



RS.TC10 Visions as a Source of Knowledge of God

AQA 8062 · Calculators not allowed · about 60 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer the two 12-mark evaluation questions in full sentences. Time guidance: 60 minutes total, roughly 25 minutes for the one 15-mark question with SPaG and 15 minutes for each 12-mark question.

1 Block 1, question 1. Which one of the following best defines a vision in the context of religious experience?

- ☐ A short dream that influences a person while asleep
- ☐ A supernatural experience of seeing something not visible to others, such as a religious figure or symbol
- ☐ A moral teaching given in a holy book and read aloud to worshippers
- ☐ A public ritual carried out to mark a life event

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 Block 1, question 2. Give two brief features of a vision as a religious experience.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Block 1, question 3. Explain two reasons why a vision might be given to a person, referring to the example of Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3).

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

- 4** Block 1, question 4. Explain two contrasting religious beliefs about the reliability of visions as evidence for the existence of God. Refer to a sacred writing or another source of religious belief and teaching in your answer.

(Total for Question 4 is 5 marks)

- 5** Block 1, question 5. 'Evaluate the view that visions are convincing evidence for the existence of God.' In your answer you should give reasoned arguments to support this statement, give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view, refer to religious arguments, reach a justified conclusion. This question carries 3 SPaG marks.

(Total for Question 5 is 15 marks)

6 Block 2, question 1. Which one of the following is an example from the New Testament often used to discuss visions?

- ☐ The Sermon on the Mount
- ☐ Paul's vision on the road to Damascus in Acts 9
- ☐ The creation account in Genesis 1
- ☐ The parable of the Good Samaritan

(Total for Question 6 is 1 mark)

7 Block 2, question 2. Give two reasons why Paul's vision on the road to Damascus might be regarded as evidence for God by Christians.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 Block 2, question 3. Explain two philosophical challenges to accepting visions as reliable evidence for the existence of God.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

9 Block 2, question 4. Explain two ways in which religious communities may test the authenticity of a claimed vision. Refer to a sacred writing or another source of religious belief and teaching in your answer.

(Total for Question 9 is 5 marks)

- 10** Block 2, question 5. 'Evaluate the claim that visions recorded in scripture must be accepted as reliable evidence for God's action.' In your answer you should give reasoned arguments to support this statement, give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view, refer to religious arguments, reach a justified conclusion.

(Total for Question 10 is 12 marks)

- 11** Block 3, question 1. Which one of the following is a common natural explanation given for visions?

- ☐ They are always direct visits by angels from heaven
- ☐ They are hallucinations caused by brain chemistry or illness
- ☐ They are formal public rituals performed in a temple
- ☐ They are commands written in sacred books

(Total for Question 11 is 1 mark)

- 12** Block 3, question 2. Give two ways that testimonies about visions might be unreliable as evidence.

(Total for Question 12 is 2 marks)

- 13** Block 3, question 3. Explain two reasons why a person who experiences a vision might still reasonably doubt that it proves the existence of God.

(Total for Question 13 is 4 marks)

- 14** Block 3, question 4. Explain two ways believers might respond to the claim that visions are unreliable because they can be hallucinations.

(Total for Question 14 is 5 marks)

- 15** Block 3, question 5. 'Evaluate the view that personal religious experiences such as visions provide better evidence for God than philosophical arguments.' In your answer you should give reasoned arguments to support this statement, give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view, refer to religious arguments, reach a justified conclusion.

(Total for Question 15 is 12 marks)

Mark scheme · RS.TC10 Visions as a Source of Knowledge of God

Question 1

- **B1** correct option B selected
- **Answer: A supernatural experience of seeing something not visible to others, such as a religious figure or symbol.**

Question 2

- **B1** one feature stated, such as: it involves seeing a figure or symbol that others do not see, oe
- **B1** a second feature stated, such as: it is often interpreted as communication from the divine or God, oe
- **Answer: Examples: seeing a religious figure or symbol that others do not see; interpreted as communication from God or the divine.**

Question 3

- **B1** point 1: a vision may call a person to a particular task or mission, oe
- **B1** development: in Exodus 3 God appears to Moses in the burning bush to call him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, oe
- **B1** point 2: a vision may reveal God's presence or holiness to the person, oe
- **B1** development: the burning bush shows Moses that God is present and holy, prompting reverence and obedience, oe
- **Answer: E.g. to call Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Exodus 3); to reveal God's presence and holiness to Moses, causing reverence and obedience.**

Question 4

- **B1** belief 1: some religious believers accept visions as reliable evidence because they are direct encounters with God, oe
- **B1** development: this view can be supported by scriptural examples such as Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3) where God speaks directly to Moses, oe
- **B1** belief 2: other believers or traditions are cautious and treat visions as less reliable, requiring confirmation by scripture or community, oe
- **B1** development: for example some Jewish or Christian teachers insist that visions must align with scripture and be tested by the faith community, oe
- **B1** reference to a sacred writing or source of authority made accurately, oe
- **Answer: Contrast: some accept visions as direct encounters with God, citing Exodus 3; others require visions to be tested against scripture and community teaching before accepting them as reliable.**

Question 5

- **Level 4** (10-12): A well-developed, balanced evaluation that gives clear arguments for and against the view, uses religious examples or teachings accurately, and reaches a justified conclusion. Reasoned discussion uses relevant evidence and shows clarity of expression.
- **Level 3** (7-9): A balanced answer that gives points for and against the view with some use of religious material, and a conclusion that is supported though it may lack full development.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some relevant points are made for or against the view, but the argument is limited or unbalanced. Limited use of religious material, and a simple conclusion if present.
- **Level 1** (1-3): Simple statements that are relevant but undeveloped, little or no use of religious material, and no supported conclusion.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant material.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Arguments that support visions as convincing: they are first person experiences that can have powerful transformative effects and provide direct knowledge of God for the experiencer.
 - Scriptural examples that support reliability, for example the conversion vision of Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6) which led to lasting change and the spread of Christianity.
 - Religious argument that God may choose to reveal himself to individuals in ways that are not open to other types of proof.
 - Arguments against: visions can be explained as hallucinations, mental illness, or psychological states, reducing their evidential value.
 - Problems of testimony and verification, including conflicting visions and the difficulty of proving that a vision had a divine source rather than an inner psychological cause.
 - Philosophical challenges such as Humean scepticism about miracles and the need for independent evidence beyond personal experience.
 - Consideration of how religious communities test visions, for example checking alignment with scripture and the character of the visionary, which may strengthen or weaken claims.
 - A balanced conclusion might say visions give strong personal evidence to the individual and may be persuasive within a faith community, but as public evidence for the existence of God they face serious epistemic challenges unless corroborated.

Question 6

- **B1** correct option B selected
- **Answer: Paul's vision on the road to Damascus in Acts 9.**

Question 7

- **B1** reason 1: it led to a radical change in Paul's life and mission, showing a powerful, persuasive experience, oe
- **B1** reason 2: it is recorded in scripture (Acts 9), giving it authority within the Christian tradition, oe
- **Answer: E.g. it caused Paul to change from persecutor to convert, showing a powerful encounter; it is recorded in Acts 9, giving it scriptural authority.**

Question 8

- **B1** challenge 1: visions can be classed as hallucinations, which are known to occur for non-divine reasons, oe
- **B1** development: if a vision is a hallucination it does not prove the existence of a supernatural source, so it is not reliable evidence, oe
- **B1** challenge 2: psychological explanations such as stress or brain chemistry can account for visions, oe
- **B1** development: if visions arise from natural psychology they do not indicate a divine cause and so are weak as evidence for God, oe
- **Answer: E.g. visions may be hallucinations with natural causes, so they do not prove the divine; psychological factors like stress or brain chemistry can produce visions without any supernatural source.**

Question 9

- **B1** test 1: comparing the content of the vision with scripture to see if it agrees, oe
- **B1** development: for example, Christian leaders may check that a claimed vision does not contradict teachings in the Bible such as the character of God shown in Exodus or the teachings of Jesus, oe
- **B1** test 2: assessing the moral character and fruit of the visionary's life, oe
- **B1** development: communities may look for long-term fruits like increased virtue and faithful leadership as a sign the vision is genuine, oe
- **B1** reference to a sacred writing or source of authority made accurately, oe
- **Answer: E.g. check that the vision's content agrees with scripture and church teaching (scriptural reference and doctrine); assess the moral character and long term fruit in the visionary's life as evidence of authenticity.**

Question 10

- **Level 4** (10-12): A well-argued evaluation that uses scriptural examples accurately, weighs arguments for and against accepting scriptural visions as reliable, and reaches a justified conclusion.
- **Level 3** (7-9): A balanced answer that uses scriptural material and gives both supporting and critical arguments with a reasonable conclusion.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some relevant arguments for or against are given, with limited use of scripture and a simple conclusion.
- **Level 1** (1-3): Simple, undeveloped statements with little use of scripture and no supported conclusion.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant material.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Arguments for: scriptural visions have been preserved by faith communities and often led to significant religious developments and teachings, suggesting divine action.
 - Examples such as Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3) and Paul's conversion (Acts 9) show visions producing lasting change and forming the foundation for further revelation.
 - Arguments against: scriptural accounts were written and edited by communities, so they may reflect theological interpretation rather than neutral reporting.
 - Historical-critical concerns about legendary development, retelling, and the standards of ancient historiography that differ from modern criteria of evidence.
 - Consideration of the role of faith and authority: believers within the tradition may reasonably accept scriptural visions as reliable because of the authority of scripture, while outsiders might ask for independent corroboration.
 - A conclusion might balance respect for the internal authority of scripture with caution about using scriptural visions as public, empirical proof for those outside the tradition.

Question 11

- **B1** correct option B selected
- **Answer: They are hallucinations caused by brain chemistry or illness.**

Question 12

- **B1** way 1: witnesses may misremember or exaggerate the event, oe
- **B1** way 2: cultural and religious expectations may shape how the vision is reported, oe
- **Answer: Examples: people may misremember or exaggerate; cultural and religious expectations may shape the report of the vision.**

Question 13

- **B1** reason 1: they may consider the possibility of a psychological or neurological explanation, which would mean the vision has a non-divine cause, oe
- **B1** development: this makes the vision insufficient as proof of God because natural causes can produce similar experiences, oe
- **B1** reason 2: they may note that visions are subjective and not publicly verifiable, so others cannot use them as evidence, oe
- **B1** development: without independent corroboration a vision remains private and cannot settle the question for other people, oe
- **Answer: E.g. one might accept a psychological explanation which removes the need for a divine cause; or one might stress that visions are private and not publicly verifiable, so they do not convince others.**

Question 14

- **B1** response 1: believers may argue that not all hallucinations are the same and that some experiences have features, such as coherence and moral fruit, that point to a divine source, oe
- **B1** development: believers may point to lasting life change or verified prophetic truth as signs a vision is genuine, oe
- **B1** response 2: believers may claim that God can use natural processes, including psychological ones, to communicate, so a natural explanation does not rule out divine intent, oe
- **B1** development: this allows for a vision to have both a psychological mechanism and divine significance, oe
- **B1** both responses explained with reference to religious reasoning or practice, oe
- **Answer: E.g. believers may argue some experiences show features that point to the divine, such as lasting moral change; or claim God may work through natural psychological means so a natural cause does not exclude divine purpose.**

Question 15

- **Level 4** (10-12): A thoughtful, balanced evaluation that weighs the strengths of personal experience against the strengths of philosophical argument, uses religious examples accurately, and reaches a well-supported conclusion.
- **Level 3** (7-9): A balanced response that gives relevant points on both sides and a supported conclusion, though may lack full development.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some relevant points for or against, limited use of religious material, and a simple conclusion.
- **Level 1** (1-3): Simple, undeveloped statements, little use of religious material, no supported conclusion.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant material.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Arguments that personal experiences are strong: they provide immediate, lived knowledge and often transform lives, offering practical confirmation for believers.
 - Examples: Paul's conversion vision had concrete effects and led to large scale change, which some argue is better evidence than abstract argument.
 - Arguments for philosophical arguments: they provide publicly verifiable reasoning and can be assessed independently of subjective experience, offering broader persuasive power.
 - Philosophical critiques of experiential evidence include problems of hallucination, testimonial error, and cultural conditioning.
 - A balanced conclusion may say personal experiences are powerful for the individual and faith community, but philosophical arguments are more persuasive to those who demand public, shared evidence; the two can be complementary.