General and Special Revelation

Theists believe that God is totally different from humans but that he makes himself known in 2 ways: general and special revelation. General revelation refers to ways that anyone can experience God. Special revelation refers to unique, individual experiences.

REVELATION CAN BE GENERAL (EVERYONE) OR SPECIAL (PERSONAL VISIT)

General Revelation

General revelation refers to experiences which are available to everyone...

- Acts of nature, conscience and morality
- Religious scripture
- The work of religious leaders

1-NATURE

Many theists see the majesty and creative power of God in nature, from breath-taking landscapes like Snowdonia to the tiny, perfect hands of a newborn baby.

2-REASON AND CONSCIENCE

Many theists believe that they can learn about God by using their intellect. Religious believers think that conscience enables them to judge whether the nature of God as described in holy books or by religious leaders rings true.

3-SCRIPTURE

All religions have sacred texts that they treat with great respect. They give an individual insight into the nature of God. Some Christians open their Bibles randomly and believe that whatever they read has a message for them from God. Most Christians read the Bible in a more structured way, often with the help of books explaining the text. All religious believers read or chant their sacred texts on a regular, often daily basis.

4-RELIGIOUS LEADERS

In addition to their founders (e.g. Jesus, the Buddha, Mohammad), all six religions have religious leaders, but their authority varies, sometimes even within the tradition. They are seen as holy men and women who are close to God, and so their insights into the nature of God are trustworthy. Other religious people may reflect the nature of God in their teachings and their lives. Mother Teresa of Calcutta's selfless devotion to the poor was claimed to show the unconditional and undiscriminating love of God.
General and Special Revelation

Special Revelation

Special revelation describes experiences of God revealing himself directly to an individual or to a select group...

- Worship
- Visions, Dreams and Prophecies
- Miracles of healing

1-WORSHIP

Religious believers claim to experience the presence of God or the meaning of existence through acts of worship and prayer.

2-DREAMS AND VISIONS

The musical Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat is based on the biblical story of Joseph, who learned of God's purposes through a series of dreams.

In the 15th century when Mother Julian was very ill she had 16 visions in the space of 24 hours. She recovered and devoted the rest of her life to meditating on the meaning of her visions and giving spiritual guidance to others. One of her most well known visions was that of the hazelnut as a symbol of the universe...

“And so all things have being through the love of God. In this little thing I saw three truths. The first is that God made it; the second is that God loves it; and third is that God looks after it”

MIRACLES OF HEALING

Accounts of inexplicable (unexplainable) cures are found in all religions, which they attribute to the power of God. Christian pilgrims travel to Lourdes from all over the world hoping to be healed by water from a spring. Many claim to receive spiritual healing. They still have their illness or disability, but they are now able to accept it and live with it. For instance, in 1987 Jean-Pierre Bely claimed to have been cured of multiple sclerosis (when the muscles in your body stop working), and after a long investigation by both medical and religious experts, it was declared a miracle.
General and Special Revelation

Task

1- What is general revelation?
2- What is special revelation?
3- Explain with examples how God can be known through general revelation.
4- Explain with examples how God can be known through special revelation.

5- ‘God cannot be known’

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:
• refer to Islam teaching
• give developed arguments to support this statement
• give developed arguments to support a different point of view
• reach a justified conclusion

Structure for 12 Mark Question

FOR
AGAINST
RELIGION
ME