

Religious Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 7877**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS 3877**

Reports on the Units

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Chief Examiners Introductory Report

Introduction

This summer's examinations produced many answers of outstanding quality. When reading this report, centres should not concentrate on the critical comments. They should, however, be encouraged by the fact that many candidates have clearly been well-prepared and appear to have read more than the standard text books. Having this additional information to hand is often what differentiates between a good response and a very good/excellent answer. As always, answering the question which has been set, rather than writing down everything they can think of, ensures candidates will achieve higher marks. Shorter essays are frequently of a better standard than longer ones which can, on occasions, miss the point.

2760 Foundation for the Study of Religion (AS)

General Comments:

Despite the fact that the responses to questions were generally satisfactory, a larger proportion of scripts this year appeared to be of poor quality. Many answers were very superficial with candidates seemingly relying on basic class notes rather than extending their knowledge by means of independent reading.

There was a wide range of candidate responses ranging from the superb to those which knew almost nothing. Unusually, there were some scripts where nothing at all was written or only one question was answered.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Part 1 – Philosophy of Religion

1(a) Explain Plato's understanding of the distinction between body and soul. [33]

This was very popular and done quite well but candidates often fell back to the cave analogy and forms with insufficient knowledge to answer the question. There were many unbalanced answers and candidates were often unclear about the distinction between the soul and body.

There were some good contrasts made between body and soul with some awareness of the different elements of the soul, pre-existence of the soul etc. Some candidates made interesting use of the charioteer analogy although some found this very confusing.

1(b) 'Plato's understanding of the distinction between body and soul is easy to criticise.' Discuss. [17]

There was some good awareness of Aristotle's views in this question. Some defended Plato by virtue of his importance for religion and religious views of the soul.

2(a) Explain the Biblical idea of the 'goodness of God'. [33]

Most candidates who opted for this question were able to answer it reasonably well, quoting a number of examples from both Old and New Testaments. A few were able to discuss accurately the complexities of God's goodness in the Bible, but some answers were rather general and some resorted to a discussion of the problem of suffering as an illustration of how the Biblical God might not be good.

2(b) 'The idea of a 'good God' is very different from that of Aristotle's Prime Mover.' Discuss. [17]

There were some very good responses where candidates had studied this topic in detail and demonstrated a good knowledge of Aristotle and the Prime Mover as well. However, there were also many poor answers where candidates seemed very confused and clearly did not know or understand Aristotle's conception of the Prime Mover and thus were not able to compare/contrast it effectively with the Biblical picture of God.

Part 2 – Religious Ethics

3(a) Explain what is meant by prescriptivism in meta-ethics. [33]

This was poorly done on the whole. Most students were able to explain a little about what is meant by prescriptivism, however, some ignored the 'within meta ethics' part of the question and discussed it as a normative theory. Many candidates struggled to write enough about prescriptivism, thus few were able to answer the question very fully. Some knew quite a lot about meta-ethics as a whole and proceeded to write everything they knew about the topic.

3(b) 'Prescriptivism means that words such as 'good' and 'bad' have absolute meanings.' Discuss. [17]

There were very few good answers. Many candidates struggled with this question and only the really able were able to wrestle with it in detail. If they scored badly on (a), they almost inevitably scored badly on (b), as they were unable to grasp the relationship between prescriptivism and absolutism.

4(a) Explain how a moral relativist might respond to the idea that people should always tell the truth. [33]

This was very popular but there were many weak answers. Some candidates were not able to explain fully what moral relativism meant and thus produced very generalised answers that were heavily reliant on limited examples. Some candidates simply wrote about Situation Ethics or Utilitarianism but did not apply these to the question very effectively. However, where candidates did grasp the potential of the question, they were able to score highly.

4(b) Assess the weaknesses of relativist views of ethics. [17]

Answers were reasonable on the whole. Some candidates were able to focus on the weaknesses and analyse these in detail, although many resorted to a simple list of the weaknesses and strengths of moral relativism.

Part 3 – Jewish Scriptures

5(a) Explain, with examples, what is meant when some of the writings of the Jewish scriptures are described as poetry. [33]

There were many good answers and a few very weak ones. The problems arose when candidates did not know what poetry was, or else did not know which particular parts of the Tenakh are poetry.

5(b) 'Poetry is a difficult way to express human understanding of God.' Discuss. [17]

There were some good responses to this question and some candidates were able to write good, coherent answers on the nature of poetry, some concluding that it was the best way in which to express such understanding.

6(a) Explain why some people may feel that Form Criticism is unhelpful when studying the Jewish scriptures. [33]

Most were able to tackle this question which was more popular than question 5. There were some good responses about Form Criticism though many found it easier to explain why it is viewed as helpful rather than unhelpful.

6(b) 'It is necessary to know the type of literature being studied in order to understand what is the revealed word of G-d.' Discuss. [17]

Many answers concluded that whilst it might be seen as helpful to some people to know the type of literature, nevertheless, for the believer, this was quite unnecessary because the material was self-explanatory by merit of being the revealed word of G-d.

Part 4A – New Testament – Early Church

7(a) Explain the beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees. [33]

This was a straightforward question and those who had studied the material thoroughly were able to produce some excellent responses. However, it appeared that many were essentially unclear about any aspects of the differences between the two groups and therefore there were some extremely muddled responses which made little sense.

7(b) 'The Pharisees were less threatened by Roman rule than were the Sadducees.' Discuss. [17]

Again, a straightforward question and those who had been able to respond well to (a) appeared to have no difficulty in discussing the statement.

8(a) Explain the discussion surrounding the authorship of the Acts of the Apostles. [33]

8(b) 'The evidence clearly shows that Acts was written by the author of Luke.' Discuss. [17]

Too few candidates attempted this question to produce a report.

Part 4B – New Testament – Gospels

9(a) Explain the beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees. [33]

This was a straightforward question and those who had studied the material thoroughly were able to produce some excellent responses. However, it appeared that many were essentially unclear about any aspects of the differences between the two groups and therefore there were some extremely muddled responses which made little sense.

9(b) 'The Pharisees were less threatened by Roman rule than were the Sadducees.' Discuss. [17]

Again, a straightforward question and those who had been able to respond well to (a) appeared to have no difficulty in discussing the statement.

10(a) Explain the two and four document hypotheses in relation to the synoptic problem. [33]

Those candidates who had studied the hypotheses produced some excellent responses and were able to give full and clear explanations of the two views. Surprisingly, there were a number of candidates who attempted this question who appeared to have no real idea of what they Synoptic Problem was.

10(b) 'If there really was a Synoptic Problem, scholars would have found a convincing solution to it.' Discuss. [17]

There were some good answers to this question and some interesting conclusions. Most were in agreement that there was a problem and many appeared to feel that more research was needed in order to find the original missing documents.

Part 5 – Developments in Christian Thought

11(a) Explain New Testament attitudes towards Judaism. [33]

Although this question is specifically on the specification a considerable number of candidates appeared surprised that it related to Judaism and this despite the recommended Biblical text referring directly to the issue.

11(b) 'The Bible teaches intolerance of other religions.' Discuss. [17]

There were some interesting responses to this question but it revealed some strange opinions by which the Old Testament was deemed to be almost totally intolerant of other faiths while the New Testament was seen as pluralist.

12(a) Explain one approach to the interpretation of the Bible. [33]

The quality of answers to this question depended largely on the particular interpretation chosen as well as on the individual candidate's ability. There were some excellent answers which wrote cogently about the interpretation chosen whilst many others appeared to have little knowledge beyond GCSE.

12(b) 'All approaches to the study of the Bible are too influenced by the use of 'proof texts'.' Discuss. [17]

This was generally not well-answered. The concept of 'proof texts' despite being on the specification appeared unknown to some candidates who would probably have done better attempting question 11.

Part 6A – Eastern Religions – Buddhism

13(a) Explain the importance of what Gautama (the Buddha) saw when he left the palace. [33]

There were many very good and very full answers to this question. Most, wisely, limited themselves to the four sights but some decided to embrace the whole of the Buddha's later life and tended to ramble over what might have happened.

13(b) 'The Buddha deliberately set out to found a new religion.' Discuss. [17]

This produced a great deal of argument from some candidates. Many seemed reluctant to believe that the Buddha might have intended to start a new religion and appeared to think that it was largely accidental.

14(a) Explain the Buddha's teaching of the Four Noble Truths. [33]

This was also a very popular question. The only problem which arose here was with candidates who were actually unsure about what the Four Noble Truths were and so focussed exclusively on the Fourth.

14(b) 'The 'Middle Way' is just an easy way out instead of following religious practices.'
Discuss. [17]

It appeared that many candidates had not considered this view before and were almost shocked by the suggestion. However, good candidates were able to write at length about the idea and, although they generally disagreed with the statement, were nevertheless able to consider it in a balanced manner.

Part 6B – Eastern Religions – Hinduism

15(a) Explain the ideas of rta/dharma. [33]

15(b) To what extent can rta/dharma be considered as universal moral law? [17]

There were too few candidates to produce a report on this question.

16(a) Explain beliefs about the Vedic god Indra. [33]

16(b) 'Vedic religion has little to do with Hinduism.' Discuss. [17]

There were too few candidates to produce a report on this question.

Part 7 – Islam

17(a) Explain the importance of the events in the life of Muhammad ﷺ from the Night of Power until he emigrated to al-Madinah. [33]

Many candidates understood this question as 'describe the night of power and Muhammad's ﷺ emigration to al-Madinah, and one other event from his life'. Some candidates wrote about events in al-Madinah and the battles, some about his early life/childhood. High level answers included good detail on the ascension to heaven, Taif, and his rejection by the clans. However, most candidates only wrote about one of these or simply mentioned two of them in a couple of sentences. There was a lack of depth of knowledge. Some candidates wrote about the spider's web over the cave entrance.

17(b) 'An understanding of the life of Muhammad ﷺ is essential for an understanding of Islam.' Discuss. [17]

There were many good responses to this question. Those in agreement said that Muhammad ﷺ was a role model, he challenged pre-existing practices, he was responsible for spreading Islam and without him it would not exist. A few candidates suggested that his early life is an inspiration to Muslims today in the face of adversity and religious intolerance. Those who disagreed said that the person of Muhammad ﷺ was irrelevant, the Qur'an could have been given to anyone, as it is the content of the Qur'an which is important.

18(a) Explain the particular way in which the whole of the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad ﷺ. [33]

This was an extremely popular question. Many candidates understood this to be 'describe the first revelation of the Qur'an', and many went on to simply mention how long the revelations went on for, how they were recorded, and compilation after Muhammad's ﷺ death. Answers were focused but varying in detail. Some candidates used this essay as an opportunity to write about

Muhammad's ﷺ early life as well. The details of the first revelation varied from centre to centre, although the general understanding was correct i.e. alone in the mountains, illiterate, overwhelmed by the experience etc. This seemed to be a very straightforward essay title.

18(b) 'The way in which the Qur'an was revealed shows its importance.' Discuss. [17]

This question posed some problems for candidates. Most of them understood it to be 'why is the Qur'an important' and wrote about how it is treated by Muslims today (e.g. wash hands before touching) or that it is a book from God. Better answers considered whether the process of revelation meant that it had been altered / corrupted or was pure. Some candidates compared it to the Bible and Torah, using them as examples of texts which had been altered by humans. Answers tended to be one-sided.

Part 8 – Judaism

19(a) Explain the origins and purpose of the Torah. [33]

For candidates who knew the subject matter this was a very straightforward question and there were some excellent responses.

19(b) 'The Torah is of far greater importance than the rest of the Tenakh.' Discuss. [17]

Answers to this question were generally very good and the only problems which arose were for candidates who had interpreted Torah as meaning the whole of the Tenakh.

20(a) Explain the purpose of the Talmud. [33]

This was not as popular as question 19 and there were few responses but most were competent.

20(b) 'For Jewish life today, the Talmud is more important than the Tenakh.' Discuss. [17]

Responses to this question were generally better than for (a). There were some good arguments presented which considered the matter well and were balanced.

2761 Philosophy of Religion 1 (AS)

There were many interesting scripts this year, but rather too many that demonstrated misunderstanding of both questions and subject material. It was disappointing that many candidates were handicapped by poor writing skills, with sometimes little awareness of the use or meaning of commonly occurring words. A few scripts were illegible because of poor handwriting.

Candidates who underperformed generally were those who failed to pay sufficient attention to the precise wording of the questions set, often writing lengthy but irrelevant answers. There were also problems because of failure to understand basic philosophical terms such as 'prove' or 'refute'.

This year seemed to elicit a significant number of 'set piece' answers. Many candidates wrote what appeared to be pre-prepared answers on topics, which did not address questions specifically. Centres may wish to examine level 3 for AO1, which is the maximum a general answer can achieve. Part (b) questions did allow candidates who had not successfully answered (a) questions to pick up marks, but again many candidates were unable to address the questions specifically.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part 1

1(a) Explain the strengths and weakness of Aquinas' teleological argument.

This was a popular and often well-done question. Some candidates assumed that Aquinas' version was identical with Paley's, which meant that their lists of strengths and weaknesses were often partly irrelevant. A minority wrote about the cosmological or ontological arguments which made it difficult for examiners to find material to credit. This was also true for those answers which conflated teleological arguments in theology with teleological theories in ethics. Unfortunately a significant majority of the candidates failed to correctly identify Aquinas' 5th way. Weaker response identified the notion of design in the universe. They then focused on Paley's design qua purpose argument (sometimes without any suggestion that this supported Aquinas) and ended up with a general discussion of the Teleological argument. However, most candidates were general in their approach to the Teleological argument but were able to identify Hume and Darwin as weaknesses. Very good responses gave a sound understanding of Aquinas' 5th way with support from Paley, Tennant and other modern proponents of the Teleological argument such as Brown or the Goldilocks Hypothesis. The weaknesses were well explained and the main ideas of Hume, Mill, Darwin and sometimes Kant or even Russell were used.

1(b) 'Human beings see "design" in the universe where none exists.' Discuss.

Some candidates wrote outstanding answers, noting the human need for patterns and suggesting that design might be seen where none existed. Many, however, wrote instead about whether the design argument worked rather than dealing with the question. Many candidates ended up with a general rant of how 'stupid' it was to see design in the universe with the theory of evolution.

2(a) Explain Freud's challenges to William James' conclusions about religious experience.

Some candidates demonstrated very sound knowledge of Freud often with some sound awareness of James' arguments. It was, however, a pity that some assumed that James argued that religious experience proved the existence of God or that he was not well aware that many experiences were the result of drugs, drink or delusion. A few outlined the four characteristics of religious experience but failed to link this to his conclusions. At times James' name was absent in the answer. Freud was written about generally with weaker responses having very little knowledge and the slightly more able failing to fillet the relevant parts of Freud's ideas with regards to the question. Better responses were able to take a more thematic approach to the question by comparing James' ideas on mystical experiences (ineffability, noetic quality etc) and Freud's general observations. This seemed to provide a successful outcome. Generally this was a poorly answered question.

2(b) 'There is no conclusive evidence for the truth of religious experience.' Discuss.

Many candidates failed to note the word 'conclusive' in the question, but there were also some thoughtful answers. The very best answers explicitly discussed what kind of evidence it was reasonable to attempt to gather in support of religious experience. Many slightly less well thought out answers made use of Swinburne's principles of credulity and testimony, but treated these principles as giving 'conclusive evidence', when really the principles explain why conclusive evidence does not need to be sought.

3(a) Explain Russell's objections to the cosmological argument.

Most candidates understood the cosmological argument. Rather fewer were familiar with Russell's views beyond awareness that he referred to the universe as a brute fact, though better responses were aware of his objections to the notion of necessary existence and his comments on the fallacy of composition. Those candidates who had read the debate, rather than relying on second-hand summaries, were at an advantage both here and in part (b). It was disappointing that so many answers put forward the view that Russell had nothing to say about the question "Why does the universe exist?" Although Russell concluded that we cannot answer this question, the radio debate contains a great deal of argument which explains why he arrived at this conclusion. Few candidates made mention of the principle of sufficient reason and even fewer were able to discuss what Russell thought could or could not be necessary and therefore had to exist.

3(b) 'Copleston proved Russell wrong during their radio debate.' Discuss.

This was fairly straightforward for those familiar with the positions of both men, but some attempts were sheer guesswork, occasionally making valid points by accident. The word 'prove' was a problem for some candidates who imagined that to *prove* meant merely to argue. This led to some claims, in defiance of the law of excluded middle, that both had proved their views. There seemed to be a general consensus that Russell was refusing to 'play the game of chess' when it was the fairness of this accusation that students needed to assess in (b). Most answers here argued that neither philosopher won as there was no proof either way. Few answers were able to draw on wider representations of the Cosmological argument. This is an area of the specification which really does show that there is no substitute for exposing candidates to the original set text.

Part 2

4(a) Describe Augustine and Irenaeus explain the origin of evil.

There were some very sound answers to this question, which gave attention to both thinkers and to their accounts of both moral and natural evil. A minority assumed there were no differences between the two philosophers, and there were some entertaining and highly imaginative accounts of the Fall which gave pleasure while not always attracting credit. The details of Augustine's argument were sometimes ignored leaving a general feel to the answers. Poorer candidates failed to make explicit the link between the 'fall and natural evil. Some better candidates were able to include the notion of Augustine's Aesthetic principle or principle of plenitude. It was refreshing that many were able to distinguish the ideas of Irenaeus from Hick's additions.

4(b) 'There is no problem of evil because God is not all powerful.' Discuss.

A surprising number of candidates did not distinguish between the "problem of evil" as an intellectual conundrum for theists, and "problems of evil" which we all – to a greater or lesser extent – face every day. Consequently some answers to this question were very confused. Some very good answers discussed whether it was coherent to talk about a non-omnipotent God. Candidates who took this route successfully incorporated material from the ontological argument. Some candidates were able to bring in Process Theodicy and Monism, although the specification does not specifically require this.

5(a) Describe how sociologists, such as Durkheim, explain the role of religion in society.

There were some very interesting answers to the question, with excellent accounts of Durkheim, Marx and Weber. Some candidates were unable to distinguish between sociology and psychology, writing at length about Freud. A minority simply made general points about decline in church-going or the state of the nation without any reference to sociological theory. Weaker responses tended to talk about religion as social glue or an instrument of oppression. However, better ones were able to refer to Durkheim's conclusions about religion as the worship of society itself and how as people experience the power of its demands conflicting with their own interests it becomes divinised, and what Marx actually meant by the opiate of the people.

5(b) 'Sociologists fail to explain belief in God.' Discuss.

This elicited some useful responses. Some made excellent points based on H.H. Farmer's objections to Durkheim while others very properly distinguished between explaining the role of religion in society and assessing the truth claims of that faith. Many of the better answers suggested the statement was unfair because belief in God lay beyond the remit of sociology. Some candidates went on to discuss whether the conclusions of sociology should still be used as evidence to suggest there is no God and that belief in a God can be accounted for in other ways. The weaker answers were often characterised by a misunderstanding of what sociologists – taken all as one body – think.

6(a) Describe sociological explanations of religious belief.

Some candidates were very familiar with sociological accounts and were able to provide sound descriptions. Some simply wrote about Freud. Candidates with a good understanding of three sociologists usually wrote a good answer. Candidates who attempted to write in more detail about one or two sociologists fared less well. A number of candidates gave general, and often useful, but unspecific, responses using the blanket term 'sociologists'. Some accurately described Marx's theories that religious belief merely deadens awareness of social and economic injustice, and makes the proletariat subservient to the demands of the bourgeoisie by promising them a reward in heaven if they behave themselves.

6(b) To what extent have sociologists succeeded in 'explaining away' religion?

There were some very good responses, but many misread the question as ...'succeeded in *explaining* religion' leading to rather generalised answers. Here as elsewhere, close attention to wording was the key to gaining credit. Candidates were rarely clear about whether they were arguing that religion had been 'explained away' because it could no longer be seen as a practice with any sort of rational basis or if it had been 'explained away' because fewer people were practising it. Some did point out that religious belief is simply too prevalent, and has too great an impact on people's lives, to be able to be explained away.

2762 Religious Ethics 1 (AS)

General Comments

Overall performance was satisfactory. Very few candidates were unable to explain the main points of the question and used technical terms well. Some, however, were unable to reach the higher bands as they failed to understand the complexities of the ethical theories, and tended to be over simplistic in their application to issues.

Part (b) questions were better than in previous years, with nearly all candidates able to sustain a relevant argument.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Explain how moral relativism would help in making decisions about abortion.

This was one of the most popular questions. Many candidates failed to fully engage with the question giving very general and loose descriptions of a relative approach to ethics rather than focussing on specific systems of which many candidates seemed to have limited understanding.

Relativism was often understood as consequentialism, with little understanding of moral relativism as an approach in normative ethics.

Answers to this question were, unfortunately, very general and vague.

1(b) 'Abortion is an absolute right.' Discuss.

Some candidates responded well to this, however, there was a great deal of confusion over what is a right and what is right. Weaker responses simply devolved into general discussion of the right and wrong of abortion without focusing on the specific question.

'Absolute right' was commonly confused with absolutism/absolute ethics or an absolutely right versus an absolutely wrong. Absolutism tended to be understood as opposed to rights.

2(a) Explain the main weaknesses of Bentham's version of Utilitarianism.

Those candidates who were able to differentiate between Bentham and Mill answered this question well. However, many candidates spent much of their essays focusing more on the general system rather than addressing the specific question of the weaknesses of Bentham.

Candidates showed good knowledge of Bentham's Utilitarianism, but often tended to ignore the question and not comment on weaknesses.

2(b) 'Mill's version of Utilitarianism avoids the problems associated with Bentham's version.' Discuss.

This was generally well answered, if formulaic. Strong responses were able to produce a very convincing argument based on qualitative rather than quantitative assessment, but others struggled to justify their argument beyond a basic level.

3(a) Explain one ethical theory which could be considered relativist.

Despite being a really straightforward question, few candidates actually attempted this question. Those that did tended to do very well, making specific references to Situation Ethics and Utilitarianism, some even attempting to use Virtue Ethics.

3(b) 'No ethical theory is completely relativist.' Discuss.

Again this was answered well, with candidates discussing 'love' or 'agape' as an absolute requirement.

4(a) Explain the ethical issues surrounding the concept of personhood.

Unfortunately this question seems to have been chosen by the weakest candidates, with very few good responses. Many of the answers barely reached GCSE level, with many candidates displaying a limited understanding of either personhood or the issues surrounding it.

A few excellent responses considered all aspects concerned with personhood – ensoulment, IVF, abortion, PVS, euthanasia and embryo research.

4(b) 'Embryos are persons.' Discuss.

Candidates tended to repeat much of the part a) answer again. Weakest answers were just a list of questions. Some did not know the distinction between an embryo and a foetus.

5(a) Explain the strengths of Kant's theory of ethics.

In general this was well answered, but many candidates spent too much time writing everything they knew about Kant without specifically addressing the weaknesses.

Good candidates were able to answer this very well with specific reference to the consistency of duty and the value of the second formulation of the Categorical Imperative.

5(b) How useful is Kant's ethical theory in making a decision about euthanasia?

Often this was not answered as well, with candidates achieving a lower level than they did for part a). Candidates knew Kant's theory but struggled to apply it to a specific issue, expressing points of view without any real justification.

6(a) Explain how the ethics of the religion you have studied might approach the issues surrounding euthanasia.

This was a popular choice among candidates, but there was a tendency to produce very generalised answers, demonstrating a weak understanding of Sanctity of Life with little ability to understand the view.

Good responses answered well with specific reference to Natural Law, contrasted with Situation Ethics.

6(b) 'Religious ethics leaves no room for compassionate treatment of the dying.'
Discuss.

This question was best addressed by candidates who were able to make reference to hospices and palliative care as examples of compassion.

Many used the question as an opportunity to rant against the perceived injustices of organised religion.

2763 Jewish Scriptures 1 (AS)

General Comments

There was a wide range of ability represented in this unit. All the questions seem to have achieved the intended differentiation with equal parity across the options. By far, the most popular question in part 1 was question 2 whilst the least popular was 3. In part 2, of the three questions, question 4 was extremely popular and question 6 was the least chosen. It must be said, however, that the candidates who chose the least popular options seem to have done so because they understood the questions and knew they could demonstrate their competence fully. There were some excellent responses to question 3 and question 6.

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

There were some excellent responses which quoted the set texts appropriately, used the opinions of scholars sensibly, made reference to issues of date, authorship, purpose and historicity where relevant and unfolded an argument lucidly. The demonstration of knowledge, understanding and evaluative skills confirmed in the minds of the markers the value of including set texts as part of a religious studies course. Unfortunately there were some centres where it seemed that the candidates had not actually read the set texts and in the examination they were simply trying to regurgitate classroom notes.

There were a few rubric errors but one whole centre spelt 'prophet' as 'profit'.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part 1

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

This was not a popular question but there were a few excellent responses. Weaker answers tended to spend a disproportionate amount of time telling the story of Noah. There was far less knowledge about David and, in particular, the set chapter.

The best responses were those that focussed on describing potential differences. Good answers identified the Noahide code as a promise with a sign, the rainbow, and with conditions for all humanity. Some commented on the differences in type of literature. They classified the story as religious myth in contrast to the account of David which they tended to describe as part of the history of the kings. Only a few identified David as the first of the covenant kings to whom G-d promised a house in the sense of a lineage. Very few had any inkling about Nathan.

1(b) 'There are no important similarities between the covenant with Noah and the covenant with David.' Discuss. [17]

Arguments needed to be based on correct facts to be fully effective and, therefore, some discussions left a lot to be desired. Similarities between Noah and David as God-fearing obedient men chosen by G-d were used mostly but there were some good responses about the similarities of the actual covenants and the extent to which there were conditions but permanent promises from G-d for the future. Some candidates decided to agree with the statement and continued pointing out the lack of similarities in crucial areas of the covenants. Others took the

same line but then focussed on the word 'important'. G-d taking the initiative and making a covenant with particular individuals as well as the importance of these two covenants as stages in the on-going covenantal master plan for humanity were argued to be important enough to eclipse the differences.

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

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

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

Weaker candidates showed some knowledge of Adam and/or Abraham with some understanding, implicitly or explicitly, of making covenants.

Better responses came from those who addressed the question and concentrated on the differences. The best answers explained with details that the Adamic covenant was made with the whole of humanity whilst the covenants with Abraham, including circumcision, have special significance for the Jews.

2(b) 'The covenant with Adam was more important than the covenants with Abraham.' Discuss. [17]

The discussions often developed from the material used in the first part of the question. Some candidates argued successfully that the covenant with Adam was for all humankind whilst those with Abraham, such as the covenant of circumcision, were for the Jews so the universal covenant with Adam, as the representative of all humankind, was not only the first but the largest. Also it was G-d's main plan.

Many argued that all the covenants are essential parts of salvation history or of progressive revelation and therefore all covenants are equally important.

3(a) Describe the main differences between the covenants G-d made with Moses and with Jeremiah. [33]

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

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

The main differences identified tended to be those in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Some excellent responses explained how corporate identity and corporate responsibility were accepted by the nation of Israel at Sinai as their part of the covenant. By the time of Jeremiah, the loss of king, land and temple had been the catalyst which provoked the idea of personal responsibility for sins and, the more positive corollary, the relationship of the individual with G-d.

3(b) To what extent was the covenant G-d made with Jeremiah a new covenant? [17]

Most good candidates gave as evidence the fact that the text of Jeremiah 31 itself uses the term 'new covenant' and encourages contrasts and parallels with the Sinai covenant. Candidates tended to develop points made in the first part of the question in order to decide to what extent they agreed with the stimulus.

The best discussions tried to balance the fact that usually the new covenant is said to concentrate on personal as opposed to corporate religion but the context foresees a restoration of land and a reunited Israel and Judah.

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

Part 2

4(a) Explain the importance of the roles the sailors and the Ninevites play in the book of Jonah. [33]

This was the most popular question within the whole unit but was poorly done by those who preferred to tell the story at the expense of addressing the actual question. Good responses demonstrated fairly comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the contents of the book and focussed on the significant details such as the fact that the sailors and the Ninevites were gentiles. The best responses explained that the gentiles were used as the catalysts not only for the sequence of events but to spur Jonah's realisation about the nature and character of the universal G-d.

Some candidates commented that the historical background of those times was turbulent and therefore it was important for the writer to explore the relationship of the Jews to the Gentile world and that made the part of the Gentiles of the utmost importance in the story. Jonah never doubted the existence or power of G-d but he was limited in his perception of the nature, character and will of G-d, particularly in respect of the Gentiles and the role of Israel.

4(b) 'Jonah was a poor example of a Jewish prophet.' Discuss. [17]

Weaker responses tended to rush to condemn Jonah or to defend him but rarely tried to balance the points of view.

Better discussions considered the fact that Jonah comes across as disobedient. There is no evidence that he ever stopped believing in G-d but his perception of G-d's power is limited in that he thinks he can run away and that G-d's jurisdiction ends at the Mediterranean sea. Later, he objects to the Gentiles being forgiven and quarrels with G-d about the kikayon plant. These factors were used to show his shortcomings as a prophet. In his defence, candidates argued that he did admit on the ship that he was the one to blame and, also, he repented in the belly of the whale.

Some attempted to justify Jonah's situation because of the threat posed by Assyria and identified Jonah as a prophet in the reign of Jeroboam II in eighth century Israel (2 Kings 14:25). They argued that Jonah knew all along that G-d would forgive the Ninevites if they repented and Jonah did not want the stubborn unrepentant Israel to look bad by comparison. Some suggested that he was trying to avert the future, which he could foresee as a prophet, when the forgiven Ninevites would lead the invasion of Israel by the Assyrian empire.

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

This was not a popular question. Some candidates began by telling the story of Job and most managed to produce some viable reasons why such a book was written and to explain how the message can inspire people who are suffering. Some candidates provided a summary of the main suggested times when Job might have lived but many candidates ignored the question of when the book was written.

There were some good essays by candidates who explained that usually the book of Job is classed as wisdom literature because it deals with a universal theme: the question as to why the innocent suffer. The purpose being to explore the problem of pain and the theological questions that raises, candidates tended to comment that it is irrelevant when it was written because it is a timeless classic.

A few candidates went on to explain that the structure might throw light on when it was written. Usually they adopted the theory that the poetic debate that makes up the central part of the book has been introduced into a well known proverbial traditional story or play in order to explore the theme of innocent suffering. That theme would be relevant at a particularly difficult period of Jewish history and some therefore placed the likely date of the book as during the Exile in Babylon.

5(b) 'The book of Job has less importance today than when it was written.' Discuss. [17]

Candidates continued on from points made in the first part of the question. None questioned the enduring importance of the book and most candidates immediately queried the importance for whom. Most used the Holocaust as a modern example of situations where the book is just as important or more important for the Jewish people than when it was written. Some reiterated its status as a timeless classic which does not offer answers but offers encouragement to those who share Job's dilemma and urges them to trust in G-d.

Some argued that the reason for having different types of literature in the Jewish Scriptures is that stories of all categories are eternally valuable as religious parables which can be applied at different times of history to situations unforeseen by the original writer, compilers and editors.

6(a) Explain why some readers might doubt the historical accuracy of the books of Jonah and Job. [33]

A few candidates told both stories before answering the question but most tended to begin by identifying areas from both books that might seem difficult to believe literally and commenting on the extent to which they were incredible, especially the likelihood of being swallowed by big fishes. The better candidates knew the full details of the story of Jonah and of the set passages from the book of Job. They addressed the question with a comprehensive selection of suitable material, including the scene in the heavenly court from 'Job' and the miraculous growth of the plant etc. in the book of Jonah.

Good responses considered not only why some features might seem difficult to believe literally but why readers might think the writers were not interested in historical accuracy e.g. the fact that Job is not identified as Jewish.

6(b) How far does it matter whether or not the stories of Jonah and Job actually happened?

[17]

Most responses discussed the extent to which the two books were intended as historical accounts. Some candidates thought that both books were simply stories which explore theological issues and historicity might be an interesting study that matters for some people but is irrelevant. Some argued that both books were full of 'miraculous' incidents but, from a faith standpoint, anything is possible with G-d and should not be questioned. Good discussions continued distinguishing between literature that is hard to believe as historical fact but not hard to believe metaphorically or spiritually as parables or wisdom literature in considering how far historicity contributes to the value of books such as Jonah and Job. Some discussions paralleled times in more recent history when resentment at suffering made people question their beliefs and turn to their Scriptures. The fact that persecuted Jews and people of other persuasions have turned to these books, particularly Job, for comfort and to Jonah to struggle with the role of Judaism in the world was used to show that there are times when what actually happened does not matter at all.

2764 New Testament 1 (AS)

General comments.

Overall, the standard of the candidates responses was good. Most candidates produced an even performance on both questions and only a minority failed to provide two answers. There was evidence that the majority of candidates had been well prepared and had a good understanding of the prescribed texts and different interpretations of meaning. There were some good, solid essays based on traditional views and some excellent ones that showed a sophisticated approach to part (b) questions.

In some cases, spelling of technical terms such as 'crucifixion' and 'resurrection' was weak even amongst candidates who had an able grasp of the text and despite the fact that these words appeared on the question paper.

Comments on Individual Questions.

Alternative A – The Early Church.

Part 1.

1(a) Explain how in Galatians 2 Paul shows that he considers his mission to be equal to that of James and Peter. [33]

This was not a popular question and with only a few exceptions was, in general, not well answered. Some of the answers, in fact, would have been better suited to question 2.

1(b) 'In Galatians 2, Paul's criticism of Peter is unfair.' [17]

Those who answered this with only skimpy knowledge of the content of Galatians 2 found it difficult to construct an argument.

2(a) Explain the importance of the circumcision of Timothy with reference to the Jerusalem Council. [33]

There were some detailed and thoughtful answers to this question and some excellent explanations as to Paul's possible motives and the apparent contradiction in terms of the conclusions reached at the Jerusalem Council. However, some answers became rambling and confused as they progressed. Candidates were not short of information about Timothy, circumcision or the Jerusalem Council but seemed unable to make any links.

2(b) 'Circumcision was not the main issue between Paul and the Jerusalem leaders.' Discuss. [17]

There were some very good answers; some candidates were able to deal very well with the issue of Paul's apostleship. Other candidates, however, only gave a one-sided view, dealing exclusively with circumcision and ignoring other aspects.

3(a) Describe and explain the significance of one occasion when Paul rejected the Jews and turned to the gentiles. [33]

This was a popular question and there were some very good answers and some excellent ones, which showed accurate detail and understanding of one occasion at a named place in the set texts e.g., Antioch, Iconium, Thessalonica or Corinth etc.

However, some candidates were too general in their answer and did not refer to 'one occasion' as specified in the question. Others launched into a description of 'one occasion' without mentioning Paul's disaffection with the Jews.

3(b) 'Paul was wrong to turn away from the Jews.' Discuss. [17]

The majority of candidates performed well on this question. Most offered evidence for different points of view. There were some solid, straightforward debates both for and against the statement. There were also some excellent, sophisticated responses, which considered evidence, that Paul preached to the gentiles but he did not reject the Jews.

Part 2.

4(a) Describe and explain what happened to Paul and Barnabas in Lystra and Derbe. [33]

This was the most popular question in this part - even candidates who did not perform well on part (b) of this question were able to give a good account of this event. The majority were able to give a good account of the event, obviously finding it an enjoyable subject. There were some excellent detailed accounts showing understanding of Paul and Barnabas's dismay at the outcome of events.

4(b) 'The persecutions of Paul were his own fault.' Discuss. [17]

There were some interesting answers to this question. Mostly candidates perhaps limited their arguments by defending Paul as having a lack of choice in whether he preached or not and blaming the Jews for aggressive behaviour, rather than looking at some of the wider issues of understanding the audience and the effect the gospel had on them or Paul's possible motives etc.

5(a) 'Jesus I know and Paul I know; but who are you?' Acts 19:15. Describe and explain the importance to Paul's mission of the event concerning the Sons of Sceva at Ephesus. [33]

There were some pleasing answers to this question from candidates who had a good knowledge of the text and who also were able to explain that this incident established Paul's authority to carry out his mission in the name of Jesus. It was not a popular question but it was well answered by a discerning few who chose it.

However, there were a few candidates who clearly had no knowledge of the text.

5(b) The story of the Sons of Sceva and the magicians at Ephesus is fiction. Discuss. [17]

There were some excellent answers from candidates who had performed well on part (a). Arguments were usually balanced and based on evidence of the dramatic details in the account and the conversions that occurred. Some referred to broader arguments on the historicity of Acts.

6(a) Explain the ways in which the Holy Spirit is seen to guide the Early Church in Acts 13-19. [33]

There were some excellent answers from candidates who chose this question. The scope of the question offered candidates a wide choice of material and the discerning candidates made good use of it. There was evidence that these candidates had prepared well across the whole specification.

6(b) Acts 13-19 is not a factual account of the growth of Christianity. Discuss. [17]

There were many well-rounded answers presenting different points of view on the historicity of Acts.

Alternative B – The Gospels.

Part 1.

7(a) Explain why the Last supper was an important event for the disciples. [33]

This was a popular and well-answered question. The majority of candidates showed a good awareness of the theological implications of the Last Supper.

7(b) Jesus' prediction of his betrayal was the most important event at the Last Supper. Discuss. [17]

Not all candidates who performed well in part (a) of the question were as successful here. For some there was confusion between Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial. Others only argued in support of the statement. However there were some very good answers which did attempt to balance the importance of the betrayal, as instrumental in the passion story, with the theological significance of the other aspects of the Last Supper e.g. the Kingdom, Resurrection, the new covenant etc.

8(a) Explain how and why Pilate appears to be sympathetic to Jesus in John's account of the Roman trial. [33]

This was a popular and well-answered question. The majority of candidates knew the text accurately and used it to explain Pilate's words and actions. Many demonstrated a lot of relevant background information.

Candidates who used other gospel information, as well as John, were credited for that which was accurate to John.

8(b) 'Pilate was just as responsible as the Jews for the death of Jesus.' Discuss. [17]

The majority of answers were good attempts to present a balanced view. Pilate and the Jews were analysed with equal severity.

9(a) Explain why there was a Jewish plot to kill Jesus. [33]

Most of the candidates who chose this question approached it by giving an overview of how Jesus' ministry and the events in it made him a target for enmity from the authorities. Only a minority included any specific reference to Mark 14 'The Plot to Kill Jesus'. The question was generally well answered.

9(b) 'Judas did not fail Jesus.' Discuss. [17]

This question discriminated between candidates who made a good attempt at evaluation but made little argument against the statement, maintaining that Judas was fulfilling divine destiny and those who offered a more balanced view and different interpretations of Judas' betrayal of Jesus' trust etc.

Part 2.

10(a) Explain the theology of Mark's account of the crucifixion. [33]

There were some excellent answers to this question, which showed awareness of the Markan motif of Jesus as 'Suffering Servant' and the climax of the 'Messianic Secret'.

A small number of candidates merely described the account of the crucifixion. A number confused Mark and John in both this question and question 11, making it unclear which they were answering.

10(b) 'The crucifixion was the end of the Good News in Mark.' Discuss. [17]

This question was generally well answered with a variety of views on the ending of Mark and the purpose of the crucifixion as well as arguments about the resurrection.

11(a) Explain the theology of John's account of the crucifixion. [33]

There were some excellent answers showing that candidates had very good understanding of John's Christology, revealing Jesus as triumphant, even on the Cross.

11(b) To what extent does it matter if John's account of Jesus' death is not historically accurate? [17]

Most candidates who attempted this question understood the necessity of presenting a balanced view. There were some very good attempts to assess the extent to which the account of the crucifixion served the author's purposes.

12(a) Explain the significance of the conversation between Jesus and Simon Peter at the resurrection appearance beside Lake Tiberias. [33]

This was not a popular question but there were some very good answers from those who attempted it - showing awareness of Peter's significance in the Church, as a result of Jesus' complete forgiveness and faith in him. Some weaker answers focused only on the repetitive 'Do you love me?' with limited explanation.

12(b) 'The conversation between Jesus and Simon Peter at Lake Tiberias is probably fiction.' Discuss. [17]

It was expected that candidates would evaluate whether this event might be historically accurate or part of early church redaction at the end of John's gospel.

Most did not perform as well on this part (b) as they did on part (a). However, the majority attempted to offer a balanced view, based upon the incredulous nature of the events of this particular resurrection story versus the undeniable fact of Peter's restoration and forgiveness and his prominence in the Christian Church.

2765 Developments in Christian Thought 1 (AS)

General Comments:

All the questions were attempted although candidates tended to avoid questions which demanded more specific understanding of the subject matter, or at least superficially appeared so. As a result, there was a more marked distinction between good and poor answers this year. Many candidates seemed ill prepared, or attempted the wrong question and had difficulty finding appropriate knowledge to sustain arguments. However at the top end there were some outstanding scripts which showed a superb grasp of material.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1(a) Explain Aquinas' theology on man as the first principle of women. [33]

This was a popular question. Some candidates wrote without mentioning 'first principle' at all and others confused the teachings of Augustine and Aquinas. Even so, good candidates talked about Aquinas' links with Aristotle (in particular the man as 'final cause') and made insightful comments on the Old and New Testament roots of Aquinas' thought.

1(b) 'Nature intended men and women to have different roles.' Discuss. [17]

There were many general answers to this question but the best considered what exactly is meant by 'nature' and used a variety of feminist theologians to support and reject the proposition. Some excellent answers referred to Daly's and de Beauvoir's views.

2(a) Explain the criticisms of Liberal Feminist Theology. [33]

This was not a very popular question but there were some fine answers in which candidates marshalled a string of criticisms against Liberal Feminist theology and used radical and reconstructionist ideas to inform their argument. Weaker candidates wrote about feminism in general with no mention of religious ideas.

2(b) 'According to the Gospels, Jesus was clearly a feminist.' Discuss. [17]

There were some good answers to this question. Many argued that although Jesus showed surprising kindness to women the term feminist was inappropriate (note: many candidates who referred to the 'woman who was bleeding' seemed to think Jesus touched her, rather than the other way round). Some thought Jesus was more concerned with liberation than feminism. A minority wrote generally about feminist theologians without sufficient focus on the question itself.

3(a) Explain traditional Christian attitudes to women as mothers. [33]

Many candidates wrote generally about women as mothers, Good answers defined traditional teaching with reference to the Bible, early Church and key thinkers such as Aquinas and Augustine. Disappointingly very few were able to refer to contemporary Christian attitudes/teaching.

3(b) 'Feminist Theology has devalued women.' Discuss. [17]

Only the best candidates were able to see how feminists (both secular and theological) might devalue women as mothers. Some were able to show that feminist theology did not have a blanket approach and that, for example, some radical feminist positions supported the role of women as mothers albeit not for the same reasons as traditional Christianity.

4(a) Explain Liberation Theology's teaching on false-consciousness and reversal. [33]

There were a few good answers to this question but most candidates wrote general essays on Liberation Theology ignored false-consciousness or reversal altogether. Those who did understand the terminology were able to bring in Marx, Feuerbach and even Hegel to explain the radical nature of Liberation Theology. Some were able to give examples of reversal from the Bible and in particular Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God.

4(b) 'Liberation Theology has not applied the idea of reversal enough.' Discuss. [17]

For some this turned into a general critique of Liberation Theology but some argued in favour of the statement strongly maintaining that Liberation Theology had not been radical enough. Unfortunately whereas in previous years candidates had realised that the question invited reference to Alistair Kee and Ratzinger, few made the connection this time.

5(a) Explain Liberation Theology's teaching on private ownership of land. [33]

Candidates were able to write about Marx and private property but had difficulty in pinpointing precise Liberation Theology teaching on ownership of land. Some candidates made good links with reference to stewardship and Jesus' teaching on wealth; some were able to refer to Amos and the 8th century prophets. Weaker answers only talked in general terms about the political situation today in Latin America.

5(b) 'No Christian should ever have private ownership of land.' Discuss. [17]

Most thought private ownership could be justified; answers were fairly general but only the best tied their ideas into Christian thinking and mentioned the Bible and Liberation Theology perspectives. The very best were able to reflect on Marx and consider whether private ownership land was also to be seen in Christian terms as a form of alienation.

6(a) Explain how Liberation Theology interprets the Bible. [33]

This was a popular question. A few just wrote about Liberation Theology in general terms but better candidates either pinpointed and discussed a variety of biblical texts and/or looked at how Liberation Theology uses the Bible; the mediations, hermeneutical circle and base communities all featured prominently.

6(b) 'The central theme of the Bible is revolution'. Discuss. [17]

This produced some good responses and candidates were able to use the Exodus and elements of Jesus' teaching to construct decent arguments. Many made the comparison with love and pacifism in the Jesus tradition. The best candidates discussed hermeneutics and that one could effectively impose one's views onto the Bible and see revolution there if one wished.

2766 Eastern Religions 1 (AS)

General Comments:

Candidates had generally been well-prepared for the examinations. They usually used their time effectively, addressing part a) and b) with a reasonable level of detail. Some candidates struggled with part b) questions, only addressing one aspect of the question, or failing to provide evidence to support their arguments.

There were more candidates this year who addressed the general area of the question, rather than specifically focussing on the question set. This prevents them accessing the highest marks. Centres may wish to remind candidates to answer the question set.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1(a) Explain how following the Noble Eightfold Path might affect kamma in Buddhist thought. [33]

This was the most popular question in this section.

The question was generally well-answered. Weaker candidates tended to list the path, and gave basic examples. Better responses tended use technical terms with facility, and providing thoughtful and well-explained examples.

1(b) 'Buddhists should not aim to get good kamma.' Discuss. [17]

Part b was often answered well with some candidates explaining and comparing different views. Many candidates effectively considered why Buddhists should not aim to get good or bad kamma.

2(a) Explain the relationship between kamma and dependent origination. [33]

This was the least popular question in this section.

Many candidates struggled to explore the connections between kamma and dependent origination. Weaker candidates tended to describe or explain kamma, without making any serious attempt to explore Dependent Origination. Better responses explore both aspects adequately, though could have explained the connection more clearly.

2(b) 'An understanding of dependent origination is not necessary for most Buddhists.' Discuss. [17]

Part b was generally answered well, with most candidates exploring a range of views before reaching a conclusion.

3(a) Explain how a Buddhist might avoid rebecoming and achieve nibbana. [33]

Answers to this section tended to be weak or excellent with few responses in the middle range. Weak candidates tended to interpret the question as 'describe nibbana', and offered little explanation focused on the question. The best answers systematically dealt with rebecoming and nibbana, and explained how to avoid rebecoming in detail.

3(b) 'Nibbana cannot accurately be described as enlightenment.' Discuss. [17]

Again answers tended to be either poor or excellent. The best responses were able to show understanding of a range of Buddhist views before reaching a conclusion.

4(a) Explain the importance of the monastic Sangha for lay Buddhists. [33]

This was a popular question, however a number of candidates explored the symbiotic relationship between the monastic community and the laity. This limited their marks, as they were not specifically addressing the question.

4(b) 'Lay Buddhists cannot be committed to their faith or they would become monks.' Discuss. [17]

This was generally answered much better than part a. Candidates generally explored both sides of the argument with facility before reaching a conclusion.

5(a) Explain how a Buddhist might show they have turned to the Buddha for refuge. [33]

This was the least popular question in this section. Few candidates considered what was meant by taking refuge.

5(b) 'It does not matter whether stories about the Buddha are true.' Discuss. [17]

The best responses tended to explore the advantages, or otherwise, of monastic life with the aim of developing a greater commitment to the seeking of nibbana.

6(a) Explain the importance of the three refuges in Buddhist thought. [33]

In some cases candidates attempted describe the three refuges, rather than focus on the question. In general however candidates were able to demonstrate clear knowledge and understanding.

6(b) 'The Sangha is the most important refuge in the modern world.' Discuss. [17]

Many candidates did not address the 'modern world' part of this question, and this limited their responses. The best candidates often gave detailed and imaginative consideration of the issues which might be faced in the modern world.

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

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

8(a) Explain the relationship between atman and samsara. [33]

This question was generally answered well, and candidates were able to explain the relationship between the two terms well.

8(b) 'An unchanging atman is pointless.' Discuss. [17]

Candidates generally offered clear analysis of the issues, considering a range of views before reaching their conclusion.

9(a) Explain how a Hindu might follow the teachings about bhakti in their daily lives. [33]

This question was generally answered well. Where responses were weaker they tended to describe puja at the expense of explaining.

9(b) 'Bhakti is a lazy way to achieve moksha.' Discuss. [17]

Candidates tended to present both arguments with some facility before reaching a conclusion.

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

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

11(a) Explain the similarities and differences between Kali and Lakshmi. [33]

This question was generally answered well. Where responses were less successful they tended to be too descriptive. The best responses focused on comparing the two goddesses rather than describing the two separately.

11(b) 'It is easier to worship Lakshmi than Kali.' Discuss. [17]

Candidates were generally able to evaluate this question effectively.

12(a) Explain why a Hindu might worship Ganesha. [33]

Candidates demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of this topic in their responses.

12(b) 'It does not matter whether the stories about Ganesha are true.' [17]

Some responses tended to describe the stories of Ganesha in too much detail in part b. This left them with too little time to analyse whether it mattered if the stories were true.

2767 Islam 1 (AS)

General Comments

Many candidates had prepared well for this examination and a few candidates gained full marks. A wide range of ability was represented. Some scripts were excellent and a pleasure to read whilst other candidates seemed to misunderstand the rubric, answering only one part of each of the two essays chosen. The quality of English used was poor in the weakest scripts and a few of those candidates seemed to have difficulty in understanding the questions. The three question options discriminated well and elicited the full range of responses. The most popular questions were 2 and 5. Candidates seem to get better every year at addressing the evaluative questions. Many candidates were careful to address the wording of the questions and seemed to enjoy demonstrating their skills in accordance with the two assessment objectives. Most candidates placed their material appropriately to show understanding or to demonstrate evaluative skills without undue repetition. Some candidates, however, demonstrated a surprising lack of basic knowledge, not only about the topics on the specification but about Islam in general. There was also a tendency to address the question which they wished to see rather than the one on the question paper. Also, some candidates only gave one point of view in all the b) sections which limited their ability to demonstrate their evaluative skills. Possibly they were not familiar with the trigger words used to elicit the appropriate responses.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part 1

1(a) Explain why the message of the Qur'an has authority for Muslims. [33]

Most candidates started with Jibril commanding Muhammad ﷺ, who could not read nor write, to 'recite'. Some gave further details of how Muhammad ﷺ received messages from 610 CE till 632 CE.

Only the best answers explained that the Qur'an has authority not simply because it was given by an angel but because it came from Allah, the one true God, to whom Muslims submit and that the message warns of the last judgement and the straight path to paradise.

Good responses demonstrated understanding of the concept of revelation and made it clear that the authority is not just of Muhammad ﷺ the last prophet but of the very words of Allah and that Muslims believe that earlier revelations of the eternal message became corrupted.

Some excellent scripts went on to explain that the Qur'an does not just have authority but has the status of absolute authority in matters of law and theology for Muslims of all persuasions.

There was a tendency on the part of quite a few candidates, however, to respond as if it was a question about how Muslims show respect for the Qur'an, placing it on high shelves etc. The weakest candidates seemed not to understand the word 'authority'.

1(b) To what extent is Surah 1 a perfect summary of the message of the Qur'an? [17]

Most essays began with an introduction about Surah 1 being the opening chapter, al-Fatihah, of the Qur'an and good candidates hastened to use the opportunity to show their knowledge of the wording of the seven ayat of Surah 1 or gave a paraphrase of the text.

The best responses included basic Qur'anic Islamic concepts from Surah 1 such as: one God, Creator and Sustainer; the final Judgement, Hell, Paradise, grace, mercy; and the obligation to monotheism and moral behaviour which is the straight way of Islam, achievable under God's guidance.

Most candidates gave a reason for considering Surah 1 to be or not to be a perfect summary of the message and some explained that Surah 1 is regarded as the perfect prayer. The main point cited against the statement was the fact that all Five Pillars are not mentioned. The weakest responses were hampered by their lack of knowledge of the surah and tended to fall back on suggestions such as something so short could not be perfect as a summary.

There were some excellent responses, however, that considered the extent to which the statement was true and weighed the evidence before coming to each candidate's personal conclusion.

2(a) Explain the manner in which the Qur'an was compiled by the followers of Muhammad ﷺ. [33]

This was popular but elicited the full range of responses. Candidates began by referring to Muhammad ﷺ and Jibril when Muhammad ﷺ, who could not read nor write, was commanded to 'recite'. Better responses filled in further details and continued to do so as they trawled through the stages of the compilation.

The subsequent revelations, the collection, reference to Zayd Bin Thabit as scribe, followers writing on bits of bone etc. the placing in Hafsa's chest...Most of these tended to appear in the accounts, sometimes a little confused, but even the weakest candidates, who did not know the names of anybody, managed to get the general sequence of the process correct.

Good answers continued explaining significant events up to 'Uthman and the four copies which were sent in 652C.E. to Basra, al-Kufa, Damascus and al-Madinah and some demonstrated understanding that, to Muslims, the Qur'an is not simply a revealed book but the eternal revelation and all stages of the process of collecting the words of Allah into the Qur'an were under divine guidance.

2(b) To what extent was the revelation to Muhammad ﷺ a 'new' revelation? [17]

Though this part was not as confidently addressed as part (a) most candidates happily provided arguments in favour of the newness of the message to the contemporaries of Muhammad ﷺ in that it was the start of Islam and different from the polytheism of pre-Islamic Arabia. Some were a little unsure whether or not the message was new to Muhammad ﷺ and wondered why he had gone to the cave in the first place but many tended not to address the 'to what extent' in the question at all.

The better responses used the fact that Muhammad is known as the seal of the prophets and that the revelation is called the final one to introduce the existence of previous revelations. They gave information about the Quranic references to previous prophets and books before Muhammad ﷺ. Good responses referred to the earlier revelations referred to in the Qur'an: the Sahifah to Ibrahim, the Tawrah to Musa, the Zabur to Dawud and the Injil to Isa. Some commented that none were 'new' because of the existence of the heavenly original.

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

'Theological' was a word not understood by some candidates so they cheerfully ignored it and went on to write all they knew about shahadah as the First Pillar of Islam. This still made it possible to gain some credit even though they did not always demonstrate full understanding of the significance of information they were giving. Some candidates gave details of the usage of the shahadah e.g. the shahadah and the adhan are the first and last words a Muslim hears etc. Others explained that the declaration is sufficient to admit a person as a revert to Islam but did not develop the explanation to demonstrate understanding of the credal function of the shahadah and the beliefs it contains.

The best responses usually quoted the declaration of faith, including a transliteration of the Arabic words and provided a competent theological analysis of the monotheistic beliefs enshrined in the shahadah and their significance for Muslims, as well as some explanation of the unique role and status of Muhammad ﷺ.

One or two candidates mistook shahadah for salah and this invalidated much of what they wrote for both parts (a) and (b).

3(b) 'The shahadah is the most important of the Five Pillars of Islam.' Discuss. [17]

Most candidates seemed to feel they were on familiar ground and launched into pre-prepared essays about the Five Pillars. Most responses, but not all, identified the Five Pillars accurately as shahadah, salah, zakah, sawm and hajj.

There were some who simply argued for the predominance of shahadah and did not consider the arguments for the other contenders nor provide any detail to support their discussion. Some candidates described the Five Pillars as supporting a building which is the Faith of Islam and used this familiar description to argue that the Five Pillars are interlinked practices which cannot exist alone.

Part 2

4(a) Explain the implications of Ummah for Muslim ethics. [33]

Few candidates attempted this question but most managed to provide a definition of Ummah as the worldwide Muslim community and explained that it started when

Muhammad ﷺ established the ideal community in Madinah.

Candidates had more difficulty explaining 'ethics' and most resorted to giving examples of how Muslims look after each other like one big family.

Some candidates quoted Muhammad ﷺ in his final sermon on Mount Arafat at the end of Hajj, '...regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust...Allah has forbidden interest...'etc. This usually led to an explanation of the way zakah helps with a fair distribution of wealth within the community.

There were some very good responses from candidates who decided to concentrate on the equality and unity implied in the Ummah. Standing shoulder to shoulder in prayer but also in situations of war in the lesser Jihad or all dressed the same at Hajj or buried with the same simplicity and one only being greater than another in piety were all used to address the question.

4(b) To what extent is Ummah more important than the individual Muslim? [17]

Discussions tended to develop from points made in the first part of the question about the importance of Ummah and the relationship of the individual and the community in Islam.

Some candidates argued that some key commands in Islam- prayer five times a day, meeting locally every Friday, celebrating the two main ids, and the experience of Hajj at least once in a lifetime all served to emphasise the importance of community.

Other candidates used the same material to put the emphasis on the part played by the individual Muslim.

Some candidates referred to the concern shown for orphans and the needy in Surah 4 and how this reflected the teachings and example of Muhammad ﷺ. Du'ah prayers were used as an example of how in worship the community activity is followed by the prayer of the individual. Some simply argued that you can't have a group unless you have enough willing individuals.

Others made a case for a group becoming in some way more powerful than the sum of the parts, especially when they are all submitting to the over-riding importance of Allah. Some pointed out that prayers were said to be worth more according to Muhammad ﷺ if they were done in the mosque with other Muslims especially on Friday at noon. The best responses were those which tried to balance the discussion rather than just arguing in support of one viewpoint.

5(a) Explain the significance of Salat-ul-Jumu(ah for the Muslim community. [33]

This question was the most popular in part 2 and was answered fairly well even by the weaker candidates who usually managed to give an account of salah at noon on Friday in the mosque even if 'the significance for the community' was not addressed fully. Most candidates pointed out that Salat-ul-Jumu(ah involves compulsory attendance for males but not for females who are expected to perform the noon prayer at home.

There were some excellent responses which explained the importance of gathering in obedience to the Qur'an (62:9-10) for Zuhr prayers as well as giving detailed descriptions that included the Imam preaching the khutbah.

Most focussed on the importance of the Imam's sermon in strengthening Ummah and many commented that in Islam all aspects of daily life are part of religious activity and so the sermon and the following discussion might be on any topic of current interest or importance to the community.

Good responses made a point of explaining that Friday is not a day of rest and that normal work and business carry on as usual before and after the time of prayer.

5(b) 'All true Muslims should go to Friday prayers at the mosque.' Discuss. [17]

Most candidates homed in on 'all Muslims' and used the fact that, though some women and children do attend, it is not compulsory for women to attend Friday prayers. Some focussed on the mosque as the location for Friday prayers and pointed out that prayers can be said anywhere as long as the place is clean. Candidates asserted the importance of going to the mosque because attendance is not only for worship – it also builds up community spirit.

Other candidates listed situations where Muslims, especially in non-Muslim countries, cannot leave work or school and provided scenarios of unsympathetic bosses etc.

Surprisingly few thought to discuss what constitutes a 'true Muslim'. There were some excellent responses, however, which debated all aspects of the question.

6(a) Explain the theological significance of Jihad. [33]

Candidates began by defining Jihad as e.g. 'striving' or 'trying one's utmost'. 'Theological significance' again proved a stumbling block but most candidates demonstrated some understanding of Jihad as part of the larger theological concept of living in submission and spiritually striving to preserve the Muslim way of life to establish peace, justice, the rule of Allah and the will of Allah for creation.

Most candidates distinguished between 'Greater' and 'Lesser' Jihad and all sensible divisions and sub-divisions were given credit.

The most common example given of personal Jihad was struggling to get up early for prayer.

From their foundation studies, most candidates knew that Muhammad ﷺ fought battles 'in the cause of Allah' and good responses made it clear what rules apply before, during and after warfare according to the Qur'an.

Good answers tended to find the opportunity to explain that the word 'Islam' derives from the word for 'peace'.

6(b) 'Believers in God should never fight other people who believe in God.' Discuss with reference to Islam. [17]

Some candidates made a case for believers in God being pacifists and not fighting anybody not just 'other believers in G-d'. Most candidates, however, were aware that Muhammad ﷺ had led his followers into battle and there were some excellent thoughtful discussions in which candidates considered situations which might meet the criteria set out in the Qur'an for conducting a defensive action.

Some defined 'other people who believe in God' as Muslims but others widened this definition to include Christians and Jews. Both interpretations led to good discussions. Some candidates made reference to present conflicts between and within religions and most did this without resorting to extremist political propaganda.

The best responses tried to present a balanced discussion and demonstrated awareness that Islam is derived from two roots, one meaning 'submission' and the other 'peace'.

2768 Judaism 1 (AS)

General Comments

This year candidate performance encompassed a wide ability range from excellent well-structured answers to some which were vague in terms of knowledge and understanding or misunderstood the focus of the question.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part 1.

1(a) Explain the principles and practice of Halakhah. [33]

This question was generally well answered by those who read the question carefully and addressed both principles and practice. Weaker answers tended to be very general and vague in definition of either principle or practice.

1(b) Halakhah is vital for Jewish identity. Discuss. [17]

The majority of candidates appreciated the necessity of offering different points of view and examined other ways of expressing Jewish identity in comparison with halakhah.

2(a) Explain the relative importance of the Ten Commandments in Jewish Law. [33]

Some candidates made very good attempts to explain that the Ten Commandments might be considered to be the Jewish Law but that there might also be a wider understanding that the Ten Commandments are only one aspect of a broader view of Jewish Law.

Less successful were the candidates who listed and explained the meaning for Jews of each Commandment because whilst these efforts were of some merit, they were not wholly addressing the question.

2(b) 'Judaism could not survive without the Ten Commandments.' Discuss. [17]

Examiners were aware that candidates might draw upon information from (a) as evidence for argument here and this was allowed for. The least successful arguments were those that argued that the Ten Commandments were unnecessary, ignoring the fact that they might be considered to be the basis for all law. However, there were some good answers but few excellent attempts.

3(a) Explain the different aspects of kashrut practice. [33]

This was a very popular question and generally well answered on all aspects of kashrut practice. There were some excellent, accurately detailed explanations. Weak answers tended to be purely descriptive of some practices, mainly food, with only a hint of explanation of the reasons for the practice.

3(b) 'All aspects of kashrut are of equal importance'. Discuss. [17]

Some candidates argued, perceptively, that regularity of practice and observance might mean that some forms of kashrut appear to be more important than others. Food and clothing were given as examples of this. Some examined whether different practices were of equal importance in different traditions. As with (a) there were some good quality answers.

Part 2.

4(a) Explain the central role of the synagogue in Jewish life. [33]

This was a popular question. The focus of the question was the role of the synagogue in Jewish life rather than details of building or worship and the majority of candidates showed awareness of this. Most answers were strong on the role of the synagogue in worship and as the place where the scrolls were kept and read etc. as well as its role in providing educational classes etc. Its strength as a community centre was also usually explained but celebrations, festivals, weddings and bar mitzvahs etc. were not always developed. Most attempts were very good.

4(b) 'Judaism cannot exist without a synagogue'. Discuss. [17]

There was a mixed performance on this question. Some candidates appeared unaware that synagogues existed in late Temple times and referred back to Judaism's survival in past times without a synagogue. Most candidates offered a balanced view comparing the benefits in (a) with times of persecution and oppression when the religion survived without synagogues but some arguments were repetitive and limited.

5(a) Explain the importance of Yom Tovim. [33]

Candidates generally interpreted Yom Tovim in one of two ways, either as rules for Holy Days or as specifically referring to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur both were worthy of equal credit. Most were aware of the need to focus on the theological importance of the days and their associated teaching as well as the effect of the observance on the family and community. Only a minority of answers were purely descriptive. There were some very good attempts to answer the question.

5(b) 'Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are highlights of the Jewish year.' Discuss. [17]

Answers to this question were good or satisfactory with few outstanding ones. Mostly candidates compared the importance of both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur with other festivals or the Sabbath and arguments were justified but bland and usually repetitive.

6(a) Explain the relevance of the laws concerning Pesach for modern Judaism. [33]

The best answers showed how, for Jews, following the laws of Pesach mean that they are celebrating the spiritual benefits of God's deliverance and also celebrating a continuing tradition and history both of which are important to Jewish identity. Pesach ensures the continuation of the religion through worship in the home and encouraging the education of children.

It was disappointing that a fair number of candidates only described how Pesach is observed in the home and did not develop their answer any further.

6(b) 'Pesach has little meaning for Jews in the 21st Century.' Discuss. [17]

Candidates who had made a good attempt at (a) had plenty of evidence for their arguments against the statement but many did not develop their answer to give a second view. It appeared that candidates found it difficult to argue in favour of the statement. However, some of those who understood the necessity of offering a balanced view assessed the need for Judaism to move away from a mentality of slavery and persecution or a celebration of ancient history, to make progress.

2769 Philosophy of Religion 2 (AS)

There were some good responses but the overall standard for this unit was a little disappointing. An increasing number of candidates wrote very short answers for at least one of the parts or wrote material that was at a complete tangent to the question. Some scripts were unbalanced with candidates giving one good answer and one weaker answer. There was much 'general topic' material in part a) questions. Part b) questions were generally answered a little better with most candidates able to sustain and justify an argument on at least one of their two questions.

1(a) Explain what is meant by propositional revelation

The responses to this question were disappointing and few candidates seemed to have a clear understanding of this term. Some wrote about religious experience and consequently seemed to be hinting at a non-propositional view of revelation as a result of this.

1(b) 'The belief that scripture is divinely inspired is an illusion.' Discuss

The answers here seemed far better than on part a) and candidates did not seem to be too hindered by a lack of knowledge of propositional and non-propositional revelation. Candidates showed some awareness of issues surrounding interpretation of texts and possible contradictions found in various scriptures

2(a) Explain the use made by philosophers, such as Tillich, of symbol to express religious ideas

This question was not particularly popular and was often answered in a rather general way focusing on religious symbols such as the crucifix or the symbolism present in Holy Communion. Most candidates had little awareness of Tillich and did not focus their answers on the issues of religious language.

2(b) 'Philosophers, such as Tillich, failed to improve on other philosophical attempts to express religious ideas.'

Candidates fared a little better on this question but some focused on the Verification Principle as one of the 'other attempts' to express religious ideas and hence produced quite confused answers.

3(a) Explain the strengths and weaknesses of the falsification principle

This was the most popular question on part 1 and elicited a wide range of answers. Most candidates had reasonable understanding of falsification and were able to make some suggestion as to strengths and weaknesses. There were a few excellent responses to the question. Some candidates were confused between verification and falsification and struggled to do well. Others recounted Wisdom's parable of the gardener at great length but without a clear understanding of its purpose. A few candidates wrote about the *Via Negativa*.

3(b) 'Falsification fails to show that religious language is meaningless.' Discuss

Candidates generally made good attempts at this question although errors made in part a) were frequently carried over, particularly confusion with verification. Better candidates were able to use the views of Mitchell and Hare in order to discuss falsification.

PART 2

4(a) Compare and contrast Plato and Hick's understanding of the concept of the soul

Most candidates displayed a good knowledge and understanding of Hick and Plato, in some cases excellent. Some candidates struggled to make explicit comparisons or contrasts other than to suggest that Plato was a dualist whereas Hick was a Materialist. A few candidates were confused on Hick's ideas and suggested that he was similar to Plato in most respects.

4(b) 'Hick's views are more likely to be true those of Plato.' Discuss

This question was fairly well answered on the whole. Most candidates were supportive of Hick on the basis that his materialistic views are more in keeping with a modern scientific worldview. Other candidates questioned whether either view could be successfully established

5(a) Describe how belief in rebirth makes the existence of evil more understandable

This question was not attempted by many candidates but those who tackled this question were able to make the link between rebirth and the problem of evil to some extent. However very few of the answers were detailed enough to reach the higher levels

5(b) 'Belief in rebirth makes no sense.' Discuss

Answers to this question tended to be a little better than those to part a). There was a good use of wider evidence including arguments from Plato as well as the more obvious focus on Buddhist or Hindu thought.

6(a) Explain how personal religious experience might be recognized as evidence of God.

Candidates wrote at length in answer to this question but were in some cases overly descriptive. Religious experiences were described and categorized at length without always clearly explaining why they may constitute evidence for God. Only a few candidates made use of James or Swinburne in order to explain the argument.

6(b) 'There is no such thing as a religious experience.' Discuss

For some candidates this question involved a repetition of much of the material outlined in part a) Better answers engaged in discussion of issues such as verification and conflicting truth claims in order to advance their position.

2770 Religious Ethics 2 (AS)

General Comments

Overall performance was satisfactory. Very few candidates were unable to explain the main points of the question and used technical terms well. Some, however, were unable to reach the higher mark bands as they failed to understand the complexities of the ethical theories, and tended to be over simplistic in their application to issues.

Part b) questions were better than in previous years, with nearly all candidates able to sustain a relevant argument.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Explain how Kant's theory of ethics might be applied to the environment.

Very few candidates seemed to have opted for this question, but those that did were generally satisfactory. Candidates approached the question using the Categorical Imperative and ideas of universalisation and not using others as means to an end. Some very good responses considered that living in a kingdom of ends would be beneficial to the environment.

1(b) 'Kant's theory of ethics is of no help when applied to the environment.' Discuss.

Good answers compared the advantages and disadvantages of Kantian ethics versus other ethical theories when applied to the environment. There were some good discussions of duty being paramount.

2(a) Explain the differences between Utilitarianism and Kantian ethics.

This was a very popular question. Most candidates were able to contrast the Categorical Imperative with Utilitarianism. Many, however, struggled to make a comparison beyond the teleological and relativistic distinctions. Those who answered using specific examples showed a greater understanding.

Most answers were limited to Bentham's hedonic calculus and took the question no further.

2(b) 'Utilitarianism is preferable as an ethical theory to that of Kant.' Discuss.

This part of the question was generally well done, with good comparisons between Utilitarianism and Kantian ethics. Again many good answers made use of examples.

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

This was a popular choice, but some candidates are still confusing Utilitarianism with religious ethics.

Weaker responses barely went beyond GCSE level and just trotted out the teachings of the different churches, or simply referred to the Ten Commandments. Some gave limited accounts of Natural Law and Situation Ethics.

3(b) 'The Sanctity of Life is the most important issue to be considered in discussions about abortion.' Discuss.

This part of the question was well done, though a minority of candidates did not understand the concept of the Sanctity of Life. Most discussed the mother's rights, the future of the child and the quality of life.

4(a) Explain how hard and soft determinism are different.

The candidates who attempted this question did quite well. Nearly all were aware of at least one cause of a deterministic view, and could give a simple account of soft determinism. There were, however, fewer candidates who understood the theory of universal causation – but those who did answered the question very well.

4(b) 'Soft determinism can easily be justified.' Discuss.

This part was more problematic, as the question was often interpreted to mean 'moral decisions can easily be justified', rather than an evaluation of the evidence for soft determinism.

5(a) Explain why people might argue that conscience is the voice of God.

This was generally answered badly as many candidates attempted to answer without any reference to Christian scholars such as Butler and Newman. Those who did refer to the scholars included very little detail on their arguments, and failed to explain the role of moral intuition.

5(b) 'Conscience is vital when making moral decisions.' Discuss.

This part of the question was generally answered better, with candidates weighing up the role of conscience, considering how it might be mistaken or easily influenced.

6(a) Explain how followers of Natural Law might approach issues surrounding sex and relationships.

Most candidates were able to explain that Natural Law precludes certain sexual acts and could explain the reason for this in relation to the primary precepts. Better candidates were able to link Natural Law with the Divine Law and give a more holistic account of Aquinas' thinking.

6(b) 'Natural Law is the best approach to issues surrounding sex and relationships.' Discuss.

This part was answered well with some excellent alternative ways of approaching sexual ethics. Often, the best answers referred to the harm principle, feminism and contractarian approaches.

2771 Philosophy of Religion 2 (A2)

This year's examination produced some interesting and thoughtful responses. It was refreshing that there were fewer signs of pre-prepared responses than in some previous years, although too many candidates decided to answer questions not by focusing on what was asked, but by attaching material without establishing why that material was relevant. It is important that candidates remember that an examination at this level is not a test of how much candidates know, but is about how well they can answer a particular question. The best responses come from candidates who have thought carefully about what they intend to write and who are able to justify coherently their reasons. Candidates need to make their reasons clear as it is unreasonable to expect the examiner to do so.

All the questions were equally popular. A surprising number of candidates produced one excellent essay and one very poor essay. Many candidates who answered question 1 also answered question 4 and many who answered question 2 also answered question 3.

The best candidates made good use of fundamental philosophical concepts, but too many struggled with basic terms such as '*a priori*', '*a posteriori*', 'prove', 'argue', or 'refute'. Many candidates handicapped themselves by very poor English and with handwriting which was illegible.

Comments on Individual Questions

1. 'Hick's views on the body/soul distinction are more coherent than those of Dawkins.' Discuss.

There were many good answers though some candidates struggled with the notion of *coherence*, assuming incorrectly that the term was a synonym for *true*. Some candidates incorrectly assumed that Hick was a dualist, while a few thought the same of Dawkins. Knowledge occasionally failed to extend beyond Hick's replica theory (John Smith visited some new destinations this year) or Dawkins' atheism. Some candidates assumed Hick supported Cartesian or Platonic dualism or assumed that Ryle was a materialist and hence would have supported Dawkins. There were a few excellent responses which discussed Dawkins' theories of memes and the selfish gene, suggesting that these notions had no more empirical backing than some of Hick's ideas.

2. Critically examine the use of myth as an approach to understanding the nature of God.

This question was assumed by many to be an invitation to write about every theory on religious language, leading to many very lengthy – and normally wrong – accounts of the verification and falsification theories with rare nods towards myth. Some had good understanding of the views of Bultmann and other scholars and there were a few very interesting comments about the significance of myths in pre-scientific ages. Some candidates did write all they knew on myth but failed to answer the question on '*the nature of God*'. Some also failed to critically assess, which again was required for a mark above band 3.

3. 'Sacred writings fail to reveal God.' Discuss.

There were some interesting answers but much misunderstanding. For some candidates, the title was taken as an excuse to work through the usual list of language theories, but most were aware of discussions about liberal, conservative and literalist theories of interpretation. Some candidates struggled with the notions of propositional and non-propositional approaches to scripture. Too many assumed that 'propositional' is a synonym for 'literal'. What makes an approach propositional is that God is seen as revealing certain truths, with faith being a

response of acceptance of those truths. Those truths might be found in Scripture, and/or the Creeds or the Confessions of the Reformers or the teachings of the Church. Non-propositional approaches emphasise God revealing himself, with the response of faith being a personal belief in God. Many candidates assumed – wrongly – that Roman Catholics take Scripture literally, while a significant minority incorrectly claimed that Catholics believe the Pope to be the voice of God. Some assumed that Protestants are all non-propositional in their belief. Many candidates seemed to simply recall (badly) GCSE material. Some excellent answers looked in detail at the Quran and Jihad and how this failed to show God as omnibenevolent. Some responses compared sacred texts with religious experience which was credit worthy. A few responses, however, dealt solely with the nature of miracles.

4. ‘There are no philosophical justifications for belief in resurrection.’ Discuss.

Candidates who understood the concept of resurrection produced some good and interesting essays, but too many responses demonstrated a belief that the question was about whether an Afterlife existed or whether dualism is true. There was much irrelevant material on reincarnation, near-death experiences, ghosts, Plato and other theories. Some made good use of Hick, (with John Smith disappearing on his travels yet again.) Too few candidates actually understood that John Hick is actually supporting the Christian belief in resurrection. Many candidates used the John Smith story without recognising how it was relevant to the actual question. It was surprising how many candidates failed to understand ‘*resurrection*’ with many claiming that this was a Buddhist belief. Assessment was particularly poor on this question with many candidates, again, failing to grasp ‘philosophical justifications’. There were several interesting answers which concentrated on issues about Jesus’ resurrection.

2772 Religious Ethics 2 (A2)

General Comments

Overall the performance of candidates was good, with some outstanding responses that not only demonstrated an ability to express knowledge and understanding, but also an ability to write against time and at speed in a mature manner.

There were relatively few responses at the lower end showing that centres are preparing the candidates well. However, some of the responses were somewhat formulaic.

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

Comments on Individual Questions

1. 'We are free to make ethical decisions.' Discuss.

This was a very popular question. All candidates gave at least an outline of libertarianism, hard and soft determinism. Some considered conscience, other ethical theories and religion as limiting the freedom to act.

Some candidates did not really grasp the idea of freedom versus determinism, and some got the terms confused. Some argued that it was God who determined everything without considering other approaches to determinism. Most seemed to think that predestination, and the ideas of Calvin allowed no freedom to make ethical decisions simply because a person's final destiny had been decided.

Most candidates referred to Locke and Darrow, though with varying degrees of accuracy. Some candidates made excellent use of Sartre and generally the Libertarian stance was analysed well, but not many candidates considered the problem of randomness and meaning implicit in the concept.

Better responses questioned the nature of freedom itself particularly in reference to quantum physics.

2. How far can the ethics of the religion you have studied be considered Utilitarian?

This question either elicited excellent answers or very poor ones. Weaker candidates made very general points and seemed to have limited understanding of Christian ethics or even of Utilitarianism.

Many candidates focussed on Natural Law and Situation Ethics, but some seemed to have little understanding of the ethical variations within Christianity. Some candidates tried to apply Christian and Utilitarian principles to applied ethics, but unfortunately this tended to turn into a list.

Better responses drew comparisons with a range of Christian ethics, not only Natural Law and Situation Ethics, but also Proportionalism and biblical ethics, as well as comparing different versions of Utilitarianism, (not just Bentham or Mill but also Singer or Hare.)

**3. 'Virtue ethics is a good approach to the issues surrounding sex and relationships.'
Discuss.**

This was the least popular question, and most responses were poor. Candidates, on the whole gave a very scant outline of Virtue Ethics and limited application to sex and relationships. Most candidates went on to give an account of the approaches of every other ethical theory to the subject – barely going beyond 'general topic' in their answers.

Those who had a good understanding of Virtue Ethics were able to draw out good applications to not only sexual ethics but also relationships. Many of the few excellent answers had considered modern versions of Virtue Ethics as well as the ideas of Aristotle.

4. Assess the view that conscience is not a reliable guide to ethical decision-making.

This was also a very popular question. Most candidates answered it well, drawing on the ideas of Aquinas, Butler, Newman and Freud in the main. They showed good understanding of the theories.

However, many candidates did not use their knowledge to the best of their ability and failed to focus on the question set, considering instead the question of whether conscience was innate, God-given or learnt.

Some candidates considered all the different approaches of many philosophers but only got round to answering the question in the final paragraph.

Better responses were able to give a balanced criticism of both religious and secular approaches to the conscience in terms of ethical decision making, and others approached the question from the point of finding other more reliable guides to ethical decision making such as external laws or other ethical theories.

2773 Jewish Scriptures 2 (A2)

General Comments

There were very few candidates who took this option, but the full range of ability for this level of examination seemed to be represented. The questions achieved differentiation and were marked according to the levels of response. The a) and b) options to the questions were approximately equally popular.

It was evident that many centres had incorporated careful textual exegesis into the course of study. A number of candidates used the set texts from the specification extremely effectively in their responses. They also showed some consideration, where relevant, of possible date, authorship, purpose and historicity with a sound overview of the historical dating of principal events in Jewish history and the types of literature found in the Jewish scriptures. Reference to scholars is not essential for good marks but awareness of the views of scholars or of literary and theological issues can be a useful factor in discussions as was demonstrated by many able candidates. Some candidates incorporated appropriate material from earlier in their studies and the breadth and depth of their responses clearly demonstrated that they had benefited from their whole course of study.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) 'A prophet's main task is to foretell the future.' Discuss with reference to Amos.

Surprisingly few candidates attempted to define the role of a prophet in the way responses have done frequently in the past. Candidates tended to begin by summarising the eighth century background in Israel where contemporary life in the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II was full of social injustice and corruption as well as hypocritical worship particularly at the royal sanctuary at Bethel.

Many gave examples from the text of how Amos condemned the social milieu and the unreal religion of those who should have known better as covenant people. Most candidates then recounted the visions (7:1 – 9:15) by which Amos predicted the inevitable future punishment of the people for their sins. A few candidates included the blessings that were prophesied to follow if the people heeded the warning.

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

Some gave an inventory of other themes in Amos such as G-d as Creator of the universe to contradict the stimulus quotation whilst others argued that the concluding passages which lighten the book of Amos might be later additions and therefore not admissible as evidence of foresight.

Another approach was to examine the motive of Amos. Some candidates asserted that the doom-laden prophecies were meant to be the catalyst towards repentance and therefore the need for the latter was his main theme and foretelling was a necessary component of 'forthtelling' the word of the Lord. Competent discussions tended to include concepts such as G-d being just and most candidates found the opportunity to write that, therefore, G-d wanted 'justice to flow like a mighty stream'.

A few candidates widened the topic to include other prophets besides Amos, which was an acceptable interpretation but some of those responses tended to read as desperate efforts to compensate for lack of detailed knowledge of the visionary element in the book of Amos.

1(b) To what extent is social justice important in the book of Micah?

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

Many candidates used the opportunity to cross reference to the social ills condemned in the book of Amos. Some confused the two but most managed to make the quotations from Amos relevant to the conditions which all the eighth century prophets castigated.

Many essays centred round the fact that Micah – like all the eighth century prophets – exhorted people to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly before G-d and quoted 6:8. A number of candidates discussed the relationship of religious and social issues extremely well.

Some candidates used the opportunity to argue that the messianic material e.g. 4:1-5, 5:2-4 and 7:1-10 was more important to Micah than social justice. Some commented that Micah 4:1-5 is repeated in Isaiah 2:2-4 and seemed to think this proved the importance of the passage. Micah 4:10 prophesies the Babylonian captivity in the sixth century BCE and some candidates decided to argue that Micah, like all prophets, was more interested in prophesying the future. The best answers explained the relevance of social justice in the context of the covenant and ethical monotheism before making any link with the future Messianic kingdom. Usually they wrote that Micah had a utopian vision of the Messianic age in which obviously there would be peace and justice and people would flock to Jerusalem so all the main themes of Micah are connected and equally essential to his message.

2(a) ‘Reward and punishment come only after death.’ Discuss with reference to the texts you have studied.

There were various but equally acceptable approaches to the question and good responses noted the word ‘only’ in the stimulus quotation. The texts in the specification itemised in relation to the topic of reward and punishment are: Isaiah 53, Jeremiah 7, Ezekiel 18, Job 19, Daniel 12 and 2 Maccabees 7. Most candidates, across the full range of ability, tended to focus on these set texts.

Most worked through the texts addressing the question whilst others seemed to be adapting, quite successfully in most cases, a pre-prepared question about hope developing from doubt into certainty about life after death.

There were some candidates who approached the topic using other set texts from the course, usually in conjunction with a few of the set texts for this area of study. These responses tended to show that the covenants which G-d made with individuals or with the nation had rewards that seemed to be perceived in material terms e.g. land, long life, descendants etc. This continued till the Exile when loss of King, Temple and Land caused many developments in Jewish beliefs about reward and punishment.

There were some good responses from candidates who quoted Jeremiah 31 where the chapter containing the new covenant also refuted the sour grapes proverb as Ezekiel did and turned the emphasis from corporate religion and reward to focus more on personal religion and individual responsibility.

Others concentrated on texts, especially Job, about suffering and usually argued that the book of Job reminded the Jews that ultimately they needed to trust in the justice and mercy of G-d. Whichever approach they took in their essay and whatever date they considered applicable to the texts, most candidates came to similar conclusions. Most thought that the teachings in Job 19 and Daniel 12 and the story in 2 Maccabees 7 to some extent suggest ideas about reward and punishment which had developed to include the hereafter, though not necessarily exclusively.

Or

2(b) To what extent do Ezekiel 18 and Job 19 contain new ideas about reward and punishment?

This question gave opportunity for candidates to demonstrate some depth of knowledge and understanding of the actual contents of two set passages and to refer, where and if relevant, to the ideas about reward and punishment in Isaiah 53, Jeremiah 7, Daniel 12 and 2 Maccabees 7. Some candidates successfully used material about suffering, from earlier in the course, to expand on their explanation about Job's situation and to explain the traditional views of his friends who thought reward and punishment happen in this life etc. A few simply resorted to telling the story of Job but some candidates made this very appropriate as a means of addressing the question.

Good responses concentrated on explaining that Job had reached an impasse in his arguments with his friends about his innocence. In Job's second reply to Bildad the beliefs are mostly latent until the end of the chapter where he expresses his confidence in vindication at the final judgement, though candidates had a variety of views about when, how and what was meant according to Job 19:25.

Some candidates referred to Jeremiah's new covenant in relation to Ezekiel and new ideas about personal religion and individual responsibility. Other equally good responses simply concentrated on Ezekiel and his refuting of the popular proverb about corporate identity and responsibility. Good candidates usually discussed whether or not there was a development and introduction of new ideas as a result of the experience of Exile and explained that Ezekiel was experiencing G-d's presence in a foreign land.

There were some interesting discussions about the long term implications of these two chapters and the development of new ideas about reward and punishment not only in terms of individual responsibility but also about the potential for personal religious experience and the relationship of justice and mercy.

2774 New Testament 2 (A2)

General comments

Overall, there was a highly satisfactory performance on both sections of the paper with many answers of good quality and well argued. In the work 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. There was also evidence of independent study.

However, there was also a noticeable trend for some candidates to use the same information and conclusions for both their questions of choice, only altering the material slightly in some cases. As a consequence of this, there were a sizeable number of completed answers that appeared repetitive and in which the sourced material and views of scholars were identical. In Alternative A, The Early Church, this was the case in answers to question 1 and question 3. In Alternative B, The Gospels, it happened in answers to question 5 and question 7. Some candidates heavily relied upon formulaic and over-revised answers.

Comments on Individual Questions

Alternative A – The Early Church.

1. 'I had been trusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised.' Galatians 2:7. In Galatians, Paul successfully argued that Christians need not first be Jews.' Discuss.

This was a popular question. The most successful answers focused on the prescribed text from Galatians 2-5 and showed good understanding and analysis of Paul's arguments.

The most common error was to include too much material from the Jerusalem Council in Acts or general arguments about the Law from other letters to the exclusion of important arguments from Galatians.

2. 'Romans was Paul's most developed statement of the gospel.' Discuss.

Candidates who knew the theological arguments in the prescribed chapters (Romans 2-8) very well tended to choose this question. Good answers offered solid evidence in support of the statement. The best answers showed flair in their analysis of the phrase 'most developed statement' and argued about deficiencies in Romans, which appeared to be mainstays of Paul's theology in his other letters. Some answers showed good evidence of thoughtful study of Paul's theology. Some of the weaker answers were vague even about the content of Romans.

3. 'Paul weakened his case for Christianity by arguing that both justification and the Jewish belief in the Law were correct. Discuss.

This was a popular question and on the whole, candidates showed a perceptive appreciation of Paul's motives for both attacking and defending the Law and were aware of the views of some scholars that Paul changed his stance to avoid the accusation of antinomianism. There were some excellent answers, which demonstrated very good understanding and analysis of Paul's 'justification' arguments.

Candidates who had also answered question 1 and inappropriately used very general arguments about the Law in that answer, often repeated the same material/information here where, in some cases, it was more appropriate.

4. Critically assess the differences in style and content of 1 Corinthians 15 and Ephesians 1-4.

This was the least well-answered question. Some candidates understood the demands of the question and were able to successfully compare and contrast the different style and content of a chapter dealing mainly with one theological issue, resurrection, and an intimately known audience with a possible circular letter whose theme is the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians.

Examiners were aware of the breadth of material to be drawn upon and looked for understanding and analysis rather than detailed coverage of specified text.

A general weakness in answers was to only make a passing reference to 1 Corinthians 15 in the introduction and the conclusion and to concentrate on the disputed authorship and content of Ephesians exclusively. It appeared that some candidates completely forgot the question. Some showed no knowledge whatsoever of the content of 1 Corinthians 15.

Alternative B – The Gospels.

5. ‘The parables in Matthew 25 are not about judgement.’ Discuss.

This was a popular question and some candidates produced excellent answers. The parables were generally well known and theologically sound arguments were usually made to prove that the whole of Matthew 25 belongs to a group of crisis or Parousia parables warning people of the gravity of the moment. Some were able to discuss possible non-eschatological interpretations of the parables in their original setting. Some good attempts were made to argue that the Christian message allegorized Jewish / Old Testament references of judgement to teach about the Kingdom.

A fair number of candidates confused the parables with those from Matthew 13. Some answers contained a large amount of confused detail on different types of eschatology but little focus on the question.

6. The healing miracles in Mark were demonstrations of Jesus’ authority and status.’ Discuss.

This was a very popular question. The majority of answers provided good evidence to support the statement that the healing miracles were demonstrations of Jesus authority and status. A good number analysed the historical accuracy of the miracle stories as portrayed by Mark and assessed possible redaction in keeping with the theme of the Messianic Secret.

The best answers showed excellent engagement with the material and attention to accuracy and detail.

However, there were a fair number of formulaic, rehearsed answers which became repetitive and showed little flair or independent study. Some weak answers included miracles not in Mark and/or large sections on the nature miracles.

7 ‘I will open my mouth to speak in Parables’ Matthew 13:35. Assess the significance of the use of parables in Matthew 13.

Those candidates who had a good working knowledge of the parables in Matthew 13 were also, for the most part, able to show understanding and analysis of the sections where Jesus speaks of The Purpose of the Parables and The Use of Parables. There were some excellent, well-detailed answers with individual conclusions. Others showed very good understanding of the

traditional interpretation of the meanings of the parables in Matthew 13 and offered traditional, well tried theories in their conclusions. Answers in the average mark range were also of this type but less well executed.

The weakest answers were confused as to which parables to refer to and combined those of Matthew 13 with Matthew 25 or the Parables of the Lost from Luke.

8. Explain the theological significance of the parables in Luke 15.

This was the most popular question. It was generally competently answered at all ability levels. The content, structure and theological significance of the three parables were mostly examined in the light of explanations about Luke's special interest and purpose in writing his gospel e.g. to show that God's love and forgiveness is unconditional and universal.

A good number of candidates demonstrated an individual engagement with the text in Luke to present evidence that one aspect of the theological significance of the parables was that they were a direct challenge to the Pharisees and the received ideas of First Century Judaism.

Answers were mostly in the range from excellent to satisfactory with only a small minority of weak ones.

2775 Developments in Christian Thought 2 (A2)

General Comments:

Those who wrote less and focussed more on answering the question often achieved far higher marks than those who wrote in general terms (and often at great length). Again those who assumed that Barth was an exclusivist theologian did less well than those who questioned this and likewise those who didn't necessarily presume that Martin Luther King had a black theology were immediately able to develop more interesting and relevant arguments than those who did. This year many candidates referred to John Hick as John Hicks. Many used the term 'conceptual lens' to describe his theology/philosophy but without knowing what it meant. Too many candidates also assumed that Hick considers all religions to be equally valid, which he does not. There was also general confusion between inclusivism and universalism and the assumption that Rahner regarded all non-Christian religions to be licit (which he did not).

Comments on Individual Questions:

1a Assess Karl Rahner's inclusivist theology. [45]

This was an extremely popular question, although candidates knew more about the other thinkers (Barth and Hick) than they did about Rahner; often only a couple of Rahner's key ideas were discussed in each essay. Most candidates described Rahner's concept of 'anonymous Christianity', but only a few were able to do this with subtlety or understanding. Many candidates confused inclusivism with universalism, and some erroneously suggested that as long as a person does not reject explicitly Christ they would be saved.

Good answers introduced a discussion of the Solus Christus principle, different ideas of Church and general/special revelation. The very best responses explored the influences behind Rahner's theology including Aquinas, Kant and Ignatius.

Excellent answers offered mature and pertinent criticisms and challenged the coherency of Rahner's thought and avoided simply saying that Rahner's views were insulting for believers of other faiths or arrogant.

1b Assess the view that Christianity is, by nature, exclusivist. [45]

This was not a popular question. The answers were usually competent, although most candidates explored a range of Christian teachings rather than looking in detail at the thought of one theologian such as Karl Barth.

Many candidates looked at different views about salvation from the perspectives of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism but by doing this they didn't fully address the issue of whether Christianity is *by nature* exclusivist.

Excellent responses did focus on exclusivism and there were some impressive responses which examined the intricacies of Barth's thought and considered the ambiguity of his theology. Some were able to pick up from Hick's comment that Christianity has never been exclusive and that exclusivism developed for political and not theological reasons.

2a To what extent did Martin Luther King Jr develop a 'Black Theology'? [45]

Candidates knew a lot about King's life and many of his actions. There was a fair amount of knowledge of his sermons and key speeches, although candidates were not able to discuss some of the concepts he introduced which may have helped support an argument about his being a black theologian. For instance his interest in the Promised Land and the New Jerusalem were only vaguely discussed.

Nearly all candidates were able to contrast King's ideas about reconciliation with Cone's ideas about white theology and black separatism. Although there was tendency to focus too much on Cone's supposed advocacy of violence as the major difference between the two men.

Excellent answers challenged the view that King was a black theologian and used the thought of Cone and other black theologians to make pertinent and critical points. Candidates mentioned King's indebtedness to Tillich and whether his dependence on white protestant theology meant his thought was not truly black. Some candidates preferred to see him as a liberator rather than a theologian.

2b 'Black Theology grew out of black slavery and is therefore only intended for oppressed black people.' Discuss. [45]

This was also a popular question, and there were some very good attempts to address both the history of slavery and black religion, and various approaches to the question of audience and relevance today. Weaker answers had a hazy knowledge of slavery and begun their history with the 20th Century rights movement.

Good responses were able to talk about some of the early black theologians and the tradition of protest, along with an emphasis on black experience. However the majority of answers looked at the different ideas of James Cone, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King on this question.

Some excellent answers explored the problem of exclusive language within black theology and discussed the way Womanists had highlighted the sexism within black theology. A few were able then to show that this had led to a new, more inclusive black theology.

2776 Eastern Religions 2 (A2)

General Comments:

Candidates were generally well-prepared for the examination. Many showed evidence of having read a range of materials prior to the exam, and they often had a good knowledge of the subject. Fewer candidates appeared to have spent a disproportionate amount of time on each question, and as a result marks were more evenly distributed across questions. Stronger answers tended to include well-reasoned answers which addressed all aspects of the question. Most candidates focussed on the question, and were able to sustain and justify their main points. A few candidates wrote fluent answers, but were unable to access high marks because their answers did not address the question specifically. A few candidates gave rehearsed answers which did not meet the demands of the question.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1. 'Zen practices are so unique that they should not be considered to be Buddhist.' Discuss. [45]

This was one of the two most popular questions in this part of the paper. Many candidates were familiar with a variety of Zen practices, and some were aware of distinctions between Soto and Rinzai practices. Some showed awareness of the relevance of the teaching of upaya. Weaker responses tended to consider the origins of Zen, rather than the practices. They were often full of lengthy historical detail, which was not entirely accurate. Some candidates ignored the 'unique' aspect of Zen practices, and as a result were unable to consider whether Zen should still be considered Buddhism or not.

2. Critically examine the importance of the five precepts for Buddhist ethics. [45]

Most candidates were able to outline the five precepts, and link these to other ethical codes. Weaker responses tended to consider which was the most important precept and why. Good responses often made clear links to the concept of kamma. Weaker candidates tended not to address the importance of the five precepts. Some ethics candidates attempted to compare Eastern and Western approaches to ethics, which was not necessary, but where relevant could be credited.

3. 'The Heart Sutra is of more importance than the Lotus Sutra in Mahayana Buddhism.' Discuss. [45]

This was the least popular question on this part of the paper. Weaker responses tended to focus on only one of the Sutras. They also tended to describe the teachings of that Sutra, without exploring its importance. Many candidates were aware of the key concepts in both sutras, and could compare their importance effectively. It was apparent that key concepts such as ekayana, upaya and sunyata were not always understood, and weaker responses often ignored these concepts completely.

4. 'There is no difference between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism.' Discuss. [45]

This was one of the most popular questions in this part of the paper. Some candidates read this question as 'describe Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism', or 'describe the differences between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism'. This limited the marks which could be achieved, as there was little analysis. There were some very good responses, with candidates showing a good ability to analyse both similarities and differences between arhats and bodhisattvas. The

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best responses tended to analyse the different views within Mahayana in order to offer more meaningful comparison with the Theravada tradition.

- 5 Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
- 6 Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
- 7 Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
- 8 Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

2777 Islam 2 (A2)

General Comments

As usual, there were some excellent scripts that demonstrated both breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding and showed the ability of candidates to sustain a critical line of argument. Several good responses gave quotations from the Qur'an and made reference to appropriate textbooks. Most candidates understood the questions and engaged with them in a manner that suggested good preparation in the centres and efficient revision. There were some centres, however, which seemed not to be aware of the standard expected at A2 level. The main weakness of some candidates was their inability to identify the strands within the questions. At A/S level the questions are separated into the individual assessment objectives but candidates at A2 are expected to be able to demonstrate some competence at handling discussions in an academic manner appropriate to the level of this examination. Some weaker candidates simply wrote all they knew about some aspect of the topic and others simply added an introductory or concluding sentence based on the question. Both the spelling and the grammar of a number of candidates were of an unsatisfactory standard. Some centres did not ensure the candidates had filled in their cover sheets accurately and other centres failed to complete the front of the envelope correctly. Many candidates, however, seemed to have benefited from the whole experience of studying Islam from foundation through AS to the culmination of this A2 written paper. They demonstrated, by the way they approached the topics in a sensible, mature, thoughtful and educated manner, that they appreciate their course of study as very relevant to issues in the world today.

Comments on Individual Questions

1. Assess the implications for Muslims of believing in the divine decree.

Most candidates began with a general introduction about the articles of belief and followed the list in the specification: Allah, angels, scriptures, messengers, the last day, the divine decree. Others just outlined the basic monotheistic beliefs, e.g. Allah is the sole designer, creator and sustainer of the universe, before going on to explain that Allah rules and controls everything, including having the final authority over history and destiny.

Some candidates explained about the Day of Judgement and that Muslims believe that Allah not only began the universe but Allah will end the universe. Most went on to discuss the relationship of predestination and freewill as one of the main implications of the doctrine of the divine decree (al Qadr).

This was the least popular question by far and, unfortunately, produced a number of weaker responses which had no idea of the articles of faith and who took the divine decree to be the Qur'an, the Shahadah or even the Ten Commandments. There were some excellent responses however, from good candidates who clearly understood that, for Muslims, Islam is a way of life and faith which includes total submission to the will of Allah and trust in divine providence. It follows that the belief in al Qadr therefore, rather than being fatalistic, helps Muslims cope in times of sadness and joy because Allah controls all things, making them conform to the divine purpose for everything in the universe, and, in the end, Allah knows best.

2. How far is ijihad an important issue for Sunni Islam today?

Candidates usually began with a definition of ijihad as a method of reasoning and Sunni Islam as Muslims who believe in the successorship of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali. Some spent time explaining the origins of the split between Sunni and Shi'ah Islam.

Some gave good analyses of the sources of authority in Islam that continue to serve as a basis for Muslim life today. Good candidates explained that there is a distinction between Shari'ah rules based on revelation (wahy) and those known as fiqh which are based on human reason. They explained that Shari'ah rules are derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah but rulings on areas of uncertainty are provided by ijma' (consensus of Ummah), qiyas (analogy i.e. parallels and precedent) and ijhtihad.

They clearly knew about the Law schools and the fact that 'the door to ijhtihad is considered closed' but that there are calls for it to be opened because the modern world is facing issues undreamt of in the past.

There were some competent references to the different approach of Shi'ah Islam to Ijhtihad although some used the opportunity to make negative comments about this branch of Islam.

Only the very best responses managed to deal with the extent to which ijhtihad is an important issue. They tended to point out that ijhtihad is not in conflict with the established authorities in Islam. Its importance is, however, that it has the potential not only to find the solution to contemporary issues but to restore the lost glory of Islam in the arenas of law, philosophy and the sciences like in the past.

3. To what extent is the belief in human messengers (prophets) the least important article of Muslim belief?

This question was quite popular. Most of the competent responses began with an introduction about the Muslim articles of belief in preparation for assessing the extent to which any one of them might be considered the least important. The articles of belief are itemised in the specification as: Allah, angels, scriptures, messengers, the last day, the divine decree. Most

knew that according to a saying of Muhammad ﷺ there were 124 thousand prophets of Allah and twenty five are mentioned by name in the Qur'an. Good candidates tended to group the articles into Tawhid, Risalah and Akhirah and explained the importance of belief in Risalah: angels, scriptures and messengers. Then they addressed the question of the relative unimportance of the belief in human messengers.

Most candidates at some point in their essays argued for the over-riding predominance of belief in Allah and Tawhid before considering the least important article.

Good discussions pointed to the unique role of Muhammad ﷺ in all aspects of Risalah i.e. in the Shahadah as the messenger, through whom the Qur'an, the words of Allah, were revealed through the agency of the angel Jibril.

Some candidates queried whether any one article might ever be considered to be less significant than the rest because they are a unity and some declared the examination question to be totally invalid. It became apparent, however, that some of the latter candidates did not recognise the term 'articles of belief' as an item in the specification and were taking the word 'article' in the sense of 'a thing'. Such candidates gained some credit but the immaturity of their approach and the lack of detail in their responses suggested that for some reason they were not ready to take an examination at this level.

4. Evaluate the claim that Shari'ah treats both men and women with equal dignity.

This was the most popular question and it attracted some from the whole range of ability. Only the better candidates gave an introductory explanation about the bases of the authority of Shari'ah. Some made a point of stating that in a number of instances, it is the local culture that influences the way Shari'ah is interpreted and applied.

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Many candidates did not address the wording of the question. Some ignored 'dignity' and others did not consider the roles of the men. The essay was treated by some as if it had asked for a diatribe on the equality of women. Candidates are supposed to have studied 'Family life and the roles of men and women' and Surah 4 as well as 'Qur'an, Sunnah and Shari(ah law as bases for Muslim life'. Some contrasted the treatment in Muslim states and non- Muslim countries of men and women with reference to punishment for behaviour such as adultery.

Those who used material from their Foundation studies which included Pre-Islamic Arabia and the reforms in al-Madinah gave a more balanced appraisal as did those who quoted the last speech of Muhammad ﷺ. Good candidates referred to the sunnah of Muhammad ﷺ, the improvements he implemented in the treatment of women, the significant role women have played in the history of Islam and the importance of all members of the family and of Ummah and the equality of all Muslims before Allah.

Good answers quoted from the Qur'an, for example from Surah 4 e.g. 4:34 'Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means.' etc. Polygamy, the maximum of four wives, rules for divorce and modest dress were usually included in the responses though not many considered the modesty of the dress code for men.

The best responses explained that Islam like other faiths faces the dilemma of looking back but also looking forward whilst trying to disentangle the essential truths and teachings of Islam from traditional family life, culture and customs.

2778 Judaism 2 (A2)

General comments.

On the whole, the performance of candidates was satisfactory. However there was a tendency amongst some candidates to answer a question they thought had been asked rather than the actual question. This was particularly the case with Question 3. Some candidates also perhaps did not achieve their potential because they failed to develop their answers to include 'modern Judaism' or 'Judaism today' in the answers to Questions 3 and 4.

Comments on Individual Questions.

1. 'The continuing existence of Judaism in the world does not need Israel in order to guarantee its survival.' Discuss.

There were some excellent answers to this question. Candidates considered the Jews in the Diaspora as well as those in Israel. Answers, which showed independent thought, critically examined the factors that might contribute to the continuing existence of Judaism outside Israel balanced with a critical evaluation of the guarantees that some Jews feel Israel might provide for the future security and survival of Judaism.

The most common error in weaker answers was confusion or misunderstanding of the views of Zionists and other thinkers and too much time spent upon a historical outline of the events leading up to 1948, ignoring the phrases 'continuing existence' and 'guarantee its survival' which were the focus of the question.

2. 'To what extent does diversity within Judaism contribute to its strength?'

This was a well answered by those who chose it. The majority of candidates wrote good, well-structured essays, which addressed the question and evaluated to what extent there was diversity within the different Jewish groups as well as assessing the strengths and weaknesses of such differences.

A minority of candidates wrote purely descriptively about divisions within Judaism with only superficial attempts at analysis.

3. 'Post Holocaust theology is essential to an understanding of modern Judaism.' Discuss.

This was the most popular question. However, a common fault was to ignore the 'modern Judaism' aspect of the question and to write at length an explanation of Post Holocaust theories on the existence of God. Eminent thinkers and their views were well known but a large number of candidates failed to develop their answers to assess the extent to which these theories might have made a distinctive impact on modern Judaism.

Some excellent and very good answers did focus directly on the question and examined the impact of Post Holocaust Theology on beliefs in terms of atheism, secularism and increased orthodoxy and also on modern movements, practices, schisms, the State of Israel etc. In analysis, they questioned whether 'modern Judaism' might be understood solely as a consequence of Post Holocaust Theology.

4. The concept of the Messiah from the Scriptures is not appropriate for Judaism today.

This was the least popular question. There were some excellent and good answers that explained and analysed the appropriateness of a scriptural Messiah for Judaism today balanced these views with those of Jewish groups who have hopes of a Messianic Age rather than the person of the Messiah and for whom the scriptural Messiah is a concept related to the time of the scriptures rather than to the situation of modern Jewry.

Candidates who achieved satisfactory rather than good marks had satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the concept of the Messiah from the scriptures and the relationship to Israel, but failed to evaluate the appropriateness of the concept for Jews today.

2779 Philosophy of Religion 1 (A2)

The overall standard of responses seemed comparable with that of previous years. There were some pleasing scripts but many obviously able candidates failed to do justice to their abilities because of failure to answer the question set. Some candidates were clearly writing to a pre-prepared formula which was a thorough overview of the topic in question yet failed to focus on the specified thinker in any great depth. The examination is not primarily a test of what candidates know, but rather of how well they can answer the question. Many candidates failed to establish the relevance of material presented and examiners were left to wonder why a particular point had been made. Good candidates established relevance – it is clear to the reader *why* a particular point has been made.

Some candidates struggled as a result of an inadequate grasp of the grammar of philosophy, with terms such as 'prove' (used as a synonym for 'argue'), 'refute' (used to mean 'deny'), *a priori*, and *a posteriori*, were commonly misunderstood. It is also worth bearing in mind that putting an alternative theory or observing that a certain philosopher agrees with a point is not the same as providing strengths and weaknesses. Some candidates had a shaky grasp on chronology with Aquinas replying to Russell, and Paley responding to Mill on several scripts.

Comments on Individual Questions.

1. Critically assess Freud's challenge to Kant's moral argument.

There was much sound understanding of both Kant and Freud, with better candidates aware that Freud did not directly refer to Kant but dealt with the general origin of the sense of guilt and moral argument. Questions of the existence of the *Summum Bonum* are not dealt with directly by Freud but can be inferred from his general thoughts on wish-fulfilment. Some scripts gave a good assessment of Freud's conclusions and methods, yet there was often material on other moral arguments that did not seem to be clearly tied to the question

2. Examine the extent to which Russell was successful in his challenges to the cosmological argument.

This question seemed particularly prone to long answers giving a general survey of the topic. Some candidates seemed to know little of Russell's argument except his claim that the universe is a brute fact. Some candidates confused Russell with Hume. Candidates who were aware of the arguments used by Copleston – the principle of sufficient reason, or the notion of necessary existence – had an advantage. Better scripts demonstrated awareness of issues around the fallacy of composition and the possibility of infinite regress. Better candidates focused clearly on Russell and used other thinkers and theories in order to engage with his argument. Here, as elsewhere on the paper, the advantages of familiarity with the original text were evident.

3. 'Modern theodicies have proved that there is no problem of evil.' Discuss.

Overall this question was well done provided candidates had spotted the word modern in the question. Too many candidates simply rehearsed the views of Augustine and Irenaeus, sometimes not even with any awareness of Hick's extension of the theodicy. Better candidates made use of theodicies such as those of Hick and Swinburne, the Process Theologians, Protestant theodicy and other modern versions. Some made excellent use of D.Z. Phillips' attack on the instrumentalism of Hick and Swinburne. There were also some pleasing discussions around the issue of whether God can create free creatures who always do good. (Mackie vs. Plantinga/Hick)

4. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Mill's criticism of the teleological argument.

There were some sound answers, but too many were clearly struggling to remember what Mill said, instead rehearsing Paley's views while sometimes attributing them to Mill. Better answers took a broad view of the issue of evil and made good use of the theodicies in order to respond to Mill's main argument. Some candidates were aware that Mill does not rule out the teleological argument but raises issues regarding the attributes of the God of classical theism. A few candidates confused the teleological with other arguments, such as the cosmological.

2780 Religious Ethics 1 (A2)

General Comments

There were very few candidates entered for this unit, with the range of marks broadly spread. There were some very good responses but weaker candidates gave too much generalisation and unsupported argument, often with too much preamble before addressing the question.

Better answers always attempted to answer the question as set.

Most candidates used their time successfully, dividing it between the two questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

1. Compare and contrast a religious ethical approach to euthanasia with that of Utilitarianism.

This was a straightforward and popular question.

Very good responses tended to focus on different types of Utilitarianism and the different responses they might give to euthanasia. They contrasted these views well with the religious views on the Sanctity of Life. There were some good discussions of the different religious approaches to euthanasia such as Natural Law and Situation Ethics.

Weaker responses limited religious ethics to some vague biblical teaching and did not identify the different nuances that exist within Utilitarianism.

2. How useful is a Natural Law approach to embryo research?

Some weaker answers latched onto the word embryo research and wrote everything they knew about it.

Most candidates who were confident with Natural Law answered the question well, explaining the precepts of Natural Law and how they would apply to embryo research.

Many candidates made good comparisons between Natural Law and other ethical approaches to the issue of embryo research.

3 Examine critically the view that Kantian ethics has serious weaknesses.

This was a popular question and candidates showed a solid understanding of Kantian ethics. Weaknesses were well examined and contrasted with the strengths of his theory. Candidates considered the lack of importance given by Kant to considering consequences, the conflicting maxims and Kant's lack of consideration of emotions as the most important weaknesses.

Candidates contrasted the weaknesses with his second formulation and the respect due to all.

4. 'Only relative ethics will allow progress in genetic engineering.' Discuss.

Fewer candidates addressed this question but most looked at different types of genetic engineering; stem cell research for curing illnesses and the genetic engineering of crops to feed the world and overcome climatic conditions.

Relativist ethics was contrasted with deontological theories such as Natural Law, but most opted for Utilitarianism (with some acceptance of dangers to minorities) or Situation Ethics as the best approach.

2791 Connections (Routes A, AX and AY)

General Comments

Overall the performance of candidates was good, with some outstanding responses, that managed to weave together both religious ethics and philosophy of religion with a clear line of argument which addressed the specifics of the question.

There were relatively few responses at the lower ends, showing that centres are preparing the candidates well. However, some of the responses were somewhat formulaic, and seemed to be rehearsed answers for questions candidates were hoping to see.

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

There were some general weaknesses: references to Eastern religions were often superficial, and some candidates only wrote lists of what the different philosophers thought on a particular topic without any analysis in relation to the question.

Comments on Individual Questions

1. 'Our consciences cannot come from God as we do not all have the same conscience.' Discuss.

This question was, in general well answered by the candidates, using a good range of scholars. Some answers contained some nuanced answers about the nature of conscience from Aquinas.

Weaker responses only addressed the question in the final paragraph, and most of these essays consisted of a list of the different approaches to conscience. A few candidates did not achieve good marks as they only wrote generalised responses without reference to any of the ideas about conscience they had studied.

Some good answers raised the issue of cultural awareness, and whether conscience was determined by environment both familial and societal. A few candidates considered whether the concept of conscience might be universal (everyone has one), but determined by different societal expectations and requirements.

2. 'The fact that most people behave morally shows that they believe in life after death.' Discuss.

Candidates often forgot the question when writing on this topic, and instead wrote everything they could about post-mortem existence without explaining how it might affect behaviour. Some candidates generalised too much and did not use the skills and knowledge acquired during the course. References to karma and samsara rarely acknowledged the Hindu concept of dharma.

Those candidates who discussed faith versus works did so effectively.

Good candidates took an ethical approach and were able to justify clearly how moral behaviour did not necessarily involve or depend on belief in life after death.

3. 'A good God would not allow humans freely to choose evil rather than good.'
Discuss.

This was a popular question with some excellent responses. The best responses explored the implications that God's omniscience had for his ability to allow humans to freely choose or prevent them from choosing evil rather than good. A few outstanding answers reflected on the manner in which understanding about God and the presence of evil has become trapped in the acceptance of a traditional understanding of how God can be defined, and whether this encases God within our limits of time and human perception.

There was evidence of extended reading by candidates in their answers to this question.

Weaker responses gave generic 'problem of evil' or 'free will and determinism' responses.

2792 Connections (Routes C,D,J,K,P, and S)

In general, candidates responded well to this question paper. There were a number of very strong responses and few very weak answers. Some candidates saw questions as an opportunity to write all they knew on a topic and saw the question as a trigger to pour out all they knew on any 'connected' issue. Better candidates targeted their knowledge to the question and in some cases this meant focussing on one side of the course. Higher scoring candidates tended to give a clear and coherent answer to the question under consideration and it was dismaying, at times, to see candidates begin well but fail to address the question as they went along and in their conclusion.

Route C

1. 'The New Testament is the word of God so it has authority for all people.' Discuss.

Weaker candidates tended to slip into the conservative, liberal, fundamentalist mode but better candidates discussed the nature of revelation and philosophical attempts to label it. There were some excellent scripts which approached this question from a New Testament perspective and argued that the New Testament *Sitz im Leben* tied it to a particular people at a particular time.

2. 'Religious experiences, as shown in the New Testament, is not compatible with the definitions given by William James.' Discuss.

Weaker candidates showed little knowledge of William James. Better scripts tended to highlight the key elements of James' analysis and relate them to the New Testament. Candidates who latched onto the public nature of the New Testament experiences tended to disagree with James' private interpretations. Candidates who studied the early church showed great resourcefulness in finding a range of religious experiences to discuss. A number of candidates who had taken the gospel route failed to consider the resurrection.

3. 'The miracles of the New Testament suggest that God does not have universal love for humanity.' Discuss.

There were some good connections in this section. Many considered the work of Maurice Wiles and used his views to challenge support the question. In general candidates showed only a superficial analysis of miracles and only the very best looked at them through the lens of a New Testament scholar.

Route D

4. Black Theology has challenged Christianity by demonstrating that revelation is culture-dependent.' Discuss.

There were some very good answers to this question. Many contrasted the views of Martin Luther King and James Cone and made good use of the ideas behind their views. Weaker responses suggested that candidates were not aware of what 'culture dependent' meant.

5. 'A pluralist view of salvation is not compatible with a Christian understanding of life after death.' Discuss.

Again there were some good answers which referred to Hick, Rahner and Barth's work and focussed these views on the actual question. Weaker responses tended to zip through the main three views or talk at length about reincarnation (bizarrely) without really any focus on the

question. Strong candidates displayed a fine understanding of the Christian views on salvation and related pluralism and other Christian responses to the question.

6. 'Feminist theology shows that traditional beliefs about God are false.' Discuss.

For some this became a 'write all you know about feminism' question and a number of candidates failed to address what 'traditional beliefs about God' actually were. Better candidates looked in detail at the main feminist theology schools and applied their beliefs clearly and accurately to the question.

Route J

7. 'New Testament ethics are absolutist and leave no room for a relativist approach.' Discuss.

A number of candidates seemed to think that Jesus' miracles were the best source of his ethics and therefore ignored key texts from the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere which abler candidates used well. There was a tendency to talk about agape and leap into Situation Ethics which often clouded a hitherto decent argument. Many pointed out that there were teleological and relativist elements in New Testament teaching but only the very best were able to suggest reasons why – e.g. that they are essentially Greek concepts and would have been alien to the Jewish minds of Paul and Jesus.

8. 'The New Testament has little to offer in relation to modern ethical debates about the environment.' Discuss.

Many candidates struggled to find appropriate New Testament texts to discuss and resorted to the Old Testament and the creation narrative for texts and ideas. Good candidates discussed the anthropocentric nature of the New Testament and how it might lead to disregarding the environment and went on to contrast this with pro-environment ideas which ranged from eschatology to ideas of social justice. Some candidates had a fine knowledge of St Paul and used Romans 8 most effectively to argue for a "deep ecology" being at the heart of New Testament eschatology.

9. 'It is not clear from the New Testament that there are consequences for unethical behaviour.' Discuss.

This was a question set up to be shot down and a number of candidates failed to do so. Some failed to mention eschatology and the concept of judgement but for many this was the key element of their argument and they argued intelligently that unethical behaviour did indeed have consequences. A number of candidates showed a superficial understanding of New Testament ethics and resorted to retelling parables.

Route K

10. 'Accepting the ethical principles of feminist theology would damage the idea of the family.' Discuss.

Many candidates struggled to pinpoint the ethical principles of feminist theology and wrote in general about the various stands of feminist theologies. Better candidates focussed on the question and drew out key ideas such as justice, equality and Marxism. Some discussed whether there was one coherent idea of the family.

11. 'If people take up arms and kill others because of their belief in Liberation Theology then they must be treated like criminals and not as good Christians.' Discuss.

Some candidates talked generally about war and peace and Liberation Theology and failed to link their ideas into the question. Better candidates had a specific knowledge of Liberation Theologians' views on violence and were able to discuss these in detail and relate them to ideas such as the Just War argument.

12. 'The growth of Black Theology was caused by an absolutist Christian morality.' Discuss.

Good candidates discussed Cone and Martin Luther King and were able to assess their root ethical principles and whether they were absolute or not. Some candidates discussed whether Black Theology was responding to, and was therefore caused by, absolute Christian morality; although this was not exactly what the question was looking for they constructed good arguments and were given full credit for their answers.

Route P

13. 'The Covenant made by Jesus in the New Testament is not compatible with the covenants of the Jewish Scriptures.' Discuss.

Candidates ably surveyed the various covenants in the Old Testament and tended to give fullest treatment to Jeremiah 31. Some candidates struggled to assess whether Jesus made a covenant or not and many had an uncritical understanding of key texts and ideas e.g. the Last Supper.

14. 'The Jewish Scriptures are about life: the New Testament about death.' Discuss.

This question produced some really interesting responses. Some argued that the Old Testament was about life and living according to the Torah and that the New Testament focussed, to a greater extent on Jesus' death. Others contrasted the doom and gloom judgement passages in the prophets with the promises of eternal life made by Jesus in John,

15. 'New Testament ethics are a restatement of those of the Jewish Scriptures.' Discuss.

Good candidates were able to see links between the Old and New Testaments and argued that Jesus essentially modified Old Testament teaching. Others latched on to New Testament debates about the Law and saw a split between the two Testaments. Some candidates had trouble in identifying New Testament ethical texts and focussed on the miracles rather than the Sermon on the Mount.

Route S

There were very few centres who attempted this route.

16. 'Black Theology and New Testament teachings are totally incompatible.' Discuss.

Some candidates opposed the question and used Martin Luther King's 'theology' as evidence of Black theology's reliance on ideas such as justice, pacifism and "love of neighbour". Some debated whether the use of violence could have biblical routes. Some thought that Cone had little in common with biblical teaching which is not accurate.

17. 'New Testament teachings oppress humanity.' Discuss with reference to Liberation Theology.

The best candidates used Liberation Theology's use of Marx to argue in favour of this question. Some saw Jesus as a liberator and discussed the revolutionary, rather than oppressive aspects of the New Testament.

18. 'Feminist Theology challenges the New Testament teaching about agape.' Discuss

This was not a popular question but a few candidates looked at the various feminist attitudes to agape; liberals were deemed to agree with it whilst radical and to some extent reconstructionists were thought to set justice above love.

2793 Connections (Routes E and L)

General Comments:

Candidates often showed a good knowledge of the topics studied. Differentiation tended to be shown through the quality of the analysis in the questions. Candidates at the lower end of the range who studied Buddhism tended to ignore Mahayana, and treat Buddhism as though it only had one view on each topic. Within the Philosophy questions weaker candidates tended to refer to a generalised 'Christian view', rather than showing specific knowledge of the Philosophy specification. It was particularly notable within the Ethics questions that candidates often showed little awareness of Mahayana approaches to ethical issues. There were some excellent responses, some well above the standard expected of an A Level candidate. The best responses showed specific philosophical knowledge, and were well-informed about the variety of responses to be found within each religion.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Route E

1. Compare and contrast the understandings of the soul found in Plato and Aristotle with those of either Buddhism or Hinduism.

Candidates were generally able to answer this question well. Most candidates were better prepared on Plato than Aristotle, however as long as they offered good comparisons with Hinduism or Buddhism this was accepted. Within the Buddhism answers candidates tended to present a Theravadin view. The best candidates tended to argue that Aristotle's views were more similar to Buddhist views than Plato. The weakest responses showed confused understandings of Plato's and Aristotle's views, often confusing the two, as well as of either Hinduism or Buddhism.

2. 'We exist therefore there is a creator God.' Discuss with reference to either Buddhism or Hinduism.

The best responses tended to focus on Copleston's version of the cosmological argument, before analysing the response of Hinduism or Buddhism to such a claim. Some responses made effective use of the Anthropic principle in their analysis. Weaker candidates tended to describe a generic version of the Teleological argument, and offered little analysis of the views of Hinduism and Buddhism.

3. To what extent is the concept of revelation in either Buddhism or Hinduism compatible with other views of revelation?

Weak responses tended to offer a comparison with a generic 'Christian view' of Biblical revelation, with little awareness of philosophical issues. The best responses offered a clear awareness of different philosophical views of revelation, and the nature of revelation within Hinduism and Buddhism. Comparisons at the top end tended to argue that revelation though different in Western and Eastern traditions was equally valid and important.

Route L

4. Critically examine the approach of either Buddhism or Hinduism to modern ethical debates about the environment.

Weak responses tended to explain the views of Hinduism or Buddhism towards environmental issues, rather than critically examine them. The views they presented were often superficial, and based on only one concept from within the religion. They often displayed little awareness of the range or depth of environmental issues which could be explored from the ethics aspect of the course. The best responses tended to be aware of conflicting priorities within the religious traditions, and used ethical views to aid their analysis of the religious traditions.

5. 'The ethics of Buddhism or Hinduism are based on belief in free will not determinism.' Discuss.

This question was in general well-answered. Most candidates were able to explore the level of determinism and free-will within the religious tradition they had studied with some facility. Most concluded that the religious views reflected a mix of the two ethical positions, with the best responses analysing the extent to which a religion favoured one over the other. The weakest responses often confused absolutism with determinism.

6. 'In the 21st century, Just War Theory makes more sense than either Buddhist or Hindu views about non-violence.' Discuss.

Most candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the Just War Theory. Candidates studying Buddhism however were less aware of the nature and potential flexibility of the five precepts. The weakest responses gave limited or incomplete views of Just War Theory. They often presented superficial or incomplete views with regard to the ethics of the religion they had studied. The best responses directly addressed the issue of which view made more sense.

2794 Connections (Routes F,M,Q and T)

General Comments:

Although most candidates had a reasonably sound working knowledge of Islam and their other chosen subject, very few showed sufficient knowledge and understanding of the scholarly debates in either area. Knowledge of Islam was often around GCSE level and was inclined to be very general and sweeping. This did not help candidates to make the connections needed to score well.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Route F

1. 'The Bible and the Qur'an are both revealed texts and so are of equal worth.'
Discuss.

Generally speaking, this question attracted the weakest answers on this route. Candidates usually had a clear idea of the importance of the Qur'an for Muslims and most had some awareness of the different approaches to the biblical texts within Christianity. The composite nature of the Bible was poorly understood by a large number of candidates as were the implications of the different approaches to the interpretation of it. A significant number of candidates referred only to the New Testament. Better answers included a clear explanation of revelation and a discussion of different possible views of the Qur'an as a revealed text and successfully compared Christian and Muslim approaches. The best answers treated this as a philosophical discussion and not purely a theological one.

2. 'The argument for death being the end of existence is more convincing than Muslim beliefs about the afterlife.' Discuss.

This was the most popular question for this route. There were some very good answers, which showed a clear understanding of Muslim ideas of life after death, supported by text and a clear understanding of the "death as the end" materialist position (usually exemplified by Richard Dawkins). Better answers included a clear philosophical analysis of the two positions. The best answers understood that it has been possible to hold a metaphorical understanding of paradise and hell in Islam (e.g. Ibn Sina) and examined the implications of this in the philosophical discussion as well as the more usual physical descriptions taken from the Qur'an. A common misconception was that those that argue for death being the end of life have still have some notion of the existence of a separate soul (Dawkins and Ryle).

3. 'The Kalam Argument is only convincing to those who already believe in God.'
Discuss.

There were some sharply argued answers to this question, which included a clear outline of the kalam argument and an evaluation of each of its premises, including its relative coherence to a believer or non-believer. The best answers showed an awareness of different Muslim versions of the kalam cosmological argument and their context in Muslim thought. There were also some very poor answers where the candidates were hampered by a lack of understanding. Many failed to address the question and gave a summary of Aquinas' 5 ways and in particular the teleological argument.

Route M

4. 'The concept of jihad is about pacifism, not war.' Discuss.

This was the best answered question in this route. Most candidates could give some description of jihad, including greater and lesser jihad. Better answers included a clear idea of pacifism and a discussion of different understandings of it. The best answers were wide ranging explorations of the concept of jihad with clear analysis as to whether each aspect could be considered to promote peace and avoidance of violence/war or not. Problems on this question arose from not reading the question correctly. A significant number of candidates took this question to be a comparison between the concept of jihad and the Just War theory. Generally, though, a better understanding of different types of pacifism would have helped to develop a more subtle set of answers.

5. 'Muslim ethics have little in common with the Categorical Imperative.' Discuss.

There were some very good answers to this question, particularly from those candidates who could clearly describe the categorical imperative and related each aspect of it to aspects of Muslim ethics. A number of candidates wrote about Utilitarianism instead of Kant. A large number of candidates failed to see the importance of autonomy in Kant's thinking and seemed to view his concept of duty as an externally imposed command. This impeded them from making a clear possible contrast between Muslim ethics and the categorical imperative.

6. 'Islam has little to offer in relation to modern ethical debates about the environment.' Discuss.

There were some very good answers to this question which included a discussion of intrinsic and instrumental value in relation to Muslim teaching about the relationship between humans and the environment from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Some of the best answers also included discussions of biocentric, ecocentric and theocentric views and their possible relationship to Muslim teaching. However there were some very weak answers. A large number of candidates gave a kind of "Cook's tour" of ethical theories, including many unfounded and certainly unjustified assertions as to what exponents of each view would say about issues such as global warming. There was little real knowledge of the content of more modern debates from some centres.

Route Q

7. 'Compare and contrast the approaches of Christianity and Islam towards other faiths.'

This was a popular question and all candidates were able to furnish some description of the approaches of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. Better answers included a range of Muslim responses to other religions and the best were able to successfully compare and contrast them with differing Christian views. Rahner was not well understood by a large number of candidates, who failed to see that he maintains that an ontological change in the relationship between God and humanity is effected by the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus, in which all share whether they are aware of it or not. Candidates, as a result, failed to differentiate correctly between Rahner's inclusivism, universalism and pluralism. Understanding of Islam was often rather one-sided; good answers though were able to give examples of Muhammad's treatment of other faiths at Madinah and to consider Sufism and pluralism.

8. 'The aims of Liberation Theology are incompatible with those of Islam.' Discuss.

Most candidates could give some description of the aims of Liberation Theology and most examined these in comparison to the role of the Ummah. Many problems arose from making too many false generalisations: a common one being that Liberation Theology is only aimed at poor Christians in Latin America whereas the Ummah is inclusive of all people throughout the world. Another common false assertion was that the main aim of Liberation Theology is to create a Communist utopia where everyone would be equal and no-one owns property and (from a few) where people become atheists. A more common error was to ignore the scriptural basis of LT and assert that it is completely Marxist. Also accounts of Gutierrez's first and second act praxis failed to understand that second act praxis is theology as a critical reflection on praxis in the light of scripture. There were however, some very good answers to this question where an understanding of Islamic teaching on social justice was compared carefully with the aims of Liberation Theology.

9. Compare the ways in which Christians and Muslims view the revelation of God / Allah through the sacred texts.

This was the least popular question in this route and the least well attempted. Most candidates had a basic knowledge of the recitation of the Qur'an and its revelation of Allah, however many answers were hampered by a lack of understanding of the Bible and its composition. The best answers included a clear understanding of differing approaches to the interpretation of scripture in both Christianity (from their foundation work on fundamentalism, traditionalism and liberalism) and Islam (such as Rippin's traditionalist, Islamist and modernist distinctions) and gave a clear evaluation of them in the light of each other.

Route T

This was not a popular route and candidates answers tended to lack knowledge and sophistication of the New Testament and Islam.

10. Compare and contrast the teachings about eternal life in the New Testament texts you have studied with those in Islam.

The answers to this were rather sketchy. Most answers were purely descriptive, in varying degrees of accuracy, and did not sufficiently compare and contrast the teachings of the two religions. Better answers were able to cite common ground but surprisingly very few seemed to have an understanding of the eschatological problems of the New Testament and the ambiguity of the term 'eternal life'.

11. 'Muslim ethics are the same as the ethics of the New Testament.' Discuss.

Most of the answers to this question comprised of descriptions of approaches to different moral issues within each religion rather than a discussion of any ethical foundations for them. Knowledge of the New Testament either of the Gospels or Paul/Acts was surprisingly thin.

12. 'As a source of authority for believers, the New Testament is not as important as the Qur'an.' Discuss.

Although most candidates had a clear, if unsophisticated and often implicit understanding of the authority of the Qur'an for believers, there was much confusion in any discussion of the New Testament as a source of authority for Christians. Some attempted to bring in New Testament scholarship views of authorship and source analysis but their understanding of such issues was rudimentary. There was generally a better understanding of the compilation of the Qur'an and some interesting discussion about Hadith and the New Testament but evaluative connections

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were not well handled. A common error was that many candidates appeared to assume that the Gospels were the only writings in the New Testament.

2795 Connections (Routes B,G,H,N,R, and V)

General Comments

It was pleasing to see an overall improvement in the quality of scripts. Candidates had obviously been well prepared and were able to use the information they had to good effect in the answering of the questions. Only a very few candidates had not balanced the time between the two questions, and there was only one case where no attempt had been made to answer a second question.

Comments on Individual Questions

1. 'The concept of revelation is incoherent when applied to Jewish Scriptures.'
Discuss.

This was not a popular question. Candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of the principal modes by which human beings receive revelation, and often included useful discussion of how these are to be distinguished from other occasions of discovery. James and Otto were the scholars most frequently cited in responses. Most agreed that the concept of revelation is coherent when applied to the Jewish Scriptures.

2. 'Without an understanding of religious language, the Jewish Scriptures might appear to be meaningless.' Discuss.

The answers to this question were generally good. The majority of candidates were able to use the material they had studied and apply it to the texts, and almost all demonstrated knowledge of well-known writers in the field - particularly Aquinas and Tillich. Most agreed with the statement in the question.

3. The book of Job proves that suffering is the responsibility of G-d, not humans.'
Discuss.

Answers to this question were generally sound. Most candidates were able to outline the main teachings of the Book of Job before going on to consider traditional theodicies - notably, Irenaeus and Augustine. Some erroneously identified Satan with evil. Only a relatively small number agreed with the statement in the question.

4. 'The strength of the relationship between G-d and the Jews is demonstrated by the existence of the modern state of Israel.' Discuss.

This was not a popular question. Most candidates argued that the founding of the modern state of Israel confirms the belief in G-d and his promises for people and land. Some included useful discussion of how the centre of Jewish life is being shifted from Europe back into the land of its beginnings.

5. 'The twentieth-century Holocaust demonstrated the evil of humanity and the ineffectiveness of G-d.' Discuss.

There were many good answers. Most candidates approached this question from the 'problem of evil' position with discussion centred on whether evil is willed by G-d or merely permitted by him for some transcendent purpose. Berkovits, Fackenheim, Maza, Rubenstein and Wiesel were the post-Holocaust theologians whose views received the most comment. In general, candidates accepted that there is a distinction to be made between the evil of humanity and the ineffectiveness of G-d, and that the Holocaust demonstrates the evil of humanity.

6. 'The concept of revelation in Judaism is incoherent.' Discuss.

Answers to this question were generally sound. Most candidates discussed propositional and non-propositional revelation and considered how these ideas can be applied to Jewish belief. The views of Buber, James and Otto were frequently cited in responses. The majority of candidates argued that the concept of revelation in Judaism is coherent.

7. 'The Jewish Scriptures have little to offer in relation to modern ethical debates about the environment.' Discuss.

This was not a popular question and answers were rather disappointing. The general assumption was that although the Jewish Scriptures show a concern for the created order, they were written too long ago to have anything to offer in relation to modern ethical debates about the environment. Candidates displayed little knowledge of the various ecological movements.

8. 'The Jewish Scriptures show that people do not really have free will.' Discuss.

On the whole, responses to this question were good. The various forms of determinism were known by the majority of candidates, who were then able to use passages from the Jewish Scriptures in support of their answers - notably, from the books of Job and Jonah. Most disagreed with the statement in the question.

9. 'Duty to G-d is the main teaching of the Jewish Scriptures.' Discuss.

There were some excellent responses to this question. Most candidates used the texts studied to provide examples of the obligation on Jews to demonstrate duty to G-d in all aspects of their lives. A number maintained that, paralleling the duty to G-d, there is therefore a duty to one's neighbour. Weaker candidates showed limited understanding of the connections.

10. 'Judaism has little to offer in relation to modern ethical debates about the environment.' Discuss.

The majority of candidates argued that a concern for the whole of the created order lies at the centre of Jewish belief and included useful discussion on the relationship between humanity and the world. The festivals of Rosh Hashanah, Tu B'Shevat and Sukkot were frequently cited, though candidates were less well aware of the various ecological movements.

11. 'Judaism cannot be considered a pacifist religion.' Discuss.

Nearly all candidates argued that while Judaism thinks of most war as wrong, it cannot be considered a pacifist religion. Many had good knowledge and understanding of the circumstances under which war is considered obligatory in Judaism, but they were often uncertain of the legal strictures attendant to optional wars.

12. 'Jewish ethics cannot be totally determinist or there would be no purpose in existence'. Discuss.

Answers were generally good. The various forms of determinism were known by the majority, and a number were able to cite the views of well-known scholars, notably Maimonides and Crescas. Most agreed with the statement in the question.

13. 'The theology of the Book of Job and the events of the twentieth-century Holocaust suggest that G-d is willing to let humanity suffer.' Discuss.

This was a popular question and there were some excellent responses. Candidates accepted that there are many parallels between the Book of Job and the events of the Holocaust, and were able to outline the attempts of various Holocaust theologians to make sense of the suffering. Berkovits, Fackenheim, Maza, Rubenstein, Teitelbaum and Wiesel were those whose views received the most comment, although a number confused the teaching of Maza and Berkovits.

Able candidates pointed out that most people would probably feel resonance with one of these approaches.

14. 'The existence of the present-day state of Israel is clearly supported by the Jewish Scriptures.' Discuss.

The question was quite well done. Most pointed out that the argument between Jewish groups is not whether they have a right to Israel, but whether the present-day state of Israel is the promised land spoken of in the Jewish Scriptures. In general, there was useful discussion of proponents of both sides of the issue.

15. 'The Covenants of the Jewish Scriptures are the single most important aspect of Jewish life and worship.' Discuss.

Answers to this question were rather disappointing. Many candidates wrote at length on the Covenants but failed to present an overview of the main principles of Jewish life and worship. Nearly all accepted the validity of the statement.

16. 'Jewish worship is personal, worship in Islam is collective.' Discuss.

This was a popular question. Candidates tended to write far more on worship in one faith than the other, and responses were often lacking in balance between description and evaluation.

The nature of regular and formal prayer in the two religions was generally understood. Several candidates made good reference to examples of personal and spontaneous prayer, pointing out that worshippers pronounce their deepest emotions to G-d/Allah in prayer. Most agreed with the statement in the question.

17. 'Internal divisions between believers are the least important part of both Islam and Judaism.' Discuss.

Candidates were able to relate the reasons for the divisions in both Judaism and Islam with a reasonable level of accuracy and objectivity. A number were confused concerning the approach of Progressive Judaism to the Oral Law. Nearly all candidates argued that the internal divisions between believers were indeed the least important part of both Islam and Judaism.

18. 'There is very little difference between Muslim and Jewish understandings of the nature of revelation through sacred texts.' Discuss.

Candidates had a sound grasp of how sacred texts had been revealed in Islam and Judaism. In Judaism most concentrated on Moses and the Torah, while in Islam the role of the Sunnah and Hadith collections were discussed. Surprisingly, few candidates considered the ways in which Muslims and Jews believe that G-d/Allah is revealed in the works of creation. In general, candidates agreed with the statement in the question.

Assessment Grid

Unit		MAX	A	B	C	D	E	U
2760/11	Raw	100	70	60	50	40	31	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/12	Raw	100	60	51	42	33	25	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/13	Raw	100	71	64	57	50	43	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/14	Raw	100	71	61	52	43	34	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/15	Raw	100	75	66	57	49	41	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2761	Raw	100	67	55	44	33	22	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2762	Raw	100	71	62	53	44	35	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2763	Raw	100	77	67	57	47	38	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2764	Raw	100	83	73	63	54	45	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2765	Raw	100	72	61	50	40	30	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2766	Raw	100	73	62	51	41	31	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2767	Raw	100	79	67	56	45	34	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	65	55	45	36	27	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2770	Raw	100	76	66	56	46	37	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2771	Raw	90	64	54	44	34	25	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2772	Raw	90	74	66	58	50	42	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2773	Raw	90	72	64	56	48	40	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2774	Raw	90	69	59	49	39	29	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2775	Raw	90	69	59	49	39	30	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2776	Raw	90	72	62	53	44	35	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2777	Raw	90	69	61	54	47	40	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2778	Raw	90	72	61	50	40	30	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2779	Raw	90	65	56	47	39	31	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0

Unit		MAX	A	B	C	D	E	U
2780	Raw	90	72	64	45	49	42	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2791	Raw	120	92	81	70	59	49	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2792	Raw	120	98	85	72	60	48	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2793	Raw	120	89	77	65	53	41	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2794	Raw	120	84	71	58	46	34	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2795	Raw	120	90	78	67	56	45	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Religious Studies (3877 7877)
June 2008 Examination Series

Specification Aggregation Results

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

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

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

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3877	20.9	45.8	69.0	84.6	93.6	100.0	11896
7877	24.0	56.3	82.9	95.6	99.3	100.0	9415

21,311 candidates aggregated this series.

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:
http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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