

Examiners' Report January 2012

GCE Religious Studies 6RS02 1A

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Introduction

This unit provides for a balance of teacher-directed and more independent student enquiry. This 'Investigations' unit offers the opportunity to undertake individual research into a topic of particular interest to the candidates. This is the reason why each question includes the expression, "with reference to the topic you have investigated". The ability to select and manage individual research material to fit into the demands of the question is an important discriminator in terms of assessment.

It is for this reason that the mark scheme for this unit is a generic one. There are no indicative mark schemes per question given the fact that there are so many legitimate ways of answering questions based on independent research.

The two assessment objectives should permeate this whole process. Candidates should determine whether there is sufficient material to access a variety of appropriate sources (AO1) and to evaluate alternative views (AO2). Candidates may monitor their progress with reference to the criteria in the level descriptors across both AO1 and AO2. The assessment criteria are always mentioned in each question. Typically this is achieved with the trigger words, 'examine' for AO1 and 'comment on' for AO2. The assessment of the candidates work is based on the application of these objectives.

Some candidates performed well on this unit. It was clear that some candidates had selected topics of genuine interest to them. There was evidence of substantial background reading which was used effectively in answers. Candidates presented well-structured responses based on the question and were able to use their knowledge to address the focus of the question. A feature of high quality answers was the ability to relate to the question throughout the answer. Candidates performed well across both assessment objectives with detailed content and cogent argument.

Some candidates did not select their material in accordance with the specific question. Some candidates could have adapted their same material so as to use it more effectively to address the question. In some cases the question was only briefly mentioned and in others there was limited reference to the question in the final few sentences. Some responses at the lower levels drew on sources that were below the standard required at GCE level. These tended to be descriptive and more narrative rather than analytical. Some responses at the lower levels were short and lacked elaboration and the substantiation necessary at this level.

Some centres chose to concentrate on the same topic for a number of candidates. This was useful when backed up with relevant sources, whereby candidates could develop their own slant and specialism on their selected topics. Occasionally, some responses became formulaic without targeted attention to the demands of the specific question. A key aim of this unit is to involve candidates as active participants in order to provide possibilities for open-ended enquiry and independent learning.

It is essential that candidates are entered for the area of investigation which is the best fit for the question on the paper. Candidates were not penalised if a cross was placed in a box that did not match the response.

Question 1

Some candidates were well-informed on a considerable range and detail about the relationship between religion and science. Extensive use was made of a number of influential scholars based around prominent themes in this area of investigation. A feature of the high standard scripts was their clear, coherent structure based around contrasting stances on the relationship between religion and science. In a few cases, some candidates presented responses that were not appropriately balanced, with the response heavily weighted towards science and only brief reference to religion.

This is an extract taken from the middle of a response. The candidate had examined historical debates about the relationship between religion and science up to the time of Darwin and after this passage, continues with more recent controversies.

The most famous opponent ~~then~~ of religion in the last two hundred years is Darwin who proposed the 'Theory of Evolution' and 'Natural Selection'. In this he showed ~~that~~ through observations of the natural world that man had evolved from a lower form of Ape. This was a huge blow to religion, one which it may never recover from, this stated that man was no more in 'God's image'. For some, the lack of answers that religion offered them meant that religion now lacked 'purpose' and led to an increase in secularisation, especially in Britain*. Science and Religion's relationship had taken a turn for the worse. ~~and so on~~

On the other hand, the still reasonably popular view of creationism was strong and Henry Morris set out to prove using geological events in the Bible ~~that~~ were ~~that~~ 'Literally true' as they

are ~~the~~ the 'Word of God'. He stated that 'Scientists make mistakes, God does not'. The ~~etc~~ evidence he showed was partially unchallengeable as he used Scientific methodology. Man is an example of using science to prove religion and the relationship wronging, ^{ironically} ~~effect~~ to prove ~~Science~~ Science wrong.

On the other hand, Charles Lyell, a geologist working around the same time as Darwin used ~~Rock~~ rock strata to highlight that the world was not created all at once (~~catastrophism~~) 6000 years ago as Bishop James Ussher had suggested but in fact formed gradually ~~over~~ over millions of years, uniformitarianism. This backed up Darwin's research and therefore was a significant breakthrough with irrefutable evidence.

Despite such significant evidence from Darwin and Lyell people still refused to ~~listen~~ listen or appreciate new evidence. The scope trials are an example of this since a teacher

was put on trial for teaching
Growth in Schools. RM Hare would
call this a Blik ~~add~~ since there are
those who will blindly believe contrary to
inevitable evidence, such as the flat
Earth Society. Although this seems like
religion ~~try~~ trying to suppress scientific
advances, ~~then~~ even just last year
Stephen Law suggested with particular
force that Creationism should not be
taught in ~~schools~~ schools as it is
"pernicious lies". A modern form of the
debate ~~between religion~~ on the
relationship between ~~religion~~ religion and
science.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate considers the role of Darwin in this debate. The exposition of Darwin is limited but the candidate selects some key issues for further analysis and discussion.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

The candidate refers to various scholarly points of view in such a way as to build up the evidence regarding major issues in this topic.

There is no clear guidance about the use of underlining at this level of work. However, once candidates study at university, they will be made aware of other ways of highlighting key scholars and ideas. For example, sentence construction can be used to draw attention to significant points, as well as using intelligent paragraphing techniques.

This is the first part of a response. This examines some controversies concerning the relationship between science and religion. The response continues (after this extract) by examining additional debates.

I have been investigating the apparent conflict of ideas between science and religion on the subject of cosmology. More specifically I have been focusing on the big bang cosmology and the cosmology of Genesis 1. As science has grown as a discipline many of its theories and findings have come into what some ~~it~~ would say is direct opposition ^{with} ^{religion}.

This has led many to dismiss the teachings of one discipline in favour of the other. This however may not be necessary as it may be possible to reconcile the differences in beliefs.

One attempt to do so comes in the form evolutionary creationism. This is the theory that God created the universe through the setting up of scientific laws such as those of evolution. Theories such as this one that aim to reconcile beliefs have been emerging in popularity. They are however only appealing to the liberal scientist or believer.

Christians of a more fundamental persuasion

such as David Rosevear a strong believer in creationism will maintain that science does not do a great job of explaining why things are as they are but only how. In relation to creation the scientific evidence for the big bang theory is almost universally accepted by scientists. There exists three main pieces of evidence

The expanding of the universe as is observed by the red shift that occurs in the light of moving galaxies agrees with the big bang theory. So does the existence of cosmic microwave background radiation from the initial big bang explosion. Finally scientific models which predict the make up and distribution of atoms in the universe based on the big bang agree with the evidence observed in real life. David Rosevear would however hold that some of this evidence is disputable. Moreover, the simple fact remains that the big bang itself remains unexplained, as David puts it, something cannot come from nothing and no type of science can show otherwise. It is for this precise reason that many arguments for God's existence such as the 'design' and 'first cause' arguments still hold much weight. It is also for this reason

that many scientists such as Jocely Bell-Brunel have chosen to redefine their understanding of God to make it compatible with science. Jocelyn claims that the conflict between literal ~~the~~ interpretations of Genesis combined with other problems such as the existence of evil mean that it would be more suitable to define God as a sustainer rather than a creator. This is a view ~~also~~ not too dissimilar to that held by Albert Einstein.

Most scientists agree that Einstein's references to God, such as 'God does not play dice' were a way of referring to the apparent regularities and laws of the universe that keep it self sustaining. This is a view called pantheism although where as Einstein likely held that God as an entity did not exist Jocelyn Bell-Burnell would hold otherwise. Is it necessary though that God exist as either a creator or a sustainer?



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

The candidate relates their own investigation to the demands of the question. The candidate selects key themes such as evolutionary creationism and considers the different contributions scholars have made to these debates.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

The candidate integrates the views of scholars to build up the discussion. The paragraph structure is reasonable on the first page but later becomes unclear. The construction and presentation of coherent paragraphs is very important at this level of work because it indicates the demarcation of content and stages within arguments.

Question 2

The most popular figure selected was Freud. The better quality answers adapted Freudian views and terms around the thrust of the question regarding his contributions to the study of religion. This paper is not designed as a psychology examination, rather its focus is the psychology of religion or anthropology and sociology of religion depending on the selected scholar(s). Most students were readily familiar with Freudian terms and key ideas. It was noticeable that the better quality answers referred to relevant primary sources. Answers at the higher levels in AO2 incorporated critical debates alongside alternative approaches. Lower level answers presented basic information about Freud with little if any structured reference to the question.

This is an extract taken part way through a response on Freud.

he has attempted to show that humanity really isn't as rational as we like to think we are, an example of his distinct contribution.

* cosmological revolution (the knowledge of the earths orbit around the sun) and the

Freud mainly tries to show that religion is a production of the mind - he says that religion is a 'universal neurotic illness' that stems from repression in the unconscious mind. (**)

To understand repression, Freud splits the psyche into three sections to explain how our lives are dictated.

Firstly we have the 'id' - this literally translates into 'it' in Latin and can be explained when we hear things such as 'it just came over me..'

The id is the part of the mind that controls our basic urges such as breathing and hunger and also those very striking urges: Our homicidal, incestuous and cannibalistic urges. To stop ourselves from being wild slaves to our urges, the mind has to create a counter balance so that we can live together in a moral society; this is called the super-ego, much like a conscience, it represses natural urges.

The third part of the psyche is the ego, this is

the most conscious part of our mind, it is the result of the super-ego and the id's conflict. It is the balance we achieve and the actions we take.

Freud's explanation of the origins of religion uses anthropological roots and these three parts of the psyche. ~~for explain~~ In this book 'Totem and Taboo', Freud describes primal society. He uses ideas of Darwin to convey a world where ancient humans go around in packs or called hordes, these primal hordes are controlled by one male father called the primal-father. He keeps the tribe safe and is revered by all the other males, and loved for he is family, however he also has exclusive access to all the women of the tribe and this causes jealousy in the other males. These males have ambivalent feelings towards the father-figure, ^{driving generally by the Oedipus complex} which lead to the murder of the father-figure. This is where the super-ego steps in and provides guilt over the display of the id, but because both of these parts are unconscious, the males next actions are not given reason to their conscious state. They proceed to worship the father figure as a totem in a religion based on 'animism'. Freud says that this is the first example of religion, a religion that gives spirits to objects, animals and other things such as elements, and worships them. Furthermore Freud says that the tribe would ritually kill and eat that which represents the father figure. (**)

So in evaluation of this theory ^{we can see over} it stems from our three main drives; ~~the~~ ^{we} They kill the father figure, this is homicide, they then share the spoils e.g. the women of the tribe (who are relations) - this is the incestuous aspect of human nature. We then eat the body of the father figure in recreation of the event. This is our cannibalistic nature. Now if we look at what Freud is saying about our basic nature, what is he saying about the meaning of life if the truth of our nature is these urges? Where does this place religion if it goes against every moral it holds? ~~Freud~~ Freud does indeed counter this argument in the development of the super-ego, which I will mention when talking about his third book 'Natural world and its discontents'.

Freud says that the reason we repress our desires is because deeply ingrained we have a sense that breaking taboo will bring disaster, he also marks out that the guilt created by the murder of the father figure, the primal crime, is passed on genetically in what he calls the mechanism of inheritance.

In Totem and Taboo he offers case studies of people that suffer from obsessive neurotic illnesses and from these he draws links to religion and to the origin of religion. ~~The~~ ^{The} case of

a man nicknamed the 'ratman' (for Freud believed his OCD came from a repressed traumatic, and obviously sexual, piece of information - he heard of one horrific method involving live rats and a man's anus) & shows neurotic behaviour such as ~~moving~~

stories to the reluctance to swear at someone because of the belief that the person would soon after die and he would be responsible.

The behaviour of the ratman is also linked with the ideas of Freud's book "The Future of an Illusion". The main ~~thought~~ theory in this is the thought that actions can change the physical, external world, whilst obviously not true, it is a symptom that Freud believes is shared by both OCD patients and religious people. For example, take the idea of prayer, repeated action in the belief that it will change (that God will change) the physical world. Now compared to the actions of the ratman, who felt compelled to remove stones from the road because the woman he loved went over them in a carriage and died. Both are repeated actions based upon that involve wishfulfilment.

~~The text~~ Freud concludes that the tribe needs to have that father figure to keep them safe, which is why they deify him, and that this links to our religious father figure - God. He also compares the Christian worship of Holy Communion to the eating of the father-figure in ritualistic worship.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate displays good practice by providing a brief outline of key ideas in some of Freud's key primary sources in this topic of the study of religion.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

The candidate is well informed about Freudian terms and ideas and uses these to provide an explicit response to the question.

Sociology is the scientific study of society and groups/individuals in society, and I have focussed on the role of New Religious Movements in society. Sociology has provided us with a strong contribution to the understanding of religion, and there have ^{one} been many sociological views on the role and effects of religion in our lives. However sociology ~~doesn't~~ ~~the understanding of God is not even~~ does not contribute to the understanding of God to such a strong extent, but I believe that nothing can really explain God as he is transcendent and no one will ever know ^{everything} ~~anything~~ about him.

It is widely accepted in our society that there are four types of religious groups. ERNST TROELTSCH was the first to distinguish between sects and the church, but this later developed into there being four religious groups: the church, a denomination, sects and cults. Sects and cults are very similar in that they are not respected by society and some are exclusive, however we focused mainly on cults.

Many sociologists have provided theories which help and a strong understanding of religion. EMILE DURKHEIM believed that social life is impossible without the shared moral beliefs of the collective conscience, and religion reinforces this collective conscience. This therefore shows how ~~religion~~ sociology explains what religion does - it provides morals which are essential to social life. Additionally, people come together in religious rituals in collective worship, which unites the group. This shows the contribution of religion to society.

BRONISLAW MALINOWSKI believed that anxiety and tension disrupts social life, and ~~events~~ to life crises and events which we can't predict cause this anxiety and tension. However these crises are surrounded by religious ritual which provides comfort and helps the believer get through it. An example of this is death and the belief ~~of~~ in immortality that surrounds it. This sociological view on what religion does helps us gain an understanding of God as we understand how he benefits people's lives, in this case he provides the afterlife. However it doesn't explain the character of God, just what he can provide, which limits our understanding of God himself.

Another key sociologist, KARL MARX, states that 'religion distorts reality'. He believed that ~~we~~ by religious people believe that supernatural beings are in

charge and that nothing we can do about it. This therefore contributes to our understanding of God as we learn that he controls lives. This means that religion keeps people in their place and stops them wanting change e.g. the oppressed. MARX also believed that 'religion is the opium of the people'. This provides us with ^{first an} understanding of the negative effects of religion. However, religion is a drug in that it dulls the pain for the oppressed and provides compensation in the form of the afterlife. This sociological view ~~helps~~ ~~us~~ ~~indeed~~ our understanding of religion as we can clearly see the effects that religion has on society. However, ~~it doesn't~~ all these sociological views don't actually tell us what religion is, just the role it plays in people's lives. However, EDWARD TAYLOR

stated that 'religion is a belief in spiritual beings'. This is a functional definition and as well as contributing to our understanding of religion it also helps us gain an understanding of God: how important God is in religion.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

The candidate clarifies their area of investigation and general perspective on the issue.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

At each stage of this extract, the candidate shows their understanding of the work of important sociologists and scholars. The candidate is well informed and builds up a good structured answer.

Question 3

There were a number of interesting responses to this question. Some candidates used a range of creative expressions such as art, film and music. This can result in good quality responses if candidates make effective use of detail when considering this range of material. Responses that are high in quality may also be achieved by a focus on a specific creative expression such as a study of a specific painting or an analysis of a piece of music. Candidates who produced good responses structured their material around the demands of the question concerning the view that the nature of the holy and/ or religion is merely glimpsed through creative expressions.

This extract is taken from the beginning of a response on creative expressions in religious life. After this extract, the candidate continues by examining additional examples of creative expressions such as film.

Whether creative ~~is in fact~~ expression is in fact the most appropriate way of giving insight into the nature of the holy and religion is a question often discussed by many. Creative expression can come in many forms such as film, music, art and literature. All of these fields within creative expression allow for the artists to express their interpretations and translations of teachings in the way they find most appropriate. Although some consider the fact that interpretations may be somewhat biased.

One way in particular that religious life is often creatively expressed is through that of art. Art can come in the forms of drawings, paintings and also sculptures among other things. Some may argue that art can sometimes lead creative expressions of religion to be very much focused on the opinions of the artist only. Using art as a way of expressing religious life and the nature of God was not always ~~as~~ as revealing and blunt as it is today. In the early years of religious art it was common when depicting God in particular through only an image of God's hand, often emerging from clouds. As religious art developed towards the time of the renaissance, depictions of God in art became more

appearing and began to represent images of God's head, face and entire figure. Many traditional Christians found this to be blasphemous and immoral. This was as the Christian teachings in the Bible contrasted these modern depictions of God, as it says in Exodus "Thou canst see my face. For shall no man see me and live". These words of God stood strong amongst traditional Christian believers and led them to question whether the nature of the holy can be truly presented through creature expression.

One painting in particular which aims to creaturely express the nature of the holy through art was that of Pieter De Grebber's 'God inviting Christ to sit on the throne at his right hand'. This piece in particular shows the image of Christ, after ~~the~~ crucifixion, being invited by God to come and sit on the throne at his right hand. This piece of art also shows a message of the trinity, through the representation of God the father, Jesus the son and an image above of a dove which many religious artists of the renaissance period used to represent the holy spirit. De Grebber also shows God wearing a white and gold robe which is considered to depict the high favour that God holds. He also shows God with a long white beard. Many find this to be the representation of God's age, wisdom and knowledge. This message portrayed is honourable to the ~~the~~ belief that God is an omniscient, all knowing being. In this painting God is also shown with his left hand

placed upon a spherical object which is said to be that of an orb. During this time period it was very common for artists to use the image of an orb as a representation of the world. Many find this to correctly express that of religion and in particular Christianity as it ~~is~~ reads in Psalms ~~in the depths~~ "In his hands are the depths of the Earth." using this piece in particular as a creative expression many found this a more appropriate representation of the nature of the holy as it stood true to the word.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate focuses on the question and then considers in some detail the place of art within this topic.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

This candidate considers a range of types of creative expressions. If this method is adopted it is good practice to select and focus on specific exemplars within in any one type of creative expression, in this case art, and in particular, de Grebber.

Paper Summary

Advice for candidates:

- Manage the material from the investigations to focus on the demands of the question
- Use appropriate sources
- Show an understanding of the topic
- Present a thoughtful analysis of the material
- Make effective use of evidence and argument
- Comment on alternative views
- Show a clearly expressed viewpoint.

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