

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Unit RST4A *Topic II Perceptions of Ultimate Reality*

Candidate Exemplar Work

- Candidate C



Unit RST4A *Topic II Perceptions of Ultimate Reality*

Example of Candidate's Work on Specimen Questions

- 3 (b) **Assess the view that the relationship between humanity and God / Ultimate Reality as depicted in religion is best described as a relationship between a slave and a master.**

(30 marks)

AO2

Candidate Response

Due to God's anonymity it is hard to define his relationship with religious followers as there is rarely physical contact made between them. In many religions such as Islam and Judaism the relationship is very much one of total subservience however in religions such as Christianity the relationship is more complicated and operates on varying levels. Comparing a relationship with God to a relationship between a slave and master is quite a strong accusation because slavery is the epitome of dominance whilst religion is supposedly portrayed as very much a paternal authority to assess encourage good habits while living our lives.

Possibly the biggest factor against the slavery relationship is the fact that religion is very much a conscious decision made by people as to how to live their lives. Although many people chose to follow a religion, many choose not to follow a religion. This shows that people have a choice to opt out. This is not the sort of option available to slaves who are forced against their will to work for a master with no pay or rest. With such a fundamental difference between the relationships of follower and God and slave and master, the two relationships cannot be compared because the basis upon which they're built is so different. A slave must follow the master, whereas God offers guidance and advice in return for loyalty; loyalty and advice that can be revoked at any time by the other. However, if you believe in pre-determinism all religious believers are slaves as they have no control in their actions of worship and anything they do is controlled by God. However, if this were the case atheism and other religions would not exist as God would have no reason to divide his followers.

Moreover it is the Christian idea that rather being slaves to God, we are slaves to original sin. Through this we have built a relationship with God who is guiding us into better habits in order to live better lives. This has moulded a caring relationship with God rather than that of a slave. This is because God is supposedly benevolent, omniscient and omnipotent which are not the characteristics shown by a master when dealing with his slaves. A master's behaviour is totally the opposite when acting towards a slave because they are meant to be treated as second class citizens only there to do their masters bidding. God is helping to correct our behaviour and become better people after humans committed original sin. On the other hand God is shown to be quite wrathful in many texts; particularly the Old Testament. However this is merely a reaction to humans becoming to confident and breaking the covenant God laid down for us. For example when humans tried to build the Tower of Babel to reach heaven God scattered the people and created languages.

However, Paul quotes what is believed to be an ancient hymn in Philippians 2 Verses 5-9. This passage describes Jesus as a slave. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!" This passage in the Bible would suggest God would want us to empty our ourselves as Jesus did and become totally subservient to God. This would suggest we are slaves to God. However in return for our obedience humans are promised the reward of heaven and offered guidance in life on how to reach it. A master does not reward a slave like God rewards his followers. Therefore the two relationships cannot be compared.

In conclusion, the relationship between a slave and master is not a mutual agreement and therefore totally different to that of a religious believer and follower. However in many religions followers physically prostrate in front of altars in places of religious worship. This behaviour is similar to that of a slave acting towards a master so in some religions people can be said to be slaves towards their master out of choice. In Christianity however it is more complicated because of the respect God also gives towards his followers.

Commentary

AO2 (30 marks)

The opening paragraph is slightly strange with its use of anonymity. There needs to be a wider explanation / exploration of ideas around slave and master which would then bring clarity to the rest of the discussion.

The next paragraph does consider the slave point in relation to free-will, this could be expanded certainly the latter section which refers to predestination needs further consideration.

The third paragraph has an interesting focus upon God as Master. It might have been interesting in the later section to consider how we see a change in ideas about the relationship between God and humanity from the Old Testament to the New Testament period.

The interpretation of the passage from Philippians is slightly misleading; it would not normally be seen as a passage encouraging subservience. The point about reward is an issue which could have been developed further.

The conclusion is rather weak as it refers to material which is new and thus not developed, for example the preceding material focused solely upon Christianity. Thus the widening in the conclusion needs exemplifying.

There should be a stronger conclusion which explores more the fact that if it is not best described as a slave-master relationship then more reasons need to be given as to why this is not accurate, or there could have been some consideration of how it would be better described.

Level 4 (18 marks)