

Kington Baptist Church

MESSAGE BOARD – 85

'The one thing I know is I know nothing.' (Socrates)

'Earthly knowledge is but shadow.' (Plato)

I know whom I have believed, and I persuaded that he is able to guard what I have committed to him against that day. (2 Timothy 1.12)

Jesus said, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'. (John 14.6)

What is your opinion about Christ? Whose son is he? (Matthew 22.42)

He that believes on him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3.18)

Paul's argument, in 1 Timothy 6.20, is with what he calls 'science falsely so-called', 'pseudo-science'; while in Colossians 2.4 he warns against being led astray by 'enticing words'; and in verse 8 he warns against 'philosophy', which he describes as 'vain' deceit, as 'intellectual double-talk, intellectual trickery, high-sounding nonsense'. But who's to tell which theories are false and which true; how do we tell the one from the other?

We know the true from the false by paying attention to the one who calls himself *'the Way, the Truth, and the Life'*; he decides, Jesus Christ the supreme arbiter. Followers of Christ have always known this; we recognise Christ as 'the sum total of Revelation' and Holy Scripture as the inerrant witness to him – its testimony is free from error and to be trusted.

But the Bible is not a book of science. The test of scientific hypotheses and of the speculations of philosophers is not whether or not they echo Scripture in general. It is not the purpose of Scripture to present scientific or philosophical theories but to bring to us the 'things concerning' Christ (Luke 24.27, 44-47). The test of whether the speculations and theories of science and philosophy are true and reliable is whether or not they accord with what Scripture tells us about Christ. Do these theories conform to or conflict with what Scripture tells of Christ: do they acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of the world? This is the whole position of the Apostle Paul on philosophy and science. This is precisely Paul's point in Colossians 2.8, where he makes a fundamental category distinction, between theories concocted *'according to the basic principles of the **world**, and not according to **Christ**'*. This inevitably was Paul's position, because he understood that in

Christ, and in him alone, are ‘*hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*’ (Colossians 2.3); that ‘*in him is all the fullness of the Godhead*’ (Colossians 2.9); that Christ is the ‘*head of all principality and power*’ (verse 19). This is the litmus-test for the theories of science and the speculations of philosophy.

Facts or Theories

Science and philosophy offer *theories*, *speculations* and *hypotheses*. The business of science is not the presentation of *facts* but of *hypotheses* and *theories*; speculations based on those things known to science. A scientist recently put it like this: ‘science does not prove anything’. Science observes, and attempts to explain and interpret the things it observes. Science is limited to those things that belong to space and time. Science knows nothing of eternal and spiritual things. Science has no knowledge of what Paul calls ‘the heavenlies’. Science would only be able to offer *facts* if it knew all things, and knew them exhaustively. Short of that the business of science is to question and suggest hypotheses. Scientific hypotheses and theories are in a continual state of flux, always under review and open to correction. The observations of science are ‘read’ differently by different scientists, presenting different, often conflicting, theories. These theories and speculations are always being revised, amended and updated. The science textbooks of yesterday have been replaced; those produced today will be replaced tomorrow by new theories. Science is the art of asking questions. Science is not a *revelation*. It is incapable of presenting eternal certainties: that is the exclusive role of Holy Scripture. God alone deals in *facts*.

It is sometimes supposed that scientists and philosophers have a superior wisdom, greater and higher than ‘ordinary’ people. Some think it wise and sensible to consult philosophers and scientists on the great questions of life and death. But this is the very danger Paul foresaw and warned against:

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of what we preach, to save those who believe. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength. Consider your own call: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1.21-29)

At that time Jesus said, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to babes. (Matthew 11.25)

Science or Sentiment

Few of the recorded words of Jesus are as disturbing as his teachings about Hell. What he says on this subject is stark and shocking; and is often derided. We find a striking example of Paul’s words concerning those ‘who hold down the truth’ in the reaction of a leading scientist to our Lord’s

teaching on this fearful subject. Paul tells us *'they become fools'*. (Romans 1.22) Frequently when confronted with the words of Jesus scientists abandon the 'scientific method'; the method they otherwise rely on to uncover the 'truth'. They react to the teaching of Jesus in the same way as a little boy who won't eat cabbage – because he doesn't like it! In many cases that is the only reason they offer for their rejection of Christ and his words. They offer no reasoned case – because there is no rational case against the teaching of Christ. But nevertheless his teaching is dismissed, because it's not liked and not wanted. It's disturbing, it interferes with strongly held prejudices. The wise response – the truly 'scientific method' – would be not to deride his teaching and dismiss it because it's not liked, but painstakingly to determine its *truth*: *'The Apostles arrived in Berea and went into the synagogue. These people were more fair-minded; they listened carefully and searched the Scriptures every day to find out whether these things were so'*. (Acts 17.10-11)

In his autobiography Charles Darwin, the great hero of the scientific community, wrote of his reaction to our Lord's teaching about Hell: 'I can hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, this would include all my best friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine.'

Darwin's reaction to the Christian message was entirely a matter of emotion, of sentiment and sheer prejudice – the reactions derided by the scientific community when 'lay people' react dismissively to Darwin's theory of the origin of species. On the basis of pure prejudice Darwin dismissed Christ and the entire Christian message. His rejection of the Christian gospel owed nothing to open minded enquiry into *truth*. Darwin had no use for the 'scientific method' where the gospel was concerned. Blind prejudice suited him best. He ignored the message of grace, of mercy and love at the heart of the Christian gospel. This is an example of how those *'who suppress the truth in unrighteousness ... become fools'*. They move from that disbelieving position into even deeper 'foolishness': they *'exchange the glory of the immortal God for an ikon – (here the word means an 'object of devotion') – of a mere human, of birds, four-footed animals or reptiles'*. (Romans 1.22-23)

The last 150 or so years have witnessed this 'exchange' taking place in the philosophy and ideas of these people. Devotion to God has been exchanged for devotion to 'man, birds, animals, reptiles'. Priority is given to the natural world in preference to the spiritual world; time above eternity; the creature above the Creator. This is the religion of our times, the 'high-sounding nonsense' of 'science falsely so-called', promoted by sheer prejudice.

For these reasons it seems to me the height of folly to assume – as many do, even inside the Church – scientists and philosophers have some particular authority to pronounce on the question of God, of Christ, the gospel, and life here and hereafter. Their 'high-sounding nonsense' is an expression of human arrogance, an arrogance that presumes to tell God what's right or wrong, fair or harsh, good or bad, true or false.

The routine conclusions of 'science' about God are not 'scientific'; the theories of philosophers are not expressions of 'wisdom'. Where the things of God, eternity and the life of Christ are concerned, the scientist does not have access to 'the data', to 'the facts of the case'. If the facts of Christ – his life, teaching, death and resurrection – annoy them, question them, seem to go against their cherished ideas of what life and the world should be, the facts are treated with disdain. Emotion, sentiment and prejudice replace objectivity. The position of the philosopher and scientist is concerned with man's futile search for God – futile, not because God cannot be found, but because he will not be found by those whose minds are closed and whose hearts are hostile. Science and philosophy are attempts (in Stephen Hawking's words) to search out 'the mind of god' – Christian truth is concerned with God's revelation of his mind to man.

There seems to be no 'skill-set' less suited to providing reliable answers to spiritual questions than that of the scientist and philosopher. There is no community less suited to provide definitive answers to spiritual questions than the 'scientific community' and the age-old ranks of philosophers. They never have provided these answers, they never will. And this is so for three reasons: *firstly*, science does not take account of all the 'data': it knows nothing of 'the heavenlies'; *secondly*, science and philosophy work from 'below', they accept nothing of the revelation from 'above'; *thirdly*, scientific investigation and philosophy are never more than provisional, their 'conclusions' are always under review, subject to revision and amendment. It is the style of scientists and philosophers to debunk with an assumed air of infallibility the outdated 'facts' of other scientists or philosophers; while their own 'facts' will be debunked in turn with a similar air of infallibility!

In addressing the Pharisees Jesus spoke strikingly and uncompromisingly: *'You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men; but God knows your hearts; for what is prized by men is an abomination in the sight of God'*. (Luke 16.15) Our Lord's strong words, referring to these men as *'an abomination in the eyes of God'*, were not prompted by lawless living or by corrupt or wicked lives. These were among the most respected people in the community, looked up to for their high morality. His words were in response to the fact that these men rejected him and his message of salvation: *'they disdained him'* (verse 14); they disdained the one God himself has authenticated: *'This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased – hear him'*. We must keep these words in mind as we listen to the ideas of certain other men about Jesus.

Sir David Attenborough has admitted to having struggled for most of his life with the question of religion; regularly, in television interviews, he has discussed his 'religion'. He claims to be 'agnostic'; he admits, 'I am not so confident to say I am an atheist'. Sir David believes that nothing is known or can be known of the existence or nature of God. Some years ago he told the Radio Times: 'I can see that if you believed you would see people in the afterlife, people who you love, it would be a great consolation'. His words here are similar to those of Charles Darwin that we quoted – except David Attenborough looks at the same reality from the 'positive' side.

Sir David's apparently cautious and undogmatic remarks are in reality settled and inflexible. He is dogmatic on two points: firstly, that nothing can be known about God; secondly, questions of 'religion' are decided by man, man is the final judge of what is true. It is on the basis of his unsupported personal opinion that he dismisses the entire biblical record of God's revelation. On the one hand saying 'I am not so confident to say I am an atheist', and on the other hand saying he is confident to insist that 'nothing is known or can be known of the existence or nature of God'. Leaving aside the deeper question, of what sort of God he would be who refused to let himself be known, we notice only that these seemingly inoffensive and cautious remarks are an outright and flat rejection of every word Jesus ever uttered, every act he ever performed, every claim he ever made, every indication from his Father that Jesus is indeed who he claimed to be, and every word of truth from the lips and pens of his Apostles. Sir David, in telling the world, on the basis of his own opinion, that 'nothing can be known about the existence or nature of God', entirely disregards the 'scientific method', relying on sheer prejudice. His opinion shows disdain for the testimony God has given that we might know him.

Sir Richard Dawkins, (in his book, *The God Delusion*) tells us that Jesus was 'innocently mistaken' in the claims he made for himself. Professor Dawkins' response to the teaching of Jesus is superficial and unconvincing. His opinion avoids all the realities of the case and reveals a prejudiced and closed mind.

The claims Jesus made for himself are so absolute, so extreme, so utterly unparalleled and so persistent that only by ignoring these facts could it be suggested that he was 'innocently mistaken'. What is clear is that Professor Dawkins' philosophy has no place for Jesus Christ, who must be removed from his world of thought. And Professor Dawkins has chosen the least 'scientific' theory to achieve that. If the claims of Christ are not true the only rational response would be to recognise that a person making those claims must be either most profoundly evil or most profoundly mad. It is not a question of what is 'rational' or 'irrational', but of morality. In his own words, the claims of Christ belong to realms of light and darkness. His claims are either light or darkness – the notion of 'innocent mistakes' is irrelevant.

It is also clear that Professor Dawkins' opinion itself is not an 'innocent mistake'. His response to Jesus Christ is far from 'innocent'. A man of Professor Dawkins' learning could not possibly propound such an idea innocently. He has a motive, and uses this unconvincing theory as a handy broom with which to sweep aside the historical record of Jesus Christ.

Professor Dawkins must know the claims of Christ go beyond any claim ever made by any human being in the course of the world's history – if he does not recognise this then he ought to refrain from commenting on matters outside his competence. To suppose Jesus Christ was 'innocently mistaken' in claiming to be '*the way and the truth and the life*'; 'innocently mistaken' when he insisted on his claims with such tenacity that they brought him to his most appalling death; 'innocently mistaken' when he insisted that these

claims were to be repeated without any dilution by his followers in perpetuity as the very truth of God, on which alone hang matters of eternal life and death – to claim in all this that the Lord Jesus Christ was ‘innocently mistaken’ is to treat the Son of God with disdain.

But the problem doesn’t begin and end with Jesus being ‘innocently mistaken’. Also ‘innocently mistaken’ were his disciples and followers, who proclaimed his message both within the life-time of Jesus and forever after. So too every prophet, every priest, every psalmist and every patriarch throughout the entire Old Testament was ‘innocently mistaken’, for their message is no different from that of Christ. Indeed the Lord God Almighty himself was ‘innocently mistaken’! For his words to the two in the Garden of Eden, to Abraham, to Moses and to all the prophets are of a piece with those of the Lord Jesus Christ – *‘beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself’* (Luke 24.27); *‘they testify to me’* (John 5.39). Dawkins brings down the entire house of the biblical record on his head – for all were ‘innocently mistaken’ if Christ is ‘innocently mistaken’!

If untrue the claims of Christ could not on any rational grounds be considered ‘innocent’. They would be expressions of ultimate, almost indescribable, evil. These claims – if untrue – have, for two thousand years, enticed billions to accept as ultimate truth a lie of deepest and darkest deception. They would amount to a unique perversion of truth and goodness. We would also be confronted with the inexplicable paradox of a body of teaching promoting goodness, truth, justice, honesty, mercy, together with the positive virtues of a ‘sound mind’; teaching originating with, explained by and exemplified in the Lord Jesus Christ – who willingly submitted his life and teaching to the most meticulous scrutiny; but is alleged, by Professor Dawkins, to have been a man ‘innocently mistaken’ in all he said and did – in *all* he said and did because his life and teaching are one seamless robe. If the claims of Christ are not true, the facts of the case (which Professor Dawkins has chosen to ignore) lead unavoidably to the conclusion that Jesus knowingly and mercilessly persuaded his followers to base their lives on a lie: as the Apostle Paul well knew: *‘If in this life only we have hope, we Christians are the most pitiful of all people’*: ‘Because none out of hell ever suffered more than the saints have done’. (John Trapp)

When asked about the possibility of an afterlife, Professor Stephen Hawking answered: ‘I think the conventional afterlife is a fairy tale for people afraid of the dark.’ It is said that ‘Hawking has never been much of a believer in God. In a speech he outlined how everything was created without a deity.’

If by ‘conventional afterlife’ Professor Hawking means the Christian doctrine of the afterlife, then he must know that it includes teaching about eternal death. Why, we may ask, is it considered a weakness to be ‘afraid of the dark’, when the ‘dark’ is ‘the blackness of darkness for ever’? (Jude 13) Such a fear would be evidence of great wisdom.

Fairy stories, was how Professor Hawking characterised the New Testament. To respond to this remark in any detail would be pointless. The fact is that

anyone familiar with the New Testament, and not blinded by prejudice, will readily recognise the superficiality of Professor Hawking's remark.

However, this comment not only shows contempt for the New Testament, but for fairy stories too! Essentially a 'fairy story' is an attempt to understand the world and our place in the world through the exploration of the deeply buried primordial essence of existence. That seems also to have been the work of Stephen Hawking himself. This same aim is the generative origin of the world's religions: fusions of ideas gained through explorations into temporal and mundane phenomena; cognitive structures assembled in an attempt to gain understanding of heavenly and eternal realities. The Christianity of the Bible stands in contrast to all this: not man's attempt to discover God but God's revelation to man. (See Acts 17.23-33)

Jesus said, *'O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding the truth from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing it to babes. For this, Father, serves your purpose'*.

Paul's words apply exactly to the opinions of these three men: *'the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God'*. (1 Corinthians 1.18)

Albert Einstein was asked to what extent he was influenced by Christianity, he answered in this way:

'As a child I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene.' He was then asked if he accepted the historical existence of Jesus. He replied, 'Unquestionably! No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life. I seriously doubt that Jesus himself said that he was God, for he was too much a Jew to violate that great commandment: "Hear O Israel, the Eternal is our God and He is one!" and not two or three. Sometimes I think it would have been better if Jesus had never lived. No name was so abused for the sake of power! If one purges the Judaism of the Prophets and Christianity as Jesus Christ taught it of all subsequent additions, especially those of the priests, one is left with a teaching which is capable of curing all the social ills of humanity. It is quite possible that we can do greater things than Jesus, for what is written in the Bible about him is poetically embellished.'

These moving remarks seem an advance on the views of the three contemporary scientists we've heard so far. But – and it's a tremendous BUT – his refusal to confess that Jesus is who he claimed to be forced Einstein to conclude that the Biblical record had been 'poetically embellished', a diplomatic way of saying the Biblical record is false: untrue and unreliable; as would be one of his calculations had it been 'poetically embellished'. A document whose only purpose is to present truth to the world – as Jesus claimed: *'your word is truth'* (John 17.24) – is rendered useless if 'poetically embellished'. It is falsified. In plain speech, poetic embellishment is falsification. Such a document can no longer be trusted; if the Bible can no longer be trusted it is useless.

It may be argued, with some credibility, that there are passages in the Bible that are poetic, that are 'poetically embellished'. That is obvious to any reader of Scripture – especially the Psalms, to cite the obvious example. But this is not what Einstein was referring to. Einstein's opinion was that 'what is written in the Bible *about Jesus* is poetically embellished'. He has in mind his miracles, his claims to be the Son of God, his resurrection, his promised return in glory.

In Einstein's opinion we know nothing about Jesus with certainty: we do not know what he said or what he did. It is then quite absurd to pretend 'unquestionably' to accept the historical existence of Jesus; it is absurd to claim his 'personality pulsates in every word of the Gospels'; that 'no myth is filled with such life' – while avoiding the heart and core of his message, a message falsified, having been 'poetically embellished'! We might ask when, where and by whom was this record of the life and teaching of Jesus 'poetically embellished' – and to what purpose?

But Einstein's opinions are open to a further, deeper challenge. Jesus is recorded as having challenged a man who addressed him as 'good master': *Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone'*. (Mark 10.18) Calling Jesus 'good' said more than this man realised. If the claims and teaching of Jesus are those of a 'good man' then they must be true. Central to his claims is the claim to be 'the Son of God', 'the only begotten of the Father': eternal and divine. Calling Jesus 'good' is in reality to accept his teaching and claims. This is the point Jesus is making in his challenge to the man who called him 'good teacher'. The critical point is that Jesus forced the man to a binary choice: Jesus is good – and so God; or else he is a liar and deceiver. The courtesy of respect – 'good master' or saying his 'teaching is capable of curing all the social ills of humanity' – is meaningless if his claim to be the Son of God is denied. How on earth can the teaching of Jesus Christ cure all the ills of humanity if it isn't true! If it is true then we must believe that he is God: *'My Lord and my God'*! Einstein's response to Jesus ignores his identity as Saviour and his message of salvation from sin; it reveals an inconsistency of thought and a deep disdain of Jesus Christ.

An equally iconic character, having similar popular respect, is Mahatma Gandhi, whose opinions about the Lord Jesus are strikingly close to those of Albert Einstein. And, for that matter, to every other major figure who wants to reserve some place among 'the world's great men' for Jesus, while refusing outright to listen to him!

Gandhi received a letter, attempting to persuade him to adopt the Christian faith. In his reply he wrote: *'Dear Friend, I am afraid it is not possible for me to subscribe to the creed you have sent me, to believe that the highest manifestation of the unseen reality was Jesus Christ. In spite of all my efforts, I have not been able to feel the truth of that statement. I have not been able to move beyond the belief that Jesus was one of the great teachers of mankind'*.

The problem is the same problem we noticed with Einstein, but expressed from the perspective of a Sanatani Hindu. Gandhi expresses his rejection of Jesus by saying he refused to recognise the Lord Jesus Christ as 'the highest manifestation of the unseen reality'. These words are significant. They echo ideas Paul recognised among the Colossians. The error is to imagine God is revealed in 'manifestations'. Different religions have different ideas about these 'manifestations'. Think in terms of a ladder set up between heaven and earth. On the ladder are 'angelic' beings – those close to heaven are most 'spiritual' and pure; those close to earth are less pure and more corporeal and bodily. Some – higher – manifestations closely resemble 'God'; or, in Gandhi's words, 'unseen reality'. Other – lower – manifestations, distant from God, are only vague likenesses of 'unseen reality'. Gandhi's opinion was that Jesus is one of these many 'manifestations', one along with countless others. Gandhi flatly denies the claim of Christ, that he is the only way to the Father. He doesn't even accept Jesus as 'the highest manifestation of the unseen reality'. This is exactly the position Paul rejected outright. Paul insisted that Jesus is not one 'manifestation' among many, not even 'the highest manifestation'. Paul understood the claims of Christ to be absolute and exclusive. He warns us: *'See that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily'*. (Colossians 2.8-9) The only adequate response to Jesus Christ is the confession that Jesus is Lord. It is to recognise Jesus as 'God with us'. It is to believe trust him as **'the way, and the truth, and the life'**, insisting *'no one comes to the Father except through me'*. (John 14.6)

Gandhi considered Jesus as a 'great teacher of mankind'. But this position makes no sense, it is an absurd paradox. Gandhi complements Jesus as a 'great teacher of mankind' but rejects the core and essence of all Jesus taught. Gandhi said he could not believe Jesus is who he claimed to be. For Gandhi, Jesus was 'a great teacher of mankind' whose teaching cannot be accepted or believed!

Jesus Christ forces a decision; he leaves no room for mere flattery. If he is 'the world's greatest teacher' then his teaching is true, if his teaching is true it must be accepted. I've no alternative but unreservedly to accept him as the Saviour of the world. My only other choice is to reject him, and reject his teaching. What is impossible and foolish is to say I admire his teaching but don't believe it to be true! It doesn't matter whether he was a deliberate fraud or an 'innocent' fraud, an intentional fraud or an insane fraud. Either he is the one he claimed to be – to be trusted and worshipped as the Son of God and Lord of all – or rejected as an impostor. If I don't accept his words, if I don't *believe in him*, then I reject him; whether I'm prepared to say that in plain honest speech or chose to hide behind a flimsy pretence of flattery. To the man who said 'good teacher', Jesus replied: 'Either recognise me to be who I am, God incarnate, or stop using meaningless flattery'.

Ludwig Wittgenstein could, in many respects, be seen to stand head and shoulders above those we've listened to so far. Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein [1898-1951] was an Austrian-British philosopher who worked

in logic, the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of mind, and the philosophy of language. He is considered by some to be the greatest philosopher of the 20th century. He wrote the following:

I read: 'No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.' — And it is true: I cannot call him *Lord*; because that says nothing to me. I could call him 'the paragon,' 'God' even — or rather, I can understand it when he is called thus; but I cannot utter the word 'Lord' with meaning. *Because I do not believe* that he will come to judge me; because *that* says nothing to me. And it could say something to me, only if I lived *completely* differently.

What inclines even me to believe in Christ's Resurrection? It is as though I play with the thought. If he did not rise from the dead, then he decomposed in the grave like any other man. *He is dead and decomposed*. In that case he is a teacher like any other and can no longer *help*; and once more we are orphaned and alone. So we have to content ourselves with wisdom and speculation. We are in a sort of hell where we can do nothing but dream, roofed in, as it were, and cut off from heaven. But if I am to be **REALLY** saved, — what I need is *certainty* — not wisdom, dreams of speculation — and this certainty is faith. And faith is faith in what is needed by my *heart*, my *soul*, not my speculative intelligence. For it is my soul with its passions, as it were with its flesh and blood, that has to be saved, not my abstract mind. Perhaps we can say: Only *love* can believe the Resurrection. Or: It is *love* that believes the Resurrection. We might say: Redeeming love believes even in the Resurrection; holds fast even to the Resurrection. What combats doubt is, as it were, *redemption*. (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*)

Beside those thoughts I will put the ideas of the writer D. H. Lawrence, from an essay he wrote on children's hymns:

As for my soul, I simply don't and never did understand how I could 'save' it. One can only *live* one's soul. The business is to live really alive. And this needs wonder.

Here is someone, considered the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century, unable to call Jesus 'Lord', because that statement 'says nothing to him'. For this statement to mean anything to him, he says, he would 'need to live differently'. On the other hand he understands to be *saved* needs the certainty of *faith* and what needs to be *saved* is his 'soul'. In contrast to the thoughts of Wittgenstein are those of a highly regarded twentieth century author (significantly his remarks were made in an essay on children's hymns!). He says he never understood what it means to 'save one's soul': 'One can save one's pennies. But how can one save one's soul?'

D. H. Lawrence's essay describes the irresistible attraction of the gospel when presented at its most simple, in children's hymns. His essay also illustrates the inability of the natural man to receive the things of the Spirit. No level of intellectual attainment, no sense of beauty, no tender recollections of childhood, no literary ability, no breadth of experience — all of which Lawrence possessed — are able to open the heart and mind to the

Spirit of truth. It is the Holy Spirit's exclusive work to create this receptivity. The simplest spiritual truths are a closed book, an impossible challenge, to hearts, minds and intellects in their natural state. The writer asks: 'How can one save one's soul? One can only live one's soul.' Such ignorance from the 'wise' is distressing, distress deepened by the universality of the condition.

William Wilberforce invited William Pitt the Younger to accompany him to hear the great eighteenth century preacher, William Romaine. William Pitt, at 24, became the youngest Prime Minister of Great Britain; a brilliant man with a brilliant mind. Romaine was a popular and practical preacher, whose London congregation comprised people from all walks of life. Following the service, Wilberforce asked William Pitt what he thought of the sermon; Pitt replied that he'd not understood a word.

Nicodemus, 'a teacher in Israel', could not understand what Jesus meant when he spoke to him of the need to be 'born again' if one is to see the Kingdom of God. Without this new birth 'the things of the Spirit' cannot be understood – regardless of intellect. It is for this reason that it is the height of folly to regard intellectual gifts alone as having any spiritual value.

You may think me stupid and arrogant to attempt to cross swords with these intellectual giants. That would be a fair response if I attempted to argue physics or cosmology or biology or philosophy with them. But I've only reflected the word of God. I've taken the words of Jesus – '*in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*' – and set them beside what these men say and think about him.

Now the serpent was more subtle than any other animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say ...'. The serpent said to the woman, 'You certainly will not die; for God knows that the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'. (Genesis 3.1-5)

They are without excuse: because when they knew God they did not glorify him as God, nor were they thankful; but became futile in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. (Romans 1.20-22)

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (1 Corinthians 1.20)

The opening of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. (Psalms 119.130)