

ARGUING FOR GOD

A national lecture-series for Year 12 students
of A Level Religious Studies

With Dr Peter Vardy and Charlotte Vardy

Spring 2021

- 1) Wednesday 24th February: The Teleological Argument
- 2) Wednesday 3rd March: Cosmological Arguments
- 3) Wednesday 10th March: The Argument from Religious Experience
- 4) Wednesday 17th March: The Ontological Argument
- 5) Wednesday 24th March: Debate: This house believes that there is no way to prove God's existence.

"Dr Vardy and Charlotte never disappoint, both deliver content with passion and are the experts of the field. Students found the conference to be intellectually challenging and important to their A Level studies." Teacher, 2020

"I first went to one as a student, later a teacher. They are excellent. You can't beat Peter Vardy."

"We have attended them for years now. They are worth every penny spent on them and every second allocated."

"They are really excellent conferences- clear, coherent and extending talks upon all subjects linked with courses. A must for aspirational sixth formers."

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To Book

Building on the success of our Y13 online lecture series during the Autumn Term 2020, through the second half of the Spring Term 2021 Candle Conferences will offer a unique, national series of online lectures for Year 12 students of A Level Religious Studies.

Exploring content specified by ALL ENGLISH EXAMINATION BOARDS for AS/A Level in Religious Studies, and aiming to develop higher-level AO2 essay skills, the lectures will take students on a "deep dive" into the Arguments for the Existence of God. Through each of the first four lectures, presenters Dr Peter Vardy and Charlotte Vardy will explore different arguments and criticisms of those argument in detail, before the final session which will take the form of a debate, to which students will be encouraged to contribute their own, reasoned arguments.

As always with Candle Conferences, the 45 minute lectures will be pacy and engaging, designed to provoke deep thought and further discussion and debate. Each lecture will be accompanied by detailed student resources in a digital format, with an overview of the content, useful scholars and quotations, suggestions for extra reading and learning activities, to print off in advance of the session.

Sessions will include:

1) Wednesday 24th February: The Teleological Argument

The oldest and still the most persuasive argument for God's existence begins with observations of purpose or teleology in the universe... but are these observations accurate and are they best explained by an intelligent designer, let alone "what everybody calls God"? This introductory lecture will begin by considering different types of argument, their relative strengths and weaknesses, and will go on to explain and evaluate teleological arguments proposed by Aquinas, Paley and Tennant with reference to Hume and Mill.

2) Wednesday 3rd March: Cosmological Arguments

Cosmological arguments start with observations of causation and conclude that a Prime Mover, Uncaused Cause or Necessary Being is the best explanation thereof... but is everything in the universe really moved, caused and contingent as Aquinas argues? Also, even if the Cosmological Argument can survive the advent of Quantum science, is it fair to say that the cause of the universe is "what everybody calls God"? This lecture will explore the arguments presented by Aquinas and William Lane Craig and evaluate them with reference to Hume, Kant and Russell.

3) Wednesday 10th March: The Argument from Religious Experience

Another popular argument for God's existence starts with the observation that Religious Experiences are a common feature of human experience, reasoning that the best explanation of their occurrence is the existence of God as their object. Nevertheless, Religious Experiences are very diverse and many are subject to plausible naturalistic explanations. This lecture will consider which religious experiences have the best claim on being authentic (with particular reference to William James' arguments) and how common these are, before evaluating the attempt to argue for God's existence from Religious Experience, such as in the work of Richard Swinburne.

4) Wednesday 17th March: The Ontological Argument

Ontological Arguments take a different approach, starting with an a priori definition of God and reasoning that God's existence is a logically necessary part of that definition. If successful the Ontological Argument has the potential to prove God's existence in a way that no a posteriori argument could do... but many people struggle to see them as any more than "a charming joke" as Arthur Schopenhauer put it. This lecture will consider and evaluate the Ontological Arguments proposed by St Anselm and Rene Descartes with reference to criticisms made by Gaunilo, Aquinas, Kant and Russell, encouraging students to take arguments from reason more seriously.

5) Wednesday 24th March: Debate: This house believes that there is no way to prove God's existence.

The motion will be proposed and then opposed live, before a range of student video-contributions are played and a final vote taken.

Logon links for the lecture series must be purchased online and cost **£100**, which includes digital resources and an .mp4 recording of the lectures.

buytickets.at/candleconferences

Links may be used to broadcast the lectures live to an assembled group of students in school. Alternatively, if this is impossible and/or the students are working from home, an .mp4 recording of each event will be provided to the school after the live event has concluded. These recordings can later be used for revision or as part of teaching in future years.

Bookings come with:

FREE Candle Friends status for 12 months; including access to resources & CPD as well as discounts on our other events.

FREE online teacher study day CPD place (worth £50)*

*Full T&Cs can be read at www.candleconferences.com/book-your-conference/

With Candle you get:

- Up-to-date scholarly content made engaging and tailored to the real needs of A Level students.
- Sessions and resources designed by practicing teachers with a record of engaging students of all abilities.
- Easy, secure online bookings with no fees to pay; just print off e-tickets.

e-mail: info@candleconferences.com

Tel: 0208 133 2241