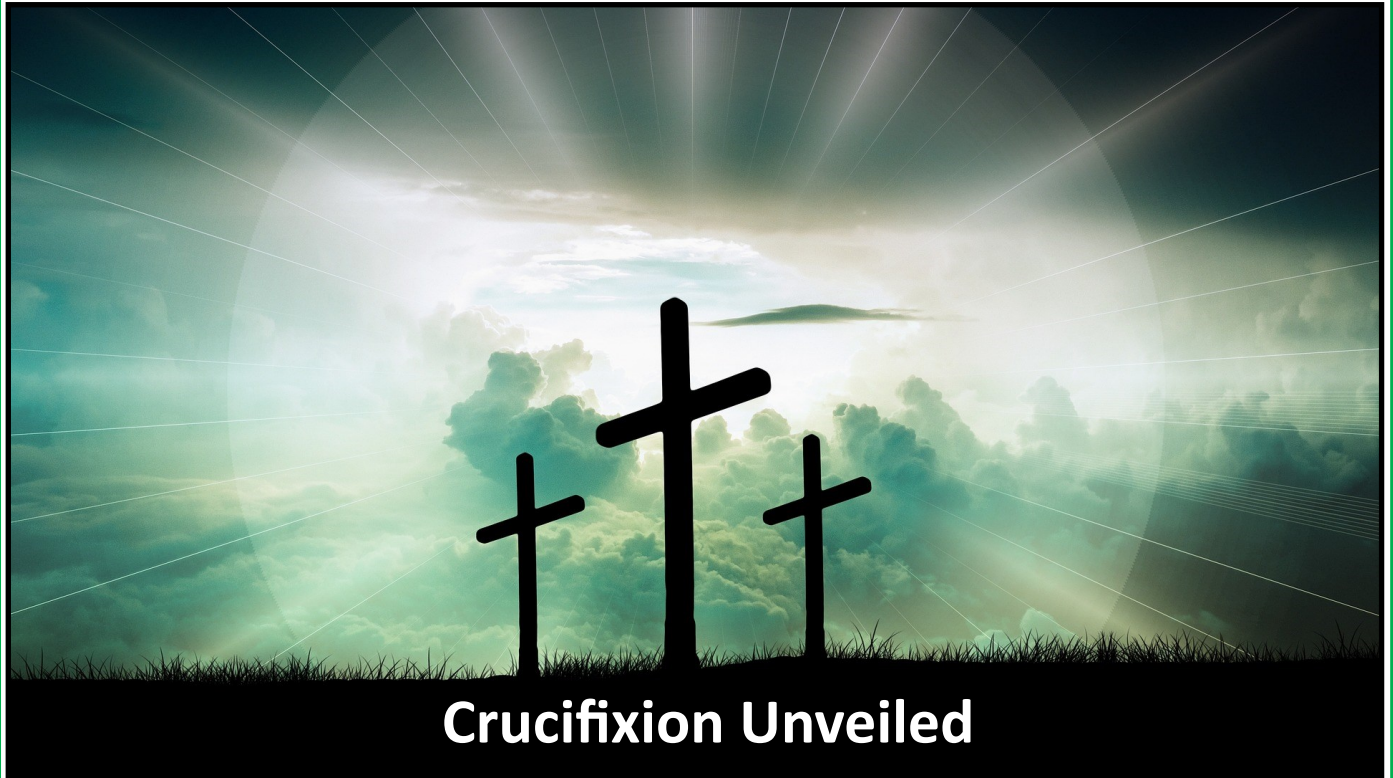




# GRASPING THE NETTLE

NEWSLETTER SPRING/SUMMER 2025



When during his coronation ceremony King Charles III was anointed with holy oil, the act was considered so sacred it was *hidden from public view*. When Jesus of Nazareth, mockingly named King of the Jews, took upon himself the atonement for the sins of the world, the dire ugliness of it took place in the *full glare of public view*.

## The Barbarity of Crucifixion

**Crucifixion was the grizzliest torture of all time.** It would never be a victim's execution method of choice! One wonders if God's plan could not have been implemented at a more civilised time in

history! We know from Galatians that in God's eyes this was the right time.

**Crucifixion was the form of punishment selected for the perpetrators of the most heinous crimes.** A culture that

enthusiastically feasted on the spectacle of death in circus rings actually banned crucifixion centuries later because it was considered too barbaric. Torture of the body was part of the design; public humiliation was exacerbated by nakedness. The early church didn't elevate Jesus' crucifixion in the way we find it presented prominently today in icons and symbols; it was too shameful and painful. Was it really necessary?



An artist's attempt to capture the horror and impact of crucifixion.



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The coronation of King Charles: royal splendour in contrast with the mocking and torturous 'coronation' of Jesus.





An overlaid and sanitised image of the crucifixion displayed in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. It marks the site of both the crucifixion and the resurrection favoured by most ancient historians.

## For the Sake of the Whole World

In his gospel, John tells us that the underlying reason for Jesus' excruciating execution was because *'God so loved the world'*. Such self-sacrificing love is beyond human comprehension. The latter part of John 3:16 makes clear that the outcome was that whoever believes in Christ as saviour is granted eternal life. It was a brutal and colossal sacrifice but, if the resurrection is true, it purchased an offer available to the whole world.

## The Resurrection Changed Everything

*"If the story of Jesus had ended with his death it's unlikely that we'd ever have heard of him,"* says Sir John Polkinghorne in an interview recorded for a new programme in The God Question series with an anticipated release date of autumn 2025. It was belief in the truth of the resurrection that made a world of difference. But how strong is the evidence that it really happened? The forthcoming programme will investigate as objectively as possible.

## Mission to the World

The world as a whole is clearly of great importance to God. On his departure from earth, Jesus instructed his disciples to take the gospel, not just to their immediate locality, but to the whole world.

In this edition of news from GTN we are delighted to share ways in which the resources which we encourage you to use are also spreading across the whole world. In partnership with you we can ensure that the area where you live is part of the whole.

## The Empty Cross

The cross of Jesus is empty. The body was removed but there is more to the story. Scripture says Jesus was temporarily buried over a weekend. The occupant of the cross on which he was crucified is believed to be alive.

In 2025 Search for Truth Enterprises Ltd expects to release a new documentary programme: **The Jesus Question**. It investigates the central claims Christianity makes about Jesus. To whet the appetite here are some stimulating examples of comments from contributors.



*"The central Christian claim is utterly astonishing. It's that God the creator became human."*

John Lennox

*"After his crucifixion Jesus' followers gradually were filled with an overpowering sense that he was alive."*

Helen Bond

*"If the resurrection is true, that's a game changer."*

Alister McGrath

*"St Paul is crystal clear. He says if there is no resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christian faith would be in vain – empty."*

Patriarch of Jerusalem

*How in the world would you ever prove that Jesus was resurrected?*

Michael Shermer

*"[The resurrection is] the lightning strike and we're waiting for this roll of thunder in which all the dead will be raised."*

Fr Antony Giambrone

## A View From The Chair

Doubtless there's more to it than this but perhaps the scientific endeavour can best be summed up thus: the quest to explain.

Explain what? Certainly the physical world and the universe beyond - on both micro and macro terms - but on occasions, it seems as if the answer is 'everything'. Science is the attempt to explain everything.



Very Rev Dr Martin Fair

From my own perspective, I've always been somewhat uneasy about that kind of approach. I remember recoiling in horror on one occasion when seeing a book entitled: **Every Answer to Every Question You Ever Had**. There's an arrogance about that which is laced with the kind of arrogance that usually leads in any number of wrong and often damaging directions.

When I was training to become a Church of Scotland minister, the final part of that process saw me learning under the Rev Fred Marshall. Of all the things he taught me (and there were many) the one that has stuck with me throughout my ministry is this one. He said to me, *'Martin, when you preach, seek not to explain the mysteries of God but to deepen them'*.

There's a humbleness in that that I've tried never to lose sight of.

Now let's be clear in this. Of course the human mind strives for clarity. The American theologian Daniel Migliore was referencing the 11th Century Saint Anselm of Canterbury when he titled his book **Faith Seeking Understanding**. The longing for meaning is fundamental to what it is to be human and GTN is built on that very foundation. The problem comes when it is forgotten that there are limits to that.

Nowhere is that more true than when contemplating the events of Easter. Many of us know of the events of Holy Week and Easter and will have sought to understand what these things meant and continue to mean. But never let us stop marvelling. Let us never stop falling to our knees in wonder. And never let us stop realising that fulness of understanding will be ours only when the veil is eventually drawn back and we see face to face.

With that deep-set humility, let us take the joy of Easter into a world that now, as ever, needs to hear of a loving Saviour who gave his all for us.

**Very Rev Dr Martin Fair**  
**Chair, Grasping the Nettle**



## A Rich Season of GTN Online



Dr Rose Mary Harley

The 24/25 season of GTN Online has been serving up a rich diet of sessions feeding the minds and interests of GTN's growing audience. Beginning with *WOW: The Wonders of the Immune System*, this event presented by Professor Chris Packard and Dr Rose Mary Harley highlighted the brilliance of the body's defence system – including both tears and skin.



Prof Chris Packard



Prof Robert White

Next, GTN welcomed Cambridge's Professor of Geology, Robert White, to present *Wonders of Planet Earth: Triumphs, Tribulations and Where is God in it All?* More details of content of both of the above were given in the Winter 2024 newsletter, accessed via the Home page of the GTN website.



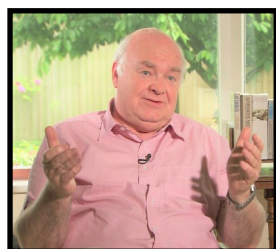
Dr Bethany Sollereeder

Early December's session welcomed back Dr Bethany Sollereeder with the title *The Plight of Animal Suffering: Issues of Pain and Death in God's Good World*. Distinguishing between moral evil and natural evil,

Bethany offered nine theological forms of explanation from which to choose! The big issue at the heart of the topic is that, if the evolutionary paradigm is correct and there was animal life before sentient human beings emerged on earth, predation pre-dates The Fall. Is a theological re-think necessary?



Animal suffering was the topic in one of GTN's online sessions 24/25



Prof John Lennox

The most recent GTN Online took place with Professor John Lennox. A wide ranging discussion, under the heading *The Essential John Lennox*, unravelled *The Beauty of Mathematics*, reflected on *Christianity and the Future of the Church* before a final session in which Professor Lennox shared his experience and advice in relation to *Becoming Confident in the Scriptures and Drawing Spiritual Strength from a Relationship with God*.

All of the above can be viewed in the [Watch](#) section of the GTN website.

## Coming Next on GTN Online

**WOW! Keeping Your Blood Flowing: Remarkable Solutions!**

*For full details see page 11*

## The Easter Message—To The World

**The God Question** series is the centrepiece of the resources promoted by GTN. From the time of its launch until now its reach has been compared to the spread of the branches of a giant tree. On television it has achieved almost worldwide coverage through almost 50 broadcast television channels and through the growing number of video-on-demand (VOD) companies offering **The God Question** across the globe.

However, one of the very encouraging current areas of significant growth is the use of the series with **student populations internationally**. This involves the production of the resources in additional languages. Much of the momentum is being created through our cooperation with IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students). Consequently:

the **Russian** version of **The God Question** has taken root

in universities in cities of Moldova.

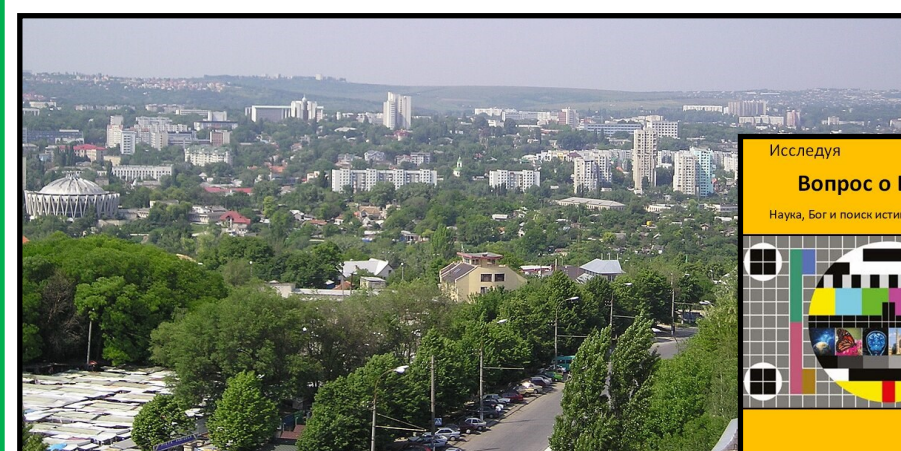
An updated version of the Study Guide in Russian is in production.

From Chişinău, Florin Trandafir, reports “*The*

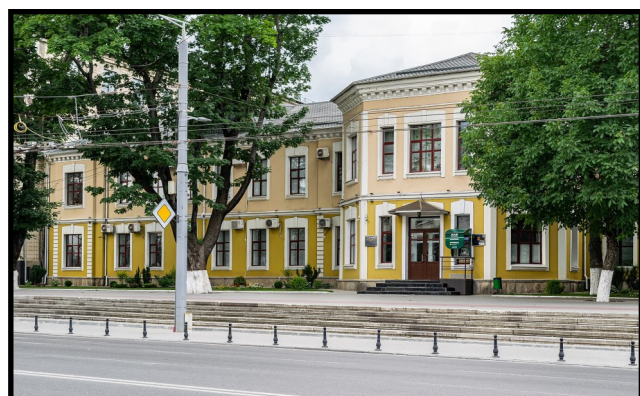
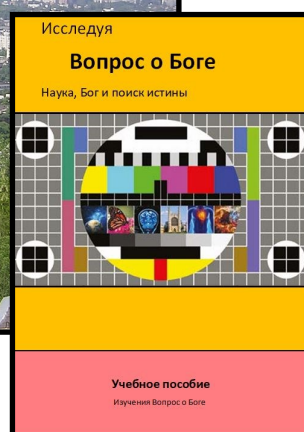
*students are finding this so interesting and there is so much stimulus for discussion*”.

Moldova’s State University of Medicine and Pharmacy

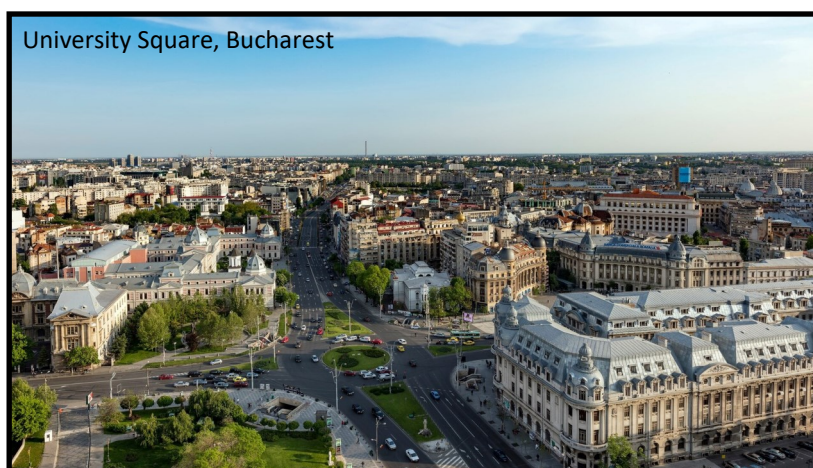
In the city of Balti, Pavel Polisciuc is preparing large scale events using **The God Question** at the start of the new term in August.



Chişinău, capital of Moldova



Additionally, the producers of **The God Question** are responding to a request to have the series in **Romanian** for use not only with young people in-country but also with Romanians in other parts of central Europe.



University Square, Bucharest



## Taking The God Question Back to the Heart of Civilisation



Historically, Greece is the cradle of civilisation, learning and European culture. Despite their intellectual rigour and wisdom the Greeks of 2.5 thousand years ago professed belief in a raft of imaginary gods led by Zeus. In 399BC the philosopher Socrates was forced to drink poison as punishment for his scepticism about their existence. Just less

than 2000 years ago the apostle Paul came to this city to proclaim Christian truth about the God of the Bible, God of the universe and Jesus Christ his son.

Now both **The God Question** series and the cinematic film **Against the Tide** are being translated into **Greek** and becoming part of the process of today's ongoing evangelism. From the Greek Evangelical Alliance, Erastos Filos, who initiated the project, said *"Our young people desperately need well crafted opportunities to explore evidence for the truth of Christianity and these resources are ideal for that purpose."*

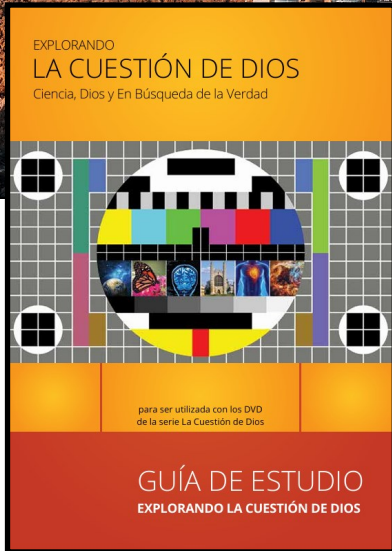
### Reaching the Chinese Population

Meantime, Search for Truth Charitable Trust, responsible for Grasping the Nettle, continues to promote **Science and God: the Search for Meaning and Truth** especially to the ethnic Chinese population. In substantial numbers, many are students in Europe and elsewhere. Sometimes known as our 'Global' series, the programmes incorporate content and contributors from the orient as well as from the west. The programmes and their study guide are available in both current versions of Mandarin: Traditional and Simplified—and also in English.



### The Strategic Importance of Students

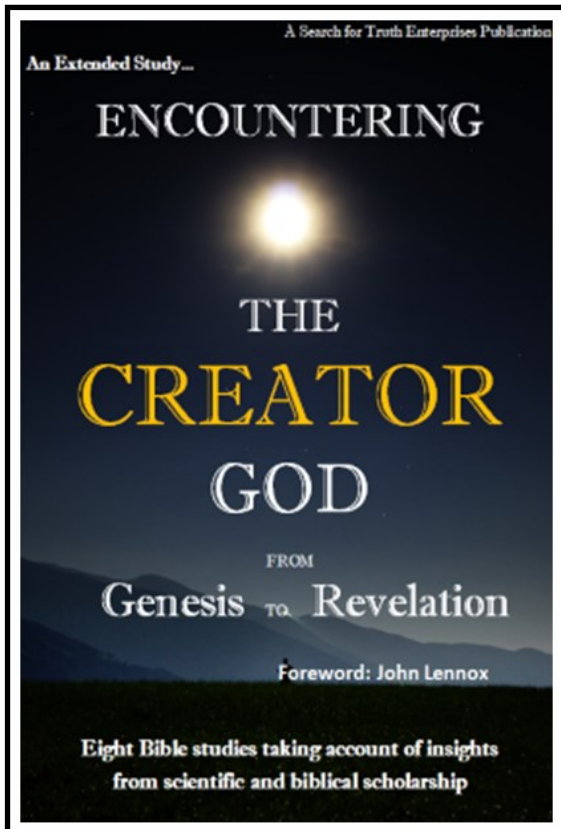
As the future leaders of the world, it is important to offer the student population opportunities to ask and explore the big question of life. We are delighted that The God Question resources are branching out and reaching so many in their native language.



## Onwards to Latin America

After its production in English, *The God Question* was dubbed in **Spanish**, creating the series **La Cuestión de Dios**. The dubbing took place with professional actors in the studios of Fox Films, Madrid.

Now the Spanish series is being promoted across many of the countries of Latin America, especially within the student population. Regional IFES Director for the sub-continent, native Chilian, Carmen Castillo, said “*La Cuestión de Dios is a wonderful resource for students because it addresses issues they find stimulating and raises many questions that take us to the heart of Christianity*”.



## Encountering the Creator God: Spreading Across Europe

At one end of the spectrum of viewers of **The God Question** series are those interested to investigate whether science and belief in God are compatible.

At the other end of the spectrum are others who wish to explore how modern academic learning, including science, might inform our interpretation of Scripture.

Responding to the interest of those in the latter category, Search for Truth Enterprises has published the eight-part Bible study series **Encountering the Creator God**. Although a word based document, each study offers a hyper-link to a relevant extract of **The God Question** or **Against the Tide**.



Scripture is concerned with 'creation' from Genesis to Revelation.



The subject of creation is central in Scripture: it begins with the creation of the earth (after a brief reference to the heavens), subsequently emphasises the need for fallen humanity to become a new creation and ends with the creation of new heavens and a new earth. The studies provided in **Encountering the Creator God** take users to eight 'landing spots' from Genesis to Revelation, each concerned with an aspect of creation.

Eva Petržilková's introduction to **Encountering the Creator God** took place at a conference in North Macedonia, Greece where Search for Truth resources were highlighted. Prague-based Eva has Europe-wide responsibility for promoting Scripture engagement for her organisation. Commenting, she said *"I'm excited about this new resource. I know of nothing like it and it addresses many of the big questions that Christians have. I am sharing this with IFES colleagues across the continent"*.



Iconic Prague in the Czech Republic, just one European city where the resources are being promoted.



To find out more about **Encountering the Creator God** follow this [link](#) to a short animated PowerPoint presentation and/or contact [office@graspingthenettle.org](mailto:office@graspingthenettle.org).



## Bring Them Home

A part of this newsletter has been devoted to revealing the spread of our resources to other countries and languages. But don't forget they are available here and in English!



Rev George Lind

Not only so, GTN Liaison Officer George Lind is very willing to help organise, participate in or lead

sessions on **Exploring the God Question**. Note too that the series in its '**For Starters**' form offers each of the themes in 10 bite-sized extracts representing the key content in the series.

This is ideal for use with young people especially.

To find out more about both versions of the series visit

[www.thegodquestion.tv/explore](http://www.thegodquestion.tv/explore).



## Against the Tide

If your church has not yet screened *Against the Tide*, the time to act is now, especially if you are planning activities for autumn 2025. Since the film was made for cinemas, why not step outside the box, as many have done so successfully, and arrange a cinematic screening in your locality? Here is an offer from George Lind, "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 developing contact with the cinema. I would be able to guide on the benefits of such out-reaches and how to ensure everything runs smoothly".*



GTN also takes care of the supply of the film to the cinema in the appropriate format and can design custom made publicity. The plan is ready to implement. Help us do it.

## Contact

Contact George Lind by email or telephone: [gklind@talktalk.net](mailto:gklind@talktalk.net), 01560 428732 or via [office@graspingthenettle.org](mailto:office@graspingthenettle.org).



**Next Up on GTN Online!**

**WOW!**

**Keeping Your Blood Flowing: Remarkable Solutions**

**With**

**Professor David Nash**

**of Strathclyde University**

**On**

**Wednesday 23rd April at 7.30 PM**

To reserve your place, simply request it at [office@graspingthenettle.org](mailto:office@graspingthenettle.org)

WOW! is a popular strand of GTN's online programmes.  
It aims to highlight aspects of the wonders of our existence.



### **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](http://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),  
a registered charity and private limited company registered in Scotland.