

# The Atheist Delusion

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[ 0 : 00 ] I've come to really appreciate, I don't know how well known this passage is amongst us. I've come to kind of, I just really love this moment in Paul to Timothy.

It's obviously creedal, and creedal as in succinct. I just read last night by accident, I came across this passage by accident.

I guess I was meant to be talking about each other than the first, the greatest thing we confess is the mystery of our religion. I should read it first. He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. Other than he was manifested in the flesh, as the author pointed out to me last night, each of the assertions, each sentence begins with the verb in Greek.

So it's obviously a kind of, it's meant to be a lyrical, creedal, may I say, perhaps something to memorize. Perhaps the early Christians sang this, I wonder. Great indeed, we confess.

[ 1 : 12 ] Without apology, I'll read it again. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion, Paul says to Timothy. After talking about the church, is the bulwark of the truth.

What does the church preach in the world? It's manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

What is implied in this is, I think, relevant to what I want to look at today. That's why I put it in front of us, obviously.

In a certain sense, this just says our faith. And if I may put it this way, God has appeared in the world. That's our faith. At one level, and what a level it is, God has appeared in the world.

Somewhere further, deeply implied here, somewhere in particular, he appeared. How else can you appear in a sense?

[ 2 : 24 ] For humans, somewhere in particular, at a particular time. Manifested in the flesh means at least what Dorothy Sayers, one of her great descriptive moments in talking about the Christian faith.

This is the scandal of particularity. You might call that the scandal of contingency. I'm reading Richard Rorty recently. Loves that word.

Our faith is contingent. It's particular, and that's its glorious scandal, if you will. God appeared in the faith. In Palestine, in the first half of the first century, God appeared.

God was manifest in the body of flesh, as Paul will say it when he fleshes this out, no pun intended, in other passages. We accept and rejoice in this scandal.

There it is. There's much of what is in this text. What else is here, of course, is that... Now, here I become somewhat interpretive, but I'll defend this.

[ 3 : 34 ] Because he appeared in the flesh, history always remains essential to the Christian church's sensibility.

God, he was there in a particular place in history, at a particular geographical location, doing things. He was a maker of history.

This is part of what, to borrow some language from Charles Taylor, this is part of the Christian imaginary. Imaginary doesn't mean they're made up. It means it's that worldview that you always carry around with you, even when you're not thinking about it.

Who am I? Where am I in the world? History always remains part of the Christian worldview.

History, you know, could be described as, this is me, I have no authorities for this, but I can't be too wrong here.

History is, you know, action in the world. So, our Lord said to his church, go, that's acting in the world, go into all the world.

[ 4 : 39 ] Which world? Our world. And it did. The gospel went into all the world. So Jesus commands his church. May I say, maybe go into all the world.

I'll gloss that as, and you'll tell me in the discussion time if I've got this wrong, but I think it must mean go, make history. Our Lord told us to go and make history. Make a story that's going to be visible in the world.

Go and make a history. Go preach the gospel. And things will happen. You'll make disciples, they'll gather together. They'll do things like on every Sabbath, they'll join themselves together and listen to things about the Bible.

So we're part of that history. We're just part of it. Go make history. Go, if you will, and make a mysterious history, in a sense.

The mystery of our religion is that it started in a real place and it moves out from there. Go make disciples, Jesus says. Go make history. So we can say that God, that the church, in a sense, manifests God to the world just by saying that it really happened.

[ 5 : 44 ] In the first century, in Palestine, God was in the world. Nothing could be more shocking and more important than that statement. If someone tells you that God is somewhere and you have an access, ability to get to him, go.

Go to God. God, the church manifests God to the world. So watching what the church does in history is, in a sense, again, a great mystery.

So faith would see it. And some people very much outside of the faith would agree with that, too. Church has a history.

Last week we were, weren't we, on the mountaintop, I guess we can say it, with Dr. We were taken to the mountaintop with Dr. Pine Marsh and his friend, Charles Wesley.

And we were with Charles Wesley singing, love divine, all loves excelling. And then the hymn says, yes, joy of heaven to earth, come down.

[ 6 : 47 ] Joy of heaven to history, come down. And the church and the world hasn't forgotten that. A more recent poet from Charles Wesley, Yeats, put it, I wonder if Wesley would appreciate this.

I think he would. Although Wesley, as a gentleman of the 18th century, would say it wouldn't be appropriate for singing in church. But he'd agree with Yeats' famous line, love has pitched his tent. That's just what Wesley says, isn't it? Love divine, all love is excelling, joy of heaven to earth, come down. Love has pitched his tent in the place of excrement, says Yeats.

That's what Wesley said. Joy of heaven to earth, come down. Love has pitched his tent in the place of excrement. That is to say, history, since we brought up the issue of history, history is messy, isn't it?

History is violent. Some people will tell you, and they've got a good case, history is absurd. You know, just one thing after another, Henry Ford said about history.

[ 8 : 05 ] And what has been pointed out, that that's exactly what Nietzsche believed. History can't be turned into a god. It has no meaning, it's just one thing after another. In the cross of Christ thy glory.

Do you know that hymn? In the cross of Christ thy glory. I've always liked this for the next phrase. Towering o'er the wrecks of time.

What is history? The wrecks. It's a mess. The place of excrement, says a poet. It's a bad thing, history. It's the wrecks of time.

Life is grim. You can pile quotation after quotation on this one. Hegel said something like, history is not a... The pages of history are not a soil of happiness.

The happiness in history, he said, are blank pages. It's grim. So from the Mount of Transfiguration, where Peter wants to remain, you know, that famous moment in history.

[ 9 : 09 ] Jesus says, no, we can't stay on the mountain here, Peter. And James and John. And he leads his people in the person of these leaders of the church. He leads them back down into the place of excrement.

And he met the demon-possessed person. No one could help him. And Jesus was distressed at their lack of faith. Back down into the place of horror, of violence, of absurdity, of messiness. Where evil seems to have the upper hand. And there our Lord leads his church to do battle. And he does battle with them. So there's an introduction to what I want to go at and look at today.

So just before we go further, let me say a word of prayer. Lord, we want to know more about the mystery of the gospel and of the faith and of the church.

The church over which you are the Lord. The church you've sent into history to make history. So lead us to just a bit more understanding today about these great issues. For your glory, Lord.

[10:15] And we would hope and pray for our benefit. We pray in the name of the Lord of history, Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. So I want to, as you know from the big advertising budget of Learners Exchange, and out there, today we want to look, I want to do a book review.

The title of the book is, it's one of the, a book that has a long title. Sometimes I don't think that's helpful, but this is a title that is exactly right. It's a good title for what you find in the book.

The book's title is, Atheist Delusions, plural, Atheist Delusions. And then the title continues, The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies.

The Christian Revolution and Atheist Delusions, The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies. The author is someone named, some of you will know of him.

He's an American, David Bentley Hart, H-A-R-T, who is an Orthodox, capital O Orthodox, Christian.

[11:31] He's a theologian and a classicist. A book which, at least at one level, answers the new atheism, which is so prominent just these days.

You know, authors like Dawkins, Mr. the scientist, is it John Dawkins? He's been talked about in Learners Exchange, I believe. And Christopher Hitchens and Samuel Harris, Sam Harris, things, things.

A lot of authors out there, they're gaining a lot of tension and they're often called the new atheists. But they've been called Ditchkins by a Marxist literary critic who thinks they're a bit dopey.

I mean, put it that way. That's the language he'd use. So even in the atheist community, they're not without enemies. The publisher, if you like to know this kind of thing, is Yale University Press.

I appreciate the, if you enjoy things on the back covers of books. There's one reviewer, an Anglican theologian, John Milbank, who's a very hyper, sort of sophisticated, modern Anglican theologian.

[12:47] A kind of orthodox theologian, but not totally. But he says on the back of the book, if Mr. Hitchens and Mr. Dawkins read this book, they'll wish they'd never put pen to paper.

So it has deeply impressed some people. I don't know, I haven't seen it too widely reviewed as yet. It is of interest to note that Mr. Hart is, I referred to this a moment ago, is a classicist.

That is someone who, now this is a popular definition, this, but I hope accurate enough, very popular, someone who knows and loves and is immersed in the world of Greek and Roman antiquity.

Roman antiquity, often called Latin antiquity. That is to say, Mr. Hart, our author, very much knows, for instance, what the Christians were doing at, say, 100, 200, 300, 400, 500, etc. A.D.

The Christians way back then. Usually a bit of a gap for people in our tradition. We usually jump from Paul to Luther, which is not wise, our tradition there.

[14:10] Around the Mediterranean world and beyond, as you will know, there was a living, strange, dynamic, chaotic, I think we can say, and wondrous forces at work, usually summarized as, isn't it, as pagan antiquity.

I thought just late in the day, as I was preparing this little talk, to at least stop here and give a little, what is pagan antiquity to your imagination?

Well, here's what it is to mine. Everything from, say, Plato and Aristotle. Greek playwrights like Euripides and Sophocles.

Philosophers, furthermore, philosophers like Stoics and Epicureans. There were materialists.

Democritus, I believe, was a famous materialist. Lucretius, famous, I think he was a materialist as well.

There were mystery religions in this world. There were, at least amongst the Romans, state-sanctioned religions. There was, when we think of this pagan antiquity, we think of the Colosseum comes to mind.

[15:20] I bet people in this room have been there, to the Oropagus. We think of Homer, the great Greek poet, but the Roman poet Enid, that pronounces, there was this world of slavery, just a panorama of an ancient culture.

Just another footnote to this before we continue. I just realized the other day, I was reading some good conservative historians in America who've written a lot about this recently.

Roughly speaking, around 1850 and before, if you went to, say, Yale or Harvard, this is the world you would have studied. Charles Wesley, he would have studied that world.

That would have been the humanities for people amongst many of our ancestors until around 1850.

Around 1850, read George Marsden, the greatest historian on this time. Around 1850, as in the world, as theism amongst intellectual and cultural elites increasingly lost its grip on them, they

began to, and they did this quite self-consciously, they took this study of antiquity and made it into a specialty, and they replaced it with what we now call the humanities.

[16:43] Everything you studied at school about literature and sociology, it's all kind of a fake theology, you know. A fake classicism. It was really, at one more level, I gave the argument away there, what I want to say, they realized they had to give students something to believe in, so they gave them the humanities instead, rather than Christianity.

That's where the humanities came from. Our faith is involved with everything. Here is this world of pagan antiquity. It was into this world that a likewise strange and wondrous Semitic religious movement projected itself, which is called, in the world, Christianity.

Composed of Christians, what else? Our moral and spiritual and theological ancestors. Most Christians, it is so interesting to ponder this, isn't it often the case that thinking about the obvious is the most interesting thing?

It's interesting to ponder this. Around the year 200, to take a representative year, around the year 250, say, or 300, all of the Christians in those years, outside of a certain place, we'll talk about in a moment, they were members of this cultural world.

All of our Christian ancestors were pagan pagans living in antiquity who had become Christians. The early Christians outside of Palestine, that is to say, outside of the diaspora synagogue, were converted pagans.

[18:17] Think about that. How were they converted? How much were they converted? That's always a relevant question for Christians. When were they noticed by pagan neighbors?

What did those pagan neighbors think of the Christians? Questions like that. Mr. Hart, our author today, is interested, very much interested, in these and like questions.

I can tell you with a nuance and a sophistication to be wondered at. This man is a thinker. A deeply learned thinker.

To the end of establishing, he is interested in these issues, Mr. Hart. To the end of establishing the thesis of his book.

To the end of establishing, that is, that Christianity was indeed, as his title says so accurately, a cultural revolution of world historical proportions.

[19:19] I first thought of, what did it mean when Christianity first got out there, obeying her Lord to preach the gospel, in far away places? Well, Mr. Hart says it was a cultural revolution of world historical proportions.

And then our author attempts to show, I would think successfully, but I'm a prejudiced reader, I don't deny. He shows, Mr. Hart does, this guy doesn't go in for little, thought about little things.

He shows us that modernity, in its deepest form, in its true form, is nothing less than an ideology that is at war with this Christian revolution.

We live in a modernity, which is an ideology, that is to say, it's a kind of superstructure of thought that isn't really fully integrated with its agenda, if I may call it an ideology that.

We live, we have absorbed into our bloodstream a modernity that's at war with the Christian revolution. That's his thesis. Mr. Hart, I can tell you, if you've ever, I don't know, should anybody in the room read any Mr. Hart, this volume or others, he writes essays for magazines.

[20:43] I hope I can convince some of you to do some Mr. Hart browsing. Mr. Hart likes extreme formulations, and he says so.

He attempts always to see, if you will, thought in, or thoughts, plural, in their final form, their final destination, if you will.

A thought, and I interpret here for Mr. Hart, if he was in the room, I think, I hope he'd agree with this. A thought is finally either under the lordship of Jesus Christ, or it's evil.

Do you think that's true? Mr. Hart would say it is. He thinks extreme thoughts. He's echoing Paul there, taking every thought captive to obey Christ, the Lord of thought.

books, you know, in the world of the mind, isn't incidental to our faith. Our Lord is the Lord of that world, putting down evil, establishing good thoughts, at war with an evil world, at war with this place of excrement, that it's become that because humans have rebelled against the lordship of God, of his son Jesus, taking every thought captive to obey Christ.

[22:05] That's the, that's the, the goal of Mr. Hart, an orthodox, Catholic old orthodox theologian. Just an example from memory of his love of extreme rhetoric.

I had to get this one in front of you. When talking of a Christian theodicy, as Mr. Hart does in one of his other books, it's not in this book, wonderful, good Christian rhetoric.

I hope it's good Christian rhetoric. He talks about, you know, theodicy again, how our faith sees God as establishing a perfect justice in the new creation. In a sense, answering all the hard speech that unbelief hurls at our Lord, you know, that are out there.

They're always hurled at our Lord. He goes to the heart of it, Mr. Hart, no pun intended there, when he talks about how the answer finally to theodicy, to the problem of evil, is what Mr. Hart calls, and this is the example of the rhetoric that I wanted to get in front of you.

He talks about the terror of Easter. Isn't that a, I love that. The terror of Easter, Mr. Hart talks about. Why is it a terror?

[ 23 : 19 ] Because when God establishes justice at the end of the world, how is he going to do it? He's going to raise people up out of their graves and he's going to confront them with what they really are and what they've really done. The deeds of their body.

Mr. Hart sees it correctly. He sees it, it seems to me, in its final form. And so how does he express that final form? He calls it the terror of Easter. You are going to be raised up in a new body that will last forever and in that form, God will judge you.

And perfect justice will be done. A perfect justice that no unbelief can condemn. That's theodicy. That's the Christian theodicy. It's based upon, Mr. Hart calls it, what a way with words this man has, the terror of Easter.

I think he's got it there. That's profound. The terror of Easter. We're waiting for our Lord to return in glory and to raise us up and to do perfect justice in the world.

There it is. It would appear, to get at, further into Mr. Hart's volume, it would appear that we are in the habit, this goes to what this book is about today, of telling the story of the world in three parts.

[ 24 : 39 ] This is a big issue here, but you can make, you can really grasp it quite easily because it's really an obvious truth. The world, especially in the Western world, we look at the world in three parts and it's ultimately related to Trinitarian theology.

And then, the Trinitarian theology gave to Hegel and Marx their three, their threeness in understanding the world. You know, the Trinity, God is one God, the God we believe in, and he's one God in the mystery of three.

Therefore, history in the Bible's view as well is also, of course, three. I don't know if I should show this with my funny little left-handed writing or not.

Maybe I'll try it once and you can tell me, oh, please stop. You know, the Bible has, there's a paradise world and then there's a fallen world and then there is a saved world.

You know, that's Eden, it's the story of salvation, the calling of Israel, then a remnant, then out of the remnant, one person. Oscar Cohen puts it beautifully, and then God reverses the story as he dwindled down salvation story to one man in Palestine, then the body of Christ opens up the story of salvation into many again.

[ 25 : 58 ] Sort of many in the beginning in sin, down to one man and then out to many again, the church in the last book of the Bible, that multitude that no man can number. Paradise world, fallen world, saved world, roughly, you can use your own language on that.

Then, as we mentioned earlier about how classicism became the humanities because God begins to disappear in elite intellectual circles in the Western world, 18th, 19th century, then history begins to replace God, in a sense.

History becomes the God of the West. Nietzsche was one great thinker who saw through this, but he was ignored at the time. Even under Marx, thought itself becomes a movement within history. The famous three again, there's an aristocracy and then there's a bourgeoisie and then the working class finally takes over. History is a drama of three.

This is all borrowed secondhand, a badly borrowed secondhand Trinitarian theology. There's conditions of thought in the world. Marx quite insightfully saw that.

[ 27 : 09 ] Material conditions that drive our thought and it all has that great threeness about it. An aristocracy giving way to a bourgeoisie, giving way finally to the happy rule of the working class.

It didn't work out, but they tried. Making a long story short, the new atheism, this is of course not new, but it's now being aggressively taught and marketed anew in our time.

The new model of three goes like this and it's rather interesting. And you hear, get this over and over again.

I heard on the CBC just about two weeks ago, some, I think it was that chap who wrote the children's stories that are the answer to the Chronicles of Narnia, the atheist writer. He's part of the new atheist crew.

This is, again, not new, but it's being told to us in a very aggressive way. In this new threeness, Greek and Roman antiquity that we talked about earlier was in a sense a kind of paradise, they want to argue.

[ 28 : 23 ] That is to say, they knew it wasn't really a paradise, but it was on the way, this wonderful civilization where our faith grew up around the Mediterranean world, it was on its way to science and even to democracy and an open and free society filled with tolerance and happiness.

But, unfortunately, according to the new atheist, this is so crude, unfortunately, just like in the biblical view, a fall occurred. But, now, the fall turns out to be the rise of Christianity.

The world fell back from this wonderful civilization that was on its way to many virtues, much like people like themselves, actually, being produced.

But, there was a fall. Christianity is the new fall and the new atheism. We are the big problem in the new atheism. A fall occurred blocking the flourishing and triumph of all of these good things.

Christianity is the fall. We are the bad guys, according to the new atheists. That is not a caricature.

That is exactly what they say. It is all over the place in their words and their writings.

[ 29 : 33 ] At the enlightenment, thank goodness, at the enlightenment, salvation's story resumed and the world is on its way yet again to salvation.

Now, this last part of the third part, the enlightenment story of the world, this is a part of its contested drama, but with more or less emphasis, you find this in some writings of the new atheists, the Christian faith and the Christian church should be, not to put too fine a point on it, must be destroyed for salvation to finally arrive.

People like Sam Harris and others are high on this thesis. It's not enough just to marginalize the Christians. We should turn on them and get rid of them once and for all.

Get rid of them. Greek and Roman culture was a kind of paradise. It was the world as it should have been. It was already on a progressive, happy trajectory.

Christianity is the fall into sin. The enlightenment overthrew the fall and salvation stories on its way again to mop up the war. We should, some of these writers will tell you rather bluntly, let's get rid of the church and the Christians once and for all.

[ 30 : 58 ] Especially, say, start with the educational system. Teach aggressively some kind of, start a pluralist view of religions. Notice in Quebec recently, they've made this the official teaching.

In Quebec, Catholic Quebec, they teach kids and parents have been told, that's why I got a lot of news coverage, parents will not have the right to exempt their children from the classes.

They will be taught that the Roman faith is one faith in the most many. They're all alike, they're all the same, you've got to believe in them all. Or you've got to be tolerant about them all. That is official Roman, that's the official Quebec provincial teaching material. Aggressively like that. It's really obviously a kind of attack on the faith. The next step is to just get rid of it altogether. Again, this is not a caricature. This is the chief plank, this threeness, Greek and Roman culture.

Christianity is the fall into sin. Enlightenment is back on our way to salvation. This is what Mr.

Hart calls at one level the ideology of modernity. This is out there and this is at war with the Christian message, period. In any of its forms, Christian fundamentalism, Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Evangelicalism, just about any form of Christian, they'll just get rid of it.

It's bad. It's the fall. It's sin. This ideology indicts, hurls at us many charges. Certainly it throws many charges at the ancient medieval past, but we're not exempted. The reformers aren't the good guys who are the good Christians. There are no good Christians. They're all bad.

[ 32 : 54 ] They hurl many charges at the Christian church. It's good to know just a few of these charges and I know, I probably can't tell you anything here that you haven't heard before, I'm sure, but it's fun to, it's fun, I suppose, to rehearse some of them. Christianity impeded or ended Greek science, we're told. The church persecuted non-Christian, non-Christian, especially non-Christian thought, especially at the rise of Constantine, early 5th century, or 30, when Constantine came on the scene. Early Christian mobs were frequently told, burnt down libraries, especially in Alexandria. Apparently our Christian ancestors just liked to burn the things down. I often felt like burning things down myself, but I don't admit it. It held back female liberation, it goes without saying.

It destroyed ancient pagan cultural glories, like many pagan temples. Generally, it gave to us the proverbial dark ages of violence, religious absolutism, the Crusades, witch burning, heretic, hunting, the Inquisition, and of course, anti-Semitism. An indictment which proves that pagan antiquity was in fact nothing less than morally superior to any succeeding Christian era, the new modern ideology will tell you. Why rehearse this? Well, because it's obviously an enemy of our faith, faith, and this story will be hurled at us, if I can use, brought up in our faith, so to speak, taught in our schools, more and more bluntly, probably, as time goes on. Much more frequently in the future, we will hear this kind of thing. It's been out there in intellectual circles for hundreds of years, but now it's becoming an organized, it might become hyper-organized attack against the Christians. At every point, a quote from memory, I should tell you a few weeks ago,

I happily lent this book to a friend, I haven't seen it recently, so a lot of things I'm just going by memory. I've read it a couple times, but Mr. Hart virtually says this sentence here, where he turns on this argument. At every point where this indictment is open to serious historical inquiry, it is, says Mr. Hart, it is demonstrably false. At every point where it is open to serious historical inquiry, this whole indictment is nonsense. Modernity's ideology about the past is nuts, is crazy, is intellectually naked. As I read this book, just a passing thought here, it reminded me very much of Mr. Professor Taylor's secular age. You get a great thinker like Mr. Taylor saying that modernity at its heart is a vacancy, a complete intellectual vacancy. The more you carefully look at it, there's nothing there. Mr. Hart echoes that kind of thing, he doesn't quote Mr. Taylor, but he echoes at every point where you can seriously look at this kind of historical indictment and try and take it seriously as a serious attack on the Christian faith. It is just demonstrably false. That's what you'll get when you happily run out to some place like

Regent College or buy this book. This is his theme, a furthering of his theme and thesis. You will want to read this book to experience Mr. Hart's demolishing of each charge. He does a magnificent job on each one. And you read it and you go, how in the world did people come to believe this? A lot of Christians have probably absorbed a lot of the modern ideology in their bloodstream and partly believe it. Mr. Hart doesn't go into this, but I think we Protestants are part of the problem. We've engaged ourselves probably in a lot of ridiculous telling of the story of the Catholic Church. We've reveled in it. At least our Protestant ancestors weren't afraid to bear false witness frequently about the Roman Church because it made us look good. And we've sort of opened the door to this atheist view of the past. It's happened to throw us into the mix. We're no better than the bad Catholics were. That's a great book and

I hope you will read it because I can't rehearse all of his arguments here today. We do all carry about with us, don't we, pictures of the past. This is why it's significant to at least the church as a whole, not every individual Christian, but to know about these kind of disputes because we do carry about with us pictures of the past. Again, which Charles Taylor calls our social imaginary, where we think we are, what we think the past was all about. Are they, could they become idols, these views of the past, which are dangerous? I think, of course, they do become dangerous. To what extent, we can ask ourselves as Christians, Mr. Hart made me think about this a lot as I read him. I didn't just enjoy the book from start to finish. He says very many challenging things. To what extent have we absorbed modernity's telling of the story?

[ 38 : 15 ] And to what extent do we all really believe a lot of this story? We've probably all absorbed a lot of this story. Casually, we pick up a lot of knowledge about the past, which is more or less bunk. Is there, as I read this book, I want to leave a good time for conversation.

What's, is there, should there be a Christian story of the past? I don't know. I really can't, I guess there should be, I think there should be. But what form should a story, a Christian story of the past take might be a better question. There has been, obviously, a Protestant telling of the story of the past, just as there's certainly a Marxist telling of the story of the past.

Telling the story of the past can pretty well constitute everything that you'll end up believing. What you believe about the past will really control what you think about yourself, the world, everything. Mr. Hart calls the Christian arrival in pagan antiquity, again, a revolution.

And it has been sufficiently successful that we have become blind to its impact. The Christians changed the world by telling its revolutionary story. That's why I wanted to start with 1 Timothy 3.16. We know this story. You may call it, if you will, a world-changing world imaginary. And we all know this story so well. Imagine the Christians, pagan Christians, pagans hearing this story. The Christians said to the pagan world, God is love. God entered the world in lowly love. God died for

the world in his lowly love in Jesus. And he was raised for it. This is the story that we've got used to telling. Western civilization has heard this story, has absorbed it into its poetry, its singing, its architecture, its everything. We're used to hearing this story. When the pagans first heard it, they thought it was crazy. God is love. God entered the world and this guy, Jesus, in Palestine, he died for it. He was raised for it. This story, in fact, and Mr. Hart will convince you of this, rejoice your heart as a Christian in hearing it again. This story is revolutionary and it revolutionizes everything. This story inevitably means that the poor are placed at center stage.

The church, unlike any other institution, perhaps in history, certainly in pagan antiquity, the church welcomed everyone. That sounds, we're so used to hearing that. It was never done in pagan antiquity.

[ 41 : 24 ] They welcomed everyone, these Christians. Peace, the love of peace became possible in the world. It wasn't achieved, but people actually saw a vision of how the world might become peaceful if everyone was changed from glory into glory with Jesus living in them. Mr. Hart, for instance, admires Nietzsche as an intelligent critic, I was talking to some friends about this earlier, as an intelligent critic of the Christian worldview, unlike, as he always calls them, the semi-literate, historically ignorant new atheists. Mr. Nietzsche saw so clearly that the Christians exalted the lowly and made weak people into the center of the view of the world. They actually, the Christians worship a crucified guy. They worship weakness. They worship the poor. They exalt these people. Nietzsche hated this. And the Christians became, in fact, in principle, lovers of peace. Did the Christians achieve peace or did they bring about world peace? Of course not. But they started to place in the world this new imaginary, this new worldview that makes these things now thinkable. They weren't even thinkable in antiquity. This is what the Christians did simply by telling the good old story of the gospel. A few anecdotes from the book. Pagans were shocked that the early

Christians, one pagan emperor said, in consternation, as the Christians started to grow in pagan antiquity, he says to a friend in a letter, this pagan emperor, the Christians are growing. Of course they are. He says, look, they care for their own poor and they also care for our poor, he calls them. He was frustrated. The Christians are growing. Well, one of the reasons is they care for people. Pagans had never really done that too seriously. Christians, it was noted by the early pagans that the Christians don't expose their infants. Popular way to do abortion, antiquity. Don't make this kid, leave him out in the wild. You've got to know that the Christians have a new baby, but they don't do that. Christians didn't expose their infants. Love in Christianity is grounded in a believable worldview and there it finds traction. It cannot find traction in any other worldview. Mr.

Hart will convince you of that, I hope. Romans, for instance, had hospitals of a sort. They were only for soldiers. You know, get the guy back whole again so he can go and kill people. The Christians provided hospitals for all. A revolutionary new idea. Christians did not burn down any library in Alexandria especially. This is a common lie repeated in cheap modern anti-Christian polemic. Mr. Hart, as a lover of books and a lover of culture, goes out of his way to have many pages where he shows you all the sources from which this charge is made. And they're so vacant and meaningless.

But out of this no proof, there were libraries burned down. Christians had nothing to do with it. There's no shred of proof that the Christians had anything to do with this. But in secondary cheap literature, you find Sam Harris and these other writers of garbage. They'll repeat this over and over again.

[ 44 : 57 ] No, the early Christians burned down libraries. There were mobs of evil Christians, evil monks from the desert. Burned down libraries. There is zero historical proof for this. Sometimes in the secondary cheap literature of new atheism, you will find point blank either historical ignorance of a rare sort or maybe not too rare or worse and worse and worse and worse and perhaps point blank lies. But one doesn't want to go to motives here. Christians didn't burn down libraries. It's again a common lie told in anti-Christian polemic. We're often told that the literature of Greek antiquity, this was a new one for me, the literature of Greek antiquity, which was saved for the world, especially for chaps of the Enlightenment, it was all ruined by the Christians, but the Muslim world saved it for us.

It came to us from Baghdad. Actually, a great and learned humanist like Mr. Hart will show you in great detail that it was preserved in Baghdad and it was preserved by Nestorian Christians. Christians preserved the language, the literature of Greek and Roman antiquity.

Don't believe a lot of the nonsense you read about our faith from these guys. There's a lot of just sheer garbage written from prestigious publishers and writers who sell a lot of books.

Across the usual issues of life, how did Christians and pagans understand reason? How are we to see and understand the inquiry we called science? Was it encouraged or hampered by Christianity? Was there science in antiquity at all?

How was the shape shaped by paganism and how was the state shaped by Christianity? All of these issues are wonderfully discussed by Mr. Hart and shown to be deeply involved, complicated, and it undermines the whole view of the past as told by the new atheists.

[ 46 : 56 ] This Greek and Roman world was not unfollowed. It was evil, an evil place like most historical places. The Christians slowly but surely, like salt and light, as Jesus told us, would start to change the world just by telling the story of Jesus.

I know I just, it's 10 to 10 now, my goodness, I've just given you a taste of what seems to me a fascinating and important book, but you already picked that up. Not all Christians, of course, need to read this kind of book, but the church needs to know about such books and such arguments and such disputes so that we can defend ourselves, our weaker brethren, from this kind of assault that will become more and more common.

I think Christian parents are going to hear this story from their children more and more in the future. Daddy and mommy, I learned about the church today. We're bad. In the media, in schools, just everywhere, the new atheism and what it stands for may very well become more intense and will want to be good conversation partners, if you will, in such a world.

Mr. Hart excels at such conversation in a very potent way. A Christian view of the past, race to a conclusion here, a Christian view of the past, it seems to me, will be in a sense very modest. It will not be surprised that evil, human beings frequently disappoint. Mr. Hart, one of his constantly refrains in this book, his sweetly understated statement, he's good at rhetoric on the quiet side as well.

[ 48 : 34 ] Human beings frequently disappoint. Some sophisticated pagans Mr. Hart finds much more attractive than some, he suspects, what he calls lightly baptized Christians in antiquity.

He's not an ideologist. He has a very subtle mind. He knew there were very good pagans around. Some of them were probably morally better than a lot of the Christians who rushed into the church at times.

Goodness knows what their agenda was. As movements get big and complicated, they attract all sorts of people. Mr. Hart is just simply trying to create a textured, sophisticated view of the past to counterblast the kind of nonsense, again, you get from the new atheists.

Anything, as I conclude, anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed. That's a potent sentence. Anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed.

So speaks a very influential modern philosopher, Richard Rorty. By which, as I understand it, he means to say that there are no social or cultural, no places, if you will, from which vantage point we may make final, non-contestable moral judgments or any kind of judgment about fact or anything about the world we live in.

[ 50 : 00 ] Anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed. Things in our time, to put it mildly, are being redescribed. An older historian, I just, at random from my own memory, it's easy to come across these kind of things.

An older historian, like I believe his name was H.A.L. Fisher, may speak. He was early this century kind of big historian. He can speak without hesitation about the inrush of a cleansing Christian ethic into pagan antiquity.

The inrush of a cleansing Christian ethic into pagan antiquity. And Mr. Hart quotes and interacts with a contemporary classicist, covered in academic honors, and influential in high influential circles, which sooner or later trickles down to the kind of people who write new atheist books, and gets taught in high schools, and goodness knows where, a very contemporary classicist who will argue that Christianity was a moral setback for Western civilization.

Hence, popular writers like Sam Harris and others will denigrate Christians with all sorts of denigrating rhetoric. Their permission to do this, if you will, by some aspects of sophisticated culture.

How do we answer this redescription? Well, Mr. Hart shows us the way. Hence, I wanted to talk today about this book. A patient, thorough, thick description will vindicate the Christian presence in antiquity as indeed revolutionary and world-changing, making love, nothing less than love, the final

horizon for the world.

[ 51 : 44 ] It's good to come to church and just keep on hearing this story, keeping it alive in the world. Anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed?

Well, of course. That is where, however, the work of inquiry begins. There are better and worse descriptions, surely. Surely we know that. That's what Mr. Rorty always sounds dramatic and biting, but he really doesn't talk too much sense often.

And as for non-contestable moral judgments, well, instructed Christians never make them anyway. They are and will be the work of Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of truth, the Christian church witnessed in pagan antiquity.

Jesus, the lowly Jesus, is the Lord of truth and the Lord of love. And he will make those final, non-contestable judgments on the day of judgment.

And what Mr. Hart calls, surely correctly, the terror of Easter, the terror of it. I wanted to find one quick way to sort of summarize how I kind of come to grips with this kind of thing.

[ 53 : 01 ] And I'm going to take a couple of lines from Emily Dickinson, completely out of context. She's a very contested soul, Emily Dickinson. But my goodness, she was a believer of sorts.

She wrote magnificent poetry. Two of her lines go like this. I died for beauty, but was scarce adjusted in the tomb, when one who died for truth was laying in an adjoining room.

She has a lovely way of saying things. I think the first half of that line is what the best pagans believed in.

The very best of them. There were good pagans. I died for beauty, but was scarce adjusted in the tomb. You live for beauty, but life ends in futility anyway, says Emily.

But when one who died for truth, he's talking about Jesus. He was laying in an adjoining room next to me. He took... Now, I'm taking her out of context, but I'm going to do it and just stop Emily there and say that's what we Christians believe and what our Christian forebears told pagan antiquity.

[ 54 : 07 ] Yes, we all end up in the tomb, but one will come and join you in death and then raise you up out of it. And that is a revolutionary belief and it changes everything.

It changes cultures. It changes the world. The stupid new atheists are totally blind to it. And just by being faithful Christians, we'll tell the true story of the world, which is that God showed up in the world.

And that makes all the difference. That makes all the difference. The true story of the world...

Maybe we'll have to wait until the Lord returns in glory to give us the true story of the world.

But he is the real true story of the world, Jesus. And the church just does any culture a great favor. The least of its favors that it does for the world.

Just tell this story. It will change your culture. And it will change everything. I've just found Mr. Hart's book lovely, exciting.

[ 55 : 07 ] He's not completely one of us. He's an Orthodox theologian in that Eastern tradition. But he's a wonderfully learned, wonderfully scholarly, subtle mind.

And I found my faith was encouraged and built up by reading this great rhetorician. A greatly learned believer in our Lord.

And I just loved his book very much. Atheist delusions. The Christian revolution has fashionable enemies. They'll pass away. Jesus will be exalted.

Amen. May I say a word of prayer before our discussion time? Lord, we thank you for that Jesus has come to join us in this evil, fallen world.

But we live in joy because he has made all things new. And we look forward to knowing more and more about him. The one who gives us joy.

[ 56 : 04 ] We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. That was a bit of a race to the finish line there.

But there you go. If anybody wants copies of this... There's a minimal charge. You want how many copies? Sorry, sorry, please.

The autograph. The autograph here. Yes. It's called... Atheist... It's a long title. Atheist delusions. The Christian revolution and its fashionable enemies.

Yale. Yale. Yale. Yeah. I was wondering if... Does he mention anything about... Gnosticism or stuff like that?

[ 57 : 09 ] Which has a great impact. Not too much. Not too much, no. But, I mean, it comes into a story. Yeah. Not too much, no. He's talking the big story, isn't he?

He's talking about worldviews changing. Yeah. Well, how does his land... Not too much, no. He's talking about Christianity in the West and pagan antiquity. He comes in by...

He glances into the story, of course. For instance, he'll take the usual, endlessly repeated story, which is told not because they're interested in the truth of historical inquiry.

They want to denigrate us. Yeah. Therefore, we're always told, Muslim world saved the literature of pagan antiquity. Mr. Hart just looks at it very carefully and says, no, Nestorian Christians saved it. Even working in Baghdad. Nestorian. Nestorian. Yeah. They were an offshoot of Orthodox... They were our Christian brothers and sisters with some slightly strange beliefs about certain aspects of Christian Orthodoxy.

[ 58 : 11 ] But they were Christians anyway. He constantly just says, the story is much thicker and more complicated than we get in the new atheist literature. And in other literature, too.

He does a masterful job giving a lengthy quotation from a very sophisticated medievalist, for instance, an historian, who talks all the time about how a medieval city would take care of lepers. And the magnificent job they did in taking care of lepers. And he shows how this modern historian sees this fact. And he starts talking virtual nonsense for a page and a half, or lengthily.

This modern, very sophisticated medievalist, starts talking about, oh, the issue of distance is here. And why did the medievals keep this distance? And he just talks some Foucaultian postmodernist babble.

And Hart just sort of puts his fist down and says, why are you saying this? Look at the facts. The medieval Christians cared for these desperately ill people because they loved them.

[ 59 : 17 ] And they meant to care for the poor and the suffering. They didn't have to. The Romans would have thrown them into pits. The Christians cared for them just because they were human.

Because he talks about, in pagan antiquity, no one had a face. You just had a role. Christianity gave every human being a face. You're someone for whom Christ died.

You desperately poor, stinking, wretched, unhappy, miserable person. And when the church acted normatively, and it didn't always do it, it failed miserably many times.

But the normativity of the Christian story says that person must be ministered to. There's a dynamic in Christianity that sooner or later gets there.

And any other view of the world will not get there. Will not. Just simply will not. That's the Christian revolution. Did the Christians fail? All the time.

[ 60 : 19 ] They frequently disappointed his refrain. But he says, look at the revolution that's happening. The telling of the Jesus story makes all the difference.

That's what this book, over and over again, says in a very sophisticated way. He shows that a lot of the modernity's ideology talks nonsense about the Christians sometimes.

Because they want to denigrate us. They want to make us, we're the fall. We're the fall. It's a very strange cultural battle that's going on out there. I mean, most of it's invisible, but it's happening.

So I saw... I was interested in what you said about Quebec. And this... What you think of as being a turnaround in terms of the teaching in the schools.

It's 40 years since I taught history at a local high school. The Department of Education said, you will promote democracy, and you will show the errors of communism.

[ 61 : 19 ] This was not too long after the communist revolution in China. And this was the focus of the course. Now, tolerance and pluralism are the trademarks of democracy.

So I'm wondering, do you want to go back to a world that didn't have that in order to elevate Christian teaching, which during the Middle Ages was not necessarily the best?

It was certainly pervasive, but a lot of it was superstition and distortion of biblical truth. Do you want to go back to that? And if not, are we on a collision course with our own political ideology?

Yeah. Well, I mean, I must take... I'll take... I have to take responsibility, obviously, for that reference, because Mr. Hart probably... But it is a... Oh, yeah. Oh, absolutely. Yeah, I mean...

I hope Mr. Hart would give my answer. I'll write him and tell him. I think a Christian might say very much... Admittedly, these are complicated issues. But might say, we'd be in favor of...

[ 62 : 25 ] The Christian faith would be in favor of a pluralist approach to talking about world religions, as long as it's done with intellectual integrity. Which means to say, as I understand it, the religious pluralism position cannot be the master of ceremonies of the discussion.

It must put itself forward as one of the choices. But that's not what it does. It tells... It starts telling everybody what to believe about all the world religions. It doesn't put itself forward as one of the

options.

So it secretly... To use the words of a philosopher from an earlier age, it never will come clean about its hidden absolute.

Which is really... The religious pluralist position is the truth. So if you ever meet a Christian who says, no, Jesus Christ is the final truth about everything, you can tell him confidently that he, she is an intolerant bigot and should be shut up.

That's what the new atheists will want. So I would see pluralism as a Trojan horse, usually. It's not taught honestly, that's all. But that goes to deeper issues, Sheila.

[ 63 : 33 ] Mr. Hart is a great believer. He thinks extreme thoughts, as he says. He knows. Modernity, he says, finally believes in nothing. Formally, it's nihilist.

But it won't face up to that yet. Modernity, when you teach religious pluralism, you're not really teaching tolerance. You're really teaching that, well, people have these fantasies about the world. But the real truth about the world is that nothing is true.

I mean, that's what I would think where the battle is joined. But I admit, it's a difficult... When you live in a pluralist society, the early Christians show every sign of wanting to learn from other people, of deeply appreciating other worldviews.

At their best, the Christians did that. Take a guy like Clement of Alexandria, hyper-learned Christian philosopher, just learns from...

He grew up in paganism. Knows Plato and Aristotle and Dudley and knows the Greek poets and just revels in them.

[ 64 : 37 ] And then he absorbs the biblical narrative and shows that he witnesses a Christian that here we find the truth, finally, that we've been looking for. You know, so... That's what I said, Paul, isn't it?

Well, yeah. Yeah, exactly. Exactly. So the Christians weren't... The Christians aren't normatively hostile to other... We're good conversation partners.

That's what I'll say. We'll be good conversation partners in a pluralist society. And the pluralists are not good conversation partners.

And Charles Taylor makes this point beautifully sometimes. Charles Taylor's a treasure. He says the worst conversation partners in our society are liberal people who shout down everybody because they really think they know the final truth.

And the pluralists are always telling us that they know the truth. But they don't fess up to that. They just... Let's look at the world religions. And they start telling you what you can and can't believe if you're a member of them.

[ 65 : 37 ] Anyway, they... What a... She'll ask an easier question next time. Who's the gentleman on your right there? Monsignor. You mentioned that...

You wonder whether we, as in the church, have perhaps bought into the modernist project. To some extent. You know, being...

Have we absorbed it because of our education and the modernist, whatever, does the author of the book address her own or do you have any thoughts to do that? Well, he would.

He does elsewhere. Yeah, I'm sure he would... You know, that... I don't... This story, I'm sure Mr. Hart would agree with, that liberal Christianity is a heresy that says...

You look around at what's progressive and healing from its point of view in a culture and you say, that must be God at work.

[ 66 : 43 ] You baptize it and that becomes the faith. So you're on board with the latest cutting edge liberal agenda. Liberalism has been doing that since the 19th century.

Sometimes, of course, backing wonderfully, happy and good things, which Orthodox Christians back too. But liberalism has become just that. So you...

You... Again, you just... You end up being a baptizer of what you consider the best in your culture. That's what liberalism is. Liberal Christianity.

I'm trying to think about an example. The worst example... I mean, it's a loaded example, admittedly, but Karl Barth saw it so clearly. Liberal Christianity had no resources by which to say no to Nazism.

So liberal Christians in Nazi Germany baptized Hitlerism as the spirit is leading us to the victory of this movement because it's the future of the world.

[ 67 : 44 ] There's liberalism at its worst. T.S. Eliot saw that very clearly. It was liberal Christianity that went into darkness in that time. But...

So I... Your question again, yeah, is... Repeat your... Well... Yeah, he sees liberal... He has to it, but I guess a follow-up question is if we have bought into the whole minds project with annoyance or alarming, might it be because of our desire to be irrelevant?

Oh, yeah, sure. Sure. Vanity is always at work. Yeah. Yeah. But although Hayden said that, I know it's not always easy to know how to discern things.

What we should be supporting and not supporting. I don't think any Christian has just bought the whole... Modernity as an ideology is now, in a certain sense, it's forming.

One German philosopher I read once who said that modernist people now look at the world almost as if they have two completely different eyes. One is going back to pagan antiquity, but the other eye is deeply shaped by biblical religion without being aware of it.

[ 68 : 57 ] So there's a kind of tension in modernity because the Christian witness and influence is still there and is deeply ingrained in things. So it's a contested, mixed-up story.

By the way, I just got... He does a marvelous job on the Galileo drama. Shows the idea that the church was just the bad guys persecuting Galileo. He's a total myth.

Total myth. I mean, the way the Middle Ages were stupid about cosmology and brave, heroic humanists took on the church and won...

It's just... It's a cartoon. It's not like that at all. It's much more complicated. Good, sir. Yes? Do you think all of us could read this book and understand it? Well, you could.

I think so. In places, it's very challenging. He's a very... Yeah. I mean, the early going is therapeutic for me. I mean, he just takes some beautiful one-liners at the new atheists and just...

[ 70 : 05 ] Yeah. Yeah, please. I'm not quite sure what we've been put the question or anything in this, but... You know, when I'm listening to you and speaking about the fact that we as Christians are so accepting and sort of firm, we want to understand other people and things like that, but through the ages, that, you know, in reading, that just now seemed to have been the case in a lot of...

and a lot of... When we had a completely Christian society really in Europe, and, you know, when you read about people, even people like Luther, you know, he was so anti-Semitic.

And so it doesn't seem... And the Inquisition, and how the Protestants hated the Catholicism. So we weren't really inclusive. He's not...

Is there any wonder that this modern thinking has come in in our world? Yeah. That may be... Yeah, yes, that may be part of the story, but, again, we have so absorbed the modern picture of Christians in the Middle Ages and the Inquisition and whatnot that it's been bloated into an ideology.

And we look extremely carefully, as Mr. Hart's capable of doing, it really doesn't justify the big generalities about the Church in the Middle Ages. Something like, during the course of the Inquisition, I think over the course of 300 years, Mr. Hart, I think I'm remembering Mr. Hart, but if these numbers are way off, it's sort of at the right ballpark.

[ 71 : 47 ] The Inquisition may have put to death 30,000 people over three centuries. You know, 30,000 people a minute died in Soviet Russia.

The wars of modern secularism, of modern nationalism, slaughtered, invented total war. In the Middle Ages, they saw war as inevitable.

They tried to humanize it through certain rules of warfare. They even tried funnily out as people have certain days when you couldn't go to war. The Middle Ages tried to contain war.

They failed, but they tried. Modernity said, let's stop trying, let's do total war. That's modernity's ideology regarding warfare. They invented total war. That's because they've lost the Christian view of things, which fought again in this world of excrement.

It tried to raise people up a bit to try and see a way to counteract our warfare impulses. The better way to tell the story is that the Christians fought heroically against war, even in the Middle Ages.

[ 73 : 03 ] The moderns gave up on it and just started to do total war. Now, how often have you been told that? That view of the world. We're never told that view. That would be Mr. Hart's view. Just as Mr. Hart says, the Greeks never practiced science.

The early Christians, there's a guy named Philopinus, I think his name is. He started to practice what we would call empirical science. The Christians started to demystify nature because they were monotheists and gave the world the courage to study the world.

Christians invented science, Mr. Hart wants to say. It was pagans who would have held that back. The modern ideology is just twisted against the Christians over and over again. Of course those facts are true. The Christians failed miserably many times. But telling the story as if it's the story of that equals the fall and the enlightenment equals the story of redemption is ludicrous.

In fact, the medievals in many ways were probably superior to the moderns in many ways, but that's complicated. He just tries to make the point that these are complicated issues and when you read cartoons like the new atheist project, you are reading cartoons, you're looking at cartoons.

[ 74 : 20 ] But it's complicated, isn't it? It's very complicated. Well, it's... Oh, good sir, please. Sorry, when you finish.

No. What you've shown is, and it's nice, is that Hart demolishes the story that you've got on the right. But the problem with demolishing a story like that is that people have a picture in their minds of Christians burning libraries and witches and all the rest of it.

And you say, you talk to such a person, you say, well, actually, this didn't happen. That's right. So they take that little bit out of the picture. Then you take this little bit out of the picture. So you can remove a little bit of the picture, but even if you remove all the elements of the picture, the picture still remains.

That's right. That's right. And so what you need is a counter story. That's right. A simple counter story which people will listen to. That's right. It does not get anywhere and not using it.

Yeah. I would say, and not to dodge the question, by implication, yes. But I think it becomes a two-part story with the way Mr. Hart tells it.

[ 75 : 28 ] That's why I wanted to quote Yeats for a reason, not just because I like quoting some of my favorite poets. If you start out with the picture of humanity as a place of excrement, where the world is just deeply prone, not always to do its worst, as I believe someone named Jim Packer likes to say, can't always, doesn't always do the worst, but there's a worst there that might be done.

The world is just deeply dark and troubled, always. And that the Christian revolution is the salt and light that goes on, the only effective worldview to counteract that perpetual evil, which takes different forms at different times in history.

So I think that's the beginnings of his counter big story. But I know it's a complicated big story. This is really interesting because I had a discussion this week with the newly gift.

Oh. And part of the discussion demonstrated to me that a lot of the ways Christians describe God actually gives a distorted view of what we believe about God.

For example, he had been talking to a Christian who said, I know that God is this, because my daughter prayed three times that it wouldn't rain on a certain day and it stopped raining.

[ 77 : 07 ] Yeah, yeah. I know that God exists because I was in a car accident but I wasn't hurt. Et cetera, et cetera.

Everything good that happens in our lives we ascribe to God. anything bad that happens is ascribed to evil. And I think that Christians have done a great disservice by having a distorted view of the sovereignty of God.

If a Christian dies, that is also God's will. not just if they're preserved. And I think that often we have done that and have given the door, the opportunity for these new atheists to point the finger at us and say, what hypocrisy, what a distorted view of God.

And I'm hoping, because I'm going to buy this book and read it, I'm hoping that Mr. Hart has an answer to that kind of challenge.

Yeah, sure, sure. Sure. I think he does? Well, he does in the broad sense that bad Christian teaching does the Christian church harm.

[ 78 : 30 ] Whereas mature, balanced, rich Christian teaching does us good. And you've nicely told us some of the results of lazy, sloppy Christian thinking.

And that the corruption of that will do us good. Yeah. So is that, I'm sorry, yeah, I'm at a very sophisticated level. Mr. Hart is not for the faint of heart.

I'm in. Well, I'm hoping to read this and pass this on to my new idiot. Yeah. Um, in hopes that that would give an answer to, um, sometimes a Christian's pat answer.

Yeah, sure. Who God is. Yeah, yeah. No, that's, yes. Have I, have I responded okay? I, I, yeah, I know I mean, lazy Christians.

Lewis called that something, the embarrassing defender. You sometimes have to undo what they've said to try and give a more mature Christian answer, I know. Unfortunately, it's prevalent in the TV and, you know, in a lot of pulpit.

[ 79 : 41 ] Yeah, there's sloppy Christian teaching. I'm quoting Emily Dickinson a lot these days. How about, we are not for conclusions is the beginning of one of her poems. Which, uh, Christians will try to give an absolute answer when actually that's never appropriate.

There's, uh, we are not for conclusions like that. We have to be more, we have to talk about the mystery of God's wrath and the fallenness of the world. A more nuanced response to just, well, when good things happen, I say, look, I mean, that's a ludicrous argument. You can, counter-arguments are everywhere. It just doesn't work, does it? I, yeah, I, I, I would come to Learn as a Change every week if we just did book reviews, but this may be an example of why we shouldn't do book reviews all the time.

It's, I mean, it's something a bit more straightforward, but it's, um, I was told an anecdote by someone in the room who has a, a connection with the University of Virginia that Mr. Hart was going to be hired by the School of Religious Studies there.

Phil, right? And I think the faculty there said, no way, we don't want this Orthodox Christian around, you know, so he, he can be, he can be apparently a controversial figure. Phil, if I got that right and did just the, so I think I've heard the same thing.

[ 81 : 07 ] Yes, is there some, please, please. Is this similar to the revisionism that has happened over the Holocaust? The word, the people say that there was no Holocaust in Nazi Germany.

No, no, I don't think it has anything to do with that at all, no. But it's a revisionism of history. It, it, it shows how contested history is and how, how important it is to be a, a pretty thorough investigator or don't do it at all because you'll get, you'll start believing very odd things.

Yeah. Of course, there is revisionism all the time. I mean, Richard Vorty tells us you can, you can re-describe anything.

But I, I don't think you want to go into that just now. I, I can quote Richard Vorty all the time or whatever. Well, if you want to sharpen your way with scripture, it's good to engage with an atheist, especially if they're using scripture.

it really is. It's quite entertaining because they'll charge you with putting spin on things, especially when you get to the truth, is what your concern is.

[ 82 : 34 ] But it's a good exercise if you've got the time to get tired. So thank you, Harvey, I think. And film us next week. Thank you. thanks, back to ■fers.

Thank you. Annette is mange of \*\*\*■■■■ with a significant successful staff.  
terms