

Jesus Christ: God and Man — Part 2

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[0 : 0 0] So yes, to get right down to it, today is part two of, as in front of us there, Jesus Christ, God and man. What do you say about words like that? Jesus Christ, God and man.

And so we will begin with a bit of an overview of last week, looking first at, as you recall from last week, ways of inquiry, ways of perhaps a moral inquiry, versions of rational inquiry. The philosopher Alistair MacIntyre, our guide in all of this, may be read, I read him so, as really mapping different sensibilities.

The sometimes prevailing ways, prevailing styles of thinking, ways and styles of inquiry, again, ways and styles of rationality, which again, frequently in the history of a culture, certain ways will dominate, have much influence. And then second, very, very briefly, again, by way of review, we'll hear just a very brief sample of the rich confessional language of our faith. It's always just good to hear the very center of our faith. It's central, as we talked about last week, it's central grammar.

What holds it together? And seeing such language, as we concluded last week, at least in broad terms, compatible with one of MacIntyre's categories regarding, again, ways of rational inquiry.

Really, rational inquiry is how do you speak about the world when you're being serious and disciplined? And with that done, we'll get on to part two. And I want to look at, within this context, with hopefully with some help from this kind of background about ways of inquiry, I want to look at how our Christian God talk might address the specific issue of Christian believing, specifically that issue, what's involved in the

Christians believing as individuals as the church. God talk, so we saw last week, explaining a bit of that reference, is our first order, if you will, confessional speech. And that God talk is nicely open, open to interesting observations about what is and what is not the central core, the confessional language of the church. God talk. Today, I was at 730 service, said the Nicene Creed. That's God talk. We sang a great hymn of the church. I consider that God talk. We heard a sermon, which was a homilist serving the word. That is God talk, for sure. God talk is, again, open to various, how much of this or that is God talk. But there obviously is in the church that first order kind of speech. But today, as part two, it will definitely be God talk, talk about believing. A kind of, okay, we are called to believe, let's explore, unpack, try and get a deeper understanding of what Christian believing is all about. We're not trying to get at a new confessional stance for the church about believing. Of course not. But we're going to do God talk, talk, talk about believing about this issue. See if we can find more light about it all. After all, we say the creed, different creeds every Sunday. I believe, we believe. How is that question for part two today in the heart of today's talk? How is that to be unfolded? That's today's issue. So there's an overview of where we're going. Let's begin, as we should, of course, with a word of prayer. Our God, give us humility today. Give us patience. Give us godly attention to surely what is the greatest of all things. The greatest of all of your gifts to us. The gift that will last forever. The gift of your son, Jesus Christ, God, and man. And in his name we pray. Amen. End of introduction. Last week, again, we looked at ways of knowing or rival versions of rationality, rival versions of inquiry. Alistair

McIntyre uses these categories we're going to look at to map how he sees, as a philosopher, the way we now understand in our early, in our late 20th century, and we wrote a lot of this in our time, how these things have unfolded. These ways may be and indeed have been mapped. And McIntyre is a big name in philosophy who's done a lot of the mapping. For a good long time, what McIntyre calls, as you recall from last week, an encyclopedic way has been dominant in our culture. Some might call this, I would call it, the way of the 18th century enlightenment. There's a lot of big generalities in this kind of inquiry, but they're nevertheless, I think, very helpful. This way examines the world, to give it a very brief, broad overview, but I hope accurate, this way examines the world with a dispassionate scholarly distance. Sounds good to start with, I'll say. In fact, on this view, here

I'm borrowing the language from a great New Testament scholar, Gavin Rowe, as he puts it, scholarship, from last week again, scholarship and world are one and the same thing, on the enlightenment view of knowledge. The enlightenment or encyclopedic thinker thinks that we can know everything. There is a world to be known and we may turn that world into a transparent place. [6 : 48] You can see it all and understand it all. The encyclopedia itself, this is why McIntyre uses this image, the very artifact, you've held one in your hands, I'm sure it captures this, every topic and principle addressed in the encyclopedia. X-rayed, if you will, by the mind, everything in its place, placed there by, indeed, this kind of rationality. Here is born, for instance, I would think, I'm not sure if McIntyre ever makes this point or looks at it, here is born religious studies. All the religions lined up in the encyclopedia and really explained. Where, the scholar in this tradition asks, does, say, for instance, Jesus fit in to the world's religious development? And, indeed, he, the she, the inquirer, fits Jesus into some big scheme of the world's development.

Enough description for now, because we want to move right along here today. To summarize this view, I want to summarize each view, you couldn't do better than one of the fathers of the enlightenment, for sure, the famous, justly famous, Immanuel Kant. He wrote a famous essay, a famous book, The title says it all, Religion Within the Bounds of Reason. That's it. There's the enlightenment speaking. Religion will place it within, within, bracketed by reason. Jesus, we gotcha. There is a way of knowing, a version of rationality. This reason model, although still very much present with us, very much so, has been under suspicion for quite a long while now. A guy like Gavin Rowe, who I'm leaning on today quite a bit, thinks it's dead. It's over. Enlightenment view of rationality probably is over. This has given rise to what McIntyre wants to call the genealogical version of rationality. Reason on this view is very contingent. It's very limited. This has been forgotten by the enlightenment view of rationality, very much remembered by another view of rationality.

Reason, contingent, limited. Reason is always embedded in history. For instance, class interests will shape your thinking. Remember Karl Marx? Or your childhood development and your sexuality will shape it deeply. Remember Freud? It, reason, pursues power, really, not truth. Nietzsche was at pains to talk that way all the time. It necessarily speaks a given language. It has to involve itself with the world, with the tool of language. The great philosopher of our time, Wittgenstein, saw this with amazing clarity. Speaking of Wittgenstein, his analysis appears simply devastating. He says things like this, Wittgenstein, it seems to me, once you, once you hear this, you can't forget it. He simply says this, there's no such thing, you know, as a language per se. No. Or a something in itself. No, language is always language in use at some time and some place. Enlightenment didn't know that. It forgot it. Language is liquid.

The postmodernists see this with great clarity, ironically, with clarity. Language moves around. It moves about. It's not a steady universal tool for making the world sit still and you can analyze it. [10 : 45] No, it doesn't work that way. Enlightenment description of the world is really just a mask for other things. This critique of reason is immensely powerful and has much influence. Reason, again, language is always embedded in some community. It's embedded in, it has a task to perform for someone. It is embodied.

Reason serves interest. It negotiates. It seeks power. Reason, to summarize this view, Nietzsche is very good on this. Truth, which reason pursues, is really just a mobile army of metaphors.

That's what reason is. It's just the tool of language moving things around on a board. It never really arrives at, quote, the truth about the world. That's a fantasy of the Enlightenment.

Harvey Guest came up with his own summary, which you won't want to forget. But I would say it's not quite as eloquent as Nietzsche. He could be so eloquent.

I would say it means beware of encyclopedia salesmen. Sorry, that's what happens when you think over coffee. There you go. And then lastly, lastly, McIntyre describes another rationality.

[12 : 06] And here he describes what he believes in fact to be, as I understand it, the real life of the mind and how it works. What reason really is. Reason lives in, as his language goes like this, in traditioned forms, if you recall from last week.

Traditioned forms. There are forms of discourse in the world which possess their own canons of justification. A little bit of technical language. Their own canons of justification.

They are much like, and McIntyre intriguingly uses this kind of image, very much reason is like a craft. It is like, say, carpentry.

Carpentry uses skills. It knows its materials. It uses and knows the grain of things. Here's how this kind of reasoning about the world works.

It has a certain grain. It has certain, again, canons of how we know what we're doing. It grows and it matures. But crucially, ever so crucially, Gavin Rowe is really good on this point.

[13:19] Ever so crucially, this way, this version of rationality, and you can see how McIntyre gets this, say, from a craft like carpentry. It involves a kind of obedience to what you're dealing with.

One enters into a way of life to participate in this rationality. Yes. It is embodied in the world.

Yeah. Like the church we talked about last week. The gospel is embodied. It has a way of life. Its rationality is that way of life.

There it is. How may traditioned rationality be summarized? Well, I would think another title of a book captures it. A young scholar.

Some people in this room know him personally and met him, I'm sure. A young scholar. I like to dramatize these kind of things. I think they deserve to be dramatized. They're so important. A young scholar at a kind of remote, not a famous school on the planet.

[14:25] A young scholar at Calvin College, a generation or more ago, wrote a small classic.

Truths that changed the world, as Nietzsche said, come on Dove's feet.

Yes. He wrote a book and the title says it all. He reverses Immanuel Kant. He wrote a little classic called Reason Within the Bounds of Religion.

The war is on. Let us confront the enlightenment. Let us overcome it for the sake of the kingdom, for the sake of Jesus.

Reason within the bounds of religion. Or as John Webster puts it, refer to him later, Reason does not call God into its presence.

God calls reason into his presence. You will serve me because I created you. You know, you will serve me. These two talks are called, again, Jesus Christ, God and Man.

[15:26] And the title, if I do say so myself, could not be better. Did you come up with that title, Alexander? It's a good title. Jesus Christ, God and Man. I would think that's a great title. It says, does it not, the entire Christian mystery.

Jesus Christ, God and Man. At Nicaea, the church summarized her most elemental speech about Jesus. The teacher, the rabbi from Nazareth.

He is, the church decided, this is our grammar. This is our language. He is very God and Man. He is God and Man. The Creed of Athanasius, we found out this morning, and happily we're going to say it next week, I believe, at the 730 service.

The Creed of Athanasius calls Jesus perfect God and perfect man. Nothing diminished about his divinity. Nothing diminished in his humanity.

Yes, he emptied himself and took the form of a servant, as Paul says to the Philippians. But, as he says to the Colossians, in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

[16:37] The church at Nicaea just looked at scripture and said, here's what it says. Here is our confessional stance. The word, the logos, the meaning of things, the reason of things, became flesh and dwelt among us.

And as we looked at last week and pertinent for today, wonderfully, Athanasius says, one of his great statements, he, Jesus Christ, ministered the things of God to man and the things of man to God.

There is, as announced, the heart of Christian confessional speech, that is God talk. That is not God talk talk.

That's not about the faith. That is the faith speaking. Non-negotiably, from now on in the church, Jesus Christ is God and man. No other speech about Jesus will do.

This is the church's, again, it's basic grammar. This is our speech about Jesus. Wow. We shouldn't take our speech about Jesus for granted.

[17:47] It is amazing. It is shocking. It is unheard of. A rabbi in Palestine, he formed a community that said, we have met with God and man in that person.

God and man. Quite obviously, Christian knowledge, Christian speech, Christian rationality, it seems to me, I'll just be bold and blunt, appears to be very much in line with McIntyre's tradition, rationality.

It seems, I think that's obviously true, but it's open for discussion. There is much complexity in all of these kinds of things, of course, that's what philosophers are for. These three rationalities could be

ever so much discussed with, and I'm sure with great profit.

But, and this I think is decisive, Christian discourse evidently regards, regards mystery as a completely intelligible category.

So we sort of reached to last week. Christian discourse regards mystery as intelligible. In Christian traditioned rationality, if I may call it that from MacIntyre, mystery is not an escape into the irrational. [19:08] It's not an escape into mere limit. You know, God created us as finite, and unfortunately, this leaves us stumped when facing transcendent issues.

Yikes, what a mess. Should have given us more powerful minds. No, mystery is not a dreamy romanticism. It's not escape into anything. Mystery is a revealed truth, which fills us with wonder and awe.

Again, which is intelligible within our discourse. It's not intelligible in any other discourse. That's really the crux of what I wanted to say last week.

Which, which truth, if you accept that as true, humbles us, and I would think, makes us very cautious about the way we think.

That's why the church always has a thinking life going on in her midst, one way or the other. What we've called, on these two talks, God talk, God talk, talk.

[20:12] Well, so, on to today's, the heart of today's talk. What about, what about the issue of our belief in this mysterious discourse, I'll call it that, the basic grammar of our faith?

What about our belief in these things? This, again, is where we left off last week. And again, if we establish that our Christian discourse, our traditioned rationality is where our God talk, our confessional speech lives, where it is established, again, as intelligible, how then, within this kind of rationality, are we to learn to understand what belief is?

And again, just for context here, this question might be prompted, for me, it is prompted, by hearing, again, those wondrous words from Athanasius.

He, Jesus Christ, ministered the things of God to man, and then he says, remember, Jesus Christ ministered the things of man to God.

That is strange language. Jesus ministered the things of man to God. That might be, may I say, a most appropriate ascension season word.

[21:29] Jesus at the Father's right hand ministers there on our behalf, of course, that's basic Christian discourse. In his very person, Jesus unites God and man there at the Father's right hand.

God has taken man, appropriately understood, whatever that is, up into his own life, apparently.

The second Adam, united in one divine person, the new head of our race, is at the Father's right hand, ministering the things of man to God, Israel's Messiah, Israel's God returning to Zion.

Hence, he is God. here is the discourse of our belief. Our belief. Mr.

Is it Senator, Jordan's last name? I always forget Jordan's last name. One of our clergy is leaving us, you know, for a while and he's going to Scotland where all good Christian thought happens.

You know, if you're going to be a great preacher, you have to arrange to be born in Scotland, I used to say. And he's going to study there with a chap named John Webster, a theologian. A very good theologian, it seems to me.

[22:50] And in a Lenten meditation, Mr. Webster looks at Isaiah 53, one of his talks, verses therein, and includes words, which include words like the will of the Lord.

This is a word from the prophet about our Lord Jesus, accepted as such in Christian discourse, you recall, Isaiah says about Jesus, so the church receives it, the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand, the prophet Isaiah says. Again, the church receives that as the prophet speaks of Jesus and his ministry for us.

And John Webster says this kind of sentence, this is what theologians do, they write sentences like this that are supposed to take you up short and make you think, God says Mr.

Webster, God has taken from us the power to live apart from him. Do you think that's true? I think that's true.

[24:01] I want to say to Mr. Webster immediately, who's us? who is us? God has taken from us the power to live apart from him.

That's what God has done for us in Jesus. Mr. Webster wants to articulate it that way. Remember, that's God talk talk. Mr. Webster is not saying, let's put that in the creed.

No. This is unfolding talk about the church's essential confessional speech. God has taken from us the power to live apart from him.

This is how much he loves us. The will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. How much will it prosper? Infinitely. Infinitely.

Why would, again, why would a theologian say that? Is that a good and true way to speak about heaven's grace? Is it a way even to speak about our belief?

[25 : 06] Some Christians might think for sure, some would think that this may be a kind of dangerous language which downplays a necessity or the necessity for our response and belief.

No. Some people immediately want to say, and it's totally understandable, remember, within the God talk world, Christians coming together to say, how do we unfold these truths of our God talk?

Some would say, we have to emphasize our believing. We have to sort of, not to do a caricature of a certain position, we have to actualize God's grace by ourselves, by our believing.

Other people in the conversation, God talk, talk, say, no, that's a diminishment of the gospel. No, no, no. It is true, just to touch on it once, Paul famously to the jailer at Philippi, what must I do to be saved?

He says famously to Paul. And Paul says, believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. There it is. Obvious, straightforward, how can we deny the importance of belief?

[26 : 19] No one wants to deny the importance of belief. But how do we unfold the nature of belief within our traditioned discourse, which is our faith?

Yes, the Bible and the New Testament calls for response. It calls for belief, much in every way. But, within the world of traditioned rationality, our form of such a discourse, we are forbidden, it seems to me, to only say that.

Our discourse has a nuanced, challenging, strange, even mysterious way of speaking about belief. Belief and even unbelief are not allowed to stand as independent powers, if you will, in the discourse of our faith.

What have you, says Paul to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 4, what have you, that you did not receive? The Philippian jailer, at some point in his unfolding of his Christian life, he'll have to hear that.

[27 : 37] Yes, you believed, but what have you, that you didn't receive? Your belief is a gift. Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.

But what have you, that you did not receive? Belief is a very interesting phenomena in the New Testament.

In encyclopedic knowledge, we can just touch on this briefly, or in genealogical knowledge, belief is, I suppose, quite a different thing. I don't know, how do you get at this?

In the first enlightenment view of knowledge, encyclopedic view of knowledge, belief and knowledge come about through noetic power.

I figured it out, and so I believe it. No, that's not Christian belief. No way. And knowledge comes about through, again, power and an application of profound and powerful method.

[28 : 41] Not so belief in our faith. Belief in the other form, the genealogical form, seems to be a function of shrewd suspicion.

You know, allow practical reason to practice as it will, but we know it's where a mask serves many interests. So we believe in that kind of discourse.

Belief comes about through suspicion and a worried understanding of reason. But in our believing, this is, but in our thinking, in our rational discourse as Christians, believing is seen as essentially, it seems to me, again, this is God talk talk, belief seems to be in the New Testament a form of gift.

Jesus is in himself, says Thomas Torrance, Jesus is in himself the personal address of God's word to man, and the personal response of man to God's word.

Jesus is our obedience. Jesus is the one who believes on our behalf. He ministers the things of man to God.

[30 : 00] Boy, belief, it seems to me, has to be in God talk talk, thought through with awe and wonder. How is it with my believing?

Our believing appears to be, I'm going to keep an eye on the time here, our believing is a mediated believing. Jesus comes into the world on our behalf to do everything for us that we couldn't do for ourselves.

Surely our believing is not somehow magically set aside and is in our power. No, he believes for us. Jesus is again, that's worth hearing again, in himself, the personal address of God's word to man, the word became flesh, and the personal response of man to God's word.

We heard this morning, abide in me, let me do everything for you, the Lord says, that's grace. Here is mediated believing.

And Galatians 2.20, which we have a little smidgen of in front of us here on this board, seems to me to capture this mystery of believing.

[31 : 17] Remember, in an enlightenment view of discourse, or a genealogical view of discourse, this is forbidden. No, no, you can't have recourse to mystery.

In our discourse, we do. And it is intelligible within the discourse of our faith, within our, again, traditioned rationality.

I am crucified with Christ. One of Paul's most poignant rhetorical moments. There's a rich context. We don't have time to unfold that.

I'm not sure if I could unfold it. It's so controverted how to read Galatians from start to finish. But in the midst of this amazing epistle, Paul famously says, I am crucified with Christ.

Got that? I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, he says, I live. Then he says, yet, not I.

[32 : 20] Christ lives in me. I, no longer I. Well, in our discourse, again, like a broken record, that is intelligible.

not so in any other form of rationality. I, not I. Or, how does, again, God talk, talk?

Is Paul saying, I am gift, just like in the creation. I didn't, I didn't command myself into existence. Nor did my parents command me into existence.

Remember having a talk with an atheist once, and I said, you didn't create yourself. He immediately said, I know, but my parents did. I said, no, think it through again. Humans do not command themselves into existence.

God gives us as gift. And our believing is gift. Our believing is gift. In our discourse, it is.

[33 : 25] Jesus has believed for us. Mystery, again, is intelligible. But it's only intelligible in this kind of knowing, in this way of knowing.

At one level, at this whole two talks, I just want to say, I want to say with Paul, I am not ashamed. I am not ashamed of our way as Christians, of reasoning. We have been ashamed for the last couple of centuries, I think.

We've been intimidated by the enlightenment. We know how to reason. You get on board our story, or you're out. we know how to take your measure.

We've got you in our encyclopedias. Measured, put aside, we got you. But they haven't.

It doesn't work that way. Thank God for, I say that quite seriously, for thinkers who serve the Lord in their own way. Mr. McIntyre does in his own way, I think.

[34 : 26] Can we ever imagine bringing some other way of inquiry again to such a witness as Paul presents here? We simply cannot. Some, perhaps, and this is Gavin Rowe's wonderful language about, as he describes encyclopedic knowledge, enlightenment knowledge, do we have access to some, here's a word for you, trans-lucifying, some trans-lucifying power of scholarship which will exhaustively explain to us this mystery of believing?

Surely not. Religion? Within the bounds of reason? No. Our category of mystery is intelligible, we should be proud of it, we should use it intelligently.

This way of thinking is thinking in Christ, and it's to be embraced and reveled in. There are, again, deep issues here, but they are worth, and hence these two talks, seems to me a humble and careful inquiry.

Just being thoughtful about the way our primary first order language, what it is, what it isn't, and how we can use it without apologizing for it, and using it responsibly.

Athanasius was, I take it, very much aware that he was thinking thoughts that had not been thought before.

[36 : 03] He was very much aware as a brilliant Greek-minded thinker that he was talking about a Jew who had lived in Palestine, who he now believed ministered the things of God to man, and the things of man to God.

Oh! These are amazing things as I draw to a close. Good time for conversation. On this point, just to summarize it a bit, and to see, not to come clean as we talked about last week as speakers, authors are supposed to do in introductions, Karl Barth, the great theologian, he worried at times or

wondered at the church's apparent refusal to really joyfully believe.

Almost as if we back off from it. What the New Testament seems to be teaching is omnipotent mercy and unconditional complete liberation is ours in Christ.

And to dig beneath the surface here a bit just for the sake of discussion, what's at stake here, as I've tried to indicate a little bit, is sin, is unbelief, this is the way Barth sometimes thought, remember he's God talk talk, he's not saying let's rewrite the creed, but he wants to ponder with the church, is sin, is unbelief to be understood as a real competitor to God's grace?

He would answer no. Sin is horrible and dark, but to exalt it into something that could take on God and beat him, that is blasphemy beyond words.

[37 : 51] Sin and unbelief, God can handle that, and he has in Jesus Christ. He's done it. Yes. Echoing Romans 10 20 and Isaiah 65 2, Barth says God has answered, this is appropriate thing to hear before we go into our discussion time, God has answered before you asked, asked, and only for this reason do you ask at all.

I would also say that, I hope it's a good contribution to again, God talk, talk. God has believed before you believed, and only for this reason do you believe at all.

Jesus believed for us. there, again, God talk, talk, talk about the mystery of believing within the kind of discourse which the Christian faith is.

So, yes, let us hear the gospel summons to believe, of course. The gospel is a summons. That's maybe at the heart of it, the kind of rationality which the gospel is.

The gospel says believe, come to Jesus, believe, and let us allow the gospel and nothing else than the gospel to instruct us in what believing is.

[39 : 14] Not take on board ideas about believing from other ways of thinking about the world. God, after all, does. Surely we can say, God has no real competitors.

He knows how to save. He knows how to do it. He doesn't leave something up in the air. Let's hope it works out. God has no real competitors.

There, these two talks are about, just about ways of reasoning, what kind of reasoning is the gospel, and then an example of reasoning in that way of reasoning about how the New Testament and the Christian tradition thinks about our believing these things.

It's a, again, extended God, talk, talk. none of this is, oh, we're studying the faith over again. We're going to rewrite the creeds and all the great hymns.

No, this is under God's gracious permission. Just attempt to understand some more of our glorious faith. Think over what I say, Paul says to Timothy, the Lord will give you understanding.

[40 : 24] We can always look to that word. Let's pray that the Lord will always give us understanding. Ten to ten, let me say a word of prayer and then have some discussion. Lord, we thank you for your gift of Jesus who is your word to us and your answering, and he answers for us as he obeyed you and died for us and rose again for us and calls us to abide in him.

I, no longer I, it is good Lord Jesus to be your servant and in his name our Father God we pray, amen. I've been asked now to have a refreshment break before the questions begin.

If you think that's a good idea, grab a cup of coffee. It's a great, oh I heard great, excellent, okay, a new format, recess. Harvey, Harvey, may I ask you a big, big, favor.

Yeah, sure. Is that any possible, is this ever possible, not just reporting, but something in the text form, the written form.

I could, but these are on St. John's website. The reason why I'm talking to you is all I have. Okay, go ahead. The reason why I do this, I'm just full of emotion, I don't know how to say this.

[41 : 54] I'm surrounded by these Chinese high achievers. Topics recently have found multiple special entrepreneurs in the area.

And they're all scientists, engineers, and how funds HR. They happen to be my classmates decades ago. And recently they're not connected because of this technology.

If ever possible, and I love to translate into it. So you can't find it on the internet? I could, of course. That would be ended up with me having to write it on stand.

And then we're like, we're trying to do it. We have to do the trouble with me. No, no, I just don't know how I would do it. I can give you this. You can give me this. But it's you'll have to mess it because I add lips to answer.

Yeah. So you don't have type. I don't, I don't, I don't. I don't even know what computer is. Well, then I probably can make a copy of this.

[42 : 59] Okay, if you'd like to try, if you'd like to try the disk, go ahead. Okay, then I can return to you. So I'll try to help you. Come back to me with any questions. Okay, and then I guess how long would it tell me?

It's very good. It's not okay? I'll just take it now. Sure, sure. Good luck. I'm a left hand. No one can read my right hand. No, look, it's just messy.

It's embarrassing to me. No, no, no, no, no. But, you know, because this is also good. I'm not very used to it. Look, yeah. It's hard to write on.

Yeah, I definitely have a go at it. It doesn't go home when I listen to you. Don't forget your food. I know, I'm going to get more. Thank you so much. You're welcome.

All right. Thank you. All right, then. So, I think we're going to...

[44 : 04] If you're ready, then. If you want to have a seat and get started, the people, yeah.

I know All right, so we'll begin part two.

Question and answer. Oh, I forgot I was being recorded. Part two. Are you going to guide this?

Okay. In case people... I'm here about you. Too many questions at once. We'll guide the hordes.

So, okay. Yes, Shenzhen.

Hi, I just wanted to... Well, first of all, thank you so much for this. I find it so difficult for me to even focus because my mind just started thinking about different things.

[45 : 21] But I thought about this. When I first encountered Christianity, that time a Christian was trying to explain to me about what's going on.

I just don't understand why Jesus has to come into the picture because I thought, to be living in God, if you're living in creation, I don't have that much trouble. But what's going on with Jesus? So, she said this. She said, look at the cross. Because of the fallen world. Because of the fall. That man and God are not connected anymore. So, there's a barrier in between.

And then Jesus is a connection. And this is why it's a cross. And I thought, oh my gosh, you know, come on. This sounds so childish. Like this. There's one sentence you can make me believe because she said, this is as simple as this.

And I just thought, no, no, no, no. This is not. This is not going to work. Through my quite a very long journey of my own conversion and search.

[46 : 21] And more and more, I thought, it's so simplistic and beautiful. But today, the way you said Jesus is a minister between God and man and God, further makes sense.

And I thank you for raising that to the more eloquent level that I constantly seek. And thank you.

Yeah, if you want to respond very briefly.

Not that this doesn't unsay anything that you've said. But the Christian way of knowing, as unfolded on this view, and I think it's a convincing view, slightly in its own way puts aside the Enlightenment's strong individualism.

The church believes. The church is the embodiment of the gospel. And our response to, in conversation with the world, our summoning speech, which is either explicit or implicit, they're wondering, well, where do you stand in the world?

What are you believing? Part of our response includes, Jesus has formed a community in the world, and in a certain sense, as the Orthodox tradition likes to say officially, come and see.

[47 : 45] Come and see Jesus. He's embodied in the world, you know. He's the church. So, now that's not the whole story, especially our tradition within Christian discourse has emphasized more of the believing.

You believe. You decide to believe. And then you step into the church. Well, that's good. But there's more to believing than the New Testament invites people to meet Jesus in the mystery of, with his people.

So, I mean, that's just the shaping of what you've been... If a caricature of evangelicalism is, well, I met some unbelievers, and I got them saved.

I gave them the right tract on the right day. They prayed the right way. They got saved. And they're going to go to heaven when they die. I don't know if they go to church or not, but, you know, at least they're saved.

That's just vaguely the gospel. Just vaguely. You know, it's much more... Anyway, it's richer and fuller than that.

[48 : 49] John? Yeah, a good talk from a United Church account about that. And I was just thinking, if we were in a United Church, if you said the word evangelical and the word say,

evangelical, you would have said that swear word in the state.

You would have said that swear word. You would have said two swear words. You would have said that in a United Church. Well, yeah. Well, our discourse is rich and full, and we don't have to be ashamed of it.

But at times it becomes wooden. Maybe we are to blame it. Our discourse can become wooden, sort of cliché-ridden. And people get to hear about, oh yeah, getting saved or advanced.

And they hear it as a kind of, oh my goodness, I've got nothing to do with that. So our discourse should be mature and rich. And so I wouldn't be too upset about their sneering.

It made me learn from it. It made me learn from it. Yeah. You know. Yeah. Sheila? Yeah. Sorry. Oh, so you would. I just want to pick up on something, Chin Chin. Briefly mention the fall.

[49 : 55] You know, I think you have to understand what happened to the relationship with God in the fall in order to understand what it takes to get back to that relationship with God.

And it's a journey in terms of the Bible. But we've lost any sense of sin in our society. We've lost, we've become anti-authority, which really means we've redefined disobedience.

And yes, we can blame the Enlightenment for some of this. Man became so important, you know, that all of his attributes were good. And we lost the beginnings of sin there.

This generation has taken it to the ultimate. You know, nobody believes in sin. And so it is just really difficult to get the need for a Savior across to them.

Yes. And I was really glad that Chin Chin raised that. And your mentions somewhere in your discourse about belief being a gift, I think that's tremendously important.

[51 : 03] There are so many different ways to believe. And the Enlightenment wanted to use the head for everything. Let's be rational. You know, we have a mind. Never mind who gave us the mind.

We have a mind. Let's just use it to get to truth. Well, sorry folks, but the Enlightenment is not the only way to truth. We have a truth that gets there.

We have a way to truth that gets at it in a different way. Ways, actually. And the gift of belief is one way. And I was really glad that you brought that up.

I have that. Just a teasing question. I know when people like Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens attack Christianity, it's being pointed out, they're only able to do that by elaborate means that are developed because of Christianity.

I wonder if some of the people like Torrance that you've referred us to, and I'm fascinated and anxious to pursue him, these analyses would only be possible because of the Enlightenment.

[52 : 11] Well, yeah, yeah, yeah. Enlightenment has a... That's what the genealogical view of the world wants. You're borrowing from them in a good way, I would say.

Because they want to say, oh, Enlightenment, you have a history. You think you're just a way of knowing, but no, no, you are in a history. And we can point out that history to you.

We all have suspicious ancestors, in a sense, and you're better even. I agree with those people who say that this Enlightenment way of knowing the world is pretty much over.

It really is. The world is much more fluid and liquid. I love the word liquid, which one cultural critic uses at the University of London.

People shift around a lot in our culture and their beliefs. It's bricolage. Love that French word. It's a bit of this, a bit of that. That's the postmodern method.

[53 : 08] Bit of this, bit of that. You know, it's an art form. B-R-I-C-O-L-A-G-E, bricolage. You know, pictures of different people from different eras, maybe, and you're...

Mashup. Pardon? Mashup. I don't know what my brother refers to, but it's that. Bless you. Yes.

Sorry, I just cannot contain what I want to say. I grew up in a society, even during a period of time, that we believed that the Western sentiment or sensibility in its rationality, in its enlightenment, in its scientific revolution, is the power, and it could be even blessing in itself, made this huge gap between backward China and the Western world.

So, we have to catch up on this. So now, some of my Chinese friends might have that slight suspicion about Westerners after you have got your living standard high to the point that you could turn around to say, hey, after all, mystery, almost giving Chinese a sense, that's a superstition, and then to talk about we could somewhat, or should, go backward.

So, if the person is very hungry, and then somehow used his own power to get fed and be rich, and then he had this capability now to pursue something more philosophical, more beyond this real

world, the world Chinese are still, in some sense, are still trying to reach that Western standard.
[55 : 10] And who are you, living in the Western world, and come back and talk to us, that, by the way, there's something else. It's almost like, I find myself, sometimes, like when I, yeah, anyways, it's...

No, these things, I'm not as are complex. That's very much to think through, but it's a joyful enterprise. It's not oppressive. I hope it's good.

He feels that the gospel is being honored by, by, I think, this kind of move in the world in our time by people like McIntyre.

Now, he's, he's returned to the church. I'm not even sure if McIntyre is still alive. He became a Roman Catholic. He's one, he's hyper-intellectual Roman Catholic. Gavin Rowe says about him, I think, very interestingly, a certain kind of intellectual Christian.

He says to him rhetorically, in one of his end notes, you become a Christian and then a Thomist. You don't become a Thomist and then a Christian. That was a very shrewd remark. But Thomism is, Mr. McIntyre thinks Thomism was a kind of peak of thinking in the world.

[56 : 28] It loves the Middle Ages. It has a wonderful, rich tradition, much to teach us that we've just forgotten under the hammer blows of modernity. Anyway, you got some?

I have a question. Okay. So, you've referred to a lot of different people today, but if you were, you know, for the simpler of us, the simpler, I'd say, what one book should we read?

Oh, I'm glad you asked. Well, I just, no, I thought of, and at one level, these have been extended book reviews.

I mean, this book is quite accessible, but it's heavy. The Mediation of Christ by Thomas Torrance. You know, Torrance was, won the Templeton Prize. That's a high company. Professor of Theology at Edinburgh.

Great kind of colleague. He knew Barth really well, personally. He was the moderator of the Church of Scotland. My goodness, these guys.

[57 : 26] Interesting about him. He was such a Trinitarian thinker that he was, I believe, he was made an honorary theologian. He's wiggling it. An honorary theologian of the Greek Orthodox Church in Alexandria or something.

He was so honored for his thinking. But you won't want to run out and get this unless you really enjoy punishment, intellectual punishment. But I have been immensely instructed by this, note this man's name for future reference.

This book, published by Yale, One True Life, The Stoics and Early Christians as Rival Traditions.

This man is C. Gavin Rowe. Our Bill Reimer said to me one day, casually, this guy's hot stuff.

And I've read this and oh, he is. He's an amazingly insightful guy. Young, young superstar, scholar at Duke. New, professor of New Testament studies.

Very, very, highly praised. And he takes this kind of McIntyre thinking. I've never seen a review of McIntyre as good as this. I read a lot of McIntyre when I was a younger man.

[58 : 35] Never seen it so brilliantly reviewed here. And then, taking it, you see, there are lots of scholars, this background, lots of scholars who take deep studies of the Stoics from the first and second century and they line them up with the Christians.

And, Roe does that with Paul, Luke, and Justin Marder, a Christian thinker, early, early. And he lines them up and says, now see, traditional enlightenment scholarship just finds all sorts of overlap and they're speaking to one another and Paul may have got ideas from the Stoics and how they impact it.

And Roe comes along and seems to me with his brilliant mind and says, no, no, no, all of this is bogus. You're living in totally different worlds of discourse.

When you're with Paul and Luke and Justin Marder and the Stoics, you cannot take any kind of similar vocabulary and say the old without, well, they're talking about the same thing.

He shows that there are rival traditions of discourse in the world and that Christianity calls you to an obedience to understand its discourse. So did the Stoics and they would have understood that in the ancient world.

[59 : 46] Live the way we live and you'll understand our doctrine. That was, Jesus said, obey me and you'll know if my teaching is true. Obedience is at the heart of knowing.

It is not a detached encyclopedia game that our world has lived under the shadow of for a long time. No, it involves obedience. But anyway, look for just his name, Gavin Rowe.

Boy, they don't give away his books. Rowe, Rowe, yeah, Gap and Rome. I have two more questions. Do you want me to go? I'm struck by a word in the title of the first book that you held up. And that word is sort of in the middle of the title. It's mediation. Very good. I really appreciate what you've done in these two sessions.

Okay. And within my own partial framework, partial, having two senses, incomplete and biased, I view what you're doing in the framework of dialectics.

[61 : 07] Thought that has tension. Thought where things move. Thought where things are not put into a simplistic and ultimately false framework.

You're dealing with a paradox. Within a certain kind of discourse. God and man. And other people have brought up other paradoxes.

And when we get real problems, as you intimated in your treatment of belief, we come down hard on one side of the paradox and don't see the tension, don't see the problem.

Yes, thank you. The other side of the tension was only implicit.

And that was the notion of Jesus Christ representing man to God. God and if you go too far with that, you end up with a universal salvation.

[62 : 37] Yeah, it can be sure. Anyway, I just want to talk about this. that's very good. Belief as a mystery, but not just a free-floating statement, but within our discourse, it's intelligible to say that.

The divine, when it approaches us, is very strange. Torrance is very high on the strangeness of Israel in the Old Testament.

And Israel is strange because she's having dealings with God. And that makes us strange. It's a death for you when God draws near.

When Torrance thinks about the believer, one of his favorite images is Mary. That Christ will be formed in you.

As Paul says in Galatians, Christ was formed in Mary. She was told a sword will pierce your heart. That's more than just she saw her son crucified.

[63 : 52] I think. You're going to have dealings with God up close. It's going to be death for you, Mary. It's always death for the believer. Death and then new life.

Because dealing with God as Israel knew, God is dangerous to approach. As Ian Proven says, the whole Old Testament is one little, you can understand it in one line, it's God says to Israel, I am very dangerous to approach, but I will provide the way of approach because I love you.

God will do it. There's paradox, danger, but God wants us in his presence. So he achieved that through Jesus who's in his presence, the second Adam.

The issue of universalism for me is no longer a problem, God will deal with that. God will always deal rightly with things.

I leave it open ended. I don't know, that's God talk stuff, it's very difficult, isn't it? I think there's still meaning through there.

[65 : 04] One last question. I just wondered, did you give us the offer of reason within the bounds of religion?

Yes, very well, Nicholas, no idea didn't mention his name, no, I was trying to be coy. I didn't write the book, I wish I had. I'll give it to Nicholas Walterstorff.

I'm not a good speller, I can just say it. You want to write it down? W-O-L-T-E-R Walterstorff.

The man on your right knows him personally, I'm sure. But I don't know if Jim's a good speller or him. That's okay. Sorry, what is that?

W-O-L-T-E-R-S-T-O-R-F-F. I think it's two S at the end.

[66 : 13] Walterstorff. Walterstorff. He's not young anymore. He's a brilliant scholar. He ended up at Yale Divinity School and the philosophy faculty.

A very distinguished world-class thinker. As a Christian, he wrote that book. He looked at Immanuel Kant and said, I'm reversing this guy.

Reason within the bounds of religion. He spent his whole life working out that proposition. There you go.

It's all very wonderful. I'm sorry if a lot of this is just sort of loopy for a lot of people. I know it's God talk, talk, remember. Let's think this through, but we're not rewriting the creed or anything.

I submit to the church's voice in the creeds. I want to just believe what the faith instructs me to believe. I'm not inventing anything here. Well, they're still singing, so I'm going to let Sam have a...

[67 : 23] Yeah, let Sam get at me. Let's go. Dr. Packard, we had the chance to take Dr.

Packard home last weekend, last Sunday, and we got talking about how we might know knowledge, and I brought this little piece for him to hopefully give his amen to this.

So just let me read this to you and see what you think of this. The organ of knowing given by God to serve the organ of preferring or desiring or enjoying or treasuring.

Thinking exists to serve feeling. reflection about God exists to awaken affection for God. God gave you doctrine for delight.

God gave you a mind to be a faithful servant of your heart. Thinking about God, reasoning about God, knowing God, is the necessary means, and delighting in God, and enjoying God, and treasuring God, preferring God, being satisfied with God, is the ultimate end of the human soul.

[68 : 31] that is a careful statement, not a rhetorical flourish. I just wonder about how we talked about knowing, and it just seems a little bit esoteric, and it could maybe I would like to know who wrote that.

Or is it your own composition? No, it's not mine. I was going to say, it sounds like, it sounds a lot like, it's a Jonathan Edwards kind of statement, and it sounds like our chief end is to know God and to enjoy Him forever.

It's an expansion on that glorious self. I just seem to put an emphasis on thinking, and that kind of seems, when we criticize the Enlightenment, I think the Enlightenment had a lot of good stuff to say, and that reasoning gets us a long way, but even reasoning gets us to respecting revelation.

Like, when my parents told me to look both ways to make sure there wasn't a truck coming across the street, before I understood that, it was still a truth that I was wise to listen to.

And if I could come to understand the reasoning behind it, all the better. So, reasoning doesn't prohibit taking instruction from revelation.

[69 : 58] knowledge is mediated through Jesus.

It has a tendency to slip into a non-Trinitarian way of thinking.

Knowledge is mediated through Jesus. Jesus, the one through whom the world was created, the one through whom the world is being saved. That's how God reveals himself and makes us knowing of him.

It is mediated. Torrance goes so far as to talk about some of the 17th century creeds, highly regarded, which he highly regards as a Presbyterian.

But he says sometimes, if you look at them critically, they become almost sub-Christian, sub-Trinitarian. They'll acknowledge the Trinity and then forget it.

[70 : 58] Everything we know is through Jesus. We can talk about God like deists. Oh, God is beautiful, isn't he? Muslims have a doctrine of God's beauty.

So do certain forms of Hinduism, of high mystical knowledge of God's infinite beauty. And what a guy like Roe wants to say is, yes, but there are incompatible traditions because our knowledge of God is mediated through Israel and Israel's fulfillment in Jesus.

If we leave out that discourse, we're no longer talking about the God of the apostles. And that's, not that that does that, but it could. Because I didn't hear any Trinitarian reference there.

God. God is the mystery of a relational dynamic. Father, Son, and Spirit. Spirit. And through the Son, who gives us the gift of the Spirit, we know God.

If we leave that discourse out, we'll soon be talking about some God of our aesthetic imagination.

Okay. I think, I think. Anyway. I'm sorry, I've got three of you and we're at 25 after.

[72 : 11] I'm going to give it to Martin. Just a, uh-oh. The mathematicians, let's get them in here.

They know everything. Just a very quick comment. Sir. We've been talking about the Enlightenment as perhaps the sort of origin of rationality.

Yeah, yeah. Of course that's not the case. No, no. Long before the Enlightenment, there were Plato and Aristotle. Sure. And the early church, you know, the fathers, had a huge period of engagement with the Greek philosophy and what they learned from Plato and Aristotle.

Yes, yes. Thomas, which you mentioned previously at one point, was the outcome of uniting Aristotle's philosophy and the question of the Greek Aquinas.

Yeah, there are deep complexities always in it, that's for sure. But if there's a meta-discourse that unites everything, as the Enlightenment seems to imply, the Christians just say no.

There is no, you don't place Jesus within any big system. He's the Lord of these things. That's our traditioned discourse, his confession, that we should not be ashamed of because of the Enlightenment sort of looking down its nose at us for being so particular.

[73 : 27] We are unashamed of Jesus. And I know everyone in this room would say amen to that. He is the Lord of all knowing. So, and what a topic, eh?

A big, um, big stuff. Thank you for listening. Thank you for listening. APPLAUSE APPLAUSE APPLAUSE