



GRASPING THE NETTLE

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2021

GOING GLOBAL WITH THE GOD QUESTION AGENDA



After several years in the making, Search for Truth Charitable Trust (sponsor of GTN) and Kharis Productions have announced the launch of **a new 'global' TV series: SCIENCE & THE ULTIMATE QUESTION**. Read more on page 2 about this significant initiative.

CHAIRMAN NEWS AT GTN



Angus Morrison in mid-interview at a GTN event at Perth Theatre

After three distinguished years as chairman of GTN, Very Rev Dr Angus Morrison is passing the leadership baton to Very Rev Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 2020/21. At the most recent meeting of the GTN Steering Board,

Dr Morrison was praised and warmly thanked for his loyal, collegiate and warmly personable approach to leadership. He described his years 'in the chair' as *"an enormous privilege"*. Dr Morrison now has the role of Ambassador at Large for GTN.

His successor, Dr Martin Fair has been a member of the GTN Steering Board from its inception in 2015.



GTN's new Chairman, Martin Fair

Always deeply committed to the movement, he is also widely experienced in the use of The God Question resources, not only in Church settings but also in Further Education, where he described the interest of students in the topic of science and God as *'totally engaged'*. He looks forward to his expanded role with *"excitement and anticipation of a growing and strengthening GTN"*.

(Continued from page 1) Although the new production draws some its content from the original 'The God Question' series, much of it was filmed in the Far East.

"Having been asked to provide 'The God Question' for an East Asian audience, we decided on a radically new approach to this production," said producer/director Iain Morris.

"The God Question series was created largely for a 'Western' mindset. We felt we needed to create programmes which asked questions of Eastern culture and religion and included expert contributors from the Orient, including several Christians."



Filming took place in London and Hong Kong

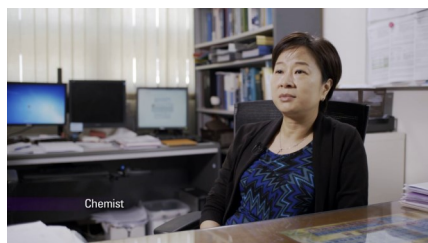


Professor and Buddhist teacher Sik Hin Hung explains how the religion answers the big questions.

Whereas The God Question series contrasted and compared the case for atheism and the case for God, *Science and the Ultimate Question* adds two other worldviews:

Buddhism and the traditional Chinese religion, Daoism. All four world views offer an account

of how our existence can be explained and what it is believed lies ahead (or not in the case of atheism) after death. In this mix, the distinctive claim of Christianity - that the Creator not only exists but has revealed himself in Jesus of Nazareth, resurrected from the dead - stands out in stark contrast to the other worldviews that do not claim such a level of divine revelation. A wide range of expert contributors from science and religion help explain and interpret contrasting answers to the big questions of existence. They include Oxford Professor Alister McGrath, interviewed while on a visit to Hong Kong.



Geneticist Prof Stephen Tsui, (Chinese University of HK), Chemist Prof Pauline Chiu (University of HK) and Theologian Prof Alister McGrath

SFT chairman, Professor John Spence said, *"We tend to refer to this production as our global series because it travels both East and West for content. Although the programmes are relevant worldwide, we expect particular interest from broadcasters in Asia, especially Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore and beyond. For that reason, the series comes with optional Mandarin subtitles"*. Special thanks to our translator Edith Ho from Hong Kong and to Rae Manger of Sanctus Media for their sterling work in creating the Chinese graphics.

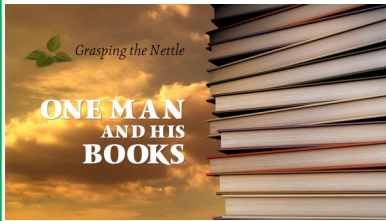
Science & the Ultimate Question is being offered worldwide by Flame Distribution. As demonstration of the series' worldwide appeal, the first contract, signed this month, is with Czech broadcaster Prima TV.

In the same week, Flame Distribution also signed a contract giving digital broadcaster Little Dot Studios access to the original God Question series. Little Dot is one of a new generation of distributors of premium TV content on YouTube and broadcasts its linear streaming to more than 15 digital platforms, generating up to 650,000 unique hits daily. Since its launch in 2013, The God Question has been broadcast, typically on mainstream TV, to hundreds of millions of homes across the world. It is also available on several digital platforms, including Amazon TV.

Why not find our more about the new global series by requesting an electronic brochure from info@kharisproductions.com. Optionally you can have it in Mandarin!

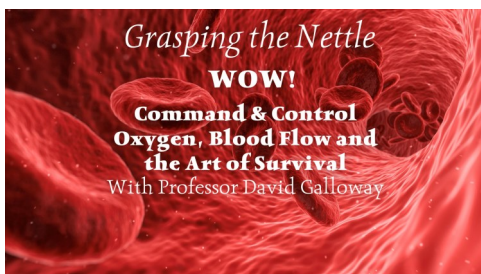
COMBATTING LOCKDOWN WITH GTN ONLINE

Throughout the most intense periods of lockdown and beyond, GTN has offered a regular form of online engagement for its growing constituency of participants.



The 'Watch' section of the GTN website www.graspingthenettle.org has become a rich gathering point for several strands of GTN online production. Some, such as the popular One Man and His Books, are simply recordings while others were live events with at least the presentations being placed on the website afterwards.

While several sessions are in the well established 'Exploring Further' category, spring 2021 saw the launch of a brand new series called WOW: Wonder On Wonder. It presents modern medical illustrations of the words of an ancient Psalm which observes that *"we are fearfully and wonderfully made"*. One of the architects of this series—as well as its first contributor—Prof Chris Packard, said *"The rationale for these programmes, which celebrate scientific discovery and its practical implications for improving human health, is to act as a stimulus to the Christian community to embrace the wonders of who and what we are"*. Chris Packard ably demonstrated that aim in his mischievously entitled *"Anyone for Statins?"* - the opening programme of the series. The audience learned about the wonders of the human heart and its vast array of arterial canals which pump life giving blood through our bodies. But what are our options if the system malfunctions?

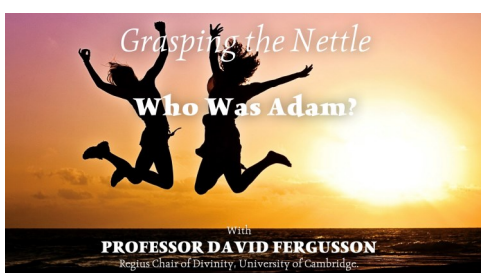


The second programme in the series was an intriguing presentation by former President of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, Oncologist Professor David Galloway. Taking as his subject *"Command and Control"* he highlighted the essential role of the pituitary gland in organising the mobilising key functions of the body. The audience was thoroughly fascinated!

Dr Martin Fair, the host of GTN online, commented that *"One of the great positives of this new strand of programmes is that it is attracting a very diverse audience including some friends who would describe themselves as humanists and at this point would certainly not identify with Christian faith. We warmly welcome this opportunity to share with them too in exploring the wonders of our existence and in asking the big underlying questions about why it should be so"*.



Martin Fair leading the most recent programme in the WOW series



In contrast with WOW, and demonstrating the breadth of the GTN agenda, were two recent Exploring Further sessions with Cambridge Professor of Divinity David Fergusson in which the focus was the Theology of Creation and particularly the intriguing question *"Who Was Adam?"*.

All of these and more can be freely accessed in the 'Watch' section of the GTN website.

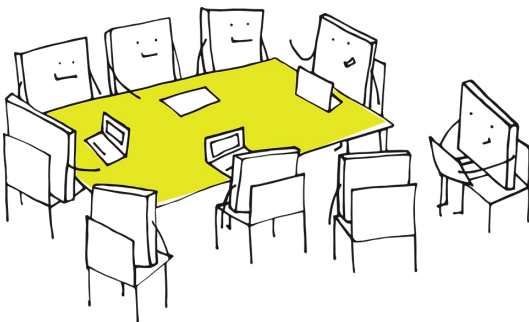
NEW INTERN FOR GTN



GTN is delighted to announce the arrival of new intern Shahrukh Gill. A 'son of the manse', he will begin training for the ministry at Edinburgh University's New College later in the year.

Shahrukh's immediate priority is to widen the scope of GTN's social media. With a first degree in psychology, he has a passion for supporting young people in the development of their Christian faith. Commenting on his new responsibility, Shahrukh said *"I am incredibly excited about the work we are going to achieve and how it will nurture my future in ministry and engagement with others"*.

GTN has had a presence on Facebook for some years now with regular posts on points of scientific relevance, links between news and GTN events and resources and thoughtful pointers to how GTN can function more effectively. With Shahrukh's arrival, GTN now has a LinkedIn page to heighten its profile among professionals and is moving to participate in Pinterest and increase its presence on YouTube. Our new intern will also focus on increasing GTN's connections with young people.



Are you or any young person you know potentially interested in being part of a Youth Council of Advisers to GTN? If so, we would love to hear from you at office@graspingthenettle.org.

GRASPING THE NETTLE IN SCOTLAND'S CLASSROOMS

Since the production of Introducing the God Question



(especially for schools) there has been a ready-made resource connected to Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence. Work continues, led by Barbara Coupar, Director of the Scottish Catholic Education Service, in making the links very specific for teachers. Former Head of RE in Grove Academy, Dundee, Rev Gerry Dillon is also part of GTN's educational advisory group.

Additionally GTN will be helping resource school chaplains especially through a conference organised by Christian Values in Education.

MODERATOR SUPPORT IN GRASPING THE NETTLE

The Newly installed Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Lord Wallace of Tankerness, has Grasping the Nettle clearly among the initiatives he has pledged to support during his year in office.



With life-long connections in politics he will attempt to strengthen links between GTN and members of the Scottish Parliament. Among several other plans to heighten the profile of GTN is his forthcoming involvement and support for the conference for school chaplains which will take place in the autumn term.

GTN continues to be immensely grateful for the support of Moderators during their terms of office.

BUILDING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

While Grasping the Nettle has a solid focus on our home country of Scotland, the GTN model and the Exploring the God Question resources continue to attract international interest and nowhere is that more obvious than among our Scandinavian neighbours in Norway.

Central to the partnership is the involvement of Prof Lars Dahle and his NLA University colleague Bjørn Hinderaker. Among their many academic responsibilities is a highly popular course of study entitled Worldviews in which students are offered the opportunity to encounter and

discuss competing and sometimes overlapping ways of explaining our existence. Cue The God Question!



Oslo, home of NLA University



The launch conference for 'Finnes Gud?'

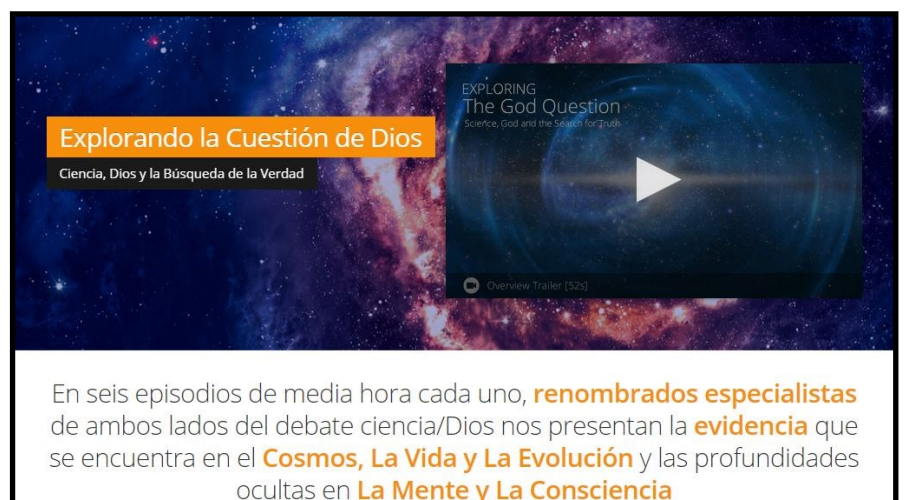
In addition, Lars and Bjørn are the driving force behind a Christian apologetics initiative called Damaris Norway. The interest in GTN and Search for Truth resources by Damaris Norway is extensive. Exploring the God Question has been translated into Norwegian, a number of GTN online programmes have been requested and there are plans to make the forthcoming Scripture, Science and the God Question series of Bible engagements available in Norway too. But the traffic is not one way. Director of

Programmes for GTN Iain Morris was, pre-pandemic, in Norway for the launch of 'Finnes Gud?' (The God Question in Norwegian) and was *"thoroughly impressed"* with the extensive reach of our Norwegian colleagues into the world of Christian young people. Around 1000 attended the event at which 'Finnes Gud?' was launched. This level of contact with young people remains an aspiration and inspiration for GTN in Scotland.

As well as the partnership with Norway, there is an ongoing strategic relationship with colleagues in Madrid where 'Explorando La Cuestion de Dios' is available directly from the website of the Spanish Bible Society but also more recently from www.thegodquestion.tv/es/explore.

Development work on the Exploring the God Question

website continues where very soon people from across the world will be able to access the series in English, Spanish, Norwegian, Russian and Ukrainian. In addition the new global series (see pages 1&2) will be available in both English and Mandarin. Consequently, opportunities to 'grasp the nettle' are spreading internationally



Part of the home page of the new Spanish section in The God Question website

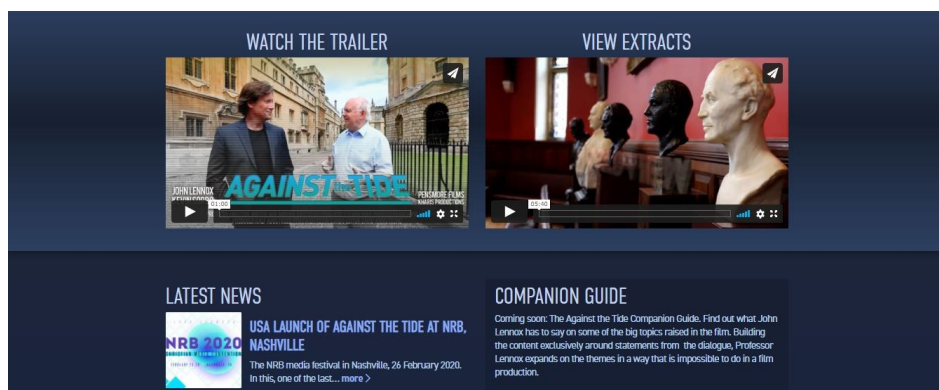
AGAINST THE TIDE: NOW AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE



The cinematic film *Against the Tide*, featuring Oxford Professor John Lennox and Hollywood actor Kevin Sorbo is available for purchase from 25th June. See details opposite. The film is both an intellectual and a geographical journey as the Professor guides his inquisitive dialogue partner through a range of evidence for the existence of God, drawn from the cosmos, life on earth and mind and consciousness.

In addition to its scientific agenda the principal duo visit Israel to examine historical evidence for the claim that Jesus Christ was God revealed and, to demonstrate the fact, was raised from the dead. Visit the film's UK website at www.againstthetidemovie.org.

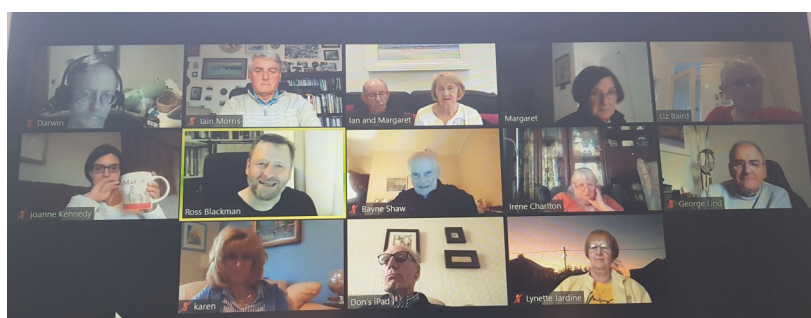
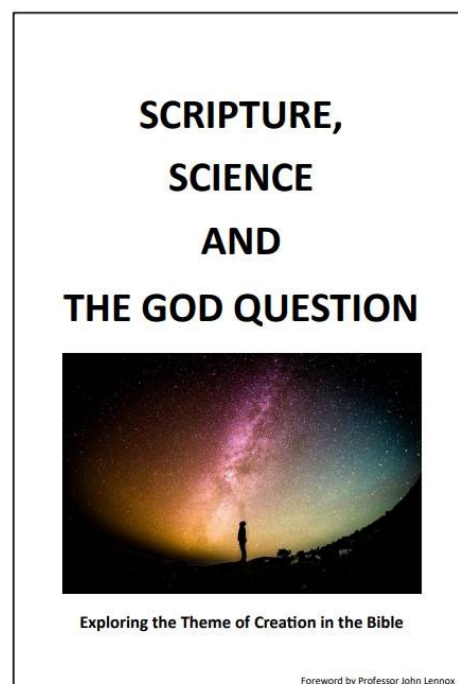
Against The Tide was produced by Kharis Productions Ltd.



SCRIPTURE, SCIENCE AND THE GOD QUESTION

This Bible study accompaniment to *The God Question* series is on the verge of completion and talks with a UK publisher are quite well advanced.

Following the theme of Creation from Genesis to Revelation in 8 key Bible passages, the publication promotes both meditational and study approaches to engaging with Scripture. The studies are contained in section two of the publication with other sections offering a range of personal extension opportunities. The Foreword is contributed by Professor John Lennox. For more information and to find out how your church groups can benefit, email office@graspingthenettle.org.



The 8 Scripture Engagements were 'road tested' in Zoom sessions led by Rev Ross Blackman.

EXPLORING THE GOD QUESTION—WHAT YOU CAN DO!



At the point of issue of this newsletter the Scottish Government has announced a revolutionary approach to the assessment of what is taught in Scottish secondary schools. It thereby recognises that being able to identify what has been learned is crucially important. The Church has a less rigorous approach to learning and teaching but it can be convincingly argued that all who own the name 'Christian' should have the opportunity to reflect upon and evaluate why they believe what they believe. That should be essential learning.

Assisting that process is one of the key aims of GTN and its central resource Exploring the God Question. Although knowledge of both is quite widespread, in an effort to accelerate the process, a new electronic seven page brochure has been produced to explain the who, what and why of the study series.

Have you Explored The God Question?

Does your church know about it?

Could you connect your contacts in church with the brochure?

Could you organise Exploring the God Question sessions? (online has proved successful)

Would you value the support of GTN in doing so and even in leading the sessions?

Might you be interested in a taster session for your prospective audience?

Can you promote the experience to young people in your church?



Write to office@graspingthenettle.org for your copy of the brochure and with any suggestions you have about how we can partner with you to help roll out this important resource.

GTN Liaison Officer Rev George Lind will readily respond to enquires and be pleased to give whatever assistance is required.

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.