

Revelation as proof for the existence of God Revelation means to unveil. Catholics believe God has revealed aspects of his being through natural and special revelation. <u>Natural revelation</u> - Believers see clues around them in the world suggesting God exists e.g. nature is complex and beautiful. - Life is more than atoms and chemical forces. It is also spiritual and gives a sense of awe at the vastness of the universe and the beauty of nature. <u>Special revelation</u> God has revealed some of his nature in the Bible. Christians believe the Bible proves the existence of God because. - It is inspired by the Holy Spirit - The Church teaches that God speaks through the Old and New Testament. - The Bible contains laws on how to behave such as the Ten Commandments. - The Bible can bring people into a closer relationship with God by learning about what God wants and how God cares for them. <u>Jesus as the culmination of revelation</u> - Catholic believe that God’s revelation was in the incarnation (God becoming flesh in Jesus). ‘It pleased God to reveal Himself’ Catechism. - The Catholic Church teaches that there can be no further and fuller revelation of God after Jesus, as God’s message to humanity reached its highest point in him. <u>What the revelation in Jesus shows Catholics about God’s nature</u> - For Catholics, Jesus shows them what God is like. He cannot be grasped by human beings on one level, but in Jesus people see God as: - One who is love - One who forgives - One who meets people where they are - Jesus on the cross showed an ultimate act of self-giving love and forgiveness for the sins of the world.	Visions A vision is something seen in a dream, trance or religious ecstasy. Catholics believe God can use our mental faculties to communicate truths and messages to us. Visions show... - God cares for, and intervenes, in the world. - They authenticate some of the Christian message. - They prove that Jesus, or Mary, or the saints have an active presence in the life of the Church. - They show it is worthwhile to pray to Christ and the Virgin Mary and to pray through the sense. Biblical examples of visions. - Abraham does not see God but hears his voice— this is known as a n auditory vision ‘the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision’ (Genesis) - St Paul on the road to Damascus. - The Transfiguration – Peter, James and John. Non-Biblical examples of visions. - St Bernadette and Joan of Arc. Why visions might lead to belief in God - They know enough about the person to believe they are telling the truth. - The changes of behaviour (e.g. St Paul) means it must come from God. - The details of the vision (e.g. St Bernadette describing the Virgin Mary) proves it must come from God. - The message in the vision makes them think it must come from God. Why visions show about the nature of God God is still at work in the world/He loves us/He communicates his revelation to humans/God can change people’s lives. Humanist/atheist response? No evidence/can be explained by science/can be suffering from mental illness/hallucinations/person on medication. Catholic Church response? Disagree with humanists/atheists as the Church has investigated the visions. It makes sure the visionary was not on medication/had a mental illness/agrees with the teaching of the Bible/It has a good effect on the visionary.	Miracles A miracle is an event which seems to break a law of science and the only explanation seems to be God. Miracles can be healing miracles (Jesus healing the blind) and nature miracles (Jesus walking on water). Biblical examples of miracles - Moses crossing the Red Sea - Jesus restoring sight to the blind. - The feeding of the 5,000 These miracles show that people can heal people at a distance and lead people to belief in God. Furthermore, Jesus performed miracles as a sign of his true nature (God’s son). Non-biblical miracles Catholics believe that God can still perform miracles. - St Bernadette saw the Virgin Mary at Lourdes. Bernadette asked her name and she said, ‘I am the Immaculate Conception’. Today Lourdes is a great place of pilgrimage and many healing miracles have taken place. Why miracles may lead to belief in God - If a miracle has really happened, it means that God has acted on earth. - If a miracle has happened, God must have performed it, therefore he must exist. - If an atheist or agnostic witness a miracle they may look for a natural explanation. However, if they cannot find one, they will be led to believe in God. Atheist and Humanist attitudes to miracles - Evidence is based on eyewitnesses but they could be mistaken or tell lies. - Many miracles in the past must be suspect because people did not know enough about science to investigate it. - Many miracles can be explained by science today. - If God performs miracles, why does he not help those who suffer? Catholic responses to humanist/atheists - Biblical miracles are authenticated by God - Miracles have been examined by the Church. - God uses miracles as a sign of his presence in the world. Why miracles show about the nature of God - God is active in the world. - God cares for his people and uses miracles to strengthen people’s faith. - God’s nature is love and so he sends miracles out of love.	Catholic attitudes to religious experience Religious experience is an event that people feel gives them direct contact with God. VISIONS, MIRACLES, CONVERSION, NUMINOUS AND PRAYER are all types of religious experience. <u>Conversion</u> Conversion is an experience which changes a person’s life or religion, or from agnosticism or atheism to belief in God (St Paul is a good example of this) <u>Numinous</u> This is a feeling of the presence of God (looking at the stars, beautiful scenery, and being filled with an awareness that there is something greater than them). This is something called the transcendent – something that goes beyond human experience. <u>Prayer</u> Communicating with God, usually through words. If a person feels that God is listening to the prayer, then they have a religious experience through prayer and are sure that he exists. Religious experience as proof of God’s existence - For people to have a numinous experience, something must be causing the experience – must be God. - If a miracle happens and breaks a law of Science only God can do this. - If a person has a conversion experience and changes their life – God must exist. - If a person prays and their prayer is answered (sick child), God must have answered their prayer, therefore he exists. Atheist and Humanist attitudes to religious experiences - They do not believe in God, therefore religious experiences do not come from him. - They are interpreted as religious experiences, but they really aren’t. - They only exist in people’s minds and cannot be investigated scientifically. - If religious experiences were true, everyone would have them. - There are more unanswered prayers then answered ones. - Followers of all religions claim to have religious experiences, they cannot prove the truth of any religion. Catholic response - When non-believers seek peace, justice and meaning, they are seeking God without realising it. ‘Man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself’ (Catechism) - There is an innate spiritual sense in each person. - Everyone has had some sort of religious experience, they have just interpreted it differently.	The design argument What is design? Any complex mechanism is designed for a purpose. Design involves things working together according to a plan to produce something that was intended. For example, looking at a car would make you think that the car has been designed. The classic argument for God’s existence William Paley argued that if you were walking in a field and saw a watch, you would conclude it would not have appeared by chance. The complexity of the watch would make you conclude it has a designer. The same is true with the universe – it is complex – the world must therefore need a designer. This is God. Modern forms of the design argument - The universe works according to laws (e.g. gravity/motion etc). - DNA is another piece of evidence of design in the world. - Some see evidence of design in evolution, where complex life forms develop from simple ones. - They see design in the beauty of nature (sunsets, mountains etc). The design argument - Anything that has been designed needs a designer. - If the world has been designed, the world must need a designer. - The only possible designer of something as beautiful and complex as the world must be God. - Therefore the appearance of design in the world proves that God exists. Why the design argument is important for Catholics - God’s existence can be demonstrated by looking at his creation ‘the existence of God the Creator can be known with certainty through his works by the light of human reason’ (Catechism). - God wants humans to use their reason to understand the world as well as the revelation he has given to the Church: ‘since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plan to them’ (Romans) - God is the Creator of the universe and keeps it in existence. Atheist and Humanist rejection of the Design Argument - The argument does not explain moral and natural evil. - Can be explained by science without needing God (e.g. matter is eternal). - The design argument does not refer to the existence of dinosaurs. - The argument only proves that the universe has a designer, not necessarily God. It could be someone, or something, else. Catholic response - The universe did not about through chance. The order of the universe is sign of a creator. - It is less likely that the universe came by chance than through a loving God. There is evidence that the world has been intelligently designed. ‘...the worlds were prepared by the Word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible’ (Hebrews).
The Cosmological Argument A Cosmological argument is one which argues that God exists from a philosophical study of the origin and nature of the universe. St Thomas put forward his classic form if the argument in his THREE WAYS to prove God’s existence in his work Summa Theologica. They are the WAY OF MOTION, THE WAY OF CAUSATION AND THE WAY OF CONTINGENCY.	THE WAY OF MOTION Aquinas argued that things in the universe are in motion (moving), but nothing can move itself unless it is moved by something else. This cannot go on to infinity as there would be no first mover who started it all off. Aquinas believed in a first mover, moved by no other. He believed this was God.	THE WAY OF CAUSATION Next, Aquinas argued that everything seems to have a cause and there is no example of anything causing itself. However, there must be a ‘first efficient cause’ otherwise there could not be the effect of the universe; and this first efficient cause is given the name God.	THE WAY OF CONTINGENCY All material things are contingent: that is their existence is not necessary and at one time they did not exist. However, if everything is contingent, then at one time nothing existed; but things do exist, therefore there must be a non-contingent being whose existence is necessary so it has always been in existence; and everyone would call this God.	

Modern form of the Cosmological Argument • Cause and effect are a basic feature of the world (e.g. doing homework will please parents). • Modern science developed through looking at causes and effects. • Anything caused to exist must be caused by something else to exist. To cause your own existence, you would have to exist before you exist, which is nonsense. • You cannot keep going back with causes because you will not have a beginning. If the universe has no first cause, then there would be no universe. As there is a universe, there must be a first cause. • The only possible first cause of the universe is God, therefore God must exist. The importance of the Cosmological argument for Catholic beliefs about the nature of God • God is the origin of everything. He is the unmoved mover, the first cause and the non-contingent being. • God is both within and beyond the universe. God is the source of all being and so has no beginning or end. God is infinite and eternal. • God is a mystery, more a question than an answer. Human beings can only grasp so much about God's being and nature 'God's greatness is unsearchable' Catechism. Atheist and Humanist rejection of the Cosmological Argument • If everything needs a cause then God must need a cause. Why should this stop with God? • Matter is eternal as so was never created. • Just because everything in the universe needs an explanation does not mean itself the universe requires an explanation. • Even if there was a first cause, why does it have to be the Christian God? It could be the God of any religion. • There is no need for a first cause, unmoved mover or non-contingent being to be good. It could be evil, a mixture of good and evil, and so on. Catholic responses • To say that the Big Bang and the entire universe 'just happened' is more unbelievable than to say it was designed or created by God. • The universe is too vast and complex and could not just appeared by chance. There must be a reason for the universe being here. • Humans are unique and have an immortal soul. It cannot be pinned down, observed or measured by science.	The problem of evil The world is full of evil and suffering but these can take two forms: Moral evil: Moral evil is suffering that is caused by humans misusing their free will (war, rape, murder). Catholics call these acts of moral evil sins because they are against what God wants humans to do. Natural evil: Natural suffering is suffering that has not been caused by humans (floods, volcanoes, drought etc). They are not caused by humans but result in massive amounts of human suffering. Why evil and suffering raise problems for Catholic beliefs about the nature of God • Catholics believe that God is OMNIPOTENT (all-powerful) as in the Bible it says that 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' (Genesis) But if God is all-powerful he must be able to remove evil and suffering from the world. • Catholics believe that God is OMNIBENEVOLENT (all-loving) as in the Catechism it says that 'God's very being is love'. But if God is all-loving he must be able to remove evil and suffering from the world as they cause so much unhappiness. • Catholics believe that God is OMNISCIENT (all-knowing) as in the Bible it says that 'By his providence, God protects and governs all things which he has made'. But if God is all-knowing he must have known all the evil and suffering in the world which would come from creating the universe in the way he did. Why this leads some Christians to examine or reject their belief in God • Catholics believe that God is OMNIPOTENT, OMNISCIENT AND OMNIBENEVOLENT, yet the problem of evil and suffering challenges their beliefs. • If they are involved in a natural disaster or their child dies, it may make them think about their beliefs. • Some people cannot believe that a good God would have designed a world that contained natural evils. • People find it hard to believe in a God who allows humans to cause so much evil and suffering when he could stop it if he wanted to. If God exists, he must have known about the Holocaust. The existence of suffering may mean that God does not exist. • Some believe that God has reasons for his actions which humans are not really in a position to challenge.	Solutions to the problem of evil and suffering Biblical responses to the problem of evil and suffering • Many Christians believe that there is no point in worrying about the problem of evil because humans cannot understand God's reasons for doing things. • In the Bible there are many examples of suffering, for example in the story of Job in the Old Testament and Psalms. • Having God's help and strength when suffering helps Catholics to cope with the problem. Theoretical responses to evil and suffering • Two responses given in the form of THEODICIES – a philosophical justification of God allowing evil and suffering. • ST AUGUSTINE – God not responsible for evil and suffering as he created humans in his image and gave them FREE WILL. Evil and suffering is a punishment as Adam and Eve misused their FREE WILL. This is known as a SOUL-DECIDING THEODICY. • ST IRENAEUS – God is partly responsible for evil and suffering. It is part of God's plan. Those who suffer will be rewarded with eternal paradise after they die. This life is a preparation for paradise. This is known as a SOUL-MAKING THEODICY as God created this world as a place for people to develop their souls. • The example of MAXIMILIAN KOLBE – a Franciscan friar who was arrested in Auschwitz and gave up his life for a fellow prisoner. Practical responses to evil and suffering • Catholics believe that they should respond to evil and suffering in practical ways. Jesus commanded his followers to help those who suffer and we should do the same. Prayer Prayer is a very powerful way if responding to the problem. They believe that by praying for those who suffer, God will ensure they get the right type of relief for their suffering. Such prayers are called INTERCESSORY PRAYERS where prayers are said for those who are sick, dying etc. Charity Many Christians believe that the best way of responding to evil and suffering is to try to overcome them in practical ways. For example; • By taking up caring jobs such as a doctor or nurse. • By giving money to charities involved in responding to suffering such as Christian Aid or CAFOD. • By giving food to food banks and campaigns designed to remove child poverty and promoting racial harmony.	KEY WORDS FOR UNIT 3.1 Natural revelation: the revealing of God in the nature of the universe. Special revelation: the revealing of God in such things such as holy books, for example the Bible. Spiritual: the non-material element of life, such as religion, feeling and values. Awe: A sense of overwhelming wonder at the vastness, mystery or beauty of something. Vision: something seen in a dream, trance or religious ecstasy, which gives a religious message. Apparitions: visionary experiences that have a physical effect on people around the word. Auditory vision: a vision which is only a voice with no images. Canonised: a person being declared a saint by the Church. Beatified: the first stage in becoming a saint; the declaration that a deceased person s counted among the blessed. Transcendent: the 'beyond' that which is more than the physical. Nature miracle: a miracle involving a change in natural objects or forces. Immaculate Conception: the Catholic belief that God preserved Mary from original sin from the moment she was conceived. Blessed Sacrament Procession: the Consecrated host is carried through the streets in a special container, a monstrance. Conversion: an experience which changes a person's life or religion. Regenerative experience: a conversion experience giving the feeling of being 'born again'. Numinous: the feeling of the presence of something greater than you. Transcendent: something going beyond human experience and existing outside the material world. Design: when things are connected and seem to have a purpose, for example, the eye is designed for seeing. Evolution: the idea that life forms changer over time (humans have developed from single-celled organisms).	KEY WORDS FOR UNIT 3.1 Summa Theologica: Thomas Aquinas' major book written in 1265-1274. Contingent: the fact that something does not have to exist; it could either be or not be. Big Bang: the beginning of the universe from a 'cosmic egg'. Moral evil: suffering caused by actions done by humans (e.g. murder, stealing). Natural suffering: suffering which is caused by nature and has nothing to do with humans (e.g. floods, earthquakes). Omnipotent: the belief that God is all-powerful Omnibenevolent: the belief that God is all-loving Omniscient: the belief that God is all-knowing. Holiness: the state of being very moral and spiritual Psalms: a book of the Old Testament containing 150 sacred songs. Theodicy: a philosophical justification of God allowing evil and suffering. Free Will: the idea that human beings are free to make their own choices. Soul making: the idea that God gives people this life to make their souls good enough for heaven. Franciscan: a member of a religious order that follows the teachings and spiritual disciplines of St Francis of Assisi. Friar: a member of a religious order who does not own property and who has to either work or beg to earn their living. Intercessory prayers: prayers asking God's help for other people.
--	---	---	---	---

