

## Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Unit RST4A *Topic II Perceptions of Ultimate Reality*

Candidate Exemplar Work

- Candidate B



## 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

Relationships between God/ Ultimate Reality and humanity have often been construed differently and the interpretations of the relationship are very varied. God is viewed within many religions as the ultimate power and portrayal of perfection, however, the idea of a slave and master is portrayed to certain extents in religions but there are also many ways in which God is depicted as loving and promoting equality.

The argument of free will plays a large part in this evaluation of the relationship between God and Humanity. The Bible encourages the idea of free will and promotes the choices we have to make. It suggests that in order to be a Christian we have to use our ability to reason and make the decisions that are right by God. "But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely perish." The choices that God presents us with suggest that we are able to choose for ourselves whether or not we follow the life he wishes us to lead or whether we choose our own path. Although God does warn that those who do not choose his way will be punished he is not forcing any one to make any decisions they do not wish to. It seems clear that God wishes us to choose our own path and, in the standard definition of a relationship between slave and master, we would be controlled and never allowed to pursue our own will, therefore suggesting that the relationship between God and humanity is not like that of a slave and master.

Similarly, if we truly were God's slaves then there wouldn't be any religions that weren't polytheistic. There are many religions that believe that there are many Gods and that some things are worth worshipping as much as a God. Polytheistic faiths are often viewed as more primitive, such as Wicca and Ancient Egypt. However, if God truly was our master and we his slaves, there would never be any other faith but his. The presence of agnosticism and atheism in the world also supports this claim. If we were God's slaves we would be under his power and every command. However, the fact that people have turned their backs on him and he has allowed them to walk away suggests that we are not totally under his control.

Within Christianity there is the Golden Rule set by Jesus that we must "do not unto others what you would not like to be done to you". This carries forward a strong message of equality which means that no one person is above another. St. Paul is famously quoted "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you all are one in Christ." This quotation not only openly disagrees with the idea of a master and slave relationship, but also suggests that the equality stretches to every conceivable issue. If God created the world with equality in mind then it is likely that he wanted is to be considered equal to even himself.

The nature of the Bible itself also suggests that we are not God's slaves. The Bible is split into two Testaments – the Old and the New. A Testament, like a covenant, is an 'agreement with God'. Many parts of the Testament are actually written with similar language as an ancient vassal treaty whereby people entered into subservience in return for aid. This in itself suggests that we are entering into a relationship with God and not being forced into it. Secondly, the idea of having an old and new agreement suggests a re-evaluation on God's part and a realisation that his old ways were not working. The traditional idea of a master would suggest a wrathful, stubborn and vengeful. Therefore the idea that he suddenly changes his testament goes against this idea and suggests that God is at the very least taking an interest in our slavery. We may also suggest that, in fact, he is not forcing us into slavery and is not our master because he cares for us and is looking after our interests. He is suggested to be our superior but the relationship suggestion we can draw from this is that he is actually our guardian as opposed to our master.

However, there are also many things that suggest the relationship between God and humanity is the same as that between a slave and master. In Christianity, God famously gave humanity himself in human form, or in the form of his son. Paul described the way in which Jesus 'emptied' himself of his divinity to become human. In Philippians 2: 5-11 it describes the form God's son took. "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Jesus had to take the form of a slave to take the form of a human. This perhaps suggests that you have to be a slave in order to become a master and therefore teaches a way out of servitude. This undoubtedly infers that God is in control of us and therefore we are his slaves and he a master.

There are also many arguments that infer we don't have free will. Kane presents a clear argument against the ideals of free will. He tells us that if our lives are pre-determined, then we have no choice or say in the way our lives proceed (known as the Determinism Objection). However, if indeterminism and real chance exist we cannot be held accountable for any of our actions. It also suggests that we may make choices by accident, again taking away our humanity and suggesting that we don't make such decisions ourselves. If you take away the free will we supposedly have then we are left only to do the will of God as his slaves.

In Genesis, we are told the story of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were the first two people to be created by God and their every move was watched by God. This infers that we cannot escape him and under his constant control. Adam and Eve were forbidden from eating from a certain tree in the Garden of Eden, but were otherwise allowed to roam free. However, they did eat from the tree and were therefore punished. The idea of being punished for our wrong-doings, again suggests that we are under God's power and that we are his slaves. From this story we could deduce that in fact, although we have been 'given' free will and are allowed to do as we wish, if we do not do things the 'right' way we will ultimately be punished and will therefore always be under God's will.

Within Islam, there is also the suggestion of a slave and master relationship. The word 'Islam' is derived from an Arabic word meaning submission. Islam is very similar to Christianity in the sense that they believe there is one God who is all powerful, all knowing and all loving. Within Islam many also believe that the aim is to reach paradise (jannat) and to avoid eternal punishment (jahannam). They are therefore also very influenced by God and his ideals of right and wrong. Within Islam there has also been the very public idea of a Holy War. There have been people within Islam who have believed so extremely in their cause that they have died. The extent that some people

go through in order to be nearer to God and to please him heavily suggests that they are under his control. Although this doesn't suggest that we are his slaves, it does tell us that people are so terrified by the idea of God's punishments that they would do anything to avoid it, hence inferring that God is using our fear and his reputation to control his. Therefore, God is controlling us and our decisions and is ultimately our master.

Secondly, within Judaism there is a strong sense of servitude towards God. The ancient people of Israel made an agreement with God whereby they would enter into a state of servitude and acknowledge only God as their master. As a race the Jews have been constantly punished by other nations. The Babylonians, Romans and not forgetting Hitler slaughtered Jewish people and, for the most part, they believed it was their own fault that this happened. They believed that they had done something wrong and that this was why they were being punished by God. I believe that Jews are the greatest example of how a slave and master relationship has been established between God and humanity. However, as the Jewish people agreed into this servitude the idea of God as a vengeful and wrathful does not apply.

In conclusion, there are many elements to the relationship between God and humanity which are similar to that of a slave and master. However, I do not believe that this is an active relationship. I feel that God, for the most part, has encouraged us to make our own decisions and live our own lives. However, the idea of heaven, hell and judgement day suggest that we will all be judged and rewarded and punished according to the lives we have led, meaning that ultimately God is our master and we his slaves.

### Commentary

AO2 (30 marks)

A sound introduction. The next paragraph needs to have a clear indication that the examples are from Christianity. There is a clear discussion about freewill. It would help if there was a closer link back to the question, that is freewill and slavery do not sit easily together, if at all. The discussion would have benefitted from some consideration of predestination.

The next paragraph about polytheism and God as Master is questionable, there is a rather simplistic view of polytheistic religions displayed, all gods are equal in status is often not the case. The point about agnosticism is well made and should be developed a little further.

Although the next section about equality is interesting the conclusion shows a lack of understanding, there are no major religions which consider humankind to be equal to God, it would have been better to focus remarks upon not so much equality as one which allows for aspects of equality.

The next section which looks at scripture and deals with covenant would benefit from a clearer understanding of the unique Jewish covenant. The point about development would have been better supported by looking at new covenant and the New Testament concept of the new relationship between humankind and God as established by Jesus.

The next paragraph about Jesus as God taking on human form misses the distinction between slave and servant, and would have benefitted from recognition of this.

The following paragraph which debates a lack of freewill is interesting and should be considered whether a lack of freewill means we must be slaves.

The next section about Adam and Eve is also well considered, but should debate more fully whether punishment means slavery, surely not in many cases.

Turning to Islam widens the discussion nicely, especially looking at submission. As with some other sections this would have benefitted from some further exploration of exactly what slavery might mean. Again some consideration of predestination would have been valuable. The following paragraph about Judaism misses the Jewish concept of the Chosen people with their special relationship with God and should have had some consideration of whether this could ever be slavery.

The conclusion needs to draw back upon key arguments made and is slightly weak without this especially by slipping into the idea that punishment equates with slavery.

**Level 6 (24 marks)**