



Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Unit RST3E New Testament

June 2011 Examination Candidate Exemplar Work



2011 (June) Unit RST3E New Testament

Example of Candidate's Work from the Examination

Grade B

- 05 Examine the nature of signs with reference to any two signs in John's Gospel. (30 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

Signs are specific to John's gospel according to a well known scholar Dodd. Indeed, John's Gospel has been called the book of signs. There are 7 signs within the gospel and the number 7 denotes the perfect number, metaphorically showing the perfection of John's gospel and perfection of Jesus. The 7 signs point to the ultimate sign of the resurrection. Signs (semeion) are often described as a miracle which points to something beyond itself, compared to the miraculous wonder miracles (dunamis) found in the synoptics. Signs have a purpose to guide men to faith and bring men to salvation. This follows throughout the theme of John's gospel, which is to convert people and give eternal life as well as salvation.

When looking at signs it is clear to see they all have similar characteristics. For instance, 'the wedding at Cana', more commonly known as "water into wine" is full of symbolism which is the nature of John's gospel and signs.

The symbols give insights into Jesus' person and work. Jesus' all knowing power is demonstrated throughout this sign as Jesus knows what will happen to him in the future with the symbols of '3rd day', and 'my time has not yet come' (i.e. his death and resurrection). This shows Jesus divinity and proves he is all knowing. These examples can be seen to have many other meanings such as '3rd day' being related to creation or 'my time has not yet come' maybe showing it has not yet come to assist the wedding. However, most scholars argue that these references are likely to refer to Jesus' resurrection and therefore shows the strength and power of Jesus to the reader.

Also within this sign, it refers to 6 stone jars. Six demonstrates imperfection, and therefore shows the failure of Jews through this metaphor and through the stagnant water in the jars. This is showing readers that Judaism is failing and therefore following the nature and purpose by bringing men to faith and to live as a Christian as Christianity is superseding Judaism. Hence symbols point to both the person and work of Jesus.

There is a strong universal motif within this sign, as Jesus speaks to his mother. In the time of Jesus men didn't speak to women in public, therefore showing the universal motif and showing that in Christianity everybody is welcome and everybody is equal. This follows the nature as it is showing the divinity of Christ by demonstrating Christ loves everybody who believes. The universal motif is significant to signs as it is proving all people are loved by Christ. Jesus married to Israel, Jesus being the bridegroom to followers also follows the nature as Jesus is the one messiah, and brings men to faith.

The second sign I have chosen is 'The official son'. This sign is also highly symbolic and like the whole of John's gospel demonstrates high Christology.

Again, relating to the symbolism of numbers, the 'son' was healed at the 7th hour. This demonstrates the perfection of belief, Jesus and Christianity.

The divinity and humanity is shown when Jesus heals from a far. Jesus knows the boy believes and therefore keeps the boy alive both physically and spiritually with eternal life. This is proving Christ is God and showing Jesus' loving and caring nature. This is related to the nature as people will see Jesus' divinity and therefore understand he is part of the trinity and will bring salvation to those who believe. Faith is also an important feature of the signs.

The official according to Marsh is thought to be a gentile. Jesus helped this gentile and his family, therefore showing a universal motif, demonstrating Jesus will help everyone if they believe. It also shows that Jesus does not pick and choose who he wants, as Jesus loves everybody equally. Within these two signs the nature is shown throughout with symbolism and metaphors. It is showing everyone is welcome to believe and also showing signs are the signpost to salvation. Signs are a fundamental part of John's gospel and should be read and understood, in a certain way.

Commentary

The essay clearly addresses the question. It focusses on the nature of signs and illustrates from two signs (Water into wine/The official's son). The candidate has correctly avoided the retelling of the two signs. Instead, they have alluded to them in order to illustrate their points from the text. This is the best way of handling text as the structure of the essay is based around the focus of the question and avoids candidates drifting into long narration of a text that they have in front of them (since they are allowed to use the Bible in the exam).

They have made a brief comment about the difference between signs in John and miracles in the synoptics, though this would have benefitted from further development. There are a number of illustrations of symbolism from both signs selected and these are linked to a Christological focus.

The essay does contain some small errors and there is only a very limited reference to scholars and scholarship. It is a satisfactory treatment of the topic but falls short of being generally thorough in depth or breadth. There is reasonable understanding demonstrated through use of relevant evidence and examples. It is therefore top of level 5 and moving towards bottom level 6. Hence the mark awarded is 23/30.

- 06** 'An understanding of Christian theology is necessary in order to understand the signs in John's Gospel.' Assess this claim. **(20 marks) AO2**

Candidate Response

It is highly debateable whether Christian theology is necessary to understand the signs in John's gospel. Theology is the study of Christ and Christianity, therefore the obvious answer would be 'yes' but the arguments are strong for both for and against.

Barrett, a well known scholar suggested only those with faith can see signs. This statement agrees with the quote as it is suggesting that you will need to have faith and knowledge of Christianity to understand what spiritual truth is shown and the purpose of these signs. Signs in this gospel have many hidden meanings which can be interpreted in many ways. It could be suggested that the interpretations need to be accurate to fully understand signs.

This could be argued against as the purpose of the whole gospel not only signs is to convert people to Christian faith. If an individual needed an understanding of Christian theology to understand signs, there would be no purpose for signs, therefore making them unnecessary to John's gospel as they don't follow the theme of the gospel.

Each sign holds a great amount of symbolism, therefore the study of Christianity and the knowledge you need to understand these are significant and important. Symbolism is a main 'nature' within signs and therefore needs understanding to reveal the real spiritual truth (Emeth).

The individual may not understand the true symbolic meaning as they don't understand the true Christian theology. Therefore their lack of knowledge may result in lack of belief. Again this can be argued against as some may believe. Also, if everybody already knows and understands the theological truths, there would be no reason for them to be present in the gospel, as signs are used to strengthen faith and give more knowledge to the individual.

This argument could proceed, and can be argued in many different ways, some Christians may agree with the statement others may disagree, my opinion would be that there is no need to have an understanding of Christian theology because if you have belief you will understand.

Commentary

There is clearly a two sided argument which focusses on the main issue. The views are explained and there is evidence of some critical analysis in the sense that a view is responded to and evaluated in terms of its persuasive strength and possible response. In other words, there is evidence of a reasoned argument. The candidate has clearly moved away from listing arguments for and against and so shown evidence of reflecting on the arguments and their strengths.

However, the arguments are limited and it is satisfactory rather than a well-focussed response. It scores 14/20

03 Examine John's portrayal of Jesus and his ministry with reference to the following two discourses:

- 'I am the Bread of Life' (John 6³⁰⁻⁵⁸)
- 'I am the True Vine' (John 15¹⁻⁷)

(30 marks)**AO1****Candidate Response**

To understand Jesus and his ministry, which is to bring men to faith and give eternal life, a brief understanding of discourses needs to be understood, 'I am' is a divine declaration known as 'ego eimi' and is the name for God revealed in Exodus. It is presented 29 times in John's gospel and is said 26 times by Jesus. Each of the discourses uses this phrase. Discourses are used to clear any misunderstanding and therefore significant in showing Jesus ministry. Yahweh (the Hebrew name for God) is translated 'I am' and is the divine declaration of God from the old testament, 'Truly truly' from Johns gospel is suggested by Campbell to prove Jesus actually said it.

Jesus ministry is to bring men to faith and salvation. Often in the discourses, Jesus is presented as doing this by revealing his divine and perfect authoritative nature.

In relation to 'I am the bread of life', Johns portrayal of Jesus' ministry is shown throughout.

'Bread' is used for physical nourishment. Jesus gives both physical and spiritual nourishment whereas Moses only gave physical nourishment. This is a reference back to the Exodus and how Jesus is superior to Moses. He shows a new exodus. It shows Jesus and Christianity superceeding Judaism. Jesus will feed both physical and spiritual which shows Jesus giving life and sustaining life which will bring men to faith as man would know Jesus is here to help and guide.

This discourse has an emphasis on belief. If you believe you will get salvation and physical nourishment, thus showing if man believes, eternal life is given. Jesus is the sustainer of life is the message presented through this discourse. He sustains life in a spiritual way, guiding people into truth and demonstrates how his ministry is saving lives and giving eternal life.

When looking at 'I am the true vine' Jesus ministry is presented in a strong way and John's portrayal of this is easy to see. The vine is a metaphor for God, whereas the branch is a metaphor for Christians. As a vine produces fruit, Jesus produces Christians. This is a strong correlation to Jesus and his ministry as Jesus is producing men of faith and giving eternal life. The vine strengthens the branches, and the branches become stronger, so the faith will get stronger therefore showing Christian life is the true way to live.

Also in 'I am the true vine' it is shown that the branch of Judaism gets cut off. This is a clear demonstration that they are not living a good life and without the help of the vine Jesus the branch will be cut off and die. This shows Christianity is the right way to live. This may produce believers as they want to be with the vine (with Christ). Therefore they will judge themselves showing eschatology salvation.

The use of the non plural 'vine' shows there is only one vine to be attached to. This shows there's only one religion and one Messiah to follow. This relates to Jesus and his ministry as Jesus is showing he is the only Messiah to believe in. Therefore, it is Jesus who can give men eternal life and bring them to salvation.

The use of the word true (emeth) may combat Judaism as they thought the Torah was the truth, and that the truth is, there is no messiah yet. The discourse showing Christ as the 'truth' and the messiah shows Judaism is failing, whereas Christianity is rising and becoming a belief in many peoples lives.

Jesus ministry is shown through all discourses and all signs. The purpose of John's gospel and discourses follow Jesus' ministry and therefore are shown by Jesus divinity and authority.

Commentary

The candidate begins by a general comment relating "I am" to portrayal of Jesus. However, it needed more development. The two discourses are discussed in terms of the focus of the question. The text is alluded to and explained in terms of the question focus. However, the discussion on "the Bread of Life" is limited, though the candidate has again avoided narrating the account and so shown some skill in selection.

"The True Vine" discourse is again a little limited in breadth of discussion but the material is relevant to the focus.

Overall, it is between a level 4 and level 5 – i.e. between key ideas and some understanding and coherence using some examples; and a satisfactory treatment showing reasonable understanding.
It scores 20/30.

- 04 'The discourses tell us little about the person of Jesus since they are John's Interpretation.' Assess this claim. (20 marks) AO2**

Candidate Response

Jesus throughout the discourses is shown as a healer, having divine nature, omnipotent, omnipresent, loving, showing his humanity, and many more characteristics, all of which reveal the person of Jesus.

John's interpretation may be the correct interpretation and therefore shows the person of Jesus. Discourses obviously do show the person of Jesus as they demonstrate Jesus work and what he taught as well as his nature and how he lived. Jesus' diadactic nature is presented throughout and therefore revealing a lot about Jesus as a person. Smalley suggested discourses are used to teach. This teaching is about Jesus and therefore shows that Smalley agrees with the statement. However, this could be argued against as it could be thought discourses are used more to clear misunderstandings and teach about the work of Jesus. Barrett suggests 'we should not focus on whether Jesus said it but we should focus on the spiritual truths'. This shows each individual has their own understanding on discourses and the way they teach.

It could also be argued that as Jesus is the main focus, Jesus and his nature is presented more than 'a little' as he is the main focus in discourses.

Jesus and the person of Jesus is definitely shown in the discourses, however the main argument must consist on whether the person of Jesus is presented a lot or not a great deal. Jesus and his work is presented in discourses and can not be questioned whether they are right or wrong teachings solely on the fact they are John's interpretation as the interpretations may be completely accurate as it is thought the writer of John was an eye witness. Of course, if the accounts in John of Jesus' teaching are inaccurate then though they may tell us about Jesus, the information is wrong and so they tell us very little.

Commentary

The main issues are identified and there is some attempt at supporting an argument. However, it is mostly one sided and the aspect relating to John's interpretation is limited. The argument is mostly against the claim that the discourses tell us little about the person of Jesus. There is some reflection but limited critical analysis. It is certainly beyond a level 3 (basic attempt) but falls short of a satisfactory response (level 4). It scores 12/20.

TOTAL 69/100

Grade A

- 07 Examine the nature and purpose of John's passion narrative (John 18-19).
(30 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

John's passion narrative is the most important part in the whole Gospel, so John has made constant reference to it throughout. Its nature is undoubtedly important, however in relation to the resurrection narrative that follows, that has a clear change in writing style (metaphysical writing – highlighting its importance) it might seem lesser.

Marsh points out that 'John takes little space...' to show the reader what he believes to be important about the crucifixion, and the passion narrative is by nature – short. This does not mean to say that it is unimportant, but simply that John manages to convey his purpose in this amount of space.

The purpose is perhaps more difficult to identify, but it is clear that his use of O.T references is used as a type of replacement theology (R.T) to show Christianity replacing Judaism. One example of this is the fact that Jesus carries his own cross. John omits the character of Simon of Cyrene (used in the synoptics to carry Christ's cross for him) to show the readers that 'Jesus goes to his death entirely reliant on his own more than adequate resources' (Marsh) – this is a clear reminder of the story in Genesis in which Abraham almost has to sacrifice his son Isaac. Isaac, like Jesus had to carry the instrument by which he has to die – 'Abraham placed the wood on his son, Isaac, while he carried the fire and the knife' – yet Abraham never actually has to fulfil the deed. Thus God is shown to make the ultimate sacrifice – going over and above the Jewish history. For Smalley, it is in fact at the crucifixion that 'Judaism has been replaced by Christianity'. Thus John achieves his purpose of superseding Judaism through the replacement theology that is part of the nature of the passage.

Furthermore, John wants to show the reader that Jesus has come to fulfil scripture fulfilling Jewish belief even though the Jews are persecuting Jesus. As he is crucified Jesus is given vinegar to drink by the soldiers, which fulfils a Psalm 'they put salt in my food, and gave me vinegar for my thirst'. By nature this shows the cruelty of the Jewish soldiers as well as making clear reference to Jesus fulfilling prophecy – and thus being the messiah.

As part of John's Gospel, the passage is Christological in nature, with the purpose to reveal even more about the nature of Jesus. John shows Jesus' juxtaposition of high and low Christology – showing him to be both God and human, in having him put to death – which naturally implies a lack of control and thus shows low Christology. However, even in his death Jesus is in complete control as he dies on his own terms – 'he bowed his head and gave up his spirit' – this shows Jesus to have very high Christology – revealing him to be equal to God.

In the passion narrative John also uses irony. Pilate writes a sign for Jesus' cross which proclaims him to be 'King of the Jews' – instead of charging him with blasphemy – this has the purpose of letting Jesus die with 'a true statement of his nature proclaimed above his head' (Marsh) so that 'even the executioners bear universal testimony to who they are crucifying'. This in turn shows the universal nature of J's teaching as the sign is written in Latin, Aramaic and Greek.

The purpose of the passion is the same as that of the Gospel, which Brown maintains is to 'deepen the faith of every believer' thus the nature may be short but it fulfils this purpose through O.T connotations and R.T as well as true Johannine irony.

Commentary

The question has two aspects – nature and purpose. There is some overlap between the two aspects as the purpose may be seen by considering the unique elements as well as the emphasis in the account. The candidate has alluded to the text and explained the examples in terms of how they relate to the focus of the question.

It is clearly expressed and there are a number of references to scholars that are relevant to the question. However, it is slightly limited in its coverage, particularly in terms of purpose. The first two paragraphs of the essay are also a little unclear.

However, it is clearly above satisfactory yet falls short of thorough treatment of the topic. It therefore scores level 6, 26 marks.

08 'John's passion narrative contains little that is historical fact.'
Assess this claim.

(20 marks) AO2

Candidate Response

Many scholars have become fixated on the historical accuracy of the the passion narrative. This has led to claims that Jesus was perhaps a temporal lobe epileptic, under the influence of a botanical extract, or in a coma state of hyperthermia due to his levels of stress. If one takes any of these to be true –then some argue that Jesus did not actually die and would therefore not be able to resurrect in the future. However, these points are futile, as even if one takes them to be true, they still show Jesus to have conquered death. Keller makes the point that when debating the historicity of the passion one has to rely on 'later, sketchy, second-hand accounts', thus asking if John's Gospel alone is enough to go on.

However, Smalley comments that 'John takes the historical basis for salvation very seriously' – and thus implies that there must be some historical accuracy in his claims. Afterall, if Jesus did not die, he could not resurrect and as Paul exclaims in I Corinthians 'If Christ is not risen, Christianity is false!' Surely the grounds of a faith as large as Christianity would have some historical truth? Why would his followers have died for something they knew to be false?

Some may doubt the historicity of the passion narrative, as it is specifically symbolic, but as Guthrie maintains 'an author with an eye for symbolism does not necessarily invent some events'. However, John's symbolic writing does not illiminate the possibility that John is writing without historical grounds. There are some questionable events recorded that are not in the synoptics. However these may be corrections to the synoptic or extra information.

Of course if he were writing historically his selectivity makes sense when he claims that 'Jesus did many more things...'. It would not be correct, however if his writing is specifically theological. T.A. Roberts maintains that it can not be proved historically authentic or unauthentic.

Nonetheless, arguing against the historicity of the passion seems futile as it is the climax of Jesus' ministry and of the Christian faith, and thus a hugely important piece of writing to both Christians now and early believers then. Faith does not need empirical proof, and if it is believed to be true by so many world-wide, who are we to challenge its historicity?

Commentary

The first paragraph is a little confused. There are two views clearly expressed and reference is made to scholarship to support the argument. There is evidence of reasoning since the arguments are reflected upon and evaluated, rather than being listed as for and against. Because of its limited discussion it is borderline level 4 (main issue addressed but analysis superficial) / level 5 (satisfactory with some evidence), even though there is some use of scholarship. It therefore scores 13/20.

- 05 Examine the nature of signs with reference to any two signs in John's Gospel. (30 marks) AO1**

Candidate Response

When considering the nature of the signs in John, it is important to note that he presents them as 'signs' not 'miracles'. Whilst the synoptics use the word 'dunamis' meaning 'mighty works', John specifically uses the word 'semeia' (signs). Thus the nature of the signs is that they point to something in particular – they have a purpose. The miracle is not an end in itself. The seven signs point to the greatest sign – the resurrection.

The nature of the writing is unvariably Christological as it reveals the nature of Christ. In his first sign, water in to wine, the nature of his Christology is revealed through the use of his spoken command – Jesus never actually comes into contact with the wine, and thus is shown to have the authority of the creative command which God is shown to have in Genesis ('let there be light') fundamentally linking Jesus and God. Similarly, Jesus is shown to have huge authority over the crowd at the feeding of the 5,000, as he simply says 'have them sit down'. Furthermore, Jesus is shown to have the omniscience equal with the Judeo Christian God – purposefully testing his disciples even though 'he already had in mind what he was going to do'.

However, at the same time John is revealing Jesus to be equal to God, John uses the Christological nature of the signs to reveal Jesus' humanity. At the wedding in Cana, John writes 'Jesus' mother was there'. As he has no nativity sequence in his Gospel he uses this verse to show Jesus' humanity. Thus the nature of the signs is that they contain Christological references to the nature of Christ.

Similarly, the signs have the nature of using replacement theology (R.T). This is evident in the water – wine sign in which Kostenberger notes 'Jesus is shown to fill up the depleted resources of Judaism' the wine that is such an important symbol in Judaism (Psalm 109 'wine that gladdens the heart') has run out, yet Jesus is there to provide more wine. Not only does he provide more, but he provides it in abundance, filling the jars 'to the brim' and creating 'wine of superior quality' (Kostenberger). This shows Jesus replacing Judaism, as in the same way as in the feeding of the 5,000 in which Jesus provides an abundance of bread and fish (there were left overs). Marsh maintains the clear link between the feeding of the 5,000 and God providing manna for the Israelites in the desert. Yet again, Jesus goes over and above the Jewish belief, as the Israelites were told only to 'take an omer per person' whereas Jesus provides so much bread that there is some left over. Again the nature of this is replacing Judaism with Christianity.

Kostenberger links the feeding of the 5,000 and the water-wine signs as they both show Jesus providing in abundance, he comments 'wine and bread in turn are symbols of the Eucharistic, messianic banquet', showing the nature of the signs to be eschatological and eucharistic. Especially, the inclusion of Jesus giving thanks over the bread in the feeding of the 5,000 shows the nature of the passage to be eucharistic.

Furthermore, the signs are highly symbolic in nature, and often use important numbers. In the wedding sign Russell notes that the reference to the 6 stone jars and the word 'women' in reference to Mary reflect the 6 days of creation. Similarly, the fact that the sign occurs 'on the third day' is important as it reflects the eschatological nature of the signs as Jesus was crucified 'on the third day'. In the feeding of the 5,000 there are symbolic numbers too – the left over bread and fish fills 12 baskets, reminiscent of the 12 disciples and 12 tribes of Israel. Furthermore, there are specifically 5 loaves of bread and 2 small fish – 7 in total which of course is the perfect number in Judaism.

The nature of the signs is also one of discipleship, as they show a progression of followers of Jesus – in the wedding 'the disciples put their faith in him' and at the feeding there is already a crowd of 5,000 as Jesus is gaining a reputation for being a miracle worker. At the same time this shows the nature of the signs becoming more public – Jesus starts on the side lines – not revealing that it is him who turns the water to wine and yet by the point of the feeding of the 5,000 it is a very public miracle and thus contributes to the rising conflict needed which eventually led to Jesus's death.

Finally, an important nature of the signs is that they may offer salvation. Jesus' use of water at wedding is clear reference to 'living water' offered to the Samaritan women. Jesus is here to offer salvation and the nature of the signs is to reveal his nature so that people may believe in order to receive that salvation. Faith is an important aspect of the signs.

Commentary

The first paragraph makes a brief comment about the difference between the synoptics and John's Gospel regards the words for miracles but needed to be developed a little more. There are two signs alluded to and clear reference to the text to illustrate the nature of those two signs. The examples are explained and there is good use is made of scholarship. It is a generally thorough treatment but there is little reference to the link with faith and some aspects such as the background to the word "signs" needed a little more depth. It therefore scores 27/30

06 'An understanding of Christian theology is necessary in order to understand the signs in John's Gospel.' Assess this claim.

(20 marks) AO2

Candidate Response

In answering this question, I believe it is important to address the variety of readers who could read John's Gospel – there are N.T. theologians who would have a good understanding of the Gospel as a whole, Christians with a more basic understanding, those with understanding of the O.T. and those with no understanding at all.

Needless to say, to a Christian it would be obvious that the signs are there to reveal that Jesus is God incarnate and the Son of God. However, their understanding of this would not necessarily mean that they understand the signs to the full. Without an understanding of the O.T. they could find themselves missing vital references, and ignoring the use of John's replacement theology.

For someone with knowledge of the O.T. however, perhaps a learned Jew, these references would be extremely clear. For example, in the Feeding of the 5,000, the reference to the Israelites in the desert could not go unmissed. Furthermore if they had a good understanding of Jewish superstition at the time in which John wrote, they could see Jesus' power being greater than that of the pool, in the healing of the crippled men, which 'could only lead one invalid at each stirring of the pool, whereas Jesus' power extended to all whom he willed' (Kostenberger). Thus, a good understanding of Jewish beliefs and miracles and scripture, would mean a decent grasp of the signs. It would be clear to see Jesus going over and beyond Judaism – replacing Jewish belief. Whether or not they would be willing to accept this, is an entirely different matter – however, the understanding would be there.

I would assume that even someone with no prior knowledge of Christian theology would be able to have some understanding of the signs, as many of the ideas presented could appeal to a universal audience. No one could misunderstand the fact that Jesus is shown as a provider in the feeding of the 5,000 and that he can conquer death when he heals the official's son. After all the Gospel was not written only for those with an understanding of Christian theology, as Christian Theology as a whole did not even exist.

Furthermore, theologians often over interpret ideas in the signs – such as reading in to the numbers. 'There is a temptation to read an allegorical interpretation into all the numbers of the 4th Gospel – many no doubt have symbolic significance but the number 6 does not seem to be one of them, there were just 6 (Sanders and Maskin on the 6 stone jars at the wedding). Perhaps only a scholar would trouble to read so much into this number and therefore it should be simply understood that there were 6 stone jars. Thus sometimes a full understanding of Christian theology is not even helpful in understanding the signs and no-one can tell if the interpretation taken by a scholar is even the one intended by John himself.

I would conclude, that a knowledge of Christian theology is not necessary to understand the signs, as John wrote for a pre-Christian audience. Rowe comments 'why did the author comment so much on the Jews if the Gospel was not aimed at them?' Perhaps the best understanding could even be gained from a Jewish mind? As long as one is open to the ideas presented and takes the time to try to gain an understanding I think anyone can. This is shown by the title above his head at crucifixion – message universal.

Commentary

This is a slightly different approach in that it considers various groups of readers and their background, and the influence this has on their understanding of signs. However, there are some good critical comments though it does drift away slightly from the Christian theology focus. It is systematic and reasoned and has some scholarship. There is some evidence of independent thought and so it is just above satisfactory level 5 . It scores 16/20

Grade A*

- 05 Examine the nature of signs with reference to any two signs in John's Gospel. (30 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

The signs of John's Gospel are carefully selected by the Evangelist and are steeped in symbolism in order to convey his purpose, that Jesus is God and the truth path to salvation. The synoptic have mighty works rather than signs. Signs are pointers. The signs water to wine and the feeding of the 5,000 examine typical Johannine themes, such as replacement theology, the idea of Christianity superseding Judaism. In water to wine, John tells us that there were 6 jars which are filled with water. Arguably, this number 6 is extremely symbolic and significant is representing RT as 7 is the perfect number in Judaism. Thus the nature of the fact that there is one less is to show the imperfection of Judaism and the insufficiency and inadequacy of it. Clearly symbolism is an important feature of the signs.

In addition, the fact that they run out of wine at the wedding in nature is also symbolic of the inadequacy of Judaism as according to Kostenberger wine is a symbol of 'life and strength' in Judaism. The fact that Jesus is called upon to 'fill up the depleted resources of Judaism' (Kostenberger), shows that Jesus' wine is the wine to salvation. It could be also argued that the fact that this sign takes place at a wedding is significant and the nature of it evokes ideas of Genesis, and new beginnings. Maybe even Jesus as the Bridegroom who brings in a new relationship. Therefore, the nature of this could be to show that Jesus brings new life and the new beginnings emphasises and the fact that Christianity is superceding Judaism.

In the feeding of the 5,000, there is stark RT, as it is reminiscent of Moses providing manna for the Israelites in the wilderness in Exodus. However, John accentuates in this sign the fact that Jesus' bread is the bread to salvation, whereas Moses' manna was merely a temporary provision. Thus the nature of this shows again that Jesus is the true path to salvation, and as stressed in the discourse which follows, it was God who provided the manna to Moses to give to the Israelites, and here this links Jesus as God.

The nature of the signs is also to portray Jesus as a divine being and as Russell comments 'to link Jesus fundamentally with the Father'. John does this through his use of high Christology in portraying Jesus. In both the signs, Jesus asks the creative command to perform the sign. In water to wine he instructs the servants to 'fill the jars' and in the feeding of the 5,000, he instructs his disciples to 'make the people sit down' and distribute the bread. The use of this creative command in the signs is in nature symbolic in order to represent Jesus as God. This is echoed in the Prologue, a 'microcosm' of the 4th Gospel, as Smalley notes, where Jesus is identified as logos 'the word was God'. Thus the fact that Jesus has such authority and is able to perform these signs by speaking, reminds the reader of the Creation in Genesis, where the phrase 'And God said' is repeated. Therefore the nature of this high Christology is to portray Jesus as divine and to stress the connection between Jesus and God. The idea of salvation is also prominent within the two signs, as they show that Jesus is a 'life giver' (Kostenberger). In water to wine Jesus' wine brings life and helps achieve salvation and in the feeding of the 5,000 Jesus bread leads to eternal life.

The signs are also eschatological in nature i.e. they allude to the death of Jesus, which is a key idea and role within the Gospel, as it dramatically leads to the imminent death of Christ. In water to wine, when Mary looks to Jesus to provide the wine he replies 'my time has not yet come', which implies his death and crucifixion. Furthermore, the wedding takes place on the '3rd day', which also evokes ideas of the resurrection, as Jesus rose on the third day. The nature of this is to allude to the death of Jesus – a fundamental feature of Christianity.

In the feeding of the 5,000 Kostenberger notes that the theme of bread and distributing the loaves among the people is 'symbolic of the eschatological messianic banquet', which takes place just before Jesus' death. In addition, there are also clear Eucharistic connotations which is significant for the basic theology and establishment of Christianity. Therefore it seems that the nature of this is to serve as a reminder to Jesus' imminent death and to help the role of the Gospel as a whole in evangelising and establishing key ideas of Christianity.

In conclusion the nature of the signs of water to wine and the feeding of the 5,000 is focused on the characteristics of showing Jesus as a divine and authoritative figure, and to show that through Jesus comes life and salvation. This is often expressed by means of symbolism.

Commentary

The essay is very clear in its development. The two signs have good exemplars, are clearly explained and relate to the focus of the question. The candidate has avoided narrating the text yet the examples are put into context. There is very good understanding. The scholarly references are relevant. There are some omissions such as focus on faith and John's use of signs compared to the synoptics. However, the treatment of the topic is thorough in its depth, and well expressed that it is sufficient to award it a level 7 (28 marks).

- 06 'An understanding of Christian theology is necessary in order to understand the signs in John's Gospel.' Assess this claim. (20 marks) AO2**

Candidate Response

The signs in John's Gospel are full of such deep symbolism that it could be argued that in order to understand it fully, you need an understanding of Christian theology, however there are many Old Testament and Jewish references which suggest that Christian Theology is not strictly necessary.

The signs were written before the establishment of Christianity and before the fundamental idea of the religion and theology had been established, therefore it is difficult to argue that you do need Christian theology. Although John uses deep symbolism and OT references in his signs, it is still possible to understand the meaning and purpose of what he has written. In the healing at the pool, for example, John mentions that the man had been ill for 38 years, which is symbolic of the wilderness wanderings in Exodus, where they wandered for 38 years. This does not require Christian theology in order to be understood, but instead requires OT knowledge to see that John is showing how the Jewish law is not coming to the man's aid and it is Jesus and Christianity, which has the ability to heal him, symbolising the new life and freedom offered by Christianity. The understanding of the signs is based greatly on realising and believing that Jesus is the path to salvation and that through faith in him we will be saved. Therefore this does not really require an understanding of Christian theology, instead showing early signs of the theology in itself. It could be argued that without OT knowledge or Christian knowledge, the signs would not be understood. It has however been noted that some New Testament scholars, who do have an understanding of Christian Theology, read far more into the symbolism, in the signs that John intended. The number symbolism for example, is often disputed as different scholars provide various reasons for why John chose this number, and Carson has commented that 'a lot of ink has been wasted on the importance of a number'. This shows perhaps, that knowledge of Christian theology is not always beneficial in understanding the signs, but it instead takes the focus away from the main and more obvious point that the evangelist is trying to make by over complicating it.

However, it would be argued that without understanding of the Eucharist and the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the signs cannot be understood. I disagree with this, believing that through understanding the crucifixion etc would help an understanding, they are not strictly necessary. The allusions which John makes to Jesus' death, such as 'his son was close to death', which reminds us that Jesus too is close to death and the idea that Jesus will die to save us, as his word and bread and wine will lead to salvation would not have as much meaning to someone who did not understand Christian theology in comparison to someone who did.

In addition, the order in which the Gospel is read and any prior knowledge must be taken into account. If someone were to read only the signs, they may not completely understand the purpose and the symbolism, whereas if one had read the Prologue, for example, this would aid their understanding, as the Prologue is a 'microcosm' of the 4th Gospel (Smalley) and the themes raised are prominent throughout the gospel.

In conclusion, I would argue that Christian theology is not necessary in order to understand the signs, as the theology had not really been established by that point, and prior knowledge of the gospel or of the OT would be just as helpful in understanding the signs. So although an understanding of Christian theology would help, it is not strictly necessary.

Commentary

This is a well-reasoned argument that weighs up and evaluates the arguments rather than just lists them. There is clear critical analysis where an argument is challenged and assessed. Effective use is made of evidence to sustain an argument. It is a well-focused response to the issues raised. It has limited reference to scholarship but has breadth enough to be awarded a level 7. (It scores 20 marks).

- 07 Examine the nature and purpose of John's passion narrative (John 18-19). (30 marks) AO1**

Candidate Response

The passion narrative in the John's Gospel is deeply symbolic as there are many references made to the OT to show replacement theology and to portray Jesus as God.

In the passion narrative, John juxtaposes the Christologies of Jesus (divine/human), which conveys the link between Jesus and God and the fact that Jesus is also human. John for example, omits the fact that Simon of Cyrene carried Jesus' cross, which is mentioned in the synoptics, which portrays the low Christology of Jesus as he is suffering. However, the fact that Jesus requires no assistance also shows the omnipotence of Christ and Kostenberger elaborates this claiming that 'Jesus goes to his death entirely reliant upon his own more than adequate resources'. This helps John convey his purpose that Jesus is divine.

In addition, the fact that Jesus carries his cross is deeply symbolic of Jesus carrying the burden of the sins of the world, showing John's purpose that Jesus dies to save mankind from his sins and that through Christ we receive forgiveness and salvation. Another portrayal of Jesus low Christology is the presence of Mary. This is the second time we see her in the Gospel, and she marks the beginning and end of his earthly ministry. We are also reminded of his humanity and that he came from a woman. This in turn evokes ideas of the wedding at Cana where we first see Mary, and the theme of new life is restored, as this is 'the dawning of a new age' (Tasker), and we see that Jesus will bring salvation.

His low Christology and humanity is again shown when he is on the cross and he says 'I am thirsty'. The nature of this symbolism is also in order to fulfil prophecy, which shows the Johannine theme of replacement theology. This fulfils scripture 'I am parched crying for my lord'. The crucifixion is arguably the climax of RT and this is shown by John in the fact scripture from the OT is fulfilled. For example, the ephod which Jesus wears, a seamless garment which is fit for a King, is not torn and the soldiers 'decide by lot who will get it', and this fulfils the scripture 'they divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing'. This shows that soldiers recognise that this garment is special, and this is supported by Marsh who maintains that 'the significance of the one piece was noticed by both Jews and Christians'. John shows us that by not tearing it, the unity of the people whom Jesus has gathered will not be destroyed'. This shows John's purpose within the Gospel to encourage the continuation of faith and to encourage people to believe.

Another example of RT is the implication of Jesus carrying his cross to that of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22. The idea of Jesus carrying his cross is symbolic of Isaac, who also carried what was going to kill him – 'he himself carried the knife and the fire' – and the nature of this symbolism is to show that both God and Abraham are prepared to sacrifice their sons – whereas God spared Abraham and told him to sacrifice a lamb instead, God here makes the ultimate sacrifice by giving up his son, thus Jesus is portrayed as the sacrificial lamb. Another reference to this is the fact that Jesus' legs are not broken and he is presented as the perfect sacrificial lamb 'without defect' as instructed in Exodus 12. This shows John's purpose of RT as it presents Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice and he has superseded Judaism and it is through him that we achieve salvation.

The portrayal of Jesus on the cross is also very important and symbolic as there is again a juxtaposition of Christologies. Whereas he is suffering greatly, the fact that John tells us he is in the middle with two other crosses either side and John omits the fact that the other two are criminals 'gives Jesus the place of honour and glorifies him' (Marsh). Thus we see a high Christology which is again demonstrated in his dignified death where we see Jesus in total control 'he bowed his head and gave up his spirit'. This shows the Christological link between Jesus and God.

In addition the sign above his head that reads 'King of the Jews' is extremely important as it is an ironic statement, 'falsely' glorifying him as the authorities believe he is not God. The sign is written in Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek which conveys John's message of the universality of Christianity.

In conclusion, the nature of the passion narrative is deeply symbolic in order for John to portray his purpose to glorify Jesus and to show him as God.

Commentary

Again, the candidate shows very good knowledge of the text and is able to allude to the text, selecting examples to support their point. The examples are explained well and address the focus of the question. There is good background knowledge and technical language is used appropriately. There is some scholarship though this is limited. It does discuss both nature and purpose but focusses most on nature though the two areas do naturally overlap. The breadth and accurate knowledge with the relevant examples places it above a level 5 but only just as the essay is not balanced in its coverage of the topics. It scores 25/30.

08 'John's passion narrative contains little that is historical fact.'
Assess this claim.

(20 marks) AO2

Candidate Response

The passion narrative is extremely symbolic, suggesting that John was not concerned with showing historical fact and accuracy, but with showing the true person and nature of Christ.

The omission of Simon of Cyrene could suggest that there is little historical accuracy as John has omitted a figure who was present, whilst the synoptics include him. However I think that the fact that John omits Simon, though he very probably did help carry Jesus' cross, helps him convey his purpose, as he uses Jesus' own strength to convey deep symbolism of Jesus' Christology. Thus the passion narrative does contain little historical fact as it is more focused on symbolism. Tasker corroborates that there is little historical fact as he argues that John wrote his gospel so much later than when the events took place, thus his accounts are 'sketchy' and 'contain little that is historically accurate'. He also continues that eyewitness accounts are not very reliable.

The fact that there is very little similarity between John's Gospel and the Synoptics suggests that there is...little historical accuracy. However, Culpepper argues that something that differs from other sources tends to be more historically accurate. This view could be plausible as it rules out the idea that John relied and depended on information from the other gospels to collate his passion narrative.

John does however include details of timings such as the '7th hour', and includes witnesses of the crucifixion such as Mary Magdalene and the soldiers suggesting there is perhaps some historical accuracy.

It seems however, that to view the passion narrative as a historical account diminishes greatly the value and significance of the passage, as it is such a symbolic narrative. It would appear that the intention and concern of John was not linked to history, but to show the 'climatic' (Carson) point of the Gospel and portray his purpose through the nature of symbolism, that Jesus is God and the Messiah.

In conclusion, it seems that the claim is quite accurate, as there is not much historical evidence within the narrative and it does differ from the synoptics. However I would say that this is John's intention, and his aim was not to portray the death historically and give a detailed and accurate account, but to show the symbolic meaning behind his death and what it means for Christianity.

Commentary

There are clear arguments both for and against the claim, though it is limited in breadth. However the latter part of the essay is reflective with some critical analysis and weighing up of the different views. There is evidence of reasoning. It is satisfactory and a little one sided rather than well-focussed. Hence is scores level 5, 15 marks.