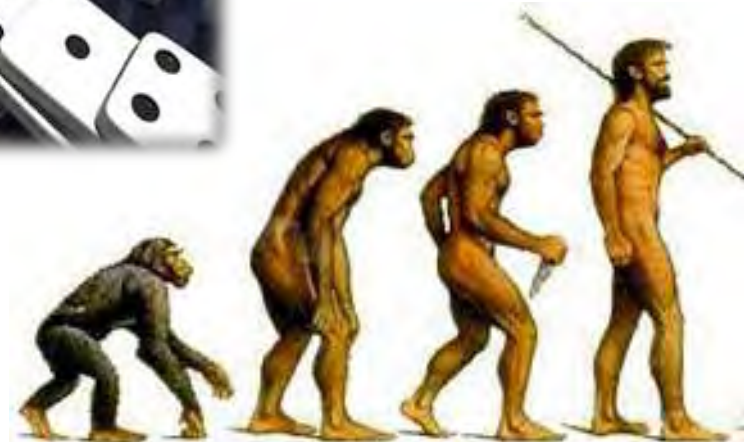




Believing in God

Revision Guide



Key Words

Agnosticism: Not being sure if god exists or not.

Atheist: Believing that God does not exist.

Conversion: Changing from one religion to another or from not following a religion to following one.

Free Will: The idea that humans are free to make their own choices.

Miracle: Something that breaks the laws of science and makes you think only God could have done it.

Moral Evil: Actions done by humans which cause suffering.

Natural Evil: Things which cause suffering but were not caused by humans.

Numinous: The feeling of the presence of something greater than you.

Omnipotent: The belief that God is all-powerful.

Omniscient: The belief that God is all-knowing.

Omni-Benevolent: The belief that God is all-good and kind.

Prayer: An attempt to communicate with God, usually through words.

How a religious upbringing may lead a person to believe in God

Evidence (examples)

Reading or watching Bible stories.

Going to a church or independent Christian school.

Praying as a family before you go to bed or eat meals.

Celebrating religious festivals as a family.

Going to Church or Sunday School each week.

Family members telling you about their belief in God.

Explanation

Could convince them that the events are true.

Would be taught from a religious viewpoint as being factual.

Parents wouldn't pray if they thought it was not real.

Explaining meaning & importance suggests factual events.

Worshipping a God becomes a naturally acceptable event.

Child accepts parents word as truth.

These examples will need to be expanded and put in paragraph form using P.E.E.



Numinous

This feeling of being overwhelmed by the sense of the presence of something greater than you is a spiritual emotion. The first man on the moon, Neil Armstrong, felt this when he saw how amazing space looked like from the moon.

Conversion

Conversion is all about Change. Changing from one religion to another or from no religion to following one. Conversion usually follows some life altering event that convinces an individual that there must be some sort of God.



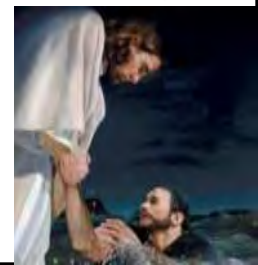
Religious Experience

Many people feel they make some form of connection with God when they pray, whether they get what they ask for or not. People pray in all sorts of circumstances, out of need, comfort, thankfulness, for guidance and for others.



Prayer

Christians believe God is immutable (doesn't change). As a result they feel God can still work miracles. Many people say incredible events in their life are a miracle. In France, Lourdes gets thousands of visitors every year hoping for a miracle.



Miracles

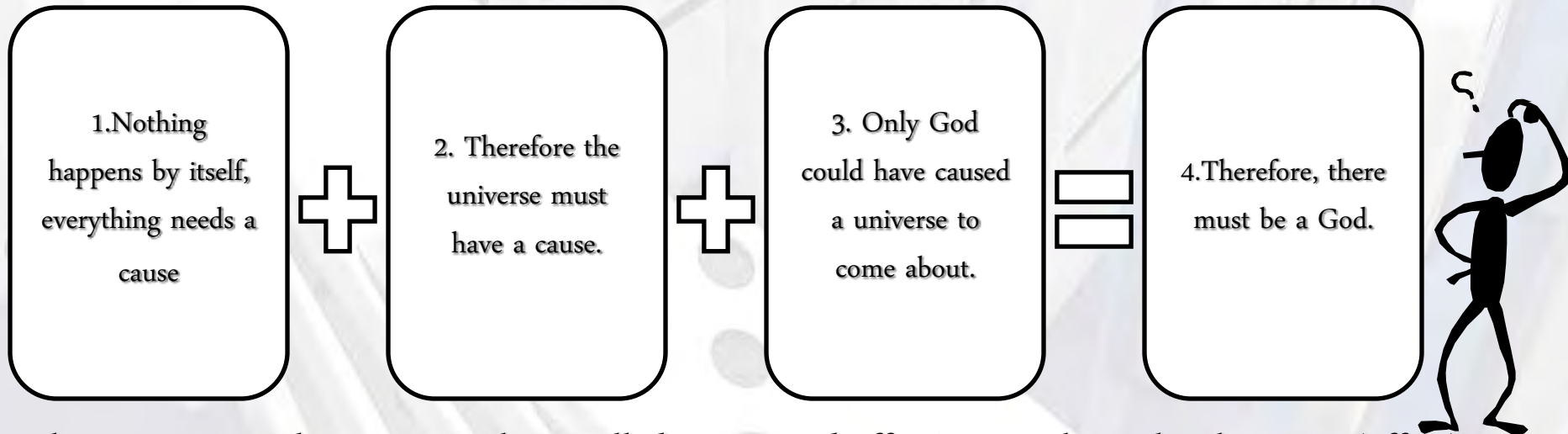


Argument for the Existence of God

Cosmological Argument = Causation (they are one and the same!)

Causation: 'The argument that everything must have been started off (caused) by something else.'

St Thomas Aquinas



This argument relies on something called 'cause and effect'. Everything that happens (effect) must have something that has made it happen (cause). E.g. a row of dominos fall (effect), someone pushed the first one (cause) or a universe exists (effect), someone (God) must have made it exist (cause).



Teleological Argument = Design (they are one and the same!)

Design: 'The idea that things with a function or purpose, must have been created for that purpose.'

The philosopher, **William Paley**, used the idea of design to try and prove the existence of God. He

looked at a watch and said if something like this requires a designer, how much more would the world need a designer



1. To design something takes intelligence and thought.



2. The world shows evidence of design.



3. Therefore, a being with intelligence and thought must have designed it.



4. Only God could have intelligence and thought enough to design the world.



5. Therefore, as the world exists, God must exist.



Argument for the Existence of God

The problem with both these arguments is that a person could say 'If God caused/designed the universe, then who caused/ designed God?'

The Christian answer is that no one made God, he always existed. He's what Aristotle (ancient Greek philosopher) refers to as the 'prime mover' (the first one to make things happen but doesn't need anything to make it happen).

Alternative explanations for the universe, exist, such as coincidence.



David Hume

'evolution' and 'natural selection' (survival of the fittest) were the reason and not design.



Charles Darwin

There are too many faults in the universe to say they are a result of a perfect God's design.



Richard Dawkins



Big Bang

Some scientist believe the universe started as a result of a huge concentration of energy causing a massive explosion they call the Big Bang. This can be seen as offering a scientific explanation for the universe without the need for a God.

Some people would say that unanswered prayers are evidence that God doesn't exist or people would get answers to their prayers, particularly ones that are for the benefit of others in tragic situations around the world.

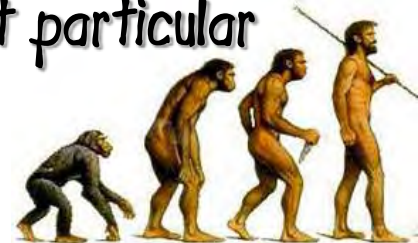
Unanswered Prayer



Arguments for not Believing in God

Evolution & Natural Selection

Many people believe evolution and natural selection are more logical explanations for the existence of humanity. Charles Darwin believed In order to survive, life forms must adapt (evolve) to their changing environment or die. The strongest and fittest will evolve maintaining the existence of that particular species.





Big Bang

The creation story in Genesis starts by God saying 'Let there be light' and so many Christians see this as God causing the Big Bang which was his way of starting creation. The seven-day creation is seen by many as a poem not an historical account

Christians say that unanswered prayer may be down to our motives or what we asking for (lottery win). If God's answer to prayer is 'No' it's still an answer. Plus sometimes God allows the world, nature and people to run its natural course.

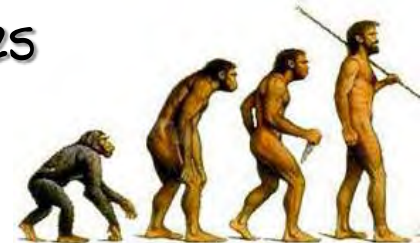
Unanswered Prayer



Christian Response

Evolution & Natural Selection

Christians believe humanity is special, made to be able to connect spiritually with God. Although they would not normally believe in evolution (e.g. from an ape) they would accept we have developed in skills, thinking and even posture. They point out that there are far too many missing links in the chain of evolutionary theories to be acceptable.





The Existence of Evil

Evil is the most extreme form of badness and suffering.

There are two main types of evil:

Natural Evil: 'Things which cause suffering but have nothing to do with humans.'
e.g. earthquakes.

Moral Evil: 'Actions done by humans which cause suffering to others.'
e.g. murder.

Sometimes these overlap, e.g. famine (**natural**) caused by war (**moral**); or cancer (**natural**) caused by pollution (**moral**).

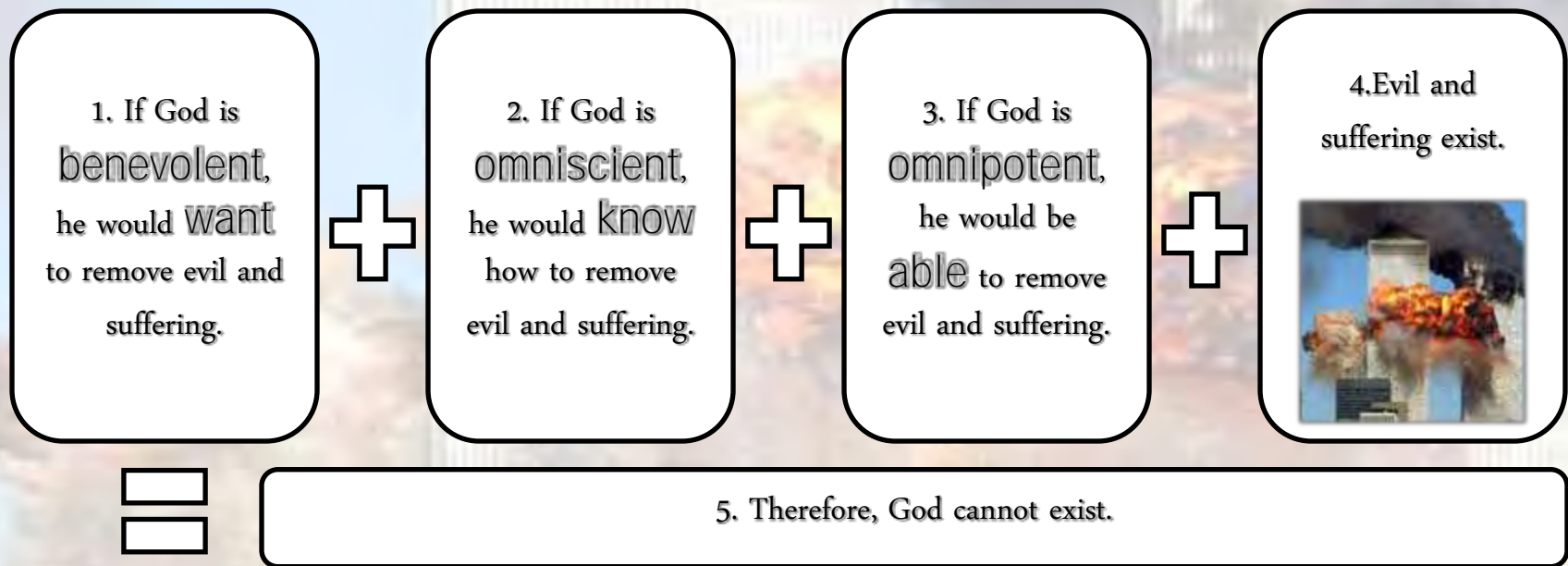
The existence of evil and suffering in the world is one of the strongest arguments **against** the existence of God.

If God made the world, why does he allow them to exist?

The Problem of Evil

God is thought to be all-loving (benevolent), all-knowing (omniscient) and all-powerful (omnipotent).

The 'Problem of Evil' argument against God goes like this:



The Christian response to this starts by saying we must first accept that the world is no longer as God created or intended it to be, and that mankind has altered its natural form through pollution, war and development.

Free Will and Evil



Christians say God gave humanity 'free will'. This means the ability and right to choose. If God had not given free will, then people would have no choice but to believe in him and follow him, which is not true freedom.

God did not make people as robots, they can choose to believe in God, or not; they can choose to do what is right, or not; they can choose to help people, or not.



Christians believe that evil is not a result of God, but of choices humanity makes. For God to intervene and stop evil it would mean taking away our free will and imposing his will.

Religion and the Media

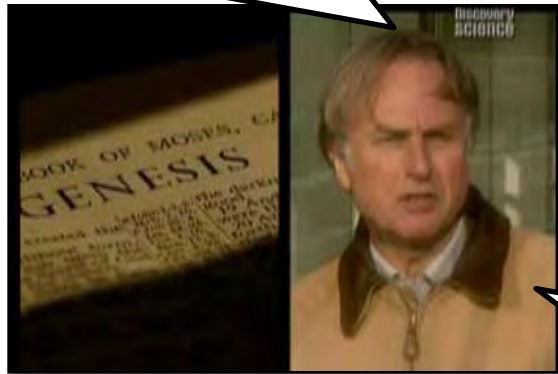
The media (TV, Film, Radio) can affect a person's attitude about religion.



The Big Question was a television documentary series produced by the Discovery Channel. One of the episodes was presented by **Richard Dawkins** who outlined how he believes Darwin's theory of **evolution** through **natural selection** disproves the religious idea of intelligent design in the creation of the universe.

*"When faced with the question of 'Why are we here?', the answers of ancient civilisations and religion were unsatisfying because they were simply **made up**."*

Some people may not recognise this as a one sided point of view and be **persuaded** that there is no God.



Dawkins uses this programme to discredit the religious argument that the universe shows evidence of design and an **intelligent designer** (as proposed by William Paley).

With the programme being presented by an **Oxford University** professor and with it being produced by the well respected **Discovery Science** Channel, this may convince some people to accept

Dawkins' argument and so not believe in God.

*"Charles Darwin has given us a much **neater**, more **self sufficient** and therefore more **satisfying** explanation which is evolution through natural selection."*

Religion and the Media

The media can sometimes lead a person towards a belief in God.



'Jesus: The Real Story' (also called 'Son of God') was a BBC /Discovery Channel documentary which sought to bring together historical, academic, religious and scientific studies to present a comprehensive modern day account of the life, mission and death of Jesus.

The programme used state of the art computer generated imagery and interviews with respected academics, theologians, scientists and archaeologists, along with dramatisations, to present an historical portrait of the person of Jesus. As the documentary was made jointly by the BBC and the Discovery Channel, both highly respected media organisations committed to accuracy and unbiased reporting, the positive outcome of the programme regarding Christian belief about Jesus may lead some people to accept the accuracy of Christian teaching and so believe in God.



"Jesus had been proved right, his campaign wasn't an act of madness, he understood before anyone the need for change"

Cut out each card and on the reverse write the meaning. Use these to help your revision.

Agnosticism

Atheist

Conversion

Free Will

Miracle

Moral Evil

Natural Evil

Numinous

Omnipotent

Omniscient

Omni-Benevolent

Prayer

Remember: Key words are not just for Q. Use them throughout your work at every opportunity.