

DIVINITY

Paper 9011/01

Prophets of the Old Testament

General Comments

Without doubt this year's scripts were of a general standard not previously attained. They were a credit to Centres, teachers and candidates. In particular, there was a much greater depth of analytical comment, with many candidates writing articulately about editorial activity, the job of redactors, the presuppositions of the Deuteronomists, and so on. Although some candidates left too little time for the gobbet question, most answered four questions in equal detail, writing at great length and displaying wide knowledge. Centres should note that there is no need for candidates to write out the verses for each gobbet before commenting. This merely wastes valuable time.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

Weaker responses treated this as a question on false prophecy, simplistically equating false prophecy with cultic prophecy, and making a string of uncomplimentary assumptions about cultic prophets, e.g. that they were all Baal prophets, prophesied only for gain, were toad-eaters of the king, their word never came to pass, and so on.

Stronger candidates pointed out that much of the evidence about prophecy and cult is ambiguous, not least because many of the prophets also exercised priestly functions or had priestly connections. With Amos, it seems that Amos is anti-cult, since he appears to deny that he is a *nabi*; yet if so, what was he doing in the shrine at Bethel? There is a theory, for example, that he had been a temple herdsman. Isaiah clearly was in a cultic context when experiencing his call vision, and Samuel had a major cultic function, and so on. It is quite acceptable for candidates not to be specific in their answers to questions such as this, and to point out that there is much we do not know about the connection between the prophets and the cult.

Question 2

This was a very popular question, and produced some superb answers. Quite a few argued that Moses was not, in fact, a prophet, but was a 'construct' figure – an anachronism invented by later editors who expanded his function for reasons that became important at a later time. In favour of the view that Moses was a clever politician, some of the ideas offered were: that Moses was given a political role *because* he was a Hebrew in Egypt; that he fought for the political independence of Israel; that the ten commandments formed the basis of Israel's political constitution (and became the basis of western society); that on the basis of the commandments, Moses dispensed justice, confronted the power of Egypt, and acted as a crisis-leader; that he had a political background by virtue of his Egyptian background; that he was a radical nationalist who was prepared to murder an Egyptian who was mistreating a Hebrew; that he had political foresight, for example in sending spies into Canaan; that as a politician he sought counsel from a higher authority (God); that he shared the workload with the elders, and so on.

In favour of the view that Moses was first and foremost a prophet, many candidates pointed out that Moses ticked all the prophetic boxes of call, commission, intercession, miracle-working, and so on; that he was the fountainhead of prophetic authority; that as a stammerer, he was hardly good-quality material to be a politician; that he was present at the transfiguration, and so on.

Quite a few candidates made the very strong claim that Moses' political authority was the inevitable accompaniment of his prophetic authority – his political activities were carried out, quite simply, as a function of his prophetic commission, and could not otherwise even have been considered. In his case, then, prophecy and politics were inseparable.



Question 3

Weaker responses tended to be weak through style rather than content, for example by listing examples of prophets performing miracles and prophets performing symbolic acts without making much, if anything, of a judgement about their relative importance in the message of the prophets. Quite a few favoured miracles as outward and visible signs of a prophet's power that caused people who saw them to turn to Yahweh, e.g. Elijah's extermination of the 450 Baal prophets, God's miraculous deliverance of the escaping Hebrews at the sea (by the way, the Hebrew says '*yam suf*', which means *sea of reeds*, not *Red Sea*), and so on.

Most opted for symbolic acts as being more important in the *message*, and some argued that miracles were not part of the prophetic message, but were just a way of authenticating the prophet's vocation. Candidates referred to a variety of symbolic acts, mainly from Jeremiah, Isaiah and Hosea, and suggested that they clarified the prophet's message to the people, and sometimes to the prophet concerned – they 'decoded heavenly language into earthly terms'. One candidate produced a very neat conclusion: 'The importance of the prophet's message depended on miracles from God, whereas the importance of symbolic acts depended on the prophet himself.'

Question 4

This was a very popular question. Weaker responses tended to list all the functions of Samuel, and then all the functions of Moses, and usually Elijah, and then said something like, 'This shows that Samuel was the greatest of the pre-exilic prophets', whereas producing lists like this does no such thing, of course. Those who agreed with the statement generally did so on the basis of the multiplicity of Samuel's roles as seer-in-transition-to-prophet, cultic functionary, judge, intercessor, king-maker, king-breaker, and so forth. Most referred to Cross's view that prophecy began with the monarchy, and concluded that this gave Samuel pre-eminent status as the first of the line.

Against this, others gave a similar list of credentials for Moses, augmented by Moses' miracle-working powers, his role in the exodus from Egypt, his function as law-giver, and his status as the founder of the covenant tradition which all later prophets (including Samuel) followed. Not everybody was so impressed with Moses, and one or two suggested that he was over-reliant on miracles, and that his many roles had been read-back into the past by later editors. Much the same comment was made for Samuel himself, and indeed for Elijah, although a lot of candidates gave the vote to Elijah because of his success in killing 450 Baal prophets on Carmel. A few quoted the neat line that *without Moses, Prophecy would not have been born, and without Elijah, prophecy would have died*. Several concluded that it is neither possible nor appropriate to make comparative judgements about greatness, since all prophets were called for a particular task and, regardless of the size of it, a prophet can be judged only by how well he or she carries out that particular task.

Question 5

On the whole, candidates did not deal too well with the concept of "necessary evil". In fact many candidates simply ignored the word 'necessary', and simply discussed which kings were good, which were evil, and which were sometimes good and sometimes evil. Many did produce good answers, of course, beginning usually with Samuel's institution of the monarchy against Yahweh's advice. On the basis of this, some said that kings were necessary because inevitably, the Israelites needed a political setup which allowed for the centralization of power in the hands of a single leader, as the basis for dealing with external threats such as the Philistines. Candidates judged that this was evil for two reasons – first because it went against the notion of a theocratic state in which the main reliance was on Yahweh, and second because however good kings were as leaders (and some were not good even at that), many of them were evil in some aspects of their character, as witness David's awful affair with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah the Hittite.

Candidates assessed the characters of a number of kings on this kind of basis – usually condemning the likes of Saul (deposed for his evil ways by Samuel) and Ahab (condemned to death by Elijah), and being rather kinder to the likes of David (generally supported by Nathan) and Josiah (approved of, at least early on, by Jeremiah). Some pointed out that beginning with Samuel, prophets anointed kings, and so of necessity they acknowledged kings as Yahweh's vice-regents. Moreover court prophets could *only* exercise their function within the orbit of the king, and at least the arrangement gave prophets the chance to show their authority.



Question 6

This was a very popular question. Where it was answered not-so-well, this tended to be because some candidates simply agreed with the question, and gave long lists of doom-oracles spoken by Amos. Very few candidates had any problem showing that God appears to be rather unloving, judged by Amos' oracles, and most summarized Amos' position by saying that since the covenant relationship had been abrogated, doom was inevitable, so God (as the author of that message of doom) also inevitably appeared as unloving.

Most candidates referred to the prophecy in chapter 9 about God raising up and rebuilding the fallen booth of David. Most acknowledged that these were probably the result of editorial activity, and so were not the real words of Amos, although others argued that these words were genuine, either as the result of a re-think by Amos, or else by his disciples. Some argued that Amos' intercession with God in chapter 7 shows an element of love on God's part. Some suggested that of course God appears as a God of love – why else would he be so concerned about the fate of the poor and the oppressed? None dealt with the eventual fate of the Northern Kingdom through the Assyrian invasion of 721, and with the question of why its effects fell alike upon those who were innocent as well as those who were guilty.

Question 7

This was probably the least popular question, although those who answered it generally made a good job of it, displaying an in-depth knowledge of the historical circumstances which caused Isaiah to make use of the idea of God as Sovereign Ruler. Most gave a detailed analysis of Isaiah's vision in the Temple as the source of his understanding of God as the exalted king whose universal power and sovereignty extends over nations, over time, and over creation as a whole.

Most referred to the tradition of the invulnerability of Zion, and with the associated material about the Davidic 'shoot'/stump, seen against the background of Isaiah's relations with Ahaz and Hezekiah and the political scene of foreign alliances. On the whole, for those who knew the material, their answers were clear and straightforward, since there was plenty of material to draw upon.

Question 8

Most candidates found it easier to demonstrate that Hosea's message does indeed show that love is stronger than judgement than to demonstrate otherwise. For example, candidates suggested that Gomer's/Israel's punishment was reformatory and not retributive; the renaming of the children shows the primacy of love; Yahweh's *hesed*-love for Israel is the all-embracing love of the parent for the child; the 'alluring' into the wilderness is to rekindle the love experience (the 'honeymoon love', as some put it) of the wilderness period; Yahweh is God, not man, so his love is more powerful, and so on.

On the judgement side, most dealt with the original symbolism of the children's names. Several pointed out that the book starts with a judgement on Hosea by his being commanded by God to marry a prostitute. This was so unthinkable that it stands as a symbol of complete judgement. Some suggested that the *balance* of love and judgement in the message of Hosea depends on several factors that are not known – for example, were the children necessarily Hosea's? If not, then Hosea's (and God's) actions show even more love. Some argued very powerfully that judgement comes into play necessarily *because* of love – love ought not to be blind, even though it sometimes is – so love can lead to judgement, or love can follow judgement, for example.

Question 9

Quite a few candidates could not make their minds up about this question, so were in the same difficulty as Jeremiah! Many elected to say that Jeremiah did in fact make up his mind to speak a message of doom, claiming that he was confused by God, and quoting the language of his 'confessions', which are accusatory in their tone when addressed to God. A few opted for the reverse, suggesting that Jeremiah believed that covenant faithfulness would triumph over wrath, as with the new covenant.

The favoured conclusion, however, was that the messages of doom and hope had nothing (or very little) to do with any indecision on Jeremiah's part, but were related precisely to the ambivalent nature of his call, where he is told that he will pluck up / break down, destroy and overthrow / build and plant. In other words, the doom/hope duality was built into his call experience, and became the paradigm of his life: e.g. his experiences with Hananiah / his experiences of God's power and love; the parable of the good and bad figs; abrogation of the covenant / the new covenant, etc. Essays were generally well constructed, and were enjoyable to read.



Question 10 Gobbets

- (a) Almost all candidates identified this correctly as Moses' speech before the entry of the Israelites to Canaan. Most suggested that divinatory practices were against the covenant, so Moses' words establish the basis of the covenant with Yahweh and the hallmarks of a true prophet. Weaker responses tended to get bogged down in talking about divinatory methods. Better responses tended to be those that concentrated on the hallmarks of 'true' prophecy being related to the demands of the covenant, since the prophets were those whose function centred around their demand for covenant obedience. One or two suggested that this was a read-back from the concerns of a later age.
- (b) Weaker responses tended to say much about kingship in general, and not so much about this gobbet in particular. All candidates were able to identify this episode as the anointing of Saul as *nagid*/prince, and most gave a good contextual overview of material such as: Saul's mission to counter the Philistine threat; the business about the lost asses; the Philistine garrison; the band of prophets; Saul's religious experience, and Saul being chosen by lot. There was some interesting comment about the different layers of source material and about the intricacies of Samuel's relationship with Saul.
- (c) Quite a few candidates assumed that this oracle was delivered by Samuel (rather than Nathan), presumably because it comes in 2 Samuel, even where they correctly identified the recipient as David and the context as being David's desire to build the Temple. Most candidates had a basic idea about the play on meanings with the word 'house', e.g. as *palace*, *dynasty*, *family status*, and in this case (verse 13) *Temple*. Again, most were correct in identifying the Nathan Oracle as the basis for the theology of the Davidic dynasty, the Temple, and Jerusalem. Most other comment was about the character of Nathan as a court prophet who was also a 'true' prophet, and about the withdrawal of Yahweh's *hesed*/steadfast love from Saul. Quite a few did refer to the father/son relationship between the Davidic king and Yahweh, although only a handful knew that this was a common ideology in the ancient world for the king in relation to God/the gods.
- (d) This was another popular gobbet, and candidates clearly enjoyed detailing the cut and thrust of the argument between Elijah and Ahab. Nearly everybody identified the background as the dispute caused by Ahab's murderous acquisition of Naboth's vineyard, and a creditable number knew that by legal and religious custom, ancestral property was required to remain in the family for perpetuity. Jezebel was given very bad press, and her eventual fate seems to have given most candidates a great deal of satisfaction! There was much interesting comment on the phrases: 'O my enemy', and 'troubler of Israel', with Elijah emerging a clear winner in the war of words, although quite a few did mention the fact that Ahab did have some capacity for noble action, and not least for real remorse, as the basis for the modified assessment in verse 29 that the judgement promised for Ahab would fall in his son's days. Nobody seemed to think this slightly unfair on Ahab's son.
- (e) Judging by the extended comment on the cows of Bashan, together with some equally interesting observations about their counterpart bulls (Psalm 22:12), there are lots of candidates who have impressive knowledge of the science of cattle breeding. Weaker responses tended on the whole to be general notes about Amos' views on social injustice. The majority, however, made good use of the context itself, commenting on the wealth and riches generated by Jeroboam's long and peaceful reign, on the wealth of Samaria, and on the exploitation of the poor by the wealthy. Some suggested that the cows of Bashan were fat and well-fed, others that they were sleek and oily, others that they were unsteady on their legs from lots of drink, and others that they were aristocratic cows. All were united, however, in satisfaction at the removal of the cows/oppressors by hooks and fishhooks, seen generally as a metaphor for being led into exile. Some made good use of Amos' ensuing satire on the public preoccupation with religious rituals in sanctuaries like Bethel and Gilgal.
- (f) Many candidates enjoyed the Amos/Amaziah encounter as much as they enjoyed that between Ahab and Elijah. This gobbet was often done exceptionally well, with candidates making excellent use of political analysis, for example in supposing that Amaziah expected Jeroboam to rid him of Amos in revenge for Amos causing him such embarrassment in his own sanctuary. There was also much discussion as to whether Amos came from the North or the South, and whether he was a cultic prophet or else was rejecting any association with prophecy before having a religious experience whilst herding the flock. Some pointed out that as a royal sanctuary, if Amos was indeed a southerner, then the insult to the king and his cultic personnel would have been intense.

- (g) This was a popular gobbet, but not always done well, for the simple reason that some candidates used it in order to retell the story of Hosea and Gomer, with little or no reference to the actual context. The best responses pointed out the metaphorical nature of the context, in so far as it alludes to Israel's 'adulterous' relationship with Canaanite Baal. The rest of the context follows from that – Yahweh as the only and universal creator, and the only provider of the gifts of grain, wine, oil, silver and gold used to propitiate Baal and to enrich his priests. Israel's sin is also that of culpable ignorance – she lacks the proper 'knowledge of God' required by the covenant relationship. Removal of the gifts will reveal Israel's status as a harlot who will be left (habitually) naked. Many candidates expressed these ideas with clarity and elegance.
- (h) Several candidates, having answered gobbet (g) in general terms, went on to do the same thing with (h), often doing little more than retelling the story of Hosea and Gomer yet again. On the whole, therefore, responses to (h) were less successful than those to (g). Some candidates did very well, of course, and picked out the themes appropriate to this gobbet with skill and precision, e.g. Hosea's re-purchase of the adulterous Gomer, subjecting her to discipline, and reaffirming his love for her, all indicative of what Yahweh will do with Israel: temporary punishment in which Israel will exist for a long time without the institutions of monarchy or religion, followed by ultimate redemption. Some candidates also wrote well on whether or not the woman in 3:1ff. is different from Gomer. Only a handful referred to the possibility that the reference to the Davidic Kingdom might be a later, Judahite addition.
- (i) Very few candidates answered this question. Weaker responses confined themselves to very general comments about a future messianic age in which there will be no more war. Better answers talked about the Zion/Jerusalem/Temple traditions, and about the fact that there is a parallel oracle in Micah, which suggests that editorial activity was unsure where to place it. Some also referred to the fact that the following verses are an oracle on the Day of the Lord – a popular prophetic theme, as in Amos.
- (j) Most candidates did well with this gobbet, referring articulately to Jeremiah's two-headed commission, to pluck up and break down / destroy and overthrow on the one hand, and to build and plant on the other. Nobody commented on the word-play between 'rod of almond', which is *shaqed* in Hebrew, and 'watching', which is *shoqed*. Where God *watches*, Jeremiah has no need to fear opposition, because *watching* activates God's word. Most suggested that the 'foe from the North' refers to the Babylonians. There was a lot of comment on vision as a classic part of the prophetic experience. Most candidates made useful links from the call experience to the general tenor of Jeremiah's life.
- (k) A few candidates assumed from some of the words in this extract that it was about destruction and doom, carefully missing out the essential clauses which make this oracle quite the reverse. Quite a few knew that the passage comes from the 'Booklet of Consolation' (30:1-31:40), generally assumed to have been collected by Baruch between 622 and 609, in which the theme is God's eventual restoration of Davidic kingship, the inauguration of a reunited Judah and Israel, and a new covenant. 'Sowing the seed of man and beast' reverses Yahweh's previous depopulation of both regions. Nearly all candidates picked up on the echo from the call narrative in 'pluck up and break down..... build and plant'. Very few, however, were able to comment on the significance of the proverbial statement that 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge': like Ezekiel after him, Jeremiah is asserting a new idea – individual (as opposed to collective) responsibility for sin.

DIVINITY

<p>Paper 9011/02 The Four Gospels</p>

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

Overall performance was consistent with previous years, satisfactory to good with most candidates making an informed and structured answer to each question attempted. Evidence of wider reading was not as clearly shown. All Centres showed evidence of satisfactory preparation of their candidates and it was clear that attempts had been made to address past Examiners comments. The standard of writing was good which demonstrated a clear attempt at understanding key theological terms.

All questions succeeded at achieving the intended differentiation. Use of time was very good – hardly any appeared to be under pressure to get 4 question answered. There were a few rubric errors. Overall – the understanding of the examination instructions was very good indeed.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1 Gobbets

- (a) A very popular question – usually put into the correct context. There was very good comment surrounding its place in the Sermon on the Mount.
- (b) This was a popular question – accurate comment and context on the whole, although some candidates confused it with the mission of the 12.
- (c) Again a popular choice with good comment on the humanity of Jesus and the place of the leper in society.
- (d) Although this was a popular choice it was often confused with Jesus healing the man with the withered hand. There was a lot of relevant comment on the Pharisees, the Sabbath and the Son of Man title.
- (e) This was identified accurately as part of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Good candidates made comment on the role of the other son who stayed at home. Some candidates still merely wrote of the parable.
- (f) Correctly identified as the Parable of the Dishonest Steward but comment was limited and lacked understanding of its meaning and relevance.
- (g) This was very well attempted. Relevant links of Genesis 1 were made and the better candidates commented on the *logos* and the role of the *logos*. The word was identified as God and the powers and attributes of God were inherent within.
- (h) The context was correct. Much was made about the 'cup of suffering' which Jesus faced. There was a lot of relevant comment on the role of Peter. Well done.

Question 2

Many candidates chose this question but it was not as well answered as expected. It was popular because Matthew's Gospel is a popular subject to get to grips with. More comment from the Sermon on the Mount was anticipated, with mention on the Beatitudes and 5v24, but this was not forthcoming. Good candidates made mention of 1v19 (re Joseph) and/or 3v15 (Jesus to John the Baptist). Answers were all too general with little reference made to the use of the term 'righteousness'.



Question 3

Although this was a new question it was thought, that the familiar theme of discipleship would draw good comment: there was a lot of material which could have been used. Several candidates drew from the Sermon on the Mount and the call and cost of discipleship. The good candidates used the specific discourse of chapter 10 on apostleship. Better candidates gave more than a mere list of examples but tried to assess Jesus' teaching.

Question 4

This was clearly the most popular question on the paper, the familiar question of the synoptic problem but with a slightly new twist. Many Centres had prepared their candidates well for issues around the synoptic problem and reference to different schools of thought and theories were well handled. On the whole this was well attempted.

Question 5

The usual comments on Mark's sense of urgency throughout the gospel, the Parables of Judgment and the Parousia; references to the imminence of the kingdom of God all played their part in a well structured answer. Not widely chosen but for those candidates who did attempt it, their answers were clear and relevant.

Question 6

This was amongst the most popular choice of questions. Candidates were well prepared for the key themes found in chapters 1 and 2 of Luke. Many did not take this further and make the clear link with stories and examples from the rest of the gospel. The themes of joy, women, and the poor were all commented on. Some candidates failed to get the balance of the question right and erred on the side of too much analysis of the birth narratives and not enough from further in the gospel.

Question 7

Again one of the most popular questions on the paper and on the whole competently answered. A lot of comment came from the birth narrative of Luke but there was plenty of comment from other incidents e.g. Mary, Elizabeth, Mary and Martha, the prostitute (7v36–50), the widow of Nain (7vii–17), the cure of Mary Magdalene (8v2), the women who provided for Jesus (8vi–3) and the lament (27–31). The majority of candidates did answer this well.

Question 8

An unpopular choice but for those who did attempt to answer it there was a great need to show how these stories demonstrate the theology of John's Gospel. Some candidates merely re-told the two encounters but failed to comment on the wider issue.

Question 9

Poorly attempted – only a handful of candidates gave reasonable answers to this question – it was important to comment on both the WHO and the WHEN. There was a lot of material which could have been used – and it was important that more than one view be offered. Many concentrated largely on the argument for the Beloved Disciple. Some mention of the Gnostics and Gnostic language, some mention of personal testimony and reminiscences.

Question 10

This question was not popular. For those who attempted this answers concentrated largely on the Pharisees, but for a well constructed answer there needs to have been balance and discussion of the other religious groups. Some candidates wrote about the Sadducees, a few about the Essenes. The Zealots were mentioned by a few.

Question 11

Answers to this question were disappointing. Very few who attempted this did so with reference to the different ways in which the gospel writers used the miracle stories. Answers sometimes lacked planning and appeared more as a catalogue of miracles rather than explanation of their use. There was a lot of material to draw from and with clearer structure the answers could have been better. The question allows comment from all the gospel writers' material, not just the Synoptics. Some of the better answers did make reference to the sings of John and not just miracle stories.

Question 12

Not a popular choice but those who did choose it tried to make comment on both theological evidence and historical evidence. All attempts were satisfactorily done.

Question 13

Some candidates concentrated more on the Jewishness of Jesus as opposed to unpacking what was meant by the Jewish Messiah. Having said that, the answers were usually satisfactory to good and gave mention of relevant material e.g. the temptation, the comparison of the suffering servant motif and Son of Man expectations, the confession at Caesarea Philippi; the baptism and transfiguration, Jesus' trial and response, the role of the miracles.

Question 14

This was a new question to the paper and a popular one. Most candidates acknowledged the different emphases that exist. Many gave background information about Pilate's position in society. This question allowed candidates to approach this answer any way they wanted to. It was well answered and candidates were allowed to draw their own conclusions.



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Paper 9011/03
The Apostolic Age

General comments

There was a significant increase in the entries for the paper this year with just over twice the number of candidates compared with last year. While there were answers of the very highest quality to all the questions in the paper, which reflected great credit on the candidates and their teachers, the overall standard was disappointing.

It was clear that a significant number of candidates could have achieved a much higher mark had they answered the questions in a more disciplined way, and used the knowledge they possessed in a manner which was relevant to the question. (See below especially in relation to the comments on the answers **Questions 2, 3, 5 and 7.**) Unfortunately too many candidates approached questions by opening the floodgates and 'letting out' all the knowledge and thoughts triggered by the question, without pausing to think whether what they had written was actually relevant to the main point of the question. Such answers inevitably gained very few marks.

All candidates entered for an A level examination of this nature need training in the technique of answering the kind of questions which are set. A good answer is invariably relevant from the first sentence and does not require two or three paragraphs in which the candidate displays his or her background knowledge, for which little credit can be given, if it is not directly related to the actual question set. A good answer will require the candidate to show knowledge of the relevant material and also the ability to present it in the form of a well-reasoned and coherent argument, which is focused on the main point of the question.

Each year in these reports examples are given of common mistakes made by candidates, in the hope that teachers will be able to prevent future generations of candidates repeating them. As there were numerous examples this year of common errors, which were mentioned in last year's report and other recent reports, these are mentioned once again for the benefit of teachers at the new Centres, which entered candidates this year.

It has often been mentioned that there is little point in candidates writing out in full each question, and in the case of **Question 1**, writing out each gobbet in full, especially if they are carefully underlined in different colour inks. Clearly candidates at some Centres had been encouraged to do this, but the time they spent on it would have been better spent on writing fuller answers, or spending more time in reading through their answers and correcting them.

While it is obviously helpful for teachers to give candidates specimen answers to questions, which might appear in the paper, to show how good answers are structured, and how the relevant content should be handled, this can have negative results, if their candidates adhere slavishly to the pattern they are given or memorise them. For example, several candidates from one Centre began all their essay questions with an almost identical first paragraph, which ended with the phrase 'these points will be unravelled as the essay unfolds'. The identical phrases appeared in candidates' answers last year. Candidates were not penalised for this, but clearly there is the danger that, if candidates are encouraged to do it, their own creativity and freedom of expression may in some measure be inhibited. Furthermore, the particular introductory paragraph they have been encouraged to use may not be suitable for the answers to some questions.

Candidates need to be familiar with some of the technical terms scholars use in the study of the New Testament, such as eschatology, historicity, parousia, etc. One distinction, of which all candidates for this paper should be aware, is the fundamental distinction New Testament scholars have drawn for a century or more between *didache* and *kerygma*, a distinction, which was indeed made by the early church. *Didache* is a Greek word meaning 'teaching', and is used to describe the doctrinal and ethical teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. It is impossible to make a rigid distinction between the two, since they are often interwoven, ethical teaching following as the logical consequence of certain doctrines.

Kerygma, another Greek word, means 'proclamation' and is used to refer to the preaching of Jesus and the Apostles, and also the content of the gospel message, the 'good news', they proclaimed. They illustrate clearly the fact that to the early Christians 'teaching' (*didache*) and 'preaching' (*kerygma*) were quite distinct activities. Questions in this paper often reflect this distinction. Candidates should be made aware of the fact that in English translations of the New Testament the word 'preach' invariably has this narrower meaning than it generally has today, where, if a minister or clergyman 'preaches' a sermon, it may include either *didache* or *kerygma*, or both.

Unfortunately this year another common error re-appeared, the meaning and use of the term 'Judaizer'. This term is NOT another name for a Jew, whether Christian or not. It is a term which is used to describe those Christians, who believed that Gentiles should become Jews.

Another common error, which appeared in numerous answers to **Questions 5 and 9**, is the use of the term '(Jewish) Church' to describe the Jews, especially the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, who did not join the Christian Church. If this term is used at all, it should only be used of the Christian Church in its earliest days, before any Gentiles were accepted into its membership. The right understanding of both these terms is essential for the understanding of the development of the early Church as described in Acts and the Pauline epistles. Sometimes this error and the error mentioned in the previous paragraph can lead to answers which are so confused that it is almost impossible to understand what the candidate is saying, and whether the point being made is valid or not.

Candidates taking this paper should know that, although the Authorised Version of the Bible attributes Hebrews to Paul, the opinion of the great majority of scholars on the basis of internal evidence is that this epistle was not written by him.

It is very important that candidates should be familiar with the chronology of the New Testament and the more significant events in the Apostolic Age, and also be able to use the abbreviations B.C./A.D. and B.C.E./C.E correctly. This was shown by many of the answers to **Question 5**, some of which dated Acts twenty or thirty years before the last events it records and as late as the nineteenth century! Two especially important dates are that of the Council of Jerusalem, usually dated at 48 or 49CE, and the Fall of Jerusalem in 70CE. A chronological diagram which, as well as showing the dates of significant events, also includes the likely date(s) of the books included in this syllabus, would be particularly helpful to candidates.

As usual there were some candidates who showed little evidence of having studied the whole syllabus in any depth, while others appeared only to have studied the books prescribed for special study. This may be the reason why some candidates answered four questions from **Section A**, thereby infringing the rubrics relating to choice of questions, with the result that only their three highest marks counted. As has been stated regularly in past reports, it is impossible for candidates to get a high grade in this paper, if they approach the examination in this manner. The questions set on the prescribed texts in **Section A** often require knowledge of the rest of the syllabus, and some of these questions may actually ask for reference to, or comparison with, other books and topics in the rest of syllabus.

The relative popularity of the questions in the paper is shown by the percentage of candidates who answered them: **Question 1** – 71%, **Question 2** – 54%, **Question 3** – 46%, **Question 4** – 54%, **Question 5** – 44% **Question 6** – 33%, **Question 7** – 29%, **Question 8** – 5%, **Question 9** – 31%, **Question 10** – 11%

From this table it will be seen that **Question 1**, the gobbets question, was the most popular, with **Questions 2 and 4** equal second. In the case of **Question 1**, (e) was the most popular, being answered by 65% of the candidates, who answered **Question 1**, while the least popular was (d), which was answered by 18%.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 6 marks were awarded for each of the gobbets with one additional mark available for overall performance. This question was answered fairly well, most candidates showing knowledge of the context and the points of interest or difficulty requiring comment. There were excellent answers to all of the gobbet questions.



- (a) This gobbet, while being amongst the most popular, was on the whole poorly answered. The majority of candidates mistook the context and thought 'they' referred to the Jews, whereas Paul was writing here of the Gentiles. The context, especially 2:12-14 is particularly important. A few brighter candidates commented on the fact that 2:1-16 appears to conflict with Paul's doctrine of justification by faith since he states that Gentiles, who do by nature what the law requires, will be justified.
- (b) A popular gobbet and generally fairly well answered. A significant number of candidates confused James' use of the figure of Abraham with that of Paul. It is James who says that Abraham was justified and his faith demonstrated by his willingness to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Paul never refers to this.
- (c) Another popular gobbet, but not particularly well answered, since a fair number of candidates wrote generally about Paul's view's on sin and its consequences
- (d) The least popular of the gobbets by a significant margin, and generally poorly answered, since most candidates did not recognise the context, which was Paul's collection for the 'the poor among the saints' in Jerusalem.
- (e) The most popular of the gobbets and generally quite well answered. Several answers were of the very highest quality.
- (f) A fairly popular gobbet, but generally not well answered since a significant number of candidates did not recognise the context and wrote in general terms about James' teaching on faith. More able candidates commented on the doctrine of the Church and of the nature of Christian fellowship, which lies behind this statement.

Question 2

While there were some excellent answers to this popular question, several candidates did not focus on the main point of the question and wrote instead in general terms about Paul's doctrine of justification by faith.

Discussion was required of the relevant material in Romans 1:16 - 8:8, especially 2:12ff, 5:12ff and 7:4-8:8. Very detailed expositions of these passages or lengthy quotations from them were not expected in the space of a 45 minute essay. Some discussion of what Paul means by 'law' was expected for better answers. Credit was given to candidates who referred to relevant material in Galatians, provided it was clear that they were not confusing the contents of the two letters.

Question 3

Another popular question, which like the previous question produced some excellent answers, but also some very poor ones in which candidates merely gave a précis of the contents of James without focussing on the point of the question.

Full credit was given for any well presented answer, whether or not the candidate argued that it was a genuine Christian letter, or a Jewish document with Christian interpolations.

Question 4

Another popular question with most candidates showing some knowledge of the basic issues.

Most candidates concentrated on the (apparent?) disagreement between Paul and James on justification, faith and works. A good answer required some analysis of what they mean by 'faith' and 'works'. A few more able candidates were able to include discussion of some of the wider issues which the question raises.

Section B

Question 5

The most popular question in this section, but unfortunately it was one of the most poorly answered of all the essay questions. Over the years questions have to be set fairly regularly on some aspect of the authorship, date and purpose of Acts in order to cover the syllabus properly. What was puzzling was the fact that the

overall performance of candidates on this question was probably lower than it has ever been on similar questions.

One of the reasons for this was that many candidates made no attempt to answer the first part of the question concerning the date of Acts, or if they did, they made a dogmatic statement about its date without giving any evidence to support it. The weakest candidates not only made no attempt to answer the first part of the question, but also, when answering the second part, merely gave a précis of the contents of Acts.

Question 6

The second most popular question in **Section B** and fairly well answered.

Question 7

One of the more popular questions in **Section B**, but it was poorly answered. Although the syllabus states clearly that candidates will be expected to have studied *'the pastoral, doctrinal and ethical teaching given by Paul, James and the author of Hebrews'*, some candidates did not understand the question and attempted to answer it by quoting passages from Acts in which the Holy Spirit figures, and adding at the end of the paragraph a phrase such as *'this shows the importance of the Holy Spirit in Paul's ethical teaching'*, even if the particular passage or incident had nothing to do with Paul.

Question 8

This was the least popular question in the paper, but it did produce a few excellent answers.

Question 9

A fairly popular question, which was quite well answered. Full credit was given for any well argued answer for or against the view that the early church was *'a sect within Judaism'*. A considerable amount of relevant material.

Question 10

Not many candidates answered this question, but it did produce some very good answers