

Eye-Opener Studies

Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. (Ps. 119:18)

3: The Existence of God

‘Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.’ (Heb 11:6)

The most important question in the world is one which everybody, consciously or subconsciously, asks themselves, whether they realize it or not, is ‘Does God exist?’, or ‘Is there a God?’. In either form it is the same question. On the answer depends our actions, attitudes, judgments and so on. If we answer ‘No’, we believe ultimately we control our own lives and destiny and are under no authority beyond ourselves; we make the rules. We may be trapped physically and politically in situations where we are helpless and are forced to bow the knee where we might prefer not to, but emotionally, morally and spiritually we answer only to ourselves. If the answer is ‘Yes’, a raft of secondary questions kicks in and ultimate accountability lies elsewhere beyond our inner being. Such questions as readily spring to mind are ‘What is this God like?’, ‘Is there only one or are there many?’, ‘How am I expected to behave and who makes the rules?’, ‘Does he, or is it she?, care much or just lets me get on with it in my own sweet way?’, and so on. In other words ‘How answerable am I to this God?’.

Thus when faced with choices and questions of the day, what we truly believe about God guides all that we think and do. We say ‘truly believe’ because many profess to believe in God but comfortably behave as if He does not exist and do what unbeliev-

ers do with great fluency. What we believe about God, however, will affect our views on issues like abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, homosexual practices, war, adultery and fornication, marriage and divorce, lying, theft, murder, love and family life, personal integrity, and so on. Not all serious theists, who, of course, believe in God, will agree on everything and line up on one side of an issue, with the atheists and agnostics on the other, thus making ‘Theists = Good’ people and ‘Atheists = Bad’. There are many humanly ‘good’ people who are intrinsically ‘good’ and who live what all would admire as ‘good lives’, who do not believe in God. There should not be a *vice versa* situation here for us to consider, so we won’t do so! And not all theist systems produce ‘good’ people because the god, or gods, they worship, and who therefore run their lives, can demand intrinsically ‘bad’ behaviour - hence the importance of the secondary questions about God once existence has been affirmed.

Studying God

Human beings seem instinctively to believe in God, or gods. From animistic pagan worship of nature gods through esoteric, ethereal, elusive gods with no form and little reality, people down the centuries have been led to accept that there is an existence above and beyond that of mere mortal humans,



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which is powerful and must be served. It has been said that man is a worshipping creature and even where the credibility of these supernatural pantheons has crumbled into cynical disrepute, the existence of such 'gods' has not often been denied. If they have been mocked into extinction and their temples and idols have crumbled back into the dust from which they once were fashioned, they have been replaced by 'better' gods, or even truly by God Himself, rather than their existence being denied altogether. Consequently the study of the question 'Does God exist?' has been the foundational topic in philosophy for thousands of years. Even in our rationalistic, humanistic university departments since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, Philosophy students cut their academic teeth on this conundrum.

The Bible on God

The Bible does not present an argument for belief in the existence of God; it simply assumes the obvious! *'In the beginning God created...'* (Gen. 1:1) is how it majestically commences, and to the final *'...Amen'* (Rev. 22:21) this 'truth' is never questioned. The only direct observation in this field comes in our banner quote from Hebrews that *'Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.'* (Heb 11:6). Obviously it is impossible to draw near to a God you do not believe exists, however your feelings on this question have no effect on the existence or otherwise of deity. He exists, if He exists, irrespective of anybody's opinions. The closest the Bible comes to presenting us directly with a 'proof' of God's existence comes from Paul in Romans. There we read about the ungodly, *'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.'* (Rom. 1:18-20 emphasis mine). In other words just look at the wonderful creation in all of its glory and intricacy and marvel at its maker, who has to transcend human knowledge and understanding. A thousand years before, king David had done a similar thing and declared: *'You formed my inward parts; you*

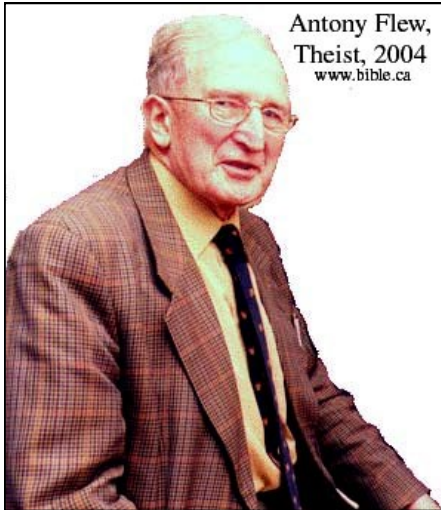
knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.' (Ps 139:13-14). Of course his soul knew it very well. He had long observed: *'When I look at*



your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?' (Ps 8:3-4). The young shepherd boy who became king must often have gazed up at the night sky and decided that *'The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.'* (Ps 19:1). Yes, David 'saw' God in creation mainly by looking up. Today we can also 'see' Him by looking down, down through a microscope and the deeper and deeper we look the more amazing the wonder of the design behind the universe becomes apparent.

Flew converts from atheism to theism

In our first study we mentioned the great twentieth-century atheistic philosopher, Antony Flew. What



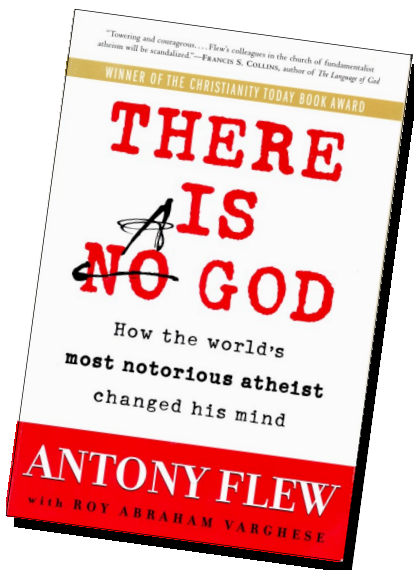
Antony Flew,
Theist, 2004
www.bible.ca

Professor Antony Flew

being the most reasonable and likely. After all he was the son of a Methodist minister, and his father made no secret of the fact that he prayed every day that his Antony would change his mind and find God again. Maybe that's why this old, new convert would not go the whole way and embrace his father's faith - he had had to climb down in the face of the evidence for there being a God, and pride prevented him from admitting he had been totally off course all his academic working life. Many a soul will be eternally in hell because of pride - even Satan!

Flew's book

Professor Flew found he was an atheist by the age of 15. He was born on 11th February 1923 and died on 8th April 2010, aged 87. For about 66 years he championed the arguments against there being a God but in 2002 he dropped the intellectual bombshell that he now believed that there has to be a God, and in 2007 he produced the book *There is a God* which explains his reasoning. Many of the students whom he influenced into becoming atheists were absolutely appalled. After all many of them had advanced in their own academic fields by building on Flew's foundations. They de-



we did not say was that in his old age, i.e. 81 he changed his mind and became a theist - not a Christian, as such, but a believer in a god, a deity, who had to have made the universe. He did favour the Christian God as

clared that in his old age he had gone senile, or that he had been taken over by an American Christian cult who manipulated him. The book, you see, shows no sign of a mind being in any way other than sharp as a tack. So if you can't attack the message, attack the messenger, in this case the man himself. He always based his thinking on Socrates and the Socratic method, whose main line was that 'we should follow the evidence wherever it leads', and Flew came to believe that the evidence led to a belief in a deity. I commend the book to you. It is very readable, only 160 pages of argument but with two important appendices which take it to 213 pages, and it's readily available (published by HarperOne, a Harper Collins imprint. ISBN 978-0-06-133530-3).

What finally persuaded Flew to change

We are going to spend a little time looking at the sort of evidence which persuaded a devout atheist to convert. Prof. Flew reports that he was part of a symposium in 2004 in New York. He writes: 'In this symposium, when asked if recent work on the origin of life pointed to the activity of a creative Intelligence, I said:

Yes, I now think it does ... almost entirely because of the DNA investigations. What I think the DNA material has done is that it has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), that intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements to work together. It's the enormous complexity of the way they work together. The meeting of these two parts at the right time by chance is simply minute. It is all a matter of the enormous complexity by which results were achieved, which looked to me like the work of intelligence.' (pages 74-75).

'I was particularly impressed with Gerry Schroeder's point-by-point refutation of what I call the "monkey theorem." This idea, which has been presented in a number of forms and variations, defends the possibility of life arising by chance using the analogy of a multitude of monkeys banging away on computer keyboards and eventually ending up writing a Shakespearean sonnet.

Schroeder first referred to an experiment conducted by the British National Council of Arts. A computer was placed in a cage with six monkeys.

After one month of hammering away at it (as well as using it as a bathroom!), the monkeys produced fifty typed pages - but not a single word. Schroeder noted that this was the case even though the shortest word in the English language is one letter (*a* or *I*). *A* is a word only if there is a space on either side of it. If we take it that the keyboard has thirty characters (the twenty-six letters and the other symbols), then the likelihood of getting a one-letter word is 30 times 30 times 30, which is 27,000. The likelihood of a getting a one-letter word is one chance out of 27,000.

Schroeder then applied the probabilities to the sonnet analogy. "What's the chance of getting a Shakespearean sonnet?" he asked. He continued:

All the sonnets are the same length. They're by definition fourteen lines long. I picked the one I knew the opening line for, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" I counted the number of letters; there are 488 in the sonnet. What's the likelihood of hammering away and getting 488 letters in the exact sequence as in "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?"? What you end up with is 26 multiplied by itself 488 times - or 26 to the 488th power. Or, in other words, in base 10, 10 to the 690th.

[Now] the number of particles in the universe - not grains of sand, I'm talking about protons, electrons, and neutrons - is 10 to the 80th. Ten to the 80th is 1 with 80 zeros after it. Ten to the 690th is 1 with 690 zeros after it. There are not enough particles in the universe to write down the trials; you'd be off by a factor of 10 to the 600th.

If you took the entire universe and converted it to computer chips - forget the monkeys - each one weighing a millionth of a gram and had each computer chip able to spin out 488 trials at, say, a million times a second; if you turn the entire universe into these microcomputer chips and these chips were spinning a million times a second [producing] random letters, the number of trials you would get since the beginning of time would be 10 to

the 90th trials. It would be off again by a factor of 10 to the 600th. You will never get a sonnet by chance. The universe would have to be 10 to the 600th times larger. Yet the world just thinks the monkeys can do it every time.' (Pages 75 -77).



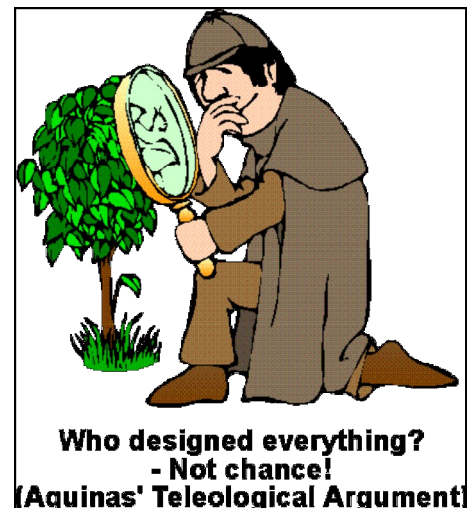
The truth of Schroeder's last sentence can be seen if you Google 'Monkeys using typewriters, images' as I did to get this picture.

The Wikipedia article falls hook-line-and-sinker for it, as do other items since it is a standard 'proof' that evolution could have easily happened by chance. It couldn't, but we won't be looking at this topic until much further on in our course when we consider 'The Genesis Foundation' (Study 8). Nevertheless be aware that the Creation v Evolution debate is, in fact, the 'Does God Exist?' debate in modern form. It is not a peripheral issue.

The argument from design

Professor Flew, as we said above, always found the argument from design to be the most persuasive.

This is the closest stance the Bible takes to verify the truth that there is a God. It is known as the Teleological argument for the existence of God. Thomas Aquinas developed his argument from design but the



even better known proponent of it was a man called William Paley. He lived from 1743 - 1805 and his best known work was his book called *Natural Theology* (1802). In it he described a man walking down a path and, seeing a watch lying beside a stone, concluded that the watch had been made by somebody, even though there was no other evidence present for the watchmaker's existence. The proof



Google images

William Paley (1743-1805)

that the watch was designed by an intelligence is evident in its working to an obvious end and purpose. There was nothing placed randomly in the watch and every part had a distinct function to perform. Paley postulated that nature shows clear evidence of design despite the visible absence of the designer. We would all recognize the common sense of this situation. Experience tell us that complicated things like watches had to have been designed for a purpose by a designer, and the universe with its plants, animals and man, as well as its laws of nature through which scientists study and hypothesise, galaxies, stars and planets, etc. all show clear evidence of plan and purpose in their design and this shrieks 'intelligence, not chance'.

This has always been the strongest argument. Well it would be if it really is God's preferred argument for Himself! When I first studied it, the book we used unblinkingly put forward that the main argument against it is not that there is a weakness in the philosophical reasoning but rather that the Theory of Evolution has shown conclusively that you can get perfectly good design from random chance events. The 'facts' of evolution, in fact, are not facts at all but are simply unproven hypotheses. Sadly this is not appreciated by most people today and the media, particularly nature programmes on television, are currently saturated with evolutionary propaganda.

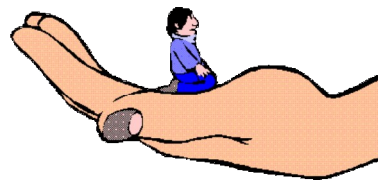
The design argument shows that it is most reasonable to accept that there was an Intelligence behind the creation of the Universe. It can, however, say little or nothing further at all about the nature of

this 'Intelligence', namely that 'It' is omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipresent (present everywhere), or that 'He' is a good, loving and gracious God. Nor can it say that the Universe was designed by a single Intelligence. In our world there can often be a team of designers who pool their talents to the agreed end. It takes other arguments to discover the nature of the Creator/Designer God, which are way beyond the remit of the Teleological proof.

Cause and effect

We have to realise that no philosophical arguments actually prove, beyond all shadow of doubt, that God exists. If there was one, we would not be considering such arguments as we are here, and there

One can't prove God exists with absolute certainty



Most people don't try to prove God exists. They search for Him and find Him. Some don't bother to look.

would be no debate. What these arguments do show is the high probability that there is a God once we put them all together.

I well remember teaching young teenage

pupils about God, and inevitably one bright spark would ask me his own, original and 'brilliant' question, which, of course, I'd never heard before! I would be telling them that in our experience everything we see has to have been made somehow. If you go back as far as you can in that process you must come to a starting point. Something, or somebody, must have started everything off. There must have been a first cause, and we call that first cause 'God'. I could then hold my breath, count to ten, and the super question would come flying at me: 'Sir, who made God?' They thought they had nailed me, and in a sense they had, though I had, and have, a way of dealing with it. The conversation would proceed thus:

'If I could tell you who made God, what would your next question be?'

'Who made the person who made God?'

'Correct, and if I could tell you who made the person who made the person who made God, what would your next question be?'

At his point they'd get the point that this question-



there has to have been a something, or somebody, who was not caused and always existed and who started everything though He Himself had no cause. He was and is eternal and everlasting and we call Him 'God'. The process of going back and back through effects to causes in this fashion is called an *infinite regression*.

For unbelieving scientists, the point at which they stop is The Big Bang. They believe that the whole Universe was once compressed into a dot no bigger than a full stop on this page. To try to imagine that, given the massive, almost unbelievable size of the Universe, takes an enormous amount of faith but they do it without the blinking of an eyelid. Yet these self-same scientists often mock the faith of Christians who believe in a Creator God who made everything. This microdot Universe encountered something like a gravity wave about 13,800,000,000 years ago, so the theory goes, and it exploded into billions of bits which later came to form the galaxies and planets. These scientists have to start with a 'something' which was always there; it's just that their 'something' is physical not spiritual. The Christian believes that only spirit is eternal; the atheist believes that some form of matter simply always was.

The Christian can suggest that he can go one stage further back than the scientist and postulate that God placed the microdot and gravity wave there. That merely begs the question. To push it one step back actually proves nothing because you still have to go outside your terms of reference in order to arrive at your answer. The argument is not logically self-consistent. And besides which, the Christian does not want to accept the validity of The Big Bang, or its accompanying gravity wave, as the

ing just goes on and on, back and back as far as you like to go and never gets anywhere. I would then tell them that you have to accept that you come to a point where you have to stop and realise that

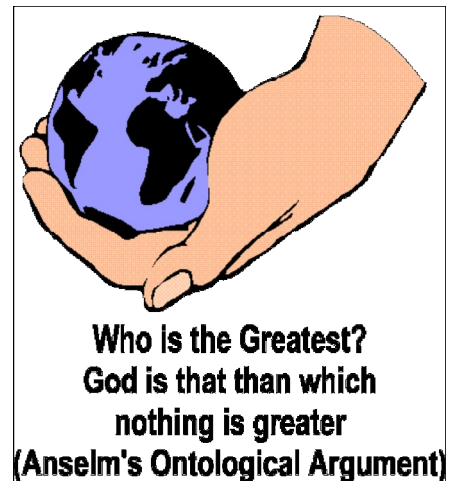
origin of the Universe. It leaks too many scientific holes and is merely the latest in a long line of failed scientific explanations.

This so-called 'proof' is known as the 'Cosmological Proof' and goes back a long time to Thomas Aquinas at least. Though it does not prove anything it certainly is an important pointer to the high probability, mentioned earlier, that God exists, as do all of the 'proofs'.

Ideas of Perfection

The first two 'proofs' of the existence of God which we have considered have a strong scientific side to them. Other 'proofs' do not. They depend on reasoning and our understanding of morality for their arguments.

The first of these is probably the most difficult to follow because it is purely an exercise of the mind. As you can see from the diagram (right), it is known as the 'Ontological Argument'.



Put simply, this argument revolves around our ideas of greatness and perfection. By applying our minds to a human understanding of the greatest, most perfect Being possible, we can come up with a list of attributes we would consider absolutely necessary for such a Being to possess. These would include the three attributes of God which we know from of old, namely: omnipotence (all-powerful), omniscience (all-knowing) and omnipresence (being everywhere). It would also contain the notion of Him being all good and all love. (We will meet this notion again (course 18) when we look at the problem of evil, pain and suffering.)

Clearly no human being could be omnipotent, omniscient or omnipresent, nor could they be all good and all love because they are fallible, fallen, mortal beings. Thus it is possible to construct our list and then conclude that, 'A Perfect Being who exists is more perfect than a Perfect Being who does not exist, therefore God exists.' This sounds



good until you realise that there is no way that existence can be a necessary attribute of perfection. For example, it is possible for us to construct an idea of what a perfect unicorn might be like. Having agreed upon all of its qualities, we cannot then conclude that, 'A perfect unicorn that exists is more perfect than a perfect unicorn that doesn't exist, therefore unicorns exist.' We know that unicorns do not exist, never have existed, and no amount of wishful thinking is going to change this. Some people readily accept that belief in the existence of God is a prime example of wishful thinking, but again, in reverse, this proves nothing whatsoever about the actual reality or not of a deity.

Wishful thinking about a Perfect Being we would want to call God does not guarantee that He exists. The Ontological Argument simply does not work.

Morality and altruism

One of the puzzles for the atheistic humanist is the presence of morality and altruism in the world. There might be some good, sociological reasons for having laws which govern any society in a given time and place but there is no logical, naturalistic explanation for what we would class as normal, human morality and altruism, or caring for others.

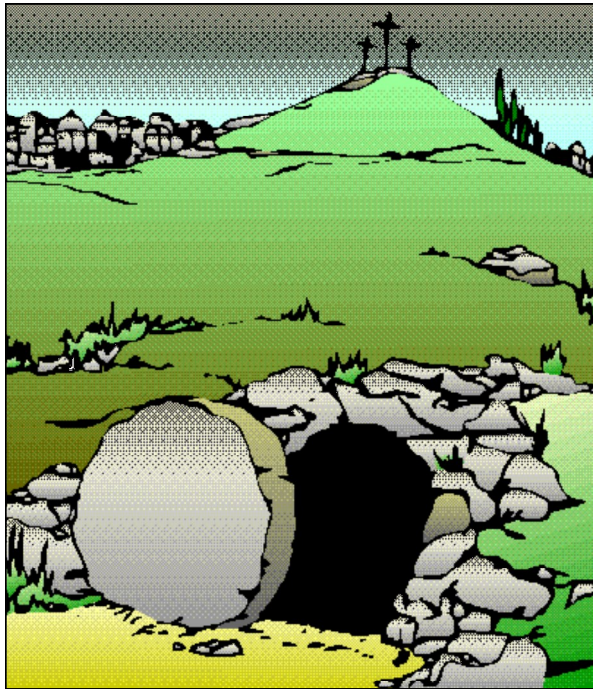
The Theory of Evolution is the basis on which atheistic humanism is founded. This, however, preaches that 'Nature is red in tooth and claw'. The survival of the fittest, the mechanism by which hu-

mans are supposed to have evolved from brute animals, has no place in its scheme for anything other than total selfishness. Look after Number One and 'Blow you Jack, I'm alright' should be our attitude to life and living. The unfit to survive need to be killed off to ensure the best possible gene pool is maintained for the successful furtherance of the species. In the animal kingdom the sick and old are soon polished off by predators. Incest, adultery, theft and murder are all common in the animal world and could comfortably be described as the 'natural' way to behave. If mankind evolved, how and when did the change to morality arrive and the de-

sire to help others come about? It actually makes no evolutionary sense to have doctors and carers, policemen and monks in an animal-driven society. 'OXFAM', 'Christian Aid', and many other charities too are clear denials of an animalistic origin for the human species. If the famous atheist Richard Dawkins goes to a doctor or hospital he becomes an evolutionary hypocrite. He should let the sickness take its course and, if he dies, he is protecting the gene pool as this one unfit human, of no evolutionary consequence, goes the way of all flesh. I doubt any atheists would care too much about a little hypocrisy in this aspect of their lives, but many would jump all over a Christian believer if they spotted some in his life.

Since morality and selfless care does not come naturally to anybody, and therefore has to be taught, from whence did it come? It is reasonable to suggest that it came from God. The almost universality of certain moral standards in all societies argues for the notion that God gave the same moral code to all societies at some point in the past. Differences today are a sign that some societies have become more degenerate than others, not that they haven't evolved as far. The trials of the Nazi leaders after the Second World War were based on the assumption of the reality of the universality of this moral code, so they couldn't hide behind the claim that they were only being consistent to their belief system by slaughtering millions of Jews. They might well have been but nobody was prepared to listen seriously to this as a defence. Morality is not just a

matter of political or social and personal choice, and deep down we all know that is true. The answer is that morality and love and care for others, even to the point of self-sacrifice to save them from harm and peril, was given to us by God. He is moral, loving and caring and He made us in His image - us, not the animals, for we are extra special to Him. Jesus taught us that *“Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13). Try telling that to an animal, but atheists are no less willing than theists to practise and acknowledge this principle. As humans they too received it from God!



by studying the resurrection of Jesus is that it is the foundation of all true belief and philosophical reasoning. The resurrection is not a philosophical argument in the abstract ether of human debate, it is an historically examinable actual event, about which a verdict has to be pronounced, but once accepted as being true - which is how the weight of the evidence powerfully points - this truth has implications way beyond being something nice to know but irrelevant to our lives. The resurrection demonstrates that there is life after death, that there is a God, and that this God is not a passive ‘watchmaker’ but is actively involved in the world and

The joint witness

As we have seen, no one proof can stand as an absolute guarantor of the certainty of the existence of God. However, put them all together and the postulate that ‘God exists’ does not seem all that unreasonable. It’s like the strands of a rope, individually they can’t take the strain but weave them together and they can moor an ocean liner.

The Resurrection

One reason why we insisted you begin this course

cares for us. He cannot be dismissed as an unimportant addition to our lives for He sets the rules, He enforces the rules, He says what is moral, right and wrong, no matter what mortal people may say, demand or deny.

Christ is the solid rock on which people of faith stand and build; all other ground is sinking sand. The point is simply made: Prove the resurrection and you’ve proved the existence of God!

Tasks

- 1) In your own words explain the Ontological Argument for the existence of God.
- 2) The latest ‘player’ in the debate over God, is called ‘Intelligent Design’? What is it and what are its strengths and weaknesses?