



GRASPING THE NETTLE

Investigating Evidence for the Truth of Christianity

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2024

Forward in Mission



Edinburgh: Scotland's capital

“I go anywhere, provided it be forward”, said Scotland's most famous missionary whose delivery on that commitment took David Livingstone to the heart of Africa.

Imagine his response if he were to return to Scotland today where a shrinking Church is in serious need of growing. But the battle is far from lost.

Remember how God used Gideon's slender army; recall the evangelistic success of a dozen of Jesus' once disillusioned disciples. We may conclude that it's not all about numbers. In Scotland let's commit to it being 'game-on'!

GTN wants to be involved in that process and even be a catalyst, supporting presbyteries, dioceses and individual churches in the business of mission.

Our Distinctive Contribution

GTN's signature contribution is in stimulating people to think about—and appreciate—evidence for the truth of Christianity. As we look through the *lens of science* there is the truth about the existence of God to be discovered in the wonders of the things that have been made—including human beings. As we look through the *lens of history*, there is truth to be discovered in the evidence for the resurrection and God incarnate.

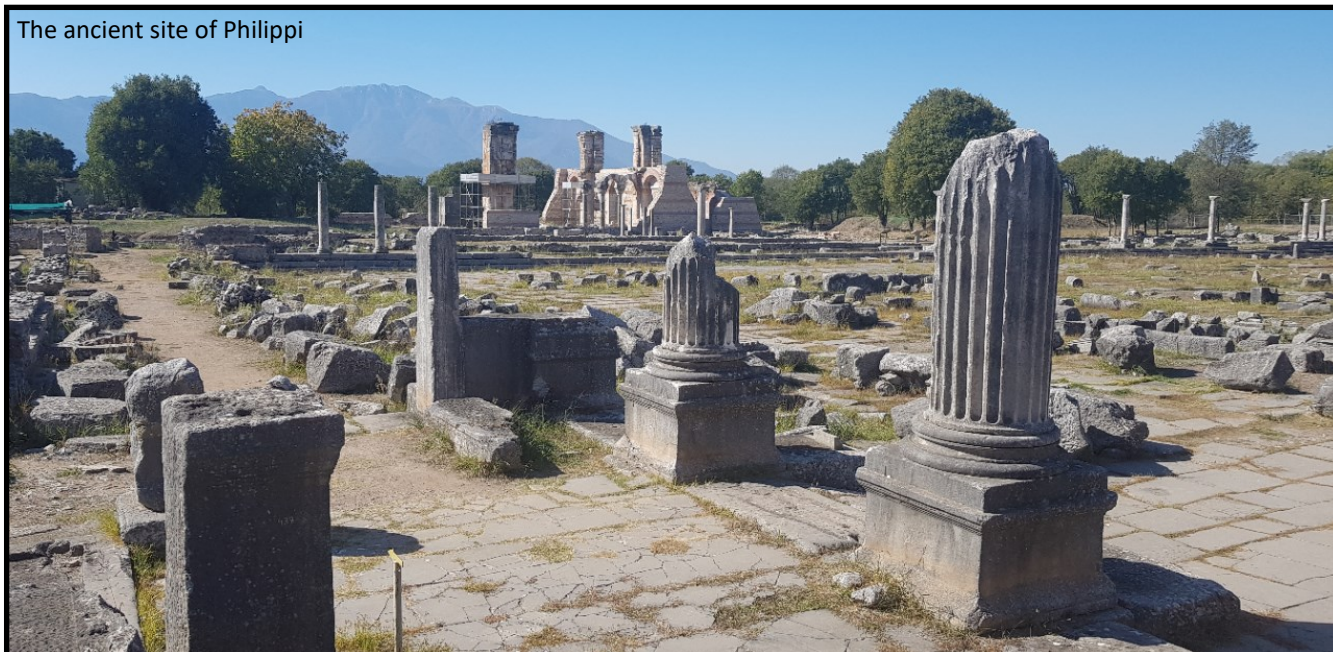
More information on the GTN resources enabling these discoveries is given later in this newsletter.

If mission in Scotland appears a daunting task we have Livingstone's encouragement:

“If a commission by an earthly King is considered an honour, how can a commission by a heavenly King be considered a sacrifice?”

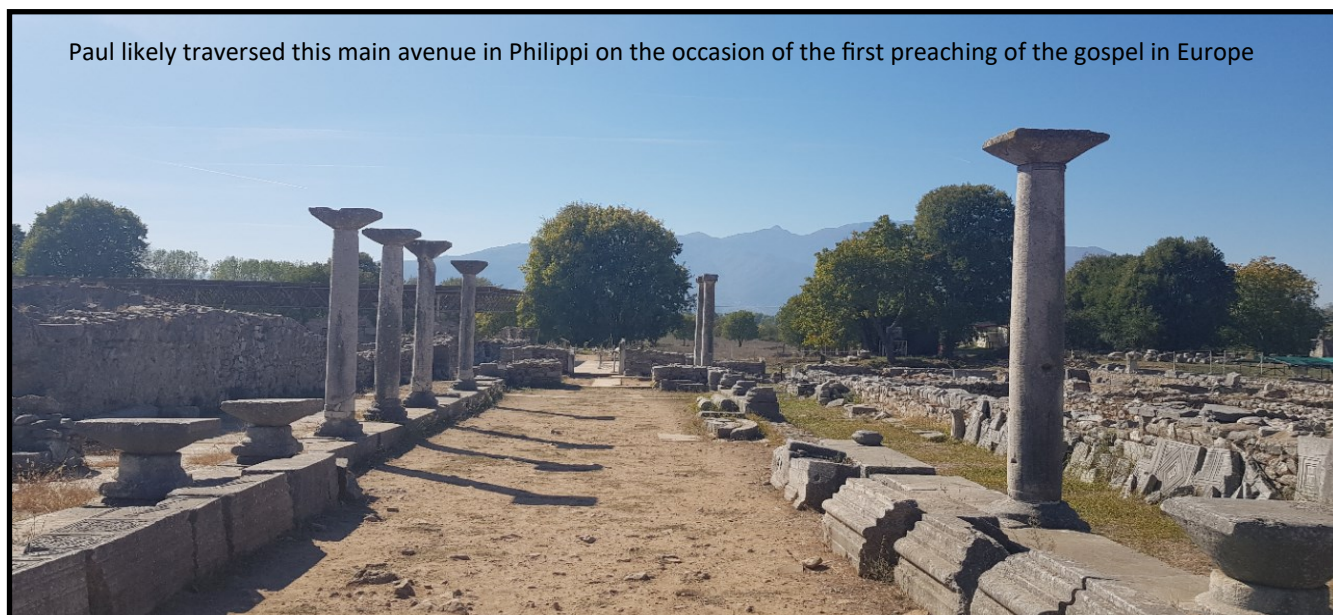
Quiet Please! Philippi Filming in Progress!

The ancient site of Philippi



Actually we don't mean it! Far from being quiet about it, we want to spread the news as widely as possible that the extension of The God Question series is well under way with a documentary that includes an investigation of evidence for the resurrection (programme 4) and another bringing an honest interrogation of the problem of suffering (programme 5). *"Producing a film can be rather like putting together a complex jigsaw,"* says co-producer Karen Rollins. *"But there's a crucial difference: the pieces are not provided in a box; you have to create them."* And that explains why recently there was a Kharis Productions camera at the ancient site of Philippi in Northern Greece. Part of the wider story of the resurrection is the spread of Christianity across the Western world. Philippi was the first place in Europe (as it was later defined) that the Christian message was shared and was the location of the first Christian convert.

Paul likely traversed this main avenue in Philippi on the occasion of the first preaching of the gospel in Europe





Top right is the location of a prison. Possibly it is where Paul and his companion Silas were briefly incarcerated after the success of the gospel message clashed with some local interests.

“The production of The God Question series began with the aim of addressing three substantial blocks to why people are reluctant to accept the truth of Christianity”, said Producer/Director Iain Morris. “One of these is the misunderstanding that science makes God redundant (existing programmes 1-3). A second is that religion is no more than wishful thinking while the third is the problem of suffering. With the launch of two new productions next year, the God Question series will be complete. It was thrilling to visit Phillippi and to reflect on its actual and symbolic significance in the spread of belief in the resurrection of Jesus.”

The town is now an archaeological site, having been demolished by an earthquake in the 7th century, after which its citizens relocated.



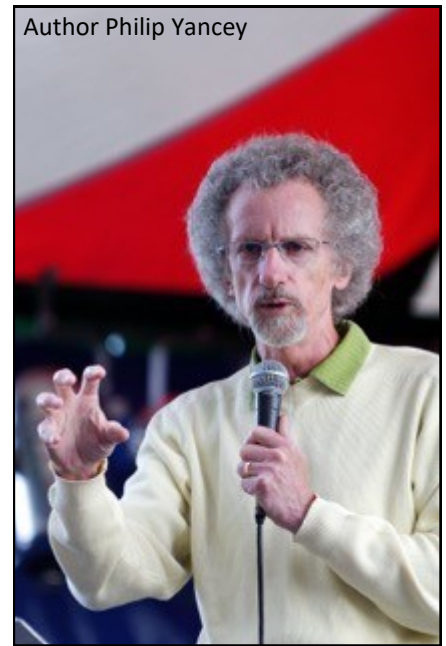
Lydia, the first convert to Christianity on European soil, is traditionally believed to have been baptised on this site.

Philip Yancey

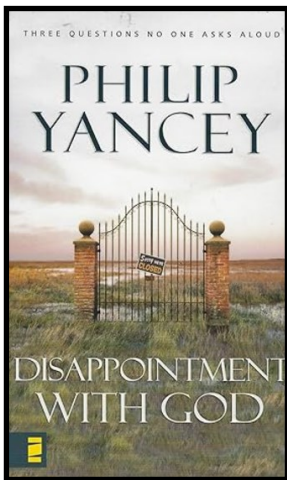
Experience and Wisdom shared in 'The Suffering Question'

Search for Truth, which commissions The God Question series, is delighted to announce the participation of world renowned author and speaker Philip Yancey in the its fifth documentary .

Revered for his intellectual integrity, insight and wisdom, Philip Yancey is Christianity's spiritual guru on the question of suffering.



Author Philip Yancey



The honest and open way in which this prolific author addresses the problem of suffering is clear just in the titles of some of his books such as

'Disappointment with God', 'Reaching for the Invisible God' and 'Where is God When it Hurts?'.

Suffering takes many forms and for Yancey it included a form of spiritual oppression from which he eventually escaped to the openness of an intellectual plateau which gave him the opportunity to think freely for himself.

A Documentary Rooted in Reality

But the programme will do more than just 'talk' about suffering. It visits the depths of human experience of the kind which words themselves struggle to convey. A poignant example is the interview with Holocaust survivor Halina Birenbaum, author of *'Hope is the Last to Die'*. Filmed in her home in Haifa in Israel she shares from the depths of her experience of the most infamous Nazi concentration camp of all.



Halina Birenbaum



Birkenau, Auschwitz

While filming at Auschwitz, the Kharis Productions crew also met and interviewed Ze'ev Ben Yosef whose family of the time was exterminated.

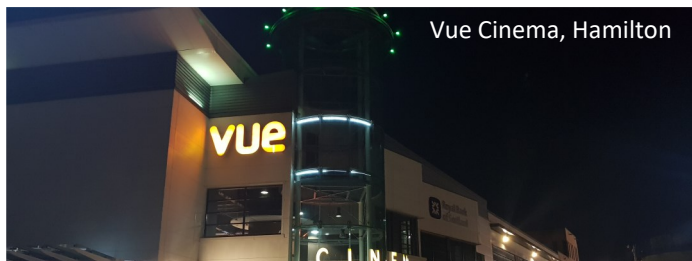


Ze'ev Ben Yosef

Trying to make sense of this in relation to a God of love is the subject of the documentary.

Imagine your Local Cinema Packed for a Christian Film...

Don't just imagine. Help make it happen. The months on either side of summer saw a number of cinemas packed and overflowing for viewings of *Against the Tide*. In Hamilton, larger theatres and an extra evening needed to be booked to meet the interest. In Kilmarnock, in addition to the Regent Cinema, an 'overspill' showing was arranged in St Kentigern's Church. Recently the Regent Cinema in Marple, Derbyshire saw a pack-out audience for *Against the Tide* on a Sunday afternoon.



Vue Cinema, Hamilton



Regent Cinema, Marple, Derbyshire



St Kentigern's Church, Kilmarnock

"It is so encouraging to have Marple Cinema packed out with Christians and seekers."

Local Derbyshire Minister



Rev George Lind introduces the film to a large overspill audience in Kilmarnock

"I have been a Richard Dawkins fan for many years. This film gave me much to reconsider."

Professor of Physics

"Feedback from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive."

Marple Cinema Manager



Your local cinema awaits. Producers, Kharis Productions, and GTN will take care of the technical arrangements. You just need to fill the seats. Plan this with other churches in the area as part of mission to Scotland.

When The Christmas Tree Comes Down...

...Think Easter and 'Against the Tide'



Rev George Lind, GTN Liaison Officer with an offer of help

It happens every year. No sooner is the tree down and Christmas is over than Easter eggs fill the shelves and holiday adverts fill our screens.

Churches should learn from this. Let us too plan towards Easter by filling screens with some of the amazing resources which Grasping the Nettle makes available. For example, why not turn the word 'imagine' of the previous page into reality by working towards screening the film *Against the Tide* in your local cinema? Last Easter, churches hosted capacity audiences in several cinemas (and churches) across the country. Audiences were riveted and inspired to join Prof. John Lennox with Hollywood actor Kevin Sorbo exploring the evidence for God as Creator and for Jesus and his resurrection. A special bonus is the wonderful filming in the Holy Land itself.

The Practicalities

But what about the practicalities? As GTN Liaison Officer, I would be delighted to speak with you and your Church representatives, offering a 'heads up' on how to go about planning, publicising and establishing the best price with cinemas. I would be able to guide on the benefits of such Easter outreaches and how to ensure everything runs smoothly.

As noted on the previous page we also take care of the supply of the film to the cinema in the appropriate format.

The plan is in place. Help us implement it.

Contact

Please contact me by email or telephone:

gklind@talktalk.net

01560428732.

Rev. George Lind,
GTN Liaison Officer



Screen in your local church or cinema

A cinematic film featuring
John Lennox
and
Kevin Sorbo

AGAINST THE TIDE
JOHN LENNOX & KEVIN SORBO / PENSMORE FILMS / KHARIS PRODUCTIONS

Free-to-use full Digital Cinema Package available. You fill the seats; leave the technical requirements to the producers.

With locations in Oxford and in Israel

Publicity template available. Just add the venue and time!
DVD, Blu-Ray and web-streaming available for use in church.
For further details and to see a trailer visit www.againstthetidemovie.org

JOHN LENNOX + KEVIN SORBO
AGAINST The TIDE
FINDING GOD IN AN AGE OF SCIENCE
KHARIS PRODUCTIONS for PENSMORE FILMS

From Scotland to Greece and Beyond

The Mediterranean Hotel in Katerini, Greece, is only a step from the beach but during the FEUER Conference in October the external paradise remained largely empty. That's because the 200 hotel guests from 41



The empty beach at Mediterranean Hotel, Katerini

countries were participating in a four day conference on mission and evangelism in Europe, especially in universities.



Iain Morris highlights the potential of SFT's resources in mission across Europe.

FEUER is German for 'Fire'. Iain Morris (Kharis Productions/GTN) was invited to share how the Search for Truth/GTN resources can help fuel the flames of mission in Europe. **The God Question** series, in English, Spanish, Norwegian, Russian and Ukrainian, is proving particularly attractive for use during special Mission Weeks on university campuses. So too is **Against the Tide**. Some with contacts in China are drawn to **Science and God: The Search for Meaning and Truth** available in both English and Chinese. Kharis Productions is currently responding to a request to supply **The God Question** and **Against the Tide** with Greek subtitles. When Erastos, who made the request on behalf of his

organisation, was asked about the potential audience he replied "*10 million. That's the population of Greece*". Response to many other requests is ongoing.

The new scripture engagement resource, **Encountering the Creator God**, also attracted attention, with Eva from the Czech Republic (now Czechia), and responsible for bible study resources across her international organisation, describing it as "*very exciting*". The FEUER Conference is an initiative of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES).



A plenary session at the FEUER Conference 2024

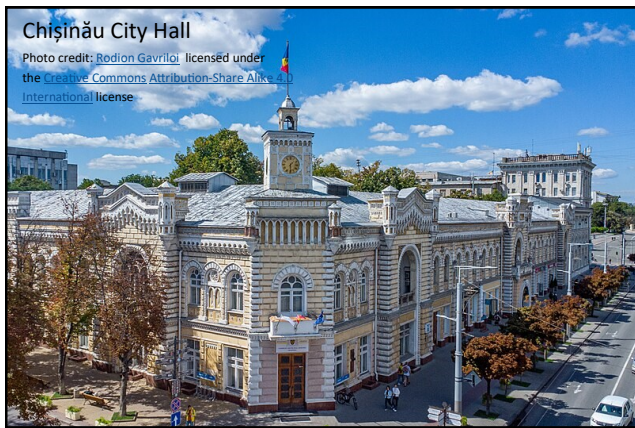
Exploring the God Question in the Former Soviet Union

Previously dubbed in Russian for broadcast across the whole of the Former Soviet Union, now, following the FEUER conference, The God Question series is once more travelling to former soviet republics for use in churches and on university campuses.

A Great Resource to Have

Originally from England but now working in

Moldova, Stephen Jackson of Comunitatea Studentilor Crestini said “ *This is a great resource to have. I've observed that science and Christianity are seen as being at odds with*



each other, even by a significant number of Moldovan Christians. This can lead young people from Christian families to think they have to decide between believing science and believing the Bible, which can be a stumbling block for them as they grow and test the faith they have grown up in.”

Responding, GTN chairman Very Rev Dr Martin Fair said, “*This is a very significant issue not only for millions of Christian young people but for the Church as a whole. It’s a nettle many churches are either unwilling, or unable, to address. Statistics show that, where it remains unaddressed, many young people abandon the faith of their youth. The God Question series can provide a watershed experience for those caught in the false dilemma of whether to choose God or science.”*

Learn more about the series [here](#) from our Insight brochure on Exploring the God Question.

Introducing the God Question for Schools

‘Introducing’ is the version specially created for high school curricula in the UK as well as for the Theory of Knowledge in the International Baccalaureate. Access our Insight brochure on this series [here](#) and find out how it connects to Britain’s classrooms.



Russian language version of *Exploring the God Question*



Young people at Cadervale High School, Airdrie, engage with The God Question

Forward in Mission: Gathering the Resources

The deployment of the famous 'Alpha' courses and 'Christianity Explored' has seen notable success in catalysing commitment to Christian faith. Yet not all participants bring to the table the presupposition that God exists, that Jesus was a historical figure and that his story, as presented in the gospels, is credible history.

The resources of the Search for Truth Charity, offered by GTN, take us back to first principles, as well as back in time to a point before there was time.

What credible—even convincing—evidence is there that God exists? Look through the lens of science to discover the wonder of our existence with the **Exploring the God Question** series.

www.thegodquestion.tv/explore

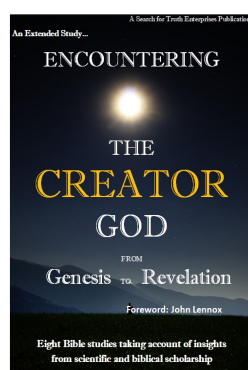


Follow the story of why an Oxford professor is so powerfully convinced of the truth of Christianity in the cinematic film **Against the Tide**.

www.againstthetidemovie.org

For those interested in making some comparison of one religion with another take the journey of discovery with **Science and God: The Search for Meaning and Truth**.

www.thegodquestion.tv/global



Concerned about academic learning undermining the biblical narrative? Take the 8 Scripture engagement studies of **Encountering the Creator God**. Click [here](#) for more information.

Have just a little patience and be among the first to experience **'The Resurrection Question'**, due for release as part of *The God Question* series in 2025.



To see the full colour catalogue of our resources click [here](#).

Christmas Facts and Fiction

Distinguishing Jesus from Santa



A Scottish shopping centre displays a Jesus in a manger scene side by side with a visit to Santa.

There are facts and there is fiction. Sometimes it's hard to distinguish one from the other. Take the 'fact' that on his hyper-sonic travel on Christmas Eve Santa burns 54 million calories. That's a lot of mince pies! It could seem convincing but it's fake news. We know the central character does not exist. But parents and grandparents play the game, perpetuate the myth and enjoy the Santa fun.

Playing the Christmas Game

And many adopt the same 'play the game' position in relation to the Jesus story as they merrily sing carols with the most profound theology: "God of God; begotten not created". Richard Dawkins refers to this as being a 'cultural Christian': participation without belief.

Making the Case for the Truth of the Incarnation

But here's the challenge. What fresh opportunities is the Church presenting to encourage dissidents and atheists to think otherwise? The incarnation is an extraordinary story. So much so, it appears to cast aside the biological laws of procreation, which helps explain why some are sceptical.

The only way forward is to look at the evidence. In its most powerful form it presents the reality of a dead man being resurrected from the grave. The news spread like wildfire across the known world. But is it really true?

For more detailed examination of the evidence, see the forthcoming documentary on The Resurrection. Referring to Jesus, the Christmas message tells us that God is (present tense) with us. Without the resurrection, it cannot be. Christmas can only be truly happy if Jesus is alive. Happy Christmas!

A View From The Chair

By Very Rev Dr Martin Fair

I suspect the practice is becoming a little less fashionable than it was a few years ago but even so, most of us will know what is meant by the 'Christmas letter'. It was usually a closely-typed A4 page through which a friend or friends offered a summary of their family's year. Often there was an accompanying photo. Typically, these letters started with something like this: *My, my, where has the last year gone? Hasn't time flown!*



It's true enough that we can find ourselves wondering where time has gone, saying to ourselves things like *it only seems like yesterday...*

But for those of us who were part of the online WOW! session with Prof Bob White in early November, there was opportunity to think about time in much bigger terms. Bob reminded us that current best estimates for the age of the earth indicate an age of 4,567,000,000 years. And for the universe? 13,800,000,000 years.

Figures like that serve as stark reminders that you and I spend but infinitesimally short timespans on this planet. Maybe that's an encouragement for us to keep things in perspective and, yes, that there are times when we'd do well to take ourselves a little less seriously. Truly we are here today and gone tomorrow.

But while for some that leads to nothing but a sense of insignificance, worthlessness and pointlessness, for the Christian there's more. Much more!

In this season, we rejoice that in Jesus, the same God who brought all things into being stepped out of the immensity of eternity to take his place with us – from the everlasting to the here and now of our existence.

And so let us join ourselves with the eternal host to sing again this year, *Hosanna in Excelsis!* The One who is forever, simultaneously present in all of time and space, draws near and declares *I am with you.*

A truly Happy Christmas from all at Grasping the Nettle.

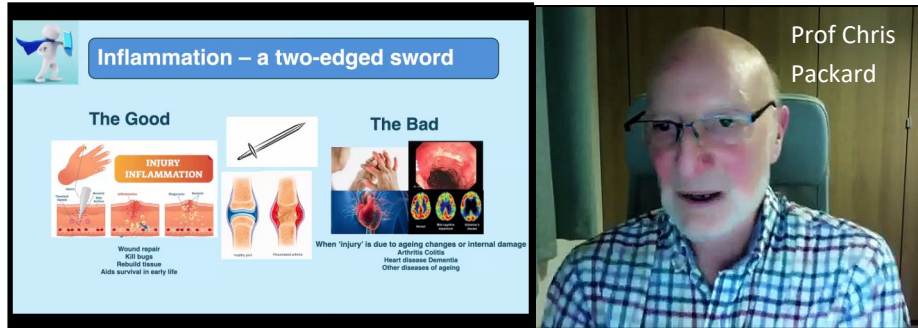


WOW! IT'S GTN Online!

When we want to explore a bit further a topic relevant to evaluating the truth of Christianity - and we want to do so with fellow travellers from far and near—GTN Online is the perfect 'vehicle'. GTN has definitive brands of programming. In **'WOW!'**, experts in their field bring amazing information about the human body, including our 'marvellous

muscles', the astonishing functioning of our digestive system or the wonders of the immune system.

The architect and presenter of the October session was Professor Chris



Packard, assisted by Dr Rose Mary Harley, both Trustees of Search for Truth Charitable Trust.

One audience response to this series was first articulated in Psalm 139: *"We are fearfully and wonderfully made"*. The more we investigate, the more information with the 'wow factor' emerges. The world of science is redolent with discussion and debate about origins and evolutionary processes. No matter how well investigated and explained, the existence of processes should not detract from the conviction that mind-less forces could not by themselves achieve such functioning complexity and effectiveness without the involvement of a creator's intention.

Through our **'Exploring Further'** strand we delve into topics that seem inexhaustible. Take the vexed issue of suffering that perplexes believers and non-believers alike.

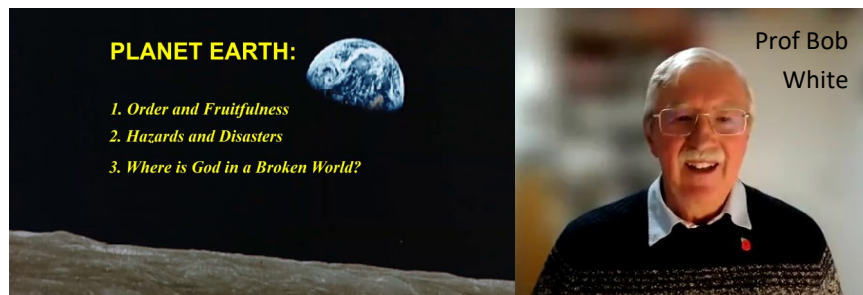
November's GTN online, with the expert and thoughtful input of geologist Professor Robert White FRS, addressed this issue sensitively and theologically, unpacking the fertilising and nutritional impact of *volcanoes* on one hand and, on the other hand, their potentially devastating impact. With reference to the 'valley' experiences of old

testament characters including Joseph and Job, in part 3 of his presentation Professor White encouraged the audience to see how God was present in the suffering of these

patriarchs. Humans typically assume the 'answer' must be removal of the problem and its causes but the Bible offers its own distinctive perspective on how God responds to suffering.

All previous GTN Online sessions in all programming strands can be viewed at

www.graspingthenettle.org/watch



JOIN US ON GTN ONLINE IN 2025!

EXPLORING FURTHER

THE PLIGHT OF ANIMAL SUFFERING
Issues of Pain and Death in God's Good World

with

Dr Bethany Sollereeder,
Lecturer, School of Divinity, Edinburgh University

Tuesday 21st January 2025

7.30pm

AS I SEE IT

THE ESSENTIAL JOHN LENNOX
Emeritus Professor of Mathematics, Oxford University

Monday 3rd March 2025

7.30pm

Lend GTN your support by following us on Social Media!



<https://www.instagram.com/graspingthenettle/>



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Supporting GTN Financially

Thanks to all who support GTN by participating in events, promotion of activities and, not least of all, with financial support . Donations to GTN can be given at

www.graspingthenettle.org/donate.



GTN is an interdenominational initiative of churches in Scotland, using Exploring the God Question as its key resource.

It is administered by Search for Truth Charitable Trust (Charity No: SC039465. Company No: SC340300),

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