CREDIBLE CATHOLIC

PRESENTATION 1 GUIDE

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE & PHILOSOPHICAL PROOF OF GOD’S EXISTENCE

Age 12+ through Adult Version

From content by:
Fr. Robert J. Spitzer, S. J., Ph.D.
Adapted by: Claude R. LeBlanc, M.A.
Welcome to CREDIBLE CATHOLIC!

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM? It is unbelief and skepticism. In our culture, derision of religion, God, the soul, Jesus, and the prospect of finding spiritual meaning in suffering, are not only tolerated but preached and sometimes even celebrated. Many are already infected by the faulty messages which are delivered in four popular, but inaccurate, secular myths. These myths, in one form or another, are as follows:

Myth 1: Science and faith are incompatible, and since science is true, it has replaced religion.
Myth 2: Human beings are like every other animal—merely a complex of atoms and molecules. We have no soul, no eternal destiny, and no transcendent nature. When we die, we die.
Myth 3: There is no explanation for why an all-loving God would allow suffering. Therefore, suffering is fundamentally negative and a loving God probably does not exist.
Myth 4: There is no evidence for Jesus as an historical figure, and therefore his resurrection or divinity. If Jesus did exist, he was just an interesting prophet, but not a Savior or the Son of God.

The 2016 Pew Research Center’s Religious Landscape Study indicates that over 40% of millennials have abandoned their faith to unbelief because these four challenges have not been adequately addressed. Unless we specifically and effectively address these challenges to faith, the percentage will continue to grow. What can be done?

OUR SOLUTION: Credible Catholic, a Magis Center curriculum correlated to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, was specifically created to address these challenging myths.

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CC Presentation 1a: Scientific Evidence of God’s Existence

PRESENTATION NOTES

SLIDE 1—TITLE SLIDE

SLIDE 2—COPYRIGHT SLIDE

SLIDE 3—OPENING PRAYER

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OPENING PRAYER

Lord, we thank You for giving us intelligence and curiosity. With these gifts, we’ve developed science to help us explore and understand the natural world. May our study lead us to know what is real and true, and so lead us to You. Amen.

SLIDE 4—LET’S DISCUSS

SLIDE 5: We live in an age of modern scientific discoveries. This has led many people to believe that we don’t need the Church to help us understand the world around us. They believe that faith is not necessary nowadays; faith is just an emotional choice. Some believe there is no possible evidence for God’s existence, so belief in God only comes from faith; a feeling, and not from any real evidence.

SLIDE 6: How do we see faith today? Let’s see an example from the movies. In “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade” Jones has to decide whether or not to have faith in his father’s journal when it doesn’t make sense to him. Watch as he questions whether faith is based on feeling or something else.
SLIDE 7—VIDEO 1a-1: “Blind” Leap of Faith scene from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*.

SLIDE 8—LET’S DISCUSS

1. WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED WHEN JONES TOOK THE “BLIND” LEAP OF FAITH?
2. WHAT COULD JONES HAVE DONE TO PREVENT THOSE THINGS FROM HAPPENING?

LET’S DISCUSS

3. SHOULD HE HAVE DONE THOSE THINGS? WHY?
4. IS A “BLIND” LEAP OF FAITH REALLY FAITH, OR SOMETHING ELSE?

SLIDE 9: Unlike Indiana Jones, Catholics understand that faith is *not* blind; faith is not just a feeling. We think that what we believe *should* make sense; faith *can* be reasonable.

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SLIDE 10: So, the question is, “Is it reasonable to believe that God exists?” Let’s find out.

SLIDE 11: There are many reasons for believing that God exists. In this presentation we’re looking at the best scientific evidence. In the next presentation, we’ll look at proofs for the existence of God that come from philosophy. Science actually provides many kinds of evidence for the existence of God. Did you know about 60 percent of scientists either believe in God or are open to God’s existence? Let’s see why.

SLIDE 12: Albert Einstein, the Father of General Relativity, is probably the most famous scientist who ever lived. He once said: "The more I study science, the more I believe in God." It was scientific evidence that led Einstein to believe in God. *What was that evidence, and why did it lead him to believe that God exists?*
SLIDE 13—CHAPTER 1—EVIDENCE FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE UNIVERSE: Before 1927 there was no evidence to indicate whether or not the universe had a beginning. But then, a Belgian priest and physicist, named Fr. Georges Lemaitre, proposed the Big Bang Theory.

SLIDE 14: His theory answered a question that astronomers couldn’t answer. The question was, “Why is it the further away a galaxy is from us, the faster it is moving away?”

SLIDE 15: Fr. Lemaitre’s Big Bang Theory states that galaxies are not moving through empty space. Instead, the space between them is stretching.

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SLIDE 16: Imagine a polka-dotted balloon. As you inflate the balloon, the space between the dots will stretch and the dots will move further apart. Thanks to the Big Bang, the space between galaxies is expanding just like the space between the dots on the balloon.

SLIDE 17: Fr. Lemaitre’s calculations gave Einstein the information he needed for his Theory of General Relativity to work. Eventually, this information also led Einstein to accept that the universe had a beginning. Let’s see how.

SLIDE 18—ACTIVITY 1: Big Bang Rubber Bands

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SLIDE 19: By looking at the rate the universe is expanding, scientists have recently calculated backwards to figure out when the universe began—kind of like releasing the tension on a rubber band, or letting the air out of a balloon. The calculations determined that the universe is about 13.8 billion years old.

SLIDE 20: Over the years, scientists have discovered several different kinds of evidence that confirm the Big Bang. The first discovery came in 1929. An astronomer named Edwin Hubble observed that the light coming from distant galaxies is stretched-out, or “red-shifted”, more than the light coming from closer ones. This means the distant galaxies are moving away from us more quickly.

SLIDE 21: Let’s let Stephen Hawking explain.

SLIDE 22—VIDEO 1a-2: Clip from Stephen Hawking’s “The Expanding Universe”

SLIDE 23: A second kind of evidence for the Big Bang was discovered in 1965. Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson noticed a strange hiss. The hiss was radiating in nearly equal amounts from everywhere in the universe they scanned. They eventually realized the hiss could only be caused by an incredible burst of energy coming from a single place at the beginning of time. This hiss was, in fact, heat from the Big Bang; something called Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation, which their instruments had picked up as a hiss.

SLIDE 24: Now, listen carefully to the Big Bang.

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SLIDE 25—VIDEO 1a-3: Hearing the Big Bang.

SLIDE 26: There’s a third kind of evidence for the Big Bang. It’s found in the very slight variation in the amount of matter spread across the universe very early in its history. The most recent evidence of this was collected by the Planck Space Observatory in 2013.

SLIDE 27: Let’s watch how its image was made.

SLIDE 28—VIDEO 1a-4: Planck’s View of the Universe.

SLIDE 29—LET’S DISCUSS

1. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HAVING THREE DIFFERENT KINDS OF EVIDENCE FOR THE BIG BANG?
   - LET’S DISCUSS

2. WHICH KIND OF EVIDENCE (a. GALAXIES MOVING AWAY FROM US, b. COSMIC MICROWAVE BACKGROUND, OR c. EVEN DISTRIBUTION OF MATTER IN THE EARLY UNIVERSE) IS MOST CONVINCING? WHY?

SLIDE 30: So far, we’ve given evidence for the Big Bang, but, what about God? Is there any evidence that the universe was created? There is, and we’ll look at some in a minute, but the Big Bang is only one step in showing that the universe needs a Creator. While the Big Bang is evidence for the EXPANSION of the universe, it only suggests the universe had a BEGINNING and requires a Creator.
SLIDE 31: Before we get to evidence for God, let’s look at some of the reasons given for the universe not having a beginning.

SLIDE 32: Keep in mind, that, being human, scientists can sometimes let their personal beliefs about God, religion and science interfere with their search for truth. Even Einstein altered his General Theory of Relativity to keep the universe from needing a beginning. He didn’t alter it based on any evidence, but because he personally assumed that the universe always existed. However, once he saw Fr. Lemaitre’s evidence for the Big Bang, he changed his theory. Giving up his personal beliefs in the face of the truth is one of the reasons Einstein is considered a great scientist. Now, let’s look at the most common reasons given for the universe “not needing” a Creator.

SLIDE 33: There are four main “reasons” given for how the universe could exist without being created. Basically, these involve looking for ways to explain how the universe didn’t have a beginning at the Big Bang.

SLIDE 34: First, it has been speculated that there might be an eternal multiverse continually producing bubble universes. In this speculation, our universe is one of these bubble universes.

SLIDE 35: Another idea is that the universe is in a continual cycle of big bangs, where the universe expands, and big crunches, where the universe collapses. In this speculation, our universe happens to be in the expansion part of this ongoing cycle.

SLIDE 36: A third speculation is that the universe always existed but it just didn’t expand before the Big Bang.
SLIDE 37: Finally, some hypothesize that universes can exist with unusually complex physics, such as having up to 11 dimensions that would permit all sorts of expanding and bouncing universes. None of these speculative universes, they claim, would require a Creator. But, is that really true?

SLIDE 38—CHAPTER TWO—EVIDENCE FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE UNIVERSE: In 2003, three of the most prominent physicists in the world developed a proof together. The physicists were: Arvind Borde of UC Santa Barbara; Alexander Vilenkin of Tuft’s University near Boston; and Alan Guth of MIT. Their proof demonstrated that any universe that is expanding HAS TO HAVE A BEGINNING.

SLIDE 39: This proof, called the BVG Proof for short, shows that our universe, and any universe we can imagine, would need to be expanding at a rate greater than zero, and therefore, would need to have a beginning. That goes for multiverses, bouncing universes, 11-dimension string-theory universes, you name it. Here’s how Dr. Vilenkin explained it.

SLIDE 40—DR. VILENKIN QUOTE

“It is said that a good argument will convince a reasonable man and that a proof will convince an unreasonable man. Now that the BVG proof is in place, cosmologists can no longer hide behind a past eternal universe. There is no escape. They must confront the problem of a beginning.”

DR. VILENKIN

SLIDE 41: A second kind of evidence for our universe having a beginning is entropy. It’s also known as the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics. Entropy is one of the most fundamental laws of physics. Most physicists, including Einstein, believe it can never be disproved.

SLIDE 42: Entropy means that every physical system, including our universe or any potential multiverse, will eventually run-down like a wind-up toy until it can do nothing.

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SLIDE 43: Because of entropy, if our universe, or any other kind of universe, always existed, it would have completely run out of usable energy by now and be unable to do anything. Our universe, though, is still full of usable energy, so it must have existed for a limited amount of time. Based on this evidence from entropy, plus the evidence from the BVG proof, it seems clear that any universe or multiverse must have a beginning.

SLIDE 44: We’ve seen that the universe is expanding (from the Big Bang), and we’ve seen that it must have a beginning (from the BVG Proof and from entropy). Now we must ask: “What, or Who, caused the universe?” Cosmologists have determined that time, space, matter, and energy all had their beginning with the universe. Nothing physical existed before the Big Bang. But, what is “nothing”?

SLIDE 46: Anytime scientists have tried to explain how the universe came from nothing, their “nothing” always turns into “something.” Even physicist Stephen Hawking made this mistake. He wrote that the universe could create itself from nothing because of the Law of Gravity. But, the Law of Gravity is actually something; something that did not exist before the Big Bang.

SLIDE 47: What can we conclude from the evidence from the Big Bang, the BVG Proof, and entropy? First, it is very likely that our universe, and any other possible universe, had a beginning. And second, something can’t come from nothing, because nothing can only do nothing. So, the universe came from something outside of time, space, matter and energy.

SLIDE 48: This brings us to something like God, as the following video explains.
SLIDE 50—CHAPTER 3—EVIDENCE FOR A CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE: We just saw that entropy is evidence for the beginning of the universe, but it also happens to be evidence that the universe needed an intelligent Creator. Why? Because of how unbelievably precise it had to be.

SLIDE 51: If entropy had been just slightly higher at the Big Bang, the universe would have been “almost dead” from the start, unable to sustain any kind of life. What are the odds of that? Physicist Roger Penrose calculated the odds of our universe having the very low entropy it does as $1 \times 10^{10^{123}}$. What does that number mean?

SLIDE 52: Since $10^{10}$ is 10 billion, then $10^{10^{123}}$ is 10 billion multiplied by itself 123 times. This number is so large, that if every zero in it were printed in 10-point type, our solar system could not hold the paper it was printed on!

SLIDE 53—LET’S DISCUSS: In other words, the odds of our universe having the very low entropy it does, by pure chance, are so small it would only happen one time out of that astronomically large number of universes!

SLIDE 54: Of course, it could happen by pure chance, but based on those odds, Dr. Penrose doesn’t think it would. He said: “This...tells us how precise the Creator’s aim must have been...an accuracy of one part in $10^{10^{123}}$.”

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SLIDE 55: Another way of describing the odds of our universe having the very low entropy it does is comparing it to the odds of a monkey typing the complete works of Shakespeare by randomly typing on the keys in a single try. In other words, don’t count on it!

SLIDE 56: Low entropy at the beginning of the universe is just one kind of evidence for what physicists call the “fine-tuning” of the universe for life.

SLIDE 57—LET’S DISCUSS

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SLIDE 58: Some of these fine-tuned conditions and constants of the universe are so unbelievably precise that a change of less than a millionth of 1% would be disastrous for life. Let’s review a couple of them.

SLIDE 59: The “pull” of gravity, or what’s called the Gravitational Constant, determines how strongly physical bodies are attracted to one another. If it were slightly weaker, then galaxies wouldn’t have formed. But, if it were slightly stronger, there would have been no Big Bang.

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SLIDE 60: Here’s another example. The element carbon is an essential building block of life. Fred Hoyle and William Fowler discovered the exceedingly high improbability of four chemical elements, all having the precise values needed, to allow for both carbon abundance and carbon bonding, which is necessary for life. In other words, change the values slightly on just one of these elements, and carbon either become much more scare in the universe or it becomes incapable of supporting life.

SLIDE 61: In the words of Fred Hoyle: “A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super-intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature.”

SLIDE 62: To illustrate his point, Hoyle went on to say, “Imagine a junkyard contains all the bits and pieces of a Boeing 747, dismembered and in disarray. A whirlwind happens to blow through the yard. What is the chance that a fully assembled 747, ready to fly, will be found standing there?”

SLIDE 63: Not everyone agrees. To avoid the need for a Creator to explain the “fine-tuning” of the universe, some physicists have resorted, once again, to a multiverse. They argue that if there are trillions and trillions of universes, each with different conditions, one of them is likely, by pure chance, to be suited for life, and we just happen to live in that one.

SLIDE 64: Well, remember how a multiverse was supposed to keep the universe from needing a beginning, but then the BVG Proof showed that even a multiverse itself would need a beginning? It’s the same story with fine-tuning. It turns out that a multiverse would also require “fine-tuning” to prevent its “bubble universes” from interfering with one another, and making life impossible. So, a multiverse only moves the need for “fine-tuning” back one step. We’d have to ask “What caused the fine-tuning of the multiverse?”

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SLIDE 65: And that brings us to our final point. How do we answer the question of “What caused the “fine-tuning” of our universe? If not random chance, then what, or Who? Many physicists—like Fred Hoyle—believe that only a “super-calculating, super-intellect,” like God, could cause the universe.

SLIDE 66: Besides, isn’t a single intelligent Creator much more likely than trillions and trillions of universes? Science typically uses a philosophical principle known as Occam’s Razor. It says that when faced with two possible explanations, the simpler of the two is most likely to be true.

SLIDE 67: Here’s a short video summarizing the evidence we’ve presented.

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SLIDE 68—VIDEO 1a-6: The Fine Tuning of the Universe.

SLIDE 69: When we add up the evidence for the Big Bang, the BVG Proof, entropy and the “fine-tuning” of the universe; they overwhelmingly imply that our universe was caused by an intelligent creative force beyond our physical reality; something, or someone, like God.

SLIDE 70: Watch one of the world’s leading scientists, Francis Collins, explain how he reached this same conclusion.
SLIDE 71—VIDEO 1a: Dr. Francis Collins on the Scientific Evidence for God.

SLIDE 72—ACTIVITY 2: Why Would Anyone Not Believe That God Exists?

SLIDE 73—CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, the scientific evidence for Your existence is powerful. Help us remain open to it, and give us the courage to share it with others so that they may be open to Your presence, too. Amen.

SLIDE 74—ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WE HAVE SEVERAL OPTIONS AVAILABLE FOR YOU TO CONTINUE EXPLORING PRESENTATION 1:

1. FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: https://mymagis.com

2. FOR MORE BACKGROUND READ: The Catholic Catechism

3. FOR IN DEPTH STUDY READ: More Modules are available at https://www.catholic-catholicism.com

SLIDE 75—CREDITS

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CREDIBLE CATHOLIC Presentation 1a ACTIVITIES

Scientific Evidence of God’s Existence

ACTIVITY #1: Big Bang Rubber Bands: Lay a cut rubber band (unstretched) next to the ruler. Draw dots at 0 inches, 1 inch, 2 inches and 3 inches. Hold one end at 0 inches and stretch the other end until the dot at 3 inches is at 6 inches. Answer the following questions (inside the rubber bands): 1. **What’s different about the dots closer to one another from the dots farther away? Why?** 2. **What happens when you release the tension?** 3. **How do each of these relate to the universe?**

![Rubber Bands](image)

ACTIVITY #2: Why Would Anyone Think it’s Unreasonable to Believe in God?

Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the NIH and former lead in the Human Genome Project, believes that scientific evidence makes it reasonable to believe in God.

Answer these questions and be prepared to discuss them:

1. **Why would anyone think it is unreasonable to believe in God or that the best scientific evidence doesn’t point to God?**

2. **Could it be just because people don’t want to believe in God?**
CC Presentation 1b: Philosophical Proof of God’s Existence

PRESENTATION NOTES

SLIDE 1—TITLE SLIDE

SLIDE 2—COPYRIGHT SLIDE

SLIDE 3—OPENING PRAYER

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SLIDE 4: We’ve looked at scientific evidence that the universe had a beginning and is expanding. Evidence like the Big Bang, the BVG Proof and entropy. We also learned about the universe’s “fine-tuning” and why “fine-tuning” makes it very unlikely that the universe happened by pure chance. Together, they show it’s very likely the universe required a super-intelligent Creator.

SLIDE 5: But we can go further. There is another method we can use to prove that the universe actually required a Creator. In this presentation, we’re going to look at some philosophical proofs for God’s existence.

SLIDE 6: But first, what is Philosophy? Philosophy comes from the Greek, meaning “the love of wisdom.” It is a method used to arrive at truth by using logical reasoning. Here’s a video to help explain what Philosophy is for.
SLIDE 7—VIDEO 1b-1: *What is Philosophy for?*

SLIDE 8—CHAPTER 1—PHILOSOPHICAL PROOF OF GOD’S EXISTENCE: There was famous medieval philosopher, St. Thomas Aquinas, who believed that philosophy *could* tell us a lot about God. He used philosophy to develop five philosophical proofs of God’s existence; proofs that are still used and studied today.

SLIDE 9: In these proofs, Aquinas showed that there must be, and can only be, *one uncreated, unlimited being who caused everything else.* You’re probably asking, “*What does that mean?*” Philosophical language can be tough to understand, so don’t worry, we’ll break it down in simpler language; we’ll take it one step at a time, and we’ll use examples you’re familiar with.

SLIDE 10: First, St. Thomas Aquinas said there must be at least one *uncreated* being. *What does that mean?* It means that there must be a being who was not created and who always existed.

SLIDE 11—THINK ABOUT IT: Here’s an easier way to understand what Aquinas meant. Imagine you came across a chain but you couldn’t see all of it.

SLIDE 12: Obviously, there has to be a beginning, or a first-link, to a chain. If it went on forever, it would fill up the whole universe.

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SLIDE 13: St. Thomas Aquinas knew that everything created, including the universe, needs an uncreated being in order to exist, just like a chain has to have a first link. We’ll explain why soon.

SLIDE 14—THINK ABOUT IT: Here’s another example. Think about setting up a line of dominoes to be knocked down. If set up correctly, each falling domino causes another domino to fall down.

SLIDE 15: If there were unlimited dominoes, you’d have to set them up forever, and you’d never get to knock them down.

SLIDE 16: There has to be a first domino to knock the second one down. St. Thomas Aquinas said that there can’t be unlimited causes. There has to be a first cause, an uncaused, or uncreated, cause, just like a first domino, in order for anything else to move.

SLIDE 17: Now logically, this first cause, or first being, couldn’t be created. Why? Well, it couldn’t be created by anything else because nothing else existed before it, and it couldn’t create itself if before it existed. So, the only possible way this first being could exist is that it always existed. In other words, as Aquinas said, this first being is uncaused, or uncreated. Because this is the first being, everything else that exists came after it, and was caused by it in some way. Nothing came before it.

SLIDE 18: Here’s another example of the need for a first (uncaused) being who created everything else.
SLIDE 20: So far, we have a being that is uncaused and always existed. St. Thomas Aquinas explained that the first being must also be unlimited.

SLIDE 21—THINK ABOUT IT: Can you think of anything in our universe that is unlimited?

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SLIDE 22: A book, for example, has many limits; it has a certain number of pages; it has a particular shape and size; it can only be in one place at a time. In fact, these limitations are what define it. They’re what make it a book, and not something else like a tree or a human. Even the universe itself has limits. It has a certain amount of matter and energy.

SLIDE 23: There’s one other thing to know about an unlimited being; it has to be perfectly simple. Why? Because anything made up of parts is going to be limited. If something has more than one part, those parts have to be different from each other, and those differences are defined by the part’s limitations, just like a book is defined by its limitations. The limits of each part of a thing cause the whole thing to be limited.
SLIDE 24: So, for a being like God to be unlimited means it can’t be made up of parts, it must be perfectly simple.

SLIDE 25: The third thing Aquinas said was this; there can only be one uncreated, unlimited, being. Why? Because things are defined by their differences. Two completely identical things are impossible.

SLIDE 27: Even when things “appear” to be identical, there is always something different about them, or they would be the same thing. Something that makes two things different is just the fact that they can’t be in the same place at the same time. So, there can’t be two “unlimited” beings. If there were, they would both be everywhere at all times, and would be the same being. There can only be one uncreated, unlimited being.

SLIDE 28: Finally, St. Thomas Aquinas said that this one uncreated, unlimited being must be the ultimate cause of everything else that exists. Only the first being could create the second being.

SLIDE 29: However, the third being came to exist, whether from the first being or the second being, its existence would still ultimately be dependent on the first being.
SLIDE 30: By this point, we can call this one, uncreated, unlimited being, who must be the ultimate cause of everything else that exists, God, because its characteristics are consistent with the way God is described in the Bible.

SLIDE 31—ACTIVITY 1: Explain a Step of Aquinas’ Philosophical Proof of God’s Existence

SLIDE 33: Both these questions are handled in the 1st step of Aquinas’ proof. We saw that there has to be a first being who always existed and caused everything else. Earlier, we showed that the universe had a beginning and itself needed to be created, so it couldn’t be the ultimate cause of everything.

SLIDE 34: Here’s an explanation.

SLIDE 35—VIDEO 1b-2: There Has to Be an Uncaused Being.

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31. By saying “God does not exist,” an atheist is making a claim. Claims need to be supported with evidence or shown to be reasonable. In the last few slides, we have shown that their claim is unsubstantiated and illogical. Of course, theists need to support their claim that God exists, as we show in Presentations 1a and 1b.
SLIDE 36: Recently, scientist Richard Dawkins brought up another objection to St. Thomas Aquinas’ proof for God’s existence. He said God would be more complex than what He creates. Then he said a complex creator is unlikely—*remember Occam’s Razor; the simplest answer is usually correct.* According to Dawkins, that means God is unlikely. *Does his objection make sense?*

SLIDE 37: Well, there’s a problem with the first part of Dawkins’ objection, where he says that “God would be more complex than what He creates.” We just saw in the 2nd step of St. Thomas Aquinas’ proof, an unlimited God can’t be made of limited parts. So, instead of being more complex, God actually must be perfectly simple.

SLIDE 38: Since the first part of Dawkins’ argument is flawed, it can’t support his conclusion. Without realizing it, Dawkins has actually shown that God—the simplest explanation—is the most likely cause of everything else that exists.

SLIDE 39—CHAPTER 2—THE LIMITS OF PROOF AND THE NEED FOR GOD’S REVELATION: Even though philosophical proofs can tell us a lot about God, they can’t tell us *everything* about Him.

SLIDE 40: We can know that there’s one unlimited God who always existed and who created everything else, but philosophy leaves many questions about God unanswered, like, “Is God aware of us?” “Does God care about us?” “Does God answer our prayers?” “Does God forgive us?”

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SLIDE 41: For us to really know God, not just know that he exists, God had to reveal himself to us. We could never KNOW that God is like the Father of the Prodigal Son by thinking about an uncaused being or by observing the red-shift of galaxies, could we? He had to tell us.

SLIDE 42: Let’s watch this explanation of why God revealed Himself to us.

SLIDE 43—VIDEO 1b-3: Why Does God Reveal Himself?

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SLIDE 44: The answers to the video’s questions are related: First, God reveals Himself to us because He is perfect love; and what He reveals is that He wants to share His life with us.

SLIDE 45: In a way, we’re just like God; we also love and want to share our lives with others. Even though we aren’t perfect, like God, we still want our relationships with the people we love to be perfect, don’t we? We all desire perfect love, and we have other perfect desires, too.

SLIDE 46: The ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle realized that we also want perfect justice, perfect beauty, perfect truth, and a perfect home with a perfect being!
SLIDE 47: Isn’t it true, when we think we’ve experienced something “perfect,” we still wonder if there could be something even better? We eventually get tired or frustrated with everything we experience in this world. This got C.S. Lewis, who wrote The Chronicles of Narnia, to wonder: “Why do we desire perfection even though we’ve never experienced it?”

SLIDE 48: Some people answered Lewis by saying “We evolved that way,” but Lewis replied, “That’s not how evolution works. Evolution says we adapt to our environment, but there is nothing perfect in our environment to adapt to. How can we evolve to desire something that doesn’t exist? There’s got to be a better answer.”

SLIDE 51: C. S. Lewis said: “If I find in myself a desire for an experience which nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”

SLIDE 50—VIDEO 1b-4: Chances are...You’re Living with Unfulfilled Desires.

SLIDE 51: C. S. Lewis said: “If I find in myself a desire for an experience which nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”

SLIDE 52—LET’S DISCUSS

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SLIDE 53: According to Lewis, we have a desire for perfection that couldn’t have evolved, but we live in an imperfect world, so there must be another world with a perfect being who can satisfy our desire for perfection. Who might that be? That’s right, our desire for perfection is really a desire for God!

SLIDE 54—CHAPTER 3—QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE EXISTENCE OF A CREATOR: We’ve looked at philosophical proof and scientific evidence for God’s existence, but other questions can come up about the existence of God.

SLIDE 55: For starters, can God’s existence be disproven? This often comes up in the context of science. Atheists often say that: “Science has disproven God.” But, is this true? What would be involved in disproving God’s existence?

SLIDE 56: Actually, it’s much easier to prove something exists than that it doesn’t. To prove something exists, we only need to find one of them. To disprove something, we need to rule out that it exists anywhere in the universe. For example, we could prove aliens exist if we found just one, but to disprove they exist, we’d have to be everywhere in the universe at the same time. And, how would we even know we had every possible means of detecting them? The best an honest scientist can say is: “We have no evidence whether or not aliens exist.”

SLIDE 57: So, what about God? If science can’t even disprove the existence of aliens, who would be in our universe, how could science disprove God, who would be outside of our universe?

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SLIDE 58: In fact, just as science can’t disprove God’s existence, it also can’t prove “scientifically” that He does exist. Science doesn’t have the tools; it’s limited to exploring the physical universe. But, God is not physical, He’s a spiritual being. So, there can be no absolute scientific proof that God exists.

SLIDE 59: However, as we’ve seen, there’s much scientific evidence that strongly suggests He does. The Big Bang is evidence the universe is expanding, the BVG proof and entropy are evidence the universe had a beginning, and the “fine-tuning” of the universe for life is evidence the universe very likely requires an intelligent Creator. Even though this scientific evidence is not absolute proof that God exists, it gives us many good reasons to believe that He does.

SLIDE 60: Proof that God exists, as we’ve just seen, comes from Philosophy. St. Thomas Aquinas proved that there has to be one uncreated, unlimited being who created everything else. And, C.S. Lewis supported Aquinas’ proof by showing that it’s very likely our desire for perfection also comes from God.

SLIDE 61: Some people are agnostics, which means they are unsure whether or not God exists. They aren’t atheists because they don’t believe God has been disproven, and they aren’t believers, or theists, either, because they don’t believe He has been proven. They may not know about the evidence, or they may know about it but not find it convincing.

SLIDE 62: Let’s see what Richard Dawkins says about being an agnostic.

SLIDE 63—VIDEO 1b-5: “Atheist” Richard Dawkins Admits He’s Really an Agnostic.
SLIDE 64—ACTIVITY 2: Respond to Richard Dawkins

SLIDE 65: If there’s so much evidence for God, why do we need faith? Reason is limited in what it can tell us about God.

SLIDE 66: Someone can follow the philosophical proofs to conclude that God exists. But, just knowing God exists is not enough. Many agnostics who have studied the evidence and proofs become deists, which means they know God exists, but incorrectly think He doesn’t care about them.

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SLIDE 67: God, however, wants more than us just knowing He exists; He wants a loving relationship with us. God offers His love freely; but it’s our choice whether or not to accept His offer.

SLIDE 68: To have this relationship with God, just like any relationship of love, we need to take a “leap of faith” by accepting that His love is true and trusting Him with our lives.

SLIDE 69: Are you ready to take this leap of faith? Here’s what it’s like.

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SLIDE 70—VIDEO 1b-6: Leap of Faith.

SLIDE 71: What other reasons, other than the lack of scientific proof, do people give for being atheists?

SLIDE 72: First, many people are troubled by the question of why an all-loving, all-powerful God would allow so much suffering when He could prevent it or stop it. Christianity charts a path to find positive meaning in suffering, which we’ll discuss later in its own presentation. But, if someone doesn’t encounter this deeper meaning, they can often conclude that suffering means “God doesn’t love us,” and so, they reject God out of sadness or resentment.

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SLIDE 73: Second, some don’t want to be answerable to any higher authority, including God, and this feeling leads them to avoid even considering the possibility of His existence, or any evidence.

SLIDE 74: Third, some think faith is just wishful thinking. They don’t see a reasonable source of faith, so they decide that atheism is more honest than taking a “blind” leap of faith.

SLIDE 75: A fourth reason given for atheism is that some, like Karl Marx, say that religion discourages the poor from fighting injustice because it distracts them with the promise of a better life after death. On the other hand, Christianity has actually been central to many advances in social justice; like the development of hospitals, orphanages and schools.
SLIDE 76: Finally, children are sometimes falsely introduced to God as harsh, demanding, and even hateful. Sadly, this trauma can stay with them their whole lives, leading them to avoid God and religion altogether. They may never get a chance to discover God as the loving and forgiving Father of the Prodigal Son.

SLIDE 77: Are Science and the Bible in Conflict? We’ve looked at scientific evidence for God’s existence, but it’s common today to assume that science and faith disagree, and especially that science and the Bible are in conflict.

SLIDE 78: The most common example is the age of the universe. Some think the Bible says it is less than 10,000 years old, while science says the universe is about 13.8 billion years old. So, do they disagree?

SLIDE 79: In 1943, Pope Pius XII explained that science and the Bible are different kinds of sources for understanding creation.

SLIDE 80: The Bible reveals sacred truths necessary for salvation, so its focus is on explaining that God created the world, that creation is good, and that human beings were created in God’s image and likeness.

SLIDE 81: Science is concerned with collecting information to describe the physical condition of the early universe. We shouldn’t get these sources confused and look to the Bible as the source for scientific data, nor to science as a source for the sacred truths of salvation.

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SLIDE 82: Ultimately, the truths revealed in the Bible, and that science has discovered, can’t be in conflict because they both come from one source; the infinite mind and all-loving heart of God.

SLIDE 83: Even though Genesis is not a scientific account of what happened at creation, it reveals that everything in the universe was created by the one God, and is good, especially humans who are created in His image.

SLIDE 84: There are some interesting similarities between the Bible’s creation story and the Big Bang, like creation of light before the stars, but this was not God’s main purpose for the Bible.

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SLIDE 85: Over the years, the Catholic Church has a long history of involvement in scientific development, including the contributions of: Copernicus, Galileo, Louis Pasteur, Gregor Mendel, Fr. Georges Lemaitre, and many others.

SLIDE 86: Galileo’s case is often cited as “proof” the Catholic Church is against scientific progress, but that was really more of a political conflict between Galileo and the Pope over how much proof Galileo needed before he published his findings.

SLIDE 87: Another topic where science and faith are often thought to conflict is evolution. Recently, two popes have spoken about evolution.

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In 1950, Pope Pius XII explained that Catholics must believe two things about creation. First, that God directly creates a soul in every human being, and second, that souls are not physical or biological structures that evolve. If these two truths are maintained, Catholics are free to consider evolution as a scientific account.

Then, in 1996, Pope St. John Paul II gave a similar statement. He noted that there is evidence for evolution, and he also cautioned that any theory of evolution that says souls are physical goes against what Scripture teaches. We must maintain the revealed truth that God directly creates each soul.

Catholics are also free to consider the existence of aliens. While no evidence exists for life outside of earth, the number of galaxies and stars suggests there may be planets where life could exist. If intelligent aliens were created, we can assume that they would have souls, and that God would want loving relationships with them, and offer them salvation.

Let’s watch a video explaining the Catholic view of evolution.

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SLIDE 91—VIDEO 1b-6: Catholics and Evolution.

SLIDE 92: Catholics are also free to consider the existence of aliens. While no evidence exists for life outside of earth, the number of galaxies and stars suggests there may be planets where life could exist. If intelligent aliens were created, we can assume that they would have souls, and that God would want loving relationships with them, and offer them salvation.

SLIDE 93—CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, guide us in our understanding as we study these questions and this philosophical proof. Give us the courage to share what it reveals about You with others so that Your Kingdom may grow on Earth as it already is in Heaven.

Amen.

Notes:
SLIDE 94—ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

SLIDE 95—CREDITS

Notes:
CREDIBLE CATHOLIC Presentation 1b ACTIVITIES
Philosophical Proof of God’s Existence

ACTIVITY #1: Explain a Step of St. Thomas’ Argument to Someone Else: We have given you examples—a chain, dominoes, a chicken and an egg, a book, a weak-link, and twins—to help you understand St. Thomas Aquinas’ proof for God’s existence. **Think of an example that you can use to explain ONE of St. Thomas’ steps (assigned by the presenter):** 1. God is uncaused. 2. God is unrestricted. 3. God is one. 4. God is the cause of all else that exists. **Write out your explanation and be ready to share it with the class.**

ACTIVITY #2: **Respond to Richard Dawkins?** Richard Dawkins describes himself as a #6 agnostic, but says he lives like an atheist.

1. **What is he admitting about science by describing himself this way?**

2. **Why do you think he describes himself like this?**

3. **How would you respond to him if you had the chance?**
What is CREDIBLE CATHOLIC?

CREDIBLE CATHOLIC is a Magis Center 20-module curriculum designed to confront the secular and anti-religious challenges of our culture head on. It is correlated to the four parts of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as follows:

**Part One (Catechism of the Catholic Church - CCC): The Profession of Faith**

| CC1  | Scientific Evidence and Philosophical Proof of God’s Existence |
| CC2  | Medical Evidence and Philosophical Proof of a Soul           |
| CC3  | Proof of Jesus’ Resurrection and Divinity                    |
| CC4  | The Significance of Jesus’ Life and Teachings                |
| CC5  | The Trinity, Incarnation, and the Last Things                |

**Part Two (From the CCC): The Celebration of the Christian Mystery**

| CC6  | Why Be Catholic?                                           |
| CC7  | The Inspiration and Canonicity of the Old Testament        |
| CC8  | Jesus and the New Testament                               |
| CC9  | The Sacraments, Part 1—*The Sacred Eucharistic Liturgy*    |
| CC10 | The Sacraments, Part 2—*Baptism, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Holy Orders, and the Anointing of the Sick* |
| CC11 | The Sacraments, Part 3—*Marriage*                         |
| CC12 | Sacramentals, Devotions, and Traditions                    |

**Part Three (From the CCC): Life in Christ**

| CC13 | True Happiness                                           |
| CC14 | Suffering, Spiritual Evil, and Jesus’ Defeat of Satan     |
| CC15 | The Seven Deadly Sins                                    |
| CC16 | Contending with Evil Through Virtue and Prayer           |
| CC17 | Personal Ethics and Social Ethics                        |

**Part Four (From the CCC): Christian Prayer**

| CC18 | Relationship with Christ and Spontaneous Prayers          |
| CC19 | Why Would an All-loving God Allow Suffering?              |
| CC20 | Examen, Discernment, and Contemplation                    |

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