

Religious Studies

Advanced GCE A2 7877

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS 3877

Report on the Units

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2760/11-15 Foundation for the Study of Religion

General Comments:

The paper allowed good candidates to show excellence whilst also permitting weaker candidates to show their ability in the best light possible. There were also some truly excellent answers that showed the specifications of the course were being very well covered. A considerable increase in numbers appeared to show to some extent an influx of less able candidates. There was considerable evidence to suggest that many candidates had prepared general answers and simply produced these in the examination. Many candidates wrote about the general topic involved with no more than a single sentence attempting to link the response to the question asked.

The best answers were generally typified by a clear response to the question asked; focusing on the question and with no suggestion that it was simply an adapted answer from a previous session.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Part 1 – Philosophy of Religion

1 (a) Explain the importance of the shadows in Plato’s analogy of the cave. [33]

Virtually all candidates knew something of the allegory of the cave although a number struggled with the specific nature of the question and were as a result quite general in their responses. There were various explanations of the shadows, some more accurate than others.

(b) On what grounds might Plato’s understanding of human reason be criticised? [17]

Generally this was reasonably well done but some candidates were unable to respond to the trigger word and did not treat this as an AO2 question.

2 (a) Explain Aristotle’s understanding of the soul. [33]

This was possibly the best done of questions 1 to 4. A number of candidates knew about rational and irrational parts of the soul. There were some good explanations of the relationship between the body and soul although some candidates confused the views of Plato and Aristotle.

(b) Compare Aristotle’s understanding of the soul with that of Plato. [17]

This was generally well answered. Some candidates spent too long describing Plato’s views in unnecessary detail.

Part 2 – Religious Ethics

3 (a) Explain Aquinas’ teaching about Natural Law. [33]

This was a popular Question. Almost all candidates knew something of Natural Law. There was good coverage of primary and secondary precepts. However, some candidates chose to concentrate on thinkers other than Aquinas. Basic answers

tended to know something of Natural Law and gave examples relating to abortion and sexual ethics. Few candidates were aware of the doctrine of 'double effect'.

- (b) 'Natural Law leads to cruel decisions.' Discuss. [17]**

Candidates generally did well here. Some however gave the general strengths and weaknesses of Natural Law and failed to focus on the word 'cruel'.

- 4 (a) Explain Virtue Ethics from the teachings of Aristotle. [33]**

In general this was well answered with the exception of the few candidates who mistook the theory for something else. Some candidates had a very detailed knowledge of Aristotle. It would have been nice to have had a few different examples other than the virtue of courage.

- (b) 'Virtue Ethics is too vague to be useful.' Discuss. [17]**

Again this was answered well by the majority of candidates. Some answers argued that virtue ethics was not vague but did so in a way that suggested they did not truly understand the topic.

Part 3 – Jewish Scriptures

- 5 (a) Explain what is meant by Form Criticism. [33]**

There were some excellent answers to this question. Most candidates correctly identified the method of Form Criticism and then went on to consider some of its principal genres.

- (b) 'Form Criticism is not helpful in understanding the Jewish Scriptures'. Discuss. [17]**

The general consensus was that Form Criticism does help the reader gain a greater insight into the intentions of the biblical writer. A few candidates confused Form Criticism with Source Criticism.

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

There were many good answers. A number of candidates commented on the difficulty of defining 'myth' theologically and made reference to the findings of recent scholarship. Examples of 'myth' most frequently cited in answers included Balaam and his donkey and the Tower of Babel.

- (b) 'If writings are myth then they must be untrue.' Discuss. [17]**

The majority of answers were generally more positive in response than the statement given in the question.

Part 4A – New Testament – Early Church

7 (a) Compare the religious practices of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. [33]

The question specified 'religious practices' but far too many answers were very general about all and any aspects of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Also a worrying number of answers confused the two groups almost completely.

(b) 'The Pharisees were a less important religious group than the Sadducees.' Discuss. [17]

The quality of responses in this section generally related to how well part (a) had been answered.

8 (a) Discuss the probable authorship of the Acts of the Apostles. [33]

This was not a popular question but there were some excellent responses.

(b) 'Acts was not written before the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE'. Discuss. [17]

Again, the answers seen were mostly very good.

Part 4B – New Testament – Gospels

9 (a) Compare the religious practices of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. [33]

The question specified 'religious practices' but far too many answers were very general about all and any aspects of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Also a worrying number of answers confused the two groups almost completely.

(b) 'The Pharisees were a less important religious group than the Sadducees.' Discuss. [17]

The quality of responses in this section generally related to how well part (a) had been answered.

10 (a) Explain, with examples, what is meant by Source Criticism. [33]

This was a popular question. There were some very good responses from candidates with a clear understanding of Source Criticism. As would be expected most referred to the Synoptic Problem in the examples chosen.

(b) How useful is Source Criticism for finding out about the authorship of the gospels? [17]

Although there were some candidates who concluded that Source Criticism was of no use in this context, the majority argued that it was a useful way of studying the gospels.

Part 5 – Developments in Christian Thought

- 11 (a) **Explain what is meant by a fundamentalist approach to the interpretation of the bible** [33]

As on previous occasions when a question has been asked on a fundamentalist approach, there were a worrying number of students who appeared to have no real idea of what the term meant. However, there were a number of excellent responses.

- (b) **‘A fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible has too many problems.’ Discuss.** [17]

With the exception of those who did not know what a fundamentalist interpretation was, most answers produced good arguments, largely in favour of the statement.

- 12 (a) **Explain Biblical teaching about the role of women in religious life in the first century CE.** [33]

This was not a particularly popular question and there were a number of weak responses which dealt with the role of women in Christian life rather than making any attempt to focus on the question.

- (b) **‘The Bible teaches that men and women are equal.’ Discuss.** [17]

Given the quality of most responses to (a) it was not surprising that answers here were largely rather general and confused and offered little insight into the matter being discussed.

Part 6A – Eastern Religions – Buddhism

- 13 (a) **Explain the nature of the Middle Way.** [33]

This was a straightforward question which produced some excellent explanations of the nature of the Middle Way. Weak responses tended to be along the lines of ‘all I know about Buddhism’.

- (b) **‘The Middle Way is an essential guide in helping Buddhists know how to behave.’ Discuss.** [17]

The majority of responses to this question concurred with the statement whilst also acknowledging that there are other aspects of Buddhist teaching which also provided behavioural guides.

- 14 (a) **Describe and explain what Buddhists mean by Right Action.** [33]

This was a less popular question but there were some excellent responses from candidates who had control of the material.

- (b) **‘The Noble Eightfold Path is no more than a Buddhist code of ethics.’ Discuss.** [17]

This question was well answered with a number of candidates arguing that there was a great deal more in the Noble Eightfold Path than ethical instruction.

Part 6B – Eastern Religions – Hinduism

- 15 (a) **Explain what archaeologists have suggested about the religious beliefs of the people who lived in the Indus Valley.** [33]

This was the more popular question of the two on Hinduism and most candidates were able to offer a fairly detailed explanation of the religious beliefs of the Indus Valley.

- (b) **'The seals are the most important discoveries for learning about religion in the Indus valley civilisation.' Discuss.** [17]

Candidates who had produced good responses to (a) were generally able to continue with good answers to (b) though, for some, there was clear confusion about the nature of the seals.

- 16 (a) **Explain the nature of rta in the Vedas.** [33]

This was not a popular question and there were too few responses to produce a subject report.

- (b) **'Rta is dependent on the will of the gods.' Discuss.** [17]

This was not a popular question and there were too few responses to produce a subject report.

Part 7 – Islam

- 17 (a) **Explain what is special for Islam about the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad (PBOH).** [33]

Almost all candidates interpreted the question as 'describe the first revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad (PBOH)' and this was done in great detail. Some interpreted it as how the Qur'an is treated by Muslims today. Some candidates knew that Muhammad (PBOH) was the last prophet and could say something about the transmission and preservation of the Qur'an. Many answers were in the form of simple statements without explanation. Some wrote that many people today believe the Qur'an to be corrupted because it has been written down.

- (b) **'The way in which the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad (PBOH) clearly shows its importance.' Discuss.** [17]

Candidates tended to interpret this question either as to how the Qur'an is used by Muslims or how long all the revelations took, and how it was recorded and compiled. A number of answers focused on the Qur'an as a tool for converting people to Islam, hence its vital importance in the early days of Islam.

- 18 (a) **Explain the social reforms which Muhammad (PBOH) introduced at al-Madinah.** [33]

This was not a popular question. Many candidates described in detail the migration to al-Madinah and associated stories such as Muhammad (PBOH) letting his camel choose where he would settle. There were a lot of detailed descriptions of the

battles. Those that did write about reforms tended to focus on religious ones only. Where social reforms were in answers they were simply stated.

Quite often candidates described the social/moral situation in Makkah (e.g. burying baby girls alive, women being unfairly treated, the suffering of orphans, gambling and drinking) and then listed all these again as not being allowed in al-Madinah.

(b) 'Muhammad (PBOH) was not a statesman but a prophet' Discuss. [17]

There were many good answers to this question. As usual a lot of responses were one-sided or only just mentioned an opposing view making high level marks unachievable. Common responses focused on the achievements in al-Madinah and in battle as examples of being a Statesman with the revelation of the Qur'an and guidance from Allah during battles as examples of being a prophet. Some candidates argued that he was Statesman only because the people of al-Madinah asked him to go and lead their town whereas as a prophet he was chosen by Allah which is more important.

Part 8 – Judaism

19 (a) Explain what is meant by the term 'a monotheistic G-d'. [33]

This question was generally well-answered. Most candidates included a discussion about polytheism in their answer. It was unfortunate that a number failed to distinguish between 'monotheism' and 'ethical monotheism'.

(b) 'Belief in a monotheistic G-d is the most important aspect of Judaism.' Discuss. [17]

Many candidates agreed with the statement in (b) although all saw monotheism as at least an essential affirmation of Judaism. A number of candidates were able to point out that the ethical demands of Judaism are dependent on monotheism.

20 (a) Explain what is meant by describing the Torah as revealed scripture. [33]

This question was generally well-answered with candidates showing good knowledge of both Orthodox and Progressive approaches to the Torah and its status as revealed scriptures.

(b) 'Although the Torah was revealed to Moses, G-d is the god of all people, not just the Jews.' [17]

Almost every candidate agreed with the statement in (b). However, given this position, it was surprising how few made any reference to the Noachide Code in their answers.

2761 Philosophy of Religion 1 (AS)

General Comments:

The performance of candidates varied widely. There were many thoughtful and accurate answers, demonstrating sound understanding of the specification and significant philosophical skill. Some candidates appeared determined to produce pre-prepared answers and these often fared less well as they failed to detect the precise thrust of the questions set. Many candidates failed to maintain focus on the question set, writing at length and too little purpose about the general topic. Reading the question and answering it remains the key examination skill. Teachers may wish to consider teaching even their less able students to think for themselves in examination conditions helping them to unpack questions more than at present. Selection and use of material is a skill which needs developing in many candidates. Students also need to be encouraged to revise the whole of the specification as it was clear that many bright candidates who produced excellent answers to part 1 of the question paper struggled to write a relevant answer to any of the questions in part 2.

On some scripts handwriting remains a problem. More widespread was misunderstanding of fundamental philosophical terms such as 'prove', 'infer', 'refute', 'a posteriori' and 'a priori'. Some candidates were guilty of errors of chronology, with Aquinas agreeing with Paley or Aristotle with Darwin; while Darwin was often associated with the discovery of DNA or the Big Bang theory. Many misunderstandings might have been avoided by greater familiarity with original texts, especially from philosophers such as Descartes, Anselm or Hume where the original arguments are so brief.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1 (a) Explain Copleston's version of the cosmological argument.

(b) 'Copleston's argument does not prove that God exists.' Discuss.

This was not a popular question. Many who attempted it wrote instead about Aquinas with little reference to Copleston's use of the argument from necessity and contingency or his use of Leibniz' principle of sufficient reason. It was evident that few who attempted the question had read the easily available Russell-Copleston debate. This was a pity as it contains so much accessible material which provides valuable information on a range of topics including the Ontological and Moral arguments.

Better answers often came from candidates who had both read the debate and were able to use it appropriately to unpack the essence of Copleston's version of this classical argument; weaker answers focussed on describing the debate rather than answering the question. Many answers, though, tended to be simply lists which did not have much evaluation.

2 (a) Explain how Paley uses observations of a purposeful and ordered universe to prove the existence of God.

(b) 'Paley's arguments are weaker than the criticisms of them.' Discuss.

Some candidates simply recounted the analogy of the watch, found in various locations including beaches, deserts, forests and streets. Better candidates recognised the thrust of part a) and dealt with the universe, often using Paley's own arguments about the eye and the planets etc., and frequently distinguishing accurately the arguments about purpose and regularity. A careful reading of the

question should have led candidates to a discussion of how Paley uses his observations and away from simply describing his analogy's. In part b) many simply listed objections to Paley from Hume, Mill and others; better candidates did as the question required by considering whether objections were stronger than the arguments that might support Paley.

- 3 (a) Explain how Augustine understands the role of human free will.**
- (b) 'The world was made perfect so God cannot be responsible for the existence of evil.' Discuss.**

Most candidates had fair understanding of Augustine, though a few confused him with Irenaeus. However, some failed to focus on free will, while others wrote exclusively about free will without demonstrating its connection to Augustine. The most common fault was to explain how free will led to the evils of the world without any consideration about why God might have thought it worthwhile to create persons with free will. Many described free will as an opportunity to sin rather than scope for moral courage. Part b) provoked some sound and interesting answers, often making useful comparisons with the views of Irenaeus. A significant number of candidates argued that Augustine would have agreed with the statement, and then proceeded to give the logical, scientific and moral flaws in his theodicy, leading to the conclusion that God could still be held responsible for the existence of evil.

- 4 (a) Explain Freud's conclusions about the nature of religious belief.**
- (b) 'Psychological explanations present no real threat to belief in God.' Discuss.**

Most answers tended to concentrate on the significance of the Oedipus Complex, but there was often valuable use of some of Freud's other arguments. The Primal Horde theory was sometimes misunderstood, with reference to the Horde as apes or even lions. Good responses went on to discuss Freud's comparison between religion and OCD, and to explain Freud's conclusions about religion as a neurotic illness and an illusion based on wish fulfilment. Some more sophisticated responses also identified the nuances in Freud's conclusions, namely his concessions about certain benefits that religion brings.

In the (b) section, as with the question on Augustine, the majority of candidates approached this via the criticisms of Freud and then concluded that because his explanation could be invalidated, it did not constitute a threat to belief. Very few mentioned Jung. Some vaguely hinted that psychology and belief are about fundamentally different things, so there's no real threat - but this idea wasn't really developed. Only a tiny minority pointed out that even if Freud's (and Jung's) conclusions are accepted, they do not actually prove that God does not exist and therefore pose no threat to belief.

- 5 (a) Explain how Descartes' ontological argument claims that if you understand what God is then you must accept that God exists.**
- (b) To what extent is Kant's view that 'existence is not a perfection' a valid criticism of the ontological argument?**

Some candidates knew little about Descartes and chose to write at length – frequently inaccurately – about St. Anselm. Among those who wrote about Descartes

there were two common errors – the belief that the Ontological Argument says that if you can imagine something then it must exist, and the view that a triangle needs three sides and three angles *to exist*. To argue the latter would be to treat existence as a defining predicate of a triangle – the opposite of what Descartes is trying to explain.

- 6 (a) **Explain psychological understandings of religion.**
- (b) **'Psychology does not present a challenge to religion.' Discuss.**

Many candidates demonstrated knowledge of a range of psychological views, though most concentrated on careful expositions of Jung and Freud – an entirely legitimate response. Some wrote instead about challenges from sociology or even physics: this material was unlikely to be relevant. In the (b) section, most candidates approached the question via a comparison between Freud's negative view of religion and Jung's more positive one, concluding that Freudian psychology presented a challenge, whereas Jungian psychology did not. Some also went on to argue that God may be responsible for placing the archetype in the psyche, and in this case Jungian views support religion.

2762 Religious Ethics 1 (AS)

General Comments:

Most candidates were able to complete two full questions and time management was generally good. Standards over all were generally good and none of the questions posed particular difficulty to the candidates.

Candidates showed good knowledge of the topics, but did not always direct their knowledge to answer the question. Higher ability candidates showed knowledge of different scholars and wider reading.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Part 1

1 (a) 'People should always do their duty.' Explain how Kant understood this.

This was a popular question and was generally well done. Most candidates had a good knowledge of Utilitarianism and the ethics of Kant. Generally candidates understood the demands of the question, and were able to bring in a variety of concepts linked to duty. Most explained the Summum Bonnum and the categorical Imperative. Some included Kant's own examples and many explained how an ethical response from duty was more moral than one based on emotions.

Weaker responses just wrote everything they knew about Kant without linking it to the idea of duty.

(b) How useful is Kant's theory of duty as a basis for morality?

This was well answered by most candidates, though some failed to discuss ideas of conflicting duties and the stability of emotion and contented themselves with contrasting Kantian ethics with another ethical theory, usually Utilitarianism. As usual there were many psychotic axe-men and Nazis at the door!

2 (a) Explain how Virtue Ethics could be applied to embryo research.

This was the least popular question but was also answered well by many candidates who had a thorough grasp of both Virtue Ethics and genetic engineering.

Most were able to describe Virtue Ethics as a person-centred ethical theory and made reference to Aristotle and modern Virtue ethicists. Candidates were able to give a variety of responses, according to the virtues of the person or the virtuous person whose virtues they followed.

Weaker candidates had only the sketchiest knowledge of both Virtue Ethics and embryo research.

(b) 'The problem with Virtue Ethics is that it gives no definite answers to moral problems'. Discuss.

This question elicited very good analysis of Virtue ethics, with most defending the theory. Some compared Virtue Ethics with other theories which they found more practical.

- 3 (a) **Explain, with examples, the main differences between absolute and relative morality.**

This question was generally well answered. It was approached in two ways by candidates: some focussing on examples of theories that fell into relative and absolute categories and build their answers around these systems, and giving examples of how they would differ in their responses to issues such as abortion; weaker candidates focussing on deontological/teleological concepts and cultural relativism for their answers.

- (b) **'Absolute morality is the best approach to medical ethics'. Discuss.**

This was well answered by many candidates who discussed the need for absolute rules in medicine and the need to treat people equally versus the need to respond to the situation and treat people with compassion.

Part 2

- 4 (a) **Explain the main strengths of Mill's version of Utilitarianism.**

This question was well answered by most candidates, who showed a good knowledge of Utilitarianism and compared Mill's strengths to those of Bentham.

Many answers, however, simply concentrated on higher and lower pleasures, and few discussed the need for Utilitarian-based rules to maintain an ordered society.

A substantial number of candidates simply wrote about Bentham and tacked a little information about Mill on at the end.

Some ignored the title of the question and simply put down a few facts about Mill.

- (b) **"'Mill's Utilitarianism has no serious weaknesses.' Discuss.**

Candidates gave satisfactory answers here, but surprisingly few were good, and failed to mention the problem with knowing future consequences. Many talked of the problem of protecting minorities with many references to gangs of rapists attacking single women.

- 5 (a) **Explain how Utilitarianism might be applied to the issues surrounding the right to a child.**

Few candidates answered this question well. Some simply explained the different approaches of utilitarianism and then tacked something about children on at the end. Some confused 'right to a child' with 'rights of a child'.

However, there were some good interesting responses that applied the hedonic calculus and looked at different responses. Issues such as IVF, adoption and homosexual parents were discussed.

- (b) **'Utilitarianism can lead to wrong moral decisions'. Discuss**

In general this question elicited better answers than question a). Candidates discussed consequences, problems with majority rule and protection of minorities.

6 (a) Explain the main strengths of Natural Law theory.

This was a popular question, but unfortunately the good responses were rarer. Many candidates showed only limited understanding of Natural Law, or failed to answer the question and simply wrote all they knew about Natural Law.

Good answers were able to explain the idea of purpose and the progression from Primary to Secondary Precepts.

Excellent answers discussed the role of reason and real and apparent goods.

**(b) 'Natural Law theory is the best approach to moral decision making.'
Discuss.**

Many emotive answers concerning pregnant rape victims needing an abortion and the unfairness of a system that cannot adapt to situations. Good answers were more balanced and discussed the need for some absolute laws. Some opted for proportionalism as a compromise.

2763 Jewish Scriptures 1

General Comments:

A wide range of ability was represented amongst the candidates choosing this option; there was a substantial number of exceptional answers which showed a detailed range and dept of knowledge and understanding. All questions achieved the intended differentiation within both part 1 and part 2 of the exam. Question 1 proved the most popular question choice in part 1, with question 3 being the least popular. In part 2, the three questions were all equally popular.

There were several rubric infringements – candidates completed more than the set 2 questions, ‘pick and mixed’ ‘a’ and ‘b’ parts of different questions or attempted 1 question only. Those candidates that had attempted only 1 question had done so with a high degree of success: if another question, or part of a question, had been completed they would have received a successful final mark for the paper. Similarly, those candidates that completed more than the set 2 questions showed detailed knowledge and understanding but their answers were limited by ‘rushing’ due to this rubric error. Most candidates however, managed to successfully complete the paper within the time-limit. It was clear that candidates were conscious of the time limitations of the paper and answered the questions in a clear, concise and direct manner avoiding unnecessary repetition. The best candidates addressed the questions according to the two assessment objectives and avoided the need to ‘story tell’; often those candidates who offered excellent arguments did so by offering a brief introductory paragraph only to outline the set text and then moving onto detailed analysis and argument of the wider theological and textual context.

It is the understanding of the examiners that the level of the paper was appropriate and achieved the intended differentiation. In the main candidates approached the paper in mature and suitable fashion showing a high level of argument and engagement with the set texts and paper question; most candidates were as such, able to offer responses in the ‘good’ to ‘very good’ range.

Comments on individual questions:

Part 1

1 (a) Describe the differences between the covenants G-d made with Adam and with Noah. [33]

All responses demonstrated some knowledge of the set texts Genesis 1:26-30 and Genesis 8:20-9:29; however, detailed descriptions of ‘floods and doves’ and ‘apple eating’ featured perhaps rather more heavily than one might wish at A2. Those responses which were excellent resisted the urge to ‘story-tell’ and instead focused on detailed analysis of the similarities and then differences between the covenants; some excellent answers discussed whether the ‘covenant’ with Adam could in fact be described as such.

Many candidates were able to discuss that both of the ‘covenants’ were for all human kind and were able to pick out differences between the covenants, most notably the stimulus for the covenants, the sign of the covenant and the recipients part/role within the covenant. There was some discussion of context and ancient Near-Eastern parallels, which although not necessary for good marks, demonstrated candidates’ awareness of both text and context. Many candidates became slightly ‘bogged down’ with the need to expand upon unilateral and bilateral covenants – although interesting and showing extended knowledge, some confusion was evident and at times the line of argument taken did not relate to the question needs. There were on the whole some excellent answers from candidates of every persuasion.

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

Many candidates developed the discussion presented in the first part of the question and showed a mature level of argument using evidence. There was a substantial amount of 'set answers' which focused on every covenant studied and which gave the impression that they would have been written in substantially the same manner regardless of the question attempted. Despite this, these answers tended to receive good marks as there was a high level of argument present and the candidates showed engagement with the set texts and the question needs.

Many candidates missed the opportunity to discuss historical, archaeological, literary and theological lines of argument, instead focusing on how the covenants 'replaced' or can be seen as extensions of each other. Although valid, it is disappointing that not more candidates used this opportunity to show knowledge of wider study outside of the 'stories' of the set texts. However, some candidates did discuss literary analysis versus theological understanding of text, and some excellent answers further expanded on the type of literature present in Genesis 1 and 8 (with some reference to ancient Near-Eastern parallels).

- 2 (a) Explain the main features of the Covenant with Moses in Exodus 20-24. [33]**

There were varied responses to this question, some candidates focused exclusively on the Decalogue (Exodus 20), whilst others took a broader approach and discussed both the Decalogue and following 'book of the covenant' (so Exodus 20-24). Although the question asked for the 'main features of the covenant with Moses in Exodus 20-24' candidates who discussed the Decalogue only, but which gave detailed answers, were not penalised. However, it is disappointing that not more candidates were able to offer some analysis and knowledge of the casuistic laws, especially as these are set texts. Many candidates offered an introduction to the question: identifying Moses, offering some context to the texts and expanding upon the role of Moses as the mediator between G-d and the newly formed nation. Whilst some candidates then resorted to story telling and implicit analysis, good candidates offered explicit analysis and discussion of the Decalogue laws and their impact on Israelite and modern Jewish society. Candidates were able to discuss the features of the covenant both with respect to the textual tradition and its place as a pivotal point of reference for future covenants. Good candidates were also able to discuss the distinctions between the casuistic and apodictic laws and their parallels within ancient Near-Eastern society, although this was not necessary to receive a high level response.

- (b) 'The Covenant with Moses is the most important of the covenants in the Jewish Scriptures'. Discuss. [17]**

As with question 1 a there was a high number of 'set answers' which expanded upon each covenant studied for this paper and which argued whether each covenant could be thought of as the most important/significant or not. However, in answering this question candidates were able to engage further with the practical function of the covenant for the Israelite community of the 'text' and the ongoing value of the Torah for the present day Jewish community.

The best answers were those which concluded that the Ten Commandments remain a pivotal point of reference in ethical monotheism and throughout the Jewish scriptures. Those answers which were excellent further engaged in discussion of the relevance for the modern day of the permanent apodictic laws of the Decalogue versus the casuistic application of laws from the wider 'book of the covenant'.

3 (a) Explain the main ideas in Jeremiah chapter 31. [33]

This was not a popular question however; it was handled fairly well by all that attempted it. Essays took a variety of approaches especially when discussing the concept of the 'new covenant' and this reflected the fact that the course is open to candidates of any religious persuasion or none.

Many candidates began this question by setting the context for the covenant: addressing the time and place of writing and possible motivations for a 'new' or 'renewed' covenant. Good responses analysed the content of the chapter and were able to draw contrasts and parallels to the Sinai covenant (v31-34); the internalising of the covenant by writing it not on stone but on the heart of every individual was intended to reinforce the Mosaic covenant. Good answers were able to discuss that a personal, as opposed to a corporate covenant is discussed here but were able to argue that it can be said that this 'new' covenant is in fact a continuation of previous covenants rather than a covenant meant to supersede past covenants.

Some candidates were able to draw on Christian theology here and so demonstrate evidence of wider reading. Nevertheless, it was clear that some candidates became slightly confused with the interpretation of this text within Christianity and presented some bizarre and confusing statements which did little to add to their answer. Although few candidates choose to attempt this question, the handling of the question was perhaps better than question 1 and 2 as candidates did not resort to story telling but rather were answering the question through analysis and extended engagement with the text.

(b) To what extent might the covenant in Jeremiah 31 be described as a universal covenant between G-d and humanity? [17]

Candidates were able to draw upon their argument outlined in part a of the question in order to develop their answer; those candidates which offered a broader answer in relation to Christianity did so well, as they grounded their answer in the original Jewish context of Jeremiah's prophetic insights. Candidates were able to discuss further the personal responsibility for sins introduced within this covenant and were able to suggest that this covenant was perhaps more effective in the lives of the Jewish community than the Sinai covenant as the covenant was now written on the individuals hearts. Excellent responses took this argument further and suggested that the covenant may have a role in fulfilling the original Adamic covenant of G-d with all humanity. There was less evidence of 'set responses' to this question which was refreshing; candidates were actually responding to the question rather than providing pre-learnt answers.

Part 2

4 (a) Compare the teachings about suffering in the books of Jonah and Job. [33]

This question, along with question 5 exhibited the most amount of 'story-telling' by candidates; often interaction with the question aims was implicit as candidates resulted to re-telling the stories of Jonah and Job but 'forgot' to apply this explicitly to the question of suffering. As such interaction with the question was at times limited and candidates did not compare the teachings about suffering within the books or even explicitly analyse and describe them. Several candidates discussed one book in detail but then did not mention the other book or did so in a passing sentence. Despite this, good candidates showed detailed analysis of the differences in suffering exhibited: Jonah's suffering being a result of his own disobedience whilst Job's suffering was one of innocence. The wider theological questions and nuances of the genre of writing were also analysed by good candidates, and many were able to draw some comparisons between the different theological questions that the suffering in each book raises vis-à-vis G-d and humanity. Excellent candidates were able to discuss the wider concepts of mercy and universalism and discuss these in relationship to the theological message of trust in G-d that the books exhibit.

(b) Discuss what types of literature might best describe the books of Jonah and Job. [17]

This question was in the main, dealt with rather disappointingly and perhaps shows that some candidates have focused explicitly on the study of the set texts rather than the wider specification materials. It was anticipated that here candidates would be able to discuss the types of literature found within the Jewish scriptures (for example, myth, history, poetry, wisdom) and apply this to their discussion of Job (writings, wisdom, poetry?) and Jonah (prophetic writing, history, wisdom?). Good responses were able to discuss the theological dimensions of the texts regardless of the type of literature they have been assigned to, and were able to analyse the extent to which the texts 'fit comfortably' within their assigned genres.

5 (a) Explain what the book of Jonah teaches about the justice and mercy of G-d. [33]

Again an inevitable amount of story-telling was present; some candidates were so caught up in relaying the story of the 4 chapters that direct references to the question and an analysis of G-ds justice and mercy was absent. Good candidates were those who were able to set the scene in an introductory paragraph and then launch into an analysis of G-ds justice and mercy to both Jonah and the other narrative characters through citing and examining textual examples. Excellent responses showed an examination of the tension between the concepts of justice and mercy and discussed the wider theological implications of the presentation of G-d within this narrative. Those candidates that examined the wider context of the narrative and the theme of universalism that is presented also achieved high levelled answers.

(b) 'In the book of Jonah, G-d treats the Jews worse than the Gentiles'. Discuss. [17]

This question was approached fairly successfully by all who attempted it even if their part 'a' had been lacking in detailed analysis. Many candidates were able to discuss at length the treatment by G-d of the Jews and the Gentiles within the book. Excellent candidates were those who picked up on the possible theological nuance

of the book - that G-d will judge and forgive all but that G-d expects more virtue from the Jews.

6 (a) Explain the points of view of Job and his 'comforters' in the first series of arguments. [33]

In the main this question was answered very successfully. A number of candidates offered analysis of only the comforter's points of view and did not mention how this was different or similar to the point of view of Job. Despite this, there was evidence of a high level of interaction with the question and most who attempted the question were awarded a high level of attainment. It was clear that all candidates who attempted this question were very familiar with the set text and were able to offer detailed analysis as they described the arguments of each 'comforter' in turn. Good candidates were able to compare and contrast the arguments and set them within a theological context.

(b) The 'comforters' did not deserve to be condemned'. Discuss. [17]

Some candidates discussed that the 'comforters' are condemned in the Epilogue (chapter 42), however reference to this was not necessary. Good answers were those which drew upon the arguments outlined in 'part a' and expanded them in relationship to theological questioning and literary genre. Most candidates were able to argue that the 'comforters' had been applying the set logic of the day re. suffering and that Job, in contrast, had learnt to apply a faith response. Some good arguments demonstrating candidates critical analysis and understanding of different viewpoints was evident.

2764 New Testament 1

General Comments:

Alternative A – The Early Church

Overall the performance of the candidates was of a good standard. Many candidates showed a good understanding of the historical and theological issues in Acts 13-19 and this allowed them to also write fluently in part (b) answers.

Alternative B – The Gospels

The most popular questions were the ones which asked for a straightforward documenting and discussion of events as in questions 7, 8 and 11. Many candidates appeared to enjoy the emphasis on women in question 12. However some candidates attempted questions 9 and 10 with very little knowledge of the background or biblical text and many answers to these questions were weak. Some candidates, answered both question 9 and question 10 with wrong information and so lowered their performance level.

Weak written expression marred the fluency of some answers. The use of phrases and words such as 'Jesus was trialed', 'crucifixed' and 'of' instead of 'have' was quite common.

However, on the whole, the choice of questions allowed able candidates to demonstrate a high level of skill and there was generally a sound performance across the whole ability range.

Comments on individual questions:

Alternative A – The Early Church

Part 1

- 1 a) **Explain how the events in Acts 13-19 show the author's purpose.** [33]

This was generally well answered. There was a wide variety in the content of answers. Some candidates examined a number of purposes whilst others concentrated on one e.g. universalism.

- (b) **How successful was the author of Acts in showing that salvation is universal?** [17]

The majority of candidates were able to develop their arguments from the information given in (a) and there was some perceptive analysis of the way Paul's relative success with Jews and gentiles was portrayed in Acts.

- 2 (a) **Describe and explain the significant features of the encounter between Paul and the Jews in Thessalonica.** [33]

This was not a popular question. Only a minority of candidates knew the details of Paul's visit to Thessalonica. The most common confusion was with the events in Philippi. Answers were either very good or poor.

- (b) To what extent was Paul responsible for Jewish hostility towards himself? [17]**

This answer did not have to be specifically linked to Thessalonica and so even candidates who had made mistakes in (a) were able to give good answers.

- 3 (a) Explain the issues raised by the different accounts of Paul's visit to Jerusalem in Acts 15 and in Galatians 2. [33]**

This was a popular question. The content of Acts 15 and Galatians 2 was well known and the majority of candidates coped well with the technical issues surrounding the two accounts. Most gave a pleasing performance.

- (b) 'The Jerusalem Council solved the problem of gentiles and the Law.' Discuss. [17]**

Generally well answered. The majority of candidates answering this offered perceptive analysis of the ambiguities in the decisions of the Council and Paul's account in Galatians 2. Most answers concluded that there was some debate as to whether matters were improved with regard to gentile converts and the Law.

Part 2

- 4 (a) Describe and explain Paul's encounter with Bar Jesus (Elymas) the magician. [33]**

Some very good and excellent answers. A significant number of candidates highlighted the similarity of the blinding of Elymas and Paul's experience on the Damascus Road.

- (b) 'The Holy Spirit, not Paul, converted people.' Discuss. [17]**

There were some good answers to this question which focussed on the working of the Holy Spirit and Paul's role as the instrument of the Holy Spirit.

- 5 (a) Describe and explain the significant features of the riot of the Silversmiths at Ephesus. [33]**

A popular question. It was obvious from answers that the events at Ephesus were well known and had captured the imagination of candidates. Most answers were accurate and full of detail including quotes and dialogue. Some weaker answers confused some of the detail with the exorcism at Philippi.

- (b) 'The worship of Pagan gods presented Paul with his greatest challenge.' Discuss. [17]**

Most candidates, with varying success, supported their arguments with evidence from the events at Ephesus, Lystra and Athens and evaluated Paul's response to the challenge of pagan gods. However many candidates seemed unaware of other challenges faced by Paul.

- 6 (a) **Describe and explain the events which resulted in the conversion of the jailer at Philippi.** [33]

Some excellent answers on a well-known text, although a number of candidates failed to recount and explain the incident that put Paul and Barnabas in prison in the first place.

- (b) **Assess the success of Paul's visit to Philippi.** [17]

The best answers gave a balanced view that the events went from success to abject misery and humiliation and then back to success. Some candidates only discussed Paul's success, although they did it in a thoughtful way e.g. commenting that even if only one family converted then it was a success.

Alternative B – The Gospels.

Part 1

- 7 (a) **From Mark's gospel describe and explain the events in the Garden of Gethsemane.** [33]

Most candidates gave a thoughtful response to this question, offering some good explanations of why Jesus seemed powerless and afraid of his approaching death. The conversations Jesus had with the disciples about their failure were accurately reported.

- (b) **'In Mark's gospel all of Jesus' disciples failed him.' Discuss.** [17]

Well answered. The majority of responses were perceptive evaluations of the role of the disciples in Mark's passion narrative and argued a balanced view of human frailty and divine destiny. Some weaker answers involved a lot of description of various betrayals, which did not always lead to evaluation.

- 8 (a) **Describe and explain how Mark shows Jesus to be alone and abandoned at his crucifixion.** [33]

A popular question, although not always well-answered. Some candidates spent too much time discussing the events which led up to the crucifixion but omitted important details about the crucifixion itself. The best answers were aware of the author's purpose in fulfilment of scripture and the O.T. motif running throughout the account. Some made reference to the culmination of Mark's Messianic Secret.

- (b) **'Mark's account of the crucifixion places too much emphasis on Jesus' physical suffering.' Discuss.** [17]

There appeared to be two approaches to answering this question. Some candidates gave insights into the symbolism of Jesus' physical suffering and often made comparisons with John's passion narrative. Others pointed to evidence of the emphasis on Jesus' mental anguish and spiritual suffering as well as his physical suffering.

- 9 (a) **Explain why the Sabbath was an important issue in the gospel accounts of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus.** [33]

On the whole, this was very poorly answered. Only a few candidates understood the issues surrounding the timing of the crucifixion and burial and the Jewish Sabbath. The main weakness in answering this question was that many candidates referred only to the Passover festival. Some confusedly referred to the Sabbath as Sunday.

- (b) **'The accounts of the burial of Jesus are probably fiction.' Discuss.** [17]

There were some good answers here even from candidates who performed poorly in (a).

Part 2

- 10 (a) **Describe and explain the significant features of the Jewish trial of Jesus in John's gospel.** [33]

This was chosen by a significant number of candidates but unfortunately was only successfully answered by a small proportion. The majority, mistakenly, wrote about the trial by the Sanhedrin in Mark or the trial before Pilate in John.

Those who did know that this was the questioning of Jesus by Annas in John 18:19-24 were able to give good answers. Some were aware of the involvement of Caiphas and the significance of the position in the text of the betrayal by Peter.

- (b) **'John's account of the trial shows that the Jews were too weak to be a threat to Jesus.' Discuss.** [17]

Again, well-answered even by those who were misguided about (a). Some very good responses. Most showed competent analysis of the Jewish position under Roman rule and also offered a balanced argument that, in John, the strength of the Jews lay in their ability to manipulate the power of the Romans (e.g. Pilate).

- 11 (a) **From John's gospel describe and explain the significant features of one resurrection appearance to the disciples.** [33]

Many candidates gave thoughtful and detailed responses to this question. Some answers based on John 21 were especially pleasing to read. Some candidates unnecessarily referred to more than one resurrection appearance.

- (b) **How effective are the resurrection stories as teachings about eternal life?** [17]

The best responses focussed on Jesus' altered bodily state and its implications for belief about resurrection. There were also some very good answers which were a straightforward debate about the evidence in the stories.

- 12 (a) Describe and explain the resurrection appearances to women in the gospels of Mark and John. [33]**

This was a popular question and a significant number of responses showed accurate detail and good understanding of the first resurrection appearances in both gospels. There were some perceptive explanations of the significance of the appearances to women in the context of both Jesus' ministry and First Century Palestine.

- (b) 'The women were the most reliable witnesses of the resurrection.' Discuss. [17]**

Some very good and excellent answers developed the explanations in (a) into thoughtful evaluations of the credibility of the women in the gospel stories and some compared this with the role of the male witnesses. Weaker responses were able to sustain and justify an argument about the credibility of the women's actions.

2765 Developments in Christian Thought 1

General Comments:

Although there was a broad range of answers it was generally very pleasing to see how well many candidates have learnt and understood the materials and, in particular, the high calibre of theological evaluation which some candidates had managed to achieve in a year's study. The more open-ended questions (1, 2, 4 and 5) proved to be the most popular.

Comments on individual questions:

Part 1

1 a) Explain the aims of Feminist Theology. [33]

This was a popular question and generally well answered. Most candidates' mode of attack was to look at the different aims of Liberal, Reconstruction and Radical feminist theologies – even though there was some confusion as to the aims of each strand and which feminist theologian belonged to which type (Fiorenza, for example is not a liberal but a reconstructionist). Radical feminist theology received the least attention and was not always well understood.

Those candidates who wrote only about secular feminism were unable to score highly.

(b) 'Feminist Theology has nothing new to say.' Discuss. [17]

This question was done well and candidates often argued that feminism had nothing new. Those who countered the essay question often referred to radical feminism to maintain it still had value. The very best answers looked at new forms of feminism such a womanism and some excellent answers considered the moral issues of abortion, contraception, IVF etc, within the patriarchal structures of the Church.

2 a) Explain how women are presented in the New Testament. [33]

Another popular and well done question. The most successful answers balanced the Gospels with the Epistles and were able to give some good interpretations of particular stories (e.g. The Woman at the Well in John 4) and Pauline passages (e.g. Galatians 3, Colossians 3 etc). Some good answers were able to refer to the role of women in Acts and Romans. Poorer candidates confused Old and New Testament texts and some answers made no specific reference to texts at all.

(b) 'The writers of the New Testament did not continue Jesus' radical view of women.' Discuss. [17]

Most candidates understood the word 'radical' and agreed with the statement with many referring to Paul's different social situation which some very good candidates explained in terms of his eschatology.

3 a) Explain Augustine's teaching on the deliberative and obedient soul. [33]

Although not many candidates answered this question, some had a reasonable understanding of its demands. Some weaker candidates thought only Adam had a

deliberative soul and Eve the obedient. Too many answers failed to include sufficient account of Augustine's interpretation of the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis and the effects of the Fall.

(b) 'Augustine was right to argue that men and women are different.' Discuss [17]

Candidates answered this question well often arguing that men and women are physically different but not spiritually. Good answers were able to consider Augustine's equal but different view from the perspective of modern theology. Weaker candidates focussed too much on Augustine's own life and his own sexual experience of concupiscence.

Part 2

4 a) Explain how Liberation Theologians use the Bible. [33]

This was a popular question and on the whole well answered. The best answers balanced a romp through the key texts and how they could be used with an examination of Liberation Theology methodology (hermeneutical circle, praxis, conscientization etc). Some answers tended to concentrate on one or the other but both were equally valid as answers. Weaker answers often just listed texts without much interpretation.

(b) 'The Bible is more revolutionary than Marx.' Discuss. [17]

There were many valiant attempts to argue that the Bible was more revolutionary than Marx, the most successful looked at the social and political context of Jesus and Marx. Some weaker candidates suggested that liberation Theology taught that the poor would be rewarded in the next world and should accept what they had in this.

5 a) Explain Liberation Theology's teaching on justice. [33]

This question was not popular and produced a wide range of responses. Too many weaker candidates described how justice could be achieved rather than what Liberation Theology meant by justice. On the whole candidates had little understanding of the Biblical and Marxist basis of liberative justice.

(b) 'The Liberation Theologians' view of justice does not work.' Discuss. [17]

This question produced some very muddled responses which stemmed from the lack of understanding about what justice is. However, some did manage to analyse what Liberation Theology achieved in terms of the continuing situation in Latin America and some cleverly brought in criticisms from the Vatican.

6 a) Explain the criticisms of Liberation Theology contained in the Vatican's *Instruction*. [33]

Answers to this question tended to be polarised. Candidates either knew a lot or very little. There were many impressive answers which highlighted the key points of the *Instruction*, in particular the over use of Marx, its treatment of the Kingdom in reductionist terms and a general failure to consider God's grace in relationship to personal sin.

- (b) **'Assess the view that the criticisms of Liberation Theology in the *Instruction* were right.** [17]

Answers here were equally mixed. The best candidates were able to bring in thinkers such as Alastair Kee and compare his ideas to those of the Vatican. Candidates' own views were fairly equally balanced between those who agreed with the *Instruction* and those who disagreed.

2766 Eastern Religions 1

General Comments:

There were a higher number of candidates who had not completed the front of their exam booklets correctly. A significant minority had failed to write their first name in the 'other names' box, and many had not recorded the questions they had attempted. Centres may wish to remind students to complete their front-sheets at the end of the examination.

Although there were some excellent answers many seemed unable to answer the questions set, instead writing responses which addressed the general topic area. Some candidates seemed to repeat answers which had perhaps been practiced in class on a similar topic. This prevents students from accessing the higher marks. Centres may wish to focus on exam technique with candidates.

Many candidates clearly had a good understanding of the content of the subject, but did not apply it successfully.

Comments on individual questions:

Alternative A - Buddhism

Part 1

- 1 a) **Explain how Buddhists might show they have turned to the Dhamma for refuge in their daily lives.** [33]

This was the least popular question in this section. Although there were some very good responses many candidates wrote a general account of dhamma rather than focusing on how Buddhists could show they had turned to the dhamma. The best responses gave specific examples of how the dhamma might be applied to daily life such as following the eightfold path. Weaker responses tended to ignore this aspect of the question, or made simplistic assertions e.g. stating that Buddhists could show they were following the dhamma by becoming monks.

- (b) **There is no point taking refuge in the Dhamma as you must seek the path for yourself.' Discuss.** [17]

There were some very good responses to this question. Good responses often made reference to the Buddhist view of the dhamma being like a finger pointing to the moon. They were able to evaluate the usefulness of the dhamma for those starting the path, but the dangers of relying on it too heavily. Weaker responses tended to state that the dhamma must be necessary or else the Buddha would not have given it. Some weaker candidates discussed whether we should take refuge in the dhamma, ignoring the second aspect of the question.

- 2 a) **Explain the relationship between the Buddha and the Dhamma** [33]

There was some evidence of candidates reproducing prepared answers on the three refuges rather than answering the question set. This limited the marks which could be awarded. The best responses explored the relationship between the Buddha and the dhamma, for example whether the eternal dhamma would have been revealed without the existence of Shakyamuni Buddha, and whether the dhamma is revealed identically or affected by the revealer.

- (b) **'The only reason the Buddha is important is because he shows us that nibbana can be achieved.'** Discuss. [17]

As expected most candidates disagreed with this statement. Weaker responses tended to be unspecific about the other reasons for the Buddha's importance. Better responses gave specific reasons to the Buddha's importance, such as his revelation of the dhamma, and thus the means to achieve nibbana.

- 3 a) **Explain the relationships between the members of the Fourfold Sangha.** [33]

This was usually the best answered question on this section. Many candidates focused on the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the laity and the monastic sangha. Some very effective answers focused on the relationship between the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, and a few responses focused on the relationships between members of the laity. The best responses tended to include two of the above areas, were methodical in their approach, and remained focused on the relationships.

- (b) **'Monks should practise Right Concentration while lay people practise Right Action.'** Discuss. [17]

This question tended to be answered very well or very poorly. Weak responses often agreed with the statement, but offered little analysis to support their agreement. The best responses usually explored the interdependent nature of the eightfold path, whilst recognising that perhaps bhikkhus did find it easier to practise Right Concentration than the laity. They also recognised that whilst the laity might focus on Right Action the bhikkhus could not ignore this requirement.

Part 2

- 4 a) **Explain the Buddhist concept of anatta.** [33]

This was the best answered question in this section. Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the concept of anatta, and were able to link it appropriately to other Buddhist concepts without losing their focus on the question. Good responses often made reference to the analogies used in 'The Questions of King Milinda' to illustrate their points, and made specific reference to the five khandhas. Weaker responses tended to confuse anatta and anicca.

- (b) **'The teaching of anatta means that belief in rebirth does not make sense.'** Discuss. [17]

The quality of responses to this question depended on how well candidates understood the nature of rebirth in Buddhism. Weaker responses tended to argue that Buddhists believed in nibbana and therefore did not believe in rebirth. Better responses tended to discuss the nature of rebecoming in Buddhism, exploring what is reborn, and referring to rebecoming throughout each life as well as between lives.

- 5 a) **Explain how nibbana can be achieved.** [33]

Candidates often explored the nature of nibbana rather than focusing on how nibbana can be achieved. This limited the marks they could be awarded. The best responses made specific suggestions for how nibbana could be achieved, often

focused on removing ignorance and reducing craving for example by following the eightfold path.

- (b) 'Nibbana can never be achieved because greed cannot be stopped.' Discuss. [17]**

There was a wide variation in the quality of responses to this question. Weaker candidates tended to state beliefs that greed could or could not be stopped, with little evidence to support their views. Better responses tended to refer to the number of Buddhists who had achieved nibbana, as well as positive and negative forms of 'greed', especially at early stages of the path.

- 6 a) Explain how the wheel of samsara is kept in motion. [33]**

This was the least popular answer on this section, and often elicited weak responses, although there were a few excellent responses. Many candidates answered from their general knowledge, rather than making reference to Buddhist teachings. Many candidates made some reference to kamma, but were unable to contextualise this appropriately. The best responses referred to the three poisons and/or dependent origination, showing how these maintained the cycle of samsara.

- (b) 'Buddhists do not believe in rebirth.' Discuss. [17]**

This question elicited many weak responses, though there were some excellent responses. The best answers tended to explore the process of dependent origination, questioning whether this process of rebecoming could be considered rebirth or not. They sometimes made effective comparisons with Hinduism or concepts of rebirth in the philosophy specification. Weaker responses tended to outline the realms of rebirth rather than discuss whether the description of these realms indicated that rebirth did in fact take place.

Alternative B- Hinduism

Part 1

- 7 a) Explain the Vishishtadvaita system of Ramanuja. [33]**

A significant number of candidates compared the teachings of Ramanuja with those of Sankara at the expense of addressing the question. Relatively few candidates had a good understanding of the distinctive teachings of Ramanuja, for example his concept of maya. The best answers usually focused solely on Ramanuja's teachings, and demonstrated a good understanding of them.

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

Very few candidates understood the term monist, which was surprising given that it is explicitly mentioned on the specification. Most candidates tended to argue that Ramanuja was a monotheist rather than a polytheist, and although this could gain some credit without some discussion of monism they could not reach the highest levels.

- 8 a) Explain how moksha can be achieved. [33]**

This was the most popular question in this section. Most candidates discussed two or three of the four yogas (bhakti, karma, jnana and raja). The variation in marks was

based on the extent to which they understood and explained them. Some candidates demonstrated an excellent grasp of these paths, whilst others offered confused and inaccurate accounts. Some candidates explored the teachings of Ramanuja and/or Sankara and how these might lead to moksha. Those who did often demonstrated a more secure grasp of how these paths might lead to moksha and secured higher levels.

- (b) 'Moksha can only be achieved with God's help.' Discuss. [17]**

Candidates who had a secure understanding of bhakti and jnana were often able to apply to evaluate the role (or otherwise) of God in reaching moksha successfully. Some candidates offered good evaluation of the different views of the role of God in helping people attain moksha in the monkey and cat schools of thought, which developed from the teachings of Ramanuja.

- 9 a) Explain how jnana can lead to moksha. [33]**

Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment.

- (b) 'Moksha is an undesirable goal.' Discuss. [17]**

Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment.

Part 2

- 10 a) Explain the concept of bhakti as shown in the Bhagavad Gita. [33]**

This question tended to be answered very well or very poorly. The best answers focused on bhakti, and explored the significance of Krishna's theophany. There were a significant number of responses which recounted the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna about doing one's duty, and made no reference to bhakti. Unfortunately this did not answer the question and thus elicited very few marks.

- (b) 'The Bhagavad Gita is more important than the Vedas to Hindus today.' Discuss. [17]**

The best responses tended to explore the nature and status of the Vedas and the Bhagavad Gita, as well as their use, before reaching a conclusion. Most concluded that the Bhagavad Gita was used more widely, and since it was considered sruti literature by some had as high a status, so was more important. Weaker answers showed little understanding of the status of the scriptures, and some had little knowledge of the Vedas, and thus were able to offer little evaluation.

- 11 a) Explain how and why a Hindu might show devotion to a murti. [33]**

This was the most popular question in this section. Most candidates were able to explain how Hindus show devotion to murtis, but only those who explained why as well were able to access the higher marks. The best responses tended to offer a methodical approach explaining the importance of each action they described, and giving specific examples showing why people might worship murtis, for example praying to Ganesha before exams to ease the obstacles which might be faced in that difficult situation. Good responses often made reference to the bhakti path. Weaker responses tended to ignore the second part of the question, and often had little understanding of puja.

(b) 'Hindus worship idols.' Discuss. [17]

There were some very good responses to this question. Those who explored what an idol might be, and whether murtis could be considered idols often achieved highly. The best candidates clearly understood the nature of the murti. Weak responses often made little reference to murtis, and clearly missed the thrust of the question. A significant minority of responses claimed that Hindus worshipped pop-stars and celebrities as much as any other group so they did worship idols, showing little awareness of the context.

12 a) Explain the importance of male deities in Hinduism [33]

Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment.

(b) 'Siva is a frightening deity.' Discuss. [17]

Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment.

2767 Islam 1

General Comments:

The majority of candidates scored between 50 and 80 (out of a possible maximum of 100 marks) with a few scoring very highly and some scoring very low marks. The marks awarded, obviously, reflected a wide range of abilities. Some candidates showed that they already possess the kind of abilities necessary for A2 examinations; they constructed answers that displayed both a good level of knowledge and understanding as well as the skill to present a critical argument. Sadly, some candidates were barely of GCSE standard, displaying a sad lack of basic knowledge of Islam.

As happens, occasionally, with the first part (a) of each question, some candidates wrote answers to the question they wanted to see on the Question paper, rather than the question printed. Colleagues in centres cannot do much about this AO 1 problem, except to offer and discuss with candidates as wide a range of practice questions as possible.

With the second part (b) of each question, some candidates were unable to 'Discuss' or tackle questions that began with either 'To what extent...' or 'Assess how well...'. The A02 skills reflected in the part (b) questions are those that need to be learned very quickly by candidates embarking on post GCSE courses in religious studies. Model answers help but, possibly, the best way of helping candidates to deal with such questions is to spend time debating issues and encouraging candidates to make rough plans before writing their examination answers.

Cross accreditation was given where necessary.

The quality of English varied considerably; some responses were a pleasure to read while others, not always the weakest candidates, were very poor in terms of grammar. In addition, the writing style of some candidates made responses very difficult to read.

Comments on individual questions:

Part 1

1 a) Explain how and why sawm is observed by Muslims. [33]

This question was quite popular and was often well answered. There were two elements in the question and many candidates wrote more fully about 'how' than 'why'. Many candidates tended to focus on the fact that Sawm is one of the five articles of faith and, therefore, concentrated on the compulsory nature of the fast and ignored or forgot to mention the personal devotion/submission to and worship of Allah. Some candidates did not refer to the effect of Sawm on the Ummah. Some candidates focused on the aspects of self control and showing compassion to the poor but failed to mention the associated idea that Sawm enables Muslims to appreciate that everything they have is a gift from Allah. Some of the better candidates began their answer with some explanation of the importance of the five pillars.

(b) To what extent are religious beliefs more important than religious practices in Islam? [17]

Many candidates answered this question as though it read, 'Are religious beliefs more important than religious practices?'; this meant that they simply argued for the pre-eminence of one or the other. Higher marks were credited to those who tackled the question as written and, therefore, considered the notion of differentiating

between or prioritising various beliefs and practices. Niyah (intention) was another aspect that tended to be considered by the best candidates.

2 a) Compare the beliefs about Allah expressed in Surah 1 and in the shahadah. [33]

This was probably the most popular question in Part 1 of the paper. Most candidates showed that they knew the content of both Surah 1 and the Shahadah and were well able to explain that the former is Al-Fatihah (the opening), the latter one of the five pillars and the fundamental belief requirement of anyone wishing to declare themselves Muslim a point relevant to (b) as well. Unfortunately, some candidates spent time on the reference to Muhammad (PBOH) rather than dealing with the question asked. Many candidates were able to show that they knew that Surah 1 is a prayer but not that it is regarded as the perfect prayer and is considered to contain the essence of the Qur'an. A substantial number of candidates appeared to not understand what was meant by 'Compare'. Many candidates covered the concept of monotheism and how it is shown in both the Surah and the Shahadah but few went on to explain how Surah 1 develops and complements this concept. Only the better answers contained detailed explanations of the various descriptions of Allah found in Surah 1, but very few gave much consideration of the ideas of 'grace' and 'mercy'; these concepts should be more thoroughly explored in the classroom.

(b) 'The shahadah contains all that a Muslim needs to know.' Discuss. [17]

This was, generally, well answered in the sense that most candidates showed that they were able to discuss the claim made for the Shahadah. While niyyah (intention) is clearly relevant to this debate, it was surprising how few answers actually referred to it. The ideas associated with niyyah, hypocrisy and habit should be considered carefully in classroom discussions and in essay questions. Many candidates distinguished well between what one needs to know to become Muslim and what is required to live as a Muslim.

3 a) Explain the origins of the hajj. [33]

This was probably the least popular question in Part 1 of the paper. Large numbers set the hajj in the context of the Five Pillars but relatively few were able to develop an answer that showed that they had a good understanding of its origins. Some candidates seemed confused about the order or stages of the hajj; some stated that it re-enacts Muhammad's (PBOH) journey from Makkah to Al-Madinah (Yathrib). While a good number were able to link some elements of hajj with narratives concerning events in times before the time of Muhammad (PBOH), hardly anyone referred to the belief that the Ka'bah lies directly below the throne of Allah and is the place where Allah began creation. Again, candidates need to tease out what is meant by 'origins' and learn to draw up a plan to ensure that the relevant elements feature in their response.

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

Generally, this part of the question was fairly well answered; candidates showed some understanding of both elements to be discussed - the individual's relationship with Allah and being part of the Ummah. In their responses, many referred to the act of tawaf (circling the Ka'bah) and praying on the plain of Arafat. Few mentioned the idea that the whole pilgrimage is meant, primarily, to give glory to Allah. A few

candidates mentioned the fact that many of those who make the pilgrimage, because of the cost involved, go 'on behalf of their sponsors'.

Part 2

4 a) Explain the process by which the Surahs were received and collected. [33]

This question on the Surahs of the Qur'an was quite popular. Candidates were asked to explain the process whereby the Surahs were received and collected. A few candidates gave very full accounts of the whole revelation process. Many gave considerable detail about the Night of Power but little on revelations thereafter. There was a degree of confusion about the level of involvement, by Muhammad (PBOH), in the sorting out of the Surahs prior to his death. Some candidates stopped their accounts of the revelation process at Hafsa's chest but almost all provided a list of materials on which the revelations were written. Few referred to dates (when the revelations began/ended, when Muhammad (PBOH) died, etc.) but the names of key figures and why they were important was quite well known. The problem that many candidates faced was what information was vital to the answer and what was not. This was probably because they were unclear about the meaning and focus of the question; candidates need to spend time analysing the wording of questions to discover the main focus.

(b) 'It does not matter whether a Surah was revealed in Makkah or in al-Madinah.' Discuss. [17]

Most candidates argued in favour of the claim of the question; the fact that the Qur'an was revealed by Allah being the most important factor. Some of the responses were a delight to read. Many weaker candidates, however, stated the case without considering any other viewpoint. Some misread the question and debated whether Surahs revealed in Makkah were more important than those revealed in Al-Madinah. Most seemed to take as an absolute fact the idea that all the Surahs revealed in Makkah were shorter, more poetic and 'theological', whereas those revealed later were all longer, written in prose style and 'socio-political'. Some, following this line, referred to Surah 4 to support their case. Very few made any reference to the relevance of the time of revelation to solving apparent contradictions in the text.

5 a) Explain the role of the imam at Salut-ul-Jumu'ah. [33]

A question about the role of the Imam in the mosque and, in particular, at Salat-ul-Jumu'ah; it was quite a popular question. There were some very good accounts of the importance of Salah and, in particular, the role of the Imam at Zuhr prayers on Fridays. Most of the best responses mentioned the necessity of (men) gathering in the mosque for Salat-ul-Jumu'ah. Very few mentioned the fact that 'Imam' means 'in front of' and relatively few mentioned the fact that the Imam is not a priest. Whereas most candidates made reference to the Khutbah, several gave only the simple fact that the Imam gives it; some did not know the Arabic word and simply said 'sermon'. Very few mentioned the importance of the Khutbah but most made reference to the time of discussion at the end of Zuhr prayers. The better candidates tended to major on the 'qualifications' of an Imam in terms of training, etc. and the fact that the Imam is, generally, a well-respected male member of the community. Surprisingly few made reference to the minbar and the position on it taken by the Imam.

(b) 'A mosque cannot function properly without an imam.' Discuss. [17]

Many candidates who scored badly in (a) scored well on this part of the question; most responses clearly presented more than one viewpoint.

The vast majority of responses ignored the adverb (properly) in the question and simply argued whether a mosque could function without an Imam.

Many candidates made a distinction between the role of the Imam at Friday Zuhr prayers and the other 'services' provided in the mosque that an Imam facilitates, such as teaching adults and children.

The best responses also made reference to the belief that a mosque is a place of prayer and, therefore, do not necessitate having a building.

The weakest candidates tended only to present one viewpoint, a few suggesting that the Imam was like a priest.

6 a) Explain how Surah 4 reflects the social reforms by which Muhammad (PBOH) changed the lives of women. [33]

This was not a very popular question. Candidates answered the question as 'Explain how Surah 4 changed the lives of women. The best responses referred to the situation of women in pre-Islamic Arabia and then described in some detail how Surah 4 brought about some radical changes to their lives. Differentiation tended to be based on the depth and breadth of knowledge displayed in the answers. Some candidates seemed to believe that the Surah expected women to stay at home and be responsible for the education and well-being of the children. Some candidates chose to adopt a negative approach, pointing out, for example, the fact that women were still only allowed to half of what a man could receive by way of inheritance. It is important that candidates are given opportunities to read the passages themselves and to discuss their impact on the society in 7th century Arabia.

(b) Assess how well the title 'The Women' describes the contents of Surah 4. [17]

Few candidates actually 'assessed' how well 'The Women' describes the content of Surah 4. For most, the answer, in summary, amounted to 'Yes' because most of the Surah is about women or, 'No' because there is so many other things talked about in the Surah. In other words, there was little or no reference to an alternative viewpoint. Only the best responses referred to the significance of the changes in women's status as being a contributory factor even though many other issues are dealt with. Again, the best candidates were able to expand some of the other issues covered in the Surah.

2768 Judaism 1

General Comments:

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 demonstrate some understanding of the issues. Most attempted to sustain and justify their arguments with evidence.

The weakest candidates often failed to focus on the question and wrote generally around the topic or were weak on knowledge.

Some responses were knowledgeable on only one tradition of Judaism. Some candidates offered misinformed or mistaken information about Jewish practice and beliefs.

Comments on individual questions:

Part 1

- 1 (a) Explain the significance of living according to halakhah. [33]**

The best responses referred both to the practical aspects of halakhah and the discipline it brings to the lives of those who adhere to it.

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

Most candidates struggled to avoid repetition of points made in (a) and there was evidence that this left them with little to say.

The most commonly developed argument was that the Law is at the heart of Judaism and creates a unique identity for Jews and the halakhah, equally importantly is the outward expression of this.

The best answers gave a balanced view of Judaism as a multi-faceted faith.

- 2 (a) Explain the importance of the role of women in Jewish life and practice. [33]**

A lot of good knowledge and understanding was evident in many answers and, in some cases there was, substantial selection of relevant material. However, some answers lacked breadth and explored perhaps only one or two aspects of a wide range of information which might have included practical, religious, ethical, social and spiritual understanding of the role of women.

- (b) 'Men and women are equal in Judaism.' Discuss. [17]**

Most responses evaluated egalitarian and discriminatory practices in one or more traditions, with varying degrees of success. There were some excellent, perceptive responses. However there were also some ill-conceived arguments based on misinformation or lack of understanding of the complementary roles of men and women.

3 (a) Explain the laws of purity (niddah). [33]

Those candidates who had access to accurate information on this mitzvah were able to give very good answers. However, there was a tendency in some responses to concentrate on physical details at the expense of a more spiritual understanding of the use of the mikveh etc.

(b) 'The mikveh is more important than the synagogue.' Discuss. [17]

Most candidates gave a thoughtful response to this question and there were some intelligent, coherent arguments for the priority of the mikveh. The most common piece of evidence offered in support of the statement was the dispensation to sell the Torah Scrolls to build a mikveh.

The main weakness in answering this question was that many candidates wrongly referred to the synagogue as an indispensable place of worship.

Part 2

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

This was a popular question but candidates' interpretation of it produced some very dull answers. The weakest responses merely reiterated the Ten Commandments with some simple explanation. Some only offered one or two commandments as examples.

The best responses gave a detailed explanation of Exodus 20 as the basis for ethical monotheism and a unique Jewish identity.

(b) 'The commandments about G-d are more important than the commandments about people.' Discuss. [17]

Most candidates were able to sustain an argument about the importance of the commandments about people e.g. as sanctifying the name of G-d and being of less or more importance than the first five. The best answers used a range of evidence to establish the equal importance of all ten commandments.

5 (a) Explain the origins and practice of Sukkot. [33]

The performance on this question was more mixed than expected. Generally, candidates failed to give balanced weighting to origins and practice. Some were excellent on origins and brief on practice and vice versa. As this is a festival that commemorates its biblical origins and reflects the rituals of the Temple in its practices, both aspects are relevant.

(b) 'Celebrating Sukkot is pointless in the 21st century.' Discuss. [17]

This was generally well-answered in interesting and varied ways. Candidates gave both religious and personal reasons for both sides of the argument.

6 (a) Explain the role of prayer in Judaism. [33]

There were some good answers to this question which focussed on both

congregational and private prayer. Prayer was also explained as being divided into thanksgiving, supplication and praise etc. Some excellent responses explained the benefits of offering different forms of prayer. A significant number of candidates gained high marks.

The main weakness in answering this question was that some candidates wrote very generally about prayer, without specific reference to Judaism.

(b) 'G-d will listen to any form of prayer.' Discuss. [17]

The majority of candidates engaged with this question and although the quality of answers varied there were some perceptive comments at all levels of ability. The more traditional answers compared the value of ritualised prayer, in action and language, with private thoughts or reflection.

2769 Philosophy of Religion 2 (AS)

General Comments:

There was a wide variation in the standard of scripts on this paper. More able candidates demonstrated good subject knowledge and more importantly were able to focus in on the requirements of the question. Some candidates were less successful and produced material of a general nature that did not always address the question. Most candidates displayed an efficient use of time but an increased number missed out part of a question or wrote a very short response. Some candidates struggled to focus answers on the individual scholars named in the questions and it cannot be stressed enough that the examiners are looking for good answers to the question set. Large sections of material about other issues within the topic will not gain extra marks no matter how interesting it is. Questions 3 and 6 were probably the most popular. Questions 1 and 4 were done by fewer candidates.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Part 1

1. (a) **Explain how Hick approaches the issue of whether humans have souls. [33]**

This was not a popular question but it elicited a number of good responses from candidates who had clearly prepared well. Some candidates missed the focus of the question on the soul and appeared to run on auto-pilot at the mention of Hick and simply reproduced his thought experiment on John Smith without drawing conclusions from it. Better candidates were able to use this information and focus it on the question.

- (b) **'Hick's views on the soul are convincing' Discuss. [17]**

Understandably candidates were often confused as to whether Hick was a materialist or a dualist; however this did not prevent good arguments being presented as to the coherence of his views. Dawkins and Plato were brought in as alternative views.

2. (a) **Explain what is meant by the idea of rebirth. [33]**

Most candidates answered this question in terms of Hinduism and Buddhism. The quality and depth of knowledge displayed varied from those who confidently and accurately used the correct technical terms to those whose knowledge could best be described as shaky. Some good answers included Plato. Some candidates confused rebirth with resurrection or wrote about souls going to heaven. A few candidates gave detailed accounts of Hick and may have been better doing question 1.

- (b) **Assess the view that rebirth is the best theory of life after death. [17]**

This was generally well done and contrasts with Christian ideas and the atheistic idea that death is the end were well employed. A few candidates gave good arguments for both points of view but failed to give a conclusion.

3 (a) Explain why some religious believers consider miracles to be significant. [33]

This was by far the most popular question in section 1. Most candidates were able to make some attempt at answering the actual question even if it came at the end of a lengthy description of what a miracle was. A number of candidates missed the focus of the question and wrote at length on religious experience, including detailed accounts of James and Swinburne.

(b) 'Hume has shown that a belief in miracles is absurd.' Discuss. [17]

Many candidates knew Hume's views well and this led to some very good responses. Some answers were content to restate Hume's views in detail rather than evaluate them. Better candidates were able to engage with his views. Less successful candidates missed the focus on Hume and turned the question into a general discussion of the arguments for and against miracles.

Part 2

4 (a) Explain what is meant by non-propositional revelation. [33]

This was the least popular question and was the most poorly done. Candidates tended to confuse propositional and non-propositional revelation. Genuine understanding of the difference between them was rare. Some candidates choosing this question gave no answer at all for part a), but wrote a reasonable answer to part b). Obviously this disadvantaged the candidate greatly on the paper as a whole.

(b) 'All scripture is inspired by God.' Discuss. [17]

This was handled much better than part a). There was good understanding of the different views on how to interpret scripture and candidates were able to offer some arguments in justifying their own view.

5 (a) Explain how Aquinas used analogy to understand God. [33]

This question was answered well by the candidates. Most had good knowledge of Aquinas' views. Better answers contained good accounts of attribution and proportionality, often with the same examples such as bull's urine. Some candidates could remember the two types of analogy but were less clear on what exactly an analogy was. A few candidates misunderstood the question and wrote at length about Aquinas 5 ways.

(b) 'Analogy provides the best solution to the problems of religious language.' Discuss. [17]

There were some good answers to this question with candidates comparing analogy to other forms of language such as the *Via Negativa* and Myth as well as considering the merits of analogy. Less successful candidates did not seem to know what the problems of religious language were.

6 (a) Explain the advantages of using the *via negativa* to speak of God. [33]

This was a popular question. For those who were well prepared and understood the question, this posed very few problems. For some candidates who lacked knowledge of this aspect of religious language, the question was an opportunity to write about

everything else but the *via negativa*, which several mistook for the verification principle. A few candidates read the question as 'speak to God' and gave interesting answers about how God would be offended by negative language.

- (b) 'The *via negativa* serves only to show how pointless religious language is.'**
Discuss. **[17]**

The question confused some candidates as they seemed to understand the quote as implying that it was the purpose of the *via negativa* to make religious language pointless. However most candidates were able to explain the criticisms of religious language and this led to some good discussions.

2770 Religious Ethics 2 (AS)

General Comments:

Most candidates were able to complete two full questions and time management was generally good. Standards over all were generally good and none of the questions posed particular difficulty to the candidates.

However, as the questions were more specifically focussed on the specification some candidates seemed unprepared and weaker candidates struggled to answer the questions as they could not just rely on knowledge from 2760 and 2762.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Part 1

1 (a) Explain a libertarian understanding of moral responsibility.

This was a quite popular question and was generally quite well done. Most candidates could explain libertarianism and could link it to the concept of freedom.

However some candidates tended to produce generalised responses, just writing everything they knew about the different theories of determinism without making any links to moral responsibility.

(b) 'People are free to make moral decisions.' Discuss.

Candidates tended to use a deterministic approach and contrast the two theories, however they rarely reached a conclusion and tended to oversimplify the arguments.

2 (a) Explain, with examples, what is meant by hard determinism.

This was a more popular question and better candidates were able to produce some very good responses. The better answers were able to refer to the ideas of philosophers and were familiar with the debate, giving examples from Locke, Spinoza and Clarence Darrow in some detail. Most were able to refer to the Darrow case in the context of determinism, rather than just retell the tale.

(b) 'People are completely free to make moral decisions.' Discuss.

This question elicited very good analysis, contrasting compatibilistic approaches with Libertarianism and Hard Determinism. Candidates showed good use of evidence.

3 (a) Explain how the ethics of the religion you have studied might be applied to sex and relationships.

This was a very popular question which elicited some very good responses. Good candidates referred to teachings from the Bible and Aquinas. Better candidates were able to analyse the debate from Natural Law, referring to cause and purpose.

However, some answers were very simplistic, and a surprising number of candidates used Utilitarianism as a religious ethic.

(b) 'Religious ethics are not helpful in matters of sex and relationships.' Discuss.

In general this elicited some good answers, analysing the difficulties of using religious ethics to consider issues in sex and relationships. Many candidates commented on the difficulties of doing this in a secular society.

Some candidates, however, were unable to produce a balanced argument.

Part 2

4 (a) Explain the ethical principles of the religion you have studied in relation to war.

This question was well answered by most candidates, who showed a good knowledge of Biblical teaching and Just War theory. Many were able to show that Christianity, the only religion referred to, had a diverse approach and considered pacifism in its various forms.

However, many candidates used a simplistic approach to the Biblical teachings, or merely listed the Just War criteria with no real explanation.

(b) 'War should not be allowed, even as a last resort.' Discuss.

Candidates really engaged with this question which inspired some excellent responses with good use of examples from various wars. Even those candidates who had not done well in part a) managed to produce argument for this question. However, there were some candidates who used the question to write a tirade against the government's handling of the war in Iraq, showing very little critical analysis.

5 (a) Explain Butler's theory of conscience.

Very few candidates chose this question, but those who did gave good answers, explaining Butler's ideas clearly. There were some very good explanations of the role of conscience in harmonising self-love and benevolence.

(b) Assess the strengths and weaknesses of Butler's theory of conscience.

Most answers to this question used other theories of conscience to help them evaluate Butler.

6 (a) Explain Freud's theory of conscience.

This was a popular question, but unfortunately the good responses were rarer. Many candidates tended to simplify Freud. They either concentrated solely on guilt or said that conscience was superego, without really explaining the superego. There was a lot of linking of conscience with the Oedipus complex.

(b) Assess the strengths and weaknesses of Freud's theory of conscience.

Again there was a tendency for candidates to over-simplify Freud. There was little analytical response or comparison of Freud's theory to those of others.

2771 Philosophy of Religion 2 (A2)

General Comments:

The standard of scripts this year was often disappointing. The most common problem was candidates failing to answer the question set, frequently at excessive length. The examination is not a test of how much candidates can write, nor does it demand that candidates write everything they know about a broad area of the specification. The key to success is focus on the precise question that appears on the paper, and it is never the same question as last year. Too many candidates wrote pre-prepared answers with the merest occasional nod towards the question, or even, sometimes, without reference to it. The published Levels of Response demonstrate very clearly the approach taken by the examiners: candidates would be wise to study these as an invaluable guide to the construction of their own essays.

Too many candidates struggled to explain ideas because of poor grammar, and many scripts were difficult to read. Many would have benefited from attention to the precise meaning of philosophical terms such as 'prove', 'argue', 'refute', 'premise' etc. and many appeared to believe, erroneously, that 'a priori', 'deductive', and 'analytic' are synonyms, as are 'a posteriori', 'inductive' and 'synthetic'. These terms are not interchangeable. Some candidates misunderstood basic religious ideas, with Catholicism sometimes treated as being outside Christianity or holding beliefs the Pope would not recognise. Too many candidates resorted to argument by assertion, and a minority to vulgar abuse of thinkers.

Some candidates did write clear, interesting, focused and sometimes genuinely original responses. These brought much pleasure to examiners.

Comments on individual questions:

1. 'The concept of hell makes no sense.' Discuss

There were some excellent and thoughtful responses to this popular question, normally relating the concept of hell to notions of divine justice and mercy and to general questions of theodicy and divine intentions. Unfortunately, too many candidates chose to write instead either an account of post-mortem beliefs in every religion they could think of, through Buddhism, the Bahai faith or whatever, regardless of whether hell was a concept in those religions, or wrote about whether there was life after death, taking the usual route through Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Ryle, Hick (with John Smith visiting some new destinations) Dawkins et al. Some especially unwieldy scripts did both, to no great purpose.

The main problem with this question was that many students wrote all they knew on life after death and the body/soul distinction. Although relevant to an extent, candidates were not referring back to the question, thus receiving low marks for AO2.

2. 'The best way to God is through religious experience' Discuss.

This was also a popular question but many candidates chose to write about the general topic of religious experience without noting the term 'best'. Good candidates recognised that 'best' implied 'better than others' and correctly considered whether other ways might be better. There was generally some sound knowledge, if not always appropriately applied. Many candidates listed Swinburne's 5 types of religious experience, but few actually used this material to answer the question. Some very good responses referred to each of these categories individually assessing whether each was a good way to God. Again, candidates listed James' four qualities of mystical experience, with only very few successfully applying this information to the question. Evaluation based on poetic quality was rarely found. Quite

a few candidates used this question to write all they knew about religious experience or whether religious experiences actually happened. A significant number of candidates could not write accurate accounts of religious experiences, which is worrying considering this was an A2 paper. Strangely, some candidates wrote mostly about miracles, which would have been a much better response to question 3.

3. Assess the view that miracles are an obstacle to faith.

Again, there were some thoughtful answers but many accounts of Hume's four subsidiary objections to miracles (barbarous nations etc.) without apparent knowledge of the inductivism on which his position rests or any stated relevance to the question. A significant number of candidates did not understand what an '*obstacle to faith*' actually was. Unfortunately, some candidates read this question as miracles being an *article* of faith, and were marked accordingly. The best candidates drew out relevant points from Hume and many rightly understood the question in terms of Wiles' theological questions about miracles and God's nature. Some candidates incorrectly argued that the devout Wiles was an atheist.

4. Consider whether symbol provides any clear understanding of God.

Too many candidates read the question as 'Write everything you know about religious language' and there were extended and irrelevant treks through analogy, via negativa, verification, falsification, language games, and so on. It would seem that for many years now centres have not been alerting students to the fact that they cannot write all they know about religious language when a specific question on language arises and achieve a high mark. Very few students had sufficient knowledge of the nature of symbol, many writing briefly on the crucifix and on the bread and wine. Many had engaged so little with the list that they had revised that they stated that the verification and falsification principles were also alternative ways to talk about God. Better candidates wrote sound – usually much shorter, and certainly more focused – essays about symbol. Some usefully distinguished between Tillich and the different approach of J.H.Randall jr., and there were some interesting ideas about non-verbal symbols from some candidates. Either was a legitimate approach.

2772 Religious Ethics 2 (A2)

General Comments:

All candidates were well prepared and the quality of the answers showed that some centres have encouraged their candidates to make specific references to scholars and use quotes to illustrate answers. There were some very good responses from candidates who were well prepared. Excellent candidates explored thinkers and ideas outside those cited in the specification, and were thus able to show outstanding command of detail and even more impressive critical evaluation.

There were still a good number of candidates who did make appropriate reference to scholars but failed to make any analytical approach to the view stated. However, there seemed to be a better standard overall than in previous years and there appeared to be a significant reduction in the number of less able candidates giving fewer of the "general opinion" essays.

Some candidates clearly spent too much time on the first essay question and then ran out of time for the second question. However, these were in the minority. Most seemed to use the allocated time appropriately. All candidates seemed to manage to answer two questions. Essay plans were in the minority and some candidates would have benefited from preparing their answers in this way.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1 Assess the view that conscience should always be obeyed.

This was an extremely popular question, and was answered particularly well by many candidates who were clearly enthused by the topic. Aquinas seemed to be covered very well by many candidates; Butler and Newman less well. Freud's approach was covered very well in general.

However, whilst candidates seemed very able in pointing out the weaknesses of religious theories concerning conscience they were notably less secure in pointing out the weaknesses of secular approaches. Perhaps because of time and planning etc., the approaches of Freud, Piaget and Fromm were not evaluated with the same thoroughness as other approaches.

Not many candidates indicated the Pauline background to Aquinas.

There were some very good evaluative responses. Some of the weaker answers dealt with overly long examples. This question was attempted by the vast majority of the candidates. The thinkers named on the specification (Aquinas, Butler and Freud) were generally known well and well compared and contrasted. However, many others were brought in, notably St. Paul, Jerome, Augustine, Newman, Piaget and Fromm and a few candidates mentioned Kohlberg, Gula, Prichard and Kirkegaard.

There is perhaps a tendency to oversimplify Freud's concept of the superego as 'what our parents have told us', although the best candidates clearly grasp the significance of the tensions inherent in Freud's tripartite model of the human personality. Interestingly, there is no clear agreement amongst the candidates as to whether Freud's thinking suggests that we should or should not follow our consciences.

Some candidates tended to deal with the question of whether the conscience could be thought of as 'the voice of God' but most genuinely managed to use this (admittedly relevant) question as a subsidiary to the overall one of whether the conscience should be obeyed.

Some possibly attempted to bring in too many thinkers to the detriment of the overall argument. The best candidates related their critical evaluation of the individual thinkers to their overall argument, some doing it extremely successfully.

2 'Sex and relationships are matters of personal choice.' Discuss.

Just over half of candidates attempted this question and there were some very engaging answers to this question, unsurprisingly as it is an area where there is much interest amongst A-level students.

There were some very good discussions of Homosexuality, using Biblical teaching as this seemed to lend itself to the issue of personal choice, nature/nurture debate etc. A large number of candidates showed themselves to be clearly informed and able to evaluate this area.

Very few candidates seemed to refer to Divine Command Theory. There were some unusual approaches to Kantian ethics here e.g. according to Kant "ought means can", and so if you can have sex then you ought to have sex.

Better candidates brought in libertarian and contractarian approaches, and focussed immediately on the concept of personal choice, producing some fine essays as a consequence. There were also some good references to feminist perspectives by some candidates.

The better candidates recognised that there had to be an element of freedom in this area, but that a libertarian free-for-all, untempered by considerations of possible harm would be untenable. Freedom had to be constrained by moral considerations stemming from ethical theories such as Natural Law, utilitarianism, Situation Ethics etc. Few differentiated the different types of utilitarian approach (preference, rule etc.) and there were many sweeping (and untrue) statements relating to current RC understanding of Natural Law ('Catholics believe that the only purpose of sex is procreation'). There were many references to Augustine and Aquinas but few to progressive RC thinkers such as Matthew Fox or Jack Dominian. Better candidates were able to discuss the problems inherent in the Natural Law approach without totally dismissing it.

There were many references to the Biblical prohibition of homosexual relations, although few candidates recognised that understanding in this area has developed hugely since biblical times.

The Mosaic injunctions against adultery and fornication were well represented, but the enthusiastic endorsement of sexual pleasure in the 'Song of Songs' was not.

Again, weaker candidates dealt with overly long examples and a few very weak answers made little reference to any ethical theory and could have been written by students who had not taken the A-level course.

Some candidates tackled the question from the perspectives of determinism and this was done to satisfactory and good levels. Determinist thinking was used to suggest that there was no freedom in sexual orientation.

3 Examine critically the claim that religious ethics are the best approach to justifying killing in war.

This was a popular question and produced a number of very good responses.

However, a number of candidates did not seem aware of the link between Aquinas and the Just War Theory i.e. they discussed Aquinas and a Natural Law approach to killing in war and reached the conclusion that the primary precept "preserve life" meant that Aquinas never justified killing in war. Kant on war was not in general covered well at all e.g. along the lines of because you cannot universalise killing other people, Kant opposed war.

A number of candidates were not able to provide any clear, specific examples which would have helped in writing their essays. Clearly due to time not very much could be written but even a couple of sentences might have given some essays a firmer foundation. There were general comments about killing in war being justified in WWII because of fighting against Hitler but few references to events such as the bombing of Hiroshima or Dresden and the killing involved there with fewer weak answers than no. 2.

The best candidates made reference to the just war theory- the terms of which were generally well known- and identified it as a product of 'religious ethics', although as some rightly commented, it could be equally well followed by atheists or agnostics.

Better candidates included a critique of just war theory, although few recognised it as an extension of Natural Law thinking. Some did recognise it as an attempt to find the 'lesser evil' but few linked it with modern proportionalism or attempted to link acts of war with 'double effect' theory.

Candidates who argued purely from biblical texts did not tend to answer as successfully and surprisingly few who did so critically examined Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5 on revenge and love for enemies; these tended to be stated baldly as if their meaning and application were obvious.

The best candidates referred to pacifism as a product of religious ethics and recognised the different forms. Again, the best scripts applied utilitarian thinking to war.

There were some good evaluative responses although, again, weaker candidates spent too long on example.

4 'Absolutist ethics prevent progress in genetic engineering'. Discuss

This was the least popular question; those who attempted to answer this question did not do very well in most cases. Good answers to this question were rare but some did achieve a good mark for this if the question was approached in the correct way.

Genetic engineering is clearly a very wide area and perhaps lack of detailed knowledge deterred candidates. Unfortunately weaker candidates did not seem entirely clear what "Absolutist" ethics actually meant. Most of the answers did recognise the approach that 'absolutist ethics' were likely to take, however, there was no real consideration of what a relative morality might offer.

There were a number of candidates who answered the question at GCSE (with high evaluation skills) rather than A level (with analytical and scholarly approaches) standard.

2773 Jewish Scriptures 2

General Comments:

Overall questions appeared to be equally popular with candidates, although some centres clearly preferred some questions to other. Generally candidates knew their texts quite well but knowledge of interpretation was weaker especially where a difficult passage was open to several different possible views. Some excellent candidates not only knew the views of various interpretations but were able to quote them against each other. For non-Jewish centres knowledge of contemporary non-Jewish scholarship generally needed to be better informed – a lot has been written since Gunkel and Wellhausen.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1 Either

(a) To what extent are the visions in the book of Amos essential to his message?

There were, in effect, two elements to this question: Amos' message and the meaning and content of the visions. Those candidates who wrote good answers were able to balance both aspects and were able to unpack each of the visions and their relationship to Amos' message. Unfortunately some candidates misunderstood vision to refer to all of Amos' words and failed to focus in on the vision of locusts, fire, plumb-line, summer fruits and temple. Most agreed that the visions were essential to Amos' message, only a few considered his oracles to contain a broader message than the visions and therefore were able to discuss the question in a more subtle and interesting way.

Or

(b) Discuss the view that the book of Amos throws light on the role and message of true prophets.

Generally this question was not as well answered as 1a. Many standard answers outlined Amos' social message and considered that this was what made him a true prophet. Surprisingly few candidates began with Amos' dispute with Amaziah and the discussion about Amos' relationship with the cult prophet. Very few actually considered Amos' style of prophecy to be very similar to what we know of the cult prophets. Some understood that Amos did not think of himself as a professional seer but few reflected on how he was able to develop his own prophetic style. Some good answers compared Amos to the other lone prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Overall, there was disappointingly little detailed knowledge of the nature of prophecy and the prophetic vocation.

2 Either

(a) To what extent was Micah more interested in a messianic kingdom rather than in a messianic figure?

This question was particularly well answered by some Jewish centres who were able to link their wider knowledge of messianic expectation with Micah. Some excellent answers contrasted orthodox and progressive views of the messianic kingdom and were able to consider the Davidic figure in Micah as a metaphor of the kingdom rather than an actual person. Equally there were those who considered the place of Bethlehem to indicate the fulfilment of prophecies for a Davidic messiah and were able to cite the appropriate supportive texts.

Or

- (b) **'The writers of the Jewish Scriptures give no clear teachings about reward and punishment.'** Discuss with reference to the texts you have studied.

Many essays were surprised that the question could even contemplate that reward and punishment could either not be central to the Jewish Scriptures or unclear. Far too many candidates effectively listed the set texts and described their content without sufficient explanation or analysis.

On the other hand those who decided that unclear could mean inconsistent or contradictory fared much better. Good candidates were able to consider, for example, that the message of Job is really less about reward and punishment than the nature of G-d and the traditional teaching on moral responsibility. Isaiah 53 was a popular passage for discussion but only the very good candidates were able to discuss the figure of the servant *and* the voice of those who have looked at the suffering of the servant and been moved. Many rejected the possibility that Judaism can countenance vicarious suffering for the sins of others but their reasons tended to be unsupported.

2774 New Testament 2

General Comments:

In the performance of candidates who achieved the higher levels, there was detailed evidence of understanding and engagement with the topic and very good comprehension of the demands of the questions. The best candidates demonstrated understanding and analysis of different viewpoints.

Disappointingly, there seemed to be more evidence than usual of over-revised, formulaic answers in both sections of the paper. In some cases the sourced material and views of scholars was identical, word for word, in the work of different candidates. Candidates who showed the most flair also showed evidence of independent study.

There was some evidence that a number of candidates had spent too long in answering a first question and the second one was rushed or incomplete. Also, the overuse of asterisks, insertions and footnotes detracted from the fluency of some answers.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Alternative A – The Early Church

1 ‘Paul’s teaching on justification completely replaced the Law.’ Discuss.

This was a popular topic and the question was generally very well-answered with some excellent evaluation of Paul’s arguments from the prescribed texts.

However, some candidates were too complacent and undisciplined in their writing. They gave a lot of description from the texts, especially Romans but with little analysis.

2 ‘...for as all die in Adam, so will all be made alive in Christ.’ (1Corinthians 15:22). Examine critically Paul’s teaching on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15.

There was a tendency to interpret the phrase ‘examine critically’ as meaning to criticise negatively and some candidates attempted to challenge Paul’s theology of the resurrection but with varying degrees of success.

The best answers showed good knowledge of the details of Paul’s teaching and showed awareness of the critical issues surrounding his description of the Parousia and the views of scholars in this crucial debate.

3 Examine what, if anything, is distinctive about the letter to the Romans.

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

4 ‘The letter to the Ephesians cannot have been written by the same person who wrote Galatians.’ Discuss.

This was a very popular question. The majority of candidates who chose it obviously enjoyed the debate about the authorship of Ephesians and demonstrated understanding and engagement with the material and the different scholars’ views. However, in some

cases Galatians was only briefly referred to or not mentioned at all, which limited achievement.

High level responses demonstrated skill in comparing the audience, style and content of the two epistles and analysis of the debate about similarities and differences.

Alternative B – The Gospels

5 Explain the theological significance of the healing miracles in Mark's Gospel.

Generally, this was well answered and the majority of candidates argued in an interesting and varied way about the theological significance of the miracles in Mark 1-2 and Mark 5.

The best responses explored the idea that the miracle stories were integral to the presentation of the gospel and illustrated Christian theology and ethics in contrast to accepted Jewish ideas. There was some perceptive analysis of the views on Early Church redaction.

Weaker answers were overly descriptive.

6 'The gospel writers considered Jesus' status to be that of the Messiah.' Discuss.

It appeared that the majority of candidates who tackled this question were, for the most part, unsure of their ground. However, too few candidates answered this question for the examiners to produce a report on overall performance.

7 'Jesus' parables give a confused description of the Kingdom of God.' Discuss.

This was a very popular question and appeared to be a topic on which the majority of candidates were well rehearsed. The best answers critically examined the different strands of understanding and interpretation given to the parables in the prescribed texts. The main weakness in answering this question was that some candidates referred to the different scholars' views on future, realised and inaugurated eschatology without relevant use of parables as evidence.

8 'The Sermon on the Mount commands perfect behaviour.' Discuss.

This was one of the most popular questions on the paper and a significant number of candidates reached the higher levels of marks.

Generally, selection and deployment of material from the text was good to excellent and the majority of candidates understood the demands of the question.

However, in some responses the evaluation was the main focus of the essay and there was a lack of facts and evidence from the Sermon to support or justify the views expressed. These were obviously intelligent answers but they lacked substance.

2775 Developments in Christian Thought 2

General Comments:

It is very pleasing to see how more and more candidates are now much better able to use technical language and have a wider understanding of theology than in previous years. There were some excellent responses to most of the questions, some candidates revealing a knowledge that went well beyond the expectations of the specification.

However, many candidates came unstuck because they failed to read the essay questions carefully enough. Far too many, even potentially good candidates, wrote everything they knew about theology of religions or King and Cone, for example, when they would have been far better off limiting their answers to one or two areas by focusing carefully on the question.

Many candidates just wrote too much. Some of the best answers were not long, but carefully composed, legible, and referred to the essay title at all times. It was certainly the case, many times, that less was more.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1 Either

- (a) **'It is a contradiction to say that, in Christ, God takes away the sins of the world and that salvation is also fully possible outside Christianity.' Discuss.**

Good candidates focussed on the relationship between exclusivism and inclusivism. Some were able to discuss Barth's theology and *Dominus Iesus*, increasingly candidates also refer to Lindbeck and Kraemer (less successfully). Only a few excellent answers looked properly at the notion of salvation being 'fully possible' in non-Christian religions. Those who had a good grasp of Rahner were able to tackle this quite well. A few were aware of Barth's distinction between revelation and religion/Christianity as institution and were able to discuss his theology of election.

Candidates who discussed pluralism were less successful and it often led them away from the central demands of the question, however good their understanding of Hick and the pluralists might have been.

Or

- (b) **'Christianity is unique and shares nothing in common with other religions.' Discuss.**

This question was as popular amongst candidates as question 1a. Good answers considered what is meant by Christian uniqueness, often by starting from the exclusivist assumptions and contrasting it with Hick's thesis that uniqueness has to be understood mythologically. Good answers were able to explain his noumenal/phenomenological distinction well, although the parable of the elephant was often more of a hindrance than a help (Rumi's many lamps analogy fared better).

For some reason this year the doctrine of 'the invincibly ignorant' appears to have been taught by many centres and made its appearance in candidates' answers. It was used to good effect by some, although less good candidates liked the sound of the phrase but were less sure as to its meaning and place in Christian history and thought.

2 Either

(a) 'It makes no sense to say that God is black.' Discuss.

Although this was not a popular question, those who attempted it often gave a good account of Cone's notion of blackness as an expression of black suffering in relation to a God of justice. Very good answers were able to consider this notion of God and universal attributes of God. Some were able to refer to Cone's use of Tillich's symbolic language and ponder whether blackness is therefore ontological or existential. Very few candidates looked at Cone's Christology and his discussion of the black messiah.

Or

(b) 'Martin Luther King Jr's theology and James Cone's theology do not share the same aims.' Discuss.

This was a very popular question and most candidates were familiar with the differences between King and Cone. Weaker candidates lacked sufficient knowledge of Cone's theology and most focussed on his 'by any means necessary' aim of achieving black power. Many candidates seem unaware that this aspect of Cone's theology is fairly minor compared to the more important issues of revelation, eschatology and Christology. However, amongst good candidates who covered these themes, there was some confusion over Cone's eschatology (and even what the word means), although most had a clearer understanding of King's 'beloved community' and the 'New Jerusalem' motif.

2776 Eastern Religions 2

General Comments:

There were a higher number of candidates who had not completed the front of their exam booklets correctly. A significant minority had failed to write their first name in the 'other names' box, and many had not recorded the questions they had attempted. Centres may wish to remind students to complete their front-sheets at the end of the examination.

Candidates were generally well-prepared for the examination. Stronger candidates were able to give evidence of extensive understanding, and they offered good critical analysis. Some candidates gave extremely detailed descriptions (e.g. of Pure Land teachings, meditation practices, and the bodhisattva path) but failed to justify or sustain critical arguments, so gained few marks for the AO2.

Some candidates had revised answers to past papers, but could not apply their knowledge effectively to the specific questions on this paper.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Alternative A – Buddhism

1 'Pure Land Buddhism is just a way to encourage people to practise Buddhism.' Discuss.

Candidates were often able to give good descriptions of the Pure Lands, and some of the teachings and practices of the Pure Land School. Many candidates were less able to address the evaluative aspects of the question, and gained fewer marks on AO2. The best responses made reference to the concept of upaya, and discussed whether Pure Land teachings could be seen as upaya or not. Many weaker candidates seemed to be discussing whether Pure Land could be regarded as Buddhism at all, or whether it offered an easy route to nibbana, rather than addressing the question.

2 'Meditation is the feature which unites Buddhism.' Discuss.

Candidates generally had a good knowledge of meditation practices, and were able to write very good descriptive accounts of the methods and purpose of meditation. Some candidates implicitly addressed the question by exploring the similarities and differences between Theravada and Mahayana meditation practices. The best responses explicitly addressed the issue of whether meditation was the uniting feature of Buddhism, offering comparison with ethics or the aim of nibbana. Weaker answers tended to try and explore whether meditation was important, or the purpose of meditation.

3 'In Mahayana Buddhism the bodhisattvas have replaced the gods.' Discuss.

This was the least popular question in this section. Many candidates were able to offer reasonable descriptions of the bodhisattva path, but were less focused on the status and importance of the bodhisattvas. The best answers often offered comparisons with the status of the gods in Buddhism, arguing that the bodhisattvas were significantly more important since the gods had a temporary status and were still trapped in samsara. Other good responses offered comparison with the status of gods in Hinduism, exploring whether the bodhisattvas fulfilled the same role for practitioners. Weaker answers were limited to stating that bodhisattvas were not gods, and otherwise ignored the second part of the question.

4 'The aim of the arhat in Theravada Buddhism is selfish.' Discuss.

In pleasant contrast to previous years candidates were usually able to offer a good description of the arhat path. Most of the good responses offered comparison with the bodhisattva path, before reaching a conclusion. Although many concluded that the arhat path was selfish, in comparison with the compassion demonstrated in the bodhisattva path, there were some good discussions about whether an arhat could be selfish given the lack of a self. Weaker candidates often ignored the second part of the question.

Alternative B – Hinduism

5 'The Arya Samaj emphasised religious reform while the Bhramo Samaj emphasised social reform.' Discuss.

Responses varied widely to this question. Those who had a good knowledge of the religious and social reforms of the Arya and Brahmo Samaj were often able to use this knowledge effectively to assess the question. Good responses tended to argue that for both movements the social and religious factors were intertwined, and one could not be emphasised over the other, but there were good responses which argued otherwise. Weak candidates tended to have some awareness of the social reforms of each movement, but were unaware of the religious reforms of each.

6 'The system of varnashramadharma is idealistic and of no real value to Hindus today.' Discuss.

This was the most popular question in this section. Most candidates were able to offer a clear description of the varnashramadharma system, though the analysis of the value of the system was often less well developed. Weaker candidates tended to have little awareness of the extent to which varnashramadharma is followed today, or has ever been. The best responses showed awareness of the scriptural basis of the system, and offered clear analysis of the likelihood of the system ever having operated as described, before reaching a conclusion. They were also aware of challenges to the system today, as well as the benefits and hindrances associated with the system.

7 Assess Gandhi's importance for Hindus today.

This question tended to be chosen by weaker candidates. They often outlined the life and teaching of Gandhi without addressing the importance of Gandhi for Hinduism today. Better responses discussed whether Gandhi's social reforms had a continuing influence in India, and thus whether Gandhi remained important for Hindus today. Others explored the continuing reverence for Gandhi within Hinduism, and his importance as a symbol.

8 'Hindu ethics are too complicated to help Hindus when they have to make ethical decisions.' Discuss.

Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment.

2777 Islam 2

General Comments:

The vast majority of candidates came to the examination well prepared and clearly determined to show their knowledge and understanding of Islam. The majority understood the questions and engaged with them in a proficient manner. A few, sadly, misread a particular question and, therefore, were unable to gain marks for AO1; however, markers were able to award marks for AO2: the quality of argument displayed.

There were many excellent scripts, a few gaining full marks. The higher marks were gained because of the breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding displayed, the quality of argument and the quotations from and references to the Qur'an and other texts employed in evidence.

Among many, however, there was too little analysis and argument and, conversely, too much pure description based on a faith standpoint. Candidates at this level need to recognise that a Madrassah approach to tackling questions is inadequate if high grades are to be achieved.

As last year, some candidates simply wrote as much as they could about an aspect of the question. Candidates need to understand that 'discussion' involves using evidence from acknowledged sources.

Some scripts were extremely difficult to read, due the peculiar style of writing used by the candidate concerned. In these cases, the principal examiner had to be involved in the marking process in order to give the candidate the fairest possible mark.

Several centres failed to ensure that candidates completed the cover sheets properly.

Several centres failed to complete the front of the mailing envelope.

Some centres failed to mail the envelopes quickly, thereby delaying the marking process.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1 Discuss the extent to which Ijtihad is important in establishing Muslim ethical values.

The question was not very popular.

Generally, however, candidates read the question as '*Is Ijtihad important in establishing Muslim values*'.

Only the best responses tackled the question as written.

While the majority of candidates gave a definition of Ijtihad, some failed to show its relationship to Shariah, ijma and qiyas and simply argued about its importance in terms of clarifying areas of uncertainty in relation to the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

There was some confusion concerning the closing of the door to Ijtihad and where the four main law schools fit in to the whole 'puzzle'. Indeed, one of the characteristics of the poorer responses to this question was the display of confusion.

The majority of the responses to this question did not gain very good marks.

Most were quite adamant that it is required to tackle modern problems; often referring to the issue of intoxicants and many insisted that 'Shias are more up-to-date than Sunnis, because they accept Ijtihad'

Clearly, there is a need for centres to spend more time explaining Ijtihad, its relation to Shariah, Ijma and Qiyas, as well as exploring the issues concerning its relevance today. Candidates need to be directed to recent texts that explore the issues or, at least, to be given relevant quotations from academic texts.

There is also a need for candidates to understand what 'Discuss the extent to which.....is important' means; this is possibly best done by reading and then discussing some 'model' answers.

2 'Believing in angels is the least important of the articles of Islamic belief.' Discuss.

This question was quite popular.

There were some very good responses to this question; there were also a number of very poor answers.

Again, a number of candidates wrote all they knew about angels; most writing about the various appearances and showing good knowledge of the incidents and the names of the angels involved. A number of candidates referred to the angels (some showing confusion about the number at each shoulder) who write down one's actions to be produced on the last day. Very few mentioned the acknowledgement of these angels during Salah. Once again, there was a marked lack of analysis in what candidates wrote. This was especially noticeable where candidates made contradictory statements when writing about Iblis.

No candidates considered the distinction between 'believing in' and beliefs about'.

Many candidates ignored '*is the least important*' and argued whether or not Muslims should believe in angels.

Most candidates ignored the idea that angels have a beneficent quality, focussing more on their 'threatening' nature in relation to judgement day.

Better responses explained the articles of belief (both in terms of the six articles or the three groupings of Tawhid, Risalah and Akhira) and explored the links between them, concluding that without belief in angels become meaningless.

The best candidates argued quite well showing that they were grappling with the importance of the unity of all the articles as well as the idea that some articles appear to carry more weight than others.

Quotations from the Qur'an were most frequently found in the better responses. There were few references to other academic authorities.

3 'Tawhid is the most important concept in understanding the nature of Allah.' Discuss.

This was a popular question.

Again, there was a wide range of responses in terms of quality.

The vast majority found no difficulty in explaining, at the outset, that Tawhid is the belief in the oneness of Allah; some laying emphasis on the absolute monotheism of Islam in contrast to other religions that 'wrongly claim to be monotheistic', like Christianity.

The majority also explored the different ways Tawhid is emphasised in the Qur'an and by Muslims in their practices.

Surprisingly few made reference to the lack of statues, etc., in the mosque but all laid emphasis on the notion of Shirk as being 'one sin that will not be forgiven'.

The better responses made good use of Surah 1 to explore the attributes of Allah as Creator, Sustainer, Judge and Guide. The better responses also referred to the 'glorious names' of Allah; the best showing that all these 'descriptions' reveal how complex and, ultimately, incomprehensible is Allah.

In this regard, the best responses explored, rather than simply stated, the ideas of transcendence and immanence.

Many candidates ignored the question and argued that 'Tawhid is the most important concept in understanding the nature of Islam.' This, of course, is a valid judgement to make but not at the expense of the focus of the question. It is important that centres help candidates to ascertain the focus of examination questions and prepare plans that ensure that they stay focussed. It was clear that, for many candidates, there is a need to explore the meaning of 'concept' and 'nature'.

4 How far would you agree that the Sunnah provides the real basis for Muslim life?

This was another popular question.

Only the best candidates answered the whole question; exploring directly or indirectly, the meaning of 'real' in the question. These candidates took the opportunity to show that they understood the relative importance of the various sources of authority for Muslim ethical rulings.

Weaker candidates tended to ignore such considerations and focussed only on the Sunnah; what it embraces and the belief that it clarifies Qur'anic pronouncements; for example, how the Sunnah clarifies the teaching about prayer times, etc.

Most responses made reference to the idea that 'Muhammad (PBOH) is the walking, talking Qur'an' and that 'Muhammad (PBOH), who received the Qur'an from Allah, was clearly the best example to follow if one wants to live a life pleasing to Allah'. The better responses went further to say that although Muhammad (PBOH) was the best role model for Muslims in any age and lived a perfect human life, he is never worshipped.

The lack of an objective analysis of this idea was a feature in almost all responses.

The fact that Shias only accept Ahadith that trace back to Ali was also rarely seen in responses.

Most candidates stated that the Qur'an contains, literally, the words of Allah and that Sunnah comprises the words and works/actions of the prophet but only the stronger candidates explored this in relation to the question.

Only the best responses explored the importance of Shariah in relation to the Sunnah. Similarly, only the better candidates referred to the arguments over the reliability of Ahadith.

Reference to the classification of Ahadith as sound, adequate, weak and inferior was rarely seen.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

Some candidates failed to answer the question, '*How far would you agree that the Sunnah provides the real basis...?*' and, instead, answered the question they wanted to see – '*Is the Sunnah the real basis....?*' Once again, this led to a lack of good analysis and evaluation.

Sadly, one candidate misread the question and wrote about Sunni Islam.

2778 Judaism 2

General comments:

There were some excellent essays, which were well constructed and theologically competent. However, there was evidence that some candidates who, although enthusiastic in their answers, were also undisciplined in writing and expression and limited their achievement by a loss of coherence. The main weaknesses were answers which were all narrative with little analysis and responses that were anecdotal rather than factual.

Comments on individual questions:

1 'The State of Israel is not the Promised Land.' Discuss.

There were some detailed and knowledgeable responses which attempted to explain the broad canvas of opinions relating to the religious significance of the promised land and the political importance of the State of Israel.

The main factors in discriminating between excellent, good and average performances were the selection of relevant material and a cogent line of argument, which maintained the focus of the question.

In many answers, the main weakness was the failure to maintain a balance between assessing covenantal evidence of Israel as the promised land and secular and religious views about the State of Israel as it exists today. Some candidates gave very one-dimensional arguments.

2 'Judaism is being weakened by the different divisions within it.' Discuss.

Some candidates based their response on an examination of the historical background of the different groups within Judaism. Most offered some explanation of the differences in practice as well as fundamental theological differences. Evaluations were mostly developed along the lines that Judaism could be perceived to be failing to provide a united front but the variety of opinions and beliefs could strengthen the faith through diversity of choice and debate.

There were some intelligent answers, which attempted to evaluate the merits of non-diversity in Judaism but did not provide supporting evidence and this omission weakened the level of achievement.

3 'Post-holocaust theology displays a tendency towards the denial of the existence of G-d.' Discuss.

This was a popular question and the majority of candidates engaged enthusiastically with the topic, with varying levels of success. The views of Post Holocaust theologians were well rehearsed but some responses offered a lot of narrative with only one paragraph of simplistic evaluation. Another weakness in analysis, in some responses, was a tendency to categorise theologians into two groups who either supported or refuted the denial of G-d.

In some answers, the analysis of the impact these ideas might have on contemporary Judaism was only superficial and some candidates had a confused idea of the timescale in which these views were presented, some believing that the ideas were prevalent at the time of the Holocaust.

However, there were a wide variety of responses and some were exceptional in their clarity of argument and analysis across a broad spectrum of attitudes from Rubenstein to Berkovits.

4 'The concept of waiting for the Messiah is not as powerful as that of the Messianic Age.' Discuss.

This was not a popular question. Most responses attempted to explain the figure of the Messiah and the concept of a Messianic Age according to the beliefs of Orthodox, Reform and progressive Jews. Some did this with a measure of success and a few made reference to Maimonides. There were a minority of good answers but generally the performance on this question was weak.

2779 Philosophy of Religion 1

General comments:

The standard of scripts was quite varied. There were some excellent responses to the questions but a number of candidates' scripts were disappointing. There was a marked increase in candidates writing very long but largely irrelevant essays rather than discussing the question set. Some of the best responses were quite brief. On some occasions candidates had considerable subject knowledge and had clearly learned a great deal, yet were lacking in the ability to select only that which was relevant to the question. Candidates need, in preparation, to concentrate on relevance. The exam is not a straight memory test and examiners do not give marks according to length.

Candidates gaining higher marks demonstrated a good ability to argue their case using evidence and answers read as a coherent whole. Less successful candidates tended to argue by assertion, (one or two by personal abuse of philosophers!) or present opposing views in juxtaposition leaving the examiner to work out the connection and thread of the argument. Some candidates struggled with basic philosophical terms such as 'argue', 'proof', 'refute'. In addition, chronology was a problem for some, with Aquinas dissenting from Kant or Irenaeus building on the *Summa Theologica*. Nevertheless, the candidates on this paper were very knowledgeable and many of them, with a little more awareness of examination technique, could have significantly increased their marks.

Comments on individual questions:

1 'Irenaeus' theodicy provides a good justification for the existence of moral evil.' Discuss.

This question was slightly less popular than the others and was perhaps a little disappointing in terms of the overall standard. Whilst there were some excellent focused answers, too many candidates wrote apparently standard 'Problem of Evil' answers, working through every theodicy they had learned. It was not uncommon to see answers that had as much material on Augustine as on Irenaeus. Many failed to note the term '*moral evil*' in the question, writing principally about suffering. Significant numbers conflated Irenaeus and Hick, particularly in assuming that both deny the existence of Hell; however this was credited according to the mark scheme. Some candidates made good use of both Hick and Swinburne's ideas to defend Irenaeus. There was some good use of D.Z. Phillips' attack on the instrumentalism of approaches such as soul-making, though no-one developed his further argument that theodicies like this actually add to the evils of the world.

2 'Sociology provides a convincing argument against religious belief.' Discuss.

This was perhaps the best done question. Many candidates had sound and detailed knowledge of Marx, Durkheim and Weber, though criticisms were often undeveloped. A few made use of the very cogent criticisms of H.H. Farmer, cited by Hick. Some candidates treated Jung and Freud as sociologists, demonstrating a lack of firm grasp of their material. A few candidates struggling to explain Weber clearly, making vague statements that religion is all to do with money or confusing him with Durkheim.

3 'Religious experience provides no evidence of the existence of God.' Discuss.

This question was generally done to a reasonable standard although the general comments about writing long 'on topic but not on question' answers are pertinent here. Some candidates wrote generally on religious experience without really considering it as an argument for the existence of God. A few candidates took the opportunity to write their prepared miracles answer. Better candidates had answers that considered a wide range of material, including thinkers such as James, Swinburne, Freud, Marx and Dawkins, which was clearly tied to the question.

4 'Kant's moral argument succeeds in proving the existence of God.' Discuss.

This was perhaps the most popular question and the standard of answers was quite varied. Some candidates had a detailed knowledge of Kant's argument and were able to offer criticisms from a range of sources including Freud, cultural relativism and sociobiological explanations of morality. Other candidates were less successful largely due to poor understanding of Kant. Some assumed wrongly that Kant says that we cannot perform moral acts without God to help us, or that God writes the moral laws on our hearts, paying scant attention to Kant's notions of freedom and autonomy. Some confused Kant with Newman's ideas on conscience, linked Kant to Divine Command Ethics or took the opportunity to discuss the Moral Arguments of several thinkers other than Kant. Some candidates misunderstood the concept of the *summum bonum*.

2780 Religious Ethics 1 (A2)

General Comments:

This was a very small entry but not all candidates were as well prepared as in previous years. However, some centres have encouraged their candidates to make specific references to scholars and use quotes to illustrate answers. There were some very good responses from candidates who were well prepared.

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

Comments on Individual Questions:

1 'Utilitarianism is the best approach to genetic engineering.' Discuss.

Good answers to this question were rare but some did achieve a good mark for this if the question was approached in the correct way.

This essay produced the weakest answers. There was a common lack of knowledge about genetic engineering or any real understanding of what the question was asking.

Good answers compared different Utilitarian responses to different types of genetic engineering. Good responses contrasted the approaches 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 and the approach to people and their value.

2 How helpful would Natural Law theory be when faced with the problem of dying *without* dignity?

Many candidates either misread or ignored the 'dying *without* dignity' and preferred to answer a straight 'dying *with* dignity'. These answers did not score very highly, as they simply wrote about Natural Law being against euthanasia and that Situation Ethics would be better as it was more compassionate.

Good answers argued that Natural Law takes no account of the situation or the quality of life preferring to concentrate on the Sanctity of Life. Some then argued from this for using a more relativistic approach, or looked at the question of apparent goods.

3 Discuss critically the idea that morality is more a question of duty than happiness.

This question was generally well done. Most candidates had a good knowledge of Kantian ethics and the Utilitarianism. Better candidates picked up on 'discuss critically', and not only contrasted happiness with duty, but also with love.

Excellent candidates examined the different meanings of the word happiness, ranging from pleasure, individual and group happiness, the summum bonum and the happiness of achieving one's telos of unity with God.

4 'Every adult has the right to become a parent'. Discuss.

Candidates usually explained well what was meant by of rights and whether a child was a gift or a right. Utilitarian theories were used in support of the statement, but candidates also argued that the cost of IVF should be considered, as well as the Sanctity of Life.

A few candidates considered the question of 'every adult' and whether males had as much right as females, homosexuals as much right as heterosexuals etc.

2791 Connections in Religious Studies

General Comments:

Most candidates were well prepared and the quality of the answers showed that some centres have encouraged their candidates to make specific references to scholars and use quotes to illustrate answers. There were some very good responses from candidates who were well prepared. Some excellent candidates explored thinkers and ideas outside those cited in the specification.

There were still a good number of candidates who did make appropriate reference to scholars but failed to make any analytical approach to the view stated.

However, there seemed to be a better standard overall than in previous years and there appeared to be a significant reduction in the number of less able candidates giving fewer of the 'general opinion' essays.

Time management was usually good. Essay plans were in the minority and some candidates would have benefited from preparing their answers in this way, as many seemed to give rehearsed responses which did not answer the question set.

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

Comments on Individual Questions:

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

1 'Ethics comes from the human mind; not from God.' Discuss. [60]

This was an extremely popular question, but was not always answered particularly well by many candidates. Many students tended to see conscience as a 'given' and did not focus on the question. Many just wrote an answer to a conscience question. Some candidates concentrated too much on the psychologists to say that ethics came from the human mind. Many failed to get to grips with the synoptic element and make the necessary connections. Good answers addressed clearly the 'from God' aspect in relation to the source of ethics. There was some good use of ethical theories, some considered to be 'from God', such as Natural Law and others such as Utilitarianism considered to be the product of the human mind. Some candidates discussed the fact that if God is believed to be the creator, he made the human mind and can, therefore, influence it.

2 'Ethical language is no more meaningful than religious language.' Discuss. [60]

Few candidates answered this question, which was unfortunate as, when attempted, it was usually the best answered. Many students had detailed knowledge of the different views on religious language, though some were not quite as knowledgeable on ethical language. Some candidates made very good connections and scored very highly, but some seemed to present their work as almost two separate essays – one on religious language and one on ethical language, with only a cursory attempt to unite the two at the end.

3 'God is omniscient so therefore we cannot have free will.' Discuss. [60]

This was a popular question and produced some very good responses. However, many candidates simply ignored the question of God's omniscience and wrote answers either on the problem of evil and the free will defence or treated the essay as one on determinism. Good answers focussed on the notion of omniscience and offer solutions to the problem.

2792 Connections in Religious Studies

Route C Philosophy of Religion with New Testament

- 1 'The New Testament is the revealed word of God so there can be no inconsistencies in the text.' Discuss. [60]**

Many candidates dealt well with the concept of the New Testament as the revealed word of God and used ideas such as propositional and non propositional revelation effectively. Only the best candidates were able to find appropriate examples from the text to pinpoint inconsistencies.

- 2 Discuss critically the concept of miracle in relation to the New Testament texts you have studied. [60]**

This was a popular question. There were many fine responses which showed a detailed knowledge of the New Testament texts and applied Hume, Davies, Holland etc to them. A number of candidates wrote all they knew on the philosophical views of miracles without much reference to the texts.

- 3 'In the New Testament texts you have studied, the concept of life after death is incoherent.' Discuss. [60]**

There were some strong answers to this question and candidates picked out the concept of bodily resurrection in the gospels and Paul for discussion and analysed its coherence with the help of Hick etc. Some candidates saw this as a trigger for a standard life after death essay and forced dualism on the New Testament texts.

Route D Philosophy of Religion with Developments in Christian Thought

- 4 'The authority given to the Bible by Christians means that a pluralist approach to other religions is impossible to sustain.' Discuss. [60]**

This question was well done. Candidates outlined theories of biblical authority and asked whether a pluralist approach fitted. The best candidates were able to write in depth about Pluralism and had an appreciation of the wide range of texts that could be used to support that view. Some candidates misrepresented Barth and his approach to the bible.

- 5 'Feminist theology has clearly established that revelation is culture-dependent and should be reinterpreted.' Discuss. [60]**

There were few strong answers to this question. For many it turned into a standard essay outlining the three main feminist theologies. Only the best had an appreciation of what culture-dependent actually meant and used their knowledge of Feminist Theology in an appropriate and focussed manner.

- 6 'Black theology requires a complete reinterpretation of traditional belief in God.' Discuss. [60]**

This was generally well done. Candidates compared and contrasted the views of Martin Luther King Jr. and James Cone. Some candidates gave no discussion on the traditional belief in God and therefore had difficulty in focussing specifically on the question.

Route J Religious Ethics with New Testament

- 7 'The ethics of the New Testament are completely relativist.' Discuss. [60]**

A popular question. There were some very strong answers which displayed a detailed knowledge of New Testament ethics, it was good to see some detailed analysis of key texts and appropriate background material being brought into discussion. Some candidates paid little notice to the Sermon on the Mount and instead concentrated on the miracles and parables. Many weaker candidates saw the word relativist and wrote in general about relativist and absolute ethical theories. Candidates need to be careful about forcing later ethical theories on to the New Testament – many thought that Jesus and Joseph Fletcher were in complete agreement.

- 8 'New Testament teaching is of no use when discussing abortion.' Discuss. [60]**

There was a tendency here again to write about a wide range of ethical theories and to see Jesus' agape principle as a licence to do what people wanted. However, there were many good scripts which pinpointed the issues raised by abortion and tried to find links in New Testament texts.

- 9 Assess critically the main principles of New Testament ethics. [60]**

Many candidates wrote at length on this answer and some almost repeated their answer to Q.7. Some candidates struggled to find principles beyond love and only the best gave a full discussion and mentioned crucial ideas such as eschatology and the kingdom of God.

Route K Religious Ethics with Developments in Christian Thought

- 10 'For a just world, the ethical principles of Feminist theology should be given priority.' Discuss. [60]**

For some this turned into a standard write all you know about feminism question without any sense of feminist ethics or justice. Good candidates talked about the nature of justice and pinpointed ethical approaches from the three main feminist theology schools.

- 11 'Liberation theology is anti-Christian in its approach to war.' Discuss. [60]**

Some candidates talked very generally about Liberation Theology and Christian attitudes to war without ever really making links. Good candidates had specific knowledge of the aims of key thinkers and were able to fit them in with the diversity of Christian teachings on war. Some candidates saw Liberation Theology as a key to talking about black theology and Feminism and thus their essays were somewhat disjointed and lacking in real focus.

12 'Black Theology does not present a consistent view of ethics.' Discuss. [60]

This question was well done and candidates ably compared the differing ideas of Cone and King. There was little consensus about whether King or Cone was deontological or teleological. The best answers challenged the idea of there being a coherent black theology all together.

Route P Jewish Scriptures with New Testament

13 'The Jewish Scriptures expect a Messiah very different from the resurrected Jesus.' Discuss. [60]

Few candidates answered this question. Those who did were not strong and had difficulty identifying key messianic texts from the Jewish Scriptures and relating them to the New Testament.

14 'The ethics of the Jewish Scriptures are absolutist: those of the New Testament are relativist.' Discuss. [60]

There were a few good answers to this question and candidates argued that the New Testament is far from being relativist.

15 'It is not possible to accept that there is any real similarity between the nature of the revelation of the Jewish Scriptures and that of the New Testament.' Discuss. [60]

Most candidates who did this question spoke about revelation in the Jewish Scriptures and New Testament and not the revelation of the scriptures.

Route S New Testament with Developments in Christian Thought

16 'Christianity is a slave religion.' Discuss this statement with reference to Liberation Theology and the New Testament texts you have studied. [60]

The few candidates who answered this question struggled to understand what was meant by Slave religion and produced general essays on Liberation Theology.

17 'The New Testament texts you have studied make it clear that there can be no validity in non-Christian religions.' Discuss. [60]

There were some strong answers but candidates fell into the trap of giving a general survey of pluralism, inclusivism and exclusivism.

18 'Feminist theology and New Testament teaching are totally incompatible.' Discuss. [60]

There were no answers to this question.

2793 Connections in Religious Studies

General Comments:

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

Route E Philosophy of Religion with Eastern Religions

- 1 'Traditional theodicies offer convincing explanations for the problem of evil but eastern religion does not.' Discuss with reference to *either* Buddhism or Hinduism. [60]**

Some candidates did not understand the term theodicies, and referred to arguments for the existence of God, rather than responses to the problem of evil. Most candidates were able to explain the views of Augustine and Irenaeus to some degree, and most explored the Buddhist views of suffering as outlined in the four noble truths. Weaker responses tried to find similarities between the views of Augustine and Irenaeus and Buddhism, rather than exploring whether they offered convincing explanations for the problem of evil in their own right.

The best responses were aware that Buddhism does not have a problem of evil in the same way as monotheistic faiths, but addressed the need of Buddhism to address the problem of suffering nevertheless. They offered clear explorations of the strengths and weaknesses of Augustinian and Irenaean views. They then explored whether Buddhist views offered a better explanation for suffering, before reaching a conclusion.

- 2 'Buddhist or Hindu teachings about life after death are more coherent than any other view.' Discuss. [60]**

Weaker answers seemed unaware of Buddhist / Hindu views of life after death, in some cases claiming that Buddhists / Hindus did not believe in life after death in any form (but without explaining this in the context of the teachings). Some candidates offered very basic comparisons with Christian views of Heaven and Hell, often with an understanding of these concepts that was of GCSE standard or below. Candidates who selected one or two other views to explore in comparison tended to do better than those who tried to cover every other possible alternative view. The best answers were able to explain the nature of rebecoming in Buddhism with understanding of the five khandhas, and the ongoing process of dependent origination. They then were able to assess the coherence of the alternative views explored (often Plato/Hick/Dawkins, with Ryle/Aristotle used less frequently) before reaching a well supported conclusion).

- 3 Consider whether *either* Buddhist or Hindu understandings of causation are as convincing as the traditional Christian arguments for the existence of God. [60]**

This was the worst answered question. Weaker responses tended to try and explore similarities between Buddhist and Christian views, rather than explore how convincing they were. On a basic level some candidates cited the Buddha's refusal to answer questions about causation, and went no further. Understandings of the arguments for the existence of God tended to be simplistic or wrong. Little reference was made to causation as such. The best responses tended to use Aquinas' 5 ways (first 3) to explore Christian views of causation, including strengths and weaknesses. They also explored the problems with

trying to posit a linear and finite universe and yet an eternal God, with little empirical evidence. In contrast they explained the cyclical nature of the world in Buddhist thought, the idea that God as posited in Western traditions was a nonsense given the nature of samsara, the processes of causation in the cycle of dependent origination, and the Buddha's use of the arrow analogy (not asking where the arrow was made/who fired it, but removing it and treating the wound) to explain why questions of causation were irrelevant in trying to solve the problem of suffering.

Route L Religious Ethics with Eastern Religions

- 4 Critically examine the approach of either Hinduism or Buddhism to issues of sex and relationships. [60]**

Candidates often had little awareness of Buddhist / Hindu teachings on sex and relationships. Most were limited to superficial statements, such as 'it's only OK in marriage'. There was little awareness of the way in which for example the 5 precepts may be interpreted differently in different cultures, and therefore the teachings reflect the 'norms' of the culture rather than having a hard and fast rule.

- 5 Compare Utilitarianism with the ethical approaches of either Buddhism or Hinduism. [60]**

Candidates often had a very weak understanding of utilitarianism. Many seemed unaware of the difference between Act and Rule utilitarianism, and the implications of this. Few showed awareness of the weaknesses of utilitarianism as an ethical theory. Understandings of the 5 precepts were often simplistic, and few candidates were able to offer meaningful comparisons.

- 6 'Belief in karma (kamma) requires a belief in determinism.' Discuss. [60]**

Understandings of kamma/karma in Buddhism / Hinduism were often very simplistic. Determinism was generally understood only at a basic level. Most candidates claimed that kamma/karma implied determinism, as our lives are determined by previous actions, with few recognising that in Buddhism / Hinduism current action can be changed, and is free, so future results can be different.

2794 Connections in Religious Studies

Route F Philosophy of Religion with Islam

- 1 'The kalam argument is more convincing than the traditional Christian arguments for the existence of God.' Discuss. [60]**

Candidates generally had a clear idea of the kalam argument, and were able to describe it. Similarly, they could give a clear description of at least one Christian philosophical argument for the existence of God. Good answers analysed the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the arguments in relation to each other.

Some candidates failed to attain better marks because they only considered one Christian argument for the existence of God and so could not be said to have demonstrated a substantial selection of relevant material. A commonly recurring misconception was that mathematics does not support the idea of an Absolute Infinite

- 2 'The nature of religious experience in Islam is very different from the arguments of William James.' Discuss. [60]**

In general, this was the best answered question of this route. Candidates in general had a clear knowledge of the ideas of William James and of various ideas about religious experience in Islam. The best answers were able to show clear similarities and dissimilarities between the two.

- 3 'The authority of the Qur'an is absolute, that of the Bible is not.' Discuss. [60]**

This was the worst answered question on the whole paper and yet the majority of candidates attempted it. The question was straightforward and not dissimilar from previous years' questions on this aspect of the specification. A good answer would have a clear understanding of the concept of 'authority'. The best answers would have a clear understanding that this can be seen as a complex issue in both Christianity and Islam and be able to form connections between the two. A serious weakness was the lack of accurate knowledge that many, if not most, candidates displayed with regard to the Bible and differing theological approaches to it. Many were unaware of different understandings of the nature of the Qur'an. Some very common misconceptions were:

- Roman Catholics are Biblical fundamentalists.
- A Liberal approach to Biblical interpretation is a very recent phenomenon.
- Only literal understandings give authoritative status to sacred texts.

Route M Religious Ethics with Islam

- 4 To what extent is Muslim morality absolutist? [60]**

There was a range of approaches to answering this question, which were all equally valid and the best were well-substantiated. Accuracy was an issue for a number of candidates. A common misconception, as in previous years, was the idea that free will detracts from an absolutist ethic.

5 Compare and contrast Muslim approaches to abortion with that of Utilitarianism. [60]

The majority of candidates attempted this question. Good answers included a clear understanding of different approaches to abortion from different Islamic schools of thought and were able to compare this to an accurate understanding of differing Utilitarian approaches. Weaker answers failed to appreciate the complexity of approaches.

6 'The equality of all humanity is incompatible with the concept of Ummah.' Discuss. [60]

Most candidates could describe the concept of the Ummah well. A significant number of candidates, however, failed to read the question correctly and only addressed the issue of equality within the Ummah itself.

Route Q Developments in Christian Thought with Islam

There were very few entries for this route. Candidates generally showed good subject knowledge. The differentiation in marks came from the quality of analysis and awareness of connections shown.

7 'Both Islam and Christianity allow only an exclusivist approach to other religions.' Discuss. [60]

8 'The aims of Liberation Theology and of the Ummah are essentially the same.' Discuss. [60]

9 'Teachings about equality mean that there is no need for feminism in Islam.' Discuss. [60]

Route T New Testament with Islam

There were very few entries for this route. No candidates attempted Q.11. For Q.10, a number of candidates failed to attain higher levels because they only addressed the understanding of the nature of sin and not that of redemption

10 Compare and contrast Muslim and New Testament understanding of the nature of redemption. [60]

11 'The New Testament concept of agape makes no sense in Islam.' Discuss. [60]

12 'Jesus is more important to Christians than Muhammad (PBOH) is to Muslims.' Discuss. [60]

2795 Connections in Religious Studies

Route B Philosophy of Religion with Jewish Scriptures

- 1 **'The approach to suffering in the book of Job is less convincing than the theodicy of Augustine.'** Discuss. [60]

Answers were generally sound with most essays demonstrating good coverage of the main points. Weaker candidates often failed to cite the Biblical text and some included lengthy paragraphs on Irenaean theodicy. The majority opinion was that neither approach gives a satisfactory response to suffering.

- 2 **'The use of analogy in the Jewish Scriptures is successful in helping people to understand G-d.'** Discuss. [60]

Responses were generally good. Most candidates had a clear understanding of analogy and were able to refer to the views of well-known writers. Aquinas and Ian Ramsey were frequently cited although a number made reference to the views of Maimonides. The majority opinion was that analogy is successful in helping people to understand G-d.

- 3 **Consider how the texts from the Jewish Scriptures which you have studied deal with the concept of G-d's revelation to humanity.** [60]

This was not a popular question. Those who attempted it tended to concentrate on revelation through the prophets or revelation through visions and voices to individuals. Clearly, candidates needed to cite the Biblical texts in support of their answer. On the whole, responses were not sufficiently comprehensive.

Route G Religious Philosophy with Judaism

- 4 **'Post-Holocaust theology only solves the problem of suffering by arguing that G-d does not exist.'** Discuss. [60]

There were many good answers to this question. The events of the Holocaust were well known and all candidates were familiar with some of the attempts to provide a theological response. The views of Berkovitz, Ellis, Fackenheim, Maza, Maybaum and Rubenstein were those most frequently used. Generally speaking, candidates did not find any particular view convincing.

- 5 **'The Jewish Scriptures are not infallible so cannot have been revealed.'** Discuss. [60]

Responses were generally quite good. Most candidates displayed understanding of what it means to consider scripture infallible, although only the most able recognised that it is not quite the same as saying that scripture is literally true. The majority of candidates included some discussion of the ways in which modern science has challenged a literal interpretation of the scriptures.

6 'Experience of G-d only happens when G-d chooses.' Discuss. [60]

This was a popular question although answers were generally disappointing. Able candidates made reference to the views of James and Otto in defining how religious experiences differ from ordinary sense experience and some cited the work of Buber and Tillich. Weaker candidates often failed to give sufficient examples from the texts to illustrate the points being made.

Route H Religious Ethics with Jewish Scriptures

7 'Abortion is a modern issue; the Jewish Scriptures are too old to have anything useful to say about it.' Discuss. [60]

This was a popular question. Most candidates had some knowledge of ethical teaching relevant to the discussion, and many were able to cite general agreement among rabbinic authorities as to when abortion was permissible. The majority opinion was that abortion is not a modern issue, even though advances in medicine have created more grey areas.

8 'The Jewish Scriptures show that people are completely free to make their own moral decisions.' Discuss. [60]

This was the most popular of the three questions. There was good discussion of the concept of free will in the context of determinist philosophies and Daniel, Job and Jonah were the texts most frequently cited. The majority concluded that circumstances are determined by G-d up to a point, but that the way people respond to them is left to their own freedom of choice.

9 'The laws of the Jewish Scriptures are Categorical Imperatives.' Discuss. [60]

This was not a popular question although answers were generally good. Kant's Categorical Imperative was widely understood and many candidates showed good knowledge of the Hypothetical Imperative. Most argued that observance of G-d's Law in the Jewish Scriptures is itself a religious act.

Route N Religious Ethics with Judaism

10 'Belief in ethical monotheism means that the conscience must be G-d-given.' Discuss. [60]

This was a popular question. Most candidates began by explaining the term 'ethical monotheism' and then went on to consider different understandings of the nature of conscience. The views of Aquinas, Freud and Newman were those most frequently cited although some made good reference to Durkheim and Piaget. Opinion was fairly evenly divided between those who argued that conscience is an intuitive understanding of right and wrong, and those who argued that people need to be told categorically what they should and should not do.

11 Compare and contrast Jewish ethics with moral relativism. [60]

This question was quite well done. Most candidates had a sound grasp of the concept of moral relativism, and were able to give adequate consideration to the basic principles underlying Jewish ethics. Many chose to contrast Jewish ethics with Utilitarianism or

Situation Ethics. The majority opinion was that Jewish ethics are absolutist, although most candidates were aware of exceptions such as pikuah nefesh.

12 'Belief in an omniscient G-d does not prevent Jews having free will.' Discuss. [60]

This was the most popular of the three questions. Most candidates began by explaining the idea of an 'omniscient' G-d and then went on to consider the concept of free will in the context of determinist philosophies. Daniel, Job and Jonah were the texts most frequently cited. The majority concluded that circumstances are determined by G-d up to a point, but that the way people respond to them is left to their own freedom of choice.

Route R Jewish Scriptures with Judaism

13 'The Covenants with G-d mean that Jews are entitled to make the State of Israel their home.' Discuss. [60]

There were many excellent responses to this question. Most candidates displayed good knowledge and understanding of the relevant texts and were well aware of different attitudes within modern Judaism to the State of Israel. Weaker candidates tended to restrict their discussion to the Covenant with Abraham.

14 'The main difference between Jewish groups is the way in which they regard the authority of the Jewish Scriptures.' Discuss. [60]

This question was quite well done with candidates showing good knowledge of Orthodox and Progressive approaches to the Torah. The more able also included discussion of Haskalah. Some erroneously maintained that the Conservative movement does not accept the divine authority of the Torah.

15 To what extent are the teachings about Messianic hope reflected in Jewish life today? [60]

Responses were often disappointing. Too many candidates restricted their answers to a discussion of Zionism rather than displaying knowledge and understanding of the Biblical teaching about the Messiah and the ways in which this teaching is important for modern Jewish life.

Route V Islam with Judaism

16 'Jewish and Muslim worship show that the Jewish G-d is personal whilst Allah is not.' Discuss. [60]

Answers were rather disappointing. Candidates needed to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the concept of a 'personal' G-d and of the ways in which this is illustrated in both Jewish and Muslim worship. Many candidates wrote far more on worship in one faith than the other and responses were often lacking in balance between description and evaluation. Surprisingly, few candidates made reference to examples of personal and spontaneous prayer. The majority opinion seemed to be that Jewish religion gives more scope for a personal relationship.

17 Compare and contrast the ways in which Muslims and Jews understand the nature of the revelation of their sacred texts. [60]

Answers were generally sound. Most candidates addressed the subject matter relevantly, although few showed different understandings of personal religious experience. Some erroneously maintained that Conservative Judaism does not accept that divine authority of the Torah.

18 Compare the extent to which Islam and Judaism can be described as pacifist religions. [60]

This was a popular question. Most candidates had sound knowledge of lesser jihad and milchemet mitzvah and there was quite good discussion of the relative strengths and weaknesses of each approach. The majority viewpoint was that neither religion could properly be described as pacifist.

**Advanced GCE Religious Studies
June 2007 Assessment Session**

Unit Threshold Marks

<i>Unit</i>		Maximum Mark	A	b	c	d	e	u
2760/11	Raw	100	71	60	50	40	30	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/12	Raw	100	70	60	50	40	31	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/13	Raw	100	73	64	56	48	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/14	Raw	100	69	60	51	42	34	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/15	Raw	100	77	68	60	52	44	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2761	Raw	100	74	62	50	39	28	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2762	Raw	100	73	62	51	41	31	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2763	Raw	100	83	72	61	50	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2764	Raw	100	80	70	60	50	41	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2765	Raw	100	75	63	52	41	30	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2766	Raw	100	75	64	53	42	32	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2767	Raw	100	84	72	60	48	37	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2768	Raw	100	78	68	58	49	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2769	Raw	100	72	63	54	46	38	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2770	Raw	100	70	60	51	42	33	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2771	Raw	90	63	55	47	39	31	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

2772	Raw	90	73	64	55	46	38	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2773	Raw	90	72	64	56	48	40	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2774	Raw	90	71	61	52	43	34	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2775	Raw	90	70	61	52	43	35	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2776	Raw	90	77	67	57	47	38	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2777	Raw	90	70	60	51	42	33	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2778	Raw	90	76	64	52	40	28	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2779	Raw	90	62	56	50	44	39	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2780	Raw	90	72	64	56	49	42	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2791	Raw	120	91	79	67	55	44	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2792	Raw	120	98	85	73	61	49	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2793	Raw	120	88	74	60	47	34	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2794	Raw	120	83	74	65	56	47	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2795	Raw	120	91	82	74	66	58	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0

Specification Aggregation Results

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

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

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

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3877	22.7	49.2	71.4	86.0	93.7	100.0	11589
7877	24.6	58.1	83.5	96.0	99.5	100.0	7540

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

19,129 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

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