

The existence of God.

What you need to know:

- Origins of the universe: **creation** or random chance?
 - The **Big Bang** theory.
 - The theory of **evolution**.
 - A creation story from a religious **tradition**.
 - The **First cause** argument.
 - Arguments for and against the **design argument**.
 - Religious experience: illusion or reality?
 - Types of **religious experience**: **conversion**, **sacramental ritual**, **charismatic worship** and **meditation**.
 - The meaning of: **theist**, **atheist** and **agnostic**.
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Terminology:

Theist: People who believe in God.
Atheist: Someone who does not believe in God.
Agnostic: Someone who is not sure what they believe about God.

The Big Bang theory:

15,000 million years ago matter was concentrated into tiny, dense matter. This matter expanded with the speed and force of an explosion. It is still expanding today.

All the planets, stars and matter comes from the gathering and cooling of matter and anti matter, which was set out by the Big Bang. Scientists also believe that the first living creature was a single cell creature a little like a lizard.

Evolution:

Evolution is:

- Natural selection by survival of the fittest.
- When species change by adapting to their environment.

This theory was given to the world by Charles Darwin. He suggested that life began in the sea. Over time species have changed from simple to complex creatures. The change included jellyfish, fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, apes and finally humans. This process took millions of years.

(DO NOT FORGET THAT THERE ARE MORE NOTES ON DARWIN IN THE SHARED DOCUMENTS AREA).

The first cause argument (Aquinas)

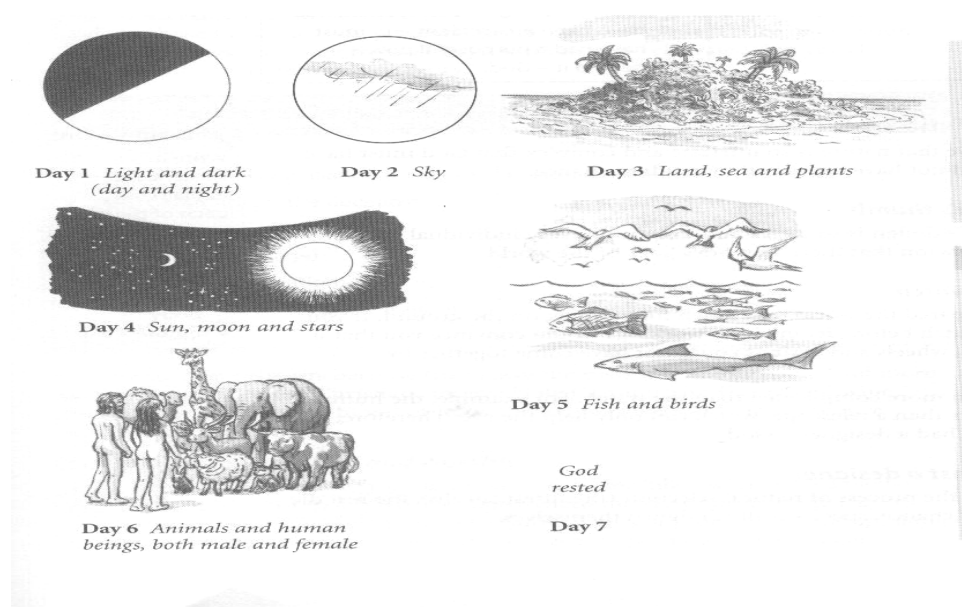
- The universe is the best evidence of God.
- Everything in the world has a cause, so the universe must also have a cause.
- There had to be something eternal (without beginning or end) that was not caused by anything.
- God is that eternal first cause.

A modern way of putting it is that God caused the big bang that started the universe and eventually all life evolved from it.

(DO NOT FORGET THERE ARE MORE NOTE ON THIS IN THE SHARED DOCUMENTS AREAS).

Creation story - Genesis 1 - 2vs.4:

According to the Bible there were seven days of creation.



Please note: You will not lose marks in the exam for mentioning Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. But make sure that you write the entire seven days out first. If you do mention them make sure that you stop at their creation - what happens next explain how suffering came into the world!

You must know one creation story in detail. To gain full marks you need to state clearly the name of the religious tradition your story comes from; what was created each day; that God created the universe from nothing and that God saw that the creation was good, a perfect creation.

Can you believe in evolution and in a creator God?

Yes:	No:
Creation stories are not scientific. They show <u>how</u> people tried to make sense of their purpose and place in the world.	Evolution says humans came from apes, not from the soil and a man's rib.
Most believers accept evolution, even though it has not been proved, but God could still have created the conditions for evolution to take place.	Evolution took many hundreds of millions of years, not seven days.
It was such a unique event that just the right conditions existed for life to begin on earth that it could not have been an accident and must have had a purposeful power behind it -God.	The process of natural selection was not guided by God; it was just luck or chance that the strong survived over the weak.

The design of the universe:

Some people believe that nature is so intricate and complex that God must have designed it. It could not have happened by random chance. Think about Sir Isaac Newton and his thumb. He was convinced that it was not by chance that the thumb print was intricate and individual. As a result of that he said that it must have had a designer, just like the world.

Or what about William Paley and his watch? Paley compared the world to a watch that was seen lying on the ground. If you have never seen a watch before, its intricate workings would convince you that they were designed. Cogs, wheels and springs could not have come together by themselves.

The universe is even more complex than a watch. For example, the human eye is more complex than a telescope, which can only help the eye. Therefore, the universe must have had a designer - God.

Arguments against a designer:

- Evolution - since the process of natural selection happens by chance, species really designed themselves.
- Design faults - if God designed the world, why are there so many faults in its structure.
- The problem of evil - if God designed everything, why did God create evil?

Religious Experience:

Many people believe in God because they say they have had an experience of him personally in their lives. A conversion (change of belief) can convince people of God's love and protection. It is usually deeply personal, unique to each individual and life changing.

(DO NOT FORGET THAT THERE ARE NOTES ABOUT THE CONVERSION OF PAUL IN THE SHARED DOCUMENTS AREA).

A **Sacrament** is an outward (religious) action that gives a spiritual blessing to those involved. A sacramental ritual is any religious service or ceremony that follows a pattern in which a sacrament is celebrated. For example:

- Baptism.
- Holy Communion.
- Confirmation.
- Marriage.

Sacraments help believers because they make the invisible, untouchable God more real. For example, when Christians receive communion they feel God's presence inside them physically.

Some Christian worship is **charismatic**, meaning that it is filled with the Holy Spirit. The first Christians experienced the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. They were given the gifts of the spirit which included the ability to speak in 'tongues' (strange language or sounds seem to pour out of the person). Features of this type of worship include:

- Singing.
- Praying aloud.
- Speaking in tongues.
- Raising the arms.
- Uncontrollable laughter, tears or shaking.

Prayer is talking to God aloud or silently, in public or in private. There are prayers of praise, thanksgiving, confessing sins and asking for things for oneself or others.

Meditation can help someone feel that God is real. By opening the mind and the heart and really listening, a believer can receive a revelation of God's peace and love. Some people claim they have had visions while meditating. This convinces them of the reality of God.

Are such experiences illusion or reality?

An atheist or an agnostic would say that such experiences are illusions (Imaginary) and are not good evidence for God's existence.

- Private experiences have no reliable outside witnesses.
- Public worship can be observed but it is impossible to be certain what people are witnessing.
- Miracles have no apparent natural explanation but this does not mean that they were brought about by God.
- In an extreme case, the person might be lying or making the experience up.

A theist would argue that religious experiences are real and are good evidence for God's existence.

- Conversion really changes a person. Its effects can be observed by others.

- Some healing miracles have been verified by doctors. The people who have been healed know that what happened to them was real.
- Visions and dreams are very real to the person who experiences them. If God is within each person, He could inspire them to dream about God.

Practice questions:

Mark scheme:

- 1 mark: Write a simple answer, one word or a sentence.
- 2 marks: give 2 reasons - 2 simple points or 1 simple point with an explanation.
- 3 Marks: make 1 simple point, explain it and give an example.
- 4 or more: write continuously - the examiner will decide if you have answered the question.
- 5 marks: evaluation questions.
'Do you agree' - give both sides of the answer but stressing your argument.

Practice questions:

1. What is an atheist? 1 mark
2. What is a theist? 1 mark
3. What is an agnostic? 1 mark
4. What is charismatic worship? Give an example. 2 marks
5. Give one example of sacramental worship. 1 marks
6. Outline the argument for the existence of God based on the design argument. 4 marks
7. Explain why some people think the world is a result of chance. 4 marks