

Religious Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 7877**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS 3877**

Report on the Units

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2760 Foundation for the Study of Religion

General Comments

A wide range of ability was demonstrated. The overall performance of the candidates was as one might expect, bearing in mind re-takes and the fact that many candidates were only a few months on from GCSE. Some candidates were surprised by the combination of questions in the Philosophy of Religion section and chose to write about Plato/Aristotle anyway.

Better candidates who had been well prepared for this examination were able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills confidently. Some candidates appeared to have revised set answers to past questions (such as God's character) and struggled to tailor their knowledge to the questions set.

In particular questions 1 and 2 seemed to have been avoided in terms of revision and there were many answers obviously constructed 'on the hoof'. Some candidates would have benefited from a closer examination of the key words in each of the questions.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1 – Philosophy of Religion

- 1 (a) **Explain what the writers of the Bible meant when they described God as 'good'.** [33]

Some answers indicated that candidates had learned material for questions on Plato or Aristotle at the expense of thorough revision of Biblical topics. Some candidates tried to weave in their knowledge of Plato into the question in the absence of much Biblical knowledge. Thus answers were frequently 'wooly'.

Many candidates ignored the phrase 'writers of the Bible meant' probably because they were desperate to answer on Plato.

Most answers referred to the creation story. Some candidates attempted to define 'good' without referring to any biblical passages. Those that did refer to the Bible were generally able to describe lots of examples of God's goodness from Biblical passages but struggled to explain them. Better candidates were able to explain what was meant by relating the concepts to specific examples within the Bible: miracles; the Ten Commandments; creation and the incarnation. Many weaker answers simply listed characteristics of God with little reference to the Biblical writers.

There were frequent references to the acts of Jesus in the Gospels. A few ignored the question set in favour of Plato's *Euthyphro* dialogue.

- (b) **'A good God would not punish people.' Discuss.** [17]

Candidates often did better with this question. Many used their knowledge of their study of the Problem of Evil in their answer – some had an excellent knowledge of the topic.

Free will and the temptation were most commonly cited as supporting arguments. A few answers explored the issue of forgiveness and the purpose of punishment. Many candidates able to give two clear viewpoints with evidence by considering first 'can

God be good to punish' and secondly 'should a good God punish'. Many candidates related punishment to evil and then concerned themselves to why a good God would allow evil into the world. Hosea 3 was mentioned by some candidates.

Some good answers were often very creative and imaginative. Some Candidates attempted to discuss the problem of evil although some wandered off the point as a result. Some candidates ignored the exact wording of the question and engaged in a general discussion about whether God was good.

2 (a) Describe and explain some events in the Bible which are regarded as miracles. [33]

This question was answered by weaker candidates in a purely narrative way with little or no analysis. Many candidates seemed to rely on some GCSE knowledge of New Testament miracles offering little or no explanation of the examples they gave.

The level of textual knowledge was often very limited with students giving vague and confused descriptions of e.g. the Feeding of the 5,000. The best candidates were able to refer to both Old and New Testament examples with confidence and to give a range of types of miracle with explanation.

Some spent a long time discussing the definitions of a miracle at the expense of describing and explaining Biblical miracles.

Most candidates named specific miracles, some described them, but few were able to explain them. Some answers focused on defining the word 'miracle' ignoring the reference to the Bible in the question. A lot of candidates just gave examples of miracles or related them in great detail rather than explaining why they were miracles or why they are in the Bible. However, there were some good answers which related the miracles to God's intervention in the world and to his attributes.

The question tended to bring out the storyteller in some candidates, often to unintentionally hilarious results: God punishing Saddam and Gomorrah; Jews and Israelites fighting each other, and Jesus healing lepers.

There was very little theology or explanation in these answers. Attempts at theological comment were often superficial. Some candidates interpreted the word 'explain' to mean 'offer alternative explanations for'. Credit was awarded for such attempts although some of them were more convincing / creative than others in their explanations.

(b) 'It is difficult to accept that miracles can happen.' Discuss. [17]

Better students attempted to define what is meant by 'miracle' referring to Hume, Swinburne et al and were able to articulate excellent responses to this question, citing examples of modern day 'miracles' along the way. Most students gave for and against answers.

Candidates generally argued better on the 'against' side. There was a lot of implicit analysis on the 'for' side. Most candidates focused on the rarity of miracles and the lack of scientific proof in answer to this question. Some candidates discussed the role of faith. Another popular approach was to debate the liberal v. fundamental approach to understanding the Bible. Some candidates cited babies being born as modern miracles but struggled to expand on their answers!

Some candidates gave modern examples of miracles such as those at Lourdes.

Part 2 – Religious Ethics

- 3 (a) **Explain the difference between emotivism and intuitionism in meta-ethics.** [33]

There were some excellent responses to this question. These candidates handled the material confidently giving detailed explanations of both theories. They had clearly been taught very well. However, there were also many candidates who did not have a clue about either theory and simply guessed at an answer obtaining a few marks for mentioning feelings in relation to emotivism.

A common error was to suppose that Intuitionism is non-cognitive. However, this may reflect the variety of explanations that common text books give.

Better answers gave an impressive array of scholars; Stevenson, Pritchard and Ross were covered as well as the usual references to Moore and Ayer although there was some confusion over these two.

- (b) **‘Ethical language has no purpose as it does not provide any answers.’ Discuss.** [17]

There were very few answers of quality in this question. Most candidates appeared to be confused by the question and did not have sufficient knowledge of meta-ethics to engage in a thoughtful response. Again the best candidates stood out. They were able to refer to the development of meta-ethics in the 19th and 20th centuries and to cite various theories along the way, drawing conclusions as they went. A number of candidates argued effectively that it is imperative to understand ethical language if one is to have purposeful ethical discussion and reach an answer.

Some candidates addressed the question as religious language rather than ethical language. A lot of answers were simple statements or implicit analysis. Good and very good answers tended to be candidates who knew meta-ethics and some who were able to bring in knowledge of other ethical theories as having more purpose and therefore being more helpful.

- 4 (a) **Explain, with examples, what is meant by moral relativism.** [33]

This was the more popular of the ethics questions and in most cases it was answered quite well. Situation Ethics was the most common example of a relativist theory although some candidates had studied Utilitarianism and Virtue Ethics which they offered as examples. There was, even so, confusion on the part of some candidates who seemed to think that Natural Law was a relativist theory.

Some candidates were able to explain Situation Ethics in good detail. Some contrasted relativism with absolutism. Most, who understood what moral relativism is, were able to state it was dependent upon time, culture, religion and society.

Weaker candidates tended to include one example only but most candidates had a clear idea of the basics of moral relativism. Cultural relativism was included at times with little attempt to make it fit the question asked. However, many candidates studying ethics with Islam wrote largely about cultural relativism rather than situation ethics giving good examples about Asian issues such as arranged marriages and wearing hijab. It was a refreshing change to see this approach.

- (b) **'Relativist theories are the only fair way of making moral decisions.'** Discuss. [17]

Most candidates were able to articulate a useful answer to the question though there was a tendency to make sweeping statements about the pros and cons of abortion. The example of the teenage girl who becomes pregnant as a result of rape made an appearance in almost all answers with little evidence of critical analysis. Many agreed with the statement but went on to argue that society also needs some sort of absolute authoritative code.

Some good candidates compared and contrasted relativism with the strengths and weaknesses of an absolutist position such as Natural Law.

Weaker candidates struggled with this question because they did not understand the meaning of term 'relativist theories'. Many weaker candidates ignored the key word 'fair' and some were confused about which of the three theories studied for this Unit were deontological or teleological.

Part 3 – Jewish Scriptures

- 5 (a) **Explain what evidence can be used in the dating of the Exodus from Egypt.** [33]

This was not a popular question but answers were generally sound. A number of candidates displayed knowledge of excavations of the palace of Rameses II and drew attention to the store-cities of Pithom and Rameses cited in the biblical text. Some made mention of the stele in Memeptah's mortuary temple at Thebes. Surprisingly, only a handful of candidates cited the information given in 1 Kings 6.1.

- (b) **'The importance of the Exodus from Egypt lies in its theological meaning and not in a discussion of whether it actually happened.'** Discuss. [17]

The majority opinion was that despite complex historical problems in reconstructing it, the theological significance of the Exodus event is fundamental, since it marks the formation of the Jewish people.

- 6 (a) **Explain what is meant by 'history' when describing some of the writings in the Jewish scriptures.** [33]

The question was generally well done. Most candidates knew something of the work of the form critics and therefore what constitutes 'history'. A number of able candidates pointed out that the identification of forms is particularly important when assessing the value of a text as historical evidence.

- (b) **'History should be regarded as the most important type of literature in the Jewish Scriptures.'** Discuss. [17]

As expected, there was little agreement with the statement though the importance of history was not underestimated.

Part 4A – New Testament – Early Church

- 7 (a) **Explain what was distinctive about the Zealots.** [33]

This was slightly less popular than Question 8. There were some good responses from those who had a clear handle on the material and they were able to give fairly detailed answers about the distinctive nature of the group.

- (b) **'The Zealots were of little importance to Jews in the first century CE.' Discuss.** [17]

The general conclusion appeared to be in agreement with the statement. Most considered that the Romans and Temple life were probably of greater significance.

- 8 (a) **What was distinctive about the religious practices of the Pharisees?** [33]

The more popular of the two questions, this produced some good and detailed responses. Some candidates chose to write about the Pharisees in general rather than their religious practices and penalised themselves accordingly.

- (b) **'The Pharisees had a significant effect on the lives of Jews in the first century CE.' Discuss.** [17]

Answers here tended to be in general agreement with the statement and candidates produced evidence to support the idea that the influence of the Sadducees tended to be limited to the Temple whereas they Pharisees had a wider influence on the community.

Part 4B – New Testament – Gospels

- 9 (a) **Explain the political and religious beliefs of the Zealots.** [33]

This was slightly less popular than Question 10. There were some good responses from those who had a clear handle on the material and they were able to give fairly detailed answers about the distinctive nature of the group.

- (b) **'The Zealots were a major influence on the lives of Jews in the first century CE.' Discuss.** [17]

The general conclusion appeared to be in agreement with the statement. Most considered that the Romans and Temple life were probably of greater significance.

- 8 (a) **What was distinctive about the religious practices of the Pharisees?** [33]

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- (b) **'The Pharisees had a significant effect on the lives of Jews in the first century CE.' Discuss.** [17]

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Part 5 – Developments in Christian Thought

- 11 (a) **Explain different biblical teachings about the use of violence.** [33]

This was a popular question and well done. Knowledge of biblical passages was broad but sometimes lacking in explanation. Stereotypical responses focused on the Old Testament encouraging violence (especially as revenge) and the New Testament encouraging peace.

- (b) **‘Biblical texts can never be used to justify violence.’ Discuss.** [17]

Most candidates found it hard to differentiate this question from part (a) and often the same answer was given for both. Where pupils tried to write something different they still used all the same biblical passages as examples.

- 12 (a) **Explain Biblical teaching about the role of women in the Creation stories.** [33]

Almost every answer ignored the phrase ‘in the Creation stories’ in the question and pupils wrote at length about the role of women generally using all sorts of biblical references from Samson and Delilah, Paul, the disciples and Jesus. Those that did write something about creation were aware of there being differing accounts but were not always able to say what the differences were.

- (b) **‘Eve was responsible for bringing evil into the world.’ Discuss.** [17]

A lot of responses were one sided either agreeing with the question or blaming everything on the serpent or God.

Part 6A – Eastern Religions – Buddhism

- 13 (a) **Explain how the Noble Eightfold Path can eliminate dukkah.** [33]

- (b) **‘Right Mindfulness is the most important part of the Noble Eightfold Path.’ Discuss.** [17]

There were some very good compare and contrast type answers on the stages of the Eightfold Path and consideration of which might be the most important, if any.

- 14 (a) **Explain the nature of the Hindu religion at the time of Gautama the Buddha.** [33]

Those few candidates that attempted this question did well because they had specifically revised for it from similar questions in the past.

- (b) **How far is it necessary to know the religious background in order to understand the early life of the Buddha?** [17]

Part 6B – Eastern Religions – Hinduism

Question 16 was more popular than Question.15 but there were too few candidates to produce a report.

- 15 (a) What are the main teachings of the Purusha Sukta? [33]
(b) How important is the Purusha Sukta as a piece of Hindu literature? [17]
- 16 (a) Explain the main characteristics of the Vedic god Soma. [33]
(b) ‘The religion of the Vedas is monotheistic.’ Discuss. [17]

Part 7 – Islam

- 17 (a) Describe the religious background of pre-Islamic Arabia. [33]

Answers were rather disappointing. In general, candidates wrote effectively on the Pagan background of pre-Islamic Arabia but made little mention of Jewish and Christian influences. It was however, a very popular question. Most answers included everything about pre-Islamic Arabia, where candidates had not been selective about their material. What was written was usually correct but greater depth and understanding would have been achieved if answers had focused on religious issues. Overall answers were good and included information about all the religious groups of that time,

- (b) ‘The growth of Islam cannot be explained without a consideration of the area in which it originated.’ Discuss. [17]

Most agreed with the statement often pointing out the importance of Makkah as a thriving trade centre and place of pilgrimage.. Many candidates repeated what was in (a) or just added more detail about pre-Islamic Arabia. Unfortunately where candidates provided a good understanding of the effect of the religious milieu in Arabia on the growth of Islam, their answers tended to be one-sided.

- 18 (a) Explain Muhammad’s role as a prophet. [33]

Answers were generally sound, though only a few candidates commented effectively on the significance of Muhammad as the last of the prophets. In fact, virtually every answer ignored the word ‘prophet’ and just provided every piece of information on Muhammad’s role from early childhood through to revelation to being a statesman. Many answers focused on secular roles such as being a trader and introducing social laws for the new society. Very good answers gave detailed accounts of the revelation, the construction of the Qur’an and the development of the ummah. Very few answers mentioned Muhammad being the final prophet or reference to other prophets. Basic statements such as ‘to spread Islam’ and ‘to do what God wanted’ were very common but rarely developed or explained.

- (b) **'The Qur'an is more important than Muhammad D in the early growth of Islam.'** Discuss. [17]

There was some useful discussion with a slight majority in favour of the statement. A lot of responses were one sided. Most answers focused on the longevity of the Qur'an compared to the life of a mortal, and the issue of authority from Allah v being a messenger.

Part 8 – Judaism

- 19 (a) **Explain the role of the Jews as a 'chosen people'.** [33]

Answers were generally good and there were a few outstanding scripts. A large number accurately quoted Deuteronomy 14:2 and went on to point out that serving G-d takes many forms.

- (b) **'The Jews could never have survived without the special love of G-d.'** Discuss. [17]

The general opinion was that God must be involved in the survival of the Jewish people, given their numerical insignificance and the enormity of their suffering. Answers need to look carefully at the phrase cited.

- 20 (a) **Describe the origins of the Torah and the Talmud.** [33]

There were some excellent responses to this question. Most had good knowledge of the work of the tannaim and amoraim in general, and of the work of Akiba and Judah ha-Nasi in particular. A few candidates noted that the work of Talmudic and halachic scholars continues today.

- (b) **'The Torah and Talmud are essential for Jewish life today.'** Discuss. [17]

The majority opinion was that both Torah and Talmud are essential for Jewish living, and that one is insufficient without the other.

2761 Philosophy of Religion 1 (AS)

General Comments

The paper overall represented a fair selection of questions that covered a wide range of topics in the specification. Most candidates were able to select two questions that were written within the specified time and according to their capabilities. There was evidence of sound knowledge and understanding, though some candidates' answers showed a lack of thorough revision and accurate knowledge of the scholars specified.

The major weakness in responses to questions was to support points with appropriate evidence or to apply what they knew to the specific question set.

There were many candidates that had acquired in-depth knowledge and understanding of the topics and were able to evaluate the issues in depth. However, a significant number of candidates were unprepared for part (a) questions that required more than simply stating the argument and equally, a number of candidates did not appear to have acquaintance with all of the specification thus making it difficult for candidates to answer all parts of a question. This technique shows the tendency for some candidates to write everything they know on a topic, including whatever irrelevancies that would bring. But overall candidates produced clear and coherent answers which is testimony to the effort and preparation made prior to the examination.

Comments on Specific Questions

Part 1

1 (a) Explain the challenges of Gaunilo and Kant to the ontological argument. [33]

This was a popular question and was generally answered well. There was a range of responses with many good answers; however, some candidates had to content themselves with an extended treatment of Anselm and Gaunilo as they had only a vague idea of Descartes' version of the ontological argument and Kant's criticisms of it. Only a few candidates seemed to know that Kant presents more criticisms than just 'existence is not a predicate' whilst a significant number evidently did not know what a predicate was. Anselm's second argument related to necessary existence was less well known by candidates. Weaker candidates confused the ontological argument with the argument from design.

(b) 'The Ontological argument is a convincing argument.' Discuss. [17]

Many candidates repeated what they had written in part (a) and did not fully explore how convincing the argument was. Few candidates were aware of later forms of the argument from the likes of Malcolm and Plantinga and referred to the argument as out dated. Other candidates simply restricted themselves to juxtaposing viewpoints, which makes achieving marks for analysis harder.

2 (a) Explain Durkheim's and Weber's understanding of the nature and role of religion in society. [33]

This question was rarely answered successfully. Few candidates were able to distinguish between the responses of Durkheim and Weber to the nature and role of religion in society. There were many answers that simply provided all that they knew on sociological challenges to religious belief frequently referring to the teaching of Marx as that of Durkheim or Weber, or even included Freud and Jung as sociologists. Weber's capitalist work ethic seemed to be unknown to the majority of candidates.

(b) 'Religion is only relevant if it has a role in society.' Discuss. [17]

The word 'relevant' caused problems for many candidates who ignored it in their evaluation. Few candidates were able to argue the role of religion has in the development of a society's moral rules or consider the role of religion in providing an idea of justice for all. Some better candidates did successfully argue that religion can be relevant to an individual even when rejected by the majority of society.

3(a) Explain Hume's challenge to Aquinas' cosmological argument. [33]

There were many good answers to this question. Some candidates explained Aquinas' ideas about motion, cause and contingency very well; others were more general 'the world has to have come from somewhere' type answers. However, a number of candidates had difficulty in distinguishing between Aquinas' first way motion/change and his second way related to cause. Only the best candidates were able to explain why Aquinas argued against infinity. This lack of understanding made it harder for them to explain Hume's challenge. A significant number were only able to explain Hume's challenges to the design argument rather than his challenge to Aquinas' cosmological argument, and of those who did many were unable to give more than one or two of Hume's criticisms. Some candidates wasted some precious examination time by describing Aquinas' fourth and fifth way.

(b) 'The cosmological argument cannot prove God exists.' Discuss. [17]

There were many valid arguments and candidates chose to agree with the statement rather than consider its strengths. Only a few candidates made reference to the Big Bang theory as evidence for or against God as the originator of the universe. Many were aware of the Copleston and Russell debate but only the best candidates were able to make the link between Aquinas' third way and Copleston's argument.

Part 2

4(a) Explain Paley's version of the teleological argument and Mill's objections to it. [33]

This was a popular question. Paley's watch argument was generally well understood although less able candidates were not able to support with specific examples of design in the world such as the human eye. Better answers referred to design *qua* purpose and design *qua* regularity. However, a great many came unstuck with Mill's objections to the teleological argument and gave Hume's instead. Those who did accurately explain Mill's objections didn't always successfully draw the inference that evidence of evil in the world compromises belief in the omnibenevolent, omnipotent, omniscient God of classical theism. They simply concluded that this meant that there could not be a designer.

(b) 'Evolution leaves no room for a designer of the universe.' Discuss. [17]

Some of the best answers were seen in response to this question. The majority of candidates were able to evaluate whether or not evolution was evidence of God's design or not. Better candidates were able to bring in the ideas of Dawkins as evidence of why evolution leaves no room for God. There were a number of very good answers which countered the challenge with the theory of Intelligent Design and many also referred specifically to the anthropic and aesthetic principles.

5 (a) Explain Freud's challenge to Kant's moral argument for the existence of God. [33]

Few candidates answered this question and of those who did not many had a good understanding of Kant's moral argument and this made it difficult for them to present Freud's challenge to it. Few were able to make the point that, for Kant, God must exist to ensure the exact coincidence of happiness and morality and the attainment of the *summum bonum*. Many simply stated that God is the source of the categorical imperative. Weaker candidates took the opportunity to write all they knew about Freud and ignored the focus of the question, for example, many simply described the Oedipus Complex without demonstrating how Freud's views actually challenge Kant's moral argument.

(b) 'Our sense of moral duty is learnt from our parents, and not from God.' Discuss. [17]

Too many candidates ignored 'and not from God' and concentrated on whether or not 'our sense of moral duty was learnt from our parents' or society. Only the most able candidates were able to relate the question to Kant's view of the origin of moral duty.

6 (a) Explain Augustine's response to the existence of natural evil. [33]

Although a few confused Irenaeus with Augustine, most managed at least the gist of Augustine's argument for the source of evil. There were many detailed and well-written explanations of Augustine's thinking, however, very few specifically addressed the question about natural evil. Some did say that it came about as a result of human/angelic disobedience and that it was a fitting punishment for sin so God was justified in not intervening to stop it, but only a few referred directly to the disharmony with nature that resulted from the Fall.

(b) 'There is no problem of evil because God does not exist.' Discuss. [17]

The majority of candidates were able to evaluate, although sometimes in simple terms the argument that God does not exist because of the problem of evil. Many candidates did not interpret the statement as a reference to the inconsistent triad, but instead as meaning the problem with evil as a general phenomenon. Consequently, many answers were based around evil still being a problem for people whether or not God exists. Some did, however, discuss the theological problem of evil, though not all made the implied connection with the theodicies they had been discussing in part (a).

More able candidates were able to support arguments with reference to Irenaeus, Mill and Hick.

2762/01 Religious Ethics 1 A/S

General Comments

Most candidates were able to complete two full questions in the time allowed. Mistakes in following the rubric were rare. The clarity of expression, structure of answers, and general level of literacy was pleasing.

Most candidates read the questions properly and attempted to answer the question as set. There was, however, a significant number who chose to display the sum total of their knowledge of the topic in general rather than focussing on the specific demands of the question. This was particularly true when discussing voluntary euthanasia, abortion, and Utilitarianism.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part One

1 (a) Explain how moral relativism might be applied to voluntary euthanasia

This was the least popular question. It was generally answered well.

Some candidates just gave a general definition of moral relativism without referring to any specific ethical theories. Better candidates were able to illustrate the principles by referring to Utilitarianism and Situation Ethics etc before moving on to apply them to voluntary euthanasia.

Most responses showed a good understanding of what is meant by 'voluntary euthanasia'

(b) 'Moral relativism is not the best approach to voluntary euthanasia.' Discuss

This was well answered by most candidates.

Better candidates were able to examine the problems involved in voluntary euthanasia in some depth and to see how the relativist/absolutist might approach them.

The question demanded a conclusion which was not always forthcoming.

2 (a) Explain the main differences between Act and Rule Utilitarianism

This was one of the most popular questions and many candidates showed a good knowledge of Utilitarianism.

Frequently candidates saw this as an invitation to just describe the differences between Bentham and Mill. Although this is important to the question, better candidates saw that they needed to explain the significance of 'rule' as opposed to 'act', how it involved the community etc. Strong and weak versions were considered by relatively few.

Weaker candidates tended to state the features of Utilitarianism (including the Hedonic Calculus at some length) rather than explaining the differences.

(b) 'Rule Utilitarianism ignores consequences.' Discuss.

There were some outstanding answers looking at how the 'rules' were developed and the role of weak Rule Utilitarianism.

Many candidates showed their lack of understanding limiting their answers to a general discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of Utilitarianism.

3 (a) Explain objections to abortion in the religious ethics you have studied.

This was a popular question but it was not always well answered.

Too many candidates simply saw the word 'abortion' and demonstrated their knowledge of the subject without focussing on the question.

Many missed the word 'objections' and went through the list of ethical theories in the specification to show how each would presumably respond to the issue of abortion. This used up much precious time in producing irrelevant material.

These shortcomings were to some extent balanced by some excellent responses showing an understanding of ethical theory, the topic of abortion and how the question should be answered.

(b) 'A foetus is a person and should be protected at all costs.' Discuss.

There were some very good and sensitive answers.

'Personhood' was well discussed by many although some just concentrated on when life began.

The rights of the foetus, mother, and father were considered by the better candidates who addressed the point of being protected 'at all costs'

Part Two

4 (a) Explain the Hypothetical and Categorical Imperatives.

This was a popular question that was generally tackled well.

Most candidates were able to differentiate between the two Imperatives. Only a few omitted to explain the Hypothetical Imperative.

Better candidates were able to illustrate the Hypothetical Imperative and to explain the three formulations of the Categorical Imperative. Some candidates were able to give excellent examples for the latter including Kant's own

(b) 'It is always right to do ones duty.' Discuss.

This question produced some very good answers.

There were some interesting discussions on the importance of taking into account different circumstances, the validity of emotion as well as reason, and the whole problem of how you resolve a situation where duties appear to conflict.

The best candidates were able to show how some of the other ethical theories studied were able to challenge Kant's stance.

5 (a) Explain the main features of one absolutist theory of ethics

This question was generally well answered by candidates who were able to give a straightforward explanation of Kant or Natural Law.

A few responses failed to identify a specific absolutist theory instead listing the features of absolutism in general.

Some candidates unfortunately nominated Utilitarianism as their chosen theory demonstrating a lack of understanding of the very basic of terms.

(b) 'Moral absolutism is too rigid.' Discuss.

The candidates who answered part (a) well tended to score highly in this part.

Good candidates were able to compare the need for absolute rules with cultural diversity, differing situations and the consequences of actions

6 (a) Explain how a follower of Natural Law might respond to issues raised by genetic engineering.

This was a popular question that required a greater knowledge of both Natural Law and genetic engineering than many candidates were able to show.

Weaker candidates appeared to have little knowledge of Aquinas, telos, reason, primary and secondary precepts preferring to define natural law as doing what comes naturally.

There were some good examples of knowledge about genetic engineering including stem cell research, germ line therapies, cloning, designer babies and crop modification. Unfortunately a significant number of candidates identified genetic engineering with IVF

(b) 'Genetic engineering is "playing God".' Discuss.

Weaker candidates tended simply to agree with the statement stating that such interference was against God's plan and therefore wrong.

Better candidates were able to see another side to the debate. Some argued that the use of reason to develop new technologies in medicine and agriculture could be within God's the plan.

This question produced several thought provoking answers

2763 Jewish Scriptures 1

General Comments

Questions two and four were the most popular combination. There were very few rubric infringements and most candidates managed to complete the paper within the time limit. Good candidates addressed the questions according to the two assessment objectives and most were careful not to repeat material. There were some excellent responses which quoted the set texts appropriately, made reference to issues of date, authorship, purpose and historicity when relevant and were a pleasure to read. Most candidates seemed to have enjoyed their studies and to have benefited from them.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part 1

- 1 (a) **Explain what G-d required of Adam according to Genesis 1:26-30.** [33]

Some credit was given for the inevitable general story telling about the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve. Better responses tended to focus on the wording of the question and to demonstrate familiarity with the relevant parts of the set text: Genesis 1:26-30 from where G-d says 'Let us make Man in Our image, after Our likeness' on through the details of the blessings and commands.

Good candidates explained the meaning or implication of significant words and phrases and reflected on the role of humankind in fulfilling the will of G-d for Creation.

- (b) **'The agreement between G-d and Adam cannot really be described as a covenant.' Discuss.** [17]

Good discussions began with attempted definitions of types of agreements and explored the set text for evidence of features that might or might not justify describing the passage as a covenant. Some arguments made reference to types of covenant in ANE and others referred to features of subsequent covenants in the Jewish Scriptures. There were some interesting scripts which considered the theology of the writers and compilers whom, they usually argued, intended to portray the covenants and the role of the Jews as part of the development of G-d's master plan for humanity.

- 2 (a) **Explain the main features of the covenants G-d made with Abraham.** [33]

Good responses tended to focus on explaining significant points from the set texts (Genesis 12 and 17), some comparing and contrasting features from the previous covenants. The cutting of the covenant in Genesis 15 is not a set passage but some candidates made use of this and confirmed their excellent level of response. Good candidates tended to be those which explained that the Abrahamic cycle reflects the concern of Biblical source material with the promise of a people and a land and with the covenant of circumcision. Some candidates made reference to types of covenant in ANE or placed the covenants in the context of the purpose and process of the literary compilation of the Jewish scriptures, often commenting that the covenant was now nationalistic and monotheistic, thus setting the scene for the second part of the question.

- (b) **'The covenants with Abraham had more significance for Abraham than for the Jewish people.'** Discuss. [17]

G-d taking the initiative, the role of faith, the promises of land and people and the covenant of circumcision continued to predominate in good responses.

Most discussions tended to continue using points made about the set texts in the first part of the question trying to balance the extent to which the covenants were with an individual but also underlining the significance of Abraham as the founding patriarch of the Jews.

Some candidates successfully developed the discussion to include issues for Jewish people today and included the promise of land as well as of a nation.

- 3 (a) **Explain the differences between the covenants G-d made with Moses and with David.** [33]

Exodus 19-24 and 2 Samuel 7 are the relevant set texts and good candidates showed knowledge and understanding of these whole chapters in their contexts as well as covering the actual covenants. Story telling was inevitable particularly in the case of David where the context of the message via Nathan with the play on the word 'house' is very relevant to the terms of the covenant though some candidates missed this significant aspect of the text. Some candidates successfully considered the similarities between the personal relationship with G-d of both characters and the differences because of the distinctive roles of each of the two men in the corporate political national religion.

- (b) **'The covenants with Moses and with David have nothing in common.'** Discuss. [17]

The best discussions were firmly rooted in the text of the chapters set for study. Responses took a variety of equally acceptable approaches which tended to stem from the differences which the candidates decided to emphasise in part (a).

A few candidates decided ultimately that there is nothing in common between a promise of a physical lineage to a king and that of a law code which endures to this day but most concluded, to a lesser or greater extent, that there is a connection between all the covenants and, therefore, some common themes, in particular the continuity of G-d's faithfulness to his promises.

Some candidates managed to bring the promised land into the equation arguing it was integral to the future hopes of any supporters of the Davidic dynasty.

Part 2

- 4 (a) **Explain what might be described as miraculous in the story of Jonah.** [33]

Good candidates gave some appropriate definition of the word 'miraculous' and a fairly comprehensive selection of examples. Any feature from the story of Jonah was acceptable if the candidate justified its inclusion as 'miraculous'. Weaker candidates tended to concentrate on storms and fish, giving the impression that they had not read the actual set text.

Some good responses came from candidates who attempted to explore the nature of the book of Jonah and the writer's purpose and from others who explained that for Jews all events are miraculous in that they are done by the hand of G-d.

(b) 'The writer of the book of Jonah did not intend the story to be taken literally.'
Discuss. [17]

There were long discussions about being swallowed by fish and the extent to which the book might or might not contain literal fact. Good discussions tended to be those which focussed either on the intentions of the writer or on the literary genre.

Most candidates suggested that the writer seems to be giving messages about the results of disobedience and the inability to hide from G-d or to resist G-d's wishes.

Good responses included the bigger themes which the writer contemplates, namely, suffering, G-d, fate, freewill, justice and mercy as well as the role of the Jews in relation to the Gentile world.

5 (a) Explain the main religious questions raised in Job 1-14 and 42. [33]

Job 1-14 and 42 cover the Prologue, the first round of the debate between Job and his friends and the Epilogue. Any religious questions or issues identified by exegesis from the set passages gained credit.

Good candidates found opportunity to comment on the nature and structure 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 explained that Job's innocent suffering calls into question the whole system of rewards and punishments of the traditional Jewish theodicy as expressed by the 'comforters'.

Some candidates suggested that the book was probably written soon after the Exile to reflect on the sufferings of that time though, in some ways, the theme is universal and timeless. They explained that suffering, especially the suffering of the innocent, presents a challenge to believers. It calls into question the character of G-d and the omnipotence of G-d. Doesn't he care? Can't he do anything to stop suffering?

The epilogue raised a variety of religious questions particularly from those who had not considered the structure of the book. Some ignored the chapter and others were quite incensed at the assumption that more children could replace the original ones.

(b) To what extent do the arguments of the 'comforters' make sense? [17]

The best responses tended to be those in which the arguments demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the first round of arguments offered by Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar with details of what the 'comforters' said. Weaker candidates tended to be hindered in their discussion because they did not know the textual material well enough to discuss the sensible aspects of what the 'comforters' said.

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, though ultimately the 'comforters' were condemned, in fact, Job could be said to have seen some sense in their arguments because he repented of his arrogance and self-righteousness.

6 (a) Describe what happens to Job in the Prologue (chapter 1) and how the situation is resolved in the last chapter. [33]

Some candidates chose this option apparently without realising that they were being given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of the set text. Most managed to list Job's family and assets and the calamities that befell him after the scene in the court in heaven. Good candidates tended to explain the structure of the book and that the prologue and epilogue serve as the framework for the poetic debate which makes up the central part of the book

The main weakness in some explanations was the lack of detail about the Epilogue. Most candidates gave some explanation of the fact that Job was innocent and eventually he learnt that the only response is not to complain but to accept G-d's will. Good candidates explained in more detail that in chapter 42, having glimpsed the majesty of G-d, Job relents whilst Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar are chastised by G-d and told to offer sacrifices. Job intercedes for them. Job's fortunes are restored. His brothers and sisters and former acquaintances feast with him and each gives him a sheep and a gold ring. The happy ever after ending finds Job with more than he had at the beginning. Again he has seven sons and three daughters and no women in all the world were as beautiful as Job's daughters etc.

(b) 'The last chapter of Job makes nonsense of the rest of the book.' Discuss. [17]

Most candidates were of the opinion that the return of equivalent goods and family members was an unsatisfactory ending for a variety of reasons. Good candidates classified the book as wisdom literature (hohma) which explores universal themes and human dilemmas and their arguments revolved around the fact that the ending makes nonsense of the acceptance of his fate that Job seems to have reached.

Good responses discussed types of literary material and surmised about the purpose of the writer and it was a pleasure to see them engaging thoughtfully with the text. Perhaps it is the time of year of the January examinations that inspired one candidate to refer to pantomimes when she was successfully explaining that the writer might have been using a well known traditional story or play, especially considering the scene in the heavenly court which is dramatically envisaged.

2764 New Testament 1

General Comments.

The performance of candidates was slightly better than in some previous January sessions. The candidature covered the whole ability range. Amongst those who achieved the higher levels there was evidence of thoughtful consideration of the topics with good evaluative arguments of different points of view. The majority of candidates were able to focus on the topic of the question and demonstrated some understanding of the issues and made an attempt to sustain and justify their arguments with evidence from the text or other sources. The weakest candidates often failed to focus on the question and wrote generally around the topic or were weak on knowledge. Most candidates used the time allocation well, commensurate with their ability. There were no rubric errors or obvious misunderstanding of questions.

1 (a) Describe and explain what happened when Paul and Barnabas visited Iconium. [33]

(b) 'The Jews were right to be angry with Paul.' Discuss. [17]

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

2 (a) 'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles.' Acts13: 47

Explain why Paul described himself as an apostle to the gentiles. [33]

There were some good answers to this question which focussed on Paul's strategy of approaching the Jews through teaching in the synagogues and gave details of the record in Acts of his rejection by the Jews and his declaration of the mission to the Gentiles. Some candidates also brought in material from Galatians 2. However, some weaker answers concentrated solely on why Paul called himself an 'apostle' and ignored the expected focus on gentiles.

(b) The purpose of Acts was to show Christianity as a religion for gentiles only. Discuss. [17]

Most candidates were able to sustain an argument about the universal purpose of Acts and present evidence to justify one or different viewpoints. The best argued that in Acts Paul's mission is presented as inclusive but certain audiences excluded themselves.

3 (a) Describe and explain the events which led to the Jews attacking Paul in front of Gallio. [33]

(b) 'The author of Acts made Christianity respectable by criticising the Jews.' Discuss. [17]

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

4 (a) Describe and explain Paul's meeting with the twelve disciples at Ephesus. [33]

(b) 'Paul's teaching showed a new understanding of baptism.' Discuss. [17]

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

5 (a) Describe and explain how Paul changed his speeches to suit his audience in Antioch and Athens. [33]

This was **satisfactorily** answered by the majority of those who chose it. The best answers described and explained the main features of both speeches and showed understanding of the contrast in style and content.

(b) To what extent are the speeches in Acts historically accurate? [17]

Most candidates gave a thoughtful response to this question. The purposes of the author of Acts were evaluated and issues of historical fact and theological purpose were argued with varying degrees of success.

6 (a) Explain how, in Galatians 2, Paul dealt with challenges to his mission. [33]

(b) 'Paul's attitude to the Law in Galatians 2 was an important development in his theology.' Discuss. [17]

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

7 (a) From John's gospel, explain the main features of Peter's denial of Jesus. [33]

The main weakness in answering this question was that many candidates referred to details from Mark's gospel and had only a sketchy knowledge of the account in John, if any. Candidates were able to gain credit for common features in the two accounts but only a few candidates gained the higher levels of marks. Some candidates began promisingly with accurate detail from John of Peter's entrance to the courtyard at the insistence of the 'one who Jesus loved' but then reverted to Mark's gospel or a popular media version of the event. The most common mistakes were in the sequence of questioning (and the omitting of the relative of the man who had his ear cut off) and the crowing of the cock, mostly inaccurate or invention. Many also added the details of Peter's despair, from Mark.

(b) 'In John's gospel, Peter is a weak disciple.' Discuss. [17]

Generally, this was well answered and the majority of candidates argued in an interesting and varied way about the attributes and actions of Peter.

8 (a) Explain the significance of the anointing at Bethany and the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. (Mark 14:1-10.) [33]

Candidates mostly answered this question giving equal weight to the details of the anointing at the house of Simon the Leper and the manner and method of Judas' betrayal. The majority of answers were satisfactory to very good. There were few weak answers.

(b) 'Jesus' disciples did not understand his purpose.' Discuss. [17]

Most answers were satisfactory and offered opinions in support of the statement from evidence that Jesus' had to explain his purpose and destiny to the disciples, as shown in the set texts. The best answers also argued a balanced view that either the disciples were fulfilling pre-destined roles or Jesus' purpose became clear to them after the resurrection.

9 (a) Compare the accounts of the crucifixion in Mark and John. [33]

This was the most popular question in Part 1 and the best-answered question on the whole paper.

A significant number of candidates gained the higher levels of marks for both parts of the question.

The contrasts in style and content of the two crucifixion accounts were known and understood.

(b) 'Mark's account of the crucifixion is more historically accurate than John's.' Discuss. [17]

Answers were mostly good attempts to balance the concept of historical accuracy in the context of the crucifixion and the theological purposes of the evangelists. Some candidates, however, did not perform as well on this part of the question as on part (a) and there were some sketchy attempts to argue only one point of view, mainly that the priority of Mark meant greater accuracy, without offering evidence in support of their views.

10 (a) Describe the Roman trial in John's gospel and explain its significance. [33]

This was the most popular question in parts 2. Good answers were able to describe most of what happened in the long passage in John 18:28-40 and explain the religious and political significance of the events. The best answers clearly explained the relationship between Caesar and the Jews and the significance of the exchanges between Caesar and Jesus. There was generally a good performance on this question.

(b) 'In John's gospel, the Jews are responsible for the death of Jesus.' Discuss. [17]

The majority of responses to this question were thoughtful evaluations of John's narrative and the intention of the author to absolve the Romans of blame for the death of Jesus. The best answers, whilst acknowledging John's negative portrayal of the Jews also considered the nature of Roman rule and other evidence/views of the character of Caesar. There were some weak answers but these were usually from candidates who were also weak in other areas of the examination.

11 (a) Describe the Jewish trial in Mark's gospel and explain its significance. [33]

This was the least popular question in this section. Although some of the facts, as recorded in the prescribed text, were known there were only a few detailed and accurate accounts of the Jewish trial in Mark. However, most answers, although lacking in detail attempted to explain something of the significance of the trial and the charge of blasphemy.

(b) 'Mark's account of the Jewish trial is not historically accurate.' Discuss [17]

Most answers concentrated on the issues of the legality of a trial by the Sanhedrin at night. Some candidates were aware of sources and views of scholars that challenge the historicity of the trial. However, most responses were sketchy and lacked the cohesion of sustained arguments or justified viewpoints.

12 (a) Explain the significant features of the resurrection narrative in Mark 16:1-13. [33]

There was a very mixed level of achievement in the responses to this question. Some candidates answered only on Mark: 1-8 and stopped at the flight of the women, ignoring the instruction Mark 16:1-13 in the question. There were some accurate and detailed accounts which stopped at verse 11. Examiners noted for future reference that candidates might be better helped by references to the Shorter and Longer Endings of Mark rather than just the verses. In weak answers the most common mistake was to confuse the account in Mark with the one in John.

(b) 'Mark's account of the empty tomb is too brief to be important (Mark 16:1-8).' Discuss.[17]

Most answers concentrated on issues of authorship and theories of authenticity and/or the intended drama of a brief ending. Some of the better responses also had an understanding of views on

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Mark's circumstances and the reasons for an original unfinished ending or whether the intended audience needed further explanation. A few analysed the theological importance of the passage. There were only a few weak answers and these mostly repeated information from (a).

2765 Developments in Christian Thought

General Comments:

Most candidates had a reasonable understanding of the topics and where they fared less well this was usually due to lack of technical terms and detailed examples. All the questions were tackled but the popular ones were Question 1 on Liberal Feminism and Question 6 on the purpose of Liberation Theology.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

- 1a Explain the message of liberal Feminist Theology.**
- Good candidates were able to state that the message of Liberal Feminist Theology is one of equality between men and women and they were able to provide Biblical examples to support this. More able candidates were able to show how liberals have developed the tools for Biblical interpretation to achieve this conclusion. It was encouraging that most candidates focussed on the theological issues and not on simply secular feminism.
- 1b 'Liberal Feminist Theology tackles the problem of sexism well.' Discuss.**
- This question sorted out the good candidates. They were able to explore other types of feminist theologies by way of analysis.
- 2a Explain Aquinas' view of the function of marriage.**
- Most candidates understood Aquinas' biology and notion of women as mothers. More able candidates related this to his use of Aristotle and were able to look at marriage in terms of first/final cause and headship.
- 2b 'Marriage makes the woman the possession of her husband.' Discuss.**
- The question didn't ask for a theological response but most looked at it in religious terms. Very few considered more radical feminist responses which do see marriage (especially religious marriage) in terms of property transaction and ownership.
- 3a Explain the arguments for and against women becoming ministers/priests in the Church.**
- There were some good answers here which set out the Biblical and non-Biblical reasons for ordination of women. Very few tackled the problem of women's bodies in terms of representing Christ at the Eucharist.
- 3b Assess the view that women should become ministers but not Church leaders.**
- Those who fared less well on this question were not clear what minister meant, but most understood the question to be looking at the role of women in senior positions of the Church. Most argued that if the principle of priesthood/minister is accepted then preferment is a logical necessity.
- 4a Explain the practical and theological purposes of base communities.**
- Those who answered well on this question were able to give a brief historical resume why and how base communities came into being. They went on to show how the three mediations undergirds the theological purpose of these communities. Very few related

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the theology of CEBs to a more radical notion of a 'popular' Church.

4b 'Base communities give too much power to the people.' Discuss.

Pleasingly many were able to recount the friction caused by CEBs and the Catholic hierarchy. Ratzinger made his usual appearance (although there is no necessity to point out that he is now Pope).

5a Explain the use of Marxism by Liberation Theologians as a tool for social analysis.

Only a few tackled this question. There were some reasonable answers and those who looked at the socio-analytic mediation were able to view Marxism as a tool not a guide. Very few referred to the impact of Marx on notions such as reversal and alienation.

5b 'Without Marxism, Liberation Theologians would have nothing to say.' Discuss.

Most disagreed with the question and considered that Liberation Theology is sufficiently grounded in the Bible not to need Marx.

6a Explain the purpose of Liberation Theology.

This was a popular question and allowed candidates to show off what they knew. Good candidates did just this with a few excellent responses, but others were too general and failed to plan their answers enough to cover the ground (which they could have done by looking at questions 4 and 5).

6b 'Liberation Theology is the most important development in theology of the 20th Century.' Discuss.

Good answers referred to the developments of other liberative theologies (feminism/Asian etc). Those good answers who referred to Black Theology noted that in fact this movement had begun independently from Latin America. Most thought that its concern for the poor and focus on justice did make Liberation Theology a very important development in 20th Century theology.

2766: Eastern Religions

General Comments:

Although there were some very good responses, many responses were inaccurate or demonstrated a superficial understanding of the material.

In many responses candidates had some knowledge of the topic, but tended to write all they knew about the topic without addressing the question. More responses than usual were descriptive, without including explanation.

In too many cases key terms were not known, for example anicca was often misrepresented as anatta by candidates.

Most candidates performed significantly better on one question, and Centres may wish to remind candidates that adequate study of the whole specification is required.

Most candidates performed better in part (a) of each question than part (b), though there were exceptions. Centres may wish to consider what additional preparation they can offer candidates to help them address part (b) with more success.

There were more Buddhism responses than Hinduism in this session.

Alternative A – Buddhism

Part 1

- 1 (a) **Explain how the story of the Buddha might support Buddhists in their lives.** [33]

Most responses tended to provide accounts of the life of the Buddha, with short, superficial comments at the very end of their response. These were often limited to statements that the Buddha was a role model, or provided inspiration.

The best responses tended to take incidents from the accounts of the life of the Buddha, and show explicitly how these might provide inspiration, guidance, or an example to follow.

- (b) **'A Buddhist must have faith in the Buddha.' Discuss.** [17]

Many candidates were unable to see any potential benefits of faith in this context, so offered very one-sided arguments.

Conversely the weakest responses tended to state that as the Buddha was the leader of Buddhism, Buddhists must have faith in him, but offered little evidence to support this view.

The best responses were able to discuss the possible need for some forms of faith at the early stages of the Buddhist path, whilst recognising that blind faith was not required and could be a hindrance.

- 2 (a) **Explain how a Buddhist might follow the Triple Refuge in their daily lives.** [33]

Many responses provided descriptive accounts of the Three Refuges, with limited or superficial references showing how they might be followed in daily lives.

Most candidates were able to make some comment about following the dhamma, but were usually unable to support this with specific examples.

Some candidates referred to the Buddha as a role model, but did not then show how this might affect daily life, for example with the practice of meditation.

Better responses often focused on the sangha, showing with clear example how daily life would be affected by joining or supporting the monastic sangha.

- (b) **'There is no point taking refuge in the Buddha unless you take refuge in the dhamma.'** Discuss. [17]

Many candidates seemed to address this question as though it was asking which refuge was of the most importance. Whilst some of these responses may have implicitly addressed issues related to the question, they did not address the specific issues raised adequately.

Centres may wish to remind candidates to answer the question set, rather than reproduce answers from practice papers used in school.

The best responses tended to argue that the Buddha and dhamma although linked could be separated, and that some lay Buddhists may take refuge in just the Buddha, relying on the monastic sangha to interpret the dhamma. They also tended to argue that the dhamma, as eternal truth, was necessary to make progress along the path, and thus both were necessary at higher levels.

- 3 (a) **Explain the importance of the monastic sangha.** [33]

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

- (b) **'The strict rules of the monastic sangha ensure that monks will always achieve nibbana.'** Discuss. [17]

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

Part 2

- 4 (a) **Explain the relationship between greed and nibbana.** [33]

This question tended to elicit either strong or weak responses.

Weaker responses tended to state there was no relationship between the two, or described nibbana in superficial way but showed little understanding of the concept of greed.

Better responses tended to explore the role of tanha within the wheel of dependent origination, and explored how tanha either drove the wheel of samsara or was overcome leading to nibbana.

A few responses made appropriate links to anicca and anatta, showing how greed may prevent us from accepting these concepts, and thus prevent attainment of nibbana.

(b) 'Nibbana is the same as life after death.' Discuss. [17]

Some candidates appeared to have limited understanding of the concept of nibbana, and thus found it hard to address the question.

Some candidates were able to argue effectively that since nibbana occurs during life it cannot be considered life after death. The best responses then discussed whether parinibbana might however be considered life after death, with a variety of conclusions.

Most candidates offered rebirth within samsara as a more suitable alternative for life after death than nibbana.

5 (a) Explain the importance of dependent origination for Buddhists. [33]

Some very weak responses had no understanding of dependant origination at all, and were unable to address the question satisfactorily.

Many candidates outlined dependent origination with some clarity, but offered little exploration of its importance.

The best responses focused on the importance of dependent origination, sometimes using the images from the Tibetan Wheel of Life to explain what the cycle teaches Buddhists about samsara, and how understanding and breaking the cycle can lead to nibbana.

(b) 'The teaching of dependent origination means that you have no free will.' Discuss. [17]

This question was generally answered poorly. Most candidates had little awareness of the issues raised for belief in free-will by the cycle of dependent origination.

Better responses were able to argue that the cycle seems to limit free-will, particularly in terms of the realm you have been reborn in this lifetime, but in fact does leave room for free-will since otherwise the cycle could not be broken.

6 (a) Explain the importance of anicca for Buddhists. [33]

A surprisingly high minority of candidates wrote about anatta rather than anicca, and thus limited the marks available to them.

Most candidates were able to offer some explanation of the concept of anicca, but fewer were aware of the subtleties of the concept.

Some candidates offered superficial reasons for the importance of anicca, for example statements that if we understood it we would suffer less.

The best responses offered detailed and supported reasons for the importance of anicca, usually focused on the avoidance of attachment, and thus prevention of greed.

- (b) **'Anicca and anatta are really the same thing.' Discuss.** [17]

Most candidates were able to argue that anatta is anicca applied to a person, with reasonable evidence to support their view.

The best responses explored similarities and differences between the two views before reaching a conclusion.

Alternative B – Hinduism

Part 1

- 7 (a) **Explain the relationship between the One and the Many in the teachings of Sankara.** [33]

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

- (b) **'Sankara was a monotheist not a monist.' Discuss.** [17]

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

- 8 (a) **Explain the importance of Kali for Hindus.** [33]

Most candidates gave descriptive accounts of Kali's characteristics, or some of the stories associated with her, with limited reference to her importance.

Better responses linked Kali's characteristics with ways in which she might be seen as important, for example her perceived strength and the offering of protection to her worshippers.

- (b) **'Kali is a destructive deity.' Discuss.** [17]

Weaker candidates tended to agree with the statement, offering limited evidence in support.

The best answers tended to argue that the destructive aspects of Kali were purposeful, and thus the statement was correct but over simplistic.

- 9 (a) **Explain the importance of female deities in Hinduism.** [33]

Many candidates gave descriptive accounts of particular female deities, with little reference to their importance.

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The best responses explored the way in which female deities act as a support for the male deities, and explored the nature of Shakti.

A few candidates made good use of particular female deities, to provide clear examples demonstrating their importance.

(b) 'In Hinduism female deities are more important than male deities.' Discuss.[17]

Most candidates made statements against the claim, but offered little evidence to support their view.

Better responses referred to the importance of Shakti as a balance for male power, or made reference to the fact that the trimurti were all male, before reaching a conclusion.

Part 2

- 10 (a) Explain the similarities between the concepts of rta and dharma. [33]**

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

- (b) 'The teachings of the Vedas are of no importance to Hindus today.' Discuss. [17]**

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

- 11 (a) Explain the relationship between atman and Brahman. [33]**

Many candidates failed to explore the concept of both atman and Brahman in any depth.

Most candidates referred to the views of Sankara and/or Ramanuja, though the views of these thinkers were often misrepresented or confused.

The best candidates were aware that different Hindu traditions see the relationship between atman and Brahman differently, and were able to demonstrate this with accurate references to particular views.

- (b) 'An Atman has no connection with the body that houses it.' Discuss. [17]**

This question was generally answered poorly.

Most candidates did not have a secure enough understanding of the nature of atman to offer meaningful discussion of the issues raised.

Centres may wish to ensure candidates have a good understanding of the nature of atman in the different Hindu traditions studied within the specification.

- 12 (a) Explain the Hindu concept of samsara. [33]**

Most candidates offered a clear explanation of the system of samsara.

Many were able to explore the operation of karma within the system, and made references to the importance of moksha.

The best responses tended to explore the different paths which could be followed to achieve moksha, and how they might affect the interpretation of samsara.

- (b) 'The Hindu belief in samsara means that everyone is born into the life they deserve.' Discuss. [17]**

Most candidates argued that through the operation of karma the statement must be true.

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The best responses explored how this view might affect attitudes towards others, and the perceived injustices this might lead to, before reaching their conclusion.

2767/01 Islam 1

General Comments

Many candidates had prepared well for this examination and a wide range of ability was represented. All six questions elicited the full range of responses. In a few instances, candidates simply spent too long on the first essay.

In Part 1, the first two questions were the most popular and in Part 2 the majority of candidates chose question 5. The quality of English used by some candidates was poor but very few seemed to have difficulty in understanding the questions.

Candidates continue to show a gradual improvement in addressing AO2 but quite a few scripts demonstrated a lack of basic knowledge, not only about the topics on the specification but about Islam in general. Performance on the whole was slightly poorer than last year and that some of the responses were barely of a GCSE standard.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part 1

1 (a) Explain the role and importance of the Qur'an in the lives of Muslims. [33]

Most candidates began by describing how Muhammad ﷺ received the revelations from 610 CE till 632 CE and some made reference to the subsequent collection and compilation of the Qur'an. Many gave practical examples of the use of and the respect towards the Qur'an in daily life and worship as well as explaining its status of absolute authority in matters of law and theology for Muslims of all persuasions.

In competent responses, the explanation of the role of the Qur'an and its importance in all facets of individual and community life and worship tended to be linked with the message it contains about Allah, the last judgement and the straight path to paradise. Good candidates also explained that the authority is not just of Muhammad ﷺ the last prophet but of the very words of Allah.

Good responses addressed both role and importance and demonstrated sensitive understanding of the significance of the Qur'an for Muslims and wrote not simply in terms of a revealed book but of the Qur'an as the eternal revelation which previously was corrupted but is now in its final form.

Some candidates structured their responses to address role and importance separately whilst others, equally successfully, considered the two aspects together, usually explaining ways in which role and importance overlap and interact.

- (b) **'It is possible to pay too much attention to a holy book.'** Discuss with reference to Islam. [17]

Some candidates considered the role of sacred writings in the context of religion in general before turning the focus of the discussion on to Islam whilst other candidates continued straight on from their explanation in part (a) of the role and authority of the Qur'an. Both approaches were acceptable.

Good discussions tended to be those which considered the issue of authority in religions and the reasons why a believer might pay attention to a holy book but there was a variety of approaches to the issue. Some candidates simply argued that it is impossible to pay too much attention to a revealed text whilst others attempted to define 'too much attention' with practical examples of taking texts literally and out of context, thus contravening the principles of the religion. Some made a case that the inimitability of the Arabic text is considered to be proof of divine authorship. Others distinguished between the Qura'n and collections of ahadith, discussing the relative status of the latter or of various collections.

Good responses tended to focus on what might constitute 'too much attention' in the context of Islam, eg suggesting situations which might verge on shirk.

- 2 (a) **Explain the difference between Greater and Lesser Jihad.** [33]

Candidates usually began with a definition of Jihad as, eg 'striving' or 'trying one's utmost' to defend the faith against enemies of Islam and to gain Allah's favour.

Most explained that Jihad may involve physical battles and identified this as 'Lesser Jihad'. The better candidates itemised the criteria that such a Jihad must meet and went on to explain that 'Greater Jihad' covers more spiritual endeavours such as struggling against evil in oneself and they itemised the kind of behaviour this entailed. Curiously, there seemed to be more reference than usual to protecting the environment and obeying parents. Some candidates wrote about Jihad at the time of Muhammad and to events in later Islamic history.

Good responses tended to demonstrate some understanding of Jihad as part of the larger theological concept of living in submission and spiritually striving to preserve the Muslim way of life to establish peace, justice, the rule of Allah and the will of Allah for creation.

- (b) **'Islam would be better off without Jihad.'** Discuss. [17]

There were some interesting discussions exploring the possible points of view of Muslims of different persuasions and often some consideration of the perceptions of non-Muslims as well as a variety of interpretations of the phrase 'better off'. To further their arguments, most candidates built on the distinction between different kinds of Jihad which they had made in part (a).

Good responses tended to reflect the understanding that Jihad is the end result of the Five Pillars and is part of the ethics of a lifestyle following Muhammad in good conduct and the struggle against evil and that for some Muslims this entails fighting and martyrdom to defend the faith.

3 (a) Explain how the architecture and design of a mosque show Muslim beliefs about Allah and worship. [33]

Most candidates began by identifying the mosque as the place of prostration. Candidates were free to make reference to purpose built mosques with domes and minarets or to converted houses in non-Muslim countries or to both. Some candidates considered architecture and design separately but in most scripts explanations of the two aspects overlapped.

Good candidates tended to give comprehensive descriptions whilst addressing the question by placing the emphasis on explaining the features which reflect beliefs about Allah and worship. Eg the significance of the qiblah indicated by the mihrab and of the features which are essential for Muslim beliefs about purification and prayer. Good candidates usually took the opportunity to explain calligraphy, lack of images etc. in relationship to monotheistic worship.

(b) 'The mosque is central to all aspects of Muslim life.' Discuss. [17]

Candidates were free to concentrate on one case study or compare several mosques or respond in general terms. Examples of mosques from any country could be used in discussions.

Some candidates began by emphasising that Muslims can pray anywhere. Most scripts contained some examples that demonstrated the importance of the mosque in community worship and activities. The main weakness was that some candidates' answers were too superficial and resembled rather weak GCSE responses.

Good candidates tended to concentrate on the issue of the centrality and tried to draw conclusions about the centrality of the mosque to all aspects of Muslim life and many discussions used arguments that reflected an accurate and balanced picture of Muslim beliefs and practice.

Some responses commented on the unity in Islam of all aspects of religious worship and everyday living; all being equally part of submission to Allah and, therefore, none being more important than another factor in the religion prescribed by Allah. Other candidates concluded that Allah is central, not the mosque.

Part 2

4 (a) Explain the religious ideas in Surah 1. [33]

Surah 1 is a set text in the specification and many candidates used the opportunity to show knowledge of the wording of the opening chapter, al- Fatihah, of the Qur'an. Any version or paraphrase of the seven ayat was acceptable. Some candidates explained that Surah 1 is regarded as the perfect prayer and is said to contain the essence of the Qur'an's religious ideas. A few candidates spent too long describing how Muhammad ﷺ received the Surahs and seemed to confuse Surahs 1 and 96.

Good responses included careful explanations of the basic Qur'anic Islamic religious ideas from Surah 1 such as: one God, Creator and Sustainer; the final Judgement, Hell, Paradise, grace and mercy. Good candidates tended to place these religious beliefs in the context of the theme of Surah 1, the obligation to monotheism and moral behaviour which is the straight way of Islam, achievable under God's guidance.

(b) 'Surah 1 is more concerned with religious beliefs than with religious practices.' Discuss. [17]

Most candidates pointed out that Surah 1 does not contain the Five Pillars which are key religious practices in Islam. They tended to refer back to the religious beliefs in Surah 1 which they had written about in part (a) and then tried to come to a conclusion. Some argued that you have to find the way before you can walk in it whilst others wrote that religious beliefs and religious practices belong together and are like two sides of a coin, a unity and equally important.

Some good theological discussions came from those who developed their exposition of the text to demonstrate that the theme of the Opening is that the believers will be guided to and led in the straight way by the grace of Allah. Some candidates concluded, therefore, that there is one over-riding concern in Surah 1 beyond either beliefs or practices and that is praise to Allah.

5 (a) Explain how zakah strengthens Ummah. [33]

This was the most popular question and the full range of responses were evident. Some candidates answered the question they wanted to see rather than the one on the paper. Weaker candidates explained both zakah and Ummah but addressed the actual question in a very superficial manner without demonstrating understanding that zakah is neither charity nor a tax but one of the basic economic principles in a Muslim state for social welfare and fair distribution of wealth. A large proportion of the scripts showed confusion between zakah and sadaqah.

Good responses directed information about the pillar towards explaining its value in strengthening Ummah not merely in practical provision but also in contributing towards spiritual unity and cohesive communal solidarity.

(b) 'Helping others is the most important part of living as a Muslim.' Discuss. [17]

Some candidates continued directly from the explanation of zakah in the context of Ummah and wrote well about Muslims as individuals and as a worldwide community regarding themselves as trustees because all wealth belongs to Allah. One or two argued that being helped is as important as helping because the collection and distribution of zakah might strengthen both the giver and the recipient.

Most candidates felt that helping others is a good idea and provided reasons which were applicable to most religions and human groups as well as to Muslims.

Good discussions showed awareness that, zakah, like all of the Five Pillars, is an act of ibadah, worship and obedience. Many candidates contrasted the greed of western society with Islamic economic principles.

When considering 'the most important part', candidates were free to prioritise the relative virtues of any aspect of Muslim belief or practice in their arguments but most opted for the unity and importance of all parts of Islam.

6 (a) Explain how Salat-ul-Jumu'ah might strengthen Ummah. [33]

Some candidates addressed the question by explaining how the preparations for salah and the prayer movements strengthen Ummah but good responses tended to be those which concentrated on the distinctive features of Salat-ul-Jumu'ah.

Good responses usually included competent descriptions of worship in the mosque on Friday when Muslims gather in obedience to the Qur'an for Zuhr prayers and the Imam leads the congregation in the first two rakahs and preaches the khutbah. Good candidates explained how each factor, through to the discussion afterwards, has the potential to strengthen Ummah within the local community. Some made reference to the women not being obliged to attend the mosque but also feeling part of the community at prayer.

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

Discussions tended to develop from points made in the first part of the question and good candidates were obviously making an effort to use general points about salah effectively without undue repetition.

Some candidates included private worship in the home as well as public worship in the mosque to explore the question.

Good candidates tried to balance the evidence and their arguments reflected accurate knowledge and sensitive understanding of the relationship of the individual and the community in Islam.

2768 Judaism 1

General Comments:

The overall standard of entry of this unit was pleasingly high, despite the relatively small number of entries. The questions were well answered, and there was a good spread of response, with no question tending to dominate in the candidates choice. The questions provoked an interesting range of response and allowed all candidates equal opportunity to respond irrespective of religion or depth of commitment. The quality of evaluative response has improved with many more candidates demonstrating an ability to maintain the tension of an argument throughout the response. The overall maturity of response may be as a result of the nature of the profile of candidates who sit the January paper – a lot of the entries are obviously resits who write with the extra maturity that one comes to expect.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- | Question No. | | |
|--------------|--|-------------|
| 1a. | Explain what is meant by Law in Judaism. | [33] |
| | This was on the whole a well answered question. Many candidates did refer to the revelation on Mount. Sinai and the importance that this brought to the perspective of the Law from a Jewish viewpoint. The very best responses did examine the perspective of the law from different viewpoints eg. Orthodox, Reform and Progressive. | |
| 1b. | ‘Observance of the Law is an important aspect of Jewish identity.’ Discuss. | |
| | There were some very well argued essays, and several candidates managed to write in some depth yet maintained a conciseness that was refreshing. Good responses included the argument between cultural Judaism and strict adherence to Halakhah. | |
| 2a. | Explain the origins and practice of the Sabbath (Shabbat). | |
| | A straightforward question that allowed candidates good opportunity to display their knowledge of the customs of Shabbat. Many candidates included Havdalah as being an integral aspect of Shabbat. | |
| 2b. | ‘Without the Sabbath (Shabbat) there would be no Judaism.’ Discuss. | |
| | This was a more challenging question which evinced some good arguments. | |
| 3a. | Explain the origins and purpose of kashrut. | |
| | It was gratifying to note that a greater number of candidates included details of kashrut regarding money and clothing as well as food. This was generally a very popular question. | |
| 3b. | ‘The observance of kashrut separates Jews from the rest of society.’ Discuss. | |
| | A well answered question and one which had obviously been the subject of discussion as part of the preparation for the examination. It was very pleasing to read so many | |

interesting responses, in particular from candidates whose own religious affiliation was obviously non Jewish.

4a. Explain the origins and importance for Jews of the Pilgrim Festivals.

This was a very straightforward question which allowed most candidates the chance to produce a very thorough review of all the festivals, with a high standard of knowledge about the origin of the customs of each one.

4b. 'All the Pilgrim Festivals are equally important.' Discuss.

This was a very well answered question. The arguments tended to centre on the classic evidence of the importance of Shavuot as being the time of the giving of the Torah, from which all the other festivals emanated..

5a. Explain the observance of Yom Kippur.

The depth of response for this question tended to reflect the depth of religious commitment of the candidates. Such details as Kaparot whilst valid, were in the main confined to a small group of very religious candidates. On the whole the responses were satisfactory.

5b. 'Fasting is the least important aspect of Yom Kippur.' Discuss.

This was the weakest question in terms of quality of response, and many candidates struggled to evaluate sufficiently. However there were several good attempts which tended to reflect the argument between ethical as opposed to monotheistic Judaism.

6a. Explain the importance for Jews of synagogue worship.

This was a very well answered question. Many candidates stressed the importance of fellowship, and the opportunities that synagogue presented. The sociological importance of the synagogue was also stressed by many candidates. The best responses referred to Temple worship as being the foundation for the establishment of the synagogue.

6b. 'Every Jew should attend weekday worship.' Discuss.

On the whole this was a well answered question covering the usual responses.

2769/01 Philosophy of Religion 2

General Comments

It is difficult to make too many general statements as the entry for this module in January is quite low. Most candidates performed reasonably well or better. There was evidence of sound knowledge and understanding in most scripts, though some candidates' answers showed a lack of thorough revision or were inaccurate in their knowledge of the scholars specified. Question 2 was particularly popular; questions 3 and 6 were the least popular options. Most candidates displayed an efficient use of time and made a good attempt at both questions. Some candidates were either inefficient in their use of time or misunderstood the rubric of the examination. As a result, they lost marks unnecessarily. Some candidates failed to respond to the trigger words and included assessment in part (a).

Comments on individual questions

Part 1

1 (a) Explain Dawkins' criticisms of the view that human beings have a soul

This was generally well answered although some candidates failed to recognize the need for detailed knowledge of Dawkins' views and answered in a general way. Most knew about Dawkins brand of hard materialism. The better candidates often had good quotations to back up what they wrote. Some candidates wrote general answers giving a range of views including Dawkins. Although they were not penalised for this approach, it constituted poor use of time and may have affected their performance on the paper as a whole.

(b) 'Belief in a soul is unscientific and therefore false.' Discuss.

Almost all candidates were able to argue a position in response to this statement. Many picked up on the wording of the question and challenged the premise that the unscientific nature of the soul meant that it had to be false. There were some good discussions of the nature of faith.

2 (a) Explain the arguments for and against life after death

This was a very popular question and generally well done. Better candidates were able to give a balanced answer and present a range of material. Other candidates chose to describe beliefs about life after death without explaining how these beliefs supported the concept of life after death, they were less successful as a result. Some answers were unbalanced and there was a tendency amongst some candidates to engage in discussion of the arguments.

(b) 'Life after death requires the existence of God.' Discuss.

Some candidates found part b more challenging, but generally there was recognition of the difference between theistic and non-theistic religions. It was pleasing to see a wide variety of material from Hinduism, Buddhism, the Bible and the works of Plato offered in support of arguments.

3 (a) Explain different views on how to define 'miracle.'

(b) 'Miracles encourage belief in an unjust God.' Discuss.

Very few candidates attempted this question. Those who did attempt it seemed to struggle on both parts of the question.

Part 2

4 (a) Explain different ways in which God might be said to be revealed.

This question was slightly more popular than question 5. Almost all candidates showed at least a satisfactory grasp of the topic. The better candidates sought to answer the question in detail and cited a range of different modes of revelation including religious experience, miracles and scripture. Some candidates did not pick up on the plural in the question and chose to focus on one area such as religious experience or miracles. This meant that they probably did not do themselves justice. Most candidates did not show evidence of knowledge of the inspiration of sacred texts.

(b) 'Revelation is the ultimate guide to truth about God.' Discuss.

Candidates generally failed to get to grips with this question. There were some attempts at an analysis of miracles or religious experiences which were credited accordingly but general discussion of the concept of revelation did not take place and this meant that most candidates who attempted the question scored higher on part (a) than on (b)

5 (a) Explain how the falsification principle may challenge religious belief

Responses to this question were quite polarised. Better candidates had a very clear understanding of falsification and were able to explain and apply Flew's ideas to the topic. Weaker candidates tended to be confused by the difference between falsification and verification. In other cases the second half of the question was not really tackled. Some candidates wrote general religious language answers that were often confused in places.

(b) 'Verification is meaningful, falsification is not.' Discuss.

Again candidates either did quite well on this question or really struggled. As in part (a) some candidates wrote general answers that covered a variety of approaches to religious language, often with inaccuracies. These attempts to construct arguments were hampered by the fact that the candidates seemed to be struggling with the topic as a whole.

6 (a) Explain what is meant by a numinous experience

(b) Assess the view that religious experiences are purely psychological events

Very few candidates attempted this question; those who did performed reasonably. Part (b) tended to be handled better than part (a).

2770/01 Religious Ethics 2

General Comments

Overall, candidates' performance varied considerably. Some centres performed very well on the whole whilst some candidates seemed thoroughly under-prepared. Some candidates were exceptionally weak. On the whole candidates answered a range of questions although favouring questions 1, 3 and 4. There were a large number of excellent answers especially to the question on conscience. It was obvious that candidates had a very clear understanding of this topic and almost all candidates who attempted this question could explain the different ideas in great detail. However, when attempting the questions with a less specific requirement many candidates did not go into any great detail and talked too often in general terms. This was especially the case in questions 2a, 5a and 6a.

Comments on individual questions

1 (a) **Explain a 'soft' determinist view of human responsibility. [33]**

Many candidates answered this question well showing how the idea of soft determinism is linked to human responsibility. Good candidates compared these ideas to hard determinism and free will. Some very good answers gave clear examples to support each point made. However, some answers did not make a link between soft determinism and human responsibility.

(b) **'Soft determinism is no challenge to free will.' Discuss. [17]**

Most answers failed to show how soft determinism challenged/ did not challenge free will, but most did clearly demonstrate the significant differences between the two ideas.

2 (a) **Explain how Kant's theory of ethics might be applied to sex and relationships. [33]**

Most candidates explained Kant's theory very clearly but when applying it to issues surrounding sex and relationships tended to stick to very general or vague examples rather than giving specific examples to support each point made in the answer. Answers that did give specific examples tended to attract more marks.

(b) **'Kant's theory of duty is weak when applied to human relationships.' Discuss. [17]**

Most candidates just outlined the strengths and weaknesses of Kant's ideas rather than applying these criticisms to human relationships.

3 (a) **Explain the nature and role of the conscience. [33]**

Most answers to this question were excellent. Candidates gave clear and detailed answers showing a variety of theories. Almost all included Aquinas, Butler and Freud and most went on to explain Newman, Fromm, Thoreau and Piaget as well.

(b) **'Conscience is irrelevant when making moral decisions.' Discuss. [17]**

Almost all answers showed two or more different views about the relevance of the conscience when making moral decisions.

4 (a) **Explain how war can be considered 'just'. [33]**

The vast majority of candidates explained the just war theory but not in any great detail. A few, but not many, did explain the Augustinian origins, modern formulations and the ideas of *Jus ad bellum* and *Jus in bello*. Some gave appropriate examples to support their answers.

(b) **How useful is the idea of justice when considering issues of war? [17]**

There was an enormous variety in answers with some very good applications and interpretations of the idea of justice.

5 (a) **Explain how moral relativism might be applied to ethical issues. [33]**

Some candidates gave specific examples of moral relativist theories and applied them to specific ethical issues. However, the majority of answers discussed moral relativism in general terms and applied it to ethical issues in general terms.

(b) **'Moral relativism is not the best approach to moral decision making.' Discuss. [17]**

Again some candidates discussed the strengths and weaknesses of moral relativism in general terms. However, many did use a range of absolute and relative ethical theories to show the strengths and weaknesses.

6 (a) **Explain the purpose of ethical behaviour according to the religion you have studied. [33]**

Very few candidates answered this question. The best answers gave very detailed explanations of the purpose of ethical behaviour in Christianity, using both Biblical and ethical ideas (such as Natural Moral Law) to support their answers.

(b) **'A religious approach to ethics is the best approach.' Discuss. [17]**

Many candidates used Christian-based ethical theories to support their answer usually contrasting them with Utilitarianism.

2781 Philosophy of Religion

General Comments:

The standard of the essays presented this year was somewhat mixed. Many candidates had made significant efforts to develop their own arguments, but many more failed to note that none of the questions was 'write everything you know about...'. It would seem that it cannot be reiterated too often that examiners are looking for genuine answers to the actual question set. It was unfortunate that some candidates in some centres seem to have been writing to identical formulas. As a result, many essays became dutiful trudges through key paragraphs of the textbooks provided. Essays should provide an opportunity for candidates to develop personal research skills, to expand their thinking on topics they find interesting and to grapple for themselves with the ideas of thinkers who appeal to them. The best responses demonstrated precisely these skills. Especially refreshing were those who looked beyond textbooks or wikipedia to original texts. Formula essays tended to be pedestrian catalogues of more or less relevant theories, often listed without any demonstration of relevance or even connection to previous or subsequent points.

One positive feature this year was that fewer candidates wrote at over the word limit and therefore penalised themselves. There were also many fewer candidates putting large parts of their essays in the footnotes.

Some candidates were unfamiliar with basic philosophical terms. Many confused 'causal' and 'casual', 'analytic' and 'analytical', 'proof' and 'argument', 'denial' and 'refutation', 'simple' and 'simplistic', and 'logical' sometimes became 'logistical'. Some struggled with standard terms such as 'a priori' or 'a posteriori'. Correct use of basic terms is a fundamental philosophical skill.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1. **'Heaven and Hell are concepts without philosophical foundations.'**
Discuss.

This question produced some of the more outstanding answers which dealt with questions such as coherence, the relationship of heaven and hell to the divine attributes, the questions of time and the problem of evil. Some referred to the notion that Heaven and Hell were philosophically necessary to balance the injustices of this world. Some examined various Biblical texts about Heaven and Hell. Some argued that Hell was philosophically incompatible with the Christian understanding of God as benevolent. Others that, universal salvation suggested that it is pointless being good in this life. Some used NDEs as evidence to support the concepts of Heaven and Hell. Others questioned the need for either arguing that it was wish fulfilment or a way of ensuring social control. The main requirement was the candidates focused on Heaven and Hell – beyond that the question was open. Unfortunately too many candidates assumed that the question demanded an all-purpose essay describing the afterlife; many were lists of theories such as Hick's replica theory, Ryle, Descartes and Plato without any indication of how they might be relevant to the subject.

2. **'Corporate religious experiences, such as the Toronto Blessing, tell us nothing about God.'** Discuss.

This question produced some very good and interesting answers, though significant numbers failed to concentrate on *corporate* experience, writing instead generalised religious experience or miracles essays. Many failed to note that the question was not 'do they happen?' The question concerned what they tell of God. A problem for many was the provision of detailed accounts of James or Swinburne which then failed to make any subsequent use of points so painstakingly explained. To describe James' views of noetic quality etc. makes sense only if candidates demonstrate how they are relevant to the discussion of the evidential nature of corporate religious experiences. Many candidates considered whether corporate religious experiences are mass hysteria and therefore of no use in learning about God. Some compared what a corporate religious experience tells us in relation to an individual religious experience, and therefore, which is more useful when trying to learn anything about God.

**3. 'Analogy provides the best way to understand the nature of God.'
Discuss.**

This question was popular, with most candidates recognising that they needed to make a genuine comparison with other theories, such as symbol or metaphor. Many showed understanding of theories such as those of Ramsey. Some candidates incorrectly assumed that the question was about the verification or falsification debates writing lengthy and frequently inaccurate accounts of Flew and Ayer. In relation to this many argued that Hick said that Eschatological verification would prove God's existence true or false. Although the verification principle could have been used to discredit analogy most did not even attempt to connect it with the essay question. Many candidates resorted to argument by assertion, stating bluntly that analogy was (or was not) superior to other theories without explaining why this was so.

2782: Unit Name Religious Ethics 2 (A2) Extended Essay

General Comments

The general standard of essays was good, with evidence of extensive research by many candidates. This was well used and some outstanding candidates were able to take hold of the research and mould it seamlessly into coherent and persuasive answers. However, a number of essays displayed a heavy dependence on basic text books and teachers' notes.

Good candidates fully engaged with the questions, but weaker ones tended to list everything they knew on the topic they were writing. There was a tendency, among weaker candidates to restrict analysis to the final conclusion.

There was a wide distribution of marks but an increase in the number of good or excellent responses, with some superb essays showing individuality, originality and deep thought.

Most candidates kept to the word limits, and were careful to acknowledge the books and other resources used. There were fewer essays this year which were seriously over-length.

1 'Our ethical choices are not free.' Discuss.

This was a very popular question, and generally well answered. Some of the weaker candidates who chose to tackle this question answered it simply as a question about general freedoms, and failed to relate it fully to the concept of morality and ethical responsibility. As a result there were many answers that were not relevant to the question set. Weaker candidates also included conscience and the problem of evil without making and useful links to the question.

Many answers did not spread sufficiently across science, psychology and sociology, and if they did just produced a 'list' of what the scholars taught.

Good candidates used their knowledge and research to focus on the question, with an excellent selection of scholars well explained and analysed. There were some outstanding discussions of more modern views such as those of Honderich and Sartre. Good answers also included some interesting applications such as the shooting by police of the Brazilian Charles de Menezes.

2 To what extent, if at all is conscience just a reflection of upbringing?

This was a popular question. However, many answers just ran through a list of scholars and their views, with a paragraph or two relating to each. There was also some confusion about the differences and similarities between Aquinas, Butler and Newman and occasional confusion of who lived when.

Better candidates recognised that even if conscience is a result of upbringing, it could still have some foundation in God or have some innate element.

Good candidates were able to approach the question in an integrated way, with some excellent analysis of the approaches of Freud, Piaget and Kohlberg. There were many very good answers, which looked far beyond the key philosophers, and were able to develop their own ideas and interpretations.

The better candidates were able to pick up on 'if at all' as well as 'extent' to examine what is meant by conscience and if indeed there is such a thing.

3 In the light of ethical theories discuss critically the arguments for and against going to war.

This was not such a popular question, but good answers really tackled the issues involved with great maturity and confidence, with good examples and good criticism of the theories. Some excellent answers argued that hindsight can show that Just War and Utilitarianism be wrong in the reasons they give for going to war.

However, a large proportion of answers failed wholly to understand that it was a question about 'going to war'. Many saw it as an opportunity to express all their knowledge of war and its application to modern society. Some used the title for attacking current involvement in Iraq and so did not do sufficient justice to the question.

The best answers met the challenge of the question, and there were some outstanding discussions of Kant's 'Of the Guarantee for Perpetual Peace'.

The conclusions to this essay were, in general, particularly good and candidates were able to defend views 'for and against going to war' ranging from self-defence to complete pacifism.

Report for 2783 Jewish Scriptures Extended Essay

General Comments

Some candidates seemed to appreciate that the essays provide the opportunity to spend more time studying and thinking about the set texts in more depth than they might when sitting for a limited time in an examination room. Other candidates, however, seemed to be unaware of the set texts required for study in this specification. Though the requirement for a bibliography is not stipulated, most candidates realised that quotations from sources need to be acknowledged within the text or elsewhere. Some candidates made sensible use of footnotes. Many candidates had made a serious effort to make the material their own response in addressing the actual wording of the question.

It was evident that some centres had incorporated careful textual exegesis into the course of study 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 good candidates.

The most popular question was question one.

1. Compare and contrast how the book of Micah and the set passages from Isaiah deal with Messianic themes.

This question achieved a wide range of responses. Some essays showed a mature fluid writing style whilst identifying common themes and discussing the extent to which the Messianic ideas are similar or different or show development.

The main weakness of some essays was that they narrated the story of Isaiah and Micah rather than comparing their views on Messianic themes. Most candidates approached the essay by plodding through Micah and Isaiah 40-43 but did manage to address the question competently and achieve a comparison between the sources.

The specification encourages candidates to focus on the Messianic hope but most candidates realised that this needs to be seen in the context of the rest of the content in both cases. Most candidates explained that Micah lived in the eighth century BCE and that the themes of his poetic oracles of the word of the Lord addressed the contemporary situation. Many quoted Micah 6:8 as the key to his message.

Some candidates were aware that the four chapters in Isaiah are widely believed to reflect the Exile in Babylon, predicting the deliverance of the exiles like a second exodus with G-d the Lord of Nature and creator of the universe as the deliverer. Others ignored the historical and literary background but still managed to gain credit for the comparisons and contrasts which they were able to make between the texts. The set chapters include one of the servant songs (Isaiah 41:1-3) and a number of candidates confidently discussed the identity of the servant.

Most acknowledged that the vision of the coming of G-d's kingdom in Micah 4:1-3 is identical to Isaiah 2:2-4 usually ascribed to Isaiah of Jerusalem, and there were some interesting explorations of the concept of a Messianic kingdom.

2. Examine the extent to which ideas about life after death develop in the texts you have studied.

This question was not as popular as question 1. Credit was given for any appropriate texts from the Jewish Scriptures but a few candidates simply wrote the title 'Life after death', cut and pasted from web sites and only gained some credit by addressing the question occasionally by accident.

The texts in the specification that good responses tended to use to address the development of ideas about life after death were those specifically itemised in relation to reward and punishment: Isaiah 53, Jeremiah 7, Ezekiel 18, Job 19, Daniel 12 and 2 Maccabees 7.

Many wrote that the traditional Jewish attitude was like that of Job's friends who thought God rewarded the righteous and punished the wicked in this life but teachings about reward and punishment gradually developed to include the hereafter.

Some candidates considered the possible chronology of events and of the writing of the texts in order to discuss whether or not there was a development and to explore the extent to which the experience of the Exile might have affected Jewish beliefs. Most made reference to Ezekiel refuting the proverb about corporate responsibility and turning the focus on to the individual. Some good candidates paralleled the teaching in Jeremiah 31 which they had studied as part of the specification on the topic of covenant.

Good candidates usually discussed how far the sons in 2 Maccabees 7 seem to believe in a more positive afterlife than Sheol. They tended to argue that there seems to be, particularly in apocalyptic literature (eg Daniel 12:2) and especially after the Maccabean revolt, a development of beliefs about the resurrection of the body.

3. 'Corporate identity and personal religion are both equally evident throughout the Jewish scriptures.' Discuss.

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

2784 New Testament 2

Extended Essays January 2007

General Comments

The overall performance of candidates was good. However, a small, but significant number of candidates presented essays with word counts well below the recommended 2000-2500 words (In one case only 600 words in total).

Questions on The Gospels were more popular than those on The Early Church.

The majority of essays showed evidence of thorough preparation; use of relevant scholarship; good understanding of the issues involved in the question. Many were able to use scholarship to form a personal analysis of the texts.

A majority of Centres prepared candidates for one choice of question. Inevitably, this led to candidates producing similar material. Nonetheless, it was, in many cases, interpreted in an individual way by candidates.

Comments on individual questions.

Alternative A: The Early Church

1 Consider the arguments for and against the Pauline authorship of Ephesians by comparison with 1 Corinthians and Galatians.

This question (the most popular in this alternative) was extremely well-answered, many candidates giving clear and concise exposition of the Pauline texts, using scholarship to good advantage. There were many essays which demonstrated the ability to analyse scholarship and reach a well- rounded conclusion.

In a number of essays some highly technical terms were used (eg hapax legomena) which would have benefited from some explanation.

Questions 2-3

Candidates choosing these questions showed a range of ability, but there were too few answers on each question for examiners to make comment on overall performance.

2 'The resurrection of Jesus lies at the heart of the gospel preached by Paul.' Discuss.

3 I handed on to you as of first importance what I had in turn received (1 Corinthians 15 : 3). Examine critically the ways in which Paul uses his conversion to authenticate his apostleship.

Alternative B: The Gospels.

4 To what extent does an understanding of the Jewish background contribute to an understanding of the person of Jesus as portrayed in the gospels?

There were so few essays in response to this question that it was not possible to comment on overall performance.

5 'Jesus' parables of the Kingdom of God were about a future hope of salvation.' Discuss.

This was the most popular question on the paper and answers covered the whole range of ability. The best answers focussed clearly on the relevant texts, describing and explaining the parables and exploring the use and meaning of allegory. These answers also demonstrated clear analysis and reached conclusions based on sound and relevant scholarship about the nature of The Kingdom of God, whilst incorporating their own well-reasoned views.

Poorer answers used limited material (eg no mention of Markan or Lukan parables outlined in the specification), and some reached conclusions without reference to relevant scholarship.

6 Assess the importance of the healing miracles as gospel teachings.

This was the second most popular question on the paper and, whilst there were some excellent answers, reflecting good use of the texts and scholarship, it was not so well answered as Question 5.

The best answers came from those candidates who remained focussed on the question linking the healing miracles with gospel teaching. These candidates not only successfully explained the miracles, but were able to make the connection, not only to the teaching relevant in the time of Jesus, but to the teaching of the gospel writers and the Early Church.

In the poorer responses to the question candidates seemed to be unsuccessful in relating the miracles to themes such as Jesus' authority. Some introduced the idea of the miracles expressing the Kingdom of God, but then went off the point, using material more appropriate to Question 5

2785 Developments in Christian Thought

General Comments:

The questions produced some very strong answers this year and those candidates who had clearly written an essay plan and stuck to it did well. The best essays showed evidence of individual research and personal reading of source materials.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- | Question No. | |
|--------------|--|
| 1 | <p>Assess James Cone's view that 'theology is a rational and passionate study of the revolutionary activity of God in the world in the light of the historical situation of an oppressed community' (<i>The Risks of Faith</i>).</p> <p>This was not a popular question but there were a number of good answers. Candidates had a good knowledge of Cone and drew out his definition of theology through a critical survey of his work. The best candidates contrasted Cone with other Black theologies – Martin Luther King, Womanist, other contextual theologies and 'white' theologies such as Barth and Tillich.</p> |
| 2 | <p>'A pluralist theology of religion undermines the purpose of theology.' Discuss.</p> <p>This was a popular question and many candidates displayed a fine understanding of Hick's ideas and related them to various ideas about the purpose of Theology - eg Barth, Liberation, Tillich etc. Some candidates saw the question as an opportunity to write a standard essay on pluralism, exclusivism and inclusivism which tended to drift away from the question. Some had a very limited definition of theology - a study of God - which made analysis and discussion difficult.</p> |
| 3 | <p>'Because black slave religion was very different from white Christianity, Black Theology is quite distinct and original.' Discuss.</p> <p>This was also a popular question and done with varying degrees of success. More able candidates analysed and compared the various factors that made black theology distinct and reached an appropriate conclusion on the place of slave religion in Black theology. Weaker candidates tended to start with slave religion and go on to write in an unfocussed manner about Cone and Martin Luther King's teaching in detail without reference to the question.</p> |

2786 Eastern Religions

General Comments:

In general the standard of response was high. There were more Buddhism responses than Hinduism.

Most candidates had made a good attempt to address their chosen question, and many had a substantial range of relevant material. In most cases good use was made of relevant technical terms.

Stronger candidates tended to demonstrate their ability by using a range of sources to present different points of view, which they were able to support with relevant evidence. Weaker candidates tended to include some relevant material, but the main points were sometime inaccurate or lacked critical analysis.

Many candidates used quotations effectively, in support of their own work, and most used academic referencing protocols correctly.

Occasionally sources were quoted, but a reference was not made. Centres may wish to remind candidates of the need to clearly reference quotations.

In a few responses quotations were made, but not explained or linked to the candidates' own work. Centres may wish to remind candidates that it is only their work which is credited, and quotations should only be used in support of the candidates' own material.

Alternative A – Buddhism

1 'The adaptations made as Buddhism moved into China and Japan are a betrayal of Buddhist origins.' Discuss. [90]

Most candidates could outline the historical development of Buddhism as it moved into China and Japan. The best candidates wrote about this development logically, using a number of sources.

The main concepts of Pure Land and Zen were considered by most candidates.

Weaker candidates tended to note the adaptations, but did not always explain whether they were a betrayal of Buddhist origins.

Many candidates referred to particular aspects of Zen and/or Pure Land to present more than one point of view.

Most candidates referred to the Buddha's claim that you must find the path for yourself, not become reliant on him.

Very few candidates referred to the concept of upaya to explain the adaptations. This was surprising, since the concept is used widely in early Mahayana to justify new teachings, so could easily be applied to this area.

2 'In Zen you must find your own way, while in Pure Land you are saved by another.' Discuss [90]

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

3 'Morality is the most important part of The Eightfold Path.' Discuss. [90]

Many candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the Eightfold Path, and were often able to put this in the context of the Four Noble Truths and the Middle Way.

Weaker candidates tended to ignore or only partially respond to the 'most important' aspect of the question.

Most candidates were able to offer some relevant argument. Many offered evidence to support the view that all aspects of the path are equally important.

The best responses tended to discuss how different aspects of the path might be more relevant for different practitioners, for example Zen Buddhists might focus more on meditation.

Alternative B – Hinduism

- 4 'The Purusha Sukta shows that varna is a god-given structure, and cannot be modernised.' Discuss. [90]**

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

- 5 The Ramakrishna movement owes less to Ramakrishna than to others.' Discuss. [90]**

Most candidates described the origins of the Ramakrishna Mission. They tended to explore the roles of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Sarada Devi with a good level of depth, and using a variety of sources.

Weaker responses tended to describe or explain the influence of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Sarada Devi, without addressing which had most influence on the movement.

The best responses considered arguments why each of the three main characters might be considered to have been the most important for the movement before reaching a conclusion. Good evidence was provided in support of all three by candidates.

- 6 'Belief in a God (Isvara) makes Yoga incompatible with Samkhya.' Discuss. [90]**

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

2787 Islam Extended Essay

General Comments

There were less than thirty candidates but a wide range of ability was represented. Most candidates had prepared carefully and had obviously consulted a variety of resources. However, there seems to be a growing tendency to 'cut and paste' material from the internet without checking the validity of the source. The majority of candidates answered question 2 on the differences between Sunni and Shi'a Islam. Though candidates are not obliged to provide a bibliography, they are still expected to acknowledge material they copy otherwise the work is simply plagiarism. There was some sensible use of footnotes by the better candidates.

One or two candidates seemed to think that raising doubts or questions at every opportunity would impress. Genuinely impressive answers, however, were those of candidates who could stand back and evaluate a position, presented in its entirety, using specific examples within the evaluation.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 To what extent is it justifiable, from the articles of belief, to describe Muhammad as the founder of a new religion?

This was not a popular question but was done well by the few who attempted it. Most candidates began with a short biographical paragraph about the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad. Most demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the concepts which are listed in the specification as articles of belief: Allah, angels, scriptures, messengers, the last day, the divine decree.

Good candidates tended to group the articles of belief into three topics: Tawhid, Risalah and Akhirah and gave some consideration of the possible Jewish, Christian and pagan influences on the teaching of Muhammad from their studies in the foundation module about the background of Pre-Islamic Arabia.

Though the question makes reference to articles of belief, matters of practice, such as comparison of the original Islamic prayer times with those of Judaism, were acceptable if made relevant to the argument.

Good discussions tended to emphasise that in the context of polytheistic Bedouism, Islam was a new beginning but, to some extent, monotheism linked Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

Good responses tried to balance the evidence for a 'new' beginning with the fact that the revelation of the Qur'an was considered by Muhammad to be the uncorrupted message linking back through time to previous revelations which had been distorted eg to Ibrahim, Musa, Dawud and Isa.

2 'The differences between Sunni and Shi'a Islam are not significant.' Discuss.

Most candidates supplied introductory definitions on the lines of the terms in the glossary. 'Sunni are Muslims who believe in the successorship of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali (Radhi-Allahu-anhum - may Allah be pleased with them) after Muhammad. Shi'a ('followers') are Muslims who believe in the Imamah successorship of Ali (Radhi-Allahu-anhu - may Allah be pleased with him) and eleven of his most pious, knowledgeable descendants.' Some candidates addressed the issue of significant and insignificant differences throughout the essay whilst others, equally successfully, deal with it in a

conclusion. Most knew that Shi'a Muslims are about ten per cent of modern Muslims but rapidly growing in developing countries. Many had obviously thoughtfully studied media reports about current events.

Candidates gave a variety of acceptable examples when illustrating or explaining what they see as differences of beliefs and practices eg about fasting, prayer times, zakah etc.

Most responses included the leadership dispute that led to the original split. Good candidates usually pointed out that loyalty to the ahl-al-bayt – the house of the Prophet – is at the heart of Shi'a belief and practice. They explained the importance of the Imamate for Shi'a Muslims with some reference to ziyara, minor pilgrimages to the tombs of the Imams, and extra festivals, especially the commemoration of the martyrdom of Husayn during Muharram.

Good responses also tended to be those which demonstrated awareness that Sunni Muslims regard themselves as true followers of the Sunnah and strict Sunni Muslims accuse Shi'a Muslims of bid'a (innovation), adding to Islam.

Many candidates wrote sympathetically about the attempt of either or of both groups to return to fundamental values.

3 Examine the implications for Muslims of their beliefs about the relationship between Allah and the created world.

Too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

2788: Judaism

General Comments:

The entry for this component was not large. Essays were perhaps not of quite such a high standard as in previous years. However, there was much good scholarship and some extraordinarily thorough research. A number of candidates, although not exceeding the word length of the essay itself, produced copious footnotes often up to three-quarters of a page. In so far as this represented thorough scholarship and research it is to be commended however, teachers are reminded that footnotes are not read as part of the assessment of the essay.

All three questions were attempted and appeared equally popular.

Comments on specific questions:

1 'The conflict between the State and religious Judaism is a major feature in modern Israel.' Discuss. [90]

This question called for some analysis of both the State of Israel and religious Judaism as well as a consideration of the conflict between them and the assessment of whether this constitutes a major feature of modern Israel. This inevitably meant that answers would be complex in addressing these various issues.

Few candidates managed to address them all although there were many good attempts. There was some confusion over the nature of the State of Israel and also of 'religious Judaism'. Better candidates were able to resolve them and produced some very thorough answers. Some concluded that there were other issues which more properly should be considered as major features.

2 'The only significant difference between Orthodox and Progressive groups within Judaism is the policy regarding conversion.' Discuss. [90]

This was a very popular question. Many candidates wrote extensively on the law and nature of conversion though, in doing so, perhaps left little room for a consideration of other differences which the question required by the phrase 'the only significant difference'. Candidates needed to be more mindful of this phrase in the title in order to produce more balanced and creditworthy responses. In the circumstances, many focussed on the minutiae of conversion to the detriment of producing a balanced response.

3 'Post-holocaust theology reflects a disastrous division within Judaism.' Discuss [90]

This was the most popular question but, regrettably, also the least well done. Again, as with Question 2, candidates had failed to consider the significance of the wording. They were asked to discuss whether Post-holocaust theology 'reflects' a 'disastrous' division within Judaism. The question was often not correctly approached from two points: one was that it was interpreted as 'Post-holocaust theology has *caused* a disastrous division...', the other was to neglect the word 'disastrous' and just consider whether it had either 'caused' a 'reflected' a division. In either case this led to lower-achieving answers. Despite huge quantities of relevant material having been presented the critical analysis required was lacking in relation to the question set.

2789 Philosophy of Religion 1

General Comments

The standard of essays presented was mixed. Some candidates had made significant efforts to develop their own arguments, but many more failed to note that none of the questions was 'write everything you know about...'. It cannot be reiterated too often that the examiners seek genuine answers to the precise question set. It was unfortunate that some whole centres seem to have been writing to identical formulas. As a result, many essays became dutiful trudges through key paragraphs of the textbooks provided. The essay should provide an opportunity for candidates to develop personal research skills, to expand their thinking on topics they find interesting and to grapple for themselves with the ideas of thinkers who appeal to them. The best responses demonstrated precisely these skills. Especially refreshing were those few who looked beyond textbooks or wikipedia to original texts. Formula essays tended to be pedestrian catalogues of more or less relevant theories, often listed without any demonstration of relevance or even connection to previous or subsequent points.

Some responses did not show an engagement with the material. Simply to list theories is not the same as considering or judging them. Examiners commented that in many essays little thought had been given to the significance, implications or even meanings of ideas dutifully paraphrased from class texts. As a result essays were sometimes shallow.

One positive feature this year was that fewer candidates wrote at excessive length.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 'Challenges from science have dealt a severe blow to the teleological argument's attempt at proving God's existence.' Discuss.

This was a popular question and there were some competent answers which demonstrated good knowledge of the ways in which science challenged assumptions about the design argument. However, too many wrote all-purpose essays without demonstrating how Mill and Hume were relevant to the challenge from science. Few dealt adequately with *severe* blow. To say simply that science is a blow was not sufficiently focused to achieve the highest marks. There was some inaccuracy in accounts of evolution and Dawkins, with many anachronistically referring to Darwin as supporting Big Bang theory or making use of DNA in his approach.

2 'Descartes offers the strongest version of the ontological argument.' Discuss.

This question was fairly popular, though in general not well done. It was evident that few candidates had made the effort to read either the few paragraphs of Descartes which constitute his argument or the 24 sentences of St Anselm's *Proslogion* 2 and 3. As a result, there was much misunderstanding of both arguments. Most listed standard objections – such as Kant – to the arguments, but few made the necessary critical comparisons with other arguments. An obvious route, taken by very few, would be to consider whether the modal arguments offered by Malcolm (and Plantinga) have particular strengths in allegedly avoiding use of existence as a predicate.

3 Evaluate Freud's claim that religion is an illusion based on human wishes.

Most candidates produced sound responses, but there were few excellent ones. Many simply accurately paraphrased class textbook accounts of Freud but did not expand on them or consider whether listed weaknesses were sufficient to destroy his argument. Some stitched in further material from Psychology texts but again failed to subject the views to sufficient critical assessment. Some candidates carefully considered the nature of illusion, contrasting this with delusion, to good effect. Some attempts at evaluation were very weak.

2790: Religious Ethics 1 (A2)

General Comments

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

A small number of candidates failed to identify their sources.

1 **Discuss critically the ethical concerns raised by genetic engineering.**

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

Some excellent answers stated that the question could be seen as one of science versus religion, but went on to examine religious ethical approaches in contrast to those of Utilitarianism and Kantian ethics. There were some very good discussions of the social concerns and effects on society, using the ethical concerns raised from genetically modified food and crops to the approach to people and their value.

Weaker candidates found it more difficult to discuss the ethical concerns in any depth and just skated over the surface of the topic. Some candidates seemed to overlook the request in the question to 'discuss critically' and seemed instead to attempt to answer the question by looking at general issues such as designer babies, without focussing on the specific ethical principles of genetic engineering.

2. **'Utilitarianism is not a useful method for making decisions about moral issues.'** Discuss.

This question was very popular and produced some good responses, contrasting Utilitarianism with other ethical theories, or simply one form of Utilitarianism with another. Utilitarianism was also applied to particular moral issues such as abortion and euthanasia, and then critically examined to determine its usefulness.

However, many candidates simply wrote all they knew about Utilitarianism, giving simplistic accounts of Bentham, Mill and sometimes Singer. Some were able to discuss the weaknesses of Utilitarianism as theory, but were less forthcoming about its strengths.

3. **'Personhood is the only important question when considering an abortion.'** Discuss.

This was the least popular question, and many simply discussed different ethical approaches to abortion with little analysis, or consideration of the difference personhood makes. Some candidates spent too long defining personhood without any application to the question.

However, good answers clearly explained the different views on personhood and discussed critically the rights of the woman as well as those of the foetus. Good answers considered the approaches of the different ethical theories to the question of personhood and the views of different scholars.

**Advanced Subsidiary GCE Religious Studies 3877
January 2007 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2760/11	Raw	100	72	64	56	48	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/12	Raw	100	73	61	50	39	28	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/13	Raw	100	72	63	54	46	38	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/14	Raw	100	78	68	58	49	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/15	Raw	100	82	70	58	47	36	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2761	Raw	100	80	70	60	50	41	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2762	Raw	100	73	64	56	48	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2763	Raw	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2764	Raw	100	80	69	59	49	39	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2765	Raw	100	78	68	58	48	38	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2766	Raw	100	73	64	55	46	38	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2767	Raw	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2768	Raw	100	89	78	67	56	46	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2769	Raw	100	76	67	58	49	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2770	Raw	100	80	70	60	50	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	14.1	42	67.2	86.2	96.1	100	325

**Advanced Subsidiary GCE Religious Studies 7877
January 2007 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2781	Raw	90	70	61	52	43	35	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2782	Raw	90	75	67	59	51	43	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2783	Raw	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2784	Raw	90	75	66	57	49	41	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2785	Raw	90	70	61	53	45	37	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2786	Raw	90	75	65	55	45	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2787	Raw	90	71	62	53	44	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2788	Raw	90	73	63	54	45	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2789	Raw	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2790	Raw	90	75	66	57	48	39	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	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	13.6	59.1	86.4	95.5	100	100	43

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