7.9 Revelation: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8062 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Explain two contrasting types of vision described within the Christian tradition. Refer to a philosopher of religion in your answer.

(Total for Question 1 is 5 marks)

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2 This question is about revelation as a source of knowledge about God. It is the AQA-style 24-mark, five-part question.

(a) State what is meant by an imaginative vision. **(1)**

(b) Give two examples of visions described in the Bible. **(2)**

(c) Explain the difference between general revelation and special revelation. Refer to a philosopher of religion in your answer. **(4)**

(d) Explain two contrasting views about whether religious experience of enlightenment can be relied upon as genuine revelation. Refer to a philosopher of religion in your answer. **(5)**

(e) Evaluate this statement: 'Special revelation is more important than general revelation for knowing about God.' In your answer you should: refer to religious and philosophical teaching, refer to different points of view, reach a justified conclusion. **(12)**

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(Total for Question 2 is 24 marks)

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Question 1

type 1: a corporeal vision is understood as something seen with the physical eyes, an external event visible in the ordinary world, oe **B1**

development: Aquinas, developing categories used earlier by Augustine, gave the example of the angel appearing to Mary at the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38) as this kind of vision, oe **B1**

type 2: an intellectual vision, by contrast, is understood as a direct apprehension of spiritual truth in the mind, without any physical or imagined image at all, oe **B1**

development: this is considered the 'highest' kind of vision in this tradition, since it involves the mind grasping truth about God directly, rather than through any sensory or imaginative content, oe **B1**

reference to a philosopher of religion made accurately, oe **B1**

Answer: Contrast: corporeal vision (seen with the physical eyes, e.g. the Annunciation) vs intellectual vision (direct, imageless apprehension of truth).

Question 2

(a) a vision seen in the mind's imagination, not with the physical eyes, e.g. as in a dream, oe **B1**

(a) Answer: A vision seen in the mind's imagination, not with the physical eyes, e.g. in a dream.

(b) Mary's vision of the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation (Luke 1), oe **B1**

(b) Joseph's dream in which an angel spoke to him (Matthew 1-2); accept also Paul's vision on the road to Damascus (Acts 9), oe **B1**

(b) Answer: Any two: the Annunciation (Luke 1); Joseph's dream (Matthew 1-2); Paul's vision on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).

(c) point 1: general revelation refers to knowledge of God that is, in principle, available to everyone through ordinary means such as nature, reason and conscience, without requiring any specific, unusual event, oe **B1**

(c) development: natural theology arguments, such as the design and cosmological arguments, are sometimes described as forms of general revelation, since they use reason reflecting on the ordinary world to reach conclusions about God, oe **B1**

(c) point 2: special revelation, by contrast, refers to knowledge of God that comes through a specific, direct disclosure to particular people, such as scripture, prophecy, visions or, in Christian belief, supremely through the person of Jesus Christ, oe **B1**

(c) development: special revelation is often considered to give clearer, more detailed knowledge of God's nature and will than general revelation alone could provide, since it is thought to come more directly from God, oe **B1**

(c) Answer: General revelation: available to all through nature/reason. Special revelation: a specific, direct disclosure, e.g. scripture or vision.

(d) view 1: some argue moments of sudden spiritual insight should be trusted as genuine revelation, since William James observed such experiences typically carry a strong noetic quality, a sense of insight into truth, that feels authoritative to the person experiencing it, oe **B1**

(d) development: on this view, dismissing such experiences simply because they cannot be proved to others sets an unreasonably high standard that would rule out trusting many kinds of ordinary personal experience too, oe **B1**

(d) view 2: others argue such experiences cannot be relied upon as objective revelation, since they are private, unrepeatable and shaped by the individual's own expectations, culture and religious background, making it hard to distinguish a genuine revelation from a psychological event mistaken for one, oe **B1**

(d) development: they add that because people from very different, sometimes contradictory, belief systems report similarly compelling experiences of insight or enlightenment, the feeling of certainty alone cannot establish which, if any, of these experiences reveals genuine truth about God, oe **B1**

(d) reference to a philosopher of religion made accurately, oe **B1**

(d) Answer: Contrast: enlightenment trusted as authoritative for the individual (James's noetic quality) vs doubted as private, culturally-shaped and unverifiable.

(e) **L4** A well-argued, balanced answer that considers more than one point of view in a developed way, using accurate and detailed references to religious and philosophical teaching to support each point, and reaches a clear, justified conclusion. **10-12**

(e) **L3** A clear and reasoned answer that considers more than one point of view, supported by relevant references to religious and philosophical teaching, though the justification of the conclusion may be less developed. **7-9**

(e) **L2** A reasoned answer that considers at least one point of view, with some relevant supporting evidence, but with limited or no consideration of an alternative view. **4-6**

(e) **L1** One or more relevant points are made, but with little or no supporting evidence and no reasoned conclusion. **1-3**

(e) **L0** No relevant content. **0**

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(e) Indicative content:

- Agree: special revelation, such as scripture, prophecy and, for Christians, the person of Jesus Christ, is often considered to give far more specific and detailed knowledge of God's nature, character and will than general revelation could ever provide through reason and nature alone.
- Agree: visions and other special revelatory experiences (e.g. the Annunciation, Luke 1; Paul's vision on the road to Damascus, Acts 9) are described in scripture as pivotal moments that directly communicated God's purposes to particular individuals.
- Agree: general revelation, through reason and nature alone, can at most establish that a designer or first cause probably exists; it cannot on its own reveal that God is loving, forgiving or personally concerned with individual believers, knowledge many hold can only come through special revelation.
- Disagree: general revelation is available to every person, everywhere, at all times, through ordinary reflection on the natural world and their own reason and conscience, whereas special revelation depends on rare, unrepeatable events experienced by only a few people, historically or today.
- Disagree: many philosophers of religion regard natural theology arguments, such as the design and cosmological arguments, as more rationally defensible than accounts of visions or special experiences, since they do not rely on evaluating disputed testimony.
- Disagree: special revelation claims vary and sometimes conflict between and within religious traditions, which some see as reducing their reliability as a unique guide to God's nature, whereas general revelation, being grounded in shared reason and the natural world, offers more common ground between believers.
- A balanced answer might conclude that special revelation offers more specific, personal knowledge of God where it is trusted, but that general revelation offers a more universally accessible, and in that sense more secure, starting point for belief in God's existence.

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