

BELIEVING IN GOD

What do Christians believe?

Christians believe God:

- Is **omnipotent** (all powerful), **omniscient** (all knowing) and **Omnibenevolent** (all good)
- Created the world and everything in it and answers prayers and can perform miracles

Religious upbringing

The way that people are brought up can affect their beliefs.

- **Baptism** – by having a baptism a child is welcomed into the Church
- **School** – Christian parents may choose a school that educates children in the Christian faith.
- **Worship** – B children may go to things like Sunday school
- **Community** – young people may mix with others of their own age and form groups where they can talk about their faith.
- **Parents' example** – If parents are Christian they will bring up children to have Christian morals and attitudes

Religious experience

1. Numinous – an experience which completely amazes someone and often inspires awe and wonder.
2. Conversion – an experience that causes an individual to change their beliefs, ideas or complete lifestyle.
3. Prayer – A method which believers use to communicate with God
4. Miracles – an act of God that appears to be impossible as it goes against the laws of nature.

The design argument

The design argument is used to prove the existence of God by arguing that the world is designed and that God is the designer.

Paley came up with a version of the design argument:

Paley compared the world to a watch. If a person saw a watch for the first time he or she would immediately know it had been designed because it is so complex. A watch has many parts that have been carefully made and put together to work successfully, so it must have been planned and designed. Paley argued that same of the universe saying it could not have happened by chance and must have had a clever designer. The only being capable of designing the universe is God. Therefore God exists.

Argument AGAINST design

The design argument may lead other people not to believe in God because:

- We cannot possibly “prove” God’s existence and the design argument only suggests he is the designer.
- The appearance of design could actually be the result of evolution: the scientific theory that everything has evolved and only the appearance of design.

The causation argument

The causation argument tries to prove the existence of God by showing that everything happens for a reason. This leads to some people believing in God.

The causation argument can be seen as the following:

- Nothing happens by itself
- Everything that happens must be caused by something else
- The universe cannot have happened by itself

- A powerful cause was necessary to cause the universe
- This cause has to be God
- Therefore God exists

Arguments AGAINST causation

- The causation argument cannot be proved
- Even if everything in the world seems to have a cause, it does not mean that the universe had a cause
- The argument only suggests that God is the cause of the universe
- There are other possible causes of the universe such as the scientific “Big Bang” theory
- If everything has a cause what caused God?

Scientific explanations of the origins of the world

- Big bang theory
- Evolution and natural selection

Christian responses to scientific explanations

Some Christians believe scientific theories are compatible with God. They believe that:

- The Bible’s description of the creation of the world is more of a story
- The six days of creation were “stages” not actual periods of time
- Science describes how the world came to exist and the Bible explains why.

Other Christians believe that scientific explanations of the world are wrong because they conflict with what is written in the Bible, these Christians are called creationists.

Unanswered prayer

Christian responses to unanswered prayer

- They may accept that they do not have enough faith that God will answer their prayers, so that they must go on trying
- They may accept that God hears and answers prayers but not always in the way they hope or expect. They do not fully understand God but go on trusting in him.
- They may feel that God is not listening to them
- Some may accept that God does not answer selfish prayers
- Some believe what they are praying for is not part of God’s will or divine plan.

The problem of evil and suffering

Evil and suffering causes a problem for people who believe in God. The problem is:

- If God is all-good he would want to remove evil and suffering as he cares for his creation – Omni-benevolent
- If God is all knowing, he would know how to remove evil and suffering – Omniscient
- If God is all-powerful he would be able to remove evil and suffering

Christian responses to the problem of evil and suffering

Christian explanations

- Free will – God gave people free will. Some people accept that evil and suffering is due to people’s decisions
- Test from God – believers are allowed to go through difficult times to see how they react, it may make people stronger
- God’s plan – people should trust God because he knows why everything happens
- Following Jesus’ example