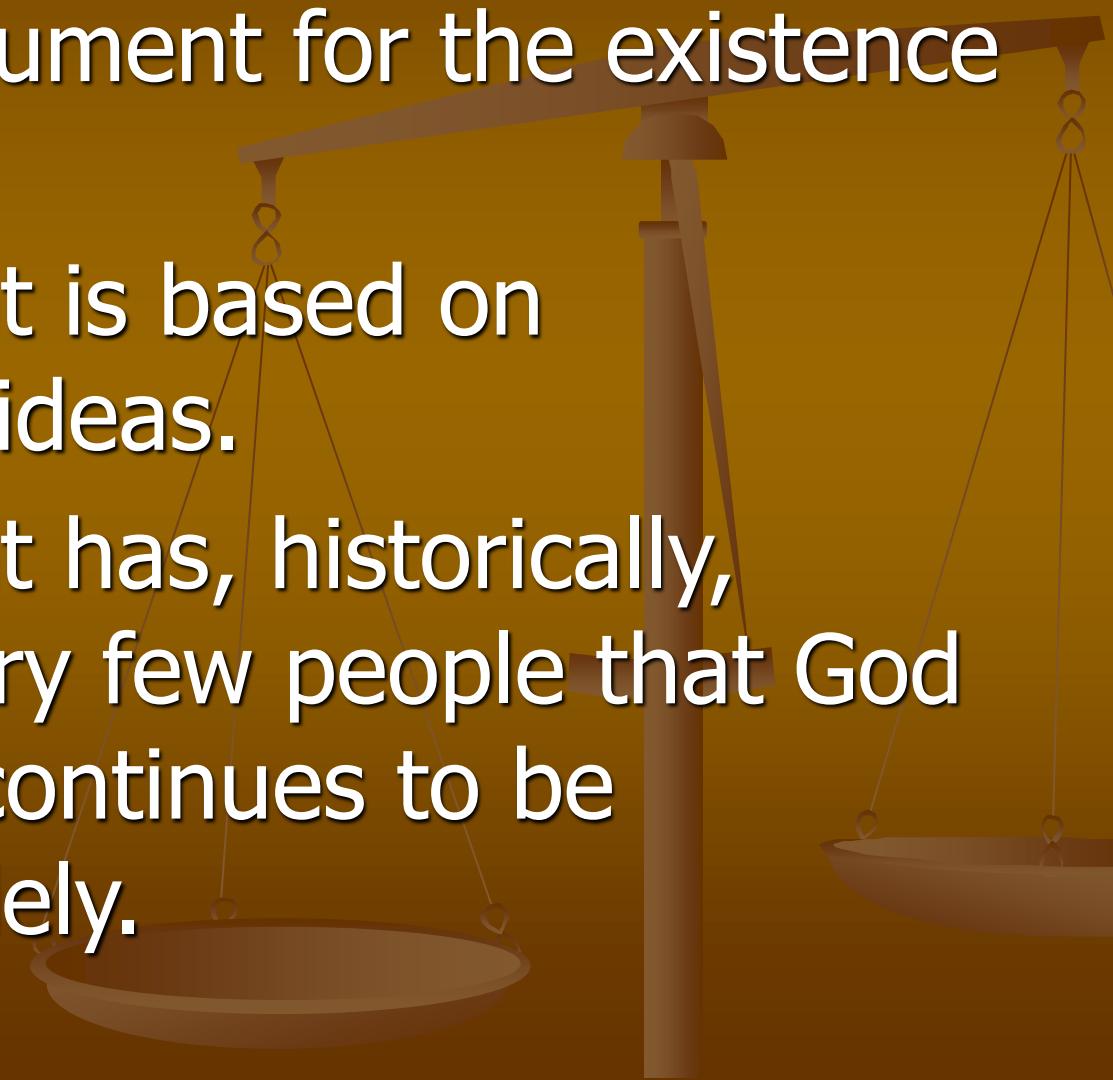


# Christian Apologetics 5

The Ontological Argument for the  
Existence of God

# The Ontological Argument

- This is an argument for the existence of God.
- This argument is based on philosophical ideas.
- This argument has, historically, persuaded very few people that God exists, yet it continues to be discussed widely.



# Ontology

- Ontology is the study of existence
- Ontology asks such questions as:
  - What exists?
  - What does it mean to exist?
  - Can things exist only in minds, or must they have physical reality?
  - Are there different degrees of existence?

# The History of the Ontological Argument

- Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109 a.d.)
- Anselm said that God is the greatest Being that can be imagined. This is easy to agree with.
- Anselm said that the greatest being must exist, or it would not be the greatest being, because to exist is greater than to not exist.

# Guanillo's Response to Anselm

- Guanillo was a monk who read Anselm's argument. He did not agree with the logic.
- Guanillo's response to Anselm's argument is called the "Perfect Island" response.
- Imagine the perfect island: the fruit trees, the beach, the sky, the ocean. This island does not necessarily exist! Just because we can imagine it does not make it real!

# Anselm's Response to Guanillo

- God is different than an island. His perfection is of a different nature.
- You can't imagine a perfect island. It could always be better, bigger, have one more flower or tree, more people enjoying it, etc.
- God's attributes are superlative (they are the best, highest, strongest, greatest, etc.)

# The Argument Today: Alvin Plantinga

- Alvin Plantinga is a Presbyterian philosopher teaching at Notre Dame University.
- He is an expert in modal logic, epistemology (the study of knowledge), and philosophy of religion.
- He has revised the ontological argument in modal logic terminology.

# Modal Logic

- Modal logic has to do with being.
- In modal logic, there are three “modes” of being:
  - Necessity- a state of affairs must exist
  - Possibility- a state of affairs may or may not exist
  - Impossibility- a state of affairs cannot exist.

# Plantinga's Formulation of the Ontological Argument

- By definition a maximally great being is one that exists necessarily and necessarily is omniscient, omnipotent and perfectly good. (Premise)
- Possibly a maximally great being exists. (Premise)
- Therefore, possibly it is necessarily true that an omniscient, omnipotent and perfectly good being exists (By 1 and 2)

# Plantinga's Formulation of the Ontological Argument

- Therefore, it is necessarily true that an omniscient, omnipotent and perfectly good being exists. (By 3)
- Therefore, an omniscient, omnipotent and perfectly good being exists. (By 4 and since necessarily true propositions are true.)

# What Should We Make of the Ontological Argument?

- It is an interesting idea
- It is confusing for most people
- It is not usually an effective apologetic tool
- Nevertheless, for those who believe in God, it can lead us to worship the greatness of God.