

DIVINITY

Paper 8041/02
The Four Gospels

General Comments

The standard of questions was good and consistent in degrees of difficulty/ease. The questions on the Synoptics were, as always, more popular than the questions on St. John's Gospel and the general Questions 10 – 14.

There was a noticeable improvement on the standard of performance this year. The range of marks increased at the higher end and decreased at the lower end. A few candidates achieved 90%+. There was evidence of wider reading and some candidates made appropriate use of this within their answers to the questions. The standard of writing was good and candidates made a clear attempt to understand key theological terms.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Matthew 1:17

A popular question which was generally answered very well. Placed into the correct context with relevant comment surrounding the mention of Abraham and David, the fourteen generations and significance of *'the Christ'*.

(b) Matthew 23:5-7

Candidates who attempt this question need to set the context as well as making comments on the Pharisees as a religious group. The difference between the Pharisees, the Scribes and the Sadducees needs to be known so that the answer given is relevant to the question.

(c) Mark 1:7-8

Another popular question with a lot of relevant comment. All candidates placed this in the correct context and wrote about the significance of John preparing the way for Jesus: that Jesus was mightier than John and that He would baptise with the Holy Spirit.

(d) Mark 14:41-42

A very popular question which was well answered. All candidates placed it in the correct context and made relevant comment on key points: the disciples sleeping, their lack of understanding, the significance of the term *Son of Man* and the identity of the betrayer.

(e) Luke 8 :1-3

Most candidates who attempted this question commented on the role of women and Luke's inclusion of women in his gospel. Mention was made of *mission* and the significance of the 12 and the healing of evil spirits. This gobblet usually brought a lot of good answers.

(f) Luke 24:17-18

Those candidates who answered this gobbet, correctly identified the context and made relevant comments surrounding Jesus' appearance on the Emmaus Road and the 'things' that happened in Jerusalem.

(g) John 2:9-10

The context was correctly identified and the comments were relevant surrounding the first miracle in John's Gospel. *Signs* were mentioned and a lot of discussion about the symbolic significance of the *new wine*.

(h) John 3:2-3

A few candidates chose to answer this question. To write a good answer, candidates need to set the context, naming the man who came to Jesus and commenting on why he came *by night*. Comment was made on the use of the title *Rabbi* and on the significance of being *born anew*.

Question 2

Examine the importance of the Sermon on the Mount for Matthew's gospel.

This was a very popular choice of question to answer. Candidates had learnt the content of the Sermon on the Mount and were able to make a lot of relevant comment to the substance of the sermon. Some made reference to the *Beattitudes* in detail and quoted them accurately. The comparison between Jesus and Moses came out and the role of the Torah was referred to. The better candidates commented on the ecclesiological and liturgical significance of some of the material and placed the Sermon in the context of Matthew's technique and with regard to the Gospel as a whole. All candidates included relevant material.

Question 3

Assess Matthew's treatment of Simon Peter in the discussions at Caesarea Philippi and at the Transfiguration.

Those who attempted this question did so very well. Comments were made about the role of Peter as a key figure in Jesus' ministry and in the Church. Mention was made of the *inner circle* and of Peter's seeming understanding of the significance of the event but, at the same time, his lack of understanding. Comments also included Matthew's ecclesiological interests in the use of *church* here and Peter's moral and doctrinal authority.

Question 4

"Mark emphasises the humanity of Jesus." Discuss.

This was probably the most popular question to answer and there were many answers of a very high standard. Most candidates did refer to Mark's picture of Jesus as divine but the bulk of the comment was about how Mark handles his material to reflect Jesus' human side. Mention of Jesus *sleeping*, *showing pity*, *showing anger*, *showing compassion*, *unable to perform miracles* all feature in the answers given.

Question 5

Explain why Mark shows Jesus trying to keep his messiahship a secret.

This was also a very popular question to answer and many candidates opted to do both this and **Question 4**. Understanding of Mark's Gospel was of a good standard with a lot of reference to scholars made. Those who did attempt this question usually made reference to the work of Wrede's theory and candidates were familiar with the traditional texts and arguments – e.g. the rebuking of demons, the silencing of the reporting of miracles and Jesus retiring from the public view. A discussion of why there is a command to be silent was included in the best answers (because of His messiahship? false impressions? the inclusion of Peter's confession). There is a lot of material available and many candidates made use of it.

Question 6

Why did Luke write his gospel and for whom?

The best answers to this question showed a genuine attempt to put the gospel of Luke in context and deal with why Luke wrote his gospel. The dedication to Theophilus was commented on and Luke's desire to provide the truth and give an orderly account of what took place formed candidates' answers to the purpose of Luke therefore this question was answered well. It was a very popular choice.

Question 7

Explain the significance of the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost or prodigal son in Luke.

This was a popular question with some good answers. To get high marks candidates needed to comment on the parables. Some answers included the key themes of *forgiveness, love and patience, repentance, joy and sacrifice* and attempted to place their knowledge of the text in a wider context of the gospel message as a whole.

Question 8

Discuss John's theology of the Spirit.

There was a lot of material which could have been included in an answer for this question. Those who attempted it concentrated mainly on the idea that the spirit was to be a counsellor and the comforter. Mention could have been made of the other functions of the spirit e.g. a provider of support, a provider of truth, dwelling in and among the disciples, re-enforcing the message Jesus taught, bearing witness to the disciples of Jesus, having authority from the Father and glorifying Jesus.

Question 9

Discuss the importance of the 'I am' sayings in John's gospel.

This was the more popular of the questions on St John's Gospel. Those who attempted it answered it well. Most answers covered the main 'I am' sayings with plenty of discussion around them.

Question 10

To what extent can the miracles be seen as parables in action?

To answer this question candidates needed to understand what the main thrust of the question was, how miracles relate to the concept of 'parables in action'. The comment rested largely on the fact that candidates felt parables and miracles were not linked but seen as separate.

Question 11

Examine the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus in the gospels.

A very popular choice of question and answered well. There is a lot of material to use and the majority of candidates attempted to include it and made intelligent and relevant comment upon it. The best answers developed the deeper issues in the relationship between Jesus and John and considered whether the gospels are hiding a tension that existed in the early church between the followers of Jesus and the followers of John.

Question 12

How far do the gospels present the kingdom of God as a future event?

This question was handled well by the candidates who chose it. Answers tended to get the balance right between discussing the kingdom as a future event as well as looking at the material that may suggest that the kingdom is a present reality. Comment was intelligent and reflecting scholarly views.

Question 13

Assess Jesus' debates with the Pharisees.

For those who attempted this question there was a lot of reference to the relevant material surrounding conflict and discussions between Jesus and the Pharisees. The best answers made an attempt to 'assess' rather than retell the conflict instances. Some included the fact that Jesus was not entirely condemning of the Pharisees' attitudes and actions and the fact that he did have positive instances with some. This provided a balance to their answers.

Question 14

Examine the gospel accounts of the trial of Jesus before Pilate.

To produce a good answer candidates needed to keep the different trial accounts separate and to show the differences between the accounts. A discussion of the relationship between Pilate and the Jewish authorities and the distinct material found in the Johannine account is necessary for the best answers.