

# **Religious Studies**

Advanced GCE **A2 H572**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H172**

## **OCR Report to Centres**

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**June 2012**

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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

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

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## Overview

These reports are designed to help Centres reflect on the questions set this session and to prepare for the future. As mentioned in previous reports, there is never one single text book which covers all the necessary material for a unit and so candidates are encouraged to read more widely and think for themselves. This is particularly so in the AS Examination part b) questions where candidates too frequently either list ideas or describe arguments already outlined in their response to part a).

Candidates are also encouraged to write less and to structure their essays. This is especially so at A2. Often examiners found themselves reading a seven page essay which by page four was a repetition of all that had been said before, but now with contradictions and misunderstandings. The old adage that less is more is certainly true. It is clear that many candidates are planning essays but even so not really thinking about their central argument. The correct use of vocabulary is also to be encouraged; too many candidates, for example, used 'induced' when they meant 'inferred'.

As always, the most frequent criticism is that a candidate has simply not read the question carefully – this affects both able and less able candidates.

# G571 Philosophy of Religion

## General Comments

There were some very good scripts presented and many candidates had clearly prepared well. In general, scripts showed greater attention to presentation than has sometimes been the case, though there remain issues around the use of language. Spelling was sometimes uncertain, with the use of some strange compound terms, notably 'aswell', 'infact', 'infront', and 'inorder', and the verb 'to of' was still making a frequent appearance. More worrying was the continuing struggle of some candidates to master the fundamental grammar of philosophy. Terms frequently misused were 'prove' (for 'argue'), *a posteriori*, *a priori*, 'necessary', 'contingent' and 'predicate' – significant numbers seemed unaware that a predicate is part of a sentence and is not a quality of a thing. In some cases, there is still an issue with handwriting with examiners having to spend a significant amount of time trying to guess what the candidate was trying to say. In a few cases more than a third of the text was illegible.

There were also the usual problems of candidates not focusing on the specific question asked, thus issues of selecting only the appropriate sections of the topic. Technical terminology could often have been used more effectively and is not always defined. The part b) answers were sometimes presented as a list of for and against arguments – candidates would achieve the highest levels through explicit use of evidence/examples and greater use of critical analysis. In general, with the exception of question 3, part b) answers, which call for the development of arguments, were weaker than those for part a). Too many candidates thought that an argument should merely be a juxtaposition of statements of different philosophical views. It is important that candidates engage with arguments: examiners seek evidence that views have been thoughtfully considered. A list of the arguments of different philosophers does not become a considered argument simply because 'however' is occasionally inserted into a narrative account.

## Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) Most responses defined natural evil; many started with the inconsistent triad which although, not necessary, served as adequate background. There were few candidates who failed to notice the emphasis on natural evil and many displayed a very good understanding of Augustine. Evil as privation of good was not always mentioned. Most understood the importance of the fall of humanity and the idea that God is not to blame. Some candidates confused it either totally or partially with the Irenaean theodicy. Best answers dealt coherently with the problem posed in stages: corruption of angels, fall of humanity and the nature of evil as privation of good. In better responses candidates gave a fuller explanation with examples such as blindness being the absence of sight.
- (b) Generally this question was answered well. Some weaker responses drifted into the Free Will Defence and moral evil. The best responses recognised that natural evil does not rule out a God with the traditional attributes because, as Hick's soul-developing argument suggests, natural evil produces virtues such as compassion and courage. Others successfully utilised their knowledge of Mill to criticise the extent and purposelessness of natural evil. Some higher level candidates discussed Process theodicy and its impact on the attributes of God as opposed to the non-existence of a God. Some made excellent use of D. Z. Phillips' criticisms of soul-making theodicy and arguments from Process thinkers.

- 2 (a) This question was a popular choice. Many candidates explained Kantian ethics in great detail which was a useful starting point for his moral argument. Weaker candidates failed to get much further, perhaps conflating ideas of judgement and heaven with the summum bonum. Many candidates seemed to understand Kant's aversion to proofs for the existence of God which led to an explanation of how Kant would only postulate the existence of God. Stronger candidates laid out the three postulates (freedom, immortality and God) and explained them methodically. The postulate of freedom was often more implicit although some good candidates linked it in well with their explanation of Kant's ideas of goodwill and the categorical imperative.

The best responses linked Kant's deontological approach to ethics with the ideas of summum bonum and 'ought implies can' rather than thinking of this as simply a reward. A number of responses showed a misunderstanding of 'ought' implies 'can' by not linking it to the summum bonum.

A significant minority, however, still assume mistakenly that Kant sees God as a moral commander or the voice of conscience. A few confused Kant's moral argument with one or more of his less well-known (especially to Kant) cosmological, ontological or design arguments.

- (b) There were some interesting responses to this question with candidates using a range of evidence to argue generally in favour of the statement. This was a question designed to encourage individual thoughtful responses and it was refreshing that so many rose to the challenge. A few weaker candidates thought the question was asking whether a non-religious person can be good. Some candidates discussed the Euthyphro Dilemma but this was not always successfully related to the question. There were a significant number of good responses, many drawing on Freud's explanation of morality and some including other scholars such as Newman and Aquinas in disagreeing with the question posed. There was also some good use of Biblical material to illustrate the difficulties in linking morality to God. On occasions, some candidates, who were clearly very able, let themselves down by merely stating the views in detail and failing to deploy them as part of an overall argument.

- 3 (a) Some more general topic responses to this question simply outlined Aristotle's four causes and seemed to have little understanding of the Prime Mover except in terms of Aquinas' Ways 1 and 2 from the cosmological argument. A number of candidates confused Aristotle's Prime Mover as a final cause with Aquinas' ideas of God as an efficient cause of the universe, possibly because having seen the part b) question they were trying to link it in. A common mistake was to use the domino example which confuses candidates into wrongly thinking the Prime Mover was the start of the chain. Many responses included some reference to the movement/change in the universe as Aristotle's starting point. Better candidates showed understanding of potentiality moving towards actuality and related this to the Prime Mover as pure actuality. Some answers struggled to explain *how* the Prime Mover caused motion, although there was some good use of the examples of the ball on a sheet and the cat with the bowl of milk. Some candidates were even familiar with Aristotle's ideas of the universe as a series of concentric circles. There were some excellent responses however, which explained fully Aristotle's concept and associated technical terminology.

- (b) This question elicited a significant number of strong responses with many candidates tending to focus on arguments from design and modern scientific explanations of causation. Many noted that the Big Bang does not necessarily imply the universe is accidental, linking it to the cosmological argument/infinite regress or to the modern fine tuning theory and the anthropic principle. Weaker candidates tended simply to state complexity of design meant creation whereas faults/evil in the world suggested an accidental universe. Some answers effectively used the Epicurean Hypothesis in their arguments.

A worrying number of candidates demonstrated strange ideas about the Big Bang, perhaps misunderstanding descriptions of two particles colliding in the Hydron Collider or showed no understanding of the theology/interpretation of creation stories.

- 4 (a) Although popular, this question was answered the least well as responses failed to focus on the relationship between the Form of the Good and the other Forms. Many answers contained lengthy descriptions of the cave analogy, although better answers at least explained the symbolism particularly of the sun. A number of candidates discussed the Form of the Good but did not explain its relationship to other Forms. Most responses outlined Plato's general theory of the two worlds giving information about the nature of the Forms. Less successful answers concentrated on descriptions of objects rather than concepts such as beauty or goodness. A fairly common error was to equate the Form of the Good with God. Better candidates focused on the hierarchy of Forms and some even explained the simile of the sun to focus on how the Form of the Good illuminates and gives knowledge of the other Forms, the element of goodness participating in other forms of concepts such as beauty and justice as well as in the particulars in the world of appearances.
- (b) Stronger candidates answered this question very well, comparing Plato's view with Aristotle's empiricism. These clearly demonstrated how Plato would suggest that the Forms are reflected in the imperfections of this material world as well as explaining how his epistemology fits in, using for example the question how do we know, and the response 'Through the soul remembering'. Weaker candidates listed generic criticisms of the theory of Forms but were unable to relate them to the question or simply made limited statements that there is no proof of the Forms.

Many candidates argued that there was no physical evidence for the Forms, many attempted to describe the Third Man argument of Aristotle though relatively few made use of any of his detailed, and rather simpler, criticisms in *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I, Chapter vi.

## G572 Religious Ethics

### General Comments

There were some very good responses from candidates, some showing a mature understanding of the questions. As in previous years, some candidates would benefit by improving essay style and structure, as there was a tendency for candidates to write too briefly for part a) questions and not show their knowledge and understanding in enough detail. Part b) responses were often very good with effective use of exemplification.

### Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) This was a popular question with most candidates able to highlight the moral issues surrounding the right to a child. Most candidates discussed the moral issues surrounding IVF, such as the issue of spare embryos, sperm or egg donors, and the idea that it is 'playing God'. Many candidates looked at the issue of who has the right to a child and the future life of the child when it is born. However, some candidates struggled with the concept 'right to a child' and attempted responses which focused on the issue of abortion. Many candidates used ethical theories to draw out moral issues and some were very successful in doing so, however, this approach to the question often meant that candidates missed the moral issues surrounding the right to a child and instead gave a general explanation of how the theories might approach the issue. Some responses were focused specifically on the moral issues and were able to draw out much of the moral complexity of the process. Some candidates even examined the whole question of rights in order to explain the specific issue of right to a child.
  - (b) This question elicited some good discussion on Christian ethics and the view that a child is a gift from God. The majority of responses showed a clear structure and made an attempt to present a two-sided argument. Responses tended to include biblical teaching in which a child is seen as a gift, with examples such as Hannah and Sarah used frequently. There was also some analysis of who deserves the right to a child, with some candidates questioning the idea that a child could be a gift when people who are deemed unworthy of parenting have children yet morally good people do not. Some candidates highlighted the problem of rights as being something defined by governments rather than being natural or innate. Some candidates dismissed the concept of having inalienable rights using Bentham's argument that this was 'nonsense on stilts'.
- 2 (a) This was another popular question. Better candidates were able to explain the moral issues surrounding euthanasia such as the sanctity of life, the quality of life, autonomy and personhood – often using the ideas of Peter Singer. Better candidates discussed the moral issues attached to different types of euthanasia, using pertinent references to case studies such as Tony Bland, Diane Pretty and Daniel James. Many candidates discussed the issue of moral autonomy using Mill's principles as found in *On Liberty* and many candidates used a range of scholars when discussing who might be considered a human being in terms of their genetic makeup but who lacked consciousness, independence, awareness and rationality. Again many candidates tried to identify the moral issues using the ethical theories – some succeeded, but weaker candidates gave a general discussion of how the ethical theories can be applied to euthanasia without giving an explanation of the moral issues.



- (b)** Generally this question was well answered and candidates were able to offer an argument as to whether the quality of life is the most important factor. Many contrasted this view with the sanctity of life. Better candidates were able to make an assessment as to whether the quality of a person's life is reason enough for a person to wish to end it. Good candidates also questioned who has the right to judge a person's quality of life as what may seem poor to one person may not to the individual in the situation – a common example used here was that of Professor Stephen Hawking.
- 3 (a)** This was the least popular question and the majority of candidates used Christianity in their answers. Some candidates limited themselves to a cursory presentation of Just War theory, but others were able to show a good level of knowledge and understanding as to how Just War theory might justify going to war, using the contributions to the theory of Aquinas, Suarez, Grotius and the American bishops. Some candidates illustrated their answers with pertinent reference to actual wars to decide whether Christians could justify going to war or not. Weaker candidates did not address the question but simply wrote out everything they knew about Just War theory, including the clauses of Jus Post Bellum even though this was outside the remit of the question. Some candidates gave good accounts of the Christians such as the Quakers who would never justify going to war. Responses also included Christian realism and the ideas of Niebuhr, though on occasion their understanding of this was limited.
- (b)** Many candidates referred to biblical teachings, specifically to the example and words of Jesus, to argue that religious believers should be pacifist. When arguing that war was sometimes necessary, even for religious believers, Just War was used effectively. Good candidates argued that following pacifism meant that evil may flourish and the innocent would not be protected – this was often linked to Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Some candidates discussed the different forms of pacifism; some argued that preferential pacifism may be the better response.
- 4 (a)** In general this question was answered well with most candidates able to differentiate between deontological and teleological approaches. The majority of candidates approached this question by explaining what the terms meant then going on to explain the theories which may be considered deontological or teleological, and highlighting the differences in the final paragraph. Most candidates discussed Kant as being deontological and this was done well with good examples, often the axe murderer, abortion or euthanasia. Some candidates also showed a detailed knowledge of Natural Law in both its deontological and teleological aspects. Utilitarianism was used to explain a teleological theory. Candidates often used the same examples to show how a teleological theory would make a different ethical decision. Weaker candidates outlined the theories but did not explain the differences, or only focused on the key differences of consequences versus action/intention.
- (b)** A small number of candidates were confused over what was meant by the question, some candidates arguing that the view expressed a Kantian perspective. The majority of candidates gave an argument in support of a teleological view and opposing this with a deontological view. Many argued that it seemed like a logical approach to decision making and used the example of killing Hitler as the means justifying the ends.

# G573 Jewish Scriptures

## General Comments

In the best answers, candidates demonstrated both detailed knowledge of the texts and the views of scholars. Candidates who scored at the lower end of the mark range tended to show less discrimination in their selection of material, and produced answers which were generally less focused on the question. Some relied heavily on narrative and description.

Most candidates managed to produce answers of approximately balanced length. Others struggled to complete the second question and might benefit from practising timed answers. Standards of spelling and grammar were quite good; however, some candidates did not show clear paragraphing. There were no rubric infringements although some candidates failed accurately to identify the question being answered.

## Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) There were some excellent responses to this question in which candidates showed thorough knowledge and understanding of the texts. Others displayed very limited knowledge of important features of both covenants, such as stewardship and circumcision. Some failed to approach the two parts of the question and restricted the response to either the covenant with Adam or the covenants with Abraham.
- (b) Most candidates disagreed with the statement, arguing that the covenants with Abraham received new emphases. Others argued that whereas the covenant with Adam was universal in scope, the covenants with Abraham had specific significance for the Jewish people.
- 2 (a) Most candidates had sound knowledge of the texts and were able to use the material to produce reasoned answers. Others failed to deal adequately with all three chapters identified in the question, and some included extraneous material; notably, Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. Some responses did not fully engage with the question in relation to what the chapters teach about G-d.
- (b) Many candidates referred to the work of form critics in identifying prophecy as one of the literary genres found in the Jewish Scriptures. Some disagreed with the statement in the question, arguing that it is misguided to set one type of literary genre against others. Some argued the primacy of prophecy because the prophets championed the cause of G-d.
- 3 (a) The question led to some interesting, thoughtful and sometimes perceptive responses. The best answers were discriminating in their selection of material and clearly focused on the question. Some answers were largely narrative. Most candidates explained that the sailors and Ninevites constituted the non-Jews in the book. A number of responses included useful discussion of the importance of Nineveh in ancient Assyria.
- (b) Although there were many good answers to the question, some candidates showed no real understanding of what was required and simply listed themes of the book with little or no attempt at analysis. Most candidates argued the traditional view of authorship.

- 4 (a)** In the best responses, candidates used the texts to very good effect to support their answers. Most focused on Moses as national leader and saviour of Israel, prophet and lawgiver. Many candidates explained the traditional view that the Pentateuch itself was the work of Moses. The question was poorly answered by those who were content to outline all that they knew about Moses but with little reference to the Jewish Scriptures.
- (b)** The question elicited many good responses. Most discussed the consequences for the Torah if the account of Moses' life was not completely historically true. Some discussed the unique position which Moses occupies in the history of Judaism.

# G574 New Testament

## General Comments

Overall, there was a good performance across the ability range and there was evidence that candidates found the questions accessible and suitably challenging. There were some excellent responses to part a) questions, which showed diligence in selecting the correct information to maintain a good focus on the question. Some candidates could have attained higher levels with more thorough attention to the detail of the text in question and more development of the text to show understanding. With regard to part b) questions, candidates should be encouraged to apportion a suitable amount of time to the evaluation. Those candidates who did spend an appropriate amount of time on part b) demonstrated perceptive and effective use of evidence to support arguments and different views. Less thoughtful approaches to part b) were often too brief or one-sided arguments.

## Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) Candidates who answered this question appeared well prepared on the significance of both the account of Jesus praying in Gethsemane and the possible purposes of the evangelist. There were some excellent and very good answers, which identified the challenges in the passage for Jesus, the disciples and Christians. At all levels, there was a general understanding of the different ways in which the person of Jesus might be interpreted according to Mark's account. Some candidates could have improved their performance with more detailed reference to the text to support their understanding.  
  
(b) Most candidates attempted a critical analysis of both the vulnerability and strength shown by Jesus in Gethsemane and there were some very good arguments and evaluation of evidence from part a). Less successful candidates merely repeated information from part a) as 'differing views', without attempting any evaluation.
- 2 (a) There was a wide range of quality in answers to this question. Candidates who were familiar with the text and had a comprehensive knowledge of Matthew's resurrection account were able to explain clearly the sequence of events and interpret their significance. Some candidates compared the emphasis in Matthew with that in Mark and Luke and produced successful answers. Knowledge of the text was key to achieving the higher levels, but many answers displayed only a passing accuracy and some accounts were confused with those of Mark and Luke.  
  
(b) Performance on this question was slightly erratic. Most candidates attempted to analyse whether or not Matthew's purpose in writing his resurrection account affected credibility. Good responses showed thought and perception in evaluating the apologetic nature of Matthew's account. Subjective responses were quite common; there was a notable trait amongst candidates to state personal opinion. Whilst the views might have been validly held, they were usually not justified by evidence from a study of the New Testament and answers only partially matched the assessment objective.
- 3 (a) Candidates who attained the higher levels showed awareness of the Markan sandwich and the multi-layered significance of this 'negative' miracle within the context of the passion story. Generally, candidates demonstrated varying degrees of understanding of the Old Testament symbolism of the fig tree and the significance of the event. Some candidates might have improved their performance with better knowledge of the specific text. Candidates should be encouraged to study the significance of the whole of Mark 11.

- (b) Usually the performance on this part was commensurate with performance on part a). This question differentiated well in favour of candidates who responded to the challenge to analyse the evidence from part a) and other evidence available on redaction and purpose in Mark. Candidates were able to use this skill to make an informed assessment as to whether this event might be an invention of the author.
- 4 (a) Many candidates demonstrated good understanding of the conditions of Roman occupation in first-century Palestine and the relationship between the Romans and different Jewish groups. There was evidence of good use of sources such as Josephus and other historical information and gospel texts. On the whole, candidates were well prepared on this topic showing engagement with the material and maintaining a focus on the circumstances of Jesus' death. There were some instances where candidates showed a loss of focus: they had good knowledge of the political situation but appeared to have forgotten that Roman involvement in Jesus' death was also a part of the question.
- (b) There were some well-argued and varied discussions. The majority of answers concentrated on assessing arguments about the situation in Jerusalem at the time of Passover and the elements of inevitability or pre-destination in the passion story. Only a minority of candidates, mainly in the best answers, referred to the significance and the symbolism of the sacrificial Paschal lamb. Candidates who attempted to show arguments relating to the dispute over whether or not it was Passover when Jesus died, either did it well, or the argument became a distraction from the focus of the question.

# G575 Developments in Christian Theology

## General Comments

All questions were tackled; no one question proved to be more popular than others. Some candidates confused assessment objectives and included evaluation in part a) and too many facts in the part b) evaluative questions and gave little sense of discussion. Lengthy historical or sociological introductions to part a) questions (eg lots on the protestant reformation in question 1a) added little to the quality of candidates' responses.

Centres might wish to refer to the revised G575 teacher's notes and resources on the OCR website.

## Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) The best answers used natural and revealed knowledge of God to tackle this question and many focused on Calvin and showed a good understanding of his ideas. There was some confusion on Calvin and the Bible; Calvin is no literalist but he considers the Bible to be equally part of natural knowledge of God (as humans witness to God's presence in the world) as well as the revealed word of God.

Some candidates answered this question from a very general perspective; others used only approaches to Scripture (fundamentalist etc) with limited success.

Some candidates chose to write about Aquinas and Augustine and this was given appropriate credit, but some fell into the trap of writing about proofs for God's existence rather than knowledge of God. Some, however, used Aquinas on God's relationship to the world as a means of knowing God.

Those who achieved top level marks focused on the 'theological problems'; excellent answers did so by referring to the issues raised in the famous Barth-Brunner debate on knowing as salvation (although there were equally good discussions which dealt with epistemological differences between knowing as fact and knowing as acquaintance).

- (b) Most picked up on Calvin again and re-presented his ideas; better candidates discussed them critically. Better candidates were able to point out flaws in his arguments about natural theology and considered whether there is a natural human openness to God (as suggested by Calvin's *semen religionis* or *sensus divinitatis*) as suggested by the large number of religions in the world in the past and today. Some used the Barth-Brunner debate to good effect and considered that there can be a 'point of contact' between human finite minds and an infinite Being.

- 2 (a) Candidates, in general, showed a good knowledge of Cone's position and outlined his general approach to the Jesus of faith and history. Most were able to explain why he rejected the Jesus of history and Christ of faith distinction; better candidates provided examples of other scholars and those liberal thinkers Cone dubbed 'white' (Schweitzer, Bultmann, Wrede, etc).

There was a little confusion about whether Cone thought Jesus to be literally or metaphorically black or both. Better candidates were able to give details and reasoning behind Cone's theory; Jewish Jewishness, the cross as a lynching tree, slave experience (and its parallels to the exodus) and participation.

**(b)** This question could have been discussed from a variety of different viewpoints. Disappointingly, the vast majority considered the question only to be referring to Cone's ideas which they outlined again without much assessment. Those who did discuss the issue considered whether Jesus' message was more important than his appearance or whether Cone had a point. Some understood the question to be a general historical one and sided with those who considered the idea of Christ to be more important than who he was and where he lived. Surprisingly few responses made reference to art in the Christian tradition but those who did so discussed the issue well.

**3 (a)** The question could be tackled in several different ways. Good candidates were aware of this and attempted to show how the Bible can be interpreted using a liberative hermeneutic as well as its practical place in the mediations.

Many candidates discussed the three mediations and concentrated on the second mediation and the part played by the Bible in the existential process of conscientisation (some excellent answers referred to Friere here). Less good answers skimmed over the second mediation.

The better responses gave concrete examples of popular biblical texts (Exodus, Amos, Luke 4, Revelation 21 etc) and explained how they have been interpreted and used. This year there were some interesting discussions of Mary and her place in Latin America by some candidates. Schleiermacher and Ricoeur were mentioned by many but only the best were able to follow through and show how these hermeneutics were used by liberation theologians in their own version of the 'circle'.

Centres might note that candidates have a tendency to use exegesis and eisegesis far too frequently without understanding the subtle relationship between the two.

**(b)** This question was generally well done. A common answer was that Marx was more useful than the Bible and then gave good reasons why this was the case. Many pointed to the failure of Marxism and communism and to the enduring message of the Bible. Good candidates used Alister Kee's and/or Jose Miranda's ideas thoughtfully; top marks were only awarded to those who focused on justice in the context of Marx and the Bible.

**4 (a)** Many candidates wrote generally on base communities and what they did rather than directly answering the question and looking at the theological reasons for their set up. Surprisingly, few candidates had clear understanding and knowledge of what base communities actually do (some spent too long on the historical background). Some looked at the preferential option for the poor, mediations and conscientisation. Very few went beyond this and looked at reversal, ecclesiology and mind-body dualism, although some were able to refer to the small communities mentioned in Acts 2 and 4 and some to the significance of Revelation 21.

**(b)** This question invited candidates to show off their knowledge of other liberation theologies other than (or in addition to) that of Latin America. Few took the opportunity offered by the question to look at dalit, gay, black, feminist liberation theologies but those who did were able to consider quite how radical these contextual theologies can and ought to be. A standard answer was that it is a risky business shaking the foundations of any society; more reflective answers pondered on the values such as sexism, racism, classism and homophobia which must, of necessity from a Christian viewpoint, need to be expunged from society.

## G576 Buddhism

### General Comments

There were few rubric errors and these tended to be from candidates who had produced weaker responses and failed to complete two full questions.

A significant number of candidates gained very high marks for one question and very poor marks for the other question.

Centres might wish to remind candidates of the need to revise the whole specification to ensure they can approach two questions with confidence.

In part b) questions some candidates seem to believe that telling the examiner they have critically assessed the views they have presented means they are showing critical analysis. They may benefit from being shown model answers which do critically evaluate in order to develop this skill.

Some candidates were exceptionally well prepared, showing evidence of a wide range of reading, and real engagement with the material.

### Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) Most responses here were in the middle range. Most candidates were able to explain both kamma and samsara and give a reasonable explanation of a link between them, for example kamma determining where a person is reborn in the samsaric realms.

Better candidates tended to explore the link in more detail and were more aware of the subtleties connected to this link. Some explored paticca samupadda to explain how the link operates. Others were able to explain the different kammic consequences, and how these for example might lead to habit formation which would affect rebirth. They were also aware of the root causes of kammic formations as the driving force behind the cycle of samsara.

- (b) Many responses were in the middle range. Most candidates were able to explore how belief in kamma might encourage someone to behave well as they fear the consequences of negative actions.

The best candidates often explored whether the term 'forced' was appropriate in a tradition which emphasises freewill. They were often aware that intention was important in kammic formations, and thus explored whether the intention of avoiding negative kammic consequences would in fact be self-defeating as it was an unskillful intention.

- 2 (a) A small number of candidates did not know all Four Noble Truths, and this limited the success of their response. Some of these wrote about the four signs or simply left some of the truths out. Some transposed truths 3 and 4, and thus were able to gain some credit for the material presented.

Candidates in the middle range were generally able to write a paragraph or so explaining each truth, with a further paragraph at the start or end of the essay explaining the purpose of the truths.



Most candidates were noticeably weaker at explaining the third noble truth than the other three, so centres may wish to focus on ensuring this truth is explored fully with candidates.

Better candidates were aware of the three types of dukkha in truth one and the four types of tanha in truth two. They also tended to explore the purpose of the truths throughout their responses and make clear links showing how the truths were interlinked.

- (b)** Those candidates who did not know the third truth often struggled to provide meaningful analysis.

Most answers in the middle range tended to provide a statement for each truth saying why it was important, before concluding that all truths were equally important as they worked together.

The best responses tended to explore the possible importance of nirodha in more detail. When comparisons with other truths were offered they tended to choose to focus on one other alternative and explore this in a similar level of detail. They were thus able to provide better substantiation of the views presented and avoid the statement which answers in the middle range often produced.

- 3 (a)** Many candidates did not address the question asked in their responses. Examiners read a range of material on the lifestyle of the bhikkhus, the relationship of the bhikkhus and the laity, the differences between forest and village dwelling monks and the life of Asoka, but little about the early development of the sangha.

Some candidates mentioned a little relevant material in passing and were given some credit.

A few candidates were able to mention the rainy season and the setting up of viharas in the early stages of Buddhism. Some considered the initiation of women into the sangha or the development of the vinaya rules. Usually this was very brief and candidates were unable to expand on these ideas.

Some candidates offered a history of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> councils within Buddhism. In some cases this led to a history lesson which was not sufficiently linked to the question. In other cases candidates made clear links showing how these councils had affected the development of the sangha and produced very good responses to the question. This approach was therefore credited, and marks awarded as appropriate for the quality of the response.

- (b)** This part was often completed to a much higher standard than part a). Most candidates were able to produce an argument with some evidence to support their views.

Most candidates argued that for those aiming for nibbana then the discipline and practices within the monastic sangha did make it an ideal lifestyle. The alternative views presented varied, but included comparison with those in the laity aiming for better rebirths, forest-dwelling monks who could be argued to have a closer link to the life of the Buddha, the problems of monastic communities in the West, and possible alternatives from the Mahayana traditions.

- 4 (a)** There were some exceptional responses to this question, but most responses showed a lack of knowledge of the details of the arhat path.

Many candidates seemed to want to describe the bodhisattva path, and tried to justify this by offering it as a comparison whilst putting one paragraph on the arhat path at the beginning and end of the response.

Some candidates simply described the monastic lifestyle – often with inaccurate or simplistic information.

A number of candidates described the stages on the path (stream-enterer et al) but with little understanding of what these stages signified. Some credit was given for this type of response, with the marks awarded reflecting the level of understanding of the stages demonstrated by the candidate.

The best responses tended to explore the noble eightfold path in some depth often explaining how the stages here could be linked to the perfections required. They were also able to explore the importance of removing the 10 fetters. When reference was made to the stages of stream-enterer etc these were clearly understood and explained.

- (b)** Responses to this section were often better than responses to part a). Most candidates saw the statement as a Mahayana criticism of the Theravada tradition. They were usually able to explore some reasons why the bodhisattva path might be seen as a better aim – often referring to karuna and the selflessness of aiming to save all sentient beings.

The best candidates also tended to explore the Theravadin defence and were then able to make well supported arguments either for or against the statement.

## G577 Hinduism

### General Comments

The quality of responses was noticeably poorer than in previous sessions. Many candidates had limited knowledge of basic concepts, and were not able to describe, let alone explain, the material required by the questions. Answers in the main were also considerably shorter than in previous sessions, and whilst quantity does not equal quality, this appeared to be because candidates simply did not understand what was required by the question.

There were, in some cases, basic confusions between Buddhist and Hindu teachings and concepts. Other common errors included confusing the jnana path with the bhakti path or the karma path. Several responses referred to samsara as a realm which was reached after moksha had been achieved.

There were, of course, some very good responses and these showed excellent scholarship.

### Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) A few candidates had little understanding of samsara, believing it to be synonymous with moksha or a realm achieved after moksha was achieved.

Many candidates wrote a brief description of moksha and samsara, and then a very short paragraph explaining the relationship. Those who felt the need to 'pad out' their answers then drifted off in a number of directions which they failed to make relevant to the response.

The best responses tended to use examples from specific traditions to explore the relationship. One effective example, used several times, explored how samsara could be seen as maya and thus moksha was the realisation of this illusion.

- (b) The quality of the response to part b) was often better than to part a). Many candidates were able to offer at least limited analysis comparing moksha with karma or dharma.

Some responses referred to the four purusharthas, though a surprisingly high number did not name all four correctly.

Some candidates offered successful analysis considering whether all Hindus could reach moksha in their current lives, and thus were aiming at moksha at this time or not. There were also some interesting responses exploring whether dharma was more pivotal since it maintains a harmonious society.

- 2 (a) Many responses to this question hovered in the middle range. Most candidates were able to offer a reasonable description of puja practices, and the majority of these then explained at least some of the actions within a puja ceremony. Many candidates did not pay enough attention to the 'why' in the question, with a few limited statements about showing devotion.

The better responses tended to explore the why throughout their response, making reference to darshan or the bhakti path, as well as personal requests from worshipper to deity. These candidates sometimes explored different types of puja, or focused on the importance of puja for a particular tradition.

A few candidates described the ancient horse-sacrifice with little understanding of its purpose.

- (b)** Some candidates clearly did not understand the term 'practice', and made comparisons with concepts such as moksha. Where this offered some meaningful analysis related to the question some credit was given.

The best responses tended to offer comparison with dharma, and often showed interesting insights into the value of these practices for both individuals and society as a whole.

- 3 (a)** This was the most poorly answered question on the paper. Many candidates simply described the Indus Valley finds with no hint of awareness that the Aryans may or may not be connected to the Indus Valley Civilisation. Some candidates mixed information about the Vedas and the caste system with information from the Indus Valley, but again with no indication that they realised there was some contention about doing this.

Most of the best responses focused more tightly on more obvious Aryan influences. They referred to the Vedas, the focus on male deities and the caste system.

There were a small number of high quality responses which made clear they were aware that in some interpretations the Aryans might be the same people who inhabited the Indus Valley sites, at least for a portion of time. They were then able to use references to the Vedas and Indus Valley finds to successfully answer the question. For example, one response referred to the importance of Agni in the Vedas and the fireplaces within the Indus Valley homes, and linked this to sacrifice in early Hinduism.

- (b)** The success of answers to this question depended on the success of candidates answering part a). Candidates who had given good examples in part a) were able to analyse the continuing influence (or otherwise) of those factors on modern Hinduism.

Some candidates gave interesting discussions of the most recent changes within Hinduism in relation to the caste system. They explored the immense length of time the caste system had been influential, but pointed out that modern living and challenges from thinkers such as Gandhi, were now posing a challenge to its continuing influence.

- 4 (a)** Although this was the least popular question on the paper, it was often answered very well.

Most candidates were able to explore the main features of Rama, and how this set him up as an example for worshippers. They were able to make links to his role as an avatar of Vishnu, and thus his preservation of the world.

- (b)** Again most candidates were able to offer meaningful analysis in relation to this question. Most focused on the idea that, although Rama is perfect, he nevertheless provides a good example for husbands to follow and an ideal to strive towards. Some explored how this perfection should not be judged as the perfection of a man but that of a deity, and thus 'too perfect' became something which has no meaning.

## G578 Islam

### General Comments

Many answers were extremely well written and indicated that those candidates had clearly engaged with the questions. There were other candidates, however, who appeared less well prepared for an examination at this level. Generally, candidates did well when they answered the questions that had been set rather than answering the one they hoped would be set.

Questions 1, 2 and 4 seemed equally popular with question 3 less so. Those answering question 3 tended not to perform as well compared to the others. There were one or two candidates who also appeared to misunderstand the rubric and answered only one question instead of two whole questions.

### Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) This was a very popular question and there were some very good responses. Most candidates started with an explanation of what the Five Pillars are. The best answers included detailed accounts of how each pillar required both discipline and commitment. For example, acknowledging that paying zakat may involve going without material possessions you desire. Weaker candidates spent too much time discussing what is involved in each pillar but failed to relate this to discipline and commitment.
- (b) Most candidates failed to engage with this question at the highest level. Weaker candidates answered from only one viewpoint and this tended to be that all are equal. The better answers were able to appreciate why some may be considered more important than others – but this line of argument was often restricted to why the shahadah (as the declaration of faith) may be more important than the others.
- 2 (a) There were some excellent responses to this question which demonstrated a clear understanding of when both surahs were revealed and their relevance for Muslims. The majority of candidates were able to quote frequently from both surah 1 and 96 and explain the religious significance well. Weaker candidates lacked in-depth knowledge of the contents of both surahs and were, therefore, only able to pick up on a few of the religious ideas contained in the surahs.
- (b) Many candidates focused on the differing tones of the surahs in order to demonstrate the possible differences. Most candidates chose religious ideas about the nature of Allah in order to demonstrate the similarities between the surahs. Weaker answers failed to adequately consider more than one viewpoint. Again, the majority of candidates failed to engage with the question at the highest level – lacking real critical analysis of the issue.
- 3 (a) This was the least popular question and was generally answered to a lower overall standard than the other three questions. Most candidates were able to provide a general outline of the battles, how they were fought and who was victorious. The weaker responses, however, failed to do more than this. The best answers were able to offer several reasons for why the battles took place. The general impression was that this was a question most candidates had not encountered before.
- (b) There were some interesting discussions for this question. Some candidates offered excellent and varied arguments for both sides, however, many candidates appeared to find it easier to argue against the claim. A few responses seemed to offer arguments for both sides when, in fact, they were actually only representing one viewpoint.

- 4 (a)** This was another popular question and there were some excellent answers. The best candidates had a clear understanding of how all of the features reflected beliefs about Allah and worship. Better responses also showed an understanding that a mosque is not essential for worship and this in itself reflects beliefs about Allah and worship. Weaker candidates chose to answer the question by addressing the general topic and listing an A – Z of mosque features without referring to beliefs about Allah and worship at all. Some candidates discussed madrassahs as features of a mosque and were credited for this if they were able to link it to beliefs.
- (b)** This question was generally answered less critically than the other three. The majority of candidates tended to argue, intentionally or otherwise, that most features of the mosque were for both practical and theological purposes. Fewer candidates were able to demonstrate how the features may be considered either for purely theological or practical reasons.

## G579 Judaism

### General Comments

The general standard of responses this session was once again satisfactory with some candidates achieving excellent marks to both parts of their chosen questions. The weakest candidates were those who failed to address the question set in part a), and simply presented a point of view in part b). In evaluative questions, it is important that candidates engage in debate.

The examination allowed candidates to respond at their own level. Most seemed to have managed their time well and achieved a balance of marks across the two questions. Standards of spelling and grammar were sound although a minority had problems with paragraphing.

### Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) Most candidates confined their responses to the specific attributes and characteristics of divinity listed in the specification. Others focused on philosophical treatments of divine attribution.

Nearly all candidates explained that the revelation contained in the Hebrew Bible is ethical monotheism and some discussed the moral demands that G-d's righteousness makes on His followers.

- (b) Most candidates disagreed with the statement and argued the primacy of acts of kindness over the belief that only one G-d exists; Micah 6:8 and Leviticus 19:18 were often cited in support of the argument. Others argued the Shema as the primary confession of faith.

- 2 (a) There were some excellent responses from those candidates who were well prepared for all areas of kashrut as listed in the specification. Most candidates had good knowledge of the laws of shatnez and many included modern-day observances; the laws relating to tzinius were equally well known. In the weakest responses descriptive writing dominated, especially concerning kashrut in relation to objects.

- (b) There were some excellently debated answers to this question with many candidates demonstrating their ability to assess the significance of a range of factors. Most maintained that the blessings of kashrut outweigh the burdens.

- 3 (a) The responses of less well prepared candidates were often limited to the reasons for a written collection of oral laws, and the differences in style and content between the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds. In the best responses, candidates included discussion of distinguished teachers in the Palestinian academies.

- (b) Most candidates argued that it is the longer Babylonian Talmud that has shaped the course of Jewish life to modern times. Others argued that the Jerusalem Talmud remains the indispensable source for the development of Jewish Law in the Holy Land.

- 4 (a) This question was answered well by most candidates who frequently explained Torah in terms of the Written and Oral Law. Many made reference to the mitzvot as expressing in a practical way how the Jew is to relate to G-d in the everyday business of life. Some discussed the ways in which Progressive Judaism differs from Orthodoxy in its approach to the Torah.

- (b)** There were some thoughtful responses to this question. Most argued that although Jews alone were present at Sinai, G-d had already provided for non-Jews with the Noachide Code. Only a minority of candidates argued that the Torah account of Creation shows how every existing thing depends upon G-d for its existence.



# G581 Philosophy of Religion

## General Comments

There were some very good scripts but some candidates failed to do justice to their abilities because they did not read the question as it had been set, especially in questions 1 and 4. Good responses establish relevance, making it clear to the examiner *why* a particular point had been made. Some essays read simply as unconnected lists. Better responses clearly *reflected* on issues, rather than simply listing them. In doing so, candidates were able to construct effective arguments. Less able candidates tended simply to outline theories, with a few generalised assertions in the final paragraph.

Some candidates handicapped themselves by very poor use of English: muddled expression too often points to and creates muddled thought.

A particular problem for many remains inadequate grasp of the grammar of philosophy, with terms such as 'prove' (used as a synonym for 'argue'), 'refute' (used to mean 'deny'), *a priori* (often mistakenly used for 'innate'), *a posteriori*, 'cognitive', 'noncognitive', 'propositional', 'non-propositional', 'antireal', 'logical', 'coherent', 'analytic' and 'metaphysical' commonly misunderstood. This is an examination in philosophy, and understanding the conventions of the subject is as significant as understanding correct notation in mathematics.

Some candidates penalised themselves by writing illegibly. Examiners can reward only what they are able to read.

## Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 Basic responses read this as 'tell me all you know about religious language'. Many answers seemed to run out of ideas on Language Games after one or two paragraphs. However, candidates did not stop writing and proceeded to describe every possible aspect of religious language including symbol, *via negativa* and of course verification and falsification, often failing to refer to 'religious statements'.

Weaker responses showed only a vague understanding of Language Games, equating it to a game which you can enter or not, missing the idea that you can only move from game to game. Some candidates used examples to illustrate their understanding – chess or cricket were often cited in comparison to similar games. There were surprisingly few examples of how the same phrases/words could mean different things in different Language Games (eg bat in cricket or a mammal) which would have perhaps helped to get across the key ideas of Language Games.

Too many seemed to think that Language Game Theory was only about religious language, when inferences about religious discourse were drawn by other philosophers from his wider theory, not by Wittgenstein himself. Many candidates assumed that a Language Game was culture specific, with the French having one game and the English another. The claim was frequently and erroneously made that members of one game found other games meaningless or that Language Games were somehow different from 'real' discussions. D. Z. Phillips, perhaps the most significant Wittgensteinian philosopher of religion, has pointed to the notion of traffic between Language Games. Oddly, many candidates assumed that Phillips was a major critic of the game theory he so regularly endorsed. Wittgenstein was frequently and incorrectly identified as a logical positivist.

A few candidates were aware of the valuable criticisms of Wittgensteinian theory from Ayer, Geach, Sherry and others.

Some candidates seemed to write pre-prepared essays on verification and falsification with the usual elementary errors of understanding. Many candidates still failed to note the asymmetry of eschatological verification, assuming that post mortem we would know whether there was a God *or not*. A significant minority of candidates still wrongly assumed that falsification meant that a sentence was true until proven false. Few candidates were aware that falsification is the demarcation between scientific and non-scientific, not between the meaningful and the meaningless. Many resorted to an uncritical endorsement of *bliks*, apparently unaware of the many objections to Hare's notion from Hick, Flew, Mitchell and others.

- 2 Many candidates began either by looking at examples of conversions, usually including St Paul, or by explaining briefly what a conversion experience is. Answers would often have been improved by discussion of types of conversion experience, or the stages of conversion. Candidates then went on to consider the validity of other types of religious experience, often attempting to compare them to conversion experiences, however all too often answers were general surveys of the different types of religious experience covered by the specification.

The best responses considered factors such as the fruits of various experiences, and whether one particular type of experience provided more 'evidence' than another. William James was often covered, and, although some simply used his criteria for identifying a common core in mystical experiences, others examined issues surrounding his pragmatism and his own analysis specifically of conversion experiences. A small minority of candidates misread the question and spoke of corporate religious experience. Some spoke of the Toronto Blessing as a mass conversion experience. There were some issues of understanding words such as 'evidence', and this question also featured the most 'emotive' responses, with candidates offering their opinion 'as a Christian' or 'as an atheist'.

Many answers tended to argue that a change in lifestyle and outlook may be strong evidence for existence of God. The better responses used specific scholars or their arguments either for or against the statement. For example, Starbuck (compared conversion to adolescence, similar process) and other psychological explanations (Freud, Marx, Feuerbach), physiological arguments (Saul and epilepsy) as well as Swinburne's Principles of Credulity and Testimony (sometimes mixed up or not explained), were often used well to assess how far conversions indicate a higher, possibly divine, existence. The subjectivity argument was generally used. Appropriate credit was given to answers that tried to compare conversion with another/other types of religious experiences to assess how strong any of them were for existence of God. However, the amount of credit depended on the extent to which the candidate had made this material relevant to the question – some were limited to descriptions of all types of religious experiences, possibly with general strengths/weaknesses but not contrasted with conversion. A number of candidates used the argument from quantity in favour of corporate religious experiences against conversion experiences.

- 3 This question attracted many very thoughtful responses and was generally the best answered question. The more general nature of the question enabled some excellent responses. Most candidates made use of the two contrasting understandings of eternity (timeless and everlasting) and explored the relative difficulties of each position. A wide variety of philosophical issues were highlighted including omniscience, immanence, benevolence, omnipotence, free will and determinism etc. Many answers used Boethius – omniscience, free will, God's right to judge fairly, intervention and prayer. Some explained conditional/simple necessity although more concentrated on Aquinas' support and justified simultaneous knowledge not being causal without specific references to the Boethian solution. Candidates frequently assumed that an everlasting God could not know the future.

Evaluation and analysis of scholars' views was generally more evident in responses to this question, perhaps because candidates could use their learnt strengths and weaknesses in a more direct way. Criticisms of the timeless view highlighted incoherence (Kenny), and the idea of the biblical interventionist God (often using examples of miracles and/or modern religious experiences). Swinburne's theory of God as everlasting was often successfully used as contrast. Some answers attempted to use Process Theology, linking most successfully to issues of omnipotence and omniscience. Middle knowledge was occasionally mentioned as an alternative to the problem of omniscience for the everlasting God. However, this was rarely understood, sometimes being mixed up with Schleiermacher's ideas of predicted knowledge. There was some good use of the argument from Aquinas regarding time implying change, and the contradiction this implies for divine simplicity. Many also made effective use of the arguments from Swinburne and Kenny, along with some biblical examples of God's interaction with creation. It was perhaps surprising that few referred to the Incarnation as the defining example, for Christianity, of God's involvement in time.

- 4 Some candidates seemed unprepared for the contrast between Aristotle and Dawkins and seemed to read 'Plato and Dawkins', hence embarking on at least 'half a tangent'. However, there were some excellent answers which showed a depth of understanding of both scholars' views on body soul identity. The best answers used examples to illustrate, such as Aristotle's wax/stamp, axe/cutting or eye/sight and could clearly explain Aristotle's ideas about faculties of the soul, linking to different identities of plants, animals, humans. Common errors were the misconception arising from Dawkins' book *The Selfish Gene* that genes/DNA was selfish; however, most candidates usually moved on in their explanation to Dawkins' thoughts that body/soul was simply a survival suit or replicator of DNA. Better answers had clarity of thought about Dawkins' descriptions of Soul 1 and Soul 2. A few answers demonstrated an understanding of the concept of *memes*. Technical terms, such as materialists, monists, and dualists tended to be widely used, although there was some confusion over substance dualism.

There were a variety of interpretations of Aristotle as monist and dualist, some drawing out characteristics of both in his work. Some wrote their afterlife essays with little success. Some dealt well with either Dawkins or Aristotle, but not both, and an unfortunate number confused the views of Aristotle with those of either Plato or Aquinas. Too often critical analysis went no further than assertions that Dawkins' views were better because they were more modern. Some candidates were unaware of the difference between 'conscience' and 'consciousness', using the terms interchangeably.

There was great difficulty with the stem 'critically compare' and it was not unusual for even the very able to only make implicit comparisons. Generally the 'critical' was missed and candidates preferred to contrast them with each other or dualists like Plato and Descartes. This was a valid approach if carefully linked to the question but many tended to then drift into a more generalised approach of contrasting monists and dualists. Perhaps candidates seemed unfamiliar with this type of question. Weaker evaluation tended to focus on afterlife rather than body/soul identity and included very little assessment of the contrasting views. Some resorted to simple assertions about similarity or difference. However, there were examples of successful and clear analysis and occasional critical assessment.

## G582 Religious Ethics

### General Comments

As in previous years, some candidates might have benefitted from reading the questions more carefully before writing their answers. Some candidates also tended to list scholars and theories without very much discussion. Some candidates showed an impressive level of knowledge and demonstrated a high level of interest and engagement in their answers.

### Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 This was the most popular question but candidates' responses differed widely in terms of quality. Some candidates demonstrated very little knowledge, if any, of Butler's ideas regarding innate conscience. Of these responses, some tended to be generalised conscience essays whilst some focused on the key word in the question (innate) and juxtaposed a number of different views ranging from Aquinas to Piaget. Some candidates showed some knowledge of Butler but did not address the argument as to whether his claims with regard to conscience are convincing. Such candidates tended to be unable to distinguish Butler's claims as to conscience from those of Newman. Some candidates successfully comprehended the demands of the question and presented a good understanding of Butler. They then went on to consider and question the concept of 'an innate sense of right and wrong' using appropriate scholars and their viewpoints.
- 2 This question evinced a variety of responses. Some candidates showed a good level of understanding with regard to business ethics and cited Friedman, Hobbes etc. A number of useful examples were also raised by candidates including Union Carbide India Ltd. and the Bhopal Disaster of 1984, and the Ford Pinto Case from 1970 involving the costs of redesigning the Pinto versus the possible costs of compensation for human loss and injury. Examples such as these enabled some candidates to consider the application of a variety of ethical theories particularly Kantian Ethics and Utilitarianism. Some candidates produced less successful responses due to a limited knowledge of case studies or an over-use of them leading to a sometimes superficial understanding of how ethical theories might be applied. Here, as elsewhere, candidates choosing to apply Situation Ethics might want to develop their knowledge so that it is not limited to arguing that parties should simply act in such a way as to produce the most loving outcome. Some candidates were able to apply Virtue Ethics in a successful way by highlighting the communitarian aspects of that theory and the goal of achieving eudaimonia in society.
- 3 This produced a number of solid responses from candidates, with a pleasing number showing a high level of understanding of the whole field of meta-ethics. Theories and their advocates including Intuitionism, Emotivism and Prescriptivism were often correctly identified and applied. As in previous years, candidates seemed a little unsure as to what constitutes the Naturalist approach advocated by Bradley and others which might be regarded as cognitive and objective. Some candidates did not address fully the question as to whether moral statements might have 'objective' meaning and limited themselves to a discussion of whether such statements have any meaning at all. Some candidates, perhaps less successfully, approached the question through a consideration of moral statements in general as found in, for example, Bentham's pleasure and pain principles. Conclusions varied with some candidates clearly unhappy with the suggestion that moral truths may 'only' be subjective.

- 4 This question provided some candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate a high level of knowledge and understanding. The absence or presence of a moral imperative to care for the environment in ethical theories such as Natural Law, Virtue Ethics, Kantian Ethics, Utilitarianism and Religious Ethics was discussed successfully. Some candidates were able to draw on examples such as the moral imperative behind operations such as the Body Shop and its rejection (along lines suggested by Singer's Preference Utilitarianism) of animal experimentation in its *modus operandi*. Some candidates attempted, with varying degrees of success, to see whether Kant's formulations of the Categorical Imperative could be applied beyond their normal focus on rational, intelligent, free and autonomous moral agents. Lovelock's Gaia was discussed by a number of candidates but often their knowledge was limited by treating this approach as a religious one. As in previous years, candidates were generally able to distinguish the dominion and stewardship approaches from the perspective of Christianity but some would have benefitted from a more detailed understanding of the biblical basis for such approaches. One frequent inaccuracy was to suggest that 'shallow' or anthropocentric views do not imply a moral imperative to care for the environment.

# G583 Jewish Scriptures

## General Comments

The standard of answers was variable. At the top end of the range, candidates thought about the question and frequently displayed comprehensive, often detailed, knowledge of the texts in their response. There was also some evidence of candidates relying on the same or similar class notes and forcing them to fit the question on the paper, seldom with real success.

The paper was of a comparable standard to that of previous sessions and was successful at differentiating between candidates of varying abilities. There were no rubric infringements. Most responses were reasonably well balanced in length but a small minority of candidates had to rush their second question, in some cases with a sequence of notes instead of worked-out concluding paragraphs. The quality of written English was generally quite good.

## Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 Most candidates began by providing an outline summary of the contexts of Isaiah 40–43 and the book of Micah, including: time, place, political and religious conditions. Some discussed the views of modern biblical scholarship that Isaiah chapters 40–55 were not written by Isaiah of Jerusalem but have an exilic location. Most candidates concentrated discussion on the teaching concerning Messianic hope in the set chapters: Isaiah's teaching on eschatological deliverance, salvation and the Servant; Micah's teaching on the judgement of Israel, the destruction of Jerusalem, salvation and the coming of a Messiah.

In their evaluation, most candidates argued that while Isaiah 40–43 and the book of Micah touched on similar themes, there were also striking differences. Some candidates argued that social morality was by far the dominant theme in the book of Micah.

- 2 Many candidates began by providing an outline summary of the context of the book of Amos, including: time, place, political and religious conditions. Some provided an outline of the book's structure and identified the main themes. Most candidates displayed sound knowledge of Amos' message. Weaker responses often focused on Amos' criticisms of contemporary social practices but without relating them to the injunctions of the covenant. Some candidates included good discussion on the degeneration of the prophetic guild in Amos' day.

In their evaluation, some candidates focused discussion on the form and content of Amos' speeches to reveal his understanding of the prophetic role and message. Some candidates contrasted the prophetic call and ministry of Amos with the professionalism and self-interest of the prophetic guild, and drew out the implications. Some focused discussion on Amos' call for justice and mercy rather than cultic service.

- 3 Most candidates focused discussion on one or more of the texts prescribed for study in the specification. Some outlined the context of the texts, including: time of writing, place, and the prevailing political and religious conditions. Several candidates made reference to the Eleventh Principle of Faith formulated by Maimonides. The best responses came from those able to display close and detailed knowledge of the set texts. Weaker scripts tended to provide narrative responses.

In their evaluation, candidates with detailed knowledge of the set texts offered well argued responses. Those with limited knowledge of the texts often did not really begin to construct an argument, though individual points were frequently valid.

- 4 Many candidates began by providing an outline summary of the context of the book of Ruth, including: time, place, and religious conditions. Some discussed the views of biblical scholarship that the book is of a relatively late date. Most candidates focused discussion on the central themes of the book of Ruth, including: faithfulness and devotion; family continuity; the universalism of G-d's design; David and his ancestry. Some discussed the inclusion of the book in the canon of the Megilloth. In the weakest answers descriptive writing dominated.

In their evaluation, many candidates argued that the purpose of the book of Ruth is not altogether clear and that the theme of David and his ancestry is but one among several important elements in the book. Some argued that the inclusion of the genealogy at the end of the book indicated the author's disapproval of a narrow exclusivist attitude ie the mixed marriage of Ruth the Moabite woman to Boaz as providing Davidic ancestry.

# G584 New Testament

## General Comments

Many candidates gave excellent and enthusiastic responses. All candidates should be encouraged to address the questions with succinct arguments and analysis. A number of candidates who showed extensive knowledge and understanding and produced good answers could have gained the higher levels of marks with greater critical insight and holistic argument. Attention should be drawn to the AO2 level of response descriptors for Bands 4 and 5. Some satisfactorily knowledgeable answers displayed a lack of focus and candidates should be encouraged to filter information and analysis to create a structured essay around the title of the question.

## Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 Comprehensive answers included both the parables in Luke 15 and the more challenging ones in Luke 16. Candidates were able to make comment and analysis on their significance, both within the gospel and in the ministry of Jesus. There were some excellent discursive arguments, which attempted to distinguish between the theology of Luke and that of Jesus. In the majority of responses, the quality of the commentary on Luke's theology was varied: the purposes of Luke were often stated but not substantiated with other textual evidence from the gospel. A number of candidates only concentrated on the parables of the Lost in Luke 15 and did not explore any connection between the purpose of Jesus and the concerns of Luke. Generally, the analysis of the parables tended to be one sided. Allegorical interpretations were often confused and some responses were overly descriptive and repetitive. Some candidates could have improved their performance by displaying their knowledge and understanding of the parables in a more succinct way in order to spend the necessary amount of time on argument and analysis.
- 2 There was a variety of approaches to this question, all equally valid. Candidates produced good responses by addressing the relevant text in the Sermon on the Mount and other issues such as purity, food laws, Sabbath, Corban and the healing of the Leper. Most examined the different scholarly interpretations of Jesus' relationship with the Law. Some excellent responses showed insight into Jesus' role in a debate within a contemporary, fluid and diverse interpretation of the Law. Some candidates argued that Jesus was attacking the Pharisees' attitude to the Law, not the Law itself, and used background material and evidence from the gospels to good effect. A number of candidates struggled to make a pre-prepared essay on the Sermon on the Mount fit the criteria of the question. Some candidates spent a disproportionate amount of time on trying to link the Beatitudes to the Law when these eschatological blessings have nothing to say on the Law. Some candidates worked diligently on their answers but adopted a fairly limited one-dimensional approach to the question and declared the text to be either 'in support' or 'in conflict' with the Law. Again, attention should be drawn to the level descriptors for Bands 4 and 5, as mentioned above.
- 3 The most successful candidates focused on theories about the authorship of Mark and its setting within a background of Nero's persecution. It was notable that candidates varied in their ability to substantiate and debate these claims. Most candidates highlighted key themes and characteristics of the gospel, which may reflect persecution and there were some thoughtful discussions of these. Some did attempt to show that the patristic evidence was not a watertight case and discuss other purposes and settings for Mark's gospel. Some candidates could have improved their performance by a more critical examination of the evidence and theories they selected. A few candidates mistook the focus of the question and wrote about the persecution of Jesus in Mark.



- 4 Candidates from across the ability range tackled this question with engagement. There were some exceptional and very good answers, which thoughtfully explored the evidence on Jesus' eschatological teaching in the synoptic gospels. The best responses provided an insightful discussion of the concept of eschatological judgment as well as its timing in relation to the coming of the Kingdom. Some of these questioned whether judgment was implicit in the future sayings and parables and debated whether realised and inaugurated theories included judgment. Only a minority of the best answers set Jesus' teaching in the context of apocalyptic Judaism. The majority of candidates discussed the main scholarly theories on the timing of the Kingdom and future judgment, with varying degrees of success. Some good or satisfactory responses could have been improved by a more critical approach to the complexity of reaching a conclusion. Most concluded that judgment implied future eschatology. In analysing the views of scholars, candidates should be encouraged to attribute the correct view to each scholar; some candidates presented a confused picture of these views and so appeared confused in making their conclusions.

# G585 Development in Christian Theology

## General Comments

There were, as usual, many excellent answers. At the higher levels it was good to see candidates really trying hard to construct their own arguments and to unpack every element of the question. However, there were more candidates than usual who did not read questions carefully and lost marks, not because they lacked knowledge but because what they wrote was too general and sometimes irrelevant. Again, it is stressed that *long* essays are not necessarily good ones. Those who wrote less, but who had clearly planned an argument, fared far better.

In some cases there were some basic misunderstandings of topics. It might help some candidates and centres to read the notes for teachers which can be found on the OCR website.

## Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 There was some confusion about whether Smart had six or seven dimensions of religion. In general, those who considered he had six (as set out originally in his *The Religious Experience of Mankind* pp 15–25) had a much better understanding of Smart's project than others. However, essays which only dwelt on the dimensions did not get very far; good candidates understood Smart's project was essentially phenomenological and were able to distinguish Smart's approach from theology and anchor it in various philosophical views. Some excellent answers compared Smart to Husserl and were able to make some concise and penetrating criticisms of Smart's weaknesses. Most candidates considered that in reducing religion to experience or to certain practices, the experiential religious dimension which Smart sought to pin down is inevitably lost. Few really concentrated on the 'invisible' dimension and his discussion of the mystical and numinous.

Many tried to critique Smart by using Feuerbach and Cupitt but on the whole this was not successful. As previous reports have commented, Feuerbach's aim was focused largely on Christianity and his aim was to rid it of false metaphysical beliefs; this is very different from Smart. Cupitt's postmodern view of religion is also very different from Smart's, although good candidates were able to make some connections.

There was a general misunderstanding of postmodernism and modernism.

- 2 Those who really focused on Hick were able to produce some excellent essays, but for those who knew less about Hick this turned into a standard theology of religion question. Some ignored the 'demythologising' part of the question altogether and some rightly mentioned Hick's move from the Christocentric to the theocentric but were unable to provide much detail on his approach. Better candidates were able to recognise links with Bultmann and gave examples from the *Myth of God Incarnate*.

Good candidates discussed Hick's reliance on Kant and were therefore able to explain the philosophical foundation on which Hick based his idea of reconciliation. Good candidates therefore considered just what is meant by reconciliation. Some of the best essays contrasted Hick and Rahner; only the very competent answers used Barth effectively – although there is still a tendency to assume that Barth is an exclusivist (or worse still that he is a fundamentalist/literalist).

Those who understood demythologising well (from their AS course) considered Hick to have rid Christianity of its one reason for existing – the person of Christ. Good answers were able to quote Hick's comparison between the Jesus idea as it developed in its Jewish-Greek setting and how he might have been pictured had Christianity developed in the east. Excellent answers referred to Wittgenstein's 'seeing-as' ambiguity which Hick found useful.

- 3 Only a very few candidates tackled this question. In general, it was done quite well; candidates showed a good appreciation of Womanist theologians, their thought, context and effect. Good candidates were able to give a detailed exposition of their use of the Hagar story and were able to extrapolate from it some of the main Womanist notions of survival, racism, classism and sexism. Many felt very positive about Womanism's achievements and contrasted them with those of secular and Christian feminisms.

Weak candidates usually chose this question because they did not know enough to answer question 4; it was evident that they had little idea about Womanism either.

- 4 Most candidates answered this question. There was a variety of ways in which this question could be tackled and candidates drew on diverse and wide ranging sources. Most assumed that 'tradition' meant the Bible, although those few who only focused on the Old Testament without reference to its use in the Christian tradition could not expect to achieve the higher levels. Most, though, were able to pick examples from Old and New Testaments and offer some interpretation. Good answers understood how the so-called 'texts of terror' could be used in various ways (few really understand Trible's aims when dealing with these texts). Those who integrated feminist theologians in to their exegesis (notably Ruether and Fiorenza) of the New Testament and early Church often produced excellent answers.

There was widespread misunderstanding of Hampson's 'golden thread' argument. Whilst Hampson's use is ironic and critical of Christianity many considered her to be a liberal feminist theologian whereas in reality she is deeply critical of writers such as Ruether and Fiorenza and classes herself as a post-Christian.

In general, appropriate texts were selected and detailed evidence was offered for discussion. However, many essays became a list of inequality through the ages, with the odd look at pro-women parts of traditions, such as Jesus or the Gnostic gospels. Good candidates were careful to explain that Gnosticism is not really part of the tradition but might be an example of an alternative tradition which the Church suppressed.

Many candidates considered the part played by Augustine, Aquinas and Luther. Weaker candidates conflated the three. Generally, knowledge of Augustine was good whilst understanding of Luther was reduced to a single notion: that as women have wide hips God designed them only to be mothers. Luther's teaching on marriage, household duties, roles in society was less well known or understood.

Many candidates interpreted respect as interchangeable with equality, but better candidates appreciated that these concepts are not the same, and wove interesting arguments highlighting respect with what seems to us today as glaring inequality.

Some essays finished very abruptly having no central thesis. Candidates should be aware of the need to create a 'holistic' answer to a question – with a beginning, middle and conclusion which always keeps in touch with the question under consideration.

## G586 Buddhism

### General Comments

There were very few rubric errors this year although there were more scripts where handwriting was an impediment to the marking of the script. Candidates should be reminded that, whilst examiners make every attempt to mark their script, illegible handwriting will make that section of their response impossible to mark.

Most candidates appeared to have been appropriately prepared for the examination. They demonstrated knowledge of the key aspects of Buddhism and attempted to address both assessment objectives.

Some responses were overly long, and contained material which was extraneous to the question. In some cases, this meant that although the material presented showed excellent knowledge and understanding the selection of material was inappropriate and, at times, this prevented a response being placed in a higher band. Centres may wish to remind candidates that short focused responses can gain full marks, and that candidates should stop writing when they have answered the question.

Some candidates had extensive knowledge of scholarly texts such as Harvey and Rahula and were able to use these appropriately in their responses.

### Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 There was a tendency by some candidates to explore the path to nibbana rather than whether nibbana was a desirable goal. In these cases, evaluation was often limited to a paragraph at the end of the response stating that as this (these) path(s) existed, nibbana must be desirable.

Some weaker responses attempted to argue that people wanted to stay in samsara as they did not want to die and be reborn. There was often little argument to support this view.

The vast majority of answers explored the idea that nibbana was desired in most traditions, running through each tradition and explaining why, but that Pure Land might be an exception depending on the view taken of Sukhavati. The main difference between the quality of responses was the level of detail and strength of argument presented as candidates explored each tradition.

Some candidates used the questions of King Milinda, either in exploring the analogies used to describe nibbana, or in the refusal to answer what happens to arhats when they die.

Although some candidates questioned the use of the word desire, and explored the inherent contradiction here, this was rarely the main focus of the response and tended to be a brief side point.

- 2 This question tended to be answered very well or very poorly. This often appeared to depend on whether candidates actually knew the two traditions in any depth.

Some candidates clearly wanted to write a response on Zen, so argued that differences between Soto and Rinzai Zen were more significant in order to try and justify an extended exploration of the Zen tradition instead. In most cases, these responses contained little material relevant to the question and resulted in low marks.

Weaker candidates tended to describe some Pure Land beliefs and practices, repeat the quotes of Honen and Shinran on good men and bad men reaching Sukhavati, and then state that there were no significant differences between the two traditions.

Better responses tended to explore, in some depth, the similarities and differences between the two traditions. They tended to focus on the chanting of the nembutsu, practice (or not) of visualisations, and attitudes to morality, scripture and Sukhavati. As these areas were explored they tended to evaluate whether the differences were significant or not as they went along, reaching a final conclusion based on these interim views towards the end of the response.

- 3** Some candidates clearly did not know what ekayana was. Some thought it was a synonym for nibbana, whilst others thought it was upaya.

A few candidates explored why upaya was important, often to a reasonable standard, but were then unable to provide any argument related to ekayana and simply stated that upaya was more important than ekayana.

Where candidates offered some implicit counter-argument in relation to upaya some credit was given, even if candidates were not fully able to address the question.

There was a tendency in some responses to explore more parables, which was unnecessary and in some cases a hindrance to the response.

Some candidates did not know the parable sufficiently well. There were accounts of two carts being offered after the children left the house (Hinayana and Mahayana), and of the children leaving to find no cart at all was given to them.

The best candidates tended to refer to parts of the parable as and when required by their argument without retelling the whole parable at the beginning. They explored the importance of ekayana in establishing the Mahayana tradition and the superiority of the Bodhisattva path. They often offered a comparison of the importance of upaya both in the early history of Mahayana and in the later developments of Mahayana schools, before reaching justified conclusions.

- 4** A small number of candidates were not able to identify correctly the terms sila and samadhi, and this inevitably affected the quality of their responses. Where they included relevant but misidentified material some credit was given.

Many candidates in the middle range tended to explore reasons for the importance of all three parts of the path before reaching a conclusion. The level of detail presented for the relevant parts of the path and the quality of their evaluation affected the marks given within this range.

The best responses tended to focus only on sila and samadhi. They were often able to explore the importance of sila for monastic and lay Buddhists, before evaluating the difficulties of samadhi for lay Buddhists. Conclusions were varied, but always justified.

An alternative successful approach was to explore the importance of sila and samadhi in different Buddhist traditions before reaching a conclusion about their relative importance.

## G587 Hinduism

### General Comments

The standard of entries appeared to be lower than in previous sessions. A number of candidates did not have a clear grasp of the material they were attempting to use, and there was evidence that some candidates were unable to choose two questions they felt competent to answer. Candidates are to be reminded of the importance of revising all areas of the specification in preparation for the examination.

Nevertheless, there were some excellent entries, displaying scholarship and understanding of different views presented by academics on a range of issues.

### Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 Those candidates who focused on the views of Ramanuja tended to be able to present a sound argument about the views of atman and Brahman in Vishishtadvaita Vedanta. Some of the best responses on the paper were to this question.

Some candidates offered detailed explorations of the nature of both atman and Brahman. They were able to explore the importance of the jiva, and the notion that although identical in substance the jiva retained some individuality when joined with Brahman. They then offered clear evaluation of whether this meant they were identical or not, and some offered excellent evaluations of whether this view was logical.

A significant number of poorer responses did not focus on Ramanuja. They either mentioned Ramanuja and then focused solely on Sankara's Advaita Vedanta, or offered a comparison of Advaita Vedanta and Vishishtadvaita Vedanta with limited if any reference to their views on atman and Brahman.

Centres may wish to remind candidates that they will secure better marks by answering the question asked (even when less confident about the material) than providing a response only loosely related to the question (however good the knowledge and understanding of the alternative material is).

- 2 Although there was a clear demonstration of knowledge in some responses this was not always focused on answering the question. A number of candidates presented lots of information about the different paths to reach moksha without relating this back to whether Hindus wanted to achieve moksha or not. In some cases the same material could have been used much more successfully if candidates had made a clear link back to the question at the end of each section.

Better responses tended to explore whether all Hindu traditions were aiming to achieve moksha, exploring whether the aim in theistic traditions was the same as those following the jnana path, for example. There was some successful discussion about whether moksha or liberation was the same in different traditions, and if not, whether this affected the aim of these traditions.

There were also some examples of very successful discussions exploring whether some Hindus were unable to aim for moksha because of the demands in their lives, or their place in the caste system, and thus aimed for a better rebirth.

- 3** This was the most poorly answered question for most candidates. Few candidates seemed to have a grasp of the content of the Vedas or the image of God presented in the Vedas. Whilst detailed knowledge of individual Vedas is not required, some understanding of the main content and themes was expected.

Most responses tended to state that having lots of deities did make the teachings about God confusing as people could not understand them.

The best responses tended to focus on the different relationships which might be perceived between the individual deities and Brahman. They were able to explore whether the concept of Brahman could be reconciled with the hymns to individual deities, or whether these were two distinct ideas which therefore led to confusion about the true nature of God within the Vedas.

There were a few excellent responses which analysed the concept of Brahman presented in the Upanishads with that of the deities in the Vedas, and successfully argued that much of what is attributed to the Vedas actually comes from the Upanishads and the conflation of ideas between the two sets of texts. This supported their argument that much confusion is due to misunderstanding of the content of the Vedas rather than confusion within the Vedas themselves.

- 4** Most candidates were able to produce a reasonable response to this question. Many outlined the concepts of ahimsa and dharma and then explored their relative importance. There were frequent references to the Bhagavad Gita as well as Gandhi and the varnashramadharma system.

In the middle range of responses the content tended to be presented in blocks of information, with a more evaluative conclusion at the end.

Better responses tended to evaluate throughout the essay using the information to support their views. They often presented an opposing view, but then explored why this view was not convincing or was not a sufficiently powerful criticism of their own view.

# G588 Islam

## General Comments

The overall standard of responses was disappointing; however, there were some excellent responses which were a pleasure to read. Questions 1, 2 and 4 were the most popular with only a small number of candidates attempting Question 3. In general, the selection of material and critical analysis ranged from adequate to good but few candidates achieved the highest level. More evidence of independent reading and research could be shown in most responses. Questions 1 and 2, in general, were answered to a higher standard than the other two questions. Candidates seemed to have the most difficulty answering the AO2 element of Question 4.

## Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 There were some excellent responses to this question and many candidates clearly had real in-depth knowledge of Sufism, both in terms of its philosophy and its practices. The majority of responses began with an explanation of Sufism – weaker responses failed to appreciate that Sufism transcends sectarian allegiances. The weaker candidates were also less critical in their selection of material, including information that was not specifically relevant to the question. The majority of candidates also included information on other aspects of Islam which could also be considered as ‘the heart’ of the faith. A few, however, decided to focus almost solely on Sufism and went into a much more scholarly treatment of the subject.

Most candidates were able to suggest some reasons why Sufism may be considered the ‘heart of Islam’ – focusing typically on the emphasis on the individual’s relationship with Allah. The view of some Muslims that Sufism is tantamount to shirk, due to the reliance on Shaykhs (Pirs), seemed to be the most common argument against the claim. There were some excellent responses which showed a high level of critical analysis of sufi practices, providing a variety of arguments to support both sides of the claim. There were also some well thought out alternatives for aspects of Islam which could be considered to be at its heart.

- 2 This was a popular question and the full range of ability was represented in the responses. Most candidates managed some explanation of the Articles of Belief and were able to demonstrate, at least, a reasonable knowledge of the role of angels in Islam.

The selection of material ranged, generally, from satisfactory to good with a few candidates achieving an excellent demonstration of knowledge. Some candidates clearly had a much more in-depth understanding of angels than others which enabled them to evaluate the claim more critically. Better responses were able to give an equally comprehensive explanation of the other articles too.

Most candidates were able to offer arguments for both sides of the claim, however, not all responses did this to a particularly high level. Better responses demonstrated a good understanding of how all of the Articles are interlinked, but equally how some can clearly be argued as more important. Weaker candidates answered the question on a more superficial level and failed to engage in any real critical analysis of the question.

- 3 This was the least popular question and it was clear from some of the responses that it was not a question which had been prepared. However, there were some very good responses which clearly demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of all aspects related to Shari’a law – both in terms of compilation and implementation. The weakest candidates failed to give specific examples of crimes and punishments or to appreciate the differences for Muslims living in Islamic countries governed directly by Shari’a law and those living in non-Islamic countries.



Most candidates based their arguments in support of the claim on the idea that as the Shari'a is based on the 'words of Allah' it should be eternal and unchanging. The majority of candidates were also able to offer at least one alternative view which tended to relate to the concept of ijtiḥād. The best responses were able to appreciate the difference between the theoretical aspect of Islamic law and the implementation of it. They also demonstrated a good understanding of the changing nature of society and how this affects the question.

- 4 Responses here were generally of a lower standard than the other three questions. All candidates were able to give an explanation of the four Khalifāhs and name some of their achievements; however, the majority of responses only did this to a satisfactory level. Most candidates were able to discuss the Khalifāhs in relation to Sunni and Shi'a Islam but the weaker candidates failed to make this information completely relevant to the question.

Discussions tended to be fairly superficial, focusing on the Sunni/Shi'a split, concluding that Sunnis accept the achievements of all four Khalifāhs while Shias only accept the achievements of Ali. The best responses showed an appreciation that personal views on the Kaliphs do not necessarily mean that their achievements cannot be acknowledged – for example Uthman's compilation of the Qur'an.

## G589 Judaism

### General Comments

The overall standard achieved by candidates was good and it was clear that centres had worked hard to achieve successful outcomes in the vast majority of cases. At the top end of the mark range, responses demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of relevant subject matter and maintained sharp focus on the question. At the lower end of the mark range, answers often lacked focus and contained gaps in subject knowledge. The quality of written communication was generally good and there were no rubric infringements.

### Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the doctrine of Messianic hope in traditional Judaism; in weaker responses, candidates were often unaware of developments in the Reform attitude. Most candidates outlined the development of modern Zionism and included useful discussion of the views of Zionist and anti-Zionist groups; notably, the view that Jewish nationalism is a tool for securing religious goals.

In their evaluation, many candidates argued that notwithstanding Reform's rejection of the doctrine of a personal Messiah, it still has much in common with modern religious Zionism; some argued that many members of Reform are themselves Zionist activists. Others argued that there is nothing like a unified attitude between the two movements.

- 2 The responses to this question usually showed sound or good knowledge of Orthodox and Progressive approaches to Torah. Many explained the European Enlightenment as the primary reason for the emergence of modern movements and there was much good discussion of the part played by Moses Mendelssohn. Some candidates erroneously supposed Hasidism to have emerged in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In their evaluation, most candidates argued that the existence of different groups means greater freedom of choice for Jews who might otherwise be lost to the faith. Some argued that differences in practice are far outweighed by the common belief in Ethical Monotheism. Others argued that lack of mutual acceptance and recognition among the groups seriously weakens the bond between Jews and diminishes Judaism's mission.

- 3 The question elicited a variety of responses. All candidates included discussion of the spiritual impact that the Holocaust has had on the Jewish community. Many discussed the connection between the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, as guarantor of Jewish survival. Several candidates focused discussion on Holocaust survivors and their work; notably, Elie Wiesel.

In their evaluation, many candidates argued that the suffering in the Holocaust has helped Jews to understand the suffering of others; some citing Israeli support for victims of recent atrocities. Some argued that the Holocaust has forced Jews to re-examine their identity.

- 4 Most candidates focused discussion on the biblical promises of land, its centrality and sanctity in the Jewish consciousness, and the historical and political factors surrounding the establishment of the State of Israel. Many discussed the State of Israel as a focus of hope for world Jewry after the Holocaust. Some discussed the views of anti-Zionist groups; notably, Neturei Karta.

In their evaluation, many candidates argued that the link between the Jews and the Land of Israel has never been broken. Some argued that all Jews have access to the State. Others argued that only a Jewish state with Torah at its centre can be the fulfilment of biblical prophecy.

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