

Religion, Reason and Revelation

CONCEPT OF REVELATION

Key idea: Revelation means to 'unveil' and make known what was previously hidden and for Christians this comes from God.

- Christians believe that God can reveal himself directly to them.
- Many Christians believe that they have had a personal experience of God when they feel he speaks directly to them.
 - Through prayer
 - When on pilgrimage
 - When meditating on a passage from the Bible
 - When having a *numinous* experience – an inspirational feeling of awe and wonder that there is a presence of something greater than you.
- Two types of revelation - *general* (natural) revelation and *special* revelation
 - General – made available to everyone and comes through the beauty and complexity of nature; William Paley (1743-1805) saw the beauty and complexity of nature and came to the conclusion that the world was so amazing and appeared so intricately made that it must have had a designer, therefore God exists. All humans possess this power of reasoning and are able to experience this revelation.
 - Special – Where God acts in the world as told in the Bible. Eg. God led the Israelites through the desert (Old Testament). God also made his plans for mankind known through prophets. Roman Catholics would regard the teachings of the Church as part of this special revelation.

Quotations

"No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known." John 1:18

"... since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."

Romans 1:19-20

REVELATION THROUGH CONVERSION

Key Idea: Revelation of God can be through mystical and religious experiences such as conversion where someone becomes a believer based on this/these experience/s.

- There are many examples of conversion in the Bible. The most important is the conversion of St. Paul after he had been persecuting some of the first Christians. While on the road to Damascus, Jesus spoke to him from a bright light in the sky telling him to become a Christian. Before his conversion he was known as Saul, and after three days of blindness, Ananias was sent by God to place his hands on Saul's eyes to restore his sight. Saul was immediately baptised, began preaching that Jesus was Lord, and Saul's name was changed to Paul.
- Evangelical Christians see conversion as a beginning of faith where a person admits their sins to God and asks for forgiveness. This is known as being 'born again' or 'saved'.

- Conversion is an important and powerful experience for some Christians as it changes their lives forever because they believe that God has revealed himself to them in a special way.
- Sometimes Christians have actual physical experiences like St. Paul when they are converted and people who are sick may be healed.
- Conversion can happen in all denominations through prayer, Bible readings or simply through meaningful and spiritual conversations with others.

Quotations

“Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized” Acts 9:18-19a

“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” 1 Corinthians 15:22

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

REVELATION THROUGH OTHER MYSTICAL AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

Key Idea: Most Christians believe that God reveals himself to them in a personal way, and speaks directly to them.

- Some Christians after their conversion, have a later experience of ‘baptism of the spirit’ or ‘religious ecstasy’ where they believe that the Holy Spirit touches them in a special way. Those that experience this are given spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues (unknown languages), having visions or prophesying (speaking a message from God).
- In Charismatic forms of Christian worship, worshippers feel very close to God and enjoy worshipping in an uninhibited way such singing, dancing, shaking, clapping and holding their hands in the air. Some worshippers are so taken up by the experience that they may cry in joy.
- Prayer and meditation are ways that many Christians believe that God reveals himself and by emptying their mind and filling it only with God, they may feel the presence of God and a sense of inner peace and wonder.

Quotation

(“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.” Acts 2:1-3)

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” Acts 2:4

REVELATION OF GOD IN THE PERSON OF JESUS

Key Idea: Christians believe that God took human form in Jesus – fully human and fully God.

- Paul wrote that God reveals himself through Jesus so that people can know God through the life, work and teachings of Jesus.
- Christians believe that Jesus reveals God to humanity because Jesus enters into a relationship and creates a relationship between people.

- Through the stories of the Gospels which show love, forgiveness and the chance of a new start, Christians believe that Jesus reveals the nature of God.
- The Church and Bible teachings is that it was necessary for Jesus to become human so that he, could make a full payment for human sin and for God's forgiveness to be made available to all humans.

Quotation

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." John 3:17

"I and the Father are one." John 10:30 ('I' relates to Jesus)

"No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6b

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

Key Ideas: There are different interpretations of the Bible but it is the central source for all Christians revealing the truth about God.

- The Old Testament contains one of the most important ideas that there is a relationship between God and humanity. Eg. Abraham and patriarchs.
- The New Testament contains the writings of the early Christians. This includes the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John which are to tell the 'good news' about Jesus.
- There are different groups of Christians who interpret the Bible in different ways. Some Christians will say that every word in the Bible is absolutely true, eg. Jesus really did 'walk on water'. (**Literalists**) **Fundamentalists** believe that it is wrong to question anything in the Bible as they believe it is the word of God and was inspired by his guidance through the Holy Spirit to the writers.
- Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Anglicans believe that through the gift of the Holy Spirit, God inspired the people who wrote the books.
- The **conservative** view is probably the most common view among evangelical Protestant Christians and believes that the Bible was inspired by God and not dictated.
- The **liberal** view suggests that most things in the Bible can be interpreted in a *symbolic* way as the stories record experiences of people seriously seeking after God in a different time and cultural setting. Eg. Jesus didn't really walk on water; it has more of a spiritual significance. However, spiritual truths can be learnt and the stories can be helpful to understand God.

Quotations

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE BIBLE

Key Idea: The Bible is the most important and holy book for Christians and they try to model their lives according to its teachings.

- Christians believe that the Bible contains the teachings they need to understand God and follow Jesus.
- The Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew, some books in Aramaic, and the New Testament in Greek.

- The Bible was finally translated into English in the 16th century by William Tyndale (1494-1536). This meant that people were able to read the Bible in their own language and have a greater understanding of the nature of God revealed through its writings.
- In all church services, there are readings from the Bible and the teachings are explained in the sermon.

Some Christians read the Bible at home every day and use it for prayer. Many Christians meet to study the Bible and to pray together. It is also read for guidance or as an act of devotion towards God.

Religion, Reason and Revelation – Key Words

| Key word | Definition |
|------------------------|--|
| Aramaic | A language spoken in the Holy Land at the time of Jesus. |
| Authority | A source of reliable knowledge and teachings. |
| Baptism | A Christian ceremony when someone is cleansed of original sin. |
| Charismatic | Form of Christian worship where people try to open themselves to the Holy Spirit and be inspired by it. |
| Conservative | Belief that the authors of the books of the Bible wrote under God's inspiration. |
| Conscience | A sense of right and wrong. |
| Conversion | A change in someone's religious beliefs. |
| Forgiveness | Pardoning someone for a mistake or a wrongful act. |
| Fundamentalists | Christians who say that every word in the Bible is absolutely true and there are not errors or mistakes in it. |
| Greek | The language in which most of the New Testament was originally written. |
| Holy Spirit | The third person of the Trinity. |
| Incarnation | God taking human form as Jesus Christ. |
| Liberal | A belief that the Bible need not be understood literally but can be interpreted. |
| Numinous | The feeling of the presence of something greater than you. |
| Pentecost | The day when the Holy Spirit came to the disciples. |
| Prophecy | Predicting future events. |
| Revelation | 'Unveiling' – when something which was previously hidden becomes known. |
| Sermon | A talk on a religious subject at a service. |

Religion, Reason and Revelation – Practice Exam Questions

Question 1

- a) What is meant by revelation? (1 mark)
- b) What is meant by a religious experience? (2 marks)
- c) Describe Christian the role of Jesus in the revelation of God to the Christians. (3 marks)
- d) Explain how it is that many Christians feel God reveals himself to believers today. (6 marks)
- e) “We don’t need any new revelations.” (12 marks) Discuss this statement. You should include different supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Christianity in your answer.

Question 2

- a) Name one Christian scripture? (1 mark)
- b) State two types of revelation. (2 marks)
- c) Describe how Christians might experience God. (3 marks)
- d) Explain why a Christian might say that suffering is a necessary part of human life. (6 marks)
- e) “One person’s experience cannot prove the existence of God.” (12 marks) Discuss this statement. You should include different supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Christianity in your answer.

Question 3

- a) What is meant by the literalism? (1 mark)
- b) State two how two different groups of Christian interpret scripture. (2 marks)
- c) Describe how a numinous experience might affect a Christian. (3 marks)
- d) Explain why some Christians don’t believe that everything in the Bible is absolutely true.. (6 marks)
- e) “The Bible is the literal word of God.” (12 marks) Discuss this statement. You should include different supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Christianity in your answer.

HOW TO WRITE A PART 'E' EVALUATION QUESTION



1

I agree/ disagree with this statement

because....



2

On one hand, some Christians think

because....

Evidence from the bible says

This is important because it shows

3



On the other hand, some Christians think

because....

4

There could be problems with this argument

because....



They may say that evidence can be found

5



Other people/denominations/relig ions/ atheists may think

because....

6



Having considered all sides of the argument which are

MATT GROENING



My gut feeling is

(and/or)

7

My final conclusion is

because....

Part D – Self Assessment

| | |
|--|---|
| Level 1 1-2 marks out of 6 | A weak answer <input type="checkbox"/> I have given a simple answer with a small amount of relevant information. <input type="checkbox"/> I have listed some answers but with little description, explanation or analysis. <input type="checkbox"/> I have made quite a few mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation. |
| Level 2 3-4 marks out of 6 | A satisfactory answer <input type="checkbox"/> I have given some relevant information without detail. <input type="checkbox"/> I have given some description, explanation or analysis to support my answer. <input type="checkbox"/> I have presented my answer with some organisation. <input type="checkbox"/> I have referred to Christian teachings in my answer. <input type="checkbox"/> I have used some specialist religious or philosophical words, and used some of them correctly. <input type="checkbox"/> I have a few mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation. |
| Level 3 7-9 marks out of 6 | A good answer <input type="checkbox"/> I have selected relevant information and developed it properly. <input type="checkbox"/> I have given a fairly complete and full description, explanation or analysis to support my answer. <input type="checkbox"/> I have presented my answer properly in a well structured format. <input type="checkbox"/> I have referred to Christianity and have given a full explanation of why the teaching(s) selected is/are important. <input type="checkbox"/> I have regularly used specialist religious or philosophical words, and used them correctly. <input type="checkbox"/> I have made a few mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation. |

Part E – Self Assessment

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Level 1 1-3 marks out of 12</p> | <p>A weak answer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I have given a simple answer without relevant information. <input type="checkbox"/> I have given an opinion that is inappropriate or without evidence. <input type="checkbox"/> I have made quite a few mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation. |
| <p>Level 2 4-6 marks out of 12</p> | <p>A limited answer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I have given some relevant information without detail. <input type="checkbox"/> I have put forward my opinion with a little bit of explanation. <input type="checkbox"/> I have stated at least one viewpoint with some limited argument or discussion. <input type="checkbox"/> I have thought a bit about the best way to organise my answer. <input type="checkbox"/> I have vaguely referred to Christianity in my answer. <input type="checkbox"/> I have used some specialist religious or philosophical words, and used some of them correctly. <input type="checkbox"/> I have a few mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation. |
| <p>Level 3 7-9 marks out of 12</p> | <p>A competent answer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I have selected relevant information and developed it properly. <input type="checkbox"/> I have given my own point of view in an appropriate way. <input type="checkbox"/> I have discussed more than one different viewpoint and explained their importance. <input type="checkbox"/> I have given reasons/evidence to back up the points of view that I mention. <input type="checkbox"/> I have structured my answer properly. <input type="checkbox"/> I have referred to Christian teachings and explained their relevance and importance. <input type="checkbox"/> I have used specialist religious or philosophical words, and used most of them correctly. <input type="checkbox"/> I have made occasional mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation. |
| <p>Level 4 10-12 marks out of 12</p> | <p>A good answer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I have shown that I understand the significance of the issue raised. <input type="checkbox"/> I have given my own, appropriate, point of view, and properly backed it up with reasons. <input type="checkbox"/> I have discussed and analysed several different points of view in detail. <input type="checkbox"/> I have explained the relevant reasons/evidence supporting each point of view. <input type="checkbox"/> I have justified my evaluation of the issue. <input type="checkbox"/> I have presented my answer in a clear and organised way. <input type="checkbox"/> I have referred to specific Christian teachings and analysed and explained their relevance and importance. <input type="checkbox"/> I have correctly used specialist religious or philosophical words. <input type="checkbox"/> I have made hardly any mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation. |