

Religious Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 H572**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H172**

OCR Report to Centres

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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.

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Overview

This is the last time AS and A2 exams will be available in January. It is pleasing to note that there were many excellent scripts and the standard was generally good. The usual weaknesses persist. Those candidates who simply reproduce a learnt essay will do less well than those who really focus on the question, refer to it in their response and attempt to answer it. This is especially important for AS part (b) questions and all A2 questions – where the quality of the final paragraph can often make a significant difference to the final mark.

Although candidates are encouraged to make reference to scholars, it is more important to discuss scholarly *ideas* rather than listing them and sometimes getting them wrong or confused. This is especially so in biblical papers; understanding and reference to the texts is clearly more important than scholars themselves.

Centres and candidates are encouraged to refer to the OCR website, to the reading lists and other resources available for each unit.

G571 Philosophy of Religion

General impression of the paper

Candidates were able to demonstrate a range of skills in knowledge, understanding and evaluation.

Overall performance of the candidates

Most candidates were well prepared in general knowledge, though many were insufficiently thoughtful about the precise requirements of the questions set. Many candidates still struggle to develop cogent arguments in part (b) questions, often simply juxtaposing statements about different philosophers without showing any personal engagement with, or reflection on, the issues concerned. Many candidates attempted to gear the questions on the paper to the material for which they had specifically prepared; as such, the Ontological Argument was found in responses to each of the four questions and AO2 marks tended to be in the 'asserted' (Level 2) and 'implicit' (Level 3) range. It is important that part (b) responses focus directly on the question set; it is therefore vital that candidates learn not only the strengths and weaknesses of particular theories, but also learn to apply these to a range of questions, so that they can respond to particular questions when the examination comes around. This will also help candidates with the transition to A2.

The standard of English was, generally, better than in some recent series. However, there were repeated elementary errors, most commonly the use of 'of' for 'have' and the invented verb "to flaw" or "to floor" an argument. However, too many candidates failed to use correctly (or to spell) terms such as 'a priori', 'a posteriori', 'refute', 'induction', 'synthetic' or 'logical'. Correct understanding of the technical language of the subject is an essential skill. To describe a theory such as evolution or the teleological argument as 'a posteriori, inductive and synthetic', as so many did, simply reveals an absence of accurate understanding of terminology. There were more candidates than usual who answered both part (a) questions before both part (b) questions. While the logic of this is evident, it did seem to hinder these candidates in that their minds had turned away from the topic at hand, and they often started to re-assert information, rather than responding to the question set.

Nevertheless, some candidates produced work demonstrating keen understanding, insight and original reflection on the issues, which was most pleasing.

Report on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) Some candidates demonstrated a very good understanding of the allegory and its interpretation, including a wealth of detail and some very good use of technical terminology. Better responses were explanatory rather than descriptive and gave detail about the concept of the Forms which the allegory is intended to illustrate. Many gave very general ideas about not seeing the truth of the world around us, and being misled by the media/politicians and a few candidates demonstrated fundamental misunderstanding by attempting, anachronistically, to 'Christianise' the analogy by references to heaven or making the Form of the Good a God of love. Few candidates referred explicitly to the particulars, and most were better at explaining the world of the forms than explaining Plato's view of the particulars.

It was apparent that not many candidates had read the few pages of the analogy: fanciful details were added to Plato's very precise account. Nevertheless, meanings were generally understood, though relatively few paid much attention to the significance of the fire or Plato's understanding of mathematical knowledge which also forms part of the analogy.

Though not required by the specification, when studying the analogy some candidates found it helpful to consider how it relates to the Divided Line. Making the relationship can be extraordinarily helpful in interpretation.

- (b) The part (b) section was not as well handled as part (a), as many candidates did not realise that they were being asked to evaluate Plato's theory of the two worlds. Many reported Aristotle's ideas about causation and the Prime Mover, but did not draw the conclusion that in contrast to Plato he values empiricism as the only way to true knowledge. There were a number of candidates who dismissed Plato on the grounds that we are happy in this life; this complacency is precisely what Plato was concerned about. There were some thoughtful reflections on the pertinence of Plato's ideas to the digital age and lifestyle. There were a large number of basic attempts to argue, which were not always successful, using the idea that we are in shadow because we do not want to see the truth/believe the media.

- 2 (a) Some candidates struggled with this question. Most candidates had very good knowledge of Paley and Aquinas, but knew little of Mill. Generally, the material on Mill was underdeveloped, especially on the attributes of God. A number of candidates erroneously concluded that Mill says there is no designer. Some responses seemed to be unaware that Mill focused on natural evil, and made reference to moral evil as well. A significant number of candidates attributed criticisms by Russell, Hume or Darwinists to Mill.

Better responses took Mill's criticism and linked it specifically to the teleological argument. They focused on natural evil, the unnecessary magnitude of this evil, and the implication that this might leave a designer who did not fit the Judeo-Christian God as presented by (usually) Paley. A few responses incorporated quotations from Mill and proceeded to explain and illustrate them with examples. Although some misattributed the example of the digger wasp to Mill, this was credited for understanding the issues raised, particularly as an example of natural evil.

- (b) This question evoked some thoughtful responses. It was straightforward if carefully read, but some assumed that all that was required was a description or statement of arguments for and against teleological arguments rather than the evaluation and weighing of arguments against each other to assess their relative merits. This led to many candidates moving away from addressing the focus of the question and whether the criticisms damaged the argument. Better candidates examined the criticisms, rather than simply asserting them.

There was some very good use of the anthropic and aesthetic principles and irreducible complexity to argue that there are modern counters to the criticism posed by evolution.

- 3 (a) Most candidates who attempted this question demonstrated relevant understanding of Freud. A few confused Freud with more general sociological arguments about moral awareness. For some reason, 'id' proved difficult to spell for many, frequently appearing as 'ID' or even 'I.D.'

Freud's ideas about the structure of the mind were explained with varying degrees of accuracy. Some candidates had an exceptional awareness of Freud's teaching on the id, ego and superego. They were able to use primal horde to show how this might

affect the development of moral awareness and the effect of guilt in determining future moral action. Better responses were able to link theories about the Oedipus Complex with the development of the superego, though quite often the Complex was simply described without any real recognition of its impact on moral awareness. There was some clear material on the influence of parents and society in forming moral awareness.

A number of candidates set out Kant's moral argument in detail. While Freud's view does challenge that of Kant, and the specification has them studied alongside each other, it seemed unnecessary for complete accounts of Kant's moral argument to be written out. In terms of what Freud said, it is important that candidates distinguish between his challenges to religion and his statements of where morality comes from. Many candidates knew about the idea of internalisation, and were able to identify the superego's role in this, but fewer were able to develop this, save for several tautologous examples.

- (b)** Many candidates struggled with this question. Some failed to notice 'only' in the question. Perhaps even more common was the assumption that the question was a request to recount Kant's Moral Argument for the existence of God. Although Kant's argument was an attempt to demonstrate the existence of God, it was not the *source* of moral awareness. More successful answers managed to tie it in to moral awareness. Many candidates used the biblical references to God as a lawgiver effectively. Some good responses developed the idea of lawgiver and commander by using Newman and Owen effectively as a contrast to Freud and general sociological sources, with some even considering cultural relativism.

There were some really interesting responses which discussed whether we could have a range of influences on our moral awareness and whether there was room for God in this range, making him an influence but not the only one. Many candidates drew on knowledge beyond the specification to good effect. Some engaged with what they perceived to be logical inconsistencies in the idea of God being the source of moral awareness and allowing certain events to occur.

- 4 (a)** Candidates were free to approach this question from any relevant angle, and many approaches were seen. The majority described some of the work of Charles Darwin and noted that Richard Dawkins is a modern Darwinist, showing good historical knowledge. Good answers tended to be sensitive to the challenges that evolution placed onto received worldviews, and that it continues to challenge many people, although some turned the answer into a discussion of Intelligent Design and Creationism, which was too far from the question to be credited. A number of candidates equated the Big Bang and Evolution here and in part (b) and they should be aware that the two do not automatically overlap.

Candidates should also aim for precision, rather than stating only that humans evolved from apes/monkeys; success at this level requires attention to detail. There was some tendency to list too many examples of evolution, without fully explaining the processes being described.

Weaker answers often used a broad brush and relied on repeated use of the term evolution without actually explaining the meaning. Many candidates chose to go down the route of explaining the threat that evolution, as a random and natural process, poses to belief in a divinely planned creation. Credit was given to those answers which chose to explore evolution in relation to creationism or other philosophical approaches, rather than a purely scientific response.

- (b)** Some candidates failed to note 'only' in the question, and many did not focus on 'existence of *life*', producing generalised answers as a result. Too many candidates over-simplified the range of Christian views on this question, assuming Christians are necessarily creationists. The best answers demonstrated careful reflection on the issues.

There was quite a lot of 'putting' creationist views next to evolutionary views without really analysing them as explanations for the existence of life. The best responses tended to consider whether the two views can be compatible in certain interpretations, but this was not the only successful approach.

G572 Religious Ethics

General impression of the paper

There were some good responses from candidates, but many candidates either misread or misunderstood the questions. Candidates need to read the question carefully before starting to write so that they are sure that they understand what is being asked.

Overall performance of the candidates

Candidates could be encouraged to develop their essay writing technique and the use of paragraphs. Additionally there are still candidates who write considerably more for part (b) than they do for part (a) in spite of the fact that it attracts fewer marks. A number of candidates also spend time evaluating in part (a) describing strengths and weaknesses and, in part (b) some candidates simply wrote information with no attempt at evaluation or critical analysis.

Report on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) Some candidates approached this question through consideration of Utilitarianism in general, Bentham's approach and Mill's refinement of what Bentham wrote. In some cases this worked, providing that the candidate kept focused on the question as to Mill's Utilitarianism. Some candidates showed a clear and fluent understanding of Happiness vs. Pleasure and Quality vs. Quantity. Some candidates successfully identified Mill with Rule Utilitarianism, though not quite so many were able to state that the term Rule Utilitarianism was only associated with Mill after his death. Some candidates were able to bring in consideration of Mill's 'no harm' principle along with the protection offered to the minority through his approach. Fewer candidates were able to talk about Mill's use of 'competent judges' in his ethical theory. Better candidates focused on **how** Mill's Utilitarianism might be used to decide the right course of action. Some candidates tended to limit themselves to the example of the sadistic guards. Other candidates used the example of abortion, though with varying degrees of success.
- (b) This question produced a wide range of good responses. Some candidates were able to contrast successfully the views of Bentham, Mill and Singer regarding abortion and then form a judgement. Other candidates were able to do this and then bring in contrasting ethical theories such as Natural Law. However, some responses seemed to miss the key word in the question of whether Utilitarianism was a *reliable* method of making decisions and simply explained how Utilitarianism might be applied to abortion.
- 2 (a) Some candidates showed a pleasing range of knowledge with regard to Natural Law. The foundations in Aristotle and development by Aquinas were frequently brought out so that the concept of the 'telos' and the Primary Precepts could then be applied to embryo research. Some candidates showed little or a hazy understanding of what embryo research entailed. This limited their response to the question, as many simply concentrated on IVF. Better candidates referred to the Secondary Precepts and the way in which they might be used in this area. Those candidates who did well on this question recognised that Natural Law would have difficulties working out whether embryo research went against the preservation of life, mentioned double effect and real and apparent goods. Some responses tended to focus on each of the primary precepts and individually attempt to apply them to embryo research; this method failed when the candidate was unsure of what embryo research is.

- (b) There were a number of good responses to this question and even those who seemed to show little knowledge of embryo research in part (a) were able to consider whether it was justified. Some candidates, however, were hampered in their efforts by their limited knowledge regarding embryo research. Better responses were able to show a fluent understanding of approaches which might be taken by Kant, Bentham and Fletcher. Those who did not refer to theories in their answer were still able to write good responses and were able to use examples to good effect to form an argument. Candidates were more successful when they discussed whether embryo research could be *justified* rather than simply saying whether it was right or wrong.
- 3 (a) Candidates who attempted this question usually performed well. Most went beyond simply listing the Just War criteria and gave some sort of rationale for the theory itself. Weaker responses did not spend any time on considering the *purpose* of the Just War Theory and simply outlined the principles. Those who did focus on the purpose as well as the principles were then able to present the principles of Jus ad Bellum, Jus in Bello and Jus post Bellum in a much more structured fashion. Some candidates were more successful in explaining the Just War Theory through use of examples. A number of candidates brought in Christian Realism and Pacifism which fell outside the parameters of the question being asked.
- (b) Some candidates limited themselves to exploring the strengths and weaknesses of the Just War Theory and whether it still worked in the modern age. Here again, more successful candidates kept their focus on whether the Just War Theory can be applied to *modern warfare*. Candidates would certainly benefit from being able to use pertinent examples in this area.
- 4 (a) This question was generally well done with candidates showing a good understanding of absolutism. Some candidates presented in varying detail accounts of Kantian Ethics and/or Natural Law. Some candidates included Divine Command Theory as well. On the other hand, some candidates simply presented general discussions as to what absolute morality meant in terms of society having rules. More successful candidates were able to explain *the concept* of absolute morality by illustrating their answers with reference to Kant etc. rather than simply writing an essay on Kantian ethics etc. Some candidates tended to write too much on relativism in general rather than referring to it as a way of explaining absolute morality. Better responses showed that there were different types of absolutism.
- (b) More successful approaches kept their focus on the question as to *considering* consequences being more important than following rules. Some candidates were able to answer the question well with clearly-drawn arguments which used the contrast between Utilitarianism and, for example, Divine Command Theory to aid their discussion. A few responses even discussed the rules in teleological theory. Better candidates explored the idea of consequences and presented a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of absolutism vs. relativism with varying degrees of success.

G573 Jewish Scriptures

General impression of the paper

The time allocated was sufficient for candidates to complete two questions and there were no rubric infringements. On the whole, the quality of written communication was good, although some candidates needed to break their writing into paragraphs.

Overall performance of the candidates

Overall, the standard of response was quite good and the majority of candidates well prepared for the examination. In the best responses, candidates were able to make secure references and to quote the text in support of their points. At the lower end of the mark range descriptive writing dominated and candidates tended to rely on pre-prepared answers. Those who spent some time considering the question and who made a brief plan often did better than those who did not.

Report on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) In the best answers, candidates showed an impressive range and depth of knowledge: the examples selected for their answers were aptly chosen and helped to advance the argument of the essay. Most candidates chose to approach the answer with a general introduction about covenants before giving a brief account of each one in turn. Candidates achieved higher marks when they considered all of the subject matter and supported their answers with reference to the texts. On the whole, candidates displayed less knowledge and understanding of the covenants with David and Jeremiah.
- (b) Most candidates agreed with the statement, often arguing that the covenants with Adam and Noah were universal in scope, while the later covenants had particular significance for the Jewish people. Some maintained that the fact that G-d had to bring in so many covenants proved that there was no progression in the covenantal relationship between G-d and His people.
- 2 (a) Candidates were frequently aware that Job is a major book of the wisdom literature of the Bible. Most had sound knowledge of the text of the book of Job and were able to use the material to produce reasoned answers. The responses of less well prepared candidates tended to include extensive commentary on the story in Job 1-2. On the whole, candidates had greater knowledge and understanding of the points of view of Eliphaz than those of Bildad and Zophar. Some commented on the use of irony and of questions in the book.
- (b) This was answered well by most candidates, including those who had struggled with the first part of the question. Almost all candidates attempted a two-sided response. A frequent comment was that those who attempted to play G-d must surely be punished. On the other hand, most candidates supposed that the three 'comforters' came with good intentions and therefore they did not deserve to be condemned.
- 3 (a) There were some very good answers to this question, in which candidates thought about the question set. Candidates needed to focus on the precise question before them, rather than concentrating on storytelling in order to obtain higher marks. Most candidates supposed that the sailors and Ninevites were not only vital elements in the story of Jonah but vital in teaching lessons; including, Israel's mission. A number of responses included discussion of the importance of Nineveh in ancient Assyria.

- (b)** Most candidates expressed sympathy for the prophet. The general thrust of the argument was that even though Jonah made a wrong decision, he eventually made amends by complying with G-d's decree and brought the Ninevites to total repentance.
- 4 (a)** In the best responses, candidates used the texts to very good effect to support their answers. Better candidates dealt with all three chapters identified in the question. Others included extraneous material; notably, the account of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. In general, candidates answered the question by explaining the impact of Elijah as each scenario was recounted. Most commented on Elijah's willingness to stand up for G-d, thereby putting his own life at risk.
- (b)** The question elicited many good responses. Some candidates argued that the stories of Elijah are certainly relevant in today's world where people are 'slaves to their desires and worship modern technology'. Some argued the stories were only relevant in the time of the monarchy.

G574 New Testament

Overall performance of the candidates

Generally, the performance was good or satisfactory. There was a trend among some candidates to produce better answers for part (b) of questions, on evaluation and analysis, than for part (a) of questions which, required selection and deployment of knowledge of the prescribed texts. In some answers there was an obvious lack of knowledge of the gospel text(s) on which a particular question was based and so explanations were general when they should have been more specific. This prevented some candidates from reaching the highest level of marks.

Report on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) The majority who answered this question had obviously studied the topic in detail and the beliefs of the Zealots and their mode of operation in 1st Century Palestine was well known. The overall performance on this question was of a good standard.

(b) Many candidates showed a critical awareness of the inter-relationship for Jews between religion and politics in 1st Century Palestine. The majority of answers were excellent or good, with candidates providing well founded examples to support their arguments.
- 2 (a) The candidates who achieved the higher levels were those who were able to show a good understanding of the Source Critic's work in relation to explaining how and why the Synoptic Gospel writers used both similar and different material in their accounts of the life of Jesus and how knowledge of this contributes to an understanding of the gospels. Other candidates wrote, in a more general way, to interpret differences in the text.

(b) The majority of candidates were able to argue, with varying degrees of success, that there were benefits and disadvantages to studying a gospel writer, but only a minority considered any arguments about the importance of the gospel content, as the message of the Good News, surpassing any biblical criticism.
- 3 (a) Amongst the majority of the candidates who chose this question, there was a lack of knowledge of the text of Mark's version of the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin. Some candidates wrote very generally about the Passion narrative and the two trials, Jewish and Roman, often confusing the High Priest with Pilate. Several candidates explained the motivation of the Jews in arresting Jesus and also Mark's bias towards blaming the Jews for the death of Jesus, but did not refer to any of the specifics of the Jewish trial itself. In general, most candidates could have improved their performance and attained higher levels of marks with more thorough attention to the details of Mark 14: 53-65 and more development of the text to show understanding of the importance of this passage in Mark.

(b) In contrast to 3 (a), this was generally very well answered and candidates demonstrated the broad scope of their knowledge of the Passion narrative to analyse and evaluate the factors that contributed to the death of Jesus. Candidates generally gained the higher levels of marks for their answers.

- 4 (a) In response to this question on the problem of the ending of Mark's gospel, the majority of candidates were aware of the well debated issues about the shorter ending of Mark but did not include any meaningful discussion about the longer ending. Some candidates dismissed the longer ending in one sentence with no reference to the text. Attention should be drawn to the fact that the prescribed texts for study are Mark 16:1–8; 16:1–9; 16:9–20. A few candidates did offer explanations as to what may have happened to Mark to prevent him completing his gospel and the theory about a lost ending as well as the possible motivation for adding the further passages Mark 16: 9–20 which gave depth to their answers.
- (b) Candidates who had a grasp of the detail of both endings of Mark were able to gain good marks for an evaluation of which ending of Mark, if any, is the most effective in completing Mark's account of the 'Good News'. There were some good responses on the pros and cons of the shorter ending, which were credited appropriately but which ignored the longer ending, even though it was mentioned in the question.

G575 Developments in Christian Theology

General Comments

There were very few candidates who took this unit. Comments are, therefore, brief and not indicative of the usual quality of candidates who prepare for this paper in the summer.

Report on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) Many candidates wrote well on Calvin, but good candidates were distinguished by their ability to focus on the aspects of Calvin's thought that dealt specifically with 'God the Redeemer'. Better candidates discussed the role of Christ as mediator but very few understood Calvin's teaching on the Trinity or his theory of accommodation.
- (b) Too many candidates simply repeated their argument from 1 (a). Better candidates understood some of the problems of rationality associated with revealed knowledge and natural theology and did so with reference to the Barth-Brunner debate.
- 2 (a) Many candidates treated this question merely as a philosophy of religion problem by outlining Aquinas' 'Five Ways'. Whilst this was not wrong, it did not give sufficient attention to his teaching on simplicity, creation ex nihilo, the actus purus and the relationship of primary and secondary causation. Many saw God and creation as separate topics for examination and only a few made links between the two. However, some candidates did offer some good explanation on the distinction between angels and humans and their place in the creation.
- (b) Most candidates approached this question via the science versus religion debate with varying success. There were a lot of sweeping statements on both sides; it would have been good to have seen some discussion of the 'God of gaps' argument, evolution, chance and necessity.
- 3 (a) This question was generally well done. Candidates were able to show the importance of Jesus as liberator for liberation theologians and were able to place him in the Zealot movement. Few were able to highlight and discuss key biblical passages and how they have been used by theologians in the mediations or teaching in the base communities.
- (b) A few very good answers were able to tackle the notion of sin from a Marxist/materialist position by considering it in structural terms. Most preferred to discuss personal sin and how groups of people sinning made sin political. Generally, this question was well done.
- 4 (a) There were some good answers to this question. Candidates showed a good knowledge of the workings of liberation theology and were able to highlight concepts such as first and second act praxis, including the three mediations. A few talked about base communities and differing interpretations by specific theologians.
- (b) Better answers tended to look at criticisms of liberation theology levelled by the Catholic Church or the implications of death of Marxism/Communism. Some candidates argued well that liberation theology had a new life in gay and feminist theologies and so therefore had a good future.

G576 Buddhism

General impression of the paper

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

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

Overall performance of the candidates

Many candidates were exceptionally well prepared, showing evidence of a wide range of reading, and real engagement with the material. Others struggled with part (b) questions and had a tendency to describe or present views without analysing them, although this was less noticeable than in previous sessions.

A small number of candidates gained very high marks for one question and poorer marks for the other question.

Report on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) Most candidates were able to outline the Four Noble Truths in reasonable depth. There was more evidence of candidates trying to show how the Four Noble Truths might be used than in past questions of a similar style. This also tended to be done more throughout the response rather than as a final paragraph. Centres should be credited for making clear to their candidates the need to link explicitly to the question throughout the response.

In the middle range, candidates tended to outline each truth in turn and then explain how this truth might be used by Buddhists before proceeding to the next truth. This was, in the main, effective and marks were awarded based on the quality of the explanation given of the truths and how they might be used.

Most candidates tended to focus on how the truths might be used to encourage Buddhists to begin the Buddhist path, provide understanding of what was necessary on the path, offer solace that the path could lead to a better existence, and offer practical guidance on how the path could be pursued.

Some of the very best responses offered less detailed accounts of each noble truth, but explained the application of the truths in very specific terms.

- (b) A minority of the candidates did not appear to know what the Deer Park Sermon was, despite it following on from a question about the Four Noble Truths.

Some responses were limited to saying that the Deer Park Sermon must be the Buddha's most important teaching as it was given first.

Better responses tended to give clear reasons why the Four Noble Truths might be considered important, or offer comparison with other teachings they considered important. Many candidates concluded that the corpus of teaching was of more value than any one individual teaching. Some candidates offered critiques based on Mahayana views with varying degrees of success.

The best responses often showed how the Four Noble Truths could be said to encapsulate all other teachings, and in this way might be viewed as the most important.

- 2 (a) Many candidates knew a reasonable range of the practices of the monastic communities: going on the alms round; studying scripture; meditating; the pattimokkha ceremony; teaching the laity; merit making ceremonies and other ceremonies for the laity.

Often these practices were described rather than explained. Candidates might benefit from limiting the range of ideas they covered, in order to provide some depth to their responses.

The best candidates did explain the practices well. They often made distinctions between forest and village dwelling bhikkhus or Theravada and Mahayana traditions in order to develop their explanations of the purpose or benefits of the practices they were exploring.

- (b) Most candidates showed some awareness that bhikkhus and bhikkhunis are viewed differently. For some, this did not move much beyond the idea that bhikkhunis have more rules to follow.

There seemed to be some confusion amongst candidates about the number of extra rules followed by the bhikkhunis – most citing that there were 10 extra rules followed. Whilst the numbers of vinaya rules vary in different traditions, and we do not expect candidates to be able to cite the numbers for each tradition, we would have expected candidates to be aware that these 10 rules (often cited as they explicitly seem to emphasise the nature of the relationship between the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis) are simply a selected few of those in the vinaya.

Some of the best responses were aware of the difficulties bhikkhunis face in some cultures, and the issues facing some Buddhist women where the line of bhikkhunis has died out and they are struggling to re-establish a female monastic tradition. Candidates often considered cultural and religious influences on the status of women, and as a corollary, bhikkhunis. Some considered the patriarchal nature of Indian society at the time of the Buddha, and whether this still needed to influence the status of bhikkhunis today.

Candidates should try to avoid the use of ill-informed stereotyping in their responses.

- 3 (a) This question either seemed to be answered very poorly or very well, with fewer responses in the middle range.

Some candidates had little grasp of nibbana or parinibbana, and believed parinibbana to be a higher level of enlightenment achieved by arhats, whilst other Buddhists achieved nibbana. This seems to be some kind of confusion with the bodhisattva path – perhaps a misunderstanding of the Mahayana claim that the nibbana of the arhats is provisional.

Better responses were able to articulate that nibbana is achieved in this life, is freedom from dukkha and the three poisons, and as a result you no longer create karmic formations. You can still experience karmic consequences and still have a body (rup (a)). They also understood that parinibbana is achieved at death when a Buddhist who has achieved enlightenment passes on to a static (nibbanic) state and is not reborn in samsara. You lose form (rup (a)) and are no longer subject to karmic consequences. They were able to explore the relationship by showing what changed or stayed the same in the two states, or showing how nibbana was a fore runner of parinibbana.

A few candidates tried to explore this question using the trikaya doctrine, with varying degrees of success.

- (b)** Many candidates repeated the information from part (a), without offering much evaluation on the material presented.

Better responses were able to explore similarities and differences between the two and evaluate their importance in relation to the claim that nibbana and parinibbana were the same.

- 4 (a)** Many candidates did not differentiate between the traditional accounts of the Buddha's life and the traditional accounts of his enlightenment. In fact a significant minority detailed many other parts of the Buddha's life, but failed to address his enlightenment much beyond a statement that he became enlightened under the Bodhi tree (and in some cases did not address the enlightenment at all).

Better responses made reference to other parts of the Buddha's life and explicitly linked these to his enlightenment and to the Buddha's teaching. A frequent example of this was Siddhartha's experience of the first jhana during the ploughing festival in his childhood.

Some candidates were clearly more familiar with the traditional accounts of the enlightenment: under the bodhi tree; temptation by Mara through his daughters and his army; calling the earth as witness; the knowledge gained in the three watches.

The best responses made thoughtful and considered links to Buddhist teachings showing a real understanding of the material.

- (b)** Responses to this were often more successful than responses to part (a).

Many candidates referred to the Buddha's reference to himself as a finger pointing to the moon, or the injunction to be 'a lamp unto yourself', to successfully argue that the teachings are more important than the Buddha.

Others claimed that the life of the Buddha was important in aiding understanding of the teachings or providing an inspiration to Buddhists. There was some very successful use of the three refuges in this regard.

G578 Islam

General Comments

The general standard of answers was reasonable with a few candidates writing excellent responses and a few below average. Some candidates appeared to lack the level of depth to their knowledge that is required at AS level while others failed to engage fully with the evaluative element in AO2. A few candidates, however, demonstrated a great level of knowledge with a similarly well developed ability to evaluate.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) Good responses demonstrated a high level of knowledge and well developed evaluative skills. Some candidates chose to limit the number of topics they picked up on when discussing a Muslim's responsibility towards Allah whereas others discussed a wider selection – either approach was acceptable as long as the level of detail in the former approach was sufficient. Most candidates talked about the Five Pillars as a fundamental responsibility for all Muslims. The lower level responses talked exclusively about these and so limited the level they could achieve. Better candidates also discussed the concept of Muslims as Khalifahs, the responsibility to help fellow members of the Ummah, the worship of Allah and the concept of Jihad.
 - (b) Some candidates were able to demonstrate very good evaluative skills. Others did not engage with this question at the highest level. Better responses considered more than one viewpoint and sustained a line of argument throughout. Most candidates were able to illustrate why helping others is important in Islam. Better responses then went on to offer alternatives for what else may be considered the most important aspect of the religion. The best responses discussed ideas like the worship of Allah or the Greater Jihad as alternatives.
- 2 (a) The better candidates selected material well and only addressed those aspects of the revelation and beliefs about the Qur'an that demonstrated its 'uniqueness'. This included things like the Qur'an as an earthly copy of an eternal book, the idea of it restoring a previously distorted message and the relatively short period of time after which it was compiled. Lower level responses tended to include a more descriptive account of the revelation with little or no reference as to why this makes the Qur'an unique.
 - (b) The majority of candidates were able to provide reasons for why translating the Qur'an may be necessary – the most common reason being for the benefit of non-Arabic speakers. Most candidates were also able to offer reasons for not translating it such as the difficulties caused when translating in terms of potential loss of meaning. Not all candidates, however, went into enough depth to achieve the highest level.
- 3 (a) All candidates demonstrated a good understanding of what both Zakat and Salah are. Better responses described how the two pillars are observed alongside discussing how they purify Muslims. Better candidates were also able to discuss both the physical and spiritual aspects of Salah and the way in which Zakat purifies remaining wealth for Muslims.
 - (b) The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate ways in which religious practices benefitted both the individual and the Ummah. Better responses offered reasons for one being affected more than the other, rather than only arguing how they benefitted both equally. The better candidates were also able to use a range of religious practices to show the benefits to the Ummah and the individual before coming to a definitive conclusion.

- 4 (a) There were some very good responses that made reference to a number of reasons why mosques do not contain statues or images of Allah, Muhammad ﷺ or any living animals. Those candidates referred to the concepts of Tawhid and Shirk, Muhammad ﷺ clearing the Ka'ba of idols and man's inability to replicate Allah's creation. Lower level responses made more general comments about the mosque and focused mainly on the concept of Tawhid alone.
- (b) The majority of the candidates were able to explain why it was not in line with Muhammad's ﷺ teachings; however, many had a limited number of points to use. Better responses were also able to offer a number of reasons in support of spending money on magnificent places of worship thus demonstrating both viewpoints.

G579 Judaism

General Comments

The standard of response was generally satisfactory in this unit and many candidates were able to develop detailed and well structured answers to their chosen questions. Some candidates needed to appreciate that in part (a) questions they were expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the material rather than engage in analysis.

Overall, standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar were sound, although some candidates needed to break their writing into paragraphs.

Candidates appeared to cope well with the paper and only a handful of candidates did not attempt both parts of two questions. Centres have clearly worked hard to achieve successful outcomes in the vast majority of cases.

Report on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the Sabbath and the varied aspects of its observance. Nearly all candidates discussed the importance of the Friday evening meal for Jewish family unity. Some discussed the ways in which Orthodoxy and the more liberal Reform Judaism view the regulations concerning work on the Sabbath. When candidates did not get high marks it was often because they outlined Sabbath observances without addressing the question.
- (b) Almost all candidates attempted a two-sided response. Some voiced irritation at not being able to use electrical devices on the Sabbath. Most argued the benefits of being able to chat and relax with family and friends. Some candidates showed knowledge and understanding that would have been creditable in part (a), has it been included there.
- 2 (a) There were some excellent responses from those candidates who integrated formal description of the contents of the Tenakh with discussion of its use in everyday living. Many concentrated discussion on how the Orthodox Jew's life is governed by the mitzvot. Most included some explanation of how the Tenakh is used in public worship, including the importance of Torah readings and the Haftarah. In a minority of responses, candidates confused Tenakh with Talmud.
- (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 candidates argued the enduring worth of ethical teachings in the Tenakh; notably, the Ten Commandments. Some pointed to the importance of teachings concerning the Messianic Age. Only a handful argued that the world and humankind have changed so much over time that anything this old can serve little purpose.
- 3 (a) There were some excellent responses from those candidates who were well prepared for all areas of the 'chosen people' concept listed in the specification. In the best responses, candidates discussed the function of priests in Ancient Israel as mediators between G-d and the people, and related this to the role of the Jews as a royal priesthood. When candidates did not get high marks it was because they limited discussion to the 'chosen people' concept and did not address the question.

- (b)** In their evaluation, several candidates maintained that the giving of the 613 mitzvot has allowed the Jewish people to have a closer relationship with G-d than any other nation. Some argued Maimonides' assertion that we simply do not know why G-d chose the Jews.
- 4 (a)** The responses to this question were generally sound, although a significant minority of candidates had trouble distinguishing pagan monotheism from polytheism. In the best responses, candidates explained the difference between ethical monotheism and pagan monotheism as not quantitative but qualitative. Some candidates included useful discussion of the exclusive monotheism exemplified in Judaism.
- (b)** There were some thoughtful responses to this question. Most argued that the Torah binds Jews to ethical monotheism. Others argued that a true Jew is one who affirms his or her identification with the Jewish people and Jewish culture.

G581 Philosophy of Religion

General impression of the paper

The full range of responses was seen on this paper. Candidates should focus on discerning what material should be selected to answer particular questions. Candidates are advised that appropriate selection of material enhances arguments and distinction should be drawn between the 'topic' and the 'question'.

Candidates should also be aware that popular philosophical principles, such as Pascal's Wager, Ockham's Razor and 'Ten Leaky Buckets' are useful devices when used appropriately.

Overall performance of the candidates

There were, as always, some very good scripts but many candidates failed to do justice to their abilities because of not reading the question as set, especially in question 4. Good responses establish relevance – it is clear to the reader why a particular point has been made. Better responses demonstrated why facts learned might be significant, rather than simply listing unconnected facts. Better answers also demonstrated reflection on issues and thoughtful insights. 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 were not helped by the poor use of English: muddled expression too often points to and creates muddled thought. There was also sometimes an inadequate grasp of the grammar of philosophy, with terms such as 'prove' (used as a synonym for 'argue'), 'refute' (used to mean 'deny'), 'a priori' (often mistakenly used for 'innate'), 'a posteriori', 'cognitive', 'noncognitive', 'propositional', 'non-propositional', 'antireal', 'logical', 'coherent', 'analytic' and 'metaphysical' commonly misunderstood.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 Overall, candidates needed to focus more on the specific question asked, rather than listing generic information regarding religious language.

Many candidates were aware that the idea of Via Negativa was to avoid anthropomorphism and this offered some the opportunity for valuable insight. A few hinted at the idea that Christian belief can give some positive clues but very few were aware of Hick's interesting theory of Incarnational meaning. Many chose to write about symbol in Tillich but significant numbers of such candidates were unaware that Tillich was talking of language, not of physical symbols such as crosses and swastikas.

Better responses showed good knowledge of the Via Negativa, using Pseudo-Dionysius and Moses Maimonides, as well as Plotinus in some cases. Very good answers were able to discuss the merits and challenges of the Via Negativa as an approach to talking about God. It might be interesting to note that Aquinas did not reject the Via Negativa, but saw it as the purest way of talking about God; although descriptions of God are analogous to descriptions of humans, God is essentially indescribable.

Significant numbers mistakenly attributed Via Negativa to the Vienna Circle, while some thought it the work of Flew. Some candidates argued, erroneously, that the apophatic way said nothing at all about God.

- 2 The majority of answers wrote on James briefly and compared thinkers such as Freud, Marx, Otto and Swinburne to the topic of religious experience in general. Responses often named and explained James' four common core attributes, some going further to recognise that James identified the fruits of religious experience as being of importance. Better candidates realised that the subtlety of the question asking about the 'aims and conclusions' of James required more awareness of the text of the lectures, and were able to discuss the nature of the religious believer who experiences the divine, the sick soul, James' pragmatism, and so on. Excellent AO2 was characterised by specific engagement with each of a range of points related to this.

Others confused James with thinkers such as Swinburne and Otto. Some candidates were unable to move beyond the four qualities of transience, ineffability, passivity and noetic quality. Many thought that these four qualities each applied to different types of experiences, rather than being all present in those experiences thought significant by James. Some candidates confused religious experience with miracles.

- 3 Most candidates dealt with issues of evil, with good use of arguments, and there were some very valuable discussions of the distinction between an eternal and an everlasting God. Some candidates were able to make good use of their understanding of the views of Boethius in this area. There were some interesting arguments about the incarnation, miracles and prayer. Some candidates considered wider issues, including God's relationship to human experience and temporality. A few wrote pre-prepared essays on omniscience or omnipotence, which did not address the question set.

Many candidates identified the problem of evil and interventions of God as being useful ways to approach this question. Others were equally as successful in discussing the portrayal of God in the Bible. While it was possible to achieve a high level from these approaches, candidates needed to focus on the question itself, and thus the attribute of God's benevolence. Less successful responses limited themselves through the narrow definition of omni-benevolence as 'all-loving' or simply by writing a section on each of God's attributes.

There were some excellent responses that were able to discuss how permutations to the classical understanding of God's nature might affect God's benevolence and the extent to which he might be worthy of worship.

- 4 Better candidates were able to draw out interesting arguments directly relevant to the question and some used Hick's thought experiment where they were aware that Hick's concern was to demonstrate the logical possibility of embodied afterlife, not to assert that this was what does happen.

It should be noted that the idea of coherence leads to a discussion of whether an issue is coherent, which is different from asserting who would have been for or against life after death. Some candidates were unaware of the technical meaning of 'incoherence', assuming it meant 'untrue' and also confused 'embodied' with 'disembodied', leading to much unrewarded irrelevance.

Many candidates wrote merely descriptive essays, listing a range of theories known on soul, body or the afterlife, where specific engagement with the idea of a psychosomatic unity and a careful deployment of ideas, critically discussed, would have been more prudent.

G582 Religious Ethics

General Comments

There were many very good responses from candidates, but more focus was needed on reading the question carefully and focusing on key words. Candidates should go further than simply stating what someone thinks e.g. Newman, Aristotle, Friedman or Freud, and instead should be able to comment on and assess the ideas of such thinkers.

Better responses evaluated the views of different thinkers or debated different views and approaches rather than listing information. Excellent responses often gave less factual information, but used the information wisely, writing holistic responses which showed a deeper understanding of the issues.

Again, there were some responses which were difficult to read and muddled in their approach to the question.

Report on Individual Questions

- 1 Many candidates displayed a great deal of knowledge as to the various thinkers covered by the specification. In some cases, much of this was given in detail. However, candidates who followed such an approach sometimes tended to neglect the need to 'select and deploy relevant information'. With regard to this question, candidates were asked to 'critically assess' the ideas of such thinkers. Some candidates tended to assume that this could be done by the simple approach of stating, for example, what the strengths of Newman's 'voice of God' concept might be and then what the weaknesses might be.

Some candidates were able to engage more deeply with the thinkers they had covered and to draw out and link their discussion to the other key word in the question – as to whether the conscience is 'a reliable guide'. Good answers showed which aspects of conscience could be seen to be reliable and which could not, for example, the 'voice of God' could be unreliable as could the accumulation of childhood experiences of authority, whereas reason may be a more reliable guide especially when mixed with the Primary Precepts of Natural Law.

Some candidates avoided a personal response to the question by not developing their conclusions sufficiently.

- 2 There were some excellent responses to this question which showed a clear level of knowledge and understanding with regard to the Aristotelian, Thomist and modern versions of Virtue Ethics. Such candidates were also able to focus on the key words of the question as to whether the example of the virtuous person is 'the most' useful aspect of Virtue Ethics. Some candidates were able to discuss this question by contrasting the concept of such a role model with other aspects of Virtue Ethics such as the Golden Mean or Eudaimonia being more or less useful.

Candidates were, in general, able to question the concept of the virtuous person being a role model given that such a person might have perceived failings in other parts of their lives. Some candidates were hindered in their response to this question by a lack of clear knowledge as to the tenets of Virtue Ethics.

Successful responses also considered modern approaches to Virtue Ethics, although some that focused on classical Virtue Ethics were still able to achieve the higher marks.

- 3 Most candidates provided a clear and coherent discussion of the relationship between business and consumer. Such candidates managed to focus on the key words ‘moral duty’ and ‘putting the consumer first’. Few candidates made the connection between duty and Kantian ethics specifically.

Some candidates were able to argue successfully that the consumer should not be put first but instead that that position should be given to other interested parties such as shareholders or the environment. Some candidates who attempted the question were only able to make very general comments given a lack of detailed knowledge and understanding with regard to business ethics as detailed in the specification.

- 4 Better candidates addressed the key words in the question and were able to write engaged responses which considered what ‘helpful’ might mean to the various parties concerned. Some candidates simply stated what a religious approach to sexual ethics might be, followed by what a secular approach might have to say. In addition, they gave the strengths and weaknesses of each. Such responses ignored the key words in the question as to whether religious approaches might be ‘more helpful’.

Candidates generally showed a good understanding of religious ethics and were able to comment on approaches which might be taken in, for example, Islam and the hadith or Christianity and Fletcher’s Situation Ethics.

Some candidates had a limited understanding of religious teaching and so tended to be too general and vague e.g. reference to ‘the teaching of the Catholic Church’ or ‘the view of Evangelical Protestants’. The lack of nuance here hindered a fully developed response to the question.

With regard to secular approaches, a number of candidates opted to illustrate their answers by simplistic reference to Utilitarianism or Kantian Ethics. Some candidates - whilst able to state what these approaches might entail - did not go on to discuss their helpfulness or otherwise in this area.

G584 New Testament

General Comments

There was a small entry for this examination. A number of candidates addressed the general topic rather than the actual question and they should be encouraged to really think about the question set before they launch into their arguments. Although there were some very good responses, many were let down by their scant knowledge of the set texts and had a limited understanding of their range of possible interpretations.

Report on Individual Questions

- 1 Most candidates wrote in general terms about the apocalyptic discourses; few showed any detailed knowledge of the set texts. Some candidates did attempt to root their arguments in the different approaches of Matthew, Mark and Luke but often made sweeping statements about the eschatological outlook of the gospels. Some were able to make links to other apocalyptic aspects of the gospels, for example Matthew's judgement parables (chapter 25) were rightly deemed to be indications of a concern for future apocalyptic judgement.
- 2 Many candidates saw the title 'Son of Man' as being synonymous with Son of God and Messiah, which is not the case, and thought that since Jesus saw himself as Son of Man he was automatically making messianic claims. Better candidates were able to pinpoint the differences between Son of Man and Messiah and some argued that these were distinct and in some senses opposed Christological titles. A better understanding of the range of scholarly opinions on this issue was needed to delve deeper into the theology and meaning of these titles.
- 3 Better responses looked specifically about the place of love in Jesus' ethics, with particular reference to the Sermon on the Mount, and were able to place it within the wider context of Jesus' ethical teaching and assess its importance. There were a number of vague responses where miracles took centre stage rather than the key ethical texts.
- 4 Many candidates saw this question as an opportunity to write a standard Kingdom of God essay and wrote extensively on scholarly views on the timing of the Kingdom without much reference to parables. Some candidates did look at parables from different gospels and assessed their message on the Kingdom of God; a sound approach. However, there were some bizarre allegorical interpretations and quite often texts were said to have one clear meaning; e.g. the parable of the Mustard Seed provides evidence for inaugurated eschatology. Although there is a case for this, candidates should be encouraged to acknowledge that texts do not have clear or fixed meanings. There were some good responses which recognised the inherent problems of parables as a clear teaching device and gave good examples to propel their argument.

G585 Developments in Christian Theology

General Comments

There were very few candidates who took this unit. Comments are, therefore, brief and not indicative of the usual quality of candidates who prepare for this paper in the summer.

Report on Individual Questions

- 1** Candidates needed to focus on the question and the best managed to do so. There was an opportunity here to consider the work of John Hick or Ninian Smart, even Ludwig Feuerbach. Many candidates responded better to the second half of the question 'all religions have equal access to salvation' and could have used the opportunity to explain and evaluate Hick's plural hypothesis. Better candidates may have used this as an opportunity to explain Barth's suspicion of experience.
- 2** The number of candidates who attempted this question was not of a sufficient amount to allow general comments to be made.
- 3** Candidates answered this question quite well. Some were able to consider Luther and his teaching on the Fall, marriage and the roles of women and men. Few focused on the 'headship' issue and Adam as primogenitor. Some candidates used their response to talk in very sweeping terms about sexism in Christianity and feminist theology rather than focusing on the question.
- 4** There were some good responses to this question. Some candidates chose to focus on key biblical passages and commented on whether they were a 'help or a hindrance'. Some looked at differing feminist schools and their relationship to the Bible. Those who had more detailed knowledge of specific theologians (e.g. Fiorenza, Ruether, Trible even Pagels on gnostic texts) fared well, but there was a strong tendency amongst some to drift into very general summaries of feminist theology.

G586 Buddhism

General Comments

The quality of work this session was very high. Many candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the material within the specification, and were able to confidently address their chosen questions.

There was a slight tendency in some responses to focus on the AO1 objective at the expense of the AO2 objective. Centres may wish to remind candidates of the requirement to meet both assessment objectives within their responses.

Some of the best candidates had comprehensive knowledge, and were clearly thinking about the issues raised by their studies. They produced scripts which were a pleasure to read.

Centres are to be commended for encouraging this questioning and exploring of the material amongst their candidates.

Report on Individual Questions

- 1 Most candidates knew the key Theravada meditation practices: samatha and vipassana. They were often able to describe other practices such as Zazen, kinhin, visualisations or the multiple arts/martial arts used in Zen.

Some candidates referred to koans in Zen or nembutsu in Pure Land as though they were simply other forms of meditation. Better candidates knew that this was not straightforward and explained how they might be seen as meditation in some cases.

Some responses described the meditation practices without really exploring whether they were leading to the same experiences. The best responses had a tighter focus on the experiences of meditation: jhanas; satori: enlightenment; or calmness.

Some candidates referred to non-religious meditation and this was deemed appropriate as long as the response focused on experiences and offered some comparison with other meditation practices.

- 2 There were lots of responses which gave a detailed history of the Zen tradition, but which did not quite use this effectively to explore whether this meant Zen had strayed too far from the teachings of the Buddha. More effective responses used this approach to show the lineage of the Zen tradition and its link to the Buddha.

Another successful approach was to outline the parts of Zen tradition which were close to, and very different from, the teaching of the Buddha, and then use this to reach a conclusion about how far it had strayed from the Buddha's teachings. Many of these responses also offered a clear understanding of the differences between Soto and Rinzai Zen.

Some candidates offered comparisons with other forms of Buddhism. Where these responses drifted away from the teachings of the Buddha it could become less relevant to the question. Often, candidates were able to tie this back to the question by considering one form of Buddhism to be closer to the teachings of the Buddha, or by showing how moving away from the teachings of the Buddha did not invalidate other forms of Buddhism.

- 3 Almost all candidates addressed this question by referring to the ethics part of the specification, and where the Lotus Sutra was used, it was usually referred to briefly and in a relevant manner.

Some candidates relayed the ethical practices, but knew little of the specifics of upaya or that it is a Mahayana concept used/referred to rarely, if at all, in Theravada Buddhism. A few responses thought that upaya could be used by any Buddhist, at any time, to justify what they wanted to do.

Most candidates were able to construct a basic argument around the Buddhist concept of intention, and the idea that 'doing whatever you like' might not constitute good intention.

Better responses placed the concept within the Mahayana tradition, and were able to explain that traditionally only bodhisattvas were able to make use of upaya, and then only in order to help someone towards enlightenment. Some candidates argued that it was used more widely now, particularly by Buddhists in the West, and discussed whether this was appropriate or not. Many candidates emphasised the need for both wisdom and compassion to guide in the use of upaya, if it was ever to be justified. Many candidates offered convincing arguments that upaya should be used only as a 'last resort' after conventional methods had been tried.

There were a wide range of ethical examples used to illustrate the possible uses of upaya, and, in the main, candidates used these appropriately.

- 4 Some candidates knew little of Pali Canon (tipitak (a)), so moved to comparison with their scripture of choice. This occasionally showed some relevance to the question, but more often than not was inappropriate.

Most candidates were able to outline three sections of the Pali Canon: sutta; vinaya; and abhidhamma. They were usually able to offer some comment on the importance of these sections.

Some candidates had a detailed account of the contents of the Pali Canon, but did not support this with an assessment of the importance of the Canon.

Some candidates offered clear analysis of the importance of the Pali Canon in Mahayana Buddhism as well as Theravada Buddhism, and this could show a good understanding of the use of the scripture across different traditions. Other candidates were limited to 'other scriptures are more important', without really showing why the Pali Canon might not be as important in these traditions.

G588 Islam

General Comments

The general standard of responses for all questions was satisfactory to good with a few candidates producing excellent answers. Some of the candidates had not sufficiently mastered the change from AS style questions to that of A2 where the AO1 and AO2 elements are combined.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 The majority of candidates who answered this question started by giving an explanation of all the Articles of Belief. Some candidates chose to do this at a reasonably superficial level, focusing primarily on messengers whilst others opted to examine all Articles in the same level of depth. In terms of demonstrating knowledge for the AO1 element of the question, either approach was valid, however, only those responses which addressed all of the articles to some extent were able to achieve the highest level.

In terms of evaluation, the best responses were those which were able to offer a variety of arguments both to back up the belief that Messengers are the least important Article, and to offer reasons why other Articles could be considered less important than Messengers. Better responses discussed the question from more than one perspective and showed an in-depth knowledge of the Articles of Belief.

- 2 Most responses demonstrated a sound knowledge of the contents of Surah 4. Better candidates demonstrated skills in selecting material on teachings in Surah 4, discussing not only those that directly related to family life, but also those that gave an overview of the majority of teachings contained in the Surah. The best candidates used quotations to do this. They were then able to illustrate exactly how relevant or irrelevant they were to Muslim family life and the roles of men and women today.

For the AO2 aspect, those candidates achieving the highest levels showed an appreciation of the possible differences in relevance to those living in Muslim countries compared to those in non-Muslim countries.

- 3 The majority of candidates who answered this question did not discuss other aspects of Islam which may be more important, focusing solely on *ijtihad*. While this is a valid approach, to get the highest level for AO2 other things need to be discussed too – in order to quantify fully the extent to which the issue is important.

Better responses discussed the question in relation to the four law schools and the different ways it is considered within Sunni and Shi'a Islam, as well as introducing other important issues for Muslims, such as Greater Jihad and following the Five Pillars.

- 4 Most candidates were able to demonstrate, at least, a basic level of knowledge of the three groups. Few responses actually attempted to discuss what a 'true Muslim' is, although some did pick up on the idea that only Allah can judge this. There were, however, some responses which were able to offer a variety of arguments as to why all three groups may be considered to be true Muslims or not, and these were the ones that gained the highest marks for AO2.

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