

# HOW HEATHEN IS BRITAIN?

*A Revised and Enlarged Edition*

*by*

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COLLINS

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## DEDICATION

*To my kind hosts, the members of the Public School Chaplains' Conference, in recognition of the great work they are doing under difficulties, and in gratitude for their hospitality and charity to a critic.*

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## NOTE ON THIS DIGITAL EDITION

*Page numbers of the revised edition (1948) are here given in square brackets: [p9], [p10] etc. Absolutely nothing else has been added to the original text. All footnotes are the author's.*

## PREFACE

C. S. LEWIS

During the war we turn with quickened interest from the newspaper accounts of the fighting to the report of any man who has just returned from taking part in it himself. The manuscript of this little book when it was first put into my hands gave me a similar excitement. Discussions on education and on religious education are admirable things; but here we have something different – a first-hand record of the results which the existing system is actually producing while we discuss. Its value is enhanced by the fact that the author is not a minister of education, nor a headmaster, nor a clergyman, nor even a professional teacher. The facts he records are facts against which he ran his head unexpectedly, almost (you might say) accidentally, while doing a particular war-time job.

There are, of course, other things beside this in the book. But I emphasize its purely documentary value because that seems to me to be far the most important thing about it – the thing on which public attention ought to be focused. The abstracts of the author's lectures – or rather openings of discussions – are indeed full of interest, and many will wish to comment on them. They are the part of the book which it is easiest to discuss. But I insist that to concentrate on that part is an evasion.

When every allowance has been made for the possibility (delightfully unsuspected by himself) that the author has unusual talents as a teacher, two facts still emerge from his record unshaken. Firstly, that the content of, and the case for, Christianity, are not put before most schoolboys under the present system; and secondly, that when they [p10] are so put a majority find them acceptable. The importance of these two facts is that between them they blow away a whole fog of "reasons for the decline of religion" which are often advanced and often believed. If we had noticed that the young men of the present day found it harder and harder to get the right answers to sums, we should consider that this had been adequately explained the moment we discovered that schools had for some years ceased to teach arithmetic. After that discovery we should turn a deaf ear to people who offered explanations of a vaguer and larger kind – people who said that the influence of Einstein had sapped the ancestral belief in fixed numerical relations, or that gangster films had undermined the desire to get right answers, or that the evolution of consciousness was now entering on its post-arithmetical phase. Where a clear and simple explanation completely covers the facts no other explanation is in court. If the younger generation have never been told what the Christians say and never heard any arguments in defence of it, then their agnosticism or indifference is fully explained. There is no need to look any further: no need to talk about the general intellectual climate of the age, the influence of mechanistic civilization on the character of urban life. And having discovered that the cause of their ignorance is lack of instruction, we have also discovered the remedy. There is nothing in the nature of the younger generation which incapacitates them for receiving Christianity. If any one is prepared to tell them, they are apparently ready to hear.

I allow, of course, that the explanation which our author has discovered merely puts the problem a generation further back. The young people today are un-Christian because their teachers have been either unwilling or unable to transmit Christianity to them. For the impotence or unbelief of their teachers, larger and, no doubt, vaguer explanations are to be sought. But that, [p11] be it noted, is a historical problem. The schoolmasters of today are, for the most part, the undergraduates of twenty years ago – the products of the "post-war" period. It is the mental climate of the Twenties that now dominates the from room class. In other words, the sources of unbelief among young people today do not lie in those young people. The outlook which they have – until they are taught better – is a backwash from an earlier period. It is nothing intrinsic to themselves which holds them back from the Faith.

This very obvious fact – that each generation is taught by an earlier generation – must be kept very firmly in mind. The beliefs which boys fresh from school now hold are largely the beliefs of the Twenties. The beliefs which boys from school will hold in the Sixties will be largely those of the undergraduates of today. The moment we forget this we begin to talk

nonsense about education. We talk of the views of contemporary adolescence as if some peculiarity in contemporary adolescence had produced them out of itself. In reality, they are usually a delayed result – for the mental world also has its time-bombs – of obsolete adolescence, now middle-aged and dominating its form room. Hence the futility of many schemes for education. None can give to another what he does not possess himself. No generation can bequeath to its successor what it has not got. You may frame the syllabus as you please. But when you have planned and reported *ad nauseam*, if we are sceptical we shall teach only scepticism to our pupils, if fools only folly, if vulgar only vulgarity, if saints sanctity, if heroes heroism. Education is only the most fully conscious of the channels whereby each generation influences the next. It is not a closed system. Nothing which was not in the teachers can flow from them into the pupils. We shall all admit that a man who knows no Greek himself cannot teach Greek to his form: but it is equally certain that a man whose mind was formed in a [p12] period of cynicism and disillusion, cannot teach hope or fortitude.

A society which is predominantly Christian will propagate Christianity through its schools: one which is not, will not. All the ministries of education in the world cannot alter this law. We have, in the long run, little either to hope or fear from government.

The State may take education more and more firmly under its wing. I do not doubt that by so doing it can foster conformity, perhaps even servility, up to a point; the power of the State to deliberalize a profession is undoubtedly very great. But all the teaching must still be done by concrete human individuals. The State has to use the men who exist. Nay, as long as we remain a democracy, it is men who give the State its powers. And over these men, until all freedom is extinguished, the free winds of opinion blow. Their minds are formed by influences which government cannot control. And as they come to be, so will they teach. Let the abstract scheme of education be what it will: its actual operation will be what the men make it. No doubt, there will be in each generation of teachers a percentage, perhaps even a majority, of government tools. But I do not think it is they who will determine the actual character of the education. The boy – and perhaps especially the English boy – has a sound instinct. The teaching of one true man will carry further and print deeper than that of a dozen white Babus. A minister of education (going back, unless I am mistaken, as far as Julian the Apostate for his precedent) may banish Christian clergy from the schools. But if the wind of opinion is blowing in the Christian direction, it will make no difference. It may even do us good; and the minister will have been unknowingly “the goddess boteler”.

We are often told that education is a key position. That is very false in one sense and very true in another. If it [p13] means that you can do any great thing by interfering with existing schools, altering curricula and the like, it is very false. As the teachers are, so they will teach. Your “reform” may incommode and overwork them, but it will not radically alter the total effect of their teaching. Planning has no magic whereby it can elicit figs from thistles or choke-pears from vines. The rich, sappy, fruit-laden tree will bear sweetness and strength and spiritual health: the dry, prickly, withered tree will teach hate, jealousy, suspicion, and inferiority complex- whatever you *tell* it to teach. They will do it unknowingly and all day long. But if we mean that to make adult Christians now and even beyond that circle, to spread the immediately sub-Christian perceptions and virtues, the rich Platonic or Virgilian *penumbra* of the Faith, and thus to alter the type who will be teachers in the future- if we mean that to do this is to perform the greatest of all services for our descendants, then it is very true.

So at least it seems to me: I do not know how far the author would agree with me. He has exposed the actual workings of modern education. To blame the schoolmasters of the last ten years for it would be ridiculous. The majority of them failed to hand on Christianity because they had it not: will you blame a eunuch because he gets no children or a stone because it yields no blood? The minority, isolated in a hostile environment, have probably done all they could, have perhaps done wonders: but little was in their power. Our author has also shown that the ignorance and incredulity of the pupils are very often removable – their roots far shallower than we had feared. I do not draw from this moral that it is now our business to “get our teeth into the schools”. For one thing, I do not think we shall be allowed to. It is unlikely that in the next forty years England will have a government which would encourage or even tolerate any radically Christian elements in its State system of education. [p14] Where the tide flows towards

increasing State control, Christianity, with its claims in one way personal and in the other way ecumenical and both ways antithetical to omniscient government, must always in fact (though not for a long time yet in words) be treated as an enemy. Like learning, like the family, like any ancient and liberal profession, like the common law, it gives the individual a standing ground against the State. Hence Rousseau, the father of the totalitarians, said wisely enough, from his own point of view, of Christianity, *Je ne connais rien de plus contraire à l'esprit social*. In the second place, even if we were permitted to force a Christian curriculum on the existing schools with the existing teachers we should only be making masters hypocrites and hardening thereby the pupils' hearts.

I am speaking, of course, of large schools on which a secular character is already stamped. If any man, in some little corner out of the reach of the omniscient, can make, or preserve a really Christian school, that is another matter. His duty is plain.

I do not, therefore, think that our hope of re-baptizing England lies in trying to "get at" the schools. Education is not in that sense a key position. To convert one's adult neighbour and one's adolescent neighbour (just free from school) is the practical thing. The cadet, the undergraduate, the young worker in the C.W.U. are obvious targets: but any one and every one is a target. If you make the adults of today Christian, the children of tomorrow will receive a Christian education. What a society has, that, be sure, and nothing else, it will hand on to its young. The work is urgent, for men perish around us. But there is no need to be uneasy about the ultimate event. As long as Christians have children and non-Christians do not, one need have no anxiety for the next century. 'Those who worship the Life-Force do not do much about transmitting it: those whose hopes are all based on the [p15] terrestrial future do not entrust much to it. If these processes continue, the final issue can hardly be in doubt.

These, you must remember, are merely my own reflections. To other readers this book will doubtless suggest very different reflections. But all of us, whatever our party, need to know the facts. Here they stand; and stated, if I mistake not, with that freshness and attraction which always come to a plain man who has something to tell and is thinking of his story, not himself.

C. S. LEWIS.

Note. – Throughout this preface *boys* means *boys and girls*, and *schoolmasters* includes *schoolmistresses*. There is lots to be said for political or economic equality of the sexes: but the claim for grammatical equality of genders is an unmitigated nuisance which should be resisted wherever it is met.

## INTRODUCTION TO SECOND EDITION

THE first edition of *How Heathen Is Britain* was written to expose the fact that nearly half the young men now leaving our public and secondary schools are almost 'pagan'; that only a small minority have any knowledge of the evidence for the truth of Christianity and that many of them do not realise that any evidence exists. Through no merits of its own, the book was widely read. This was assured by the kindness of Mr. C. S. Lewis, who wrote the Preface, and by a host of friends, known and unknown, who were dismayed by the shocking state of ignorance which I had discovered. What surprised and delighted me was not so much the wide circulation as the fact that it did help to sound the alarm, and I take this opportunity of thanking all those who, by their energy, goodwill, and generosity, have done so much more to make the situation known than I could have done by merely writing down the facts. There are still left "seven thousand men in Israel" who have not bowed the knee to the Baals of materialism and indifference, and are determined to do their part in bringing Britain back to the love of God and the knowledge of truth before it is too late.

This edition is written in the light of a far wider experience than I possessed two years ago. I knew then that two-thirds of our schools fail to teach Christianity effectively. I know now how and why they fail. I have also, I believe, put right some of my own mistakes in applying "first aid" to young men who, through the neglect of their parents and teachers, are starting life in ignorance of their nature, their purpose, and their destiny.

I originally intended to write a new book under the [p18] title "Why Britain is Heathen." I should have been wrong. In the first place it would have been a pretentious title, for I have neither the knowledge nor ability to deal with the complex historical factors which have all contributed to the present deplorable state of affairs. This subject has been admirably treated in Canon Spencer Leeson's scholarly and fascinating book *Christian Education*. Secondly, my anxiety to avoid theorising and to keep to facts personally known to me would have led me to be unfair to schoolmasters. It is true that their failure is the immediate reason for the ignorance of their charges, but in a wider sense it would not be just to saddle them with the whole blame. They are what they are and teach as they do teach, because of the apathy and indifference of the parents who employ them; and to say that Britain is going heathen because the majority of the schools fail in this or that way is equivalent to blaming the armies of France for the collapse of 1940. In this edition I have tried to strike a fairer balance between the home and the school than I did in the last, but, in order to avoid theories and keep to what I know, I have said less about the home because I know less about it, and not because I underrate its supreme importance.

Letters to the papers by distinguished men in very different walks of life, and the speech by the late Secretary for War expressing concern at the moral and spiritual condition of the army, show that the country is awake to the danger of losing its Christian heritage. I have dared to write again in the hope that I may be allowed to contribute, in however small a way, to actually getting something *done*. It is a great thing that we are now awake to the menace of paganism. That awakening will not serve us unless we use it to turn the tide while there is still time.

B. G. SANDHURST.

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## *Part I: THE FACTS*

### CHAPTER I

#### HOW HEATHEN IS BRITAIN?

DURING the last few years periodical discussions have taken place in the press as to the existence, or otherwise, of a religious revival. Distinguished people have stated categorically that Britain is returning to the Faith. Others, equally distinguished, have contradicted the optimists and declared that the country is getting more pagan every day. It would be fatuous impertinence for a mere layman to add his *opinion* to those of the experts. Such is not my intention. Nine-tenths of what follows is incontrovertible fact, proved to the hilt. It is limited in its range to one important section of the community.

Owing to the peculiar nature of my appointment, and to a series of providential accidents, I have been able to find out the state of affairs among young men from the public and secondary schools to-day. I know how many of them are Christians: I can form a shrewd guess as to the quality of their Christianity. Most important of all, I know why this state of affairs is as it is, and how it can be rapidly improved. Even so, I should not presume to write about it if I were not reasonably certain that this knowledge is shared by very few, and if I were not convinced that it is essential that it should be made widely known, particularly to schoolmasters, youth leaders and, in fact, to every one concerned with education.

I make no apology for the matter of this book, which [p20] is of the first importance, but I do apologise for the irritatingly frequent use of the personal pronoun. I have tried to avoid it, but it keeps cropping up; partly because of my negligible literary skill, and partly because it is necessary to describe my job and how it is done in order to stress the point that the facts stated are *facts* and not mere opinions.

#### THE JOB

Eighteen months ago I took over the duty of discussing post-war problems with young men likely to become officers. Before taking up the appointment I made it clear that I should “put over” the principle of the Christian Social Order and make that the touchstone by which to judge the innumerable plans now before the bemused citizen. My audience consisted of young men of whom the majority were drawn from the public and secondary schools, aged between eighteen and twenty-two, with a sprinkling of older men from the ranks and from the Dominions. I took them in classes varying from twenty-five to thirty strong.

After a few weeks I came to the conclusion that there were so few Christians in my classes, that it was a waste of time to talk of the Christian Social Order, without making clear my own position and giving them the evidence for the Godhead of Christ. Clearly an approach was necessary. It was obviously bad psychology to plunge straight into such a subject with boys whose minds had been concentrated for months on Bren guns, pincer movements, and co-operation with armour. I made several experiments, and finally decided upon two preliminary periods. During the first I discussed whether Man was merely a highly developed animal, or whether he also possessed a spiritual soul. The second period was concerned with the existence of permanent standards of goodness and truth, and with the purpose and destiny of [p21] human life. The authority for these standards, and for our knowledge of our purpose and destiny was purposely left vague until the third and fourth periods. These were devoted to the evidence for the Godhead of Christ who, if He was God, had authority to reveal the nature of His creature, man; to tell us what He had made us for, and to lay down the standards by which we should live. I would not for a moment claim that this is the only or even the best method of approach, but it lifts the mind on to the abstract plane without too much of a jolt, and has a certain logical

sequence. Also, it seems to work.

For eight or nine months I saw no reason to alter my melancholy conclusion that the Christians were in a tiny minority, and that materialism was so firmly entrenched that it was no longer possible to do more than make a feeble protest. It was not that the boys lacked interest or were in any way hostile, but during discussions (I soon abandoned the lecture technique in favour of a discussion on each point as it came up) it was the exception for any one to back up the Christian argument. Almost all the talking was done by the opposition.

At last I determined to make a test. The difficulty was to do this without appearing to pry, and without running counter to the "old school tie" code, which forbids any public and personal declaration of opinions on any subject on which one feels deeply. The problem was solved by the simple device of making every one draw a number out of a hat, and ordering them to conceal their identity behind it. In fact, I copied the methods of the "Gallup Poll." All that was necessary was to phrase the questions clearly; to declare my determination not to get to know the names of individuals unless they chose to tell me, and to gain the boys' confidence by sticking to that resolution in spite of all temptation to establish more personal relations.

The results of the two preliminary periods were [p22] illuminating. In most classes there was a steady minority of over one-third who denied that they were anything more than animals, and about the same number who denied the existence of any known permanent standards. This was alarming. Here was a cross section of the educated young men of Great Britain, and over a third of them was prepared to deny that there was any certain knowledge of what was right and what was wrong. A large majority – fully go per cent – professed utter ignorance of the purpose and goal of human life. What was even more remarkable was that they were entirely impervious to any argument whatever. The reader will be able to judge whether I put forward the right arguments, or whether I left out anything essential. At present, I must confess that these boys seem to me incapable of abstract thought. They are also devoid of logic; for while there is a hard core which is convinced of the spiritual aspect of man, that there are absolute standards, and that there is authority for them, there is a wide fringe which is prepared to hold any one of these propositions and deny the other two.

Lest it should be thought that the questions were not clearly framed, here they are –

*First Period.*

"Is Man merely a highly developed animal, or has he a spiritual mind, or soul? Answer in one word 'Animal' or 'Spiritual'."

*Second Period.*

1. "Are there fixed standards of Good, as against Evil, or do they depend upon the opinion of the moment? If you think they are fixed and known, answer 'Permanent'; if you think they are fixed but unknown answer 'Unknown'; if you think they alter from age to age, and from country to country, answer 'Shifting'."

[p23] 2. Is it possible to know the truth as to Man's origin, purpose, and destiny? Answer 'Yes' or 'No'."

With the third period we reached the crucial question, which was phrased as follows: "Your ancestors believed in the permanent standards of life because they were laid down by the Carpenter of Nazareth, and they believed Him to be God as well as Man. Were they right? Were they wrong? Or don't you know?"

Upwards of four hundred\* boys were asked that question. To my astonishment, half of them answered "Right"; a third were doubtful; and less than twenty per cent were positive sceptics. Here was a problem. What had misled me into thinking Christians were a tiny minority?

The same question was put after an hour and a half's discussion of the evidence. The result was an immense and a very pleasant surprise. The "Rights" increased to seventy-three per cent, the doubters were reduced to twenty-one per cent, and the hardy sceptics to a mere six. So far as it went this was most gratifying. Here were young men whose opinions were more or less

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\* Written in 1945.

formed, but who were not only ready to listen to evidence, but to change their opinion when they had heard it. It was noticeable that rather more sceptics than doubters were ready to be convinced. What was the reason for this astonishing turn over on the subject of Christianity among young men who seemed incapable of philosophic thought? It was certainly not due to oratory, for I am no orator, and would not consider it honest to use mere rhetoric. Perhaps it was partly due to a descent from the abstract plane, on which they are completely at sea, to concrete historical evidence. Of this I am certain: the main effect of the evidence was due to its *novelty*. The vast majority had never had it put before them in a reasoned way. [p24] They had never been encouraged to discuss it, nor had they been warned of the objections with which they would be faced in a materialist world, nor equipped with reasoned answers. To the educated young man of this Year of Grace, 1945, the good news of the Gospel is once more *news*. It may be objected that this is sheer assumption, unsupported by any evidence. It was, until I tested it.

Three more questions were added after discussion

1. "What was your school?"

2. "Were these matters intelligently discussed in your last years at school; were you encouraged to reason out the evidence, and told the answers to the stock materialistic objections?"

3. "Do you, or do you not, think they should be discussed?"

Owing to lack of time the answers were almost always confined to "Yes" or "No." One-third answered "Yes" to question No. 2, *and over ninety per cent to question No. 3*. I did not take much notice of the answer to question 2, although it was- rather remarkable that boys from the larger schools which had provided small contingents to these classes nearly always differed, some saying "Yes" and some saying "No."\* The overwhelming majority which answered "Yes" to question 3 was most significant, particularly as many of the boys underlined their reply, or put it in large letters. Here was a very evident demand for more information; and the sceptics and doubters were just as insistent as the believers.

A few weeks after I had added these last three questions, a providential accident threw a flood of light on the meaning of their answers. Owing to pressure of time I forgot to ask the questions, so put them ten days later, when I next saw this particular class. Whether it was that they had had time to think it over, or felt more [p25] deeply than others, I do not know, but two-thirds of them burst into prose, and with few exceptions gave vent to what can only be called a sense of frustration and loss. Ever since then I have made a point of insisting upon a full answer.

Here is a selection which speaks for itself. Thirty examples have been chosen as fair samples of the rest. The first ten are either completely or partly satisfied, the rest are very far from it.

1. Yes, it was discussed intelligently at school, both in and out of official periods. There cannot be too much of this type of discussion, and past reticence over this matter, as over other things, was wrong.

2. Yes, we were thoroughly instructed in the historical proof of the Gospel. I think it is essential for people to have these things proved to them.

I feel that if this is not done, this country, which is far from being a Christian land, will drift until it is completely pagan.

3. Yes, they were discussed intelligently at school, and I definitely think it should be encouraged more.

4. The fault lies entirely with the person under instruction. There are in schools to-day remarkably fine opportunities for boys and girls to learn something of Christianity and the Messianic Gospels. The trouble is that pupils are far too slack and lazy to pursue and take advantage of the remarkable amenities at their disposal.

5. Yes, but I found that the clearer explanations I received were from laymen. Invariably the parsons were hopeless.

6. Yes, and they should be, provided that there is a person capable of conducting the discussion. In many cases there isn't.

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\* *Note:* I have since discovered that this difference of opinion is due to the different methods of housemasters in the same school.

7. Yes. We discussed why the Bible should be believed, and also how the opposers of this – i.e., that the Bible was [p26] all rot – were unable to prove this. We were given reasons with which to argue for the Bible, but this subject was not stressed enough, and therefore, of course, people forgot all about it. I certainly forgot all about it.

8. Yes, but only in a small way.

9. It was discussed slightly, but I think it should be discussed more fully, as it broadens the mind.

10. It was discussed intelligently, but the don was a padre himself, who, however, did not attempt active conversion, and only pointed out the Christian point of view. The matter certainly should be discussed fully, but until the State, and in particular the House of Commons, takes a broader view of religious teaching in school little will be achieved.

11. No, these things were far from fully discussed, if discussed at all. I consider instruction and debate upon these subjects invaluable, and commensurate with the raising of the school leaving age. Seventeen is only just the time when these things can be appreciated.

12. There was certainly no effort to place before us a summary of evidence for and against. In addition, the whole time I attended the school no other instruction than the reading of the Bible was given. This, though admirable, is insufficient.

13. Religious education was limited at my school to numerous visits to the Chapel and to incompetently run divinity classes. Although there were exceptions, one felt on completing five years' religious education that one had learned how to sing hymns and psalms, but had only touched the very outside of the real problems, leaving one in a worse position in one's mind than before.

14. No, very little. What discussion we had was mainly among ourselves or in an organisation distinct from the school.

15. They were not discussed nearly sufficiently to form an opinion. The answers to these questions were not [p27] supplied. I think they should be, to the best ability of the school staff.

16. There was no discussion of, or instruction on, the standards of life. Nor was there any suggestion as to their existence. I consider this state of affairs to be extremely wrong and bad.

17. At school the facts were given indifferently more as history than a line to be devoted to thinking. Nothing was laid in a pattern which would induce one to develop an opinion on the subject. I think there should be.

18. I definitely think that they should be, but, unfortunately in my case the matter was never brought forward or discussed during any period of my school days.<sup>19</sup>

19. There was definitely no organised instruction on the subject of religion. No answers, or even attempted explanations, were offered. We were simply told that it was right to believe in God, and even that was given with an air that implied that we should not take it too seriously or we might not enjoy life to the full. Of course, the subject should be taught. It is the most important problem of the universe.

20. These matters were not taken seriously enough – not, at any rate, in those forms below the sixth, where odd current affairs problems came into the time-table. Outside these periods there was little incentive to study the problems.

21. No, this subject of permanent values was not discussed in my last years at school, but I think it should be, in order to turn out men and women with a sense of duty to themselves and mankind, which should go a very long way to help in reaching the Democratic Utopia we hear so much about.

22. Was not discussed at school, and it would be a very good idea.

23. Only by individual effort, and damn well time there should be more of it. Grubby little schoolboys [p28] have set up among themselves, though not in their own individual minds, the idea that these things are laughable. I got fed up with the shallowness of public school education.

24. It was not discussed, but I believed one could go and discuss such matters if one went and saw the chaplain in his rooms. It most definitely ought to be discussed and taught by really convinced Christians.

25. In my last year it was beginning to be with a new headmaster. It should be, and if it had been I should be quite certain of the above question now, instead of still having a shade of

doubt, simply through the matter being so deep, that I am not sure that I understand it.

26. Personally I never had the opportunity of discussing this, or this type of question. It may have been done by the top forms or by certain specialists.

The trouble seems to be that education demands a "school cert" standard, which merely seems to require one to know the subject-matter and how to explain certain contexts.

But as for an interesting discussion (or talk by yourself) as we had the other day, I never experienced one, and I think this subject should be discussed, as there appears to be no point in being made to learn the Bible and its stories if we do not first know whether they are supposed to be accurate, or actually based on fact. This school, by the way, was

The reason why the people in agreement with you remained silent was that none of us had been taught anything about it, and merely took it for granted.

27. The chief trouble is in a big school, where for three months you get a fellow who reads out of a book and makes no sense at all; then after the holidays you get someone entirely different, who produces all sorts of deep theories and facts which are entirely beyond the comprehension of a seventeen or eighteen year old. There [p29] were marked examples of this at my school, and I only discovered one man who made any sense out of these subjects. He was a clergyman.

28. I think that education in this matter should be broadened ... if there are men who can explain the philosophy of the Old Testament in detail. A waste of time to my mind; let them quit this and teach the present problems, and the way to overcome them. We are not taught *real practical* Christianity enough.

29. Surely if the young people realise the importance of such a subject, school teachers should too. Are they too idle or unknowledgeable to know it? If so, ninety per cent of the present-day teachers should be slung out.

30. No, and they had no one who would have done it properly. It should definitely be done by the right people.

This is a fair selection of these boys' opinions on the instruction that they received at school. One is obviously by a prig; a minority are fully satisfied; some seem to me pathetic in the realisation of what they have lost; and some are definitely angry about it. I believe I have made good my claim to have put facts before the reader, not mere opinions. The facts have driven me to certain conclusions.

1. The instruction given at schools does little to increase either the quantity or quality of Christian belief' and practice. A large proportion of boys who deny that they have had any instruction at school are, in fact, Christians. I believe that in their case, and in many others, this is solely due to the influence of their homes. Parents have taught their children the Faith, but the intellectual backing which would enable them to stand up for their beliefs is lacking. This is what the schools should provide, and do not.

2. It is good, so far as it goes, that half the rising generation are still nominally Christian; but they lack [p30] the reasoned basis of faith, and the courage and enthusiasm needed to make their influence felt. Again and again I have found sceptics proclaiming loudly at the beginning of a discussion that nobody could possibly know the truth of these matters, let alone put forward arguments in their defence. They have been surprised and rather shocked to find that half their friends do not share their opinion. The Christians have been equally surprised to find that they were more than a small minority.

3. The extraordinary fact that it is possible to raise the proportion of those who accept the evidence of Christianity from *one-half to three-quarters*, at an age when boys consider their opinions to be formed, shows what an enormous change could be brought about if only schools could be induced to take this matter seriously.

4. For obvious reasons I have left out the names of the schools at which the boys' criticisms are directed. Had I put them in, an unfair bias against the larger and better known schools would have been created, as some of the most trenchant criticisms quoted are directed against them. In fact, there is nothing to choose between large and small, public and secondary. Some of the smaller public schools and many of the secondaries give no religious instruction at all. Of those which do, some certainly do it exceptionally well. The main characteristic of the big public

schools seems to be that the boys are unable to make up their minds whether they were taught properly or not,\* some say in effect “yes, but we want more of it.” The *average* proportion of satisfied pupils is thirty-three per cent. Most are definitely dissatisfied.

The demand for more and better teaching is practically unanimous. One thing is clear. No amount of compulsory attendance at chapel will make or keep boys Christian, [p31] unless the devotional influence of the services is backed by clear, definite and efficient religious instruction.

Here are fields white to the harvest – good lads for the most part, with the best of intentions, who have been deprived of their faith through sheer neglect. I do not deceive myself. In an hour and a half’s discussion it is impossible to produce more than an intellectual assent, which is in many cases temporary. It is extraordinary that so much as this can be done. How infinitely greater the result would be if the same evidence had been put before them slowly, steadily, and consistently during their last years at school, and backed by all the moral and devotional influence which it is the function of the clergy to provide.

If I may be allowed to contribute my mite to the discussion as to whether there is a religious revival, I would say that there certainly is not. But the time is ripe for it, and it depends upon our schools whether we get it or not. I am strongly inclined to think that the opportunity is a new one. Thirty years ago religion was taken for granted, and any attempt to reason about it would have been considered indecent. Ten years ago I believe that the nominal Christians would have been bored and the sceptics hostile and contemptuous. To-day the whole situation has changed. The horrors of this war have completed the work of disintegration begun in 1914. All certainty as to the existence of moral standards has gone. The persistent neglect and denial of Christian dogma has been followed by the destruction of the principles which derive from it, and from it alone. Civilisation based upon materialism has at last shown itself for the ghastly failure it is. The very completeness of the collapse has given us our opportunity.

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\* *Note:* I have now discovered that this is due to the difference between ‘houses’ in the same school. unless the devotional influence of the services is backed by clear, definite and efficient religious instruction.

## CHAPTER II

## THE FAILURE OF THE SCHOOLS

THE last chapter, which is substantially the same as Part I of the first edition, was written eighteen months ago. The experience which I then possessed proved that nearly fifty per cent of young Englishmen were pagan or semi-pagan, that most of the nominal Christians had no more than a half-hearted unsatisfactory type of faith and that they were incapable of saying why they believed as much as they did. The cadets' criticisms of the religious instruction which they had received at school showed that this instruction was largely to blame. These criticisms bore witness to widespread neglect and inefficiency which would not be tolerated for a moment in the teaching of any other subject. So much was clear, but I had not then enough evidence to analyse what was amiss with any degree of certainty. Since then my experience has increased enormously. Over four thousand young men have argued, objected, agreed, and demanded more time for discussion. Between two and three thousand have answered my questionnaire and given their opinion on the methods of instruction used at their schools. I lay no claim to any peculiar ability for sifting evidence, but this is such a rich mine of information that only an utter fool could fail to extract the truth from it, and I believe that I am now in a position to state positively what is wrong, and to criticise constructively instead of destructively.

I have written this chapter in the hope that it may be useful to masters who are sincere Christians. Men who are doing their best and who think that they are turning [p33] out Christians while, unknown to themselves, they are failing hopelessly; are, in schoolboy language, "browning people off" the whole subject. Over and over again I have been astonished at the number of young sceptics who come from schools where the headmasters are well known to be thorough-going Christians. One of them wrote to a friend of mine only the other day, saying that he would dearly like to know the answers to my questions given by his own boys. I have not dared to supply the information! These good men have got into a rut and have failed to realise the needs of the rising generation. I do not ask them to take notice of my opinions, but I do beg them to consider whether their methods are open to the criticisms of the ex-school boys themselves which are given in Chapter IV. The customer is not always right, particularly when he is a young customer, but when the number of comments runs well into four figures and when they all fall into the same definite categories, I submit that we have to deal, not with opinions, but with proved facts, against which argument is useless.

The first great defect lies in the setting, or rather lack of setting in which religious teaching takes place. Whatever the intention of the masters, in the boy's mind it often bears no relation to science or to life. Here is the proof of that very sweeping statement. When I first began my course of discussions on the nature of man and on the existence of the moral law, I chose those subjects as an opening gambit, designed to lead up gradually to Christianity. I now know that in the existing state of ignorance these subjects have a vital importance of their own. During the discussion on man's nature the attitude of the opposition is one of tolerant amusement. "Here is an old fool who obviously knows nothing of science – let's give him a run for his money." Often one third of my audiences are so conditioned by the theory of evolution that they cannot believe that they are in any way different [p34] from the other animals. The discussion on the moral law is a different matter. The tone is far more serious and tempers are often lost. The opposition evidently feels that to believe in the human soul is an amiable eccentricity, but to insist on an eternal law by which conduct can and must be judged, is to tread on dangerous ground. The greater, and more intelligent part of the opposition, is pagan or semi-pagan, but the really extraordinary thing is the high proportion of "Christians" to be found in its ranks. When I first discovered this very odd phenomenon I smiled and put it down to British lack of logic, but it is too common and persistent to be accounted for in this way. It must mean, and I know it does mean, that religion is taught in a water-tight compartment atmosphere, so isolated from a boy's life and from everything else which he learns, that it produces no result on his thought and very little on his actions. There is nothing to prevent the less intelligent child from calling himself a Christian and yet denying in effect the human soul. When he is put to it he will even

acknowledge the Godhead of Christ, but he has only thought of Him as the great example; not as the Author of the moral law.

This extraordinary confusion rarely exists in the more thoughtful and intelligent types. These are either full-blooded Christians, or thorough-going pagans. A few – not many – are atheists; the rest are deists though their deism is often confined to belief in a “blind cosmic force” which started the universe off and then left it to its own devices.

It is easy to show the “four legged Christians,” as I sometimes call them, that they have not had the wit to think out the relationship between their various opinions, but your deist is a hard man to shift. His mind has been conditioned to the notion that evolution explains everything, as thoroughly as the mind of the young Nazi was conditioned to the doctrine of blood and soil. You can [p35] hardly blame him for the result. He is too clever not to realise that if man is no more than an animal, then there is no room for an immortal soul, or for eternal right and wrong, still less for Christianity. Often enough he has been brought up by Christian parents, but as soon as he begins to think he becomes conscious of a contradiction between the atmosphere of the science form and that of the “scripture class,” and if, as is only too often the case, it is literally a scripture class and nothing else (where little or no attempt is made to show that what is being read is important or even true), the result is not difficult to foresee. The boy begins to doubt. As he grows older and considers the world and the vast game of animal grab now bringing us to the brink of destruction, his doubts are confirmed and his faith is lost through the sheer inefficiency of his masters. It is they who have made God’s revelation appear as a boring and out-worn lie, and a badly told lie at that.

I fear that this may be considered bitter. It is bitter, for the thing is an immense and crying scandal. It could be put right if only Head-masters would see to it that the masters who teach religion are as competent as the professors of science, history, and classics; men who not only believe and live their faith but who know how to teach it, and are capable of putting it in its proper setting – that of a sane and living philosophy. This last is of vital importance, for unless a boy leaves school convinced by reason that God exists, and knowing the reasonable grounds for belief in His revelation, that boy’s faith will be in danger the moment he begins to think seriously. At the very least he must know the grounds for belief in the human soul, and in the purpose and destiny of his life. Furthermore, he must realise that, so far from being a disconnected subject which cannot be made to fit into the scheme of things – rather like a sore tooth which causes us discomfort [p36] until we are rid of it – revelation is supported by reason – is, in fact, the very ground of sanity.

All this is hardly covered by the term “scripture,” and I personally should like to see that word vanish from every school programme. Divinity is not much better. It conjures up the vision of a clerical collar with a stage parson inside it. Religion and Christianity are both fine words which every one understands. Their appearance on the notice board would, I believe, rouse interest among boys and might remind those masters who need it what it is that they are really supposed to be teaching!

I would gladly leave the criticism of religious instruction in the narrow sense to those who have enjoyed it or suffered from it more recently than I. In the main I have done so, for Chapter IV gives a hundred unselected comments. Unfortunately a summary is necessary if the message of that company is to have its effect. I would give it at the end, but I know how trying it is to read a series of disconnected remarks, and I fear that some of you may skip it in whole or in part. I very much hope that this will not happen, for these “customers’ verdicts” are very much more important and authoritative than any opinions by an outsider such as myself. They are, of course, devoid of literary form, but you who have read as far as this have already allowed interest in the subject to override your distaste at my own lack of skill. For this reason I venture to hope that you will summon up yet a little more patience and read carefully what is, after all, the meat of the whole matter and the very reason for this book. The comments are from a complete company just over a hundred strong. I chose it for a definite reason. Owing to unusual circumstances I was only able to finish my course on the last day of term. This had never happened before and it enabled me to demand, and get, an absolutely candid criticism of my own discussions. I had long wanted to do this but discipline had always prevented me. [p37] Here was my chance, and the company’s chance. We would never meet again officially, so I

gave them *carte blanche* to be as rude and as critical as they liked. At the time I had no intention of publishing the results but they are so valuable that I have decided to do so, particularly as there are more than enough candid critics among them to absolve me of the charge of boasting. One hearty young atheist, whose remarks about his school were unprintable, said that he could only think of two reasons for my course: either I must be mad or had nothing better to do! I am ashamed to say that I lost my temper and tore up this priceless contribution. I have now made amends by giving it a place of honour by itself. With this exception they are all there, the rough with the smooth, in the boys' own words. Nothing has been added or toned down to fit a theory, and as the complete company is, so to speak, on parade, selection has been ruled out.

It is fair to add that the company is not quite typical. All its members were destined for the technical arms. Naturally a number of them had been to technical schools, while the proportion of public school boys was rather lower than usual. The actual percentages are of interest: Public schools 14, Grammar schools 33. Secondary 23, High schools 12, Technical schools 14, Catholic Secondary schools 4. The number of nominal Christians was rather less than usual, and the number of hard-boiled sceptics rather greater; so was the percentage of boys who had had no religious teaching whatever at school. But it must not be thought that this was very different from the ordinary run. The public schools as usual have their share of sceptics; those which give no religious instruction are by no means all technical, and the proportion of Christians among these is as high as it is among those which attempt to do so and fail miserably. It is true that the proportion of boys who are [p38] satisfied with what their schools taught them, falls well below the average for the country, but this I believe to be sheer chance. The average of intelligence, and of what I can only call a readiness to think, was far above what I had learned to expect. As an advocate of "humane" education I hope this also was due to chance, but I am afraid there may be more in it than that. I learned a great deal from these criticisms about my own defects; in particular the absolute necessity for extreme simplicity, and of linking religion to practical life. I found it impossible to do this in six short periods, but lack of time did not save me from some very pointed remarks. The great lesson to be learned is that the majority can be made to find interest in religion and do respond with real gratitude to any attempt to present it intelligently, however feeble and incomplete the attempt may be.

I have sorted the criticisms into types, with reference to their schools. With some of them we need not concern ourselves. There is nothing to be said here regarding those which give no religious instruction at all; or those which trifle with it by using masters to teach it who are patently insincere; or those again which give so little time to the subject that they obviously care nothing for it. These are wasting the boys' time and in some cases the parents' money. It is well that it should be known that there are such schools, for I believe that once it is known, Christian parents may be stirred into doing their plain duty, which is to find out what their children will be taught, before deciding where to send them.

First, and perhaps most important, are those schools which allow no discussion. It is easy to make excuses for them, for I suppose they slip into this error by failing to realise the different methods needed for teaching children and adolescents. It would obviously be foolish to invite a child to discuss religion before his mind is formed, but surely it is as obvious that this must be done as soon as [p39] it is formed. What a shocking lack of psychology is displayed by that master who tries to impose Christianity by his mere "say so." He *must* know that his pupil is about to be thrown into an almost pagan world where everything is questioned, and unless he is a very great fool, he must know that there will be a natural reaction against anything imposed by his bare authority. The utmost which can be hoped for from a boy subjected to this treatment, is that he should leave school clinging to the faith learned at his mother's knee and hoping, rather desperately, that it is not a myth. Chapter IV affords plenty of examples of this state of mind.

The next type is perhaps a variation of the last. It is described by its victims as "pure bible reading," sometimes with the addition "very useless." I should hate to be misunderstood over this. There is one fortunate sixth form which is advised to "read St. Luke through twice – slowly – and then see if you can doubt Christ." Never was better advice given. It is poles apart from the sort of nonsense described below, so woodenly stupid as to be almost wicked.

*"Instruction at school took place under the headmaster (this prohibited full discussion) and consisted merely of reading passages out of the Old Testament verse by verse round the class,*

*the headmaster giving a resume of the story before it was read. No attempt was made to bring out the man-God and nation-God relationships wherein lies the principal value of the Old Testament. Incidentally the passages were carefully censored by the Head, certain verses being omitted on his instructions. This ensured that attention was brought inevitably to the wrong aspect of aspect passage.”*

Or this:

*“Yes, we had a little instruction. The periods were very uninteresting and the subject was treated very impersonally. For the most part the Old Testament was read and more rarely the New Testament (the four Gospels were not brought up). [p40] The facts of the tremendous revolution that Christ brought about was never discussed. It seemed as if the subject of Christ’s life and teaching was labelled ‘ Please do not touch – highly explosive.’ The Bible was in fact treated as literature and vital truth, but never have I heard any other great literature discussed with such lack of enthusiasm and so impersonally.”*

Is this tragedy or raving farce? It is hard to say. These examples are exceptional, but is this due to the masters’ outstanding stupidity, or to the cadets’ exceptional powers of description? I do not know. Are these men – can they be – sincere? Or are they just getting through the time allotted to a subject about which they know nothing and care less? I cannot tell. One thing I do know and that is that their pitiful efforts are doing immense harm and are well calculated to poison any boy’s mind against the Faith.

The next chapter tries to assess the responsibility which must be borne by parents for the infliction of this sort of nonsense on their unfortunate children. It is a heavy responsibility. It is their indifference which has led so many Headmasters to the conclusion that they need not bother to have religion properly taught. One would have thought that “Heads” who look on it as a matter of little or no importance would at least have handed it over to assistants who took a different view, if only on the principle of doing a job well if you are going to do it at all. For their own credit they should realise that it would be better not to touch the subject than to allow it to be travestied, but if Christian parents only did their duty, the Schools would have no choice. Nothing except pressure will move these cynically indifferent men. There are others who are honestly doing their best and who also fail. I criticise them with great reluctance. They have not realised the needs of a pagan age, and do not know the harm they are doing.

It remains to pay tribute to those schools whose boys [p41] really feel grateful for the help they have been given. There are fewer of them than usual in Chapter IV but these are shining examples of what can be done. I beg them to believe that no attack is intended on schools in general, but only on those which are failing in their duty. To the large minority of one third, tribute is duly paid in acknowledgment of a vital job well done.

## CHAPTER III

## THE FAILURE OF THE PARENTS

THERE are three types of parent whose influence on the religion of their children is to be deplored and who make the task of the Christian school exceedingly difficult. The first is positively hostile. It is composed of pagans who wish their children to be brought up as pagans. These people form a small minority. There is nothing to be said about them here.

The second type of parent would probably call itself Christian, but is so indifferent that it “couldn’t care less” what its children learn, if anything. It neither lives nor practises its nominal religion. This is the type which has recently been castigated with much justice by the Headmaster of Clifton, who pointed out how all but impossible it is to deal with boys brought up in such a negative atmosphere.

The third type would be very indignant at the suggestion that it was not Christian and did not wish its children to receive a Christian education. It is made up of people who suffer from an irrational hatred of dogma – or say that they do – without really knowing what a dogma is. It would be useless as well as unjust to think or say anything uncharitable about them, but they have forgotten--if they ever knew – that Christianity is a definite belief, and that a dogma is nothing more than a clear statement of what is believed. That being so, they naturally fail to realise that you cannot have one

without the other. Their “Christianity” is really religiosity based on feeling. They like impressive services, ethical sermons and hearty hymn singing, but [p43] are not concerned as to whether or not these are the outward signs of supernatural faith. They would probably be distressed if they were, for though they repeat the creeds they do not really believe them – they are too dogmatic! If they were ever to compare their “religion” with the dynamic revelation of the Carpenter who was God Incarnate, they would realise that there was no real connection between them, but would probably consider their own an improved variety, far “more suited to the spirit of the age.” It is no good blaming them. That is the sort of thing they like, and wish their children to have, and that is what they will certainly get, for there are plenty of schoolmasters who share their views and purvey “morality tinged with emotion” under the honest impression that they are teaching Christianity.

These three types together form a minority of the parents who send their children to public and secondary schools. They are only able to exercise the influence they do because of the negligence of the rest who are genuine Christians and bring up their children in a Christian atmosphere until the fatal day when they send them to school. When that day comes they often fail to make any inquiries as to what religious teaching they will receive, or to take the slightest trouble to ensure that that teaching is effective. That statement is not a guess; it is a fact. If you doubt it I beg you to take the trouble to read the evidence of your boys themselves which is given in Chapter IV. Fifty per cent of them are Christians in the “old-fashioned” sense of the word, but only twelve per cent admit that they owe anything whatever to the instruction given them by their schools. Where could the other thirty-eight per cent have learnt that the founder of Christianity was and is Incarnate God? Obviously from their parents, helped no doubt by the influence of the clergy; but these could never have made their influence felt if the homes had not been Christian. [p44] As I have already said the figure is unusually high. That company had a rather smaller number of nominal Christians in its ranks than the average, and a more than usually large proportion of schools which failed miserably to teach religion effectively; but when all allowances have been made, it is quite certain that more than half the Christian young men now leaving public and secondary schools have kept their faith, *in spite of* their parents’ neglect to see that they were properly taught once they had left home.

These are the real culprits. It is no good blaming the pagans, the indifferent, or the modernists. They cannot hand on what they have not got. Those who believe in the great historic facts of the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and the Redemption are still a majority, but they are not making their influence felt, so their case is going by default. Their

differences are no excuse. For four centuries Britain has been divided in her religion. Her loss has been immense, but until the last few decades she has remained predominantly Christian and has produced great and saintly men and women of every denomination, and a mass of solid piety based on "Bible Christianity." Whatever their differences the bulk of the people stuck to their belief in the great dogmas – without which there can be no faith – even though they protested that they hated dogma. That unity is now a thing of the past. Vagueness has gradually replaced clear thought. Now the very knowledge that Christ is God is vanishing. It is time to call a halt, and to insist that the great fact of the Incarnation is clearly taught to the children of those who believe it, and know that it is the central event of history; the one link between God and man which gives meaning and purpose to life.

It will not be easy, nor will it be popular. Distinguished "Heads" and house masters will find it intolerable when their clients begin asking searching questions and insisting [p45] upon definite answers. Many of them will have to make sweeping changes in the "system" if half the boys have to be taught real creedal Christianity which the other half refuse to entertain. It is even possible that the vulgar business of "contracting in" and "contracting out" may have to be considered in some cases. Parents themselves may have to make financial sacrifices or abandon the family tradition, before they win their point. In fact a most uncomfortable situation will be created, just as it was eighteen centuries ago when the tolerant Roman authorities found themselves forced to persecute those absurd people who would not be reasonable and throw a little incense on the Emperor's statue. That honest democrat Marshal Tito finds himself compelled to take the same action to-day, of course much against his will, simply because those "reactionary fascists," his Christian subjects, will not see reason. I am comparing small evils and ordinary folk with tyrants and heroes. Britain is still a free democracy. The type of schoolmaster who is doing damage is no tyrant, but an honest and well-meaning man. Above all, Christian parents are still in the majority – though a small one. They have the power to insist that the birthright which they have given their children shall not be squandered or endangered. It is for them to decide if they will use that power, or whether they will continue to fail in their duty through sheer idleness.

It is not yet too late.

I have not touched on the problem of religion in the great mass of schools which are controlled by the State for I have no first-hand knowledge of it. It is well known that the results of State secular education have so far been much worse than those of the independent schools with which we are concerned here. There is a terrifying amount of leeway to be made up. On the other hand the future is much more hopeful than the past. The Butler [p46] Act does provide facilities which have never existed before. Great numbers of future teachers realise that Christianity must form the basis of a sound training. At their own wish they are being taught to provide it. The difficulties are immense. It may be that we have reached the darkest hour before the dawn, but that dawn will never come unless Christians have the courage and energy to use their influence as they have not done for many years.

[p47]

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CUSTOMERS' VERDICT

I HAVE sorted these comments on the religious instruction which the boys received at school into their various types for your convenience. I have also put them in order of demerit – as I see it – and left them to speak for themselves. Nothing that I can say could add to their force. The two cheering things about them are that they do show that there are still many parents who instil enough faith into their children to ensure that they shall grow up Christians in spite of their schools; and, secondly, that the great majority of boys are interested in religion. The gloom I will leave you to gather for yourselves. Here is the key:

*Question 1.*

“Do you believe in the Godhead of Christ? Put + if you do. If you are uncertain, put ? If you don't believe, put – .” I have put down the cadets' opinions both before and after my course of discussions.

*Question 2.*

“Did you have any religious instruction at your school?”

*Question 3.*

“Give your opinion on the instruction you received.”

*Question 4.*

“Give your candid opinion on the course we have just finished.”

[p48]

### INSINCERE

*Question 1.*

Before + ; After +

*Questions 2 and 3.*

Elementary explanation of the Bible and Christian Doctrine. Not very convincing. It was explained in an apologetic manner as if the instructor was very sorry to have to put it over as most of the pupils were to have to listen to it. Sound instruction can only be given by someone who believes what he is saying and is enthusiastic. Religious instruction is generally left to some junior master who happens to have a free period.

*Questions 4.*

I doubt very much if this course would change the opinions of the people. This is due mainly to the fault of the people themselves who have no desire to change, as it might effect their peace of mind. As a provoker of the intellect the course was probably a success but will not have permanent or large scale results. I personally have found the course stimulating and refreshing.

*Question 1.*

Before + ; After +

*Questions 2 and 3.*

Yes, but was work that was more connected with exams, than a subject for its own sake.

*Questions 4*

The subject of your lectures was interesting but at times I found them rather disjointed and hard to connect together.

*Questions 1.*

Before + ; After +

*Questions 2 and 3.*

Yes, but there was no sincerity about it.

*Questions 4*

I consider that you tackled the difficult problem of teaching this subject in a clever and ingenious manner, and it was carried out in such a way that it did not embarrass or offend any one, but which made a number of people – including myself – come away from each period thinking very hard about what you said.

*Question 1.*

Before + ; After + [p49]

- Questions 2 and 3.* School instruction was very poor. No one took any real interest in the subject and the instructors showed no enthusiasm. No attempts to prove the facts were made, and on the whole, the instruction increased the doubts already in the pupil's minds.
- Questions 4* The course has been worth while. It has made me think seriously about things I have never thought about before. It has been very interesting and well worth while.
- Questions 1.* Before – ; After –  
*Questions 2.* Yes.  
*Questions 3.* Most ineffectively done. Insincere, unreal and mainly hefty random selections (mostly incomprehensible) from the Bible.  
*Questions 4* Quality good, quantity meagre.
- Questions 1.* Before ? ; After + (?)  
*Questions 2 and 3.* The instruction was good but there was no attempt made to prove the facts stated. If the instructors had been more enthusiastic on the subject their efforts would have been rewarded. I think that instruction in this subject should be given by people who have really studied and believe it.  
*Questions 4* The course has been quite good and has given me a lot to think about. I only wish I could arrive at a definite conclusion.

#### USELESS

- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Not primarily, only through our own efforts, not intelligently done through inexperience.  
*Questions 4.* The course is to all intents and purposes necessary to open one's mind, but I think that the whole issue was inclined to get into a rut revolving round the innermost workings of one individual's mind, instead of using a medium in which everybody can [p50] understand the differences of local opinion as against those put forward by the lecturer or discussion leader. I consider myself of average intelligence but I found it increasingly difficult to follow the working of the lecturer's mind.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* None which I consider did me any good.  
*Question 4.* Yes, because previously the idea of having a definite set of standards had never occurred to me. Although I must confess I didn't agree with some of the ideas put forward, I think on the whole these talks have given a more intelligent view of this thing called Christianity.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* None at all that could possibly have any effect on my mind at that time or even now.  
*Question 4.* The course has been of great help to me and has opened up an entirely new line of thought. Therefore the course has been worth while.
- Question .* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* The instruction I received at school was very muddled. It was, in fact, above our heads. It was taught in a "hush-hush" manner and forced upon us. It would have been of no value if it hadn't been explained by my parents and the Vicar. The Vicar, in contrast, spoke to us on our own level.  
*Question 4.* I have really enjoyed the course, it has of course been too short. I found the evening voluntary lessons were the better part as everyone present was definitely interested and the proofs were more conclusive.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes, but the effect was not great. It neither enhanced my belief, nor did it lessen it. The instruction was merely on normal lines. [p51]  
*Question 4.* The course has had some effect strengthening some beliefs, but definitely dis-

proving some – on the whole quite educational – but still I am not absolutely certain that my “plus” in answer to the first question is right, and I believe that with proof on the other side I might change it to a definite

*Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Series of disjointed lectures which just juggled with the subject.  
*Question 4.* The course of discussions clarified many points of the subjects dealt with but was on occasions rather vague. The discussions had no effect on my views which are very decided as can be seen from the first question.

*Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* The instruction I received at school was disguised as Scripture, but actually was mainly the ideas of an intellectual sceptic – a doctor of Divinity from Oxford.

*Question 4.* Your course has been most thought-provoking. To many people – some pseudo scientists – who found that atheism and agnosticism was a popular way of avoiding vital issues, looking big in other’s eyes and trying to convince themselves that human nature should have its way, these lectures I feel must have jolted them into a state of mind where “queries” would have been in the predominance. Your following up lectures giving facts to back up your convictions have aided many to join the “plus” group – and I attribute a lot of this success to the rational and yet enthusiastic and sincere manner in which you handled this course.

May I as one who has a profound belief in God and His ability thank you for giving myself and others the opportunity of helping others in the same way – an opportunity [p52] which we may never otherwise have had. I only wish that our time might have been longer so that others may see the subject in the same light.

*Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* No systematic religious instruction at school – usually prayers and services.  
*Questions 4.* Interesting Course – would have been better with more time. Say one period for factual lecture and then one period to discuss the subject matter of the lecture and its implications.

*Question 1.* Before ? ; After ?  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes, but absolutely no use.  
*Questions 4.* I admit to being bored by the whole proceedings. No new points were heard and I am still in the same undecided frame of mind. I would have preferred to have heard your views more directly.

*Question 1.* Before ? with a tendency to – ; After ? with a tendency to +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Early instruction was concerned with the doings of Christ, but at a later stage, when we were approaching a reasonable frame of mind, “Scripture” became merely a form of early history.

*Questions 4.* A previous series of lectures by a padre at an R.A. unit dealt with the question of the existence of God, and the line of approach was that our so-called laws of physics were so apt to vary according to the period, that to say God did not exist as it was against the physical laws was rubbish, therefore He probably did.

This course seemed to be of a similar type, and gave a reasonable proposition of the existence of some guiding hand. We still do not know, however, why it is possible for somebody, claiming no faith, can act in a thoroughly decent and humane manner.

[p53] The “Yardstick” is not remarkable, in that it is based on Christian standards, but that it is a very practical method in keeping a large community in harmony, that is to say, the only logical way of living. If any other was more convenient, it would have been tried, and had it been better, would undoubtedly have survived.

*Question 1.* Before – ; After –  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes. Extremely bad instruction. Not appealing to the intellectual mind.  
*Questions 4.* As far as I personally am concerned, the course has proved to be instructive to a

certain degree. As seen above, my opinions have not altered as a result of these discussions. This is a very good thing as the few discussions of this nature should not alter the opinions of people whose ages range from 18-28. To probe the depths of this highly important subject, I think, requires more time than that given. I hardly think that this should be the subject to “Ponder in our minds,” whilst on an O.C.T.U. course, or rather I would say that the subject should be considered with a mind completely clear, and ready to assimilate all of the facts. Nevertheless, the subject matter conveyed has been most interesting.

*Question 1.* Before – ; After –  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Very little. Instruction was not convincing or interesting.  
*Questions 4.* There has always been a struggle in my mind between a desire to believe in Christianity and a persisting doubt regarding the accuracy of truth of the New Testament. On this course I have had vague points clarified and been given an insight into various viewpoints, but still remain unconvinced. Whilst recognising the inherent goodness of the truly Christian way of living I cannot believe that a godly [p54] Christ came to earth and died, etc., to save sinners.

*Question 1.* Before – ; After –  
*Question 2.* Vaguely.  
*Question 3.* Have touched on the subject before.  
*Question 4.* To me the subject was leading to no definite point, and most discussions were “well over my head.” As you see my opinion remains unchanged. The subject requires much attention and more time should have been taken had it been possible.

*Question 1.* Before – ; After +  
*Question 3.* I received instruction at school.  
*Question 4.* It was very poor instruction and did not do much good. The course of instruction I have received, here has been interesting and has made me think about the subject along definite lines, instead of being hazy or not thinking at all.

*Question 1.* Before – ; After ?  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Little, but poor and rather biased.  
*Question 4.* Before the course I thought of the Bible teaching as just a moral code that is incidentally ignored by a large number of people, but after the course I am beginning to entertain the idea that Christ may have lived, and am prepared, and indeed intend to delve deeper into the subject and come to a definite conclusion.

NONE

*Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* No.  
*Question 4.* The course has been most enlightening to me and has answered many questions which worried me, and of which I was ignorant. I am the son of a Presbyterian father and a Quaker mother, neither of whom were church workers or church [p55] attenders and consequently I was never forced to attend religious instruction. In conclusion this course has been of the utmost value to me.

*Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* No instruction. I attended a Catholic College and being a Protestant no arrangements were made for us. I would add though that no attempt whatsoever was made to convert us as common belief has it.  
*Question 4.* The course has certainly provided me with food for thought. I was not aware that any evidence existed to prove anything that is laid down in the Scriptures.

*Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* No instruction at school. I feel that my education was sadly neglected in the

- subject of current affairs. This was probably due to the fact that the majority of my studies were confined to technical subjects. Whilst I always held certain ideals and principles in my mind, these were more or less dormant and I did not feel sufficiently well versed in them to be able to express a good opinion.
- Question 4.* The course was definitely worth having. I consider the course to have been of great value to myself. The discussions have been extremely interesting and I have formed from them a lasting and permanent opinion.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* No.  
*Question 4.* Most useful and enlightening arguments strengthened one's beliefs in the direction indicated above in (1).
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* No instruction given. Certain periods were set aside for instruction but either the teachers did not possess the interest or the [p56] knowledge to give instruction and the periods were solely devoted to reading from the Bible either aloud or to ourselves. In either case no attempt was made to discuss the passages later. Because of the general interest of youth in the district discussions were held by the priest every Sunday night in the Church Vestry. The discussions lasted for about go minx. and the attendance was maintained throughout the year by about 20 people. This I feel speaks well for the youth of the district.
- Question 4.* The course was quite good as far as it went. However I do feel that insufficient time was devoted to it. It is a pity really because the questions discussed are of prime importance nowadays, and if the young officer has not a cut and dried opinion how can he look after his platoon? The time devoted to the subject I appreciate was not your fault and in the time allotted I believe that you covered as much ground as was possible as thoroughly as possible.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* *and 3.* No instruction was received in school at all. I have spent a great deal of time and thought on this subject since leaving school. I have in fact decided that there is a great lack of comprehension in the world at the moment. As soon as I am able I would like to devote my whole time to this. That is one reason why I accepted the opportunity offered by the W.O.S.B. to prepare myself perhaps in a roundabout way, but at least to teach.
- Question 4.* Most definitely worth while.
- Question 1.* Before ? ; After ?  
*Questions 2 and 3.* No.  
*Question 4.* The subjects were all bordering on what to my mind are the main questions, i.e.:Is there any explanation for our existence or [p57] the existence of the universe? and, if there is a supreme creator how can we conceive his creation? The lectures had very little bearing on these questions. No answers to these questions would be possible of course, but a discussion of explanations would be a suitable groundwork for discussing religion which after all is only the outcome of creation.
- Question 1.* Before ? ; After ?  
*Questions 2 and 3.* *Questions 2 and 3.* No instruction at school.  
*Question 4.* It has made me *think* about this subject of the truth of Christianity. In the first case I put a "query" for I felt I was in no position to give an opinion on the subject which I had never been taught and which I had never even considered. Even after consideration I find myself unconvinced, but now I shall always be trying to find the truth which is better than leaving the question unconsidered. The time available was much too short. I also consider double periods to be essential, for one period is too short to touch upon the subject.
- Question 1.* Before ? ; After ?  
*Questions 2 and 3.* *Questions 2 and 3.* No.  
*Question 4.* Not being religious and having forgotten most of what I did learn on the subject I

thought that the arguments were beyond me. To be able to take part in debates you have held a person must have a good knowledge of the Bible stories.

I am sorry to say, sir, I am no more convinced than I was before, not in any way because your side of the argument is lacking but because it was on the whole far too deep for any one like myself with little knowledge of the subject to discuss or even grasp.

*Question 1.* Before – ; After –  
*Questions 2 and 3.* (No answer). [p58]  
*Question 4.* Being an agnostic I always welcome any efforts to prove or disprove the existence of a God. Therefore have thought the course of some value in that respect.

*Question 1.* Before ? ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* No instruction at all. Need felt till after leaving school.  
*Question 4.* Course definitely worth having. One criticism: Discussions at first were put forward as pure discussions, but the guiding hand was much too obvious and tended to irritate.

*Question 1.* Before ? ; After ? +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* No religious instruction at school.  
*Question 4.* Please do not regard the question mark as absolute (or plus). I have never had much faith and have always realised that there must be a large amount of truth at least in the record of the New Testament. I have never been convinced of this and my immediate reaction is towards plus. The effect is still going on so that I have conviction, but as I have for a long time refused to credit the idea of a God, something which is very hard to visualise, I have no faith.  
I do not think anybody can accept such a sweeping reconstruction of ideas without physical evidence, as you have given, *and* spiritual, which can only be obtained by applying oneself to the scriptures and seeking it in discussion and deliberation with others. Maybe more could be done to induce this discussion after giving the “physical” proofs.

*Question 1.* Before – ; After ?  
*Questions 2 and 3.* *Questions 2 and 3.* No.  
*Question 4.* Definitely worth while.

[p59]

#### MOST PECULIAR AND ALMOST USELESS

*Question 1.* Before + but only because I have been brought up that way – a very unsatisfactory and shaky belief. After + very definitely improved my belief by sound common sense.

*Questions 2 and 3.* As a potential school teacher I would rather leave this question. Whilst teaching I have seen religion replaced by Maths frequently, but I have also seen it introduced into almost every subject (including Maths) in a very effective way. Secondary Schools seem to completely ignore this very important subject and Elementary Schools generally prefer Maths.

*Question 4.* ist Class – the most satisfactory series of talks I have ever heard and extremely helpful to those who have a belief (like myself) but don’t know quite what that belief is.

*Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes. There were certain groups of Christian discussion and instruction (voluntary) run by one of the school chaplains, but the divinity periods confined themselves to examining grammatical construction, etc. We had compulsory chapel, and there we had some very good sermons, and also a series of short evening services in Lent conducted by an outside preacher.

*Question 4.* Although I believed in Christianity before, it has helped me to clarify my views.

*Question 1.* Before + ; After +

- Questions 2 and 3* Yes. Subject approached from the angle that Christianity was a “state” in which we lived and that the question of Christ’s actual status was unquestionable merely because it was so unimportant, and had practically no bearing on the subject apart from His use as a popular and almost fictional figure whom one might raise as [p60] an example to prove the correctness of the Christian way of Life. (Usually to Children.)
- Question 4.* Course has raised points which have not before been considered and had the effect of strengthening existing convictions. The “plus” after course had finished written with a much firmer hand.
- Question 1.* Before ? a prophet ; After ? a prophet.
- Questions 2 and 3.* Instruction at school merely on various religions of world and on work of the Apostles.
- Question 4.* The course has been stimulating and disturbs much thought on the theory of a Deity. But I am not convinced of the divinity of the carpenter and still consider him on the same plane as Mohammed.
- Question 1.* Before ? ; After ?
- Questions 2 and 3.* No. Periods for religious instruction were usually used for other purposes, e.g., a music master who took us for religious instruction devoted the period to religious music. Likewise a history master used the time to teach us history of certain religious movements in the period of history we were studying.
- Question 4.* (No answer)
- Question 1.* Before: The whole affair was very mysterious and unknown.  
After: Such proofs and lines of thought were forwarded that the position has been clarified.
- Questions 2 and 3.* At school it was merely a matter of knowing God’s work and not His origin or the foundation for having faith.
- Question 4.* The course has been rather enlightening and has given some foundation for faith. If this type of instruction was carried out in schools it would be far more useful than the present instruction. [p61]
- Question 1.* Before ? ; After +
- Questions 2 and 3.* We did get instruction on Divinity, Bible reading, etc., and also had intelligent discussion, but discussion was mainly about the authenticity of the Gospel, and the fact that Christ was God was either taken for granted or ignored. The result of this was an incomplete understanding of this question and hence scepticism in your early lectures.
- Question 4.* I think your course was very useful and encouraging and there should be more of this type of planned discussion. Occasionally you talked “over our heads.”

#### NO COMMENT ON SCHOOL INSTRUCTION

- Question 1.* Before ? ; After +
- Questions 2 and 3.* Yes.
- Question 4.* Unfortunately the effect is marred by the incompleteness. Some of the points were a little obscure and needed more time for digestion.

#### VERY LITTLE TIME

- Question 1.* Before + ; After +
- Questions 2 and 3.* Very little time indeed devoted to the subject.
- Question 4.* The periods proved interesting but at times deviated from the subject matter. Very few opinions were changed or shaken basically, but food for thought was certainly provided.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +

- Questions 2 and 3.* I received but a little religious education at school, which was for the most part badly and unconvincingly put over.
- Question 4.* Your series of lectures and discussions have definitely been most helpful and useful to all who have been able to attend. For the unbeliever you have, to some extent, shown the way to salvation – and for the believer you have provided the physical proofs of [p62] the facts that we know to be true. For all, you have provided a great deal of “food for thought” and the cadets have certainly “inwardly digested” all that you have said.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +
- Questions 2 and 3.* A little religious instruction from the headmaster who was Ph.D. I have found that a Doctor of Philosophy is the only person qualified to talk on this subject in schools.
- Question 4.* I have thoroughly enjoyed your discussion on the above subject and consider talks of that sort far more enlightening than those given from a pulpit.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +
- Questions 2 and 3.* Not sufficient time spent on it, but what was done was done well.
- Question 4.* Your course of lectures were extremely interesting and dealt with subjects with which I have dealt little with before. It is very interesting to hear the opinion of others.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +
- Questions 2 and 3.* Yes. Unfortunately taught at such an early stage in my life to be completely incomprehensible. Later the matter was dealt with again in a secondary school, but only occurred for 30 mins. per week and was extremely boring. I did not realise anything about Christianity until I attended confirmation classes at the age of 16.
- Question 4.* The ABCA course has definitely enlightened me a great deal and I should liked to have received “instruction” in Christianity in this way when I was about 14 years of age. The “evidence” was completely neglected in the teaching I had previously received.
- Question 1.* Before ? ; After ?
- Question 2.* Yes.
- Question 3.* Above instruction received in somewhat [p63] small proportion during a short part-time course of psychology. Have never had time or energy to devote sufficient mental concentration, and the necessary research work required for the subject, to form a definite opinion either way.
- Question 4.* This course has been useful to me in the way that it has brought back to my mind a question that I met earlier in life, which was, and still is unanswered. Despite the course however I shall not attempt to form a definite opinion until I have turned philosopher and devoted twenty or so years to the subject. On principle I suggest that my opinion, formed under such conditions, would probably be wrong.
- Question 1.* Before ? ; After ?
- Questions 2 and 3.* *Questions 2 and 3.* None during the upper classes at school. During first year in school weekly readings on which comments were passed. These comments were of a common sense nature and needed little deep thought.
- Question 4.* This course has tended to correlate our basic ideas on life. The topics introduced have created “food for thought.”
- Question 1.* Before – ; After
- Questions 2 and 3.* In junior classes at school it was treated as a subject much in the same manner as History. Given up as a subject during my senior years at school. This was certainly no loss.
- Question 4.* As I disagreed with most of your views I suppose it was a worth while course. Periods were too short and, had they been longer, possibly I *might* have been converted to your viewpoint. As I still hold the same opinions – not through stubbornness – I am afraid you have achieved nothing in my direction. The more fickle-minded, possibly, have altered their opinions to your view, in

which case your time has not been wasted. [p64]

- Question 1.* Before – ; After –  
*Questions 2 and 3.* I received a little instruction in this subject while at school.  
*Question 4.* Some of your instruction has been too “deep” for me. Also you should have given us much more time, firstly to assimilate the facts as you gave them to us, secondly, to analyse our own opinions.

#### GLIB PARROT TALK

- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Question 2.* No instruction apart from the religious instruction which in the light of these recent talks causes me to reflect and ponder on the ABSOLUTE veracity of that information which was imparted so glibly to me during the course of my bible reading as a young boy.  
*Question 3.* I think such information was given earnestly but without conviction in that it was repeated parrot fashion throughout generations.  
*Question 4.* I don't pretend to have fully understood many of the subjects we have discussed during my sojourn at R.M.C. in the last three months but I would like to record my appreciation and I feel that discussions of this nature should have commenced earlier in my career. I might also add that had we lived in the Middle Ages you would surely have died a martyr's death at the stake because some of your beliefs? or statements are tantamount to heresy or blasphemy in trying to turn our young minds from the path of True Religion.  
(!!! *What have I said to deserve this?*)

- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes, but it was parrot talk and ineffectual, dealing entirely with theological detail and not practical difficulty.  
*Question 4.* Most certainly! You have proved beyond all shadow of doubt all I had previously [p65] hoped was true. My only regret is that you could not continue your course, and enlarge on the yardstick theory. At the present time it is difficult, often, to decide upon the length of the yardstick, but surely we all know that it exists! It would have been valuable to have had the definite, logical and Christian yardstick and to know where the present generation differed from it.

- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes. The facts were put over in a very parrotwise fashion. Foundations were expected to be believed in. Doubts still existed in many minds.  
*Question 4.* As regards religious matter I gained knowledge to some extent, which made me understand the problems more.

- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Question 2.* Yes.  
*Question 3.* But the instruction that one receives is really too doctrinal and there is not sufficient approach to the practical side of this subject that one gets thrown at one in workshops, etc.  
*Question 4.* Yes. I think that it gives to those who have not given much thought to the subject before a really practical outlook to the whole subject and causes them to really give some thought to the matter, even if it does not have the effect of making them change their minds one way or the other, but then since our religious beliefs coincide perhaps I will be somewhat biased.

#### NO DISCUSSION

- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* just a little which was not cleverly tackled at all – just lectures which were both boring and very one-sided. One didn't have opportunities to discuss that which we

- were taught. [p66]  
 Worth having.
- Question 4.*
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes, but very lop-sided. We discussed it last Tuesday.  
 (*I remember conversation.*)
- Question 4.* Definitely worthwhile.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Although my school was very closely connected with the church, the question was never tackled in a straightforward way. Being such a vast subject I feel that too little time was spent in discussion. The fact that every one fully understood each stage was rather taken for granted.
- Question 4.* Worth while.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* No, only a certain amount of ordinary religious instruction at an early age, not open to dispute or discussion; but it is important to appreciate that it is very much a subject for private discussion and one that the young “modern” loves to get his teeth into, and consequently theories and opinions are seldom lacking even though it is a topic that does not receive the attention it deserves in our educational system. Nevertheless it should be brought into the open because experienced and careful guidance in such thought will bring a sober contemplation of all its aspects and problems; it is essentially a subject that cannot be tackled half-heartedly or “nibbled” at, this will inevitably lead to warped and distorted opinions.
- Question 4.* The course has been worth while because you have brought it into the open. *Your* opponents are often apt to believe that they are the only ones who dare to think and that religious belief is founded on blind faith alone and not on reason of any sort.
- [p67]
- Question 1.* Before – ; After –  
 My opinion on the question of the existence of Jesus Christ is, and always has been, that He was man, born long before His time, who, being possessed with a great brain, seeing the plight of the World, put forward the THEORY OF GOD, which settled once and for all the turbulent minds of the masses on the question of a Creator. He incorporated the assistance of some intelligent people, who assisted Him in every way.
- Questions 2 and 3.* The only “Religious Instruction” I received, as it was called, was always one-sided, and did not allow for discussion or argument. Consequently it was beneficial to me as an individual, as I was able to look at the OTHER SIDE, and form my own opinions, for which you once told me to shoot myself.
- Question 4.* Your course of lectures was extremely beneficial as I was presented with several very new and interesting arguments; which I am afraid have not convinced me at all, on the contrary I am more fully convinced of my opinions than ever.
- Question 1.* Before – ; After –  
*Question 2.* Yes.  
*Question 3.* Lecturer was too dogmatic, and did not have the sympathy of the class.  
*Question 4.* These types of lectures are usually boring and dry, but in this case I feel they were worth having as they were put over interestingly and the lecturer was in sympathy with the class; which in other words means the class was attentive and therefore learning something. Though I do feel that such subjects should not be put over in the form of an ABCA. I always say that either you believe or you do not believe. I believe in God for purely selfish reasons – it gives me a faith and a higher standard which to aim at. Thus it gives me strength where others give in. Religion is necessary for modern [p68] civilisation more so than it was in the old days. Men will reach a stage when they know so much that they will realise that only through a faith will they realise their purpose on earth.
- Question 1.* Before – ; After –  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Instruction at school nil as regards controversy.

- Question 4.* Course worth while in that a number of people have been made to consider the matter, but ineffectual in doing what you set out to do, namely, to change people's opinions. Once people have eliminated the fear of saying No "from their minds they will not say Yes" until that fear is reintroduced, either by the enormity of their sins having effect in their old age, or by developing a superstition. Men are not convinced of superstition by reason, reason is a destroyer of superstition. Quite apart from your talks I think there is another class of people whom you have not considered. And I am one of them. They are people who for one reason or another believe the "existence" of a higher mind or "power," but that the race of men know nothing of the particulars, and are not impressed, maybe sometimes disgusted by the clerical clap-trap.
- Question 1.* Before ? ; After ? to +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Instruction was given at school but it was put over in such a way that we were not able to say what we thought or in any way contradict. Therefore I took no notice whatsoever, having the idea that we were having something drilled into us.
- Question 4.* Worth while.
- Question 1.* Before ? – doubtful ; After ? a little more certain.  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Instruction at school merely tried to force me into believing. [p69]  
*Question 4.* Course here useful because both sides were discussed with equal sincerity.
- Question 1.* (No answer.)  
*Questions 1 and 2.* Scripture – Secondary school. Not a discussed subject, but literally "dictated" – hence my mind was not voluntarily "moulded."
- Question 4.* Excellent. Ideal for progressive outlooks – sound reasoning, entailing initiative and an analysing mind – a mind which is free and unbounded and RATIONAL.

#### BIBLE ONLY

- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes, we had a little instruction. The periods were very interesting and the subject was treated very impersonally. For the most part the Old Testament was read and more rarely the New Testament (the four gospels were not brought up). The facts of the tremendous revolution that Christ brought about were never discussed. It seemed as if the subject of Christ's teaching and life was labelled "Please do not touch – highly explosive." The Bible was in fact treated as literature and vital truth, but never have I heard any other great literature discussed with such lack of enthusiasm and so impersonally.
- Question 4.* The course was well worth while and it is only to be hoped that it will happen a great deal more.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Instruction at school took place under the headmaster (this prohibiting full discussion) and consisted merely of reading passages out of the Old Testament verse by verse round the class, the headmaster giving a resume of the story *before* it was read. No attempt was made to bring out the man-God and nation-God relationships wherein [p70] lies the principal value of the Old Testament. Incidentally, the passages were carefully censored by the Head, certain verses being omitted on his instructions. This ensured that attention was brought inevitably to the wrong aspect of the passage.
- Question 4.* For the non-believer your lessons have created interest and they have confirmed the beliefs of the believer and provided him with useful fact and argument to support his cause.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Question 2.* Yes.  
*Question 3.* Instruction mainly concerned with Bible reading, little explanation of, and reasons for, etc., the taking up by civilised people of such a religion and its progress over

- the world. "Scouting" activities has heightened my belief – logical and fundamental thought becomes more apparent in the surroundings of nature – country and scenic beauty.
- Question 4.* Good in promoting train of original thought – helps to build up individual philosophy.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* I did have instruction at school. It was of a nature such that I learnt Bible Names and facts. Facts are of two kinds (1) Useful (such as you have given); (2) Not useful as given in schools.
- Question 4.* Yes, the course is, and has been, very interesting.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Question 2.* Yes. As a subject on a par with Maths, etc. known as Divinity. Bible may have been a book of tales as the spirit of the thing was lacking.  
*Question 3.* Not much use – it stuck to the letter of the Bible too much. [p71]  
*Question 4.* Yes. Excellent in conception, but personally I thought parts of it rather dry – possibly through lack of anecdotes from the personal experience of the lecturer, in which I feel sure he is rich. A bit too drawn out. I consider that *at least one* practical application of results of opinion to some present day problem would have proved exceptionally valuable.
- Question 1.* Before ? ; After ?  
*Question 2.* Yes.  
*Question 3.* Mainly Bible readings as far as I can remember. The junior forms had some form of religious instruction, but from the fourth forms upwards it was mainly a farce. Most teachers were incompetent to instruct on the subject.  
*Question 4.* I am afraid that the course has not convinced me of anything. I do not feel that your proof has been sufficient to sway me to the positive side. But on the other hand I am not prepared to disbelieve in the nonexistence of a God. I feel that some power exists, but I do not feel bound to accept the old religious teachings.
- Question 1.* Before ? ; After ?  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Religious teaching at school consisted of simple process of reading aloud extracts from the Old and New Testaments and left me very much in the dark and disinterested. I was very thankful in the fourth form to switch over to the study of psychology.  
*Question 4.* The real value of your course lies not in that you have made up my mind for me about my religious beliefs, but in the fact that you have presented a realistic viewpoint on the matter which provided at least a basis for logical thought. I would like to have heard your discussions on other subjects in the light of your religious views. My one criticism is that I would have [p72] preferred a philosophical approach to human behaviour and affairs rather than your religious basis.
- Question 1.* Before – ; After –  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes. Quotations given directly from the Bible only and in such a manner that its authenticity is unquestionable. I, like others who think scientifically, am not convinced unless proof can be submitted which can be investigated systematically and objectively.  
*Question 4.* Course good.
- Question 1.* Before ? ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* I never received instruction on the same lines as received here; I had one scripture lesson a week and there was never any explanation as to the more deeper meanings found in the Bible. The reason, I feel sure, was because the masters had never studied the question or even given the matter more than a moment's thought; they were quite unqualified to take scripture lessons, and regarded them as our young minds did, as little more than a waste of time.  
*Question 4.* Previously I was unconvinced as to the question of Christ's being a heavenly or earthly being, but now, although I doubt whether I could satisfy any one else, in

my own mind I am quite convinced by your arguments, which were fairly constructive and watertight.

- Question 1.* Before ? ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Religious instruction, so called anyway, was in the curriculum of my two schools. It took the form of pure Bible reading with summary explanations of events in the text. No attempt was ever made to make the class *think* about the happenings related in the text. Even in the senior classes no real attempt was made to capture the class's interest. [p73]
- Question 4.* It is because of this (see *Questions 2 and 3*) that the course given us in the past two months has been, in some aspects, very refreshing. I, for one, have had my interest aroused in the subjects, and although I have only taken a passive part in the discussions, I feel that the course has been of real use to me.
- Question 1.* Before ? ; After + ,  
*Questions 2 and 3.* No not in this style, just plain Bible reading; very useless.  
*Question 4.* Yes, as it gave the facts which as far as I knew it has not been in publication by the school teachers, Sunday School or Bible Class teachers before. The actual proving beyond doubt of these facts came as a physical and mental shock. The method of putting it over was excellent, the sequence clever, and the discussion expertly handled. In conclusion I feel that if these facts were published and taught, instead of the clergy just looking meek and mealy, and ask people to believe a devil of a lot, there would be an increase in the number of conscious Christians, and a decrease in the number of sheep Christians and quite a few converts.
- Question 1.* Before – ; After ?  
*Questions 2 and 3.* No instruction at school except learning well-known portions of the Bible by heart, i.e. St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, which I have now almost entirely forgotten. Obviously very little use.  
*Question 4.* The course has been of use if for no other reason than making me think about a subject I was inclined to push on one side.
- Question 1.* Before – ; After ? +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Merely reading passages from the Bible. No benefit derived from it – very little [p74] explanation given. Periods of so-called religious instruction were “mucked about with.” We had one period per week in 1st Form and supposed to have had one in 2nd Form, but they were usually used for anything but R.I. From Form 3-6 nothing. This was in a quite well-known Scottish Secondary School.  
*Question 4.* Very worth while. I'd like to see some of this done by the Churches.
- Question 1.* Before ? (–) ; After ? (+)  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Only at elementary school – mere repeat of Bible, no sound reasoning (this apart from Sunday Chapel teachings).  
*Question 4.* The course has proved beneficial, interesting, promoted thought and was worth the trouble taken in preparation of lectures. At times the question put to the class needed too much thought on what was required of you than on the actual subject.

#### TOO MUCH OLD TESTAMENT

- Question 1.* (No answer.)  
*Questions 2 and 3.* I did receive instruction at school and I consider it to have been imparted quite intelligently. I do think however that too much emphasis was made on the Old Testament. I also do not think the teachers realised the extent of the permanent impression that their instruction was making on young minds. They say: “All this happened” instead of: “This is *John's account* of what happened.”  
*Question 4.* This course has been extremely interesting and educating. Chief complaint is that I consider the periods devoted to this subject were not long enough and it would have been better if at least two consecutive periods could be arranged as both class

and lecturer gained more enthusiasm when it was time to close.

[p75]

*Question 1.*

Before ? ; After ?

*Questions 2 and 3.*

During early school, very poor. During school we merely looked through the Old Testament, the lessons were extremely disjointed and I feel I was not old enough to appreciate the matter contained. It appeared to me then as a fairly story of rather simple history.

*Question 4.*

The course has again raised this subject but I still feel my answer to your first question remains.

#### FAIR

*Question 1.*

Before + ; After +

*Question 2.*

Yes. Instruction given.

*Question 3.*

Sometimes intelligent. More often parrot fashion – depended on the master.

*Question 4.*

I think that this course of lectures should have been a little less lecture and rather more discussion. The idea of partly lecture, partly discussion is very good since it helps to control the trend of discussion and keep it within the prescribed limits, but by not giving sufficient time for discussion it tends to air the views of one man and not those of the general body of the class. The subject matter was very good and quite provocatively put, generally in such a manner as to give the class plenty to think about but not much time to express their views, although on the other hand the size of the class handled was rather large and classes of such a size do not readily lend themselves to full discussion, so the method adopted was probably the best compromise possible.

*Question 1.*

Before + ; After +

*Question 2.*

Instruction at school. Fairly good.

*Question 3.*

The Head, who gave talks to the VIth, was a ? but gave very interesting talks both ways. *Not* a repetition of Sunday School

*Question 4.*

Worth having. [p76]

*Question 1.*

Before – ; After –

*Questions 2 and 3.*

General and fairly good instruction on scriptures at school.

*Question 4.*

I feel that owing to the fact that this course has been so short these series of talks and discussions have been of little use. I will agree with you that as a basis for a longer series these discussions might have been a use. Against this, I do not see that it is *really* necessary to go into the question of Christianity, the question of a yardstick maybe, but I do not see that Christianity need be brought into the discussions at all. As a conclusion to these remarks I must say I feel that these periods would have been put to better use if more modern and pressing matters had been discussed. Furthermore I consider that the individual should have more chance, rather than one person's views expressed all the time. I am sorry to disappoint you, sir, but I feel that our time might have been put to better use.

*Question 1.*

Before ? ; After +

*Questions 2 and 3.*

Instruction received, some good, some bad.

*Question 4.*

Interesting, but I should imagine largely ineffective although from my point of view it has helped me to decide what I really do believe. I always feel that religious subjects have to appeal to something more than the brain and -therefore a matter-of-fact talk or discussion does little good although it does perhaps give the mind something to work on. People do not want to believe in Christianity because it would possibly curtail their activities and from that they deduce also their enjoyment. It is because of this that appealing to reason is not enough.

*Question 1.*

Before ? ; After ? +

*Questions 2 and 3.*

Yes. Instruction was given to instil the principles of the Christian religion, but too [p77] much stress was laid on the capabilities of the student to repeat, parrot-like, various answers to any standard questions.

*Question 4.* The course here, to a person such as myself, has given certain food for thought, but if the aim was to *prove* the existence of a recognised yardstick then it has failed. It certainly makes it apparent that the subject must be treated with tact, as the adult mind resents any difference of policy when one has always been contented with one's own convenient theories.

*Question 1.* Before – ; After ?

*Question 2.* Received instruction at school. Sometimes quite intelligently.

*Question 3.* I was given four years of instruction in the true school-like manner. Practical subjects such as Maths and Science proved extremely contradictory to such lessons, putting these "Bible Lessons" in the class of the ridiculous.

*Question 4.* The course which was given here had a very good aim and purpose, but in the early stages these were not discernable. Therefore I suggest that the subject should be introduced far more bluntly taking care to aim the pointed remarks chiefly at the person with the negative sign. Such as above. By this you would carry more conviction with your statements by the suppression of the opposite point of view.

#### EXCELLENT

*Question 1.* Before + ; After +

*Question 2.* Yes.

*Question 3.* Up till the time I took School Cert. our two scripture periods per week were devoted to study of the Bible, but after School Cert. I entered the VIth Form where I received excellent instruction concerning theology and social problems in the light of [p78] Christianity. Amongst other literature we looked at some of Galsworthy's "moral" plays, a bit of Shaw (the one and only), "Is Christ Divided," "Beyond Personality," by C. S. Lewis, and a book of answers to some of the more frequently asked questions written by various authorities on Theology.

The majority of this instruction was given by our Headmaster ... who I think is very broadminded and astute in the way he conducts these periods. He does not force opinions on the boys, yet he ably guided us on the right line of thought.

Several of us attended a meeting of the Student Christian Movement held in Edinburgh which I, at any rate, thought was successful, if not to the extent that some of the organisers hoped.

It is interesting to note that I would have written "?" if the questions you ask had been put before me 18 months ago, but by the time I left school 8 months ago, I had arrived at the decisions "+".

*Question 4.* I have found it interesting and useful, giving me some new angles on the subject and serving to confirm the beliefs I already hold.

*Question 1.* Before + ; After +

*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes I had plenty of instruction at school. It was given by a member of the staff who was a lay preacher and interested in the subject. He spent his time in interesting us in the subject as opposed to instructing us. We were required to write a somewhat lengthy essay each term on subjects such as "I believe" or "Science and Religion," which subjects helped to make us clarify our own ideas as we wrote. Subjects of instruction covered Higher Criticism, a history of comparative religions and general instruction in Theism and Deism, etc., and also ethical and social questions. I only [p79] benefited from this instruction in Vth and VIth Forms, but I believe that the lower forms in the school were also interested to a considerable extent.

*Question 4.* The course has certainly been useful in clarifying my own ideas and also to judge the opinions of other people in relation to their social activities. I personally would have liked to join in discussions on the question of dogma, i.e., a discussion between "High" and "Low" church and chapel within the values of Christianity, but no doubt this may have been included in the longer course.

*Question 1.* Before + 1 After +

*Question 2.* Yes.

- Question 3.* Very intelligently taught by well-qualified teachers at a Catholic College.  
*Question 4.* (No answer.)
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes. Intelligently done by the priests at my school.  
*Question 4.* Very interesting, and with regard to the discussion on God I found these particularly interesting.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes. Intelligently done. R.C. Doctrine, taught by Jesuit.  
*Question 4.* These lectures acted as an excellent refresher course in those subjects which, since joining the army, I have found to be the most discussed of subjects.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes. Up to School Certificate the instruction was “parrot talk.” Later, however, in the VIth the instruction was much more “deep” based often on C. S. Lewis’s books on “religion” such as the Screwtape Letters, etc. However, we were very lucky to have a master who had inquired deeply [p80] into religion of all sorts and knew how to express what he had found out. The great disadvantage of this was that he was so sure of what he was saying that it was merely a case of taking what he said for granted, which I found was very different in the lectures here where very few statements were allowed to pass without criticism. As a matter of interest he and you agreed on nearly every point which was a good sign.
- Question 4.* I think these talks were good in that they put some thought of “religion” in people’s minds who perhaps had not bothered before.  
I think that your gradual approach to “religious” matters was very sound as it stopped any resentment that might arise about being “preached” to.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Question 2.* Yes.  
*Question 3.* Done very well, but spoiled in senior forms by mere cramming for examination purposes.  
*Question 4.* Definitely yes. The mere fact that there is so much discussion and thought among the cadets shows this.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes. On similar grounds as you have taken only further and compared Christianity with other religions. We also compared the different churches and sects in the Christian world.
- Question 4.* It has in many ways been simply a confirmation of school instruction, and I am sorry we didn’t have time to consider other aspects of Christianity.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Question 2.* Yes.  
*Question 3.* Good instruction, but took certain beliefs for granted, attached too much importance to incidents and less to principles. Some [p81] features of religion, such as the Trinity, were tackled by masters who did not really believe in it themselves, and instead of being honest and saying it did not matter a damn anyway, tried to put over something, acceptance of which demanded more than faith from the pupils.
- Question 4.* I think the course was a success in so far that it gave people problems to ponder over. I feel, though, it was not instructive enough in some respects to make people think and decide for themselves upon the right issues. If people believe in God merely because Christ rose from the dead they had better go and worship Mashlia Soulia.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* I believed in Christianity very strongly before you gave your talks, but what you have said has helped me a lot. I am very glad to know some of the arguments there are to give to the questions of unbelievers.

- Questions 2 and 3.* Yes. But some masters were very much better than others.  
*Question 4.* Yes, definitely. My only regret is that your lectures were so few.
- Question 1.* Before + ; After +  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Religious instruction in schools can be greatly spoiled by the type of teachers, of which several exist, who give religious teaching because it is part of the curriculum and because he or she believes it.  
 The religious teaching that I had at school was of the better type, i.e. the teacher sincerely believed what he taught, but was purely historical. Christianity, the generally accepted religion of this country, is something more than historical facts. I think schools should attempt to give the pupil the historic background to both O.T. and N.T. and give him sufficient interest to [p82] search further for himself. Instruction should continue to school leaving age, not end at the age of 11 years.  
*Question 4.* It served the useful purpose of making people who are professed Christians to think more about their own religion: in particular to think of what they believe and why.
- Question 1.* Before ? ; After ?  
*Question 2.* Yes. Good.  
*Question 3.* Instruction at school was given very largely by laymen which in my opinion is a very good thing as it avoids biased opinions. On the whole the instruction was well put over and done largely on a discussion basis. All views were allowed a fair hearing and you could “get away with murder.”  
*Question 4.* I think the course has definitely been worth while as it has made people think for themselves and discuss subjects of vital importance which would not normally be broached in a military community.
- Question 1.* Before – ; After –  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes, did get instruction. Intelligent.  
*Question 3.* Tendency to “ram it down.” More tact.  
*Question 4.* Very beneficial.
- Question 1.* Before – ; After –  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Yes. Good instruction at school.  
*Question 4.* Course has become religious instruction and discussion. A series of questions have been asked, an answer given by one of the class, and his answer crushed by superior arguing ability. Makes a man feel that it is a waste of time answering. Course itself excellent in principle but restricted too much. O-C.’s will have to deal with unintelligent beings on the whole and therefore need less abstruse subjects for discussion.
- Question 1.* Before – ; After – [p83]  
*Questions 2 and 3.* Being a pupil at the best school in existence ... I took part in intelligent constructive discussion of various aspects of the subject, and, being Jewish, was given extra encouragement to express my own views and opinions. I consider that the training and experience which I have had has given me infinite opportunities for a better understanding of the subject and of Christianity. I might add that the proofs and explanations have in no way weakened my attachment to Judaism.  
*Question 4.* Approached in an entirely new way. The interest in the subject has been greatly stimulated by this course. I consider that such a subject should be an essential factor in the training of all O-Cadets of all denominations. Besides convincing doubtful religionists one way or the other, it helps to create a better understanding and healthy discussion. There are, however, a number of important gaping faults, mainly the wrong approach in the first period. On the whole though, very good!

*Part II: FIRST AID*

## INTRODUCTION

READERS of the first edition will notice that the course given there has been lengthened, both by the addition of two new subjects, and by the introduction of fresh matter into the old discussions. The latter needs little explanation. Naturally many of my classes brought up new difficulties, some of which had no doubt been felt by their predecessors but not expressed. As I had the great advantage of discussing the same subjects over and over again with different people, I was able to learn by experience and develop my treatment of the old subjects to meet the proved needs of the cadets. I have added specimens of the most common questions and objections because friendly critics have pointed out that these would be useful to them in their own work. I have also reproduced a few diagrams which I have found helpful.

The first of the new subjects, "Creator and Creature The Proof from Existence," was added partly to meet the very reasonable criticism that I had left out the most important question of all – that of the existence of God – and partly because I realised that though my young atheists were few, it was unfair to ask them to consider the evidence for the Godhead of Our Lord, when they were probably ignorant that there were proofs of the existence of a personal Creator. I am sure that many readers must have thought it odd that I did not deal with this subject before. One or two did in fact accuse me of leaving it out because I was afraid to meet the scientific objections to direct creation. I had a reason, but it was [p85] not that! I believed – quite rightly – that many cadets looked on religion as a bore, and that I should have to make a gradual approach to it, and rouse their interest before unmasking the full scope of the course: also I suspected, and soon proved, that the atheists formed such a small minority that it was out of the question to waste the time of the majority in barren arguments with them.

Naturally these difficulties still exist, and although I have put the existence of God first here for obvious reasons, I do not in fact deal with it at the beginning of the course but bring it in, as it were, "under the counter." I have found that the best way to do this is to use the evolutionary twist, which is nearly always taken by the discussion on the nature of man, to point out that neither the evidence for the soul nor the necessity for a Creator can possibly be affected by a theory, however well established, on how our brains and bodies may have developed. I then suggest a voluntary debate on that motion. If there is a self-confident atheist in the class he can be relied on to lead the opposition, and the rest come to see the fun.

The second new subject, "The Purpose and Destiny of Man," ought to have been included from the beginning, and I blame myself very much for not having done so. The need was brought home to me by three cadets who ran after me saying, Sir, you have talked a lot about the purpose of man for God's sake tell us what it is." I had been stupid enough to suppose that I had made it clear! I am immensely grateful to them, not only for pointing out a glaring deficiency, but because my efforts to make it good have forced me off the level of mere reason on to that of the heart and will. I have been stupidly shy of doing this, so much so that a friend criticised the course as being good so far as it went, but added, "Where do we go from here?" A most just comment which I have tried to meet in the final period.

## DISCUSSION 1

## CREATOR AND CREATURE: THE PROOF FROM EXISTENCE

I HAVE chosen to prove the existence of God from the plain fact of our existence, not because it is the simplest proof but because it is the most interesting, in my opinion, and because it gets you a great deal further than simply proving His existence, which nearly all of you already believe.

1. Start by getting two facts quite clear. (a) We exist. (b) We need not exist. If you doubt No. 2 just remember that we did not exist a few years ago, and that things would go on very much the same if we were to be snuffed out to-morrow. This is true of anything we chose to look at or think about. Some things, like the stars, are of immense age, but there was a time when they were not. Everything in the universe owes its existence to the action of something else, which might quite easily not have taken place. The universe consists of a vast number of *receivers of existence*. There is a vast number of wireless receiving sets in the country. Not one of them could receive wireless waves unless there was a transmitter. Multiply them indefinitely and it would make no difference. They are *receivers* – it is their nature to be *able* to receive; they do not necessarily do so. You have, I hope, already spotted the key to that little parable. We, the chairs we are sitting on, the gravel on the square, the trees beyond, the sun itself are the receivers. That which we receive – our existence – corresponds to the wireless waves. The creator (spelt for the moment with a small c) is the transmitter without which we could not have received [p87] existence at all, any more than the millions of receiving sets could receive a single wave. Without the transmitter, neither waves nor existence could ever have got into the system. The parable breaks down on one point. Only the human soul (in which I happen to believe) receives its existence *direct* from the creator. Every other receiver gets its existence from another being which has itself received it, and is itself unnecessary. That does not matter. The “transmitter” is just as inevitable, if the universe is to exist, as it is in the wireless system if that is to function.

2. If you have got so far, you can forget the parable and consider the relation between the creator and existence. Put it crudely: Who made God? The question answers itself, for if you are foolish enough to say someone must have, you are only pushing the difficulty one step further back. The creator must exist in His or its own right, as none of us do. Existence must be His very Nature. He *is* existence.

3. The Hebrew name for God is HE WHO IS, and the next step is to decide whether that is the right name. Must we say with the ancient Jews “HE WHO IS,” or with the creative evolutionary, “that which is”?

In other words, is the creator a person or a thing? There is a strange reluctance to attribute personality to Him. We who do so are accused of making God in our own image. I am afraid that there are two reasons for this. One is discreditable to the intelligence, and the other to the will, or, if you like, to the head and the heart. The idea of a personal God is subconsciously connected with the image of an old man with a beard, which is too ridiculous to be entertained once it comes to the surface. When that has been disposed of – by giving imagination a kick, and telling it that God is spirit, and that it is not its business to imagine spirits – there remains a very different obstacle. Without thinking it out we [p88] realise that a personal God may, and quite possibly will, demand things of us which we may be very unwilling to give. There is no danger of this if “god” is not a person so a train of “thought” has been invented to get over the difficulty, and high-sounding names have been given to the result. Some of us tell ourselves that we are limiting and degrading the “creator” by talking, as if it were a person. Let us remind ourselves that persons are the highest beings of which we have any knowledge. To be a person is to be able to know, to chose, and to love. To deny these powers to the creator is to reduce him to a thing, and to say that this is a higher conception than a person is to say that an “it” is higher than a “he.” Which, as Euclid would say, is absurd. I can respect the man who is so oppressed by the evil in the world that he refuses to believe in an omnipotent and infinitely good God, and

so talks of a “cosmic force” or a “stream of tendency” in his efforts to account for the existence of the universe. He is an honest man who has got stuck in a real difficulty; but the man who uses these high-sounding and quite meaningless phrases and says that he has a *higher* conception of the creator than the Jews, or the Christians, is telling a lie – not only to you but to himself, and I suspect that he knows it. No lie is ever told without a motive, and the motive here is obvious. You cannot possibly love or worship a “cosmic force,” still less can you obey a “stream of tendency”, but the man who realises that God is a Person, knows that he is bound to do all three. He frequently fails to do so, but knows that he ought to, and that is a very great nuisance – a nuisance which your cosmic force merchant is determined not to admit into his life.

4. If you need another proof, here it is. The Creator is the *real* cause of every one and everything that exists, and the real cause must be greater than its effect. Consider a great business, a car factory, for example. There may [p89] be any number of subsidiary causes – luck, situation, the fact that the self-made founder persuaded his bank manager to lend him a couple of thousand in his early struggling days – but the real cause of the factory and its success is what was in the founder from the beginning. His personality, his vision, perhaps his ruthlessness. He must be greater than what he has “created.” Since God is the founder, not only of us but of the universe, He must be greater than His creation. A Person, yes, but a Person whose infinite wisdom and power we can never conceive.

5. Now come back to the first fact that we established. God is not only an infinite Person. He is Existence, and He transmits existence to us. Persons only do things because they wish to do so. That brings us in an instant to the practical point of our relations with Him. We only exist because of His will, and if He did not keep us in existence, if He, so to speak, stopped willing our existence, we should stop existing. That may give us some faint conception of the real relationship between ourselves and our Creator, and incidentally makes about three-quarters of our ideas on life look simply silly. The whole tendency of modern thought is to push God into the background. We most of us believe in Him, but we feel – I use the word feel rather than think – that He doesn’t matter much. The important thing is to be a “decent chap,” or good at our job, or even pleasant company. God – if He is there at all – is so remote that we seldom think of Him. Vast numbers never bother to talk to Him, let alone love Him or obey His known orders. Yet we only exist at all because He wishes us to. Neither we nor the “practical affairs of life” which we think so important would be here if He did not chose that it should be so.

That is what I meant when I said at the beginning that this proof gets us further than some of the others. It is technically called the proof from “contingency” because it shows that our very existence is contingent or dependent [p90] upon the will of HIM WHO IS. I could have given you the proof that God is the First Cause, the Prime Mover, or the Designer of the universe in very much fewer words, but this proof has, I hope, brought out something of our relations with Him, and emphasised the oft forgotten fact that if we are wrong about Him we are wrong about everything, and out of touch with reality, since He alone is REALITY in His own right. That relationship, that infinite gap between creature and Creator, is there whether we recognise it or not. It is spanned by God’s Love and by that alone, for it is His love which moves His Will to keep us in existence. To fail to recognise His rights and our obligations is not really sane, and it is far madder on the part of the believer than on that of the atheist.

The opposition is nearly always materialistic, but just occasionally I have had to deal with an idealist who denies the existence of the external world and even of himself. The idealists are the more difficult to deal with, for they deny the first principle of the proof-existence. They can usually be laughed out of the denial of their, own existence, but it is difficult to get any further. I have found one line of attack which they cannot answer, which is worth repeating:

“If the world does not exist, the only reason it seems to be there is because you think it is – you expect it, and you expect things to behave in certain ways. How about the unexpected? Two years ago I was bicycling to the library. I was thrown over my handle-bars and found I could not get up. I was picked up and taken to the hospital where I was found to have a smashed shoulder. The subsequent treatment was painful and lengthy. I did not think or expect this accident to

happen. I *expected* to get to the library. Unless the rough ground which caused my fall, the X-rays which revealed the damage, [p91] and the doctors who hurt me were real, how do you account for it all?"

The above is a personal experience, which goes home the better for being personal. Every one can produce similar experiences – even if it is only the real but quite unexpected effect of putting salt in one's tea. The idealist is a survival from the past. He is so rare and unconvincing that he is not worth a great deal of time, but he is an honest soul worth convincing by a simple story like that.

The "cosmic force" merchants are very common and often dishonest. I think they deserve a little forcible treatment. See point 3 of the main argument; it has its effect.

The only other argument which I have come up against is the eternity of the universe. "For all you know the universe may be eternal. If it is you need no Creator." I have met it by agreeing that there can have been no time before the universe *was*, since time is only the succession of events and could not have been there before there were any events to "success." This does not make it eternal, or self caused.

By a strange chance I have not yet encountered the one real objection to an all powerful and infinitely good God – the existence of evil in His universe. Mr. Lewis has said the last word upon this in *Broadcast Talks*. I am quite sure that any one who is likely to tackle this question in practice has already read that admirable book. If not, they certainly ought to do so, and I do not propose to save them the trouble, for I should only put badly what lie has already put supremely well.

I use the proof from contingency because it is more useful to an audience the greater part of which still believes in a personal God, than any of the others. The ordinary young man is apt to react by "So what?" to a [p92] discussion on God's existence which gets no further. This proof does answer his "so what?" and answers it rather forcibly, and (to him) surprisingly. In short, it works. It has worked ten times better since I read Mr. Sheed's *Theology and Sanity* which puts it so well that it is difficult not to quote it in full. I have tried to avoid plagiarising by resolutely refusing to look at this book for two months. I am not at all sure that I have succeeded!

Other books recommended:

*Broadcast Talks*. C. S. Lewis.

*Beyond Personality*. C. S. Lewis.

*The Problem of Pain*. C. S. Lewis.

*HE WHO IS*. Mascal.

## DISCUSSION 2

## THE NATURE OF MAN

*Introduction.*

So far as we can see, we have reached the end of an era; a very evil era, including two world wars, and the uneasy period of armistice in which you grew up. In this country it was a period of insecurity, loss of ideals, greed, selfishness, materialism, and self-indulgence. Even patriotism was laughed at by the “bright young people” between the wars. Our enemies suffered from a very different set of failings. As might be expected, defeat produced the opposite vices to those of victory. We are not concerned with these now: Germany has been crushed as no nation has ever been crushed before.

There seems to be very little chance that we shall slip back into our pre-war softness like a man subsiding into an armchair. Society in the immediate future may or may not be an improvement on that of the 1920's, but it won't be the same. It won't be so unthinking. Whatever it may be, we shall bring it upon ourselves quite deliberately. The country is thick with plans and planners. Social security, a clean sweep of the slums, better education for every one, nationalisation versus free enterprise... All these things and a great many more are live issues eagerly discussed by every one. It is up to you to form sound judgments about them, and to take your part as citizens in furthering or opposing them. It is impossible to do this unless you have a firm idea of what you are trying to produce and why. Why should every one have more education? Why better houses? Why private property – or communal property? *What sort of society* [p94] *are you out to get, and why?* Until we have decided upon our Ends, it is useless to consider Means. *What is it all for?*

*Man.*

The raw material of society is man. Man is also the object for which society exists. No one would design a building without first considering the nature of his raw material, what laws it was intended to obey, and what could be expected of it. Therefore, in considering society, we must first decide what sort of a creature man is. His body is obviously material, made out of the crust of the earth. It can be seen, touched, handled, and – note this – it is constantly subject to change. Matter seems so solid that we don't associate it with change, yet change is its essential characteristic. Burn wood and it turns into gas and ashes, turn a herd of cows into a field and the grass becomes cow and manure. We share these qualities and, in common with other animals, we have a life principle which causes the matter of our bodies to grow, to absorb other matter as food, to reproduce our kind, and finally, to fall apart and corrupt.

From the dawn of history, man has realised that he was capable of thought, and within limits, of free will which follows on thought. We judge and, inevitably, we choose. These are attributes which share no single one of the characteristics of matter, and are evidently of a higher order. Therefore man came to the conclusion that he possessed something immaterial, something which did not, and could not, come from the crust of the earth. He sometimes calls it Mind and sometimes Spirit. He was gradually driven to the view that he alone had it; that it marked him off from the other animals, and showed that he was different from them, not merely in degree, but in kind. Was he right or wrong? (*Written answer taken here.*)

This matters enormously, for on it depends the nature of man, and therefore the type of society which will suit [p95] him. If he is merely a highly developed animal he must live by the law of the jungle. He is certainly a pack animal of the fiercest kind, so the type of jungle law to which he is most adapted is that of the hunting, fighting pack.

What is the law of the pack?

No individual fights against the pack. Unswerving loyalty to the pack-leader. No mercy to the weak. No rights of a weaker pack against a stronger. No absolute right or wrong at all. Is not this exactly what we have been fighting against? “The individual has no rights against the State.” “That is right which serves the German purpose.” “The Leader is always right.”

On the other hand, if man is not a mere animal, if he is marked off from the rest of the animal kingdom by an immaterial soul, then the law of the jungle is not for him. If he attempts to live by it, it will destroy him. You cannot run a car on vitriol.

Let us consider the evidence, and not spoil our case by exaggerating it. It is quite strong enough without that. The higher animals have their five senses, as we have – often more delicate than ours. They have a material brain, and a “common sense” which enables them to use the information given them by their senses. They have memories, they share our capacity for passion, sex, mother-love, affection and hatred. What then is left? What, if anything, have we got that marks us off from them? We cannot get inside an animal’s mind; all we can do is to judge by his actions and achievements, and compare them with our own. Four characteristics are strictly confined to the human race, and are so absolutely without parallel in the animal kingdom that they mark us off as something utterly apart: [p96]

#### 1. *Art.*

It is *as* certain as anything can be that no animal has ever created a work of art of any kind. It has neither drawn, painted, sculpted, composed music, nor written literature; nor is there the slightest sign that it is capable of appreciating any form of art or beauty. This is more difficult to prove, because of the impossibility of getting into its mind, but there is certainly no evidence for it. As for creation, that is definitely a purely human achievement, and clearly marks us off from the animal kingdom. It is not as if we did it well, and the animals did it badly. They don’t do it badly, for they don’t do it at all!

It may be objected that birds, insects, and some mammals, such as beavers, build; and that some of their buildings are very beautiful and perfectly adapted to their end. This is undeniable, but the purposes for which they build are purely material, and they *never change*.

#### 2. *Change.*

Change is the second characteristic which marks off man from the animals. Within historic time at least they have pursued the even tenor of their way. Whatever their style of building (their only creative achievement), it is always the same. The wren’s nest is so beautiful that improvement is impossible. The pigeon, whose amazing sense of location is one of Nature’s mysteries, is content with a mere heap of sticks, neither ornamental nor practical. It is so bad that it could not be worse, so improvement in the past cannot have taken place. Whatever their style of building may be, it always remains the same. Man, on the contrary, is forever changing. As in architecture, so in every other artistic achievement, he changes almost for the fun of the thing, by no means always for the better. It is the same with civilisations; they rise from the primitive to the complex and to the [p97] cultured in a few centuries. They decay and corrupt with even greater rapidity.

It is useless to ask what Germany, France, or England will be like in a hundred years’ time. It depends upon how Germans, Frenchmen, or Englishmen choose to go on. It depends upon their *free will*. We all know what wolves, chaffinches, or tigers will be like in A.D. 2045. If we choose to allow them to live, they will be exactly as they are to-day. Surely this can only be because they lack the prerogative of free will which enables us to change for the better or for the worse.

#### 3. *Worship.*

Worship is a third trait which is purely human. You may not approve of it. You may think we would be better off without it. It remains a fact that we alone have it.

#### 4. *Moral Law.*

The fourth and last difference is the sense of right and wrong, the appeal, sometimes unconscious, to a moral law outside ourselves which urges us to adopt, or to refrain from, a course of action in defiance of our inclinations. This comes into the next period, so we will not discuss it here. It is, however, worth pointing out that we constantly break it, whereas the

animals appear to be forced to a rigid adherence to the laws proper to themselves. *Man is the eternal rebel.*

These four activities are so essentially and exclusively human, so much the stuff of which history is made, so absent from the animal make-up, that it seems probable that they have a common origin, which, like themselves, is also the peculiar property of Man. Let us examine this matter. The workings of the animal brain seem to be purely chemical. They are caused directly by the senses [p98] which convey information by physical, indeed chemical means. The most wonderful functions of the animal brain – memory, the power of association and imagination – all work directly by images. The very word imagination shows its association with *images*. Images are material things received and printed on the matter of the brain by material means. They are stored in the material storehouse of the memory, and are available when required. An enormous proportion of our own brainwork is of this kind. It is concerned solely with material images drawn by material means from our very material senses. Let us not flatter ourselves. The animals can do as much.

Can we detect a difference when we come to the essentially human activities we have considered? Everyone of them depends on the power to think about, use, or pursue realities which have no material existence, and of which no material image is possible. Could our awful power of rebellion wreck us as it does if we did not know right from wrong? Can you *imagine* – *form* an image – of rightness or wrongness? You can imagine a right or a wrong action. You can say of an action that it is right or wrong. You can only do so because you “know” right from wrong, but you can form no image of them. They belong to the order of ideas, and are different in kind from the material universe. It is the same with worship. Can you *imagine* the Infinite Spirit? He is Reality itself, but no image of Him is possible. We humans find our way with difficulty to the abstract and the spiritual; hence the recurrent temptation to idolatry; but I doubt if the most debased idolator really worships his image without a thought of a spiritual reality behind it, of which no image is possible.

What of change? I will not use free will, which is the real cause of change, for that itself is denied by materialists. Instead I will take the most material aspect [p99] of change; the mechanical improvements of civilisation. Could any of them have taken place but for the power of the human mind to conceive, use and work with the abstract ideas of mathematics? The straight line? The circle? We have never seen them and we never will, for they have no material existence. We cannot form images of them, though it seems as though we could because we have seen so many straight and round things. This is easier to grasp in the case of algebra, where all we work with is a mere collection of agreed pothooks and hangers which stand for the immaterial abstractions. A surd – the square root of minus one – is a good example. We have seen the convention which represents it but this has not the faintest relation to the thing itself, which exists only in our minds, and yet is real.

Art? Could it exist? Could it ever have started if man had not known, pursued and tried to create Beauty? That too is an abstract idea with no material existence. We have all seen and touched beautiful things. We have heard beautiful music, but beauty itself is not material and no image of it is possible.

Whenever we cross the frontier which separates us from our fellow animals, we find we are concerned in some way or other with the immaterial, with realities of which no image is possible. We are in a realm where our animal senses cannot help us, where the mere chemistry of the brain has no matter to work with. Yet *something* works and in so doing produces those very results which make us the unique creatures we are. Is it more reasonable to suppose that the material brain is in some incomprehensible way empowered to deal with the immaterial when it is inside a human head and nowhere else, or to agree that we have in us an immaterial principle, the mind, soul or personality which makes us men?

Do you need a further argument to convince you of our double nature? How often do you say to yourself “I [p100] must not *let* myself do this”? I must not let *myself*. In every case you will find that “myself” is your animal nature urged by your instincts. What is the “I”?

How does all this fit in with evolution? For the atheist – the man who has convinced himself

that there is no Creator – not at all. For the great majority of us very simply. If God chose to create the world and our bodies by a gradual process of development and change, who in the name of common sense can dare to limit His power and deny Him the right to unite those bodies to souls when He saw fit to do so? Science has not and, by its very nature, can never produce any evidence one way or the other. Philosophy, which is little more than glorified common sense, can, and has. As G. K. Chesterton says in his great book *The Everlasting Man*:

*“It is not natural to see man as a natural product. It is not seeing straight to see him as an animal. It is not sane. It sins against the light; against that broad daylight of proportion which is the principle of all reality. It is reached by stretching a point, by making out a case, by artificially selecting a certain light and shade, by bringing into prominence the lesser or lower things which may happen to be similar. The solid thing standing in the sunlight, the thing we can walk round and see from all sides is different. It is also quite extraordinary; and the more sides we see of it the more extraordinary it seems. It is emphatically not a thing which follows or flows naturally from anything else. If we imagine that an inhuman or impersonal intelligence could have felt from the first the general nature of the non-human world sufficiently to see that things would evolve in whatever way they did evolve, there would have been nothing whatever in all that natural world to prepare such a mind for such an unnatural novelty.”*

There is the evidence, or some of it. Remember this is not a merely abstract problem. It is abstract, but like [p101] a good many other abstract questions it has a practical outcome of vast importance. There is a kink in our nature which is always trying to drag us back to the animal level, to make us live by the law of the jungle. Every time we do a dirty, unkind, or dishonest action we give way to that inclination. If we were once to make up our minds that we really are nothing more than animals, we should lose the only incentive to behave otherwise. If that idea did not happen to be true, the results would be disastrous for ourselves and – if the majority made the same mistake – for society.

#### *Typical Objections and Questions:*

These consist of an endless series of dog and other animal stories, all designed to show that animals have minds like ours but in an undeveloped state. They vary from the fantastically improbable story of the flock of birds coming to drink at a frozen pond, and lying down in turn on the same spot until they had melted it, to the well authenticated case of the monkey, the banana out of reach, and the stick used to poke it down. I find it much better to deny none of them, however improbable, but to point out that in every case the animals’ sagacity was concerned with the material and nothing else. When time allows I find that it is well worth while capping the story with a better one, and then drawing the same conclusion. When my luck is in I get the conversational powers of the parrot produced in evidence of its intellect. There are two parrot stories so effective in dealing with this “difficulty” that they should be more widely known:

1. A parrot was lost and a reward was offered for its capture. It was eventually discovered in a hay rick by the man who came to cut hay. When he tried to catch it the bird let go with such a flood of highly polished but explosive language that Garge retired hurriedly, touched [p102] his hat and apologised, saying, “I beg pardon, sir, I thought you was a bird.”

2. Another parrot was lost at the opening of the partridge season. Next day a covey was driven over the guns and a voice was heard from the thickest part screaming, Damn your eyes, don’t push.”

Story No. 2 is perhaps hardly on the abstract level, but it brightens things up, and at least disposes of parrots. The class should be invited to decide which story is possible and which is not.

The only truly human activity which is seriously claimed for animals by my classes is art, and the curious fact emerges – and is well worth pointing out – that our real rivals in the evolutionary race are not the apes but the birds! The beauty of birds’ nests is by no means their only artistic achievement produced for my confoundment. Their song, and even the fact that

some of them acquire brighter plumage in the mating season are often adduced with great confidence. I hesitate to give the extremely simple answers and only do so because any one who attempts this subject is quite certain to be confronted with a mass of ill-digested ornithology, and because it took me some time to get the quickest and most certain technique for defeating it. I find that the best thing is to invite the opponent to carry his ideas to their logical conclusion. If he rhapsodises over the beauty of a bird's nest, ask him if he really thinks that Mr. and Mrs. Wren regard their half-finished nest in the same critical way that an artist looks at his picture. Plumage is an easier matter still. Does the male bird say to himself, "I shall be going courting soon. I must get my best clothes on"? Has he any voice in the matter at all? Bird songs are best dealt with by drawing attention to the astonishing monotony of a single bird song, e.g. the cuckoo. Inevitably the answer comes, "What about the nightingale?" but the same holds. It never changes, and lovely as it is, the [p103] constant repetition palls after a time. The universal rule applies. Bird songs, like all animal activities, never change because they can't change: there is no mind, no conscious striving after beauty which can bring about a change.

It will then be pointed out that animals do adapt themselves to their environment, not only in the course of ages, but in some cases seasonally. It is easy to show that none of these adaptations are even conscious, whereas man not only adapts himself consciously but takes the bolder and more fruitful step of forcibly adapting his environment to suit his own needs.

One final question of far greater importance than any of these will often emerge at the end of the discussion. If it does not come up naturally it should be "angled for." "If the human soul is so different from the animal that it cannot have been produced by the natural processes of evolution, where on earth did we get it?" The answer affords the best peg possible on which to hang the rest of the course.

#### *Notes.*

The more my experience grows, the more convinced I become of the vital importance of this subject. The half-baked camp followers of science have produced a small crop of atheists, but for every young man who is an atheist because he believes that "evolution" has disproved God, there are twenty who deny the human soul because they believe that they are developed animals and nothing more. Their case is at first sight far more plausible, and the error is hammered home in many schools from a very early age. The minds of the rising generation are conditioned to it, and it proves to be only too often fatal. Once convince a thoughtful young man that he is nothing more than an animal, and you make him incapable of grasping the necessity for an eternal moral law, or the conception of the supernatural. Yet as far as I have been [p104] able to discover, it is a subject which is almost entirely neglected by Christian authors. I may be quite wrong in saying this, but I have only been able to find one book which deals with the human-animal mind theory, and smashes it. That is G. K. Chesterton's *Everlasting Man*, in which all that great man's magnificent common sense and devastating wit are brought to bear on the pedantries of the "professors." It is, of course, out of print. Here is an urgent need, for one book, however great, is not enough equipment with which to fight a rampant heresy, particularly if the book cannot be had.

## DISCUSSION 3

## ETERNAL STANDARDS

ONE OF the sayings that have come down to us from the great Aristotle on the subject of education is this: "The object of education is to make the child like what it OUGHT to like." Before considering whether we agree with this or not, what does it mean? The operative word is "ought," and if the sentence means anything – and it means a great deal, it is that there are certain fixed standards which we must be taught to live up to. Plato put it more fully when he said that the child must be taught " . . . to love and hate that which really is lovable and worthy of hatred." He went further, and laid down three categories of absolute standards or values: the beautiful, the good, and the true.

*The Beautiful.*

I personally believe that there is an objective standard of beauty in art and nature, quite apart from our individual opinions, but it is difficult to find an authority. The best we can do is to submit to the common verdict of mankind over a long period of time.

*Goodness.*

This is a far more important question: Is there, or is there not, an absolute standard of right and wrong irrespective of what any particular generation or nation chooses to think? If not, then there is no moral law depending upon anything higher than a mere human convention.

It is only too obvious that 'human conventions vary [p106] from age to age and from place to place. Examples: Fifty years ago we had probably reached a standard of kindness to our enemies unknown to former generations. Torture, persecution, and war atrocities were thought to be things of the evil past. To-day it would be difficult to find a town for many hundreds of miles east of Calais which has not had its own torture chamber. Mass deportations, religious and political persecution, are some of the main features of our age. The sanctity of the plighted word between nations has almost gone by the board in the last thirty years. Our ideas of sex morality are quite different from those of a generation ago. Common honesty is at a discount because Virtue was not strong enough to stand up to the jungle inclinations produced by Scarcity. On the other hand, social justice – the realisation that slums and undeserved poverty are a scandal – is far higher than it was at the beginning of the century.

Is there or is there not an eternal standard by which we can measure these things? If not, then our quarrel with the Nazis seems to be limited to their very obvious intention to force their ideas down our throats. We look into the future and hope for a better order of society, but if there is no absolute standard by which to measure what is good, how are we to know what to aim at? It is widely said to-day that there is no such standard, that our conscience is merely the result of education, and that it is nothing more than the accumulated human experience of what has been found to work. Yet all through history the existence of a moral law has been assumed. Interpretations of it have varied, particularly in the matter of sex; but every great civilisation and every great religious teacher has agreed on broad principles. So also in the matter of beauty, we can find a rough authority in the common verdict of mankind, reinforced by what we feel is right or wrong. We know what we ought to do, [p107] although we often do the opposite. Many of you may agree with everything said so far, but you will say, and rightly, that none of these arguments *prove* the existence of an absolute standard. I do not at the moment propose to dispute this, but merely to point out that, if you do take this view, you must be content to swim with the tide. It is like going on the range without having a target or a bull's-eye – you have nothing definite to aim at.

*Truth.*

Truth, in the sense used by Plato, means something much more than the virtue of not telling a

lie. It means an insight into the root principles of reality. A knowledge of the answers to the great fundamental questions of why we are here, where we are going, and whether or not this life is the end of everything. Can we or can we not know these things? Human authority fails us here far more than it does in the question of moral law. Yet, if we cannot reach this knowledge with certainty, life seems to be very pointless – “A tale told by an idiot signifying nothing.” It is pointless in more senses than one, for it is like going to sea without a compass, or a known port of destination.

*Notes.*

There are four snares into which I have fallen when discussing “standards” against which the unwary should be warned.

The first is the use of the word standard.” We have become so used to talking about “shifting standards” – a significant debasement of a fine word – that its very use helps to confirm the wobblers in their errors. I have found it more effective to talk of the “yardstick,” after explaining that a yardstick is a unit of measurement which is only useful because it does not alter.

The second snare is the danger of being led away [p108] to discuss irrelevant details. The class will do this in all good faith, simply because they get interested. Standards of beauty are particularly fatal. If you are not careful you will find yourself discussing the merits and demerits of modern art and music. Five minutes should be allotted to beauty and no more. I have found these two anecdotes particularly useful: (a) The cadet who protested that Shakespeare wrote nonsense and put that nonsense into bad English, and (b) The senior officer who remonstrated with me for walking up the Acropolis to look at the Parthenon, because if you really have a taste for pillars you can find them in a far better state of preservation in Euston Station.”

Snare No. 3. The difficulty of realising that the distinction between “subjective” and “objective” has been almost entirely lost. I have often heard Josef Kramer of Belsen defended on the grounds that he thought he was doing right. No amount of insistence that, even if he did, he was nevertheless doing an objective wrong, has the slightest effect. I have found it necessary to take a chair and point out to my opponent that, if he thought the chair had a broken leg, he would be wise-2-subjectively – not to sit on it. Having demonstrated that the chair is sound, I have then suggested that the doubts of the cautious man who refused to sit on it would be objectively foolish and unfounded. That seems to work.

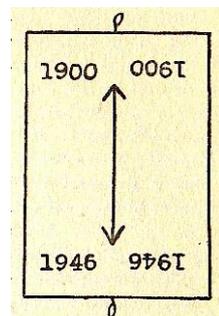
Snare No. 4 is the danger of appearing to side with the past against the present, just because it is the past. For this reason I always make the very most of “social justice” and insist on our vast superiority to our ancestors in that respect. Another useful example would be the penal code – formally so brutal.

A useful “visual aid” is on the next page: It should be light and easily rolled up and must have a loop at each end to hang either way up on the blackboard. Example of use: [p109] Take social justice and obtain general agreement on the superiority of modern standards. Then ask,

“Which way up?”

Answer: “1946 up.”

Question: “Why? Unless you have a yardstick you can not possibly tell. Those of you who think you are animals must follow the law of the jungle – survival of the fittest and the weakest to the wall – in which case 1900 should be at the top.” Then take the picture rail or some other permanent fixture in the room, and hang your arrow on it, 1946 upwards. This will help to emphasise the decision they have made as to which way up it should hang.



Proceed to another example such as the sanctity of treaties and make the same point. It is useful to take sex morality, for there you are quite sure to get violent differences of opinion as to whether our fathers’ strictness or our own “broadmindedness” is the more admirable. You can end up by showing the confusion which has actually resulted over the question – all for lack of a yardstick.

In my experience it is quite useless to spend more than a few minutes over the question of

human purpose and destiny. I have given up taking a written answer because the result is a foregone conclusion. Only a tiny minority – rarely more than ten per cent – even know what the question means. I still take a show of hands, and then give them the parable of the ship's captain setting out with sealed orders, and being unable to find them when he wants to. Neither lie nor the class know where they are going or why.

[p110] One last point. Let no man be discouraged if – after using all his wit, and far better examples, parables and visual aids than I have been able to think of – he finds that he has convinced nobody! The sceptic on the matter of values is, in my experience, unconvertible. So much the better. If you are fortunate he will demand – probably with some show of heat – to know your authority. This is the best possible lead-up to the all important subject of the next discussion.

Books recommended: *Broadcast Talks* by C. S. Lewis. This takes an entirely different line to that sketched above. I have always been debarred through lack of time from a thorough discussion of it. It is quite admirable and there is no need to look further.  
For deeper reading: *The Abolition of Man*, by the same author.

## DISCUSSION 4

### AUTHORITY FOR ETERNAL STANDARDS

#### *Preliminary Notes.*

1. We now reach the climax of the whole course. The grounds for belief in the Godhead of Christ, and His consequent authority to lay down the moral law and to reveal the purpose and destiny of man. This tremendous subject should never be skimmed for time. I have had to do it in two periods, but three is the real minimum, and I need hardly say that even this allows no time for real discussion if the class is either keen or volubly obstructive. In fact it is extraordinarily hard to estimate how much time to allow. Sometimes when the majority of the class is Christian and the opposition is "dumb" the work is easy. It is also dull and unsatisfactory! At other times two or three earnest supporters, or voluble opponents, make it difficult to finish at all. Probably, the best compromise is to allow three periods and arrange voluntary discussions out of hours for those who wish to go further.

2. A lecture is always fatal, but never so fatal as at this stage. One of three things, and probably all three, will happen if it is attempted.

(a) Interest flags.

(b) The class feels that religion is being forced down its throat.

(c) The lecturer is suspected of putting up a fraudulent case. The more pauses for questions and discussion the better the result.

3. It is necessary to concentrate on pulverising the arguments of those who try to pick and choose by accepting the moral teaching of the Gospels while rejecting the supernatural element as legendary.

4. At the risk of offending the pious one must be quite cold-blooded, and insist on examining the evidence bit by bit. Only by abandoning all reserve can its full [p112] strength be brought out. I have found it worth while to start with a warning that this will be done, and to beg the convinced Christians not to be shocked. One other warning should perhaps be given before discussion gets under way, that is that no discussion of the Character of Christ will be allowed.

5. It is necessary to reiterate the miraculous again and again: "You can no more take the miraculous out of Christianity than the rattiness out of a rat."

The three diagrams reproduced in this Discussion have been found invaluable. This first one is left up during the whole discussion:

**C**laim  
**U**nique  
**E**xplanation?  
**D**eluded?  
**T** rue  
**P** roof  
**G** ospel Miracles  
**R** esurrection

This is a prepared board which shows the first letter of each point to be discussed in large capitals. The rest of the word is hidden by a sliding slip, which is withdrawn as the point is made. The advantage is that it rouses the curiosity of the class to start with, and then fixes their attention point by point. It also serves as a help to memory.

### PRÉCIS OF DISCUSSION

#### *Three Categories of Eternal Standards:*

Those of Beauty, Goodness, and Truth. Where can we find Authority? [p113]

Beauty against ugliness.

Not very easy. The common verdict of mankind over several generations is the best we can do.

Good against evil.

Again the common verdict of mankind gives a rough but by no means a ready guide. All great religions have given fairly good advice, but there are many contradictions. As an authority it is too woolly and vague. The individual conscience is probably more effective. It says "I ought" and "I ought not," but it is easily silenced or twisted. Where is the external authority, definite and clear-cut, to say "This is right and this is wrong"? There is only one answer possible to Western man, for there is only one claimant – the Carpenter of Nazareth.

Here is the Authority we have been looking for, if we can accept Him as reliable.

Truth – final truth. Again the Carpenter claims to give the final answer to the questions, "Why am I here? What am I here for? Where am I going?"

Can we accept His Authority as final? Our ancestors did because they believed Him to be God. Were they right, or were they misled by a mass of legends?

### *The Evidence.*

Partly documentary (this is what we shall consider). Four incomplete accounts of Christ's public Life. One description of the very early history of the Church. Twenty-one letters to Christians in various parts of the world. Nine authors in all.

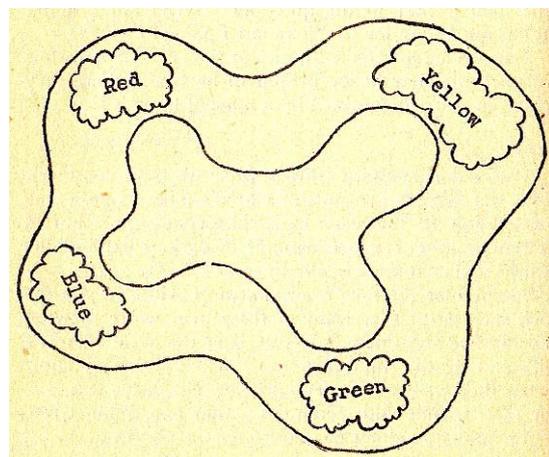
Assume for the sake of argument (I will give you the argument later) that eight of these men wrote between twenty-five and thirty-five years after the event (Christ's life and death), that they were in a position to know what they were talking about being either eye-witnesses or their friends and secretaries; that one, John, wrote later, probably about 60 years after the event. [p114]

### *Legend?*

Was there time for the main lines of the story to be obscured by legend? Remember, legend is not conscious lying. It is a story told by someone who believes or imagines it to be true, but which is in fact false. It needs time to grow. Compare the time between the event and the recordings of it to that between now and the 1914 war. Any one who served in the 1914 war could give an account of his adventures and they would be true, unless he chose to "shoot a line." It would have been very difficult to these men to shoot a line because there were thousands of people still alive who could and would have contradicted them.

This diagram has been found useful to illustrate what may reasonably be asked of an intelligent sceptic.

[p115] The outer line represents the story as we have it to-day. The coloured scrawls represent the coloured clouds of legend which readily collect round the life of any great man. The inner line represents the truth underlying the story when the legends have been discounted. Any reasonable class, no matter how sceptical, will agree that the diagram represents a fair proposal if the authors of the story really are honest witnesses, and that the inner line should be more or less the same shape as the outer – i.e., the main lines of the story will be accurate.



*Note:* It is necessary to make it quite clear that the diagram does not represent your opinion – merely what you consider is fair to ask of the sceptic!

The shape can of course be any shape you like.

*The Story.*

That of a Carpenter who left His bench; started teaching in Judea and demanded absolute faith in Himself: absolute obedience to Himself. The first thing people noticed was that He spoke with Authority. He claimed to forgive sins. He treated the temple as His own house. He claimed to have existed before time. He accepted Divine honours. He was tried for His life, condemned and executed for blasphemy. He supplied the evidence Himself, when the witnesses for the prosecution failed to agree.\*

*The Human Christ.*

It is fashionable to-day to speak of Him as a great man, a great moral teacher; probably the greatest who has ever lived, but to dismiss His claim to be God as an impossible superstition. This simply does not wash. It [p116] doesn't make sense, for the claim to be Divine is literally the whole point of the story. It is the crucial point in more senses than one, for it led straight to the Cross. Say, if you like, that the story has become surrounded by a fringe of legend which you take leave to doubt, but that you believe its main lines. Good enough; but this *is* the main line of the story. It is also the *whole point* of the story. If I were to write an account of how I rode a horse in a straight line from London to York across country, and jumped every fence on the way, you would be entitled to say it was a lie. You would *not* be entitled to say "I believe he went from London to York, but obviously he went by train." That is silly. It is not worth saying, for the whole point of my story is that *I rode*.

So far you are entitled to say that Christ made this extraordinary claim, but that there is not a shadow of evidence for it; that it is absurd on the face of it. You cannot say that He did not make the claim, *for that is the main point of the story*.

*Unique Claim.*

Before going on it is worth noting that this claim is unique in all history. No other religious leader has made it. Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius would have been horrified at the idea. It has never been made by any one with the slightest pretensions to greatness, and the greater the man the less possible is it for him to make it.

Consider its enormity. It means that the hands and feet of the helpless baby in the manger, the hands and feet of the criminal on the Cross, were the hands and feet of the Eternal Creator of Heaven and Earth.

[p117] Those who do not accept Christ's claim to be God are faced with a very difficult problem. A problem which most of them have never considered. How is it that a man whose greatness is so patently obvious, whose character is so beautiful that it has captured the minds and hearts of mankind, whom we are still arguing about after nineteen centuries, could have made a claim which, if it is not true, is a mere blasphemous absurdity?

*Objections and Answers:*

*Objection 1.* "Christ did not claim to be God, only the Son of God or Son of Man. Your are exaggerating if you turn this into a claim to be God."

*Answer.* This can often be satisfactorily answered by pointing to the result which these self-

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\* *Note:* It is questionable how much detailed evidence of Our Lord's claim should be given at this stage. I usually give rather more than the bare outline quoted above, but I believe it is a mistake to give it all, for three reasons:

1. It is difficult to do so without a great many quotations, which are liable to bore people.
2. A class can actually be made sullen by the overwhelming evidence; particularly if it is not putting up violent opposition. An overdose of proof can induce a "so what?" mood which is difficult to get rid of.
3. It is very advisable to keep something ready to deal with objectors. Here I have reserved a good deal of detailed evidence to help the man who maintains that the expression "Son of God" does not imply the claim to *be* God. I have no idea how far this reserve is wise or justified in dealing with schoolboys.

claimed titles had on our Lord's audiences. His enemies treated Him as a blasphemer and often tried to lynch Him, even when He was only hinting at His true identity. The questions put to Him at His trial, His answers, the immediate, horrified reaction of the judges, "You have heard his blasphemy; what need we of further witnesses?" is usually conclusive. But often it is worth while to go into the evidence in detail, showing how the claim was gradually brought out – the preservation of a mysterious reserve as to who He actually was, coupled with claims which no sane Jew would think of making.

For example: The Son of Man is greater than the Temple; greater than Solomon; greater than the Sabbath. "Your sins are forgiven you I am the Way, the Truth and the Life"; "He that loves father or mother, wife or children more than me is not worthy of me"; "I am the Resurrection and the Life." It is worth pointing out that He told the apostles to say "Our Father," and spoke to them of "your Father," but never uses these words in His own person – always "My [p118] Father." It is easy to lead on from these tremendous hints to the great declarations at the end of His life, "Before Abraham was made I AM"; "My Father and I are One"; the great answer at the trial in full. St. Thomas' declaration, "My Lord and my God," and finally the commission to the apostles with its preface, "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth."

*Objection 2. "You are wrong when you say that Christ's claim was unique. Plenty of other men have claimed to be God. There is nothing unusual about it."*

*Answer.* Hitler and the Emperor of Japan are popular instances. The Roman Emperors are also brought up but not nearly so often. It is worth while to spend a few. minutes on this objection, for the idea than Our Lord is one of many claimants is very common.

*Objection 3. "The claim was certainly made by Christ, or else the writers of the Gospels made it for Him. It was the obvious thing to do in a superstitious age to draw attention to His message."*

*Answer.* This objection is not intended as an insult to Christ's character, but as a tribute to His ability! It is the logical result of disbelief in standards. In the case of a small minority this has gone so far that they have accepted as a dogma the belief that "the end justifies the means."

## THE PROOFS

### *Miracles.*

Christ expected His friends to believe in Him on account of His overwhelming personality, but He knew that this would not be enough for the mob, nor for us, for we can only see a faint reflection of that tremendous [p119] presence. So He offered proofs; not celestial fireworks to stun His enemies into submission – He repeatedly refused to do this – but signs which clearly showed that He could overrule the ordinary laws of nature at will, both by healing the incurable in a moment by His mere word or touch, and by controlling the very elements, by calming the storm or feeding the five thousand. You may object that now at any rate we have entered the clouds of legend. These things are obviously impossible. The stories must have been added afterwards. They may have been added in good faith, but anyhow they were added. "Legendary accretions" is the technical term. This attitude of mind is reasonable in an atheist. It is the only view he can possibly take, for he believes that "nature" is a closed system, and denies the existence of any outside influence which could modify her laws. That is understandable enough, but what is extraordinary is to find the miracles doubted or explained away by "Christians" on the grounds of their impossibility. Once admit an all powerful Creator and miracles become possible. If you are presumptuous enough, you can say that you don't think He ought to interfere with His own laws. You must not say that He cannot do so, for that is a contradiction – the Omnipotent *can* do anything. The question of whether He has done so becomes a simple question of evidence. The man who calls himself a Christian can still doubt Our Lord's miracles provided that he considers the gospels merely as fairly reliable records of His life; *provided* – a most important proviso – that he has never read them, or that he has quite forgotten the story they tell. Once he has read them – even superficially – he must either give up believing a word they say, or accept the miraculous. The reason is that there is far too much of it. Not more than a

quarter of the chapters in Matthew, Mark and Luke are free from the miraculous element. Mark in particular, which is commonly believed to be the oldest [p120] and most “primitive” gospel, contains very little of Christ’s teaching, but is stuffed full of miracles which are described in the most vivid detail. Either they happened, or the whole story is false from start to finish.

A great many people are sentimentally reluctant to admit this, so they put on a pair of blinkers, ignore the “nature miracles” (or find some utterly fantastic explanation for them) and concentrate on the miraculous cures, for which they try to find a natural explanation on the grounds of faith healing, or the power of mind over matter. It is pointed out that modern psychology has proved that many diseases have a nervous origin and can be cured by putting the patient’s mind right. This is undeniable, but it is just as undeniable that many – I should say most – diseases, not to mention wounds, are organic and not functional. They have nothing to do with nerves and can only be cured by prolonged treatment often involving an operation. They can only be cured instantaneously by the intervention of God and, if the gospels are reliable records of facts, that is exactly what happened.

The Incarnation itself is a miracle of God’s goodness, so great as to be far beyond our understanding. If you believe that, surely you can believe these lesser miracles, for they were simply particular examples of that same divine goodness, and their motive was the same – to lift the load of human misery, to help our faith, and to teach us a little of God’s nature in human terms which we can understand. If you do not believe, you should at least be able to see that these are no tales of haphazard celestial monkey-tricks, no mere display of power. They fit into the great scheme. If there was a God who cared enough for us to take our nature, to live in poverty and die in agony, His miracles are just what we might expect, for at one and the same time they prove both His power and His love. The evidence for events which, so far from [p121] being improbable are so much to be expected, is certainly worth your consideration.

*Note.* I have never had time to bring out the point that a miracle does not involve a “breach” of the natural law, but only the supernatural introduction of another factor which is then assimilated by nature. I am sure that this would often be worth an explanation. I recommend *Miracles* by C. S. Lewis as indispensable background reading.

#### *Objections and Answers.*

*Objection 1.* “The gospel writers put nothing on paper till many years after the events. I believe they imagined the miracles and wrote them down in all good faith. They got the details wrong and just added that touch of the queer which made natural events seem miraculous.”

*Answer.* It is well known that you remember what you see a thousand times better than what you hear. None of you will be able to remember a single sentence of mine this time to-morrow, but you may remember my diagrams, or my appearance; and if I were to do something out of the ordinary, such as hitting one of you, or throwing a box of chalk at him, you would never forget it. The difficulty of the evangelists would be to remember Our Lord’s words rather than His actions. Imagine the impression that must have been made on an eye-witness by a leper suddenly healed or a dead man brought to life. Every detail of the scene must have been stamped on his memory.

*Objection 2.* “Other people have performed miracles besides Christ – what about faith healing.”

*Answer.* Other people certainly have performed miracles, but only in His name. He alone did them by His own power. I know that miracles do happen to-day. [p122] They are rare but they happen. Remember that a miracle is not just an answer to prayer; that is an everyday affair. A miracle is an answer to prayer so startling that it *can not* be merely natural. The instantaneous cure of an organic disease is the best example. If that happened through faith healing, and the medical evidence was water tight, it would be a miracle.

*Objection 3.* “What about the queer things done by witch doctors and Yogis?”

*Answer.* I doubt if Yogis would care to be lumped together with witch doctors, but they have this in common. They have both studied the power of mind over matter, and know far more about it than we do. The witch doctor has, I believe, three or four good herb cures, but he makes his living and his reputation by hurting and killing rather than curing. Most of his power is due

to the superstitious fears of his people.

The Yogis are on a far higher plane. They study the control of the body scientifically, starting with deep breathing exercises. I have yet to hear that they work miracles in the Christian sense of the word.

*Objection 4. "The miraculous nature of the gospel cures often hangs upon one word. For example, if substitute 'hours' for days' in the story of Lazarus, it is all too easy. He was in a coma."*

*Answer.* The only answer to this is to tell the story in full and prove to the questioner that he has either never read it or forgotten it. There are few if any cases in which the real account leaves room for doubt. Either a miracle actually happened or the account is a deliberate invention.

*Objection 5. "Why worry about miracles? Our Lord declined to use them to convince His enemies, and sometimes tried to keep them secret." [p123]*

*Answer.* He only declined to work miracles in cases of obstinate refusal to believe in Him. Usually the miracle was the reward of faith, but He often resorted to it to strengthen faith when it was failing – John the Baptist's disciples: or to restore faith when it had been lost – St. Thomas. There is no hint that He ever refused to work a miracle because His enemies were present. He used their very presence as an indictment against them. He first appealed to His personality, then to His "works" as a sign of His divine mission. Since He did so, we cannot ignore them.

*Objection 6. "If His enemies saw Him do these wonderful things, why did they not believe in Him?"*

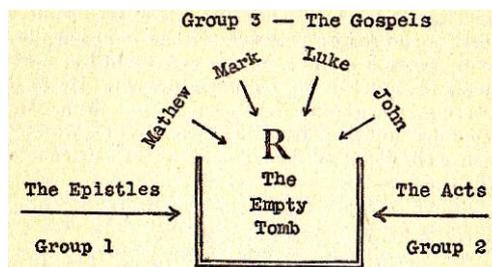
*Answer.* Because their minds were so evil that they could not recognise incarnate Goodness when they saw it. They actually attributed His power to the devil. They never denied it either then or in later years.

#### *The Resurrection.*

We now come to the crux of the Christian story: the very lynch-pin of the Faith. If the Founder of Christianity really raised Himself from the grave, no further argument is possible. He has proved His Godhead, and His right to our absolute allegiance and unquestioning obedience.

In order to weigh the evidence fairly we must understand the aims of our witnesses, and the public for whom they wrote. If they intended to convert the world by writing, we should have a right to expect a logical and orderly proof of the Christian claim, but in fact this was very far from the case. The "good news" was preached, not written – not a line has come down to us from the Apostles which was intended to convert any one. The books of the New Testament were written exclusively for Christians. They needed no written proof and were given none, for they already knew the truth. [p124]

*(At this point I put the following diagram on the board. The letter R stands for the Resurrection.)*



The documents may be divided into three groups, each having a different aim, and each giving a different line of approach to the Resurrection. When we realise what those aims were we shall find that each group contributes its quota to the mass of evidence. The proof is built up naturally and often unintentionally, and we can learn as much from the authors' silence as from their statements.

Group One (*see diagram*) consists of the “Epistles”; letters written to the Christian communities scattered up and down the shores of the Mediterranean.

Many of them were written to meet temporary and local needs, others have a more general interest. They are in the nature of “directives,” and they were almost all written between the years A.D. 45 and 65. Their contribution to the evidence for the Resurrection lies in the fact that they are not concerned to give any! The early Christians are congratulated and encouraged when they do well. They are given detailed instruction on disputed points, but belief in the Resurrection *is assumed as a matter of course*. It would be strange if it were not, for it is the foundation of the Christian’s faith and way [p125] of life. There is no need to prove the soundness of the foundations of a house to those who live in it.

Why, then, labour the obvious? For this reason: there is no conception dearer to the heart of the modern sceptic than “the gradual growth of legend.” To this he attributes belief, not only in the Resurrection, but in every- thing supernatural in the Christian story. The historic fact that thousands upon thousands of people already believed these things within a generation of the Crucifixion is well worth pointing out. If this is a legend, at least it grew with remarkable speed.

Only one objection has ever been brought up by cadets at this point. As far as I can see, it is the only one which could be brought up. It is an obvious one and so is the answer.

*Objection.* “The fact that a story was widely believed within a generation of its alleged occurrence is no proof that it is true. There are lots of examples of legends which have grown far faster than that.”

*Answer.* I never said that this widespread belief did prove the truth of the story. I merely pointed out that this belief did exist as a matter of history, in case it had escaped your notice. It proves nothing, but it removes one difficulty. I should find it difficult if not impossible to believe in the Resurrection if there was no evidence to show that it was not widely believed from the beginning. I think I have shown that this evidence does exist and that there is plenty of it.

Group Two (*see diagram*) consists of a single book, the Acts of the Apostles – the history of the foundation of the Church and of its first missionary campaigns. It describes and quotes the first “sermons” of the Apostles. It was not written to convert any one, any more than were the Epistles, but it does show how the first converts were made. We might [p126] expect that they would have been led gradually up to the supreme event, but in fact they were convinced *first of all* full of the Resurrection, by men who were so of their tremendous message that they could not keep silence. They concentrate upon it to the exclusion of lesser matters. “He is risen, we have seen Him, talked to Him, eaten with Him, we are His witnesses – *we know*.” Here is the explanation of the extraordinarily rapid spread of belief in the Resurrection. Conviction was the result of the sincerity, the courage, and, incidentally, of the miraculous signs worked by the men who claimed to be their Master’s witnesses. Can we at this distance of time decide whether the first Christians were right in accepting the word of right accepting these *soi-disant* witnesses? The answer is given in the third group of documents – the Gospels (*see diagram*) – which show how the Apostles themselves were convinced, but the Acts makes one thing very clear. All talk of the “slow growth of legend” is utter nonsense. This thing did not grow like a legend; it burst like a bomb!

Peter opened his campaign in Jerusalem while the Crucifixion was still fresh in men’s minds – within a mile of that unaccountably empty Tomb. If he had been concerned to propagate a legend, surely Galilee would have been the place to do it. In Galilee there were thousands of devoted friends of Jesus – “ignorant peasants” no doubt, ready to believe anything! A week’s journey from Jerusalem – far enough to make it difficult to check on the actual facts – the ideal culture in which to cultivate fairy stories. But Peter is not interested in fairy stories; his business is to establish a Fact. He chooses Jerusalem as His headquarters – not a very good place to start a legend with the Sanhedrin on the spot ready to stamp it out, but *the place of all others* for a man to complete the history of the Crucifixion, if he was certain of his facts and had the courage to face persecution.

[p127] Its advantage lay in this: the masses of Jerusalem already knew a great deal.

Thousands of them had seen the trial before Pilate. Carried away by mob brutality they had joined in the yells for the prisoner's blood; had noticed in spite of themselves His dignity, His unheard of courage upon the Cross, and the strange portents which accompanied His death. They knew that the Tomb was empty. If ever a city had an uneasy conscience, Jerusalem must have been that city during the fateful six weeks which followed the first Good Friday. Guilty, ashamed, and half afraid, Peter's first audiences reacted to his proclamation like petrol to a match. Mass conversions followed – even the priests were not immune. Caiaphas and his gang were left fuming with no argument but threats, no weapon but the scourge. Even that they did not dare to use as they would have liked, for this time the people were against them.

*Note.* I have seldom had to deal with any worth-while objections up to this point. However sceptical a class may be, they will agree that the Epistles prove that faith in the Resurrection was widespread within a generation of its supposed (sic) occurrence, and that the Acts reduce the time factor to six weeks in the case of Jerusalem and show how the story was first put about. The real objections come when the gospels are appealed to to show how the apostles were convinced themselves, i.e. whether the belief was based on fact or fiction. It is possible to make two mistakes here, and considerable judgment is needed in deciding how to handle this final – and vital – phase of the discussion. If the opposition is strong and intelligent, the objections must be dealt with one by one and in detail. This is the most satisfactory method, but it is quite fatal if there is a numerically strong but woolly-minded Christian majority and a dumb opposition. I then go straight through the evidence and hope for the [p128] best. It is a harrowing experience to try to argue with people who don't want to argue; beside which it is worse than useless, for they only get bored. I give here the two extremes. Between them there are an infinite number of variations.

*First method. For use with a strong opposition.*

For the facts we must go to the Gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke who each tell the story in their own way – and John, writing much later, who fills in the gaps left by the others. Here are the main points. The -finding of the empty tomb by the women early on Sunday morning. Our Lord's appearance, first to Mary Magdalen, then to the other women. Then a whole series of appearances to the apostles and others over a period of six weeks, ending with the ascension into heaven. That is the shortest possible outline of the events which convinced the witnesses, or which they pretended had convinced them, and induced them to spend the rest of their lives convincing the world.

If the Resurrection is not a fact, you are left with three choices: either Christ never died on the cross at all; or the apostles were the victims of mass hallucinations; or the whole story after the account of the burial is false, and the apostles were a gang of successful racketeers out to deceive the world for their own ends. If none of these suggestions hold water then the Resurrection is a fact – the greatest fact of all time and the most important to you and me. Which shall we take first? (You may get one or more of these classic objections and in any order. I give them all.)

*Objection 1. "Christ never died on the cross."*

*Answer.* To appreciate this objection you must consider it in detail, and carry it to its conclusion. Consider the brutality with which He was treated even before the [p129] crucifixion. The scourging, the crowning with thorns, the journey to Calvary carrying that fearful load. Then the long hours hanging by the nailed hands and feet. Remember that it was Roman soldiers who decided that He was dead, men who were well accustomed to death and were hardly likely to make a mistake. We need not rely on their judgment for they made sure by piercing His side with a spear. They at least had no doubts after that.

If in spite of everything they were wrong, He must have fainted or been in a coma. Then He "came to" in the stuffy atmosphere of the sealed tomb. Most extraordinary of all, He must have come to, not as a helpless tortured cripple, but as a man radiant with health and energy, strong enough to push open the rock door and to walk surprising distances in spite of lacerated feet in order to find his unfortunate friends and impose on them. The thing has only to be thought out to show its absurdity. It is both physically and morally impossible.

*Objection 2. "The appearances were due to mass hallucinations."*

*Answer.* To be hallucinated people must be in the right frame of mind. If the apostles had been expecting Christ to rise again, they might possibly have imagined that they saw Him. All the records make it very clear that they expected nothing of the kind. They had lost their faith and were in a state of complete despair.

*Objection 3. "The Gospels were written a long time after the event. It would be very easy for the writers to imagine that they had been in despair thirty years ago. Even if they were completely honest, they would realise how much it would strengthen their case to be able to say that the Resurrection took them by surprise; and in time they come to believe it."*

*Answer.* The evidence of their despair and incredulity is extraordinarily strong. It is true to say that no one to whom Our Lord appeared was believed by his friends [p130] until they themselves were in turn convinced. Still, let us suppose that you are right. Even then it is astonishingly hard to fit the evidence to hallucinations, for if they really saw Him, or rather thought they saw Him just because they expected to, it is quite certain that they would have recognised Him when He first appeared. *Dig never did.* Mary Magdalen thought He was the gardener. The two disciples took Him for a complete stranger. The apostles thought He was a spirit. Never was He recognised until He chose. We do not know why He chose to hide His identity, but the fact that He did so utterly disproves the hallucination theory. If you are expecting a friend and think you see him, the false recognition comes first and is followed by disillusionment. The appearances of Our Lord are utterly different. They work the other way round – the way of reality. If you accept the hallucination theory, you must do so with all its implications, and you will find that these particular hallucinations were unlike any that have happened before or since. They lasted for six weeks. They included medals together, and the closest physical contact with the "vision." There is another very serious difficulty. Christ's tomb was empty. That was so well known that the apostles themselves never bothered to mention it, and the priests, who could have stifled the story in a day if they could have denied it, did not dare to do so.

*Objection 4. "The apostles were simply racketeers. They invented the whole story of the Resurrection after stealing the body, and later committed it to writing, no doubt with many improvements."*

*Answer.* In dealing with this objection it is necessary to point out that if it is valid, the whole gospel story is a tissue of lies, for it is obviously impossible to trust anything from the pens of men involved in such a cunning plot. All that we are entitled to believe is that there was [p131] a man – a carpenter from Nazareth – who created a stir by his preaching and was eventually put to death by the Roman Governor for making trouble. This granted, the story is physically possible. The apostles could have stolen the body and invented and carried out their plot, if they had been able and courageous crooks. That is not the account which they give of themselves, but why should it be? By the time the plot and its astonishing success came to be written down, it would have been well polished and they might be expected to write themselves down as stupid cowardly peasants. There remain some insuperable difficulties:

1. Was there a motive strong enough to justify their action? The only possible one is an extreme form of Japanese "face saving." Sooner than sink into their well-deserved obscurity, these wretched men were determined to carry on the campaign of deception in the hope that there might be "something in it" for them, both financially and by way of notoriety. That seems a desperate chance even to start with, but would they have been so obsessed with the plan as to have kept it up for years after it had become clear that there was nothing in it for them except contempt and persecution, ending with death, usually inflicted by torture? Is it conceivable that in the course of their long lives, spent in utter devotion to a cause which they knew to be false, that not one of them should have faltered in his assumed faith and given the game away?

2. Could they have deceived people as they did, in the very country where they and their master were well known? Where the civil and ecclesiastical government were ready and anxious to stamp out their movement? Where there were thousands of people who could and would have checked up on their stories and have contradicted them when they strayed from the truth? [p132]

3. Is it even remotely possible that such stupendous results could have followed such a paltry

plot?

These are the classic objections to the historic fact of the Resurrection. I think it is worth giving the answers shortly, even if they are not brought up, unless the class is obviously ready to believe. Care must be taken not to spend too much time on them at the expense of difficulties which the young men may think of for themselves. I find it an advantage to end with the “racket theory” if possible, as it gives an opportunity for lifting the discussion out of the atmosphere of niggling details which is so liable to spread, and to ensure that they go away realising, however dimly, that they have been discussing the most stupendous event in all history.

*Second Method. For use when the opposition is negligible.*

Group Three – the Gospels – tells how the witnesses were convinced in spite of themselves. The finding of the open and empty Tomb by the women, who expected to find it closed; the long series of appearances, first to Mary Magdalen, then to the other women; then repeatedly to the disciples over a period of forty days, culminating in the last meal together and the Ascension. All this, we are told, was nothing but a series of delusions. The women “imagined things.” The Apostles suffered from mass hallucinations. The conversion of the world, the greatest transformation that history has ever known, was due to nothing more than the delusions of a few peasants. It seems a paltry cause to produce so gigantic a result!

Nor is this all. Hallucinations require a favourable state of mind on the part of the hallucinated. They see whom or what they expect to see, and they recognise the vision at once. If doubt and disillusion come, they follow later, when the first effect has worn off. Our Lord’s [p133] appearances were not like this. They never seem to have been expected. He was rarely, if ever, recognised at first, but only when He chose to reveal Himself. So little were His friends prepared to see Him that they always disbelieved the reports of others who had done so. Each individual and group had to be convinced separately. The scepticism of Thomas was typical. Repeatedly Jesus went out of His way to offer proofs of the reality of His risen body, by demanding food and by insisting on being “handled.” No one can really read the Gospels and honestly think they are describing delusions.

The priests had a different story. “The apostles came by night and stole the body.” That is a physical possibility, but does it really hold water? Twelve peasants who had proved themselves to be arrant cowards, suddenly change into the boldest rogues imaginable, take an incredible initial risk, unseal and push open a rock-door, carry off a body without waking the guard, and face flogging, persecution, torture, and death all to propagate a gigantic fraud.

The man who can believe that will believe anything. Even the astonishing result – thousands of converts in a few days; perseverance in face of the bloodiest persecution by the Roman Empire; conversion of the Empire itself, and transformation of the history of the world, will leave him unmoved. The man who can ignore the records and invent a human Christ in order to account for the Christian law of love will find no difficulty in ignoring the records once more and ascribing the Christian creed, which hangs on the fact of the Resurrection, to an incredibly audacious fraud. A fraud not conceived by a genius; not even by a gang of ordinarily intelligent criminals, but by a few cowardly and despairing peasants.

The human mind works by the laws of reason; the first of these laws is that every effect must be produced by a cause greater than itself. Plus cannot come out of [p134] minus. Yet a certain type of mind will dethrone reason herself sooner than admit that there is a God. As for the notion that God is Love, that He became Man out of love of us, proved His love by His life of poverty and death in agony, and proved His Godhead by His resurrection; perish the thought! It involves the supernatural, which not only can, but has, broken into the closed circle of our comfortable, human, material scheme of things. Worse still, if it were once admitted, we should have to make a return of love. We should have to try to *live* by this hideously uncomfortable and exacting Christian code, instead of talking about it. Reason is sound enough for material purposes – here she is out of place. Away with her and with Him too. “We will have no King but Caesar,” bread and circuses – not the Cross.

Book recommended: *The New Testament*.

## DISCUSSION 5

## THE TITLE DEEDS OF THE FAITH

*Preliminary Notes.*

I thought a long time before introducing the question of the trustworthiness of the New Testament; in fact, I kept off it until I was convinced by experience that there was widespread doubt about it in the minds of many of my listeners. The doubters are in a minority, but they are numerous enough to warrant attention. Most of those who take the Gospels on trust do so only because they have never given the matter a thought. Not one in a thousand is capable of attempting their defence. A state of happy trust based on ignorance may be well enough in an age of faith, but it is a dangerous state to be in to-day.

I repeat two remarks verbatim which will, I hope, exonerate me from the charge of disturbing the faith of the innocent: "It's all very well what you said, sir, but the history master at my school tells me that there is very little evidence that Christ ever existed."

"I have always been a sceptic, but if I had ever had an idea that the New Testament bore any relation to history, I should have taken a different view."

The logical place to discuss the veracity of the New Testament is naturally at the beginning, but this is a psychological impossibility. Every one thinks the subject is going to be dull, and they will not listen unless their interest has first been roused by the Incarnation. Owing to lack of time I usually have to be content with a bare summary, sandwiched into the main subject, but I am convinced that it should be treated fully.

## THE TITLE DEEDS

When we began this discussion I asked you to accept [p136] the fact that the New Testament in general and the Gospels in particular were written by trustworthy men, and I promised to give you the proof later. Obviously we can only deal with the subject in outline, but that outline should be known, and it very rarely is, even to educated Christians. Many do not even know that the books have been attacked, and they are liable to get a shock when they first hear them doubted. Suppose that you were suddenly confronted by a statement – given with an air of great assurance – that "modern scholarship has now proved the Gospels to be late forgeries unworthy of belief," what would be your reaction? You would put yourself hopelessly in the wrong if you were to lose your temper and deny that they have ever been criticised; and if you did, your friend might know enough high-sounding names and tags of "history" to convince you that you were wrong. Your faith would then be quite unnecessarily disturbed.

The plain fact is that the attack has been made. It has failed. The battle was long and bitter and lasted into this century. It is now over. Why, then, bother about it? *Because the man in the street is always a generation behind the man in the study.* When the controversy was at its height, say in 1870, you and I would have been unlikely to hear about it. In fact, some of the early critics were considerate enough to write their theses in Latin, so as not to disturb the populous prematurely. Now, however, odd scraps of information about the old disputes have reached people like ourselves. Few of us really know what the trouble was about, fewer still know that it is over; but there exists an uneasy feeling that the title deeds of the Faith are in dispute. This confirms the sceptic in his scepticism, and may worry the Christian. It is high time to bring the facts into the open. [p137]

*Manuscripts.*

I doubt if it is generally known that the manuscript evidence for the New Testament is immeasurably stronger and more ancient than that of any of the classics. Our manuscripts run into thousands, but the classics, which are not disputed by any one, have to depend on a few dozens at the most, often on far less, and sometimes on a single unit. Our boldest copies date from the

fourth century, when the first durable writing material – vellum – was introduced. The gap between them and the date of their origin is 250 years. We have to be content with far longer gaps for the classics. Virgil is in the best case. Our earliest copy dates from 350 years after his death. Horace has a gap of 800 years and Demosthenes 1,200. There is no need to labour the point, for the most sceptical of the critics admitted that the Church had the Gospels at the end of the second century. He knew nothing of the discoveries which were to come. In 1931 the great find of the Chester Beatty papyri, dating from the third century, reduced our gap by a hundred years, and in 1935 a few verses of St. John’s Gospel were found in a library in Manchester, *which are ascribed to the first half of the second century* – considerably earlier than the old-fashioned radical estimate of the date of its original composition.

*The “swing back to tradition.”*

The following table shows the tremendous change which has taken place since the critical attack began in 1835:

<i>Author and date of writing.</i>	<i>Estimate of the date of the Gospel.</i>			
	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Strauss 1835		150 at the earliest.		
Baur 1847	130	150	150	160-170
Renan 1877	84	76	94	100-110
Harnack 1911	70	65	67	after 95

[p138] It was Harnack who called this the great swing back. He said well. The twentieth century has reversed the verdict of the old radical critics, and has admitted that the ancient tradition as to the date of the Gospels is virtually accurate. We believe that St. Matthew wrote in Hebrew considerably earlier than A.D. 70, but agree that the date of the Greek translation, which is all we possess, is uncertain. There are reasons for putting Mark and Luke a little earlier than does Harnack – say 60 and 62 – but that is a small matter. Strangely enough, we agree about St. John, once supposed to be the latest and most flagrant forgery of all. He undoubtedly wrote at the end of the first century; probably after 95, but not later than 100. A few outstanding reasons for this revolution in critical opinion are worth knowing and easy to remember.

1. The overwhelming evidence for a universal tradition as to the apostolic authorship of the fourfold Gospel, at the end of the second century, made it impossible to maintain that this was based on nothing but recent forgeries. Witnesses from East and West make it certain that this tradition was not only universal but already ancient, and never doubted by any one. There is clear proof, too, that the leaders of the Church were quick to reject spurious documents which pretended to apostolic authorship, for several were actually published, only to be condemned as the impudent forgeries they were.

2. The few early Christian documents which had come down to us from the early second and late first centuries are steeped in the New Testament. As soon as their genuineness had been vindicated beyond reasonable doubt, a general attack on the sacred books became much more difficult to sustain. None of these early writers give a catalogue of the New Testament authors, for the good reason that they happened to be writing about something else, and their quotations are obviously from memory. [p139] This makes it difficult to say which Gospel they quote, so that it has been still possible to attack individual books such as those written by St. Luke.

3. A special attack was in fact made upon Luke on the grounds that he was a bad historian. Archæological research in Greece and Asia Minor has now proved him to be surprisingly accurate.

“Further study of Acts xiii-xxi showed that the book could *bear the most intimate scrutiny as an authority for the facts of the Aegean world, and it was written with such judgment, skill, art, and perception of truth as to be a model of historic statement ... The more I have learned year after year about Greco-Roman society and thought and fashion and organisations in those provinces, the more I admire and the better I understand. I set out to look for truth on the border where Greece and Asia meet and I found it here. You may press the words of Luke far*

*beyond any other historians and they stand the keenest scrutiny and the hardest treatment.”* That quotation is from Sir William Ramsay, who devoted his life to historical research in Asia Minor. Before starting in 1880 he read St. Luke, as he did every other book he could get hold of, but he was imbued with the prejudices of his age and did not expect to find anything of value. Sheer hard facts made him change his mind and pay his great tribute to the author of the Acts.

From the examples I have given I think it is fair to say that the tremendous change in critical opinion which has gone on during the last century has been brought about by common-sense examination of the evidence, by research, and by new discovery. In short, by scientific progress – the very thing which was once expected to make the Christian position untenable.

#### *The Authorship of the Gospels.*

So far we have only proved that the Gospels were written by men of Our Lord’s generation. What proof have we that their authors were the actual men to whom [p140] they are always ascribed? First, the universal and early tradition of the Primitive Church that the Apostle Matthew wrote first in Hebrew for the benefit of the converted Jews; that Mark was the interpreter of Peter, and wrote down his sermons; that Luke, being St. Paul’s disciple, put into a book the Gospel preached by his master; and that John wrote last of all in his old age. The earliest author to mention all four evangelists was St. Irenaeus, the martyred Bishop of Lyons. He was brought up in Asia Minor and learned the ‘Faith from St. Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John, and had known many other “eye-witnesses of the life of the Word.” We can go earlier still for the first two Gospels. St. Papias, who wrote early in the second century – not later than 130 – and who had known St. John personally, confirms the tradition’ as to Matthew and Mark, and adds the interesting information that Mark’s order is different from Matthew’s, because he was only concerned to report St. Peter’s sermons, which naturally disregarded the order of events.

The internal evidence of the Gospels themselves confirm and amplify the tradition, though none of them sign their books, or say in so many words that they wrote them. Matthew and Mark keep their secret best, but Matthew is obviously written for Jews and Mark shows clear signs that he is merely St. Peter’s interpreter. Matthew’s insistence that Our Lord is the true Messiah in whom the prophecies are fulfilled – the New Law-giver come to complete the old law – was of interest to Jews, but meant nothing to the Gentiles of the day. Mark’s is the shortest Gospel, for it contains little of Christ’s teaching, but incident after incident at which St. Peter was present is described at length, with a vividness of detail which is just what an old man would bring out in order to impress his audience with his authority as an eye-witness. St. Peter himself is never mentioned to his own advantage, [p141] and Our Lord’s rebukes to the Apostles are recorded quite bluntly. We would expect their leader to do this, but not an ordinary disciple writing on his own authority.

St. Luke’s Gospel bears out his own statement that he is a compiler of first-hand evidence. He makes great use of Mark and usually keeps to his order, perhaps out of respect for St. Peter. He often seems to follow Matthew, but many of the incidents described by Matthew and Luke contain different details, and Luke is clearly reporting another account. his Mother of Christ is – must be – the authority for his description of the Annunciation and the Virgin Birth, just as St. Matthew’s account of the Nativity is drawn from St. Joseph. Luke had other informants to whose identity we have no clue. If, as we shall see in a moment, Luke was St. Paul’s disciple and biographer, his Gospel must have been influenced and approved by the great Apostle.\*

The Acts gives away Luke’s identity. The style makes it certain that it was by the author of the third Gospel, and the famous “we sections” show that he was with Paul on many of his journeys. Couple this with Paul’s “only Luke is with me” and “Luke the beloved physician,” and reasoned doubt is impossible. It has, in fact, been abandoned, since Luke’s vindication as a contemporary historian, and the demonstration of his familiarity with the medical language of the day.

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\*Note: The unequivocal statement that St. Matthew wrote his Gospel first has come in for a great deal of criticism, but I have not yet heard any evidence which is worth weighing against the unanimous verdict of the great saints and scholars of the second and third centuries. Therefore the statement stands.

The exact relationship between the first three Gospels has been and still is the subject of controversy. It provides a problem, and has been given a name of its own – the synoptic problem. Great blocks of these Gospels deal with the same incidents and sometimes describe them in the same words, but often very differently. If you are [p142] sufficiently interested to study it, I suggest a golden rule: Beware of theories which contradict the ancient evidence. The saints and scholars of the first centuries were liable to make mistakes, but when they all say the same thing, their verdict should be treated with great respect. After all, they had better opportunities for finding out the truth than any which are open to us. Above all, beware of “lost documents,” which the evangelists are alleged to have copied. Documents of that importance are not easily lost. When they are never heard of until a nineteenth century scholar assures us that they must have existed, it is not unreasonable to assume that they are the product of that man’s brain.

St. John goes nearer than any of the others to signing his Gospel. There was a reason for this. He wrote much later than the others. He was the only Apostle left alive at least in the West. He wrote to supplement the synoptics, and to supplement them with a purpose. By the end of the century heretics had denied both Our Lord’s Godhead and His real Humanity. The other Gospels were content to allow His Divine and Human nature to appear naturally from the record of His life. Once they had been denied they had to be formally asserted. St. John does this by describing a few great miracles in detail (e.g. the raising of Lazarus), and by giving full accounts of those arguments with the scribes and pharisees which seem almost to have compelled Christ to make open declaration of His Divinity. John emphasises that he personally saw the result of the spear-thrust into His Master’s side, and proves the reality of His risen body in descriptions of the appearances after the Resurrection.

To add weight to his words – he not only declares that he was an eye-witness, not only an Apostle – but “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” To silence argument he throws false modesty to the winds. How can we be sure that the beloved disciple was John himself? There are [p143] four proofs, all compelling, and taken together I think you will agree that they bring certainty:

1. The author gives the names of individual Apostles even more often than the other evangelists, yet he never mentions the two who were next in importance to St. Peter – James and John. Only once are they referred to – as “the sons of Zebedee.”

2. The other Gospels show that Peter, James, and John were close friends, favoured above all the others by Christ. They alone were called into the house to see the raising of the ruler’s daughter; they alone witnessed the Transfiguration; they were offered a special share in the Agony in the garden. They were partners in the fishing business before their call. They are obvious leaders, and they know it. Yet James and John are not mentioned in the fourth Gospel.

3. Instead, we are introduced to this “other disciple and” the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He is as prominent as is John in the other Gospels, and – except when he stands with the Blessed Virgin, at the foot of the Cross – he is always in close association with Peter. Who can this be but John?

4. In the fourth Gospel, the Baptist is referred to simply as John, instead of as John the Baptist, as he is always called elsewhere. Who but John the Apostle could write of the other John with the certainty that he would not be confused with himself?

#### *The Veracity of the Gospels.*

I think you will agree that the evidence for the traditional date and the authorship of the Gospels is remarkably strong, but we must remember that it was never doubted by the rulers of the Jews or by the Romans, and still they did not believe. The former regarded the miracles as a sorcerer’s tricks, and the Resurrection as a fraud perpetrated by the Apostles – or at least they pretended [p144] that they did. The Gentile world as a whole started with the view that the thing was a base superstition promoted by lying knaves. This section of the discussion comes down, if not from the sublime, at least to the ridiculous; but we must not shirk it, for the Roman view that the thing was a hoax imposed on the mob by swindlers is only too common to-day. Let us state it cold-bloodedly, and see if it fits the facts, particularly the fourfold fact of the Gospels.

“The central figure round whom these stupid lies have been woven is an agitator who was sentenced to death and crucified by Pontius Pilate a few years ago. He was either a knave or a fool, and probably both. These yarns that are being spread about him by his miserable followers

are a pack of lies. They are simply trying to deceive the mob by pretending that this unimportant rebel, from a subject race, rose from his grave, and is in fact a god.”

Take that as it stands; see how we should have to class the authors of the Gospels, and then compare that judgment with the books they produced. In the first place, they were rogues determined to propagate a ramp of unexampled audacity. In fact, they are only to be distinguished from other rogues by their daring. Secondly, they were men of no great parts, unfitted, one would say, for their self-imposed task. Two of them – three if it comes to that – were peasants, the third an ex-doctor. This story that they imposed on the world was pure fiction, based on the flimsiest foundation of fact. Their “Christ” was the product of their own brains.

Now look at the work which these low-class ruffians produced. With apparently superhuman skill they constructed a fictitious personality so unique in its goodness, dignity, strength, and beauty that it captivated the imagination of mankind, and holds it even to-day. It [p145] lives and influences us as no character in fiction or history ever has. The fact that we are discussing it to-day is proof of that.

Side by side with their astonishing skill as fiction-writers, these clever rogues display a wonderful lack of common sense and worldly wisdom. Remember that they were writing fiction, and so had a free hand. They had two chances of success: one with the Jews and one with the Romans, and they threw them both away.

The Jews were looking for a Messiah. They expected one. The Nazarene was made by His biographers to claim the Messiahship, but instead of the national-leader who would free them from the Romans and re-establish their ancient glories he was represented as a moralist, uninterested in politics, insurrection, or war. A man who went out of his way to condemn the very men who might have given him the most effective support, and so alienated them that they handed him over to the very government that they hated.

Roman society was thoroughly tired of the official religion of the Empire. It no longer believed in it, except as a convenient and dignified support for Society. The Romans were tolerant people, very ready to welcome strange sects from the East, particularly if they had an air of mystery. If Christ had been depicted as a mere wonder-worker, who made no particular demands on his followers, his new sect might have had a considerable vogue, but these extraordinary missionaries of His wrote of His pity for the poor, His kindness to His enemies, and His rigid moral code. His attitude to sex and marriage was thoroughly outmoded, if indeed it had ever existed. His declaration that every one was equal in the sight of God seemed to threaten the very foundation of society; for how could one continue to own slaves if they were one’s equals? There was some strange and rather repulsive stuff about fasting and the Cross – in fact, the [p146] whole thing stank in the nostrils of Neronian and Caligulan thing society.

How came these story-tellers, who had such astonishing ability, to throw away their only chances of success? We can only conclude that they cared nothing for success, and were content to court disaster, not only for their cause, which they knew to be worthless, but for themselves.

What could their motive have been? We have touched on this already, and I will say no more about it, but will quote a historian who asked the same question sixteen hundred years ago, and answered it in his own way. He imagines the scene at the preliminary meeting of the conspirators and puts the proposition into the mouth of their leader:

*“Friends, you and I of all men are best informed with regard to the character of him, the deceiver and master of deceit of yesterday whom we have all seen undergo the extreme penalty. ... Come let us join hands and make a compact to carry to all men a tale of deceit on which we all agree ... Let us say that he cured lepers and raised the dead ... and since his end was a notorious death which we cannot deny, we can even slip out of this difficulty by determination, if we quite shamelessly bear witness that he joined us after his resurrection from the dead, and shared our usual home and food. Let us be impudent and determined and see that our wild project is carried out even to death. There is nothing ridiculous in dying for nothing at all. And why should we dislike to undergo for no good reason scourging and bodily torture, and if need be to experience imprisonment, dishonour and insult for what is untrue ... We will tell the same falsehoods and invent stories that will benefit nobody, neither ourselves nor those whom we deceive, nor him who is deified by our lies. And we will not confine ourselves to men of our own*

*race but go forth to all men and fill the whole world with our fabrications...*” Eusebius, H.E.

[p147] On that note of the *reductio ad absurdum* we will end. You can search history, you can flog your logic, you can call upon the new sciences of the mind, but you will never find an explanation for this unique event, and its transformation of the world’s story. An artisan lives in poverty and dies in disgrace in an obscure corner of the Empire. His followers in their words and writings throw away every chance of popularising him, yet before two centuries – centuries of unexampled persecution – have elapsed, this boast can be made: “*We are of yesterday, and we have filled every place that was yours. Your cities, islands, fortresses, towns, councils, even the camps of your armies ... the palace, the senate, the forum; we have left you only your temples.*” Tertullian, *Apologia*.

Can you really believe this stupendous thing which has conquered and saved the world again and again is the work of a few poor frauds? The sceptical mind revolts from the idea of Divine intervention. The easiest course is to doubt, until you have examined the evidence. Once you have done so the choice lies between what may seem to you improbable, and what is in fact a sheer impossibility. You can take your choice.

Books recommended:

*The Third Day.* Arnold Lunn.

*The Four Gospels.* John Chapman.

## THE PURPOSE AND DESTINY OF MAN

WE HAVE reached the end of our baby course of Christian philosophy. We first discussed our own nature and found that we belonged to a strange and unique race of body-spirits, bridging the gulf between the material and the spiritual; then the question of the existence of an eternal set of standards – a yardstick imposed from without – independent of time or place. The rest of the time has been spent in weighing the evidence for the Divine Nature and therefore the Divine Authority of the Man who claimed to tell us our real nature and “to lay down the law”; the Moral Law which is the real name for the yardstick. We must now come back to the question which I asked you at the end of our second discussion. “Have we or have we not any certain knowledge of why we are here?” In other words, “What is our purpose and what is our destiny?” Let me remind you of the parable of the ship’s captain who sailed under sealed orders and could not find them when the time came to open them. He was in the unfortunate position of not knowing where he was bound for. As he did not know his destination he could not know the reason for his voyage – he knew neither his purpose nor his destiny. We are very literally in the same boat if our orders have been lost, or if they have never been written. There could be no more useless piece of knowledge than the knowledge that God created us, unless we also know what He created us *for*. Everything that we have discussed up to date is mere barren intellectualism leading nowhere, unless we can decide this.

[p149] It does not lend itself to discussion, for it must be accepted on faith – that is, on the authority of someone whom we know to be trustworthy. This is not an unreasonable thing to do. If you take the trouble to think it out you will find that the number of facts which you take on faith is simply enormous. If you refused to accept them and act on them, unless you could verify them for yourselves, life would become impossible. Most of the facts of science for instance have to be accepted on faith, for although we could verify them by experiment if we had the time and the ability, most of us lack both and the only practical thing to do is to take them on faith. Our purpose and destiny must even more obviously be accepted on faith, because we have no means of finding them out for ourselves. Imagine a pipe endowed with reason. It has just been finished but has never seen tobacco or a man smoking. It is an intelligent pipe, so naturally wants to know what it is for. If it tried to think it out for itself it could only guess, for it would have no data upon which to start thinking, and it would almost certainly guess wrong. A wrong guess might easily prove fatal, particularly if it thought it was intended as a hammer, and started knocking in nails! It would only have one certain way of finding out and that would be to ask its maker, and to accept his answer on faith. Notice that the pipe would not be stupid or credulous or superstitious in taking this action; on the contrary it would be doing the only intelligent thing it could do, unless of course it was under the delusion that it had been made by accident, or by some blind and unintelligent “cosmic force.” We are in exactly the same position. If we want to know our purpose and destiny we must ask our Maker and accept His answer on faith. We can of course ask for an explanation if the answer puzzles us, but the explanation too must be accepted on faith. I have spent a few minutes in explaining what faith is because [p150] people have such odd ideas about it. It is “what we feel to be right” or “mere credulity” or superstition. The enemy has coined an astonishingly clever parody calling it “a gift enabling us to believe without doubting that which we are perfectly certain is not true”! It is a gift all right, and it does enable us to believe without doubting – something which we have no means of finding out for ourselves, but which has been revealed to us by our Maker. That is why discussion does not help us much – not because we are not dealing with facts, but because the facts are undiscoverable, and could only have been made known by God. Christ has told us of them, and if we believe Him to be God there is no more to be said. If we don’t there is nothing to be said either. His guess is as likely to be right as ours – no more so – and we are free, or condemned, to go on guessing.

You all of you know His answer. Man’s destiny is eternal happiness in heaven and his pur-

pose is to get there. Presumably you have made up your minds to accept or reject that answer, and you may say, "Why talk about it any more?" For this reason. The whole question has been literally bedevilled by wrong emphasis and misunderstanding, and I am determined to strip these aside, so that whether you accept or reject, you will at least know what you are accepting or rejecting. A great deal too much emphasis has been laid on the idea that heaven is a prize to be won; so much so that the Christian has been made to appear as a mere pot-hunter driven by the hope of reward or the fear of punishment – far inferior to that grand chap, the good pagan, who does good for its own sake. I suppose it is impossible to deny that heaven is a prize to be won, since it consists in unimaginable happiness and it is quite possible to fail to win it; but although the prize idea is not positively false, it is quite definitely misleading. You all hope to get a commission and you are here to prepare for it. Is that commission therefore a prize? [p151] I suppose it is, but it is far more than that. It is fulfilment – a destiny – and the object of your training here is to prepare for it. If you don't prepare you won't arrive. Heaven is the same, and if you look on it simply as a prize you certainly won't get there – nor ought you to get a commission if you treat it in the same careerist spirit. There is no essential connection between the cup which you get for winning the 440, or the pair of pads for third place. There is the most intimate and vital of all connections between your training here and the life for which it prepares you. Heaven is the same, and the Christian who consciously and deliberately tries to prepare for it is no more guilty of pot-hunting than the cadet who consciously and deliberately tries to prepare for his commission.

More mental rubbish has to be cleared away when we come to consider the nature of the happiness of heaven. First there is the utter misunderstanding of the word eternity, which we rather naturally imagine as endless time. This is a black lie on the part of our imagination which, as is so often the case, butts into the realm of pure thought where it is incompetent to act. So far from being endless time, eternity is *absence of time*, the great NOW without past or future. The malice of the lie is this: endless time inevitably suggests endless boredom. Our opponents are not slow to point this out, and to persuade us that we are not merely greedy pot-hunters, but that we are hunting a pot made of very inferior metal which we should dislike enormously if we were ever to win it. The enemy's task has been made far easier by the stupidity of our immediate ancestors, who seem to have taken a few inspired metaphors as literally true. Whiteness, the sign of purity; crowns, the symbols of victory; the palms of martyrdom and the music of the love song were all combined in St. John's great vision. Like all great poetry it must be read and read again before [p152] its grandeur can be appreciated. To take it literally is to cheapen and distort it out of recognition, yet this criminal travesty has been perpetrated by men who were presumably pious and well intentioned. They have left some of us with an idea of heaven which is faintly funny to imagine, and which would be perfectly frightful to endure; and they have made a great many decline the offer – with or without thanks. We must get at the reality which lies behind, try to understand it as far as we can, for it is unreasonable to prepare for we know not what.

Love lies behind. Love of no created being, but of Love Himself, who made us out of nothing from pure Love, that we might enjoy eternal and unimaginable happiness in loving union with Him.

This and nothing less is our immeasurable destiny. It is the very secret of the universe. You cannot imagine it, for it is beyond imagination. You cannot argue about it, for it must be accepted on faith. It is information supplied by God; news which is so good that we could never have thought of it for ourselves.

What of our purpose here? How are we to prepare? Again the answer is, by love. It is a very obvious answer, for the best way to prepare for an event is to practise it. Obvious as it is, Our Lord saw fit to lay it down in considerable detail, "Love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole mind and with thy whole strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." God forbid that I should take on the chaplain's job and preach to you, but perhaps a few words of explanation may be useful. We are so accustomed to thinking of love as an affair of the emotions – usually between the sexes – that we may be puzzled by the idea of loving someone whom we are unable to see, and usually unable even to feel. We cannot imagine how it can be done. Of course we can't, for there is nothing to imagine – nothing make an image of. The love of God [p153] is an

affair of the will, at least as far as we are concerned. He can and does provide the emotion, as and when He sees fit. Our part is to learn about Him, to realise Him as the supreme good and to choose Him before any of His creatures. This is very different from the love of God in heaven. "Face to face" with the uncreated Beauty, Goodness, and Truth, we shall not be able to withhold our love. Here it is hard going. So hard that most of us would fail miserably if God had not literally gone out of His way to make it easier.

That is one reason for the Incarnation. He became Man – took our nature – so that we might begin to understand. "*Apart from the Incarnation, man could know God only in God's nature. Man could, for example, know God as infinite power, creating the universe from nothing, and this is true knowledge and very valuable. But if it is true knowledge it is undeniably remote knowledge ... For such things we have no measuring rod. But to see God not simply in His own nature but being and doing and suffering in our nature is a very different matter. And reading the Gospels, that is precisely what we do see – God obeying His mother, God paying taxes, God receiving hospitality, God receiving insults, God tormented by hunger and thirst, God loving, God angry, and these things we can measure, for we have done them all ourselves.*"\* Therefore, if I may, I would urge you to read the Gospels as a first step. Love comes easier that way, and is very hard if you don't. How can you love a man unless you know him? How can you know Our Lord unless you read His life? Next, obey His orders. "He that loves Me keeps My commandments." They are after all the maker's instructions, framed not to fetter us, but to free us to live a full life as He designed it. Perhaps the first of those orders is to pray. Obvious again. You cannot love a person and put him in coventry. You cannot put this person without showing that you are an ungrateful fool.

[p154] What of our neighbour? Here something more active is required. We must show our love by service – not by a vague benevolence, but by actively helping him, even to our own inconvenience and disadvantage. If Christians had only done that or even tried to do it however feebly, the world would have been converted centuries ago. We nearly all of us constitute the one really strong argument against our faith, by our utter failure to put it into practice. Perhaps one reason is that when we think of it at all we do so in general terms. That usually means vague terms, and what is vague is nearly always ineffective. In fact this universal duty of service has an individual application to each separate person. We are all different, and each of us has a different vocation. I use the word vocation, not because it sounds important but because the word "job" has been debased to mean a necessary bore by which we earn our living. Vocation still means a call – a personal call to serve in some particular way. Some vocations must be extraordinarily difficult. I cannot imagine what I should do if I had a vocation to sweep roads, or make my pile in business. Road sweeping would bore me and I should fail by getting hopelessly discontented, business would bore me and I should probably become both discontented and dishonest. You are most of you extraordinarily fortunate. If the army is really your vocation, you have been given a very pleasant one. Frighteningly responsible but very pleasant. The danger is that you may concentrate on its pleasant side and forget its enormous responsibility – the responsibility for men. Not only for their training in peace and for their lives in war, but for their characters, their ideas, and, to use a hackneyed phrase, their "spiritual and moral welfare." It is an alarming thought, but that is what leadership means. Nearly all of you will take up another vocation before many years have passed, and one much more difficult than the army. You will get [p155] married. I have been told that there to an encyclopædia lift which classes marriage with sports and pastimes! It is lying. Of course, like the army it is, or can be, great fun, but the responsibility is even more terrifying – nothing less than co-operation with the Creator in populating heaven. Think that one out, and if you can't face up to it you had better not get married.

I put this subject into the course by special request of some cadets who said, "You have talked a lot about the purpose of life, for goodness' sake tell us what it is." I will summarise it in the words of another cadet who put the whole thing in a nut-shell. "The purpose of life is one gigantic W.O.S.B."† That could not have been better or more tersely put.

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\* *Theology and Sanity*. F. Sheed.

† War Office Selection Board.

## CONCLUSION

THERE is one party who is vitally concerned in this question of religious education, about whom very little has been said, and that is the boy. It is for his sake that this book has been written. How far is he personally to blame for his own deplorable ignorance? I have not the slightest hesitation in saying, "Not at all." If Britain ceases to be a Christian country and becomes a police state, the resultant tyranny should not be laid to the doors of the commissars of the future, but to ours. The discerning historian will put it on record that it was the lack of home training and school instruction which did the damage. There cannot be very much wrong with a generation, when an average middle-aged man such as myself starts his association with boys by being rather bored, and after dealing with 5,000 of them becomes their affectionate admirer. Let no parent or schoolmaster preen himself on this result, or think that I have given my case away. In most cases their charges lack the one thing necessary, the knowledge of God which leads to love of Him and to the realisation of their own supernatural destiny. That does not prevent them from being very likeable people. Their faults *are* due to ignorance more than to anything else; and for that ignorance we are responsible. If ignorance of God's revelation leads to loss of souls, as it seems bound to do, it is our souls which should be, and will be forfeited in all justice; for it is we, their parents and teachers, who have failed them. "The hungry sheep look up and are not fed." Never was such a promising flock so scandalously neglected.

There is an idea abroad that all young men go through [p157] an irreligious stage during which they sow their wild oats, and have no interest in the things of the spirit. That may be true as regards wild oats. *It is not true* that this generation has no interest in religion. I do not know how widespread this fallacy may be. I have heard it from two distinguished Headmasters of well-known Public Schools. They are quite wrong. It was true in their young days, and therefore in my own. It is completely false to-day. Forty years ago this was a Christian country, where religion was taken for granted, but taught fairly unintelligently. Then boys did react against it, when they threw off the shackles of school. But it was in their bones, so most of them came back to it after a fashion when they married and settled down. Not so to-day. It has a "news value"; almost a secret society value. It has only to be taught with a reasonable degree of intelligence to be welcomed by the majority. That is the hopeful side. The other side is the dreadful danger of the climate of the age; at its worst among the young middle-aged who rose to manhood during the deplorable twenties. Those are the men and women – many of them those very parents and masters who bear such a load of responsibility – to whom the younger generation will turn, and are turning. Can they be trusted to see that the badly taught shall not lose "even that which they have"?

If you doubt the interest of these young people in religion and its handmaid philosophy, look again at Chapter IV. I have just been through it to see how many approved of my puny effort. Seventy-nine per cent did so. In many cases their approval was modified by criticism – and very good criticism some of it was – but they were not uninterested. The little course is still very incomplete. A dozen vital subjects have had to be left out both for lack of time and because of the plain duty of not talking denominationally. Even where there has been time I have considered it more important to link up the ground [p158] that has been covered so far with practical life. The last period provides a link between Christian principles and practice which has proved invaluable. Divorce, capital and labour, economics, international relations, are a few of the subjects which can be and have been discussed in the light of the moral law instead of mere feeling, opinion and prejudice.

It is not only on the supernatural plane that damage is being done. Thousands of boys are being turned out to-day who possess great powers of leadership – and very little idea of where to lead. Tens of thousands of potential citizens have little notion of citizenship. How can they have if they think they are mere animals without purpose or supernatural destiny? They are more than willing to learn, and the disaster which faces our civilisation will certainly overtake us, unless we who know the Truth insist that our sons and daughters know it too.