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Examiners' Report

June 2010

GCE AS Level Religious Studies
6RS02 1A

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Introduction

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Investigations Paper of June 2010 demonstrated an encouraging level of engagement with a wide range of topics by candidates who demonstrated a superb level of scholarship across all areas of study. The enthusiasm for and knowledge of the chosen topic was clearly conveyed in many answers that were truly academic in their approach. Some Centres chose to focus on the same or similar topics for all their candidates, whereas other Centres permitted considerable choice for individual candidates. 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 note that the overall title of this unit 'Investigations' has a definite academic purpose. The aim is to involve students 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 answers were considered.

Most centres had entered their candidates for the correct option but 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. 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.

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 answer. 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 answers. 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 answer which was not adapted to the question set.

Comments on Individual Questions

This report will provide exemplification of candidates' work, together with tips and/or comments, for a selection of questions. The exemplification will come mainly from questions which required more complex responses from candidates.

This report features work produced by candidates in the actual examination for 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.

Question 1

AREA 1A The Study of Religion

Q1 RELIGION AND SCIENCE

Many candidates presented well structured answers on the various relationships between science and religion with a clear understanding of the possible range of models from conflict to consonance. A significant number of candidates presented excellent answers with breadth as well as layers of depth with balanced analysis and well supported judgement. This introduction from an essay indicated from the outset a firm grasp of the subject matter: 'To this question you will find many extremely varying viewpoints depending on whom you ask as the 21st Century relationship between science and religion is much more complicated than just between believers and non-believers. This was the case in Galileo's time when Christianity was dominant and the Church opposed Galileo's idea of heliocentricism because it challenged the biblically based geocentric idea (its scriptural basis lying in Psalms: the earth shall not be moved).' 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 'Creation versus Evolution' and these included contextual material and the better essays deployed narrative and biographical material in a structured argument drawing out a number of implications. It was good to see how up to date most studies were and good material was offered on 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 some candidates had studied in 6RS01 such as design and cosmological arguments and process theology, although a few weaker answers 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. Some answers echoed of fundamentalism and tended to select their evidence to favour people like Behe and avoided counter arguments like the scaffolding theory, thereby giving a slanted analysis favouring Intelligent Design. 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.

Candidates can achieve a lot in a short essay if they use words precisely. Many of the highest level answers on Religion and Science were very precise.

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Examiner Comments

This essay has a clear introduction which sets out precisely what the candidate is hoping to do in response to the question.

The scientific revolution is only a recent phenomenon. Prior to this existed a pre-scientific culture. Since it has become more prominent the relationship between Religion and science has erupted into a fierce debate, with three different models used to portray it from different perspectives. The confrontational model states that religion and science cannot exist together. Only one of them is true. Convergence thinkers argue that the two can exist together and that many of the ideas they propose overlap and complement each other. Whilst the distinct beliefs states that they are two different spheres of knowledge and should be kept separate. Intelligent Design falls into the confrontational model as the ideas it propose advocate conflict between religion and science. The theory suggests that certain features of the universe and us as humans are best explained by a form of intelligence, rather than an undirected process such as Natural selection. In this essay I will bear Intelligent Design as an example of conflict.

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Examiner Tip

Candidates can benefit from precision when writing because they will say more with less words!

Question 2

Q2 ANTHROPOLOGY/SOCIOLOGY/PSYCHOLOGY of RELIGION

Some candidates paid little attention to the quotation. In many cases, the content of their work was eminently applicable to the quotation and this could have been more effectively used. One of the most popular choices was an investigation into Freud and his importance for an understanding of religion. The answers that were in the lower levels tended to be basic introductions to Freud with a superficial summary of his key terms. The better quality answers selected and adapted their material to manage it in a purposeful manner so as to answer the question. These included reference to scholarly debates about Freud and his contributions.

Material on the sociology of religion displayed a sound understanding of this discipline with careful analysis of the likes of Durkheim and Marx coupled with debates on Liberation theology. The same points made about Freud apply in terms of the crucial importance of managing the content so as to focus on the question. One essay on Freud concluded thus: 'Freud's ideas that God is an answer to inner necessities or wish fulfilment, in my opinion, shows that God does have some purpose in the world and in fact strengthens the idea that religious ideas hold truth. If it is something we all desire, surely then we should follow God. There is nothing wrong with having our natural desires for love and protection answered' and went on to make a final comment on the question that was already substantiated within the body of the essay.

Essays on cults were informative albeit at times narrative and descriptive rather than analytical. There were a few competent answers that focused on anthropology of religion including interesting material from scholars such as Eliade. A minority of candidates think that this topic area requires a study 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. In fact in the time available it may prove daunting.

This was an example of a weak essay where the problem was not so much lack of precision as lack of material.

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Examiner Comments

A plan and 3 pages of essay material may not be enough to achieve the higher levels in terms of breadth and/or depth. You will see that the conclusion to this essay was brief and was only supported by less than three pages of A01 material.

finally, this idea may work for those worshipping male gods, but comes into question when faced with groups such as the Egyptian cult of Isis, which worshipped a female deity

Many Philosophers have argued to need for religion, calling it a "necessary bridge between mind and reality". If God was proved unnecessary however, religions such as Buddhism,

which doesn't worship any deities, would still survive

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Examiner Tip

Practice writing essays before the exam in order to work out how much can be achieved in the time allowed.

Question 3

Q3 CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

This Area of Study attracted a wide range of material mostly brilliantly written and researched. Some candidates presented a very wide range of material covering various art forms across different historical periods. In a number of cases this approach was handed in a superb manner which included a coherent structure on a thematic basis. Some of these answers were of the highest quality. Others focused on specific topics such as CS Lewis, Paradise Lost, Dostoevsky, Gerard Manley Hopkins or particular examples in fine art and Liturgy. There were examples of the highest quality work from this more specific approach as well as the broader perspective. Most candidates approached their research in the best spirit of the Investigations Paper and produced highly independent studies and, in some cases, original work. The following introduction exemplifies an approach which has immediacy in terms of religious ideas and the topic studied:

“‘Virtue is not cloistered innocence untroubled by passions, in Milton’s view, but rather the difficult experience of rationality, or perpetual rational choices between seductively deceptive alternatives.’ writes Alastair Fowler in his introduction to Paradise Lost. Thus, central to Milton’s theodicy is the idea that ultimately, human free will is responsible for mankind’s destiny and for the Fall. With this comes the need to justify God’s ways, which Milton states is his intention right from the start:

That to the height of this great argument

I may assert the eternal providence

And justify the ways of God to man. (Book 1)

The problem with Milton’s creative expression in Paradise Lost is twofold: in attempting to construct his theodicy Milton highlights some characteristics of God’s that many readers find unsettling, and furthermore there comes the difficulty of accepting God’s divine foreknowledge, when we are told the Fall occurred due to mankind’s misuse of free will. It is there that these two elements of Milton’s creative expression of religion have been highly topical, and especially the theme of God’s nature, which has been viewed as rather unorthodox. “

This extract shows a command of the topic area with an early reference to central themes of religious significance within the literature itself plus evidence of appropriate scholarship.

This is a good example of a response where the candidate has sound knowledge of religious concepts and applies these to a study of modern material from the Arts and Media.

The topic of religion and religious life is difficult to grasp because of the vast amount of information and myths there are surrounding it. A person's own depth of understanding regarding religious life or a particular religion depends on the individual's own dedication to that concept. However, a general understanding of religion is required in us all and through creative expression, such as art, film & literature, we can all gain an insight to religion & religious life in a way that proves entertaining yet still valuable.

Creative expressions are a significant source when trying to understand the nature of God, however such understandings must be looked upon with some cynicism as it is impossible for a piece of work, devised to draw in the attention of the masses using plot devices, humour etc. to be a fully accurate portrayal of religion & religious life. With regards to God's physical appearance for example, we see examples of creative expression which ignore the laws of the old testament forbidding the human representation of God and further represent him in a way to appear humorous to its audiences yet contradictory to true religious beliefs. For example in *Digma*, God is presented as a woman and in *Bruce Almighty*, he takes the form of a black man. Both are examples of modern creative expression, however in more traditional forms such as old pieces of art, we see more accurate representations of

God. As mentioned, the Old Testament forbids human representation of God thus he is commonly represented either through Jesus - "No man hath seen him God at all, only the begotten Son, of which is in the bosom of the father, he hath declared him" (John), through the trinity e.g. a dove such as in Verrocchio's painting 'The baptism of Christ' or as the 'father' who can be differentiated by age with grey hair and a long beard - 'I beheld all the thrones fall upon us, and the ancient of days did sit... and the hair on his head as white as snow... his throne a fiery flame and his wheels a burning fire' (such as in William Blake's painting 'The Ancient of days' 1794). Despite the contradictions in creative expression, they do all in their own sense allow us an understanding of the physical appearance of God and even the films, which ignore the laws of the Old Testament, do manage to accurately portray God as holy and divine - both important characteristics associated with God.

In terms of Greek mythology, there are no real laws of how the Gods can and cannot be portrayed and moreover, to some the Greek Gods were considered no more than super-mortals thus to present them with human bodies, but just exceptionally perfect human bodies was just. In many pieces of art we see the human representation of God e.g. Jupiter & Thetis (Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres 1811) and again in sculptures worldwide. However artistic forms of creative expression are only representative of the artists perception of the Gods at the time and therefore are not enough alone to give us a full insight to religion or religious life.

God is commonly associated with being a creator and this a characteristic that is universally ^{acknowledged} ~~accepted~~ and widely accepted. We believe God to have created the heavens, the earth and mankind which can be seen in certain forms of creative expression. In William Blake's 'The ancient of days', we see God looking down upon his creation and the use of colour (green, oranges and yellows) make it seem as if God is giving light to his creation of Earth. In Michelangelo's painting on the ceiling of the 'Sistine Chapel', we see God giving life to Adam and this is supported by a quote from the bible - 'And created men & women, he then did, and he blessed them, and called them in their name Adam.' (Genesis 5:7)

We can further see God as a creator in film e.g. In *Dogma* when ~~Brexa~~ Bethany kills God's human body thus inadvertently killing herself, God not only brings her back to life but also conceives a child inside of her which is all the more significant as we believed it impossible for Bethany to conceive - 'With God nothing is impossible.' (Luke 1:36). The film is a portrayal of the concept that God is both a creator but also able to do things we defy against the laws of nature. The Greek Gods are also considered to be 'creators', and although less prominence is placed on it than it is in the Christian God, we can see examples of it in creative expression such as when Zeus creates Pegasus out of a cloud for Hercules in the Walt Disney film 'Hercules'. Creative expression has again proved as a way to express both the Christian God & the Greek Gods' vital characteristics in a light hearted and enjoyable manner.

which appeals to the masses.

Religion puts a lot of prominence on the idea of God's almighty power thus his omnipotence. God is considered a divine being who is capable of everything despite whether we believe it to be possible or not - 'With mankind this is impossible, but with a God nothing is not possible' (Matthew 19:23-26). We can see God's omnipotence in examples of art such as 'The Ancient of Days' (William Blake) in which God's posture and centrality are alone enough alone to portray the power God holds. // Film is another form of creative expression which teaches us of God's omnipotence as in Bruce Almighty, as soon as Bruce is given God like powers, he is able to do things he had never been able to as a mortal before. Furthermore in Dogma, the sheer power of God's voice alone is too powerful and therefore requires the mediation to communicate for her i.e. to approach Bethany and tell her of her relation to Jesus. The God in this film is arguably too powerful as when she does finally speak, her voice alone shatters Bethany in a vesical explosion, however Peter Vardy (The puzzle of evil) claimed that 'to recognise God as almighty is to recognise the dependency of the planet and everything in it on God'. Therefore if God is as powerful as religion claims he is, creative expression can go as far as they please in showing this as there is no limit to what God can and cannot do.

The Greek Gods are similarly associated with being all powerful.

in particular, Zeus. In 'Jupiter & Thetis', we see his centrality and size make him look all powerful and the fact that Thetis is begging for his assistance makes him appear all powerful by nature. We again see of Zeus' power in 'Hercules' where due to his rage of his son's disappearance, causes a storm. Despite generally associating omnipotence with Zeus, we can see examples of other gods being portrayed as all powerful such as in Naitore's painting 'The awakening of Venus' where Aphrodite is given central place and through posture appears all powerful which is then supported by the painter placing her in front of a 'cloth of honor'. Through this creative expression, we gain an insight into two very different religions and how they portray their god(s) in a way we are all vaguely aware of; omnipotent.

The gods ^{is} generally associated with being omniscient thus all knowing, however this is a very complex issue in religion as it proposes the question - if God is all knowing, thus can foresee events, does this take away the human value of free-will? Such an issue is difficult to explore through creative expression hence why we see contradictions regarding this issue. Bruce Almighty portrays a God who does appear to be all knowing as he knows exactly when Bruce will lose the ability to cope and steps in before this can happen, however the God in Dogma appears to be less omniscient as she fails to see the plan of Michael thus is unable to put it right. With regards to this aspect of religion, creative expression does not appear to be a valid source

in which we can gain an accurate understanding thus it may be best explored through sources more focused on revelations of religion e.g. the 1st holy scriptures as opposed to sources devised to appeal to the masses thus be more devoted on providing humor and entertainment as opposed to answers. Greek mythology is somewhat less complex as there is no claim of an omniscient God, in 'Hercules' we regularly see Hades ask for the future to be revealed rather than claiming to know himself and 'The Iliad' contains regular reference to the use of soothsayers.

An imminent God is another part of religion that is difficult to grasp due to the vast amount of belief, but it is again explored through creative expression allowing us to gain a better understanding through sources that are available and appropriate for all. The Greek Gods, in film and literature do appear to be imminent as in 'Hercules', we see the Gods regularly come down and interact with mortals on Earth. This is further supported by the Wars in the 'Iliad' which speak of the Gods' input thus their imminence on Earth. Moreover, Zeus' intimacy with mortals is further support of the Gods' imminent nature. Despite this, 'Mount Olympus' was a place specifically for the Gods implying that although able to interact on Earth, their divinity entitled them to a refuge primarily for them. The importance of Mount Olympus is highlighted in Disney's 'Hercules' where Hercules is fighting for the right to be accepted at Mount Olympus and to prove himself worthy of a place there.

Although common understanding implies that the Christian God is not involved in the Earth thus does not acquire imminence, forms of creative expression contradict this belief. In 'Dogma', the final scenes show God on Earth interacting with both the angels and the mortals. Furthermore, in 'Bruce Almighty', we see God on earth both as himself and disguised as a tramp. The choice to portray God as imminent may be for various reasons, however it is most likely for ^{the} audience's understanding. A film revolving around the concept of God and religion may make less sense if we are not revealed to God himself at some point.

Benevolence, thus the ability to be all-loving, is again a widely accepted concept in religion as being representative of God's nature. The Christian God is thought to be the leading example of agape - a love that is for everyone, forgiving and seeks nothing in return and in certain forms of creative expression, we see exactly that shown to us. In 'Dogma's' final scenes, we see God tenderly embrace and forgive Bartleby for his sins and in 'Bruce Almighty' we see God prove his love in ~~a less obvious~~ way, ~~but it is~~ by teaching Bruce a lesson to value his own life and ^{to} take responsibility. Although two very different approaches, both films do not fail to show an all loving God similar to the one religion promotes.

There is however a contradiction in these films regarding God's benevolence.

In 'Bruce Almighty', we witness the anguish and torment Bruce is put through before God offers assistance. This makes us question the religious portrayal of God as surely if God was all-loving - he would of stepped in before Bruce was made to suffer so much. Furthermore, in ~~Bruce~~ A 'Dogma', there is numerous flaws with God's benevolence such as the reason for Levi - 'The Angel of Death'. It begs the question of why an all-loving God requires an Angel of Death and we further doubt God's benevolence in the scene of which Bartleby gives a speech claiming how God is unfair as we offers constant repent and forgiveness for humans yet the angels do one thing wrong and are punished by being thrown out of heaven. This does not seem signify an all loving and forgiving God.

The Greek Gods appear even less Benevolent via Creative expression. Greek myths tell of the God's constant sins regarding adultery and in addition, involvement in War (such as the Trojan war), which the 'Iliad' teaches us of, is not a very bring thing to do. Myths show of the Greek Gods less loving side such as the Myth surrounding Hera's plans to kill Hercules and his mother Alcmene. Regardless of this, in film such as 'Hercules', we do see Zeus' paternal and fatherly side when interacting with infant Hercules. The love of which the Greek Gods possess may can be explained using the idea of them being 'super mortals'. Like us they experience emotions such as jealousy and rage thus do not possess an 'agape' love.

They do however, have the ability to love and this shown in cases such as when Zeus interacts with Hercules.

Creative expression allows valuable and usually relatively accurate insights into religion and religious life however due to their main aim and function of creative expression (in particular film), being to draw in the masses and provide entertainment, it is not enough done to give us anymore than a partial insight into religion. Furthermore, creative expression is the result of one or a few at most, person(s) idea of the nature of God and the study of religion and thus cannot be regarded as an overall and fully accurate portrayal of religion and religious life.



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Examiner Comments

The juxtaposition of ideas fully demonstrates a broad range of knowledge and how religious ideas such as models of God are drawn out from the materials studied, for example a choice of films such as Dogma and Bruce Almighty.



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Examiner Tip

Candidates have a wide choice of material in this Area of Study to choose from and will achieve the highest levels if their material is contextualised in their response to the question.

Grade boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Raw boundary mark	50	41	36	31	27	23	19	0
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30	0

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