

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
GCE Advanced Level

**MARK SCHEME for the October/November 2011 question paper
for the guidance of teachers**

9011 DIVINITY

9011/02

Paper 2 (The Four Gospels), maximum raw mark 100

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes must be read in conjunction with the question papers and the report on the examination.

- Cambridge will not enter into discussions or correspondence in connection with these mark schemes.

Cambridge is publishing the mark schemes for the October/November 2011 question papers for most IGCSE, GCE Advanced Level and Advanced Subsidiary Level syllabuses and some Ordinary Level syllabuses.

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Candidates are expected to show 'ability to organise and present information, ideas, descriptions and arguments clearly and logically' and to write their answers 'in continuous prose'. A good essay answers the question holistically; the interpretation and comparison of issues will be demonstrated in the course of explanation and analysis of the relevant material, and thus evidence of the fulfilment of the assessment objectives will be inextricably interwoven. Marks are always awarded for the two assessment objectives which, when combined, produce a mark which is appropriate for the overall grade descriptions.

NB. Any response which is appropriate (i.e. a response to a reasonable interpretation of the question) is assessed according to the extent to which it meets the syllabus requirements and fulfils the objectives, conforming to the mark band descriptions.

The Examiner's task is to assess the ability of each answer according to the descriptions provided. The marks are an intermediate stage on the route to assessment of attainment, which is ultimately reported as a grade. The mark for an answer is a true reflection of the candidate's level of attainment in the assessment objectives for the syllabus according to their weightings, bearing in mind the Syllabus Aims and what may reasonably be expected of an 18-year-old who has studied the syllabus for two years.

The descriptions are cumulative, i.e. a description at one band builds on or improves the description at lower bands. Not *all* the qualities listed in a band may be demonstrated in an answer for it to fall within that band (some of the qualities are alternatives and therefore mutually exclusive).

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ASSESSMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The examination will assess the candidate's ability:

- 1 To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the main approaches to the aspects of religion specified in their chosen area through the selection, explanation and interpretation of relevant material (60%).**

0	none evident
1–2	very limited/serious inaccuracies and/or relevance/completely unacceptable quality of language
3–4	some significant omissions/some knowledge but no attempt at explanation of interpretation/very poor quality of language
5	knowledge and understanding partial and insufficient/any explanation attempted betrays poor understanding/interpretation incorrect/definite evidence of a serious error which outweighs otherwise acceptable demonstration of knowledge and understanding/poor quality of language.
6	some irrelevance but sufficient material present/ quality of explanation basic/interpretation limited but attempted/significant error(s) of fact but otherwise promising/quality of language fair.
7–8	mostly accurate and relevant/evidence that knowledge and understanding are wider than merely basic/competent handling of material/reasonable quality of language
9–10	accurate, comprehensive, apposite, largely coherent/good quality of language
11–12	selection of material is wide and detailed and is restricted to the relevant/explanation shows full understanding/interpretative skills well evidenced/excellent quality of language
13–15	sophisticated in explanation and interpretation of scholarship; outstandingly mature in approach.

[NB 'relevant material' includes both objective evidence (usually original texts/writings by protagonists/contemporary observers, but could include archaeology, tradition etc.) and 'recent [19th & 20th C] mainstream academic study' (see NB to AO2).]

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2 To analyse and evaluate the issues that arise from a consideration of a mainstream academic study in their chosen area, using an appropriate quality of language (40%)

Evaluative ability will be assessed on the quality of the reasoning and evidence used to arrive at a position rather than the position itself. It is thus impracticable to include likely responses in this area in the outlines

0	none evident
1	only vestigial evidence/largely incoherent/completely unacceptable quality of language
2	very little evidence/serious misapprehensions and inaccuracies/poorly structured/very poor quality of language
3	very limited and largely unsuccessful/analysis very restricted/judgement not supported by evidence/poor quality of language
4	attempted, but limited or only partially successful/a few glimpses of genuine ability/quality of language fair
5	some evidence of ability/reasonable attempt to analyse and evaluate/fairly well-structured/some skill at communication/reasonable quality of language
6	having identified them, analyses and evaluates the main relevant opinions competently/logically structured/good quality of language
7	some well grounded insights and judgements/coherently and systematically constructed/excellent quality of language
8+	personal insights and independent thought/sophistication and elegance in expression, construction and quality of language

[NB 'mainstream academic study' is intended to exclude GCSE level textbooks and material that is not widely accepted in the academic community (e.g. *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail*; anything to do with the Egyptian pyramids, Stonehenge, astrology etc. in a pseudo religion context; material such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, *The Satanic Verses* etc. which is offensive and/or libellous)].

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3 To organise and present information, ideas, descriptions and arguments clearly and logically, taking into account the use of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

In essay answers, the organisation and presentation is inherent in the quality of the coherence and progression of the exposition; grammar, punctuation and spelling make a slightly less direct contribution to it but must be taken into account. Overall adjustment to the final mark for an essay [out of 25] is unlikely to be more than one mark in either direction, and is best carried out as part of the final judgement according to the overall descriptions.

The overall mark for a question (all are allotted 25 marks) reflects the descriptions below, which are cumulative, with due allowance being made for variation between the levels achieved in the two objectives, and reflecting their weightings:

0	Answer absent/completely irrelevant
1–4	Largely irrelevant/very short/in note form making very few significant points/completely unacceptable quality of language
5–7	Unfinished and without much potential/high level of inaccuracy outweighing accurate material/high level of irrelevance but makes some creditable points/in note form which might have been developed into an acceptable essay of moderate quality/very poor quality of language
8–9	Does not quite meet the standard required for an A level pass/too short/immature/limited knowledge/unable to create a coherent argument/poor quality of language
10–11	Basic factual knowledge accurate and sufficient/largely relevant/analysis, critical ability, reasoning limited but occasionally attempted/has seen the main point of the question/a promising start but finished in note form/ quality of language fair but limited
12–13	Accurate factual knowledge slightly wider than just basic/in general sticks to the point/fairly complete coverage of the expected material/competent handling of main technical vocabulary/some evidence of reading/glimpses of analytical ability/fairly well-structured/ moderate quality of language
14–15	Good and accurate factual knowledge/coherently constructed/some telling points made/ definite evidence of reading/displays analytical ability/includes all the expected main points/ competent handling of technical vocabulary/shows some knowledge of critical scholarship/understands what the question is looking for/reasonable quality of language
16–17	Evidence of wide reading/quotes scholars' views fairly accurately/addresses the substance of the question confidently/is familiar with different schools of religious thought/ good quality of language
18–19	Up-to-date, accurate and comprehensively demonstrated knowledge of reputable schools of scholarly and religious thought/coherently and systematically constructed/well-informed evaluative judgements/in complete control of the material/excellent quality of language
20+	Can compare, contrast and evaluate the views of scholars and schools of religious thought/personal insights and independent thought evident/outstanding maturity of thought and approach [for an 18-year-old]/sophistication and elegance in expression, construction and quality of language

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Question 1 – Gobbets

Each gobbet is marked out of 6. An extra mark can be awarded at the end for the overall quality of the performance.

The points provided below are not exclusive.

- (a)** And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. (Matthew 6:7)

Context: Sermon on the Mount – section on hypocrisy concerning almsgiving, prayer and fasting – just prior to the 'Lord's Prayer'.

Points:

- only in Matthew
- typical Matthean theme – comparisons with Matt 23 and his criticisms of the Pharisees
- Matthew's treatment of Gentiles
- significance of 'empty phrases' (an open interpretation is possible here)
- room for something on prayer generally, but must not diverge too far from this text

- (b)** The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. (Matthew 13:44)

Context: Matthew's chapter on the kingdom of heaven parables – after the parable of the weeds and prior to the drag net.

Points:

- only in Matthew (though the main part of the chapter is lifted from Mark)
- from Matthew's third section of teaching
- this parable forms a pair with the drag net, being preserved side by side
- Matthew's use of kingdom of heaven rather than God indicates the Jewish leaning of the gospel
- Room for comment on the familiar gospel theme of giving up everything for the kingdom

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- (c) And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking around on those who sat about him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" (Mark 3:33–34)

Context: after the calling of the 12 apostles and the saying about the 'sin against the Holy Spirit'; during the popular Galilean ministry with Jesus surrounded by crowds, he is visited by his mother and brothers.

Points:

- also in Matthew and Luke (though both treat it slightly differently)
- a difficult saying so there's room here for a variety of sensible and relevant interpretations: notably, the comparison between those who take his ministry seriously and follow him and those on the outside (family ties mean nothing in this respect)
- comment upon why his mother and brothers may have come to see him
- comment on how difficult it would be for them to recognise who he was (comparison with Mk 6:4)
- comment upon mother: there is no birth narrative in Mark; comment upon brother(s): James? Who else?

- (d) But the woman, knowing what had been done to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. (Mark 5:33)

Context: from the healing of woman with a flow of blood which, in turn, sits in the story of the healing of Jairus' daughter; the woman had touched Jesus' garments and then approached him when Jesus asked who had done it.

Points:

- also in Matthew and Luke (though Matthew treats the story slightly differently)
- attitude to women (contrast between her and Jairus' daughter); attitude to blood taboos, explains her fear and trembling
- 'fear and trembling' is a common theme in Mark (note the women at the tomb)
- comment upon her healing: 'knowing what had been done to her'
- room for comment upon the circumstances and placing of this story: e.g. the crowds, Galilean ministry, the story of Jairus' daughter, etc.

- (e) And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing in those days; and when they were ended, he was hungry. (Luke 4:1–2)

Context: start of Luke's account of the temptations in the wilderness (after the baptism and just prior to his proclamation in the synagogue at Nazareth)

Points:

- parallels here with Matthew: possible Q material
- comment on the part played by the Spirit in Luke (comparisons with Acts are relevant)
- comment upon the significance of the forty days and the wilderness (symbolic number, wilderness tradition, etc.)
- comment upon explanations for the lack of food (also wilderness tradition)
- room for brief comment upon the nature and purpose of the temptations and the identity of the devil, but answers should not diverge too far from the text

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- (f) And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. (Luke 23:7)

Context: Jesus' first trial before Pilate (early Friday morning)

Points:

- only in Luke
- identity of Herod (Antipas); room for general comment upon the overall relationship between Pilate and Herod
- comment upon why Pilate sent him to Herod
- comment upon why Herod was in Jerusalem at that time (e.g. Passover)
- room for general comment upon how Herod would have seen Jesus (though no marks for a narration of the story)

- (g) He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. (John 6:56)

Context: Bread of Life discourse, following the feeding of the 5000 (also the comparison with Moses and *manna*)

Points:

- only in John (derived from the 'I am' saying in 6:35), though obvious parallels with synoptic accounts of the feeding of the multitudes and the Last Supper
- comment upon how John has used eucharistic sayings in a different context and to illustrate a slightly different point;
- room for brief comparisons with John's own account of the Last Supper (Jn 13)
- room for brief comment upon the eucharistic significance itself, but this should not be the main part of the answer
- better are the comparisons with Moses and *manna* and the Johannine point about eternal life

- (h) Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes that it may bear more fruit. (John 15:2)

Context: 'I am' discourse in the third Passover section of the gospel; following the 'Farewell Discourse' and the declaration of the coming of the Spirit.

Points:

- only in John
- but comparisons with the synoptic Parable of the Tenants and the Parable of the Fig Tree are valid
- reference to Isaiah's Parable of the Vineyard
- reference to the overall message here: that of doing God's will
- comment upon judgement

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Essays: each marked out of 25. Essays must deal with the question asked and some of the points outlined below may be expected but they are not definitive or exclusive.

2 To what extent can it be said that Matthew's birth narrative (chapters 1 and 2) sets the scene for the rest of the gospel?

As with Luke, Matthew's first two chapters very much set the scene for the rest of the gospel: most Matthean themes and characteristics can be found in chapter 1 and 2. But, it is important that candidates refer to the gospel as a whole and not just limit themselves to the Birth Narratives. Candidates should know what is distinctive about Matthew's account (Lukan material can only really occur for reference and comparison).

- Prophecy fulfilment ... *this took place to fulfil the scriptures*... Use of 'formula quotations' from scripture (5 out of 10 are found in the birth stories) and Matthew's interest in 'fulfilment';
- The genealogy – the link with both Abraham and David fulfilling the promises of Genesis 12:3 and 2 Samuel 7. The former incorporated the Gentiles; something fulfilled in Matthew 28:19–20. The latter fulfilled specific messianic hopes (note that Matthew traces the line directly back through Joseph).
- The genealogy also prepares the reader for an eschatological message and for an unusual one (the reference to the four women, all who were misunderstood in their own time).
- *and he called his name Jesus* (1:25) – i.e. 'he who is to save you from your sins'...
- Use of the title 'Emmanuel' ('God with us') links well with 18:20 and 28:20.
- The use of Bethlehem, again stressing the fulfilment of prophecy (Micah 5:2), is reinforcing the messianic claims.
- The use of Hosea 11:1 ('Out of Egypt I have called my son') originally referred to Israel but now Jesus is to supersede Israel as he is later to demonstrate...
- The birth stories introduce the reader to conflict with authorities, especially the house of Herod; the use of Jeremiah (2:18) is already hinting at his rejection.
- The reader is also fully prepared for the miraculous element that is stronger in Matthew than in the other synoptics.

3 "Matthew's gospel aims to show the beginning of the Christian Church." Discuss this view.

Matthew is the only gospel to use the word 'church' (*ecclesia*), 16:18, 18:17, and the Church itself has made great use of the Gospel throughout. This is an important Matthean topic and a great deal of material can be worked into the answer. Similar questions in the past have tended to draw very general responses. In fact, good essays may well outline some relevant references to the gospel's overall purpose and its possible setting in Christian history. However, there are some very specific points to draw out from the text itself.

Some of the main points are likely to include:

- Matthew's church is clearly centred upon God/Christ and, although the Gospel is more openly Jewish than the others, it does include *all nations*
- The centrality of the Twelve and their preparation for the future
- The special responsibility and leadership given to Peter but all the disciples are given promises of authority (18:18)
- References to church order (18 and 23)
- The role to be played by the Church in the preparation of the eternal Kingdom (see parables)
- The emphasis upon behaviour and ethics (5–7); the emphasis upon worship (6)
- Possible reference to the split between the Church and Synagogue in the Jamnia period.

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4 When, where and by whom was Mark's gospel written?

This question combines authorship, provenance and date. All three aspects should be dealt with, though they need not be separated in discussion. The best essays will be selective in their use and assessment of the examples chosen. Most will write about the suffering motive within the gospel, making connections with the persecuted Christian community at Rome in AD 64/65. The Papias tradition will appear in a number of guises. Petrine influence can be employed, though it should not be overdone. Use could be made of a number of the following points.

- Identity of (John) Mark and evidence of his connection with Peter (I Peter 5:13); some use can also be made of the Pauline tradition and Acts.
- The passages in Mark which suggest that Peter might have given them to him, i.e. those which suggest a definite eye-witness (e.g. 7:34, 9:36) and those which seem to imply criticism of Peter (e.g. 8:27ff, 9:5–6, 10:28ff).
- The Papias and early Church tradition which associates Mark with Rome (and with Peter).
- The existence of numerous 'latinisms' in the text.
- The argument that Mark's gospel would only have been recognised if it had the weight of an important congregation behind it.
- The dating prior to the other synoptics, and to John (traditional arguments)...
- but not too early because of the development of tradition.
- Mark 13 and the approaching Jewish War, but no clear reference to the destruction of Jerusalem (70–71).
- Most scholars date Mark between 64–70/perhaps the Antioch question?

5 Examine the significance for Mark's gospel of the accounts of the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi and the transfiguration of Jesus.

Good answers must engage with the fullness of the question, i.e. they should make a genuine and effective attempt to place the confession and the transfiguration within the context of Mark's gospel. Disappointing answers will simply narrate the stories and make standard commentary points. The events themselves are crucial elements in Mark's story. Examiners should expect answers which will refer to any number of the following (and more) points:

- The turning point in the Markan narrative, changing from the ministry in Galilee to the journey to Jerusalem; links with baptism (for the transfiguration); this should be clearly demonstrated and argued.
- The messianic secret and the overall question of Jesus' identity in Mark.
- The emphasis upon suffering (examples given).
- The role of the disciples, especially the 'inner circle'; the role of Peter (although there should only be marginal overlap with Q4).

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6 Examine and assess the way Luke used sources in writing his gospel.

An opportunity for candidates to write an essay on source criticism and the synoptic problem, but it must be addressed from a Lukan perspective. Thus, the essay involves redaction criticism as well. Good essays should show some knowledge of how Luke built up his gospel (Proto-Luke?) but should make a definite effort to *examine*. This means that top marks will probably be reserved for essays which not only demonstrate Luke's sources but also show how he used them in his whole gospel story. Main points:

- The admission to Theophilus that he used sources ... *'that you may know the truth'...*
- Evidence for the use of Mark showing how Mark is used and changed.
- Common source with Matthew (?) – Q – differences with Matthew are also useful.
- 'L' material – evidence for written or oral source(s)?
- Luke's Passion Narrative and Resurrection stories – are these from a separate source?
- The Birth and Infancy stories?
- Was there a Proto-Luke onto which and into which the other sources were added?

7 “Luke presents Jesus as having extraordinary powers.” Discuss.

Behind this question sits a much deeper debate and, perhaps, some examples of inconsistency in Luke's theology. Following Mark, he seems to want to avoid showing the miracles as revelations of Jesus' power and identity (despite Luke 7:22), and yet, as showing them as evidence of the kingdom, they cannot but demonstrate Jesus' own credentials.

Although Luke does not develop teaching from the miracles in the same way as the Johannine 'signs', they are clearly very much part of his message of salvation ('to save the sick') and of the arrival of the kingdom of God (e.g. Luke 7:20–22, 10:17–20, 23–24) as well as definite demonstrations of Jesus' 'power' (*dunameis* = 'acts of power', 'mighty works'). Luke's use of Mark is worth noting as are the 'L' miracles (e.g. the 'woman with a spirit of infirmity', 'the Samaritan leper', etc.)

8 Assess the role of John the Baptist in John's gospel.

This title gives plenty of scope for discussion as well as having a good amount of specific textual material from which to draw. It also allows for comparison with other gospels, likely in the best essays, but this isn't mandatory for a high mark. Similarly, good responses will probably show awareness of the 'problem' with the followers of J the B in the early church (cf. Acts 19:1–6). In what way is John's gospel, if at all, dealing with this?

- All the gospels stress the superiority of Jesus to John, as well as the latter's role as 'preparer' (quoting Isaiah), but the Fourth Gospel emphasises J the B as 'witness' rather than specifically as 'baptiser'. J the B's role is completely in relation to Jesus.
- Areas for discussion include, from chapter 1: the Fourth Gospel's apparent rejection of the association of J the B with Elijah (1:45); the lack of direct baptism of Jesus; the more obvious connection of Jesus with the Spirit of God; the declaration that Jesus is the (pre-existent) Son of God and of all that is implied in the Lamb of God section; the ready acceptance by the leading disciples of what J the B said.
- From later chapters, there is the important discussion between J the B and his disciples ("he must increase, but I must decrease") in ch.3 and Jesus' description of John as "the burning and shining lamp" in ch.5.

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9 Why was John's gospel written?

The danger with this type of question is that it encourages unsubstantiated answers. The best responses will be those that are rooted in the text, i.e. comprising examples. In addition, candidates should really try to deal with the question itself and come to a conclusion, however tentative. Answers that are purely confessional will gain little credit.

Good answers will probably examine apologetic, liturgical, polemical reasons for its ultimate construction and form. Points:

- John 20:30–31.
- The possible audience/readership: unbelieving Jews, Diaspora Jewish Christians, etc.
- John written to replace, interpret or supplement the synoptic gospels.
- John written to restate the Christian gospel in Hellenised terms.
- John written as polemic or apology.
- John written for liturgical use.

10 What are the significant features of Jesus' teaching on discipleship?

Likely to be a popular question, but it should involve a discussion and assessment (i.e. as to what are the significant features...) rather than being just a list of points. There is a lot of material in the synoptics (especially Luke) which will have been learnt well, and many answers are likely to be limited to the synoptics, for which they can still score very highly, but particular credit ought to be given to Johannine material (e.g. the discussions with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman). Thus, the scope for this question is actually quite large: good answers could come either from the synoptic tradition or from the Johannine, or both. Examiners should watch out for a common error, which has been highlighted in previous reports, where candidates write about the disciples themselves, rather than discipleship.

11 To what extent do the gospels portray Jesus as breaking the laws of the sabbath?

A completely new question, but an entirely reasonable one in that there is a great deal of gospel material that can be used. Examiners should watch out for pure story-telling and the use of non-sabbath examples: they will creep into some responses. Marks should be awarded for the quality of discussion based upon relevant texts.

- Along with other Jewish groups, Jesus and his disciples normally kept the Sabbath and attended the synagogue (Mk 1:21; Lk 4:16)
- But the gospel writers suggest that Jesus flouted established Sabbath observations and that this led directly to conflict (e.g. Mk 3:1–6)
- There are some suggestions, however, that Jesus' sabbath healings did not involve action on his part, rather the uttering of a simple word, thus ensuring that he didn't transgress – however, the gospel writers clearly didn't seem to see it that way
- The key lies in the pronouncements that usually follow (e.g. Mk 2:27 'the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath'); see also Matt 12: 1–12; Mk 3:2–12; Mk 6:1–6; Lk 4:16–20, 31; Lk 6:1–11; Lk 13:10–17; Lk 14:1–6).

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12 In what ways do the gospels show Jesus fulfilling the role of the suffering servant in Isaiah?

There's some difficult scholarship behind this question, but most candidates attempting it will have had some teaching on Christological material and tasks of this type have been set before. However, good responses must deal with the 'significance'. There ought to be some discussion of the background to the Servant and candidates should be expected to show some knowledge of Isaiah 52:13–53:12 (if not of 42:1–4, 49:1–6, 50:4–9, or even of 43:10 and 55:4). Answers can be illustrated either from the synoptics or John (or both). Good candidates may raise questions themselves concerning a possible difference between what Jesus intended and how the evangelists may have written it down. Was it likely that Jesus was familiar with the tradition? Most responses will rightly examine the passages in the gospels where Jesus talks about himself and his mission, especially those where he introduces ideas of suffering, e.g. passion predictions, the Last Supper: did the gospels present Jesus seeing his suffering as being vicarious; are some of the texts (e.g. Mark 10:45) more likely to reflect the evangelist's opinion rather than Jesus' own self-awareness; is the Servant Christology a creation of the evangelists and the church – could Jesus have had other intentions – did he lead his followers to this identification? John is often ignored in answers to this question, though he does cite from Isa 53 in 12:38 and his depiction of the Lamb of God leads the reader directly to this passage.

13 Discuss the difficulties that arise from the gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection.

This title demands a comparison between the various gospel accounts. It is not actually necessary to refer to *all* the gospels or to *all* the inconsistencies to write a good essay about the 'difficulties'. These 'difficulties' are theological as well as historical and it is hoped that the best candidates will refer to some of these. Among the most likely areas of discussion are:

- the problems over the shorter, probably original, Markan ending;
- the problems over the last chapter of John;
- the men/angels at the tomb; the problem of the guard and the stone; the 'Appearances'; the place (Jerusalem or Galilee); the type of body

There are many areas of agreement which, in turn create their own difficulties: the presence of women at the tomb, dawn on the Sunday, the empty tomb...

14 Assess the view that the gospel texts can only be properly understood in the context of the political, social and religious situation of first century Palestine.

A twist on a familiar topic which allows candidates to be more expansive in their answers: the reference to 'political, social and religious' is very broad in itself and allows for a wide range of answers. ('Political' alone can be interpreted in the local or national sense.) However, good responses will demonstrate a definite attempt to deal with the assessment aspect of the title itself. There is plenty in the gospels, much that is indirect (i.e. relations between Pharisees and the community, tax collectors and the presence of Romans, Sadducees, etc.), all of which can be used in this essay, and some that is direct e.g.

- The Matthean Birth Narratives, Matthew. 10:5; in Luke, the dedication to Theophilus and 1:5, 3:1–2, 3:18–20, 9:5–56, 13:1–5; John 4;
- The events leading to the Passion and the Passion Narratives themselves in all the gospels (e.g. in John: the Roman soldiers are involved in the arrest, Jews will not enter the praetorium, Pilate condemns Jesus to be crucified on the grounds that the Jews did not have authority to pass capital sentence).