

C. World Religions | Sample Answer

Outline how the relationship between the sacred and profane is expressed in the way two objects are used in worship by members of a major world religion.

(2018 Section C [b])

That which is sacred is that which has been consecrated. This means something that is set aside for religious purposes. It is not the intrinsic quality of a thing that makes it sacred but the fact that it invokes in the person or a community, awe, wonder, respect and reverence.

For religious people, the sacred refers to things of God, God's actions and revelations. In Islam, the first revelation of the sacred text was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, 'The Seal of the Prophets', in a cave on Mount Hira. On this night, referred to as 'The Night of Power and Excellence', the Angel Jibreel appeared to illiterate Muhammad and revealed to first sura of the Quran. According to Islam, the Quran is Allah's literal words and provides his guidance to humanity. The Qur'an is the will of Allah to Muslims and therefore it is considered very sacred and is treated with the greatest reverence by Muslims. Many Muslims will perform ablution before reading the Quran and during times of impurity such as menstruation the Quran is not to be read.

The profane is that which is not religious, 'the world of everyday existence, the ordinary and the mundane'. The profane looks at all that is not sacred, these things do not draw out attitudes of awe, wonder, respect and reverence in people. In Islam, the profane may be a notebook, a table - these things are mundane, everyday objects, they have no religious affiliations and are not consecrated.

The cross is the most central and sacred of the symbols of Christianity. The cross has a twofold significance. First, it is the symbol of the death and crucifixion of Jesus Christ and secondly the redeeming benefits of his Passion and death. The cross is a sign both of Christ himself and of the faith of Christians.

In ceremonial usage, making a sign of the cross may be an act of profession of faith, a prayer, a dedication or a benediction. Christian devotion to the cross is centred on the victory of Christ over

the powers of evil and death. Jesus Christ suffered for our sins and therefore his death, symbolised by the cross, is consecrated and treated with great respect and reverence by Christians.

There are many variations of the cross, the basic forms are the Latin cross with unequal arms and the Greek cross with equal arms. Christians make the sign of the cross/blessing oneself before prayer or ritual. This action echoes the traditional shape of the cross of the Christian crucifixion narrative. This blessing is made by the tracing of an upright cross across the body with the right hand, often accompanied by spoken or mental recitation of the Trinitarian formula "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen". The sign of the cross is a prayer, a blessing and a sacramental.

The cross is the most central symbol of Christianity. It evokes great feelings of reverence, awe, wonder and respect in Christian believers. Traditional crosses are wooden with the purpose of recreating Christ's crucifixion. The profane wood is transformed to become the sacred, holy cross. The importance of the cross can be seen in various churches, catholic schools and in the homes of believers. Some believers even wear the cross in a necklace around their neck as a symbol of their faith and devotion to our suffering saviour.