Pharisees and this part of the question was often ignored. There was better knowledge and understanding of their beliefs though all too often there was confusion with the Sadducees.

- (b) 'The Jews did not benefit at all from the Roman occupation.' Discuss.**

This topic had clearly been taught very well in many centres and there were some excellent responses which produced very balanced considerations of the issues.

- 8 (a) Explain the importance for first-century Judaism of the Roman occupation of Palestine. [33]**

This question again required detailed knowledge of the occupation and, as in Q.7, it was clear that many candidates had been very thoroughly prepared with much modern scholarship and thinking being deployed.

- (b) 'The Zealot movement was an inevitable response to Roman rule.' Discuss. [17]**

Whilst there were some excellent answers to this question, there was an obvious general dearth of detailed knowledge about the Zealots and this was all too apparent in the work of less able candidates.

Part 4B

- 9 (a) Explain the importance for first-century Judaism of the Roman occupation of Palestine. [33]**

This question again required detailed knowledge of the occupation and, as in Q.7, it was clear that many candidates had been very thoroughly prepared with much modern scholarship and thinking being deployed.

- (b) 'The Zealot movement was an inevitable response to Roman rule.' Discuss. [17]**

Whilst there were some excellent answers to this question, there was an obvious general dearth of detailed knowledge about the Zealots and this was all too apparent in the work of less able candidates.

- 10 (a) Explain what is meant by 'Q' (quelle) in relation to the synoptic problem. [33]**

Most candidates appeared to know what 'Q' meant, though specific knowledge was missing in general. Many answers mentioned 'Q' and then simply wrote at length about the Synoptic Problem. Perhaps if they had considered material such as *The lost gospel: the book of Q and Christian origins* by Burton L. Mack, they could have produced more balanced responses.

- (b) **'Solutions to the Synoptic Problem have raised more questions than they have answered.'** Discuss. [17]

There were many weak answers to this question. Most candidates seemed to feel that the Synoptic Problem in general and 'Q' in particular were totally irrelevant to almost anything and some resorted to dismissing them as an academic backwater rather than giving balanced consideration to the question.

Part 5

- 11 (a) **Explain biblical teaching about attitudes towards other religions.** [33]

Those candidates who had studied and considered the texts in the specification were often able to produce good responses to this question. However, many resorted to a sort of sub-GCSE answer which argued that Christians loved everyone and that Christianity taught that all faiths were equal paths in the 'journey up the mountain'.

- (b) **'Christianity is the only true faith and other people cannot enter heaven.'** Discuss. [17]

For those who had already considered exclusivism, pluralism etc. this was a very straightforward question. However, this is certainly not expected at Foundation level and there is enough material in the set texts to produce a good response which many did although, given the quality of answers to (a), the general poor quality of responses was not surprising.

- 12 (a) **Explain what is meant by a Liberal approach to the interpretation of the Bible.** [33]

Answers to this question came in two distinct categories: those who knew what a Liberal approach was, and those who did not. It is one of the three interpretations listed on the specification and therefore there was no excuse for responses which did not address the topic accurately. There were, however, many excellent responses.

- (b) **'A Liberal approach to the biblical text is destructive to the Christian faith.'** Discuss. [17]

Clearly, responses to this question depended, in part, on whether candidates had been able to answer part (a). Few were willing to agree with the statement but there were a number of good, balanced and valid responses.

Part 6A

- 13 (a) **Explain the importance of the early life of the Buddha for understanding his teachings.** [33]

There was an issue here over what candidates determined to be the Buddha's 'early life' and answers were marked according to the interpretation given. Some limited this to the birth and pre-birth stories, some went up to the Sights whilst others continued up the Enlightenment.

- (b) **‘Accounts of the life of Siddhartha Gautama are just fiction.’ Discuss. [17]**

A significant number agreed with this statement but the better answers moved on to consider the implications of this idea.

- 14 (a) **Explain the Buddha’s teachings about the nature and the ending of suffering. [33]**

This was a very straightforward question and by far the most popular of the two. Most candidates were able to give a very clear account of the Buddha’s teachings though weaker responses simply gave a list of the Four Truths and the Eightfold Path without explanation.

- (b) **‘The Four Noble Truths suggest that the Buddha must have been a very miserable person.’ Discuss. [17]**

This produced some very interesting responses and there were some very good and very thoughtful answers from many candidates about whether the statement could really be extrapolated from the Buddha’s teachings or whether it was really a misunderstanding of his teachings.

Part 6B

- 15 (a) **Explain the main characteristics of two of the gods of the Vedas. [33]**

This was the less popular of the two questions. The specification requires knowledge specifically of Indra, Agni, Soma and Varuna. It was rather surprising, therefore, to find that many candidates who attempted this question appeared to know nothing about any of them and wrote about Hindu gods instead.

- (b) **‘Vedic religion was polytheistic, not monotheistic.’ Discuss. [17]**

While there were many good responses to this question, some candidates appeared simply not to know the meaning of the terms and so were unable to respond in any meaningful way.

- 16 (a) **Explain the importance of the main discoveries made in the Indus Valley. [33]**

This was by far the more popular of the two questions. Although there were a few weak responses, most candidates wrote at great length and in exceptional detail about the discoveries, showing excellent preparation.

- (b) **‘The archaeological discoveries of the Indus Valley are of very little help in understanding Hinduism.’ Discuss. [17]**

Building on their responses to (a) there were some equally good answers to this question which showed good knowledge of both the Indus Valley civilisation and of Hinduism.

Part 7

- 17 (a) Explain the importance for Islam of the migration to al-Madinah. [33]**

There were some very disappointing answers to this question. Many candidates answered it as though it was 'the importance for Muhammad (bpuh)' rather than for Islam.

Nevertheless, there were, of course, many good answers which displayed good knowledge and understanding of the event and its significance.

- (b) 'The events of Muhammad's (bpuh) life in al-Madinah are more important than those which took place in Makkah.' Discuss. [17]**

In general terms, those who answered (a) well continued to do well with (b). A disappointing number of candidates seemed unclear about what happened where and there is perhaps a need in studying the life of the Prophet to produce a timeline of events.

- 18 (a) Explain the influences on Muhammad (bpuh) during his upbringing. [33]**

Again, there were many excellent responses which showed very good knowledge of the upbringing of Muhammad (bpuh). Equally, there were many responses which showed candidates who seemed to know little or nothing about his upbringing.

- (b) 'Muhammad(bpuh) totally rejected the beliefs and practices of pre-Islamic Arabia.' Discuss. [17]**

This produced some very strange responses. Many candidates did not appear to have any real knowledge of the beliefs or practices of pre-Islamic Arabia. Many thought that Muhammad (bpuh) did not change or reject anything. There were, however, some very good responses.

Part 8

- 19 (a) Explain the content and use of the Talmud. [33]**

There was the seemingly inevitable quantity of responses which confused the Talmud and the Torah or Tenakh. A substantial number of candidates thought that the Talmud was one homogenous entity which was almost as confusing. There were some very thorough responses which showed good knowledge and, although not in such quantity, use of the Talmud.

- (b) 'For Jews, the Tenakh must always be seen as more important than the Talmud.' Discuss. [17]**

Weaker answers did not really get off the ground with this question and tended to content themselves with 'they are both equal' type of answers, avoiding engaging with the topic. There were some very good arguments which showed thorough knowledge and understanding of the topic.

- 20 (a) Explain what Jews mean by describing their religion as monotheistic. [33]**

This was the less popular of the two questions. This can be a relatively difficult concept for students to go beyond saying 'they believe in one god'. However, there were some excellent in-depth responses.

(b) Assess the implications of ethical monotheism for Jewish life. [17]

This can be a difficult concept and many candidates found it so. However, those who had studied the topic thoroughly produced some excellent responses.

2761: Philosophy of Religion 1 (AS)

1 General Comments

On the whole, the paper represented a full and fair examination of candidates' abilities, with a wide range of responses.

There were some extremely good scripts where candidates showed sound knowledge and understanding of philosophical concepts, this was particularly evident in part (a) of the questions. It was disappointing to see, yet again, that many candidates displayed difficulty in constructing arguments in their responses to part (b) questions, many simply listed arguments for and against a view, rather than engaging with the question and actually arguing a particular position. Candidates' attention is drawn to the mark descriptors for AO2 – where candidates are required to consider and clearly analyse viewpoints.

Philosophical chronology continues to be a problem for many candidates with the likes of Aquinas, Paley and Mill purported to be very much alive whilst Swinburne and Hick have been firmly committed to the historical records of a bygone era. Chronology aside, many candidates' responses demonstrated detailed, literate and thoughtful material.

2 Comments on Individual Questions

1 (a) Explain how teleological arguments attempt to prove the existence of God. [33]

This was a popular question amongst candidates and generally it was answered very well. The better responses made use of a range teleological arguments from Aquinas, Paley, Swinburne, and the Anthropic Principle recognising the arguments from 'qua purpose' and 'qua regularity'. Weaker answers were confined to Paley's use of the 'watch' analogy.

(b) 'Mill proved that teleological arguments cannot prove the existence of God'. Discuss. [17]

This question attracted many poor responses, with much confusion in candidates' minds about what Mill's position was. Many candidates confused Mill with Hume's or Darwin's arguments, and those who knew Mill's criticism simply stated his position on the teleological argument without sufficient analysis. The more competent answers made use of the theodicies as the most likely response to Mill.

2 (a) Explain how Kant's understanding of morality leads him to assume the existence of God. [33]

This question was fairly popular and was generally well answered. Many candidates could accurately recount the 'summum bonum', arguments about the afterlife, and the better answers referred specifically to the three postulates of freedom, immortality and God's existence as the guarantor of the summum bonum. Weaker responses tended to focus on a discussion of Kantian ethics with 'God' attached as an afterthought.

(b) 'Kant's assumption that God exists is wrong.' Discuss. [17]

On the whole, this question was discussed and argued very well with many candidates referring to the persuasiveness of alternative approaches to understanding morality such as moral relativism, evolution and psychology. Stronger candidates were able to make clear comparative judgements rather than simply describing alternative approaches.

3 (a) Explain William James' argument that the nature of religious experience proves the existence of God. [33]

This was one of the least popular questions and the quality of the answers varied considerably. Candidates seemed to be polarised between those who knew very little about William James and those who seemed able to give lengthy detailed accounts of his arguments. Weaker responses simply gave very vague and general accounts of religious experience often without reference to William James. Better answers were able to make use of James' string of interconnected ideas, such as, the key features that constitute a common core to genuine religious experience or the variety of religious experiences which give testimony to their persuasiveness and authenticity. Surprisingly, not many candidates mentioned James' assertion of the primacy of religious experience as opposed to the creeds and religious practices which are of secondary importance.

(b) 'Religious experiences are nothing more than a product of the human mind'. Discuss. [17]

The vast majority made good use of this statement in arguing from the verdict of psychological analysis of religious experience, particularly, utilising Freud's ideas of religious experience as wish-fulfilment and neurosis. Some made good use of Swinburne's Principle of Credulity and Testimony.

4 (a) Explain why Anselm's ontological argument concludes that God has to exist. [33]

A very popular question among candidates and one that was generally answered to a high standard. Some candidates were unaware of Anselm's second form of the argument in *Proslogion* 3, and those that did mention it incorrectly assumed that it was a response to Gaunilo. Some very able candidates wrote at great length on several versions of the argument, but most of their material was irrelevant. They would have done better if they had simply answered the question set.

(b) 'Anselm's ontological argument is wrong.' Discuss. [17]

Analysis of this statement produced some excellent answers with many referring to Gaunilo's and Kant's objections to the ontological argument and Descartes' support for Anselm. Stronger candidates were also able to utilise more modern reformulations of the ontological argument, such as, Plantinga's or Malcolm's in arguing the statement, although this is not a prerequisite for an excellent answer here.

5 (a) Explain how Irenaeus and Augustine account for the existence of moral evil. [33]

Another popular choice for candidates, and on the whole one that was answered quite well. Some confused the two theodicy arguments, and some failed to realise

that the question specifically asked on 'moral evil' and not natural evil. For the most part, knowledge of Irenaeus and Augustine was detailed and accurate.

- (b) 'The sufferings of innocent people defeat any attempt to explain why God allows moral evil.' Discuss. [17]**

Many good thoughtful answers here using contemporary examples to illustrate points. Arguments were generally well-balanced. Many candidates were aware that the statement above refers to Dostoyevsky's 'The Brother's Karamazov', and quite a few candidates legitimately related the views of Augustine and Irenaeus to the issue in question.

- 6 (a) Explain Psychological objections to religious belief. [33]**

Surprisingly, this question was not as popular as it has been in previous exam sessions. Most candidates focused on Freud, and there were some good answers on Feuerbach and Jung. Weaker responses tended to give lengthy descriptions of the Oedipus Complex and Primal Horde without demonstrating how these constitute objections to religious belief.

- (b) 'Psychological objections to religious belief are nonsense.' Discuss. [17]**

In the main, this question was poorly answered with many candidates simply not knowing the misgivings or problems with the psychological challenges to religious belief. Those candidates who answered well made valid arguments referring to the lack of empirical evidence and using science verses religion arguments.

2762: Religious Ethics 1 A

General Comments

Most candidates were able to complete two full questions and time management was good. Standards overall were generally good.

In some questions the part (b) sections attracted proportionally higher marks than the part (a) sections.

Some centres had prepared candidates with the understanding that part (a) was about theory and part (b) about application, which led to some difficulty in questions 3 and 5.

Credit goes to candidates who used the time to write detailed and thoughtful responses, with evidence of further reading.

Comments on Individual Questions

1

(a) Describe the main strengths and weaknesses of Utilitarianism. [33]

This was a very popular question and most candidates answered it well. Stronger candidates evaluated strengths and weaknesses throughout their answers, with sparing use of relevant examples, such as the NHS and terrorist bombings.

Weaker responses tended to just write about what they knew about Utilitarianism and added a few weaknesses at the end. Many weaker answers spent most of the time writing lengthy examples to illustrate a point.

Better responses did show how Mill overcame some of the original weaknesses and how Preference Utilitarianism overcame further problems.

Surprisingly few candidates picked up on the difficulty of predicting consequences, though all wrote, with varying degrees of success, on the lack of protection for minorities.

(b) 'Utilitarianism is a good approach to genetic engineering.' Discuss. [17]

This was well answered by those candidates who were familiar with stem cell research, germ line therapies and the modern applications of genetic engineering. However, most seemed to answer from the view of cloning and 'designer babies', with a few discussing thoroughly genetically modified food and its success or otherwise in both developed and developing countries.

However, there were still some candidates who knew little about genetic engineering and had little understanding of it beyond 'designer babies' and cloning which they seemed to think were happening all the time. Some candidates still wrote about IVF.

2

- (a) **Explain how the ethics of the religion you have studied might be considered absolute.** [33]

This was not a very popular question and most candidates did not answer it well. Many contented themselves with writing about Natural Law or even Kant, with weaker candidates limiting themselves to the Ten Commandments.

Candidates would benefit from more direct teaching on the 'ethics of the religion you have studied', as some confused this with Christian denominations and some covered all the ethical theories they had studied at AS level. There were, however, some outstanding answers that compared the ethics of the Jewish scriptures with those of the New Testament, and Natural Law with Situation Ethics.

The answers to this question tended either to be below average or outstanding.

- (b) **How far can a religious theory of ethics be justified?** [17]

Most candidates simply criticised basing ethics on religion as being too authoritarian.

Better candidates contrasted religious ethics with different ethical theories, mostly preferring Utilitarianism or Kant. Some argued successfully that a religious theory of ethics can be justified if you are a religious believer.

3

- (a) **Explain how moral absolutism might approach issues surrounding the right to a child.** [33]

Most candidates used a particular absolutist ethical theory to answer this, whether it was Natural Law or Kantian ethics. There were some good arguments, using Kant, that the child should not be used to fulfil the desires of the parents.

Many candidates concentrated on what sort of person was suitable to be a parent and used the ethical theories to examine the suitability of married couples, single people, homosexuals etc.

The best answers examined the rights and wrongs of IVF treatment. Some failed to read the question properly and simply discussed 'the rights of a child'.

The performance of many candidates showed that this section of the specification needs greater explanation in class.

- (b) **'Absolute morality is an unfair approach to issues surrounding the right to a child.'** Discuss. [17]

The answers to this question varied according to the emphasis placed in part (a). However, most candidates compared the approaches of absolutist theories and relative theories such as Situation Ethics and Utilitarianism – generally concluding that Situation Ethics was a fairer approach as it considered the rights and wrongs of each situation by applying agapaic love.

4

(a) Give an account of Kant's theory of universal maxims. [33]

This was another popular question and generally well answered in a straight forward and thorough way.

There were some outstanding answers that examined every aspect of Kant's ethical theory – quite a feat given the time available.

Many candidates referred to Kant's own examples or used examples from medical ethics – particularly abortion or euthanasia.

(b) 'Kant's ethical theory is too inflexible.' Discuss. [17]

Again this question was generally well answered with most candidates agreeing with the statement. However, many candidates did discuss the need for absolute principles and their role in creating a stable society and the dangers of subjective ethics.

5

(a) Explain how a follower of Natural Law might approach the issue of abortion. [33]

Those candidates who knew and understood Natural Law answered this question well. They used the ideas of telos, reason, primary and secondary precepts and applied these to abortion. Better answers also included real and apparent goods and the role of double effect.

However, there were still many weak answers who just considered Natural law as 'doing what comes naturally' or even allowing abortion as the law of the land allows it up to 24 weeks!

Many candidates simply answered using Biblical texts.

Some candidates wrote about the rights and wrongs of abortion. Therefore, although this was a popular question, it was not always well answered.

(b) 'A woman has the right to choose an abortion.' Discuss. [17]

Few answers examined the word 'right' and most simply argued for and against abortion. Better responses evaluated the positions of different ethical theories as applied to abortion.

Many weaker responses went off at a tangent, including numerous scenarios, and long arguments against the Catholic position (contraception and euthanasia as well as abortion) as well as for and against GCSE type arguments. Many weaker responses spent more time and wrote more for part b) than they did for part a), gaining proportionately higher marks.

6

(a) Explain what is meant by the sanctity of life. [33]

This question was not very popular and candidates did not always produce good answers. Responses tended to be very repetitive and there were few Biblical teachings or links to Natural Law.

However, there were a few answers with a thorough knowledge of the topic and they related their knowledge well to medical dilemmas ranging from abortion and euthanasia to foetal research and transplants – some even including healthy living and diet.

(b) 'The concept of the sanctity of life is not helpful in understanding the issues surrounding euthanasia.' Discuss. [17]

Again many answers for part (b) were longer than those for part (a).

The arguments usually contrasted the approaches of sanctity of life and Situation Ethics. Some also included Kantian ethics and Natural Law.

Some excellent responses discussed the fact that neither the concept of the sanctity of Life nor ethical theories were completely helpful as euthanasia was so complex and involved individuals, their families, the NHS and many different beliefs about the value of human life, free will and autonomy.

Report for Paper 2763: Jewish Scriptures 1

General Comments

A wide range of ability was represented among the candidates choosing this option. All the questions seem to have achieved the intended differentiation with equal parity across the options. The most popular question in part 1 was question one whilst the least popular was three. In part 2, the three questions were virtually equally popular.

There were very few rubric infringements and most candidates managed to complete the paper within the one hour time limit. It was obvious that candidates were conscious of the time limit and most tried to place their material appropriately without undue repetition. The best candidates addressed the questions according to the two assessment objectives but cross accreditation was given where necessary.

There were some excellent responses which quoted the set texts appropriately, used the opinions of scholars sensibly, made reference to issues of date, authorship, purpose and historicity where relevant and unfolded an argument lucidly. The demonstration of knowledge, understanding and evaluative skills confirmed in the minds of the markers the value of including set texts as part of a religious studies course.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part 1

1 (a) Explain the covenants G-d made with Adam and with Abraham. [33]

All responses demonstrated some knowledge of stories concerning Adam and Abraham, though apples featured in accounts of the Garden of Eden rather more than one might wish at this level. Most candidates had some understanding of making covenants. Good responses made reference to the covenants with both Adam and Abraham and showed familiarity with the set texts (Genesis 1: 26-30 and 12 & 17).

Some candidates made reference also to ANE covenants as parallels but this was not essential for good marks, nor was the more detailed 'cutting of the covenant' in Gen 15. There were some excellent responses from candidates of every persuasion.

(b) 'The covenants with Abraham replaced the covenant G-d made with Adam.' Discuss. [17]

The discussions often developed from the material used in the first part of the question.

Most candidates rejected the word 'replaced'. Some argued successfully that the term was more appropriate in the case of the Noahide covenant as a replacement of that made with Adam. Many argued that all the covenants are essential parts of salvation history or of progressive revelation and that the covenant with Adam was for all humankind whilst those with Abraham, such as the covenant of circumcision, had specific significance for Judaism.

2 (a) Explain the importance for the Israelites of the teachings found in Exodus chapter 20. [33]

Exodus 19-24 is the relevant set passage in the specification. The best responses tended to be those which reflected study of the actual set text. Some candidates did not seem to be aware that Exodus 20 contains the Ten Commandments which were given at Sinai. The first commandment in the Decalogue makes reference to the Exodus from Egypt so some credit was given for general background narrative. Better responses included not only some of the content of the Decalogue but also some significant background information e.g. the context of the theophany and the role of Moses as the mediator between G-d and the newly formed nation. Some excellent responses explained that Exodus 20-24 'the book of the covenant' includes casuistic laws as well as the apodictic commands and addressed both in terms of importance.

(b) 'The giving of the Ten Commandments is the most important part of the Covenant with Moses.' Discuss. [17]

Most responses acknowledged, implicitly or explicitly, the practical function of the whole covenant for the Israelite community and the ongoing value of the Torah for the Jews to the present day. Candidates were free to come to any conclusion and some simply argued that all laws given by G-d are equally important. Other candidates argued that the casuistic application of laws to specific situations is less important than observing timeless permanent apodictic laws such as the Decalogue. Some excellent candidates pointed out that the conclusion of Exodus chapter 20 includes the rulings about the building of altars and reasoned that even such rules were important because these altars contrasted starkly with the high places of the surrounding nations and the beliefs and practices the Canaanite altars represented. The best discussions usually included some consideration of the way in which the Ten Commandments remain a pivotal point of reference in ethical monotheism and throughout the Jewish scriptures.

3 (a) Compare Jeremiah's new Covenant with the Covenant G-d made with Moses on Sinai. [33]

This was not a popular question but was handled fairly well by those candidates who selected it. Essays took a variety of approaches as this course is open to candidates of any religious persuasion or none but most candidates were able to explain some of the features of the new Covenant in Jeremiah 31. The best explanations placed verses 31-34 within the context of the whole chapter.

Exodus 19-24 is the set text in the specification for the covenant with Moses. Most good candidates tended to concentrate on the Decalogue rather than the whole Mosaic Covenant for the comparison.

Some excellent candidates explained how corporate identity and corporate responsibility were accepted by the nation of Israel at Sinai as their part of the covenant but loss of king, land and temple had been the catalyst which provoked the idea of personal responsibility for sins and, the more positive corollary, the relationship of the individual with G-d.

(b) 'Jeremiah intended to replace the Mosaic covenant.' Discuss. [17]

More able candidates gave examples to show that the text of Jeremiah 31 uses the term 'new covenant' and encourages contrasts and parallels with the Sinai covenant. The best discussions tried to balance the fact that usually the new covenant is said to concentrate on personal as opposed to corporate religion but the context foresees a restoration of land and a reunited Israel and Judah.

Most candidates argued that Jeremiah's new covenant presupposes the continuation of previous covenants rather than intending to supersede them. Many wrote that the internalising of the covenant by writing it not on stone but on the heart of every individual was intended to reinforce the Mosaic Covenant and make it truly effective.

Part 2

Answer one question from this part.

- 4 (a) **Explain the arguments used by Job’s “comforters” in Job 2-14.** [33]

Candidates usually began with a competent account of Job’s situation and the arrival of his “comforters”. Weaker responses provided very general outlines of the traditional Jewish view of reward and punishment rather than supporting their explanation with reference to the arguments in the set text. Material selected from commentaries gained some credit but the best responses tended to be those which demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the first round of arguments offered by Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar with details of what the “comforters” said.

- (b) **‘What the “comforters” said was of no use to Job.’ Discuss.** [17]

Weaker candidates tended to be hindered in their discussion because they did not know the textual material well enough to discuss the potential value of what the “comforters” said. Some candidates used the fact that the book lets the readers see behind the scenes into the heavenly court and managed to argue that any advice would be useless because Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar did not know the full story. Good candidates found opportunity to comment on the nature of the book and usually classified it as wisdom literature because the writer was exploring rather than explaining the problem of suffering. Most good candidates argued that Job’s innocent suffering calls into question the whole system of rewards and punishments of traditional Jewish theodicy as expressed by the “comforters”. Some excellent candidates considered that, though the book suggests that the traditional reasons for suffering are wrong in the case of Job, the speeches themselves contained some wise advice such as not despising the Almighty’s discipline. Many argued that, in fact, Job could be said to have taken some notice in the end because he repented of his arrogance and self righteousness.

- 5 (a) **Explain what Jonah learnt about G-d from his experiences.** [33]

Some candidates went into extreme detail about various experiences of Jonah but essentially missed the point of the question and did not explain what Jonah learnt about G-d. There were many responses, however, which reflected the specification and explained that Jonah learnt from his experiences that he was unable to hide from G-d or to resist G-d’s wishes. Some excellent candidates developed this to explore the implications about G-d’s nature and attributes, using theological concepts such as omnipresence, omnipotence, transcendence and immanence. The best candidates moved beyond the disobedience and the whale incident to explore other key parts of the story e.g. the kikayon experience which broaden Jonah’s perception of G-d’s wishes for humanity. There were some excellent explanations which highlighted universalism as a key lesson as well as exploring the necessary tension between justice and mercy if G-d is seen as just and merciful.

- (b) **‘Jonah never doubted G-d.’ Discuss.** [17]

Candidates suggested a variety of reasons why Jonah tried to avoid going to Nineveh. Most tried to show that it was never an issue of doubting G-d. Some candidates took the opportunity to consider the purpose of the author of the book. They argued that Jonah knew all along that G-d would forgive the Ninevites if they repented and Jonah did not want the stubborn unrepentant Israel to look bad by comparison. Some suggested that he was trying to avert the future when the forgiven Ninevites would lead the invasion of Israel by the Assyrian empire.

Some candidates tried to ascertain what it was about G-d that Jonah never doubted. There were some excellent responses which concluded that Jonah never doubted the existence or power of G-d but he was limited in his perception of the nature, character and will of G-d, particularly in respect of the Gentiles and the role of Israel.

6 (a) Explain why both Jonah and Job resented their suffering. [33]

This question was slightly less popular than the other two but tended to be chosen by candidates who were capable of delivering detailed and knowledgeable responses which demonstrated understanding of the challenging theological dilemmas faced by both characters. Very few simply gave an account of the suffering of Jonah and Job. Most candidates selected sensibly using material relevant to the question and gave articulate explanations of potential reasons for resentment.

The best candidates contrasted the suffering of the innocent Job and the suffering that Jonah brought on himself and some attempted to justify Jonah's situation because of the threat posed by Assyria. They also quoted appropriate parts of the text, for example when Jonah says, 'I am greatly grieved to death' during the kikayon incident.

(b) 'The book of Jonah is harder to believe than the book of Job.' How far do you agree with this statement? [17]

Candidates made reference to material from the first part of the question to identify areas from both books that might seem difficult to believe literally and compared the extent to which they were credible. Most discussions dismissed arguments about the likelihood of being swallowed by whales as being superfluous. An unexpected conclusion from many candidates was that the message of the book of Jonah is the one which is harder for some believers to believe (i.e. that it is true), namely, that G-d loves all human kind.

Some candidates concentrated on the fact that there are different types of literature in the Jewish Scriptures. They discussed the extent to which the two books are intended to be historical accounts or literary constructs to highlight theological issues. Some argued that both books were full of 'miraculous' incidents but, from a faith standpoint, anything is possible with G-d. Others paralleled times in more recent Jewish history when resentment at suffering made Jewish thinkers question their beliefs. The fact that persecuted Jews and people of other persuasions have turned to these books, particularly Job, for comfort was used to illustrate the spiritual dimension of 'believing' with, as some candidates wrote, 'your heart and not your head'.

Specification/Unit Code 2764 Specification/Unit Title Religious Studies

1 General Comments

The majority of Centres entered candidates for the Alternative B – The Gospels option of the paper.

The answers to all sections of the paper covered the whole ability range with perhaps rather fewer achieving the highest marks than in the last two June sessions. The majority of candidates had been adequately prepared on the set texts and were able to use textual evidence to support their explanations and opinions, with a fair degree of accuracy. The best showed understanding and engagement with the text of Acts 13-16 or the passion narratives in Mark and John.

A significant number of candidates appeared to have spent a long time on the first question, followed by a much weaker second question. Although there were no rubric errors, a number of candidates only answered one question.

2 Comments on Individual Questions

Alternative A – Early Church

Part 1

1 (a) Describe and explain the significant features of Paul's speech at Athens. [33]

This was a popular and generally well-answered question. The best answers explained the main features of Paul's speech to the Aeropagus in terms of their significance to the audience i.e. as the Athenians would view them. Some answers failed to mention Paul's reference to the Resurrection.

(b) 'Paul's visit to Athens was not a success.' Discuss. [17]

Most candidates gave a balanced view of Paul's success. The majority of candidates recognised that Paul's success was in understanding the religious nature of the Athenians and their admiration of literature and philosophy. Some converts were made and others said 'we will hear you again about this'. Only a few candidates referred to the idea of the resurrection as being uncongenial to the Athenians and a reason why Paul might be ridiculed. The idea that the letter might be a contrivance i.e. "a set piece sermon" rather than a genuine event (making 'success' unimportant) was not usually explored.

2 (a) Explain the terms of the Apostolic letter at the Jerusalem Council. [33]

Some very good answers with accurate details. However, some candidates mistakenly said that circumcision was mentioned in James' speech and the Apostolic Letter.

This was a popular question and appears to be an area that candidates enjoy engaging with.

- (b) **'The Apostolic letter made it difficult for Jews to become Christians.'** Discuss. [17]

There were a variety of interesting responses to this evaluation. The best answers used evidence from Galatians 2 to support the statement and showed understanding of Paul's conflict with the Judaizers etc. Most responses offered a balanced view of the favourable terms of the letter and then argued whether, in practice, it helped or hindered conversion.

- 3 (a) **Explain what Paul said in his speeches about the resurrection of Christ** [33]

There were only a few answers to this question and although there were some good attempts they were too varied for the examiners to make detailed comments about performance.

- (b) **'Paul had no knowledge of what happened at the resurrection.'** Discuss [17]

Some candidates who demonstrated good knowledge and understanding in part (a) experienced difficulties here. Few candidates were able to offer a fully balanced view. Many answers omitted the point that Paul had personal proof of the resurrected Christ from his own conversion experience (a claim he makes in Galatians.)

Part 2

- 4 (a) **Explain the occasion when Paul and Barnabas were thought to be gods.** [33]

Generally a good performance on this question. Some very good answers with accurate detail from Acts 14:8-19. The fullest answers explained the reaction and words of Barnabas and Paul in verses 15 to 18.

- (b) **'Paul encouraged his audiences to think he was a miracle worker.'** Discuss. [17]

This was also well attempted. Some very interesting and valid assessments were made of Paul's miracles in the set texts. Some candidates concentrated only on the miracle in part (a) and this was a perfectly acceptable approach and equally as valid as wider references to the set texts.

- 5 (a) **Describe and explain one occasion when Paul defeated those who practised magic.** [33]

A number of candidates chose this question, with the majority concentrating on the events with the Sons of Sceva at Ephesus in Acts 19. A few answers chose the defeat of Bar-Jesus/Elymas at Paphos in Acts 13. However, the question was not particularly well answered and the majority of attempts were lacking in accurate detail and understanding. It appeared that this question was very definitely a weak second choice for some candidates, which was surprising considering the drama of the events in the context of Paul's mission in Acts 13-19.

- (b) **'Paul's miracles did more harm than good.'** Discuss. [17]

With a few exceptions, answers here were mostly weak, perhaps because of lack of understanding of the event chosen in part (a) or, in some cases, weakness in written expression.

- 6 (a) Explain, with evidence from the texts you have studied, what Paul meant by 'baptism into the Spirit'. [33]**

There was evidence that the few candidates who tackled this question found it challenging but examiners were able to reward some very perceptive answers. The best answers made reference to the baptism of John and the Pentecostal nature of the baptism into the Spirit of the twelve disciples at Ephesus.

- (b) 'Acts of the Apostles' should be re-named "Acts of the Holy Spirit". Discuss. [17]**

The candidates who performed well on (a) were able to use the set texts as evidence in their arguments supporting the statement and although arguments against the statement tended to be weaker, or, non-existent, candidates achieved a satisfactory level of marks.

This part of the question appeared also to be accessible to the weaker candidates.

Alternative B Gospels

Part 1.

- 7 (a) **Describe and explain the actions of the Sanhedrin in bringing about Jesus' death.** [33]

This was a very popular and generally well-answered question. The majority of candidates displayed impressive knowledge of the events and the actions of the Jews in the trials of Jesus in both Mark and John. The best answers were able to explain the religious and political implications of the relationship between Jesus and the Chief Priests and between the Jews and Pilate and the Romans. Some candidates made reference to earlier conflicts between Jesus and the Pharisees/Chief Priests etc.

- (b) **'Jesus was crucified because he was guilty of blasphemy.' Discuss.** [17]

Some very good, well-balanced answers which analysed the events described in ((a) and also considered the issue of the fulfilment of God's will and prophecy in Scripture. It was pleasing to note that most candidates demonstrated an intellectual interpretation of the meaning of blasphemy in First Century Judaism and many pointed out that in John 19:15 the Jews themselves were guilty of blasphemy.

In some of the weaker answers, candidates appeared to be confused about the meaning of blasphemy and missed the subtleties of the charges against Jesus in the gospels.

- 8 (a) **Explain how John's gospel presents Jesus' death as a sacrifice.** [33]

This was a popular question and there were some very good answers. However, a significant number of candidates appeared to confuse the terms 'victim' and 'sacrifice' and offered evidence that Jesus made no attempt to prevent his death as the reason he was 'a sacrifice' and made very little reference, if any, to the actions and words at the crucifixion in John. Clearly, the best answers were those firmly based in the textual references, Old Testament motifs and the imagery of the Pascal lambs in John 19.

- (b) **'John's account of Jesus' death is more about faith than fact.' Discuss.** [17]

On the whole, this part of the question was well answered by all who attempted it. The majority of candidates assessed the faith versus fact argument successfully and showed awareness of the purpose and genre of the gospel. There were only a few weak answers.

- 9 (a) **From evidence in the texts you have studied explain why it was important for the gospel writers to include Old Testament references in their passion narratives.** [33]

Only a few candidates attempted this question, the majority perhaps preferring question 8 on this topic. Some weaker candidates appeared to choose this question as a second option, with very little relevant knowledge. However, a small minority of candidates did have the relevant knowledge and understanding that the answer was a thematic one and they achieved a satisfactory level of marks.

- (b) **'The Old Testament was no longer important after the resurrection of Jesus.'** Discuss. [17]

There were some varied answers to this question and evidence that it was accessible and interesting to candidates. Even candidates who had found part (a) too challenging produced some good answers. The importance of the Old Testament to Christian ethical practice as well as a study of the New Testament was often well argued. The weakest answers were brief and made reference only to the Ten Commandments without any analysis.

Part 2

- 10 (a) **Compare Mark and John's accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb.** A [33]

There was evidence here that some candidates might have chosen this question without a careful reading of all questions in this section. Many candidates who answered this question had good knowledge of the events in John's gospel but only a sketchy or confused account of what happened in Mark 15. Therefore, some candidates would have gained better marks for their response by answering question 12.

The usual mistake in most answers was to confuse rather than compare the two accounts. Answers to this question needed to be clear, concise and organised but many were quite the opposite.

- (b) **'Mark's account of the discovery of the empty tomb is more convincing than John's.'** Discuss. [17]

Candidates who answered well in (a) were also able to perform well in this section of the question because they had an accurate and clear idea of the different content of the two gospels. Weak answers in 9(a) inevitably meant that some candidates did not have accurate evidence to support their argument.

- 11 (a) **In the texts you have studied, what evidence is there for the sources of Mark's gospel?** [33]

Only a minority of candidates answered this question and answers were mostly sketchy and contained only two or three brief ideas about the sources of the gospel. However, some candidates demonstrated understanding of the priority of Mark and possible sources and the identity of Mark and his possible connection with Peter. Only a few answers were comprehensive enough to reach the higher levels of marks. Candidates only rarely referred to text to support their explanations.

(b) 'Peter was the main source of Mark's gospel.' Discuss. [17]

Some candidates had already answered this question as their sole theory for the source of Mark in part (a). Some who had omitted reference to the possible identity of Mark in the arrest scene or the climate/purpose for which he might have been writing, used the material here as evidence to support or disagree with the statement. Only a few, but the best answers, analysed evidence from the text e.g. the arrest, Peter's denial, 'the angel at the empty tomb 'go and tell Peter'' etc.

12 (a) Explain the significant features of John's account of the discovery of the empty tomb and the resurrection appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene. [33]

This was the most popular question in this section. There were some very good, detailed and accurate answers and it was the selection of the significant features and relevant explanation of John 20:1-18 which discriminated between candidates. There were some patchy answers which missed out the main details of the discovery of the tomb in verses 1-10 but were accurate about the appearance to Mary or vice versa. Performance on the whole was good with only a few very weak answers.

(b) 'Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene is essential to an understanding of eternal life.' Discuss [17]

All candidates, who attempted it, found something to argue about in this question with varying degrees of success.

The best answers offered a perceptive analysis of the credibility of the account and whether later accounts of the resurrection in John offered more understanding of eternal life. Some candidates focussed their argument on the debate about the possible altered bodily state of Jesus in this and other accounts of the resurrection. The argument as to whether there was any resurrection promise or eternal life for Christians in this account was attempted by some but not always successfully concluded.

2765 Developments in Christian Thought 1

General Comments:

It is good to note that increasingly candidates have a much better theological grasp of the questions. Far fewer treated it as a history paper.

In general the answers to the liberation theology were better informed and more articulate than answers to the feminist theology questions.

Part (b) of the questions was not so well tackled this year. Too many candidates wrote longer answers here than in their part (a) questions, often failing to concentrate on the specifics of the question and without attempting to assess or evaluate ideas. Often shorter and more focussed answers gained much higher marks.

2. Comments on Individual Questions:

Question
No.

1a **1 (a) Explain traditional Christian teaching on women and the family.** [33]

Most were able to give a general outline of male/female relationships. Good answers provided traditional interpretation of biblical texts. Some gave reasonable outlines of Augustine's and Aquinas' thought. The best answers were able to refer to contemporary theology and recent statements from the Roman Catholic Church.

1b **(b) 'Traditional Christianity does not support the view that a woman can be a mother and also have a job in the workplace.' Discuss.** [17]

Good answers referred to biblical examples of women who held influential roles in society or to Jesus' discussion with Mary and Martha. Many understood that women could take on a job provided it did not upset the natural order where men take on the primary function of breadwinner. However, far too many answers were unable to develop any kind of argument other than to agree with their statements in part a.

2a **1 (a) Explain the main aims of reconstructionist Feminist Theology.** [33]

There were some excellent references here to Fiorenza and Ruether and their desire to reconstruct early Christian history and theological language. Many referred to Tribe but without really understanding her theological aim in analysing the 'texts of terror'. Candidates were generally much better at distinguishing between liberal and reconstructionist feminist thought than in previous years.

2b **(b) 'From the start Christianity has always had a radical view of women'** [17]

Although most candidates appeared to understand what 'radical' meant in terms of 'radical feminist theology', most interpreted it to mean 'conservative' or 'reactionary' in this context. Many took 'from the start' of Christianity to refer to the Old Testament rather than early Christianity. However, there were some good discussions which compared St Paul's and the Gospels' presentation of women and were able to consider who offered the more authentic version.

3a **3 (a) Explain the status of women in the Old Testament. [33]**

This was a popular question. Most were able to make the paragon/prostitute distinction and illustrate with appropriate examples. The best answers were able to move outside simple story-telling and showed a very good knowledge of the background and social development of the Old Testament world.

3b **(b) To what extent is the Old Testament's presentation of women useful for modern theologians? [17]**

Most were able to say that theologians could use the Old Testament to show the dangers of a patriarchal world. Some good answers distinguished between different kinds of feminists and argued that the Old Testament provides the reason for radical feminists rejecting Christianity. Excellent answers were able to discuss the sophia/wisdom tradition and its usefulness for modern theology.

4a **4 (a) Explain the teaching of Liberation Theology on the dialectical view of history. [33]**

Good answers were able to connect liberation theology and Marxism and the poor/rich dialectic. Sophisticated answers related this to an immanent notion of the Kingdom of God and the dialectical process of praxis via the three mediations. Some excellent answers considered Hegel's dialectical view of history and the place of the Spirit.

Less successful answers interpreted the question to be referring to the development of liberation theology.

4b **(b) 'The main purpose of Christianity is to give the poor their own dignity.' Discuss. [17]**

This evinced a range of good answers from those who considered the basis of Christianity to be a restoration of the *imago dei* to those who argued that Christianity's aim is to bring all people closer to God/salvation.

5a **5 (a) Explain what Liberation Theology teaches about sin. [33]**

Those who understood the relationship of personal and structural sin were able to offer some very good answers. Excellent responses referred to sin as alienation from the means of production and the usefulness of Marxism as part of the process of analysis and solution proffered by the liberation theologians.

5b **(b) 'Liberation theologians have made Christianity too political.' Discuss. [17]**

There were many good answers to this question. Many considered with varying degrees of success the Vatican *Instruction* and the dangers of becoming involved with class struggle. Too many candidates are still convinced that liberation theology condones violence as a means to an end; many therefore equated politics with violence. There were many subtle answers which reflected on what it means to give a preferential option for the poor and dispossessed.

6a **6 (a) Explain what is meant in Liberation Theology by 'conscientization'. [33]**

Most had a very good understanding of conscientization. The best answers looked at the *process* of conscientization of the poor via the mediations and some of the favoured biblical texts. Some excellent answers discussed Paulo Friere. Some less successful answers considered that conscientization is only aimed at the rich.

6b **(b) 'Reading the Bible is essential for conscientization.' Discuss. [17]**

Many were able to suggest that Marxism offers an alternative to the Bible for conscientization. Good answers considered the role of Base Communities and of the liberation theologians themselves. Some suggested that the Bible has been read too selectively and has not really helped the poor sufficiently.

2766: Eastern Religions 1 (Written Examination)

General Comments

Centres had generally prepared candidates well for this examination. Very few candidates ignored the rubric, a few answering too many questions, and a few only answering one part of a question, however these were generally weaker candidates. Most candidates used their time effectively, and wrote a similar amount for both questions.

The part (b) of each question offered sufficient scope for able candidates to demonstrate their skills analytic and evaluative skills. Weaker candidates usually attempted analysis, but were not able to justify or develop their viewpoints.

The best responses showed a clear awareness of a number of different resources. In Alternative A – Buddhism, most candidates found part B questions more challenging than part A questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

Alternative A – Buddhism

Part 1

1 (a) Explain why suffering is a poor translation of the Buddhist term dukkha. [33]

This was the least popular question in this part. Some candidates gave answers to this question which would have been more suited to question 3. The best responses focused clearly on the question. They often outlined different types of dukkha, before exploring why the translation suffering was or was not appropriate for them.

1 (b) 'Dukkha is the least important of the three marks of existence.' Discuss. [17]

Candidates generally concluded that all three marks were equally important. The best responses discussed the importance of each mark, and why it might be considered the most/least important before reaching their conclusion. They were usually aware that dukkha described the human condition, and an understanding of it could provide the impetus to 'solve' the problem. Weaker responses tended to state that the Buddha gave three marks, so they must all be important with little further discussion.

2 (a) Explain how following the Four Noble Truths may lead to nibbana in Buddhist thought. [33]

Weaker candidates tended to ignore the statement 'may lead to nibbana' in the question. As a result they often merely outlined the Four Noble Truths. Whilst this gained some credit it did not fully address the question. The best responses tended to outline each of the truths in order, explaining how each may be linked to nibbana as they went through. They then drew each aspect together in a conclusion directly addressing the question.

- 2 (b) **'Understanding of the Second Noble Truth is all that is needed to attain nibbana.' Discuss.** [17]

Some candidates made little reference to the Second Noble Truth in their responses. This made it hard for them to provide a sustained and justified response. The best responses tended to explore how the understanding of the causes of dukkha implied an understanding of dukkha, hence the First Noble Truth would have to be understood as well as the second.

- 3 (a) **Explain what is meant when Buddhists say all life is dukkha.** [33]

Good responses for this question generally included a detailed and accurate explanation of the different kinds of dukkha. They were then able to explore what aspects of life could be considered dukkha, and how this might affect other aspects of Buddhist belief and practice. Some candidates reflected on the pessimistic nature of Buddhism, perhaps based on exam preparation of a formulaic nature. Centres could remind candidates to focus on the question set.

- 3 (b) **The existence of happiness means that all life cannot be dukkha.' Discuss.** [17]

There was a huge variation in the quality of responses to this question. Weaker responses tended to have a stereotypical view of dukkha as suffering, and thus were unable to offer any meaningful discussion of the statement which was taken at face value.

The best responses cited examples of happiness leading to dukkha – too many cream cakes being eaten was a popular choice, or happiness not lasting. They were also able to discuss the nature of the term dukkha, and analyse the nature of experiences which may be considered dukkha, but which are not 'suffering'. A few pointed to nibbana as being the most obvious experience of 'happiness', and stated that once nibbana was achieved dukkha was in fact extinguished

Part 2

- 4 (a) **Explain the problems Buddhists might face belonging to the monastic sangha.** [33]

In many responses the problems which might be faced by Bikkhus or Bikkhunis were implied rather than explicitly discussed. The problems raised by candidates were often very general, and showed little awareness of the specific constraints of the Buddhist monastic community. The best responses examined specific rules, and explained problems specific to the monastic sangha, such as the alms round. Centres may wish to aid candidates in exploring a few key vinaya rules in more detail.

- 4 (b) **'It is impossible to follow Buddhist monastic rules in the modern world.' Discuss.** [17]

This question was often answered poorly. A large proportion of candidates seemed to address the issue of whether the rules could be followed if all Buddhists joined the monastic community, perhaps as a result of exam preparation of formulaic nature. The best responses tended to give examples showing how the world has changed, and where this might make following the rules difficult, or took the modern world to mean the western world and gave examples of how rules might be adapted to suit

the western culture. Most concluded that though difficult it was not impossible to follow the rules.

- 5 (a) Explain how monastic rules reflect the Buddhist ideal of the Middle Way. [33]**

Strong candidates gave detailed and specific information on the monastic rules and made clear links to the Middle Way. Weaker candidates looked at Buddhist rules in general rather than vinaya rules, and often made little reference to the Middle Way. A surprisingly high number of candidates stated that the 10 precept followed by novices were the only rules followed by the monastic community.

Centres may wish to aid candidates by exploring some vinaya rules in more detail.

- 5 (b) 'Buddhist monks should live alone, not in communities.' Discuss. [17]**

Most candidates tried to offer some analysis of the issue. Weaker candidates were hampered by their lack of specific knowledge of monastic practices. The best responses were aware of both lifestyles being practiced by Buddhists, and evaluated the strengths and weakness of each before reaching a conclusion. They often concluded that it was more challenging to live in a community, but also more supportive, so was the best way to practice the Middle Way.

- 6 (a) Explain why Buddhists take refuge in the Dhamma. [33]**

This was the most popular question in this section. Some candidates offered a response which explored the three refuges with equal weighting rather than focusing on the dhamma. This hampered their response. The best responses showed awareness of the different dimensions of the term dhamma. Some candidates made good use of A2 material to explore the importance of the dhamma in different Buddhist schools, though this was not required.

- 6 (b) 'The Dhamma would not exist without the Buddha.' Discuss [17]**

Most candidates concluded that the dhamma and sangha would not exist without the Buddha. Weaker candidates made superficial claims about the dhamma being the teachings of the Buddha. The best responses often discussed whether the dhamma would have been the same if a different Buddha had revealed it.

Alternative B – Hinduism

Part 1

- 7 (a) Explain the importance of practising puja. [33]**

Candidates were usually able to provide good descriptions of the practice of puja. Many omitted the 'importance' of practicing puja however. Centres may wish to remind candidates of the need to read and respond to key terms. The best responses made references to darshan and the need to communicate with God.

7 (b) 'Practicing puja at home instead of going to the temple is selfish.' Discuss [17]

Candidates often included some clear explanation of their views in their responses. The best responses referred to religious and social benefits of both attending the temple and worshipping at home. Most concluded that both were appropriate depending upon the circumstances of the individual worshipper.

8 (a) Explain the importance of Lakshmi for Hindus. [33]

Candidates often offered descriptions of Lakshmi, or told stories connected to her, rather than explain her importance. The best responses cited her importance for specific groups of people, for example business men or females. Few made reference to the importance of female power as a necessary corollary for the male power of the gods.

8 (b) 'Goddesses are less important than gods in Hinduism.' Discuss. [17]

Candidates often wrote more for this section than for part a. Most were able to make reference to the male characteristics of the Trimurti, and use this to argue that at times the statement may seem to be true. The best responses usually made reference to the prevalence of goddess worship in many Hindu villages, and the popularity of worship of some pan-Indian goddesses.

9 (a) Explain why many Hindus worship Ganesha before worshipping other deities. [33]

Candidates often described the characteristics of Ganesh, or retold stories connected with him, without discussing why he might be worshipped before other gods. The best responses were able to discuss how worship of Ganesh might remove any obstacles to their worship of other deities, clearing the way for other matters.

9 (b) 'For Hindus, praying is just a way of expressing hopes and wishes.' Discuss. [17]

Candidates were generally able to offer some relevant discussion of this issue. Most concluded that Hindus did expect a response, or gain something from prayer, and therefore that the statement was incorrect. A few candidates were able to refer to different Hindu traditions, showing that e.g. for monists this statement might be true, but these practitioners would be judging other Hindus, rather than praying themselves.

Part 2

10 (a) Explain how Ramanuja developed the Advaita Vedanta of Sankara. [33]

Candidates often described the teachings of Sankara in more detail than those of Ramanuja. They were usually able to outline the key changes between the two thinkers such as the relationship between atman and Brahman and the practice of Bhakti yoga.

- 10 (b) **'Ramanuja was a monotheist, rejecting Sankara's atheism.'** Discuss. [17]

Candidates often seemed uncertain about whether the descriptions of Sankara as an atheist and Ramanuja as a monotheist were correct, but few were able to clearly discuss the issues raised by these descriptions. The best responses argued that Ramanuja did reject Sankara and were able to make good use of their understanding of nirguna and saguna Brahman to illustrate their views.

- 11 (a) **Explain how the teaching about God in the Bhagavad Gita differs from that in the Vedas.** [33]

Few candidates answered this question.

- 11 (b) **'Hinduism is polytheistic.'** Discuss. [17]

Few candidates answered this question.

- 12 (a) **Explain what ends when moksha is reached according to Hindus.** [33]

Few candidates showed awareness that interpretations will differ according to different Hindu teachings. Most were able to outline what moksha was, and could explain that reincarnations ceased. Some candidates were confused about the relationship between karma and moksha. Good responses used technical vocabulary well, and made reference to samsara, maya, and karmic formations in their responses.

- 12 (b) **'Fulfilling your dharma is more important than seeking moksha.'** Discuss. [17]

Most candidates presented more than one viewpoint, and could justify them. Many candidates referred to the teachings of Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita to argue that dharma must be followed, and that detached following of one's dharma will in fact lead to liberation. Other views included reference to the nature of maya, and thus the value or otherwise of following any kind of traditional Hindu practices.

2767/01: June 2006 (Written Examination)

General Comments

Many candidates had prepared well for this examination and a few candidates gained full marks. A wide range of ability was represented. Some scripts were excellent and a pleasure to read whilst a few candidates seemed to misunderstand the rubric, answering only one part of each of the two essays chosen. The quality of English used was poor in the weakest scripts but very few candidates seemed to have difficulty in understanding the questions. The three question options discriminated well and elicited the full range of responses. The most popular questions were three and six. Many candidates were careful to address the wording of the questions and seemed to enjoy demonstrating their skills in accordance with the two assessment objectives. Some candidates, however, demonstrated a surprising lack of basic knowledge, not only about the topics on the specification but about Islam in general.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part 1

1 (a) Explain why Surah 1 is a good introduction to Islam. [33]

This was the second most popular question in this Part.

Candidates usually began by giving some information about Surah 1, identifying it as the opening chapter, al-Fatihah, of the Qur'an. Some explained that Surah 1 is sometimes called the essence of the book and is regarded as the perfect prayer. A few weaker candidates thought that Surah 1 contained -or was- the Shahadah. Good candidates took the opportunity to show knowledge of the wording of Surah 1 (any version or paraphrase of the seven ayat was acceptable). Many good candidates worked through the Surah explaining each clause from the point of view of it being a worthy introduction to Islamic belief. The best responses included explanations of such basic Qur'anic Islamic concepts from Surah 1 as: one God, Creator and Sustainer; the final Judgement, Hell, Paradise, grace, mercy; and the obligation to monotheism and moral behaviour which is the straight way of Islam, achievable under God's guidance.

(b) 'Islam could not exist without the Qur'an.' Discuss. [17]

Some candidates argued mainly on historical grounds about the role of the Qur'an in the life of Muhammad (bpuh), and this had some validity, though it fitted more appropriately a question which might have been worded 'would not exist' or 'could not have existed'. Some candidates spent too long on this question and rushed their second question.

Good discussions, with arguments based on knowledge and understanding, approached the question in a variety of different ways. Some candidates considered virtually all the aspects of Islam that contain significant features which depend on the Qur'an, ranging from theology, jurisprudence and Shari'ah law to practical everyday life as a Muslim and the emotional impact of recitation on believers. Others considered philosophically the extent to which the revealed words of Allah are and need to be essentially part of Islam. Some excellent candidates referred to the heavenly archetypal version of the Qur'an and the continuum of divine revelations (which became corrupted) before the time of Muhammad (bpuh) (in order to argue for the essential role of the final revelation of the Qur'an in the destiny of humankind.

2 (a) Explain what Surah 4 teaches Muslims about hypocrites and enemies. [33]

This was the least popular of the three questions. Some candidates seemed determined to write on Surah 4 whatever the question. Most candidates began with a general outline of the contents of the Surah, which is a set text. Some explained that the subject matter probably reflects the social problems which the Muslim community had to face in Madinah and that the principles laid down for the fledgling community have governed Muslim religious and social practice ever since. Hypocrites and enemies are denounced in Surah 4 along with other unbelievers and the fate of these unsavoury characters is described. Some candidates concentrated on the fact that believers are constantly warned against fraternizing. Teachings about the attitudes Muslims should have towards the hypocrites and enemies were as acceptable in responses as the teachings about these condemned people. The best candidates demonstrated familiarity with the set text (e.g. 153-176 where the Jews and Christians are criticised) though detailed knowledge was not expected.

(b) Teachings about hypocrites and enemies are not a main part of Surah 4. [17]

Weaker candidates took the opportunity to write a response to the question which they wished had been on the paper and concentrated on the eponymous 'Women'. Better candidates acknowledged the existence of several themes before arguing about pre-eminence or predominance. Some argued that warnings against disobedience and hypocrisy are included throughout all the themes of Surah 4, social as well as theological. Therefore, they concluded that teaching about hypocrites and enemies was a main part of Surah 4 especially since the purpose of the Surah seems to be to protect and consolidate the Muslim community after the battle of Uhud.

3 (a) Explain why the Qur'an has importance and authority in Islam. [33]

Most candidates included an introduction about the Qur'an, usually with some details of how Muhammad (bpuh) received the revelation(s). Some candidates addressed importance and authority together whilst others equally successfully dealt with the two separately. Some gave a variety of instances about the Qur'an's importance for Muslim worship, the inimitability of the Arabic text and its effect on all facets of individual and community life. Many explained that the main importance lies in the message the Qur'an contains about Allah, the last judgement and the straight path to paradise. Far too many candidates went into excessive detail about how respect is shown in the handling of the Qur'an and wandered from the point. The best responses explained why the Qur'an has a status of absolute authority in matters of law and theology for Muslims of all persuasions and made it clear that the authority is not just of Muhammad (bpuh) the last prophet but of the very words of Allah.

- (b) How far would you agree that the Qur'an was a new revelation as well as a final one? [17]**

There were different, equally acceptable, emphases in the response to this question as it does not necessarily require the justification that the revelation was 'final'. Many candidates accepted that, for Muslims, Muhammad (bpuh) was the seal of the prophets and the revelation is the final one and concentrated on what was 'new' about the Qur'an and Islamic teaching, usually developing points they had made in the first part of the question. Some wrote brilliantly perceptive answers as did other candidates who wrote about the Qur'an not simply as messages revealed to Muhammad (bpuh) but as the eternal revelation which previously was corrupted but is now in its final form. They supported their arguments effectively about the extent to which it can be described as a new revelation by Quranic references to previous prophets and books in the centuries before Jibrail told Muhammad (bpuh) to recite.

Part 2

- 4 (a) Explain how Muslims give to others when they observe zakah and sawm. [33]**

Candidates began by giving some information about the collection and distribution of Zakah – the purification of wealth by payment of the annual welfare due - usually 2 ½ % of surplus income, and about Sawm, fasting during the hours of daylight in the month of Ramadan. They concentrated on explaining features relevant to how Muslims give to others when practising these two pillars of Islam and good candidates included much detail, especially about zakah. The best explanations demonstrated understanding of the way practical provision in Islam contributes to the local, national and international welfare of the Ummah. Some responses added an extra dimension to the discussion by considering the more nebulous areas of giving such as making time to help others and showing care, respect, compassion, sympathy, encouragement and hope etc.

- (b) 'Giving is more important than receiving.' How true is this statement for Muslims? [17]**

Discussions tended to develop points made in the first part of the question, making reference to zakah in particular but also to other relevant aspects of Islam. Some candidates concluded in favour of the quotation and some against it whilst others tended to implement some sort of compromise after a balanced discussion. Only the better candidates wrote, in any detail, about receiving. There were other equally acceptable approaches to the discussion such as using Qur'anic quotations or the sunnah of the Prophet to support a point of view. The best discussions tended to be those which showed understanding of the positive aspects of being in receipt of alms but also of the benefits to the giver in that sincere compassionate giving frees them from greed, selfishness, materialism and hypocrisy.

- 5 (a) Explain the role and importance of the Imam. [33]**

This was probably the least popular question in Part 2 but had the full range of levels of response. Very few mentioned the difference between the Sunni and Shi'a concepts of the Imam. This was not essential but would have been accepted as an approach to this question. Some candidates explained the role by quoting an Imam (or several Imams) they had interviewed in mosques they knew or had visited. Most candidates included descriptions of leading the worship, particularly on Friday, including the khutbah, presiding over festivals etc. and of the responsibilities of teaching Arabic in the madrassah. Some emphasised that the role is not that of a

priest and that all Muslims are equal in the sight of Allah but the Imam is important in Muslim communities with regard to the application of Muslim ethics and Qur'anic teaching. Good explanations commented on the learning and qualities expected of an Imam. There were a number of excellent responses. Some candidates explained that the pursuit of knowledge for every Muslim is essential to a just society and that education is regarded by many Muslims as particularly important in relating Islam to contemporary world issues.

(b) How far does Muslim worship emphasize the equality of believers? [17]

Candidates usually continued the theme of the Imam being equal to other Muslims despite his role 'at the front' in Muslim worship. Then, as soon as possible, some candidates widened the discussion to include other aspects of equality such as gender, race and socio-economic status. The strongest arguments were those which homed in on the word 'worship' and included details from salah or sometimes from other aspects of Muslim worship (in the wider sense), often the Five Pillars and especially Hajj, which contain features that symbolise the importance of equality in the Ummah.

6 (a) Explain why the Five Pillars are so important to Muslims. [33]

Often the responses to this popular question read like 'prepared' answers. Most responses began with an introduction to the Five Pillars with the better candidates using accurate terminology and selecting salient details of the observance of the Five Pillars: shahadah, salah, zakah, sawm, hajj. Competent responses then homed in on the importance. Some worked through the five, one at a time. Others, often equally efficiently, gave a general picture (sometimes in fact a pictorial illustration) of the Five Pillars as supporting a building which is the Faith of Islam. The best candidates explained the Five Pillars as being important in two main ways. The pillars are visible signs of a way of life demonstrating the unity, cohesion and solidarity of the Ummah. They are also, however, essential for the spiritual growth of individual Muslims as acts of ibadah, worship and obedience, as part of their submission to the will of Allah.

(b) 'Without Shahadah, the other four pillars are worthless.' Discuss. [17]

Good discussions explored confidently how far the Five Pillars are inter-linked practices that cannot exist alone and the extent to which one pillar –or even the greater Jihad- might have an overarching all-embracing significance. The only thing that hindered the ability of weaker candidates to address the question with valid arguments to support their opinions was lack of knowledge about the Five Pillars. Candidates are free to come to any conclusion and some supported, for a variety of reasons, the pre-eminence of the declaration of faith. A few candidates discussed the relative merits of each of the pillars whilst others accepted that Shahadah embraced them all and concentrated on arguing why no pillar was worthless. Some argued that nothing is worthless that Allah provides and 'without Allah' everything would be worthless. This argument led some to agree with the stimulus and some to disagree. Many text book illustrations have all five pillars as supporting pillars and other diagrams have four pillars with Shahadah as the roof and that might be the reason why the discussions took different directions.

2768 – Judaism 1

General Comments:

The vast majority of the candidates made reasonable attempts at the questions that they had chosen.

Many centres had prepared their candidates excellently and these candidates were in the main, very confident with the material that they had chosen.

Some candidates relied too heavily on a small selection of evidence. This had the effect of hampering the candidate's ability to reflect further and consider different opinions.

Time management was an issue for a number of candidates, some of whom either did not finish the last question or their answers appeared rushed.

2. Comments on Individual Questions:

Question

1 (a) Explain the main differences between the roles of men and women in Judaism. [33]

A very popular question. The amount of detail and supportive evidence varied, but tended to centre on the difference between synagogue and communal involvement for the male, as opposed to home and family duties for the female. There were some very comprehensive and detailed answers and this was a topic which candidates enjoyed writing about. A fair number of candidates, across the whole ability spectrum showed knowledge of the man's role but confined their explanation about the roles of women to nurturing the family and supporting the husband and often did not make wider reference to the religious rituals/customs in the home that are the prerogative of women. The majority of answers showed awareness of the use of the Mikveh and the varying levels of its importance to Jews today.

(b) 'Judaism unfairly discriminates against women.' Discuss. [17]

This question provoked some passionate responses which tended to reflect the level of religious commitment of the various candidates. There were some very balanced and well constructed answers.

2 (a) Explain how the Law shows the relationship between G-d and the Jews. [33]

A fair number of candidates answered this question. There were some good answers and others made a reasonable effort. Those who did made a reasonable effort, concentrating on the concept of the Law as the embodiment of the Covenant.

(b) 'Judaism is too concerned with the Law.' Discuss. [17]

This tended to be a standard ethical versus monotheistic argument, again reflecting the strong views of those candidates who came from a religious background or otherwise.

3 (a) Explain the importance for Jews of the first commandment. [33]

Some interpreted this question to refer only to the very first commandment in the Torah – being fruitful and multiplying, which led to interesting and well informed responses concerning the importance of family life for Jews. However, the majority of answers concentrated on the importance of ethical monotheism and the range of response was appropriate.

(b) 'Strict laws in a religion are a weakness not a strength.' Discuss with reference to Judaism. [17]

This question provoked some very well argued and balanced responses which referred not only to the effect of strict laws on the lifestyle of adherents, but also in several cases to the differences between the various sects or groups within Judaism.

4 (a) Explain what can be learnt from the scriptures about the origins of Jewish worship. [33]

A number of candidates answered this question. The performance was mixed. Those who interpreted the question in a straightforward way were able to gain up to the higher level of marks for coherent explanation and evidence. However, some candidates interpreted the question to be asking about the origins of Jewish worship in terms of ethical monotheism and wrote about the origin of the Ten Commandments and the Oral Torah, explaining that an ethical lifestyle is worship for Jews. These answers gained some credit but were limited.

(b) 'Jewish ways of worship must never be changed.' Discuss. [17]

This was well answered. Even candidates who had offered confused answers to part (a) were able to argue perceptively on this topic. Most answers were well balanced and the best candidates evaluated the arguments about changes since Scriptural times being unavoidable but change for change sake being undesirable.

5. 5 (a) Explain the importance for Jewish life of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. [33]

The most popular question. Well answered with a very good range of knowledge. Weaker candidates tended to concentrate on the customs of the festivals with less reference to an understanding of their importance.

(b) 'Yom Kippur is more important than Shabbat.' Discuss. [17]

Some very well balanced, intelligent responses. Many referred to the reference to Yom Kippur as the 'Sabbath of Sabbaths' hence the greater importance of the festival. Several candidates offered opinions regarding the socio- religious value of a weekly family oriented day of spiritual rest which was refreshing and

encouraging to read.

6.

6 (a) Explain the continuing importance of the mitzvot for Jewish life today. [33]

The few candidates who attempted this question also tended to repeat earlier material. Some candidates did offer original and relevant information on the continuing and equal importance of all mitzvot today and were credited accordingly.'

(b) 'If Jews do not keep all the mitzvot then they cannot be regarded as good Jews.' Discuss. [17]

This was a straightforward question offering the candidates the opportunity to display a range of opinions regarding the importance of the laws. Some candidates examined the strength of Judaism as a culture as opposed to a practical faith.

2769: Philosophy of Religion 2

General Comments

The general standard of answers was good and it was particularly pleasing to see that some candidates were able successfully to use material from 2760 and 2761. Almost all candidates displayed an efficient use of time and were able to make a good attempt at both questions. Question 1 was extremely popular and was attempted by the vast majority of candidates. In part 2, all three questions were reasonably popular with perhaps a slight preference for answering question 5. Most candidates displayed a good ability to select relevant material however some candidates seemed less able to focus precisely on the question and included large sections of general material about the topic. Some candidates failed to respond to the trigger words and included assessment in part (a).

Comments on Individual questions

1 (a) Explain the views of Plato and Dawkins on the nature of the soul. [33]

This question elicited good responses from most candidates. It was pleasing to see a good depth of subject knowledge particularly on Plato. A number of candidates could see the connection between Plato's dualism and other aspects of his thought such as the forms studied elsewhere in the course. Candidates displayed a pleasing array of technical terms such as dualism and biological materialism. There was even a little Greek. A few candidates seemed confused about what Dawkins believes or chose to ignore him altogether.

1 (b) 'Plato was right about the soul.' Discuss. [17]

A number of candidates took the line that Plato's views were supported by various world religions. Some candidates successfully engaged with Plato's views and suggested evidence which may count for or against his ideas. Alternatively other candidates presented a case as to why the views of another thinker such as Dawkins or Hick were more coherent. Some candidates tended to focus on general criticisms of Plato's philosophy, missing the focus on the soul, and were less successful as a result.

2 (a) Explain the relationship between theories of resurrection of the body and the problem of evil. [33]

This question was not a popular choice and was not done particularly well by most of the candidates who attempted it. Most candidates displayed some knowledge of life after death but did not seem to have seriously thought about the relationship to the problem of evil. Some candidates only considered the need for punishment of those who were evil and had not thought of the possibility of heaven as a compensation for those who had suffered in this life.

2 (b) 'Theories of life after death cannot solve the problem of the evil which happens in this life.' Discuss. [17]

Candidates tended to gain reasonable marks on this question but relatively few really got to grips with the demands of the question. Candidates advanced arguments as to whether life after death could compensate for suffering in this world. Surprisingly few candidates thought to assess the Irenaean and Augustinian theodicies as approaches to this problem. A number of candidates also failed to realise that the scope of the question had widened in part (b) and as a result missed out on the opportunity to discuss reincarnation.

- 3 (a) **Explain the concept of God's revelation to humanity through holy scripture.** [33]

This question was also attempted by comparatively few candidates. Although most answers displayed a reasonable subject knowledge, there was a tendency to be overly descriptive. Candidates tended to give examples of revelation in the scriptures e.g. Moses and the burning bush, rather than discuss the 'concept' of revelation as asked in the question. Some candidates were able to provide an intelligent discussion using technical terms such as propositional and non-propositional revelation.

- (b) **'Revelation through holy scripture has more authority than revelation through religious experience.' Discuss.** [17]

This question tended to be answered well. There were some good discussions of the authority of both the scriptures and religious experience; most candidates being able to offer two points of view. There was surprisingly little use made of scholars' views.

Part 2

- 4 (a) **Explain how symbol has been used to express an understanding of God.**

[33]

Most candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge of some religious symbolism, the favourite being the symbol of the cross. Some wrote about the symbolism involved in the eucharist. Candidates tended to write about the understanding of physical or pictorial symbols as opposed to the use of symbolic language. There was hardly any mention of scholars such as Tillich. Few candidates reached the highest levels.

- (b) **'God is beyond human language, so cannot be understood by symbol.' Discuss.**

[17]

Most candidates were able to put forward arguments for and against the validity of symbol as a means of expressing an understanding of God. Some made links with the *via negativa* to suggest that although symbol brings some understanding, God's true nature remains hidden.

- 5 (a) **Explain the implications of the verification principle for religious belief.**

[33]

This question was generally well done. Almost all candidates had at least a reasonable knowledge of the Verification Principle and were able to explain the implications for religious belief. Some were able to give very detailed explanations of the strong and weak versions of the principle. There was some imaginative use of Hick to suggest that the implications for religious belief were not all negative.

- (b) **'The important point about religious language is that it is not verifiable.' Discuss.**

[17]

Answers were generally good, even where some candidates may not have totally grasped the point of the question they ended up getting there by a more circuitous route. There were some good contrasts and comparisons made with falsification as a means of assessing the validity of religious language. Some candidates challenged the question by arguing that religious belief could be verified either eschatologically or privately via individual religious experience.

6 (a) Explain Wiles' criticism of miracles. [33]

Answers to this question were of a variable nature ranging from those who did not seem to be aware of Wiles' criticisms through to those who gave a precise account of his criticisms. Most candidates were aware that Wiles opposed miracles on theological grounds, that they would be both arbitrary and unfair. A few candidates made links to Wiles' view that the act of creation could be seen as a singular miracle. Some candidates included irrelevant material on Hume.

(b) 'Miracle stories are simply inventions to strengthen faith.' Discuss. [17]

Most candidates made a good response to this question. Some continued the discussion of the moral objections to miracles outlined in part a). The arguments of Hume were also well presented. A number of candidates discussed the miracle stories in the New Testament, some showing a good knowledge of Form Critical approaches.

2770: Religious Ethics 2 AS

General Comments

Most candidates were able to complete two full questions and time management was good. Standards overall were generally good.

In questions 1 and 2 in particular candidates were really able to show their knowledge and understanding. Credit goes to candidates who used the time to write detailed and thoughtful responses, with evidence of further reading.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

(a) Explain a determinist view of morality. [33]

This question was often not done well because candidates focused on more than one view of determinism rather than concentrating in detail on one view as the question asked. Some candidates dealt very simply with Libertarianism, soft determinism, hard determinism and Theological determinism. Leob and Leopold were very popular as was Locke and his locked room.

Some excellent answers focused on the complexities of determinism and were able to bring in explanations of universal causation. Some good candidates focused on theological determinism and were able to recognise the implications for morality rather than simply explaining the theory.

(b) 'People are morally free to do what they want.' Discuss. [17]

This question was generally answered well and pupils put forward the libertarian response to determinism, they mentioned Kant, Hume and Campbell in this discussion.

Some candidates struggled to differentiate their answers and some simply repeated what they had written in part (a).

A significant number of candidates considered that a person can choose whether to be a determinist or not! Only a few responses offered any evidence for free will.

Question 2

(a) Explain the arguments that conscience is not the voice of God. [33]

This was a very popular question and most responses focused on Freud and Fromm (although some did not distinguish between the two). Some answers brought in Aquinas and good answers recognised the difference between Butler, Newman and Aquinas' views.

Few answers considered the role of intuition or thought that Freud's view of a religious conscience is essentially negative.

(b) 'People should always follow their conscience.' Discuss. [17]

This was answered well and generally focused on the debates mentioned in part a) countering (or supporting) the arguments they made in order to conclude that is wrong (or right) to follow your conscience.

The better answers used Aquinas and the importance of the formation of conscience, although responses that discussed the relative values of upbringing and culture were also awarded highly.

Question 3

(a) Describe one absolutist ethical theory. [33]

In general this was answered well. Candidates tended to focus on Natural Law (and some used this again in question 4).

However, the best responses tended to write about Kant. The second and third formulations were clearly explained, but some candidates struggled with universality.

(b) 'Moral absolutism cannot be defended.' Discuss. [17]

Again this was answered well and candidates were able to give good arguments for and against an absolutist approach.

Most responses contrasted absolutism with Situation Ethics or Utilitarianism and used examples to back up the arguments.

Question 4

(a) Explain a religious approach to ethics. [33]

Most responses discussed a Situation Ethics or Natural Law approach and this was done very well.

Some of the weaker answers just focussed on the Ten Commandments and did not get into any detail.

Some tended to describe a religious approach to a specific issue like homosexuality or abortion; this did not help them to achieve very high levels of response.

(b) 'Religious ethics are useless when considering the environment.' Discuss. [17]

Most recognised that many Christian Ethics are anthropocentric and discussed different theories about looking after the environment. Most candidates referred either implicitly or explicitly to domination v stewardship and contrasted these with other approaches such as deep/shallow ecology and the Gaia hypothesis.

Some were able to point out that Situation Ethics may lead to a good use of the environment due to a love for future generations.

Question 5

- (a) **Explain Virtue Ethics.** [33]

This was the most impressive response and nearly all candidates answered it well. Answers tended to focus on Aristotle, the Golden Mean, the flourishing of eudemonia and the importance of virtuous role-models.

The better responses were able to discuss MacIntyre's rethinking of Virtue Ethics and feminist ethics.

- (b) **'Virtue Ethics is of no use in considering sex and relationships.' Discuss.** [17]

Most candidates were able to put forward a good argument that virtue ethics is in fact useful when considering sexual ethics. They were able to recognise that a deficiency and excess in sexual behaviour is undesirable and that a virtue approach is one that would produce moral behaviour.

Better answers considered that Virtue Ethics is relative to cultures and situations and discussed the strengths and weaknesses of this.

Question 6

- (a) **Explain Utilitarian approaches to issues of war.** [33]

This question was not answered well as a substantial number of weaker candidates wrote about just war theory despite the question. Some answers wrote at length about Bentham and Mill with limited application to war or focussed on examples of wars that produced good outcomes.

Some of the better candidates produced good responses and were able to recognise the different responses Mill and Bentham might make to war.

- (b) **'Pacifism is immoral.' Discuss.** [17]

There were some good responses here some arguing that pacifism is wrong because of a moral imperative to defend society on Utilitarian grounds, but only a small number of candidates showed awareness of Christian realism.

Others were able to take a Kantian or Situation Ethics response and argue in favour of pacifism.

All answers understood the concept of pacifism and gave biblical support for it.

2771: Philosophy of Religion 2

Compared with some previous years, some of the work presented was a little disappointing. Difficulties were generally the result of erroneous subject knowledge and, in particular, failure to address the question set. The examination questions do not invite candidates to write everything they know about religious language, religious experience, scripture etc – there is always a specific focus to each of the four questions. In the levels of response there is clear and specific reference to the skill of addressing the question and selecting appropriate material. Those who do this are highly rewarded. Too many candidates tried to cover all bases by writing at enormous length – scripts of 15 sides were not uncommon. A relatively briefer essay directed to the question would often have been more successful.

Another matter that gave concern was significantly inaccurate subject knowledge. Often even very good candidates made basic errors in interpreting key philosophical ideas such as falsification, proof and coherence.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 ‘The concept of disembodied existence is incoherent.’ Discuss.

Many candidates appeared unfamiliar with the concept of coherence, confusing it with questions of truth or possibility. Many used the opportunity to describe every possible afterlife theory, with lengthy accounts of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Ryle et al. with relevance rarely established. Better candidates focused on key issues of personal identity and mind/brain identity theory. There was a tendency to use the *cogito* as the sole justification for all Cartesian arguments. Some candidates managed to use Hick’s replica theory with great skill, though significant numbers imagined erroneously that Hick’s theory was designed to support disembodied existence.

2 Assess the view that the different forms of religious experience are nothing more than fantasy.

This was a popular question and many candidates revealed sound knowledge of James, Swinburne and Otto. Some candidates wrote their pre-prepared miracles answer and found it difficult to make the adjustment necessary for the question asked, overlooking ‘different forms’ in the title. Many devoted their answer to whether experiences were true, ignoring the point about fantasy. Many however did note the point, and overall this was, for many, the most successful question.

3 ‘The falsification principle offers no real challenge to religious belief.’ Discuss.

This was a popular but frequently poorly done question. Very many misunderstood falsification, claiming that it meant one or more of *via negativa*/ something is true if you cannot think of a good reason why it is not/ verification etc. Many wrote just about verification, mistakenly arguing that strong verification meant that one could prove a statement by looking while weak verification applied only to historical statements as people could have looked at the time. Candidates would be advised to read Ayer’s account in Chapter 1 of *Language, Truth and Logic*. Only a few candidates were aware that falsification is about whether a sentence is or is not scientific, not whether it is meaningful: in Flew’s case, he puts the question about whether theological propositions are genuine assertions. Basil Mitchell was much misunderstood, with many saying that the partisan has blind faith in the stranger. That is not Mitchell’s point: his argument is that unlike the possessor of a *blik*, the partisan can and does acknowledge that there is evidence against his belief. Hick’s eschatological verification was often misrepresented as claiming that when we are dead we will know whether beliefs about God were true or false. Hick’s view is that they are verifiable if true but not falsifiable if false, thus meeting the criteria of weak verification, but *not* of falsification. Many struggled with Hare’s *bliks* – they tended to appear also in other

answers – and treated the notion as unproblematic, apparently unaware of Flew's cogent rebuttal in the *University* debate or Hick's subsequent trenchant comments.

A strange idea of religious language appeared in a number of scripts in this and the next question – candidates argued that religious language was non-cognitive and thus based on a coherence theory of truth while cognitivism presupposed a correspondence theory. This is a category error, confusing theories of justification with theories of meaning.

4 'Scripture is the word of God.' Discuss.

The problem for some was that it was taken as an invitation to write everything known about scripture, but with scant regard for philosophical perspectives, and the question was poorly done by many. A remarkably common error was to argue that 'propositional' was a synonym for 'literal' while 'non-propositional' meant a more liberal reading. The '*Da Vinci Code*' was occasionally cited as scholarly evidence and some candidates resorted simply to declarations of faith. Many candidates laboured under the misapprehension that Roman Catholics were required to take an absolutely fundamentalist, literal interpretation of scripture.

2772: Religious Ethics 2 A2

General Comments

Overall the performance of candidates was good, with some outstanding responses, characterised by a willingness to engage with the material at a very deep level. Many answers showed evidence of extended reading around the topics.

There were relatively few responses at the lower ends, showing that centres are preparing the candidates well.

Weaker candidates gave too much generalisation and unsupported argument, often with too much preamble before addressing the question. Better candidates always attempted to answer the question as set.

Most candidates used their time successfully, dividing it between the two questions. There was more evidence of essay planning this year, leading to clearer and better constructed answers.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 **Natural Law is the most reliable approach when making judgements about sex and relationships.' Discuss.**

This was one of the most popular questions, with varying degrees of understanding of Natural Law. Weaker responses tended to refer to its derivation from natural and unnatural acts. Stronger responses looked at telos, potentiality and primary and secondary precepts.

Among many candidates there was some confusion of and failure to separate the teachings of Thomas Aquinas and those of the Roman Catholic Church. Too many answers focussed on the negative aspects of Natural Law, with regards to abortion, sexually transmitted diseases etc., and rather over did the view that it is 'out dated'.

Answers compared the applications of Utilitarianism, Situation Ethics, Virtue Ethics and even Contractual Ethics to the approach of Natural Law. Some introduced the idea of Mill's harm principle, but many did not develop this.

Very good responses tended to focus on 'reliability' and the scope of Natural Law, including 'final purpose' and comprehension of the developing aspect of human nature.

A number of answers made good use of Biblical teaching to support arguments against homosexuality and rethought these using current teaching. There was useful analysis of current thinking such as Jack Dominion's reappraisal of traditional Catholic ethics.

Question 2: 'People are not free to make moral decisions.' Discuss.

Generally this question was well done and the answers reflected thorough preparation by the candidates. The answers used much supporting evidence from Locke to Darrow and showed a thorough knowledge of the different types of determinism and demonstrated the implications of adopting a determinist or libertarian approach to morality.

Some candidates used source quotations well to illustrate their answers and showed a real understanding of the subject matter.

Very few answers considered psychological behaviourism or the fact that libertarianism is as restrictive as hard determinism.

Some candidates introduced the conscience, but often with little success – and a few candidates wrote entirely on the conscience and ignored the question completely.

There were some chronology problems – for example Augustine did not respond to Calvin.

3 'Utilitarianism is the best approach to environmental issues.' Discuss.

Very good responses answered the question succinctly, addressing various types of Utilitarianism from Bentham and Mill to Singer and demonstrating how they could produce different results. There was evidence of extended reading and a good understanding of the different environmental approaches from deep and shallow ecology and the Gaia hypothesis. Good answers were able to ask whether Utilitarianism helped the environment as a whole or just benefited the people in it.

Less good responses tended to give a brief description of Utilitarianism, usually Bentham and Mill, Act and Rule, before launching off into a brief tour of environmental ethics according to the different ethical theories.

The greatest failing among the weakest responses was failing to address the question and just writing an essay about the environment.

4 'Only religious ethics can provide answers to the problems raised by euthanasia.' Discuss

Fewer candidates addressed this question and most answers showed basic knowledge and understanding with very little critical analysis. Very few focussed on what the problems with euthanasia might be.

Very few answers discussed the variety of religious ethics and tended to focus on deontological and absolutist theories (including Natural Law and Kant) without mentioning Biblical teaching or Situation Ethics. Many saw it as an opportunity to list various ethical theories and discuss their approaches to euthanasia. There was little discussion of sanctity of life v quality of life.

Better answers showed an awareness of the topicality of the question, using recent examples to illustrate their analysis and there was some good comparisons of the approaches of Natural Law and Situation Ethics.

Very good answers actually analysed what the question required before tackling the answer and actually focussed on answering the question.

2773: Jewish Scriptures

General Comments

The full range of ability for this level of examination seemed to be represented and a few candidates gained full marks. There were some rubric infringements that resulted in a few obviously talented candidates gaining no marks for one of their responses.

Candidates seem to be growing more aware of the set texts and use them sensibly. This year, it was evident that many centres had incorporated careful textual exegesis into the course of study. Many had done so with some consideration, where relevant, of possible date, authorship, purpose and historicity with an overview of the historical dating of principal events in Jewish history and the types of literature found in the Jewish scriptures. Reference to scholars is not essential for good marks but awareness of the views of scholars or of literary and theological issues can be a useful factor in discussions as was demonstrated by many able candidates. One main weakness was that some candidates did not build on relevant material from earlier in their studies despite the advice in the preamble to the A2 specification.

2 Comments on Individual Questions

1 Either

(a) 'The Servant is not a messianic figure.' Discuss with reference to the texts you have studied in Isaiah.

Most candidates made reference to Isaiah 40-43 and 53, which are the texts from the Servant songs in the specification and good responses gave detailed exegesis of these set texts. Many candidates managed to cite similarities and/or differences between the Servant in either or both specified texts and a messianic figure.

Candidates were free to support or reject the given statement. Some candidates provided an introduction to the book of Isaiah and considered issues of authorship, date and purpose to be significant factors in trying to place the Servant figure in the context of the writer(s) and of the possible contemporary hopes and fears.

Many showed knowledge and understanding of the views of commentaries and scholars, past and present, about the identity and role of the Servant in the specification selection from the Servant songs as well as explaining general concepts associated with messianic figures. Responses may reflect any religious persuasion or none but some excellent candidates of all persuasions explained both Jewish and Christian approaches to the text and evaluated the views of a variety of scholars thoughtfully.

Or

(b) Critically examine the view of messiahship in the book of Micah.

Most candidates began with a brief explanation of the historical context, usually presenting Micah as an eighth century prophet, a younger contemporary of Isaiah of Jerusalem, (during the reigns of the three Judaeen kings, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah according to the editorial superscription). Most identified Micah as a peasant called to preach a message condemning the corruption of city life, in Israel and in Judah, even prophesying the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.

Good candidates quickly moved on to the main messianic material which is 4:1-5, 5:1-5 and 7:1-10. Many candidates presented a fairly coherent messianic portrayal from the book of Micah and good candidates continued to support their observations with

appropriate textual material. Some commented that Micah 4:1-5 is repeated in Isaiah 2:2-4 and seemed to think this proved the importance of the passage.

This year there were less sectarian views about battles at the end of time. The best candidates explained the relevance of ethical monotheism in the context of the messianic kingdom. Usually they wrote that Micah had a utopian vision of the Messianic age in which obviously there would be peace and justice and people would flock to Jerusalem so all the main themes of Micah are connected and equally essential to his message. Some commented that the original writer and the later editors perceive that messiahship is not modelled on David as King of Jerusalem but follows the Bethlehem shepherd king tradition.

2 Either

(a) 'Amos was a prophet of doom.' To what extent does the book of Amos deserve this comment?

Candidates tended to begin by summarising the eighth century background in Israel where contemporary life in the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II was full of social injustice and corruption as well as hypocritical worship particularly at the royal sanctuary at Bethel. Good candidates then concentrated on selecting copiously from the scriptural text to illustrate the theme of doom. They explained that Amos condemns the social milieu and the unreal religion of those who should have known better as covenant people and then they recounted the visions that predict inevitable punishment for the sins of the people.

Some candidates agreed with the stimulus quotation and others disagreed. The weakest candidates only gave arguments for the point of view they had chosen rather than enter into discussion but most candidates tried to balance the evidence.

Some candidates addressed the question from the very beginning whilst some drew the points together in a conclusion as to the extent Amos deserves the doleful title.

Some argued that the concluding passages which lighten the book of Amos might be later additions whilst others gave an inventory of other themes in Amos such as G-d as Creator of the universe to contradict the stimulus quotation. Another approach was to examine the motive of Amos. Some candidates asserted that the doom-laden prophecies were meant to be the catalyst towards repentance and therefore the need for the latter was his main theme.

Or

(b) Discuss the importance of Daniel 12 and 2 Maccabees 7 in relation to beliefs about life after death.

Some candidates homed straight in on Daniel 12 which concerns beliefs about the end of tribulation, the resurrection of the dead and the sealing of the prophecy to the time of the End. Then they turned their attention to 2 Maccabees 7 which was often told with all its gruesome detail rather than exploring the implications of the defiant hope. Some candidates made reference to their earlier studies to establish that some beliefs seem not to have occurred till the later Jewish Scriptures. Better arguments not only selected texts but considered the chronology of the events or when the texts might have been written. Many discussed whether or not there was a development in beliefs about life after death and the extent to which it was gradual or was linked to certain catalytic events such as the Maccabean revolt in 165BCE. Some candidates used the term re-incarnation for the bodily resurrection and, though this was given credit when the meaning was clear, candidates should be warned that such usage can lead to confusion with some other faiths e.g. Hinduism. Some candidates explained the significance of textual material

Report on the Units taken in June 2006

relevant to beliefs about life after death at intervals throughout the essay whilst others, equally successfully, addressed the importance in a concluding section.

2774: New Testament 2

General comments.

The achievement of candidates was wide ranging. The vast majority of candidates performed within the levels of response band range 3-7, with only a small number failing to reach this and falling within band 2. The questions were accessible across the ability range and presented the opportunity to stretch the good candidates but remain open to all candidates. There were some very impressive performances from candidates who were confident and knowledgeable and engaged with the material at the highest level: these answers were always coherent and very well expressed. However, some weaker candidates who had some grasp of the required textual knowledge and understanding, struggled to produce coherent arguments.

Most candidates appeared to have had the time to complete their papers, there were a few very short answers but this was not due to lack of time.

Comments on individual questions.

Alternative A The Early Church

1 'Paul's theology in Galatians was a successful response to all challenges to his teachings.' Discuss.

This was a popular question and the majority of candidates who chose it grasped the main points well. The best answers explained and analysed the effectiveness of Paul's theology in Galatians 3-5 where Paul established a connection between Abraham and the Galatians and the purpose of the Law. Inevitably, many candidates made reference to Paul's comments on his Jerusalem visit and the incident with Peter in Galatians 2. However, some candidates concentrated only on Galatians 2, which as an answer on Paul's response to challenges from the Judaizers was worthy of positive credit but ignored the wider points of theology in Chapters 3-5. These answers failed to reach the higher levels of marks. Amongst some weaker candidates there was a tendency to confuse material from Galatians with 1 Corinthians 15.

2 'Teachings about the Spirit are the key to the theology of Romans.' Discuss.

There were a variety of responses to this question but the number of candidates was too few for the examiners to make comment on general performance. The best answers showed good knowledge of the 'Spirit' theology and explained its purpose within the framework of Romans.

**3 'Now I would remind you brothers and sisters of the good news.'
(1Corinthians 15: 1)**

To what extent was the resurrection the main feature of the 'good news' preached by Paul?

This was the most popular question in this section and the performance overall was good. Many candidates produced impressive, wide ranging answers which demonstrated very good and even excellent knowledge and understanding of the set texts, predominantly 1 Corinthians 15. Most candidates were able to assess the importance of the resurrection in Paul's teaching with varying degrees of success. The discrimination between the good attempts to address the question and excellent answers was in the engagement with the material and the ability to present a balanced argument that the resurrection is one of Paul's major theological themes, among others.

4 Examine whether Ephesians should be seen as distinct from the other epistles that you have studied.

Most of the candidates who chose this question were aware of the contemporary debates about Ephesians and the standard arguments were reproduced well. However, whilst many candidates were strong on the literary style, possible audience and common content with Colossians, some answers were thin on analysis of the theological themes of the letter. The best answers were comprehensive and coherent.

Alternative B Gospels.

5 To what extent did the parables of the Lost (in Luke 15) challenge Jewish ideas of sin and redemption?

There were some strong answers to this question. The parables in Luke 15 were well-known and Jewish ideas of sin and redemption in terms of O.T. teaching and First Century Judaism were clearly explained. Candidates who had a good grasp of the requirements of the AO2 assessment target were able to make cogent arguments as to the extent these ideas were challenged by Jesus' teaching. Weaker answers were mostly unable to bring arguments about the parables and Jewish ideas of sin and redemption to a conclusion or misunderstood the nature of the 'challenge' to the Jews.

6 Examine Mark's purpose in presenting the healing miracles as a conflict with evil.

Most candidates coped well with this question, although there were not as many outstanding answers as in some of the other questions in this section. Explanations about Jewish attitudes to sin and sickness were, on the whole, clear and comprehensive and most could explain Mark's concern to show the healing miracles as Jesus triumphing in a conflict with evil as in the exorcisms. However, some candidates were unable to develop their answers further to show a critical understanding of the miracles as proof of Messiahship or as a messianic act bringing redemption for all in, for example the cleansing of the leper or the healing of the paralytic. Some candidates included the Calming of the Storm in their answers and although there was some appropriate credit awarded as a conflict with evil (the sea) the healing miracles were the focus of the question. Some candidates appeared to use 'faith' rather than 'a conflict with evil' as the focus of their answer.

7 'The Sermon on the Mount was not a challenge to the Law.' Discuss.

This was the most popular question in this section. Answers ranged from very impressive, comprehensive critiques of the whole of the Sermon in Matthew 5-7 to some fairly sketchy attempts, which concentrated on anger and adultery only. The best candidates truly engaged with the question and had been well prepared on the topic, enabling them to express confident, if not original, arguments. The best answers also showed an empathetic understanding of the ethical principles of the Law in Judaism and its relationship to the teachings in the Sermon as expressed in Matthew's gospel.

Most candidates were able to write at length and sustained and justified their arguments with varying degrees of success, across the whole ability range. There were few very weak answers.

8 'The parables in Matthew 13 and 25 offered people an opportunity to understand fully the nature of the Kingdom of God.' Discuss.

Some of the best performances on the paper were on this question. The parables and the eschatological debate provided the best candidates with plenty to write about. There were some excellent answers which demonstrated a high level of understanding and engagement with the parables and their audience. These produced some original thinking on the apparently contradictory nature of both Jesus' teaching and the eschatological debate. Some good candidates wrote at length about the specified parables but also wrote unnecessarily about other

teachings in the specification. These were not candidates who lacked the ability to deploy the relevant information but they found themselves with too much material to use succinctly to challenge or agree with the statement and so the evaluative part of the answer was confused or unsuccessful. Some weaker answers did not succeed because although some of the parables were fairly well explained, candidates struggled with the evaluation as to the effectiveness of the parables in promoting understanding.

2775: Developments in Christian Thought 2

General Comments:

All questions were attempted and none proved to be more popular than others - although it was evident that some centres preferred certain questions than others. Over all candidates were theologically more literate this year than in previous years and there were some most impressive answers at the higher end. As always those who wrote less but concentrated on the subtleties of the question gained higher marks. Very few candidates know how to write a decent opening paragraph.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

1

Either (a) Discuss the view that Barth's theology is inclusivist and not exclusivist.

Too many answers gave general exclusivist accounts which they then applied to Barth assuming that he must think the same. Good answers were able to point to Barth's theology of revelation, the nature of God and in particular his teaching on the Trinity. Excellent answers were able to discuss Barth's discussion of religion in the *Church Dogmatics* and a revisionist view that could be seen to make his theology inclusivist. Too many candidates spread their nets too wide and discussed Rahner as an example of an inclusivist without explaining carefully how Barth shares or does not share his theological view point.

Or (b) 'Hick's pluralist theology succeeds because it has a sound philosophical basis.' Discuss.

Many had a good broad understanding of Hick's aims but fewer really grasped the philosophical basis of his global theology project. Generally, philosophy was taken to mean Hick's moral concern that religions share the same value outlook but only the very good candidates were able to give an accurate account of his use of Kant. Evaluation therefore proved to more elusive to those who had not been able to locate precisely his Kantian outlook. Those who did, and were also able to consider his demythologisation of Christology, were able to give some insightful analysis.

2

Either (a) 'Black theology and feminist theology share the same aims.' Discuss.

On the whole this question was tackled well. Many were able to draw on relevant AS materials and to consider the different types of feminist theology with the different strands of Black Theology. For example, many linked Martin Luther King Jr.'s rights-based theology with liberal feminist theology and reconstructionist feminist theology with Cone. There were a sizable minority who claimed that Daly and Cone shared the same views although more subtle answers both noted their separatist tendencies. Excellent answers were able to give a very good account of Womanism and its critique of feminism and black theology.

Or (b) 'Black theology's teaching on Jesus is more to do with politics than theology.' Discuss.

There were some good answers to this question. Candidates might have improved their essays had they attempted to define politics and theology first before launching in, but many realised how difficult it is to disentangle one from the other. Many contrasted Martin Luther King' Jr.s obvious political involvement and his theology with Cone's black theology/power relationship. Those who did less well failed to relate the question specifically to the 'teaching on Jesus' (i.e. Christology and blackness). There is still a tendency amongst many to reduce all black theology to a debate about violence and power. Some considered that this is all that politics means.

2776: Eastern Religions

General Comments

Many centres had prepared their candidates well for the examination. Most candidates were able to answer two questions from the relevant section, and most managed their time appropriately. Candidates usually attempted to meet both assessment objectives within their responses, though weaker responses tended to make statements or give spurious evidence rather than offer sustained and justified arguments. There were fewer misconceptions seen than in previous sessions.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 Assess the importance of the Lotus Sutra.

Candidates were generally able to recount key parables from the Lotus Sutra. Weaker responses tended to outline key stories without discussing their importance. Good responses showed an awareness of the origins of the sutra, and were able to outline some key teachings of the sutra. The best responses often outlined the use of the Lotus Sutra in different Mahayana traditions, often referring to Zen and Pureland.

Most candidates were able to offer some analysis of the importance of the Lotus Sutra. Weaker responses often focused on the unimportance of the sutra for Theravada Buddhists, and offered brief statements of the importance of the sutra for Mahayana Buddhists. The best responses tended to analyse the relative importance of the Lotus Sutra to different Mahayana schools, often referring to the Zen traditions reliance on Rōshi's and citing an incident where the scriptures were buried. Some of the very best answers referred to the accessible style of the scripture, and its importance in establishing the Mahayana tradition. They often pointed out that the Heart Sutra also had important Mahayana teachings, and offered analysis of the relative importance of the two scriptures.

2 Assess the importance of the Buddha for Mahayana Buddhism.

Most candidates were able to offer some accounts of the Buddha's importance. The best responses often explored the status of the Buddha in different Mahayana traditions. Most good responses outlined the trikaya doctrine, and explored the difference between the status of the Buddha in Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism.

Weaker candidates tended to state that the Buddha was important, often without presenting any real argument in support of this claim. Stronger candidates tended to conclude that the importance of the Buddha varied in different traditions, offering clear evidence in support. Good use was made of the differing attitudes in Zen and Pureland traditions to frame arguments. Some of the best responses argued that while the historical Buddha had lost importance in the Mahayana tradition, the development of the trikaya doctrine showed the continuing importance of Buddhas within Mahayana.

3 Compare and contrast the differing practices found in Zen Buddhism.

Many weaker candidates showed a limited knowledge of Zen practices and in some cases simply made statements to the effect that Zen Buddhists meditated more than other traditions. The best candidates were aware of different Zen traditions, and were able to outline the practices used by them. The best candidates also showed awareness of different beliefs within Zen, to illustrate their understanding of the purpose of the different practices used.

Many weaker candidates found it difficult to address this aspect of the question. Their knowledge of the practices used was limited, thus they were unable to explore the purpose of them in any meaningful way. The best candidates compared the aims and methodologies of Soto and Rinzai Zen throughout their response. They showed a good understanding of how the methodologies reflected the historical background and aims in the different schools. The best candidates offered a personal evaluation of the likely success of different practices in meeting the aims of the Zen practitioners.

4 'Actions are neither good nor bad in Buddhism – it is intention which counts.' Discuss.

A few weak candidates merely outlined the five precepts, showing little knowledge of the wealth of ethical guidance within Buddhism. A surprising number of candidates made no reference to the eightfold path. This was disappointing, since reference to 'right intention' and 'right action' would have provided good material for discussion. Most candidates could outline the concept of kamma, though often their understanding of it was weak.

Weak candidates tended to state that what you did resulted in good or bad kamma, so actions were good or bad. Others stated that the five precepts told you to be good, so there were good actions. The best candidates were aware of the kammic results for action and intention, and tended to argue that it was not one or the other which mattered, but both. These candidates often made good use of the eightfold path to support their analysis. Some candidates were aware that when Buddhism was practiced in different cultures attitudes to the gaining of kamma varied.

Alternative B – Hinduism

5 'It is impossible to seek liberation while practising the life of a householder.' Discuss.

Candidates were usually able to outline the system of varnashramadharma clearly, and most were able to offer a more detailed account of the duties of a householder. Some candidates discussed different paths to liberation such as karma, jnana and bhakti yoga.

Most candidates did not find evaluation very easy. They tended to make a statement for or against the statement without a clear analysis of the complexities of the situation. Candidates often argued that the two were not incompatible, offering a brief reference to bhakti or karma yoga. The best candidates were aware that the answer to the question varied according to the Hindu tradition followed. They often referred to Sankara as evidence to support the statement, and offered clear analysis of karma or bhakti yoga in contrast.

6 To what extent does renunciation make jnana more important than karma?

This was not a popular question. Few of the candidates who chose this question could clearly outline what the terms jnana and karma meant. They often had little awareness of demands of a renunciate lifestyle, and sometimes outlined the varnashramadharma system rather than address the question.

Candidates found this aspect difficult to address, as they often had a poor knowledge of the renunciate lifestyle, and the path of jnana yoga. Better responses tended to argue that renunciates had given up the path of karma yoga, which was followed mainly by householders, so jnana was more important.

7 'In the Samkhya system liberation is the understanding that the Self is identical with Brahman.' Discuss.

Many candidates were able to offer an appropriate outline of the samkhya system. The best responses showed an excellent understanding of the concepts of purusa and prakriti, the relationship between them, and liberation within the system.

Most candidates argued that while this statement was appropriate to other Hindu traditions it was not for the Samkhya system. They argued that since purusa and prakriti are wholly separate and the aim is to liberate purusa from prakriti, the Samkhya system is completely different to other traditions. The best responses offered evaluation of the extent to which purusa could be equated with Atman and/or Brahman, before reaching a conclusion.

8 Assess the importance of The Ramakrishna Mission for Hinduism.

Most candidates could describe the origins of the Ramakrishna Mission, and some of its main religious and social reforms. Few placed the movement in its historical context. A few candidates explored the main themes of other reform movements such as the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj.

Most candidates argued that many of the reforms suggested by the Mission were also pursued by other groups, and so while it had some importance it was not truly significant. Very few candidates referred to the Ramakrishna Missions high profile on the world stage, and its importance in revitalising Hinduism at a weak point in its history.

2777: Islam 2 June 2006

1 General Comments

As usual, there were many excellent scripts, some gaining full marks, which demonstrated both breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding and showed the ability of candidates to sustain a critical line of argument. Several good candidates gave quotations from the Qur'an and textbooks. The majority of candidates understood the questions and engaged with them in a manner which suggested good preparation in the centres and efficient revision but a few centres seemed not to be aware of the standard expected at A2 level. The main weakness of some candidates was their inability to identify the strands within the questions. At AS level the questions are separated into the individual assessment objectives but candidates at A2 are expected to be able to demonstrate some competence at handling discussions in an academic manner appropriate to the level of this examination. Some weaker candidates simply wrote all they knew about some aspect of the topic and others simply added an introductory or concluding sentence based on the question. Most candidates, however, seem to have benefited from the whole experience of studying Islam from foundation through AS to the culmination of this A2 written paper and showed by the way they approached the topics in a sensible, thoughtful and educated manner that they see their course of study as very relevant to issues in the world today.

2 Comments on Individual Questions

The questions were fairly equally popular but some candidates spent too long on their first question to the detriment of the second.

1 'It is not possible that both Sunni and Shi'a can be true Muslims.' Discuss.

Most candidates began with an account of the history of the division between Sunni and Shi'a and some spent far too long on this section, seeming to forget the actual question. Some candidates clearly could not say anything positive about Shi'a Islam and could not relay simple information without rancour. Better responses explained the loyalty of Shi'a Islam to the ahl al bayt as the key not only to the split but to subsequent developments and significant features of Shi'a Islam. Some candidates, in addressing the question, thoughtfully discussed what constitutes a true Muslim or suggested various meanings of 'true'.

Any feasible interpretation of the statement was acceptable and candidates were free to come to any conclusion after considering the relevant evidence. Some candidates argued that it is not possible theologically for both stances to be true. There were some good balanced discussions about the viability of the possibility that the differences in attitude to authority, law, politics and variant religious practices can be swept aside in the face of the overarching common faith and the worldwide Ummah.

2 'Strict keeping of Shari'ah law is impossible in a non-Muslim country.' Discuss.

Candidates tended to begin with an analysis of the primary and secondary sources of authority in Islam as a basis for Muslim life. Most candidates were able to identify the Qur'an and the Sunnah as the two main sources for Shari'ah law. Good candidates explained that there is a distinction between Shari'ah rules based on revelation (wahy) and those known as fiqh, which are based on human reason (aql). Some candidates referred to Ijma' and Qiyas with the five categories for classifying behaviour or to four of the law schools which came into being during the rule of the Abbasids and have survived to the present day: the Hanifite, Malikite, Shafi'ite and Hanbalite. Good candidates made this

information relevant to the question. Some explained that Muhammad (bpuh) in Madinah intended to form a community – Ummah – with no division between civil and religious law so Shari’ah law extends beyond ritual duties and embodies a whole range of provisions covering every area of life: social and economic, civil and criminal, communal and personal. Candidates were free to come to any conclusion but good responses engaged in reasoned arguments and attempted a balanced discussion. Some candidates defined ‘strict’ to further their arguments or qualified the word, ‘impossible’. Some made insightful comments about the different approaches to sins and crimes in various cultures, giving examples of punishments which are permissible under Shari’ah law but cannot be imposed in, for example, the UK. Others simply wrote about the difficulties of keeping the Five Pillars in a non- Muslim country. Surprisingly few candidates gave any consideration of the challenges for young Muslims of living in a pluralist, secular society with liberal values.

3 To what extent might Sufism distort true Islamic teachings?

There were some excellent well-informed candidates who gave thoughtful responses to this question but also a few who apparently saw nothing of value in Sufism. Most candidates began with a paragraph of information introducing or defining Sufism and some attempted a definition of the phrase ‘true Islamic teachings’. Some good introductions included a brief historical perspective and referred to specific individuals such as Rumi, Rabi’a, Al-Ghazzali etc.

Most candidates explained that though Sufis hold the same beliefs as other Muslims and follow the Shari’ah, the external legal and moral code of Islam, they also follow the path of spiritual development known as tariqah, in which they are trained by Shaykhs or Pirs to seek purity of heart. Good candidates focussed on describing the aspects of Sufism which are relevant for addressing the question such as the tendency in Sufism to internalise and allegorise Islamic teachings or the use of dhikr recitations, poetry, music and dancing to achieve the mystical state, fana.

Good candidates discussed in a balanced manner the extent to which distortion is an apt and fair description of Sufi teachings. Some accepted the mystical tradition in Islam as existing since the time of Muhammad (bpuh) and argued that the witness of Sufism counters materialism whilst the emphasis on spirituality not only tempers the legalism of Muslims but also preserves Islamic faith and spreads Islam to non-Muslims. Others shared, to some extent, the reservations that some Muslims have about asceticism and considered the pursuit of ecstatic states as, in fact, potentially self-centred. Respect for Shaykhs, particularly in fringe movements on the edge of Sufism, was thought to be verging on shirk by many candidates.

4 ‘Muslim teachings about family life are both the strength and the weakness of Islam.’ Discuss.

Candidates’ studies on ‘Family life and the roles of men and women’ and on Surah 4 were reflected in the responses. Many quoted Surah 4:34, ‘Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means.’ etc. Some, however, then stayed with the roles of men and women and seemed to forget the other members of a nuclear or extended family. Good responses included reference to the Sunnah of the Prophet from the foundation studies of the life of Muhammad (bpuh) and usually contrasted Muslim teachings with conditions in pre-Islamic Arabia. Some candidates argued that Muslim teachings about family life are a weakness and gave examples of dissension within families and how traditional attitudes might hinder adaptation to modern life. Other candidates took the stance that Muslim teachings could help family life in a positive way especially when dealing with new problems and issues which arise for Islam in a rapidly changing global world. The best candidates explained that Islam like other faiths faces the dilemma of

Report on the Units taken in June 2006

looking back but also looking forward whilst trying to disentangle the essential truths and teachings of Islam from traditional family life, culture and customs. Good discussions tried to weigh the positive strengths of continuity of tradition against the negative aspects.

2778: Judaism 2

General Comments:

Candidates appeared to find the questions challenging and many gave thoughtful, well informed responses. The paper was in the main well answered with most centres reflecting a good application of the assessment criteria and a thorough level of preparation.

Some candidates appeared to be using 'template essays' which they had obviously learned thoroughly, however this can sometimes restrict the ability of the candidate to offer original ideas.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1 'If one of the divisions of Judaism is right then the others must be wrong.' Discuss.

This was a popular question. The very best responses displayed an excellent knowledge of the origins and development of the different groups within Judaism, but also an awareness of the principle theological differences between them. Discussion about the possibility of bridging any divisions and whether these divisions constituted a weakness were also evident.

2 'Judaism cannot really exist without the Land of Israel.' Discuss.

This was also a popular question. The best responses offered both biblical evidence about the Land of Israel, as well as consideration of the existence of a diaspora as a counterbalance to this. Weaker responses often confused the topic of the *Land* with the *State*, which is of course different. Generally, the question offered candidates plenty of scope to display their knowledge of literary sources regarding the Land of Israel. Some candidates referred to extreme factions within Judaism such as *Neturai Karta* and cited their response in disagreement with the title.

3 'Messianic hope is only of importance to Orthodox Jews.' Discuss.

This was not a popular question but was attempted by some candidates, whose general level of response was very good. Examination of the difference between Messianic hope as embodied in textual references in Isaiah etc, and the concept of a messianic age which is of course a fundamental tenet of Progressive Judaism, was welcome. Historical analysis of the Progressive attempts to remove messianic references from liturgy etc. was also offered.

4 'We cannot sustain the old belief in man, nor the old belief in G-d... but we can search for new beliefs.' (Albert Friedlander)

To what extent does post-Holocaust theology mean that all Jews must change their beliefs?

The use of a quotation by an eminent holocaust theologian as part of the question, appeared to confuse some candidates who had prepared quite detailed responses based on a selection of the well known theologians – Berkovitz, Rubenstein., Fackenheim etc. Many good candidates felt confident enough to quote and discuss responses of other authorities who are not necessarily mentioned in the specification, but whose opinions are, of course valid – Schneerson, Maza, Sacks and Teitelbaum to name but a few. The general level of response to this popular question was very good.

2779: Philosophy of Religion 1

1.

The paper seemed to be fair but there was a disappointing response by a number of candidates.

There were problems of chronology for many. It was evident that relatively few candidates had looked at original texts. Closer textual knowledge would have avoided errors such as Anselm's example of TV sets, Hume's car (which was very popular) or Kant's pixies.

2. Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

1. **Evaluate the claim of the ontological argument that it is necessary for God to exist.**

Notions of necessity and logic caused some problems for many of the candidates who addressed this question. Many were imprecise about the meaning of predicate, many asserting that predicates were part of a thing rather than of a concept, leading to needless confusion. Some made good use of more modern formulations of the argument by Malcolm and Plantinga though many misunderstood these writers. A significant number of candidates simply described every theory they had learned about God's existence.

2. **'Challenges from Darwinism disprove teleological arguments for the existence of God.' Discuss.**

Many candidates seemed to know very little about Darwin beyond a hazy notion of evolution. Many attributed to Darwin theories of DNA, Big Bang, Stephen Hawking et al. Many candidates wrote all they knew about teleological arguments but few were aware, or could express, the ways in which an evolved world might look designed. Some could do little more than describe Paley's version the argument. Some of the best candidates made good use of Tennant and Polkinghorne.

3. **'Marx's understanding of religion was right.' Discuss.**

This was the least popular question and frequently poorly done as many candidates knew little about Marx beyond the 'opiate of the people' and padded their essays with every sociological or psychological theory they could. Many in fact, having clearly prepared essays on Freud, gave very detailed accounts of his theories and barely mentioned Marx at all. A few good candidates gave a good account of the views of Marx using an evaluative comparison with Weber and Durkhiem.

**4. 'The best response to the problem of evil is to deny that God exists.'
Discuss.**

Most responses were all-purpose 'problem of evil' answers rather than focusing on the question set. Over a number of sessions now, this question seems to attract the 'everything I know about' kind of answer. It is often clear that bright candidates do not do themselves justice as they constantly fail to address the actual question. There was some sound knowledge and some candidates made effective use of D.Z. Phillips.

2780: Religious Education – Religious Ethics 1 (A2)

General Comments

This was a very small entry but all candidates were well prepared and the quality of the answers showed that some centres have encouraged their candidates to make specific references to scholars and use quotes to illustrate answers.

There seemed to be an even better standard overall than in previous years and there appeared to be a significant reduction in the number of less able candidates giving fewer of the “general opinion” essays.

Most candidates seemed to use the allocated time appropriately. All candidates seemed to manage to answer two questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 **‘A Natural Law approach to abortion is cruel.’ Discuss.**

This was a popular question and elicited good analytical responses and showed good understanding of Natural Law.

Good candidates explored the meaning of the word ‘cruel’ and discussed whether abortion was cruel to the mother, the foetus or society in general.

Most candidates compared Natural Law with other ethical approaches which looked at each situation and gave a more relative response.

Excellent candidates showed their analytical skills in discussing whether it mattered whether the Natural Law approach was cruel, and whether, in fact, it was more important to discuss if the approach was adequate to deal with abortion in today’s modern and ever-changing world.

2 **‘Only Kantian ethics can provide the correct solution to euthanasia.’ Discuss.**

Most candidates answered this question well, giving clear accounts of Kantian ethics and applying it to the question of euthanasia.

Weaker answers concentrated on either defining euthanasia or applying every ethical theory they had learnt to the topic in a list.

There were some excellent discussions on why it was important not to be swayed by emotion, and how, in a question like euthanasia, it is impossible not to involve emotions as they are what inspire us to be moral.

Answers generally compared Kantian ethics to more relative theories, generally concluding that Situation Ethics provide a ‘safer’ answer than Utilitarianism which could lead to abuse.

3 **Examine critically the view that Utilitarianism has serious weaknesses as an ethical theory.**

This was quite a popular question and most answers discussed different forms of Utilitarianism, and how each had attempted to remedy weaknesses in other forms of the theory.

Good answers concluded that Utilitarianism was a flexible theory and so able to adapt and almost re-invent itself to cope with its inherent problems, but our inability to foresee all consequences was its ultimate weakness.

4 'Virtue Ethics is of little use when dealing with practical ethics.' Discuss

Fewer candidates answered this question, but those who did so usually answered it well.

Most answers confined themselves to Aristotelian Virtue Ethics and there were some good applications to mainly medical ethics.

The cultural relativity of the virtues was considered in the better answers.

Very few answers looked at modern versions of Virtue Ethics or considered its application in the ethics of care.

2791: Connections in Religious Studies

General Comments:

As in previous sessions, and with an ever-increasing entry, the quality of the candidates' work continues to reflect a very wide range of ability. The majority of candidates had clearly been well prepared for the examination and were able to make appropriate links between the different topics they had studied and to give good examples to illustrate their arguments.

There were, once again, a few candidates who, very disappointingly, wrote an excellent answer to one question and then did not continue to a second, thus limiting themselves to a maximum of half marks for the paper. Conversely, there were very few who appeared to have run out of time completely.

Teachers and students should be congratulated for the excellent preparation which they had put into this examination. Most candidates were well prepared and the quality of the answers showed that some centres have encouraged their candidates to make specific references to scholars and use quotes to illustrate answers.

However, some candidates did make appropriate reference to scholars but failed to make any analytical approach to the view stated. There were also some answers that were very generalised in their responses.

Essay plans were more common and this was reflected in the improved quality of answers.

Route A, as always, was by far the most popular Route.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Route A/AX/AY Philosophy of Religion with Religious Ethics

1 'Ethics are the product of society, not of religion.' Discuss.

This was the least popular question and the least well answered. Too many candidates knew too little sociology and even considered Freud a sociologist. However, there were answers that approached the question with rigour and showed good analytic skills, arguing both for and against the role of God and religion in forming ethical codes. Some very good answers questioned whether anyone had successfully explained where ethics originated.

2 'Evil exists because humans have free will.' Discuss.

This was a very popular question, and was generally well attempted. Good answers used a range of philosophical views, contrasting the traditional theodicies with different approaches to determinism. There was evidence of good use of scholars and succinct use of quotations and examples to provide evidence. Weaker responses had not grasped the rationale for determinist theories and Freud became a determinist for some candidates.

3 'The fact that we have a conscience proves that God exists.' Discuss.

Again this was a popular question. Most answers showed a good knowledge and understanding of the different theories of conscience. Too many answers, however, concentrated on writing a 'conscience' essay and failed to answer the 'proves that God exists'. Sometimes it was considered implicit that if the theory mentioned God e.g. Aquinas, Butler, Newman then that 'proved' the existence of God. Good responses considered the question of whether we all had a

Report on the Units taken in June 2006

conscience and whether those that either did not seem to have one or ignored it proved that it had nothing to do with God. Good responses also contrasted psychological views with theological/philosophical views. Most answers included Kant v. Freud.

2792: Route C Philosophy of Religion with New Testament

1 'Theories of rebirth are convincing; New Testament ideas about life after death are not.' Discuss.

There were some good responses to this question but far too many candidates wasted a great deal of time writing about theories of rebirth from Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh bases which they clearly did not understand. Having used most of their time on this they then said little about New Testament ideas, about which they seemed equally unclear, and did not discuss the issues raised.

There were many good responses which defined rebirth simply and then considered the New Testament issues and the comparison.

2 'The New Testament texts which you have studied do not present a consistent picture of the nature of religious experience.' Discuss.

Many candidates failed to make any attempt to consider definitions of religious experience and even those who did rarely went beyond Swinburne. This made the question difficult to answer. Some focussed exclusively on the conversion of Saul and generally produced very weak answers. On the other hand, those who were in command of the material wrote fluently and insightfully about the issues.

3 'The New Testament texts are inconsistent, so they cannot be the revealed word of God.' Discuss.

There were some excellent responses to this question, however, many failed to consider the nature of consistency. When they did, they often argued that the texts were inconsistent because they were written by different people but then argued that this proved that they were revealed. It seems that, as so often in Philosophy papers, there was little understanding of the nature of revelation.

Route D Philosophy of Religion with Developments in Christian Thought

4 'An inclusivist understanding of salvation is not compatible with a belief in salvation only through Christ.' Discuss.

Generally this was only attempted by the more able candidates. There were some very good responses which dealt thoroughly with the inclusivism and the issue of salvation and were then able to consider the seemingly exclusivist idea of salvation through Christ.

5 'A pluralist view of religion means that scripture cannot have authority.' Discuss.

This produced some weaker responses than those for Q.4. Some rightly pointed out that it depended on what scripture was being considered and that not all scriptures were necessarily exclusivist. Many candidates seemed to be well-prepared for this question.

6 'Liberation Theology is concerned with life, not death.' Discuss.

This was the most popular question in this Route. The quality of response largely depended upon how good was the candidate's understanding of Liberation Theology. Some answers suffered from the same problem as arose elsewhere on this paper in relation to Liberation Theology. Whilst it is possible to argue that both Feminist Theology and Black Theology can be considered matters of liberation, to use this argument every time Liberation Theology appears in

a question is to weaken the response by attempting to cover too much ground and too many views. The specification and therefore the question papers use the term in a specific sense and for good marks it is the interpretation which should be used in answers to avoid hitting too broad a target.

Route J Religious Ethics with New Testament

7 According to the New Testament texts which you have studied, to what extent are people compelled to behave morally?

The word 'compelled' appeared to cause issues for some candidates. It seems that the idea of religion 'compelling' its adherents to behave morally or, indeed, in any other way, was alien to many candidates who largely took the position that being a Christian did not mean that the person had to accept Christian moral values. As a consequence some of the answers seen were rather unfocussed and did not address the question specifically.

8 'Natural Law is consistent with the New Testament concept of agape.' Discuss.

There were one or two rather alarming responses where candidates appeared to have just discovered that agape was, in some ways, rather similar to Situation Ethics. What was equally surprising was that many candidates argued that the two concepts were totally compatible and, essentially, the same thing.

9 'New Testament teaching is of no use when considering ethical issues raised by sex and relationships.' Discuss.

This was the most popular question in this Route although not necessarily the best answered. For some reason almost all of the discussion was about homosexuality. Although this was, of course, a legitimate response and good have produced good answers, candidates seemed to know very little of such New Testament teachings as there are and which could be utilised in the argument. Argument therefore tended to reflect on church teaching and general Christian attitudes rather than on specifically New Testament teaching.

Route K Religious Ethics with Developments in Christian Thought

10 'Liberation Theology is about justice, not peace.' Discuss.

(See report on Q.6 above.) This question in particular suffered from the matters discussed in relation to Q.6. As a consequence it was often difficult to follow the argument being made or follow the course of the discussion as it moved between the three issues of Liberation, Feminist and Black Theology. Those who did focus clearly on the question and the issue being raised generally produced excellent responses.

11 'A pluralist approach to religion cannot work with an absolutist approach to ethics.' Discuss.

Those who attempted this question generally did well. Some had difficulty in defining the terms they were using but most were able to argue convincingly in relation to the question. Opinion seemed fairly clearly divided as to whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement.

12 'Black Theology assumes a relativist view of ethics.' Discuss.

This was not a particularly popular question as many candidates seemed reluctant to write about Black Theology. However, for those who had studied the material thoroughly, this was an accessible question which produced some excellent responses.

Route P Jewish Scriptures with New Testament

13 With reference to the texts you have studied, how far do the ethics of the Jewish Scriptures differ from New Testament ethics?

There were some excellent responses to this question and, indeed, to all the questions in this Route. Many candidates appeared to have been thoroughly prepared for this examination. However, there were far too many responses which appeared to indicate that candidates knew very little at all about the set texts beyond the basic words they include – there seemed little appreciation of the theology involved in these. In the relation to this particular question there was a lot of general material about New Testament ethics and some about those of the Jewish Scriptures but there was little attempt to tie these to the texts.

14 Compare and contrast the ways in which the Jewish scriptures and the New Testament texts you have studied deal with the concept of Law.

Most candidates seemed clear about the idea of Law in the Jewish scriptures but had far more problems with applying this to the New Testament other than some very general comments about the Sermon on the Mount. Generally the responses were disappointing.

15 'The ideas of reward and punishment are presented more logically in the Jewish scriptures than in the New Testament. Discuss.

This was the best tackled question in the Route. The issues surrounding reward and punishment and clearly presented in both the Jewish scriptures and the New Testament texts specified. Generally, candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of both sets of texts and were then able to draw effective comparisons between them.

Route S New Testament with Developments in Christian Thought

16 'Black Theology is more concerned with the suffering of Christ than with his resurrection.' Discuss.

This was not a popular question, perhaps showing candidates' seemingly general reluctance to deal with Black Theology. There were some excellent responses but many candidates appeared to have problems separating out the issues and structuring their answers.

17 'Neither a pluralist position nor an inclusivist one is compatible with New Testament teachings.' Discuss.

There were some very good responses to this question. Those candidates who had made a thorough study of the texts as well as of the cited theories. Those who chose to write generally about the issues without close reference to New Testament teachings tended to produce rather weak responses.

18 'Liberation Theology is the only possible way to interpret the message of the New Testament.' Discuss.

(See Report on Q.6 above.) This question suffered from the same issue as Q.6 which approach produced very diffuse and weak answers. Those who focussed clearly on Liberation Theology and were fully familiar with New Testament teachings were able to produce some excellent responses.

2793: Connections in Religious Studies

General Comments:

Most of the questions in these Routes were answered from the perspective of Buddhism as is reflected in the other Eastern Religions papers. There were, however, some excellent responses in relation to Hinduism from the relatively small number of candidates which study this.

Route E Philosophy of Religion with Eastern Religions

1 'Existence without a soul makes little sense.' Discuss with reference to either Buddhism or Hinduism.

There were some excellent responses to this question which addressed different theories of the soul from Plato onwards and then considered these in relation to the religion studied. However, there were many weak responses which seemed not only unclear about the idea of the soul but also showed very vague understanding of Eastern beliefs.

2 To what extent can either Buddhist or Hindu texts be considered sacred?

This was not a popular question. Many answers seemed unclear as to what anyone might mean when describing a text as sacred, perhaps demonstrating a lack of study of the relevant part of the Philosophy specification. Given this lack of knowledge and understanding many also seemed unclear about the particular sacred texts they were studying and how they are regarded.

3 Compare either Buddhist or Hindu understandings of religious experience with other views.

Although many candidates appeared to have a fairly clear idea of what religious experience meant in relation to the religion they were studying, nevertheless very few were able to talk about other views and there was a very disappointing lack of reference to theories such as those of James, Swinburne etc.

Route L Religious Ethics with Eastern Religions

4 To what extent do either Hindu or Buddhist ethics provide a useful approach to euthanasia?

This was the most popular question in this Route. Most candidates were able to write competently about euthanasia and to draw conclusions from their study of the relevant religious ethics which enabled them to produce competent responses.

5 'The only purpose of behaving morally is to gain good karma.' Discuss with reference to either Buddhism or Hinduism.

This question was the second most popular in the Route. Many candidates struggled to take their understanding of karma and apply this to the question. The conclusion generally appeared to be that, despite some quite convincing arguments to the contrary, nevertheless the statement was untrue.

6 Compare and contrast the ethics of either Buddhism or Hinduism with absolute morality.

This was the least popular question in the Route. However, those who attempted it generally produced some excellent responses which were able to look closely at the chosen ethics and consider the extent to which they were in or out of line with the principles of an absolute morality. Weaker responses tended to be those which were unclear as to what was meant by absolute morality.

2794: Route F Philosophy of Religion with Islam

1 Compare Muslim understandings of the nature of the revelation of the Qur'an with ways of understanding the revelation of the Bible.

Unfortunately, popular as this question was, it tended to display a general weakness in relation to the idea of revelation. There was some specific material about the revelation of the Qur'an but, generally, very little about the revelation of the Bible which, in the case of many candidates, appeared to be a topic of which they knew almost nothing.

2 Beliefs about rebirth are more convincing than Muslim teaching on life after death. Discuss.

There were some good responses in relation to Muslim teaching about life after death although a greater depth of understanding would have helped. The major problem came in relation to beliefs about rebirth. Some candidates attempted an overview of rebirth theories which were generally very muddled. Others chose to write about being 'reborn in Jesus'. Neither approach proved very successful.

3 To what extent does Islam provide convincing arguments for the existence of God?

It was surprising to see how few candidates appeared to have a thorough understanding of the Kalam argument. Whilst the question did not require use of the argument it was, nevertheless, difficult to produce convincing responses without mentioning it. Some therefore wrote very generally about Muslim belief in Allah and many failed to consider whether the arguments being presented were 'convincing'.

Route M Religious Ethics with Islam

4 'The concept of Jihad leaves no room for pacifism.' Discuss.

Unsurprisingly, this was a very popular question. The weakest responses wrote entirely about Lesser Jihad which tended to lead to inadequate one-sided responses with little foundation. Better answers gave a clear account of Jihad in its various forms and were able to draw interesting conclusions which largely disagreed with the statement in the question.

5 Compare Muslim approaches to issues of sex and relationships with the approach of moral relativism.

Some responses were side-tracked into homosexuality for some reason and then demonstrated that, in fact, they knew very little about Muslim responses to the issue. The best answers tended to limit the 'Muslim approaches' to a very limited area with which they were familiar and then looked closely at the comparison with moral relativism.

6 'Islam (Submission to the will of Allah) makes moral decision-making unnecessary.' Discuss.

Generally this was only attempted by more able candidates. Many were familiar with Muslim ideas about predestination and free will and determinism and there were some excellent responses which clearly and fully addressed the question.

Route Q Developments in Christian Thought with Islam

7 'Christian and Muslim understandings of revelation through sacred texts have nothing in common.' Discuss.

This suffered from the same problem which has been noted earlier in relation to a question on the nature of revelation. Many candidates appear to have significant weaknesses in this area. Also, although many could write about revelation in Islam there was far less understanding of the concept in relation to Christianity.

8 Examine the differences between the concept of community in Liberation Theology and brotherhood in the Ummah.

(See note on 2792 Q.6 above.) This was not generally well tackled. Those who focused clearly in Liberation Theology usually had sufficient understanding of the concepts of community and Ummah to produce some very good and thoughtful responses to the question.

9 'Feminism is a Christian concept, not a Muslim one.' Discuss.

This was the most popular question in this Route. Although there was the inevitable number of weaker and rather general responses with little supporting evidence or argument there were many excellent answers which showed thoughtful study and consideration of the issues.

Route T New Testament with Islam

10 'There is no similarity between the status of Jesus in the New Testament and the status of Muhammad (bpuh) for Muslims.' Discuss.

This was a popular question. Many candidates were able to write competently and at length about the status of Muhammad (bpuh) for Muslims, real differentiation between candidates tended to appear in relation to the status of Jesus in the New Testament. As has been noted earlier in this report, with some candidates there appears to be a lack of understanding of the theology of the New Testament texts which are being studied.

11 'Christian and Muslim ethics are both absolutist.' Discuss.

This question was generally very well answered. Most candidates were able to write competently about ethical theories and positions in relation to both religions and drew interesting and valid conclusions about the statement presented.

12 Compare and contrast the nature of revelation in the New Testament with that of the Qur'an.

As is noted above, questions about revelation tended to be done less well than other topics in this examination. As a consequence, although there were some very good answers, responses to this question were in general rather weak as candidates did not appear to have the knowledge and understanding required, particularly in relation to the New Testament.

2795: Route B Philosophy of Religion with Jewish Scriptures

1 To what extent should the texts which you have studied from the Jewish Scriptures be regarded as sacred?

This was less popular than the other questions in this Route and generally produced rather weak responses. Candidates seemed to have difficulties with the meaning of the term 'sacred' in the question and generally showed little understanding of the nature of revelation.

2 'The use of symbol and myth in the Jewish Scriptures does not help people to understand G-d.' Discuss.

There were many good answers to this question. Aquinas, Bultmann, Tillich and Wittgenstein were cited frequently. Most candidates concluded that symbol and myth in the scriptures did indeed help people to a greater understanding of G-d.

3 To what extent do the Jewish Scriptures show a consistent understanding of religious experience?

This produced some very good responses. Many candidates wrote about James' characteristics of religious experience and some also referred to Otto. The most able tied this in to the relevant scriptures.

Route G Religious Philosophy with Judaism

4 'Post-Holocaust theology has provided its own solution to the problem of evil.' Discuss.

This was the most popular question in this Route. The theologians and writers most frequently cited were: Berkovits, Cohn-Sherbok, Maybaum, Maza and Rubenstine. The general conclusion was that it was still important to attempt to discover a meaningful theological explanation for the Holocaust even if there is no answer.

5 'The authority of the Jewish Scriptures is not open to discussion.' Discuss.

There were many weak answers to this question. Answers needed to look at different approaches to the authority of the scriptures but many had little or no grasp of any view other than an Orthodox one. As a consequence there was little for these candidates to discuss.

6 In Judaism, religious experience does not match the definitions given by William James.' Discuss.

Most candidates had good understanding of James' classification though some made no mention of his insistence that there is a two-way traffic in the experience. Most answers concentrated on direct encounters between G-d and people – it was surprising that some also included the New Testament account of the conversion of Saul.

Route H Religious Ethics with Jewish Scriptures

7 How useful are the teachings in the Jewish Scriptures which you have studied for an understanding of the ethical issues surrounding sex and relationships?

This was a popular question and generally well answered. Most candidates were able to explain the religious laws which relate to family life and there was useful discussion of these teachings in respect of the husband-wife relationship.

8 'The existence of the Law means that Jews do not have to consider the consequences of their actions.' Discuss.

This question concerned the concept of free will in relation to freedom and determinism. Some candidates considered the nature of Jewish Law in a categorisation of systems of ethics and this produced some excellent responses. Few candidates were able to support their answer with reference to the scriptural text.

9 'The Jewish scriptures show that human responsibility is a collective duty, not an individual one.' Discuss.

This was the most popular question in this Route. Unfortunately, for weaker candidates, the question required a good grasp of the specified texts and lack of this produced some very weak answers.

Route N Religious Ethics with Judaism

10 Compare and contrast Jewish ethics with those of Utilitarianism.

There were some excellent responses to this question. Most candidates had some comprehension of the theories of Bentham and Mill although there was little recognition of other forms of Utilitarianism. Weaker candidates showed no awareness of different perspectives within Judaism.

11 'Orthodox Jews follow the Categorical Imperative while Progressive Jews are moral relativists. Discuss.

Whilst most candidates generally accepted the given statement, they were able to indicate that Kant would have nothing to do with consideration of consequences and that Progressive Judaism has not entirely broken from halachic norms.

12 'Jews do not have free will.' Discuss.

There was good discussion of determinist philosophies. Most candidates accepted that, although Judaism is based on a system of Law, there is still freedom to choose one's actions. A number of candidates would have improved their responses if they had illustrated them with Biblical examples.

Route R Jewish Scriptures with Judaism

13 Evaluate the importance of scripture in Jewish worship.

Although there were a few excellent responses to this question, too many answers lacked focus; they were often no more than generalised accounts of the differing approaches to scripture, or summaries of the teaching of one or more of the prophetic books.

14 Discuss the implications of the biblical idea of covenant for Jewish life.

This was often well done with useful discussion, especially of the judicial and social elements of the Sinai Covenant. Several candidates lost the focus of the question, writing extensively on religious responses to the Jewish homeland and the coming of the Messiah.

15 'It is not possible for the Jewish Scriptures to be interpreted in different ways.' Discuss.

This was generally well answered with candidates showing good knowledge of Orthodox and Progressive approaches. Some erroneously supposed that Progressive Judaism does not accept that the Biblical writers were inspired by G-d.

Route V Islam with Judaism

16 Compare and contrast Muslim understandings of the nature of Allah with Jewish understandings of the nature of G-d.

Answers were rather disappointing. Few candidates showed knowledge and understanding of ethical monotheism and a large number over-emphasised the transcendent nature of Allah with little reference to those surahs that depict him as immanent. Many would have improved their answers had they been able to support their points with reference to scripture.

17 'The status of the Torah for Jews is the same as the status of the Qur'an for Muslims.' Discuss.

Answers tended to lack an overview and many simply supposed that the status of the Torah for Orthodox Jews is the same as the status of the Qur'an for Muslims. Many had insufficient understanding of the views of Progressive Judaism.

18 'Methods of worship in a synagogue and in a mosque have more similarities than differences.' Discuss.

Answers were generally competent. Several candidates pointed out that perhaps the most obvious difference between Orthodox and Progressive Judaism is found in the synagogue. Weaker candidates tended to write far more on worship practices in one faith than the other.

**Advanced Subsidiary GCE Religious Studies 3877
June 2006 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2760/11	Raw	100	75	65	55	45	36	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/12	Raw	100	75	65	55	45	36	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/13	Raw	100	79	71	63	55	47	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/14	Raw	100	77	69	61	53	45	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/15	Raw	100	75	67	58	49	41	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2761	Raw	100	85	74	63	52	42	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2762	Raw	100	73	64	55	46	38	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	75	65	55	46	37	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2765	Raw	100	74	63	53	43	33	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2766	Raw	100	77	67	58	49	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2767	Raw	100	78	68	58	49	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2768	Raw	100	85	76	67	58	49	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	79	69	59	49	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
3877	300	240	210	180	150	120	0

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

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3877	23.4	50.6	73.3	87.1	94.3	100	10319

**Advanced Subsidiary GCE Religious Studies 7877
June 2006 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2771	Raw	90	69	61	53	45	37	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2772	Raw	90	75	66	58	50	42	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2773	Raw	90	72	64	56	48	40	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2774	Raw	90	74	65	56	48	40	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2775	Raw	90	67	57	47	37	27	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2776	Raw	90	75	67	59	52	45	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2777	Raw	90	73	65	58	51	44	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2778	Raw	90	76	68	60	53	46	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2779	Raw	90	74	65	56	47	39	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2780	Raw	90	72	64	56	49	42	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2791	Raw	120	96	85	74	63	53	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2792	Raw	120	96	85	74	64	54	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2793	Raw	120	92	80	68	56	45	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2794	Raw	120	90	78	66	54	43	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2795	Raw	120	86	77	68	59	51	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
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
7877	25.6	58.1	83.3	95.3	99.3	100	8272

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Information Bureau

(General Qualifications)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: helpdesk@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations
is a Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England
Registered Office; 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU
Registered Company Number: 3484466
OCR is an exempt Charity



OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

© OCR 2006