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# **GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME**

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**SUMMER 2023**

**A LEVEL  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - UNIT 6  
TEXTUAL STUDIES – NEW TESTAMENT  
1120U60-1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This marking scheme was used by WJEC for the 2023 examination. It was finalised after detailed discussion at examiners' conferences by all the examiners involved in the assessment. The conference was held shortly after the paper was taken so that reference could be made to the full range of candidates' responses, with photocopied scripts forming the basis of discussion. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners.

It is hoped that this information will be of assistance to centres but it is recognised at the same time that, without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation.

WJEC regrets that it cannot enter into any discussion or correspondence about this marking scheme.

## **Positive marking**

It should be remembered that candidates are writing under examination conditions and credit should be given for what the candidate writes, rather than adopting the approach of penalising him/her for any omissions. It should be possible for a very good response to achieve full marks and a very poor one to achieve zero marks. Marks should not be deducted for a less than perfect answer if it satisfies the criteria of the mark scheme.

Exemplars in the mark scheme are only meant as helpful guides. Therefore, any other acceptable or suitable answers should be credited even though they are not actually stated in the mark scheme.

Two main phrases are deliberately placed throughout each mark scheme to remind examiners of this philosophy. They are:

- “Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.”
- “This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.”

## **Rules for Marking**

1. Differentiation will be achieved on the basis of candidates' response.
2. No mark scheme can ever anticipate or include every possible detail or interpretation; examiners should use their professional judgement to decide whether a candidate's particular response answers the question in relation to the particular assessment objective.
3. Candidates will often express their ideas in language different from that given in any mark scheme or outline. Positive marking therefore, on the part of examiners, will recognise and credit correct statements of ideas, valid points and reasoned arguments irrespective of the language employed.

## **Banded mark schemes**

Banded mark schemes are divided so that each band has a relevant descriptor. The descriptor provides a description of the performance level for that band. Each band contains marks. Examiners should first read and annotate a candidate's answer to pick out the evidence that is being assessed in that question. Once the annotation is complete, the mark scheme can be applied. This is done as a two-stage process.

## **Banded mark schemes stage 1 – deciding on the band**

When deciding on a band, the answer should be viewed holistically. Beginning at the lowest band, examiners should look at the candidate's answer and check whether it matches the descriptor for that band. Examiners should look at the descriptor for that band and see if it matches the qualities shown in the candidate's answer. If the descriptor at the lowest band is satisfied, examiners should move up to the next band and repeat this process for each band until the descriptor matches the answer.

If an answer covers different aspects of different bands within the mark scheme, a 'best fit' approach should be adopted to decide on the band and then the candidate's response should be used to decide on the mark within the band. For instance, if a response is mainly in band 2 but with a limited amount of band 3 content, the answer would be placed in band 2, but the mark awarded would be close to the top of band 2 as a result of the band 3 content.

## **Banded mark schemes stage 2 – deciding on the mark**

Once the band has been decided, examiners can then assign a mark. During standardising (at the Examiners' marking conference), detailed advice from the Principal Examiner on the qualities of each mark band will be given. Examiners will then receive examples of answers in each mark band that have been awarded a mark by the Principal Examiner. Examiners should mark the examples and compare their marks with those of the Principal Examiner.

When marking, examiners can use these examples to decide whether a candidate's response is of a superior, inferior or comparable standard to the example. Examiners are reminded of the need to revisit the answer as they apply the mark scheme in order to confirm that the band and the mark allocated is appropriate to the response provided. Indicative content is also provided for banded mark schemes. Indicative content is not exhaustive, and any other valid points must be credited. In order to reach the highest bands of the mark scheme a learner need not cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content, but must meet the requirements of the highest mark band.

## **Awarding no marks to a response**

Where a response is not creditworthy, that is it contains nothing of any relevance to the question, or where no response has been provided, no marks should be awarded.

## A Level Generic Band Descriptors

<b>Band (marks)</b>	<b>Assessment Objective AO1 – Section A questions [30 marks]</b>
	<p><i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i></li> <li>- <i>influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</i></li> <li>- <i>cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</i></li> <li>- <i>approaches to the study of religion and belief.</i></li> </ul>
<b>5 (25-30 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>• An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set.</li> <li>• The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Insightful connections are made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• An extensive range of views of scholars/schools of thought used accurately and effectively.</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<b>4 (19-24 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>• A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set.</li> <li>• The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Purposeful connections are made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• A range of scholarly views/schools of thought used largely accurately and effectively.</li> <li>• Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<b>3 (13-18 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>• A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set.</li> <li>• The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Sensible connections made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• A basic range of scholarly views/schools of thought used.</li> <li>• Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<b>2 (7-12 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance.</li> <li>• A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set.</li> <li>• Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Makes some basic connections between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable)</li> <li>• A limited range of scholarly views/schools of thought used.</li> <li>• Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<b>1 (1-6 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance.</li> <li>• A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question.</li> <li>• Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Very few or no connections made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable)</li> <li>• Little or no use of scholarly views/schools of thought.</li> <li>• Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary.</li> <li>• Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication.</li> </ul> <p><b>N.B. A maximum of 3 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'.</b></p>
<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No relevant information.</li> </ul>

<b>Band</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Assessment Objective AO2- Section B questions [30 marks]</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5</b> <b>(25-30 marks)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set.</li> <li>• The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• The views of scholars/schools of thought are used extensively, appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Confident and perceptive analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4</b> <b>(19-24 marks)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed.</li> <li>• The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• Views of scholars/schools of thought are used appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Purposeful analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b> <b>(13-18 marks)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed.</li> <li>• The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Views of scholars/schools of thought are generally used appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Sensible analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2</b> <b>(7-12 marks)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed.</li> <li>• Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Basic use of the views of scholars/schools of thought, appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Makes some analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• Some mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b> <b>(1-6 marks)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set.</li> <li>• Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence.</li> <li>• Little or no use of the views of scholars/schools of thought.</li> <li>• Limited analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary.</li> <li>• Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>0</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No relevant analysis or evaluation.</li> </ul>

**WJEC GCE A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**UNIT 6 - TEXTUAL STUDIES – NEW TESTAMENT**  
**SUMMER 2023 MARK SCHEME**

To be read in conjunction with the generic level descriptors provided.

**Section A**

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**Examine the purpose of the New Testament miracles, with reference to Keith Warrington.**

**[AO1 30]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses will be credited.**

- Reference should be made to the set texts of: the healing of the centurion's servant, the story of the Gerasene demoniac; and, the feeding of the 5,000 to exemplify the answers, they should not simply be re told.
- Particular but not sole reference can be expected from the specification text Keith Warrington, *Miracles in the Gospels: What do they teach us about Jesus?* including the following:
- Miracles are recorded to teach readers about Jesus who is without a peer and as such answer the question 'Who is this man?' and 'Is he God?' Miracles do not therefore provide a healing model for others.
- Jesus resolves many varied problems authoritatively – showing his divine authority e.g. to cast out demons and raise the dead.
- Jesus delegates his supernatural restorative authority to his disciples – the commissioning of the 70 and in the early church.
- Jesus reinstates the marginalised – the inability of the sick to function corporately e.g. lepers, blind, lame seem of particular importance to Jesus as healing also brings restoration; reflecting an Old Testament concern of God.
- Jesus is greater than Messiah foretold due to his miracles which in turn add to recognition of him as Messiah.
- Jesus fulfils Old Testament prophecy in his miracles – Matthew characteristically records this referencing Isaiah in a way that shows Jesus was healing throughout his life, not just on the cross.
- Jesus is identified as the Son of God through the miracles – not simply the Messiah. His birth miracle. His resurrection. In the miracles narratives Jesus is often referred to as the Son of God, beyond its former use but explicitly Jesus partakes in the nature of God.
- Jesus initiates the Kingdom of God through the healing miracles and in the present tense; a new era is being introduced.
- Jesus manifests God's authority – within the miracles Jesus forgives sins, manifests authority over the law and over nature itself.
- Jesus offers people opportunities to believe in him through his miracles even though they do not always register a response of faith. For John they are 'signs'.
- Unbelief could have an influence on miracles.
- The purpose of the miracles of Jesus' birth and resurrection can be examined appropriately.

**This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses will be credited.**

- Different suggestions have been made but none can be guaranteed as the main purpose.
- Assuming Peter (for ease, Peter can be referred to as the author) is writing as he says to ‘the dispersion scattered throughout...’ (1.1) it is designed for a specific group of Christians scattered over a wide area.
- Some translations refer to this group of Christians as ‘pilgrims’ further illustrating the purpose of the letter being addressed to those who are on a particular, Christian, path of life and so addressing what they, in the area they live, may meet along their path.
- Question whether the purpose of the letter is to write specifically to Jewish Christians, as Origen proposed. Others do not see this as the purpose given the way Peter refers to their former lives ‘former lusts in ignorance’ etc. which suggest a Gentile purpose for the letter.
- Whether, Jewish, Gentile or mixed the letter encourages the audience to grow in trust and obedience to God.
- Particularly to help the audience deal with suffering, especially the persecution being imposed on them. Appropriate illustration from the text can be made to show the purpose was to strengthen men and women in jeopardy of their lives because of their faith in Jesus.
- A key overall purpose may be considered as ‘hope’ – the hope received through Jesus Christ from which he gives practical guidance to assist in their human relationships and particularly exhorts them to endure their suffering in a joyful manner for Christ’s sake.
- Identifying similarities and differences between 1 Peter and other New Testament letters that may variously assist in the answer. For example, it would seem that 1 Peter was not written to deal with theological heresy.
- There appears clear evidence of Peter’s Old Testament background both in quotation and allusion, so a purpose may be to show the fulfilment of the same.
- Some see the original purpose of 1 Peter as being rather a baptismal sermon which has been combined with a general address.
- 1 Peter 5.12 – ‘I have written briefly to you exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.’ The purpose is that the readers be fully assured that faith in Jesus is where God’s saving grace is to be found and to stay faithful no matter what, do not give into doubt or difficulty.

**This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.**

## Section B

**0 3** 'Jesus' parables should always be interpreted literally.'

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.**

- Reference is expected to the set texts i.e. Parables of the prodigal son, great banquet and the sower and / or other parables to aid the evaluation.
- Particular reference may be made to Robert H. Stein's *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* providing material is placed within analysis and evaluation.
- Allegorical interpretation is often used as the historic mainstay, illustrating the perceived need to interpret Jesus' parables to the extent that each aspect of the parable has a meaning to be unwrapped for our understanding e.g. St Augustine's allegorical interpretation of the Good Samaritan.
- Adolf Julicher was thought to demolish this approach since 1888 as he defined parables in terms of simile and similitude rather than metaphor and allegory. The purpose of a parable was to express a single point, usually a timeless aphorism or an "existential decision" e.g. the Good Samaritan rests purely on the action of the Good Samaritan, nothing else and so needs no interpretation. This is the main argument for a more 'literal' understanding.
- However, Robert Funk later suggested parables are 'extended metaphors'. Craig L. Blomberg followed this and argued that there may not be one overall message to a parable; for example, he considers that each character of the Prodigal Son has a lesson and so interpretation is needed.
- C. H. Dodd in 1936 pointed out that to understand parables correctly we need to recognise that Jesus did not address them to C19th or C20th or C21st audience, but to the C1st people who listened to him i.e. their *Sitz im Leben* and so their meaning and application have to be understood in that context first e.g. Jesus could use them as a mode of defence or of attack.
- While that may be a scholar's point that is not what Christians want to do today. They want to interpret Jesus' parables to their own situation for which Stein provides four basic principles:
  - i. Seek one main point of the parable – rejecting the allegorical approach. Is this what actually happens as sermons are preached on the parables? If not the extent of Augustine's allegorical interpretation certainly the expectation of some such input is widespread.
  - ii. Seek to understand the *Sitz im Leben*. For example, what 'Samaritan' meant as heard rather than our hearing 'Good Samaritan'. Few would argue against the benefit of this approach but is it a starting rather than finishing point for interpreting parables?
  - iii. Seek to understand how the Evangelist interpreted the parable e.g. Luke used parable of Good Samaritan alone of evangelists as fitted his theme of outcasts and love. This may be of interest, but does it actually affect the interpretation?
  - iv. Seek what God is saying to us today through the parable – this is surely the most important point and therefore does it matter whether or not or how parables are interpreted?

**Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.**

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**‘The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) cannot be called an example parable.’**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.**

- ‘Example Parables’ – as defined by J.D. Crossan - are those that stipulate or involve the sense of ‘go and do (or do not do) likewise’. Pointing beyond themselves these parables are designed to instruct behaviour so that people lead better lives. Is this the case for the parable of the prodigal son?
- Candidates may employ arguments from J.D. Crossan to suggest that the prodigal son is an example parable by combining / comparing it to the Parables of the Lost Sheep and Lost Coin i.e. the message is the same – rejoicing over the lost that is found. Is this sufficient to make it an example parable?
- The introductory context may affect one’s answer in that Jesus delivered these three parables because the Pharisees and Scribes were grumbling that Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them. Jesus in delivering the parables may accept that the sinners are lost but through him they are being found and so it is right to rejoice and that everyone should rejoice. This may aid explanation, but does an act of rejoicing make it an example parable?
- Specifically applying the parable of the prodigal son – the lost son represents the tax collectors and sinners who are ‘lost and found’ and so celebrate along with the Father – God – the elder angry son represents the Pharisees and scribes who grumble. This is all understandable, but it cannot make the parable an example. If it is so, why?
- While candidates may answer the above question variously, JD Crossan determines that the answer is yes and that it is an example parable showing metaphorically and illustrating microcosmically that what Jesus is doing is just common sense, in contrast to his opponents. Therefore, it is an ‘Example Parable’ in that we are to do the same – to rejoice when the lost are found.
- Crossan particularly looks at Luke’s Gospel and asks whether Luke has superimposed this element onto the parable/s giving it a false morality. Is this the case for the parable of the prodigal son? If so, is it Jesus presenting an example or is it Luke?
- Crossan goes on to suggest that the parable of the prodigal son may be a Challenge Parable, even if it is an ‘Example Parable’, as it challenges us to think, discuss, argue and to ultimately decide about its meaning for us today.
- With the parable of the prodigal son is Crossan making a false connection with the parables of the lost sheep / coin as the real meaning of the parable is the important of repentance – that reinforces the sense of it being an example parable more than the appropriateness of rejoicing.
- Ultimately every reader of the parable of the prodigal son has / needs to see themselves as the younger son in terms of their relationship to God and so this must be the example parable par excellence in terms of our own spiritual life and relationship to God.

**Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.**

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**‘Doubts about the authorship of 1 Peter have no effect on the letter’s message.’**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.**

- This is not a question on authorship *per se* the arguments of which are relevant when applied to any effects on the letter’s consequent message.
- The letter self purports to be written by Peter in a standard fashion used by other New Testament letter writers e.g. Paul, James, John, Jude and as such gives full apostolic authority to the message/s within the letter.
- Was that apostolic authority simply added to an otherwise anonymous letter to give its message an authority it did not really possess rendering the messages suspect?
- Similarities can be drawn between the record of Peter’s speeches in Acts and the message of I Peter providing collaborating evidence of the trustworthiness of the message. Others detect too much of a similarity to Paul’s writing, but even if he were the author the message of the letter would be just as effective, some would suggest more so.
- A key message of the letter is suffering. The use of Peter’s name to write about this would add weight and comfort to those reading it and yet it is believed that the general persecution commenced after Peter’s own death and so it cannot be from him. Surely this undermines the gravitas of the message of suffering. Yet if the message itself can remain relevant, as it has done for many Christians over the centuries who are suffering, then the authorship is secondary.
- On the theme of suffering the author refers to his connection to Jesus ‘a witness to the sufferings of Christ’ (5.1). Such a reference would surely validate the message in a unique and unquestionable way.
- Yet Peter would surely use his years with Jesus to provide evidence and examples to his own writings and so validate the message of I Peter. However, he does not and some of the messages are now consequently questioned especially in the modern church e.g. obedience. Yet, I Peter is not a gospel account of Jesus, but provides messages / instruction to specific situations. This suggests that perhaps that the gospel story was already well known and hence he only uses references to Christ with the consequence that the message/s of the letter are valid and important.
- The early Church Fathers (Polycarp d.155 and Irenaeus writing 182-8) quoted the letter and took its message as trustworthy and a basis of their own teachings/doctrines because they regarded it as written by Peter. Some modern scholars continue to regard Peter as the author e.g. W. Barclay and Wayne A Grudem and see this as adding weight to the authentic messages of the letter.
- Whoever the author the letter itself, unlike others, was regarded as valid and instructional in its message for it to be included in the Canon of the New Testament and as such it is still used in the Church today.

**Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.**

**Evaluate this view.****[AO2 30]****Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.**

- Particular reference may be made to the Specification text *Richard Bauckham's The Theology of the Book of Revelation* who states: 'But what kind of book is Revelation? It is important to begin by asking this question, because our answer determines our expectations of the book, the kind of meaning we expect to find in it.'
- John uses a unique strategy in Revelation. The body of his message is for all the churches, but he has different, very specific introductions for each church. These are the famed 'seven letters' to the churches. This has to mean that the message is affected at least 7 times as letters are sent to specific people for specific reasons even if they may prove of interest to others.
- Yet, the 7 messages are but introductions to the rest of the book as shown by the promises to the conquerors which complete each message. This shows that the overall message is unaffected as the meaning of conquering is only found in the message of the whole book. However, for Bauckham, the book is to be read from 7 explicitly different perspectives and so it must affect the message.
- That may have been the case when first written. but it does not really affect how it has been read i.e. as one book by the church ever since.
- According to Bauckham, John lived under Rome's worldwide tyranny. He wanted the churches to see how that tyranny related to the issues they faced. He wanted them to see how their struggle on the issues fit in God's great battle against tyranny / evil, and how it served God's purpose to establish his kingdom. As such Bauckham argues that we need to resist a common generalisation about Revelation seeing it as a book written for consolation and encouragement for Christians undergoing persecution.
- Nevertheless, it is precisely those messages of consolation, encouragement and final victory that many through the ages and today see as the message of Revelation irrespective to it being written as a circular letter.
- Bauckham observes that not all Christians were poor and oppressed by Rome. Many were affluent and compromised with it. For them, the judgments described in Revelation came not for consolation but as stern warnings of the danger they incurred. It was not only pagans, but many of John's hearers/readers were tempted to, or actually did, worship the beast (as those who listened to Jezebel at Thyatira). Again, this message is unaffected by its form as a circular letter.
- Nevertheless, whether comfort or warning, the application of Revelation turned on the group to which hearers belonged, and their relationship with Rome's tyranny. Asia Minor had more than seven churches, but the wealth of perspectives John provided allows all the churches to find analogies in his representative sampling of churches.
- 7 is a number of completeness and so by writing to 7 churches John is in essence writing to all churches of all times; it is for the church of each time and place to read Revelation and receive its own message.

**Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.**