03 5 **“The design argument proves that God exists”**

Evaluate this statement.

Many Christians might say that the Design Argument proves that God exists. The world is so complicated and amazing that it has to have a designer, and that designer is God. Other people might disagree that an argument can prove anything about God, and they might contradict the evidence put forward in the argument by Christians.

To support the above statement Christians might refer to William Paley and is watch analogy. The watch is complicated, and it has a designer. He compares the watch the world and the world is even more complex, therefore it also must have a designer, and he said the only person capable of designing the world had to be God, therefore God exists. On the face of it this seems like a logical argument and fairly convincing because there is evidence of design in the world.

Evidence to support the argument are complexities in nature. For example the complicated patterns that occur such as the Fibonacci sequence, DNA, and the fact that our Earth exists in the Goldilocks zone. The chances of this happening are billions to one. All of this complexity points to the fact that the universe didn’t appear by chance but was carefully designed and created by God, supporting the statement that God must exist.

However, the argument does not convince everyone that God exists. Atheists might say that there are flaws in the argument. Just because the world appears designed, doesn’t mean it has a designer. In fact, we now know that all the complexities in the world are the result of evolution, and evidence for this has come from Charles Darwin with his trip to the Galapagos Islands and his evidence of animals and birds for example the finches, adapting to their environments rather than being created and designed as they are now.

Secular people might also point to the fact that the world often appears random and unplanned. There is evidence of moral and natural evil happening for example natural disasters such as tsunamis and good people suffer and die. If God had designed the world, then surely he wouldn’t let this happen. They might therefore conclude that either he is a bad designer, or that he doesn’t exist.

In conclusion it would appear that the Design Argument at first glance is a logical argument because complicated things do require a designer and it does have some good evidence to support it such as the complexities in nature. It is therefore convincing to Christians that God exists. However, I don’t agree that it proves God exists, because much of the evidence put forward such as complex patterns in nature are now known to be the result of billions of years of evolution, something William Paley wouldn’t have known about. This doesn’t mean God doesn’t exist, but it does mean that the argument isn’t strong enough to prove his existence. I would conclude therefore that the argument might strengthen a Christian’s faith, but doesn’t provide proof of God’s existence.

*This is an extremely well-argued response giving reasoned consideration of arguments for and against the statement. It is a very full answer including logical chains of reasoning which draw on knowledge and understanding of evidence and information and lead to judgements. Christian teachings and non-religious beliefs are applied to the arguments which are appropriate for a Theme C answer. The final paragraph provided the justified conclusion.*

*Level 4 - 12 Marks*

**If God were loving, there would be no suffering in the world**

Many people would agree that if God were loving, there would be no suffering in the world. God is supposed to be loving and powerful, so why would he want or allow his people to go through hard times. However, religious people counter this with arguments to try to show that although suffering exists, God does still love them.

Those who would agree with the statement such as Atheists might use the inconsistent triad. If God is omni-benevolent, omnipotent and omniscient, suffering should not exist. This is because if he was loving, he wouldn’t want people to suffer, if he was omniscient, he would know they were suffering and if he was omnipotent, he would be able to take the suffering away – however, suffering exists. This would indicate that either God is not loving, or powerful, or all-knowing, or that he doesn’t exist. This is a strong argument and is hard to counter because of the logical way it presents itself. Christians do agree God is each of these things, and so there is an inconsistency. I will come back to their counter arguments later in this answer.

In addition, many people would use suffering to say God cannot be loving because much suffering, for example caused by natural evil – affects innocent, good people. Such as if there is an earthquake or flooding, or even something like cancer. These types of suffering are random and affect people who often don’t deserve to suffer. Moreover, moral evil such as murder or rape, also affect innocent people which seems unfair. If God is all loving and fair and just, why does he allow people to suffer in this way. It would appear that he doesn’t care, or is so transcendent that he is unaware of what is happening, not the loving father figure that is portrayed in the New Testament.

However, the majority of religious people don’t just give up believing that God is loving just because these types of suffering exist. Christians would still believe that God is loving because it says so in the Bible. John 3:16 says that God loves the world so much that he gave his only son to die and because the Bible is the ‘Word of God’, Christians see this as their authority so that whatever is happening in the world, God is still loving. They might then say that through suffering, God has a plan and that because he is omniscient, he knows what is best and he knows what will eventually happen and Christians can be comforted by the fact that he is still in control even if it doesn’t feel like it.

Christians might also point to the fact that Jesus himself suffering and felt abandoned by God ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me’ and yet three days later, this suffering led to the resurrection and chance for all people to one day be saved. This response holds weight as Jesus is the ultimate role model for Christians and if he suffered, Christians can take heart that he identifies with them in their suffering and there may be a reason for it.

In addition, Christians might also look at verses in the Bible that suggest suffering can be a test of faith and make people stronger. This response makes sense as in life sometimes suffering is needed in order to grow or improve – such as the pain an athlete might go through in training. In the Bible, Job was tested in the worst possible ways, and yet stayed faithful which demonstrates to Christians that even if it appears that God has abandoned them, they should stay strong and trust in the fact that he still loves them. Moreover, moral evil is going to be a possibility due to the belief of free will – that we are free to make moral choices.

Having discussed this statement and the various arguments and counter arguments, it would appear to me that just because there is suffering, it doesn’t mean that God is not loving. Christianity is full of examples of the fact that suffering exists and can be almost seen as a good thing – making the faith of the person stronger, giving other people the chance to be charitable, making people appreciate the good times and it doesn’t necessarily mean God is not loving. Because Christians believe he has a plan and is omniscient, they can take heart that even if suffering, God is there and maybe is even suffering with them. Rather than saying that suffering means God is not all-loving, I actually think the argument to say that suffering means God does not exist at all holds more weight. I think that suffering is a very strong argument to show that God cannot exist because suffering is random and the unfairness of suffering would perhaps indicate that there isn’t in fact an all-powerful, loving being in control, but that suffering is randomly caused by acts of nature and the evilness of individual people.

*Students cannot be expected to write as much as this in the time allowed in the exam. It is an excellent well-argued response giving reasoned consideration of different points of view with good use of technical terms. The logical chains of reasoning lead to judgements and there is a strong final justified conclusion. Level 4. 12 marks.*

**If God were loving, there would be no suffering in the world.**

The arguments for this view are very strong. Every day we hear about some natural disaster or terrible act of human wickedness. Most people are horrified and feel pity for the victims. If they could, they would prevent such suffering. So how can there be an all-loving God? Surely a loving God would do something to stop such evils happening. Surely he would have created a world where they could not occur. It really seems as if God does not care. What makes it even worse is that so often those who suffer the most have done nothing to deserve it, e.g. young children born with painful, life-limiting conditions. If there is a loving God, why does he not protect the innocent and vulnerable, as he told the Jews to do in the Old Testament? Christians challenge this view in various ways. One argument is that suffering enables spiritual growth. It brings out the fighting spirit in us that enables us to develop into mature humans. It encourages us to feel compassion for and want to relieve the suffering of others. Christians believe that suffering also deepens their relationship with God. They realise that they are not self-sufficient, and their trust in him enables them not just to cope but to triumph over suffering. Most Christians also believe that suffering is inevitable if we are to be totally free. God’s gift of free will is one of his most precious gifts and without it we would be no more than puppets on a string. Genuine freedom means the freedom to make good and bad choices, to show love for others or to inflict suffering. The arguments in support of the statement are persuasive. It is certainly true that suffering often seems to be excessive and pointless and that it often targets the innocent. Nevertheless, the counter-arguments are even stronger. Without suffering we would never fully appreciate true happiness and joy. If the weather was always beautiful sunshine life would be boring but because we have times when it is wet and miserable, days when the sun shines are special. God in his love designed the world to enable us to experience the fullness of life. Moreover we learn from suffering as much of it is caused by human action. God has given us the priceless gift of free will and if we misuse it by, for example, going to war or taking illegal drugs then suffering results. God allows us to learn from our mistakes but he also in love allowed his only Son, although totally innocent, to be crucified so that we could be forgiven for our wrong doing. What greater love could be shown than this, thus showing that God is love and that the statement is incorrect!

*This is a well-argued response with the arguments developed and reasoned consideration given for and against the statement. It contains good reference to religious beliefs and has logical chains of reasoning leading to judgements. It also has a strong conclusion. The content is very good and so Level 4 maximum of 12 marks is awarded. However, it would have been useful to have written the answer in paragraphs.*

**Sample answers from Religious Studies 2A Specimen 2018 Themes paper**

**Section C – The existence of God and Revelation**

**03 2 Give two types of general revelation**

The Bible

 Nature

*One mark awarded for each of two correct points. Maximum 2 marks.*

03 3 Explain two contrasting beliefs in contemporary British society about visions.

In your answer you should refer to the main religious tradition of Great Britain and non-religious beliefs.

One belief about visions held in contemporary Britain by many Christians is that they are what is called a special revelation. This is because they are thought to be God or an Angel, or the Virgin Mary revealing themselves to people. God is thought to be transcendent, and outside of our knowledge but Christians believe he does on occasions reveal himself to people. An example might be Saul in the Bible who heard the voice of Jesus and changed his life around and became St Paul. Does there need to be a direct Biblical reference here? *No, but it is helpful as it develops the belief being made.*

Do you need a second example?

*No, one example is sufficient.*

Another contrasting belief in Britain might be held by a secular or non-religious person who might disagree and find alternative explanations of visions. This might be because they don’t believe in God and so want to find a more rational explanation of God speaking to people. They might say that the person could be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or they might be mistaken or even that they have an ulterior motive such as fame or money.

*This is a very full answer explaining two contrasting beliefs held in contemporary society. The main religion of Great Britain is included and contrasted with a non-religious belief. The maximum four marks were awarded. It wasn’t necessary to go into quite so much detail to get the four marks.*

03 4 Explain two religious beliefs about miracles

 Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer

One religious belief in Christianity about miracles is that they demonstrate the power or omnipotence of God. They are events that cannot be explained by the laws of science such as someone miraculously being cured. One example from the Bible is when Jesus walked on water (Mark 6) and even raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11). These miracles demonstrate that Jesus had power over nature and that God has the power to break the laws of Science.

A second religious belief is that they show that God is immanent, involved in the world and that he cares about people. When people pray and their prayers are answered with a miracle it shows God is listening, and wants to help them. The Bible teaches that if you believe, God can do anything; ‘With God, all things are possible’ (Matthew 19:26). An example of a more modern miracle is Simon Teece who suffered a serious head injury but recovered after his community prayed for him. This showed that God cared about him and wanted to be involved in his situation.

*Another excellent answer. Two beliefs clearly explained with reference to scripture. Maximum 5 marks awarded.*

03 5 “The design argument proves that God exists”

Evaluate this statement.

Many Christians might say that the Design Argument proves that God exists. The world is so complicated and amazing that it has to have a designer, and that designer is God. Other people might disagree that an argument can prove anything about God, and they might contradict the evidence put forward in the argument by Christians.

To support the above statement Christians might refer to William Paley and his watch analogy. The watch is complicated, and it has a designer. He compares the watch with the world and the world is even more complex, therefore it also must have a designer, and he said the only person capable of designing the world had to be God, therefore God exists. On the face of it this seems like a logical argument and fairly convincing.

Evidence to support the argument are complexities in nature. For example the complicated patterns that occur such as the Fibonacci sequence, DNA, and the fact that our Earth exists in the Goldilocks zone. The chances of this happening are billions to one. All of these things point to the fact that the universe didn’t appear by chance but was carefully designed and created by God. The Bible also supports this idea by stating in Genesis 1 that ‘God created the Heavens and the Earth’.

However, the argument does not convince everyone that God exists. Atheists might say that there are flaws in the argument. Just because the world appears designed, doesn’t mean it has a designer. In fact, we now know that all the complexities in the world are the result of evolution, and evidence for this has come from Charles Darwin with his trip to the Galapagos Islands and his evidence of animals and birds adapting to their environments rather than being created and designed as they are now.

Secular people might also point to the fact that the world often appears random and unplanned. Bad things happen for example natural disasters such as tsunamis and good people suffer and die. If God had designed the world, then surely he wouldn’t let this happen. They might therefore conclude that either he is a bad designer, or that he doesn’t exist. The argument for them therefore does not prove God exists

In conclusion it would appear that the Design Argument at first glance is a logical argument because complicated things do require a designer and it does have some good evidence to support it such as the complexities in nature. It is therefore convincing to Christians that God exists. However, I don’t agree that it proves God exists, because much of the evidence put forward such as complex patterns in nature are now known to be the result of billions of years of evolution, something William Paley wouldn’t have known about. This doesn’t mean God doesn’t exist, but it does mean that the argument isn’t strong enough to prove his existence. I would conclude therefore that the argument might strengthen a Christian’s faith, but doesn’t provide proof of God’s existence.

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