

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

Paper 2048/12

The portrayal of the life
and teaching of Jesus

General comments

This was the first session of the new syllabus and most Centres responded well to the demands of the new paper.

It should be noted that there is no cross credit. For example, material relevant to part (a) cannot be credited if it only appears in part (b) where it is not relevant.

The examination requires 12 parts of questions to be answered in 90 minutes and some candidates appeared to misjudge the time and so did not manage to complete all the parts of questions required. Part of the problem was that some candidates went beyond the demands of the question. For instance, on **Question 5(a)** many candidates gave detailed accounts of the preparations for the Last Supper and how the room in which the meal was held was identified.

For the part (c) questions some candidates achieved Level 3 or above. Many candidates, though, presented arguments for and arguments against but they were statements of arguments without any evaluation or weighing up of the relative strengths and weaknesses.

There were also a significant number of candidates who presented the arguments in bullet points rather than continuous prose. Answers need to be in continuous prose so that a reasoned argument can be presented.

It is important that candidates do not recount material that does not appear in Matthew but does appear in one or more of the other gospels. Again, **Question 5(a)** was a good example with many accounts including the prediction of Peter's denial and the washing of the disciple's feet (Luke and John respectively). Candidates penalise themselves in spending time writing material that is not relevant.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) This was generally well answered and most candidates gave a full account of Jesus' response to the Pharisees' question. However, there were a number of candidates who confused Matthew with Zacchaeus.
- (b) Most answers argued that the accounts were written by an eyewitness and some confused it with the Acts of the Apostles, appealing to the occurrence of the "we" passages in the text. Very few candidates showed any knowledge or awareness of the external evidence from sources such as Papias or Irenaeus.
- The challenge to the traditional view was equally poorly answered with only a few candidates discussing the problem of Matthew seemingly using Mark's Gospel as a source.
- (c) As discussed in the general comments above, most candidates failed to engage in an evaluative way with the arguments. They stated that the content was what was important rather than knowing the identity of the author. Then they just stated that an unknown author questions the reliability of the contents.

Question 2

- (a) This was generally well answered with only the occasional candidate confusing it with the feeding of the 4000. However, conflation with the other gospels often occurred; in particular, the account in John's Gospel of the boy who had the bread and fish.
- (b) The most common answers made reference to Jesus as compassionate and as provider, arguing that in the Kingdom of Heaven people will have an abundance of anything they need. Only a few candidates went beyond this and linked the feeding miracle to Jesus as the Messiah.
- (c) Candidates clearly felt more confident with arguing this issue but tended to just list the arguments for and against. It should be noted that the level descriptors refer to justified arguments in which the personal response must be fully supported. Evaluation requires more than just listing arguments. Candidates need to engage with the arguments.

Question 3

- (a) This was well answered with candidates able to accurately recount most of the details of the event. A few candidates confused the Transfiguration with either Jesus' baptism or Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane or Jesus' ascension.
- (b) Although most candidates in part (a) referred to Moses and Elijah, and the voice from the cloud, only a few candidates referred to them in part (b). As a result, most comments centred upon Jesus' discussion with the three disciples as they walked down from the mountain. A few candidates gave general platitudes rather than linking to the Transfiguration.

The issue of cross credit was relevant to this question as some candidates in part (b) made reference to the voice and what was said but had no mention of it in part (a) and so credit could not be given.

- (c) Most candidates tended to give a potted summary of the events in the life of John the Baptist. The more able candidates addressed the focus about the importance of John the Baptist in relation to understanding the person and work of Jesus. A few candidates gave good arguments to support the view that John the Baptist had only limited importance. Once again most candidates gave a response that was mostly descriptive rather than attempting to support a personal response by justifying arguments.

Question 4

- (a) This part question produced overall the best answers. The main weakness was the omission by some of the contrast between the two debts. A very few candidates confused the parable with the parable of the Talents.
- (b) Weaker candidates tended to merely repeat the parable, whilst others gave a list of general platitudes but did not attempt to relate to the parable. Most focused on forgiveness but did not always relate the contrast between the two debts in terms of God's forgiveness of sin. Many did discuss the judgment of the servant who demanded the debt be paid. Candidates need to note that explaining a parable requires making clear how the explanation is drawn from the parable.
- (c) Most candidates discussed how forgiveness removes any need for punishment, unless the wrong act was repeated. Only a few candidates argued that punishment and forgiveness are not mutually exclusive.

Question 5

- (a) As was mentioned in the general comments, this question produced lots of conflated accounts that also affected part (b) answers. In particular, in Matthew's account Jesus prophesying that Peter would deny him takes place on the Mount of Olives and not during the Last Supper, and therefore could not be credited.
- (b) Most candidates correctly referred to Judas and the arrest but only a few explained the events of how Judas betrayed Jesus. Many candidates answered in a brief sentence just stating that Judas betrayed Jesus at his arrest. As mentioned in part (a) the majority of candidates referred to Peter's denial and wrote at length about it.
- (c) Although this was the best answered part (c), most candidates tended to list points for and against rather than discuss their strengths and weaknesses as arguments.

Question 6

- (a) A number of candidates confused Joseph of Arimathea with Simon from Cyrene. Those that did correctly identify Joseph of Arimathea tended to give only a scant account, usually just saying that his tomb was used.

The problem of brevity of detail also applied to the account of the angel at the tomb. A significant number of candidates conflated accounts from the other gospels referring to the woman meeting Jesus.
- (b) A number of candidates failed to read the question carefully and only addressed the issue of why the guards were put at Jesus' tomb. Those that did deal with both aspects again tended to give only brief accounts omitting much of the detail.
- (c) Although this produced some good answers, many candidates only addressed one side of the debate and therefore limited the level they could achieve.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

Paper 2048/13

The portrayal of the life and teaching of Jesus

General comments

Almost the full range of marks was achieved. Although it was a small entry, there were a significant number of scripts that reflected very good knowledge and understanding of the text, which was very encouraging given this was the first session of the new syllabus.

Although **Question 2(a)** was the least well answered overall, it was the part **(c)** questions where candidates struggled to reach much beyond a Level 2. Evaluation requires weighing up the strengths and weaknesses of arguments rather than just stating an argument.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Part (i) of this question was well answered with most candidates able to give details of Jesus' baptism by John. A few candidates went beyond the question and wrote at length about John's preaching in the wilderness. Although there is no negative marking, candidates penalise themselves by writing at length on material that is not relevant. Part (ii) was omitted by some candidates which suggested that either the material was not known or that candidates forgot that **Question 1(a)** had two parts.
- (b) Although there is quite a lot of material that candidates could have selected from, most limited themselves to the idea of John's role as forerunner to the Messiah, the prophet who prepares the way.
- (c) Most candidates were able to give arguments disagreeing with the statement, but few were able to give a two sided argument.

Question 2

- (a) A number of candidates either confused the healing miracle with other healing miracles or confused the details of Jesus' reply to those who had asked Jesus whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. As a result this was the least well answered question overall.
- (b) Again, answers were limited in their explanation and most just centred on the view that human well-being is more important than Sabbath observance of Sabbath law. The question allowed candidates to go wider than just the account of the events in **(a)**.
- (c) Candidates tended to give a reason supporting and disagreeing with the statement but there was no attempt to weigh the strengths or weaknesses of those reasons.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates who attempted this question clearly knew the details of the parable. A few candidates confused the parable with the parable of the Sower and so they also scored no marks for part (b).
- (b) Although the candidates clearly knew the meaning, many tended to just identify the sower as Jesus, the enemy as the devil, the good seeds as followers of God and the weeds as unbelievers. Attempts at explaining what the overall parable was teaching were rarely addressed.
- (c) Most answers comprised of a basic view in support and a basic view against. The limited discussion suggested that not all candidates who attempted this question had studied the various arguments.

Question 4

- (a) This was well answered with candidates showing good knowledge of the details of the text, though some conflated the accounts from other gospels.
- (b) There were some good answers though few referred to fulfilment of prophecy. The question asked about the person AND work of Jesus. Some candidates only addressed one aspect.
- (c) This produced the best (c) answers with evidence of evaluative skills.

Question 5

- (a) This was not a popular question. Those that did attempt it showed limited knowledge of the seven woes about Pharisees being hypocrites and struggled to develop their answer.
- (b) Some tended to repeat what they had written in part (a) in that Jesus accused them of being hypocrites, whilst others widened the discussion to include Jesus' attitude to the Sabbath and various Laws of Moses.
- (c) Most candidates referred to Pilate and Jesus' death in terms of agreeing with the statement and struggled to disagree with the statement. Few referred to the persecution at Jesus' birth or the opposition by religious authorities throughout Jesus' life.

Question 6

- (a) This question was not well answered, mainly because of the lack of knowledge of the details of the text and the conflation with other gospel accounts.
- (b) Most candidates who attempted this question concluded that Pilate was weak but gave only limited reasons to support the view.
- (c) This was the weakest of the (c) answers. Most concluded that historical knowledge helps but is not crucial, but gave little justification for such a conclusion.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

Paper 2048/22

The portrayal of the birth of the early church

General comments

This was the first session of the new syllabus and most Centres responded well to the demands of the new paper. However, the new material on the background to the Acts of the Apostles clearly posed many candidates problems and there seemed evidence that some candidates attempted **Question 1** with little or no understanding of the issues involved.

In general, candidates appear less confident with questions on the Acts of the Apostles than with questions on a Gospel. Often there is confusion about what happened where on Paul's missionary journeys and also what was said where, given there are a number of speeches recorded in Acts of the Apostles. For instance, a number of candidates in **Question 6(a)** confused the events at Caesarea with the events at Philippi and Ephesus. Another common confusion was the distinction between synagogue and church.

It should be noted that there is no cross credit. For example, material relevant to part **(b)** cannot be credited if it only appears in part **(a)** where it is not relevant. This was a particular problem on **Question 1** and **Question 5**.

The examination requires 12 parts of questions to be answered in 90 minutes and some candidates appeared to misjudge the time and so did not manage to complete all the parts of questions required. Part of the problem was that some candidates went beyond the demands of the question. For instance, on **Question 3(a)** many candidates gave detailed accounts of the events when Peter met Cornelius.

For the part **(c)** questions some candidates achieved Level 3 or above. Many candidates, though, presented arguments for and arguments against but they were statements of arguments without any evaluation or weighing up of the relative strengths and weaknesses.

There were also a significant number of candidates who presented the arguments in bullet points rather than continuous prose. Answers need to be in continuous prose so that a reasoned argument can be presented.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) and (b) Candidates seemed to lack knowledge of basic dates with many arguing that Jesus was crucified in 64CE. As noted in the general comments above, candidates confused parts **(a)** and **(b)**. However there were some scripts that clearly had studied this topic and made reference to the connection of the Acts of the Apostles with the author of Luke and the fact that Luke used Mark's Gospel, so suggesting a late date for the writing of Acts of the Apostles. Equally they were aware of the absence of reference to important events such as the fall of Jerusalem, suggesting a date before 64CE.

(c) Most candidates were able to address the issue in part **(c)**. Agreement with the statement was generally argued for, although some candidates struggled to give any opposing view.

Question 2

- (a) This was a popular question and many candidates gave full answers.
- (b) Again, this was generally well answered although candidates did not always make clear the work of the Holy Spirit. However, there was a breadth of material.
- (c) Candidates seemed more confident arguing in support of the statement but often struggled to give an alternative point of view. Some candidates repeated much of their answer to (b) but did not shape it to address the focus of the statement.

Question 3

- (a) This was another popular question with most candidates able to cover the details of the visions. A few candidates confused the visions with the occasion when Peter escaped from prison. As mentioned in the general comments, a significant number of candidates wrote at length not just about the visions but about Peter's meeting with Cornelius and all that happened and was said. This often resulted in the candidate only having time to briefly answer their fourth question and so limiting their total marks.
- (b) Most candidates were able to discuss the significance of the vision in terms of the gospel being open to Gentiles. However, only a few were able to go beyond that and link it to questions about eating with Gentiles, circumcision and the Council of Jerusalem.
- (c) This question produced some good answers with candidates giving a breadth of arguments supporting Peter and Paul. Again, the arguments tended to be listed on either side rather than any discussion about their relative strengths/weaknesses.

Question 4

- (a) Those candidates who identified the correct event tended to know the details and gained the top level for marks. Some confused the event with Paul's visit to Paphos.
- (b) Most candidates could generally identify one reason for opposition. However, these were rarely discussed beyond a one sentence statement. Very few candidates alluded to the text or identified the theological reasons behind the opposition to Paul. Also some candidates did not read the question carefully and did not select their material from Paul's first missionary journey but from later ones.
- (c) The majority of candidates who answered this question gave an account of the dispute between Barnabas and Paul, when Paul refused to take John Mark on a second missionary journey. However, if candidates only discussed this account then a top Level 2 was the maximum they could be credited. It is a topic that is specifically referred to in the syllabus (which also gives as an example the fact that initially Barnabas was leader over Paul). Some candidates made reference to the change of role of leadership, citing such events as Barnabas taking Paul to Antioch, and at Lystra where Paul is referred to as chief speaker.

Question 5

- (a) Some candidates confused the speech with other speeches Paul gave during his missionary journey. As mentioned in the general comments, a number of candidates put information required for part (a) in part (b) and omitted it from part (a).
- (b) A number of candidates appeared confused about what to answer and argued that Paul had wanted to teach them about Jesus so he asked if he could preach to them. Only a few candidates referred to Paul's debate with the philosophers, the confusion over Paul's teaching about Jesus and resurrection, the view that Paul was advocating foreign gods and the taking of Paul to a meeting of the Areopagus.
- (c) There was evidence that some candidates misread the question and referred to hospitality rather than hostility. Those that did answer about hostility often gave one sided answers, focussing on the hostility and omitting examples where Paul was well received and churches established.

Question 6

- (a)** Only a few candidates attempted this question. Despite the references to prophets and Agabus in parts **(b)** and **(c)** many candidates did not know what happened in Caesarea and guessed giving general summaries of Paul's preaching found elsewhere in the Acts of the Apostles. Other candidates confused Caesarea with other towns that Paul visited.
- (b)** Candidates seemed to struggle to say anything much beyond a reference to predicting the future.
- (c)** Again, this produced a poor response. Even if candidates had not answered well on parts **(a)** and **(b)**, they could still have answered part **(c)**. Very few candidates discussed the problems of knowing about events that had not yet taken place. Equally, the idea that God knows the future or the possibility of divine revelation were rarely mentioned. Most comments revolved around Agabus guessing that Paul would be arrested and that there would be a famine from interpreting the circumstances of the times.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

Paper 2048/23

The Portrayal of the Birth of the Early Church

General Comments

There were a significant number of scripts that reflected very good knowledge and understanding of the text, which was very encouraging given this was the first session of the new syllabus.

Most candidates attempted **Questions 1–4** but those few who selected to answer **Questions 5–6** showed good knowledge of the relevant text.

Although **Question 2(a)** was the least well answered overall, it was the part **(c)** questions where candidates struggled to reach much beyond a level 2. Evaluation requires weighing up the strengths and weaknesses of arguments rather than just stating an argument.

In general, candidates struggle more with answering questions on the Acts of the Apostles than they do answering questions on a Gospel. Often there is confusion about what happened where on Paul's missionary journeys and also what was said where, given there are a number of speeches recorded in Acts of the Apostles. For instance, a number of candidates in **Question 4(a)** confused the events at Paphos with the events at Lystra.

It should be noted that there is no cross credit. For example, material relevant to part **(b)** cannot be credited if it only appears in part **(a)** where it is not relevant. This was a particular problem on **Question 5**.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a)** Part **(a)(i)** was well answered with candidates showing good knowledge of the text. In part **(a)(ii)** candidates were less confident about the material and a few gave accounts of healings that were not done by Paul and so could not be credited.
- (b)** Although this question allowed material from all parts of the Acts of the Apostles, a number of candidates just restricted their answer to those healings they had referred to in part **(a)**. This therefore limited the marks they could achieve.
- (c)** This was the least well answered **(c)** question. Candidates struggled to give arguments beyond basic unsupported comments such as miracles are impossible or that the accounts are in the Bible and therefore are true.

Question 2

- (a)** Overall, **Question 2** was the best answered question with part **(a)** achieving the highest average mark from those candidates who attempted it. The text was well known and the details related accurately.
- (b)** This question allowed candidates to select from a wide range of material but a few limited themselves to some repetition from part **(a)** and some general comments about prayer and breaking bread. Some candidates seemed confused about the difference between synagogue, Temple and churches.

- (c) There were some references to persecution leading to dispersal of Christians and that Paul spread his message often without being persecuted, e.g. Athens. But some candidates clearly struggled to give any other arguments or weigh up the relative strengths and weaknesses of the arguments that they had given.

Question 3

- (a) Some candidates misread the question and wrote at length about Paul's conversion experience on the Damascus Road rather than about events when Paul was in Damascus. As a result, this was the least well answered question overall.
- (b) Those candidates who answered correctly in part (i) usually answered correctly in part (ii). However, a few candidates confused the event in (i) with places where Paul was forced to leave and so were also confused about part (ii).
- (c) There were some good answers that made reference to Paul's commission through Ananias to preach to the Gentiles and contrasted this with Paul's preaching in the synagogues to the Jews first.

Question 4

- (a) Some candidates confused Paphos with places such as Lystra and so could not be credited. Those that did identify the correct place and event gave detailed accounts showing good knowledge of the text.
- (b) Most answers tended to limit the material to the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas. However, some candidates also made reference to John Mark's mother and the fact that John Mark was the young cousin to Barnabas.
- (c) Some candidates included material that was not part of the first missionary journey and so could not be credited. Others tended to be very general in their comments rather than give examples from events of the first missionary journey to support their views.

Question 5

- (a) Very few candidates attempted this question and as referred to in the general comments above, there was a tendency to include material relevant to part (b) in part (a).
- (b) This question was generally well answered, although some candidates had more detail of the content of the letter in (a) than they gave in (b).
- (c) Overall, this was the best answered part (c). There were good contrasts between the tensions shown by the need for the Council of Jerusalem and the picture of life in the church of fellowship, care and growth.

Question 6

- (a) Again, very few people answered this question. Those that did showed good knowledge of both parts (i) and (ii), though often described events that went beyond the bounds of the question. The resulting lengthy answers meant that some candidates were short of time answering the rest of the question. Candidates are reminded about the need to read the question carefully. Only material that is relevant to the question can be credited.
- (b) This was generally well answered though sometimes limited in coverage.
- (c) Those that answered this question were often able to give some good examples to support their argument. The aspect of "to what extent do you agree" was, as in most of the (c) answers on the paper, often ignored.