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Examiners' Report

June 2011

GCS Religious Studies 6RS02 1A

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Introduction

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Investigations Paper of June 2011 demonstrated a high level of scholarship evident across all areas of study and many responses demonstrated the engagement that candidates had with their area of investigation. The enthusiasm for and knowledge of the chosen topic was clearly conveyed in many responses that were truly academic in their approach. Candidates were very well prepared for the examination and it was evident that Centres used their specialist resources and interests to encourage candidates to research in depth a particular area of study. It is important to stress again that the 'Investigations' unit has a definite academic purpose. The aim is to involve candidates as active participants pursuing open-ended enquiries with an emphasis on independent learning. Questions were designed to be inclusive of all possible approaches to various topics and all valid responses were considered.

Whilst most centres had entered their candidates for the correct option there were still a few entries for particular areas of study where consideration regarding entry for a different area of study may have been beneficial to the candidate. It is important to ensure candidates know which area of their investigation is the best fit for the question they answer on the paper. There was evidence of candidates choosing a different question on the paper to the question they had clearly prepared for before the examination.

Candidates were not penalised if correct entries were not made or a cross was put in a box that did not match the answer. Examiners were encouraged to mark positively. Centres should ensure that candidates are entered for the option that matches their area of study and that candidates are clear about which question they have been prepared for on the paper.

Variation in achievement was related to the two Assessment Objectives. These objectives should receive prominent attention in the process of the investigation. Importantly, in the exam itself there must be explicit attention to these objectives in the examination response. Each question consistently referred to the Assessment Objectives with the trigger word 'Examine' for AO1 and 'Comment on' for AO2. These dictated the structure of the question and helped candidates to plan their responses. It would be advisable for candidates to pay regular attention to the level descriptors for these Assessment Objectives as a way of monitoring their development and progress during their investigations. The phrase 'with reference to the topic you have investigated' will always appear in the question to ensure that the generic question can be answered with material from any appropriate investigation. The mark scheme itself is generic to all questions. In preparation for this examination candidates may find it useful to write up their investigation under exam timed conditions to a variety of different possible questions. They might build up a number of different essay plans to different possible questions. The important point in these activities is to enable candidates to develop their management of material such as how to best structure their content to answer the specific question. However, success can be undermined by writing up a rote-learned response which was not adapted to the question set or by answering a question that has been written for a topic they have not studied.

6RS02_1A_Q01

Q1 RELIGION AND SCIENCE

There was a wide range of responses to this question, some very ably marshalling a range of scientific and religious accounts of origins of the universe and others at the other end of the spectrum that became a little too narrative with little focus on the wording of the question. The best responses drew their material back to the question, or set up their approach clearly with reference to it and then proceeded to address key themes through a variety of models of relationship between religion and science, which answered the task well. Good mention was made in some responses to methodology of the two disciplines, and the usage of language within the two systems. Other more 'straightforward' approaches also did extremely well in many cases. Good material was used and scholarship referred to in a majority of cases, the weaker responses lacked supporting or illustrative material of a suitably academic nature. Overall there was good material on science but sometimes weaker on the distinctive discipline of religion, although quite a few dealt with religious issues and some were very aware of the academic discipline of religious studies.

Quite a number of studies discussed the relationship between religion and science within the context of creationism and evolution. It was good to see how up to date most studies were and good material was offered on the more contemporary debates including reference to a broad range of influential scholars. There was good analysis of terms and drawing out their significance. Effective use was made of material which candidates had studied in 6RS01 such as the design argument and process theology, although a few weaker responses relied on 'Design Argument' type approaches without demonstrating any further knowledge of the religion and science debate. It must be stressed that the demands of the Investigations Paper are different to the Foundations Paper and this Area of Study is not exclusively about the existence of God. It is also worth noting that whilst any point of view can be argued for it is important to be able to substantiate an individual view with balanced knowledge of both sides of the debate.

The candidate in the following essay presented a range of material and was able to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the religion and science debate; this material was clearly brought together in the conclusion where the argument is discernible through a valid answer to the question.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate selected from a range of material and clearly had an argument in mind. The question was answered and the reader was left to consider the candidate's thoughtful conclusion.

'All men by nature desire to know'. This is why science and

religion are such popular topics as they are used so that humans can provide themselves with an explanation and a purpose. 'Why are we on this earth? What purpose am I supposed to fulfil?' These are questions that both religious and non-religious people ask themselves all the time.

~~Some~~ Some use religion as a means of finding explanatory value whereas others use science.

There are also those that find a way of combining the two and managing to find satisfactory value for themselves that offers them with ultimate explanation.

'Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind.'
I tell me that the two can be of an advantage to each other and I believe this to be true. I believe that both science and religion offer very valuable viewpoints and should be used as a means of describing and helping

each other. It's, as Jocelyn Bell says, we are looking for understanding not truth and it by using science and religion ~~that~~ together helps us to do this then it should be done.



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Examiner Tip

Know your argument and then you will have no trouble establishing your view.

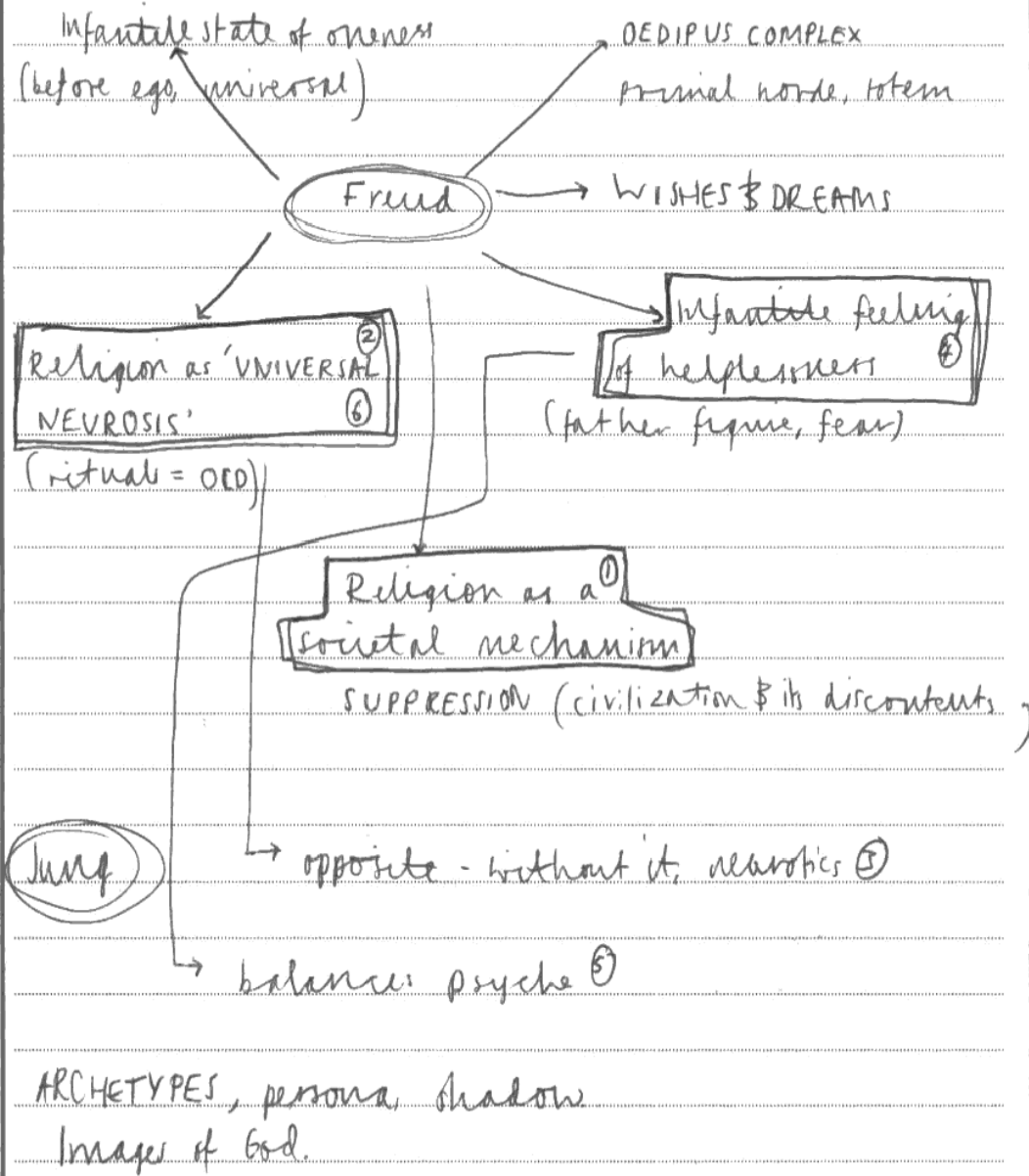
Question 2

Q2 ANTHROPOLOGY/SOCIOLOGY/PSYCHOLOGY of RELIGION

This question was largely very well done. One of the most popular choices was an investigation into Freud and his importance for an understanding of religion. There was much evidence of skilful interaction with the question that resulted in stimulating discussion. In AO1 most candidates presented the core, basic details about Freud's ideas with a proficient use of terms. Candidates who performed at the lower levels were content with a straightforward exposition of Freud's key ideas. Those candidates who were credited at the higher levels selected and adapted their work to the demands of the question. With regard to this question, these sound responses focused on those Freudian ideas pertinent to an understanding of religion. It is not essential, but some candidates knew the distinctive ideas in some of Freud's primary texts and were able to draw on specific textual data. If candidates know this type of material it is to their credit to draw on this expertise. AO2 tended to be well answered with a consideration of a range of debate and controversy ending in a conclusion that decisively argued for or against the question. There was also some examples of Freud and Jung in the same answer and these essays worked well when presented as a comparison of their views in relation to the view that religion plays a positive role in the lives of people.

Other approaches included a comparison and analysis of sociologists of religion and an assessment of the validity of those views in the light of the quotation and some focused on Dawkins' critique of religion and evaluated that viewpoint well. The same points made about Freud apply in terms of the crucial importance of managing the content so as to focus on the question. There was evidence of informative essays on cults which might have been more analytical. Some candidates attempted to cover a breadth of several academic disciplines such as psychology, sociology and anthropology within an essay. There is nothing to prohibit this but there is no requirement that such breadth of material is essential and in the time available it is a daunting task to attempt such breadth.

The following essay shows how much can be achieved in eight pages! The candidate has a strong command of relevant technical vocabulary and sound knowledge of two scholars that are contrasted to answer the question effectively. No words or phrases are redundant and every comment adds something of significance.



Opinions have greatly differed with the field of ~~philosophy~~ psychology as to the role of religion in believers lives. Freud, as the 'father of psychoanalysis' sees religion as a dangerous illusion, suppression of trauma resulting in a 'universal neurosis', that is, religion.

To examine the view that religion plays a positive role in people's lives, I am going focus on some key elements of Freud's extensive research into the cause and effects of religion.

In his book, 'Civilization and its Discontents', Freud discusses the way in religion is beneficial to society, and how far this defines the nature of religion. Freud sees religion in one sense as a way of suppressing any natural desires that would be detrimental to a functioning society, the aggressive and sexual drives found based in the ID in particular. Religion, to do this, provides a motivation for sublimation of unwanted desires (channelling energy into culture, art or charity instead) as it provides a conveniently omnipotent

authority in the form of God. The fear of punishment and desire for reward in the afterlife are presented by religions to be infinitely more powerful than earthly pleasures or punishments, and hence is religion a prime motivator for the types of behaviour necessary for a functioning society.

The negative aspect of this approach, comes for Freud, from the suppression of these natural desires. Freud argues that religion encourages not only abstinence but suffering with the idea that absence, pain and mental difficulties are passed if they seem to stem from overcoming 'evil' tendencies. This complete ~~and~~ repression of any trauma or negative desires, Freud believed, could lead later to that repressed trauma surfacing, causing great psychological disturbances.

The possible psychological disturbances resulting from suppressed trauma can be seen, Freud believed, in sufferers of neurosis. He ~~from~~ drew comparisons between religious believers and neurosis sufferers, leading to his conclusion that religious

is no more than a 'universal neurosis'. Freud, in his work with neurotics and sufferers of hysteria, noted that obsessive compulsive actions performed by neurosis sufferers are similar to the religious ceremonies and rituals undertaken by religious believers. Firstly, both OC actions and religious ritual have important meaning and purpose to those involved but to the uninitiated seem pointless and often strange; secondly, that both parties feel a deep sense of guilt on neglect on their actions/rituals, rooted in an irrational fear that something bad will happen if they decline to perform their ceremonies. In his book, 'The Future of an Illusion', Freud argues that due to ~~religious~~ society and societal expectations, it is a human tendency to suppress shameful or 'bad', ^{often sexual,} memories, thoughts or events. He said that as our life goes on, renewed temptations will appear, irritating, as it were, our repressed guilty, shameful memories. These modern temptations, ~~has been~~ were responsible for rejuvinating an ~~new~~ unrooted sense of guilt, and it ~~is~~ from a subconscious ~~desire~~ desire to appease

this sense of guilt and prevent our darker, shameful personality aspects from surfacing. Therefore religion becomes in Freud's eyes, a universal 'safety-net' on which we fall back on to distract repressed traumas.

Jung, a once friend and contemporary of Freud's has a directly opposing view. Jung argues that religion is a positive phenomenon, and that in fact, without it, the balance of the psyche is lost and then neuroticism will develop. Jung, like Freud, worked with many sufferers of mental disorders, but it was his work with schizophrenic patients that led him to reject Freud's conclusion that religion, as a form of neurosis, was rooted in sexual trauma. He noted that the schizophrenic condition appeared to have no aspects of sex or sexual desire, and so came to conclude that ~~neuroticism was~~ ~~not~~ the libido, the part of the psyche that controls satisfaction and desires, and has a large role in the nature of neurosis, is much more complex than simply dealing with straightforward ~~repression~~ of sexual ~~trauma~~ desire. To quote 'the

complete lack of self-awareness from which schizophrenics suffer must have a cause more complex ~~than~~ than simply repressed sexual trauma. Jung, rejecting this theory, established that religion is not a negative phenomenon, not the 'illness' of Freud's work.

Freud does however, take an almost sympathetic stance on religion in his discussion of God and belief being a reaction to 'an infantile sense of helplessness.' Freud, to make this particular strand of his argument noted that as a child, one faces many fears, problems and confusion. However, being only a child and not usually exposed to the harsh reality of the world, a child will turn to a parent, typically the father, to have his problems solved and fears placated. The father is typically the figure chosen because as a father is usually ~~or~~ (or was in Freud's time) seen to be more disciplinarian, he seems more powerful and so his comfort, in its turn is more powerful. // When a child grows up, and becomes equal to his parents he finds

that they are not as powerful as they once seemed, and can no longer deal with the much more problems within his adult life. This, like religion itself, is a universal trait, and the outcome is the same, a father figure God is created, much more powerful than humans to match with the growing fears of the world, death in particular. Like a father, God is to be feared and venerated, but is also all powerful, all-loving, and provides comfort. Freud does not make clear why this reason for religion contributes to his view that religion is a 'dangerous illusion', but perhaps he felt it was shying away from confronting one's own fears and 'demons'.

Jung, again, with his more humanist and sympathetic view on religion would disagree with the negativity of religion as a protection against fear and helplessness. He saw religion (and saw atheism too, as a type of religion) as an essential means of harmonising all elements of the psyche, and providing a crucial balance between the unconscious mind and the conscious.



Reference to the question is not 'forced' or superficially tacked on to the narrative. The argument clearly moves through the A01 material towards a thoughtful conclusion.

Ultimately, Freud would reject the view that religion plays a positive role in people's lives. I am inclined to support his views on this issue, as his argument on the similarities between religion and neurosis is very striking, and the main defence both a religious believer and a sufferer of neurosis would make - that their had an unseen purpose and that their beliefs and rituals are acceptable because they are true - seems weak, as there is no evidence within that response of a positive effect. In fact, to answer the question, it could even be noted that most of the benefits ascribed by believers to their cause do not occur or have any effect until after this life.

The view that religion provides comfort from fear and pain is indeed a powerful one, and difficult to humanely ignore, but, if by suppressing those fears ~~and~~ instead of facing up to them, they are becoming neurotic, then religion seems negative. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that it could be a very positive move indeed, to eschew religion, and

face up to feelings of fear, guilt and helplessness
in order to grow as a stronger person.



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Examiner Tip

Answer the question! Do not make hard work of your reference to the question by 'add-on' phrases. It is always obvious that you are answering the question in the way it fits in to your narrative.

Question 3

Q3 CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

This Area of Study attracted a wide range of material some brilliantly written and researched. Some candidates presented a very wide range of material covering various art forms across different historical periods. Outstanding work was presented within the field of literature with some excellent work using C.S. Lewis, Gerard Manley Hopkins and Dostoevsky as an exemplar for creative expression in religious life. There were examples of the highest quality work from this more specific approach as well the broader perspective. This topic attracted much research conducted in the best spirit of the Investigations Paper and candidates produced highly independent studies. Many studies conveyed a strong grasp of the relationship between religious ideas and creative expression. There is also a growing interest in liturgical music and a selection of artists renowned for their works on religious themes such as Caravaggio and Leonardo da Vinci. The individual interest in this area of study is evident in some examples of very high quality work that demonstrates a high level of command of the religious themes studied.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate knows the theological problems of creative expression and how these could limit the work of an artist.

Chosen question number: **Question 1** **Question 2** **Question 3**

Creative expressions play a key role for believers in helping them with their religion. Creative expressions could be defined as the use of art, literature, music & film to help convey theological ideas that are typically difficult to comprehend through conventional means of explanation.

~~The~~ ~~studied~~ Creative expressions as a means to reflect upon religion have been around for a long time and it is easy to notice religious art in almost every culture since ancient times ranging from prehistoric to ancient aboriginee, Ancient Greece to classical Rome.

However, Creative freedom has not always been absolute. In particular the ~~the~~ God of the Judeo-Christian religion has until recently always had limitations and restrictions in place. Early Christians always had severe doubts as to the nature of artwork displaying their deity; they had a particular concern that it would end up being worshipped and that they would ignore God's constant commands in Biblical texts to worship nothing but him. In part-

icular the Commandments God gave to Moses in the book of Exodus in the Old Testament.

"Do not worship false idols."

Another interesting problem that early Christian philosophers & theologians encountered was that of Can you truly & accurately paint/sculpt images of God; as he is perfect & naturally any image we make of him would be imperfect.

However over time Christians progressed from these early Judaism roots and started to be more liberal and experimental with the portrayal of their God.

Initially only certain elements of God's Body was allowed to be displayed mainly his hands, but this too gradually relaxed until around the Renaissance era when particularly the Vatican decided to employ artists to paint. One such example is ~~is~~ Michelangelo's "Creation of man" which adorns theistine chapel - one of the Cornerstones of Christian culture.

A trouble Christian artists have constantly faced through out the development of Religious Art is the limited references of God's image they have to work with.



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Examiner Tip

Keep in mind that your topic is engaging with religious ideas that are linked in some way to theology. Researching and expressing these ideas carefully will add substance to your study.

Summary

6RS02 reports features work produced by the candidates in the actual examination for candidates in Area 1A, 1B and 1C where possible. Areas 1D, 1E, 1F and 1G have smaller entries and the style of report is briefer for these areas of study.

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