

Religious Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 7877**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS 3877**

Reports on the Units

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Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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2760 Foundation for the Study of Religion (AS)

General Comments:

As usual most candidates chose to answer questions from the ethics/ philosophy of religion route. However, in general whilst most candidates made reasonable attempts to read and answer the questions with care, there were few excellent scripts.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.	
1a	<p>Explain the role of the prisoners in Plato’s analogy of the cave. [33] The question on the prisoners in Plato’s cave analogy was very popular. Candidates were able to retell the analogy of the cave and offer some analysis. However, weaker candidates tended to give a general meaning for the analogy rather than focus on just the prisoners.</p> <p>Whilst most candidates were able to describe Plato's theory of two worlds they tended not to use technical language such as forms, phenomenal/essential worlds, enlightened/ignorance, the Good etc.</p> <p>Better candidates were also to consider the prisoner/soul relationship before escape, afterwards and at his return.</p>
1b	<p>‘The killing of the returning prisoner shows that people will never accept Plato’s theories.’ Discuss. [17] Answers mainly fell into two types: those who concentrated on the ‘killing’ of the prisoner (however that is to be interpreted) often linking it with the death of Socrates and seeing in it the reluctance of society to acknowledge the challenge of philosophy in society and those who talked in general about the problems of forms and metaphysical ideas in general.</p> <p>Quality of answers ranged from the poor to the very good.</p>
2a	<p>Explain how the texts you have studied show God as creator. [33] This was not such a popular question. Candidates either wrote about God as a creator in a general sense with little reference to the biblical texts, or they gave long lists of textual passages but without sufficient explanation of what these tell us about the nature of God and his relationship to the creation.</p>
2b	<p>To what extent is it true to say that a good God should not need to perform miracles? [17] Generally this part of the question was better answered than part (a).</p> <p>Good candidates concentrated on the problems of theodicy and the nature of miracle. A small number of very good candidates wrote about Hume and discussed what constitutes a miracle and therefore whether God’s special intervention in the world is entirely relevant.</p> <p>Weaker candidates tended to refer to the general problem of suffering without sufficient reference to the problem of miracles and God’s goodness.</p>

3a	<p>Explain the purpose of ethical language. [33] Candidates split fairly evenly between this question and question 4 for those following the ethics/philosophy of religion route.</p> <p>There were a wide range of approaches. Some gave a straightforward summary of meta-ethical theories; others tackled the issue of the ‘purpose’ of ethical language in general; others (the better answers) managed to do both.</p>
3b	<p>‘Learning what “right” and “wrong” mean is the most important purpose of ethical language.’ Discuss. [17] There were equally some excellent and imaginative answers here as there were very poor responses.</p> <p>Some candidates were merely repeated the comments they had made in part (a).</p>
4a	<p>Explain the strengths of relativist ethics. [33] Answers to this question were more wide ranging even than to question 3 and generally reasonably well done. Most candidates wrote about situation ethics but they tended to outline the theory rather than develop the strengths.</p> <p>Good candidates were able to say that compassion, flexibility and accounting for the context were strengths of moral relativism. Weaker answers tended to focus on cultural relativism without being able to suggest how this might provide a basis for ethical relative theories.</p>
4b	<p>To what extent do the weaknesses of relativist ethics outweigh the strengths? [17] There were some very good answers to this question and some were able to compare moral relativism with natural law/rights. Weaker candidates tended to repeat the points they had made in part (a) without much <i>discussion</i>, which is historically a problem with part (b) questions.</p>
5a	<p>Explain, with examples, what is meant by ‘prophecy’ when describing some of the writings in the Jewish scriptures. [33] Good answers were able to balance the aims of prophetic literature with the role of the prophet; very good answers were able to use form criticism as a means of highlighting the distinctive features of prophecy and some were able to consider Moses’ role as prophet as well as law-giver.</p> <p>Weaker responses referred only to foretelling of events but with only scanty knowledge of prophets such as Amos and Hosea.</p>
5b	<p>‘Form Criticism does not help when trying to understand the Jewish scriptures.’ Discuss. [17] Good answers made the point that without form criticism it would be possible falsely to read prophecy as law or history etc. Others made the point that form criticism was able to high-light the very distinctive form in which Israel developed her style of prophecy compared to the rest of the ancient near east.</p> <p>In some cases candidates knew about the scholars who had developed form criticism but were unsure how their views had helped read the texts.</p>
6a	<p>Explain the evidence which might be used in dating the Exile. [33] This was not a popular question; answers varied considerably but those who understood the question were able to consider the variety of sources and types of evidence scholars have used to date the Exile.</p>

	<p>Surprisingly only a handful of candidates referred to Jeremiah (and the Fall of Jerusalem) and Ezekiel (his experience of the Exile) as legitimate sources.</p>
6b	<p>'The Jewish scriptures themselves are more reliable than other types of evidence.' Discuss. [17]</p> <p>There were some good answers to this question. Interestingly almost no one argued that the Scriptures are a sufficient source of knowledge of the Exile.</p>
7a	<p>Explain the origins and beliefs of the Zealots. [33]</p> <p>This was a popular question for candidates taking this route. Strong responses included accurate accounts of Zealot origins, their beliefs, relations with other Jewish groups and their relations with the Romans which led to the siege at Masada in AD70.</p> <p>Weaker responses omitted detail on one or more of these areas, particularly reasons for their resentment of Roman Rule.</p>
7b	<p>'The Roman occupation made the arrival of the Zealots inevitable.' Discuss. [17]</p> <p>Many candidates included much detail here which, if included in part (a) would have enhanced their marks significantly. Very few candidates had sufficient knowledge of current scholarly views to tackle the subtleties of this question especially when assessing the 'inevitable' element.</p>
8a	<p>Too few candidates attempted this question to produce a report.</p>
8b	<p>Too few candidates attempted this question to produce a report.</p>
9a	<p>Explain the origins and beliefs of the Zealots. [33]</p> <p>See report on 7(a). Answers tended to list facts about the Zealots rather than explain or assess them.</p>
9b	<p>'The Roman occupation made the arrival of the Zealots inevitable.' Discuss. [17]</p> <p>See report on 7(b) A few candidates were able to understand that the social and political context of Israel under Roman occupation created an atmosphere where a group of rebels would arise. However (as stated above for 7(b)) answers were not developed and lacked analysis.</p>
10a	<p>Explain, with reference to the Synoptic Problem, what is meant by Source Criticism. [33]</p> <p>This was the more popular question for those taking this route than question 9. There were some very strong responses but weaker responses got names and numbers mixed up, and one or two responses simply described the Synoptic problem without any explanation of the nature and purpose of Source Criticism nor reference to scholarly solutions.</p>
10b	<p>'Source Criticism can damage faith.' [17]</p> <p>Many candidates gave a good range of plausible reasons why Source Criticism might challenge faith. Weaker candidates tended to repeat the ideas set out in 10(a) and so there was some unevenness in response between parts (a) and (b).</p>

11a	<p>Explain, with examples Biblical teaching about the treatment of the weak and the oppressed. [33]</p> <p>Many candidates showed a very good knowledge and use of the Bible. Most referred to the Exodus events (as a key liberation text). Better candidates were able to link Hebrew Scriptures with Jesus' teaching, e.g. Sermon on the Mount, The Richman and Lazarus, The Rich Young Man etc.</p>
11b	<p>'God will reward the oppressed so suffering is not important.' Discuss. [17]</p> <p>This part of the question was significantly less well done than in 11(a). Stronger answers referred to liberation theology and war to support their responses but weaker answers discussed the issue vaguely in terms of reward in heaven to make amends for suffering.</p> <p>Some better answers highlighted the fact that even sinners and unbelievers will be welcomed into heaven and they argued that this was unfair and made rewards irrelevant. Almost no candidates considered the problem of heaven/reward as a false-consciousness.</p>
12a	<p>Explain what are meant by Liberal and Traditional approaches to the interpretation of the Bible. [33]</p> <p>There were some very good answers to this fairly popular question. Most were able to outline in a very straightforward manner the two approaches; some referred to Bultmann but surprisingly very few appeared to know about Barth, Schleiermacher and other very well-known scholars.</p> <p>Weaker candidates elided Traditional and Liberal approaches together, contrasting them with the Fundamentalist approach (which was not asked for in the question).</p>
12b	<p>'A liberal approach to the bible may weaken faith.' Discuss. [17]</p> <p>This was quite well done on the whole and many were able to discuss the problem of the historical authority of the Bible supported by Traditionalism versus Liberal emphasis on experience and the power of myth.</p> <p>Weaker candidates did not really understand this question and their answers tended to reiterate points from part (a) with little reference to revelation and truth.</p>
13a	<p>Explain how the ideas of Gautama the Buddha may have been influenced by the Hinduism of his day. [33]</p> <p>This was the less popular question of the two in this route (i.e. questions 13 and 14). Those who did tackle this question knew their materials well (i.e. to atman, dharma, the deities, varna) and gave good examples of Hinduism at the time of the Buddha.</p> <p>Weaker answers tended outline the story of Gautama with only passing reference to his religious and philosophical background.</p>
13b	<p>'The Buddha's aim was to reform Hinduism.' Discuss. [17]</p> <p>Those who had answered 13(a) well were able to respond were usually to this question. Answers were very well balanced and with effective analysis.</p>
14a	<p>Explain how Buddhists might apply the Noble Eightfold Path to the way in which they live their lives. [33]</p> <p>This question was generally very well answered. Most had a good factual knowledge of the Noble Eightfold Path and its composition and various</p>

	<p>purposes.</p> <p>Weaker candidates tended to outline the Path but were less effective in considering its application to the Buddhist way of life.</p>
14b	<p>‘Living by the “Middle Way” is not practical in the 21st Century.’ Discuss. [17]</p> <p>Good answers were able to supply apt examples and consider the Middle Path in terms of the virtue of balance, avoiding extremes and development of one’s character.</p>
15a	<p>Too few candidates attempted this question to produce a report.</p>
15b	<p>Too few candidates attempted this question to produce a report.</p>
16a	<p>Too few candidates attempted this question to produce a report.</p>
16b	<p>Too few candidates attempted this question to produce a report.</p>
17a	<p>Explain the importance of the geographical background for a study of pre-Islamic Arabia. [33]</p> <p>This was a popular question. The majority of candidates ignored the word 'geographical' and wrote generally about pre-Islamic Arabia - polytheism, polygamy, gambling, drinking, and fighting are all general activities of the society at that time but not legacy of the geographical setting.</p> <p>Good answers discussed the impact of the trade routes on the diverse culture, access to a variety of faiths and reliance of the people on the caravans, all of this leading to fighting between the clans/tribes as trade and resources were often scarce.</p> <p>Some candidates observed that the inhospitable nature of the desert (lack of water, varying temperatures and inability to grow crops) directly influenced the lifestyle of the people, forcing them to be nomadic, and the emphasis on income from trade rather than farming.</p> <p>A few candidates mentioned the dangers of the men being away trading in nearby towns whilst the clan/tribe stayed in the desert. Excellent answers identified the volatile nature of life in pre-Islamic Arabia.</p>
17b	<p>‘The growth of Islam cannot properly be understood without a consideration of the area in which it originated.’ Discuss. [17]</p> <p>Unfortunately many candidates did not understand this question. Most answers focused on the role of Muhammad ﷺ as prophet, arguing that because he was chosen by God this shows that Islam would have succeeded anywhere. Whilst this is a valid response from a <i>believers</i> point of view, candidates did not make the connection between the teachings of Muhammad ﷺ and the socio-political environment of pre-Islamic Arabia.</p> <p>Only a minority of candidates identified that Arabia offered a good opportunity for a new leader and a new religion which was going to improve living conditions for the people.</p>

<p>18a</p>	<p>Explain the social and political environment of al-Madinah at the time of Muhammad's ﷺ arrival there. [33]</p> <p>This was a popular question but the responses varied greatly. Most candidates started by describing how Muhammad ﷺ was treated in Makkah and why he had to escape to al-Madinah. Only then did they describe the situation he found in Madinah.</p> <p>Most answers then went on to describe what Muhammad ﷺ did in Madinah, some even describing the battles and his return to Makkah. Whilst candidates were able to list the conditions in Madinah they were also unable to select only relevant information.</p> <p>Weaker answers gave muddled information about Makkah and Madinah which they failed to relate to the essay question.</p>
<p>18b</p>	<p>'In al-Madinah Muhammad ﷺ was a statesman and politician, not a prophet.' Discuss. [17]</p> <p>This question was generally very well answered.</p> <p>Answers were balanced and offered good evidence. Candidates mostly argued that Muhammad ﷺ was both a statesman and a prophet and they gave examples of what he achieved in Madinah as leader (e.g. new social rules, the battles). This was balanced by the point that Muhammad ﷺ continued to receive revelations and that as God's chosen messenger he would have succeed anywhere and therefore his role of prophet was the most important.</p>
<p>19a</p>	<p>Explain the difference between the ethical monotheism of Judaism and pagan monotheism. [33]</p> <p>Most candidates had a very good knowledge of Jewish ethical monotheism but poor understanding of pagan ethical monotheism. As a consequence some very good answers fell short when it came to making full and detailed comparison which would have earned them top marks.</p>
<p>19b</p>	<p>'The G-d of the Jews is universal.' Discuss. [17]</p> <p>This question was generally very well done. Most candidates were able to refer to the Noachide covenant and discuss which of the mitzvot had universal application and what this implied about God.</p>
<p>20a</p>	<p>Explain the different roles of the Tenakh and Talmud in Jewish life and worship. [33]</p> <p>There were some very good answers on the relationship of Talmud and Tenakh and some excellent discussion how these affected everyday Jewish life.</p> <p>Some weaker candidates used Torah to include Talmud and Tenakh and whilst this is not wrong they failed to be specific enough to give clear answers.</p> <p>Weaker answers just described Talmud and Tenakh and were unable to consider the written/oral law distinction in application to everyday living.</p>

20b

'The Torah is enough; Jews do not need any other scriptures.' Discuss.
[17]

Good answers here were able to comment that although Torah (in terms of the Pentateuch) might in theory be sufficient the insights of the prophets and writings are also necessary in order to gain a deeper understanding of Torah.

Many good answers argued for the necessity of the Oral Torah as well as the Written Law.

2761 Philosophy of Religion 1 (AS)

Examiners felt the level of difficulty on the paper was appropriate.

Timing seemed to be sound and there were few reported rubric errors.

1. a. Explain the strengths of the Cosmological argument.

This was a popular question where many candidates were able to explain the cosmological argument in some detail, demonstrating a sound understanding of the intent of the syllogisms. They were also able to give a good account of what was meant by an a posteriori argument. However a significant number failed to address the part of the question asking them to explain the strengths of this argument.

b. 'Hume successfully criticises the Cosmological argument' Discuss.

Many students seemed to have a very superficial understanding of Hume's views which made accessing the higher levels of response difficult as many ideas were 'put' by candidates rather than 'considering' them. A significant number also wasted their time exploring Hume's arguments against a Judeo-Christian designer.

a. Explain why Irenaeus sees the existence of evil as a necessary component of the universe.

This was easily the most popular question on the paper, with many approaching a straight forward question in a straight forward manner. There is still a tendency for candidates to conflate Irenaeus' theodicy with more modern versions in his tradition. Weaker candidates tend to see Hick and Irenaeus as interchangeable. However it was good to see that a growing number now realise that the concept of 'universal salvation' is not found in Irenaeus. There are still a number of candidates who confuse Augustine with Irenaeus.

b. 'Irenaeus is wrong, evil disproves the existence of God.' Discuss.

Many candidates made excellent use of the Epicurean problem in formulating very good responses to this question. Some however found it difficult to access the higher credit as they were using Augustine's theodicy to put their arguments together. A number also talked about purgatory out of context.

3. a. Explain what Anselm meant by 'necessary existence'.

Fewer candidates attempted this question with some doing little more than explaining the first version of Anselm's Ontological argument, some even found themselves doing little more than explaining Descartes view of the argument and therefore failed to address either Anselm or 'necessary existence'. Those who did engage with the actual question however did so with clarity and ease with well focused responses appropriately exploring the nature of necessary existence. Some were able to make a good distinction between Guanilo's 'contingent' island and a God whose existence is necessary.

b. 'Kant was right when he said the existence was not a predicate like other predicates.' Discuss.

Most candidates are now aware of this famous criticism of the Ontological argument and were able to assess both sides of the critique with confidence and some clarity. Some however did seem to be thrown by this linking of Kant with Anselm which often led to a not unusual chronology problem, some for example having Guanilo reply to Descartes. A significant number of candidates still seem to think that the word 'existence' is about being 'alive'; arguing that therefore to be alive is to be the best of all predicates, thus to be alive is the most important 'Predicate of Kant'.

4. a. Explain the objections of psychologists, such as Freud, to religious belief.

This was another question where candidates had trouble addressing the actual question, with many candidates doing little more than giving a general account of the views of Freud followed by a detailed description of the Oedipus complex. A good number of candidates did little more than explain Freud's tripartite view of the mind. Those who explained the views of Jung, again, made little attempt to apply these views to the question. The best candidates who had explored Freud's views in terms of their effect on religious belief had little trouble accessing the higher levels of response. There are still a significant number of candidates who think that Marx and Weber are psychologists.

b. 'Psychologists such as Freud successfully proved that religious belief is an illusion.' Discuss.

This question really did depend on how well the candidates had addressed part (a). Those who understood the psychological objections to religious belief and had idea of what 'illusion' might mean in this context produced interesting and relevant discussions clearly focused on the topic. Others did little more than the usual critique of Freud's limited research.

5. a. Explain why some philosophers argue that evidence of design in the universe proves the existence of God.

This was the other very popular question which many candidates approached in a clear and coherent manner. Unsurprisingly a significant number chose to approach the question through the writings of Paley which allowed the better candidates to fully address the actual question. Weaker candidates seemed to know no more about Paley arguments than the watchmaker which they simply described in a fairly descriptive way ignoring the 'why' in the question. It was pleasing to see that a greater number than usual were able to give good accounts of Aquinas' version, though many saw him as writing after Paley.

b. 'Mill's discussion of evil successfully undermines the argument from design.' Discuss.

Among most of the candidates knowledge of the writings of Mill was clearly limited. Many simply took the issue of 'evil' from the question and made no attempt to explore what Mill had actually said in this context. This still allowed candidates to assess intelligently the issue of evil as a possible weakness in the teleological arguments. Weaker candidates tended to stray from the issue of evil as a weakness of the claim that the natural world is designed, into a general discussion of the problem of evil, repeating some of the material they had used in question 2.

6. a. Explain why some philosophers argue that religious experience proves the existence of God.

There was a wide range of responses to this question with many of the weakest answers being found here and some of the most sophisticated. Those who had prepared answers on miracles did little more than use the material they had revised without any attempt to address the actual question. Some ignored the 'philosophers' in the question and resorted to anecdotes about a variety of allegedly religious experiences. Those who had revised philosophers such as James or Swinburne were able to make good use of their arguments to address the claim that religious experience is a valid argument for the existence of God.

b. 'Religious experiences are all illusions.' Discuss.

Here again there was a large divergence in the responses. Some candidates merely used anecdotes again to argue that religious experiences are not all illusions. Better responses were able to assess the extent to which writers such as Freud or Marx were successful in their critique of religious experiences.

2762 Religious Ethics 1 (AS)

General Comments

Most candidates performed well and rose to the challenge of the paper. However, those questions which asked candidates to relate ethical theories to medical ethical issues were not so well answered, as they either wrote about the ethical theory or about the medical ethical issue. Candidates also tended to write in very general terms, for example applying the Utilitarian principle as a whole, rather than applying a specific element of it.

Candidates managed the time well.

1(a) **Explain the main strengths and weaknesses of Mill's version of Utilitarianism.**

This was the most popular question, and most candidates did well. Generally there were clear descriptions of Mill's version of Utilitarianism, with better candidates explaining the strengths and weaknesses as they wrote about the descriptions. Less successful answers tended to write more briefly about the strengths and weaknesses after explaining Mill's version. Some candidates only wrote why Mill attempted to improve on Bentham's version of Utilitarianism.

Poor

answers simply wrote generic answers about Utilitarianism, not recognising and difference between Bentham and Mill in their approaches. Very few candidates gave good examples in their answers.

1(b) **'Utilitarianism is the best approach to embryo research.' Discuss.**

Many candidates answered this question better than part a) and were able to give good discussions of merits of Utilitarianism as opposed to other ethical theories when considering embryo research. There was still, however, among some candidates confusion as to what embryo research actually was. Better answers were actually able to discuss the comparable merits of different types of

Utilitarianism as an approach to the topic. Most answers simply compared Utilitarianism as an approach to embryo research with that of Natural Law.

2(a) **Explain the differences between the ethics of the religion you have studied and Utilitarianism.**

This was not a very popular question. Good answers used Natural Law and Situation Ethics as examples of religious ethics, and compared them with different versions of Utilitarianism. But many answers were rather vague, with the knowledge of Christian ethics limited to the ten commandments. A disappointing number of answers only showed a superficial understanding of religious ethics, but wrote at length about Utilitarianism in a very general way.

2(b) **'Utilitarianism makes more sense than religious ethics when solving moral problems.' Discuss.**

Many candidates simply considered that Utilitarianism was better as it was more modern!

However, there were some very good discussions weighing up the merits of the different approaches to solving moral problems, with some good use of examples to evidence their answers.

Even if candidates had not mentioned Natural Law or Situation Ethics in part a) many used them effectively in part b).

3(a) Explain one example of an absolutist theory of ethics.

This was a popular question and generally well done. Candidates who answered on Kant generally tended to give fuller and more detailed answers than those who answered on Natural Law.

Where candidates did not do well they tended to re-write rather sketchy revision notes listing the main points, or simply gave examples of absolutist laws, such as 'do not murder'.

Good answers made good use of examples.

3(b) How far can moral absolutism be justified?

There were some very effective answers to this question, weighing up the certainty of absolutism with the flexibility of relativism.

Many good answers discussed the absolute nature of more 'relative' theories and claimed that some sort of flexible combination was needed depending on the moral issue being addressed.

4(a) Explain how Kant's concept of universalisability might be applied to abortion.

This was another very popular question. Good candidates wrote straightforward and logical responses, exploring the link between good will and duty and contrasting the Hypothetical and Categorical Imperatives, and applying Kantian ethics to abortion. Good answers discussed whether Kant would have considered a foetus a person, but most did not recognise this issue.

Some candidates were confused about the Categorical Imperative, commands not to kill and the Sanctity of Life.

4(b) 'Kant's ethical theory has no serious weaknesses.' Discuss.

Good answers analysed the strengths and weaknesses clearly, backing up their conclusions with examples. Some merely continued their discussion of abortion, concluding that Kantian ethics were too rigid, but containing little analysis of his ethical theory.

5(a) Explain how the principles of Natural Law support the Sanctity of Life.

This was a very popular question, and those answers that explained both Natural law and the Sanctity of Life did well. Good responses understood the Biblical basis of the Sanctity of Life, and were able to use all aspects of Natural Law to explain its support for the Sanctity of Life. There were some good discussions of the doctrine of double effect

5(b) 'Human life does not need to be preserved in all circumstances.' Discuss.

Good answers approached this question with more than a 'for and against' format, often considering proportionalism as a way forward in the debate.

Weaker answers contented themselves with story-telling in the hope that it might prove a point.

6(a) 'Explain, with examples, how moral relativism could help in making decisions about genetic engineering.'

This was not a popular question. Good answers covered the approaches of different forms of Utilitarianism and of Situation Ethics as examples of how more relative ethical theories might approach the issue. There was good understanding of genetic engineering from good answers.

However, many candidates showed only a fleeting acquaintance with the niceties of genetic engineering and examples, apart from blond hair and blue eyes, were hard to find.

Some answers were very general and strayed into evaluative approaches to the issue.

6(b) 'Moral Relativism leads to wrong decisions concerning genetic engineering.' Discuss

If candidates struggled with part (a) they tended to simply state the opposition of Natural Law to genetic engineering, concluding that it was too rigid and stopped scientific advances so moral relativism must be right.

There was lots of support for Utilitarianism as it supports the best outcome for the majority, but candidates gave very little analysis in the answers.

Those answers that focussed on the wrong decisions, and the inability of relative morality to see the future, produced some good responses.

2763 Jewish Scriptures 1 (AS)

General Comments

There were only 25 candidates for this paper though 11 centres were represented. There were very few rubric infringements and most candidates managed to complete the paper within the one hour time limit. There were some excellent responses which quoted the set texts appropriately, made reference to issues of date, authorship, purpose and historicity when relevant and were a pleasure to read.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part 1

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

AO1 Responses outlined the covenants made with both Adam and David and the best explanations demonstrated familiarity with the set texts. (Genesis 1: 26-30; 2 Samuel 7). One or two candidates explained that the covenant G-d made with Adam did not technically look like a covenant but usually counted as one. Some explained that it was difficult to compare the two because they were from different types of literature. Most candidates demonstrated understanding that a key difference is that the Adamic covenant was made with the whole of humanity whilst the covenant with David was made with one individual but has special significance for the Jews.

b) 'The covenants with Adam and with David have nothing significant in common.' Discuss. [17]

AO2 Candidates tended to develop points they had made in their comparisons in the first part of the question about similarities and differences. The specification encourages seeing the covenant story as a whole and reflects the idea that no covenant stands alone but is part of salvation history in the eyes of the Jewish writers and editors. It was not surprising, therefore, to find that the consensus among most responses tended to be that all covenants existed for a reason and they were part of a larger scheme, G-d's plan for humanity, which was the significant common factor.

2(a) Explain the significant features of the covenant G-d made with Noah. [33]

This was marginally more popular than the other two options in Part 1 and most candidates knew the set passage well. There was some story telling about the flood, the ark and the animals but most responses identified the significant features including the fact that over the generations G-d did not punish the people until they started to show inhumanity to each other. Most candidates made reference to the traditional list of the seven Noachide laws incumbent on all people which can be extrapolated from but are not itemised in the set text (Genesis 8:20-9:29). The fact that Noah was allowed to eat animals but not the blood featured in some responses as did the promise symbolised in the rainbow. A few decided to comment that it will be fire next time.

(b) 'The covenants in the Jewish Scriptures are for all people.' Discuss. [17]

AO2 The specification refers to the way in which the covenant idea develops through the selected texts, moving from a largely single-sided agreement on the part of G-d to a two-way agreement with G-d and humanity. The covenants in the specification are: Genesis 1:26-30, (Adam); 8:20-9:29, (Noah); 12&17 (Abraham); Exodus 19-24 (Moses); 2 Samuel 7 (David); Jeremiah 31 (the new covenant).

Candidates wrote that the covenants with Adam and Noah were for all humanity because there were no 'chosen people' before Abraham and no covenant nation before the Mosaic covenant. One or two candidates stopped there. It was not clear whether this was the end because Moses brought the Torah or whether the candidates did not know which covenants are in the specification. One or two mentioned David but seeing question 1 on the paper might have been the reason for that.

Candidates were free to express Christian views of the significance of Jeremiah's new covenant and some of the Jewish centres explained what the Christian view is.

Most candidates, of all persuasions or none, simply commented that Jeremiah's new covenant concentrates on personal as opposed to corporate religion and is for all people but the context foresees a restoration of land and, with the in-gathering of the exiles, a reunited Israel and Judah.

3(a) Explain the covenant ideas in Exodus 19-24. [33]

AO1 Surprisingly few started with any reference to the Exodus, despite the fact that the first commandment in the Decalogue starts with G-d as the deliverer of Israel from Egypt. Some began with the context of the theophany on Sinai and the role of Moses as the mediator between G-d and the newly formed nation. Most gave a brief account of the Ten Commandments, dividing them into those between G-d and Israel and those between the people themselves. Some explained that this is a conditional covenant in that the people are expected to keep the Ten Commandments and the other rules and to be a people set apart. It seemed, however, that a number of the candidates weren't sure of the exact contents of the set chapters. Only a few went on to cover the rituals about altars and the rest of the material. One or two mentioned the key distinction between apodictic laws such as the Decalogue and casuistic laws.

(b) 'The Ten Commandments are the least important part of the Mosaic Covenant.' Discuss. [17]

AO2 Some candidates were hampered by their lack of knowledge of the set chapters. If they did not know that Exodus 20-24 'the book of the covenant' includes casuistic laws and that these were the application of laws to specific situations as opposed to timeless permanent apodictic laws such as the Decalogue, they had difficulty addressing the question beyond giving a general response. Some did manage to argue against the stimulus statement by analysing the significant features of the Decalogue and justifying their undoubted importance in that they are still in use today, are displayed on tablets in the synagogue and are the basis of the laws of most countries. A few argued that every bit of the Mosaic law even the oral Torah is acknowledged as valuable so you cannot say any part is the least important.

Part 2

4(a) Describe and explain the religious problems raised by the difficult situations faced by Jonah and by Job. [33]

AO1 Candidates gave quite detailed accounts describing the suffering of both of these characters. When it came to explaining the religious problems, some gave very simplistic outlines of Jonah trying to run away from G-d when you can't and Job losing everything, getting boils and having unsympathetic friends. Very few candidates actually quoted any text. There were some good responses, however, which tried to exonerate Jonah to some extent in that he knew the consequences for Israel if the Assyrians repented and were forgiven. Some also identified with Job on the grounds that all people feel anguish when innocent people suffer and it is one of the great theological problems as to why a caring God does not stop suffering even though he could.

(b) To what extent were Jonah and Job to blame for their own suffering? [17]

AO2 Candidates developed points made in the first part of the question in their discussions, making reference to Jonah's disobedience and resentment, then to Satan's plot behind the scenes which affected Job. There was a tendency to leave it at that without explicitly addressing 'to what extent'. A few contrasted the suffering of the innocent Job and the suffering that Jonah brought on himself and one or two tried to justify Jonah's situation because of the threat to Israel which he could foresee would come from Assyria. A few seemed to have misunderstood the story of Job in that they said his arguing with his friends only made the situation worse and he should have listened to his friends.

5(a) Explain how and why, according to the writer of the book, Job was suffering. [33]

AO1 'How and why' could be addressed together or tackled separately. It seemed odd that some candidates who chose this option did not actually know the contents of the set chapters in any depth. There were some detailed accounts, however, but sometimes these seemed to forget the question and just squashed in as many facts from the story as possible, including the arguments of the friends. Some forgot to include the scene where Satan is permitted to test Job but gave a paragraph about reasons why the book continues to have relevance today.

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

AO2 This question was quite well done, especially by a few candidates who identified the book as Wisdom (Hohma) and discussed the purpose of types of literature. One or two suggested that the debate that makes up the main part of the book has been introduced into a well known traditional story to explore the universal problem of human suffering. The writer was assumed to be challenging the conventional views expressed by Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. Whether literally true or not was usually seen as irrelevant because the lessons are so important.

6(a) Explain the theological significance of the teachings about G-d found in the book of Jonah. [33]

AO1 Most candidates went through the story identifying the lessons Jonah learnt about G-d. For example, candidates wrote that people are unable to hide from G-d or to resist G-d's wishes, that G-d is everywhere and can do anything, as well as being patient and forgiving towards people like Jonah who eventually repent of their disobedience and do what they are told. Most responses included some reference to the sailors and to the repentance of the king of Nineveh but a number of candidates had no depth of theological understanding in their explanations. Some seemed to think Nineveh was a Jewish city. There were a few though who gave perceptive comments about the theme of universalism and explained the significance of the kikayon incident.

'The Jewish attitude to Gentiles is the most important theme of the book of Jonah.'
Discuss. [17]

AO2 The Gentile sailors and the Ninevites featured as evidence but it was not always clear what point was being made apart from the fact that therefore Gentiles must be an important theme and that Jonah eventually had a helpful attitude and caused them to repent. The better candidates included the kikayon incident as a significant lesson for Jonah but some of the exegesis tended not to be of much substance. A number of candidates decided, as they were entitled to, that the Jewish attitude to Gentiles is not the most important theme. Rather, they argued, the relationship that G-d had with Jonah is the most important because even when Jonah did not listen to G-d, G-d still watched over and looked after Jonah.

2764 New Testament 1 (AS)

There were only a few strong papers and many were rather weak - there was the sense that some candidates had done little revision. There was a tendency in all questions to describe rather than explain, and it was clear that candidates knew the set texts but many only gave superficial explanations. Candidates should be encouraged to split stories down into their key parts and briefly describe and then comment in as much detail on that part of the story. Very few papers showed a detailed knowledge of the text or background issues which could be used to illuminate biblical passages. In the AO2 questions many candidates wrote generally without grounding their arguments in texts or examples.

1a Explain what happened when Paul visited Corinth. [33]

This was not a popular question. Candidates tended simply to describe the events in Acts 18 without placing them in context or indeed commenting on them.

1b 'The Jews were hostile to Paul because he was successful.' Discuss. [17]

Few candidates were able to latch on to "successful" and explore what this might mean and then relate it to the Jews' hostility to Paul.

2a Describe and explain the significance for gentiles of the Apostolic letter at the Jerusalem Council. [Acts: 15.] [33]

Many candidates answered this question and showed a good understanding of the Apostolic letter, some put the letter in context of Paul's debates with the Judaizers. There was some confusion among weaker candidates as to the conclusion of the letter and some assumed, wrongly, that "things strangled" referred to circumcision.

2b 'The Apostolic letter did not promote universalism.' Discuss. [17]

There were some good answers to this question and some explored how the letter broke down boundaries between Jew and Gentile and then went on to discuss its limitations, including the absence of circumcision.

3a Explain the difficulties concerning the date and destination of the letter to the Galatians. [33]

This was not a popular question and it was not done very well. Most candidates got tied up with the North/South Galatia debate and ignored the dating issues. One or two strong candidates discussed the evidence for dating implied by the missionary journeys in Acts and questioned its reliability.

3b To what extent were the problems in Galatians 2 a serious threat to Paul? [17]

Some candidates argued that Paul won through in Galatia and so the problems of the Judaizers were not a threat. A few candidates saw the seriousness of the threat and how the change of the Jerusalem church's attitude nearly scuppered Paul's mission.

4a Explain the reactions of the people of Ephesus to one event which occurred during Paul's visit. [Acts:19]

Answers tended to be purely descriptive and devoid of explanation.

4b 'The reactions of the people of Ephesus were probably exaggerated by the author of Acts.' Discuss. [17]

Few candidates had an understanding of the motives and theology of Acts so were unable to unpack why the Ephesians' reaction might have been "exaggerated".

5a/b No candidates attempted this question.

6a With reference to one example, explain how Paul delivered a speech to suit his audience. [33]

This was a popular question and most chose to discuss Paul's speech to the Athenians. Good candidates noted the absence of Old Testament support and Paul's reliance on nature, the cosmos etc.

6b 'Paul's speeches in Acts are fiction.' Discuss. [17]

Candidates constructed good arguments here. Some thought that Luke knew Paul and therefore the speeches were reliable others contrasted this with Lukan theology and explained what Acts was trying to do in terms of his ideas of universalism and salvation history.

7a Explain the evidence for the possible sources of Mark's gospel. [33]

Many candidates fell in to the trap of writing all they knew about the synoptic problem which was a little off task. Better answers used the Greisbach hypothesis to suggest that Mark may have used Matthew and some went on to discuss Mark's links with Peter, a Passion Narrative source and Mark's theological creativity. Only the best were able to give explanations rooted in the text.

7b 'The historical accuracy of a gospel is more important than the purpose.' Discuss. [17]

Most candidates talked generally about history in Mark. Some linked the question to Mark's community in Rome; some chose to focus on John and discussed elements of history and theology.

8a Explain the debate about the possible sources of John's gospel. [33]

There were only a few answers to this question and they were somewhat confused. Some tried to link to Raymond Brown's ideas about the "beloved disciple" and others debated the links with John and the Synoptics.

8b 'Faith or Fact?' Assess which of these is more important in John's gospel. [17]

Candidates who chose to debate issues arising from the gospel e.g. the timing of Jesus' death, John's portrayal of Pilate etc tended to do better.

9a Describe and explain the references in Mark's passion narrative which are intended to present Jesus as the Messiah. [33]

A popular question but poorly done. Most candidates confused Messiah with Son of God and Son of Man and thereby wrote a "Christology of Passion Narratives" essay. A few good candidates discussed the Jewish background to the term Messiah and then showed where this was to be found in the Passion Narrative e.g. the Last Supper and the Messianic banquet, the Sanhedrin trial, the idea of salvation through the cross etc.

9b 'Messiah was the least important title of Jesus.' Discuss. [17]

Candidates tended to confuse titles in this question too. One or two argued that Son of God with the centurion's confession was the most important title, others saw that Son of Man with its more human focus was the most important.

10a From Mark's gospel, describe and explain the significant features of one of the trials of Jesus. [33]

Most candidates chose the Sanhedrin trial. There was a lot of story telling and even key details like the High Priest's questioning of Jesus was left out! Others worked their way through the trial and commented on Mark's reasons for showing the trial to be unfair, some tried to show that the trials didn't meet Jewish legal proceedings, some discussed whether Jesus had actually committed blasphemy etc. Few answers covered all parts of the trial.

10b With reference to Mark's gospel, discuss which trial of Jesus finally sealed his fate. [17]

There were some good answers here. Some argued that Pilate alone had the power to execute but some argued for joint responsibility.

11a Describe and explain the significant features of John's portrayal of Jesus' death. [33]

Although this was not a popular question but generally well done. Candidates discussed the timing of the crucifixion, the casting of lots, the seamless robe and Jesus final cry. Only the best tried to explain what John was up to in his distinctive version of events.

11b 'In John's account of the crucifixion, Jesus does not suffer.' Discuss. [17]

Many were able to argue convincingly that Jesus did not suffer in John and linked the ideas to the suffering servant and John's ideas about the triumph of the crucifixion. This was generally contrasted with the horrible reality of crucifixion as a punishment.

12a Describe and explain the features of Jesus' resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene in John's gospel. [33]

Answers tended to be purely descriptive and there was little sense that candidates had any appreciation of what John was up to here.

12b. 'The account of the resurrection appearance to Mary is told in such detail, it must be true.' Discuss. [17]

Most agreed with the statement and struggled to disagree.

2765 Developments in Christian Thought 1 (AS)

General Comments:

There were few very good scripts, and although candidates some were able but did not have the detailed depth of knowledge to do themselves justice.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.	
1a	<p>Explain traditional Christian teaching on the role of women. [33] This was a popular question. Most took the word 'traditional' to refer to the Bible alone and discussed pro- and anti-women passages in detail. Better candidates presented the teaching of Augustine and Aquinas and a few even considered present day conservative Christian attitudes.</p>
1b	<p>'Traditional Christian teaching values women more than feminism does.' Discuss. [17] Many sided with secular and theological feminists. Only the best were able to see any negative affects of feminism on women and on religion. Some were able to develop the 'equal but different' argument, although there was almost no reference to contemporary thinkers in this area.</p>
2a	<p>Explain the feminist interpretations of Christianity. [33] Most candidates understood that there are different theological feminist traditions/ schools. There was some confusion as to what reconstructionists really said (e.g. Ruether and Fiorenza) and radical feminists were described briefly. The best answers included examples to illuminate the various approaches.</p>
2b	<p>'Christianity is fundamentally sexist.' Discuss. [17] There were some good answers here. Most focussed solely on the Bible and many were able to identify and discuss pro-women passages. Only a few really understood the challenges of Daly and Hampson that Christianity's ontology is deeply flawed and sexist.</p>
3a	<p>Explain Christian debates about women and the family. [33] Some just wrote generally about Christian ideas about women and surprisingly few were able to pinpoint teaching on the family. Many responses skimmed through lots of theories without giving any support or detail – although a few good answers did consider the role of women in the ordained ministry.</p>
3b	<p>'Feminism has undermined the importance of the family.' Discuss. [17] Only the best candidates were able to argue whether feminism has undermined the family; most thought it had liberated women whilst Christianity oppressed.</p>
4a	<p>Explain how Marx's teaching on the means of production has influenced Liberations Theology. [33] Most candidates wrote about Marx in general whilst only a few had a really had a good idea of what he meant by the 'means of production'. Some successfully were able to indicate how the notion had been developed by liberation theologians especially in the first mediation and the failure of the traditional Church.</p>

4b	<p>‘Marxism does not mix well with Christianity.’ Discuss. [17] This question produced some good answers. Most discussed whether Marx’s atheism made it fundamentally incompatible with Christianity. Some very good answers distinguished between Marxism in practice and Marxist theory which could be used by liberation theologians.</p>
5a	<p>Explain the process of hermeneutics in Liberation Theology. [33] This was a straight forward question but on the whole it was not well done. Those who tackled it well were able to discuss the second mediation, the hermeneutic circle and hermeneutics of suspicion. Surprisingly few candidates gave examples from the Bible even the popular passages such as Exodus and Luke 4.</p>
5b	<p>‘Liberation theologians read too much into the Bible.’ Discuss. [17] Some argued that liberation theology is biased too much towards the poor and therefore gives a lopsided interpretation of the Bible. Others argued that the Bible is rich in meaning and open to many kinds of interpretation.</p>
6a	<p>Explain what Liberation theologians mean by praxis. [33] Most understood that praxis is derived from Marxism. Some mentioned first and second act praxis and went on to talk about the mediations. Despite its simplicity this was not a popular question.</p>
6b	<p>‘The purpose of theology is to interpret the world, not to change it.’ Discuss. [17] Although some candidates struggled to understand what this question was asking many others were able to question whether the purpose of theology is personal and spiritual and/or aimed at society and social justice.</p>

2766 Eastern Religions 1 (AS)

General Comments:

Most candidates were well prepared and could answer both parts of each question. Many part (b) answers differentiated between candidates who had good understanding, and those who lacked clear knowledge of the topics. There were few excellent answers, and few very weak responses. Most candidates showed knowledge of the key concepts but often did not focus their work to the question throughout their work. For example answers on the Dhamma and the Sangha in questions 1 and 2 often elicited a discussion of the importance of all three refuges.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.	
1a	<p>Explain what Buddhists mean when they say they have taken refuge in the Dhamma. [33]</p> <p>This was the most popular question in this section.</p> <p>A number of responses seemed to want to address the question 'explain the importance of the dhamma', rather than explore what was meant by taking refuge in the dhamma. Failure to address the question explicitly limited their marks.</p> <p>The best responses had a clear understanding of the different meanings of the term dhamma, either as eternal truth or as a reference to the specific teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, and used these to help them address the question. These responses also explicitly addressed what was meant by taking refuge, and more specifically taking refuge in the dhamma.</p>
1b	<p>'Taking refuge in the Dhamma is merely escapist.' Discuss. [17]</p> <p>The best responses tended to explore what might be meant by escapism, and most argued that the sense of refuge in Buddhism did not amount to escapism.</p> <p>Weaker responses tended to misunderstand the direction of the question that kamma was the most important concept in Buddhist thought without offering any evidence to support this view.</p>
2a	<p>Explain the relationship between the Dhamma and the Sangha. [33]</p> <p>A large number of responses explored the relationship between all three refuges, rather than the specific relationship between the dhamma and the sangha. This often resulted in superficial and brief accounts of the relationship between the dhamma and the sangha.</p> <p>The best responses were aware of the dhamma as eternal truth, and as the teachings of the Buddha. They often explored the nature of the monastic sangha as a repository for the Buddha's teachings, as well as a living example of the living out of the dhamma.</p>

2b	<p>‘The only reason the Sangha is important is because the Sangha preserves the Dhamma.’ Discuss. [17]</p> <p>Most candidates disagreed with the statement presented. Weaker responses tended to simply argue that all three refuges must be important because otherwise they would not be refuges, perhaps reflecting rehearsed answers.</p> <p>The best responses considered other possible roles for the sangha, for example inspiration for the laity, support for each-other and providing the ideal lifestyle for the achievement of nibbana, before they reached their conclusion.</p>
3a	<p>Explain the ethical principles for Buddhist monks. [33]</p> <p>A few weak responses outlined some disconnected rules for the monastic sangha, without relating these clearly to either the vinaya, or the eightfold path.</p> <p>Most candidates were aware of the requirement to do more than merely outline the eightfold path in this question. The best responses explored both the eightfold path, and the vinaya codes, showing how these were directed at following the middle-path outlined by the Buddha.</p>
3b	<p>To what extent could it be argued that only monks should follow the eightfold path? [17]</p> <p>Most candidates argued that the laity should also be allowed to follow the eightfold path. The best responses tended to argue that even if the laity could not follow the path as completely as the monastic sangha, any following of the path was better than none.</p> <p>A few responses offered a valid argument that bhikkhunis should also follow the eightfold path, since they too are part of the monastic sangha.</p>
4a	<p>Explain the Buddhist concept of anicca. [33]</p> <p>Some candidates discussed all three marks of existence rather than focusing on anicca. Whilst some reference to the other marks of existence to support their explanation would be valid in many cases candidates wasted time and effort discussing the other two marks in much more detail than necessary, and this left them less time to focus on anicca.</p> <p>The best responses were aware of anicca as evidenced in both gross and subtle changes, and were able to provide clear examples to demonstrate this.</p>
4b	<p>‘The concept of anicca is identical to the concept of anatta. Discuss. [17]</p> <p>Many candidates argues that anicca and anatta were in essence identical. Weaker responses tended to simply state that anatta was identical to anatta with little reference to evidence to support this, or gave the chariot analogy from King Milinda's Questions, without relating it to the question.</p> <p>The best responses explored how anatta described change as it affected the human on gross and subtle levels. They also explored how failure to understand anatta and anicca could both lead to attachment.</p>

5a	<p>Explain how Buddhists can believe everything is dukkha despite the fact that we experience pleasure. [33]</p> <p>Most candidates were able to explain the Buddhist concept of dukkha adequately, often using colourful examples to explain how apparent pleasure can lead to dukkha.</p> <p>The best candidates were aware of the different forms of dukkha, and perhaps most particularly the sense of unease or dissatisfaction which is experienced over time, despite periods of pleasure.</p>
5b	<p>To what extent is belief in dukkha pessimistic? [17]</p> <p>Most candidates were able to present Buddhist responses to this question with facility, arguing that teaching on dukkha were realistic not pessimistic.</p> <p>The best responses built on the traditional Buddhist responses, and gave reasoned views of their own about whether the teachings encouraged people to confront the realities of life, and deal with them effectively, or whether they led to a more negative and depressing view of the world.</p>
6a	<p>Explain how the Buddhist concept of kamma might affect behaviour. [33]</p> <p>This was the least popular question in this section. Responses tended to be either weak or very good.</p> <p>Weak responses tended to give rather rambling accounts of the different ways in which Buddhists might behave, without really showing understanding of the specific Buddhist teachings on kamma.</p> <p>The best responses tended to explore the way in which lay Buddhists might seek positive kamma in their search for a better rebirth. They also showed awareness that doing something with the intention of seeking good kamma could in fact be counter-productive, and the issues this might cause for Buddhists. The very best responses often demonstrated awareness of the ultimate need to stop building either positive or negative kammic consequences.</p>
6b	<p>To what extent is kamma the most important reason for behaving morally? [17]</p> <p>There was a wide range of responses to this question. Some argued effectively that the stage of the Buddhist path being followed could be a factor in determining the conclusion, since the laity were more likely to act morally in the hope of good kamma than the monastic sangha. Other candidates offered interesting comparisons with Virtue Ethics, exploring the extent to which kamma could not be the motivation if kamma was to be achieved.</p>
7a	<p>Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment</p>
7b	<p>Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment</p>
8a	<p>Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment</p>
8b	<p>Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment</p>
9a	<p>Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment</p>

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9b	Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
10a	Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
10b	Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
11a	Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
11b	Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
12a	Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment
12b	Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

2767 Islam 1 (AS)

General Comments

A range of ability was represented but overall the quality of the essays seemed somewhat more impressive than in previous years, apart from the one or two candidates whose responses were not even of GCSE standard.

Some candidates had prepared well for this examination and their scripts were a pleasure to read. The quality of English, however, used by some candidates, particularly the spelling, was poor though very few seemed to have difficulty in understanding the questions. One examiner wrote that there was something ironic in reading responses to Q2a wherein candidates wrote that Muhammad ﷺ was 'elitret', 'ellitaret' or 'illetarate'. Some words that actually appeared in the questions were also subject to inaccurate spelling in the responses.

In Part 1, questions 1 and 2 were mostly chosen by the candidates whilst 3 was the least popular question. The question options in Part 2 were virtually equally popular and elicited the full range of responses.

One or two candidates seemed to misunderstand the rubric, answering only one part of each of the two essays chosen.

In addressing the evaluative questions, some candidates managed to support their opinion and sustain their presentation of evidence but were apparently reluctant to consider or anticipate the existence of other points of view in the discussion. A few candidates, however, seemed to think that discussion was required in the AO1 task and their essays usually demonstrated a surprising lack of basic knowledge, not only about the topics on the specification but about Islam in general.

Comments on Individual Questions

Part 1

1(a) Explain what Surah 1 teaches about Allah. [33]

AO1 Most responses began with some introductory information about the Qur'an and identified Surah 1 as al-Fatihah, the opening chapter, starting with the Bismillah. Some took the opportunity at the beginning or throughout the response to demonstrate full knowledge of the actual text apart from the one or two candidates who confused Surah 1 with the Shahadah. Most candidates concentrated on explaining that Allah is the creator who also keeps the universe going. Some of the better responses included a few sentences about theological implications such as transcendence and immanence before they turned their attention to Allah as the 'Master of the Day of Judgement'. Responses usually included the teaching that Allah is the guide, the one who shows the straight way, and some explained the appropriateness of the prayer for guidance encapsulated in Surah 1.

(b) 'The relationship between Allah and his people is the most important theme of Surah 1.' Discuss. [17]

AO2 Candidates who had been unsure of the contents of Surah 1 were at a disadvantage and usually they opted for 'there is only one theme in Surah 1'—usually cited to be the relationship of Allah and his people—and concluded that therefore it is the most important. There were some interesting thoughtful discussions from other candidates, often about theme and purpose. Some argued that Surah 1 is considered by Muslims to be the perfect summary of the Qur'an as well as being called the perfect prayer. The distinction they made was that the main theme of the

Qur'an is Allah and the purpose of Surah 1, as an introduction, is to remind the readers so they pray to respond properly to the revelation. With those reservations most accepted the overall importance of the relationship theme.

2(a) Explain how the Qur'an was revealed, compiled and structured. [33]

AO1 There were some thorough succinct explanations but weaker candidates had trouble getting the balance right between the three aspects of the question. Some had obviously chosen the question because they wished to tell the story of the encounter between Muhammad ﷺ and Jibrail and then they came to an abrupt halt. Candidates were not necessarily expected to address all aspects in equal proportion but to make some attempt to address revelation, compilation and structure.

Better candidates were able to continue through the subsequent revelations to the collection of the material and made reference to Zayd Bin Thabit as scribe and to the followers writing on bits of bone etc. through to the placing in Hafsa's chest. Some included 'Uthman and how the order of the surahs was decided. A few explained that there is a heavenly original of the Qur'an and that every stage of the revelation of the very words of Allah was under his protection.

(b) 'Without the Qur'an there would be no Islam.' Discuss. [17]

AO2 Candidates were free to approach this stimulus from any angle. Most started with the significance of the concept of revelation for Muslims and of Muhammad ﷺ as the seal of the prophets. Some argued that if the sequence of events that they wrote about in part (a) had not occurred then there literally would have been no Islam. Others considered the importance of the Qur'an in all aspects of Muslim life as evidence for agreeing with the stimulus.

Some discussions included reference to earlier corrupted versions of the revelation to argue for the essential role of the final revelation of the Qur'an in the destiny of the world and that Allah would have found some other means to give his words to humankind.

3(a) Explain why Surah 4 is thought to have been revealed in al-Madinah. [33]

AO1 This was not at all popular and one or two candidates obviously chose question 3 because the (b) part appealed to them but some candidates produced very competent responses. They obviously felt some rapport with the fledgling community in al-Madinah where the first Ummah was based. They launched into an account of the principles of the new community, the changes Muhammad ﷺ established in contrast to those of Arabia at the time, the aftermath of battles and the needs of the many widows and orphans. Candidates explained how these themes and warnings about false teachings etc. reflected the situation in al-Madinah and how the revelations served to guide the Ummah and all future Muslim communities.

b) 'Revealed texts should never be translated.' Discuss with reference to Islam. [17]

AO2 Arguments against holy books being translated into other languages tended to concentrate on possible misinterpretations and those in favour of translations emphasised the value for the readers of having words and concepts they can understand. A few considered the need for non-Muslim scholars to have access to a version (technically an 'interpretation') they can understand for study.

In their arguments, most showed understanding of the uniqueness of the Qur'an for Muslims and its status as the revealed words of Allah in Arabic.

4(a) Explain why mosques are important in Islam. [33]

AO1 Candidates tended to address the question from the very beginning by identifying the mosque as the place of prostration and explaining the function of the mosque as e.g. a place of Muslim worship and especially at Salat-ul-Jumu'ah. Some referred to Muhammad ﷺ and the first mosque at al-Madinah to emphasise the importance of the mosque from the very beginnings of Ummah even though prayers can be said anywhere.

Candidates gave a wide variety of activities which centre round the mosque and are important to the community, including lessons in the madrassah and funerals etc. Some homed in on the particular value of the mosque for Muslims in non-Muslim countries.

(b) 'The design of a mosque is practical, not theological.' Discuss. [17]

AO2 Discussions covered the expected practical elements of the design such as the washing facilities, the minaret, the dome for the acoustics etc. to support the practical nature of the design of a mosque. Then some candidates went through their list again to consider the theological aspects. Others covered both the practical features and how they reflect Islamic beliefs as they went along e.g. the significance of the mihrab in the qiblah wall and the theology behind the lack of statues etc.

Some candidates argued that the intention is to provide such a balance because of the multiple uses of the mosque which they had explained in the first part of the question. The balance of the theological and the practical was seen as typical of the religion of Islam as a whole. Some quoted text books which said this was so.

A few candidates simply gave up when they had listed the practical points and it seemed that they did not understand the word 'theological'.

5(a) Explain the theological significance of salah. [33]

AO1 This popular question provided full differentiation between the candidates who attempted it. The main weakness was the failure to address the word 'theological'. Again, examiners gained the impression that some candidates do not know the word or that they see a key phrase and don't read the whole question.

Candidates usually provided much information about salah as one of the Five Pillars and how it entails Muslims praying five times a day at Fajr, Zuhr, (Asr, Maghrib and (Isha(. The preparations and movements were also recounted in detail. Explanations of symbolism, the need for purity and anything that reflected beliefs about Allah made some responses more appropriate. Some simply wrote for theological significance that five times a day you remember Allah.

Some candidates wrote that salah is significant because it is fard (obligatory) and at this stage they began addressing the question well by identifying salah as an act of 'Ibadah (worship, submission and obedience) which must be done with the right intentions and is what Allah requires from his people. Some even linked the theology with Surah 1 and the prayer to be guided into the straight path and the compassion with which Allah listens to Du'ah.

Some explained that the number of five times was set when Muhammad ﷺ went on the night journey to al-Quds (Jerusalem) and visited heaven but only the strongest candidates thought to use this to address the question. The metaphor of the river by the door and other ahadith were used to good effect by some.

(b) To what extent is salah a significant aspect of all the Five Pillars?[17]

AO2 Some candidates developed points they had made about salah from earlier in the question to illustrate its particular importance and therefore the significance of its role as one of all the Five Pillars. This global or general reading of the stimulus was accepted as a possible interpretation.

Most discussions considered the Five Pillars as inter-linked practices of which none can exist alone and there was a tendency to leap at the opportunity to produce the all-purpose Five Pillars essay. Pillars of buildings and the occasional roof proliferated and it was argued that they all had to be significant or that Shahadah had to be the most significant.

There were other candidates, however, who took the wording of the question in its primary sense. There were some excellent analyses of the role salah plays not only in the observance of each one of the other four Pillars but also in reminding Muslims five times a day of the core beliefs to which they are committed.

6(a) Explain the Muslim understanding of Jihad as ‘striving for the will of Allah’. [33]

AO1 Most who chose this fairly popular option gave competent explanations of the two ways of thinking about Jihad and several remarked on the current interpretations of Jihad in the ‘western’ media. The best responses concentrated on using examples to try to explain the concept of ‘the will of Allah’ and how Muslims might strive for it. Spiritual endeavours such as struggling against evil in oneself or simply getting up early to pray were explained thoughtfully as part of living in submission, which is what the will of Allah is for Muslims.

As regards striving by physical fighting, most referred to the fact that Muhammad ﷺ fought defensive battles and some candidates used the quotation from the set text ‘...in the cause of Allah, And of those who, being weak, Are ill-treated (and oppressed).’(4. 75). A few looked at the broader picture of Jihad as part of striving to establish peace, justice and the will of Allah for creation so that all nature might live in harmony as Allah intended.

(b) ‘Jihad shows more commitment to Allah than keeping any of the Five Pillars.’ Discuss.[17]

AO2 Some candidates leapt at the opportunity to write about the Five Pillars and the commitment to Islam which each - or all - require whilst some continued from the first part of the question and emphasised the commitment that is shown in situations of both types of Jihad. Discussions then usually tried to balance Jihad and the Pillars.

Other candidates argued that Jihad is the end result of the Five Pillars and is considered to be like a sixth Pillar. Therefore, Jihad was argued to cover each and all of the Pillars and so, logically, involves total commitment.

Some, however, rejected the stimulus totally. They argued, with reference back to what they had written about a lifestyle following Muhammad ﷺ in good conduct and the struggle against evil in order to strive for the will of Allah, that such striving cannot be quantified into ‘more’ or ‘less’ commitment. For some Muslims this might entail fighting and martyrdom to defend the faith whilst for others it is the petty struggles of everyday life.

2768 Judaism 1 (AS)

Question 1

(a) Explain the importance of worshipping as a Jewish family. [33]

This was the most popular question in section one. It was generally answered well with better candidates citing many examples to support their ideas. Weaker candidates omitted examples and often digressed off the topic to explaining in more detail the one example they included - for example a description of the importance of prayer.

There were two major and very different approaches by different centres. Some explained that years of persecution resulted in worshipping as a family becoming not only more important, but the only route available. In contrast others cited the many different forms of worship and how they affect the family unit.

(b) 'The home will always be more important than the synagogue for Jewish life.' Discuss. [17]

Most candidates answered this question very well and were able to develop two contrasting arguments. Some argued a gender difference with men considering the synagogue as more important and women appreciating the home for pragmatic and family reasons. Others argued that it might depend on living an Orthodox or Reform lifestyle with a greater emphasis being placed in an Orthodox Jews' lifestyle to rituals in the home.

Question 2

(a) Explain the basis of Jewish life and worship as devotion to G-d. [33]

This was not a very popular question. Weaker candidates listed commandments as evidence that Jewish life is one of constant devotion without any explanation. Stronger candidates detailed the Mosaic Covenant from Exodus 19-24 and explained how this became the basis for Jewish life.

(b) 'Jews cannot be expected to think about G-d all the time.' Discuss. [17]

This question elicited some emotional responses from some candidates who were shocked by the statement and argued strongly against it stating the numerous rituals (Halakah) that Orthodox Jews run their lives by. Most candidates were nevertheless able to argue from two perspectives.

Question 3

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

This was not a very popular question. Weaker candidates listed commandments in a purely descriptive manner. Some deviated from the topic and discussed Laws between man and man. Stronger candidates focused on the first five of the Ten Commandments.

(b) 'The Law in Exodus 20 suggests that G-d wants Jews to be obedient, not happy.' Discuss. [17]

Most candidates answered this question well. Most argued that that obedience to G-d would make the follower happy and so being happy is an extension of doing the right thing. Others argued that the restrictions found in the Laws will make life difficult for a Jew and so their personal happiness is of no interest to G-d.

Question 4

(a) Explain the observance of Sukkot. [33]

This was the most popular question in section two. Weaker students mentioned sitting in a Sukkah and described with little explanation some of the rituals associated with the Festival. Stronger candidates explained the historic and agricultural aspects of the festival and detailed many rituals that relate to the two origins. A few candidates explained how the festival would have been celebrated in Temple times.

(b) 'No one can rejoice when they are living in a hut.' Discuss. [17]

This was answered well by many candidates. Most argued that following G-d's commandments and following Jewish traditions will make a person rejoice. Some cited the law that if one is uncomfortable, one need not sit in the Sukkah and so if the sukkah is too basic one need not suffer during the festival.

Question 5

(a) Explain the use and purpose of the mikveh. [33]

This was not a very popular question. Weaker candidates limited their answers to a description of the Laws of Family Purity. Stronger candidates detailed the use of the mikveh by men, converts and for dishes for use in a kosher home. Additionally stronger candidates explained the purpose of a mikveh as being a moment of spiritual rebirth.

(b) 'Without the mikveh, Judaism could not survive.' Discuss. [17]

This was answered well. Most candidates were able to detail two contrasting arguments. Some argued that without mikveh no children will be born as husbands and wives cannot touch. Others mention that Reform Judaism has rejected this ritual and so it is no longer essential to modern Jews.

Question 6

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

This was fairly popular with most candidates writing about the Exodus and how fifty days later the Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai. Some stronger candidates cited the early grain harvest that was celebrated in ancient Israel. Better candidates explained the various customs associated with the Festival such as the reading of the Book of Ruth, all night Torah study and eating dairy foods.

(b) 'The origins of Shavout show that it is a more important festival than Pesach.' [17]

Script evidence suggests candidates struggled with the question. Most however were able to argue that one cannot judge relative importance as all are commanded in the Torah. Additionally Shavuot would not have happened if not for the Exodus.

2769 Philosophy of Religion 2 (AS)

General Comments

There were very few entries to this unit but the general standard was encouraging. Some candidates displayed a mature and developed understanding together with an ability to assess evaluative questions. Questions 3 and 6 were by far the most popular. There were no rubric infringements and candidates generally demonstrated good time management and exam technique.

1a) Compare the theories of resurrection and reincarnation.

b) 'The differences between theories of life after death suggest that there cannot be an afterlife.' Discuss.

Too few candidates attempted the question to produce a report.

2a) Explain the arguments for and against miracles.

Most candidates were aware of some of the arguments of Hume although candidates tended to dwell on the four practical arguments rather than Hume's main case against miracles. Some candidates also made good use of the arguments of Maurice Wiles. Candidates seemed less clear on the arguments in favour of miracles.

b) 'The idea that miracles actually happen is not important to believers.' Discuss.

This was generally answered well. Candidates made use of the ideas of Wiles to suggest that miracles are damaging to religious belief together with the notion that miracles can have a symbolic meaning. This was illustrated by some with reference to Bultmann. Other candidates defended the idea of miracles by suggesting that it is essential to the idea of an omnipotent God.

3a) Explain the differences between Plato's and Dawkins' understanding of the soul.

This question was popular and was generally answered well. Candidates knowledge of Plato was particularly sound. Candidates' knowledge of Dawkins was less secure. Some answers did not get beyond the statement that he did not believe in souls and a few candidates seemed to be confusing his view with that of Aristotle. Better responses drew a distinction between his two ways of understanding the soul and made use of his idea of memes.

b) 'Science cannot explain the soul.' Discuss.

This question was addressed well and enabled candidates to discuss whether it mattered that the idea of souls was unscientific. Some candidates explained that there were different types of truth. Some candidates supported the statement and discussed the nature of scientific statements as being those that can be verified or falsified.

4a) Compare the verification and falsification principles.

b) 'The falsification principle shows that meaningful statements cannot be made about God.' Discuss.

Too few candidates attempted the question to produce a report.

5a) Explain, using examples, the idea that God can only be spoken of in negative terms.

This question was done by a few candidates but not very well. Several candidates wrote at length on analogy. Those candidates who were able to explain the *via negativa* gave basic definitions and were unable to elaborate in detail. There was little reference to scholars.

b) 'Speaking of God in negative terms tells us nothing.' Discuss.

This question suffered some of the difficulties that had beset part a. Most candidates were able to justify a view on the question but discussion and analysis was quite limited.

6a) Explain, with examples, different forms of religious experience.

This question was popular and was done reasonably well by most candidates. Some candidates wrote almost exclusively about miracles but this was still able to be credited. Other candidates described visions, voices, numinous experiences and conversion. There were some good and at times original examples. There was good use of thinkers such as James and Swinburne on occasions.

b) 'Religious experiences must be caused by God.' Discuss.

This questions elicited good discussion from candidates. The pragmatic argument of William James and the Freudian theory of religious experience as illusion were well used. Some candidates focused their answers on the difficulty of verifying the experience. A few candidates produced very intelligent responses that suggested the quote might be a tautology. If the experience is not caused by God, then by definition it is not a religious experience.

2770 Religious Ethics 2 (AS)

Principle Examiners Report

General comments:

Candidates performed less well than in previous years. Candidates' knowledge of the key ethical ideas and theories is as always exceptional. However, they have struggled to apply these theories to situations and ethical issues. When candidates are asked to do this they are far too general. They need to relate specific elements of each theory to the situation or issue involved in order to attract the better marks.

Candidates seemed to be able to do this when it comes to the AO2 questions. In most cases candidates seemed to approach the AO2 questions well and very few did not present a sustained and justified argument. However, candidates need to be mindful that any comment they make needs to be justified in terms of how it supports either a view for or against the question.

Comments on specific questions:

1 (a) Explain the view that not all of our actions are determined. [33]
Candidates answers were knowledgeable and well written and were credited accordingly.

1 (b) 'Only hard determinism can be justified.' Discuss. [17]
This was well answered by most candidates when they justified why each point they made supported either a view for or against the question.

2 (a) Explain why it might be argued that conscience is not innate. [33]
Again candidates answered this well. However, some did not know what 'innate' was and others just explained where conscience came from without mentioning the word 'innate' at all.

2 (b) 'Conscience need not always be obeyed.' Discuss. [17]
This was well answered by most candidates when they justified why each point they made supported either a view for or against the question.

3 (a) Explain how a follower of Natural Law might approach any one issue of medical ethics. [33]
Students who attempted this one had difficulty picking a specific medical ethics issue and even greater difficulty applying Natural Law to it in any great detail. Very few mentioned for example, how the Primary and Secondary precepts could be used.

3 (b) 'Natural Law is not the best approach to medical ethics.' Discuss. [17]
This was well answered by most candidates when they justified why each point they made supported either a view for or against the question.

4 (a) Explain the differences between a Kantian and a religious approach to ethics. [33]
Candidates answered this well when they knew Kant's ethical theory and compared it in detail with specific religious approaches such as Natural Law or specific Biblical references (Which were often more than just the 10 commandments).

4 (b) 'Kantian ethics are more useful in solving moral problems than the ethics of the religion you have studied.' Discuss. [17]
This was well answered by most candidates when they justified why each point they made supported either a view for or against the question.

5 (a) Explain how the ethics of the religion you have studied would approach the question of going to war. [33]

Many, if not all, the candidates used Aquinas and the Just War theory, although not everyone did so in sufficient detail.

5 (b) 'Religious believers should be pacifists.' Discuss. [17]

This was well answered by most candidates when they justified why each point they made supported either a view for or against the question.

6 (a) Explain a Utilitarian approach to the environment. [33]

Again this question was answered in very general terms by all but a few. Good answers looked at a specific issue such as deforestation or driving cars and related these to the hedonic calculus or 'Act' and 'Rule' Utilitarianism.

6 (b) 'Utilitarianism helps us to focus on the needs of the environment.' Discuss. [17]

This was well answered by most candidates when they justified why each point they made supported either a view for or against the question.

2781 Philosophy of Religion 2 (Extended Essay)

General Comments

Although there were, as always, sound responses, many candidates struggled with answering the precise questions set, writing instead general essays about miracles, the afterlife or religious language without the necessary focus. Candidates would be well advised to study the published levels of response criteria used by examiners, perhaps paying particular attention to the credit given to candidates who genuinely *consider* philosophical arguments rather than thinking that a list of the views of others, with the occasional 'however', constitutes an argument.

A disappointingly large number of candidates continue to write formula essays, following patterns given by teachers rather than taking the opportunity to develop their own research and thinking skills. The best candidates demonstrate *person* philosophical skill which goes beyond rote learning. Examiners look for those able to engage philosophically rather than merely descriptive work. Some candidates failed to recognise that this is a philosophical paper – statements of personal belief, however sincerely held, do not constitute rigorous argument.

Many candidates appear to believe that a close paraphrase of an item on the internet or in a textbook is a substitute for demonstrating their own skills in argument. Particularly evident was how few candidates were prepared to engage with the original – even very brief – texts by thinkers. As a result, these essays lacked the insight and subtlety of those prepared to examine critically even brief sources. This is a particular problem in areas, such as religious language or body and soul, where secondary sources are often very unreliable, repeating each other's errors. Problems of interpretation would have been dealt with effectively by thoughtful recourse to the original source.

A few scripts were below the minimum length. Referencing was sometimes very poor, frequently lacking basic details such as the correct names of authors or even page numbers. To give as a reference, "the Internet" lacks precision to such a degree as to be worthless. Some candidates had works cited in the bibliography which were not in the footnotes and vice versa, and a number improperly included as primary sources material which evidently they had not read other than as an extract in a textbook. This often was evidenced by strange attributions, whether to Richard Dawkins' *Philosophy of Religion for OCR*, or that fictitious old favourite, Ryle's *Concept of the Mind* [sic].

Comments on Individual Questions

1. 'Only a belief in an embodied existence after death is philosophically justifiable' Discuss [90]

Many candidates took the opportunity to write a general essay on life after death, but it was refreshing to see candidates who really focused on the question of embodiment. There was some admirable use of Geach from some better candidates and many good candidates drew valuable material from psychological awareness of the interdependence of mind and body. Some candidates made good use of the alternative suggestions from Plato and Descartes. Ryle was frequently misunderstood, and many continue (incorrectly) to describe both Ryle and Aristotle as materialists – neither held this view and Ryle specifically repudiated it at length.

A pleasing number attempted to clarify what might be meant by 'philosophical justification' – referring to notions of coherence and credibility and such like. The best treated quite well the notion of 'personal identity' – and many asked how a disembodied soul could relate to anything beyond itself or to other souls. John's Hick's 'Replica' did not deserve the peak viewing time it was generally given, and still less its detailed exposition, candidates often tried to give it a

significance Hick would not claim for it. Generally the basic map work in the philosophy of mind was not well done.

2. 'Religious experiences are all illusions.' Discuss. [90]

This was a popular question though answers were sometimes rather general. William James, Swinburne and Freud were sometimes very effectively deployed, though too often their views were simply listed. Some candidates just gave a series of different religious experiences. References to verification came very often, but usually without any real sense that the candidates fully understood why these comments might be applicable to the essay. A wide range of topics was covered by some of the essays, often in little depth. The better candidates limited themselves to a few types of religious experiences but were able to make good personal comment on the validity or the illusionary nature of these experiences. There tended to be some simple factual errors which suggested that candidates had not sufficiently checked the material that they were using. Some excellent candidates raised interesting questions about Swinburne's two principles, arguing that the nature of religious experience precluded the simple application of normal rules of testimony and credulity. A few candidates hoped optimistically but mistakenly that this was a general miracles question, while there were lengthy accounts of out-of-body experiences (too often rendered as 'outer body' experiences) or stigmata, without establishing precisely how they were relevant to the question of illusion.

There was a great deal of repetition of material copied from sources. As in previous years 'religious experience' was often identified with the bizarre and unusual; but some took religious experience more as an interpretative paradigm – as in the tradition of writers such as Oman, and indeed his pupil Hick. There were quite good reflections by some candidates on the lack of parallel between 'religious experience' and sensory experience – although weaker on the philosophical reflection on the significance of this lack of parallel. Many spotted that all 'experience' is interpreted and an interpretation can be contested. Some candidates devoted too much space to descriptions of religious experience (e.g. from Bible) with too little philosophical discussion of the issues.

3. 'Myth is the only way to understand the nature of God.' Discuss.

This was the least popular question, though it elicited some very thoughtful answers as well as rather too many dutiful rambles through every theory of religious language. Candidates often seemed to adjust their approach and answer an apparently preferred question on religious language in general, listing different possible approaches without relating these to the matter of the question. The title did require comparison with other theories, but a mere list was too often given as a comparison: candidates need to actively weigh up the relative merits. Some candidates showed a further weakness of response with exemplification of myths drawn from the Old Testament (such as the annunciation – more than once!), followed by a simple series of other approaches, usually analogy, symbol, the *via negativa* and logical positivism with little apparent comprehension of how these might or might not be approaching the matter of expressing understanding of the nature of God.

A significant number simply equated symbol and myth, while many good candidates made effective use of writers such as Bultmann and other scholars. Few candidates really addressed the issue of whether God's nature can be easily dealt with by human language of any type.

2782 Religious Ethics 2 (Extended Essay)

General Comments

Most candidates produced essays of a good standard and of the required length, but the general standard was average to good, rather than very good to excellent, with too many candidates producing formulaic answers, especially on question 2. However, there were some outstanding candidates.

A small number failed to identify their sources. There were a few centres with poor essay structure, limited understanding of key concepts and even factual errors. Some did not even attempt to answer the question, for examples in question 2 discussing whether conscience came from God, not whether we should always follow it. A few candidates exceeded the word limit by some considerable margin, and centres need to be aware of this as candidates do not do as well as they might have done.

There were many examples of excellent work, with the best essays combining the issues raised in the questions

Comments on Individual Questions

1. Evaluate the arguments of Virtue Ethics for and against abortion.

This was the least popular question and answers were mostly good, with some outstanding responses.

Good responses used a wide variety of approaches to Virtue Ethics, from Aristotle to Hursthouse and Slote. They discussed the issues surrounding abortion from personhood to viability and the effect of abortion on society.

Most of the good responses showed evidence of much research and reading that was used widely and constructively in the essays.

Good answers discussed how virtues were relative to the society.

Weaker responses did not spend enough time establishing the nature of Virtue Ethics beyond its concern with the character of the moral agent.

2. Discuss critically the view that we should always follow our conscience when making ethical decisions.

This was by far the most popular question and usually answered well, even if most of the answers tended to simply produce a list of the views of different philosophers. Some centres had clearly provided structured outlines which candidates then followed. This meant there was little scope for wider research and the conclusions that followed were inevitable. It also resulted in restricting the ability of the candidates to evaluate, reflect and compare.

On the other hand those that did well handled the material in a mature and critical manner, producing work of a very high standard.

Many centres, however, produced formulaic answers, relying too much on teacher input, which tended to undermine the innovative and imaginative thinker.

3. Discuss critically religious ethical views on justice and peace.

The responses here were varied, being a wide subject there were various interpretations. Some focussed on the Just War and Pacifism, whereas others discussed different approaches to justice, including social justice and capital punishment.

Better candidates responded well to the open-ended nature of the question and discussed a range of issues, but weaker candidates tended to focus on one religious ethical view, notably Situation Ethics, and then see how they might apply to issues of war. Some candidates avoided the heart of the question by covering a number of secular ethical theories rather than religious ones.

In general the answers to this question ranged from good to excellent, and the scope of the question meant that there were no really poor answers.

2783 Jewish Scriptures 2 (Extended Essay)

General Comments

More candidates opted for this unit than last year, and the full range of ability for this level of examination was represented. Of the three essay titles, question one and question two were virtually equally popular and question three slightly less popular but all titles achieved the intended differentiation.

Some candidates seemed to appreciate that the essays provide the opportunity to spend more time studying and thinking about the set texts in more depth than they might when sitting for a limited time in an examination room. Choosing appropriately from the set texts required for study is in fact an important skill. Some candidates made sensible use of footnotes. Many candidates had made a serious effort to make the material their own response by carefully addressing the actual wording of the question.

The examination is open to candidates of any religious persuasion or none and some essays of all types were a pleasure to read. It was clear that, for some candidates, exploring the historical and literary background had added an extra dimension to their understanding and appreciation of the texts they had studied.

There is a growing tendency to 'cut and paste' from the internet without consideration of the validity of the sources so perhaps, sadly, it is just as well that January 2010 will be the last opportunity to submit extended essays.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 To what extent is concern about social justice evident in the texts you have studied?

In the spirit of positive marking, and especially in this situation where the question says 'in the texts you have studied', use of any suitable text is acknowledged but, given the subject matter, the better candidates chose to use appropriate material from the specification. As expected many tended to focus on the eighth century prophets Amos and Micah and to emphasise that from Amos onwards we have actual prophecies not just stories about the concerns of the prophets. Other texts in the specification include the Ten Commandments and covenant material from the AS course, such as the Noahide Covenant, which for some candidates provided a useful context for considering the overarching ethical monotheism of the Jewish Scriptures. The best responses had tailored the material to fit the wording of the question whilst a few candidates were content to plod through the text, particularly of Amos, copying chunks of commentaries or notes. There were some candidates who simply wrote out verse after verse of Amos, presumably to prove the theme was there, showing no awareness that essays are expected to have some interaction with the question.

The situation in which Amos was called to prophesy in eighth century Samaria during the reign of Jeroboam II over Israel inspired a number of candidates to draw interesting parallels with the present day. The belief of Amos that G-d is just and wants people to show justice was considered to be paramount in his message by some candidates, particularly since the book starts with the condemnation of neighbouring peoples because of their crimes against humanity. A few tried to offer other examples of roles and topics for prophets such as prophesying the future but agreed that even the Messianic Kingdom is said to be full of peace, righteousness and social justice.

Some concluded that Amos, like all the textual evidence cited, whether from the Torah, the prophets or the writings, condemns both Israel and Judah for social injustice in the context of

their special relationship with G-d. Like their unreal religion, social injustice demonstrated breaking the Sinai covenant.

Micah 6:8 was used to good effect by some candidates as a fitting conclusion to their discussions about the relationship of religious and social issues.

2 'Prophets are more important than kings in the Jewish Scriptures.' Discuss with reference to the set texts.

This question provoked some of the weakest responses but also a few of the best. As expected, candidates tended to begin with some introductory definitions or information about prophets and kings. A number of candidates, however, had accessed sources that inspired them to write out pages about prophets then pages about kings but with scant reference to the wording of the question, particularly the words 'more important than' and 'with reference to the set texts'. Some credit is given for relevant texts from outside the specification but this question actually asks for set texts so responses are expected to include at least some.

Any character from the set texts who might be labelled a prophet in some traditions was acceptable.

The prophets named in the specification are Amos, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jonah and Job whilst Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Nathan etc. come in the covenants in the texts set for A/S study. Relevant background information was acceptable, but, with a limited word count, sensible selection is important in addressing an essay title.

Various kings feature as characters within the set texts but David is the main king mentioned in the specification and a main theme of the set texts is the Messianic king and the Messianic Kingdom. Establishment of the monarchy is not actually in the set texts so was not expected for full marks but was creditworthy because of the timeline in the historical and literary overview that is studied at foundation level.

Some candidates made excellent use of the account in Amos of his call. The importance of the covenant G-d made with David was a key feature of some responses, especially in discussing the interaction of prophets or prophecies and kings. Such candidates had obviously enjoyed the opportunity to consider the significance of the roles of particular individuals in the sacred history, irrespective of (or, sometimes, taking into consideration) the type of literature. The statement that prophets were more important was supported by many and refuted by a few, whilst some candidates gave equal but different status to prophets and kings as part of the divine master plan.

3 Discuss the extent to which date, authorship, purpose and historicity are important when studying Daniel 12 and 2 Maccabees 7.

This was the least popular option. Candidates tended to choose this question if they were confident handling issues involving textual criticism and it is not surprising that there were a few exceptionally good responses. Candidates were free to assume the traditional authorship by Daniel of the book that bears his name or to approach this question from any other angle of study. Daniel is a prophetic book in the Roman Catholic and Protestant Bibles and one of the Writings in the Tenakh (Tanach).

Most candidates gave a very short introduction summarising the contents of each of the set passages and, in line with their AS studies, suggested the possible types of literature. Most then went through Daniel 12 considering the evidence regarding date, authorship, purpose and historicity. The same process was usually followed in respect to 2 Maccabees 7.

Report on the Units taken in January 2009

Some candidates had argued from the start that there are issues about the date, authorship, purpose and historicity that suggest both chapters were particularly of value during times of persecution such as the Maccabean struggle for independence in 165BCE. Whether both chapters had been written at that time was a different issue and so date, authorship, purpose and historicity for both were considered where relevant to the case being made.

The more traditional approach was equally effective in some responses especially when candidates examined beliefs that might throw light on the purpose of the writers. Some discussed whether or not the texts show a development in beliefs, such as about life after death, by the time the chapters were written or edited. There were some thoughtful comments about the implications of theological teachings being discerned when ancient texts are applied to new historical events .

2784 New Testament 2 (Extended Essay)

There were a large number of entries this year and the standard was generally good. The key to success for many candidates was to fully grasp the question and keep it in sight throughout the essay, some candidates ignored the question or misinterpreted it and therefore did not fair so well. It was clear that some centres had advised the whole group on an approach, this stifled individuality and in some cases meant that mistakes in interpreting the question were repeated throughout the whole entry.

It was good to see candidates reading widely and using scholarly opinions to illuminate their discussions. Some candidates relied on websites rather than books - perhaps a balance needs to be struck here? Some essays showed a knowledge of an older generation of New Testament scholars, although there undoubted riches to be found here, centres should be aware of the revolution in New Testament scholarship which has taken place over the last twenty three years which has rendered some of the older views obsolete. Contemporary scholars such as Graham Stanton, EP Sanders, JDG Dunn, MD Hooker etc are all accessible to A level candidates and they should be encouraged to look at their work.

Alternative A The Early Church.

1 **Analyse the significant theological themes in Paul's letter to the Galatians. [90]**

This was a popular question and many candidates provided a full survey of Galatians chapter by chapter. Better candidates were able to select key themes and illuminate them with various parts of the letter. Surprisingly not every candidate painted the 'political' background to the letter and Paul's clash with Judaizers. Very few essays displayed any detailed textual exegesis, for example Galatians 2:16 is a key verse but few discussed what was meant by "works of the law", most took it for granted that it meant the whole law.

2 **'For all have sinned and fallen short.' Romans 3: 3. From the letters you have studied, examine the extent to which Paul's mission was inclusive of both Jews and Gentiles. [90]**

A few candidates were thrown by "sin" in the quotation which preceded the question and wrote about Paul's views on this. Most grasped the question and gave good examples from Romans and Galatians on Paul's views on the Jews and Gentiles. For some it turned into a general survey of Pauline theology but others successfully kept the question in mind. As in question 1, there was little or no detailed textual exegesis.

3 **'If one ignores the debate about authorship, Romans and Ephesians both offer reflective summaries of the major themes of Paul's theology.' Discuss. [90]**

Few candidates attempted this question and those that did failed to get to its heart. Some wrote generally about Paul's theology in Ephesians and Romans, others misunderstood "reflective" and interpreted the question as to what extent does Romans reflect or mirror the theology of Ephesians.

Alternative B The Gospels.

4 **'In the gospels, Jesus' authority and status is shown only within the context of Judaism.' Discuss with reference to the texts you have studied. [90]**

This was a popular question. Some misunderstood the title and wrote on how Jesus had authority "over" Judaism which resulted in some hit and miss paragraphs. The best concentrated on Christology and there were some fine answers which examined the Jewish roots of the key

titles for Jesus. Some very good answers looked at how there had been a shift with the developments of the early church and how a gentile context illuminated Jesus' "authority and status" in different ways.

5 Assess the extent to which Jesus teachings on the Kingdom of God were a challenge to his audience. [90]

Some candidates slipped into a standard Kingdom of God essay with the odd line about challenge and thus slipped in and out of focus with the question. Others painted a picture of Jewish expectations at the time of Jesus and then measured whether Jesus actually did challenge these beliefs. Some pointed out that Jesus' universalism and possible realised eschatology were 'challenging' better answers were able to find Jewish roots for these too. Candidates used a range of texts to support their answers ranging from the parables to the Sermon on the Mount - in using the latter some were not too successful in explaining why it should be counted as "kingdom" teaching.

6 'The clearest understanding of Jesus' teaching on salvation is shown in the healing miracles in Mark's gospel.' Discuss with reference to the texts you have studied. [90]

This was a popular question. Most zipped through the miracles in Mark showing how Jesus saved through these actions. Some analysis was fairly skimpy and pretty descriptive - the best were able to pinpoint key miracles and discuss them in depth. Candidates sited a range of evidence in debating the question - some felt that Luke's "Lost Parables" were better sources of salvation. some thought that Mark's nature miracles provided clearer evidence but the best examined the status of miracles at the time of Jesus and mentioned miracle workers such as Honi the Circle Drawer, Appolonius and Hanina ben Dosa as evidence that there were too many miracle workers around for Jesus' miracles to provide clear teaching on salvation. There were some valiant attempts to use the Sermon on the Mount as a contrast to Mark's miracles but in general these turned into lengthy summaries of Jesus' ethical teaching.

2785 Developments in Christian Thought 2 (Extended Essay)

General Comments:

Most candidates knew how to tackle the questions by defining terms of reference to begin with before exploring the ideas in greater detail. Those whose definitions were flexible and who understood the ambiguities of a term or notion (e.g. 'heresy', 'religion' 'theology') were able to achieve very high marks. As usual some candidates relied far too much on internet sites for research and did not do as well as those who used books.

However, it is good to see a year by year increase in the number of candidates who have a really good feel for *theological* as well as historical and philosophical discussion. There were a pleasing number of excellent scripts showing great maturity and insight into some difficult topics.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.	
1	<p>'Black Theology is a Christian heresy.' Discuss.[90]</p> <p>This was most popular question. Many candidates defined heresy and then described whether or not Cone's and King's views could be deemed heretical or not. Only the stronger candidates set out what they considered to be orthodoxy in any detail and then compared black theology's views.</p> <p>Some had a rather limited view of what heresy meant and relied too much on a standard dictionary definition rather than an explanation given in a dictionary of theology.</p> <p>Those who were aware of the political as well as the theological niceties of the term were able to develop some excellent analysis in relationship to 'white' (Enlightenment and Western views of theology) and 'black' theology. Interestingly almost no candidates considered the views of womanism and more recent radical trends in black theology.</p>
2	<p>To what extent does Martin Luther King's theology emphasize the strengths of Black Theology? [90]</p> <p>On the whole those who answered this question did less well than those who tackled question 1. A number of answers to this question simply described Martin Luther King's ideas without any mention of their strengths, others tried to contrast King with Cone but many lost focus on the question.</p> <p>The best answers pinpointed what they considered the strengths of black theology, usually with the help of Cone, and then measured Martin Luther King against them.</p>
3	<p>'As we cannot define what religion is, there can be no satisfactory theology of religions.' Discuss. [90]</p>

	<p>This was the least popular question and those who attempted either wrote excellent answers or rather moderate responses. Those who realised that religion is a plural phenomenon were able to link this with the theology of Hick or Kung and reflect whether, despite the range of external differences, there is an essential noumenal reality which enables religions to share a common interest.</p> <p>However, almost no one suggested clearly that those who claim that a religion is true, is not only able to define it but reject other versions which fail to satisfy the necessary conditions.</p> <p>Disappointingly no one looked at the argument set out in <i>Dominus Iesus</i>, although there were some very good discussions of natural and revealed religion.</p>
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2786 Eastern Religions 2 (Extended Essay)

General Comments:

The Candidates were generally well-prepared this year, showing an improvement from last year. Most candidates had access to an appropriate range of material, and were able to use these effectively. Most candidates were within the word limit, and most helpfully included a bibliography and word count.

Many candidates were able to address the title of their essay effectively, and most were able to explain and justify their point of view demonstrating a variety of perspectives. Many used relevant technical terms with facility.

Some candidates did try to redefine the title of their essay, for example by exploring the importance of the Buddha as a refuge in question 1, and this limited the marks they were able to achieve.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.	
1	<p>Critically examine the attitudes to the Buddha in Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. [90]</p> <p>Weak responses to this question tended to describe similarities and differences between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism in general rather than focusing on their attitudes to the Buddha.</p> <p>The best responses had a clear idea of the teachings within both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism which related to their attitudes to the Buddha, and focused on addressing the question. They were able to critically examine these teachings, exploring their compatibility with other teachings or with each other. Excellent responses often explored the different attitudes within Mahayana schools such as Zen and Pure Land, as a way of providing different viewpoints.</p>
2	<p>‘Wisdom is more important than morality in Buddhist ethics.’ Discuss. [90]</p> <p>Weak responses often described the eightfold path, but failed to engage in any detailed exploration of the relative importance of wisdom and morality. They often demonstrated little awareness of any other Buddhist ethical teachings, and made little reference to Mahayana teachings.</p> <p>The best responses tended to explore the importance of wisdom and morality before reaching a conclusion about the title. They also explored Mahayana concepts such as upaya and sunyata, and the implications of these ideas for both wisdom and morality. Most were able to outline valid arguments both for and against the statement before they explored which they found more convincing.</p>
3	<p>To what extent are the teachings in the Heart Sutra representative of Mahayana Buddhism? [90]</p> <p>Many weaker responses explored the teachings of the Heart Sutra at a basic level, but failed to analyse their nature as representative of the Mahayana tradition.</p> <p>Mid range responses tended to get more AO1 marks than AO2 marks. They often</p>

described the teachings of the Heart Sutra, and then explored the nature of Mahayana Buddhism often in some depth. They tended to ignore the 'extent to which the Heart Sutra was representative of Mahayana Buddhism.

The best responses explicitly addressed the extent to which the teachings of the Heart Sutra represented Mahayana Buddhism. They often analysed the implications of the teachings for different Buddhist schools, and explored how much the teachings were reflected in the general character of these schools. Some made effective comparisons with other Mahayana teachings or concepts, or with the extent to which the Lotus Sutra might be considered more representative of Mahayana as a whole.

4 Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

5 Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

6 Too few candidates answered this question to offer meaningful comment

2787 Islam 2 (Extended Essay)

General Comments

There was a small entry for this unit but a range of ability was represented. One candidate gained the full marks. The three questions were virtually equally popular overall. Some candidates had prepared carefully and had obviously consulted a variety of resources. Most scripts were a pleasure to read. However, there continues to be a tendency to 'cut and paste' material from the internet without considering the validity of the source. Though candidates are not obliged to provide a bibliography, they are still expected to acknowledge material they copy, otherwise the work is simply plagiarism. There was some sensible use of footnotes by the better candidates.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 'Sufism is the heart of Islam.' Discuss.

Most candidates began by defining Sufism as a tradition within Islam that emphasises mystical experience and a relationship with God. Some traced the spiritual dimension of Sufism back to the practice of Muhammad ﷺ but mostly the origins of Sufism as a dynamic movement tended to be seen as a reaction to the wealth, decadence and lack of piety of the Umayyads. Any sensible derivation for the word 'Sufi' was accepted.

Some commented on the considerable variation in Sufi thought and practice and had researched the wide range of Sufi shayks and pirs in the modern world and the many different Sufi orders. One or two essays deteriorated into a polemic against Sufis as a corruption of Islam whilst others championed Sufism as getting to the heart of what religion should be about. Some aspects of Sufism were seen as verging on shirk or neglecting the Five Pillars. The best responses attempted a balanced discussion and there were some interesting explorations of what the phrase 'the heart of' might mean in a religion. Some appreciation was expressed for the contribution of Sufism to the spread of Islam and for keeping the faith alive in times of persecution.

2 To what extent do Sunni and Shi'a Islam share the same views concerning the importance of each of the articles of Islamic belief?

The articles of belief itemised in the specification are Allah, angels, scriptures, messengers, the last day, the divine decree. The specification includes study of 'beliefs about God: creator, judge and guide; tawhid'. Text books refer to five or six or seven key beliefs of Iman, the faith. The number is not significant. Centres need to be aware that there is still a tendency of weaker candidates to interpret 'articles' simply as 'things'. Since the context was Islamic belief the essays tended to be appropriate but, from an academic point of view, centres need to be aware of such limitations in comprehension. Most candidates began with the historical background of the split between Sunni and Shi'a Islam and some spent far too long on this. Then candidates explained the meaning of each of the articles and stronger responses tended to group the articles of belief into three topics: Tawhid, Risalah and Akhirah.

Some differences of Sunni and Shi'a belief and practices were identified in the essays. The role of the Imam and the wording of the Shahadah tended to feature and there was some consideration of the extent to which Sunni and Shi'ah Islam share the same views about Allah and the importance of submitting to the whole of Islamic belief. The main weakness in the responses was a tendency to ignore the phrase 'the importance of each of' in the question so there was little consideration of the relative importance of each article, except by accident. This was such a common weakness that the more general interpretation of the question was accepted as a viable alternative and credited.

3 'Shari'ah law has been a positive influence on family life and the roles of men and women.' Discuss.

The specification includes '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'. Foundation studies include Pre-Islamic Arabia and the reforms in al-Madinah.

Most candidates explained as an introduction that the Qur'an first and then the Sunnah are the two main sources of authority for 'the clear straight path' of Shari'ah. Some candidates quoted the farewell speech where Muhammad ﷺ spoke of the roles of men and women. Virtually all quoted Surah 4, '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' and the ruling about the maximum of four wives. Some candidates made a special point of explaining that Shari'ah encompasses all aspects of life and the code of modest dress conduct is expected of both men and women.

A few had researched the situation for Muslim women in Muslim states compared with non-Muslim countries and usually gave thoughtful balanced arguments. A few gave a polemic against patriarchal traditional culture and customs but, on the whole, candidates argued that Shari'ah laws help family life in a positive way even when dealing with new problems and issues which arise for Islam in a rapidly changing global world

2788 Judaism 2 (Extended Essay)

General Comments

As in previous years, there were some very good essays in this session which demonstrated the candidate's ability to grapple with subject content, offer analysis and construct synoptic links between the subject matter studied for the unit. However, misinterpretation of the questions by several candidates led to some rather poor marks; some candidates offered very little academic content in their essays or were sidetracked from interacting, as would be expected, with the question from a religious studies perspective. Although the specification allows for any reasonable interpretation of the question, some of the responses submitted did not fall into this category. Centres are reminded that candidates need to show responses which fall within the boundaries of religious studies; good answers will focus on theological issues for the religion studied rather than general knowledge. Moreover, centres are reminded of the importance of pupil autonomy in constructing answers and that writing frames or similar may actually disadvantage the candidate.

Whilst some candidates made genuine attempts to develop interesting independent arguments, many were content to follow a formula based approach. Inevitably the better candidates were those who demonstrated an ability to engage with the arguments and consider their merits rather than reciting a list of points, strengths and weaknesses etc. A few candidates' submitted essays which were too long, thus penalising themselves - no advantage can be gained by infringing the rubric regarding length. Although some candidates offered copious amounts of footnotes, and in some cases, appendices, centres are reminded that footnotes are not be used to 'extend' the length of the essay but rather for referencing the source of the primary or secondary material being analysed and/or brief comments. On some occasions candidates failed to do themselves justice by giving accounts of all they knew about the subject.

1 'Only Reform Judaism offers any real hope for the survival of Judaism into the 22nd century.' Discuss. [90]

The question was primarily concerned with a consideration of the central tenets and teachings of Reform Judaism and whether Judaism should adapt to the world in which it finds itself whilst still maintaining its essential principles or not. Therefore, it was a question about the principal theological views of Reform Judaism and how these are reflected in both religious and secular life and religious practice – it was expected, although not necessary, that candidates would have defined Reform Judaism and outlined the historical origins of this group and the reasons for its appearance within world Jewry and Great Britain. The question 'Who is a Jew?' may have been looked at with reference to religious belief and practice before candidates considered whether there is any question about the survival of Judaism in the 22nd century, and whether, with G-d's protection, this is a real issue.

Centres are reminded that candidates need to show evidence of knowledge and learning; they must grapple with the theological issues that the question raises in order to reach higher level answers. Many candidates answers faltered because they answered 'their own question' not the set essay title; a very large proportion of candidates looked at 'threats' to Judaism and discussed how Reform and Orthodoxy have responded to these via statistical numerical evidence of numbers from a website article. Therefore, much of content of the answers focused on number crunching rather than discussion of the central tenants and teachings of Reform Judaism and those other groups that could have been used in comparison from a theological perspective. The specification outlines that in studying this section candidates need to acquire a clear idea of the various groups within Judaism as represented in Great Britain; many answers focused primarily on American Jewry and references to the Reform movement in Great Britain was fleeting.

Despite this some candidates showed a good grasp of AO2 analytical skills and were able to construct arguments in a clear and successful manner.

2. 'The hope of the coming of the Messianic figures as prophesied in Isaiah and Malachi is simply unrealistic.' Discuss. [90]

This question was not attempted by any candidate.

3. 'To ensure the survival of the faith, it is time for Jews to forget the 20th century Holocaust and look towards the future.' Discuss. [90]

There were some excellent answers to this question which demonstrated candidates' ability to offer detailed analysis and interaction with primary and secondary source materials. Many candidates were able to discuss accurately and confidently the specification content and offer an analysis of post-Holocaust theology and theodicy's. Many candidates explored the views of scholars such as Fackenheim, Wiesel, Rubinstein and Berkowitz and analysed if these viewpoints supported, or rejected, the essay question; the better answers offered detailed compare and contrasting of views and engaged in a discussion of what effect post-Holocaust theology has for world Jewry at present. Many candidates were able to talk knowledgeably and critically about the validity and practices of remembrance by both Jewry and secular society. Excellent scripts were able to draw upon the 'look towards the future' section of the question and demonstrate synoptic skills by touching on how Judaism has, and is currently, doing this. Some weaker scripts, although offering an interesting discussion of the candidates own personal experience of the Holocaust and their personal contextual reference to 'the future' of Judaism, were let down by a lack of academic rigor. Again, centres are reminded of the need for candidates to approach the question from an academic perspective and show evidence of learning relevant to that outlined in the specification.

2789 Philosophy of Religion 1 (Extended Essay)

The standard of candidates' responses to the questions was generally good. Some produced excellent discussions showing a real ability to engage with the arguments. Other candidates failed to make sufficient use of the opportunities offered by an extended essay and relied on paraphrases of standard textbooks. As a result these candidates at times were not entirely focused on the question that was set and merely stated arguments rather than analysing or engaging with them.

Most candidates this year had paid close attention to the word limit requirements although a few candidates wrote essays that were closer to 4,000 words than the 2,000-2,500 allowed. These candidates penalised themselves as they were only midway through their analysis of the issues when the examiner had to stop reading. The tendency of some candidates to overly rely on spell check produced some amusing sentences that, although grammatically and syntactically correct, were clearly far from what the candidate actually intended.

Comments on Individual Questions

1. 'The moral argument for the existence of God fails as it is impossible to draw conclusions from our experience of morality'. Discuss.

This was not a particularly popular question. Those candidates who attempted it tended to give general accounts of the moral argument focusing mainly on Kant rather than directly engaging with the question. Some made good use of Kant where his views were directly relevant to the quotation, and there was much reference to Newman and Owen although this often lacked depth. There was some use of Illtyd Trethowan's *Absolute Value*, though almost no primary reference to it.

2. 'Religious experience provides solid evidence for the existence of God'. Discuss.

This was a popular question though too often was taken as an invitation to write a general essay detailing various views of religious experience. Better candidates often discussed the meaning of 'solid' evidence and discussed some of the difficulties of arguing from experience.

Understanding of the arguments was generally good, and in some cases exceptional. There was good use of James and Swinburne together with the criticisms of thinkers such as Freud and Persinger. Some candidates became side-tracked into lengthy but not always clearly relevant accounts of miracles or Padre Pio's stigmata, with some graphic accounts of the uses of carbolic acid.

3. 'Thanks to Hume and Darwin, teleological arguments are bound to fail'. Evaluate this claim.

This was the most popular question and almost all candidates had at least a satisfactory grasp of the issues. There was a tendency for some candidates to write at length on the general topic giving overly long accounts of Aquinas and Paley's arguments and running out of words before any detailed discussion of Hume or Darwin's arguments could take place. Most gave sound accounts of the arguments of Hume and Darwin and were at least aware of some of the responses of Tennant and Swinburne, such as the anthropic principle. Better candidates were able to explain how Darwin's arguments undermined the notion of design and could assess the theistic responses to it. Some attributed to Darwin an atheism he did not himself advocate. His later religious position was a type of uncertain agnosticism.

2790 Religious Ethics 1 (Extended Essay)

General Comments

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

A small number failed to identify their sources. There was a smaller than usual entry for this component and no candidates attempted question 3.

1. **Evaluate the ethical arguments for and against euthanasia .**

This question was a popular question. Higher performing candidates were able to fully apply themselves to the question, exploring appropriate theories in the context of euthanasia.

However, there was sometimes confusion between Fletcher and Bentham and some candidates considered that Bentham also used the love criterion as well as Fletcher. There were often simplistic approaches to Situation Ethics and no real attempt to evaluate this theory.

Weaker candidates presented a standard euthanasia essay with little reference to the question. There was a lot of reference to high profile cases with extensive quotations from the media, but too often these were not placed within the context of ethical theories, or evaluated critically to assess the contribution these stories might make to the ethical debate.

Sometimes the essays became a treatise for the legalisation of euthanasia.

2. **Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of moral absolutism.**

A few candidates attempted his question but it certainly seemed to attract the more able candidate. Consequently essays for this question were very good indeed. Responses were good and really aimed to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses, mostly using Kantian ethics as a focus.

3. **'Virtue Ethics is useless when dealing with issues about medical ethics.'** **Discuss.**

No candidates attempted this question.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Religious Studies 3877 and 7877
January 2009 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2760/11	Raw	100	71	62	53	44	35	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/12	Raw	100	75	65	55	45	35	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/13	Raw	100	72	62	53	44	35	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/14	Raw	100	73	63	53	44	35	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2760/15	Raw	100	74	63	53	43	33	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2761	Raw	100	75	65	55	46	37	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2762	Raw	100	76	65	55	45	35	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2763	Raw	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2764	Raw	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2765	Raw	100	73	63	54	45	36	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2766	Raw	100	75	65	55	46	37	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2767	Raw	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2768	Raw	100	78	68	58	49	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2769	Raw	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2770	Raw	100	78	68	58	49	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2781	Raw	90	66	58	50	42	35	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2782	Raw	90	78	69	61	53	45	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2783	Raw	90	71	62	53	44	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2784	Raw	90	68	59	50	41	33	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2785	Raw	90	74	65	56	48	40	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0

2786	Raw	90	70	61	52	44	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2787	Raw	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2788	Raw	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2789	Raw	90	70	61	52	44	36	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2790	Raw	90	73	64	55	47	39	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0

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	17.00	51.90	77.50	93.80	98.90	100.00	777
7877	32.40	70.60	91.20	91.20	100.00	100.00	36

813 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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