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Examiners' Report January 2011

GCE Religious Studies 6RS01 01

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Introduction

It is always a joy to see how well some candidates have been prepared for this examination by knowledgeable and dedicated teachers and also to recognise how hard so many candidates have worked in their preparation for this examination. Candidates seem now to have a good grasp of what is meant by AO1 but for many there is still much to do in order to understand what is required by the evaluative part of the question.

Time management in the examination seem to be improving with fewer candidates only attempting two questions because they run out of time, and candidates are reminded that there are three sections, one for each answer.

Question 1(a)

This question asked for the weaknesses of the argument however some candidates spent most of their answer expounding the strengths, partly perhaps as a result of prepared or semi-prepared answers. There was a minority of students who struggled to adapt their material to answer the question and simply wrote about the argument, regardless of what the question was asking. Good responses kept the balance firmly with the weaknesses and related each weakness to a particular form of the argument. Higher marks were gained by those answers that gave fullness and depth in their analysis of these weaknesses. There were some excellent, detailed focussed responses which were often centred on Hume and his critiques of the argument. Weaker answers tended to spend too long explaining the argument and only gave a cursory and brief explanation of the weaknesses.

The second part of the question gave problems for those candidates who had spent the first part explaining the strengths of the argument: they had little left for this part of the question.

The candidate deals with Hume's objections to Aquinas' argument, refers to the difficulty in Paley's approach, quotes Ayer's criticisms and finally deals with objections that stem from Darwin's work.

In the box, state whether you are answering part(a) or part(b). A

The design argument is a very old 'proof' for the existence of God. It is concerned with finding order and purpose, often in parts of the world and then extrapolating from there, to the whole. There are two forms of argument, inductive and ~~and~~ analogical.

David Hume, the empiricist philosopher

paley Some say that God created the world to evolve and so Darwin's theory does not go entirely against design. However Richard Dawkins the revered atheist supporter of Darwinian theory crushes this argument by ^{applying} ~~referencing~~ the theory of evolution to paley's analogy of the watch. He states evolution is a random uninhibited process. Therefore if it

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Examiner Comments

The first clip shows how the candidate briefly sets the scene of the argument and then is straight into Hume's criticisms.

The second show that the candidate can show how the weaknesses of the argument come through even when it is being defended.

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Examiner Tip

Candidates are advised to read the whole of the question so they might see what is entailed in each part.

Question 1(b)

This was generally answered well and there were many responses which focused on the three areas required. Some candidates, despite the rubric, found it difficult to avoid examining all four aspects.

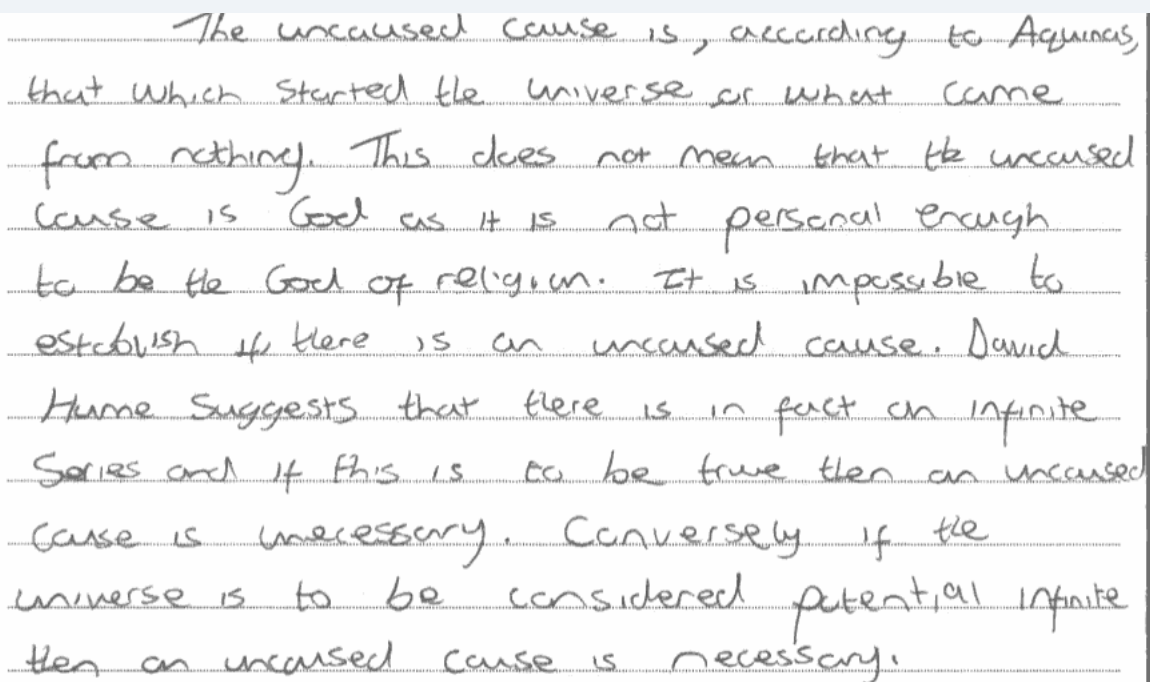
The best responses were full and precise in their analysis of the key concepts, and showed knowledge of the range of opinions. Weaker responses were descriptive or simply repeated a key (e.g. uncaused cause) idea without examining what it might mean in the argument.

These responses ranged from a clear and coherent exploration of three of Aquinas ways to a more broad response which included links to modern reformulations. The second part of the question asks for evaluation and the good responses not only gave the objections but used them to assess the strength or weakness of the cosmological argument.

The final part of the second section, asking for comments regarding “no firm conclusions about success or failure” was not often directly addressed. Generally, responses to the second section comprised opposition to the cosmological argument and perhaps a cursory personal evaluation of the argument.

The candidate does what the question asks and sets out the answer to deal with the categories of the question by dealing with different philosopher’s approach to these issues.

In part (ii) the candidate focuses directly on the question about no firm conclusions.



The uncaused cause is, according to Aquinas, that which started the universe or what came from nothing. This does not mean that the uncaused cause is God as it is not personal enough to be the God of religion. It is impossible to establish if there is an uncaused cause. David Hume suggests that there is in fact an infinite series and if this is to be true then an uncaused cause is unnecessary. Conversely if the universe is to be considered potential infinite then an uncaused cause is necessary.

ii) I believe the cosmological argument is up for debate. So far there has been no proof of a God creating the universe but nor has there been proof of anything else.

Science has put forward some strong arguments such as the Big Bang or the oscillating universe models but these still aren't bulletproof arguments.

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Examiner Comments

1st clip shows how the candidate examines the uncaused cause in relation to Aquinas and Hume.

2nd clip sets the scene for the evaluation which is very well introduced but not sufficiently developed to reach level 4.

Question 2(a)

The question had to be read carefully. Some students failed to talk about the problem of evil, or to discuss the quote at all. Good responses achieved a balance between analysing the problems of evil and giving one theodicy - Augustine or Irenaeus were the favourites. Good responses are characterised by fullness and accurate detail in presenting the theodicy. Weaker responses either gave a range of responses to the problems of evil or were too brief and superficial in presenting Augustine or Irenaeus. There were a few students who spent a bit too much time considering the problem, and identifying the problem, giving one line solutions from a Monist, Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim perspective as well as the one solution they were considering.

The second aspect of the essay tended to be an exploration of Augustine or Irenaeus with some candidates adding in the concept of Whitehead's Process Theodicy argument. There was a significant increase in candidates using Free Will Defence this year and also exploring Hick in more detail.

(ii) required the candidate to present a brief picture of another theodicy and it was good to see how many gave an account of Process theodicy. Some candidates simply criticised the theodicy they had explained in the first part. Good answers managed to balance the need to give a second theodicy and to assess it.

A few candidates thought that the "inconsistent triad" was itself a solution to the problem of evil.

This candidate fully discusses the quotation and then deals with the theodicy of St Augustine. For part (ii) the Irenaean theodicy is offered. This is a very common pattern of answer.

different problems for believers. Moral evil according to Swinburne is 'evil constituted by deliberate actions or negligent failure'. Natural evil according to Hick is 'the evil that exists independently of human actions'. Physical evil raises the question why would an omnibenevolent God allow humans to suffer physical and mental anguish? Metaphysical evil also raises questions about the nature of God. Swinburne says that if a believer would need a satisfactory answer to the problem of evil otherwise there is no reason why the atheist should share their belief.

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Examiner Comments

A number of candidates wanted to get straight into the theodicies without dealing with the first sentence of the question: "Examine this claim." Here the response has taken this part very seriously.

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Examiner Tip

Ensure that in Augustine's theodicy you deal with the essential motivation that Jesus was sent to bring salvation into the world.

Question 2(b)

Good answers kept the balance between definition and reasons for miracles. These answers provided a range of scholars' opinions. Weaker responses gave simplistic biblical explanations or showed little knowledge of the philosophical problems posed by miracles. A wide range of examples and key philosophers were being used. There was some varied use of Swinburne from an obvious lack of real understanding of his key principles to in-depth analysis of their importance. In many cases this section was significantly shorter than ii) as the candidates were much more confident with the reasons not to believe in miracles.

However, many candidates struggled to adequately identify reasons to believe in miracles. Some wanted to explain problems with belief anyway.

ii) This again tended to focus on Hume and why he was right from the weaker responses and did not engage in the wider issues. Most candidates were able to give at least some of Hume's objections. Good answers also addressed the demand of the question to assess the weight of the case for and against.

This candidate examines a number of definitions: Tennant, Davis, Swinburne in part (i). In part(ii) the candidate uses Hume's critique of miracles and judges it by the use of Swinburne's Principles of Credulity and Testimony. The candidate does not deal with the issue of whether there is any justification for believing in miracles and therefore cannot really enter the highest band for evaluation.

In the box, state whether you are answering part(a) or part(b). (b)

i). There are many definitions of the term 'miracle' and subsequently many concepts of the same term. To f.R.

Tennant's definition of a miracle can be compared to the two part definition put forward by Brian Davis.

Davis suggests that there are two types of miracles: strong-sense miracles and weak-sense miracles. ~~A strong~~ ~~miracle~~ When looking at an strong sense miracle we must ~~be~~ ask two questions a) are they possible? b) Do they actually occur? It would not be wrong to say that the miracles which occurred in the New Testament are strong-sense miracles e.g. walking on water. The second definition, weak sense miracles are event which are highly unlikely or coincidences, such as the story of a man ~~die~~ in New York, who jumped from an office block (to commit suicide) only for a tremendous gust of wind to blow him into the office block and through a window. It is weak sense miracles that fascinate philosophical thinkers.



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Examiner Comments

This candidate neatly relates concepts to definitions at the beginning. In the second clip the candidate compares the definition of Tennant with that of Davis.



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Examiner Tip

Ensure that you understand which part of the question is for and which part is against belief in miracles.

.Question 3(a)

There were relatively few responses to Religion and Morality, even though it was a straightforward question. Some made good use of the Euthyphro Dilemma, used Freud or Dawkins to argue against the link or were able to discuss the relationship in a coherent manner, referring to Aquinas, Divine Command Ethics and Kant. Some were able to use the Bible to show either reasons for or against the connection between Religion and Morality.

For AO2 the better responses were able to add new material, exploring the independency of Religion and Morality, whilst being able to thread through an argument to suggest whether it made the relationship unsuccessful, but some failed to concentrate on the thrust of the question by not focusing on the extent the arguments were unsuccessful. There was a clear lack of conclusions. Some candidates completely ignored the question and wrote about Situation Ethics in the hope that some link could be made by the examiner that they had not done themselves.

The candidate begins by making a clear link between a divine command approach within Abrahamic faiths and the issue of morality being dependent upon religion; then deals with the Euthyphro dilemma.

In (ii) the candidate gives a quotation from St Paul and Freud and after some discussion comes to a conclusion.

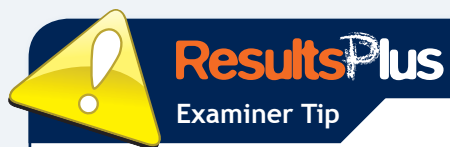
In the box, state whether you are answering part(a) or part(b). a

Judaism, Christianity & Islam are 3 of the main religions that believe in the Divine Commandment - this is that God has told us all ~~what~~ ^{what} is good. The reason for this is that 'disobeying is sin... obeying is virtue'. In this case morality is definitely dependant on Religion. As a reason for obeying

Overall the extent at which the view on 'morality is dependant on Religion' is unsuccessful is debatable - especially it can depend wholly on whether an individual is religious or not.



The 1st clip is the opening sentence.
The 2nd clip shows the balanced conclusion. However there is very little real evaluation so this does not get into level 4.



Make sure you discuss the points for evaluation and do not simply list them, in order to get into the higher levels.

Question 3(b)

The utilitarianism answer was by far the most popular. As usual Bentham and Mill were used with no reference to the actual question. Some candidates were able to identify the context in which Utilitarianism was developed, but did not really say that this was why it was a persuasive theory.

However many candidates did not answer the set question and either wrote an account of the characteristics of Utilitarianism or wrote out the strengths in A01 and the weaknesses in A02, without ever addressing the questions.

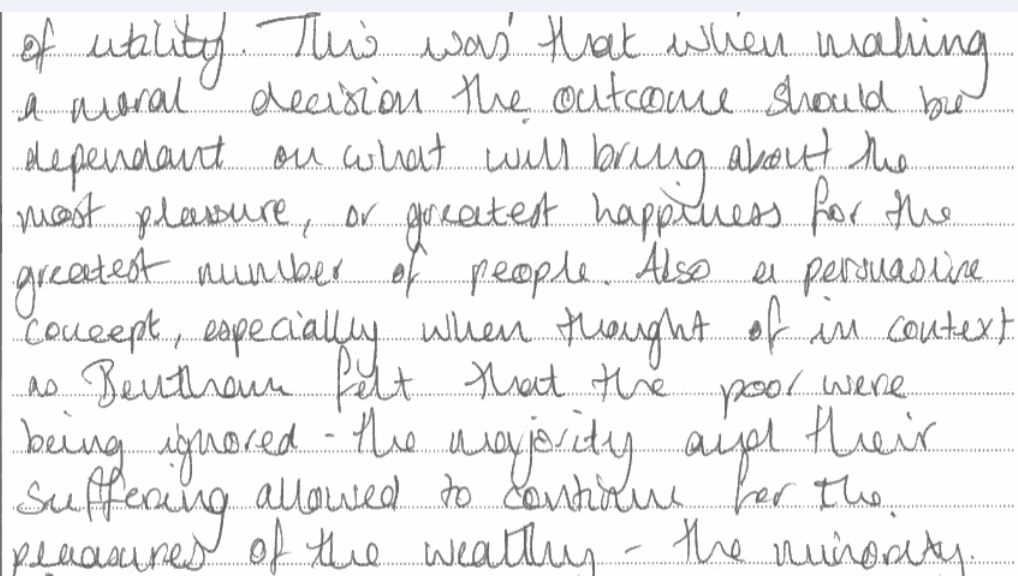
Good responses were able to zero in on just how 'persuasive' Utilitarianism was/is as an ethical theory. A range of reasons were proffered from those who claimed that it was altruistic in nature to others who stated that Mill's form of rule utilitarianism and his 'higher' and 'lower' pleasures promoted cerebral and spiritual development over bodily pleasures and thus was very persuasive. Many candidates were able to support their arguments with well-chosen examples. Weaker responses tended to simply write all they knew about Utilitarianism without any reference to the question.

Better responses offered clear explanation of the principles of Utilitarianism, coupled with scholarly comment and discussion on Mill, Popper and others. The best answers were distinguished by their concentration on scholarly discussion, rather than reliance on lengthy 'Eastenders' - style scenarios. Mid-range responses offered good generalised accounts and made some attempt to discuss the persuasiveness of the theory though quite a few simply wrote all they knew about Utilitarianism,

(ii) The better responses evaluated the criticisms wisely and linked them to pertinent examples with good scholarship. The mid-range largely wrote out the weaknesses of Utilitarianism in rote-fashion. A degree of selectiveness of material would have aided the answer. Lower-level responses relied on vague attempts to apply Utilitarianism to a range of often bizarre ethical dilemmas.

This candidate gives a straightforward analysis of utilitarianism but manages to keep bringing the subject matter back to the question that has been asked.

In A02 the candidate not only deals with criticism of Utilitarianism but sees newer types of utilitarianism as themselves criticisms of the older variants before reaching a conclusion.



of utility. This was that when making a moral decision the outcome should be dependant on what will bring about the most pleasure, or greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. Also a persuasive concept, especially when thought of in context as Bentham felt that the poor were being ignored - the majority and their suffering allowed to continue for the pleasures of the wealthy - the minority.

The criticisms do have a damaging effect on Utilitarianism - even though its rationalist in nature it still restricts decision making in a way which renders utilitarianism impractical. It's not easy to every time weigh up every outcome - as in act and yet rule doesn't allow for situations which may be slightly obscure. Utilitarianism is impractical and therefore not employed in many decisions as it seems to have blind spots where immoral ~~act~~ actions may be justified.

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Examiner Comments

Notice in the first clip the candidate says this is also a persuasive concept.

In the second clip the final paragraph sums up the evaluation.

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Examiner Tip

Keep the question always in your mind in the format of your answer.

Question 4(a)

This question was really well answered by the some of candidates that chose it. Good responses were able to trace the historical development of the Just War theory from Augustine to the present day and simultaneously demonstrate the justification for various wars though some however laid the whole theory at the feet of Aquinas. Many candidates were able to explain the seven principles of

Jus ad bellum and the three principles of Jus in bello and were able to give pertinent examples to demonstrate their understanding of these principles. For example it could be said that the Second World War was a just war as it met the 'just war' principles.

Some of the better answers mentioned the American Catholic Bishops statement of 1983 or the recent development of the Jus Post Bellum (Justice after War) principles by Brian Orend amongst others.

For part ii many were able to not just rely on Pacifism, but were able to clearly explore the reasons behind why there may not be any good reasons and use succinct evidence from previous wars to support this. However there seemed to be some candidates who were relying on retelling of GCSE principles and tended to repeat themselves in A02. Some of the arguments included the fact that nuclear weapons could not be proportionate or could not be used discriminately, but often candidates failed to state why this was the case.

This candidate outlines the background of the just war theory and then goes through the main criteria with examples.

For (ii) the candidate uses Bentham, Fletcher's situation ethics and Quakers to illustrate the varying views. There is however just sufficient discussion of the views to raise the evaluation into the bottom of level 4.

if a Christian, who is not an absolute pacifist, can accept warfare under certain conditions, then Aquinas' theory can justify

warfare ~~under~~ as it has been influenced by the love and wisdom of Jesus.

International retribution. Furthermore, it is easy to describe a war as just and evaluate it in hindsight however at the time it is near impossible to see ~~the~~ teleologically the consequences of military decisions.

Quakers are good examples of a pacifist denomination



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Examiner Comments

1st clip shows how the candidate brings the answer back to the question at the end of the answer.

2nd clip shows how difficult it is in reality to evaluate any war as just.



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Examiner Tip

Ensure that differing views are actually discussed in evaluation.

Question 4(b)

There were some very good answers to this question and it is clear that candidates are becoming more engaged in the wider topic than just merely describing some aspect of sexual ethics. Good use of religious opinion and interpretations were deployed by many candidates. The weaker responses descended into anecdotal stories without any supporting arguments; some candidates seemed to lack the raw material to answer this at AS level and concentrated on GCSE-style scenarios about adultery and homosexuality that went along the path of being good, taking precautions and following the teaching of the Bible.

Some did not understand what the question was asking. Situation Ethics was used but not really to the effect it might have been. Some candidates used Bible quotations, Leviticus being the main one, but there was little evaluation, most were content to allow the statement to stand without discussion of its context within the rules of the book.

(ii) This was particularly obvious, with candidates appearing to answering 'off the top of their heads' and making vague links to sex and the Bible. Some candidates seemed to be unprepared for this question, perhaps doing it as a last resort, and answers largely relied much too heavily on GCSE knowledge.

The candidate takes the issue of homosexuality and examines different resolutions of this question in different Churches.

i) Sexual ethics is a constant discussion on the ethical values of sexual relationships between people. It may be about Marriage, divorce or homosexuality. When forming an opinion upon the subject, or wanting to know how to act appropriately, people often turn to religion for guidance.

The bible although old and some people agree outdated, is still widely used and believed. therefore such bold value is the interpreted resolution.



The 1st clip shows that religion can be used for guidance. Some candidates saw religion as just setting old fashioned rules. Again some candidates seemed not to grasp that deciding that a practice is wrong may also be a resolution. 2nd clip shows the evaluation of the word "still" in part (ii) that some candidates missed.

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Examiner Tip

When dealing with issues about which you feel strongly why not try to use the word *may* rather than *must* or *should*, it softens the answer.

Question 5

There were very few scripts for Q5(a). Responses for Q5(b) which were assessed at the lower levels had a limited range of material, given that the question asked for four key features. These responses presented material in a descriptive manner without attention to an examination of the features. The better quality answers were full of detail and displayed proficient use of technical vocabulary.

Question 6

Questions 6, 7, 8 9 and 10

There were very few scripts across all of these questions. The best quality answers for Q6 had an explicit focus on the question about the context of meditation together with a fine analysis of key terms. These presented similar good quality material in part (ii) with a commendable range of different purposes.

Question 11(a)

This was a popular question and the best quality answers in part i) demonstrated an excellent knowledge of life in Arabia before the time of Muhammad and examined the religious and social context in detail, drawing out relevant implications. Some candidates wrote competently though some selected only a few examples of the social and religious context or wrote about one aspect whilst omitting the other. A few candidates did not answer the question and described the early life of Muhammad.

Only a few answers gained marks in the higher levels for part ii) and demonstrated a good understanding of the Muslim perception of the period. Many answers gave one or more examples of immoral behaviour without relating these, whilst others very briefly made reference to the need of a final prophet without explaining their comment.

Question 11(b)

There were relatively few answers to this question and these were variable in standard. In part i) some answers simply described Muhammad's life in Madinah in varying detail, whereas the best quality answers focused successfully on the question and used their material carefully.

Answers to part ii) were often brief and descriptive rather than considering 'the extent...' and some candidates repeated material from part i).

Question 12(a)

This question was answered by only a few candidates and answers varied in standard.

Those achieving marks in the higher levels demonstrated a good knowledge of Tawhid and Shirk and the Six Beliefs and used their material well, with close focus upon the question.

Other candidates gave brief answers without focusing closely upon the question.

Answers to part ii) were often brief or repetitive.

Question 12(b)

This was a popular question and though the answers varied in standard, it was generally answered competently; demonstrating sound knowledge of the Five Pillars. Responses gaining marks in the higher levels related closely to the question and carefully examined the view that the five pillars are the foundation of Islamic belief. Some responses described the Five Pillars in varying detail, implicitly demonstrating the importance of these, whilst others described them without drawing out their significance and importance.

Part ii) was often answered briefly with some answers describing or referring to problems relating to the practice of Islam; particularly in a non Islamic environment. The best quality answers focused closely on the question and successfully placed the Pillars in context within the religion linking them closely with other important aspects of the Religion such as the Six Beliefs, the importance of Muhammad as a role model, and Sharia Law whilst showing the problems that could result if these were not also used as a guide.

Question 13

Questions 13, 14, 15 and 16

There were very few scripts across all of these questions.

Question 17(a)

This was generally well answered for both Luke's Gospel (Wealth and Poverty) and the Fourth Gospel ('I Am' sayings). The weaker responses tended to retell the events/episodes without making contextual or theological connections beyond the immediate narrative. The better answers engaged with the respective gospel writer's purpose and were able to make appropriate scholarly references. The higher level answers gave evidence to support the assertions being made. For A02, far too often, answers drifted into listing arguments and no attempt made at weighing why these teachings were important to Jesus' ministry.

Question 17(b)

There were some good answers displaying understanding of the incidents (both Luke and John). The higher level answers focussed on the implications for the Luke incidents while the lower

level answers focused on the narration of the events with some general teaching comments about the implication occurring in their explanation of the stories. A significant number of responses handled the Fourth Gospel's stories well and gave good accounts of 'replacement theology' demonstrating good analysis and application.

Question 18(a)

The Fourth Gospel option was answered well by some candidates and went beyond the retelling of the events to actually articulating what could be learned. Weaker responses either failed to discuss both aspects of the question or tended to focus on one of the events, usually Mary Magdalene, and thus failed to synthesise what could be learned from both. Those that answered the question on the Sabbath generally engaged adequately with the requirements of the question. Some A02 answers for both Luke and John clearly developed their responses from A01 and discussed the extent they were vital to the respective Gospel whilst others added very little to their A01 offering.

Question 18(b)

Those that chose the discipleship question generally produced very good answers and were able to go beyond simple narrative and unpack the distinctive nature of being a disciple. Part ii answers on John the Baptist generally made all the salient points needed but many failed to evaluate how important the role was other than recount the Baptist's (and his parents) connection with Jesus.

In order to improve their performance, candidates should:

- Read the question carefully before starting to write
- Read through both parts of the question to see which parts should contain what information
- Learn to give narrative accounts very succinctly
- Evaluate by weighing up different views not just listing them
- use scholars in weighing up not simply by learning quotations

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