

GCE



CCEA GCE A2
Exemplifying Examination
Performance
Religious Studies

**A2 1: Themes in the Synoptic
Gospels**

This is an exemplification of candidates' performance in GCE A2 examinations (Summer 2018) to support the teaching and learning of the Religious Studies specification.



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EXEMPLIFYING EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE

GCE Religious Studies

Introduction

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Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna Finlay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

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GCE: A2 Religious Studies

**ARE11: Themes in the Synoptic
Gospels**

Grade: A Exemplar

Section A

Q1a Analyse the sources used by Luke in writing his Gospel. [20]

Student's response

Source criticism is an 'important literary tool' to find a developed theological understanding of the synoptics Gospels, and their relationship between one another as well as their literary interdependence according to Morris. Through the use of BH Streeter's widely accepted 'four-source hypothesis' studies are able to discern that Luke was written after Mark's Gospel, and that he made the use of a handful of dedicated sources to facilitate the information of which his Gospel is comprised. Unlike Matthew's Gospel, Luke's work is seen to make less consistent usage of Mark's Gospel, and Banks sees that whilst Matthew includes 91% of Mark's writings, Luke only includes 53% of it. Banks also sees that Mark's Gospel accounts for one third of Luke's Gospel, indicating that primary focus is given to his other sources. However, the idea of Marcan priority is still intrinsically useful to an understanding of the general structure of events that Luke shows with the other synoptics, starting with a ministry that begins in Galilee and journeys from north to south.

A very important source in the understanding of Luke's links to Matthew is the hypothetical source Q. derived from the German word for source 'quelle'. This is comprised of all of the content that is present in Matthew and Luke, but not in Mark. As it is a hypothetical source Drane remarks that it could be 'oral, written or both'. This reinforces JG Herder's idea of a previous oral tradition, 'definite in structure, and even in language'. Banks recognises that Q's content can range from exact correspondence between the two Gospels and 'significant divergence'. This indicates that Luke had the same source but made independent use of it. Such independent use can be seen on the Sermon on the Mount, where content is similar but the execution differs. Scholars recognise Q as primarily a source of sayings not entire passages.

Introduced by Streeter, 'L' is a source comprised of all of Luke's unique Gospel material. This includes fully formed parables and events, such as the Parable of the Rich Fool, and Jesus' meeting with Zacchaeus. 'L' is where most of the Lucan themes come from that weren't achieved through redaction, such as a great condemnation of greed and care for the marginalised. Critics present a Proto-Luke theory of an original Gospel made of 'Q' and 'L' by Luke when Paul was imprisoned in Rome, with Mark added later. This is reinforced by the presence of five distinct 'blocks' of Marcan material suggesting a two-stage structure. However, whilst Donald Guthrie recognises the theory's potential he sees awkward gaps and questions its actual usefulness. Overall, Luke made very educated use of his sources no matter of the order he received them.

Examiner's comments

The candidate makes a strong introduction outlining their knowledge of Source Criticism and Streeter's 4 document hypothesis. The candidate by highlighting Streeter's theory is then able to display a high degree of understanding of the sources used by Luke in composing his Gospel. The candidate also makes a comparison of Matthew's and Luke's use of Mark and backs up their understanding with evidence, in this case the opinion of Banks. The candidate demonstrates awareness of Markan priority and utilizes this understanding to feed into the basis of the question posed. The candidate answers accurately that Mark, "Q" and "L" are the main sources used by Luke in writing his Gospel. This accurate knowledge introduced a competent discussion of the priority of Mark and Luke's use of Mark as a key source in writing his Gospel. The candidate shows clear knowledge of "Q" and makes a coherent synopsis of its construction and content. After clarification of "Q", the candidate is able to elaborate on the hypothetical nature of the "Q" theory. They allude to the views of Drane and Herder and conclude that Luke's use of "Q" may have differed from that of Matthew and again the candidate clarifies their argument with a textual example; The Sermon on the Mount. While discussing "L", the candidate proffers a range of examples and displays a high degree of understanding of the themes included and possible construction of "L" through reference to the Proto-Luke theory. This is a mature answer with a clear and coherent structure. The candidate references scholarly opinion in context and shows clear understanding throughout. To access Band 5 the candidate could have given some relevant textual examples of material all three Gospels share thereby making the conclusion Mark was the source. Luke's use of Mark could have been stronger looking at Luke's editorial improvements to Mark, his thematic omissions such as that of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter or Luke's adaptation of Mark's characterization of the Disciples. The candidate could have shown wide-ranging understanding through greater elaboration of key points and perhaps the mention of Luke's other sources such as Paul or the suggestion that Luke used Matthew thus negating the "Q" hypothesis. This answer clearly merits a top Band 4 mark as overall it provides a very good range of examples also employing the use of scholarship. The candidate engages with the question and the answer is relevant to the task set.

Band 4

Q1b Critically assess the view that Matthew and Luke's copying of Mark poses no serious problems to an understanding of the gospels. [30]

Student's response

It is generally accepted that both Matthew and Luke made exponential usage of Mark's Gospel during the production of their own with the development of Marcan priority and Holtzmann's two-source hypothesis. Some scholars may argue that this can lead to a cloudy understanding of the Gospels and their unique literary relationship. However, typically I do not believe this to be the case. In fact, it allows for a greater understanding of their interdependence. We can see Matthew and Luke's specific themes and how they cater to their own audience through critical analysis of redaction criticism. Redaction criticism is a close look at how the Gospels omit and change certain parts of Mark's Gospel in order to better suit their audience. For example, Luke omits a Marcan reference to the Gentiles as 'dogs', as he was writing to Gentiles in a time of strong tension and thus did not want to cause upset with his writings. Another example is how both Matthew and Luke 'make Jesus' powers more immediate and divine' according to Hale. Whilst Mark presents Jesus' powers as somewhat gradual, the other synoptics redact that fact and 'upscale' his powers to truly present his divinity.

However, at the same time this obvious redaction of Mark's writings may cause an upset showing the Gospels 'taking creative liberties with their writings and almost presenting themselves as a religious propaganda machine' as Piper believes. These obvious edits can prove the understanding of the Gospels as inherently confusing, as well as sparking question as to whether or not the Gospels aimed to provide a true image of Jesus' character, or if they suffered as a result of early Church involvement. When Matthew and Luke pad out Mark's content differently, it could also seemingly invite problems. For example, Matthew and Mark both include the anointing at Bethany, whilst Luke does not and instead places the theme in A Sinful Woman Forgiven. These omissions cloud the real person of Jesus with the Messiah that Matthew or Luke wants you to see, and that they seemingly cannot agree poses an issue of understanding.

Examiner's comments

This response is located on the cusp of Band 4 as the candidate makes a very good attempt to critically assess the stated view. The response is presented in a clear and coherent way which directly focuses on the question posed and shows that the candidate understands what the question asks. The candidate begins by knowledgeably setting up their argument showing understanding of Markan priority and Matthew and Luke's use of Mark as a source. From the outset, the candidate presents their argument that copying poses no serious problems but rather leads to greater understanding. The candidate backs up their argument with textual examples and scholarly opinion therefore providing evidence and reasoning for their views. Some of the points the candidate considers is the issue literary independence, with Matthew and Luke redacting their sources to suit the needs of their audience and own theological outlook. The candidate explains Luke's redaction of Mark's reference to the Gentiles as 'dogs' so not to give offence to his Gentile audience. The candidate also alludes to the Christological presentation of Jesus in the Synoptics. Essentially, the candidate puts forward the consensus that copying of Mark provides a greater understanding of how each Gospel writer presented their material to suit their outlook. The candidate then provides a counter claim stating that where differences occur between the Gospels it can invite questions of reliability. The candidate discusses how the Gospel writers could be seen as taking creative liberties with the facts and thus do not provide an accurate picture of the life of Jesus. This argument was augmented by scholarly opinion and textual examples, in particular the anointing at Bethany. The candidate makes a very good attempt at analysis of the question. To improve, the candidate could have developed their argument further. Looking at the view that the priority of Mark as a long-established theory has been widely accepted without serious problems. The candidate could have elaborated on use of the triple tradition, Mark's use of Peter and the apostolic reliability this gave to Mark as a source are some of the expansions that would have been advantageous. The counter claim while relevant could have benefitted from greater elaboration and reasoning on the use of alternate sources such as Matthean priority, Griesbach, Proto-Luke and individual independent sources. In general, the candidate could have provided a greater range of evidence and argument and provided analysis throughout showing greater independent thought.

Band 4

Q2a “The title Son of Man is essential to an understanding of the person and mission of Jesus.”

Examine this statement. [20]

Student's response

According to Banks the title son of man is the most important title given to Jesus, and this is supported by Cooper who states that this is the only title that is used by Jesus. Perhaps Jesus used this uncommon name so that he could go about his ministry to seek and save the cost without making an open claim to be the messiah.

In order to understand the person and ministry of Jesus based on the title Son of Man we must understand the origins of the titles. The title son of man comes from the Old Testament in psalms 8:4-8 'What is mankind to you, the son of man, you crowned him in glory and honour. Campbell comments that there are 2 important ideas being expressed here man in his lowliness and insignificant as God's creation and man's possibility of glory. Using this title allowed Jesus to stress his human qualities. The book of Daniel also mentions the son of man, in Chpt 1 there is an account of one of Daniels dreams 'the son of man who will be seated at the right hand of almighty'. Here he is speaking of the son of man who will come again, to judge men and angels, he is designed to reign forever. Therefore the son of man has apocalyptic overtones. Additionally the book of Isaiah takes account of someone known as the suffering servant. Scholars believe that Jesus combined the idea of the son of man in Daniel, in Daniel the son of man will come again with the son of man in Isaiah, in Isaiah the son of man will suffer and die Isaiah 53 'he was tormented and deprived by suffering'. According to Stanton this fits neatly with the experiences of Jesus.

The origins of the titles can then be used to understand the person of Jesus and the mission. He uses the title to speak of his authority on earth MK 1:2-12, 'Son of man has authority to forgive sins' This shows Jesus' true divine nature as only God had the authority to do so. Similar to the suffering servant of Isaiah he uses it to speak of his suffering on earth 'the son of man must suffer many things + be delivered over to the teachers and chief priests'. Additionally based on the son of man in Daniel he uses it to speak of his coming again LK 22:69 'Sitting at the right hand of the power of God.' In conclusion this title helps understand the person of Jesus and how he would suffer and die like an ordinary human. When Jesus used this he truly saw the eschatological messiah at whom Daniel spoke.

Examiner's comments

The candidate displayed competent knowledge throughout their answer. The candidate opens by exploring the origins of the title Son of Man in the Old Testament, referring to the Psalms. The humanity of Jesus is explored. The candidate then looked to the Book of Daniel and the apocalyptic nature of the title. The candidate also covered the use of Son of Man as a self-designated title, the connection to Isaiah's suffering servant and the human and divine nature of Jesus expressed by the title. The candidate then sought to respond to the specific nature of the task, that of the person and mission of Jesus expressed through the title Son of Man such as: the authoritative and eschatological aspects of the title. The candidate used numerous textual examples throughout to clarify their understanding, for example, they did not just allude to Daniel and his prophecy but also spoke of Psalms and Isaiah. The candidate also gave some examples of use of the title in the Gospels. The candidate used Mark and the issue of authority to forgive sins and Luke's eschatological mention of Son of Man at the Trial of Jesus. Allusion to these textual references elucidated the candidates understanding of the title in Jesus' mission and the evangelists outlook. The response could have been further improved by being structured better to display a clarity of thought. Reference to scholarly views and analysis of the title in relation to Jesus' Messiahship would have been beneficial but nonetheless a competent example of wide-ranging knowledge.

Band 5

Q2b Critically evaluate the claim that the ethics of Jesus are only relevant to the lives of Christians. [30]

Student's response

Student's response not available for this question.

Q3a Discuss what is distinctive about Matthew's account of the resurrection. [20]

Student's response

The Resurrection Stories is one of the most important stories within the Bible and are essential to Christian faith. The Resurrection story is told within the Gospels written by the evangelists. Matthew's resurrection is similar in a sense to most gospels but he does have some distinctive features.

The Resurrection story begins with the women going to see Jesus. Going to 'see' is different from what is written in Mark as he talks about the women preparing the spices in order to anoint Jesus the next day. In Matthew's Passion narrative Jesus is blessed at the home of Simon the leper. So the women were simply going to see Jesus showing he was clear in mind and contemplative. They were not expecting the resurrection.

Matthew's account of the messenger is different from all other evangelists. Mark describes him as 'dressed in white and to the right of the tomb while Luke describes two men in 'dazzling white'. Matthew takes a more dramatic approach in his description. He states the messenger was 'an angel from God', dressed in garments 'as white as snow'. Matthew's description is deliberately apocalyptic and over dramatic and he wants to show the importance of the events and how it was beyond human comprehension.

Also distinctive in Matthew is his mention of an earthquake just as an angel appears. This is in reference to the earthquake that happened just before Jesus' death linking the two significant experiences. This is distinctive as he is the only gospel writer to mention this.

What is distinctive to Matthew is he doesn't try to explain the resurrection through theology as what has happened is beyond human comprehension. His unique descriptions and unworldly aspects show that this event is not ordinary.

The message given by the angel is not distinctive as all three synoptic writers include the same message. This shows the importance of what is being said. The message never changing shows its reliability. He tells the woman that Jesus has been risen by God, he is not in the tomb and that the disciples are to go find him in Galilee, which he had previously informed them about during the last supper. In the Resurrection the women became the 'apostles' as they are delivering the good news to the disciples.

What is distinctive to Luke is how the women respond to the message. In Mark they are terrified and don't mention what they saw to anyone while in Matthew they receive the message with joy and run off to tell the disciples.

Examiner's comments

This response integrates knowledge and understanding, which is one of the merits of this answer. The candidate approaches the question by giving an account of Matthew's resurrection and then including their understanding of the salient points. The candidate begins comparing Matthew and Mark's differences in the motivations of the women going to the tomb. The response includes the message of the angel and incorporating the message as a fulfilment of Jesus' prediction at the Last Supper. The response draws out Matthew's apocalyptic signs that accompanied the resurrection of Jesus and includes the role of the women as the first witnesses. The candidate is aware of Matthew's unique feature of the earthquake and the significance of Matthew's inclusion of it. The candidate also makes a comparison of the synoptic accounts thus displaying very good understanding of the theological outlook of Matthew. While the candidate shows a high degree of understanding a lack of discussion about the bribery of the guards at the tomb situates this response in Band 4 and not in Band 5. To improve on the mark awarded the response could have been more alert to all the distinctive features and referred to the wide range of scholarship available on Matthew's account of the resurrection. The knowledge and understanding throughout could have been articulated in a more detailed and precise way.

Band 4

Q3b “Belief in the resurrection of Jesus is an essential part of the faith of the Christian in any generation.” Critically evaluate this statement. [30]

Student's response

I agree with that 'Belief in the resurrection of Jesus is an essential part of the faith of the Christian in any generation'. It is a message / event that never loses its power no matter who, where or when the message is told.

The resurrection is the corner stone of our Christian faith. Without it there would be no Christianity. Evidence of its importance can be seen in Acts where nearly every sermon mentions its occurrence. It was the substance of the early church teaching and still is today showing that it is indeed an essential part of the faith of the Christians in any generation. Without the resurrection we could not have Easter which is considered to be the most important event of the ecclesiastical calendar.

The Resurrection teaches Christians many things that are essential for our Christian faith. The resurrection of Jesus showed that he was indeed no ordinary man. This would help reaffirm his existence so anyone who is struggling to believe in God. This resurrection also shows that Jesus died for our sins reiterating the importance of repentance and confession for Christians. This is essential for all generations especially now as the number of attendees to confession is drastically decreasing.

Another importance of the resurrection was its fulfilment of the Old Testament prophet. This is an essential part of faith as it helps prove that the stories and prophecies can be relied on and do hold some truth. The Resurrection also proves to us that Jesus was indeed the son of man which helps to show how Jesus really was. It would have particularly important to the generation alive at the time of Jesus as they did not know Jesus true identity. However, it is still relevant today as it reiterates who Jesus was and the close relation he had with God.

The resurrection also gives hope of life after death. This is an essential part of faith that every Christian in every generation can relate to. The question of afterlife is one that causes much belief. Some don't believe in it at all while others are unsure what to believe. The resurrection could help reassure those who question its essence. The afterlife / heaven is an important aspect of their faith and Jesus resurrection helps ease the minds of those who question it to some extent. The hope of resurrection also gives faith to those who are in mourning giving them hope that they will someday be reconnected with the ones they love.

While the belief in the resurrection is an essential part of faith to all Christians in any generation, it is not the only aspect of faith for Christians. Faith can be explored and strengthened through prayers and penance as well as going on religious retreats and pilgrimages such as Lourdes and Lourdes.

Another essential part of Christian faith is looking out for others and performing charity work. 'Loving your neighbour' and following the Ten Commandments is

also an essential part of faith. Doing charity work for charities such as SVdP or donating charity is an essential part of faith as it is living in the way taught us too.

The Miracles stories and parables are also an essential part of faith as they show Christians how to live and also teaches Christian morals that Jesus taught as were essential for living a good Christian life and developing our faith. However, this can affect different generations differently as old generations would relate more to Jesus reference to the sower. Today's generation is aware of a more modernised agricultural environment therefore it may be less relatable however the messages within the parable is still clear.

I definitely agree that 'Belief in the resurrection of Jesus is an essential part of the faith of the Christian in any generation. The resurrection is the cornerstone for Christianity and without it there would be no Christianity therefore no faith. It is also an event that does not specifically apply to a generation. Therefore it is something I would consider the basis of Christian faith. However other aspects such as prayer, pilgrimage and 'Love you neighbour are also important'.

Examiner's comments

The candidate begins by outlining the importance of belief in the resurrection as the cornerstone of the Christian faith for the early Church and Christians today. The response then competently discusses the importance of the resurrection in confirming the identity of Jesus, fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and the future hope of eternal life. The response proffers evidence from Acts of the importance of the resurrection for the early Church, especially in relation to the Easter festival. The importance of the resurrection for Christians today is also explored in relation to the identity of Jesus and the Christian hope of an afterlife. The candidate is aware of the nuances of the question when exploring Christians in any generation as they look at both the effect of belief in the resurrection on both the early Church and Christians today. The response displays very good reasoning and an attempt to construct a balanced analysis through their counter arguments. The response states there are other essential elements to the Christian faith such as prayer, pilgrimage and acting in a Christian manner that are more essential than belief in the resurrection. Examples and evidence supplement the argument throughout such as references to the teaching contained in the Golden rule and the work of St. Vincent de Paul. The response also argues that the messages contained in miracles and parables are an essential part of the Christian faith. There is a knowledgeable summing up in the conclusion of the relevant points of the debate. To improve, the response would benefit from use of scholarship such as the views of Jenkins and Spong in relation to belief in the resurrection. Greater development of the stated arguments would also have been appropriate. Possibly looking at attempts to explain the resurrection in other ways and rejection of the resurrection by other world faiths. The candidate could have referred to the text of the Gospels when discussing the resurrection which would have shown a more informed argument. References to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15: 14–19 and his stated belief that without the resurrection Christianity would be null and void would have also enhanced the task. Nevertheless, the candidate responds to the task set and offers meaningful debate looking at varying viewpoints.

Band 4

Section B

Synoptic Assessment

Theme: Religious Texts, Authority and Interpretation

Q4a “The interpretation of religious texts is no easy matter.” With reference to **one** example, discuss this statement. You must support your answer with reference to at least one other unit of study. [20]

Student's response

To a certain extent, the interpretation of religious texts is not an easy matter. For example, there are dangers to the literalist approach of interpretation of religious texts, that can lead to religious extremism. One of the most used 'justifications', against homosexuality is that of in St Paul's teachings when he classifies homosexuals in a group of who will not be allowed into the kingdom of God, or that of in Leviticus where homosexuality is classified as a sin. The literalist will interpret this to the full extent, believing homosexuality to be an abomination, and has led to some religious extremism. For example, the Westborough Baptist Church has justified its claim for hatred of gay people, viewing them as an abomination to the fact they interpret the bible saying in this way, and have used their literalist approach to also justify picketing US soldiers funerals. They state that these soldiers died because it is God's way of punishing people for homosexuality. However, despite liberals viewing interpreting religious texts as reading through the lines, i.e. create a difficult and more complex process, the literalist, and indeed, in my other unit of study, Celtic church, Martin Luther, did not find difficulty in interpretation of religious texts. One of Luther's key ideas in the protestant reformation was that of 'sola scriptura' ie scripture alone, thus his interpretation was an easy matter, whatever scripture says, goes. Similarly, in monasticism, many of the monastic founders were very strict in their rules, for example Columbanus' rule that his monks were only to eat what was necessary to survive, and that they must be always self sufficient in what they do, echoes that of a very strict literalist approach. What the text says, must be interpreted exactly like so, thus interpreting religious texts is an easy matter.

Interpretation of religious texts is however not an easy matter, for in Sharia law, interpreted from Qu'ran, it is said that a man can divorce his wife if he says three times 'I divorce you', but for a women, she cannot, but simply has to take the divorce if he decides, leading to the issue of gender equality and how interpreting religious texts leaves women as unequal to their subordinate gender. For feminist interpreters of religious texts, it is not an easy matter, especially when some blame women for all sin, simply because Eve ate the apple in the story of the fall.

In conclusion, the interpretation of religious texts is not an easy matter as they are all open to it, however, some, such as Luther in the reformation, emphasised the text is what it is and should be easy.

Examiner's comments

The response begins with a clear focus on the question by discussing the theme of interpretation of religious texts using relevant evidence. From the outset the response engages directly with the stated task, that interpretation of religious texts is not straightforward. The candidate chooses the example of homosexuality and correctly roots their answer in Scripture, in this case Leviticus and the letters of St. Paul (non-taught course material). Again, the candidate uses an example to elaborate on their answer; Westboro Baptist Church. Thus far the candidate makes a very good attempt at analysis of the question using one example. The response concisely makes the point that religious texts, if interpreted in a literal way, can lead to religious extremism. The candidate then makes a link to their other area of study; the Celtic Church. This is clearly identified for the examiner. The response follows through on literal interpretation of religious texts by Martin Luther and the key idea of 'sola scriptura' (scripture alone), thus making a link to their other area of study. The synoptic thread focusing on the literal interpretation of texts being both difficult or straightforward depending on the circumstance. The link to the other area of study is skillfully done as the candidate looks at the alternate view, that literal interpretation of texts poses no difficulties. The crux of the point being the possibility of interpreting religious texts along the lines of preexisting viewpoints. The response also uses the example of Sharia Law and how interpretation of the Qur'an can often be to the detriment of women. The candidate makes an insightful comment focusing on feminist interpretation of religious texts and that understanding of religious texts can be a contentious area. The response represents a well-informed answer and the candidate's general discussion of the interpretation of religious texts displays a high degree of understanding especially as they use relevant evidence as a means of exemplification of their understanding. This answer is an example of a very good response to the synoptic question especially the analysis the candidate was able to make in quite a limited timeframe. To improve, the answer could have offered wider reference to the variety of ways in which religious texts can be interpreted; symbolically, morally, liberally. The issue of subjective interpretation of religious texts and the possibility of using isolated verses to condemn or condone ethical viewpoints could have presented a more in-depth layer to the response.

Band 4

Q4b Critically assess the view that religious leaders are no longer relevant to the important decisions and choices of society. You must refer to other aspects of human experience in your answer. [30]

Student's response

To a certain extent, religious leaders are no longer relevant to the important decisions and choices of society. For example, the recent abortion referendum in Ireland, a still predominately Religious country, with over 80% of people affiliating with some source of religion, the 8th amendment was voted to be repealed, with over 70% voting for abortion rights. This clearly displays, that although vehemently opposing abortion, clergy and religious leaders do not have influence and are no longer relevant to the important decisions and choices of society. Furthermore, with the scandal of the child abuse scandals within the Catholic Church, has lost trust and respect within the church itself, calling into question their relevance in leadership. Contrary to this statement however, there are 26 bishops who sit in the House of Lords, a revising chamber for societal changes and decisions, of which Archbishop Justin Welby stated that they are still needed and are relevant to the choices and decisions made in society.

On the otherhand however, if we call the relevance of religious leaders into question, this calls into question church and state relations. Pope John Paul II believes that religious leaders need to be involved in social change, but not by posing the Church as a political institution. Similarly, France has called an end to all church + State relations, thus leading to the conclusion of religious leaders not being relevant in decision making.

Additionally, with the view of feminists that there needs to be reform in the religious leadership first, i.e. ordaining women bishops, how can men be relevant as leaders to fulfil this.

In conclusion, religious leaders are to a certain extent no longer relevant as needed to the important decisions and changes in society, especially when they occur now more than ever, despite the thinking of religious leaders e.g. through politicians lobby pressure movements and social media, their relevance can be called into question, especially if Church is seen as a 'dinosaur' in need of reform in itself before calling to question other choices and decisions of the modern, secular and atheistic society.

Examiner's comments

The response undoubtedly satisfies the requirements of the Synoptic AO2 task. The candidate engages directly with the stated view and refers to other aspects of human experience in their answer while also evaluating the question. The response initially discusses how religious leaders are no longer relevant to secular policy making and reflects on the reason why this may be so, such as, a lack of trust following sexual abuse scandals and societal changes. The example chosen, of the repeal of the 8th amendment in the Republic of Ireland was both relevant and up-to-date. The candidate also makes the point that although religious leaders may have influence on their congregations this is not the same as being relevant when it comes to making important choices in modern society. They also provide a balance to the argument by discussing examples such as Pope Francis and the very Rev. Archbishop Justin Welby who continue to make a valuable contribution to modern society. The response cites the example of the House of Lords, who have Bishops as members, and are involved in important secular changes. The response also points to the transformative view of Pope Francis that Church and State must work together to elicit change. The use of evidence in analyzing the view was done well. The response started to discuss feminism and Church leadership, but the argument could have been further developed through use of evidence and example into a very valid point. Following through on the point would have further enhanced the debate. The candidate concludes with a synopsis of their debate and introduces further examples. The candidate makes a very good attempt to debate the statement with reference to other aspects of human experience and overall, this is a very competent answer. The candidate could have developed their debate further by exemplifying their answer in more detail. Critical analysis of the view could have benefitted from wider discussion of the rising trend of secularism and individualism in modern society, how the views of religious leaders have been undermined in some countries and the differing views of societies about the role of religious leaders. The debate could have also looked towards religious leaders, for example, Martin Luther King who was extremely influential at provoking societal change through the civil rights movement in America.

Band 4

