

Finding Truth in our Modern Age

Answers to Four Common Questions about Christianity

David Gooding

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Design Versus Evolution in the Universe

My topic tonight is to be *Design versus evolution in the universe*. You have a right to know by what kind of qualification I stand before you to talk upon such a topic. I honestly confess to you that I am a Christian; not a very good one, as my friends will tell you, but a Christian nonetheless. The kind of a Christian who believes the Bible, both Old Testament and New. You may rightly conclude, therefore, that I am biased when I come to talk upon a topic like this. That, I freely admit and I declare my bias right from the beginning: I do believe in God, creator and designer of the universe.

Having said that, part of my thesis tonight will be that those who espouse the theory of evolution are likewise biased. Shocking as it may sound, I shall advance the thesis that those scientists who believe in evolution do not believe in it because the evidence compels them to believe in it. They believe it, if they do, on *a priori* grounds of materialistic philosophy.

That may sound a rather boastful, arrogant claim made by a Christian, so let me quote to you the recent confession of Professor Ruse of the United States, a leading evolutionary scientist. Indeed, you may recall that some years ago there came up a trial before the High Court in America. It was about one of the states, I think it was Arkansas, which had passed a law in their state that schools that taught evolution to the children as science must also teach what they called *creation science*, and thus be fair to the children in the school.

The anti-creationists got together and pursued the state of Arkansas right up to the high federal court. The case came before a judge to decide this issue, and the judge gave his verdict. Evolution must be taught in the state schools because it is science; what Christians have called creation science—that is, the doctrine that there is a Creator God who has designed the universe—must not be taught in the state schools of America, because creation science isn't genuine science, it is a philosophy. It is a *faith*.

The judge wasn't saying that people shouldn't have that faith; he was simply remarking that faith is open to your choice—you can choose to believe or not. Therefore, creation science should not be taught in the schools as if it was science. Evolution is science, and therefore it must be taught in the schools. Faith deals with value judgment; science deals with fact. If evolution is a science and a fact, it must be taught as a fact and received as a fact. To believe in God as the creator is only a belief: it isn't science, it isn't a fact, and therefore it should not be taught in state schools.

So Professor Ruse was the leading witness for the evolutionists. He put before the judge that evolution is founded on science; whereas belief in a creator is not science, it is a faith, a philosophy. Much through the personal friendship and the argumentation of Phillip Johnson

of the States who, some five or six years ago, wrote the book *Darwin on Trial*,¹ Professor Ruse publicly acknowledged in his keynote address at a meeting of scientists from the whole United States that he had come to the opinion that evolution is not a science, it is a philosophy. He hastened to add that he still believed evolution, but now had to admit that, strictly speaking, evolution is not a science. It certainly isn't a fact put down by science; it is a theory based on [materialistic] philosophy.

An increasing number of folks, even in the scientific community, are beginning to see that Darwinian evolution is as much built on philosophy as is the Christian doctrine of the creator. Yes, I admit my bias: I am a Christian, I believe the Bible, I believe in God. But I would want to remind any evolutionists present that evolution too is based on a philosophy; not, strictly speaking, on science.

What is evolution?

Our topic then is design versus evolution in the universe, and I thought perhaps to spend our first few moments pointing out what I mean here by *evolution*. 'Evolution' has become a very slippery term; difficult to take by the tail and hold in the 'fingers' of your mind when you are discussing these things with people of a different view. For instance, evolution is commonly used today in a sense that is not really evolution at all. Just let me remind you of instances of that.

The peppered moth and natural selection

Generations of school children have been taught—I hasten to add, by honest school teachers—that the evidence for evolution is provided by the story of the peppered moth. At one stage, before the Industrial Revolution, peppered moths were mostly white in colour with dark speckles here and there; hence their name.

In those days, even in the 'Black Country' (but it wasn't black then; it was green), the barks of the trees were often white or speckled, and so was many a lichen on a rock. When the lighter speckled peppered moths would land on such trees and lichen, it was very difficult for the birds to see them, and therefore they managed to gobble up just a few. However, those moths that had more dark speckles in their wings stood out against the white-grey background and the birds got them, which is a good example of the natural selection that does take place in the world. When the birds were hungry for their dinners, they selected the black moths because they didn't see the lighter coloured ones, and so there came to be more white peppered moths than black.

Then came the Industrial Revolution, belching out its smoke and fumes of every colour under the sun. The silver birches and the lichens were all blackened with soot, and there was no longer an advantage in being a white peppered moth. Contrary to what it used to be, there was now every advantage in being a black peppered moth. Natural selection got to work again, and the white ones were gobbled up by ravenous birds; the black speckled ones were overlooked and therefore there came to be more of them.

¹ Phillip E. Johnson (1940-2019). First published 1991, Regnery Gateway.

Now we've got clean air laws, and even in the Black Country the smoke is much less than it used to be. The silver birches are now predominantly white or grey, so the black moths show up and the birds eat them because they can't see the white moths as easily. That is natural selection, and everybody agrees it is a thing that goes on in nature.

School children are taught this as a marvellous example of evolution. But, after a moment's thought, it is surely quite plain to see that this isn't evolution at all. It is simply a moth population in whose genes there is a certain range, and given different circumstances natural selection will operate. In some circumstances one will survive better than the other and vice versa. That's not evolution.

The human race

Take, for instance, the human race itself. 'Red and yellow, black and white', as we used to sing in our Sunday school days.² How did all these differently coloured humans come to be? The Bible will tell you that God didn't create one lot black and one lot brown and one lot white and one lot yellow and one lot red. It says that all human beings, whatever their colours, come from one. This is the biblical doctrine. The different colours and so forth in physiognomy, physical characteristics, are not truly evolution, but development within the limits of natural physiological and biochemical development. The different colours have come about by development, but if you ask how did the human race start, that's a different story.

The moths change according to the possibility of change in their genes, but that tells us nothing about how moths came to be in the first place. So, when schoolchildren are taught it as an example of evolution, that is not true, and it doesn't begin to support the Darwinian theory of evolution. You can call it evolution if you like, but you must perhaps then call it *micro-evolution* and very carefully distinguish it from *macro-evolution* for that's a very different thing. The Bible itself talks about variation within species, but that's not what I shall mean tonight by *evolution*.

Darwinian evolution

Let me quote Professor Futuyma, a leading evolutionist in the States, and let him tell you what Darwinists mean by evolution.

Anyone who believes in Genesis as a literal description of history must hold a world view that is entirely incompatible with the idea of evolution, not to speak of science itself. . . . Where science insists on material, mechanistic causes that can be understood by physics and chemistry, the literal believer in Genesis invokes unknowable supernatural forces.³

Now, that is the sense in which I shall be talking about evolution tonight. And this isn't my Christian viewpoint putting up an Aunt Sally⁴ so I can knock it down: here is a leading expert in evolutionary theory telling you what, at heart, evolutionists of the neo-Darwinian kind actually believe.

² Clare Herbert Woolston (1856-1927), 'Jesus loves the little children.'

³ Douglas Futuyma (born 1942), *Science on Trial: The Case for Evolution* (Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates Inc., 1983).

⁴ A game played in some parts of Britain in which players throw sticks or balls at a wooden dummy.

There are Christian people and others who would call themselves evolutionists and tell you that they believe in Darwinian evolution, only they hold that evolution is the method that God has used for the development of the universe and the human race. I respect them, but I think they are wrong. I shall not be discussing that view tonight: the view that God himself has used evolution as a technique for developing the universe. I shall be showing evidence that, if we followed it, would, in my opinion, show that that view is quite mistaken.

But those who say they believe in Darwinian evolution, and think God has used it, should listen perhaps to Professor Futuyma, the thorough-going evolutionist. He not only doesn't believe in God, but as you see he points out that there is an utter, complete and absolutely irreconcilable difference between neo-Darwinian evolution as currently taught, and a belief in a creator. The two are irreconcilable.

Science insists on material mechanistic causes that can be understood by physics and chemistry. The world came to be, not by the creation of God, nor by any intelligence, but simply by mindless mechanistic materialistic forces. No supernatural forces were involved at all; not in the initial coming to be, nor at any stage in the development. That is neo-Darwinianism. Futuyma points out, as you'll see, that there is this direct, irreconcilable opposition between the two views. Let nobody persuade you otherwise. You will see the practical implications of this materialistic philosophy, which we call evolution, if you look at his next paragraph:

Perhaps more importantly, if the world and its creatures developed purely by material, physical forces, it could not have been designed . . .

So what? Well, if it wasn't designed, then it has no purpose.

The fundamentalist, in contrast, [*that's people like me, I suppose*] believes that everything in the world, every species and every characteristic of every species, was designed by an intelligent, purposeful artificer, and that it was made for a purpose. Nowhere does this contrast apply with more force than to the human species. [*Notice his final paragraph.*] Some shrink from the conclusion that the human species was not designed, has no purpose, and is the product of mere mechanical mechanisms. (Italics mine.)

People shrink from that; I certainly do. According to him a pot of jam has more purpose in it and behind it than a human being, apparently. Behind every pot of jam stands a jam maker, and it is made for a purpose. But if the evolutionists are right, there is no purpose behind you; you're worse than a pot of jam. The gentleman at the front here objects, but I'm just pointing out the implications of the theory.

This seems to be the message of evolution. It is a good thing, if we wake up and listen to the evolutionists themselves and what exactly they are saying. You will see that this is, so to speak, a fight to the death.

Why should we bother about these things?

Some who are older will say, 'But we've always believed in God. We believe the Bible, so why should we bother to listen to you?' So if you care to go to sleep for the next half an hour you

will be rewarded by cake and tea at the end. On the other hand, if we are to keep our minds awake and fresh to the thinking of the world, then we ought to know something about what the world is thinking. We can start with our children in the schools, where many of them are taught evolution as a fact, not merely as a theory. They listen to you in Sunday school; then they go to school and hear the very opposite, and they develop a schizoid mentality. In school they believe in Darwinian evolution, which hazards this preconception that there is no God. In church you talk to them about God, and as they get older it sounds like a fairy story, 'Little Red Riding Hood', to comfort people when they go to bed in the dark, but nothing more than a yarn.

Anyway, nowadays there are multitudes of grown-ups who think science has proved that there is no God. Therefore, when they listen to you preaching your gospel, they think you must be cranky if you don't know that science has proved there is no God.

Julian Huxley⁵

I had the honour for many years of working in a Greek department with a great nephew of Julian Huxley. He spoke in 1959 at the famous meeting at Chicago in honour of Darwin. Look at the second paragraph, if you will.

This is one of the first public occasions on which it has been frankly faced that all aspects of reality are subject to evolution, from atoms and stars to fish and flowers, from fish and flowers to human societies and values—indeed, all reality is a single process of evolution. . . .

In the evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer either need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created, it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion.

. . .

Religion evolved, it didn't come from any God because there isn't any God. It's something that evolved, like indigestion has done in the human stomach. Finally, the evolutionary vision is enabling us to discern, however incompletely, the lineaments of a new religion.

And though he was an extremist and said some silly things, ladies and gentlemen, when this world has been soaked from end to end in generations of people brought up to the notion that evolution is a fact established by science, and science has thus proved that there is no God, it is easy to imagine the kind of religion that would dominate the West before our Lord comes in power and great glory. It will be a religion that says there is no God out there: man is God.

Millions will flock to the propaganda put out by his chief of propaganda. They shall say 'Who is like the beast?' (Rev 13:4), claiming divine honours for man. For if there is no God, Julian Huxley himself said:

Having understood there is no God, we have now evolved far enough as a human race that we ourselves could take control of evolution. The trouble is, there are so many silly people about who are liable to get angry if you step on their toes, and set off an atomic bomb. And that's

⁵ Sir Julian Sorell Huxley FRS (1887-1975), Evolutionary Biologist.

unfortunate, because if somebody sets off too many atomic bombs, then we shouldn't have the possibility of controlling evolution and developing into a beautiful, marvellous, peaceful society. How can we persuade these idiots not to set off atomic bombs? We need to get hold of their hearts.

How do you get hold of their hearts? You can't get hold of people's hearts by a scientific test tube. People are not given to falling down on their knees and saying, 'Thy kingdom come, O test tube.' So how do you get at their hearts to stop them playing the fool and setting off atomic bombs and eliminating planet earth?

He said, 'We want a new religion.'

Well, if there's no God, what will you worship now? You won't go worshipping centipedes, will you? Obviously not. What is the highest thing you know in the whole of the universe? That would be Mankind, and man will worship man. That is the forecast of the Bible.

We should be concerned about these things, of course, because it is commonly to be heard to this day that evolution is a fact. Let's take two examples here, just to remind you.

Here's Julian Huxley once more, and after this I shall not trouble you with him again. He was saying at that same conference,

The first point to make about Darwin's theory is that it is no longer a theory, but a fact. . . . Darwinianism has come of age so to speak. We do no longer have to bother about establishing the fact of evolution.

Wow, if only he had known what the scientists have thought in this last forty years. But he has been repeated at all kinds of levels, and in schools and in many a textbook it is taught like that.

Richard Dawkins⁶

Here is his modern equivalent, Professor Dawkins. Some media people recently endowed him with a chair in Oxford. He is an exceedingly clever man. His books are a delight to read for their sheer ingenuity and their sparkle. He is, in fact, an evangelist more than a scientist. He preaches Darwinianism as though it were a gospel. I wish I had half his ability to preach the truth of the gospel as he preaches Darwinianism. He is much to be heard, of course, on the BBC. I'm referring to Richard Dawkins, not Stephen Hawking: you will distinguish those two, won't you? Hawking is a thoroughgoing scientist. Dawkins says,

Today the theory of evolution is about as much open to doubt as the theory that the earth goes round the sun.⁷

Michael Denton⁸ quotes this in his book, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*,⁹ and then he says:

⁶ University of Oxford's Professor for Public Understanding of Science from 1995 until 2008.

⁷ Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (1976, 2nd ed 1989).

⁸ Senior Fellow at the Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture. (Born 1943.)

⁹ Adler & Adler Publishers Inc., U.S., 3rd Revised edition, 1996.

Now of course such claims are simply nonsense. For Darwin's model of evolution is still very much a theory and still very much in doubt when it comes to macro evolutionary phenomena. Furthermore, being basically a theory of historical reconstruction, it is impossible to verify by experiment or direct observation as is normal in science. It is a confusion of categories, therefore. Evolution is strictly speaking not a science, it is a theory; it is certainly not a fact.

So tonight I want to put before you ideas drawn from different areas of science, to show that the evidence for evolution is substantially lacking—it isn't there, so to speak. And for this purpose, I am going to quote people who are not Christians, as far as I know, but evolutionists.

The fossil record

Many a book has been written and beautifully coloured, particularly for schools and the young, showing all sorts of wonderful things from the supposed fossil records. They build up marvellous chains and trees of evolutionary development, and people are taught that that's where we come from. You're on this branch here and it joins a bigger branch there; that joins another branch and comes to the central trunk and down to the bit of slime or whatever it was where it all started. All sorts of marvellous things are pictured; things that were meant to be not quite human, imaginary things.

David Raup¹⁰

David Raup is an evolutionist and one of the most respected *palaeontologists* in the second half of the twentieth century—that's the people who deal with the fossil record.

A large number of well-trained scientists outside of evolutionary biology and palaeontology have unfortunately gotten the idea that the fossil record is far more Darwinian than it is.

Don't believe me, believe him because he's an evolutionist. He's an expert palaeontologist. He is saying, it's a pity that people who are not experts as he is—scientists indeed, who don't work in palaeontology but in other disciplines—have gotten the idea that the fossil record is much more full than it actually is. He continues:

This probably comes from the oversimplification inevitable in secondary sources: low-level [elementary] textbooks, semi-popular articles, and so on. Also, there is probably some wishful thinking involved.

He's being honest isn't he, this evolutionist? Just as I like to believe in a creator, some people like to believe evolution.

¹⁰ David M. Raup (1933-2015). University of Chicago and the Field Museum. 'Evolution and the Fossil Record,' in *Science*, July 17, 1981.

In the years after Darwin, his advocates hoped to find predictable progressions. In general, *these have not been found* yet the optimism has died hard, and some pure fantasy has crept into textbooks.¹¹ (Emphasis mine.)

All you young folk at school, do listen to this chap, won't you? If your textbooks say the kind of thing he's complaining about, don't tell your teacher that the preacher in the gospel hall says it's nonsense; tell him that Raup said it was nonsense.

One of the ironies of the evolution-creation debate [*and this is a very choice bit from Raup*] is that the creationists have accepted the mistaken notion that the fossil record shows a detailed and orderly progression and they have gone to great lengths to accommodate this 'fact' in their Flood geology.

If only they knew the facts, they wouldn't bother to try and reconcile it with flood geology because it isn't true to start with. Here is Raup again:

Darwin predicted that the fossil record should show a reasonably smooth continuum of ancestor-descendant pairs with a satisfactory number of intermediates between major groups
...

After all, when things evolve little by little by little by little by little, there ought to be many fossils in the record that are a little bit, little bit, little bit, little bit different and developed; and Darwin predicted there would be such.

Darwin even went so far as to say that if this were not found in the fossil record, his general theory of evolution would be in serious jeopardy. Such smooth transitions were not found in Darwin's time, and he explained this in part on the basis of an incomplete geologic record and in part on the lack of study of that record.

Now, look at the next contribution by Raup, who is the expert in the record of the rocks:

We are now more than a hundred years after Darwin and the situation is little changed. Since Darwin a tremendous expansion of palaeontological knowledge has taken place, and we know much more about the fossil record than was known in his time, but the basic situation is not much different. We actually may have fewer examples of smooth transitions than we had in Darwin's time, because some of the old examples have turned out to be invalid when studied in more detail.¹²

Young folks, you don't have to believe what so many charts in so many museums put across as though it were fact. It is not founded on fact; it's what Raup called a lot of 'wishful thinking'.

¹² *Scientists Confront Creationism: Intelligent Design and Beyond*, W. W. Norton Company, first published 1983.

How did human life start on our planet?

Let's take another angle from the palaeontological record. Let's think about how all you enchantingly beautiful, complicated and sophisticated ladies and gentlemen came to be. We shall limit ourselves for the moment to human life. How did it start? Was it by the creative act of God, as the Bible says? Or did it happen just by chance, without any design, without any plan: blind forces gradually producing life, which then became more and more complicated and sophisticated?

Sir Frederick Hoyle¹³ and Professor Chandra Wickramasinghe¹⁴

Here is the combined opinion of these two eminent professors. Neither gentleman believes (or believed) in the God of the Bible, nor in Christ. Hoyle accepted a kind of evolution, *Evolution from Space*, as the title of their book says.¹⁵ But now look at what he says about the possibility of life developing here on earth by evolution.

A simple calculation then shows that the chance of obtaining the necessary total of 2,000 enzymes by randomly assembling amino acid chains is exceedingly minute.

Let's stop over that because there are some big words there that are difficult for me to take in. If you're going to have life, you'll have to have things called *enzymes*. To get enzymes, you have to start with other stuff called *amino-acids*, and there are plenty of amino-acids. They call these 'a' and 'b' and 'c' and 'd'. They generally come in groups of four, but they've got to be in exactly the right order. They can't be in just any old order, and the order changes with different ones. You've got to get about two thousand of them in exactly the right order or else you don't have life, and you'll not even get started without the enzymes.

He then asks, 'What is the chance of getting these two thousand amino-acids all exactly in the right order?' It's a very complicated order indeed, so what are the chances of it happening by accident?

The random chance is not a million to one against, or a billion to one or even a trillion to one against, but p to 1 against, with p minimally an enormous superastronomical number equal to 10 to the power of 40,000 (1 followed by 40,000 zeroes). . . . If all these other relevant molecules for life are also taken account of in our calculation, the situation . . . becomes doubly worse. The odds of one in 10 to the power of 40,000 against are horrendous enough, but that would have to be increased to a major degree. Such a number exceeds the total number of fundamental particles throughout the observed universe by very, very many orders of magnitude. So great

¹³ Professor of Astronomy and Experimental Philosophy at Cambridge. (1915-2001.)

¹⁴ Professor of Applied Mathematics and Astronomy at University College Cardiff until he retired in 2006. (Born 1939.)

¹⁵ Simon & Schuster; Reprint Edition, 1 January 1984.

are the odds against life being produced in the purely mechanistic way that the difficulties for an earthbound mechanistic priority are, in our view, intrinsically insuperable.¹⁶

He was one of the leading astronomers in the world. He didn't believe in God or the Bible, nor in our gospel, and here he is pointing out the odds against life having started by chance. He is the author of that famous phrase, 'You might as well talk of a hurricane blowing through a scrapyard producing a Boeing 747.'

A junkyard contains all the bits and pieces of a Boeing 747, dismembered and in disarray. A whirlwind happens to blow through the yard. What is the chance that after its passage a fully assembled 747, ready to fly, will be found standing there? So small as to be negligible, even if a tornado were to blow through enough junkyards to fill the whole Universe.¹⁷

Don't let your teachers tell you that evolution has been proved and is a scientific fact. If they start to tell you that, tell them about what Hoyle said. As we read it, did you notice that the number of the odds against it is so big that it is more than all the particles in the whole universe?

Irreducible complexity

But now let's take another approach. I was present at a conference recently in the States and profited much by listening to Professor Michael J. Behe,¹⁸ who has recently produced his book, *Darwin's Black Box*.¹⁹ He takes Darwinianism to pieces in a gentlemanly but firm way, and points out its sheer impossibility. To help us understand what the biochemists nowadays mean by *irreducible complexity*, Michael Behe uses a very potent and simple illustration of a mouse trap.

Ladies and gentlemen, you'll know what a mouse trap is, but I've got to be careful not to nip my fingers and get caught by my own argument! You'll see that it consists of the basic board, this platform here. Then it has to have a hammer that comes over and smites the mouse. But that would be no good unless you also had a spring to make it come down. And then you have to have a catch, so there's a long thing here that holds this whatnot up. The cheese is put on that end, and when the unfortunate mouse steps on this end here, it doesn't foresee the fact that it will spring the trap and the hammer will come down and kill it.

That is a very simple mechanism: one, two, three, four, five bits and pieces; but Michael Behe points out that it is what you might call 'irreducibly complex', meaning that the whole five parts have got to be there all at once, or else the thing doesn't work. You can't just start off with the platform and catch ten mice; and then one day add the hammer bit on without the spring, and catch a few more mice. And then put the spring on but no catch, and get a few dozen mice; and then gradually evolve over millions of years until all the parts are there. The

¹⁶ Cosmic Life Force. J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., London, 1988.

¹⁷ Fred Hoyle, *The Intelligent Universe: A New View of Creation and Evolution*, Michael Joseph Ltd., 1983.

¹⁸ Michael Behe, Professor of Biochemistry, Lehigh University, Pennsylvania. (Born 1952.)

¹⁹ *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, Free Press; 2 Rev Ed Edition (19 June 2006).

fact is that, until they're all there, you wouldn't catch any mice. It is complex, but it's irreducibly complex. Take one bit away, and nothing works.

Now you say, 'What's that got to do with evolution?'

Michael Behe

Well, Mike Behe is a biochemist and therefore studies the chemistry that goes on inside the cell in the body. He points out that in Darwin's day folk didn't know what was inside the cell; it might have been a bit of plasticine. They thought it quite reasonable that a little bit inside it could change, and you'd get a bit of an advantage. A few million years later, another little bit inside would change, and you'd hope to get another advantage, and so on. That was a reasonable supposition in those days, when people didn't know what was inside the cell. But the astonishing advance of technology and biochemistry nowadays has shown us that inside the cell there is such a complicated and sophisticated mechanism as beggars description, and that it has all got to be there or else it doesn't work at all. Mike Behe gives many examples in his book, and I recommend it to you for the parts when he talks as a biochemist.

Take, for instance, the process of what happens if you cut a finger very badly, and it starts to bleed. If it kept on bleeding you would die, of course. As we all know, when you cut your finger, first of all the blood comes and that's very good because it helps to wash away any germs that are there, but then presently the blood coagulates and seals the wound. It's got to do that, or else you'll bleed to death. What is it then that happens inside the cell? What is the mechanism that causes the blood to clot and fill the wound? It's no good saying, 'Well, it just happens,' when actually what happens inside the cell to cause the blood to clot is an exceedingly complicated thing.

Let me begin to remind you. When you cut your finger there is a stuff in your body that eventually will cause the blood to clot precisely at that point. Where do you get the stuff from? If you're in the jungles of Peru and you cut your finger very badly, on a machete or something, it's no good saying, 'I'll go to the nearest chemist.' You'd be dead before you got there! So the stuff has got to be somehow, somewhere, in the cells in the blood. But it can't be in a form that's active, otherwise it would make the blood clot everywhere and you wouldn't be alive for two minutes. It's got to be in the blood, but it can't be in the form that makes blood clot. It's got to be able, somehow, to be in the bloodstream, in the cells, and when your finger is cut something has got to be transformed and changed so that now it becomes active and causes blood to clot.

But wait a minute. It can't be clotting while it's still going around and hasn't reached your finger, because if it clotted in your brain you'd be less thinking than you are even at the moment! And if it clotted down your arm you could be dead. So, how does it work? By what kind of mechanism? You don't have to learn the names, or strain your eyesight to follow every arrow on this diagram,²⁰ but this is the kind of process that has to happen within the cell, and if one or two of them are lacking you would bleed to death. Can you see what Professor Behe means by irreducible complexity? They've all got to be there, or else it doesn't work.

²⁰ To see the diagram Dr Gooding used, please go to https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coagulation_in_vivo.png.)

How could a little bit of that have happened millions of years ago and a mouse nearly survived, and suddenly another bit was added? It is sheer nonsense, and this is not conservative Christians putting their heads in the sand and trying to ignore science. This is the kind of thing that modern science and technology is bringing to light in the workings of the human cell: it is called a *cascade effect*. But that doesn't mean that all scientists and biochemists are now converted and no longer believe in evolution, far from it. There are many, many honest scientists. We're not despising them, nor, I hope, talking rudely about them.

On the back cover of Professor Behe's book, there is a review by Professor Robert Shapiro,²¹ author of *Origins: A Skeptic's Guide to the Creation of Life on Earth*.²² He's an evolutionist. This is what he says:

Michael Behe has done a top-notch job of explaining and illuminating one of the most vexing problems in biology: the origin of the complexity that permeates all of life on this planet. Professor Behe selects an answer that falls outside of science: the original creation of life by an intelligent designer.

That is true; it is Mike Behe's position. He does believe in God. He is a Roman Catholic, actually, and he believes this points to a designer who designed the whole system and installed it complete, not that it evolved bit by bit.

So says the evolutionist, Professor Shapiro. 'Michael Behe chooses the answer outside of science: the original creation of life by an intelligent designer.' Now listen to what he says next: 'Many scientists, myself included, will prefer to continue the search for an answer within science.' You see the implication, don't you? Is Shapiro admitting that they have no answer to this problem?

Dawkins of Oxford gets rather angry with Mike Behe and calls him all sorts of funny things. He would say, 'Yes, we have no answer to it, but why doesn't Behe go on with his science and find an answer within science, instead of calling on a designer outside?'

Why does Dawkins continue with his atheism, I wonder? Describing himself on one occasion, he said, 'Darwinianism makes it possible for me to be an *intellectually fulfilled atheist*.' He wants to be an atheist, but he's looking around for intellectual justification for being one.

Here is another interesting little diagram you'll find in Behe's book. It's how a certain bacterium works. Bacteria are mighty difficult to see because they're very lowly creatures in the process of life. Some of these bacteria need to transport themselves around, and to a bacterium a cell is an enormous, vast stadium. Bacteria are so small, so some of them have got means of propelling themselves around. They don't all have the same means. Some have got a thing sticking out the end and they sort of scull along. Some have what is called a *flagellum* because it rotates and goes round and round like a propeller at the end of the bacterium. It is a remarkably complicated mechanism. Then there's the filament because, if, when the propeller went round, the bacteria went round and round and round, it wouldn't get very far, would it?

²¹ Professor Emeritus of Chemistry, New York University (1935-2011).

²² Summit Books, 1986.

If you've been used to driving motorboats, you'll know that the propeller goes round. But if, when the propeller went round, the boat went round and round and round, you wouldn't get very far, would you? You'd be going round in circles. You've got to have some kind of thing that keeps the boat fixed straight so that the propeller doesn't whizz the boat round. So has the bacterium. It's provided by this universal joint, the *hook*, that comes down through *bushing*. We're talking about a bacterium, not a motor car of course, but using the terms for mechanical engineering. It comes down here to an engine that is driven by electricity produced in the cell. Behe asks the question, 'How could that have happened in stages, little by little by little, because nothing would have worked?'

You can believe, if you like, that it all happened over millions of years, tiny little bit by tiny little bit. That is what some scientists in America, call a *just-so story*. 'How did the elephant get its trunk? Well, it was because a lion or something pulled it!'

One more line of enquiry and we shall be finished. We've talked about the record of palaeontology, the fossils. We have talked about the unlikelihood of life beginning by accident in biochemistry, the amino acids and all the other things that have to go to produce life in a cell. We have now talked about some of the cascade processes: irreducibly complex, because if one bit were missing they wouldn't work. If they didn't work, nothing would have survived until they did work. What other form of attack comes these days?

Information theory

To illustrate what information theory is, let me take some of you who were experts in engineering in the 1950s back to those days. Do you remember, ladies, when you had the last word in a washing machine? It worked fast and you no longer had to pull a long handle around. In the top there was a slit, and there was a hole where you put the clothes in. If you were going to wash woollens they had to be washed in a different process from linens, so you had a square of plastic with notches down the side. If it was the linens, following the directions from the handbook, you'd put that side into the machine. The notches on the plastic controlled the mechanism inside—'Linens, please'—and the machine went round the right way for linens, at the right speed and the right temperature and everything else, until the linens were done. After the linens, if you wanted to put the woollens in, you took the bit of plastic out and turned it round to a different set of notches, and that made the machine go the right way for woollens.

Of course, the younger generation doesn't know how sophisticated we were in those far off days, and most of you ladies are too young to remember it. I remember it. Now, if you'd got that piece of plastic and said to somebody, 'Tell me, what is this square thing here?' they'd say, 'it's plastic'.

You'd say, 'Yes, ten marks out of ten. Anything else?'

'Well, not as far as I can see. It's only plastic. It has nothing else on it.'

'Oh, it's only plastic?'

It would be absolutely true; but was it *only* plastic? Well, of course, it wasn't. What are those notches on the side? Are they just notches in the plastic, and that's all?

Ah, but you see it was more than just plastic, wasn't it? It was *information*, as the engineer would call it, from the designer to the engine inside, so that when the plastic was put in one way with the right notches that side up, it made the engine do what the designer wanted it to do. Of course, the plastic couldn't speak and the engine couldn't hear. Engineers nowadays talk in terms of *information theory*. The information is put on the plastic, so to speak, in the form of a design, so that it will make the engine do what the designer wants it to do. So it wasn't just plastic, it was plastic-plus-information.

What the Bible says about creation

That's interesting, but let's think about how the Bible talks about creation, ladies and gentlemen. You'll all remember Genesis 1, won't you?

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

And God said, 'Let there be light'.

And God said, 'Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.'

And God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.'

And God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation'.

And God said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night.'

And God said, 'Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.'

And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds'.

Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' (see vv. 1-26)

Hebrews 11 says, 'By faith we understand that the universe was created by *the word of God*' (v. 3). The material around us, and particularly living material, is not just *stuff*; it is stuff plus information from the designer.

The easiest example is how a child is conceived: a cell from mother and a cell from father, forming a zygote. As you know, that contains enough information to control the development of the foetus in the womb and the very timing of the different parts. It's no good developing an eye unless you've got an eye socket to put it in, a brain if you haven't got a skull, nor legs if you haven't got a body to put the legs on. This tiny little pair of cells has all the information necessary in them to control the development of the foetus in the womb, the time of its birth and its growth right up through manhood or womanhood to the time it dies. What is more, if the child born eventually becomes a father, the original information he got from his parents will be enough through him to control the next generation. It's a thing to be pondered, isn't it? The original cells, whatever stuff they're made of, have long since died, but the information carries on.

Where did the information come from?

What is information? Listen to Wilder-Smith²³ talking about the way the genes in the cells are arranged in a double helix.

By means of a double helix [*that's two lines twizzled round each other of four letters; if you just had four letters and twisted them round and stacked them up one after the other in special order around this helix*], entire books filled with information could be written by merely altering the sequences—just as we write books by varying the sequences of the letters of our alphabet. In this manner the double helix system within a human sperm and a human egg contains the total coded building instructions for synthesising the complete human being. On paper, using our alphabet system, this human genetic information on one human zygote would fill over 1,000 volumes each of 500 pages—a total of 500,000 printed pages. That is, one human egg the size of a pinhead holds 500,000 printed pages' worth of information and chemical instructions.²⁴ (Italics mine.)

I'm sure you won't tell me that that all happened by accident, and there was no mind behind it. Believe it if you will, but the Bible has something relevant to say.

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 1:19–20)

The Bible doesn't claim that we see from creation around us that God is love. Creation around us doesn't tell us anything about redemption: that is God's special revelation. But the Bible insists that men and women looking at creation can see, if they will, the evidence that there is a God. We are his creatures and responsible to him. People who refuse to acknowledge it shall be without excuse.

Darwinism is not forced upon us because it is a science. You've seen enough to know it is not a science; it is a philosophy. In that strict sense, Christianity is a philosophy. But the Bible declares that creation holds the evidence that all could see, if they would, that there is a God, an almighty powerful creator, behind this universe.

To show you that that is not talking nonsense—you know it isn't, of course—I give you this last illustration from Paul Davies' book, *The Mind of God*.²⁵ Paul Davies is a mathematical physicist. He is not a believer in the God of the Bible, nor in Jesus Christ, nor in his miracles, nor in his resurrection. I would hesitate to try and describe him. I imagine that he's some kind of a *pantheist*, but listen to what he says. He's talking about man made of stardust—made out of the elements produced in the gigantic atomic furnaces of the stars, but calling attention to this tremendous thing, that man has an intelligence, so that man, not the animals but only man, can begin to understand the way the universe works.

²³ Arthur Ernest Wilder-Smith, FRSC (1915-1995), British organic chemist and young earth creationist.

²⁴ A. E. Wilder-Smith, *The Natural Sciences Know Nothing of Evolution*; T. W. F. T. Publishers, California, 1981.

²⁵ *The Mind of God: Science and the Search for Ultimate Meaning* (Penguin Press Science) Paperback, 1993.

He's asking himself, 'How is it that man can begin to understand how the universe works and perceive the great intelligence that is behind it?'

The physical species Homo [man] may count for nothing, but the existence of mind in some organism on some planet in the universe is surely a fact of fundamental significance. Through conscious beings the universe has generated self-awareness. This can be no trivial detail, no minor by-product of mindless, purposeless forces. We are truly meant to be here.

Listen to that: 'We are truly meant to be here.' Young folks, don't be ashamed of the gospel. Don't be afraid to stick your toes in and very politely make it known that you believe in a creator, you believe that there is an intelligence behind the universe. The quotation with which we began from Futuyma says that there is no purpose, no mind behind it, and that's what evolution stands for. But, in light of recent discoveries, Paul Davies, who would still be an evolutionist and a scientist, now says that there must be an intelligence behind the universe. He doesn't recognize it as the God of the Bible, but he has come to see that we are intended to be here. We are not the product of mindless mechanical forces, there is an intelligence behind the universe. That's God's creation doing what the Bible says it was meant to do—making it clear that there is a creator. There is a designer, and he made us. There's a purpose behind our existence therefore, and we are responsible to him.

If more of our modern folks saw it and got it into their heads, then perhaps they would begin to ask what is the answer to the problem that our consciences have told us, that we've sinned against our creator. Perhaps a place to start is to investigate the evidence of the universe around us to see that it has been designed, and Darwinianism therefore is not true.

Does it Make Sense to Believe the Bible?

It is a pleasure to be with you here once more, and you have invited me to address the question, 'Does it make sense to believe the Bible?' My frank answer to that will be, in short, yes, it makes superb sense still to believe in the Bible. I shall be answering the question, however, from my own personal particular point of view. So, to those of you who are already Christians, I may well give reasons somewhat different from what you would give, if you were giving your personal reasons why you believe the Bible to be the word of God and to make superb sense.

To those of you who are not yet Christians, let me be honest with you and just sketch in my own personal experience. I was brought up by Christian parents, and I say that at once so that you can see where I am coming from. You may well be inclined to think, 'Well, of course he would hold a Christian view, since he was brought up as a child in a Christian family.' But that argument is not very sound, because you could account for atheists by saying that many atheists were brought up in atheist families, and therefore that's why they believe atheism. In the end that argument is counter-productive. Yes, I was brought up in a Christian family, but I have spent most of my adult life in academic circles, teaching and studying the Greek classics and philosophers, and I still hold—in fact I hold it more today than ever—that the Bible makes superb sense and is worthy of our belief.

Tonight, I want to put before you lessons and reasons that have impressed themselves on me during the years in academic circles and in practical living, why it is superb sense to believe what the Bible says.

The Old Testament

1. The doctrine of creation and the position it gives to humankind

High among my reasons for believing that is the Old Testament—the Bible being in two parts, as you know. First, the Old Testament, and then the New. I believe it makes sense because of the immensely high significance that the Old Testament gives to mankind. According to the Old Testament, man is the creature of the one true God, the creator of the universe. Not only the creature of the creator, but made in God's image (Gen 1:27). Able, therefore, to have intelligent conversation with his Maker and to act as God's viceroy over the rest of creation. And because we are made in the image of the creator, we are ultimately more important than any part or even the whole of the universe put together.

Man is not simply a super-duper computer. I am aware of the argument that rages ever more intensely in academic and technological circles, that one day people will be able to produce a computer that in every respect is parallel to humans, or perhaps exceeds them. It is, of course, an argument that has powerful protagonists on both sides; but I hold that, according to the Bible, man is not simply a super-duper computer. For instance, if your computer doesn't please you, as far as the Bible is concerned you are free to destroy it. But if your next-door neighbour doesn't suit you, according to the Bible you are not free to destroy him. Why not? Because man is made in the image of God, and to murder a human being is an insult to his creator.

That's a theme we never tire of pointing out to the Russian intelligentsia these days. We gently say to them that if Stalin had believed that man was made in the image of God, he would not have proceeded to eliminate sixty million people just for the sake of his political theories. The CIS would have been a much healthier place, had Stalin and some of his confederates actually believed what the Old Testament maintains, that human life is sacred because men and women are made in the image of God.

If man is but a super-duper computer, then why not ultimately destroy him if it pleases you? In that sense he is but a machine that you have made. Number one reason, therefore, for my thinking that the Bible still makes excellent and fundamental sense to human existence is this high significance it gives to human beings.

I said a moment ago that, according to the Bible, man is made in the image of God his creator, and therefore he is more important than the material universe around him. Actually, we all instinctively believe that, don't we? I suspect you all do; I certainly do.

Take, for instance, the sun up in the sky. We are absolutely dependent on it for light and heat, without which human life is impossible. On the other hand, even though the sun is vast compared with my little brain, I have no hesitation in saying which is the more significant. The sun is but a collection of gas. My brain is more than that, and so is yours. I know the sun is there, but the sun doesn't know I'm here. If it did, it would shine a bit more! I actually know how the sun works, thanks to the scientists and I have every admiration for them; the sun doesn't know how I work.

Ladies and gentlemen, size is not of ultimate significance in the universe. A load of hay is very big compared with a baby's brain, but there's no doubt which is the more significant. It's not size that necessarily counts, it's *complexity*. Everything in this vast universe, other than space and perhaps dark matter, is made up of billions and billions of galaxies and stars. Yet we know that every one of them is made of basic particles, a collocation of gas, and the whole vast universe in one sense is less significant than a baby's brain. I believe that gives to humankind its proper and elevated significance.

Perhaps you say that in arguing like that I am guilty of wishful thinking, because I want it to be so. Men and women have always wanted to think they are important, and therefore it is no surprise that I should prefer that argument, but it doesn't make it so.

If it were natural human wishful thinking, you would expect the majority of people who ever lived to have believed it, but the very opposite is true. If you go back to the time when the book of Genesis was written, then I suppose the nation of Israel was unique among the surrounding oriental nations in adhering to the view that there is one true Lord God Creator,

who made the heaven and earth. He was and is independent of the creation. He doesn't need the creation and the creation is not part of him. As the philosophers would say, his existence is not *contingent*. No one made him; he is self-existent. This is what the ancient nation of Israel stood for, and in the day when Genesis was written that was unique. According to the Bible, the rest of the nations had once known and believed that there was one supreme Creator God, but for various reasons 'they did not see fit to acknowledge God' (Rom 1:28).

Allow me an aside, for in my observation of the modern world that statement is true of a good many people still. They prefer not to think of an almighty Creator; they would prefer any other scientific explanation of the complexity of the universe rather than that. Professor Dawkins of Oxford, the evangelist for Darwinian evolution, has it in his book that the universe is a system that everywhere gives overwhelming appearance as if it had been designed, and then adds, 'But it hasn't been.' Says he, 'Darwinian theory makes it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.'²⁶ I wish I had the opportunity to ask him why he wants to be an atheist to start with, let alone an intellectually fulfilled one. And as I shall argue presently, it is mighty difficult to be intellectually fulfilled if you dismiss the creator from his creation.

But to get back to this business of Israel being unique in her maintenance of this faith that there is one true Lord God Creator, uncreated himself, who made our universe and us within it. The other nations, letting go of that idea, found what everybody finds. Get rid from your thinking the idea of a Creator God, banish him to the dustbin, and now what? You'll find that you can't just believe in nothing; you have to believe in something. You'll find by obvious, clear observation that you didn't make the universe and you didn't make yourself. Therefore, you will have to decide what it was that made the universe and where it came from. What powers made you in particular, and what powers will one day end our universe and all human life upon it?

If you had asked the ancients around Israel, the non-Israelites, what were the powers that made the universe and made them, they would have replied, 'That's the sun god, and the moon god, and the storm god, and the god of fertility,' and suchlike things. In other words, letting go of the idea of the one true Lord God Creator, they proceeded to deify the forces of nature. They saw they couldn't control these forces, so they adopted all sorts of antics to try and cajole them. But in the end they found the inevitable consequence: by their very superstition and fear they became slaves to the processes of the universe.

The Old Testament warned men and women not to be afraid of such things. But in those far off days, people were less educated, and when the moon went into eclipse the women would come out with their bin lids and bang them hard together. They thought a demon had got hold of the moon, and that if they made a noise this demon might be persuaded to let go. They began to be afraid that these powers were going to destroy them. So presently they had to offer endless sacrifices, charms, magic, whatever they could. They were at the mercy of these great powers of nature. Read the most exalted of the Babylonians, and they will tell you

²⁶ *The Blind Watchmaker* (London: Penguin, 1991).

that man was made as a drudge and a slave to the gods. Well, if there's no Creator God, then men and women are slaves to all these various forces in the universe.

If you ask a modern atheist what are the forces that control us, that produced our universe and produced us, the curious thing is that he will reply exactly the same as the ancient pagan idolater. Of course, he doesn't keep idols in his sitting room, nor burn incense to them. However, he will say that the forces that made us and control us are the material forces of the universe. He's very sophisticated, of course: he doesn't say the sun god and the moon god. He will say that these forces are basic energy—whatever that is, and nobody knows—the weak atomic power, the strong atomic power, electromagnetism, gravity, antigravity, if there is such a thing; the laws of chemistry, physiology, biochemistry. These, he will say, are the forces responsible for us and for our universe.

That is a very interesting answer, because, as atheists will admit, these forces are mindless and impersonal. They do not work by plan but by accident, by chance. So, according to the atheist, our intelligence and all the rest about us, is brought about by mindless forces. As one prominent evolutionist has it, we were brought into being by forces that did not have us in mind. How could they? They are mindless, and they're material.

The implications of this are horrendous. It means that, if it were true, there is no ultimate purpose and meaning behind human existence. We do not move to some predetermined glorious goal. We were produced by mindless forces and one day we shall be destroyed by those same mindless forces. The irony is that, when they've done it, they won't know they've done it.

I often say to my good atheist friends in Russia, 'According to your theory a little virus without any sense in its head will enter your body one day and set about destroying you. You will have the intelligence to see what it is going to do, but you will not have the power to stop it. You will be the spectator as that mindless power proceeds to rip your body to pieces, invade your brain and your intelligence and make a nonsense of the whole thing. All your powers of planning, all your beautiful sense of aesthetics will be destroyed, and the virus won't even know it's done it.'

When they're being honest, evolutionists constantly tell us that we might as well face the fact of human life, that even our highest possession of intelligence, let alone our heart, is but the product of mindless forces that mindless forces will one day destroy. And then what? Nothing? It seems to me an extraordinary result, when man's highest intelligence comes to invent theories that make a mock of his intelligence.

In medieval times, there was a severe torture. A prisoner would be put into a cell. At first, nothing would seem to change, then suddenly he would get the impression that the cell was somehow smaller and he would take to measuring the distance between two of the walls. After a day or two, he would find the walls were moving inwards, very slowly, but moving inwards they were. Measuring the rate at which they moved he was able to calculate that one day those walls would meet in the middle, and he would be crushed lifeless. That was a hideous torture, wasn't it? But if there is no God and we are the product of mindless forces, that is precisely the position we human beings are in. We are in a material prison house, the walls of which are coming in, not only for us as individuals but for our world as a whole.

It is debatable, I suppose, whether our planet will be destroyed by cold, or whether it will be destroyed when our sun explodes and become a red giant for a while. But the consensus is that sure enough it will be destroyed. The Bible agrees, of course; it's been saying it for centuries. But behind that destruction, the Bible adds, there is a watchful creator who will use it for his own purposes (see 2 Pet 3:10–13).

Meanwhile there is a salvation for his creatures, but that is another long story. I argue simply at this moment that, having read as far as I can on both sides of this, I am convinced that it makes more sense to believe the Bible. It is more honouring, more in line with intelligence, than to accept the other view that there is no God, that our intelligence itself is the product and ultimately the victim of non-intelligent forces.

2. The authority behind morality

Then there is a second reason why I believe that it makes sense to believe the Bible. And that is because its account of things makes sense of our inner feelings of right and wrong. We all have them of course. Even the little infant on a nursery floor has a very highly developed sense of right and wrong. If his brother steals his toy and there's an argument, and mother comes in and clips his ear instead of his brother's, the infant says, 'That's not fair!'. We are born with that sense of right and wrong.

What is it? What's its value? What authority has it? Is it simply a matter of taste? You like oranges, I like lemons. There's no sense in my coming to you and saying, 'Look here, you oughtn't to like oranges. You should like lemons, as I do.'

You'd say, 'Don't be stupid. When it comes to taste, there's no right or wrong about it. I've a right to my taste, and you've a right to your taste.'

I see. But is right and wrong simply a matter of taste? Suppose you met Adolf Hitler and said, 'Look here, you oughtn't to be gassing six million Jews. I wouldn't do that.'

And Hitler replied, 'Well, if you don't like gassing Jews, don't do it. It's just a matter of taste.'

No, you wouldn't have that, would you? So, what is this sense of right and wrong? We all use it, of course.

Here are two women in the supermarket, and they've stopped to have a little gossip together. Woman number one says to woman number two, 'Have you heard that Mrs Brown has left her husband and gone off with another man?'

'No,' says woman number two, 'I haven't heard that. She oughtn't to do that.'

What does woman number two mean, she oughtn't to? Is this just her taste, or is she appealing to some standard that we expect everybody to accept?

Woman number two says, 'She oughtn't to do it,' and then woman number one says, 'But her husband was an evil, bad old thing.'

So the first woman was accusing Mrs Brown for going off with another man, and now the first woman is excusing her. Why does she bother to excuse her? You see, if you like oranges and I say you ought to like lemons, I don't excuse you for liking oranges, do I?

When you find people sometimes accusing others and sometimes excusing them, the Bible says that it shows that their conscience is appealing to some standard or other, and they expect

you to agree with them that there is a standard of right and wrong. That is not just my private opinion or taste, nor yours either.

What is the authority behind that right and wrong?

Let's hear an atheist again. I had a colleague in my university who had been blinded as a commander in the last war. He was a brave and excellent and honourable gentleman, but he was an atheist. I say this not as condescending or propaganda, or anything. He came to lecture us in a particular forum that we organized, and the topic of his lecture was that you could have a system of morality of right or wrong without God.

His theory was a form of what is normally called *the social contract*, and he put it this way: 'If you poke your finger in my eye, you will find that I shall poke my finger back in your eye. When you've done that once or twice and I have replied, you will come to the sensible conclusion that it isn't really a good idea to go around poking your finger in people's eyes; you might get worse in return. So you will come into a contract with me, that you won't poke your finger in my eye if I don't poke my finger in yours, and in that way we can order society. We don't need God or some absolute law like that; as intelligent human beings we can come to this idea ourselves.'

It came to question time, and when I got a chance I asked permission to speak.

'My name is Adolf Hitler and I'm about to gas six million Jews. Why shouldn't I?'

'You'll say to me, "I shouldn't do that if I were you, for we shall come and destroy you."'

'I'll say, "No, you won't. I happen to have the aeroplanes and tanks at the moment, and for the next four years there's nothing really you can do. So I shall proceed to gas six million Jews, and when you begin to catch up with me I shall shoot my brains out because there's no God and there's no final judgment, and I've enjoyed myself."'

'You'll say, "That's not a very worthy way to live." But I'll say, "I've got away with six million murders."'

'What would you say to me?' I said to my good lecturer.

I remember his reply, for it was very short and to the point. Said he, 'I should say, "Go and get lost."'

At that moment, I didn't quite perceive the philosophical urgency of his advice.

According to the Bible, the authority, and therefore the validity behind our moral sense, is the authority of our creator. Therein is hope, because, if our creator is the author of our moral sense, the Bible assures us that one day there will be a final judgment when earth's wrongs shall be put right.

I am aware of course, that to talk of final judgment—what the Bible will call in the end *the lake of fire*, that is, eternal perdition—is nowadays an unpopular subject. But when one reads the Old Testament you will find the assurance that one day there will be a judgment, and it is a thing that gets people excited and delighted.

Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

(Ps 98:8–9)

For most of the time many of us would concur with that. Have you ever met anybody who would wish that earth's evils and wrongs and injustices would go on forever? The prospect that the Bible holds out of a final judgment is glorious news.

I've said more than once to atheists in Russia and elsewhere, 'Let's try our theory, shall we?' Marx was all for fighting for the poor and seeing justice done to the workers. I honour his intent, but Marxism was scarcely ever practised. True Marxism was never given a chance in the USSR. But that aside, I invite them to come in thought to Auschwitz, to a concentration camp. We'll imagine we have permission to go and speak to the prisoners. This is Saturday, and they're going to be gassed on Monday. As we come to them, in their weak voices they cry out for us to help.

'What are you going to do about us?' they say. 'We want justice.'

I shall have to be honest and say, 'I'm sorry, you're not going to get justice. On Monday you will be gassed. But there is a God who cares for justice and the Bible says that one day there will come a final judgment when earth's wrongs shall be put right.'

And then I say, 'You atheists, come and talk to them, will you? They're saying to you, "We want justice." What will you say?'

The atheist would have to say, 'I'm sorry, you're not going to get justice. You're going to be gassed next Monday. What is more, there's no life to come, so there won't be a final judgment and you won't get justice then.'

'Is that so?' they reply. 'All these years we were brought up to believe that there is such a thing as justice, and you're telling us we have been duped? Our hope for justice has been a rope of sand; there never was any chance of our getting justice?'

Yes, I'm afraid that's how it is for multi-millions. Justice was a mockery. There never was any hope of their finding it.

Does it make sense to believe the Bible nowadays? Yes, I hold that it makes sense to believe the Bible because of its doctrine of creation and the position it gives to humankind; and then the authority behind morality.

Had I time, I would want to argue that from the very earliest it also has held out a *hope for this world*. Unlike some philosophies and religions that hold that matter is basically undesirable—the best we can hope for is to be able to escape this material world and go off to be merged into the universal soul—the Bible holds that matter is very good. God is not ashamed of having created matter, and though we are a fallen race the Old Testament and the New hold out hope:

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Rom 8:20–21)

I must not stay to speak about that now; perhaps it will come in tomorrow's talk. I must come swiftly to the New Testament. I have given just two reasons—there are many more, why

it makes sense for me to believe the Old Testament. What about the New? What reasons have I for feeling it makes sense to believe in the New Testament?

The New Testament

The person of the Lord Jesus Christ

1. Was he a real person or someone's invention?

I begin with the central figure of the New Testament, Jesus Christ, whom Christians call 'our Lord'. That he stands like a colossus over human history is an obvious fact, acknowledged by foe as well as friend. But what of this character, Jesus Christ? Was he real, historical, or was he an invention of the early Christian church, as many nowadays would hold? He was a carpenter and after his death they allowed their imagination to weave all kinds of religious fables and legends about him, and gradually increased his stature in their eyes until they virtually turned him into a god. Was he that, or is his character solidly historical? Was he real?

The idea that Jesus Christ's character and person were invented seems to me to be a very hard case to argue; much more difficult to believe in than to believe that he was an historical figure, and was who he claimed to be. For instance, I begin by asking, if he was an invented character, who invented him? We're not talking about a cartoon in the daily paper after all, are we? We're not even talking about a character in a novel. A few novelists have contrived to invent characters that live in the imagination—Dickens's Scrooge, for instance. And yet that's all they are, literary figures.

Plato depicts Socrates in his works, and for classicists he is an exceedingly vivid figure. Of course, Socrates was an actual living person. Plato may have polished his image a bit, but he tells us enough about the real Socrates for us to be able to distinguish very easily between the real Socrates and later pseudo-fables about him. But nobody would die for Socrates nowadays, would they? And if anybody talked about being 'in Socrates' you would think they were talking gobbledegook.

So let's start with asking who invented Jesus Christ. He was, as was argued decades ago now, nobody's ideal. If he were not true, no Jew would have invented him. He claimed to be the Messiah, but to their thinking he could not possibly have been Messiah. They envisaged Messiah as a valiant political military leader, like the Maccabees for instance, who would raise an army and lead the troops of Israel against the Roman imperialists and break their power. When Jesus Christ didn't do that, not only the multitudes, and particularly his Galilean fellow citizens, but even his apostles deserted him. When at last in Gethsemane the squad came to arrest him, Christ forbade his disciple Peter to use a sword even in his defence and let himself be arrested. 'At that point,' says Matthew, 'the whole lot of us forsook him and fled' (see Matt 26:56). A Messiah who wouldn't defend himself and couldn't stop himself being arrested and crucified, what kind of a Messiah was he?

I used to have a very respected senior Jewish friend in Belfast. And often we would have dinner together, and eventually when it came round to Jesus and so forth, he had the idea that we Christians were responsible for the Holocaust because we had taught Sunday school

children that the wicked Jews crucified Jesus, and had stirred up age-long antagonism and hatred in people's hearts against the Jews.

So we had to try and explain that kind of thing; the shame of medieval Christendom has to be acknowledged and blazoned abroad. That Christians should have put Jews to the stake in Spain, in the *auto-da-fé*, or eliminated them in the gas chambers in Germany and the pogroms in Russia in the name of the Christian church, was a horrible scandal that is impossible to exaggerate.

But then I would point out that it was all quite contrary to the actual explicit teaching of Jesus that anybody could read on the pages of the New Testament. He forbade the use of violence, either to protect himself or to further his cause. And I would quote to my Jewish friend what the New Testament says about Christ: 'When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly' (1 Pet 2:23).

What was my friend's response? 'I wouldn't have a Messiah like him. He's a weakling. If anybody hit me on the nose I would want to hit them back. I've no time for your Jesus.'

He wasn't the Jews' idea of a Messiah, was he? As for the Romans, Pilate thought him absolutely impractical when he stood before him.

So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?' Pilate answered, 'Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?' Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.' Then Pilate said to him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.' Pilate said to him, 'What is truth?' (John 18:33–38)

And you might well ask in that context, what is truth? What has it got to do with politics or government? Herod and his soldiers found it all very funny that Jesus should claim to be the Messiah. They decked him out in royal robes, and played the fool with him. And the Greeks? Well, read any school of philosophy you like among the Greeks, in their eyes the cross was folly. At Calvary, didn't he cry out, 'My God, why have you forsaken me?'

Jesus Christ was nobody's ideal. Who would have invented him if he weren't true? The early Christians wouldn't. The greatest preacher of Christ throughout the European world in those early days was the Apostle Paul, and in his writings he openly confesses that the message he preached, which was *Christ crucified* as a solution to this world's problem, was utter folly to the Greeks and a scandal to the Jews (see 1 Cor 1:23). Certainly, Paul would never have invented the message on those terms if it were not true.

The person of Jesus Christ to me stands out of the pages of the New Testament as being true: a hard fact, as hard as the Rock of Gibraltar; a non-invented character. I hold him to be what he claimed to be, God incarnate.

2. What was his purpose in coming to earth?

That brings me to my second point, which has already been mentioned. According to Jesus Christ, the central point about his coming to our earth was not to preach morality, nor simply to do miracles, nor to feed the poor and hungry, though he did all of those. According to the New Testament, Jesus Christ's prime purpose for being born into this world was to die.

When John the Baptist, his precursor and forerunner, introduced him to the public, he pointed to him and proclaimed, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' (John 1:29). This is precisely one of the main reasons I have for believing him to be true. We shall talk about it in our third lecture, but most religions are geared to tell us that we ought to be good. My problem is not that I don't know I ought to be good. I have a certain sympathy with the man who complained that he didn't see why he should pay a parson a fat salary to tell him to be good; he already knew that. Like him, my problem is that I haven't been good. I have broken and fallen below my own moral standards, let alone God's. So the question arises, how can we find forgiveness without lowering our own moral standards, let alone God's?

How can anyone simply say, 'Well, I did sin; I got drunk and drove my car while I was drunk, and I knocked down your seventeen-year-old daughter and killed her. It's happened, so there's no good crying over spilt milk. She's dead now, isn't she? Sorry, but let's brush it under the carpet.'

How can we ever say sin doesn't matter? If sin doesn't matter, then your daughter didn't matter. It's a poor excuse to say, 'It's years ago now; time has changed and memories have faded.' Is your daughter's value such an impermanent and temporary thing? The Bible says that God is not only creator, but God is love, and he loves your daughter. If I injure your daughter, God will have it against me. And if I do not repent, he will have it against me not only for this life but for all eternity. God will never forget it.

That is our problem and predicament. How do we find forgiveness without letting down our standards and saying sin doesn't matter? Unless you can solve that problem, you'll not get very far with advising me to try and be good.

Christ is the only one who ever came up with an answer that satisfied me. He was God incarnate coming to deal with the problem of human guilt; the lawgiver who prescribed the penalty of sin, in his mercy standing beside me to bear the penalty of sin in my place, so that he might honour God's unchangeable law and make a heaven that's not built on saying sin doesn't matter. Sin will forever be God's enemy number one, but its guilt can now be put away for all human beings who will repent and accept the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf.

I myself know of none other in the current world, let alone in the past, who claimed that he had come to die for the sins of the world. No other religious leader has ever claimed it. For a mere human to do so would be a sign of insanity, wouldn't it? Yet Christ claimed it. The question of whether Christ was insane is so absurd that many people wouldn't bother to reply. Christ has been the author of more peace and psychological health than anybody in the whole of human history. A man who said, 'All things have been handed over to me by my Father,' in the same breath as he said, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,' is not insane (see Matt 11:27-30). For this reason, I hold that it makes sense to believe.

3. *Is this not circular reasoning?*

One final question tonight. Perhaps someone will say, 'But you have built your case on the Bible; you've been guilty of circular reasoning. I don't believe the Bible, so your arguments are no use. For me to accept them I should first have to believe the Bible. I don't believe it, so it's not worth my while reading it. I should first have to believe it is the inspired word of God and I don't believe that, so it's no use my even reading a Bible.'

I've had many tell me that. Yes, my arguments have been based on the Bible. You asked me to start with, 'Does it make sense to believe the Bible?' Well, how can I not base the argument on the Bible?

But there's a deeper point. Christians are expected to believe the Bible, but if you are a non-Christian God doesn't ask you to start by believing the Bible. That would be circular reasoning, wouldn't it? If you're not a Christian and you don't believe the Bible, do please for your own sake have the sense to read it, and at least listen to what it says. You can then make up your mind whether you're going to believe it or not. Isn't that how you treat the daily newspaper? When you open the paper in the mornings do you start off by saying, 'I shall believe every word this paper says'? I think not. But you read it nonetheless, and trust your moral sense to be able to distinguish for the most part what is true and what is not true, and what's in the middle.

If you consent to read the Bible you will find Jesus Christ talking to you directly, and appealing to you to use your moral judgment on his teaching. 'Be fair' he says. 'Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgement' (John 7:24). 'Weigh up my teaching and my acts and come to your decision whether what I say is the word of God or not. Use your moral judgment.'

Moreover, there is a kind of an experiment that the New Testament holds out, and I commend it to you. The miracles of Christ were not only miracles, but simultaneously parables. When he fed the crowd it was also a parable that men are hungry and he can satisfy their spiritual hunger. So he found a blind man one day, and gave him sight. The man had never seen; he had been blind from birth, and our Lord gave him sight. It becomes a parable, for there's more to this believing than just making up your mind, your moral judgment. That's a necessary first step, but the Bible declares that to see that Jesus is God's Son will involve being given the spiritual sight to see it. At the same time, you don't have to sit there and do nothing. There's an experiment you can do.

With the man who was born physically blind, what our Lord did was to make mud and put it on his eyes, tell him to go and wash in a pool in the city and he would come seeing (see John 9). That put the man in a predicament, didn't it? He'd never seen, so he had no concept of sight.

'Don't talk nonsense, I don't believe there is a thing called *sight*. Explain to me what sight is.'

And I can imagine a zealous apostle having a go. Have you ever tried to explain sight to a person who was born blind?

'Sight is . . . well, sight is so that you can see colour.'

And they'll say, 'What is colour?'

So you put a flower into their hand and ask, 'Can you feel that?'

'Yes.'

'Well, with sight you could see it.'

'What is seeing?'

When the Bible says that Christ can give you eternal life, I do confess that Christians find it a little difficult to explain sometimes. They will tell you it's a very real thing, and say, 'Once I was blind but now I see.' But what is sight?

The man might have said, 'Go and wash in a pool? That's a whole lot of nonsense. If I've first got to believe that there is such a thing as sight, well then, when I've washed I shall imagine I've got it and delude myself.'

But the man was sensible. He said, 'I don't know what sight is, but if it's real I want it. His disciples say they have sight. Is this Jesus a liar? Is he a charlatan? Is he given to talking nonsense? What's his character like? If he says there is such a thing as sight, and he could give it to me, it would be worth making the experiment.' And the blind man found his way down to this pool, so the story goes, washed, and came seeing.

There is an experiment, nothing so dramatic, that we can make. Christ said, 'If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority' (John 7:17). There's the challenge. The fourth Gospel in the New Testament is written, 'so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God' (John 20:31). You don't have to start by believing it, but you could say, 'If there is a God, and Jesus is his Son, and he has authorized this gospel, all right, I'll read it. And if God shows me that Jesus Christ is his Son, then I'm ready to do God's will when he shows it to me, whatever that is.'

The guarantee is, says Christ, that, if we make the experiment, God will give us that inward certainty, that illumination, and we shall find the experiment works (see John 5:24). My case for tonight is ended, and our chairman is going to ask a question that's been raised.

How would you answer an agnostic who says that God isn't relevant?

I should want to say things like I have said tonight to try and show that God is relevant all the way down the line to our basic understanding of how we came to be. If the agnostic thinks that God isn't relevant because science has shown that the universe came into existence without God and without a designer, I should argue, as I shall attempt to argue tomorrow, that such a view is scientifically untenable.

And then I should raise the whole question of the purpose of life and life's values. Even an agnostic has got to face the question of where our values are founded. If God is not relevant to it, I shall want to know what his values are based on, and such like things.

Regarding it not being relevant, I should ask if, perhaps, he hasn't thought too much about it. I can understand the agnostic who says, 'God may be there or he may not, but it is not possible to find out. No one can know about it.' Most of my agnostic friends take that position. Some of them are hard agnostics; they say that God *cannot* be known. You cannot know about God. But I say to them that they are claiming to know a colossal amount. *Agnostic* is the Greek for somebody who doesn't know. If an agnostic says that you cannot know God, I'd ask him to prove it, for he is claiming an enormous amount when he says nobody can know there is a God.

Secondly, some agnostics are what I call *weak agnostics*. They say, 'Well, some people could know God perhaps, but I personally don't know and can't know.'

And I would say, 'But if you say that, my good friend, you are making Jesus Christ into a liar, actually, because he says you *can* know (John 17:3). If you say you know that Jesus Christ is false, you're claiming to know a lot, so you shouldn't call yourself an *agnostic*—someone who doesn't know. If you know that Jesus Christ is telling untruths, you know a colossal amount.'

Hasn't Science Made Belief in God Obsolete?

A very good evening to you. It is a delight for me to be present here tonight, and to be introduced to you by Mr Warnock. It sets all kinds of vibrations going in the very cockles of my heart, and warm feelings surround me as I think that I have a fellow East Anglian to comfort me in this foreign country. I knew his father many years ago and it is a delight therefore to meet his son, now come to this honourable position in the country of his adoption.

Tonight, the question that has been put to me is as follows, *Hasn't science made belief in God obsolete?* The first thing I ought to say to you in all honesty is to remind you that I am not a scientist. I have had a long interest in the early Greek forms of science because I am by profession a classicist. I have taught certain Greek philosophers; among them the Epicureans, who took over the atomic theory of Leucippus and Democritus for their physical philosophy. It fills my heart with pride as a classicist to remind you that the atomic theory is a very, very ancient theory. Three or four hundred years before Christ it was the ancient Greeks who invented the idea that the universe was made of atoms.

Of course, their version of the atomic theory was very different from our modern one. But the basic idea was already present with those men, that the world was made of tiny particles that cannot be cut, invisible to the naked eye they are indivisible. But that said, I confess to you that, in the modern sense, I am not a scientist. You may well ask, therefore, what possible competence I should have to comment on the theories of world famous scientists and the deductions they draw from their scientific theories.

My answer would be that the scientific experts, particularly nowadays, publish many books addressed to the thinking general public who are not experts. I am among that public myself, so they address their theories to me as a layman to persuade me that their theories are true, and therefore I should accept the fact that modern science has indeed made God obsolete. It seems to me that I have a right, if not a duty, to listen to their arguments. And of course, how shall I do them honour if I do not proceed to think as hard as I can about their theories? To critique them, certainly to ask upon what evidence their theories are based, to compare the different theories that modern scientists put forth, and thus come to my own conclusions as to whether their arguments are as cogent and valid as they would have me believe.

So, when some scientists—not all of them of course—assure me that science has made God obsolete, my initial layman's response is to say, 'How could science ever possibly manage to do any such thing?' Science, as far as I am aware, gives itself to study the mechanisms by which our universe works. It measures all the things it can with its tools, and then ponders those measurements and comes up with various theories as to how best to account for and to describe these things. But the God that I believe in is not a something that can be measured,

or observed down a microscope. God is not material; God is spirit. How, by examining this material universe, you could possibly discover that science has made God obsolete, I am not at all sure. I am tempted to think that there is a basic fallacy somewhere.

Let me use a simple analogy at the beginning of my talk to illustrate in some fashion, the kind of fallacy I think that is before us. Suppose a Ford motor car was placed in the middle of an uncivilized and savage society. Someone set the motor car going with an endless supply of petrol, and then left. Suppose also that the savages come to examine this phenomenon that has appeared among them. They decipher the name that is on the bonnet of the car, Ford. Not being used to these things, as they hear the noise coming from the inside of the engine, they decide that this Mr Ford is in the engine somewhere. He's making it go. When the engine runs smoothly and turns the wheels as it should, they decide that Mr Ford in the engine is very pleased with them. When it makes objectionable noises and emits rather unpleasant smells, the natives conclude that Mr Ford is very angry with them. You might call it the primitive explanation of motor car mechanics: Mr Ford is in the engine, making it go.

Of course, when they get civilized and learn how to dismantle the car and examine its insides, they find there isn't a Mr Ford in the engine at all. Presently they come with their theories as to what makes it go. They learn how to measure the cylinders and the pistons and so forth, and in the end they triumphantly come to the conclusion that there never was a Mr Ford in the engine. Now they can explain how it works, down to the last bit of wire in the machine. They don't need Mr Ford in their theory to explain how this thing goes; they can explain it all without Mr Ford.

Isn't that what so many scientists have concluded? Like Laplace²⁷ said to the emperor Napoleon [as to explaining how the universe works, or anything else], 'I had no need of [God in] that hypothesis'. That wasn't meant to be an atheistic remark on Laplace's part. It is simply saying that scientists, as they apply themselves to the way the universe works, don't need to bring in God. They can understand the mechanisms; how the thing works. At that level of explaining the mechanisms, science doesn't need to think about God.

To come back to my savages when they discover that there's no Mr Ford inside the engine. Suppose they then say that their understanding of how the engine works has made Mr Ford obsolete: there never was a Mr Ford anywhere. Well, that would be stupid, wouldn't it? A fallacy. To understand the mechanisms by which the car works is one thing, but to say that that proves there never was a Mr Ford at all anywhere is to confuse the mechanisms with the cause and designer of the mechanism.

And when scientists tell us that they so understand the mechanisms by which our universe works, and have discovered they don't need God in their theories to describe and explain the mechanisms, I say, 'Yes, very good.' But when they go further and say that their understanding of the mechanisms has made the idea of God and a designer unnecessary and

²⁷ Pierre-Simon, marquis de Laplace (1749-1827), French mathematician, astronomer, and physicist who was best known for his investigations into the stability of the solar system. (Britannica.com)

obsolete, then I am tempted to reply that they have committed this same fallacy, to confuse mechanisms with causes.

Guns don't shoot anybody, do they? You can understand all the mechanisms by which a gun works, but guns don't shoot anybody. It's people who shoot people, using guns. Somebody has to pull the trigger. When you understand all the mechanisms of the universe, you will be left with the question about the original cause. Unless science can show to me that it explains not merely the mechanisms, but can prove there was no cause that designed the mechanisms in the first place, I shall resist their suggestion that science has made belief in God obsolete, if not impossible.

What do the scientists say?

But now to come to what some scientists say. A whole succession of scientists from the past and now the present do claim that science has made belief in God unnecessary. In fact, some of them would say impossible. We have already met some of them in our first lecture.

Sir Julian Huxley

You may remember we quoted what the learned and famous Julian Huxley said at the conference for evolutionists in Chicago in 1959, on the 100th anniversary of Darwin's *Origin of Species*:

In the evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer either need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created: it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion. . . . Finally, the evolutionary vision is enabling us to discern, however incompletely, the lineaments of the new religion that we can be sure will arise to serve the needs of the coming era.

What he had in mind by his last remark is that the old religion, which believed in God the creator, is dead and now fit to be buried. But now as responsible human beings we shall have to learn to play God ourselves and invent a new religion that is based on mere materialism and evolution.

That is a long while ago now, so let's look at a more modern version of the same thing.

Professor Douglas J. Futuyma

In his work, *Science on Trial: The Case for Evolution*²⁸, Futuyma says:

Where science insists on material, mechanistic causes that can be understood by physics and chemistry, the literal believer in Genesis invokes unknowable supernatural forces. Perhaps more importantly, if the world and its creatures developed purely by material, physical forces, it could not have been designed and has no purpose or goal.

²⁸ Pantheon Books, New York, 1983.

Let me pause there to remind you of what we were saying last night. If evolution is true, then the whole universe and we ourselves are the product of mindless forces (see p. 19). Therefore, by definition, there could have been no purpose, no design, no goal; life is ultimately a goalless phenomenon. It's brought about by accident by mindless matter, and that same mindless matter will eventually destroy it. You can invent what religion you like after that, but your religion will only be a short-term thing. It will have to be based on the presupposition that life had no purpose ever, and it has no ultimate goal.

That is what Futuyma is saying. The fundamentalist in contrast believes that everything in the world, every species and every characteristic of every species, was designed by an intelligent, purposeful artificer, and that it was made for a purpose. Nowhere does this contrast apply with more force than to the human species. Some shrink from the conclusion that the human species was not designed, has no purpose, and is the product of mere mechanical mechanisms; but this seems to be the message of evolution. No God, then, no purpose, no design behind our universe or behind us either. There is, therefore, no meaningful goal.

Professor Jacques Monod

Let's take one more scientist to show that I am not misrepresenting them. Let me read you a passage written by Nobel Prize winner, Jacques Monod.²⁹

Pure chance, absolutely free but blind, [is] at the very root of the stupendous edifice of evolution . . . man knows at last that he is alone in the universe's unfeeling immensity, out of which he emerged only by chance. His destiny is nowhere spelled out, nor is his duty.

If that is true, you will see that Professor Monod has banished God from the universe, and in consequence denies any concept of an absolute morality.

So that is what some of the scientists say. But has evolution been proved as a fact?

Professor Richard Lewontin

Let me quote you some words of a modern scientist, Richard Lewontin of the United States. He says as follows:

It is time . . . to state clearly that evolution is fact, not theory. . . . Birds arose from non-birds and humans from non-humans. No person who pretends to any understanding of the natural world can deny these facts any more than she or he can deny that the earth is round, rotates on its axis and revolves around the sun.³⁰

So, according to Professor Lewontin, evolution has been proved as an absolute fact. It is no longer just a theory: it is as proven as the fact that the earth goes round the sun and rotates on its axis.

²⁹ Jacques Monod (1910-1976), *Chance and Necessity: An Essay on the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology* (1971), p. 112.

³⁰ R. C. Lewontin, *BioScience*, Volume 31, Issue 8, September 1981, p. 559.

Professor Richard Dawkins

Professor Dawkins is professor for Public Understanding of Science at the University of Oxford in England.³¹ Its aim is for the propagation and the publication to the public of the latest in scientific thinking. He writes,

It is absolutely safe to say that if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid or insane (or wicked, but I'd rather not consider that).³²

I thank him for his suggestion, for I have to confess myself now, according to Dawkins' characterizations, in the category of persons ignorant, stupid or insane—and possibly wicked as well.

Has evolution been proved?

There is a view that is greatly popularized in Britain, that evolution has been proved. On what basis has it been proved? As I mentioned in our first lecture (see p. 3), one of the main pieces of evidence that is offered to the general public concerns the Kettlewell peppered moths, so called after the name of the theorist who carried out the original experiments. They are constantly quoted in biology lessons in schools or universities as evidence for evolution.

'There you are,' say the schoolteachers, 'evolution is proved. See how these moths have developed according to their surroundings. Tiny little mutations in their DNA have turned them from being whitish to becoming black. The mutations were altogether accidental, but having happened they produced a moth that was a little bit blacker than the others and the birds didn't gobble them up. They produced more moths of the same colour, and natural selection picked out the black moths. So descent by accidental mutation of the genes inside, and natural selection outside with the birds picking the ones they could see, served the purpose of evolution. Here is a tremendous example of actual evolution taking place.'

So the teachers have said, and I'm afraid professors also, that here's an example of how the whole of the universe has worked from start to finish, by chance mutation of the genes, and natural selection outside. That whole theory is quite false, and I want to give you not my opinion, but the opinion of some experts in these matters.

Here is a publication in 1990 of the *Science Framework* published by the California State Board of Education in the United States.

Students should understand that this is not an example of evolutionary change from light-colored to dark-colored, to light-colored moths [*that is not an example of evolution*], because both kinds were already in the population. *This is an example of natural selection*, but in two senses. First, temporary conditions in the environment encouraged selection against dark-colored moths and then against light-colored moths. But second, and just as important, is the selection to maintain [*now listen to it*] a balance of both black and white forms, which are adaptable to a variety of environmental circumstances. This balanced selection increases the chances of

³¹ Richard Dawkins held this chair from 1995-2008.

³² Quoted from *New York Times* in *Prospect* magazine, March 11, 2013.

survival of the species. This is in many ways the most interesting feature of the evolution of the peppered moth *but one that is often misrepresented in textbooks*. (Emphases and italics mine.)

So much were the California State Board of Education concerned about the misrepresentation that they put out this special publication. This thing about the peppered moths is not evolution in the normal sense. We can call it micro-evolution, if you like. All it is, is that in the moths, as in any living form, their genes have the possibility of variety.

Doesn't the Bible teach that?

Yes, it does. God made human beings of one man, Adam, and his wife, Eve. Were they black, white, yellow, pink, red? Who knows what they were, but the original gene pool had enough potential in it over the centuries, by mating and the natural mutations, to produce human beings of every kind of facial configuration and every kind of colour. That is what you would better call *micro-evolution*. The fact that the human gene pool allows for that diversity does not explain how humankind started and how men happened to become men. It shows how the human species can change within limits; but whether they are black, white, yellow, red or whatever they are, *they remain human beings*. They do not evolve by that technique into something else. This is micro-evolution and it has its limits. It is not macro evolution. All the changes in the Kettlewell moths don't explain how they came to be moths in the first place.

Another scientist has pointed out that the fruit fly breathes very rapidly, and they have bombarded it with all kinds of rays to see if they could change its genes. They have produced fruit flies of all kinds of looks and perversities and strange forms. But one of the leading French experts in the field reminds his fellow scientists that, after all these changes, *the fruit fly remains a fruit fly*. It hasn't changed into a moth, let alone into an animal of any kind.

We should therefore be very careful when we read the kind of propaganda that is put out in our schools and very often in our universities. Seeking on the one hand to advance the theory of what is better called macro evolution—how moths came to be moths, how fruit flies came to be fruit flies, how human beings came to be human beings; supposedly saying it was by these little changes over years, mutations in the genes leading to different forms that weren't selected naturally. And then seeking to prove that theory by quoting things like the Kettlewell moths, which are not instances of evolution whatsoever.

That is an important thing to notice, and that is why I said at the beginning, when scientists say that by their scientific theories they've made God obsolete, I beg leave to be allowed to question the logic and the facts behind their theories.

Let's take one or two more expert opinions.

Dr Michael Denton

You won't need me here in New Zealand to remind you of the work of Michael Denton.³³ I repeat the quotation from his book, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*,³⁴ where, in his frank way,

³³ Born in Australia, 1943.

³⁴ Adler & Adler Publishers Inc., U.S.; 3rd Revised edition (1 Dec. 1996).

he's talking about our English author, Professor Richard Dawkins, author of *The Selfish Gene*,³⁵ who says emphatically that the theory of evolution is about as much in doubt as the fact that the earth goes round the sun.

... such claims are simply nonsense. For Darwin's model of evolution is still very much a theory and still very much in doubt when it comes to macro-evolutionary phenomena. Furthermore, being basically a theory of historical reconstruction, it is impossible to verify by experiment or direct observation as is normal in science.

Michael Denton is saying something in addition there, something very important. When people like Lewontin and Dawkins say that evolution as a theory has been proved to be true — as true as the fact that the earth goes round the sun — one would hope that they know what they're saying. Because the parallel is not true. We all know that the earth rotates on its axis, and that the earth goes round the sun; you can prove it by observation. But Darwinian evolution cannot be observed; never has it been observed.

And what is more, you cannot prove it by experiment, for by definition Darwinian evolution is a matter of history. It sets out to tell you their theory as to how things have happened all down the centuries. Indeed, some would claim to explain how the universe came to be; but by definition you can't experiment on it, even with history. You can't put the universe through your laboratory and test it. You can't test your theory in a laboratory, and that is the point Michael Denton is making. It's a very serious and important point, which we shall come to presently.

Quotation from *Nature* magazine

One more statement, lest you think that I am being very arbitrary in quoting just one or two scientists who happen to 'bat' on my side in the 'test match'. *Nature*, one of the leading scientific journals in the world, gave a report on what one of the British Museum's senior scientists was telling the public in a film lecture.

The Survival of the Fittest, they said, is an empty phrase; it is a play on words. For this reason, many critics feel that not only is the idea of evolution unscientific, but the idea of natural selection also. There's no point in asking whether or not we should believe in the idea of natural selection, because it is the inevitable logical consequence of a set of premises.³⁶

What does he mean by that? Well, here the scientist says he's starting from some premises that he assumes. Having assumed these premises, if they are right he can show you how he deduces this result from his premises; but if you don't accept his premises, then, of course, he is stuck. It depends therefore on his prior presupposition, and that is the point, isn't it? It is not demonstrated science; *it is a theory based on presuppositions*. That is a very important point to get hold of, and this is what one of the chief scientists in the British Museum in London is trying to point out to those who read his book.

³⁵ Oxford University Press, 1976.

³⁶ Article by Barry Cox in *Nature*, 4 June 1981, p. 373.

Has the fossil record proved the case for evolution?

It is a popular idea that the fossils in the rocks have proved the case for evolution. The idea is that these rocks took millions of years to create through sediment and so forth, and the remains of birds and animals and fish are to be found in them as fossils. That is perfectly true. The next theory is that, if you look at these fossils in all the different levels of rocks, you will find evidence for evolution, for in the early rocks they are very primitive affairs and they gradually get more complicated as you come up.

But Darwin's theory said that not only would there be distinct animals, birds and things — distinct kinds coming up, but there must be, by definition of the theory, thousands of intermediate forms with little changes, and still more little changes, and still even more little changes intervening between the main species. For Darwin, that was a very, very important part of his thesis.

Darwin's problem

Let me remind you of what we know already of what Darwin said upon the evidence of fossils. In his day he was concerned about the absence of these transitional forms in the fossil record, and he wrote,

... so must the number of intermediate varieties, which have formerly existed on the earth, be truly enormous. *Why then is not every geological formation and every stratum full of such intermediate links?* Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against my theory.³⁷ (Emphasis mine.)

The absence of these intermediate forms is the biggest objection to his theory. In those days, of course, the rocks hadn't been systematically explored, so there was hope that, with intense industry and the rocks being explored in detail all around the earth, transitional forms would eventually come to light.

So let's look again at a more modern report on these transitional forms that we discussed in our first lecture (see pp. [10](#)).

Professor David Raup

A large number of well-trained scientists outside of evolutionary biology and palaeontology have unfortunately gotten the idea that the fossil record is far more Darwinian than it is. This probably comes from the oversimplification inevitable in secondary sources: low-level textbooks, semi-popular articles, and so on. Also, there is probably some wishful thinking involved. In the years after Darwin, his advocates hoped to find predictable progressions. In

³⁷ Darwin, C. R., *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, D. Appleton & Co., New York (1860). New edition, revised and augmented.

general, these have not been found yet the optimism has died hard, and some pure fantasy has crept into textbooks.³⁸

Let's hear what another one has got to say.

Professor Stephen Jay Gould³⁹

He is perhaps one of the most famous palaeontologists of all nowadays, because of his endless stream of popular and highly entertaining books. He says,

The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of palaeontology.⁴⁰

That is, the palaeontologists all know that there aren't these transitional forms. They keep the information to themselves: it is a 'trade secret'. They don't normally tell the public about the absence of these intermediate forms.

Niles Eldredge⁴¹

Just to quote one more; now listen to this bit.

We palaeontologists have said that the history of life supports [the story of gradual adaptive change] knowing all the while it does not.⁴²

That's not me, that's a famous evolutionist, Niles Eldredge of the American Museum of Natural History.

Evidence of design

So let's come to the next step in the theory, which says that not only do different animals, birds and whatnot evolve from one species to another by tiny changes, but that life arose out of non-living substances by minute changes in the chemical structure. How likely is that?

Sir Frederick Hoyle

And here I quote to you again from the famous words of the astronomer Sir Frederick Hoyle, who is much interested in the theory of evolution. Fred Hoyle is not a believer in God; he never was, as far as I am aware.

A simple calculation then shows that the chance of obtaining the necessary total of 2,000 enzymes by randomly assembling amino acid chains is exceedingly minute. The random chance is not a million to one against, or a billion to one or even a trillion to one against, but p

³⁸ 'Evolution and the Fossil Record', *Science*, Vol. 213, No. 4505, 17 July 1981, p.289.

³⁹ Stephen Jay Gould (1941-2002), Harvard University and American Museum of Natural History in New York.

⁴⁰ 'Evolution's Erratic Pace', *Natural History*, vol. 86 (May 1987), p. 14.

⁴¹ Curator Emeritus, Division of Palaeontology, American Museum of Natural History.

⁴² *Time Frames: The Evolution of Punctuated Equilibria*, Princetown University Press, 1989.

to 1 against, with p minimally an enormous supraastronomical number equal to 10/40,000 (1 followed by 40,000 zeroes).⁴³

That is Sir Fred Hoyle, the man who said that you might as well suppose that a whirlwind blowing through a junkyard would produce a jumbo jet, as to suppose that life could have come out of non-life by accidental mutation of the chemicals.

Professor Michael Behe⁴⁴

Let's come to the positive side of things. The idea that life could have come about by accident is challenged these days by a growing number of biochemists. In particular, by Michael Behe from the United States. He has recently put out a book entitled *Darwin's Black Box*.⁴⁵

He points out that in Darwin's days, one hundred years ago or more, people knew very little about the inside of a cell; they thought it was like a blob of jello. It was easy to think therefore that little changes in the cell could easily cause developments that eventually would turn non-life into life. Nowadays, microbiologists and biochemists like Behe are discovering that, far from being a mere blob of jello, the cell is a vast factory with many subdivisions and all kinds of operations going on in a fantastically complicated way. They have come up with the expression that the cell shows, forgive the term, *irreducible complexity*.

Professor Behe is a genius at explaining things for the general public and in our first lecture we used his illustrations of a mousetrap and of human blood clotting as examples of irreducible complexity (see pp. [12-14](#)). In a mousetrap such a conglomeration of actions and interactions all have to happen together, and if one or two are missing it won't work at all. It must have been designed for the job, and *could not have come together by accident*.

Just observe what an enormous scheme has to come into place within the cells of different chemicals in order to turn the fibrinogen in the blood into the stuff that clots, and turn it from potential to actuality. All those things have to take place, then, for it to eventually unclot. There are about twenty different processes and they are all necessary. If one or two were missing, it would lead to very serious disease in the body. It is what is called technically a *cascade effect*, and it is Professor Behe's argument that this is just one instance of many of irreducible complexity. *It's got to be all there at the right time, at the same time*, or else it doesn't work, and if it doesn't work it's fatal.

For that reason Behe will say that there are many such systems in biochemistry, and they must have been designed as complete systems. They cannot have come into being by tiny little changes accidentally coming about—a mutation in the genes, because you'd be dead before they got to the last one that was necessary.

We also saw that some bacteria are required within the cells to propel them around. Some of them carry vital substances for various purposes, the cell being like a great factory with different factory sheds and laboratories doing different things in the cell, and material having

⁴³ Hoyle and Wickramasinghe, *Cosmic Life Force*, London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1988, 134.

⁴⁴ Professor of biochemistry at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania and a senior fellow of the Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture.

⁴⁵ *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, Simon & Schuster Ltd., (1996; second edition 2006).

to be transported from one to the other. According to Professor Behe this is another example of irreducible complexity. *It could not have come into existence and functioned little by little.* The whole machinery had to be there or nothing would work, and if that part of the cell system didn't work, then health would suffer enormously. So, on the positive side, scientists are now talking about this kind of thing in the cell.

Professor Shapiro

As far as I know, Professor Shapiro is not a believer in God, and he doesn't altogether like Behe although he applauds his work. He doesn't necessarily agree with him, and hopes that one day we can come to an explanation of these things without supposing there is a creator. In his most recent work, Professor Shapiro has pointed to the bacterium he's been studying. When it comes across anything it has to know if it is poison, and if the bacterium ingests it, will it kill it, or is it safe to ingest. He has found that at the tip of the bacterium there is a nose mechanism, which he says can only be likened to an analytic computer that analyses the stuff the bacterium comes across, as to whether it is fit for ingestion or not.

Evolution cannot possibly account for it, says Professor Shapiro. As far as I know, he is not a believer in God, but he's saying that current evolutionary theory cannot really explain it or account for it.

Information has to come from a designer

Let me just mention another positive area among the scientists: the insights given by *information theory*. It was the engineers who first called our attention to this, but what do they mean by it? Well, in engineering terms, if you want something to lock or unlock a door, you design a key. On that key, you've got to design the shape of the metal to do various things inside the lock, and people are inclined to call it 'information' to be put on the key. That is, you have to think through the things that have to be put on the key so that it fits the lock.

You will remember my example of the old fashioned washing machine, with the notches in a piece of plastic. They were put there by the designer to 'tell' the machine what to do: to instruct it, to set things going. The designer knew the inside of the machine, and he knew what notches to put where. They were his way of communicating with the machine, and making it do what he wanted it to do. So it wasn't just plastic, it was information. Did the notches come there by accidental mutation? Of course not. Information of that kind is put there by the designer.

The biochemists and microbiologists say that inside your cell there's stuff called DNA, and it's double helix formed. It's immensely complicated and full of information. Starting with two cells, one from mother and one from father, coming together as a zygote, and that zygote contains not just chemical stuff—to say it's just chemical would be laughable. It's carrying information that will control the development of the embryo, the foetus, in all its development in the womb and the timing of the development right up to the time when it becomes 99½ and goes home, we hope to heaven. Where has the information come from? To say it's just chemicals would be nonsense, wouldn't it? Information comes, in that sense, from a brain, a mind, a designer.

What is information?

Let me take another illustration, much more to our hearts. Suppose you pick up a piece of paper and on this piece of paper it says, 'My dear Rosie, I love you with all my heart, John'. You take it to a chemist, and say, 'Analyse this for me, please'. He tells you what the paper is made of, and the ink, and he says, 'That's all it is, a piece of paper and ink.'

'No,' you say, 'it's more than that.'

'What is it then?'

You say, 'It's information from John to his beloved Rosie.'

'What is information?'

You say, 'The letters on the page.'

No, it's not. He could have said the same thing to Rosie by Morse code, shouted it from one window to another, or with flags. He could have done it in English letters or Russian letters. It doesn't matter what form he gets to convey the information; the information itself didn't exist as letters to start with, did it? Where did it come from?

You say, 'It came from somewhere inside his brain. It is invisible; it is mental and perhaps also spiritual.'

But John conveys the information from his brain to Rosie's brain by these carriers: the letters on the page and a bit of paper. And the information on the DNA, which controls the development in the womb and thereafter, is not the chemistry, is it? The original zygote from the parents had the information, then it was copied by other DNA and RNA, but the original material has gone. The information survives: it will be passed on to their son, and their son, and their grandson, and their grandson, all down the centuries. The information goes on being carried by a different lot of chemicals. The same structure, but fresh chemicals, like the paper on which John wrote his message. The message itself, the information, was invisible and not material, but spiritual. Mental, at any rate.

Where does the information come from?

The engineers with their information theory, and the microbiologists faced with DNA, are coming more and more to say, 'Here is a supreme example of information.' The physical material is carrying information. That has enormous implications, doesn't it? Where does the information come from? In all our experience, information has to come from a mind, a personal mind. It is invisible; it is not material.

It comes from God

Listen to the Bible, 'In the beginning, God created . . .' (Gen 1:1). How did he create? 'And God said . . .' —Genesis 1 repeats it many times.

The New Testament says, 'In the beginning was *the Word*'; that is, information. 'All things were made through him' (John 1:1, 3).

Hebrews 11 says, 'By faith we understand that the universe was created by *the word of God*' (v. 3). It's not merely that '[God] commanded, and it stood firm' (Ps 33:9); it was that, in commanding, God implanted the information from the divine mind on to material. That is the source of the information that keeps our universe going, and us human beings in particular.

Evidence that the universe presents

Has science made belief in God obsolete? How has it? Science is slowly coming round to see that the evolutionary theory is inadequate. Other scientists are beginning to point the way to the positive evidence that there is a God; there is a designer. The Bible has been saying it for a long while, of course. There's not a logical mathematical proof that God exists, but Romans 1 tells us that we can see things about the creator by looking at the universe (v. 20), just as you can look at a tulip and see that it is beautiful. If I tried to prove it to you logically, you would think I'm absurd. How would I prove to you that a tulip is beautiful? If you can't see it, you can't see it; but most people can see it. And the Bible says you can see it if you look at the universe, that behind it is God's vast power and his Godhood. Therefore, the Bible says that those who reject God will be held responsible and without excuse because they have shut their eyes to the obvious evidence that the universe presents.

Perhaps that sounds a very hard judgment to you. But the Bible says that if people reject the evidence of creation around them, that it comes from the hand of God, they will be without excuse, and incur the judgment and displeasure of God, because 'they [do] not see fit to acknowledge [him]' (v. 28). Do you think that's a hard judgment?

Rejection of the evidence

I finish with one more quotation, and with this I do promise to let you go. This is a quotation from Professor Lewontin. I quoted him earlier in this lecture as one who said that evolution had been proved. Now I quote from another work of his. He was reviewing a book by his late colleague Carl Sagan, the man who used to listen to outer space to see if there were other intelligent beings around. Sagan was a great scientist and an atheist, as is Lewontin. Lewontin is an eminent scientist; we're not taking anything away from his science, but this is what he says:⁴⁶

Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are *against common sense* is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. (Emphasis mine.)

What does he mean? Well, he's inviting you to observe that scientists like him come up with explanations that, as he says, are contrary to common sense. Why do they do it? It's the key to their 'struggle'. What struggle? The struggle between science on the one side, and the supernatural on the other.

We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfil many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories*, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. (Emphasis mine.)

A *just-so* story doesn't pretend to be scientific. Why do they do that? 'Because we have a prior commitment to materialism.' It doesn't mean consumerism. He means, 'We have a prior commitment to the philosophy that there is nothing in the universe except material. We will

⁴⁶ Billions and Billions of Demons, *The New York Review*, January 9, 1997 Issue.

not admit that there is a God; we are committed to the view that there's nothing but matter; and because we're committed to that view we evolve our theories, even though they're against common sense, they are a kind of a just-so story.' That's what he says; I didn't write this.

It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated.

He says, 'It is our prior commitment; that's what we believe; that's our philosophy; we're committed to it. There is no God, there is only matter in the universe, and because we are committed to that we are obliged to frame our scientific investigations in such a fashion as they come up with the results that seem to prove that our materialism is correct.'

In other words, with him science is not really science, it's based on a prior philosophy. Now, listen to what he says at last.

Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.

That's Professor Lewontin. 'We are determined not to allow God to put his foot in; not to recognize the foot if it is there. We are determined to keep the supernatural out, and, because we are, we base our science and its investigations on that hypothesis. We construct our experiments so that they come up with the results that there is no God.'

Not all atheists would agree with Lewontin. I do not pretend that all scientists who believe in atheistic evolution adopt that same attitude. I'm simply saying that that is the attitude expressed by one leading scientist, and it agrees with the Bible. *There is evidence that some people do not like to retain God in their knowledge.* Their presupposed philosophy eliminates God because they are determined to keep the divine foot out of the door.

Ladies and gentlemen, my question at the beginning was, *Hasn't science made belief in God obsolete?* In the face of the evidence put before me, my answer is an unqualified 'No, it hasn't.' Thank you for your immense patience.

Don't All Religions Lead to God?

I would ask you to believe my sincerity in saying how grateful I am to you for your invitation and for the friendliness with which you have welcomed me. Thank you, all of you who have gone out of your way to show hospitality and to show me the countryside and what life is like in New Zealand. I thank all my hosts and hostesses. My special thanks go to Campbell Fountain, who has just graciously chaired this session. He is the one who organized my visit here for the whole of the ten weeks, and has put an immense amount of work into the detail of arranging many different venues. I am deeply indebted to him, and it is right that I should give him now my thanks publically.

Tonight, though I cannot guarantee any success, I am going to make an honest attempt to give a shorter lecture than I have done on the previous three occasions. I know that very observation fills you with mirth and incredulity; but at least I have started out with good intentions, whatever the result. I'm hoping there will be time for questions afterwards, not only on tonight's topic but on the topics of the previous occasions.

The question you have put to me tonight is, *Don't all religions lead to God?* The first thing I must do, in honesty and fairness to you, is to remind you once more that I am a Christian. I shall try to be fair to other religions, as far as I understand them and have had experience of them. If in the course of my remarks I say things that are unfair, I beg the pardon of any who are members of those religions.

At the same time, of course, being a Christian I am not altogether a neutral judge, as you will readily understand. As a Christian I do believe the words of Jesus Christ our Lord, when he said, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' (John 14:6). I accept also the words of the Christian apostles, when they informed the Sanhedrin, 'there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12).

Yet at the same time, as a Christian I do believe that the one we call Jesus Christ did not begin to exist when he was born in Bethlehem. I believe that he is the Word of God, who in the beginning was with God, and was God (John 1:1). He was the one who has told out God in creation. He is the beginning, the agent and the goal of creation (Col 1:15-16).

According to the Old Testament, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6). Even though Abraham had never heard the name 'Jesus', the God he believed, whether he knew it or not, was the blessed and holy tri-unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Abraham, therefore, believed the word of God, because he believed in a God who, as I repeat, was and is the gracious tri-unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Moreover, I believe

that God took the initiative in revealing himself to Abraham, as he had a special role in history for both Abraham and his descendants.

Yet, as the New Testament affirms, God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). A God who revealed himself to Abraham in those early centuries could reveal himself to anyone. God taught Peter in the Christian age the basic truth that God is no respecter of persons, 'but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him' (v. 35). What Peter meant on that occasion is not that people's good works find such approval with God that he grants them salvation on the basis of those works. Far from it. The Bible declares that none shall ever be saved on the basis of their works, only through faith in Christ, faith in God (see Eph 2:8-9).

What Peter meant was this. Here was a Gentile, Cornelius, who knew nothing of Jesus; in his heart he earnestly desired to find the true and living God, and in his life did works as best he could as evidence of the sincere desire of his heart. God didn't disregard him because he was a Gentile, but took steps to secure that a preacher of the gospel should come to where Cornelius was, and tell him words by which he must be saved.

We notice that the Gentile wasn't already saved because he had done a lot of good works. He needed to be saved; but God read the man's heart and respected his sincerity and sent a messenger to tell him how he could be saved. Our Lord himself laid it down as an absolute rule, 'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened' (Matt 7:7-8).

Moreover, in John 3:19, our Lord comments on people who have lived in times before he was born, particularly immediately before he was born. He said that the situation now is that, 'the light has come into the world'—he was referring to himself as 'the light of the world' (8:12). Said he, generally speaking, 'people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God' (3:19-21).

In that we see an explanation of many in the nation of Israel, for instance, who in the days before Jesus was born in Bethlehem honestly believed in God and did his will as best they could. Because they believed in God—the triune God, whether they knew it or not—they were, therefore, believing in God the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and when the second person of the trinity entered our world they came to him and recognized him for who he was. They found in him the glorious message of complete Christian salvation.

There were many others in those days past in Israel who were exceedingly religious, but, when the God whom they professed to worship came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ, they rejected him. Saul of Tarsus was an eminent example, though he later repented; but there were many who persisted in their rejection of the Word, and showed thereby that their professed faith in the one true God in the days before Christ came was not the genuine article.

And finally, by way of general remarks, I do believe that the God who so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that men and women shall not perish, can be relied upon to save as many as he possibly can.

Common moral values in religion

But then, if you ask me, do all religions, in my opinion, lead to God, I shall say, 'Well, hardly so, and certainly not.'

For many nowadays that has become a very popular idea once more, and politically correct no less. There are reasons for that. For many people, the sum total of religion is concerned with teaching people to be good. And at that level, of course, all major religions have certain basic moral principles in common, such as respect for your parents, for telling the truth, and for fulfilling your social duties in your family, in your tribe, in your larger nation, and to the world.

Certainly, the major religions are therefore concerned, to a greater or lesser extent, with certain common moral values, and therefore it is understandable that many people should feel that these moral values are really the sum total of religion. Therefore, all religions are about the very same thing: teaching people to be good. Their distinctive beliefs are not significant. To put it in the famous phrase, 'all these religions are different paths up the mountain, but it's up the same mountain'. Of course, the paths are different in many respects but their goal is the same, and sooner or later they will all arrive at the summit of the mountain and find that the goal they were seeking is exactly the same goal. It is foolish, therefore, to say that one religion is right and the others wrong. Some might be a little better than the others, but they are all intending the same thing.

Postmodernism

That attitude chimes in very well, of course, with present modern philosophy. In the world that we call 'the West', postmodernism is the newest style in philosophy. It holds that there is no such thing as objective truth. Everybody has a right to their opinion, but no opinion is absolutely right or absolutely wrong. They are all equally either right or wrong, however you care to think about them. And the uttermost arrogance would be for any one person to say about any one thing, 'My opinion is right, and anybody else is wrong.'

Therefore, when faced with the question, 'Do all religions lead to God?', postmodernism would say that all religions are equally valid, or invalid as the case may be. Have your pick according to your choice, but what you mustn't say is that yours is absolutely right, and anybody else's is wrong. To do as I did at the beginning, and state the Christian belief—that there is no other name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved, and that name is Jesus—is highly offensive to many who have embraced postmodernist philosophy.

Religious wars

I also understand the pain that is caused to many people by the strife and bloody wars that have been caused by religion, and still are. Very often they are caused by what the press will call 'fundamentalist religious attitudes'. Our religion is right, and everybody else's is wrong. Religion has been at the cause of so many of the wars in past centuries, and still is in ours. In that respect, as a Christian I want to confess the shame and scandal of Christendom at large. I shall not tonight criticize other religions who at present are waging war in support of their religion and persecuting others. Christendom has enough to answer for itself; its disgraceful

habit in times past, with the inquisition and other such execrable acts. We should remember, for instance, that to Jewish people Hitler was a Christian and Franco was a Christian. In the Middle Ages and later, the Spanish held their inquisitions and burned alive many thousands of Jews at the stake. In the Jewish mind, these were Christians.

Many Christians nowadays, and I among them, would wish to point out that those actions on the part of Christendom—raising armies to go and slaughter Turks, for instance, because they were Muslims—are in open direct blatant contradiction to the explicit teaching of Christ in the New Testament. I offer that to all who have suffered, as I have to Jewish friends. It shows how even Christianity can deteriorate into being a mere religion held by unregenerate people.

There is nothing so dangerous as religion, when it is held by unregenerate hearts. It has been the cause of endless misery. But it wouldn't be fair to condemn either Christ or the New Testament for that mispractice based on misinterpretation of Christ's teaching. But with all those things said, let me now say why I do not think that all religions lead to God.

1. How can all religions lead to God, when some of them don't admit his existence?

Buddhism

If I've understood it right, pure Buddhism as originally thought by the Buddha, was not in that sense a religion; more a philosophy and a psychology. It offered no certainty of any heaven, or peace with the almighty God or any gods. It taught people how to arrive at the state of calm and self-possession by understanding their desires and being able to cope with human desires, which, according to the Buddha, are the cause of all our human distress. If we can get rid of our desires, get release from them, we shall find peace, said the Buddha. I would find it difficult to believe that that pure form of Theravāda Buddhism can be said in any sense to lead to God.

Hinduism

Or take Hinduism, first in its popular form. In Hinduism, as we all know, there are one thousand and one gods. You take your pick as to which you prefer to follow. The supreme being, Brahma, is largely unknowable. Even philosophically very little can be said of the supreme being, whatever he might be like. Whether it's right to call it he, she, or it, nobody knows. It is beyond our comprehension. Here, therefore, allow me to refer to the intellectual philosophical side of Hinduism. Hinduism is a difficult religion to comment upon because it has so many different forms, and there is no Hindu magisterium, as there is in the Roman Catholic Church, to tell you which is the right doctrine and which isn't. You have your choice amongst thousands.

My colleague in university, the professor of Italian, is an Indian. Just the other month at a university lunch we fell to talking, as often we have in the past. Professor Singh likes to pull my Christian leg from time to time, and I try to allow it to be pulled in a very Christian way. But anyway, when I enquired about the philosophic teaching on the part of philosophical Hinduism, I said, 'How do you know it represents reality?'

He said, 'We don't know. This is not a revealed religion. Our concepts are simply philosophers arguing from the bottom upwards what ultimate reality is like, and therefore we

come up with our logical theories; but whether any of it resembles the ultimate reality or not, we have no way of knowing.'

From the mouth of an Indian, that is his version of philosophical Hinduism. *How could it lead to God?*

God has revealed himself to us

In the Christian sense, and indeed in the Jewish sense, it isn't even in the running. The stark difference between that and Judaism and Christianity is that they are not the records of men and women trying to find God, starting from the bottom upwards by philosophical reasoning, in the manner of the Greeks like Plato and Aristotle, and so forth. The gospel according to both Old Testament and New is that the living God who made us has taken the initiative to reveal himself to his creatures. The Bible is not the record of man's attempt to find God.

Atheists, of course, have laughed at religious people, haven't they? They say that man makes God in his image, and if elephants had a tendency to be religious they would regard God as a super-duper elephant. Man regards God as a super-duper kind of human being because it's man making God in his own image, so they claim. The claim of the New Testament and the Old is the reverse. It is not the attempt of man to find out God by his own devices. This is the living God revealing himself to men at different times, says the New Testament, in different proportions (Heb 1:1). Scheduling his message to the human race when it was young in simple terms, leading people on in the course of their spiritual development, until you come to the adulthood of the race and God manifests himself in Jesus Christ. *Can we say, then, that all religions lead to God?*

2. The second thing I should say is that it's hardly likely

Pantheism and Stoicism

Take for instance those religions and philosophies that believe in pantheism. Pantheism simply means that everything is God. There are those who believe that the heavens are God, the stars are God, matter is God; human beings are God, alligators are God, cows are God; stones are God, everything is God, or a bit of God.

The technical name as you know is *pantheism*. It is a view held by certain Hindus, of course, and was held by the Greek philosophers, the *Stoics*. They held that at the heart of the universe is reason, intelligence; but that reason and intelligence is a part of the stuff of the universe: it is a material. It is very fine and pure material, so they thought, but it's part of the matter of the universe, just as anything else is a part of the matter of the universe. They were therefore pantheists. They said that this reason, this divine stock, is in everybody; all that happens is part of God and therefore all is good.

The inevitable end to which such a theory brings us is to say that evil is a part of God too, and evil is good. It may not look good, it may not seem good, but it is part of the whole and it is therefore good. If everything is God, pantheism has sooner or later to agree to that. Do you see what that means? The Stoics said that everything was ruled and caused by the divine reason at the centre of the universe, this *material fire*; and therefore we ought to act according to reason as best we can.

If you saw Pol Pot about to murder a couple of million people, you might choose by reason to try and stop him. That would be a very reasonable thing to do. But if you failed, said the Stoics, then you would see that the murder of two million people was part of reason, part of the whole, and ultimately it was good. And you would not be right to sorrow over the fact that two million people had been massacred. You must take it that this too was good, and part of the whole.

That is not exactly what either Judaism or Christianity would say, and Christians would regard it as a horrifying scandal upon the Almighty. Stoics, therefore, were obliged to say that this world, as it is, is the best of all possible worlds. It couldn't be improved, because ultimate reason that purveys everything is in control of everything. And therefore you had to put up with things as they are, for, if you couldn't rationally put up with them any more, you were allowed to commit suicide, and that was good as well.

In the first century there were many noble minds adhering to Stoicism, among the Romans in particular. If you believed it, it really did make you a rigorous, brave character; and shall I say *hard*, but I mean it in the noble sense. But who could agree with it? It's certainly not what the New Testament means when it says, 'we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose' (Rom 8:28).

Yes, the New Testament affirms that God can turn all things to the good of those who trust him, but, 1. he's not the author of evil, and 2. this world as it is, is not the ideal world; not the best of worlds that could possibly be. This is a fallen world, says God, and even nature groans, says Scripture, waiting for the revelation of the sons of God. Even believers in God and in Christ groan within themselves, waiting for their adoption, the redemption of their bodies (see Rom 8:22–23). Here lies the hope that evil shall not be triumphant or permanent. There shall come a new heaven and a new earth where evil has been banished and righteousness shall dwell (2 Pet 3:13).

Do all religions lead to God? Well, Pantheism surely does not. And if you will allow me a personal opinion: if God is the god of the Stoics, I'm not sure I would want to get to know him.

What about the doctrine of creation?

What about the universe in which we live? Well, let's start again with certain forms of Hinduism and Buddhism. They would hold, along with the Greek philosopher Plato, who got his doctrines from them via the Pythagoreans, that the supreme deity, the supreme being, or whatever you call him, is not responsible for this universe. The supreme being is of such undiluted purity that he would never have considered creating matter. He did create lesser deities, and they in turn created still lesser deities, and at that level they each possessed creatorial powers. As the neoplatonists would have said, one deity somewhere down the ranks, alas, went and used his creative powers to create matter.

That was unfortunate, because it is somewhat down the scale and ultimately not to be desired. We human beings are caught up in this as we're composed of matter; so the goal of any wise person is to try and get free from matter, back to the universal soul, or spirit. So they were taught to despise the body, to despise matter. The great and famous Socrates—I do

respect his memory—taught that the soul, if it is wise, will keep far away from the body, because it is the body that defiles the soul. Therefore, the soul's wisdom is to get as far from the body as it possibly can, and seek thus to incur the least stain of the body. Does that lead to God? Indeed, not. The one true God, creator of heaven and earth, saw the work of his hands and said, 'It is good' (Gen 1).

Despising matter, will that lead you to God? Well, it won't lead you to Jesus Christ. He is God incarnate in a human body, and if you think human bodies are not altogether desirable and not the ideal, then you will not respect the body of Jesus. Our bodies are fallen of course, and damaged, but the human body in its essence is good. The sinless body of Christ is so much a part of God's good things, that the Bible declares the supreme act of our redemption is the resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ (see Rom 8:11).

So much for the Platonic theory. The Hindu idea that matter is bad will not lead you to the Christ who has been bodily raised from the dead, nor to any eventual hope for this world. The idea that wisdom is to escape from matter, which is a kind of unreality, and get back to the centre of things, the universal soul, goes clean contrary both to God's original purpose in creation, and to his ultimate purpose in redemption. The Bible affirms that there shall not merely be a new heaven, but a new earth, which holds out hope, not merely for us personally, but for nature and for the world.

What is wrong with us?

Let's come to what is wrong with us. First, according to some religions, and then, according to what the New Testament says. What's gone wrong? Suppose a baby is born with some serious disability. What has caused it?

1. According to some religions

Hinduism and Buddhism

Hinduism and some forms of Buddhism will say that the baby has been born that way because of some sin it did in a previous incarnation. These religions hold the doctrine of *reincarnation*. A human soul must be born in a body, and when it dies, if its wrongdoings have not been cleared, it will have to be reincarnated in another body, either of a human being, or even of an animal.

The theory is that when someone sins, that person's soul invokes a 'tax' of suffering, a load of suffering, and the only way to get release from its *karma* is by suffering the penalty and consequence of its own sin. If by the time it has reached the end of life it hasn't suffered enough to clear that karma of pain and suffering which it has incurred, then it will have to be reincarnated. If its sin was very bad it will have to be reincarnated, perhaps in one of the lower, and sometimes disgusting, animals, as part of the suffering imposed upon that human soul. If the soul has been moderately good, but still has not wiped out its karma, it could be reincarnated in the person of a nobleman or a king, or something; but not until the karma has been wiped out, and a cycle of repetitious reincarnations put to an end. Then the soul is released from the need to be reincarnated, and thus free to be reunited with the central,

ultimate world soul. That is what Plato taught, too. As I say, he got a lot of his philosophy from Hinduism via the Pythagoreans.

To some people, particularly in more recent decades, reincarnation has been appealing. I fancy with many people it seems to offer another chance. Christianity, with its doctrine of one life and then after death the eternal judgment, seems to many to be severe. They feel in their hearts that they are not ready to face any final judgment. They say, 'How is it fair that for sins done in a finite lifetime of, say, seventy years, to have to face an eternal penalty?' Therefore, they welcome the idea of reincarnation because it seems to offer another chance to work it out, and to suffer temporary pain so that eventually one might attain eternal bliss.

But actually, the doctrine of reincarnation is one of the cruellest things that man's mind ever invented. Take a baby born with a congenital disability. Is this load of suffering because, in some previous incarnation this human soul, now in this baby's body, committed some grievous sin, and in that previous incarnation didn't suffer enough to wipe out the karma coming from that sin, so it's had to be reincarnated?

You say, 'What sin?'

Well, the poor child can't be told what sin it was.

'It must have been a grievous sin, then?'

Well, who knows?

Ah, but there's another catch to it, isn't there? How long has this business of reincarnation been going on, so to speak? How many times has it already happened with this soul that's in this baby's body? If it's true, has not the process of reincarnation been going on from the word go? And what if now, after all these centuries and many hundreds of reincarnations, the poor soul has not yet suffered enough? When is it likely ever to finish the suffering, considering that now this time round again it will still sin and incur more suffering and more karma? What a cruel doctrine that is.

Does that lead you to God? Well, not to the God of the Bible.

THE DOCTRINE OF FORGIVENESS

You see, in this theory of reincarnation, there is no such thing as forgiveness. That sounds startling, doesn't it? I am aware that some forms of Buddhism will talk of forgiveness, but not classical Buddhism.

I remember vividly a Thai girl who came to my university to conduct post-doctoral studies in chemistry, and through the grapevine she heard that there was this Christian chap who inhabited the Greek department. She asked if she might come and investigate him, and find out what he thought Christianity stood for. She informed the people who told her about me that she wasn't intending to get converted; she simply wanted to honestly 'gen herself up' on what Christians believed. So one Saturday morning she came to see me, and we had quite a long discussion.

I happened to remark how wonderful Christianity is, because therein God offers us forgiveness; and when he grants us forgiveness he wants us to *know* that we are forgiven. He doesn't say, 'Well, I've forgiven dogsbody here, but I shan't tell him. I shall keep him on tenterhooks, just to keep him on his toes and best behaviour.' No, when God forgives anybody he wants them to know, and he lets them know, as the Bible puts it in its lovely terminology: '*Let it be known to you* therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is

proclaimed to you' (Acts 13:38). Lovely words that the Lord Jesus was so frequently repeating to people in their repentance: 'Take heart . . . *your sins are forgiven*' (Matt 9:2).

So I said to my Thai friend, 'If your little girl did something naughty, and she said "sorry", you would forgive her, wouldn't you?'

'I should do no such thing,' she said. 'Who would I be to forgive anybody? No, if the girl has done something wrong, then she must bear her own karma and suffer for it. I'm in no position to forgive her.'

Nor were any of her gods in a position to forgive the girl. The girl must suffer. *Does that lead to God?* I want to quote the words of the Old Testament prophet Micah: 'Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? . . . You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea' (7:18–19).

THE GOD OF THE BIBLE IS A SAVIOUR

Reincarnation will not lead you to the God who has manifested himself in the Old Testament, nor in his Son in the New. That leads us of course immediately to the question of a saviour. I have talked of a contrast between Christianity and Hinduism over certain basic matters, and of Buddhism likewise. Let me now turn to two of the *monotheistic* religions, first of all Islam, and then Judaism.

Islam

Has Islam got anything to say by way of offering us a saviour? Its leader, prophet and founder, Mohammed, never claimed to be a saviour, just a prophet. He is unlike Jesus Christ there, who claimed to be the Saviour of the world.

Of course, Muslims honour Jesus Christ, do they not? They believe he was born of a virgin, and in that they put a lot of modern so-called Christian theologians to shame. They still believe the truth that Jesus was born of a virgin; he was a prophet; he is coming again, and when he comes, says the Qur'an, he will announce to the world that Mohammed was the true and final prophet. But the one thing they do deny about Jesus Christ is that he died on the cross at Calvary. That they most emphatically deny. If you should insist that Jesus Christ did actually die, they will get ruffled and a little bit out of sorts. They hold it rigorously that Jesus Christ did not die on the cross.

As you will perceive, that cuts the very heart out of the Christian gospel. The gospel is that Christ died for our sins. Paul the apostle doesn't say that the gospel is Christ's high moral teaching with which all decent people round the world will agree, all religions included. The gospel is that, 'Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures' (1 Cor 15:3–4). The Gospels and the Epistles in the New Testament constantly repeat the fact that Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

According to the Qur'an, Muslims are supposed to respect not only the people of the book—the Jews, and their Old Testament, but the *Injeel*, which is the *Evangelion*—that is, the New Testament Gospels. Mohammed taught his people to respect them. But if you should say to a knowledgeable Muslim that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he would accuse you of having changed the Bible. He would say, 'You've altered that bit. The Gospels, as they were

originally written, did not say that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. You Christians have altered the Bible to make it say that he did.'

I was in Jordan the other year with good friends of mine. He is practising dermatology and he and his wife are seeking to witness for Christ in that country. He introduced me to some of his colleagues, and one of them invited me to dinner, and brought some of his senior friends in with him. They were delightful people, not at all aggressive, but gracious and sympathetic.

They didn't agree with all the religious strife between Muslims and Christians going on in some countries; they regretted and deplored it. But when I happened to say something about Christ dying, they said, 'We're all seeking the same direction, but Christians have changed the Bible to say that Jesus died on the cross, when he didn't die on the cross.'

I happened to have my pocket Bible with me, and I drew it out. I said, 'I wonder, gentlemen, if would you allow me to read something?'

Well, they gave me instant permission.

I said, 'Now, what I'm going to read to you was not written by Christians. In fact, it was written some six centuries or so before Jesus Christ was born, so we Christians didn't write it, and we Christians certainly didn't change it. Ask the Jews if you want to find out if that is true. This was written six hundred years or more before Christ was born.'

And I read them those lovely verses from Isaiah 53:

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. . . . thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, . . . he hath poured out his soul unto death. (vv. 5, 10, 12 KJV)

One of them pointed his finger at me, and said, 'You're going to say that's talking about Jesus, aren't you?'

I said, 'Well, I shall later on, but I wasn't just at this moment. I was just saying that it was written around six hundred years before Jesus was born. We Christians didn't write it; this is from the Old Testament.'

And of course, they respect the people of the book, don't they?

I said, 'This is God showing his people what his plan was in the coming centuries for the redemption of mankind.'

A kind of silence fell upon the room for a moment or two.

Then the senior man said, 'Is that a Bible you have?'

I said, 'Yes, it is.'

Pulling out a Qur'an, he said, 'I have a pocket Qur'an in my pocket too.'

We all parted as friends, of course. But that excuse that we Christians have changed the Bible is nonsense, as any student of textual criticism who knows anything about biblical manuscripts will tell you.

Judaism

If you say to the Jews, 'Have you a saviour and redeemer?', they'll say, 'Of course we have. God is our Saviour. Don't the Psalms proclaim it everywhere? God is our Saviour and redeemer.'

They will tell us, 'We don't need your Jesus to be our Saviour.'

But then one notices that, in the Old Testament days, God not only gave them his law to keep, but he ordained sacrifices of animals and things, so that when they broke his law they might be taught the beginnings of the basic principles of redemption and forgiveness of sin. They don't have any sacrifices now, do they?

I remember at one stage in my university some of us had what we called a *forum*. We were Christians of various sizes and shapes, and we used to invite speakers to come and talk to us. They could talk on anything they liked, so long as they allowed us to question them afterwards, which we obviously did in very fair-minded and gentlemanly fashion. At one time there came the newly appointed rabbi from Belfast. He was a young man, and his high office had affected him a little bit. He was a very orthodox Jew, and made the point to the assembled throng that Judaism was glorious in this, that its laws were given to the nation when they were in the desert all those centuries ago.

'They were suited to the desert', said he, 'and do you know what? Even though we no longer live in the desert, we've never changed anything. We keep the same laws today as our ancestors did when they were in the desert. There is the glory of unchanging Judaism.'

I listened a little impatiently to that, and summoning up my best manners when it came to question time I asked permission to speak. I said, 'Did I get you right? You've changed nothing?'

'We've changed nothing,' said he.

'But didn't your fathers in the desert have animal sacrifices appointed by God? When they had broken his law and repented, and now wished for forgiveness, they had to bring a sacrifice. Do you have them still?'

'No,' he said, 'but we have the equivalent. In those days, for instance, they brought a sheep or a bullock and that cost them money, and our rabbis tell us that nowadays when we sin, we can just contribute some money.'

Very few present were convinced by that. Those sacrifices weren't a *fine* to be paid into court, either by a bullock or the equivalent in cash. They were a *symbol* of the basic principle, 'without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins' (Heb 9:22). That was God beginning to teach people in the nation's infancy that sin costs. He can forgive sins, but not by saying that sin doesn't matter. A penalty must be paid. Here was a figure, a parable, pointing to the great reality when John the Baptist proclaimed the approaching Christ as 'the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' (John 1:29).

I was speaking many years ago in the Christian Union in the University of Cambridge. I had been asked to lecture on the first and second books of Kings in the Old Testament. Towards

the end of the series, a young man came up to me, and graciously thanked me. He was a Jew, and said that it was marvellous for him to hear his Old Testament expounded like this.

He said, 'Why don't our rabbis expound the Old Testament in the synagogue?'

I said that I didn't know, but that was a pity. 'Why don't they preach to us Gentiles those glorious passages that denounce idolatry, like Isaiah did? We Gentiles are fast going to idolatry in our modern world. Why don't your rabbis preach some Isaiah to us?'

Anyway, we became friends and he came to dinner once or twice. Plucking up courage in getting to know him, I said, 'You know that I'm a Gentile, but I don't believe in just any God. I believe in the God of Abraham. It was Jesus Christ who brought me as a Gentile to believe in the God of Abraham. There are very few Jews who have done that for Gentiles, aren't there? I've tremendous respect for your Old Testament law, and for the declaration that behind the moral law stands the authority of the almighty Creator. We need it,' I said, meaning it sincerely. 'Morality is not a matter of subjective opinion, nor mere social contract. Behind true morality stands the authority of the creator. I admire Judaism for standing for it. I also admire the fact that in your Old Testament, the *Tanakh*, when people sinned they had to bring the sacrifice of animals to get the forgiveness of sins.'

He said, 'Yes, that's true.'

I said, 'Tell me, do you think that the blood of those animals actually atoned for sin; put away sin?'

'No,' he said, 'of course not.'

I said, 'Well, what was it, then? They were symbols, perhaps, were they?'

'Yes,' he said, 'they were symbols.'

I said, 'Symbols of what?'

'No, no,' he said, 'don't press me any further. I don't want our friendship to be spoilt.'

And I said, 'Okay, I won't press you any further.'

But before the evening was out I did allow myself to point to what seems to me a significant thing; that when the nation as a nation—not all individuals—persisted in its rejection of Jesus Christ, God allowed their temple to be destroyed. Since then they have not had any place on earth where they would be allowed by God in the Old Testament to offer a sacrifice. They can't offer it, because they've no place at which to offer it. I said, 'Is that a coincidence, do you think?'

2. According to the New Testament

And finally, we come to the terms upon which we can receive and enjoy salvation. Here we must distinguish between what I would call *Christianity* on the one hand, and *popular Christianity* on the other. Without being unduly critical, it seems to me that popular Christianity has deteriorated into a mere religion. When it comes to the question, how can I be saved, on what terms, and can I know that I'm saved, popular Christianity will give the same answer as most religions. Most religions have some kind of initiating ceremony: a gateway at the beginning that is followed by a road, a course of religious practice and discipline, hoping thereby to improve oneself. And then at the end another gate, which is some form of the final judgment.

Now you can be through the first gate by some religious ceremony, and you can be on the road, trying seriously to improve; but in religion you cannot know what the result is going to be at the end. You cannot be told whether you'll be accepted by God Almighty at the end of the final judgment or not, and there are many in Christianity who hold that view too, don't they?

They seem to think that salvation is like a university degree. First of all, you have to qualify to enter the university. You won't get a degree if you don't get in, and to get in you must qualify. Once you're in, that's good; but that doesn't guarantee you're going to get the degree. Now there's the course to be taken, and the *dons*. I know from personal experience, they're a kind-hearted set of men and women. They'll do their best to help you; they'll wish you through, and do all in their power to get you through. But not one of them can guarantee that you'll get through at the end. That can only be known after you've done finals.

People think of religion like that. It is true in any religion, Islam or Hinduism or anything. Christianity is different, isn't it? Yes, there is an entrance: repentance and faith, and being born again. There is a road: our spiritual development to maturity. The glorious thing is however, that in Christianity you don't have to wait until the end to know whether God will accept you or not. You can know it now. That is the extent of the love and mercy of God.

Our Lord is on record as saying two wonderful things.

1. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son (John 5:22)

So now as he speaks, he speaks as the judge at the final judgment, and as judge he says,

2. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgement, but has [already] passed from death to life (v. 24)

That is a marvellous thing, isn't it? Here on life's pathway you can meet the final judge, and through faith in him receive a verdict that is final and irreversible: you shall not come into judgment, but be passed from death to life. How is that possible?

SALVATION IS NOT OF WORKS BUT BY FAITH

It is possible because, while Christianity exhorts all believers to make moral and spiritual progress, Christianity affirms that acceptance with God is not by our works but through our faith. I want to stress that because I have criticized other religions in some sense and I am not unaware that much popular Christianity has failed really to grasp its own gospel.

I was travelling once from Dublin to Cork City, in that fair land of Ireland. The train was full, but there was one seat beside a priest. I took it, and sat beside him. I had to preach that weekend in Cork, and I got out my Greek Testament and was reading it. Presently, curiosity overcame him.

He said, 'And what might that be?'

I said, 'It's the Greek Testament,' and went on reading.

He said, 'It's unusual to see somebody reading a Greek Testament on a railway train. Why do you do it?'

I said, 'To be honest with you, sir, it's because I'm a believer in our blessed Lord. I'm one of those who are so grateful to God for having absolute assurance of salvation. I shall never

perish; never come into condemnation. I know I'm saved, and it still fills me with gratitude. I want to read everything else our blessed Lord and his apostles said.'

He said, 'Very good, but you can't know you're saved, of course.'

I said, 'Why's that?'

'Well,' he said, 'it depends on your works, doesn't it?'

I said, 'Does it? I didn't know that.'

'Yes,' he said. 'Do you remember the parable our Lord told of the men who got the talents? The men who worked were all right, the one who didn't work was put out into a bad place.'

I said, 'Is that what that parable means? I never knew that before.' I turned in my Greek Testament to Romans and said, 'Let me read you this: "Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt"' (4:4 KJV).

'Yes,' he said, 'that is what it is saying. It is to him that works; you see you have to work.'

I said, 'Just a moment. It says, "to him that works the reward is reckoned not of grace, but of debt." If you could earn salvation, you would put God in your debt, wouldn't you? He would have to pay you. You can't do that. Listen to the next verse, "But to him that doesn't work" — what about him?'

'Oh,' he said, 'there's no hope for him.'

I said, 'Hold on. What it says here is, "To him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted to him as righteousness"' (see v. 5).

He said, 'I don't know what that means, I didn't know it was in the Bible. That was written by Paul, wasn't it? He was an old rogue.'

Well, it's not really to be laughed at, is it? He had a sincere profession of Christianity, but there's a difference between mere religion and the salvation that Christ offers, and he had not grasped it. In fact he denied it. It is so with all mere religion. The glory of the real God is that, in his Son, Jesus Christ, he offers us a salvation which, because it is not of our works, can grant us the peace of acceptance with God here and now, and assurance of his heaven beyond.

It doesn't mean that Christians are free to do as they like, and sin, of course. God has provision for that; not just mere exhortation, but a new spiritual birth in which God imparts his Holy Spirit and gives his people the wherewithal to begin to struggle against sin until the time comes when they shall see the Lord, and in seeing him be transformed to his likeness.

Don't all religions lead to God? Obviously not, for mere religion says that, when you've done your best, you can't be sure that God has accepted you. Says Christ and his apostles, the moment you repent and believe, you have access into the very holiest of all, the presence of God.

That is my answer to your question, very roughly put. I have laboured sincerely and strenuously not to go on until nine o'clock tonight, as I did last night, so we have at least ten minutes left if you have any questions. Our good chairman will moderate them for me.

Questions

What is God going to do in the end with all these very sincere people who are following other religions? Is it not very unjust that he doesn't let them into his heaven?

DWG: You prompt in me all sorts of philosophical and theological questions, sir. What will God do? When God announced his imminent destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their sin, Abraham pleaded for the city. He argued with God, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?' (Gen 18:25). So that's my first basic principle.

The second principle I would hold to is that the New Testament says it is God's intention by his very goodness to lead men and women to repentance (see Rom 2:4). If God tries to lead them to repentance, it follows in my understanding that he will have a salvation for them, if they are prepared to take it.

Thirdly, I notice what Paul says in Romans 3, to the effect that the death of Christ not only reaches forward to us in our age now, but reached backwards to former ages. So Paul says that, through his great sacrifice as a propitiation for sin, Christ has shown God to be perfectly just and righteous in two respects.

1. He was just and righteous in passing over former sins (v. 25). What does that mean? Well, take the case of Abraham for instance. 'Abraham believed God' (Gen 15:6). He'd never heard of Jesus, but he believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. God accepted him on the grounds of faith.

You say, 'How could God possibly be righteous and just in accepting Abraham simply because he believed in God, when Abraham was still an imperfect man and sinned from time to time?' The answer is, God knew that Abraham's sins would one day be atoned for by his Son at Calvary. In light of Calvary, God passed over his sins. Calvary has now shown that God was perfectly just in forgiving Abraham's sins.

2. Then Romans 3 says that the death of Christ shows God's justice at this present time — that's in the centuries since Calvary — 'so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in *Jesus*' (v. 26). Notice this time the personal name 'Jesus'. You couldn't have known the Saviour's name until he was born. This age does know his name, and therefore it is through faith in him and his name that we are justified, and the death of Christ justifies God in accepting and pardoning those who believe in Jesus.

That being so, I recur to Old Testament people. Abraham was forgiven and accepted by God because *he believed God*, though he knew nothing about Jesus. Since God is no respecter of persons, in every race and at every time those who have cast themselves on the mercy of God in sincere repentance and put their trust solely in the supreme God will be covered like Abraham was covered.

No pagan religion could forgive their sins

We need to be very sure, however, that they will not be covered because of their pagan religion. That is important to notice. Baalism in the Old Testament led nobody to God, even though the priests of Baal were so sincere they cut themselves with knives and danced upon their altars. All that kind of religious sincerity would not lead anybody to God. What God is prepared to do is to justify those who are conscious of their sin and in repentance cast

themselves on the mercy of God, as best they know how. Those who seek to gain salvation by their good works shall never attain it, either in past ages or in this age. That is, sir, as I understand it.

What about individual Roman Catholics?

DWG: Well, to answer that question, sir, I would want to ask one or two more. I'd want to know, first of all, what individual Catholics you are talking about. There are Catholics who have put their faith solely in Christ and his work and do not offer the *Mass* as a sacrifice to obtain forgiveness of sins. I think such people are certainly saved, and I've met many of them, in fact.

But if you ask me about the doctrines of the Catholic church as enunciated by the curia⁴⁷, I have to say in all honesty that they seem to me frequently to contradict holy Scripture straight out. Take the matter of offering a sacrifice to get forgiveness of sins, as is plain they do from the *Missal*⁴⁸, at least our Irish Missal; and from the fact that they offer the sacrifice of the *Masses for the Dead*, so that they might be released from purgatory.

The New Testament says that if you meet anybody who continues to offer a sacrifice in order to get forgiveness of sins, that person has not yet a conscience made perfect (see Heb 9:9). Meaning, if they were sure that their sins were gone and they had complete acceptance with God now and forever, they would cease to offer sacrifices (10:2). So if I find a Roman Catholic who offers the sacrifice of the Mass—or any other sacrifice for that matter, to get forgiveness of sins, then I do believe what the Bible says: here is a person who does not yet have a conscience made perfect.

In Bible studies with Catholics in their homes I have done my best many times to gently point them to holy Scripture, and to the wonder of God's salvation. Because Christ's sacrifice is enough to cover all our sins, the Bible says there is 'no longer [the process of] any offering for sin' (10:18).

There are several other things I would want to test in the Catholic Missal alongside of Scripture, and particularly in the official doctrine set out by the *magisterium*.⁴⁹

I was talking to a Sikh not long ago, and he said that when he is working with different religions, he does what that religion requires. Why can't we get on with all religions?

DWG: I would like to meet him first, and then to come alongside him. If you ask me in abstract, I would say that that is an attitude typical of religion. I'm not a theologian as you've already gathered, I am a classicist. I taught Greek and Latin: language, literature, civilization and so forth. That would be a typically pagan attitude. The Romans didn't mind which gods you sacrificed to or worshipped, so long as you sacrificed to the god of the state. It was the

⁴⁷ Roman Curia, Latin Curia Romana, the group of various Vatican bureaus that assist the pope in the day-to-day exercise of his primatial jurisdiction over the Roman Catholic church.

⁴⁸ A liturgical book containing all instructions and texts necessary for the celebration of Mass throughout the year.

⁴⁹ The Magisterium of the Catholic Church: Defined as 'the Church's divinely appointed authority to teach the truths of religion'. Catholicessentials.net

gentlemanly thing to do. If you were in Rome, you offered sacrifices to the Roman gods. If you were in Athens, you could still offer sacrifices to your own god, but you offered a sacrifice to the Athenian god, Athena, because that is the very basis of idolatry. There are many, many gods, and, while you might be attached to one of them in particular, you also ought to reverence everybody else's gods because they're gods in some sense.

And so when a man like your friend says that as a Sikh he does Sikh things, but when he's with Christians he does Christian things, and when he's with Muslims he does Muslim things, I should say that there's a man who is *pagan* in the sense that he has the typical attitude of the ancient world. He is saying that you do these Christian things to get salvation, but it doesn't harm you to pray to other gods, your own god specially, because they could add their weight to help to get you saved.

I would want to enquire what he's expecting from doing these Christian things; and what Christian things? Very often people look upon Christianity as a system of symbols. It's singing hymns, so they'll sing hymns. You have prayers, so they'll have prayers. You have this ceremony of bread and wine, so they'll join in that as well without beginning to perceive what it stands for. All without personal repentance and faith solely in Christ.

So that is the way I should begin to come at it. Ask him what he is expecting to get out of all these various performances of Christian, Muslim and Sikh affairs, and see what he says.

Why do Christians have to 'go to church'?

DWG: 1. Because the Bible says that Christians are not to forsake the assembling of themselves together.

I had a friend when I went to lodge in a certain city in England. He had been a stark atheist and he got converted one night. I think he heard Billy Graham preaching over the radio and was overwhelmed by a sense that God was offering him something that he must accept, and if he didn't it could be fatal. There and then, atheist though he was, he got down on his knees and accepted Christ as the Saviour.

He said, 'When I woke up the next morning I said to myself, "Now, is this real? Will it last?" Then I said to myself, "I don't need to go to church, I can be a Christian all by myself."' "

And so he proceeded until, reading through his Bible, he came to that particular verse, 'not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near' (Heb 10:25). 'Oh,' he said, 'I do have to go to church then.'

2. There's a deeper sense, isn't there? When we are converted, the New Testament explains, it's not merely that we are personally saved and forgiven, but 'we were all baptized into one body . . . and all were made to drink of one Spirit' (1 Cor 12:13). In giving us the Holy Spirit when we trust Christ, Christ joins us first to himself, and then to every believer to form the *Body of Christ*, and Christ's intention for that Body is that it should work together as a body. Therefore, if we refuse to follow the instruction of the New Testament, we are to that extent defeating the purpose of Christ in forming the Body of Christ.

It just falls to me, on your behalf, to thank Dr Gooding very much for the time that he's spent in our city and for what he has shared with us here from the word of God, and at the missionary conference from his own experience of the many opportunities the Lord has given him to share his faith in all sorts of situations that we can never even begin to imagine, let alone find ourselves in. We thank you very much, David, and we do want to wish you God's blessing as you continue through this country, and trust that many, many more will be encouraged as they listen to your ministry.

As we close, I want to use as a prayer the words of a chorus in our book, because I think they sum up something of what we have heard tonight.

I believe in Jesus; I believe He is the Son of God.

I believe He died and rose again; I believe He paid for us all.

And I believe He's here now standing in our midst

Here with the power to heal now, and the grace to forgive.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Keith Matten.

About the Author

DAVID W. GOODING (1925-2019) was Professor of Old Testament Greek at Queen's University Belfast and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. He taught the Bible internationally and lectured on both its authenticity and its relevance to philosophy, world religions and daily life. He published scholarly articles on the Septuagint and Old Testament narratives, as well as expositions of Luke, John, Acts, Hebrews, the New Testament's use of the Old Testament, and several books addressing arguments against the Bible and the Christian faith. His analysis of the Bible and our world continues to shape the thinking of scholars, teachers and students alike.