

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Unit RST4A *Topic III Religious Experience*

Candidate Exemplar Work

- Candidate A



Unit RST4A *Topic III Religious Experience*

Example of Candidate's Work on Specimen Questions

- 6 (b) Consider how far religious definitions of God / Ultimate Reality allow for any idea of revelation.

(30 marks)

AO2

Candidate Response

Revelation is divine self-exposure. Through revelation, the divine shows itself humanity. Similar to visions, revelations can be a feature of any type of religious encounter, e.g. mystical. One way of comprehending what is meant by revelation is to view it as either propositional or non-propositional. We have to consider how we, mankind, perceive God as a supreme being. As well as looking at different faiths and how their God reveals himself to humanity. Although God may not reveal himself at all.

Propositional revelations can be described as a direct contact with God, where he reveals some truth to the individuals. The content of this experience can vary but the most important factor is the experience of God himself. When we think about ancient scriptures like the Bible and the Qur'an, they have differences. In Christianity, God reveals himself openly in human flesh to the world in the form of Jesus. We notice that God was very open here; this is not the case in Islam and Judaism. From reading the Old Testament and the Qur'an we can see that God does not present himself so openly to humanity. For example, in the Old Testament we can look at Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-23). If we examine the passage God only allows Moses to go up the mountain and threatens to strike down those who try to gaze upon him. This does not seem like the God in the New Testament who walks around in human form revealing himself to mankind. There are many examples in the Old Testament where God privately reveals himself, like again with Moses and the Burning Bush (Exodus 3). This is the same for Islam, where there is a clear separation between God and humans. On the occasions where Allah does wish to speak to Muhammad, he sends Gabriel, this is how the Qur'an was written. Muhammad was in a cave alone and the angel Gabriel descended down from heaven, or Jannah, and dictated Muhammad the Qur'an. The important factor here is that there is a clear separation between the God figure in Judaism and Islam and humanity. In Christianity there is not as much separation, although he does walk around in human form. Other experience are more personal.

That of course was an explanation propositional experience. We now have to consider non-propositional experiences to fully answer the question. Non-propositional experiences are not the divine imparting wisdom directly upon you, but of realisation after a period of reflection, for example by meditating. Non-propositional experiences are endeavours carried about by human kind where they concentrate in focusing their mind on just God, or something of that nature. It requires real discipline. It was the Archbishop Ramsey who said that he prays for just two or three minutes a day but it takes him two to three hours to get there. This is a major focus for Buddhists who do not have a God in the way Christianity does but do believe in enlightenment. They believe that you can only reach enlightenment through constant meditation in which you focus all your body's energy. At the end of meditation Buddha himself said, after six years of striving, that he had finally achieved enlightenment and realised that there was something beyond death. In his scriptures he claimed he had attained ultimate enlightenment and knew how everyone else could achieve it. Although this is not direct contact from God it is a revelation of some sort. Buddha realised that there was something more.

In conclusion, divine intervention can be accepted in today's society. It depends on which religion it occurs in. Your revelation will be much more credible if your experience happens in Christianity, rather than Islam or Judaism, in which there is a clear separation between God/Allah, and humanity. They believe that God or Allah is up there and we are down here. If he does decide to reveal himself then it will be to individuals and not to large crowds. Christianity on the other hand allows for revelation experiences, as there have been many recorded. The biggest revelation experience arguably is that of Jesus coming down to earth and walking among us. Some however, may argue that this is not a revelation. Whether today's post-modern society would accept an experience like this is debateable, when we consider the amount of atheists that there are in the world.

Commentary

AO2 (30 marks)

A good introduction but could do with further consideration of definitions of God. The next paragraph focuses upon propositional revelation and provides a good range of examples with reference to scripture and to the point being made that this style of revelation keeps man at a distance from God.

The next section turns to non-propositional revelation, here there needs to be a clearer expression of exactly what is meant by this, the definition provided is too restricted and thus does not allow for a wider consideration later. The second part of this paragraph turns to Buddhism and Ultimate Reality, but here the discussion seems to miss the point which should have been definition of Ultimate reality set against ideas of revelation, which does not seem to be the focus of this section of the essay.

The conclusion also seems to move away from the question into a wider issue about whether there can be an acceptance of revelation in general, whereas the question is not asking this, it is asking whether definitions held by various religions or a single religion allow for the ideas which have been well presented here of revelation.

Level 4 (19 marks)