

Certificate in Theology Examiner Reports – Semester 1, 2009

Christian Belief

There were only two candidates so comments are restricted.

Essays

The essays were well done and there was reasonable theological reflection on the topics chosen. This was particularly the case with the essay on the resurrection.

Both candidates used scripture to support their arguments. Expression of ideas demonstrated in the essays and knowledge of concepts involved was above average.

Examination

Generally the exam questions were disappointing compared to the essays. The exam answers were basic at best and in some cases inadequate. A more thorough grasp of a basic theological textbook such as *Milne's Know the Truth* would have significantly added to candidates' answers. Candidates' answers were strong in some areas such as the Holy Spirit, but weaker in other areas such as eschatology.

Examples:

Question 3 *What is sin and what effect has it had on human beings?*

Candidates often fail to appreciate that prime effect of sin is death.

Question 9 *What can we learn about the kingdom of God from the parables of Jesus?*

The kingdom of God as a concept was not explained and did not appear to be understood,

To their credit however, candidates did attempt to directly address the question asked.

Scripture was used to back up arguments.

Rhonda Barry

11/08/2009

Christian Worship

The assignments submitted for Christian Worship displayed a developing theological ability, and showed that the students had been introduced to core biblical and theological concepts in this field, and to the ecclesial and pastoral dimensions of the topic being dealt with. The subject seemed to have been taught in such a way that the students gained practical foundations integrated with key theological insights, and the desire to investigate the topic and its implications further.

Comments on the Essay Title: Old Testament Feasts as Background for Christian Worship:

Presentation Requirements

1. While the title page is certainly good, the abstract needs work in order to represent the findings of the paper more clearly.
2. Spelling and grammatical errors need editing out of the paper.
3. Assertions are made that are unsupported by evidence (texts and journals)
4. Watch consistency of font, size and styles throughout the essay, footnotes and bibliography.

Content

This essay addresses the title and is of appropriate length according to course regulations. It has a discernable structure and an acceptable standard of literacy. It demonstrates a developing understanding of the issues and a capacity to relate them to practice/experience/context, and shows some evidence of basic reading relevant to the topic. Unfortunately the essay tends to be too descriptive, rather than analytical, and could answer the essay question in more depth.

Sources

Your engagement of the sources you have consulted is commendable, and demonstrates a growing theological ability. Well done.

Strengths: the paper makes a valid attempt at answering the essay question, and reveals a willingness to be self-reflective and to ask some questions of the history and theological framework of Christian worship. You have applied yourself and written with personal conviction, and with attention to biblical theology.

Weaknesses: the presentation standard need some work (see presentation requirements above). But you have given this paper a solid attempt, and this should be commended.

Graham Hill

24/06/2009

Christian Leadership and Management

The essay showed a lot of work however not all of what was promised was proved. There were also some readability and sense issues.

Nathain Secker

22/07/2009

Church History

A little bit general but competently done. Evidence of good work done. Only one paper.

Peter Barnes

26/06/2009

Ethics and the Christian Faith

There were two candidates for this semester.

The candidates submitted different essays, and both essays were well done.

Both candidates attempted the same questions in section B of the examination: 5 (homosexuality) and 11 (capital punishment). Between them they attempted all four questions of section A.

These comments will only address section B, since comments on Section A would be individual rather than general.

Question 5 in my mind required addressing the issues of the predominantly male orientation of the biblical texts (very little on lesbianism), and the tone of Jesus' remarks about Sodom (which make no explicit reference to homosexuality). The other biblical texts/issues regarding homosexuality (eg Romans 1) were well enough covered. One of the candidates acknowledged lesbianism but developed no further argument.

Question 11 on capital punishment was well done with good insights into the range of practical and ethical issues as well as the underlying theological issues arising from Christian disagreement about the relevant biblical teaching.

As an examiner, I was disappointed (but in a way not surprised) that the urgent contemporary issues were not addressed in Section B- question 6-9 particularly. I would prefer an attempt to grapple with the issues by way of some response, even if the issue has not been subject to extensive Christian reflection so that understandings have started to 'settle' (as they have for capital punishment and homosexuality), including agreement to disagree.

Revd Jim McPherson
16/07/2009

Evangelism

There was only candidate.

Question 2

What is the 'Gospel' and how is it still relevant in the 21st Century?

There are two parts to this question – “What is the ‘Gospel’?” and “How is it still relevant in the 21st Century?” The answer to the first part of the question was of an excellent quality. The answer was thorough and detailed.

The answer to the second part of the question provided a good analysis of the 21st Century and its challenges to Christian evangelism. Its suggested solution was that “the church and its need and its message can remain the same – the same Gospel – but its approach, language and sensitivity – its love – can be ‘postmodern sensitive’” was good and could have been teased out more.

Overall, there could have been more awareness of how necessarily enculturated the Gospel message, the Church and the evangelist are; and the challenges of how to communicate this message to a new and different culture.

Question 3

What must someone do to be 'saved'?

In answering the question “What must someone do to be saved?” there was good awareness of all the theological issues that are involved – e.g., God's election, illumination, regeneration and the human's need to repent and believe.

Although these was much detailed discussion on God's role, there could have been more detailed discussion on the human's role – i.e., the actions of repentance and belief.

Question 6

How possible is it to have 'evangelism' without prayer?

There was good discussion on prayer and what things to pray for. The answer could have been improved with more attention to the heart of the question – i.e., what is God's role in evangelism? That is, the answer needed to engage more with *why* one must pray – i.e., what is the theological foundational reason for prayer in evangelism?

Question 9

What can be done to nurture someone who decides to become a Christian?

There were good discussion and suggestions. But the answer could have gone further by addressing *why* these things need to be done to nurture a new Christian.

Sam Chan
01/07/2009

Introduction to Pastoral Care

The assignments submitted for Introduction to Pastoral Care evidenced a passionate commitment to Scripture, a clear sense of conviction about the importance of pastoral care, and a growing awareness of the role of pastoral care in the life of a local church. Essay at times tended to be written like a sermon rather than an academic piece of work, and a range of assertions are made without any supporting evidence or attention to alternative perspectives. Nonetheless, the groundedness of these assignments in Scripture was commendable.

Graham Hill
June 2009

New Testament

Student number: 200815431

Essay

The student seemed to have a good understanding of the topic and its theological and practical implications. However, the essay only occasionally dealt with the relevant passages in the biblical texts. There was minimal bible referencing and too much time was spent discussing extra-biblical historical evidence.

The essay's presentation and structure could have been improved by more closely following the ACT handbook's essay guidelines.

Exam

Q1

The answer discussed the Maccabean Revolt in some detail and understood the importance of Herod's role. A fuller presentation of the loss of Jewish autonomy and the installation of Roman leadership would have rounded out the answer.

Q4

The answer showed an understanding of the meaning and background of the term 'gospel'. More time could have been spent discussing the specific characteristics of the gospels.

Q7

The answer showed some familiarity with the gospel's themes and its differences to the synoptics. However, John's purpose statement was not dealt with, and there was not much cohesive thought regarding the gospel's unique theological presentation.

Q8

The answer showed familiarity with some of the speeches in Acts and their importance to the book. The answer could have been improved through more specific referencing of speeches.

Philip Harding

03/07/2009

New Testament

3 students

Essay

Question 1 (1 student)

This essay showed a good grasp of the topic despite some awkward expression of ideas. The student presented the ideas with a clear and helpful structure and engaged well with specific parables. All in all, a good effort. The essay's presentation could have been improved by better proof-reading and more closely following the ACT handbook's essay guidelines.

Question 4 (2 students)

Student 1:

The student seemed to have a good understanding of the topic and its theological and practical implications. However, the essay only occasionally dealt with the relevant passages in the biblical texts. There was minimal bible referencing and too much time was spent discussing extra-biblical historical evidence. The essay's presentation and structure could have been improved by more closely following the ACT handbook's essay guidelines.

Student 2:

The student presented a thorough and well-referenced essay. There was some engagement with scholarly opinion and debate. The student had a very good grasp of the different facets of the topic. If the many ideas were drawn together in a more cohesive way, an even higher mark would have been awarded.

Exam

Question 1 (1 student)

The answer discussed the Maccabean Revolt in some detail and understood the importance of Herod's role. A fuller presentation of the loss of Jewish autonomy and the installation of Roman leadership would have rounded out the answer.

Question 3 (2 students)

Both answers included historical information which was peripheral to the question. However they did demonstrate a basic understanding of the effects of Hellenism.

Question 4 (1 student)

The answer showed an understanding of the meaning and background of the term 'gospel'. More time could have been spent discussing the specific characteristics of the gospels.

Question 6 (1 student)

A well written and thorough response covering many of Mark's unique characteristics. Very well done.

Question 7 (2 students)

Both answers showed some familiarity with the gospel's themes and its differences to the synoptics. However, John's purpose statement was not dealt with, and there was not much cohesive thought regarding the gospel's unique theological presentation. One answer was very short.

Question 8 (1 student)

The answer showed familiarity with some of the speeches in Acts and their importance to the book. The answer could have been improved through more specific referencing of speeches.

Question 9 (2 students)

Both answers had an understanding of the contents and themes of Corinthians. However, more attention should have been placed on Paul's specific response to factionalism as opposed to other ethical issues.

Question 10 (2 students)

Both answers had a satisfactory understanding of the theme of hope in the letter. However one paper was very short and simplistic, while the other analysed the book with some depth.

Philip Harding

16/07/2009

Old Testament

2 papers were received from two centres. Both essays were of a high standard. The candidates chose different options but it was clear that both had been well taught and were well grounded in the Old Testament story and in the themes which it contains. They demonstrated a familiarity with the key passages which intersected with the topics that they had chosen to answer and brought in secondary material from the standard texts to support and buttress the points they were making.

At times they made the common mistake relied too heavily on the introductions of people like Drane, Hinson and Dumbrell to make points, particularly on content, that could more easily

and more effectively be established from the primary text. The flip side is that references are needed for matters of interpretation. While it is encouraging to see a willingness to cite sources, it would be better still to see candidates learning to distinguish between these author's describing what is there and their interpreting that material.

In the exam the essays were likewise of a good quality and evidenced a good grasp of the primary text and a growing familiarity with the secondary literature. The challenge for ThA students continues to be to focus on the question and to recognise that the exam is always going to be concerned with what you can do with what you know, rather than an opportunity to relate all that you have found out. Candidates tended to use an exam question to detail all they knew about a topic area from the syllabus, rather than to draw on what they know of the topic area and to select from that knowledge pool those aspects that best answer the question. Marks can only be awarded for those parts of an essay that answer the question. I suspect that both candidates may feel that their exam mark does not reflect their knowledge of the OT. Indeed it doesn't. But it does reflect the extent to which they employed that knowledge to answer the questions.

Andy Stirrup
5/08/2009