

Professor Montgomery, while a student at Cornell University, had contact with Norman Malcolm, disciple and close friend of Wittgenstein, and cut his teeth in formal logic under the instruction of Max Black, allegedly one of the very few to have understood on first reading Russell and Whitehead's argumentation in their *Principia Mathematica*. Montgomery's university teaching career in history, law, literature, and theology, combined with that philosophical background, led to the production of the present work, which offers a comprehensive apologetic for classical Christianity.

Consisting of over 1,800 propositions in logical sequence, Montgomery's *Tractatus* is accompanied by detailed scripture, name, and subject indexes. The coverage is remarkable, embracing logic, literature, history, myth, science, philosophy, jurisprudence, political theory, and theology – interspersed throughout with the wit and rapier thrusts of a barrister at home in adversarial contexts.

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, having demonstrated the limits of any non-transcendental attempt to understand the world, ended with the proposition, "Of that which one cannot speak, one must remain silent." Montgomery, after setting forth in depth the overwhelming case for the very transcendental revelation for which Wittgenstein longed but never found, concludes: "Whereof one *can* speak, thereof one must *not* be silent."

The *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* purports to break new ground apologetically, as did the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* epistemologically. It should be of particular interest to philosophers of religion, theologians, pastors, historians of ideas, and to everyone seeking solid answers for the ultimate questions which plague all of us at one time or another, especially during what St John of the Cross labeled "the dark night of the soul."

Professor Montgomery, a UK and US citizen, resides in England and in France. He is the author and editor of more than fifty books in five languages (for information about his other publications, see <http://www.ciltpp.com>). Biographical articles on him appear in Who's Who in America, Who's Who in France, the European Biographical Directory, Contemporary Authors, and Who's Who in the World.

"The name of John Warwick Montgomery deserves to be mentioned alongside of C. S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer as one of the 20th century's most articulate defenders of historic Christianity. Written in the style of the early Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* is vintage Montgomery. It brings together and updates several decades of his thought, as it provides a clear, articulate defense of the truth of Christianity, the existence of God, the inerrancy of Holy Scripture, and the fundamental importance of Christian revelation for addressing the human condition. I know of no other book like it, and given the renewed focus on religion in these troubled yet pluralistic times, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* is must reading for anyone who wants to know how to choose a religion intelligently."

J. P. Moreland,

Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, La Mirada, California

"John Warwick Montgomery is one of the most important apologists for biblical Christianity in our time. This is his *magnum opus*. In it he refutes pluralism (the view that all religions are just different ways to God and none is a superior way of salvation) and postmodernism (the view that there is no discoverable truth that is both universal and absolute); he then sets out the evidence validating Christianity's truth claim. *Do not go into battle without reading this book.*"

Paul D. Feinberg,

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TRACTATUS LOGICO - THEOLOGICUS

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John Warwick Montgomery

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John Warwick Montgomery

**TRACTATUS
LOGICO-THEOLOGICUS**

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For

A “Fellowship of the Ring”—Andreae’s Civitas Christiana

Harold O. J. Brown

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INTRODUCTION

Of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein wrote: “Perhaps this book will be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it—or at least similar thoughts.—So it is not a textbook.” The same may be said of the present work.

Critics will attack this *Tractatus* on a number of grounds. The religious liberals, the presuppositionalists, and the pietists will dismiss it as a work of rationalism. Theological conservatives will say that Wittgenstein was little more than a misguided mystic and unworthy of offering methodological insights in the religious area. Many in the philosophical community will say that a work such as this shows no recognition of the replacement of Wittgenstein I by Wittgenstein II—the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations*, who allegedly gave up all interest in verification for the sake of linguistic analysis and the substitution of puzzles for genuine philosophical problems.

Since the present work is only structurally modeled on the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, much of this criticism will be beside the point. But we note *en passant* that Wittgenstein himself wanted his *Philosophical Investigations*, if published, to appear bound together with his *Tractatus*: surely indicating that he did not intend his language games to float free of all relationship with the world, much less of verification. G. A. Smith has quite properly shown that Wittgenstein’s later philosophy of language creates legitimate scepticism concerning “the presumption that rational, logical thinking is always or ultimately a deductive mental process. But this is not to cast doubt on the possibility of rational, logical thinking.”¹ And to those in philosophy and in religion who regard verification as unimportant, we point out the obvious: either they think that all mutually contradictory positions are somehow true; or they are unconcerned with the effects of metaphysical error on individual and societal life. One would think that the events of 11 September 2001 would have put paid to such indifferentism.

The author, though an undergraduate majoring in philosophy and the classics at Cornell University during the time Wittgenstein visited Norman

¹ Gene Anne Smith, “Wittgenstein and the Sceptical Fallacy,” 3/2 *Canadian J. of Law and Jurisprudence* 155 at 179-80 (July 1990); cf. C. B. Daly, “New Light on Wittgenstein,” 10 *Philosophical Studies* 5-49 (1960).

Malcolm, never had the privilege of meeting Wittgenstein. There was contact with Malcolm, who perhaps understood Wittgenstein better than any other²; and I cut my teeth in formal logic under the instruction of Max Black, who allegedly was one of the very few to have understood on first reading Russell and Whitehead's argumentation in their *Principia Mathematica*. But my own studies focused on philosophy of religion and my chief mentor was Edwin A. Burtt, author of *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*. After Cornell, I pursued graduate studies in fields other than philosophy, having already come to appreciate that though traditional philosophy could eloquently articulate the problems, it was incapable of supplying the solutions so desperately needed by a fallen race. My *Tractatus*, whose writing literally spans some thirty-five years, is designed to combine a serious look at those problems with the only ultimately verifiable and satisfying solution.

It should not be inappropriate, therefore, to commandeer the final paragraph of Wittgenstein's Preface to his *Tractatus*—with the change of a single word: “. . . the truth of the thoughts that are here set forth seems to me unassailable and definitive. I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems. And if I am not mistaken in this belief, then the . . . thing in which the value of this work consists is that it shows how *much* is achieved when these problems are solved.”

London, England

J. W. M.

Easter Day, A.D. 2002

² “In 1949, when Wittgenstein visited Malcolm at Cornell and sat in on one of his seminars, a student asked who the old guy was at the back—‘impersonating Malcolm’” (David Edmonds and John Eidinow, *Wittgenstein's Poker* [London: Faber and Faber, 2001], p. 33; cf. pp. 202, 263).

Often as we walked together he would stop and exclaim “Oh, my God!,” looking at me almost piteously, as if imploring a divine intervention in human events.

--Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, p. 32.

* * *

If you can accept the miracle that God became man, then all of these difficulties are as nothing. . . . What inclines even me to believe in Christ’s Resurrection? It is as though I play with the thought.—If he did not rise from the dead, then he decomposed in the grave like any other man. *He is dead and decomposed*. In that case he is a teacher like any other and can no longer *help*; and once more we are orphaned and alone. And we must content ourselves with wisdom and speculation. We are as it were in a hell, where we can only dream, and are as it were cut off from heaven by a roof. But if I am to be *really* saved—then I need *certainty*—not wisdom, dreams, speculation—and this certainty is faith. And faith is faith in what my heart, my *soul* needs, not my speculative intelligence. For it is my soul, with its passions, as it were with its flesh and blood, that must be saved, not my abstract mind.

--Ludwig Wittgenstein, cited in *Wittgenstein:*

A Religious Point of View?, ed. Norman Malcolm, pp. 13, 17.

* * *

Il y a assez de lumière pour ceux qui ne désirent que de voir, et assez d’obscurité pour ceux qui ont une disposition contraire.

--Pascal, *Pensées*, No. 430.

* * *

Was sich überhaupt sagen läßt, läßt sich klar sagen.

--Wittgenstein, Preface to the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

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TRACTATUS LOGICO-THEOLOGICUS

- 1*** **The characteristic most fully shared by the religions of the world is their incompatibility with each other.**
- 1.01** *This fundamental incompatibility is at root logical, not socio-logical.*
- 1.011 Indeed, sociological conflict between two religious positions commonly rests in the logical incompatibility of their respective beliefs.
- 1.02 Logical incompatibility among religions applies no less to religions of the present than to religions of the past, and no less to “higher” than to “lower” religions.
- 1.03 “There is in fact no subject upon which so much difference of opinion exists, not only among the unlearned but also among educated men; and the views entertained are so various and so discrepant, that, while it is no doubt a possible alternative that none of them is true, it is certainly impossible that more than one should be so” (Cicero, *De natura deorum*).
- 1.1** *The religious cacophony sounds to many ears like a harmony for two understandable, but nonetheless inadequate, reasons:*
- 1.11 Objectively, many students of the world’s religions (e.g., Max Müller, Joseph Campbell) have noted the similarities in ceremonial practice among different faiths, e.g., the widespread employment of animal sacrifices; or the institution of monasticism and the use of rosaries in both Eastern religions and Christianity.

* As in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, “the decimal numbers assigned to the individual propositions indicate the logical importance of the propositions, the stress laid on them in my exposition. The propositions *n.1, n.2, n.3*, etc. are comments on proposition no. *n*; the propositions *n. m1, n. m2*, etc. are comments on proposition no. *n. m*; and so on.” But, as Stenius observed in reference to Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, this form of presentation has more in common with musical compositions than with philosophical syllogisms. Let the reader be forewarned: attendance at this performance requires, above all, sensitivity of mind and clarity of heart.

- 1.111 But common activities do not signify common causes; to assume this is to enter the sphere of post hoc, propter hoc.
- 1.112 In certain instances nothing more profound than direct cultural borrowing accounts for similarity of religious practice.
- 1.113 Most important, ceremonial parallels are of superficial kind; the issue is always the motivation behind and the purpose for which the practice is employed: but here even religions similar in practice can differ most radically.
- 1.1131 That is to say, the question of religious unity depends not upon practice but upon teaching, or (expressed more accurately) it depends upon the teaching which gives the practice its meaning; but the teachings are the focal center of disharmony among the world's religions.
- 1.12 Subjectively, students of the world's religions (one thinks of Ninian Smart) frequently regard them as saying essentially the same thing because they want them to say the same thing.
- 1.1201 True, Smart speaks of "religious" or "theological" rather than "phenomenological" grounds for legitimating the identification of two or more contradictory beliefs as constituting worship of the same God, but this gratuitous dualism merely begs the question: why should a higher, "theological" level of validity exist in the face of clear phenomenological contradiction?
- 1.121 The desire for religious unity, though not logically justifiable, is eminently understandable: it is a special case of man's fundamental concern to bring oneness out of the diversity of his experience, or (in philosophical terms) to solve the ancient problem of the One and the Many.
- 1.1211 The problem of the One and the Many can indeed be solved, but the solution will never result from ignoring genuine and irreducible differences in empirical experience; and the diversities in religious teaching constitute just such root differences.
- 1.122 We may wish most fervently that the world's religions taught a unified doctrine, but what is the case is not determined by what we wish to be the case.

- 1.2** ***The conception of Deity-as-Ultimate-Concern (Tillich) is basic to religious belief, and can therefore serve as prime indicator of the logical disharmony among religious positions.***
- 1.21 One can, with Hartshorne and Reese, pose five key questions about God, *viz.*:
- 1.211 Is he eternal?
- 1.212 Is he temporal?
- 1.213 Is he conscious?
- 1.214 Does he know the world?
- 1.215 Does he include the world?
- 1.22 If the affirmative answers are designated respectively as E,T,C,K, and W, then the following nine disharmonious positions, among others, can be identified:
- 1.221 ETCKW: the Supreme as Eternal-Temporal Consciousness, knowing and including the world (Panentheism); represented by Plato, Sri Jiva, Schelling, Fechner, Iqbal, Radhakrishnan, Hartshorne.
- 1.222 EC: the Supreme as Eternal Consciousness, not knowing or including the world (Aristotelian Theism).
- 1.223 ECK: the Supreme as Eternal Consciousness, knowing but not including the world (Classical and Biblical Theism); represented by Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, the Protestant Reformers.
- 1.224 E: the Supreme as the Eternal beyond consciousness and knowledge (Mysticism, Emanationism); represented by Plotinus and by the Cabalistic tradition.
- 1.225 ECKW: the Supreme as Eternal Consciousness, knowing and including the world (Classical Pantheism); represented by Spinoza, Royce, and by the Eastern doctrine of *Sankara*.
- 1.226 ETCK: the Supreme as Eternal-Temporal Consciousness, knowing but not including the world (Temporalistic Theism); represented by Socinus.
- 1.227 ETCK(W): the Supreme as Eternal-Temporal Consciousness, partly exclusive of the world (Limited Panentheism); represented by James, Brightman.

- 1.228 T(C)(K): the Supreme as wholly Temporal or Emerging Consciousness; represented by Alexander.
- 1.229 T: the Supreme as Temporal and Nonconscious; represented by Wieman.
- 1.23 Refinements of these positions offer numerous other irreconcilable possibilities, e.g., Whitehead's belief that whereas God is not the cosmos and does not include the cosmos, his activity is always conditioned (though never determined) by the cosmos.
- 1.24 Moreover, varieties of religious skepticism (for example, the "religio-pragmatic skepticism" of the Buddhist doctrine of God) stand in direct opposition to all positive claims as to the nature of Deity.
- 1.25 Though all of the above God-assertions may be wrong, they cannot all be right.
- 1.251 To claim, therefore, that the numerous conceptions of Deity among religious positions "really say the same thing" is to require an answer to the question: What evidence *would* convince one that these positions are incompatible?
- 1.3 *The world's religions view the human person in fundamentally different ways:***
- 1.31 As a psychosomatic unity, with a body destined for resurrection at the end of the age (Christianity); as a dualism, with a body to be cast off and a soul to be reunited with the Ultimate, as the candle flame reunites with the sun and as drop of water re-enters the ocean from which it came (Eastern religions).
- 1.4 *Evil is regarded differently in the different religions, and reconciliation of these differences is logically impossible:***
- 1.41 The Zoroastrian held that both good and evil—Ahura Mazda and Ahriman (Angra Mainyu)—existed from the beginning; the Christian Science sect affirms that evil is an illusion of the unenlightened mind; the Buddhist is convinced that evil (Karma) dogs man's steps from one reincarnation to the next.
- 1.42 Chinese folk religion, Taoism, and Confucianism consider mankind basically good and not requiring redemption; Christi-

- anity holds that every person has violated the will of God and can only be saved by God's grace as manifested in Jesus Christ.
- 1.421 "Before 1949, the education of wealthy boys and girls [in China] began around the age of seven. Most likely, the first book they encountered was *Sàn zì jīng*, the *Three Character Classic*. They used it as generations of [American] colonial children used their *New England Primer*, to learn elementary reading skills along with the philosophy fundamental to their culture. While Chinese children of the Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1912 A.D.) were poring over the first words of the *Three Character Classic* ('Men at their birth are naturally good'), English-speaking children were reading rhymed couplets for each letter of the alphabet, beginning with 'A / In Adam's fall / We sinned all,' a poem that appeared in countless primers published in England and America during the eighteenth century" (R. and M. S. Chang, *Speaking of Chinese*).

1.5 *There are as many conflicting Ways of Salvation as there are religions claiming to save:*

- 1.51 Islam offers salvation to those who obey the Quranic law; Buddhism demands that one fully attenuate one's desires; Christianity claims that through God's Incarnation in Christ and atoning death salvation has been made freely available to mankind.
- 1.511 The teaching of *sola gratia* seems to unite Christianity on the one hand with the Sri-Vaishnava sect of Tengalai Hinduism and the Japanese Buddhist sect of Pure Land (Jodo and Jodo Shin-shu) on the other; but the similarity proves to be apparent, not real.
- 1.5111 In the Sri-Vaishnava sect, the *Prema-bhakti* "grace" experience is an "emotional, even sensuous, realisation" which is "entirely individual and self-centred" (Sushil Kumar De); in Christianity, Christ "died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves."
- 1.5112 "In Christianity everything goes from God to man; the two terms apply to two entirely different personalities, the one being the creature of the other. In the Jodo and Shin doctrines a

human ascent towards the Pure Land takes place. We all become Buddha, and we are so already in a certain degree, since Amida-Buddha is space, Time, Eternal Life” (Kanei Okamoto, in Steinilber-Oberlin).

1.6 *The goal of the human drama is conceived in mutually contradictory ways by the religions of the world:*

1.61 The religions of classical antiquity viewed the world as eternal and history as a never-ending cycle; Hinduism and Buddhism are indifferent to the ultimate disposition of the world, since, in any case, it is but illusion (*Maya*); Marxism proclaims the inevitable movement of history toward a classless, humanistically-perfect society; Christianity promises a Second Coming of the Christ, a judgment both of nations and of individuals, and the transformation of heaven and earth.

1.7 *The basis of authority in the world’s religions differs radically:*

1.71 In Eastern religions, it is inner experience; in Islam, it is Qu-ranic law; in Judaism, it is the Old Testament; in Christianity, it is both Testaments; among the Latter Day Saints, it is the Book of Mormon; for the Deists, it was the Book of Nature; in Totalitarianism, it is the voice of the Ruling Party (Orwell).

1.8 *Yet as to ethics and morality, do not the religions of the world offer a common message? Seemingly yes; in fact, no.*

1. 81 The “lower” and “higher” religions have inconsistent ethical codes, this being one of the main devices for distinguishing “higher” from “lower” religions.

1.82 Taking the “higher” religions alone, one still encounters the most fundamental moral divergences.

1.821 Observe the attitude toward marriage and woman in Islam as compared with the teaching of Christianity in this regard.

1.8211 In Quranic law, the wife is a chattel; she cannot divorce her husband, but he can divorce her with but an announcement of the fact (the *Talaq*); the woman has no hope of attaining Paradise; and the only feminine element in Paradise consists of the

“Houris with large dark eyes” who give pleasure to the male inhabitants thereof.

- 1.8212 In Christian teaching, “there is neither male nor female, for you are all one In Jesus Christ” and husbands are to “love their wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.”
- 1.83 The common *Tao* or conception of goodness among the higher religions (C. S. Lewis) is deceptive, for their morality is intimately connected with their other basic teachings, and these have already been shown to stand in irreconcilable opposition.
- 1.831 Thus a common ethical principle (e.g., the Golden Rule) is not really common at all if in one case it is employed as a means to legalistic self-salvation (Islam) and in another it serves to show man that he cannot perfectly fulfil God’s standards of righteousness and therefore must cast himself upon God’s mercy for salvation (Christianity).
- 1.832 It is certainly true, as Frazer emphasised, that common motifs—such as the “dying God”—can be found in diverse religious traditions; but if it were the case that in one instance, Christianity, the motif became actualised as a historical fact, the presence of that motif in other religious contexts would not vindicate those religious positions: it would simply say that in those traditions there was a longing for just such a fulfilment (C. S. Lewis; J. R. R. Tolkien; Simone Weil, *Intimations of Christianity Among the Ancient Greeks*).
- 1.8321 “Frazer’s account of the magical and religious notions of men is unsatisfactory: it makes these notions appear as *mistakes*. Was Augustine mistaken, then, when he called on God on every page of the *Confessions*? (Wittgenstein, *Bemerkungen über Frazers Golden Bough*).
- 1.84 A religion must not be viewed piecemeal—in terms of its morality alone or in terms of any other single aspect of its teaching—but as an organic whole having a leitmotif or leitmotifs pulsating throughout.
- 1.841 The inconsistency of the basic leitmotif of one religion as compared with that of another is the clearest evidence of their incompatibility.

- 1.8411 Personal salvation of the whole man through the atoning sacrifice of the personal God who willingly immersed himself in man's condition: this Christian leitmotif is not only absent from the other religions of the world, past and present, but is basically repugnant to them.
- 1.8412 In Judaism and Islam, the transcendent God cannot become man; and the concept of a unique Son of God is idolatrous.
- 1.8413 In Eastern religions, the world is illusion, and one attains Divinity by separating oneself from it.
- 1.84131 "All suffering will cease when we suppress all desires" (the third of the Buddhist Four Noble Truths).
- 1.84132 Salvation by separation and negation is the path even in Mahayana Buddhism where it is taught that Gautama, after Enlightenment, delayed his entrance into Nirvana, thereby providing a model for the *bodhisattva* or enlightened discipline, who will compassionately refuse Nirvana until others are led into that state as well.
- 1.84133 "Whereas Buddha 'enters' history to exhibit compassion and to reveal a saving truth which is independent of history, Christ 'enters' history in order to accomplish and confirm by his death and resurrection a salvation which is incomplete without such historical involvement" (Sparks, in 13 *Numen* [1966]).
- 1.84134 "It is undeniable that there is a fundamental difference between Christianity and Buddhism. . . . Amida Buddha is more or less in the nature of an expedient (*hoben-setsu*) because it is made by the consciousness, that is, it is a creation of the mind (*ishiki-shozo no mono*)" (Yoshiro Tamura, *Living Buddhism in Japan*).
- 1.8414 In Confucianism, man is capable of the ethical without the aid of Deity; salvation is understood in terms of moral self-attainment.
- 1.84141 Confucius teaching was "hardly more than a pure secularism. He had faith in man, man made for society, but he did not care to follow him out of society, nor to present to him motives of conduct derived from the consideration of a future state" (James Legge).

- 1.8415 When in modern secular life, politics, science, psychology, or any other sphere of activity is turned into a religion, then here also the human being saves himself apart from any supernatural agency.
- 1.85 An important collateral evidence that the religions of the world are not actually saying the same thing is provided by the change of terminology in the field of their study:
- 1.851 Previously the field was termed “Comparative Religion”; now it is generally called “Comparative Religions.”
- 1.9** *True, religions do have something in common, or the generic term would not exist; but the closer one approaches an inarguable common denominator, the closer one comes to pure formality.*
- 1.91 The inadequacy of definitions of religion involving substantive content is easily seen, and the obvious failings of any single one doubtless explain the plethora of them.
- 1.911 “Religion is the recognition of all duties as divine commands” (Kant): but a Divinity of what nature? Personal or impersonal? Multiple or single? Separate from oneself or identified with oneself? Ontological, metaphorical, or esthetic?
- 1.912 “Religion is what a man does with his solitude” (James): And in how many inconsistent ways do men utilise their solitude?
- 1.9121 When one enlarges the definition to include man’s corporate activity, the contrasts in religions becomes even more patent.
- 1.913 “The essence of religion is the feeling of absolute dependence” (Schleiermacher): Dependence on what?
- 1.914 “The heart of religion lies in a “*conjunctio oppositorum*” (Jung; Eliade; Altizer): but what specifically are the elements in opposition? (ontological good and evil, as in Christianity? the Yin and the Yang as in Eastern thought? classes struggling for control of the means of production, as in Marxism?); and, even more important, what is the precise nature of the conjunction? (does it require Divine atonement, or does it view atonement as utterly foreign to an experiential union conceived in mystical or anthropocentric terms?).

- 1.915 As soon as the key element in the definition (“divinity,” “dependence,” “conjunction”) is itself particularised, the multitude of inconsistent particularisations destroys the concept of a single world religion.
- 1.92 Here lies the beauty of Tillich’s definition of religion as relation to an ultimate concern:
- 1.921 Allowing for all possible “concerns” (religious values), this definition seeks maximum formality and maximum applicability.
- 1.922 The success of Tillich’s definition lies in its high degree of formality, or (which is the same thing) its lack of substantive content, or (again) its minimal defining character; from which we may conclude:
- 1.93 As soon as one endeavors to define a common religion in which all religions participate, one must offer a definition in more and more general terms, owing to the substantive inconsistencies among the teachings of the world’s religions.
- 1.931 Thus the wide acceptance of Rudolf Otto’s description of the Holy: the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.
- 1.94 The best definition of religion will therefore be the one which says the least.
- 1.95 This is so because the *definiendum* (religion) lacks substantive character, or, to put it another way,
- 1.96 Religion does not exist, but religions do.
- 1.97 Any effort, therefore, to create an “ecumenical religion” through eclecticism or syncretism (Bahaism; Toynbee) will both pervert the religions incorporated into it (since only part of their substantive content is employed) and yield inconsequential platitudes (as maximum generality is attained).
- 1.98 The logical impossibility of a world religion embracing the world’s religions rests upon the de facto character of the religions themselves; to illustrate in terms of the Christian faith:
- 1.981 “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me.”

- 1.982 “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”
- 1.99 Expressed logically, if J represents the proposition that Jesus Christ is the sole source of human salvation, then it cannot be the case that both J and \sim J are true.
- 2 To determine which religious position, if any, is worthy of credence requires serious attention to Pilate’s question: What is truth?**
- 2.1 But the answers generally given to this question are not really answers at all, for they beg the question.*
- 2.11 Many claim that “common sense” and “intuition” supply self-evident answers to the religious quest.
- 2.111 Common sense, however, has proved time and again to be anything but sensible, as Copernicus well illustrated; and in the religious realm, common sense is appealed to by advocates of innumerable mutually incompatible faiths, and is thus not “common” at all.
- 2.112 Intuition has led women to buy hats that do not fit them and religionists to accept tenets that stand in irreconcilable conflict with the beliefs of other intuitionists.
- 2.113 Were common sense and intuition indeed sources of self-evident religious truth, it is self-evident that all men would hold the same religious convictions.
- 2.12 “Authority” is said to offer the answer to the religious truth-question.
- 2.121 Since “the sense of the world must lie outside the world,” an authoritative Word of God is a desperate necessity; but where is that Word to be found?
- 2.122 Merely to claim that divine authority rests with an institution (e.g., the Roman Church), a sacred book (the *Qur’an*, the Bible, the Book of Mormon, etc.), or a person (Jesus Christ, the Buddha, Muhammad, Father Divine) is not to establish that authority.

- 2.1221 The incompatible claims of alleged religious authorities suggests that many false prophets have gone out into the world; to determine which prophets are false—and whether any are true—requires a screening of authority-claims from without.
- 2.123 Those who claim that religious authority is self-attesting ought to meditate on the French story of the theatre fire in which, just as panic was about to begin, a man of distinguished, aristocratic bearing gained the stage, raised his hand and cried, “Que chacun regagne sa place.” The audience did so and was burned to death, whilst the gentlemen walked out through the wings, took someone else’s cab, and drove home unharmed.
- 2.13 God is to be found, we are told, “where the action is” (i.e., he is to be discovered intuitively in the social advances of our day), and we are sensitized to recognize him through participation in “the confessing community” (Harvey Cox).
- 2.131 A combination of two inadequate epistemological sources (intuition and authority) yields a double-dose of *petitio principii*:
- 2.1311 How does one tell God’s action from neutral—or demonic—action? In the Germany of the early 1930’s, the “action” centered on the rising National Socialist party; was this God-revealing action?
- 2.1312 Which “confessing community” offers proper sensitizing to the work of the divine Spirit? The Ku Klux Klan? The Black Muslims?
- 2.14 If modern religious life stands “on the threshold of a whole new era in theology” (James McCord)—an age of the Spirit—perhaps Joachim of Floris’ “third age of the Spirit” (Altizer)—we had better be very sure that we know how to test the spirits.
- 2.141 Satan, it is said, is capable of transforming himself into an angel of light.
- 2.142 A “spirit of Antichrist” as well as a “spirit of Christ” has to be taken into account by the seeker for religious truth; and a way must be found to distinguish them.
- 2.143 One is reminded of “the Great Beast” (Aleister Crowley) and Anton Lavey’s Church of Satan.

- 2.15 “Religious experience” is held by many to offer a sure way to religious truth.
- 2.151 However, the results of analyses of religious experience are dictated by the religious experiences which are analyzed; and the religious experiences analyzed, being dependent upon the criterion of religious experience employed, are necessarily determined by the value-system of the believer.
- 2.1511 Thus, analyses of religious experience do not yield independent information as to what is religiously true; they simply mirror the prior beliefs of the investigator who chooses to regard certain experiences as “truly” religious.
- 2.1512 At best, the argument from religious experience is therefore circular; at worst, it depends upon unrecognized presuppositions which must be tested for soundness in some other way.
- 2.152 Moreover, identification of religious experience with truth commits the naturalistic fallacy (sometimes unkindly called the “sociologist’s fallacy”): it assumes that the “isness” of the believer’s experience constitutes an “oughtness.”
2. 153 Tillich was therefore quite right when he asserted: “Insight into the human situation destroys every theology which makes experience an independent source instead of a dependent medium of systematic theology.”
- 2.16 But when Tillich (together with many Protestant theologians of the present day) offer multiple-source solutions to the religious truth-question (religious truth is to be found in the “Bible, church history, history of religion and culture”), they muddle the epistemological water even more.
- 2.161 Just as the combination of many weak arguments does not give rise to a single strong argument, so the marshalling of several unjustified religious answers does not produce a single compelling religious answer.
- 2.162 If A, B, and C represent multiple sources of religious truth (for example, the Anglican reliance on “Scripture, reason, and tradition”), then one must establish a calculus to handle those situations in which A, B, and C do not say precisely the same thing, or indeed contradict one another.

- 2.1621 For example, one must determine whether a combination of two sources (A, B; B, C; A, C) always takes precedence over the third source in case of disagreement, or whether and under what conditions A, B, or C is to be followed even when opposed by a combination of the other two sources.
- 2.1622 The over-simplification of this example should be noted: when sources such as Tillich's "history of religion and culture" are introduced, the number of factors becomes virtually unlimited, and a proper calculus would have to be unbelievably complex.
- 2.1623 In multiple-source approaches to the religious truth-issue, an implicit calculus of relations thus functions as the ultimate determinant of religious truth; but this calculus must itself be justified—and when this is recognized, the truth-question is re-exposed in its original nakedness.
- 2.17 "Faith" is self-validating, say the fideists: one must begin with belief, not with epistemology.
- 2.171 Faith, however, is a relational term, always involving an object of belief; so we are compelled to distinguish sound from unsound objects of faith.
- 2.1711 Even if one has "faith in faith," the question necessarily arises: Is "faith" a better object of belief than God, or mankind, or oneself?
- 2.1712 There is no "magic in believing": the magic attaches to the object of believing.
- 2.1713 Believing *per se* is neither good nor bad; but beliefs can be true or untrue, noble or demonic.
- 2.1714 To believe fervently that a medicine bottle contains aspirin when in fact it contains arsenic is a very dangerous practice; to consume tablets from the bottle on the ground that faith is self-validating could be fatal.
- 2.1715 The answer to the question, "Can faith validate God-talk?" (Kai Nielsen) is thus a resounding negative; whether Deity exists and is the proper object of faith must be determined apart from the fact of faith.
- 2.1716 The claim of the Protestant "New Hermeneutic" (Fuchs; Funk) that God must always be viewed as the subject of faith and the

believer as its object in no way avoids the epistemological issue: we must still ask, Why this particular *subject* of faith and not another?

- 2.17161 Fundamental philosophical and theological problems are seldom solved merely by the alteration of terminology.
- 2.172 “*Credo quia absurdum*,” though unfairly attributed to Tertullian, has had distinguished advocates.
- 2.17201 Tertullian himself was really saying, “The Christian faith is almost too good to be true”; and this claim—as we shall later see—is anything but absurd.
- 2.1721 If I am seriously told that I should accept X because it is absurd, I must ask: Why absurdity X rather than absurdity Y? For the world is full of remarkable and interesting absurdities.
- 2.1722 It is evident that a non-absurd criterion would be needed to tell me which absurdity to make the object of my faith.
- 2.173 Kierkegaard objects in principle to the question, What is the proper object of faith? For one to try to answer such a question, he maintains, is like a lover attempting to reply to the query, Could you love another woman?
- 2.1731 But can we accept the idea that any religious marriage is a good one? Particularly since the number of willing brides is so great and their characteristics so diverse and contradictory?
- 2.1732 The real question to be faced is *not*, Could you love another woman? *but* Which potential bride is a virgin and which a prostitute?
- 2.1733 Theodore Abu Qurra, bishop of Harran in Mesopotamia, provided an even better analogy in the 9th century: A wise king (God) sent his young son who had never seen him face to face (mankind) into a distant province accompanied by a doctor. There he falls seriously ill. Though news is brought to the king, before he can send instructions for the boy’s care, his enemies in the court send many false and poisonous remedies. How is the boy to find out the genuine message from the king?
2. 1734 Clearly one cannot try all the faith-options of the world in the hope of finding one of self-authenticating quality.

- 2.17341 The number of currently active faith-positions, though finite, is far too great for serial faith-trials; and since any fact of the world could theoretically serve as an ultimate concern, the actual number of faith-orientations approaches infinity.
- 2.17342 Moreover, in what order would one try faith-claims? If no external epistemological test is to be applied to religious options, then the order of faith-trial would be arbitrary (alphabetical? chronological—in order of appearance on the stage of history? vocal, in terms of the loudness of proclamation?).
- 2.17343 But since faith-options radically contradict each other in positive teaching, it can be assumed, as in Abu Qurra's parable, that some at least of these religious remedies are harmful. Without any test for truth but the "leap of faith," how can one avoid the live possibility of autointoxication by metaphysical poison?
- 2.17344 And, assuming that one does successfully extricate himself from a false option after embracing it, how many trials of total commitment will one be able to tolerate psychologically? Arthur Koestler's break with Marxism came close to destroying him as a person.
- 2.17345 How many leaps of faith does it take before one is incapable any longer of recognizing religious truth? Ogden Nash wrote of the seven spiritual ages of Mrs. Marmaduke Moore; we wonder if in this case seven could in any sense be regarded as the perfect number.
- 2.174 Barth demands that we accept as focal center of our faith the self-attesting, revelatory Word of God, which differs qualitatively from, and stands in judgment over, all the religions of the world.
- 2.1741 Our need for a genuine message from God is undeniable, but we are loathe to assume that Barth's revelatory Word is such a message merely because it or he affirms that it is.
- 2.1742 Granting that the Christian revelation-claim contradicts other belief-orientations in asserting that God comes to mankind with the grace of unmerited forgiveness, does this make the Christian claim true?
- 2.1743 In the villages of the Middle East, at the time of an eclipse, children come out into the streets banging pots and pans to

“frighten away the whale that is swallowing the sun” (Denis Baly); apart from concrete evidence in its behalf, the Christian revelation claim, however noble, could likewise be a mythical response to a very real problem.

- 2.1744 The best indication that there is something fundamentally wrong with Barth’s “irrationalism” (Brand Blanshard) is that parallel claims to self-validating truth could be and have been made with equal force by adherents of the very religions Barth rejects; they *also* are capable of asserting that because of doctrinal characteristics peculiar to their world-views, all other beliefs (including Barth’s) are the product of self-deifying religiosity, whereas their position alone is the Word of God.
- 2.1745 To write a “Church Dogmatics” is a legitimate endeavour, but the prior question still remains: How is the Church and its Dogma to be justified, over against a plurality of competing claims to truth?
- 2.18 All arguments begin with presuppositions; thus, we are told by influential orthodox Protestant theologians, Christians have every right to start from the presupposition that God has revealed himself in Holy Scripture.
- 2.1801 Advocates of “orthodox presuppositionalism” go on to affirm that any attempt to justify the Christian world-view makes the presuppositions of one’s epistemology more fundamental than one’s Christian beliefs, thus idolatrously demeaning God.
- 2.181 Kant’s demonstration that all arguments begin with presuppositions is eminently sound; but from this it does not follow that I can sensibly begin to construct a world-view from any presupposition whatever.
- 2.1811 If the latter were the case, then, as readily as one man took to his bosom an unjustified Christian presupposition, I could take to mine the aprioristic belief in a cheese-impregnated Deity with whom communion is possible through the medium of the toasted-cheese sandwich.
- 2.182 Religious presuppositions must be tested for truth-value from without; otherwise one claim has as much right to acceptance as a claim mutually incompatible with it.

- 2.1821 But as soon as one begins to test religious “presuppositions” for truth-value, these religious tenets lose absolute presuppositional value.
- 2.18211 It is nonetheless legitimate to speak of “the presuppositions of one’s systematic theology” (meaning the starting-points for one’s doctrinal system) as long as one recognizes that these “presuppositions” still require justification over against other possible starting-points for theologizing.
- 2.183 The truth-testing of religious first-principles does not lower their value or depreciate the Deity on whom they center.
- 2.1831 To use a road map to ensure that one reaches the king’s palace instead of a garbage dump does not give the king a status below the road map.
- 2.1832 What *would* doubtless offend the monarch is an attitude of indifference in the quest: a lack of concern to distinguish his palace from the garbage dump.
- 2.1833 It is a simple “category mistake” (in Ryle’s sense) to make invidious comparisons of value between substantive beliefs and the epistemological means by which those beliefs are verified; truth-tests and religious tenets have different functions; and the use of the former, instead of diminishing the value of the latter, actually enhances them.
- 2.1834 Care must be taken, therefore, not to confuse one’s starting-point for systematic theology (e.g., the God who reveals himself in Scripture) with one’s epistemological means of verifying that starting-point (e.g., Carnell’s employment of Brightman’s systematic-consistency motif).
- 2.19 For religious ontologists (such as Tillich), a proper theological beginning is made not in the realm of epistemology, but in the sphere of ontology, for, it is argued, every epistemology presupposes an ontology.
- 2.191 That every epistemology presupposes the existence of a world of real and alleged fact capable of epistemological investigation is quite correct: but this is tautologous.
- 2.192 One of the chief criteria of a proper epistemology is that it not implicitly create a world of its own distinct from the world that is the case.

- 2.193 Rather than every epistemology presupposing a world unique to it, having no necessary relation to the world that is, a better case can be made for the need to test every ontology epistemologically.
- 2.1931 Why, we ask, should one conception of Being be preferred to another? Why should one world-scheme be acceptable and another not? Why should one religious view of what is ontologically real command more belief than another?
- 2.1932 In sum, which religious ontology is meant when we are offered *the* ontological answer? And: How do we know the given answer is true?
- 2.194 To start (or stop) with ontology is thus to beg the truth question no less than when the final word is allegedly spoken by common sense, intuition, authority, activism, the Spirit, religious experience, faith, presuppositionalism, or any combination thereof.
- 2.2 ***The search for religious truth—as for truth of any kind—must begin with the utilisation of the laws of deductive, formal logic.***
- 2.21 By “formal logic” we mean the deductive method of testing inferences constructed from the law of contradiction (the constant \sim), together with any one of the following constants: \vee (disjunction), \bullet (conjunction), \supset (implication).
- 2.211 The primitives \vee , \bullet , \supset are *relatively* primitive, since they are inter-definable; the contradictory function, however, is absolutely primitive, since it cannot be defined by means of any selection of \vee , \bullet , \supset ; the law of contradiction is thus the fundament of deductive logic.
- 2.212 Whether Whitehead and Russell, in their *Principia Mathematica*, are correct that mathematics is a special case of deductive logic, or Gödel is right, by way of his incompleteness theorem, that one cannot derive mathematics from logic since a formal axiomatic system only partially characterises the concepts expressed therein, the deductive affinities between logic and mathematics are so close that we may refer to formal logic also as mathematical logic.

- 2.22 In any case, the word “logic” properly has no plural.
- 2.221 “Sometimes people suppose that ‘symbolic’ logic and so-called ‘classical’ or Aristotelian logic differ from each other in the sense of being *logics* that are not identical with respect to their subject matters. This, however, is completely mistaken. There is only one subject matter of both ‘symbolic’ and ‘classical’ logic, namely, formal concepts. Aside from the use of a notation which allows for both precise expression and ease in deduction, the only difference between the ‘logics’ consists in the more accurate and extended analyses symbolic logicians have made of their common subject matter” (Ambrose and Lazerowitz).
- 2.2211 To denigrate logic as “Aristotelian”—and to imply that the Protestant Reformers, in opposing medieval Aristotelian scholasticism, depreciate formal logic because they reject Aristotle’s metaphysics—is absurd.
- 2.22111 Aristotle was the first thinker in the West to provide a systematic classification of zoological phenomena (*Historia Animalium*, etc.); should we therefore reject taxonomy as “Aristotelian?”
- 2.222 Non-Western “logics” are in reality varieties of that universal system of inference based on the law of contradiction which we in the West designate as “classical” or “symbolic” logic.
- 2.2221 This is true even for “Indian logic” which developed in a religious atmosphere where paradox and the *conjunctio oppositorum* were basic motifs: “The most interesting thing about this [Indian] variety of logic is that in quite different circumstances and without being influenced by the West, it developed in many respects the same problems and reached the same solutions. Examples are the syllogism of the *Tarka-Samgraha* and Mathurānātha’s definition of number” (Bochenski).
- 2.223 Hegel’s “dialectic logic,” while the necessary base for his own metaphysic, for the Marxist interpretation of history, for all process philosophies and theologies, and for an influential death-of-God position (Altizer), is really no “logic” at all.
- 2.2231 If, as Hegel supposes, truth and falsity are not sharply defined opposites, but interfuse dialectically, and “reason is the con-

scious certainty of being all reality,” then the necessity of knowing everything before understanding anything would preclude the possibility of knowledge as such.

- 2.2232 “Hegel thought that, if enough was known about a thing to distinguish it from all other things, then all its properties could be inferred by logic. This was a mistake, and from this mistake arose the whole imposing edifice of his system. This illustrates an important truth, namely, that the worse your logic, the more interesting the consequences to which it gives rise” (Russell).
- 2.2233 Hegel was wrong to assert that logic is the same thing as metaphysics, but he was quite right in identifying his own “logic” with his metaphysics.
- 2.23 Why should we commit ourselves to the primitives of formal logic, thereby presupposing the validity of its inferential system?
- 2.231 Not because a “revelation” establishes or employs the laws of logic; for without the prior acceptance of the law of contradiction we would not be able to understand what a “revelation” was saying, much less distinguish a genuine revelation from a pseudo-revelation.
- 2.2312 Apart from the law of contradiction, a revelation would in principle be impossible, for “revelation” would blend with “obscuration” and mankind would remain in darkness as before.
- 2.232 Employment of formal logic is justified by the best of all “reasons”: sheer necessity.
- 2.2321 To reject the law of contradiction is to destroy the possibility of knowledge as such, since from a tautology or a contradiction anything whatever follows.
- 2.2322 To argue against formal logic is to employ formal logic already.
- 2.2323 Of logic one must say what Emerson said of Brahma: “When me they fly, I am the wings.”
- 2.23231 In the present work we have thus been airborne on the wings of logic since proposition 1; owing to the necessitarian character of the flight, we saw no need to describe the craft until now.

- 2.2324 “Why should I be logical?” You needn’t be, if that is your preference; no police force exists to enforce the laws of logic. A man is permitted to be as nonsensical as he wishes; all he loses is the ability to communicate with his fellows and the possibility of discovering truth.
- 2.23241 If, however, one’s refusal to employ the laws of logic is carried out consistently in society, the laws of the land concerning insanity (however primitive they may be) will officially separate the individual from the society in which he can no longer meaningfully function.
- 2.2325 Strictly speaking, the question, “How can I know that the laws of logic are valid?” has no meaning, since an answer to it would require the existence and employment of a higher-level logic (L^2) to justify mathematical logic as we know it (L); L^2 would then require justification by L^3 , and so on. Generalizing, L^{n+1} would always have to be appealed to to justify L^n —to the limit of $L^{\infty-1}$ needing justification by L^∞ . But such an infinite series, even if it existed (and we could not know if it did), would still stand without justification of its last term and thus without grounding for any of its other terms.
- 2.2326 If worlds exist in which other “logics” prevail, we cannot, *qua* human beings, know their characteristics, though we might on evidential grounds come to know of their existence.
- 2.23261 Wittgenstein is right that “we could not say what an ‘illogical’ world would look like,” but this does not limit God to the creation of worlds in which formal logic as we know it is normative.
- 2.24 Deductive logic is entirely formal, i.e., it does not instruct us as to the content of the world, but shows us how validly to interrelate the facts of the world.
- 2.2401 To utilize logic, then, is not to commit oneself in any way religiously; it is merely to admit that one is a human being.
- 2.241 In another sense, however, logic does tell us something about the world: “The propositions of logic describe the scaffolding of the world, or rather they represent it. They have no ‘subject matter.’ It is clear that something about the world must be indicated by the fact that certain combinations of symbols—whose

essence involves the possession of a determinate character—are tautologies. This contains the decisive point” (Wittgenstein).

- 2.25 The assertions of formal logic, like the propositions of pure mathematics, are absolutely certain; but their certainty, rather than stemming from an accord with the facts of the world, derives from their tautological character—from their analytical separation from the world of fact.
- 2.26 To argue, then, as did the Deists of the 18th century “Enlightenment,” that one’s religious position follows from Reason alone, is to misunderstand the character of logic.
- 2.261 If one’s religion did actually derive from logic alone, it would be perfectly certain; but it would gain such certainty at the expense of losing all factual content.
- 2.262 Logic cannot prescribe the content of religious truth; it can only tell you that *if* A is true, *then* it has implications B, C, D, ... N, and that $\sim A$, $\sim B$, $\sim C$, ... $\sim N$ must be rejected. But, in performing this analytical function, logic renders an invaluable service.
- 2.263 Those who claim that their religion follows from logic or reason are really saying that the content of their religious beliefs seems logical or reasonable to them; but whether their religious views are indeed consistent with the laws of logic must be ascertained, and the content of their convictions must be examined against the facts of the world.
- 2.3 ***Deductive logic cannot pass judgment on the factual nature of the world or on what religious claims, if any, are factually true; but empirical method can.***
- 2.31 Empirical method involves:
- 2.311 The clear recognition and accurate statement of a problem to be solved;
2. 2312 The formulation of working hypotheses which appear to explain the problem;
- 2.313 The determination of specific methods of investigation which will yield reliable and pertinent data on the problem;
- 2.314 The accurate collection and recording of the relevant data;

- 2.315 The re-checking of the facts to establish their soundness and pertinence to the problem under investigation;
- 2.316 The testing of hypotheses against the data, thereby confirming or disconfirming the hypotheses in question.
- 2.32 Empirical method, like deductive logic, involves certain unprovable assumptions, *viz.*:
- 2.321 A factual world exists.
- 2.3211 “Reality . . . *does* appear differently to different observers, though this difference is not an empirical difference but concerns only our speculative attitudes, the world-views that underlie our approach to the world. The mistake which gives rise to the dispute as to the nature of the given in sense-perception consists in thinking that this difference is somehow an empirical difference” (J. J. Ross).
- 2.3212 The world could be no more than a dream in the mind of God, as Kant suggested; but, if it were, we would have no way of knowing it and would have to operate in it exactly as we do.
- 2.32121 Pertinent is the story of the Christian Scientist who said, after being stuck with a pin, “I will admit this much: the illusion of pain was as bad as I imagine pain would have been.”
- 2.3213 Solipsism cannot be disproven as a theoretical option, but the solipsist can be transported to Broadway and 42nd Street at the height of the rush hour and shoved into traffic; his physical perspiration may assist him in reconsidering the question as to whether an external world of fact exists.
- 2.32131 Solipsism is the equivalent philosophically of psychosis medically and insanity legally: a refusal to come to terms with the factual world; if practiced assiduously, solipsism can lead to a dehumanized, vegetative state which may well have to be treated by legal or medical means.
- 2.3214 “Could not the world revealed by psychedelic drugs be the real world, and the world as we ordinarily see it constitute unreality?” Since, in a contingent universe, anything is possible, we cannot rule this out a priori; however:

- 2.32141 *Which* psychedelic world should be regarded as real, since there are as many such worlds as there are drugs, trips, and travelers?
- 2.32142 Sobering is the consideration that, under the influence of LSD, black handwriting can appear red.
- 2.32143 Troubling also is the fact that a cat, given the drug, recoils in fear from a mouse (Roger Heim).
- 2.322 Empirical method assumes a distinction between myself as empirical investigator (the subject) and the empirical world I am investigating (the object).
- 2.32201 “Bohr has emphasized the fact that the observer and his instruments must be presupposed in any investigation, so that the instruments are not part of the phenomenon described but are used ” (Lenzen).
- 2.3221 Neither Einsteinian relativity nor the Heisenberg indeterminacy principle destroys the subject-object distinction; indeed, relativity and indeterminacy could not even have been discovered if Einstein and Heisenberg had lost the distinction between themselves and what they were investigating
- 2.32211 How sad Robert Benchley’s account of his college biology course, where he spent the term meticulously drawing the reflection of his own eyelash as it fell across the microscopic field.
- 2.32212 How unfortunate also if, as has been suggested, Schiaparelli’s Martian “canals” were in part the result of incipient cataract in his own eye.
- 2.323 Honesty in investigation and in the reporting of investigative results is held as an unproved value when empirical method is employed.
- 2.32301 To try to demonstrate the normative character of honesty by empirical method would be to confuse the descriptive with the normative.
- 2.3231 The existence of Descartes’ “evil genius” can never be eliminated as a logical possibility; but if lying were really fundamental to the universe, how would we know it? If all Cretans are liars, can you believe a Cretan if he tells you this?

- 2.33 Such assumptions of empirical method as the factuality of the world, its capacity for objective investigation, and the need to report investigative results honestly involve minimal commitment as to the nature of the world.
- 2.331 Empirical method is of a genuinely heuristic character; it assumes as little as possible about the world and endeavours as much as possible to discover by investigation what the world in fact consists of.
2. 34 The hypotheses employed in empirical method are explanatory constructs—conceptual Gestalts—whose value lies in their ability to “fit the facts” (Toulmin).
- 2.341 “Theories are nets cast to catch what we call ‘the world’: to rationalize, to explain, and to master it. We endeavor to make the mesh ever finer and finer” (Popper, Wittgenstein).
- 2.342 Again, theories are like boots or shoes, whose effectiveness is determined by how well they fit the foot represented by empirical data (Ian Ramsey).
- 2.343 The conceptual Gestalts resulting from the employment of empirical method never achieve the status of absolute certainty, since they are at least theoretically subject to revision in light of more extensive or more accurate factual information.
- 2.3431 Empirical theories approach absolute certainty as a limit, but never reach it.
- 2.344 Certainty rests only with the world of fact, against which hypotheses are tested and to which they must conform, and this certainty, like that of formal logic and empirical method, is a necessary assumption.
2. 35 Conceptual Gestalts are built up through the mutual employment of deduction, induction, and retroduction
- 2.3501 Empirical theory-formation must not be thought of monolithically, as the product of a single type of inferential reasoning, but as “a concrescence, a growing together of variable, interacting, mutually reinforcing factors contributing to a development organic in character” (Max Black).
2. 351 By deduction we refer to the operations justified by formal, mathematical logic.

- 2.352 The generalization “All P are Q” is made on inductive grounds when the evidence for it consists of a number of propositions of the form “This P is Q.” But how is the legitimacy of this procedure to be established?
- 2.3521 Not on the ground of the alleged “uniformity of nature.”
- 2.35211 The claim that nature is uniform is not a logical truth, for its denial is not self-contradictory.
- 2.35212 But to try to establish the uniformity of nature by empirical evidence of regularities (as did J.S. Mill) is to engage in circular reasoning.
- 2.35213 “The overwhelming objection to the assimilation of all induction to deduction is that this would require that one should reasonably believe a very general empirical major premiss [the uniformity of nature], the reasonableness of belief in which would have to be justified by another inductive argument” (Braithwaite).
- 2.35214 The principle of the uniformity of nature is thus a metaphysical assumption—and a very dangerous one, since, far from being heuristic in character, it commits one to a restricted world-view in which all events must conform to regular patterns, and unique occurrences are excluded *ex hypothesi*.
- 2.3522 Induction cannot be justified, à la Peirce, on the ground that its self-correcting character gives it pragmatic success.
- 2.35221 If ultimate success through self-correction is needed to justify induction, we shall never have it, since ultimate success “can only mean when the need for any inference has passed, because there is nothing left to infer to. A promissory note isn’t any good if you cannot ever collect it” (E.H. Madden).
- 2.35222 Moreover, if inductive success is our ground for accepting inductive method, then we are justifying induction inductively—and again begging the question.
- 2.3523 In general terms, all pragmatic arguments in behalf of induction are inadequate because pragmatic epistemology is inadequate.
- 2.35231 The concept of “usefulness,” which is fundamental to all pragmatism, is impossibly vague; useful *to whom* and *in what sense*? What utility exists in the fact that Sophroniscus was the

father of Socrates? And even if social utility is established for such a fact, does *consensus gentium* ever necessarily determine what is true?

- 2.35232 Instrumentalism regards truth as continually subject to change on utilitarian grounds; but, if this were the case, then the “truth” of instrumentalism itself would remain in question. The pragmatist tacitly assumes that in the midst of a totally relativistic universe, her own methodology is unchanging; her truth-test thus stands revealed as self-contradictory.
- 2.35233 True ideas often appear hopelessly impractical, and untrue ideas may lead to results which appear to be practical; as a religious illustration, it has been observed that “Christian Science and Roman Catholicism are both systems of belief that have led to practical results; yet both cannot be true at the same time unless the universe is a mad house. Pragmatism may include the untrue or exclude the true” (Brightman).
- 2.35234 Whitehead underscores the impracticality of pragmatic epistemologies in the search for religious truth: “We want an assurance that the soul in reaching out to the unseen world is not following an illusion. We want security that faith, and worship, and above all love, directed towards the environment of the spirit are not spent in vain. It is not sufficient to be told that it is good for us to believe this, that it will make better men and women of us. We do not want a religion that deceives us for our own good.”
- 2.35235 Since pragmatism supplies neither a necessary nor a sufficient test for truth, its own claims must be checked for truth-value on extra-pragmatic grounds; it is thus in no position to judge the adequacy of inductive methodology.
2. 3524 To hold, with many “ordinary language” philosophers, that induction is justified by definition—that “the use of the term is learned by taking note of the kind of thing which is evidence for that term’s exemplification” (Max Black)—is too weak to be helpful, for the marshalling of synonyms for an activity does not constitute a valid reason for the soundness of the activity.
- 2.3525 Induction is properly justified as is deduction: by its necessitarian character.

- 2.35251 Consider the question: What would be a sound reason for believing an oracle rather than induction? Answer: the past history of the oracle's predictions, or evidence that the oracle is the mouthpiece of God. But, in either case, relevant empirical data have to be collected and analysed; i.e., inductive procedure has to be employed.
- 2.35252 Or take the problem: How can inductive method be disproved? Answer: by collecting relevant data against it; but, here again, induction is already being utilized.
- 2.35253 It follows that "a reasoned policy for purposes of prediction and generalization is necessarily equivalent to an inductive policy. If we wish to call reasoned policies better than not-reasoned ones, it follows further that induction is of necessity the best way" (G.H. von Wright).
- 2.353 Retroduction (Peirce's abduction, based on Aristotle's *apagôgê*-type inference) is the connecting link between induction and deduction.
- 2.3531 "Abduction consists in studying facts and devising a theory to explain them. Deduction proves that something *must* be; Induction shows that something *actually is* operative; Abduction merely suggests that something *may be*" (Peirce).
- 2.3532 "Theories provide patterns within which data appear intelligible. Theories put phenomena into systems. They are built up 'in reverse' – retroductively. A theory is a cluster of conclusions in search of a premise" (N. R. Hanson).
- 2.3533 The employment of retroductive inference necessitates the use of imagination, a quality vital to success in any empirical endeavor, as Einstein emphasized.
2. 36 Conceptual Gestalts—the interpretive patterns created imaginatively to render phenomena intelligible—are genuinely empirical, though not in precisely the same sense as the phenomena comprising them are empirical.
- 2.361 Empirical facts comprise the phenomenal content of interpretive theories, and those theories are properly confirmed or disconfirmed by the marshalling of relevant empirical data.

- 2.362 At the same time, empirical hypotheses render empirical phenomena intelligible, and thus accomplish a task which the data themselves do not.
- 2.363 Conceptual Gestalts can best be thought of as empirical propositions of the second degree (E^2), made up of, and dependent for their truth-value on, empirical phenomena (E).
- 2.364 Higher level interpretive Gestalts (E^3 , E^4 , ... E^n) are characteristic of empirical method also; but no matter how ethereally these conceptual towers seem to rise out of the mist of the world, their strength depends squarely on the empirical facts which ground them and which they endeavour to explain.
- 2.37 An understanding of conceptual Gestalts assists in appreciating the fundamental principle that facts are self-interpreting.
- 2.371 Were facts not self-interpreting, knowledge would be impossible, for the understanding of any given fact would require the understanding of another fact or facts, leading to infinite regress and the inability to explain the initial fact concerned.
- 2.3711 If a fact or text is held not to have any inherent meaning, so that one must appeal beyond it to the interpreter for its true signification, then that must be true also for the extrinsic facts to which one appeals.
- 2.3712 “Bigger bugs have littler bugs upon their backs to bite ‘em / And littler bugs have littler bugs / And so—*ad infinitum*.”
- 2.372 Historians must regard facts as self-interpreting.
- 2.3721 “Let us consider an example from recent history. It can be substantiated that some 6 million Jews died under German rule in the second World War. Let me suggest two mutually exclusive interpretations. First, these events may be interpreted as the actions of a mad man who was insanely anti-Semitic. The deaths were murders, atrocities. Second, it might be asserted that Hitler really loved the Jews. He had a deep and abiding belief in heaven and life after death. After reviewing Jewish history, Hitler decided that the Jews had been persecuted enough, and because of his love for them he was seeking to help them enter eternal blessedness. If no necessity exists between events and interpretation, then there is no way of determining which meaning is correct. We would never be justified in claiming that one

holding the latter view is wrong. This is both repugnant and absurd. There must be an empirical necessity that unites an event or fact with its correct interpretation” (Paul Feinberg).

2.373 Likewise, in courts of law:

2.3731 “Petitioners, long time residents of North Carolina, came to Nevada, where they stayed in an auto-court for transients, filed suits for divorce as soon as the Nevada law permitted, married one another as soon as the divorces were obtained, and promptly returned to North Carolina to live. It cannot reasonably be claimed that one set of inferences rather than another regarding the acquisition by petitioners of new domicils in Nevada could be drawn from the circumstances attending their Nevada divorces” (*Williams v North Carolina*, 325 U.S. 226).

2.374 The declaration that facts are self-interpreting means that, to understand a given fact, one must ask: “Which conceptual Gestalt best explains it?,” and then allow the fact itself to judge among the competing Gestalts.

2.375 Suppose we have *n*-theories as to the nature of electrons, or as to the meaning of a play by Shakespeare, or as to who committed the crime for which the defendant is charged, or as to what happened to the body of Christ following his crucifixion: we must see which theory accounts best for all aspects of the object of our investigation.

2.3751 Where such a process is carried out, the object of the investigation ultimately decides among the interpretations of it, and so we may say that the object is self-interpreting.

2.376 Ian Ramsey, following Wittgenstein, employs the analogy of *the shoe and the foot* to illustrate this point: the world of fact is like a foot and our interpretations of it like a shoe; what we seek is the ideal interpretation which will be neither too narrow (pinching the foot) nor too broad (fitting *any* foot and therefore not helpful in the particular case).

2.377 Questions of fact and questions as to the meaning of texts (scientific, legal, literary) can indeed be said to have “one right answer” (Ronald Dworkin)—in the sense that one Gestalt will better fit the subject of the investigation than will its competitors.

- 2.38 The very possibility of arriving at knowledge of the world requires the assumption that a relation of agreement, fit, or correspondence exists between true assertions about the world and the nature of the world as it actually is.
- 2.381 Two varieties of the correspondence theory of truth can be distinguished, *viz.*:
- 2.3811 Correspondence-as-correlation, where correspondence is a “weak” relation, a pairing of two groups in accordance with some principle; and
- 2.3812 Correspondence-as-congruity, where correspondence is a “strong” relation of harmony between language and the world.
- 2.3813 The “weak” correlation theory has been regarded as superior to the “strong” theory because it supposedly does not involve a denotative theory of meaning (“a term means whatever it denotes”); however, correspondences-as-correlation employs an implicit denotative meaning theory and requires a strong congruity relation between language and the world for its own acceptance.
- 2.38131 When Austin declares that “a statement is said to be true when the historic state of affairs to which it is correlated by the demonstrative conventions (the one to which it ‘refers’) is of a type with which the sentence used in making it is correlated by the descriptive conventions,” he must assume that the “conventions” involved do in fact accord precisely with the real world and that the terms conventionally employed accord precisely in meaning with the states of affairs to which they refer.
- 2.382 The most thorough statement of the “strong” view of truths-as-correspondence remains that of Wittgenstein, who asserted that elementary propositions (those to which all others are reducible by analysis) are logically perfect pictures of the states of affairs they describe, and that “in order to tell whether a picture is true or false we must compare it with reality.”
- 2.3821 Unlike Russell, Wittgenstein made no attempt to create an ideal symbolic language, for he saw that logically there must already be a congruence between language and reality; for the same reason he was not inclined to construct a common scientific language as were the members of the Vienna Circle.

- 2.3822 In contradistinction to Russell and logical positivists such as Carnap, Wittgenstein rejected the concept of a hierarchy of languages, each of which serves as a metalanguage for describing a language lower on the scale; he was aware that at the upper end of the continuum this concept involves infinite regress, and at the lower end the recognition of his own basic principle that, on the most fundamental level, language must picture facts and cannot at the same time picture its own picturing of facts.
- 2.3823 Moreover, Wittgenstein avoided Carnap's linguistic "tolerance principle," whereby the latter asserted that "in logic there are no morals. Everyone is at liberty to build up his own logic, i.e. his own form of language, as he wishes."
- 2.38231 "Carnap's tolerance-principle must lead to absurdities" (Harnack). "In the tolerance here I can see nothing but an expression of weakness and resignation. That kind of liberalism is misguided" (G.H. von Wright).
- 2.383 Arguments against the correspondence view of truth leave it untouched.
- 2.3831 We are told that for Wittgenstein's "strong" correspondence theory to succeed, it would be necessary to be able to specify the actual number of constituents a proposition has and to show how each element can be paired with reality; moreover, Wittgenstein would have to produce examples of elementary propositions, and of the simple objects which are denoted by the terms (names) comprising the elementary propositions.
- 2.38311 Wittgenstein was indifferent to the empirical identification of simples and to the linguistic analysis of propositional assertions because he realized that correspondence between language and the world is not established by empirical research or by the work of linguists, but has to be assumed on the grounds of logical necessity if we are to know anything about the world, and is in fact presupposed in all our attempts to understand the world.
- 2.3832 Even Wittgenstein's own second thoughts on the denotative theory of meaning and his expansion of linguistic interest via language games did *not, pace* many of his interpreters, cause him to reject a correspondence view of truth.

- 2.38321 “Wittgenstein’s later philosophy is a plea for the return to earth, to facts. It cannot be too much emphasised that the return to ordinary language is a return to reality, to facts. It is the means to getting the ‘engine’ of thought back in motion again; making the disconnected wheel ‘engage’ again with the rest of the machinery of experience; getting ourselves ‘off the slippery ice’, where the conditions looked ideal ‘but where also, just because of that, we are unable to walk’, and ‘back to the rough ground’ where we have the indispensable ‘friction’ of hard fact” (C.B. Daly, citing the *Philosophical Investigations*).
- 2.38322 Though not a few practitioners of ordinary language philosophy and theology (in the latter category: William Hordern) are indifferent to the grounding of language games in reality by way of a correspondence relation between the world of the game and the world of fact, Wittgenstein never suffered from such indifference.
- 2.383221 “The argument that meaning is not a matter of a private mental act, but rather of the function or use of language in the context of established community practice is not an argument *for* scepticism of the possibility of objectively correct understandings or interpretations, it is an argument *against* that scepticism. Because there is no meaning to one’s words apart from the function they perform, the language game one is playing, meaning cannot be an *unattainable* something locked up in a person’s mind. The idea that someone might *always* mean something different or something more than you or I do, or than she might be able to explain to us, when *she* describes lemons as ‘yellow,’ is incoherent, for there is nothing in which that ‘something more’ *could consist*. Radical subjectivity in meaning and interpretation is incoherent” (G. A. Smith).
- 2.383222 A language game manifesting internal inconsistency is an exceedingly poor candidate for acceptance; but the mere presence of internal coherence hardly establishes the truth of a language game, since many mutually incompatible language games can be internally consistent.
- 2.383223 To claim for Christian theology the status of an “Olympic game” (Hordern) which lays down standards of “purpose, di-

rection, and integrity” for other “games” (disciplines) is fatuous unless theological assertions can be shown to correspond to reality; otherwise, why should any other discipline subject itself to theology’s standards?

- 2.3833 Is not the correspondence understanding of truth belied by the number of utterances that are neither descriptive nor susceptible of analysis in terms of correspondence? One thinks of performatory utterances, formulae in a calculus, definitions, value-judgments, intentional fictions, etc.
- 2.38331 Granted, as the ordinary language school has stressed, “it is simply not the business of such utterances to ‘correspond to the facts’ (and even genuine statements have other businesses besides that of so corresponding),” but this says only that such utterances are not intended to describe the world and therefore are not properly regarded as either true or false.
- 2.38332 A blending of the descriptive and the performatory often occurs; and when it does, the descriptive aspect, to be true, must involve correspondence with reality: “It is common for quite ordinary statements to have a performatory aspect: to say that you are a cuckold may be to insult you, but it is also and at the same time to make a statement which is true or false” (Austin).
- 2.38333 When Sraffa made a Neopolitan gesture of contempt and asked Wittgenstein, “What is the logical form of *that?*,” no refutation of the correspondence theory was involved. If Sraffa had intended the gesture to express a personal value-judgment only, then any attempt to determine its “truth” would have been out of place; on the other hand, if Sraffa had employed the gesture to say something about the world, then its truth depended squarely on whether the view of the world conveyed by the gesture corresponded to reality.
- 2.3834 But do not “facts” exist solely in—and are they not actually created by—the context of the language game being played, so that truth as correspondence with fact cannot be maintained in any absolute sense?
- 2.38341 The contention is correct that what is regarded as a “fact” in one language game (e.g., poetry) may be considered not to be a fact in another language game (e.g., science); but whenever a cog-

nitive language game is played—a game purporting to say something as to what exists—the test for the soundness of its assertions is simply whether the world does indeed have the characteristics attributed to it.

- 2.384 The correspondence idea of truth can be justified in positive terms.
- 2.3841 Justification does not take place on the grounds of venerability or authority, but it is of more than passing interest to note that the two streams of thought whose confluence forms the Western mind—classical philosophy and Hebrew-Christian religion—presuppose truth as correspondence.
- 2.38411 Plato evidences correspondence thinking in the *Sophist*, and Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*. If the correspondence theory “struck the great philosophers who first considered the problem of truth—*viz.*, Plato and Aristotle—as so obviously the correct one that the question of possible alternatives to it never occurred to them” (George Pitcher), is it not just possible that this was because no meaningful alternatives exist?
- 2.38412 “It really ought to go without saying that with all its different genres and figures of speech, Scripture, like all cognitive discourse, operates under the rubrics of a correspondence idea of truth: see John 8:46; Eph. 4:25; I Ki. 8:26; 22:16, 22 ff.; Gen. 42:16, 20; Deut. 18:22; Ps. 119:163; Dan. 2:9; Prov. 14:25; Zech. 8:16; John 5:21-32 ff.; Acts 24:8-11; I Tim. 1:15; note, too, the forensic picture which haunts all of Scripture—for example, such concepts as witness, testimony, judge, the Eighth Commandment, etc.; John 21:24” (Robert Preus).
- 2.38413 Indeed, the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures view the correspondence between language and the world as properly a relation of strict congruity, involving a denotative conception of meaning.
- 2.384131 Thus: Adam appropriately named the animals in Eden; the names given to Old Testament persons corresponded to their characteristics; Jesus himself was named in this fashion (Hebrew/Aramaic: “Jahweh will save”) because “he shall save people from their sins”; Simon and Saul received appropriate new names (Peter and Paul) after they came to know Jesus as their Lord.

- 2.3842 Logical justification for strict correspondence-as-congruity is based on a necessitarian line of reasoning: “There must be a completed route from words to something outside words which they denote. But if one word only leads to others, and they in turn only to still others, and so on forever, then words are eternally trapped in their own realm. At some point, there must be a breakthrough” (George Pitcher, explicating Wittgenstein).
- 2.3843 Further evidence that truth as correspondence must serve as a necessary assumption in evaluating propositions about the world is supplied by the fact that even the theories of truth that purport to replace or surpass the correspondence idea implicitly use it.
- 2.38431 F. P. Ramsey maintained that the predicates “true” and “false” do not designate either properties of propositions or relations between propositions and something else, but are “logically superfluous”; Strawson refined this view by holding that whereas to assert that the statement S is true says no more than the assertion S, it does serve to confirm, grant, or reinforce the assertion S.
- 2.384311 Agreed that “to say that I believe you is on occasion to accept your statement; but it is also to make an assertion, which is not made by the strictly performatory utterance ‘I accept your statement.’ Mr. Strawson seems to confine himself to the case where I *say* ‘Your statement is true’ or something similar—but what of the case where you state that S and I *say* nothing but ‘*look and see*’ that your statement is true? I do not see how this critical case, to which nothing analogous occurs with strictly performatory utterances, could be made to respond to Mr. Strawson’s treatment” (Austin).
- 2.38432 Brightman’s criterion of truth as “systematic consistency” involves observance of the law of contradiction (consistency or formal truth) and “devotion to all of the facts of experience” (systematic or material truth).
- 2.384321 But “consistency” simply marks allegiance to the laws of logic, and the “systematic test”—the test pertaining to empirical facticity—requires the investigator to distinguish what is from what is not the case in the world of experience and then bring

- his assertions into accord (the relation of correspondence!) with reality.
- 2.385 What of the oft-repeated, and presumably irrefutable, counter to any and all correspondence views of truth that one cannot compare the world with assertions about it: one can only compare one idea in the mind with another?
- 2.38501 Expressed otherwise, it is claimed that since reality is extra-ideal, one cannot bring it into the mind to compare it with the picture by which the mind endeavours to represent it; a proper comparison therefore can be made only among ideas.
- 2.3851 It is of course true that one cannot literally put the world in one's mind so as to be able to compare it with ideas concerning it; the mind compares ideas with ideas.
- 2.3852 Correspondence views of truth assume—and must assume—that an objective world outside of the mind in fact exists and that the mind is capable of comprehending it.
- 2.3853 This, however, is an unprovable assumption made not only by the advocate of correspondence but also by the critic, for one cannot function in this world at all without making it.
- 2.38531 Were the critic not to assume such, he would be incapable of (inter alia):
- 2.385311 Distinguishing his wife from a prostitute (since only his ideas of wives and prostitutes, not the women themselves, exist in his mind for comparison);
- 2.385312 Distinguishing his favourite restaurant from the municipal garbage dump (since neither exists in his mind for comparison with his ideas of garbage and paté de foie gras).
- 2.3854 A refutation which depends on the rejection of a consideration which the critic herself necessarily accepts cannot possibly be a sound refutation.
- 2.38541 Such an argument is the functional equivalent of sitting on the proverbial limb and cutting it off beneath one's derrière.
- 2.38542 Or: it is the equivalent of the occultic Ouroboros, which digests its own tail.

- 2.4 *What of the influential Process schools of philosophical and theological thought, committed to the proposition that not “Being” but Becoming” constitutes the fundament of reality?*
- 2.41 Is it indeed the case, universally:
- 2.411 That “you cannot step into the same river twice,” since not only the river, but you personally, will not be the same on the second occasion as on the first (Heraclitus)?
- 2.412 That God should be regarded, not as an Absolute, but in dynamic relation to the cosmos, either pantheistically (God and the cosmos are coterminous); or panentheistically (God is greater than the cosmos, but the cosmos is a part of God), as conceived by K. C. F. Krause and reflected in the thought of Hartshorne, Pittenger, Cobb, and Gregory Boyd; or, à la Whitehead, as One who, whilst neither identical to nor including the cosmos, is always conditioned by it?
- 2.42 These views, whether philosophical or theological, refuse to begin with, or to employ as a fundamental category, an absolute point of reference.
- 2.43 But all arguments must have a starting point.
- 2.431 In logic, as we have seen, that point is the non-processive law of contradiction; Hegelian dialectic “logics” in fact presuppose that law without realising that they do so.
- 2.44 Process positions *either* make their claim from an unrecognised acceptance of inductive method as an absolute starting point *or* they absolutise the very concept of Process.
- 2.441 If the former, they must demonstrate, as a synthetic fact, that flux is more fundamental than permanence and that God does in fact change in relationship with his cosmos—tasks beyond all human competence.
- 2.442 If the latter, they have the burden of showing that Process is more fundamental than Stasis—which hardly seems likely when any such proof would have to assume the law of contradiction as its absolute starting point.
- 2.443 In both scenarios, therefore, Process thinking shows itself inherently self-contradictory: flux is allegedly primary, but to ar-

- gue or show this, one must work from an absolute of either deductive or inductive logic.
- 2.45 Not without reason, then, the major streams of philosophical thought have followed Plato's assertion of the primacy of Being rather than a Pre-Socratic commitment to Becoming.
- 2.46 Theologically, the notion that God is dependent on his creation poses more problems than it solves.
- 2.461 Brightman's "finite God" left the believer with considerable disquiet: if God is not necessarily capable of an eventual triumph over evil, why bother to help him? Maybe one would do better to choose the other side?
- 2.462 An "Openness" theology, which, in the supposed interest of preserving freedom of human decision-making by removing God's omniscience, leaves God unable to prophesy with any confidence (since, like his creatures, he is limited to statistical prediction within the framework of his limited knowledge) and unable to assure his followers of a positive conclusion to human history.
- 2.4621 Such a view seems far removed from that of Jesus, who declared that "Not a sparrow shall fall on the ground without your heavenly Father knowing it" (Matthew 10).
- 2.463 Moltmann's "Theology of Hope," grounding our theological knowledge in the eschatological future, places religion at the mercy of the least known aspect of life, namely, what is yet to transpire.
- 2.4631 It gives maximum generality to the "eschatological verification" argument (to test the truth of the Christian claim, you must first die; you will then know whether there is eternal life)—an argument which, not surprisingly, has led to few religious revivals.
- 2.464 Similar criticism can properly be directed to the views of Teilhard de Chardin, who offers an esoteric "hyperphysics," subordinating entropic drift to organic evolution (in defiance of all modern physical theory), thereby supposedly justifying the promise of a progressive, evolving future where God waits for us "up ahead" at a mystical, christic "Omega Point."

- 2.47 For religious Process views to succeed, it would appear that their adherents require a reference point beyond the human situation in order to justify their description of God's nature; or a special revelation from him providing them with the knowledge that He is indeed processive.
- 2.471 They clearly lack the former (even were they to cry, "Stop the world; I want to get off," it would not stop); and the latter would have to be an *absolute*, not a processive, revelation (since otherwise it could not be depended on for its picture of God).
- 2.472 Chardinian "New Shape" Roman Catholicism cannot, even in principle, offer the needed solid revelational ground for theological Process, since within the "true Church" (as Karl Adam stressed), revelation is *organic* in character; therefore, future Magisteria will always be capable of revising prior ecclesiastical pronouncements.
- 2.48 Biblical revelation, over against all such views, asserts unqualifiedly that God in Christ is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever."
- 2.49 Religiously, also, there is a most uncomfortable experiential consequence of a Process view of Deity: it forces one, against one's knowledge of one's own inadequacies and evil tendencies and those of the human race, to see, in the shaving mirror each morning, the Divine Presence.
- 2.4901 "The man who denies original sin believes in the Immaculate Conception of everybody" (G. K Chesterton).
- 2.491 If the world were really "within" God, or God were necessarily conditioned by it, either God himself would be a sinner or there would be no sin at all.
- 2.492 In Process theology the jettisoning of sin results necessarily in the loss of any meaningful understanding of the need for Incarnation or for redemption.
- 2.4921 Which doubtless accounts for the fact that in such writings of the Process theologians as Cobb's *A Christian Natural Theology*, redemption is conspicuous by its absence.

- 2.5 *We are told by existentialists (Heidegger, Bultmann) and post-modernists (Derrida) that objective truth cannot be arrived at, owing to the necessary interlocking of the object of interpretation with the interpreter, such that the investigator of the world will always colour what he is investigating (the so-called “Hermeneutic Circle”).*
- 2.51 From this it follows that, ultimately, the most that one can do is to create values by one’s acts of decision (Sartre), or to “tell one’s story” (Postmodernism).
- 2.511 Sartre (Existentialism and Human Emotions) illustrates this with the account of a young man’s coming to him for advice during the Second World War: should he join de Gaulle in England or not? Sartre’s answer: “There are no omens in the world, and, if there were, we would give them their meaning. Decide!”
- 2.5111 We are led inexorably to the conclusion that it is fruitless to go to an existentialist for advice.
- 2.52 It is of course true that the observer brings to every investigation of the world her own background and prejudices.
- 2.521 But this is a *descriptive* fact, hardly a proper *normative* piece of advice.
- 2.53 It is a mark of maturity, and a departure from childishness, to be able to distinguish the nature of things as they actually are from one’s own beliefs and desires.
- 2.531 We must not forget the case of Schiaparelli’s Martian canals, or Robert Benchley’s college biology class.
- 2.532 To lose sight of the difference between one’s own story and the story of the world outside is to turn the world’s story into a solipsistic fairy tale.
- 2.533 To confuse one’s own story with that of human history is to transform history into an historical novel.
- 2.54 No-one, to be sure, lives such existentialism or Postmodernism in ordinary life, or could live that way (cf. A. Sokal, *Fashionable Nonsense*).
- 2.541 We regard as autistic those who build and inhabit worlds of their own, untouched and untouchable by outside reality.

- 2.55 In jurisprudence, the Critical Legal Studies movement (Roberto Unger, Duncan Kennedy) maintain that the law is to be viewed from the standpoint of radical scepticism: all legal judgment is a matter of choosing one set of values over another.
- 2.551 It follows that, for those of this viewpoint, the purpose of legal activity is not a search for principles of justice embedded in and developed by the legal tradition, but the conscious advancement of a political vision.
- 2.5511 The law, we are told, is inherently indeterminate; its literature has no single and objective meaning, being capable of virtually any interpretation; legal principles are contradictory; indeed, the law is but a tool generally serving the interests of the powerful and the maintenance of the status quo.
- 2.5512 Convinced advocates of CLS follow the approach of critical neo-Marxist Antonio Gramsci and endeavour to destabilise the liberal legal culture in favour of those they see as oppressed.
- 2.552 As in science and history, so in law, such a viewpoint will eliminate all objective determinations; guilt and innocence, right and wrong, justice and injustice will go by the board in favour of the “story” the CLS advocate wishes to tell or the CLS judge wishes to implement.
- 2.553 One is reminded of the “show trials” of Soviet Russia, in which innocence was sacrificed in the interests of “educating” the populace to the needs of the Proletarian society as defined by the Party’s “story.”
- 2.5531 “The thought of vanguard lawyers armed with real destabilisation power conjures up nightmare visions of re-education camps” (J. W. Harris).
- 2.56 If it is true, as it surely is, that “the world is the totality of facts”, “the world is determined by the facts,” and “the totality of the facts determines what is the case” (Wittgenstein), then we must respect the facts and not endeavour to force them into the Procrustean bed of our personal prejudices or value system.
- 2.561 Only by listening, observing, and subordinating ourselves to the facts of the world will we have any chance of understanding it.

- 2.57 There is no logical necessity for a Word of God to have appeared in this world, but to the extent that we insist on “our story,” the chances of our finding it reduce proportionately.
- 2.58 J. A. Bengel’s aphorism, *Te totum applica ad textum*, can be generalised, over against all forms of the Hermeneutic Circle: *Te totum applica ad mundum*.
- 2.59 Who knows, perhaps it is indeed the case that *Verbum in mundo venit*.
- 2.6 ***The psychoanalytic revolution of the 20th century (Freud, Lacan) is grounded in the conviction that the unconscious mind determines conscious activity; does this not eliminate the possibility of successful objective investigations of the world, including the determination of religious truth?***
- 2.61 One need not dismiss the clear influence of the unconscious in dreams, *lapsus linguae*, etc., to see the fallacy in such a conclusion.
- 2.62 Were we to agree that all conscious mental activity may mean something other than what the thinker intends or believes it to mean, and that the only way to understand true meaning is by way of depth analysis, we would still have to ask: Is the analytical technique *itself* not necessarily the product of the analyst’s unconscious, and therefore inscrutable without depth analysis?
- 2.63 More concretely, how did the first analyst (Freud?) transcend the problem of really knowing his own intentions?
- 2.64 *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*
- 2.65 The analyst must assume that she at least can comprehend objective reality in the treatment of the patient.
- 2.651 But how, then, can the psychoanalytic community maintain an embargo on objectivity and the meaningful investigation of reality by others?
- 2.652 In theory, it might be the case that only those with psychoanalytically attained self-knowledge are capable of objective understanding, but the burden of demonstrating this surely lies with the psychoanalyst; this heavy burden of proof remains to be discharged.

- 2.66 When the analyst asserts, in the Freudian tradition, that religious assertions such as “A loving God exists” are the product of human illusion, we may legitimately ask: How do you know that *your denial* of his existence is not the product of *your* unfortunate psychological development and experiences?
- 2.661 All attempts at psychological reductionism are two-edged swords, equally capable of decapitating the wielder of them.
- 2.67 Psychoanalytic attempts at historical explanation have been particularly disappointing.
- 2.671 Erikson (and playwright Osborne, following him) “explains” Luther’s reforming activity as the result of a severe “authority problem,” stemming from early resentment to father and teachers; and all this on the basis of the sketchiest childhood data.
- 2.672 Feldman, having accounted for Benjamin Franklin’s development of the lightning rod to control thunderbolts as the product of Franklin’s effort to handle anal-erotic drives, justifies such an interpretation in the absence of records of Franklin’s education in rectal cleanliness: “Logic will have to supply what the biographers miss.”
- 2.68 One receives the distinct impression that psychoanalytic theory, whatever its therapeutic value, operates as a closed system, largely unwilling to subject its basic assumptions to meaningful testing, and perhaps incapable of doing so.
- 2.7 ***What of the popular view that scientific activity is really not the product of objective, empirical investigation of the facts of the world, but the result of the metaphysical presuppositions, commitments, and Gestalt of the scientist (Burt, Polanyi, Kuhn)?***
- 2.71 This understanding should not be attributed to Edwin A. Burt, whose purpose in his classic, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*, was only to show the extent to which unexamined presuppositions can and have influenced scientific thinking (cf. R. Hooykaas’ Gifford Lectures).
- 2.711 Burt’s point is entirely valid, and serves to criticise, not scientific method as such but *scientism*—the “religion of science”—

which would pass off the worldview of the scientist as the equivalent of a legitimate application of scientific method.

2.712 Examples abound, as in the case of Evolutionary Theory, where a naïve, unverified, 19th century belief in Progress, rather than empirical evidence, has led to the widely held conviction that amoeba-to-man evolution is indisputably scientific (*contra*: A. Standen, *Science Is a Sacred Cow*; M. Midgley, *Science As Salvation*; C. Hunter, *Darwin's God*).

2.72 It is likewise unfair to attribute to Polanyi an anti-objectivist view of scientific method.

2.721 True, Polanyi opposes a naïve, Baconian inductivism and the belief that the scientist operates with a Lockean *tabula rasa*: “Far from being neutral at heart, he [the scientist] is himself passionately interested in the outcome of the procedure. He must be, for otherwise he will never discover a problem at all and certainly not advance towards its solution.”

2.722 But this does not mean that the scientific investigator can legitimately create results that are the mirror-image of his own belief system; as in proper legal procedure, he must evaluate evidence and come to conclusions that are consistent with it: he acts, declares Polanyi, “as detective, policeman, judge, and jury all rolled into one. He apprehends certain clues as suspect, formulates the charge and examines the evidence both for and against it, admitting or rejecting such parts of it as he thinks fit, and finally pronounces judgement.”

2.73 As for the Kuhn thesis, it is simply not the case that one scientific paradigm replaces another simply because of a shift in metaphysical orientation.

2.731 Though alterations in the ideological climate may contribute to movements in scientific theory, the ultimate reason why one theory replaces another is the incapability of the older theory to explain facts which are explainable by the newer theory; here, the “crucial experiment” is the key.

2.7311 So—to take but a single example—the scientific revolution represented by Einstein’s special theory of relativity, which reduced Newtonian physics to a special case within relativitiy theory, was ultimately accepted when the Michelson-Morley

experiment put paid to the belief in an “ether” as a universal medium for the transmission of electromagnetic waves.

- 2.8 *Assuming (as we must) that truth claims are to be tested by the twin criteria of logical soundness and empirical facticity, what if a claim proves genuinely factual but logically problematic, i.e., suppose only the factual test is met?*
- 2.81 Were the reverse to be the case (a logically coherent position in violation of the facts), we should readily reject it:
- 2.811 The great paranoiacs have invariably set forth consistent world-views.
- 2.812 Baron Munchausen’s tales were wonderfully consistent.
- 2.82 But facticity *cum* illogic cannot be so readily dismissed, since it is indeed the case that “life is bigger than logic.”
- 2.821 When light is subjected to two equally sound tests to determine its nature, they give logically conflicting results, for to be particulate and undulatory at the same time is irrational: particles (having mass) are not waves, nor are waves particles; yet the *photon* (a “wave-particle”) is properly employed as the unit of light, since to do otherwise would fly in the face of demonstrable fact.
- 2.8211 “Quantum physicists agree that subatomic entities are a mixture of wave properties (W), particle properties (P), and quantum properties (h). High-speed electrons, when shot through a nickel crystal or a metallic film (as fast cathode-rays or even B-rays), diffract like X-rays. In principle, the B-ray is just like the sunlight used in a double-slit or bi-prism experiment. Diffraction is a criterion of wave-like behaviour in substances; all classical wave theory rests on this. Besides this behaviour, however, electrons have long been thought of as electrically charged particles. A transverse magnetic field will deflect an electron beam and its diffraction pattern. Only particles behave in this manner; all classical electromagnetic theory depends upon this. To explain all the evidence electrons must be both particulate and undulatory. An electron is a PWh” (Hanson, *Patterns of Discovery*).

- 2.822 In such instances, one wishes it were otherwise, and every effort is of course made to resolve the contradiction, but if it cannot be resolved, the facts nonetheless remain.
- 2.83 The bedrock justification for such a position is that logic is a matter of pure formality--the "scaffolding of the world," not the world itself.
- 2.831 The content of the world can be discovered only by seeking its factual nature; if it proves to be "illogical," so much the worse for our reasoning, not so much worse for the world.
- 2.9 *A verifiability principle cannot be avoided.***
- 2.91 Those who argue to the contrary are employing an implicit criterion of verifiability to refute it.
- 2.911 Implicit operations are always more dangerous than explicit operations, for at least the latter occur in the open epistemologically and can far more readily be evaluated.
- 2.92 But is it not better to speak (à la Popper) of "falsifiability" and not of "verifiability"?
- 2.921 Falsification is indeed vital, for it clears the field of chimerical players in the game of truth.
- 2.922 However, since there are in theory an infinite number of possible worldviews, to eliminate even a significant number of them will never, by process of elimination, yield the true worldview (if such there be).
- 2.923 Moreover, as in Popper's own case, exclusive concentration on falsification leads to a perpetually tentative view of the world contradicted by the day-to-day necessity of decision-making.
- 2.9231 "Popper's own philosophy of science had this element of paranoia in it. Because what he used to teach us is that the nearest thing to a true theory is one that hasn't betrayed you yet" (Toulmin).
- 2.924 Even more importantly, the same criteria will inevitably apply to verification as to falsification, so one gains little by insisting on the latter in preference to the former.
- 2.93 By verification we mean: the evaluation of the potential truth-value of a proposition by asking, "Can the one claiming it to be

veracious offer some means of confirming its truth, i.e., can she indicate what observations should lead us to accept the proposition as true or reject it as false?"

- 2.931 Here, the classification employed by the Analytical Philosophers has considerable utility: truth claims are either formal ("analytical") assertions, factual ("synthetic") assertions, or assertions that are neither formal nor factual ("meaningless" or "nonsensical" statements).
- 2.932 Analytical claims, the truth of which depends on their definition (e.g., assertions of formal logic, pure mathematics, and tautologies) are verified by seeing whether or not they logically follow from their premises.
- 2.9321 Examples: $2 + 2 = 4$; Euclidean proofs; the assertion that "All husbands are married."
- 2.9322 It is a category mistake to think that any observation of the world can verify or falsify such assertions: no sociological survey will establish whether indeed all husbands are married.
- 2.933 Synthetic claims, on the other hand, *do* make assertions about the world, and only by factually vetting those assertions can one determine their truth or their falsity.
- 2.9331 Example: "There are five husbands in this room"; "Napoleon lost the Battle of Waterloo"; Abraham Lincoln was fatally shot in Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C., rather than expiring after a slip and fall accident in Peoria, Illinois"; "Jesus claimed to be God, predicted that he would rise from the dead, and was in fact resurrected."
- 2.94 It will be observed that verifying a factual claim does not require laboratory experiments or repeatability, as desirable as these are where possible and appropriate.
- 2.941 A. J. Ayer eventually saw that historical claims could hardly be regarded as little more than pseudo-synthetic—and therefore meaningless—because it is very difficult to repeat the Battle of Waterloo under laboratory conditions.
- 2.942 Even in the "hard" sciences, experiment and repeatability are not always possible: think of palaeobotany (where the plants are no longer available for laboratory work) or astronomy

- (where, owing to the speed of light, one often observes galaxies no longer in existence and therefore immune to experiment).
- 2.95 Verification does not arbitrarily force data into the Procrustean bed of a single investigative method; it does, however, insist that where there is no way, even in principle, to confirm or disconfirm a truth claim, such a claim be classed as nonsensical or meaningless.
- 2.951 Not, to be sure, meaningless in absolute terms: such claims can be very meaningful psychologically (they can tell us much about the claimant) or sociologically (they can likewise provide exceedingly valuable insights into the groups maintaining such claims).
- 2.9511 “Imagine that there is a town in which the policemen are required to obtain information from each inhabitant. e.g. his age, where he came from, and what work he does. A record is kept of this information and some use is made of it. Occasionally when a policeman questions an inhabitant he discovers that the latter does not do *any* work. The policeman enters this fact on the record, because *this too* is a useful piece of information about the man” (Wittgenstein).
- 2.96 In the realm of traditional philosophy, as the analytical philosophers maintained, verification can eliminate much dead wood.
- 2.961 “Philosophy is the disease of which analysis should be the cure!” (Feigl).
- 2.962 Examples:
- 2.9621 F. H. Bradley’s neo-Hegelian assertion that “the Absolute enters into, but is itself incapable of, evolution and progress.”
- 2.9622 Heidegger’s existentialist assertion that “the Nothing itself nothings.”
- 2.963 In such instances, one is reminded of the comment written on a colleague’s paper by physicist Wolfgang Pauli: “This isn’t right; it isn’t even wrong.”
- 2.97 Verification has no less a valuable role to play in the religious sphere.
- 2.971 One might say “a *more* valuable role,” since there are far more people caught in the net of bad religion than in the net of bad

philosophy, and the former often creates more personal and societal havoc than the latter (cf. 11 November 2001).

- 2.972 Examples (by no stretch of the imagination an exclusive list) of religious claims falling under the axe of non-verifiability:
- 2.9721 “You can’t say Tao exists / You can’t say Tao does not exist / But you can find it in the silence, / In *wu-wei* [deedlessness]” (Taoist poet Ch’ang-tzu, translated by Robert Van Gulik).
- 2.9722 Brahma is All.
- 2.9723 Mohammed caused the moon to come down and pass through his tunic, and this occurred so quickly that no-one noticed that the moon was missing (“The Prophet’s Miraculous Night Journey”).
- 2.9724 God is the Wholly Other (Rudolf Otto).
- 2.9725 Jesus rose from the dead in *Geschichte* (supra-history, which cannot be investigated by the techniques of the historian), not in ordinary, verifiable *Historie* (Karl Barth).
- 2.9726 God is Being Itself (Paul Tillich).
- 2.9727 All illness and evil are an illusion (Christian Science).
- 2.9728 Smedley is the reincarnation of an ancient Egyptian sage (Eastern and New Age thinking).
- 2.98 The “Flew-Wisdom parable” serves as a classic reminder of the need to verify religious claims.
- 2.981 “Once upon a time two explorers came upon a clearing in the jungle. In the clearing were growing many flowers and many weeds. One explorer says, ‘Some gardener must tend this plot.’ The other disagrees: ‘There is no gardener.’ So they pitch their tents and set a watch. No gardener is ever seen. ‘But perhaps he is an invisible gardener.’ So they set up a barbed-wire fence. They electrify it. They patrol with bloodhounds. (For they remember how H. G. Wells’ *The Invisible Man* could be both smelt and touched though he could not be seen.) But no shrieks ever suggest that some intruder has received a shock. No movements of the wire ever betray an invisible climber. The bloodhounds never give cry. Yet still the Believer is not convinced. ‘But there is a gardener, invisible, intangible, insensible to electric shocks, a gardener who has no scent and makes no sound,

a gardener who comes secretly to look after the garden which he loves.’ At last the Sceptic despairs, ‘But what remains of your original assertion? Just how does what you call an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary gardener or even from no gardener at all?’”

- 2.99 Attention must be paid to a standard criticism of verifiability, to wit, that principles of verification are not themselves testable by the criteria set forth by those principles.
- 2.991 It is claimed that since verification principles are neither true by definition nor factually testable—and thus, neither analytic nor synthetic in nature—they themselves must be meaningless.
- 2.992 A verification principle (like methodological principles in general, including induction and scientific method, treated earlier) is a *linguistic proposal* (Hempel).
- 2.9921 “This does not imply that the principle is regarded as an analytic or necessarily true statement. A principle that expresses a linguistic recommendation is no doubt closely related to a corresponding analytic statement, but the recommendation itself is not tautological and uninformative. A recommendation or a decision has a different logical status; it is not successful by being true or unsuccessful by being false” (R. W. Ashby).
- 2.993 As linguistic proposals, verification principles are perforce not themselves subject to verification.
- 2.9931 Were they verifiable by the terms of the principles themselves, the result would be perfect circularity; were they verifiable by some independent criterion of verifiability, one would arrive at infinite regress.
- 2.994 Sound methodological proposals are accepted on a *necessitarian* basis, in that whenever the critic herself is forced to make decisions of a crucial nature in ordinary life, she is found to be employing the very proposal she is criticising.
- 2.995 And so:
- 2.9951 The critic will not invest in shares when the company in question refuses to allow anyone to look at the company books.

- 2.9952 The critic supports Popper’s “Open Society” as against régimes where there can be no presentation and testing of diverse political positions.
- 2.9953 The critic refuses to believe in the existence of ghost who appears in the Haunted House only when no psychical investigators are present.
- 2.9954 The critic hesitates to marry a girl who refuses to give him any information on her background—or who says that if he wants to check up on her, this demonstrates a lack of real love toward her.
- 2.9955 The critic does not join a sect which declares that space creatures beyond the range of human telescopes wish the members to engage in collective suicide to enter a Fifth Dimension of blessedness.
- 2.996 It follows that to discard verification by criticising the original form of the verifiability principle (“Der Sinn eines Satzes ist die Methode seiner Verifikation”—Wittgenstein; “The meaning of a proposition is the method of its verification”—Schlick) is to miss a most important epistemological truth: that claiming something is not the equivalent of proving it.

3 Historical, jurisprudential, and scientific standards of evidence offer the touchstone for resolving the religious predicament by establishing the truth claims of Christian proclamation.

- 3.1 *Historical and legal methods parallel scientific methodology.***
- 3.11 Like the scientist, the historian employs logic, collects facts, sets forth explanatory constructs to explain the facts, tests the constructs against the facts, and accepts those explanations which best accord with the totality of the factual situation (Barzun).
- 3.111 The better the historian, the more she will be aware of her biases and prejudices and will consciously endeavour to put them aside in order to arrive at the most faithful understanding of the past.

- 3.1111 Though the historian needs empathy with her subject-matter, it does not follow, as existentialist historians claim, that the past is undiscoverable apart from a “life relation” between the historian and what she is investigating—otherwise it would be the case that “to understand Ghengis Khan the historian must be someone very like Ghengis Khan” (J. W. N. Watkins).
- 3.112 The good historian will allow the facts to interpret themselves, in the sense that explanations will be tailored to the facts, rather than being forced into a Procrustean bed of interpretation.
- 3.113 The historian cannot engage in repeatable experiments because of the nature of historical subject matter, but, as we have seen, neither can all scientists (palaeobotanists, astronomers dealing with distant galaxies no longer in existence); and for precisely the same reason.
- 3.114 The historian’s conclusions, like those of the scientist, are open to examination and criticism by others.
- 3.115 “The form of inference used both to interpret perceptions and to draw conclusions from data . . . has been found reliable in experience, and we conventionally assume it generally produces true knowledge of the world. Given this assumption it is often reasonable to believe the best explanation of perceptions is that they are correct; and to believe that good historical explanations of the perceived data are true. . . Those who deny the possibility of discovering truths about the past have no good reason for distinguishing historical truth from fiction” (C. B. McCullagh, *The Truth of History*).
- 3.116 The scientist deals with the present, the historian, with the past; since the present is but a knife edge which is continuously transformed into the past, those who deny the ability to arrive at sound historical knowledge necessarily undermine the possibility of reliable knowledge of present existence (the same methods being employed to investigate both present and past).
- 3.1161 And yet the historical sceptic must rely upon his knowledge of the present to survive in daily life.
- 3.11611 The historical sceptic, to function in the present, employs his knowledge of the past every waking moment (as in remembering where the bus stop is located so that he can repeat his jour-

ney of last week); he likewise relies on documents and testimony for his knowledge of the past, (as in tracing land records to determine whether a property he desires to purchase is free of encumbrances).

- 3.117 An historical event, if adequately supported by proper historical method, deserves acceptance wholly apart from questions as to its importance or consequences.
- 3.1171 The historian will not create differing standards of evidence, depending on the alleged “importance” of the event to be investigated (for example, requiring an incredibly high level of evidence for matters relating to the life of Christ, since much depends on that life; but being satisfied with lesser evidence in support of, say, the accounts of Herodotus).
- 3.1172 Were this approach not to be followed, there would be as many legitimate standards of historical verisimilitude as there are interest groups: for the English and the French, high standards of investigation for the Battle of Waterloo; for the Chinese, very low standards—the battle being of little importance in Beijing.
- 3.118 What of Lessing’s “ditch” between history and ultimate certainty (his contention that historical knowledge can never provide us with “the necessary truths of reason,” and thus that no historical investigations could ever yield absolute truth)?
- 3.1181 Wittgenstein himself apparently fell into this error (in dependence upon Platonic idealism?): “God does not reveal himself *in the world*” (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.432).
- 3.1182 Historical knowledge is indeed of a synthetic nature, never rising above probabilities—but, as we have seen, this is true of *all* factual knowledge, including present experience; demeaning the one will necessarily demean the other.
- 3.11821 Evidential probability of a historical nature—*pace* Plantinga—is thus a friend to religious truth claims, not its enemy (T. McGrew, “Has Plantinga Refuted the Historical Argument?,” 6/1 *Philosophia Christi* [2004]).
- 3.1183 To assume, on the basis of such a “ditch,” or by way of the similar, more classical principle, *finitum non est capax infiniti*, that history cannot reveal eternity, is to make a grandiose, gratuitous and unprovable metaphysical assumption—for how could

one know that God is incapable of using history to reveal himself? Or that he could not manage an Incarnation? Or that, were he to do so, we could not recognise it or distinguish it from false claims?

- 3.1184 “We don’t know enough about the unknown to know that it is unknowable” (G. K. Chesterton).
- 3.119 The historian, no more than the scientist, can rule out the miraculous *a priori*.
- 3.1191 Since neither the historian nor the scientist stands outside the world, neither has or can have a comprehensive knowledge of what is possible or impossible within it; neither, therefore, is in a position to exclude events from consideration, or insist on “natural” explanations for them, simply because they are unique in character or offensive to the researcher’s personal worldview.
- 3.1192 Indeed, it is profoundly true that every historical event is unique.
- 3.12 Legal method closely parallels historical method.
- 3.121 “We have already examined the historian’s procedure in evaluating the testimony of documents and remains. An essentially similar procedure is followed in the courtroom when the testimony of witnesses is weighed and judged. For the fact to be proved in a court is of the past, while the testimony or the evidential facts are of the present” (Cohen and Nagel, *An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method*).
- 3.122 Legal methodology is committed to a correspondence theory of truth.
- 3.1221 “In the Anglo-American as well as in the Continental European legal culture the language of the law of evidence conforms to a correspondence theory of truth. This is no coincidence, since the meaning of verdicts would be strangely altered, if one of the rival accounts—especially coherence and pragmatic theories—should be adopted” (Friedrich Toepel, Universität Bonn, “Truth in the Law of Evidence”).
- 3.123 Legal methodology, like scientific and historical method, relies upon *probability* in arriving at its judgments; it does not expect

to attain to formal, analytic *certainty*, nor does it waste time on mere *possibility*.

- 3.1231 Relevant evidence is defined by the *Federal Rules of Evidence* as “evidence having any tendency to make the existence of any fact that is of consequence to the determination of the action more probable or less probable than it would be without the evidence.”
- 3.1232 In the Anglo-American Common Law tradition, civil cases are typically decided on a “preponderance” of evidence, i.e., a balance of probabilities, and criminal cases employ the test of “moral certainty, beyond reasonable doubt.”
- 3.1233 It will be observed that even in criminal matters, the standard is not *absolute* certainty, nor must the trier of fact exclude *all* doubt.
- 3.1234 After all, entire certainty and zero doubt are not attainable in the synthetic realm of fact—and few crimes (except in Alice’s Wonderland) occur in the analytic domain of pure mathematics, deductive logic, or tautology.
- 3.124 Yet courts of law render judgments every day—and must render judgments every day—which determine critical issues of person and property; where the death penalty still exists, life or death hangs on just such determinations.
- 3.125 The importance of legal method lies especially in the fact that courts of law exist to decide the most intractable conflicts in society (cf. Ch. Perelman, *Traité de l’argumentation: La nouvelle rhétorique*).
- 3.1251 This methodology has been developed and refined over the centuries in response to unarguable human need, and there is remarkable consistency across legal systems in requiring sound testimonial evidence in order to reach just conclusions.
- 3.12511 The Lozi people of Northern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe “distinguish between different kinds of evidence as hearsay, circumstantial, and direct, and attach different degrees of cogency to these and different degrees of credibility to various witnesses” (Max Gluckman).
- 3.12512 The ancient Persian *Digest of a Thousand Points of Law* begins with a detailed chapter on the law of Evidence, insisting, as

does the common law, on “independent and convincing proof” to support allegations, and setting forth detailed criteria for distinguishing reliable from unreliable testimony (declarations against interest as opposed to self-serving declarations, etc.).

- 3.12513 In Roman law, “when the witnesses for the parties gave conflicting testimony on any point, it was the duty of the judge, not to count the number on each side, but to consider which of them were entitled to the greatest credit, according to the well-known rule, ‘*Testimonia ponderanda sunt, non numeranda.*’ . . . The Roman law provided that the benefit of the doubt should be given to the defendant rather than to the plaintiff” (Lord MacKenzie, *Studies in Roman Law, with Comparative Views of the Laws of France, England, and Scotland*; cf. J. Wybo, *De interrogationibus in jure* [1732]).
- 3.12514 For Jewish tribunals of the 1st century, “all evidence must be direct, and not circumstantial or presumptive. Be the chain of evidence ever so strong, if not all links are forged by direct eye-testimony, and that of at least two competent witnesses, the accused cannot be adjudged guilty” (S. Mendelsohn, *The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews, Compiled from the Talmud and Other Rabbinical Writings, and Compared with Roman and English Penal Jurisprudence*).
- 3.1252 If the critic wishes to jettison legal methodology, she risks melting the very glue that holds society together.
- 3.1253 But just suppose the application of the very epistemological approach required in legal thinking were to vindicate a particular religious claim—would that claim not *also* have then to be accepted?
- 3.126 In the philosophical community, not a few influential contemporary thinkers have concluded that legal method provides a better potential avenue to truth—including religious truth—than traditional approaches.
- 3.1261 “legal rules of evidence are reflections of ‘natural reason,’ and they could enter into dialogues in several different ways, for example, to test the validity of theological arguments for the existence of God” (Jerome Hall).

- 3.1262 “I am persuaded that God exists, either beyond a reasonable doubt or by a preponderance of reasons in favor of that conclusion over reasons against it. I am, therefore willing to terminate inquiry with the statement that I have reasonable grounds for affirming God’s existence” (Mortimer Adler).
- 3.1263 “To break the power of old models and analogies., we can provide ourselves with a new one. Logic is concerned with the soundness of the claims we make—with the solidity of the grounds we produce to support them, the firmness of the backing we provide for them—or, to change the metaphor, with the sort of *case* we present in defence of our claims. The legal analogy implied in this last way of putting the point can for once be a real help. So let us forget about psychology, sociology, technology and mathematics, ignore the echoes of structural engineering and *collage* in the words ‘grounds’ and ‘backing’, and take as our model the discipline of jurisprudence. Logic (we may say) is generalised jurisprudence. Arguments can be compared with law- suits, and the claims we make and argue for in extra-legal contexts with claims made in the courts, while the cases we present in making good each kind of claim can be compared with each other” (Toulmin).
- 3.13 We are therefore entirely justified in employing a combination of historical and legal techniques to investigate a primary religious claim, that of historic Christianity.
- 3.14 But does not the choice of the Christian claim for investigation reveal a bias in its favour? No; for the following three reasons:
- 3.141 Firstly, the consideration of a claim by no means predetermines its validity, any more than the filing of a lawsuit is the equivalent of winning it.
- 3.142 Secondly, if Christianity were found to be true, any religious affirmations contradicting its teachings must be rejected, so that by investigating the former we may be said simultaneously to be treating fundamental claims of the latter.
- 3.143 Thirdly, and most importantly, we can only meaningfully investigate religious claims which allow for factual testing, and we have already seen that, where virtually all of the religions of

the world are concerned, such testing is precluded by the non-synthetic nature of their claims.

- 3.1431 Other than Christianity, only the two other great “historical” religions (Judaism and Islam), and the cult of Mormonism, do not fall beneath this axe; but their synthetic claims are not sustainable.
- 3.14311 Judaism depends for its truth on the revelatory character of the Old Testament, and in particular of the Torah; but the earliest of all the Old Testament manuscripts (a Dead Sea scroll Isaiah) cannot be dated earlier than the first century B.C., and so the documentary evidence offers no primary historical attestation for the miraculous, allegedly revelatory events recounted in the Old Testament.
- 3.143111 To be sure, if the claims of Christ in the New Testament can be verified, then his stamp of approval on the Old Testament as revelation would achieve the needed result; but this would not validate Judaism, with its denial of Jesus’ messiahship.
- 3.14312 Islam claims that the *Qur’an* is God’s final revelation to mankind, but, in support of this, we have only Muhammed’s personal claim—and no miraculous evidence to back up that claim.
- 3.14313 The Book of Mormon lacks historical credibility, Joseph Smith’s “witnesses” to its supposed divine origin hardly instill confidence, and the assertion that the angel Moroni conveniently took the Golden Plates back into heaven leaves us with an epistemologically untestable claim (Walter R. Martin).
- 3.15 To decide the Christian truth-claim that in Jesus Christ there has been a unique and final revelation of God to man, one must establish the soundness of the primary documents relating to the life, ministry, and death of Jesus Christ; evaluate the quality of the testimony to Jesus presented by the witnesses in those records; determine what Jesus claimed for himself, as set forth in those documents by those witnesses; and, finally, examine the evidence, if any, to support these claims and determine whether that evidence is sufficient to warrant the acceptance of Jesus’ assertions concerning himself.

- 3.2 *The New Testament documents are the primary-source records for the determination of Jesus' life and work and are historically veracious.*
- 3.21 There are several valuable 1st and early 2nd century references to the Christian church and to Jesus himself in Jewish and pagan sources (G. Habermas).
- 3.211 These references include, but are not limited to, Josephus, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger.
- 3.212 Such references make it virtually impossible to deny the historical existence of Jesus: even radical critics such as G. A. Wells are forced to the conclusion that he did in fact exist.
- 3.213 However, none of these references are in the nature of primary sources, i.e., they do not derive from persons who themselves had contact with Jesus.
- 3.22 The only primary documents relevant to the life and ministry of Jesus are those collected in the New Testament.
- 3.221 We use the term “primary” in the strict historian’s sense of a source contemporaneous with the events described and deriving from persons who had immediate contact with those events.
- 3.23 If, as will be shown, the New Testament documents do indeed have primary-source value for the life and activities of Jesus, it is fallacious to argue that by relying upon them the Christian is engaged in circular reasoning, in that he is “using the Bible to prove what he believes about Jesus.”
- 3.231 The fact that excellent documents are collected in an attractive binding, printed on India paper, and distributed widely for devotional purposes has no relevance whatsoever for determining their value as historical sources, either positively or negatively.
- 3.24 The standard tests of documentary authenticity are the “bibliographical” or “textual” test, the “internal” test, and the “external” test (C. Sanders, *Introduction to Research in English Literary History*).
- 3.241 It cannot be stressed too strongly that such tests are universally applied—to all historical and literary materials—and are not the product of religious bias.

- 3.25 By the *bibliographical* test, we mean the analysis of the textual tradition by which the given document reaches us; in the case of the New Testament documents, the question is: Are the printed texts as we have them today essentially the same as when they were originally written, or have they been significantly corrupted in transmission?
- 3.251 The discipline engaged in this determination is that of textual (or “lower”) criticism; its operations are the same, whether the text in question is secular or religious, Catullus’ erotic poetry or the Gospel of John.
- 3.252 After exhaustive examination of the considerable number of New Testament manuscripts preceding modern printed texts, which commenced with Erasmus’ *Novum Instrumentum* of 1516 (the first printed critical edition of the Greek New Testament), the judgment of the lower critics has been unequivocal: not only is the New Testament text reliable, it is the most reliable of all the texts of Graeco-Roman antiquity.
- 3.2521 “The New Testament text . . . is far better attested than that of any other work of ancient literature. Its problems arise not from a deficiency of evidence but from an excess of it. In the case of no work of Greek or Latin literature do we possess manuscripts so plentiful in number or so near the date of composition. Apart from Virgil, of whom we have manuscripts written some three or four hundred years after the poet’s death, the normal position with regard to the great works of classical literature is that our knowledge of their text depends upon a few (or at most a few dozen) manuscripts, of which the earliest may be of the ninth or tenth or eleventh century, but most of the fifteenth. In these conditions it generally happens that scientific criticism has selected one manuscript (usually but not necessarily the oldest) as principal authority, and has based our printed texts on this, with some assistance from the later and inferior manuscripts and a liberal use of conjecture. . . . In the case of the New Testament . . . the vellum manuscripts are far earlier and far more numerous; the gap between the earliest of them and the date of composition of the books is smaller; and a larger number of papyri have (especially since the discovery of the Chester Beatty papyri), given us better means of bridging the gap. We are far bet-

ter equipped to observe the early stages of textual history in the manuscript period in the case of the New Testament than of any other work of ancient literature” (Sir Frederic Kenyon, *Recent Developments in the Textual Criticism of the Greek Bible*).

- 3.253 Between the dates of original composition and the earliest complete texts of the Gospels which we possess (*Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus*), there are extant fragments, quotations, and lectionary readings going back to the end of the first century and possibly even earlier (Thiede).
- 3.2531 This in marked contrast, for example, to the case of the Roman writer Catullus (1st century B.C.), all our knowledge of whose textual material is based on a single manuscript of the Italian Renaissance period, subsequently lost.
- 3.254 “The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the [New Testament] Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the *authenticity* and the *general integrity* of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established” (Sir Frederic Kenyon, *The Bible and Archaeology*; Kenyon’s italics).
- 3.255 But what of the claim that, in spite of all that has been said, we do not have the original autographs of the New Testament documents?
- 3.2551 The same is true of the *entire* corpus of ancient literature—and much of literary productivity throughout history; we do not have, for example, a single autograph of a play by Shakespeare, but this does not at all deter the textual critic from arriving with confidence at texts which accurately reflects the work of the original author.
- 3.2552 There is no surviving autograph of the present work: but no problem whatsoever exists in attributing authorship or being confident of the text.
- 3.256 Muslims invidiously compare the single, standard text of the *Qur’an* with the textual variants of the New Testament (as set forth in such critical editions as the Nestle-Aland *Novum Tes-*

tamentum Graece); are we to conclude that the Quranic text is therefore superior and the New Testament text doubtful?

- 3.2561 The reason for the absence of critical variants in the Quranic text today is that other versions were arbitrarily destroyed: “There were wide divergences between the collections that had been digested into Codices in the great Metropolitan centres of Madina, Mecca, Basra, Kufa and Damascus,” so the solution hit upon by Uthman, the third Muslim caliph, “was to canonize the Madinan Codex and order all others to be destroyed” (A. Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur’an*).
- 3.2562 What we have, therefore, in the Muslim argument is a classic *non sequitur*: the *Qur’an* is superior (we are told) because there are no known variants to its text; but what accounts for this absence of variations is the fact that the Muslims themselves eliminated all versions but today’s standard text, so that now there is no way of knowing the value of what survives as opposed to what has not.
- 3.2563 As for the textual variants in the New Testament documents, only in the rarest instances do these go to the substance of the text and in no case do they put in question theological issues.
- 3.25631 The 16th-17th century Textus Receptus (employed by Luther and by the translators of the Authorised Version) is virtually identical to the more sophisticated Westcott and Hort text of the late 19th century—the reason being that virtually all scribes of the pre-modern era so respected the biblical text that they copied it meticulously.
- 3.257 The consequence of our textual argument cannot be too strongly emphasised: to discount the New Testament documents on textual grounds requires the critic first to discount *the entire body of Graeco-Roman historical and literary remains*, since the textual authority for the latter is considerably inferior to the textual value of the former.
- 3.258 It may be taken as certain, therefore, that anyone who selectively rejects the New Testament documents but retains confidence in the documents of secular antiquity is either ignorant of the facts or so biased against the case for Jesus Christ that she

prefers irrationality to what she perceives as the dangers of Christian commitment.

- 3.26 The *internal* test of documentary reliability asks: What do the texts claim for themselves?
- 3.261 Here, historical and literary scholarship continues to follow Aristotle's dictum (fundamental also to the rules of legal evidence) that the benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself, not arrogated by the critic to herself (*De Arte Poetica*, 1460b-1461b).
- 3.262 In the case of the New Testament documents, they claim either to have been written by eyewitnesses of the events recounted (e.g., John's Gospel and Epistles, Peter's Epistles) or to have been written by close associates of eyewitnesses and based upon careful research (e.g., Luke's writings).
- 3.263 To discount such claims on an objective basis would require better sources refuting what the New Testament materials say of themselves; such sources do not exist.
- 3.27 The *external* test of documentary attribution and authenticity focuses on materials outside of the texts in question which may be capable of confirming what those texts say about themselves.
- 3.271 It is always possible in theory for a document, like a witness, to make claims that are not true; external confirmation is therefore an important avenue for eliminating such mendacity.
- 3.272 For secular texts of the classical world, external assistance is very rarely available, owing to the paucity of confirmatory source material.
- 3.273 For the New Testament, however, such confirmation is readily available. Thus:
- 3.2731 Papias of Hieropolis (*ca.* 130), on the basis of information obtained from the "Elder" (Apostle) John, informs us that Mark recorded what the Apostle Peter had told him—and that "he paid attention to this one thing, not to omit anything that he had heard, nor to include any false statement among them" (Eusebius, *H. E.*, 3.39, 5.20).

- 3.27311 That the “Elder” John was in fact the Apostle John (the writer of the books attributed to him in the New Testament) has been demonstrated by such eminent New Testament scholars as Theodor Zahn—and even by some less eminent (J. A. T. Robinson).
- 3.2732 Irenaeus, a student of Polycarp of Smyrna, who in turn had been a disciple of John himself and had heard from him and from others personally acquainted with Jesus eyewitness accounts of Jesus, states: “Matthew published his Gospel among the Hebrews in their own tongue, when Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel in Rome and founding the church there. After their departure [i.e., death, which occurred at the time of the Neronian persecution in 64-65], Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the substance of Peter’s preaching. Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the gospel preached by his teacher. Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned on his breast [John 13:25, 21: 20], himself produced his Gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia” (*Adv. Haer.* 3.1).
- 3.274 What principally distinguishes the New Testament records from the so-called Gnostic and Apocryphal gospels is the absence, in their case, of any external confirmation of authorship, date, or provenance that would give them primary-source value for the life and ministry of Jesus.
- 3.2741 It follows therefore, that where Gnostic and Apocryphal writings attribute acts or teachings to Jesus which cannot be confirmed in the New Testament records, they have no necessary historical worth; and where they contradict the New Testament records, they must be rejected.
- 3.275 It follows from the preceding analysis and evidence that the New Testament documents, with the exception of John’s Gospel, should all be dated prior to the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70; and that John’s Gospel had its origin *ca.* 95, not long before John’s death in Ephesus.
- 3.2751 This was the conclusion of W. F. Albright, the foremost American biblical archeologist of the late 20th century; it was also the

conclusion to which J. A. T. Robinson arrived (even dating John's Gospel before 70).

- 3.2752 There exists a fragment of the Fourth Gospel which must be dated no later than the end of the 1st century, thus eliminating the speculations of such critics as Bultmann that that Gospel reflects 2nd century Gnostic influences.
- 3.276 Those who employ later dating invariably do so because of their anti-miraculous bias ("Jesus predicted the Fall of Jerusalem in the Gospel records, so, since genuine prophecy is impossible, the records must have been written after the event prophesied"); *contra* G. P. Holford, *The Destruction of Jerusalem* (1805).
- 3.2761 It should not be necessary to point out, as emphasised previously, that disbelief in miracles is no proper ground for historical conclusions which fly in the face of sound factual evidence.
- 3.2762 Such fallacious reasoning is endemic among the "higher critics," whom we shall treat shortly.
- 3.277 The legitimacy for the early dating of the New Testament materials is based, not only on the evidence of authorship by contemporaries of the Apostles but also on powerful inferential reasoning; thus (following Harnack):
- 3.2771 [Where > signifies "must have occurred later than" :] Paul dies in A.D. 64-65 > Book of Acts (which does not refer to Paul's death but would have done so had he already died) > Gospel of Luke (which constitutes "part one" of Acts and is referred to in the preface of Acts as written earlier) > Gospel of Mark (which was employed as one of the sources of Luke's Gospel), and probably Matthew as well (tied in content, as it is, to Mark and Luke) > Jesus' ministry (*ca.* A.D. 30).
- 3.2772 From such reasoning, it follows that the Synoptic Gospels must have been written *within a thirty-five year period following Jesus' crucifixion*, and it is hardly likely that the authors waited until just before Paul died to do so.
- 3.28 When one is aware of the high standards of retention of oral material among the Jews of the time, and the respect which Jesus' hearers accorded to his words and acts, one has every rea-

son to consider the New Testament documents as a highly accurate record of Jesus' deeds and utterances.

- 3.281 It was a Jewish custom at the time (and it has continued throughout Jewish history to a significant extent) to memorise a Rabbi's teaching—for a good pupil was like a “plastered cistern that loses not a drop” (*Mishna Aboth*, 2.8).
- 3.29 Legal scholarship conjoins with good historical scholarship in regarding the New Testament documents as trustworthy.
- 3.291 These documents would be received as competent evidence under the Common Law “ancient documents” rule (Simon Greenleaf).
- 3.2911 Ancient documents are received as competent evidence if they are “fair on their face” (i.e., offer no internal evidence of tampering) and have been maintained in “reasonable custody” (i.e., their preservation has been consistent with their content).
- 3.29111 Thus, the New Testament records would be admitted into evidence, whereas one of the alleged testaments of Howard Hughes, found among the Mormons, would not.
- 3.2912 To be sure, the application of the ancient documents rule merely allows for the admission of documents; the question of how trustworthy they are—how much weight should be given to them—is a decision for the trier of fact.
- 3.29121 But, in setting forth the evidence of the dates, authorship, and provenance of the New Testament records, we have already shown how solid those documents are; and we shall shortly be offering equally good grounds for accepting the testimony they contain.
- 3.292 Could not the New Testament records nonetheless have been “faked”?
- 3.2921 “[What] renders the argument invalid is a fact about fakes of all kinds which I learned myself in the course of a case I did in which there was in question the authenticity of a painting purporting to be by, and to be signed by, Modigliani. This painting, as the result of my *Advice on Evidence*, was shown to be a fake. . . . Although fakes can often be made which confuse or actually deceive contemporaries of the faker, the experts, or even the not so expert, of a later age can invariably detect them, whether

fraudulent or not, because the faker cannot fail to include stylistic or other material not obvious to contemporaries because they are contemporaries, but which stand out a mile to later observers because they reflect the standards, or the materials, or the styles of a succeeding age to that of the author whose work is being faked” (Lord Hailsham of St Marylebone).

3.3 ***Do not “assured results of modern biblical criticism” destroy the force of the foregoing argument for the soundness of the New Testament documents?***

3.31 Even the most radical of the biblical critics has to accept the results of the bibliographical test which establishes the transmissional reliability of the New Testament documents.

3.32 Moreover, even after the most extreme criticism has been exercised, the critics themselves have not been able to excise central, miraculous elements from the narratives (G. Habermas).

3.321 For example, the discovery of the empty tomb on Easter morning—accepted by the great majority of critics because that discovery by women would have been so unlikely a fabrication in the context of male-dominated 1st century Judaism.

3.33 How, then, in spite of having to agree with the textual (lower) critics as to the value of the New Testament texts, do the higher (form- and redaction-) critics conclude that the life of Jesus, as set forth therein, is not—regardless of the asseverations of the writers—an accurate, historically reliable account, but is instead a theological product of “the faith experiences of the early church”?

3.331 The higher critics analyse the texts, identifying what they believe to be irregularities and inconsistencies in style and content; these are explained as the result of multiple authorship and the later editing and redacting of the materials by diverse faith-orientations within the early Christian community.

3.34 This hypothesis faces the following insuperable objections:

3.341 No documentary evidence whatsoever exists to show the multiple authorship of New Testament books, i.e., no manuscripts of “pre-edited” material have ever been found; nor have any ac-

counts been discovered which describe the redaction of the books by churchmen or by early Christian communities.

3.3411 Indeed, the early church and its spokesmen are uniform in their affirmations of respect for the Apostolic writings and the need to follow them without question.

3.3412 The conclusion seems inescapable that the methodology of the higher critic is a subjective one, dependent on the critic's views as to what constitutes a consistent literary product.

3.34121 It appears that what the critic is actually saying is that, were she to have written the book in question, she would not have written it that way; but perhaps that is why, in the ways of Providence, higher critics were not chosen as biblical authors.

3.342 Higher critical method has been weighed in the balance and found wanting when used to establish the authenticity of writings in other scholarly fields.

3.3421 Ugaritic scholarship discarded prior efforts to find multiple authorship on the basis of variation in the use of divine names (Cyrus Gordon).

3.34211 "If we applied the criterion of 'Divine names' to Ugaritic, Egyptian, or Arabic texts, we should see that the principle was not valid. I could multiply examples for all other criteria of the documentary hypothesis" (E. Yamauchi).

3.3422 Classical scholars, having attempted to locate multiple authors and establish the redaction of the Homeric poems, now conclude that "if the Iliad and the Odyssey were not written by Homer, they were written by someone of the same name who lived about the same time" (H. Caplan).

3.34221 "The chief weapon of the separatists has always been literary criticism, and of this it is not too much to say that such niggling word-baiting, such microscopic hunting of minute inconsistencies and flaws in logic, has hardly been seen, outside of the Homeric field, since Rymar and John Dennis died" (H. J. Rose, *Handbook of Greek Literature from Homer to the Age of Lucian*).

3.3423 Efforts to show the redaction of the English ballads were given up because the time span was considered too short for such a process (John Drinkwater, *English Poetry*); yet "no Gospel sec-

tion passed through such a long period of oral tradition as did any genuine ballad” (McNeile and Williams, *Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*).

- 3.3424 C. S. Lewis (essay on “Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism”) pointed out that interpreters of his Narnian Chronicles had not in a single instance been successful in isolating his sources, even though they were his contemporaries, employing the same language he used; Lewis then wondered why biblical critics, working with material two thousand years old and in ancient languages, think that they can succeed in a parallel endeavour.
- 3.35 Legal scholarship, with no literary axe to grind, has found the work of the biblical higher critics “curious”:
- 3.351 “It is astonishing that while Graeco-Roman historians have been growing in confidence, the twentieth-century study of the Gospel narratives, starting from no less promising material, has taken so gloomy a turn in the development of form-criticism that the more advanced exponents of it apparently maintain—so far as an amateur can understand the matter—that the historical Christ is unknowable and the history of his mission cannot be written. This seems very curious when one compares the case for the best-known contemporary of Christ, who like Christ is a well-documented figure—Tiberius Caesar. The story of his reign is known from four sources, the *Annals* of Tacitus and the biography of Suetonius, written some eighty or ninety years later, the brief contemporary record of Velleius Paterculus, and the third century history of Cassius Dio. These disagree amongst themselves in the wildest possible fashion, both in major matters of political action or motive and in specific details of minor events. Everyone would admit that Tacitus is the best of all the sources, and yet no serious modern historian would accept at face value the majority of the statements of Tacitus about the motives of Tiberius. But this does not prevent the belief that the material of Tacitus can be used to write a history of Tiberius” (A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*).

- 3.36 What of the mediating scholars, generally of evangelical persuasion (Gundry, Osborne), and particularly found in the British Isles (Tyndale House, N. T. Wright), who believe that a mild, chastened, baptised higher criticism can be productively employed in New Testament scholarship?
- 3.361 This viewpoint partakes of the classic failing of “the curate’s egg”: the fact that a minute portion may not be bad does not warrant eating it.
- 3.362 If a methodology is fundamentally flawed—as is higher criticism by the inherent subjectivity of its analysis—it must be rejected per se and not employed selectively (G. Maier; E. Linnemann).
- 3.363 If, on occasion, the results of a bad methodology are not themselves bad, that hardly vindicates the method.
- 3.37 Even if it were possible to remove the anti-supernaturalistic bias from higher criticism—which is by no means certain—this would not correct its subjectivism.
- 3.371 We have already seen how a bias against veridical prophecy leads the higher critics to postdate Gospel materials after A.D. 70—against the full weight of evidence in favour of their having been written within a generation of the events in the life of Jesus.
- 3.372 The subjectivity of higher critical method is particularly evident from the fact that the critics cannot agree among themselves as to the particular “sources” behind biblical materials—much less as to where one source leaves off and another begins.
- 3.3721 Probative is the very short history of the once projected “Polychrome Bible,” which was to show in colours the different alleged strands underlying the received text and employed by the “redactors” to arrive at it; but the Polychrome Bible was never published, owing to the fact that the critics could not agree amongst themselves as to the sources.
- 3.3722 To bypass this difficulty, the end-of-the-20th-century “Jesus Seminar” (Robert W. Funk, Gerd Luedemann, *et al.*) has resorted to *voting* on the reliability of Gospel pericopes, thus avoiding the need for unanimity—surely a damning admission as to the inadequacy of the higher critical method itself.

- 3.373 Computer-assisted efforts to establish the “true,” underlying authorship and provenance of New Testament writings have led to most unsatisfactory results.
- 3.3731 MacGregor and Morton fed the “literary style” of Romans and Galatians into a computer, so as to compare them with the other New Testament letters claiming to be Pauline; their conclusion: none of these other works were written by Paul. Then the MacGregor and Morton book on the subject was itself subjected to computer analysis using parallel criteria, proving that their work was actually a product of multiple authorship.
- 3.374 Style and vocabulary are not sufficiently stable criteria for determining questions of authorship.
- 3.3741 Parts one and two of Goethe’s *Faust* would never be considered the work of a single author on the application of such criteria—but Goethe in fact wrote both; compare John’s Gospel and the Revelation of St. John.
- 3.3742 Would the single authorship of one’s love letters and academic productions survive higher critical analysis?
- 3.3743 “Many measures are extremely sensitive to a text’s length (measured in number of words) and to its subject content. Longer texts and specialist texts prepared for expert audiences, for example, may have larger vocabularies than shorter texts and those written for general audiences. Genre, too, has an impact. A collection of newspaper articles and an autobiographical account all by the same author may differ considerably in their measurable style. Clearly, then, stylistic analyses are fallible and cannot provide positive identification of a text’s authorship or literary heritage” (D. I. Greenstein, *A Historian’s Guide to Computing*).
- 3.38 As for the anti-supernaturalism of the critics, it is worth noting that since the New Testament materials are thoroughly impregnated with miraculous occurrences, from the Virgin Birth of Jesus to his resurrection from the dead, the rejection of such material makes it logically impossible to retain the non-miraculous as representing an accurate record of his life and work.
- 3.381 Thus, the illogic of such efforts as the so-called *Jefferson Bible*, in which the third American president (a Deistic rationalist) in-

cluded only Jesus' moral teachings after excising all the miraculous elements from the Gospel accounts.

- 3.382 Thus also (to take but a single current example), the critics' oft-repeated comment that, after all, the Virgin Birth accounts appear only in two Gospels (Matthew and Luke) and so, presumably, can be rejected; *but* they disregard the fact that this is equally the case with the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount (a favourite of those liberal critics themselves).
- 3.383 One cannot have it both ways: either none of the material is of historical value or all of it must be taken seriously, since the authorship and dating issues are identical for the material in its totality.
- 3.3831 As in the legal construction of documents, integrated texts are to be viewed as a whole: "Lord Justice Peter Gibson said it was possible for a court to find that part of a will did have the knowledge and approval of the deceased and that another part did not. But the circumstances in which it would be proper to find such a curate's egg would be rare" (*Fuller v Strum*, Times Law Report, 22 January 2002, finding that the will, in its entirety, was valid).
- 3.39 Do not the alleged "contradictions" in the New Testament material support the need for a higher critical analysis of the texts? Not at all, for:
- 3.391 The burden falls on the critic to show the existence of contradictions, and she cannot discharge that burden.
- 3.392 In most instances, the critic is not aware of the definition of a logical contradiction, namely, two incompatible states of affairs, one of which cannot logically exist at the same time or place, or under the same conditions, as the other.
- 3.393 Is it a "contradiction" when the Gospel of John records that Jesus cleansed the Temple early in his ministry, whilst the Synoptic Gospels speak of a cleansing of the Temple at the end of his ministry? *Only* if one assumes that there was one, and only one, cleansing; but that is not required by the language of the texts.
- 3.3931 Considering the condition of the Temple at the time, might we wonder why Jesus did not clean it out every Sabbath?

- 3.394 We have already noted that it is a fundamental principle of responsible literary criticism always to give the benefit of doubt to the writing; this principle is honoured only in the breach by the higher critics of the New Testament documents.
- 3.4** *The New Testament documents are not only textually sound: they provide reliable testimony concerning the life and work of Jesus.*
- 3.41 It is of course possible for well-authenticated historical records to contain testimony of little worth.
- 3.411 For example, Mason Weems' biography of George Washington.
- 3.412 But this hardly justifies skepticism as to testimony in general (as C. A. J. Coady and others have shown).
- 3.42 Legal scholarship is especially useful in providing criteria for sound witness statements, since courts of law rely upon testimony as their chief source of evidence.
- 3.43 The *point de départ* is the basic principle, applicable, not just to the accused but also to witnesses in general, that one is innocent until proven guilty—not the converse.
- 3.431 The burden falls, then, on whoever wishes to show that a witness is *not* telling the truth.
- 3.44 The McCloskey-Schoenberg standard, fourfold test for identifying perjured testimony can be usefully applied to the New Testament witnesses to Jesus Christ.
- 3.441 That test entails examining alleged “internal defects” in the witness himself (W-I) and also in the testimony he presents (T-I), and a similar examination of “external defects” in the witness (W-X) and in his testimony (T-X).
- 3.442 Considering W-I: In the case of the Gospel witnesses to Jesus, did they possess characteristics or have a past history suggesting that they were “inherently untrustworthy, unreliable or undependable”? Were they pathological liars? Did they have criminal records? Were they mythomanes?
- 3.4421 To ask the question is to answer it—in the negative.

- 3.4422 They baldly assert (and the burden of proving the contrary rests, as always, on the critic): “We have not followed cunningly devised fables [Gk., *mythoi*] when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16).
- 3.443 W-X: What about “motives to falsify,” i.e., external, environmental factors which would lead otherwise truthful witnesses to lie?
- 3.4431 Everything in the pagan and Jewish context would have pushed the New Testament witnesses in exactly opposite direction, for by insisting on Jesus as the Divine Messiah they alienated both Jews and Romans, lost their societal status and possessions, and, in the case of the Apostles, forfeited their lives as well.
- 3.4432 As for the argument that Jesus’ own influence over his followers was doubtless so powerful that it warped their judgment, pushing them to fabrication on his behalf, we have only to note that Jesus himself was committed to the highest standards of truth-telling and categorically opposed to lying: he taught that lying was of the Devil (John 8: 44).
- 3.444 T-I: As for the testimony presented by the New Testament witnesses, when examined only with reference to itself, can it be impeached for internal inconsistencies or contradictions?
- 3.4441 The four Gospel accounts are certainly not identical; but, rather than indicating unreliability, this fact supports their genuineness, since it argues against collusion (E. H. Bennett).
- 3.4442 Each Gospel writer views the events of Jesus’ ministry from the standpoint of his own concerns (e.g., Matthew, writing primarily to a Jewish community, stresses the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in Jesus’ activities; Mark, writing a catechetical treatise primarily to Gentiles, leaves out many details; Luke, a physician, stresses the medical aspects of events): all of this increases, rather than decreases, the credibility of the narratives.
- 3.4443 No one of the Gospel accounts claims completeness, so it is consistent with their character to employ them in a complementary way, harmonising the four accounts with each other.

- 3.44431 Thus, to take a single example, the partial genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke can be reconciled by regarding one as paternal (focusing on Joseph's family) and the other maternal (Mary's family record) (W. F. Arndt).
- 3.4444 Such harmonisation is entirely feasible, as can be seen in the harmonies of the Gospels from early Christian times, and also in modern works such as John Wenham's demonstration of the consistency of the narratives of Jesus' resurrection.
- 3.4445 We have already observed that the "contradictions" cited by the critics stem largely from a misunderstanding of the nature of logical contradiction.
- 3.4446 The New Testament witnesses' lack of defensiveness and willingness to put themselves in a poor light supports the transparency of the Gospel materials (the portrait of Peter in the Gospels being an especially powerful example).
- 3.4447 These documents have "the ring of truth" (J. B. Phillips).
- 3.445 T-X: Is there external evidence which would impugn the veracity of the testimony contained in the New Testament documents?
- 3.44501 As noted earlier, there are no other contemporary accounts of Jesus having primary-source value by which they can be criticised.
- 3.4451 Jewish records of the time do not impugn the New Testament accounts; thus, the trial of Christ has been vindicated historically by the best authorities (Blinzler, *Der Prozess Jesu*; J. Imbert, *Le Procès de Jésus*).
- 3.4452 Secular history does not contradict the New Testament accounts; attempts to show that they do, fail on more careful analysis, as the following examples of fallacious criticism (L. Grabbe) demonstrate:
- 3.44521 Luke, says Grabbe, wrongly refers to a census under Quirinius at the birth of Jesus. *However*, Luke's reference is a perfectly proper one to a general census authorised by Augustus and carried out in the days of Herod (Sir William Ramsey, A. N. Sherwin-White, Ethelbert Stauffer).

- 3.44522 In Acts 12, says Grabbe, Luke improperly designates Agrippa I as “Herod” when this was not his proper name. *However*, the reference “testifies that the king is being viewed typologically, as another persecutor in the Church’s Judaeon history, following Herod, Herod Antipas, Herodias and the Herodians, who figure as persecutors in the Gospel stories” (D, Schwartz, in *Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum*).
- 3.44523 Mark 6, says Grabbe, incorrectly states that Herodias was the wife of Philip, whereas her daughter Salome was Philip’s wife. *But* “the full name of Herodias’ first husband is unknown, [and] no evidence exists that it was not Herod Philip”; moreover, as for Salome, “she was later married to the *tetrarch* Herod Philip”—her own half-uncle (W. Lane, following Lenski). Further, the problem reading “of Philip” does not even appear in the 3rd century Chester Beatty papyrus (p⁴⁵) of the Marcan text (Vincent Taylor).
- 3.4453 Modern archaeology—a source of information far less subject to manipulation than literary sources—has confirmed again and again the reliability of New Testament geography, chronology, and general history (E. M. Blaiklock; E. M. Yamauchi).
- 3.44531 Thus, whereas critics prior to 1961 speculated that Pontius Pilate was a creation of the Gospel writers (!), archaeologists discovered in that year the now famous “Pilate inscription,” definitively showing the historical soundness of the New Testament references to him.
- 3.446 In sum: the Gospel testimony to Jesus Christ survives the application of all four limbs of the McCloskey-Schoenberg construct for attacking perjury.
- 3.45 Legal specialists have analysed how very difficult it is to engage in successful lying in the hostile presence of cross-examiners.
- 3.451 “The person with a wide angle of divergence between what is recalled and the impression sought to be given is . . . at an almost helpless disadvantage, especially if confronting a cross-examiner who understands the predicament” (R. A. Givens, *Advocacy*).

- 3.452 The functional equivalent of cross-examination, in the case of the New Testament witnesses, was the Jewish religious community and especially its leadership, who had the means, the motive, and the opportunity to refute what the witnesses were saying about Jesus had it been false.
- 3.4521 *Means:* The life of Jesus was an open book, the events of which took place within the purview of the Jewish community of the time; and Jesus' disciples followed his instruction to preach "first to the Jew"—going first to the Synagogues, where they encountered the very religious leaders who opposed Jesus.
- 3.4522 *Motive:* The leaders of the Judaism of the time, though divided amongst themselves in many respects (Pharisees, Sadducees) were united in their desire to get rid of Jesus, and they were instrumental in bringing about his execution (J. Imbert, *Le Procès de Jésus*); it is therefore unthinkable that they would not have refuted inaccurate or false claims about him from their own knowledge.
- 3.45221 Moreover, these religious leaders regarded themselves as specialists on the Old Testament, and would have been quick to refute the witnesses' constant references to fulfilled Old Testament prophecies in the life and ministry of Jesus (e.g., birth at Bethlehem, flight to Egypt, betrayal for thirty pieces of silver, etc., etc.).
- 3.4523 *Opportunity:* As community leaders, they had the ear of the public; as literate clergy, they were in an ideal position to memorialise for posterity any fabrications in the testimony of the early witnesses to Jesus' career.
- 3.4524 But not a word of refutation comes from these contemporaneous sources.
- 3.45241 The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 cannot be used to argue that such refutations have been lost, for
- 3.452411 Jewish writings did successfully survive that catastrophe; and
- 3.452412 The early Christian witnesses preached the same message in Jewish settlements throughout the Roman world (the Jews of the Diaspora, *nota bene*, were not rendered mute by the Fall of Jerusalem); and

- 3.452413 There is no surviving reference to lost or destroyed refutations—leaving the argument in a condition purely *ex silentio*.
- 3.4525 “It was not only friendly eyewitnesses that the early preachers had to reckon with; there were others less well disposed who were also conversant with the main facts of the ministry and death of Jesus. The disciples could not afford to risk inaccuracies (not to speak of willful manipulation of the facts), which would at once be exposed by those who would be only too glad to do so. On the contrary, one of the strong points in the original apostolic preaching is the confident appeal to the knowledge of the hearers; they not only said, ‘We are witnesses of these things,’ but also, ‘As you yourselves also know’ (Acts 2:22). Had there been any tendency to depart from the facts in any material respect, the possible presence of hostile witnesses in the audience would have served as a further corrective” (F. F. Bruce).
- 3.46 In sum, the quality of the witness testimony to Jesus is impeccable—which should not be surprising, considering the fact that the relevant documents, as we have seen, derive from first-hand contact with him or with his immediate followers.
- 3.461 “All that Christianity asks of men on this subject, is, that they would be consistent with themselves; that they would treat its evidences as they treat the evidence of other things; and that they would try and judge its actors and witnesses, as they deal with their fellow men, when testifying to human affairs and actions, in human tribunals. Let the witnesses be compared with themselves, with each other, and with surrounding facts and circumstances; and let their testimony be sifted, as it were given in a court of justice, on the side of the adverse party, the witness being subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. The result, it is confidently believed, will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability, and truth. In the course of such an examination, the undesigned coincidences will multiply upon us at every step in our progress; the probability of the veracity of the witnesses and of the reality of the occurrences which they relate will increase, until it acquires, for all practical purposes, the value and force of demonstration” (Simon Greenleaf).

- 3.5 *According to the uniform testimony of the primary-source documents, Jesus claimed for himself no less than divine status.*
- 3.51 If we go to what is widely regarded as the earliest of the Gospels, he begins his ministry by forgiving sin—and “who can forgive sin, but God only?” (Mark 2).
- 3.511 This claim cannot be successfully weakened by Jesus’ reference to himself as “Son of man”; to the contrary, that expression, as his Jewish hearers well knew, derived from the apocalyptic literature of the Old Testament (Daniel 7:13 and Ezekiel), and signified that Jesus regarded himself as the divine Messiah.
- 3.512 The same Gospel concludes with Jesus before the High Priest, where Jesus is condemned for blasphemy for declaring: “You will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14).
- 3.52 Matthew’s Gospel, with its Synoptic parallels, presents Jesus as divine Saviour.
- 3.521 He is given the name Jesus, “for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1).
- 3.522 He declares: “The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20; cf. Mark 10) and “The Son of man has come to save that which was lost” (Matthew 18; cf. Luke 15 and 19).
- 3.523 At the end of his earthly ministry, the resurrected Jesus’ charges his disciples: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28).
- 3.53 The Fourth Gospel records Jesus’ frequent “I am” sayings (“I am the light of the world,” “I am the bread of life,” “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no-one comes to the Father but by me,” etc.)—by which he alludes to, and identifies himself with,

- the “I am that I am” revelations of the God of the Old Testament (Exodus 3:14, *et al.*).
- 3.531 Jesus asserts his pre-existence and thus his transcendent nature: “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8).
- 3.532 When Philip asks Jesus, “Show us the Father,” Jesus replies—identifying himself unqualifiedly with the God of the Old Testament—“He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14).
- 3.533 When Jesus, after his resurrection, appears to “doubting” Thomas, Thomas declares, and Jesus accepts the declaration, “My Lord and my God [Gk., *ho kyrios mou kai ho theos mou*]” (John 20).
- 3.534 Attempts by Jehovah’s Witnesses to deny John’s attribution of Deity to Jesus in John 1:1 (“The Word was God . . . and the Word was made flesh”), owing to the absence of the definite article before the Greek word for God, fail because of the presence of that article in Thomas’ declaration—and because what in fact accounts for the missing article in John 1:1 is simply the reversed word-order (E. C. Colwell).
- 3.54 Passages commonly cited by Moslems, Unitarians, and humanists to argue that Jesus considered himself at best a unique prophet and moral teacher, but not the incarnate God (e.g., Matthew 19:17, Mark 13:32) are explicable if we keep in mind that Jesus was fully man as well as fully God.
- 3.541 If, however, these passages are understood to remove Jesus’ claims to Deity, there is no way to explain the passages previously cited, in which Jesus unequivocally affirms his Divine status.
- 3.542 Here one follows the common rules both of literary hermeneutics and of the jurisprudential construction of documents that “clear passages are to interpret unclear passages”—not the reverse; and that one is to seek to avoid contradiction in the interpretation of texts.
- 3.55 The writers of the New Testament documents and the earliest Christians follow Jesus’ own declarations concerning himself and consistently present him as no less than God almighty, come to earth to die for the sins of the world and the only way of salvation.

- 3.551 Mark opens his Gospel by quoting Malachi 3:1, but with a highly significant alteration, showing that he considered Jesus to be the God of the Old Testament, whose coming had been prophetically promised: “Behold, I [Jehovah] will send my messenger, and he shall prepare *the way before me*”; Mark modifies the verse to read, “ he shall prepare *thy way*,” i.e., Jesus’ way.
- 3.5511 For a Jew, such a change would have been a blasphemous alteration of the sacred Old Testament text—*unless* Jesus were in fact identical with the Jehovah to which the passage referred.
- 3.552 Luke, author of the Third Gospel and the Book of Acts, records the Apostolic preaching as asserting, “There is salvation in no one else [other than Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4).
- 3.553 The letters of the Apostle Paul, which comprise the bulk of the New Testament and were written as early as, or even earlier than, the earliest of the Gospels, present Jesus as God Incarnate.
- 3.5531 “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2).
- 3.5532 World history shall end when “the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1).
- 3.5533 With the phrases “Our God and Father and our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 3) and “Our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father” (2 Thessalonians 2), Paul uses a *singular* verb; for him, Jesus and the God of the Old Testament are one and the same and the common object of prayer.
- 3.554 The early Christian church was likewise committed to a divine Jesus, based upon his own declarations concerning himself.
- 3.5541 The very first description of Christian worship from the pen of a non-Christian states: “On an appointed day they [Christians] were accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn

antiphonally to Christ, as to God” (Pliny the Younger, Epis. x. 96; *ca.* A.D. 112).

- 3.555 Worth remembering is the ferociously monotheistic nature of Jewish belief (“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord”—Deuteronomy 6): no Jewish convert to Christianity would have worshipped Jesus without believing him to be identical to the God of the Old Testament.
- 3.56 Attempts during the 19th century to create a humanistic, progressivistic, evolutionary Jesus in the image of the age were definitively ended by Albert Schweitzer’s *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, which (in spite of Schweitzer’s personal lack of faith in a divine Jesus) showed that, if one is to take the primary sources seriously, one must admit that Jesus considered himself the apocalyptic Messiah who would judge the world at the end of time.
- 3.561 In his Strasbourg dissertation for the medical doctorate, Schweitzer endeavoured to exonerate Jesus from the charge of mental illness; but, as the psychiatrist editor of the English version points out, this attempt was not necessarily successful, since sane people do not consider themselves God, and for a person not to know who he really is indicates severe psychological abnormality.
- 3.5611 If, then, Jesus was not God, he was likely insane, for he certainly thought of himself in divine terms.
- 3.5612 But many in the psychiatric profession have regarded Jesus as the teacher of mental health *par excellence*.
- 3.56121 “If you were to take the sum total of all authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified of psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental hygiene . . . you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of the Sermon on the Mount. And it would suffer immeasurably through comparison. . . . Here . . . rests the blueprint for successful human life with optimum mental health and contentment” (Dr J. T. Fisher).
- 3.5613 The only other humanistic alternative, then, would be to say that Jesus knew himself not to be God but claimed it anyway—the problem here being that Jesus’ high moral character (as ad-

mitted even by unbelievers) makes this a particularly unattractive choice.

3.56131 “The character of Jesus has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exerted so deep an influence, that it may be truly said, that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind, than all the disquisitions of philosophers and than all the exhortations of moralists” (W. E. H. Lecky, *History of European Morals*).

3.57 Since there is no realistic factual possibility of regarding Jesus as one who viewed himself as but a simple moral teacher (a kind of Jewish boy scout helping little, old ladies across the Sea of Galilee), and since to consider him insane or an ethical charlatan makes even less sense, there appears to be only a single satisfactory explanation for his claiming to be God, namely, that *that was exactly who he is*.

3.6 *To be sure, even the most attractive claim to divine status requires proof; and, in Jesus’ case, unlike that of history’s false messiahs and gurus, the necessary proof is available by way of his miraculous resurrection from the dead.*

3.61 The resurrection constitutes an event subject to investigation: its synthetic character removes the central Christian claim that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” from the realm of technical meaninglessness into which, as we have seen, so many religious claims fall.

3.611 “If Christ did not rise from the dead, we are of all people the most miserable” (Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15): Christian faith, from its earliest days, has not been afraid of testability—or of its mirror image, falsifiability.

3.62 Why should Jesus’ resurrection be accepted as factual?

3.621 Firstly, it is recorded in the same sound, primary-source documents, and by the same sane and sober witnesses, as all the other events of Jesus’ life.

3.622 Secondly, Jesus’ death by crucifixion is recorded in agonising detail, leaving no doubt that he did in fact die on the cross.

- 3.6221 “Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death” (*JAMA* 1986; 255: 1455-1463).
- 3.6222 The medical evidence puts paid to every variety of “swoon theory” (à la Venturini, Schonfield [*The Passover Plot*], etc.).
- 3.6223 Moreover, “it is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening, and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to his sufferings, could have given the disciples the impression that he was a conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life” (the sceptic Strauss).
- 3.6224 Such a Christ “would himself have been a party to a gross deception; and this, we imagine, no intelligent critic would suggest” (Sir Norman Anderson).
- 3.6225 And, if this bizarre theory were to be accepted, what happened to Jesus afterwards? Such speculation leaves us precisely where we started.
- 3.623 Thirdly, Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances are described in minute detail, and they are of an indubitably physical nature.
- 3.6231 The resurrected Jesus ate with his disciples (Luke 24, John 21).
- 3.6232 Thomas had physical contact with the resurrected Jesus (John 20).
- 3.6233 But can we rely on the eyewitness identifications? Do not witnesses make mistaken identifications? Might not the witnesses have taken someone else for Jesus?
- 3.62331 Specialists agree that “the better acquainted a witness is with a subject, the more likely it is that the witness’ identification will be accurate” and that “in an eyewitness context, the greatest challenge to the advocate’s power of persuasion is presented by the attempt to argue, without support from expert testimony, the unreliability of an unimpeached eyewitness’ identification of a prior acquaintance” (Arnolds, *et al.*, *Eyewitness Testimony*; cf. E. Loftus; A. Heaton-Armstrong).

- 3.62332 The witnesses to Jesus' post-resurrection appearances had had intimate contact with him throughout an immediately prior three-year ministry; it is therefore inconceivable that they would have mistaken him for a third party.
- 3.624 Fourthly, the appearances extended over a forty-day period and to over five hundred persons, "most of whom," asserts Paul in A.D. 56, "remain alive to the present" (Acts 1; 1 Corinthians 15).
- 3.625 Fifthly, the events of the last week of Jesus' earthly life—his trial, crucifixion, and burial—were events of high interest, and they transpired in the public setting of the high Passover season at Jerusalem: the public context would have made fabrication an impossible task.
- 3.6251 As Paul asserted when on trial for his faith, "These things were not done in a corner" (Acts 26).
- 3.63 Efforts, such as those of Luedemann, to discount these historical considerations fail, and fail miserably:
- 3.631 We are told that "the visit of Mary Magdalene (with the two other women) to the tomb of Jesus on the day after the Sabbath can hardly be said to be historical. Historical enquiry must be directed at the character of the underlying traditions."
- 3.6311 *But* there are *no* "underlying traditions": the accounts of the visits to the empty tomb and angelic encounters there are in the same Gospel materials as every other fact about Jesus' life, and these are the earliest records which we possess; all references to earlier "traditions" are entirely speculative.
- 3.632 Likewise we are told that "the tradition of the bribing of the guards cannot be taken seriously. . . . The guards would have been convicting themselves had they confessed that they had slept at the tomb."
- 3.6321 *But*, as above, this account is an inherent part of the earliest textual material; and have we never encountered damning admissions by defendants or witnesses?
- 3.633 "The Thomas pericope represents, in terms of the early history of the tradition, a late stage of the early Christian Easter stories," asserts Luedemann.

- 3.6331 *But* not a scintilla of historical evidence exists to place the Thomas incident at “a late stage”: it appears in the earliest manuscripts of the Fourth Gospel and there are no variant texts omitting it.
- 3.634 Luedemann informs us that Jesus’ “appearance before the ‘more than 500’ as a historical phenomenon can plausibly be represented as mass ecstasy which took place in the early period of the community. Given the nature of mass psychology, the stimulus towards it may have been provided by one or more individuals.”
- 3.6341 “Plausible”? *Hardly*. The critic attempts to practice psychology without a license:
- 3.63411 Granted that hypnotism has been found to produce testable brain changes and is therefore a physiological reality (D. Spiegel, AAAS, Boston, Feb. 2002), it is impossible to induce the requisite hypnotic visions as crowd phenomena.
- 3.63412 “Mass ecstasy” can hardly account for the detailed, individual accounts of Jesus’ appearances, such as his eating entire meals with those to whom he appeared and providing them with lengthy interpretations of the Old Testament (Luke 24, etc.).
- 3.63413 Had the entire gamut of post-resurrection appearances really been nothing more than vague visions on the part of suggestible disciples, would not the contemporaneous enemies of early Christianity have exploited this to the full, thereby discrediting the movement from the outset?
- 3.64 What of the critics’ contention that the resurrection accounts in the Four Gospels are riddled with contradictions?
- 3.641 We reiterate that what a critic considers “contradictory” generally has no relation to *logical* contradiction; and that texts deserve to be given the benefit of the doubt.
- 3.642 One “is often surprised to find how many apparent contradictions turn out not to be contradictory at all., but merely supplementary. Take, for example, the various accounts of the Resurrection appearances at the Sepulchre. The divergences appear very great on first sight. . . . But the fact remains that *all* of them, without exception, can be made to fall into place in a single orderly and coherent narrative without the smallest con-

tradition or difficulty, and without any suppression, invention, or manipulation, beyond a trifling effort to *imagine* the natural behaviour of a bunch of startled people running about in the dawn light between Jerusalem and the Garden” (Dorothy Sayers, *The Man Born to Be King*).

- 3.65 If Jesus did not rise from the dead, one must explain the missing body from a sealed tomb on Easter morning—a tomb guarded by a Roman patrol requested by the Jewish religious leaders who wanted no rumors of resurrection to begin spreading.
- 3.651 “Most conclusively, it is impossible to imagine the earliest believers having any success whatsoever in their attempt to convince people that Jesus had been raised from the dead without ungainsayable evidence of an empty tomb. Otherwise, their enemies could have refuted their testimony by simply producing the body” (S. T. Davis).
- 3.66 What alternative explanations might be offered for the missing body, and how effective would they be?
- 3.661 The Romans stole the body?
- 3.6611 *But* this would have been against their own interest, since Roman policy was to quiet the Jewish religious unrest, not exacerbate it.
- 3.662 The Jewish religious leaders stole the body?
- 3.6621 *But* they would have had far less reason than the Romans to do so, and every reason not to do so, since it was their fervent desire to put an end to Jesus’ influence; indeed, it was they who requested the Roman guard for the tomb.
- 3.663 Jesus’ disciples stole the body?
- 3.6631 *But* had they done so, they would have subsequently died for what they knew to be untrue, and we have no reason to think that they were psychologically unbalanced.
- 3.66311 People have often died for what was false, believing it to be true; but to die for what one *knows* to be false is a psychological aberration of the first order.
- 3.664 The body was stolen by persons unknown?

- 3.6641 *But* historical explanations must be backed up by facts, and there are none whatsoever to support such a contention.
- 3.66411 Legal reasoning arrives at the identical conclusion, for (as we have seen) tribunals insist upon probability, based on evidence, as the standard of proof—not mere speculative possibility.
- 3.6642 Even less attention need be paid to such views as those of Von Daniken (*Chariots of the Gods*), hypothesising that supernatural religious phenomena are to be accounted for by invasions of advanced creatures from outer space.
- 3.66421 In the complete absence of documentary evidence to support this account of Jesus’ resurrection, one might as well believe that Von Daniken himself is a space creature.
- 3.66422 The same total absence of historical support should eliminate from serious consideration those New Age claims that during the “silent years” of Jesus’ life (prior to his three-year public ministry) he traveled to India and fraternised with Eastern gurus; or that he married and had children.
- 3.66423 “Of that which one cannot speak, one must remain silent” (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 7.0).
- 3.665 Having eliminated all other explanations of the missing body, we conclude that the resurrection of Jesus—the explanation presented by the primary-source witnesses—has been established “to a moral certainty, beyond reasonable doubt.”
- 3.6651 As noted previously, this is the higher, criminal standard of proof; it means (as in this instance) that the trier of fact must be able rationally to exclude all other explanations of the crime (here, the event) as being unsustainable by the facts in evidence.
- 3.666 An identical result is reached by the application of the legal principle of *Res ipsa loquitur*.
- 3.6661 This principle is chiefly employed in tort actions (e.g., patient wakes up after an operation and discovers that his surgeon has amputated the wrong leg; sues; and succeeds without the need to provide empirical evidence of the surgeon’s negligence); *Res ipsa* entails the following syllogism:

(1) This kind of event does not normally occur in the absence of negligence.

(2) The instrumentality in the instant case was under the defendant's exclusive control.

(3) The plaintiff himself did not contribute to the injury.

∴ Defendant negligent: "*the event speaks for itself.*"

3.6662 Applied to the resurrection of Christ:

(1) Dead bodies do not leave tombs in the absence of some agency effecting their removal.

(2) If the tomb was under anyone's exclusive control, it was God's, for it had been sealed, and Jesus, the sole occupant of it, was dead.

(3) The Romans and the Jewish religious leaders did not contribute to the removal of the body (they had been responsible for sealing and guarding the tomb to prevent anyone from stealing the body), and the disciples would not have stolen it, then prevaricated, and finally died for what they knew to be untrue.

∴ Only God was in a position to empty the tomb, which he did, by raising Jesus from the dead: "*the event speaks for itself.*"

3.67 Granted the force of all that has been said as to the soundness of the testimony for Jesus' resurrection and the inadequacy of the attempts to explain it away on naturalistic grounds, does not the mere fact that such an event would constitute a *miracle* eliminate it from serious factual consideration?

3.671 Hume's classic argument against the miraculous maintains, in its strong form, that miracle evidence must always be discounted, since there is "uniform experience" against it.

3.6711 That argument is a perfect instance of circular reasoning, for the only way to determine whether in fact there *is* "uniform experience" against the miraculous is to evaluate testimony—and the existence of serious testimonies to the resurrection of Christ shows that such anti-miraculous testimony is *not* uniform.

3.6712 It is a particular weakness in the traditional philosophical community to set forth arguments of this kind which would supposedly permit us to make valid declarations as to what is and what is not the case without investigating the nature of things.

- 3.67121 Does this urge follow from a credulous belief that one has found the Shangri-La of synthetic a priori? Or is it simply a product of laziness, in not wanting to go to the trouble of investigating the world of fact?
- 3.67122 “Somehow or other an extraordinary idea has arisen that the disbelievers in miracles consider them coldly and fairly, while believers in miracles accept them only in connection with some dogma. The fact is quite the other way. The believers in miracles accept them (rightly or wrongly) because they have evidence for them. The disbelievers in miracles deny them (rightly or wrongly) because they have a doctrine against them” (G. K. Chesterton).
- 3.672 The weaker form of Hume’s argument maintains that, since it would always be “more miraculous” for the witness to a miracle not to have been mistaken, lying, or deceived than for the miracle actually to have occurred, one should always “reject the greater miracle.”
- 3.6721 Archbishop Whately, in his delightful tour de force (*Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Buonaparte*) applied Hume’s criteria to the remarkable, indeed unique, events of Napoleon’s life, concluding that the evidence for them must be mistaken and that Napoleon had never lived: after all, the French idolised him and the English hated him, so neither the testimony of the one nor that of the other could be relied upon (cf. C. Parton).
- 3.6722 Insofar as the underlying assumption of the weaker form of Hume’s argument is, again, the “uniformity of experience,” the weaker argument falls along with the stronger.
- 3.67221 Whenever we are asked to weigh a single, allegedly miraculous event against the vast number of regular events and in consequence reject the miracle, we must observe the unstated assumption underlying that request: that *all* events are interlocked in a nexus of regularity, such that the regular events should influence the character of the whole; but that is exactly what has not been proven—and *cannot* be proven in an open universe where each event needs to be investigated without prejudice.

- 3.6723 Insofar as Hume's weaker argument is statistical in character (the great number of regular, non-miraculous events should be weighed against the rarity of unique claims), it should be noted that statistics are of no value once an event *has* occurred (C. S. Lewis).
- 3.67231 It is overwhelmingly unlikely that I should meet a friend from Chicago on the Paris *Métro* when both of us are on independent holidays; yet one would be engaged in the height of foolishness if one used statistics to assert that such an event did not take place in spite of the undeniable empirical evidence in its behalf.
- 3.67232 Exactly one year to the day after a van plunged down an embankment near Selby, England, causing a fatal crash with a high speed train, a van did the very same thing near Lincoln, England. "Government safety advisors stated this week that disasters such as Selby were likely to happen only once every 350 years" (*The Times*, 1 March 2002). On the basis of the statistics, do we conclude that, in fact, the second accident never occurred?
- 3.67233 "You know, the most amazing thing happened to me tonight. I was coming here, on the way to the lecture, and I came in through the parking lot. And you won't believe what happened. I saw a car with the license plate ARW 357. Can you imagine? Of all the millions of license plates in the state, what was the chance that I would see that particular one tonight? Amazing!" (Richard P. Feynman).
- 3.673 Insofar as the Humean argument in both of its forms relies on an absolutistic understanding of natural (i.e., physical) law, it must be rejected.
- 3.6731 Einsteinean relativity, whilst accepting Newtonian physics as a satisfactory, pragmatic scheme for understanding a limited range of phenomena, removes the possibility of considering it as universally correct: the laws of the universe are not an invariable script, inscribed on the walls of the universe, by which we can discount uniqueness, but our own generalisations based upon observations of the phenomena of the world.

- 3.6732 Unique events must therefore be taken into account in the very formulation of our scientific “laws,” and should always operate to correct generalisations which are too rigid.
- 3.67321 Thus, against the uniformitarian assumption of the 19th century Periodic Table that the so-called “inert gases” could not enter into chemical union with other elements to form compounds, xenon tetrafluoride, xenon hexafluoroplatinate, and radon compounds were produced in the laboratory, forcing a modification of the elegant generalisation represented by Mendeleev’s Table (*J Am Chem Soc* 1962; 84: 3593; *Proc Chem Soc*: 1962: 218).
- 3.67322 It follows that, if one wishes to formulate laws concerning death, the proper formulation, based on all the observational evidence, should at least read: “People who die stay dead, with one very important exception, namely Jesus Christ.”
- 3.6733 Not without reason, the most comprehensive study to date of Hume’s argument is entitled *Hume’s Abject Failure: The Argument Against Miracles* (J. Earman).
- 3.67331 Equally noteworthy is D. Johnson’s devastating refutation: *Hume, Holism, and Miracles*.
- 3.674 Antony Flew gives a new twist to the Humean approach in respect to the case for Jesus’ resurrection: granted (he argues) that if the disciples stole the body and then preached the resurrection, knowing it to be false, and in consequence died for what they knew to be untrue, that would constitute a psychological miracle; we should *still* prefer the latter to a *biological* miracle (i.e., a de facto resurrection).
- 3.6741 This argument is of course dependent on an unstated assumption of biological uniformitarianism—the Humean-Newtonian absolute conception of physical law—as if Einsteinian relativity had never appeared on the scene.
- 3.6742 Moreover, the argument contains a gratuitous, a priori preference for psychological uniqueness over biological uniqueness, in defiance of the observational facts.
- 3.67421 Whereas there is powerful first-hand testimony to a biological miracle in the records of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, there is not a shred of evidence to support the “psychological

miracle” of deranged disciples (e.g., a history of psychological aberration on their part which would make likely their dying for what they knew to be false).

- 3.675 But could it not be argued that, since by definition we do not know what a miracle actually is, we cannot speak of it meaningfully and should avoid the use of it in historical explanation?
- 3.6751 It is certainly true that we do not understand the mechanism of the resurrection, or of miracles in general.
- 3.67511 However, as we have seen, a proper scientific approach recognises facts even when we do not understand their workings and even when they appear internally inconsistent (e.g., the wave-particle nature of Light).
- 3.676 If we admit to not understanding the miraculous, how can we say that our ordinary methods of investigation could provide sufficient reason for accepting a miracle? How could the ordinary standards of proof ever be sufficient?
- 3.6761 Here, when treating Jesus’ resurrection, it is essential not to become enmeshed in the semantics of “miracle” or even of “resurrection”; instead, we must analyse the components.
- 3.6762 A resurrection entails someone (Jesus) dead at point A and alive at point B.
- 3.67621 This sequence is indeed outside of our immediate experience.
- 3.6763 We are, however, well acquainted with the sequence: alive at point A and dead at point B—and we know how to distinguish the one from the other,
- 3.67631 Otherwise, we would be burying the wrong people.
- 3.6764 Since we know how to establish that a given person is alive (e.g., does he currently eat?) and that someone else is dead (e.g., has he been effectively crucified?), we are in a position to employ these tests *though in reverse order*.
- 3.67641 What is critical epistemologically is not the *order* of applying the tests, but the *legitimacy* of the tests themselves.
- 3.6765 The standard of proof, therefore, is whatever normally satisfies in deciding whether a subject is alive or dead.
- 3.67651 “Suppose you saw a Man publicly executed, his Body afterwards wounded by the Executioner, and carry’d and laid in the

Grave; that after this you shou'd be told, that the Man was come to Life again: What wou'd you suspect in this Case? Not that the Man had never been dead; for that you saw your self: But you wou'd suspect whether he was now alive. But wou'd you say, this Case excluded all human Testimony; and that Men could not possibly discern, whether one with whom they convers'd familiarly, was alive or no? Upon what Ground cou'd you say this? A Man rising from the Grave is an Object of Sense, and can give the same Evidence of his being alive, as any other Man in the World can give. So that a Resurrection consider'd only as a Fact to be proved by Evidence, is a plain Case; it requires no greater Ability in the Witnesses, than that they be able to distinguish between a Man dead, and a Man alive: A Point, in which I believe every Man living thinks himself a Judge" (Thomas Sherlock, *The Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus* [1729]).

- 3.67652 Those living in the 1st century were as capable as we today of determining, in a case such as this, whether the appropriate standard had been met.
- 3.676521 For the crucifixion team, this entailed driving a lance into Jesus' side.
- 3.676522 For those involved in the entombment, it consisted of preparing the body for burial in accordance with Jewish custom.
- 3.676523 For the witnesses to the post-resurrection appearances, it involved eating with Jesus, listening to him, and, after forty days, watching him ascend physically into heaven.
- 3.67653 "He showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And . . . while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1).
- 3.68 The fact that Jesus himself, throughout his ministry, predicted his resurrection from the dead adds even more weight to the case that in his person the transcendent became immanent, heaven touched earth, and the Word was indeed made flesh (Matthew 12:40, 20:19; Mark 9:31, 10:34; Luke 18:33, 24:7; John 2:19).

- 3.69 We may rightly conclude, therefore, that when on the first Easter morning Mary at the empty tomb thought at first that the risen Jesus was the gardener (John 20), she was not entirely mistaken: he was indeed the gardener of the Flew-Wisdom parable, come—not secretly at all—but openly and by many infallible proofs to “look after the garden which he loves.”
- 3.691 “On the third day the friends of Christ coming at daybreak to the place found the grave empty and the stone rolled away. In varying ways they realised the new wonder; but even they hardly realised that the world had died in the night. What they were looking at was the first day of a new creation, with a new heaven and a new earth; and in a semblance of the gardener God walked again in the garden, in the cool not of the evening but the dawn” (G. K. Chesterton).
- 3.7 *The consequences of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead are momentous: they include, inter alia: reasonable belief in the other miracles he performed, acceptance of his claim to Deity, a Trinitarian view of God, and a solid basis for revelational truth.*
- 3.71 Jesus’ de facto resurrection renders pointless those perennial attempts to explain away naturalistically the many miracles he performed during his public ministry.
- 3.711 What, after all, is the value of a convoluted, gratuitous “explanation” of the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 (e.g., “The little boy shamed the crowd, so they reluctantly produced the loaves and fishes they had with them all the time”) when one cannot account naturalistically for Jesus’ walking on water?
- 3.72 From Jesus’ resurrection from the dead we may properly accept his claims to Deity.
- 3.721 Two possible sources of explanation, and two only, are available for Jesus’ resurrection once it has been established as a fact: *his own* explanation or an explanation deriving from *someone else*.
- 3.722 The great advantage to accepting Jesus’ own explanation is that he, and he alone, had the experience; the overwhelming disadvantage to accepting the explanation of a third party is that that

- explanation will come from someone who certainly has not risen from the dead.
- 3.73 Jesus' explanation was that he is God almighty, come to earth to die for the sins of the world, and that the resurrection is the proof that he is the very person he claimed to be.
- 3.731 Since, presumably, God knows more about God's nature than anyone else, we can legitimately look to Jesus for whatever understanding of God may be possible for and available to us.
- 3.732 The reason for the highly unsatisfactory state of religious affirmations among the mutually contradictory religious systems of the world may well be that those who have taken upon themselves the task of describing God, his nature and his work, have been considerably less knowledgeable on those subjects than God himself.
- 3.7321 Water does not rise above its own level.
- 3.74 Jesus presents a Trinitarian view of God's nature.
- 3.741 His Great Commission to his disciples, after his resurrection and prior to his ascension into heaven, is thoroughly Trinitarian—"Go and baptise in the name [*one* name—singular noun] of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."
- 3.742 He declares: "I and the Father are one," and "He who has seen me has seen the Father."
- 3.7421 This creates an identity between Jesus and the God of the Old Testament.
- 3.743 He also promises (John 14:16) that he will send the Holy Spirit—"another Comforter," the Greek referring to "another of the same kind qualitatively (*allos*)" as himself, not "another of a different kind" (*heteros*).
- 3.7431 True, Jesus spoke Aramaic, not Greek; but since our primary record of what he said is in Greek, we must suppose that the writer, an eyewitness, recorded accurately in Greek what Jesus had said in Aramaic.
- 3.74311 Anything can be said in any language, though it may require paraphrase and circumlocution: English does not possess all the words for the different parts of a whale which exist in Es-

kimo tongues, but the English speaker can certainly describe all those parts of the whale, though it may take him a bit longer.

- 3.74312 To reconstruct the words of Jesus—as do Aramaicists such as Matthew Black—on the basis of hypothetical (deductive) conclusions from Aramaic vocabulary, syntax, and style, rather than accepting inductively what the existing Greek sources tell us Jesus said, is to replace the known by the unknown, and to fall into a serious *non sequitur*.
- 3.74313 To reason, not from the known to the unknown but from the unknown to the known, is to enter an asylum of ignorance.
- 3.7432 In his teaching, therefore, Jesus identifies the Holy Spirit with himself.
- 3.744 But if Jesus (the Son of God) = God the Father, and the Holy Spirit = the divine Jesus, then the Holy Spirit also = God the Father.
- 3.7441 Two things equal to the same thing are equal to each other.
- 3.745 At the same time, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are presented as having distinct personalities and perform separate, though often simultaneous, acts (e.g., at Jesus' baptism); they must therefore be considered separate Persons, united in one Godhead.
- 3.746 It will be observed that the doctrine of the Trinity derives from Jesus' own understanding of himself, as presented in his own teachings: it is simply *not* the case, as maintained by various critics, that Trinitarian doctrine originated later as an incrustation of Greek philosophical ideas on the simple, uncomplicated, Jewish belief-system of the early Christians.
- 3.7461 And if the objection is raised that such a picture of God is irrational because logically inconsistent, we remind the objector that facts trump our inability to fit the world into neat, consistent compartments—as illustrated scientifically by the Photon.
- 3.74611 Moreover, whilst $1 + 1 + 1 \neq 1$, $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$.
- 3.747 The philosophical importance of Trinitarian doctrine (three Persons in one Godhead) is often overlooked: if God is indeed love, and has always been so (even before he created other persons), he would have to be more than monopersonal.

- 3.7471 The only alternatives for a unitarian God would be (1) in his essential nature he is not love, or (2) his “love” was first and most fundamentally manifested in self-centredness—for prior to creating other persons it could only have been directed at himself.
- 3.74711 Aristotle’s Deity was of the latter sort, spending eternity loving himself, since no other object of love could be equally worthy of his attention.
- 3.74712 “Even if God exists, yet is of such a nature that he feels no benevolence or affection towards men, good-bye to him, say I. Why should I say ‘God be gracious to me’?—since he cannot be gracious to anybody” (Cicero, *De natura deorum*).
- 3.75 But why must we accept as true the statements of Jesus, simply because he is God?
- 3.751 The biblical God and his Son Jesus Christ continually present themselves as “the God of truth”: but could that in itself be a lie?
- 3.752 To the possibility raised by Descartes that God could be a consummate liar, we need only point out the analytical meaninglessness of the idea.
- 3.7521 Were God a liar, he would be the best of all possible liars, and humans would never be able to catch him out; thus there would never be a way of confirming or disconfirming his mendacity.
- 3.76 Why must we conclude that Jesus is God just because he conquered the power of death?
- 3.761 The resurrection of Jesus is a sufficient ground for accepting Jesus’ Deity, not just because it is a miracle but because this particular miracle deals effectively with the most fundamental area of mankind’s universal need, the conquest of death.
- 3.762 We do not argue that the performance of *any* miracle would perforce justify belief in the Deity of the one performing it; we argue that Jesus’ conquest of death is a miracle of a special character, properly implicating his Deity for the human race.
- 3.7621 Contrast the East Indian “rope miracles” and walking unharmed on live coals.
- 3.7622 Contrast also computer “god-game” miracles, e.g., in *Black & White Creature Isle: the Fireball* (it “can quickly become one

of a god's main weapons—so much damage from such a tiny ball of flame. . . . It causes collateral damage, setting alight anything made of wood that it comes into contact with: houses, civic buildings, whole forests, etc.”); the *Enlarge* (“the sheer size of your Creature can gain Belief from any villagers who see it—the bigger the Creature, the larger the Belief”); the *Winged Creatures* (“a pretty spell, designed purely to impress a village's inhabitants and to gain Belief in large, desirable chunks. Once charged, the Winged Creatures Miracle releases a flight of doves (good alignment) or bats (evil alignment) from the casting point”).

- 3.763 Psychologists tell us that we are at all times conscious of our own demise; existentialist philosophers argue that the meaning of life can only be found when we face the reality of our own mortality.
- 3.764 The “dying declaration” exception to the hearsay rule points to this truth: the law admits into evidence even the declaration of the homicide victim without religious faith—on the ground that one is particularly likely to tell the truth when conscious of the immanence of that most terrible of existential events.
- 3.765 Jesus promised eternal life to all who come to him to receive it; says he: “I am the resurrection, and the life: he who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.”
- 3.766 It follows that not to worship One who gives you the gift of eternal life is hopelessly to misread what the gift tells you about the Giver.
- 3.77 Jesus' Deity compels the acceptance of whatever he has said, and on any subject.
- 3.771 His statements on computer programming would be definitive, had he made any; but apart from his use of the law of contradiction, fundamental to binary computer language, he does not appear to have touched on the matter (which goes far to explain computer crashes).
- 3.772 What Jesus did speak about was *the way of salvation*. He declared:

- 3.7721 That every human being lacks the moral perfection required by a Holy God, is self-centred in his dealing with his fellows, and can only enter again into fellowship and communion with God by personal salvation.
- 3.7722 That salvation is available only through Jesus, by way of accepting his death on the cross as sacrifice for our sins.
- 3.7723 That refusal to accept him is refusal of the love of God and has eternal consequences.
- 3.7724 That receiving his forgiveness is the gate to a new, changed life here and the assurance of everlasting personal fellowship with God.
- 3.78 Might not Jesus' views of the religious subjects on which he spoke have nonetheless been coloured by the very fact of his Incarnation and therefore limited to the knowledge of his time?
- 3.781 This suggestion is generally designated by its advocates the *Kenotic* theory, according to which Jesus either unknowingly was limited, or knowingly limited himself, to the thought-forms of his day.
- 3.7811 Kenotic theory takes its name from the Greek word for "emptying" in Philippians 2:6-8, but that passage makes no reference to an alleged fallibility on Jesus' part.
- 3.782 The Kenotic view, though sometimes flirted with by liberal evangelical theologians, is generally promoted by biblical critics within the church who wish to maintain an official commitment to Jesus' Deity whilst not being compelled to accept as revelatory certain of his views, such as his emphasis on his atoning, substitutionary death or his unqualified acceptance of the Old Testament.
- 3.7821 This may, rather unkindly, be seen as an effort to have one's cake and eat it too.
- 3.783 In a single instance, Jesus indeed admits that he does not know something (the hour of his second coming). *But:*
- 3.7831 Only an item of eschatological knowledge is involved (and, according to Jesus, that information was withheld by divine fiat); and

- 3.7832 Jesus' disclaimer of knowledge on this point shows that in his incarnate state he was nonetheless fully aware of the boundaries of his knowledge.
- 3.78321 Being in control of his knowledge, he would not have advertently or inadvertently given false or misleading information when he did make positive assertions (e.g., on the reliability of the Bible).
- 3.784 Had Jesus purposely given incorrect teaching in order to accommodate to the views of his time, he would have committed the basic moral fault of letting the end justify the means (thereby placing himself in the same category with such towering ethical figures as Lenin, Lukács, and Joseph Fletcher).
- 3.7841 But the mere fact that Jesus' never flinched in uttering messages which infuriated his religious contemporaries removes all plausibility from such a claim.
- 3.785 If Jesus could not help giving false information (owing to the exigencies of Incarnation), then
- 3.7851 Incarnation would lose all meaning, since not a single word of what he taught could necessarily be regarded as more than a fallible matter of human opinion.
- 3.78511 Indeed, Strack and Billerbeck have shown that a great deal of the individual remarks of Jesus can be paralleled in Jewish literature of the intertestamental period: would it therefore follow that virtually all of Jesus' teachings were accommodations to the spirit of the age, and not divinely mandated revelation?
- 3.7852 If Jesus' teaching consists of a combination of genuine revelation and mere human, fallible opinion (to which he accommodated himself or could not help but accept, owing to his taking on human flesh), we would never be able to identify which portion was which.
- 3.78521 In the absence of a higher (absolute) criterion by which to make the judgment, we could not arrive at a satisfactory separation of the wheat from the chaff—and such a criterion would have to come from an unqualified, non-kenotic revelation (precisely what the Kenotic theory excludes).
- 3.7853 The solution of the kenoticist, to be sure, is to reject as the product of human limitation whatever in Jesus' teaching makes her

feel uncomfortable, or whatever does not seem to fit modern, contemporary beliefs.

3.78531 Where this kind of reasoning is employed, we have a classic instance of creating God in one's own image.

3.8 *The matter of God's existence now warrants our philosophical and scientific attention.*

3.81 Nothing has been said to this point concerning philosophical or scientific proofs of Theism; is this not a fatal lacuna in our demonstration?

3.811 Yes, say the neo-Thomists and the so-called classical theists, who insist that an independent theistic structure must be established to make sense of Jesus' claims to Deity and to give probative force to his resurrection.

3.812 We disagree: one does not need such a structure to understand what Jesus meant in claiming divinity for himself or to appreciate the force of the argument for the significance of his resurrection.

3.82 When asked "Show us the Father," Jesus simply pointed to himself, declaring: "He who has seen me, has seen the Father."

3.821 This is an inductive argument based on factual considerations within the purview of the questioner.

3.8211 That this was Jesus' approach in general can be seen in his response to disciples of John who asked, "Are you the promised one, or should we look for another?," and Jesus answered: "Go and show John again those things which you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whoever shall not be offended in me."

3.822 Indeed, this approach has great philosophical merit, since it relies, not on a *descriptive* attempt to define and justify Deity (subject, as are all descriptive definitions, to an infinite number of sub-definitions), but on a *denotative* identification: "By God, we mean, in the first instance, the Jesus to whom the primary witnesses point. He will be glad to give you a fuller picture of Deity if you are willing to listen to him."

- 3.8221 Only if there is Incarnation—only if God became man—will a denotative treatment of him be possible.
- 3.8222 Technically, descriptive definition can never be exhaustive, since all facts are interconnected and fully to explain one would require an explanation of all the rest.
- 3.8223 Even more importantly, persons always transcend descriptive definition.
- 3.8224 Since God is personal, and the philosophies and non-Christian religions of the world cannot appeal to an Incarnation, they are forced to descriptive definitions of Deity—which may be a significant factor in the inadequacy of their results.
- 3.83 This is not to say that all philosophical and scientific arguments for God’s existence are fallacious; quite the contrary.
- 3.84 Some, however, are, such as the classic, Anselmian ontological argument.
- 3.841 That argument asserts:
- (1) God is than which no greater exists.
 - (2) In consequence, God possesses all properties.
 - (3) Existence is a property.
- ∴ God exists.
- 3.8411 The fallacy of this argument is to suppose that “existence” is a property lying alongside other properties such as “colour,” “size,” or “weight”; but if one removes all the genuine properties from something, one does not find that existence remains: existence is the *name* we give to something that *has* properties.
- 3.84111 Gödel's more sophisticated, modern form of the ontological argument likewise suffers from overwhelming difficulties: Sobel has shown that “given the terms and conditions of the system, no being that possessed all positive properties could reasonably be maintained to be God” and that “there is a collapse of modalities in the system—that in it everything that is actual or true is so of logical necessity” (J. H. Sobel, in J. J. Thomson's *On Being and Saying, Essays for R. Cartwright* [1987]).
- 3.8412 But Norman Malcolm has a genuine point in his soteriological variant on the ontological argument—that as members of a fallen race we may well experience a guilt beyond all measure,

a guilt “than which a greater cannot be conceived”; this, in turn, can lead to the conviction that there is indeed a Forgiveness beyond all measure, a forgiving mercy “than which no greater can be conceived.” (*Philosophical Rev.*, January 1960).

- 3.842 The traditional, Aristotelian-Thomistic proofs for God’s existence have serious problems, as Kant and many others have pointed out.
- 3.8421 *Inter alia*, these proofs deal with single aspects of God’s nature and of the cosmos, and do not necessarily lead to the desired Transcendent Absolute.
- 3.84211 The argument from Motion (everything that moves requires a mover; the cosmos therefore requires a Prime Mover) might lead us only to a Divine Billiard Player who first “breaks.”
- 3.84212 William Paley’s stress on the complexity of the human eye as an illustration of the argument from Design might only bring the unbeliever into philosophical contact with a Cosmic Ophthalmologist.
- 3.843 Even if such problems are overcome, the proofs, at best, take one only to a Creator God, not necessarily to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3.85 The philosophical case for God’s existence is best made by way of the *Contingency* argument, which employs the underlying, foundational principle of the traditional theistic arguments, namely

Contingent → *Absolute*.

- 3.851 That argument may be formulated thusly:
- (1) Nothing in the world can explain itself.
 - (2) The world is the sum total of everything in it.
 - (3) ∴ The world as a whole is contingent, requiring an explanation beyond itself, i.e., a transcendent God.
 - (4) That transcendent God must either be absolute (non-contingent) or himself require explanation.
 - (5) If contingent, a higher-level Deity will be required to explain him, and so on, *ad infinitum*, producing an infinite series (where W = the contingent world, and G = God):

$$W \rightarrow G \rightarrow G^2 \rightarrow G^3 \dots G^{n-3} \rightarrow G^{n-2} \rightarrow G^{n-1} \rightarrow G^n$$

(6) But since an infinite series, by definition, has no end, there will be no explanation for any Deity prior to G^n , and the world itself will remain without explanation, and

(7) \therefore An absolute, non-contingent, existent God must be regarded as the final explanation of the contingent world.

3.852 But why do we need to bother with an “explanation” for the world? Why not just be satisfied with the world as it is?

3.8521 To take this route is, in effect, to deny the contingent nature of the world and mythologically make it absolute—in the face of all empirical knowledge of its non-self-explanatory character.

3.853 But who created the absolute God?

3.8531 A nonsensical question, since, *ex hypothesi*, whatever is absolute does *not* require explanation; if it did, it would not *be* absolute but contingent.

3.8532 We seek an explanation for the world, for it is demonstrably contingent (consisting, as it does, of nothing but contingent, non-self-explanatory things); but there is no evidence to suggest that *God* is contingent.

3.854 What is the nature of the Absolute God of the Contingency argument?

3.8541 Is he rational? Doubtless, since we, as his rational creatures, have employed a rational proof to arrive at his existence.

3.85411 Indeed, as the *Logos*—the “Word” (Jn. 1)--God may properly be described as “la source première de l’information créatrice” (C. Tresmontant).

3.8542 Is he (it?) personal? Doubtless, since in our human experience—*pace* doctrinaire evolutionists—personality does not arise from the impersonal, and the existence of personhood is one of the contingencies requiring an appeal to a transcendent Absolute.

3.8543 Is he a moral Deity? Doubtless, for one must account for the fact that no human society functions without an ethical code of some sort (C. S. Lewis); however, this brings us only to a Divinity who justifies value-systems as such, not to a Deity supporting any particular moral or ethical position—the human

- landscape displaying a plethora of competing ethical viewpoints.
- 3.8544 Beyond this, it seems that we cannot go in characterising the Absolute: apart from a special revelation from God setting forth his character, his moral standards, and what he expects of us, we remain in darkness.
- 3.8545 That arguments for an Absolute—even the most powerful—do not necessarily carry one to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob or to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is evident from the recent “conversion” of atheist Antony Flew; Flew now describes himself as “a deist like Thomas Jefferson, whose God was not actively involved in people's lives.”
- 3.86 Scientific evidence for the existence of a Divine Creator is powerfully compelling.
- 3.861 When atheist Richard Dawkins begins his book, *The Blind Watchmaker*, with the assertion, “Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose,” one is reminded of the old adage, “If it looks like a duck, smells like a duck, quacks like a duck, and tastes like *canard à l'orange*, chances are it is not a qumquat.”
- 3.8611 The argument that, given an infinite length of time, any physical or biological development would be possible without a Creator constitutes an asylum of ignorance.
- 3.86111 Huxley's notion that monkeys typing at random long enough will eventually produce literature (“the works of Shakespeare”) has been tested at Plymouth University, England: over time, the monkeys (1) attacked their computer, (2) urinated on it, and (3) failed to produce a single word (AP dispatch, 9 May 2003). Cf. Angus Menuge, *Agents Under Fire*.
- 3.862 The Second Law of Thermodynamics—a foundation stone of modern physics and engineering science—supports the Contingency argument.
- 3.8621 That Law declares that in closed systems (systems not receiving energy from an outside source), the entropic process will result in “heat death” in a finite time, i.e., a point will be reached in a finite period when there will be no “workable” energy any longer available.

- 3.8622 Were the atheist to be right, the universe would *already* have reached heat death, since for the atheist the universe is necessarily a closed system (there is no God to feed energy into it), and it has been around for an infinite time (since there is no God to have created it)—and all finite times are swallowed up in an infinite time.
- 3.8623 The Second Law, properly applied, requires *either* that the universe came into existence a finite time ago (its not yet having reached heat death) *or* that there is a Cosmic Petrol-station Owner outside of it feeding energy in to sustain it (what the theologians call *Creatio continua*)—or both; what is *not* possible is a universe devoid of a transcendent explanation for its energy conditions.
- 3.86231 One evidence that the universe has not already reached heat death is the fact that we still possess the energy to discuss this question.
- 3.8624 It does not help the atheist to suggest that perhaps the present universe is the product of a prior universe, since (1) the issue is the energy conditions of *all* such universes, not any one of them; (2) there is no positive evidence of a succession of universes, nor presumably could there be, since the conditions of scientific investigation are necessarily limited to the universe in which the investigator currently finds herself; and (3) any “succession of universes” argument falls under the axe of the infinite series fallacy, discussed above.
- 3.8625 It is likewise of no assistance to appeal to a “Big Bang”: it will still be incumbent upon us to identify the “Banger.”
- 3.86251 If the Bang in question derived from a prior world, we have no choice but to treat its energy conditions by way of the Second Law (leaving us in the same position as when a Bang is not postulated); if it is assumed to be an Absolute, non-contingent Bang, we arrive at the very God to which the Contingency argument points.
- 3.8626 If the cosmologist thinks the way out of the difficulty lies in an oscillating, cyclical universe (A. Friedmann, N. Turok, P. Steinhardt, J. Khoury, B. Ovrut), she is mistaken: the issue (again) is not the energy conditions in a part of the whole—

here, one phase of the alleged oscillation—but the energy situation in the universe *in its entirety*, oscillations included.

- 3.86261 A college student receives a fixed amount of money for the finite school year (her economic situation is a “closed universe,” since Daddy will not pay one penny beyond that amount); she then creates *two* (oscillating) bank accounts, so that she can watch the money *grow* in one of them, as it is transferred from the other; *query*: does this prevent the monetary equivalent of heat death following the entropic drop in her funds due to over-spending?
- 3.8627 The Second Law leads most astronomers and astrophysicists to postulate a *finite* universe.
- 3.86271 Isaac Asimov (*Astronomy*) estimates its radius (“Hubble radius”) at 12,000,000,000 light-years.
- 3.862711 His calculation, it is true, may be off by a few kilometres.
- 3.862712 However, a radius requires a circumference—a boundary; and a boundary means, logically, something (Someone?) beyond it.
- 3.8628 “The author has found that the second law tends to increase his conviction that there is a Creator who has the answer for the future destiny of man and the universe” (Van Wylen, *Thermodynamics* [John Wiley]).
- 3.863 Steller phenomena provide further evidence of contingency and the need to posit a finite universe requiring a transcendent Creator.
- 3.8631 Olbers’ Paradox can only be taken seriously if the universe is finite; that paradox, recognised since ancient Greek times but often ignored by secular thinkers, recognises that if there were in fact an infinite number of stars distributed evenly in infinite space, the consequence would be a sky blazing all over with extraordinary brilliance; this, however, is in clear contradiction to the factual darkness of the night sky. Conclusion: space is not infinite, nor is the number of stars infinite (Jaki).
- 3.864 “Intelligent design” is powerfully supported by empirical evidence.
- 3.8641 The presence of intelligent design may validly be detected by “specified complexity.”

- 3.86411 “Complexity guarantees that the object in question is not so simple that it can readily be attributed to chance. Specification guarantees that the object exhibits the right sort of pattern associated with intelligent causes. A single letter of the alphabet is specified without being complex. A long sequence of random letters is complex without being specified. A Shakespearean sonnet is both complex and specified. *Specified complexity* is how we detect design empirically” (Dembski).
- 3.86412 Considerably lacking in these requisites was the “Holy Tomato” apologetic design claim made in 1999 by a Muslim Pakistani woman living in Bradford, England: she found a tomato whose vein structure presented an Arabic inscription reading “There is no god but Allah.”
- 3.8642 A highly significant positive illustration is that of the “fine tuning” of the universe: were it not for six highly specific constants, our universe could not exist as it is (Martin Rees).
- 3.86421 These constants include: the N-factor (the strength of the electrical forces holding atoms together divided by the force of gravity between them: 1 followed by 36 zeros): if even one zero were missing, only a short-lived miniature universe could exist; the ϵ -constant, 0.007, defining how firmly atomic nuclei bind together (if this were 0.006 or 0.008, our existence would be impossible); the Ω -number determines the expansion energy in the universe (were it higher than it is, the universe would have collapsed long ago; were it lower, no stars or galaxies would have formed); λ , the cosmic antigravity force, has to be as small as it is, or galaxies and stars would have been prevented from forming; the Q-constant, about 1/100,000, represents the ratio of two fundamental energies (if smaller, the universe would be inert and structureless; if larger, the universe would be dominated by black holes and so violent that solar systems could not survive); and the D-factor: our universe consists of three physical dimensions, no more, no less.
- 3.86422 The field of “chaotic dynamics” has shown that “almost all of the everyday physical world is so exquisitely sensitive that the smallest disturbance produces quite uncontrollable and unpredictable consequences” (J. Polkinghorne, opposing a mecha-

nistic, deterministic view of the universe and offering evidence for an open cosmos in which prayer is meaningful).

- 3.86423 The precision so manifested makes exceedingly difficult the atheistic claim that ours is a universe which arose by random chance.
- 3.86424 “If you see a spacious and beautiful house, you could not be induced to believe, even though you could not see its master, that it was built by mice and weasels. . . . I cannot understand why he who considers it possible for this to have occurred [by chance] should not also think that, if a countless number of copies of the one-and-twenty letters of the alphabet, made of gold or what you will, were thrown together into some receptacle and then shaken out on to the ground, it would be possible that they should produce the *Annals* of Ennius, all ready for the reader. I doubt whether chance could possibly succeed in producing even a single verse!” (Cicero, *De natura deorum*).
- 3.8643 There are irreducibly complex biochemical systems, such as the bacterial flagellum, which cannot be accounted for by evolutionary development, since they are at the very beginning of biological life; the “engineering” manifested by these biochemical systems cries out for an intelligent Designer (Michael Behe; Michael Denton).
- 3.86431 The flagellum has functional elements satisfactorily accountable only from the hypothesis of an intelligent Designer: a universal joint (hook), a propeller (filament), L-ring and P-ring bushings, a stator (C-ring and studs), a drive shaft (rod), and a rotor (S- and M-rings).
- 3.8644 The physical brain is insufficient to account for the existence of the human mind; here, again, contingency requires a transcendent explanation.
- 3.86441 “It can be asserted that I have my experienced uniqueness because my brain is built by the genetic instructions of a quite unique genetic code, my genome with its 30,000 or so genes (Dobzhansky, personal communication) strung along the immense double helix of the human DNA with its 3.5×10^9 nucleotide pairs. It has to be recognised that with 30,000 genes there is a chance of $10^{10,000}$ against that uniqueness being

achieved. That is, if my uniqueness of self is tied to the genetic uniqueness that built my brain, then the odds against myself existing in my experienced uniqueness are $10^{10,000}$ against” (Sir John Eccles, in Popper and Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain*).

- 3.8645 These evidences of intelligent design hardly suffer from the illogic of Voltaire’s sarcastic proof of Theism: “God made our noses so that they would fit glasses.”
- 3.86451 So persuasive is the argument from intelligent design that it has recently convinced philosopher Antony Flew to move from atheism to deism.
- 3.8646 “The fool hath said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Ps. 14 and 53).
- 3.865 Those who argue that the scientific evidences just described should not be presented in secular schools because to do so is nothing more than disguised religious proselytising only display their own prejudices: if hard science leads to theological conclusions, this in no way alters the facticity of the data or the scientific character of the investigation.
- 3.8651 Interestingly enough, the same secularists have never worried about the legal or philosophical implications of teaching scientific data—or even philosophical (e.g., evolutionary) speculations—which allegedly support their own atheistic or agnostic views of the universe.
- 3.8652 “It is absurd for the Evolutionist to complain that it is unthinkable for an admittedly unthinkable God to make everything out of nothing, and then pretend that it is more thinkable that nothing should turn itself into everything” (G. K. Chesterton).
- 3.87 We now see that, with all its limitations, the evidence supplied by what has been traditionally called “natural theology” is very powerful in supporting the existence of a transcendent God and in underscoring the meaningfulness of Jesus’ historically attested claim to Divinity.
- 3.871 This is true whether one turns a philosophical or a scientific spotlight on that which is the case.
- 3.872 Such arguments present in other terms what is stated theologically in Romans 1: “The invisible things of him from the crea-

tion of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.”

3.873 Interlocking natural theology and the historical case for Jesus’ resurrection by way of Bayes’s theorem of probability calculus leads to the conclusion that the probability of the de facto occurrence of Jesus’ resurrection is “something of the order of 97%” (R. Swinburne).

3.8731 Bayes’s theorem asserts that the probability of an hypothesis h (here, the facticity of Jesus’ resurrection), given evidence e , is the initial or prior probability of h , multiplied by the probability of e given h , divided by the prior probability of the evidence e (cf. J. Earman). Expressed as a formula, $\Pr(H/E\&B) = [\Pr(H/B) \times \Pr(E/H\&B)] / \Pr(E/B)$, where H is the hypothesis, B is background knowledge (here, natural theology) and E is the evidence acquired by observation (here, the historical case for Jesus’ resurrection). Confirmation of the hypothesis occurs, then, insofar as (1) we would expect E to be present if H is true, given B ; (2) we would expect H to be true on background evidence alone; and (3) we would not expect to find E unless H were true.

3.8732 “If you agree with me that the coincidence of the evidence we have of the satisfaction of the prior and posterior requirements is (barring divine intervention) very very improbable, and the evidence of their coincidence (if God intervened to become incarnate and to rise from the dead) only very improbable, it follows that it is very probable that Jesus rose from the dead, and also that he was God Incarnate—which is enough reason to suppose that he speaks to us through Scripture” (Swinburne).

3.9 ***Some truths make no demands upon us (“James Buchanan was 15th President of the United States”); others very definitely do (“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself”).***

3.91 Can personal decisions required by the case for Jesus Christ not be postponed on the ground that that case is, after all, empirical in nature and therefore always subject to possible revision based on the discovery of new facts?

- 3.911 The evidence for Jesus' Lordship, based chiefly on his resurrection from the dead, has been available for two thousand years; the likelihood of finding the body of Christ today is infinitesimal.
- 3.912 Would we consider rational a refusal to purchase an album of the "Complete Songs of Elvis Presley" because there is always the possibility that he is indeed still alive and may be recording new songs in the future?
- 3.92 Can a response to the claims of Christ be postponed on the ground that the case presented is not 100% certain and therefore agnosticism is more reasonable than belief?
- 3.921 Would we consider it reasonable to refuse to put money into U.S. government bonds because 100% assurance cannot be provided that the country might not go bankrupt sometime in the future?
- 3.922 As the existentialists have correctly emphasised, all life is decision, and when one refuses to make a decision, *that in itself* is a decision.
- 3.923 The real issue in agnosticism is, then: Does better evidence exist in favour of not making a decision for Jesus Christ than for making such a decision? Everything presented to this point should decisively answer that question.
- 3.93 But surely many great thinkers have not gone this route? True; though the best of them have wished they could—from Plato to Wittgenstein.
- 3.931 "With respect to such matters, it seems to me, and perhaps also to you, Socrates, that it is either impossible or very difficult to arrive at certainty in the present life; yet at the same time that a man shows very great weakness if he ceases to examine in every way what is said concerning these matters while he is still able to do so. For with regard to such things it is necessary to do one of the following: either learn from others or discover yourself how they stand, or, if this is impossible, lay hold on the very best and most irrefutable of human reasonings, and, having embarked on this, sail through life as one who risks himself upon a raft, unless a safer and less hazardous passage is possi-

- ble in a more secure conveyance, to wit, some word of God” (*Phaedo*, 85d; our translation).
- 3.932 “Often as we walked together he would stop and exclaim ‘Oh, my God!,’ looking at me almost piteously, as if imploring a divine intervention in human events” (Malcolm, speaking of Wittgenstein).
- 3.94 The evidence for the reality of the “secure conveyance” and for the facticity of the “intervention” is solid, and their benefits extraordinary.
- 3.941 “O King, this present life of men on earth, in comparison with the time that is unknown to us, seems to me as if you were sitting at a banquet with your ealdormen and thanes in the winter time with the fire burning and the hall warmed, and outside the storms of winter rain or snow were raging; and there should come a sparrow swiftly flying through the hall, coming in by one door and flying out through another. During the time it is inside it is not touched by the storm of winter; but, that little moment of quiet having passed, it soon returns from winter back to winter again, and is lost to sight. So this mortal life seems like a short interval; what may have gone before or what may come after it, we do not know. Therefore, if this new teaching has brought any greater certainty, it seems fitting that it should be followed” (Bede, *H.E.*, ii.13, recounting the argument that converted the 7th century Northumbrians to Christian faith).
- 3.95 If the case for Jesus Christ is as strong as it is, then one should consider the consequences both of acceptance and of rejection.
- 3.951 We are told that, ultimately, “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10; cf. Romans 14:11; Isaiah 45:23).
- 3.9511 One does not, in the final analysis, have a choice between either confessing Christ or not confessing him; the choice is between doing it *now*, to one’s benefit, or doing it at the last judgment, unwillingly, and to one’s eternal loss.

- 3.96 Thus the force of Pascal’s wager, which asks: Suppose the evidence were exactly balanced for and against the truth of Christianity, what would you gain and what would you lose by accepting Christ as Saviour?
- 3.961 If Christianity were false, and you accept it, you still benefit by gaining the highest moral code and following the finest moral example in human history.
- 3.962 If, however, Christianity is true, and you reject it, *you lose your soul*.
- 3.97 And we have seen that the evidence is by no means equally balanced for and against the veracity of Christ’s claims; the truth of his assertion to be God almighty, come to save us from our sins, is compelling to a moral certainty, beyond reasonable doubt.
- 3.971 “Belief does not aim merely at truth; it aims at knowledge. The more it is justified by knowledge, the closer it comes to knowledge itself. If evidence and knowledge are one, then the more a belief is justified by evidence, the closer it comes to its aim” (T. Williamson).
- 3.98 Jesus’ probing questions thus arrive at our door, and there is no rational way of avoiding them: “What do *you* think of Christ?” “But who do *you* say that I am?”
- 3.99 “From no necessity [He] / Condescended to exist and to suffer death / And, scorned on a scaffold, ensconced in His life / The human household. In our anguish we struggle / To elude Him, to lie to Him, yet His love observes / His appalling promise; His predilection / As we wander and weep is with us to the end” (W. H. Auden).
- 4 The historical validation of the Christian faith yields an inerrant, perspicuous and univocal written revelation.**
- 4.1 *The presence of fulfilled prophecies in the Bible supports the hypothesis that it is the product of divine revelation and not a collection of books merely of human origin.***
- 4.11 To be sure, for prophetic evidence to be compelling, the prophecies need to be highly specific and non-ambiguous.

- 4.111 They must not be in the nature of the pronouncements of the Delphic oracle, who declared on one occasion when her advice was sought that “the army to cross the river on the way to battle would win” (but both armies had to do so to reach the battlefield).
- 4.112 Nor can they be of the kind represented by the quatrains of Nostradamus, where competent interpreters have come to irresolvable, mutually contradictory positions as to their meaning.
- 4.113 Nor can they be so trivial and limited in character that they could be accounted for either by human inference from known events in the past or present, or by a seer’s extrasensory “tuning in” on other human minds.
- 4.12 The biblical prophecies are not subject to these difficulties (cf. J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*); examples:
- 4.121 The future of the twin cities of Tyre and Sidon (the former to be utterly destroyed with its stones and dust laid in the sea; the latter to continue—Ezekiel 26 and 28), confirmed by secular history (J. Urquhart; R. C. Newman).
- 4.122 The multitude of prophecies of the coming of Messiah—prophecies interspersed throughout the Old Testament books (A. Keith; E. A. Edghill); for example:
- 4.1221 Daniel’s prophecy of the “seventy weeks” (Daniel 9), offering a precise chronological prediction of the date of commencement of Jesus’ public ministry (cf. Sir Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince*).
- 4.1222 The Messiah’s lineage through the tribe of Judah and King David (Genesis 49 and Isaiah 9).
- 4.1223 His birth in the little village of Bethlehem (Micah 5; cf. Sir W. Ramsay, *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?*).
- 4.1224 His birth to a Virgin (Isaiah 7).
- 4.12241 A modern English translation of the Isaiah prophecy, such as the RSV, which substitutes “young woman” for “virgin,” does violence to the original text—since well before the Christian era the Jews themselves, in translating from Hebrew to Greek (the Septuagint, produced in Alexandria, 300-100 B.C.), em-

ployed the Greek *parthenos* to translate the Hebrew *almah*; *parthenos* means “virgin,” not merely a young woman.

- 4.1225 The massacre of infants at his birth and his flight into Egypt (Jeremiah 31 and Hosea 11).
- 4.1226 His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver and the money used to buy a potter’s field (Zechariah 11).
- 4.13 The force of the Messianic prophecies can be specified mathematically, employing the statistician’s “product rule.”
- 4.131 The product rule states that the probability of the common occurrence of several mutually independent events is equal to the product of the probabilities that each of those given events will happen, i.e., if the probability of one event’s occurring is $1/x$, the probability of a number of similar but mutually independent events will be $1/x^n$, where n = the number of events.
- 4.132 If one arbitrarily sets the probability of the occurrence of a single valid Old Testament prophecy of Christ at 50-50 ($1/2$), then the probabilities against twenty-five of them happening by chance is $1/2^{25}$, or 1 in 33 million. But since the likelihood of any one of these prophecies succeeding is considerably less than 50-50 (“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,” etc.), we can legitimately lower the probability of one occurrence to 25 percent ($1/4$). The probability against 25 similar events transpiring by chance would then be $1/4^{25}$, or 1 in a thousand trillion.
- 4.133 “Since there are many more than 25 prophecies of events surrounding the birth and life of Christ, and a compromise chance of success is undoubtedly less than 1 to 4, then the chance of success, if these predictions were all mere guesses, would be so infinitesimal that no one could maintain that these prophecies were mere guesses! The alternative must be true—these prophecies were all foreseen events, in which *‘holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.’* The prophecies were given by revelation—divinely inspired” (H. O. Taylor).
- 4.134 Can it be said that this application of the product rule is improper, owing to the fact that the rule should only be applied to “mutually independent” events? No, for

- 4.1341 The prophecies of the Old Testament are indeed mutually independent, in that they were set out by diverse authors at diverse times, and their fulfilments were recorded by more than one Gospel writer.
- 4.135 But are we not assigning an arbitrary value for the probability of the occurrence of any one prophecy?
- 4.1351 We are indeed, but the values we assign are exceedingly conservative: ours is the a fortiori position that even if the likelihood of the success of a single prophecy were but 50 percent or 25 percent, the conclusion would be inescapable that the totality of fulfillments must not be attributed to chance.
- 4.136 Is it not logically the case—since probability reasoning does not in itself establish causation—that the “success” of what we have regarded as predictions could be due, not to divine inspiration but to (1) Jesus having conformed his life to the prophecies to “make” them come true, and/or (2) the New Testament writers having “fudged” the life of Christ to fit the Old Testament prophecies?
- 4.1361 These arguments face overwhelming difficulties:
- 4.13611 As for Jesus’ making his life fit the prophecies, he might have been responsible personally for the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy when he said on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?,” but he could hardly have set up the time, place, and manner of his own birth, the number of pieces of silver for which he would be sold, etc.
- 4.13612 As for the Gospel writers’ making the life of Jesus fit the prophecies, had these writers altered the facts of Jesus’ life to accord with Old Testament predictions, they could never have gotten away with it.
- 4.136121 We have already stressed that the preaching of the facts of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, as well as the circulation of the Gospel narratives of these events, took place while hostile witnesses of Jesus’ career were still alive (the very Jewish religious leaders who had brought about his demise); it is unthinkable that they would not have easily refuted such claims to fulfilled prophecy when (a) they knew the Old Testament and (b) they knew the actual facts of Jesus’ life.

- 4.14 The presence of statistically significant numbers of highly specific prophecies across the span of the Old Testament which come to concrete fulfillment in the New lends powerful support to the contention that the Bible is a collection of books having a divinely revelatory character.
- 4.15 And since the most significant of those prophecies, both quantitatively and qualitatively, refer to Jesus Christ himself, they also provide powerful reinforcement to the case for his Divinity.
- 4.2 *It has already been pointed out that Jesus' attested claims to Deity establish the truth of what he said; this principle will now be applied to the concrete issue of the extent of biblical authority—beginning with the Old Testament.***
- 4.21 We shall first ask: What was Jesus' view of the Old Testament?
- 4.22 It cannot be stressed too strongly that, following from Jesus' divine status, his view will be normative—whether it accords with that of “the assured results of modern biblical criticism”—or not.
- 4.23 Jesus regarded the Old Testament as entirely the Word of God, quoted it as fully authoritative, never contradicted it, and took its historical narratives as historical fact.
- 4.24 Jesus' high view of Scripture is evident from his specific declarations to that effect. Said he:
- 4.241 “Not a jot [the *yod*, the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet] or a tittle [the calligraphic shading of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet] shall pass from the Law until all is fulfilled” (Matthew 5).
- 4.2411 True, among the Jews of the time (and today), the “Law” could mean either the Ten Commandments, or the Pentateuch, or the entire Old Testament; that Jesus used it in the sense of the whole Old Testament is clear from his assertion elsewhere: “Is it not written in your Law, I said, Ye are gods?” (John 10:34)—the passage referred to being in the *Psalms* (Psalm 82:6), which is in neither the Ten Commandments nor the Pentateuch.
- 4.242 “Search the Scriptures: . . . they testify of me” (John 5:39).

- 4.243 “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27).
- 4.25 Jesus’ belief in the revelational character of the entire Old Testament is also clear by implication from his teachings.
- 4.251 He quotes authoritatively from a wide variety of books of the Old Testament, early and late, and in doing so employs the formula, *gegraptai*: “it is written.”
- 4.2511 This passive construction requires a “personal agent” (“it is written *by someone*”), which here Jesus takes to be God the Father.
- 4.2512 At no time does Jesus, like the modern-day biblical critic, focus on the human writers of the Old Testament books or attempt to explain their teachings in terms of the peculiar cultural conditions of the time.
- 4.25121 Jesus’ approach gains modern support from G. Ernest Wright (*The Old Testament Against Its Environment*).
- 4.2513 It cannot seriously be doubted that Jesus views the Old Testament as a unitary work by a single, divine Author.
- 4.252 In his encounter with the devil in the wilderness (Matthew 4, Mark 1, Luke 4), Jesus counters the devil’s quotations of Scripture out of context with a text from Deuteronomy 8:3: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceeds out of the mouth of God”—the clear implication being that the whole of the Old Testament must be treated as the Word of God.
- 4.2521 Had Jesus *not* believed in the full authority of the Old Testament, this would have been the ideal opportunity to say so; he could have declared: “Come, come! We are cosmic beings, not naïve, culturally-bound humans. There is no need to act as if the Bible were an inerrant source of information. Let us deal with general principles, not engage in literalistic, fundamentalistic “proof-texting.”
- 4.25211 By making this clear, Jesus could have saved Bible societies the immense amounts of money they have spent in disseminating the whole Bible throughout the world, as well as in trans-

lating the Scriptures in their entirety into a variety of minor tongues.

- 4.26 Jesus never criticised the Old Testament; he accepted its teachings in every respect.
- 4.261 He frequently criticised the religious leaders of his day for allowing their settled traditions to overwhelm the original scriptural message; but that is hardly the same thing as criticising the Bible itself—quite to the contrary.
- 4.262 When Jesus uses the formula, “It was said of old time ‘x’ (‘do not murder,’ ‘do not commit adultery’), but I say to you ‘y’ (‘do not be angry without cause,’ ‘do not lust in your heart’),” he is not contradicting Old Testament teaching; he is saying “*Not only ‘x,’ but also ‘y.’*”
- 4.2621 Otherwise, one would have to conclude that Jesus was really saying, “Don’t be irrationally angry and don’t lust—but go ahead and kill and commit adultery if you like”!
- 4.27 Unlike the higher critics, Jesus considered the most difficult Old Testament passages for modern readers to be history--not metaphor, myth, or poetry.
- 4.271 Jesus believed the Adam and Eve narrative (Genesis 2) to recount an historical event which had occurred “at the beginning” of human history (Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9).
- 4.272 He considered the Noahic flood to have been an actual, historical occurrence, and paralleled it with his own Second Coming (Matthew 24:37 ff).
- 4.273 He held that the “Jonah and the whale” incident was factual, and used it as the “only sign” of his own, forthcoming resurrection (Matthew 12:38 ff).
- 4.2731 The beast in question was not necessarily a whale; the Hebrew and Greek words signify a “great fish” or a “sea monster.” The translators of the Authorised Version identified it with the largest aquatic beast they knew. In any case, even a whale could swallow a man and the man survive, as has happened in other cases (72 *Bibliotheca Sacra* 334 [1915]; 25 *Princeton Theological Rev.* 636 [1941]).

- 4.28 As to the list of books comprising the Old Testament validated by Jesus, we know which they were, for the Jewish historian Josephus (*Contra Apionem*, ca. A.D. 100) specifies the number as 22.
- 4.281 “The five of Moses were of course the Pentateuch; the thirteen of the prophets probably included the eight regular *n^ebî’îm* plus Daniel, Job, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Esther; the ‘four hymns and maxims’ would most naturally consist of Psalms, Proverbs, Canticles, and Ecclesiastes. There is little doubt that his twenty-two books are those of our present Hebrew canon” (G. L. Robinson and R. K. Harrison).
- 4.282 This collection (identical to what is today found in Protestant Bibles) does not include the so-called Old Testament Apocrypha, for they were never part of the Hebrew Scriptures (they originated for the most part in Hellenistic Judaism during the intertestamental period).
- 4.2821 These books have therefore not received Jesus’ divine stamp-of-approval as revelatory, though they are useful for historical and religious purposes (and were translated and placed in a separate category by Luther and by the translators of the Authorised Version).
- 4.2822 They are included in Roman Catholic editions of the Bible because the Council of Trent (1546), in opposing the Reformers, made their acceptance a *de fide* matter, and this was confirmed by the first Vatican Council in 1870.
- 4.29 It will be observed that, in the case of the Old Testament, the authority and reliability of the material is established by Jesus’ own (divine) stamp of approval on it, not on textual investigations of the kind we entered into in reference to the New Testament documents.
- 4.291 This is not to say that there is not good archaeological support for many events of Old Testament history, e.g., the details of patriarchal history as recounted in the earliest biblical books (K. Kitchen; E. Yamauchi; G. Archer; W. Kaiser).
- 4.2911 Indeed, the critics of Old Testament history have been continually forced to revise their negative judgments on the basis of new evidence (for example, after asserting that Moses could

not possibly have written the Pentateuch because there was no writing system available to him, the critics were confronted by archaeological evidence of no less than three writings systems in use in the Egypt of his day).

4.292 But such external confirmations touch only a portion of the entire content of the Old Testament books; and thus, without a transcendent Word establishing their revelational authority, one cannot make definitive revelational claims in their behalf.

4.3 *As for the New Testament, Jesus proleptically established its authority and revelational character as well.*

4.31 He promised his Apostles a special gift of his Holy Spirit which would insure a “total recall” of his teachings (O. Cullmann).

4.311 “When the Holy Spirit shall come, he will guide you into all truth. . . . He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16).

4.312 “The Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said to you” (John 14).

4.32 The gift so described was not for believers in general or for the church, but only for the apostolic company, since only they had been present to hear Jesus’ original teaching during his earthly ministry (and so were the only ones capable of having it “brought to their remembrance”).

4.33 In collecting the writings to be included in the New Testament, the early church therefore employed as principal criterion that of *apostolicity*: a book had to be written by an Apostle or derive from apostolic circles, for only then could it have benefited from the gift of accurate recall promised to the Apostles.

4.331 A book did not have to be written personally by an Apostle, but it had to have direct apostolic association (Mark’s Gospel with the Apostle Peter, for example).

4.332 True, it took time for such decisions to be made in the case of some New Testament books, but the early church was in the best position to make the determination, since they were closest in time to the apostolic age, and, in general, the Apostles were

the first occupants of prominent bishoprics, whose immediate successors had access to the needed corroborations.

- 4.3321 The early church came ultimately to entire agreement on which books to include in the New Testament; and when, in the 16th century, the question was raised again by the Reformers (who insisted on the priority of Scripture over the church, and who therefore could not simply accept the canonicity of the New Testament because the church of their day said so), they also arrived at the very same conclusion as to which books should comprise the New Testament canon on the basis of apostolicity.
- 4.33211 Even Luther, who had been deeply troubled by what he saw as salvation by works in the Book of James and an absence of the clear teaching of salvation by grace alone in the Book of Revelation, ultimately accepted these writings as apostolic.
- 4.332111 Luther's problems with canonicity had no bearing on his belief, in common with Augustine and the entire historic church, that the Scriptures were inerrant; said he: "I have learned to ascribe the honour of infallibility only to those books that are accepted as canonical. I am profoundly convinced that none of these writers has erred" (WA 2, 618).
- 4.33212 The Reformers saw the illogical circularity of grounding the canon of Scripture in a decision of the church *qua* church, when the Scriptures constitute the only standard by which the church's teachings must be judged.
- 4.332121 One could not rely on the so-called "Petrine theory" passage (Matthew 16:18) to established ecclesiastical authority in the supposed successors of Peter, for in saying "Thou art Peter [Greek, *Petros*, a little stone], and upon this rock [Greek, *petra*, a mass of rock] will I build my church," Christ did not create an identity between Peter and the church's foundation, but must have been referring to himself—or belief in him—as that rock (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:11: "No other foundation [for the church] can anyone lay than that which is laid, namely, Jesus Christ").
- 4.34 The imagery of the "four and twenty elders seated around the Throne" in the last book of the New Testament (Revelation 4) was not lost on the early church: this passage was commonly seen to refer to the twelve Tribes of Israel (the Old Testament)

together with the twelve Apostles (the New Testament)—both having the same revelatory authority (even though the New Testament constituted the final word, as the fulfillment of the Old).

- 4.4 *One may well ask how the foregoing argument can apply to the majority of New Testament writings, namely those attributable to the Apostle Paul, since he was not one of the original apostolic band to whom Jesus' promise of "total recall" was given.*
- 4.41 Paul, however, after his remarkable conversion to Christian faith following his encounter with the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus, was accepted by the original Apostles as a legitimate Apostle—one "grafted in" as a special Apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9).
- 4.411 He even corrected the Apostle Peter (Galatians 2:11 ff).
- 4.42 We may therefore conclude that Paul received the same gift as the original apostolic band.
- 4.421 That this gift does not continue in the church—so as to provide an "open-ended" Scripture subject to continual revision and addition—is shown by the fact that the apostolic company was limited to the 1st century—an Apostle having to be "a witness of Christ's resurrection" (Acts 1:21-22).
- 4.43 Clear evidence that the Pauline writings were regarded as Scripture—on the same level as the Old Testament—by the original apostolic company is provided by 2 Peter 3:15-16, where the writer speaks of "all the epistles of our beloved Paul . . . in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, *as they do also the other Scriptures*, to their own destruction."
- 4.431 The Greek for "Scriptures" in this passage is *hai graphai*—the standard expression employed to refer to the Old Testament.
- 4.44 The early church finally accepted the Book of Hebrews into the New Testament canon after concluding that, even though its specific author could not be determined, the author (Barnabus, perhaps) definitely operated within the Pauline circle; this

meant that the book was subject to vetting by Paul, who had the special apostolic gift to ensure its revelational quality.

4.5 *One arrives, therefore, at a Bible—in its totality—whose authority and factual reliability have been established by God himself by virtue of the imprimatur, nihil obstat placed upon both Old and New Testaments by Jesus Christ, who demonstrated his Deity by his resurrection from the dead.*

4.6 *Does this conclusion commit us to an errorless Bible: a Bible “inerrant” in all that it teaches and touches? Or can the Scriptures be considered “spiritually” and “morally” trustworthy, while not necessarily without error in “secular” matters?*

4.601 The latter is the position of so-called “liberal evangelicals” (D. Fuller, and many British evangelicals, who are uncomfortable with the terminology of “inerrancy”).

4.61 The “partial inerrancy” view encounters a host of insuperable difficulties.

4.611 First and foremost, as we have seen, this was not Jesus’ approach to the Bible (he took the narratives of the Old Testament purporting to be history as having that very quality); and, as we have also noted, one cannot avoid the force of Jesus’ divine judgment on the matter by any kind of kenotic reasoning.

4.6111 Significantly, Jesus declared: “If I have told earthly things and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?” (John 3).

4.61111 Indeed, it constitutes analytical nonsensicality to assert that the Bible is true in those theological and moral areas where it cannot be verified, but is subject to error in “earthly” domains where it can be tested.

4.612 Secondly, because all knowledge is intertwined, there is no way effectively to separate the “secular” (and allegedly fallible) material in Scripture from the “religious” content of the Bible.

4.6121 The divisions of knowledge—physics, chemistry, biology, geography, history, literature, art, theology, ethics, etc., etc.—are

but arbitrary (they exist to keep us from going mad by trying to study everything).

- 4.613 Thirdly, where Scripture is concerned, all attempts to split the earthly from the heavenly are particularly unfortunate and obnoxious, since the central theme of the Bible is the Eternal entering the Temporal: God revealing himself in ordinary history through prophets and Apostles, but especially by way of a genuine Incarnation, the Word becoming flesh.
- 4.6131 Note, then, the meaninglessness of such questions as: “Is the death of Christ on the cross a secular, historical event—or is it a religious, theological event?” (It must in fact be *both*; indeed, if it is not the former, it cannot be the latter, for then it is a non-event.)
- 4.61311 Parallel question: “Have you stopped beating your wife?”
- 4.62 The well-known adage *Errare humanum est* would seem to eliminate the possibility of an inerrant book.
- 4.621 This philosophical tag, however, must itself be questioned: do we really know the universe so well that we can be sure that every human expression *must* contain error?
- 4.622 In point of fact, the expression derives from Platonic idealism—the belief that nothing on earth (the *phenomena*) can reach the level of perfection of the metaphysical Ideal (the *noumena*).
- 4.623 This view, however, is manifestly incorrect: Euclid’s *Geometry* contains no errors and is internally consistent—and who would disagree that it is a human product?
- 4.6231 Note that we do not argue that the Bible must be a divine revelation because it is inerrant; we argue, rather, that it must be a divine revelation because Jesus, who proves himself to be God, declares that it is such—and *he* regarded it as inerrant.
- 4.624 To assert that erring is at all times and in all places a necessary characteristic of humanity has repercussions far beyond the denial of full authority to the Scriptures: if held consistently, it would also eliminate the possibility of Incarnation and reduce our Lord to necessary error in his teachings and conduct.

- 4.6241 Hans Küng, in arguing against papal infallibility (and scriptural inerrancy) on such a ground appears unaware that he has cut off the theological limb on which he is sitting—to the point of undermining a meaningful Incarnation and Trinitarian Christianity itself.
- 4.63 To maintain the total truth (inerrancy) of the Bible, one must reject the documentary criticism of the Old Testament, which modifies the plain meaning of the text by recourse to hypothesised underlying sources and supposed editorial revisions of the text.
- 4.631 Thus, the Graf-Kuenen-Wellhausen J-E-P-D theory, which held that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, as Jesus thought, but was a 10th century B.C. paste-up created from four major sources (one using *Yahweh/Jehovah* as the name for God, one using *Elohim* for the name of God, one a priestly, sacrifice-orientated source, and one a deuteronomic or law-focused source).
- 4.6311 What we have said previously as to the hopelessly subjective, and therefore unscholarly, character of New Testament form- and redaction-criticism applies equally here.
- 4.63111 No manuscripts have ever been discovered which represent any one of the supposed underlying sources of Old Testament books.
- 4.63112 The critics have by no means stopped with J-E-P-D; Morgenstern of Hebrew Union College endeavoured to divide a K source into K and K₁.
- 4.63113 “Review of activity in the field of Old Testament criticism during the last quarter century has revealed a chaos of conflicting trends, ending in contradictory results, which create an impression of ineffectiveness in this type of research. The conclusion seems to be unavoidable that the higher criticism has long since passed the age of constructive achievement” (H. F. Hahn).
- 4.6312 The attempt to rearrange the Old Testament material by way of alleged sources has been deeply influenced by extrinsic, ideological considerations; thus, the naïve progressive-evolutionary thinking of the 19th century led critics to assert that “primitive” blood-sacrifice passages must have come earlier

than “advanced” moral-prophetic passages (thereby allegedly showing the evolution of Old Testament religion from “lower” to “higher” monotheism).

- 4.632 Higher critics of the Old Testament almost universally maintain that the Book of Isaiah is actually two books, one earlier, the other (Deutero-Isaiah) later.
- 4.6321 One of the chief reasons for this supposition is the critic’s antimiraculous bias: if the book is a unity, written at the time claimed for it, it must contain de facto fulfilled prophecy (cf. E.B. Pusey’s powerful refutation of antimiraculous postdating [*Daniel the Prophet*]).
- 4.6322 Our earliest manuscript of an Old Testament book, a Dead Sea scroll Isaiah (*ca.* 125 B.C.), has the same text as in Bibles today, and shows no break whatsoever at the point where Deutero-Isaiah is supposed to commence.
- 4.633 Such examples make plain that rejection of Old Testament criticism has only one scholarly disadvantage: one will not be asked to deliver papers at the conferences of the critics.
- 4.64 It is sometimes said that to regard the Old Testament as erroneous cannot touch the central issue of salvation as set forth in the New Testament.
- 4.641 Nothing could be further from the truth, for:
- 4.6411 Jesus was at pains to interconnect Old Testament events (many of them especially problematic for “modern man”) with his own saving work (e.g., “As [Greek, *hōsper ... houtōs*, “even as / just as”] Jonah was three days and three nights in the beast’s belly, so the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”—Matthew 12); and
- 4.6412 If Jesus was mistaken in his evaluation of Old Testament reliability, he could not have been God Incarnate, and thus could not have saved us by his work on the cross.
- 4.64121 To be sure, there are mediating theologians who refuse to give up their belief in Christ while at the same time maintaining views of the Old Testament entirely at variance with his own; but this only confirms F. Pieper’s point that the illogic of liberal theologians is a “happy [i.e., fortunate] inconsistency,” since if

they applied a modicum of logic to their position they would cease to be Christians at all.

4.65 But “everyone knows” that there are unresolvable errors and contradictions in the Bible which militate against an inerrancy view.

4.651 The *così fan tutti* approach is always dangerous.

4.652 Problem passages were not discovered yesterday; in the 5th century Jerome and Augustine effectively dealt with alleged errors and contradictions which critics today think they have noticed for the first time.

4.653 Encyclopedic scholarship across the centuries has provided resolutions of virtually all the claimed errors and contradictions (e.g., those listed in the second part of Paine’s *Age of Reason*)—and, in general, there are often multifarious solutions available, free of strained harmonisations or torturings of the text (*vid.*: J. W. Haley; G. Archer; W. F. Arndt; and cf. A. Althamer, *Conciliationes locorum Scripturae* [1582]).

4.654 In the rare instances where a resolution of the problem does not seem to be available, a lesson can be taken from the apparent contradiction as between the Gospel accounts in regard to the date of the crucifixion: was it on the 14th of the Jewish month of Nisan or on the 15th?

4.6541 The civil-lunar calendar, known for centuries, explains one dating; it required A. Jaubert’s discovery of a “Jubilees-Qumran” calendar among the Dead Sea scrolls to explain the other—but how many critics over the years were then proved wrong in not accepting Jesus’ own strong view of Scripture?

4.655 We suggest a model for dealing with alleged errors and contradictions in the biblical text: the *balance scale*:
$$\frac{E \quad J}{\Delta}$$

4.6551 Here, one balances the unresolved contradiction or error (E) against Jesus’ own view of Scripture as the inerrant Word of God (J). Even if a number of problems constitute E, their weight will be finite, whereas Jesus’ view (being that of God himself) will always have the greater weight.

- 4.6552 To be sure, the weight of J is not infinite, since it represents *the case for Jesus' Deity and view of Scripture*, not Deity per se; however, that case is so powerful (as we have seen above) that it will always be stronger than the problem posed by the difficult passage(s).
- 4.6553 “If you chance upon anything [in Scripture] that does not seem to be true, you must not conclude that the sacred writer made a mistake; rather your attitude should be: the manuscript is faulty, or the version is not accurate, or you yourself do not understand the matter” (St Augustine, *De potent.* IV, 1, 8).
- 4.656 We may therefore confidently regard the Bible in the same way Jesus did, and this means regarding it in its entirety as the trustworthy Word of God.
- 4.7 ***Surely, however, this approach to the Bible is gainsaid by its early chapters, involving a hopelessly primitive, unscientific view of the beginning of the world and of human kind on the earth?***
- 4.71 As to chronology, Archbishop Ussher (17th century) saddled subsequent Bible printings of the Authorised Version with the Creation date of 4004 B.C.
- 4.711 The Archbishop assumed that the genealogies of the Bible were complete, omitting nothing.
- 4.7111 *But* the genealogies of the Old Testament, like those of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, include only the more important names: the word “begat” signifies only that the one begotten came after the begetter, not that the former was the immediate offspring of the latter.
- 4.7112 This makes it impossible to calculate backwards to the time of Adam and Eve, much less to the Creation itself, by employing biblical data.
- 4.7113 A bench of bishops may be mistaken; even more so, a single bishop.
- 4.72 It is hardly reasonable to criticise the author of Genesis for asserting that there was a first man and a first woman; logically, there must have been such.

- 4.721 The biblical text nowhere describes their appearance; perhaps they were very hairy and their arms were long enough that they could scratch their feet without bending over.
- 4.73 As for evolutionary theories of human origins, we are at liberty to take either of the following two approaches;
- 4.731 We may say that evolutionary theory is so hopelessly saddled with 19th century ideological baggage that in its main lines it does not deserve acceptance; and that it has been unsuccessful in its attempts to demonstrate amoeba-to-man evolution (A. E. Wilder-Smith; W. R. Bird; H. Morris; D. Gish; J. Wells; P. Johnson).
- 4.7311 This is not to say that there has not been development within species; all that is asserted is that the evolutionist has not proven a crossing of species lines such that human development can be seen as the end product of the development of “lower” forms of life.
- 4.732 Alternatively, we may say that—owing to the fact that (1) the six creative days in Genesis 1 are intended to represent undefined periods of time (“one day is with the Lord as a thousand years”—2 Peter 3), and (2) “the evening and the morning” throughout the chapter is a poetical expression—evolution over millions of years within the species types set out in Genesis 1 is compatible with the biblical account (E. J. Carnell; R. Mixer; R. C. Newman; H. J. Eckelmann)
- 4.7321 It would not appear possible to extend this position to the view that Genesis 1-2 is entirely poetic and has to do only with the “what” and not the “how” of creation.
- 4.73211 The text presents considerable detail concerning the “how” of creation (for example, the important expression “after its kind” is repeated again and again).
- 4.73212 If the divine Author was only concerned with the “what,” it would appear strange that he did not omit everything except verse 1: “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.”
- 4.733 It is worth remembering that neither the readers of Genesis nor the critics of it were present at the Creation, and that contem-

porary cosmological theories appear to have a very short shelf life.

- 4.7331 We are informed, in contrast, that Jesus Christ, the Word of God, who believed the Genesis accounts, existed from eternity and was himself involved in the Creation (John 1).
- 4.74 Genesis gives great longevity to the patriarchs.
- 4.741 Science has been unable to find a biological reason for death; micro-organisms can be kept alive indefinitely.
- 4.742 The Bible gives *sin* as the reason for death (Rom. 3:23, etc.); may it not have been the case that one of the effects of sin's reinforcing itself from generation to generation was a radical drop in longevity once certain population levels had been reached?
- 4.75 Surely, the account of Noah and the Flood in Genesis 6-9 cannot be accepted today? *Au contraire*:
- 4.751 There are accounts of a universal Deluge among a vast number of early cultures throughout the world, and many of these cannot be accounted for by cultural borrowing.
- 4.7511 It is very hard to reconcile the Genesis text with a limited flood, only affecting the Near East.
- 4.752 The Ark, as described in Genesis, is a remarkable piece of engineering—far beyond the knowledge and skills of the time (H. Morris).
- 4.7521 There would have been room for all the basic species types on the Ark.
- 4.75211 Variations might well have perished: thus the iguana survives but not the dinosaur??
- 4.753 There is surprising evidence of the survival of at least identifiable remnants of the Ark on Mount Ararat in Eastern Turkey (Montgomery).
- 4.76 What of “Joshua’s long day” (Joshua 10)?
- 4.761 It has long been recognised that Scripture often speaks phenomenally when dealing with matters of human observation (Augustine; Rheticus, defending Copernicus’ *De revolutionibus orbium caelestium*; Calvin; cf. R. Hooykaas’ Gifford Lectures).

- 4.762 We can hardly criticise such usage when we ourselves speak of “the sun coming up in the morning”—although, in fact, it is the earth, not the sun, which changes position.
- 4.763 Whatever the physical explanation of the event Joshua describes, had he recorded that event with a camera, it would have shown the sun, not the earth, altering its movement.
- 4.77 We conclude that nothing in the early biblical narratives requires us to take a view of the inspiration, revelatory nature, and factual correctness of the Bible different from that held by Jesus Christ.
- 4.8 ***Over against the biblical worldview—indeed, contra the very existence of the God of the Bible—looms the Problem of Evil: how can there be a God who is both perfectly good (and therefore opposed to evil) and all-powerful (and therefore capable of eradicating evil), when the world displays the presence of evil on so many levels?***
- 4.801 As we shall soon see, and as Wittgenstein himself emphasised, absolute moral judgments can only be justified transcendently; it follows that the atheist, having by definition no such absolute source of morality, is in a particularly disadvantageous position logically to offer ethical criticism of the actions of Deity.
- 4.802 We have already noted the inadequacy of trying to handle this issue by maintaining that God lacks omnipotence (Brightman): such a finite god is not the God of Scripture or the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and he does not in any event constitute an attractive object of worship.
- 4.81 The earliest chapters of the Bible inform us that evil in the human sphere originated because the first humans chose to violate God’s express will, and that, in consequence, they and their descendants suffered pain and death, and the natural world itself lost its perfection (Genesis 3:15-19).
- 4.811 The tempter in that scenario is identified elsewhere in Scripture as the devil, a former angel who himself fell as a result of a similar insistence on following his own way rather than acknowl-

edging the sovereign will of God (Isaiah 14:12-15; Revelation 12:9, 20:2).

- 4.82 It follows that evil was not created by God but came about as the result of God's creatures' misuse of their freewill.
- 4.821 Evil is neither a mere "absence of good" (Augustine) nor a substance: it refers to a *broken relationship* between the creature and the Creator; from that broken relationship follow concrete evils (plural)—sickness, death, crime, environmental catastrophe, etc.
- 4.822 Evil is not something God created; it is a perversion of the right relationship with him, for which the creature is responsible.
- 4.83 Natural evils can follow from perverse human decisions, just as physical illnesses are often produced psychosomatically by wrong psychological attitudes.
- 4.831 Many so-called "natural catastrophes" today (such as African famines) are in fact the product of human neglect of the environment or bad use of natural resources.
- 4.84 When the Bible asserts that the sin of Adam passed to his descendants, so that the entire human race is corrupted and needs salvation (Romans 5:12), it speaks both biologically and sociologically: every human generation is born into the sinful context created by past generations, is impacted by them, and adds to the burden for the future.
- 4.841 The Hebrew word *Adam*, like the Greek *anthropos* and the Latin *homo*, means "mankind"; in that sense, the first man was a representative of the entire race—a kind of perfect statistical sampling of mankind in general.
- 4.8411 Thus the truth of the old school-book doggerel: "In Adam's fall, we fell all": had you or I been in the Garden, we would have done the same as Adam and Eve did, so we are in no position to blame someone else for our condition.
- 4.8412 Moreover, if we are honest with ourselves, we know that we have, by our own personal, conscious decisions, gone against the best dictates of our own conscience—to say nothing of divine standards (cf. J. S. Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil*).

- 4.85 The key to understanding why the continuing presence of evil in the world is not a bar to the existence of the God of the Bible is, then, *the reality of freewill*.
- 4.8501 Even if one operates with a Calvinist understanding of God as the predestinarian Sovereign, the Problem of Evil is not insoluble, since God (not man) sets the standards of cosmic morality (Plantinga).
- 4.85011 “C’est le Père Noël qui fait la classe aux lutins. Quelquefois, il perd patience et les menace d’appeler le directeur, mais les lutins savent bien que c’est pour rire; c’est lui, le directeur” (G. Solotareff, *Dictionnaire du Père Noël*).
- 4.8502 Scripture, as a matter of fact, presents the interrelationship of predestination and freewill as a mystery: man’s freewill is genuine and one must believe in order to be saved (John 3:16; Acts 16:30-31), yet salvation is God’s work alone—even faith being the gift of God (John 1:12-13; Ephesians 2:8-9).
- 4.85021 As Luther put it, fallen humanity has all the freewill needed to choose a preferred path to hell—but not the capacity to climb to heaven—since salvation is a matter of God’s grace alone.
- 4.85022 “Double” predestination (God’s choosing not only the saved but also the damned) is an obnoxious and unbiblical doctrine; and so is the Arminian teaching that we have the capacity to assist in our salvation by contributing our faith (or our “predisposition toward faith”) to the salvatory process.
- 4.85023 The revelatory facts take precedence over the logical difficulty; as already noted, when fact and logic conflict, facts win.
- 4.851 God is love (1 John 4:8, etc.), and love entails freewill (John 7:17): the biblical God is not a puppet master, pulling strings so as to force his creation to do what he wishes (C. S. Lewis).
- 4.852 Enforced love would not be love at all; it is rape—metaphysically even if not physically.
- 4.8521 Every lover (and parent) knows this, or should know it: you want your intended or your child to love you in return, and to do what is best, but to force this upon the object of your love is to destroy the possibility of a genuine, reciprocal love-relationship.

- 4.853 Freewill means the possibility of rejecting love as well as of accepting it—with all the negative consequences which flow from such rejection.
- 4.8531 If the rejection is everlasting, the negative consequences will likewise be eternal and everlasting; such a choice cuts one off from all goodness and love, and leaves one with only one object of worship: the egocentric self which has been the source of the problem from the outset.
- 4.854 But does not determinism—biological or otherwise—prevent our recourse to freewill as an explanation for the Problem of Evil? Certainly not; for:
- 4.8541 Determinism contradicts human experience (even the determinist functions as if he were making free decisions); and
- 4.8542 Determinism is self-defeating (were it universally true, then the determinist philosophy *itself* would have been predetermined and could not claim to be objectively true); and
- 4.8543 So-called “chaotic dynamics” shows that we are operating in an open universe: though God has set out a pattern of general cosmic laws, he has indeed “left himself and us room to maneuver” (Polkinghorne).
- 4.86 Did not God foresee the negative effects of sin, and, if so, why—among the infinite possible worlds he could have created—did he not create one where Adam would *not* have fallen?
- 4.861 To eliminate all possible fallen worlds in favour of one that would not fall must be seen as the functional equivalent of eliminating freewill from the creation in the first place.
- 4.8611 Even the non-religious find couples morally unpalatable who obtain “perfect” offspring by systematically destroying nested embryos when ultrasound shows that, if born, they would display characteristics the parents dislike.
- 4.87 If freewill is essential to love, would this not mean that in eternity there would always have to be the possibility of new falls into sin—contrary to the assurances of a perfect “new heaven and new earth,” given, for example, in the Book of Revelation?

- 4.871 As Augustine argued, the redemption of the world in Christ moves the relationship between creature and Creator to a new level—that of *non posse peccari*.
- 4.872 “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19), so the likelihood of a repeat of the fall drops to zero as a limit in the face of an undeserved redemption of infinite consequence.
- 4.88 Even granting the essential tie between love and freewill, could—and, therefore, *should*—God not have limited the *effects* of man’s sin?
- 4.881 But if the consequences of moral acts are removed, their moral character disappears: the language game changes from ethics to play or to strategy: in our own interests, we will try more and more clever ways to circumvent the law, knowing that a term in gaol is no longer in the offing.
- 4.882 Why do not the consequences of sin fall only on the wicked? Why does not God preserve the innocent from sin’s miseries? Why does the godfather die comfortably at an advanced age while the good citizen is struck down by the early onset of cancer?
- 4.8821 Unfortunately, since “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23; cf. Psalm 53:3; Isaiah 53:6; 1 John 1:8), there are *no* innocents.
- 4.88211 As John Donne put it, the human race is inseparably interconnected: “Never send to know for whom the bell tolls: it tolls for thee.”
- 4.8822 Sin, by its very nature, is irrational, and its consequences likewise.
- 4.88221 Sinful consequences in a broken world are like the effects of a terrorist’s bomb, striking anyone within range, not necessarily specific political opponents (cf. 11 September 2001).
- 4.8823 Even genuine Christian believers are not exempted from the effects of a fallen world—the promise to them is, not that they will never suffer but that “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28).
- 4.883 But God could certainly have *diminished* the consequences of sin without removing them entirely? Scripture teaches that:

- 4.8831 He has already done so, since if he had removed his hand from the world after the fall, all would have returned to its original state of chaos (Colossians 1:16-17); and
- 4.8832 In spite of our killing his prophets and even his own Son, he has provided the only way of salvation out of the misery we have created for ourselves (Matthew 21; Mark 12; Luke 20; Romans 5:8); and
- 4.8833 He promises an ultimate restoration of all things (Revelation 21-22); and
- 4.8834 Those who have created the mess are in a particularly poor position to criticise the only One who is doing anything cosmically about it—simply because he is not working on their schedule; and
- 4.8835 Oddly enough, God, not ourselves, remains the sovereign in these matters (Job 38-42).
- 4.89 Granted, the evils of this world are evident on every hand; but the issue is: does their existence negate the clear evidence of God’s love for us in coming to earth in Jesus Christ to deal with this very problem?
- 4.891 One must not regard this matter as a question of weighing quantities (deaths in the Holocaust, for example, against the single death of Christ): *if* the case for Incarnation is a good one (and we have seen just how excellent it is), that case stands regardless of the existence of human misery, whatever its degree.
- 4.892 Indeed, the greater the misery, the greater should be our gratitude to the One who loves us and gave himself for us.
- 4.893 “Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die”—one thinks of Sidney Carton in Dickens’ *Tale of Two Cities*—“but God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5).
- 4.9** *Even supposing that all objections to a fully trustworthy written revelation from God in Scripture can be successfully answered, what good would such a revelation do when, as is so often said, “You can get anything out of the Bible”?*

- 4.91 One can indeed get anything out of the Bible—as long as one is erroneously permitted to *take anything to the Bible* in interpreting it.
- 4.92 The Bible is a remarkably clear book.
- 4.921 Few would maintain, for example, that the passage beginning, “There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed,” refers to the banana crop in Tanganyika.
- 4.922 “The Holy Scriptures are assuredly clearer, easier of interpretation, and more certain than any other writings, for all teachers prove their statements by them, as by clearer and more stable writings, and wish their own treatises to be established and explained by them. But no-one can ever prove a dark saying by one that is still darker. Therefore, necessity compels us to run to the Bible with all the writings of the doctors, and thence to get our verdict and judgment upon them; for Scripture alone is the true overlord and master of all writings and doctrines on earth. If not, what are the Scriptures good for?” (Luther, in *WA* 7, 308 ff.).
- 4.923 “I certainly grant that many passages in the Scriptures are obscure and hard to elucidate, but that is due, not to the exalted nature of their subject, but to our own linguistic and grammatical ignorance. . . . Who will maintain that the town fountain does not stand in the light because the people down some alley cannot see it, while everyone in the square can see it?” (Luther, *De servo arbitrio* [against Erasmus], *WA* 18, 606).
- 4.924 If the Bible is so clear, why are there many Christian denominations?
- 4.9241 Many churches came into existence for purely historical and cultural reasons, not because of doctrinal differences (e.g., the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, which could no longer maintain its connection with the Anglican Church, owing to the American Revolution).
- 4.9242 In the case of those churches which differ theologically with other churches, the points of contention are generally low on the scale of major biblical teaching (e.g., whether to dunk or to sprinkle in baptism).

- 4.9243 All Christian churches are by definition united in their understanding of the central doctrinal teachings of the Bible by virtue of their commitment to the Ecumenical Creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian).
- 4.9244 Where there is nonetheless disagreement among Christians as to what the Bible teaches, this is to be attributed to human failings, not to God's inability to make himself clear.
- 4.93 The interpretation of the Bible depends on the same general principles which must be employed in understanding any written material—principles which have been codified and are common to literary hermeneutics and to the legal construction of documents.
- 4.931 There is no special, unworldly, “spiritual” hermeneutic applicable uniquely to the Bible, for the Scriptures are written in human language and employ the grammar, syntax, and vocabulary of human language.
- 4.9311 The declared purpose of the Scriptures is to *reveal*, not to provide a recondite, in-group, Gnostic message.
- 4.9312 One must be very suspicious of views such as that of Watchman Nee, who maintained that only true believers can understand the Bible, for only they have a “renewed mind” (*nous*).
- 4.93121 Salvation does indeed make “all things new” for the believer (2 Corinthians 5:17), but it does not change the character of the human language of the Bible, nor does it remove the new Christian from the planet.
- 4.932 The fundamental hermeneutic rules have been well set forth in the field of law, where sound interpretation of legal instruments is essential to achieving societal justice.
- 4.93201 “I have long felt that problems of interpreting legal texts are closer to theology than to literary theory” (W. Twining).
- 4.9321 Statutory interpretation entails the following basic principles:
 (1) Words that are reasonably capable of only one meaning must be given that meaning whatever the result (the so-called *literal rule*).

(2) Ordinary words must be given their ordinary meanings and technical words their technical meanings, unless absurdity would result (the *golden rule*).

(3) When an Act aims at curing a defect in the law, any ambiguity is to be resolved in such a way as to favour that aim (the *mischief rule*),

(4) An Act must be construed as a whole, so that internal inconsistencies are avoided.

4.9322 In the law of contracts, the *parol evidence rule* sets forth the same hermeneutic philosophy: integrated writings cannot be added to, subtracted from, or varied by the admission of extrinsic evidence of prior or contemporaneous oral or written agreements; extrinsic evidence is admissible to *clarify* or *explain* the integrated writing, but never when it would *contradict* the writing.

4.9323 The construction of deeds follows the same approach: the parties are presumed to have intended to say that which they have in fact said, so their words must be construed as they stand.

4.93231 “The Court has to take care that evidence is not used to complete a document which the party has left incomplete or to contradict what he has said, or to substitute some other wording for that actually used, or to raise doubts, which otherwise would not exist, as to the intention. When evidence is admitted in connection with interpretation, it is always restricted to such as will assist the Court to arrive at the meaning of the words used, and thus to give effect to the intention so expressed” (Sir Roland Burrows).

4.9324 Likewise in constitutional interpretation: “As men whose intentions require no concealment, generally employ the words which most directly and aptly express the ideas they intend to convey, the enlightened patriots who framed our Constitution, and the people who adopted it, must be understood to have employed words in their natural sense, and to have intended what they have said” (Chief Justice John Marshall, *Gibbons v Ogden*).

4.9325 In sum: *Non est interpretatio, sed divinatio, quae recedit a littera* (Lord Bacon).

- 4.933 This approach of taking written material literally unless the context requires a non-literal meaning, and refusing to alter the clear meaning of a text by the introduction of extrinsic materials, applies equally in the literary field in general and in biblical interpretation in particular.
- 4.9331 A sound literary interpretation is “one which is absolutely commensurate in its basic, inferential, and evaluative propositions with the data, the implications, and the values contained within the work” (Elder Olson, “Hamlet and the Hermeneutics of Drama”).
- 4.9332 “It is a fundamental principle to assume that there is one intended, literal, proper sense to any given passage in Scripture (‘sensus literalis unus est’); also that the Scripture is its own best interpreter (‘Scriptura Scripturam interpretat’ or ‘Scriptura sui ipsius interpres’). . . . The literal sense thus always stands first and each interpreter must guard against cluttering that which is being communicated with his own ideas, lest the meaning be lost” (Eugene F. A. Klug).
- 4.934 The biblical interpreter’s axiom, therefore, is that data extrinsic to a text may be used *ministerially* (to clarify or reinforce the meaning of the text), but never *magisterially* (to criticise or alter the natural meaning of the text).
- 4.9341 It follows that extra-biblical linguistic and cultural considerations must never decide the interpretation of a text, and any use of extra-biblical material to arrive at an interpretation inconsistent with the plain meaning of a scriptural passage is to be rejected.
- 4.93411 Extra-biblical data can and should put critical questions to a text, but only Scripture itself can legitimately answer questions about itself.
- 4.935 To insist on the “plain” or “natural” meaning of a text is not necessarily to insist on a literal interpretation; the natural meaning may in fact be poetical, parabolic, or metaphorical—but only the biblical material itself can determine this.
- 4.9351 The Psalms are poetic in format; thus one need not assume that the mention of unicorns and dragons therein requires zoological treatment.

- 4.9352 When Jesus says that he is setting forth a parable, it is a waste of energy to seek archeologically for the address of the Good Samaritan.
- 4.9353 When, however, Paul states that, owing to not discerning the body of Christ in the Eucharist, some have become physically weak and sick and others have died (1 Corinthians 11), one must not regard Jesus' assertion, "This is my body," as metaphorical.
- 4.94 It will be observed that the hermeneutic approach here set forth—and required for meaningful interpretative activity in law, literature, and ordinary life—is at utter loggerheads with the fallacious "Hermeneutic Circle" methodology of the existentialists and post-modernists, discussed earlier.
- 4.941 The latter approach is followed by Rudolf Bultmann and his post-Bultmannian followers (Ebeling, Fuchs, Conzelmann, Guenter Bornkamm, *et al.*), as well as by the so-called "New Hermeneutic."
- 4.9411 By their interlocking of the text and the interpreter, and by allowing extra-biblical materials to determine the meaning of the biblical text, these theologians turn the Bible into what Luther felicitously characterised as a "wax nose," which they twist in the direction of their own presuppositions and contemporary cultural values.
- 4.9412 This approach has been hilariously caricatured in the literary field by Frederick C. Crews (*The Pooh Perplex*), who develops an entire series of contradictory portraits of Winnie the Pooh (romantic, Marxist, psychoanalytic, etc.) by allowing the interpreter's *Weltanschauung* to obscure the meaning of the original stories.
- 4.95 To understand any text (Pooh or Philippians), one must ask the questions: *What kind of book is this?* And: *What is it trying to tell me?*, i.e., *What is its central theme?*
- 4.951 In the case of Pooh, we have a children's book, focusing on a Bear of little brain but great of heart.
- 4.952 In the case of Philippians (and Scripture as a whole), we have a book setting forth the *Heilsgeschichte*—the history of human salvation—and focusing on the Saviour, Jesus Christ, who

achieved that salvation by his atoning death on the cross and his resurrection for our justification.

- 4.96 If we miss the fundamental theme of a writing, no amount of attention to its details will give us its significance.
- 4.961 This is why fundamentalists who study, for example, the “birds of the Bible” or endeavour to set forth a calendar of the “end times” often have no idea as to the real point of Scripture.
- 4.962 This is why moralists who draw up plans for the renovation of society by following the Sermon on the Mount or by posting the Ten Commandments in schoolrooms lose sight of what the Bible is actually teaching.
- 4.963 This is why religious liberals who occupy themselves with critiquing Old Testament history or applying Gnostic categories to the New Testament might as well be reading the *Bhagavad-Gita* for all the good it does them.
- 4.97 Biblical revelation is solid and it is perspicuous; but, in order to benefit from it, one must set aside one’s prejudices, suspend one’s disbelief, refuse to force the text into the mold of extra-biblical ideologies, and *seek Christ there*.
- 4.971 “Search the Scriptures, for they testify of me” (Jesus Christ).
- 4.972 “The whole of Scripture is about Christ alone, everywhere” (Luther).

5 The perennial dilemma of man (corporate and personal) as to the meaning of existence finds its resolution in Christian revelation.

- 5.1 “*The unexamined life is not worth living*” (Socrates).
- 5.11 Examination is called for as to the meaning of history, ethical values, and the significance of human life.
- 5.12 If history is “a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing” (Shakespeare), or, less elegantly, “bunk” and “the succession of one damned thing after the other” (Henry Ford), then historical action loses all significance.
- 5.121 But how can historical meaning be established when we, as the actors, are ourselves locked into the play?

- 5.13 Neither individual nor societal life is possible without values.
- 5.131 The values may (and do) differ widely, and are often mutually contradictory.
- 5.1311 There must, on some level at least, be “honour among thieves.”
- 5.1312 Among cannibals, rules of etiquette may require that one clean her plate; the law may insist that femurs not be left in the front garden so as to harm the environment.
- 5.13121 In actual fact, anthropologists have observed that cannibal societies do not eat indiscriminately: there are invariably rules which limit one’s diet to members of other tribes.
- 5.1313 But would we be satisfied with the value systems of the thief or of the cannibal, it being the case that we could well be the object of their attentions?
- 5.13131 This is the painful difficulty generally ignored by ethical relativism and by the postmodern approach of “live and let live”: one may find herself devoid of possessions and one of the ingredients of a stew if certain value systems are given legitimacy.
- 5.1314 In the face of competing value systems, which should be accepted and which rejected? And from where ought the criteria to come?
- 5.14 Human rights are essential in a world in which governments, power groups, and individuals so often trample upon minorities and the weak.
- 5.141 War crimes trials such as those held in Nuremberg at the end of World War II have no choice but to appeal to values transcending national interests.
- 5.1411 Otherwise, the trials become nothing more than an expression of the power of the victor over the vanquished.
- 5.142 But where are transnational values to be sought?
- 5.1421 “In order to discover the rules of society best suited to nations, a superior intelligence beholding all the passions of men without experiencing any of them would be needed. This intelligence would have to be wholly unrelated to our nature, while knowing it through and through; its happiness would have to be independent of us, and yet ready to occupy itself with ours; and

lastly, it would have, in the march of time, to look forward to a distant glory, and, working in one century, to be able to .enjoy in the next. It would take gods to give men laws” (Rousseau, *Contrat social*).

5.2 *Secular attempts to establish the meaning of history have been conspicuous failures.*

5.21 Kant held that “the history of the human race, viewed as a whole, may be regarded as the realisation of a hidden plan of nature to bring about a political constitution, internally, and, for this purpose, also externally perfect, as the only state in which all the capacities implanted by her in mankind can be fully developed.”

5.211 Kant tells us that man’s “unsociableness”—his “envious jealousy and vanity” and “unsurable desire of possession or even of power”—turns him from “idleness and inactive contentment” to “further development of his natural capacities.”

5.212 Here, Kant commits the basic moral fault of allowing the end to justify the means.

5.2121 The means employed to reach an end cannot be separated from the end itself: a corrupt means will colour the end, corrupting it as well.

5.213 And: like so many rationalists, Kant does not take evil seriously.

5.214 And: like so many classical philosophers, he makes apodictic assertions about the historical process without factually investigating what actually occurs in history.

5.22 Hegel proclaimed a “World Spirit of Reason,” immanently working in history, bringing mankind to an idealistic goal of freedom by way of world-historical epochs, the last of which would be the Germanic.

5.221 Kierkegaard rightly saw that Hegel’s confidence that, unaided by revelation, he could understand the Essence of all history was sheer bombast.

5.2211 However, when Kierkegaard offered the Existential answer (that we can never know more than our own existential condi-

tion and that “truth is subjectivity”), he went from one false solution to another.

- 5.2212 As finite and fallen creatures, we cannot obtain a valid total picture of the world or of its history, but we certainly can arrive at objective truth on a limited scale (cures for lumbago; the construction of bridges; the determination that Caesar was assassinated on the Ides of March and that Jesus rose again on Easter morning).
- 5.2213 Kierkegaard found in his personal *Existenz* the saving Christ; the most prominent 20th century existentialists who followed in his train (Heidegger, Sartre, *et al.*) found only Angst and estrangement, and, having cut themselves off from the possibility of an objective ladder out of the quicksand of subjectivity, they had nowhere to go but to meaninglessness and ethical relativism.
- 5.2214 Kierkegaard suffered from an understandable, but deadly, case of fideism and perhaps even of historical skepticism; Wittgenstein, however, faced by analogous bombast to that of Hegel in the philosophical community, did not contract those diseases—*pace* many of his interpreters.
- 5.22141 “I want to sound a warning about the relationship between the Wittgensteinian insights I have propounded and the critical project in which *The Sceptic* is engaged. . . . The Sceptic moves from rejection of ‘the enlightenment project’ and its notions of abstract and absolute truth to a rejection of the possibility of objective rationality at all. This is a move from rejection of a particular *epistemological theory* to denial of the possibility of knowledge at all” (G. A. Smith).
- 5.222 The assertion of the existence and activities of Hegel’s *Weltgeist* partakes of a large dose of technical meaninglessness—since the World Spirit is not definitionally true, nor is there any apparent way to demonstrate it factually.
- 5.223 World history hardly moves forward in a rectilinear fashion: granted, plumbing seems steadily to improve, but most areas, such as artistic endeavour, are anything but progressive.
- 5.2231 Would anyone in her right mind consider Marcel Duchamp’s ready-mades or “Nude Descending a Staircase” on the same

level of artistic quality as Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel or Rembrandt's "Night Watch"?

- 5.224 Hegel's historical philosophy suffered from his own temporality; from our perspective, against the background of two horrific World Wars, Germany would hardly be regarded as the modern vehicle of greater freedom for mankind; quite the opposite.
- 5.225 Hegel swallowed a very large dose of naïve 19th century progressivism.
- 5.2251 Autosuggestionist Emile Coué advised our repeating, "Every day, in every way, we are getting better and better": unfortunately, repeating this, instead of reflecting necessary improvement, may only give the repeater laryngitis.
- 5.226 Hegel's dialectic ("thesis" leading to "antithesis," the two struggling together to produce a higher "synthesis" which in turn becomes a new "thesis") cannot be shown to function as a universal motor of historical action.
- 5.2261 We have already seen that this "dialectic logic" is not a logic at all.
- 5.2262 Even if all human action did operate dialectically, why should it move upward, to higher and higher levels? Why might it not reach greater and greater depths of depravity, considering the human condition and the testimony of history itself?
- 5.23 When Karl Marx "turned Hegel on his head" by understanding progress in history as a materialistic, not an idealistic, necessity, he succeeded no better than Hegel in finding historical meaning.
- 5.231 Marx's employment of Hegel's dialectic contaminated his historical philosophy with all the difficulties of Hegel's naïve progressivism.
- 5.2311 Why, for example, should the state and law "wither away" so as to produce the perfect, classless society? In point of fact, "power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely" (Lord Acton).
- 5.232 Marx's materialism, derived from Feuerbach ("Der Mensch ist, was er ißt"), is unprovable, whether in its strong form (every-

- thing is material) or in its weak variety (everything significant is material).
- 5.2321 To claim that all “ideology” (political ideas, the state, the law, justice, philosophy, literature, art, morality, religion, etc.) is mere “superstructure,” founded upon and always determined by the materialistic, economic “base” is in itself to set forth an ideology—and an unverifiable one at that.
- 5.2322 Were Feuerbach and Marx correct on this point, it should be possible to produce Johann Sebastian Bachs by feeding little Germans the same diet of Wienerschnitzel that Bach consumed.
- 5.233 Marx’s economic reductionism is likewise unrealistic.
- 5.2331 History does indeed show that material factors influence ideological development (e.g., the effect of the shifting balance of trade in the Mediterranean on the progress of the Italian Renaissance); but it equally shows the reverse causal sequence (e.g., the effect of Eli Whitney’s invention of the cotton gin on world industrial development).
- 5.234 Marx’s view of human nature was skewed in the extreme.
- 5.2341 He believed that humans are basically good and that only the evils of a corrupt, capitalistic economy produce the sorry conditions of modern life.
- 5.2342 But who created the social conditions in the first place? Martians? Or the very human beings who are supposed to be basically good?
- 5.2343 A radical change in the ownership of the means of production in society is supposed, in Marxian terms, to produce “new men,” i.e., humans no longer desirous of subjugating their fellows.
- 5.23431 Yet liberated “Soviet new men,” such as Stalin, perpetrated some of the most horrific human rights violations in all of world history (cf. Solzhenitsyn’s descriptions of the Gulag).
- 5.24 Spengler (*The Decline of the West*) argued that history moves in cyclical patterns, and that self-contained human cultures follow a life cycle similar to that of living organisms and nature; thus a culture develops from barbarism to a civilized classical

period, and finally stagnates, decays, and dies in a new barbarism of hypercommercialism.

- 5.241 But why should systems of relations (cultures) created by organic beings have the same life cycles as those beings?
- 5.242 And why should Spengler's particular set of value judgments be accepted as binding upon history (e.g., instinct favoured over understanding, the life of the soil over the life of the city)?
- 5.25 Toynbee identified thirty-four historical civilisations and claimed that the future of ours depends upon effectively "responding" to the "challenges" we face; and he declared that "the societies of the species called civilisations will have fulfilled their function when once they have brought a mature higher religion to birth."
- 5.251 "Toynbee still believes that the idea of 'challenge and response' constitutes a magical key to the why and how of human creativity. But is it not, after all, little more than a formal principle, like Hegel's dialectic, which cannot provide us with a canon of interpretation?" (G. Masur).
- 5.252 Why must a civilisation produce a new religion to fulfil itself? If Jesus declared that he was "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" and that "no person comes to the Father" but by him—as he did (John 14:6)—and demonstrated his finality by his resurrection from the dead, would it not follow that a civilisation producing a new religion contradicting this would have done just the opposite of fulfilling itself?
- 5.26 Common to the philosophies of history just surveyed, and to all other secular interpretations of the past, are built-in deficiencies which vitiate their claims to an adequate understanding of history's meaning, viz.:
- 5.261 The goals they set for history (Kant's reason, Hegel's freedom, Marx's classless society, Toynbee's ecumenical civilization) cannot be demonstrated to have a necessitarian character about them.
- 5.262 In choosing their respective goals, the secular philosophers of history continually make judgments as to what is significant and what is valuable (Hegel's idealism, Marx's materialism, Spengler's favouring of instinct and the agrarian society); but

in no case are they able to justify these value judgments in absolute terms.

- 5.263 The secular philosophers of history always enter upon their work with an unjustified, unprovable concept of human nature (the optimistic view of man held by Kant, Hegel, and Toynbee, the ambiguous view held by Marx, the pessimistic view held by Spengler).
- 5.264 These philosophers gratuitously presuppose ethical principles (Hegel's exempting of history's "great men" from the ordinary standards of right and wrong, Marx's willingness to let the end justify the means in bringing about the classless society through revolution).
- 5.27 The common denominator here is the "human predicament": the lack of absolute historical perspective on the part of finite man.
- 5.271 We are all "on the road" (Jack Kerouac).
- 5.272 All secular attempts to find the meaning of history necessarily view the past from the limited historical perspective of the observer, who assumes that past trends can be used to predict future happenings.
- 5.2721 But the secular philosopher of history has no way of knowing what proportion of total history is represented by the past she contemplates.
- 5.2722 She therefore cannot determine whether her understanding of "her" past constitutes an adequate statistical sample of the entire universe of historical experience (i.e., of history as a whole).
- 5.2723 But without knowing that her past can also represent the future, she is in no position to generalise from that past to an unknown future, and she is therefore logically precluded from making apodictic assertions concerning the goal, if any, of the historical drama.
- 5.273 Lack of perspective on the human drama as a whole will also mean that the secular interpreter cannot in any absolute sense know what is more or less significant or valuable in the total history of mankind.

- 5.274 Because she is able to acquaint herself personally with only a fraction of all the members of the human race, past, present, and future, her conception of human nature can have only limited value, and is certainly not an adequate basis for historical generalisation.
- 5.275 The secularist's ethical ideals will also reflect her stance in history, and will therefore not be capable of justification in absolute terms.
- 5.276 Secular and humanistic historical searchlights are incapable of illuminating all of the path we have traversed, and they continually meet a wall of fog ahead.
- 5.277 It follows that secular philosophers of history have often—though unwittingly—served as the blind leading the blind.
- 5.28 Even in principle, the only way to a sound understanding of the significance of the historical drama would require a perspective outside of time, unconditioned by it, but capable of observing the entire expanse of historical experience, past, present, and future.
- 5.281 Transcendence, and transcendence alone, satisfies these conditions.
- 5.282 But only if the Transcendent were to communicate with us as to history's meaning would a transcendent answer do us any good.
- 5.2821 An Aristotelian Deity, aloof from human affairs, would leave us in the same predicament as if he did not exist at all.
- 5.2822 Not so the God of the Bible, who, as we have seen, revealed himself both in the living Word (Christ) and in the written Word (the Holy Scriptures)—and has thereby given us the key to the historical drama.
- 5.283 The biblical God informs us that history is not a cyclical movement without beginning or end (the Greek understanding), but a linear pattern beginning with mankind's creation and fall, centring on God's act of love and redemption for us in Christ, and coming to ultimate fulfilment in his return at the end of time and the restoration of all things in a new heaven and a new earth.

- 5.29 There is no circularity in holding simultaneously to the justification of Christian truth by way of an objective historical investigation of Jesus' miraculous resurrection from the dead *and* to the need for revelational principles to understand the overall meaning of history.
- 5.291 The total historical picture can only be grasped by finite man when its significance is revealed from a transcendent perspective.
- 5.292 This does not preclude our being able, without the prior benefit of revelation, to investigate limited historical particulars and arrive at a proper interpretation of them (the Battle of Waterloo, the death of Lincoln, the resurrection of Jesus Christ).
- 5.293 In the case of Jesus, investigation of his life, death, and resurrection leads us to divine revelation; and that divine revelation then gives us an overall understanding of the meaning of the general historical drama which we could never have arrived at otherwise.
- 5.3 *Natural law theory has tried—and failed—to establish an independent foundation for ethics and human rights.*
- 5.31 Three major stages of natural law thinking in the West can be identified.
- 5.311 From Augustine, through Aquinas, to Blackstone, it was held that because of sin, the natural morality written on the human heart (Romans 1) requires clarification and correction by way of the special revelation from God provided in the Holy Scriptures.
- 5.3111 “If our reason were always, as in our first ancestor before his transgression, clear and perfect, unruffled by passions, unclouded by prejudice, unimpaired by disease or intemperance . . . we should need no other guide but [the law of nature]. . . . This has given manifold occasion for the benign interposition of divine providence; which, in compassion to the frailty, the imperfection, and the blindness of human reason hath been pleased, at sundry times and in divers manners, to discover and enforce its laws by an immediate and direct revelation. The doctrines thus delivered we call the revealed or divine law, and

they are to be found only in the Holy Scriptures” (Sir W. Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*).

- 5.312 In the second stage, at the time of the 18th century French and American revolutions, it was maintained that the “God of Scripture” should be replaced by the “God of Nature” (Paine, Jefferson), and that God’s implantation of morality in man’s nature was sufficient without any special, written revelation from the Creator.
- 5.3121 The Bible was regarded, by Deists and *philosophes*, as a book of ancient superstitions, unworthy of their newly founded “Age of Reason.”
- 5.313 Finally, with the advent of Darwinian evolutionary theory and Nietzsche’s declaration of “the death of God” in the 19th century, followed by the 20th century secular human rights movement, ethical values have come to be understood as built-in humanistic phenomena, requiring no appeal whatsoever to a divine Creator (cf. Michel Villey).
- 5.32 There are overwhelming difficulties common to the two later stages of natural law thinking.
- 5.33 Assertions of natural morality, unassisted by biblical revelation, suffer from such vagueness and ambiguity that they offer little assistance in dealing with practical ethical issues.
- 5.331 Thus, the classic definition of natural law from the Digest of the Justinian Code: “*Honeste vivere; alterum non laedere; suum cuique tribuere.*”
- 5.3311 This formulation is so “imprecise” that it really does no more than to underscore the need for “some kind of equity” (C. Friedrich).
- 5.3312 The third part of the Justinian definition, “To give each person what he deserves,” was inscribed by the Nazis on the gate leading into the death camp at Buchenwald: “*Jedem das Seine.*”
- 5.34 The advocates of a non-revelational natural law cannot agree among themselves as to its content, and, even if they did, the result would not necessarily represent a true ethic.

- 5.341 To believe that agreement = truth, or that validity can be arrived at by voting, is to commit the logical fallacy of *consensus gentium*.
- 5.3411 In Ray Bradbury's classic, *The Illustrated Man*, all the futuristic world's population had the same dream, that the world would end on a particular night; by unanimous vote, fathers killed their children in a painless way to prevent their suffering from the cataclysm; but the adults woke up the day after and the world had not ended.
- 5.3412 Fifty million Frenchmen can be wrong.
- 5.35 Secular natural law efforts to provide an adequate answer to man's ethical dilemma may be denominated "Jiminy Cricket solutions," for they say in essence, "Let your conscience be your guide."
- 5.351 But conscience is culturally influenced, if not determined.
- 5.3511 Did not Dickens' Fagin make his little charges feel guilty for not stealing more expensive watches?
- 5.36 Secular natural law thinking exemplifies what G. E. Moore termed the "naturalistic fallacy": the belief that one can move, without more, from the descriptive to the normative, from the "is" to the "ought."
- 5.361 The only valid ethical move from "is" to "ought" occurs when God descriptively reveals what he declares to be normative.
- 5.37 It now becomes evident why St Paul, in dealing with Stoic natural law thinkers on the Areopagus, declared: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription: 'To the Unknown God.' Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, him I declare unto you. . . . And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent: because he has appointed a day when he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained; whereof he has given assurance to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead" (Acts 17).
- 5.371 Natural morality partakes necessarily of superstition and ignorance unless special revelation clarifies and corrects it.

- 5.372 Contemporary natural law thinkers such as J. Finnis thus make a fatal mistake when they endeavour to set forth natural law theories which allegedly do not require God to exist or to reveal himself.
- 5.3721 This is especially sad when the thinker is himself personally a Christian believer (as in Finnis' case).
- 5.4 *Other inadequate secular solutions to the ethical dilemma include intuitionism, situationism, and contextualism.***
- 5.41 Intuitionism (Plato, H. Sidgwick, G. E. Moore) holds that ethics commences from an incorrigible, indefinable, unanalysable starting point—"the Good" being known directly, without inference from something else and without the possibility (or the necessity) of independent justification; one begins and ends with the perception of universal ethical relationships.
- 5.411 We have already seen the failure of intuition as a general test for truth; it does not suddenly rehabilitate itself because it is brought to bear on ethical questions.
- 5.412 "Whatever the difficulties in this general epistemological theory, in ethics there is the additional difficulty that the common-sense roots of the problem of justification—the inescapable fact of disagreement on fundamental ethical matters—are untouched by the doctrine of intuitionism" (A. Phillips Griffiths).
- 5.42 Situation ethics (J. Fletcher) holds that (1) only one thing is good, and the ultimate norm of decision-making, namely, love; (2) love and justice are the same (justice is love distributed); (3) love wills the neighbour's good; (4) the end justifies the means; and (5) decisions should be made situationally, not prescriptively.
- 5.421 Since in situationism love, justice, and the neighbour's good remain undefined, this ethical theory collapses into pure subjectivism.
- 5.422 We have already seen the dangerously fallacious nature of the notion that the end justifies the means (appropriately held also by Marxist-Leninism).
- 5.4221 To incorporate it formally in one's ethical system is to cut off the limb on which one is sitting.

- 5.423 Since all actions depend on the application of principles (unless they are but subhuman, automatic responses to stimuli), there are no non-prescriptive decisions.
- 5.4231 Prescriptive decisions are of two kinds: (1) the prescriptions are recognised as such and are therefore subject to analysis, criticism, and possible correction; and (2) the prescriptive basis is concealed by talk of “love existentially arising from the situation itself.”
- 5.42311 Scenario (2) yields a highly dangerous kind of decision-making, for there is no rational way of preventing wrongheaded and perverse decisions when they are not open to principled discussion.
- 5.424 Situationism reduces to a naïve utilitarianism (“the greatest good for the greatest number”), with all the problems inherent in utilitarianism, such as:
- 5.4241 The absence of any basis for establishing what is in fact “good” for others (What *they* want or think is good for them? What *I* (or a committee, or a government) believe they want or think is good for them?); and
- 5.4242 Tyranny of the majority, as illustrated by the celebrated eye-bank analogy: Utilitarians would presumably insist that if eye transplants become possible, a democratic vote could legitimate forcing those with two eyes to give up one of their eyes for the utilitarian benefit of citizens blind in both eyes.
- 5.43 Contextual ethics (Paul Lehmann) maintains that proper ethical decisions will arise in the context of community—in religious terms, the “community of faith.”
- 5.431 Such a view painfully begs the question: Will the true community please stand up?
- 5.432 Since (last we heard) *all* human communities are made up of sinful, self-centred, fallen human beings, why should *any* community have a special pipeline to ethical reliability?
- 5.433 Contextual ethics is “decision-making by bladder control” (George Forell).

- 5.4331 This is because, more often than not, the persons who most influence final group decisions are those with the greatest staying power.
- 5.44 What is needed to solve the ultimate problems of ethics and to handle everyday moral quandaries is an absolute set of principles and a way of overcoming human self-centredness; but these are unavailable from humanistic sources, which suffer from finitude and the very moral failings which give rise to ethical dilemmas in the first place.
- 5.5 *Kant's ethic has had remarkable influence since the secular Enlightenment of the 18th century; but it, too, when weighed in the balance is found wanting.*
- 5.51 Kant separated ethics from theology, morals from God: this he believed to be one of his greatest contributions; in fact, it was one of his greatest mistakes.
- 5.52 Though he maintained that God's existence could not be proved (as by the classical, Aristotelian proofs), Kant held that an absolute ethic was able to be demonstrated.
- 5.53 Thus, Kant's categorical imperative: "Act only on that maxim which you can will to be a universal law."
- 5.54 This principle of "universalisability" fails to achieve its ethical end:
- 5.541 The actions permitted by the rule remain undefined, so a perverse individual (a sado-masochist, for example) could well be more than happy to have his activities extended to the world's population and be directed back upon himself.
- 5.542 Ghengis Khan (as representative of the tyrants of this world) would not be persuaded by the categorical imperative to stop raping and pillaging, for he would not agree that he and others are equal members of a common humanity; *they* do not have the strength to rape and pillage *him*, whereas *he* does have the power to treat *them* in such a fashion.
- 5.55 Kant's ethical philosophy collapses due to its rationalistic character: he assumes that human beings will view others as the rational equivalent of themselves and will therefore treat them as they would want to be treated.

- 5.56 Apart from a transformation of the selfish nature of man, such an expectation is entirely unrealistic—even if human beings *were* equal in strength, intelligence, and abilities (which they are not).
- 5.57 For the Kantian approach to work, we would need:
- 5.571 A Creator God who declares every person to have the same ultimate worth as every other person—regardless of empirical differences in personal characteristics; and
- 5.572 A Redeemer God who can transform human hearts so that they will *want* to treat others as themselves.
- 5.6 *In modern legal philosophy and the theory of human rights, attempts have been made to rehabilitate and apply the Kantian ethic; these neo-Kantian efforts succeed no better than the original formulation.***
- 5.61 John Rawls offers a rationalistic, neo-Kantian political philosophy, dependent in part on 17th-18th century contract theories (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau).
- 5.611 For Rawls, human beings placed under a “veil of ignorance” as to their special advantages will, by rationalistic necessity, arrive at his two fundamental Principles of Justice (embracing civil and social rights) and thus establish a rationally-sound political and legal order.
- 5.612 But the last thing members of a fallen race are going to do is to give up—even theoretically, to say nothing of practically—their special advantages, since it is their personal strengths (over against others) which give them the opportunity to exercise their selfishness.
- 5.613 And “even if Rawls’s theorem can be established, the self-interested moral skeptic may still decline to make a once-and-for-all commitment, even to a principle chosen from self-interest. Fidelity to principle is not, after all, deducible from bare formal rationality” (Robert Paul Wolff).
- 5.614 The root problem with Rawls’ rationalism is thus the same as that of his mentor Kant: he assumes that “formal rationality” will yield “fidelity to principle” and other ethical virtues.

- 5.6141 Sinners have a nasty habit of disregarding virtue, even when it would constitute the rational course of action—and even when it would, in the long run, be in their own best interest.
- 5.62 Alan Gewirth applies Kantian universalisation to ethics and concludes that it provides a solid basis for human rights.
- 5.621 He offers the following syllogistic argument:
- (1) Human beings always act purposively.
 - (2) To act purposively, human beings must have freedom (embracing civil and political rights) and well-being (entailing social and economic rights).
 - (3) They must therefore object to the removal of or the interference with their freedom and well-being by others.
 - (4) The ground of one's freedom and well-being is the mere fact that one is a "prospective personal agent"; that ground does not lie in any special strengths or characteristics one may possess.
 - (5) ∴ All prospective personal agents have rights to freedom and well-being; and
 - (6) One ought to act in accord with the generic rights of one's recipients as well as of oneself—thereby establishing the general moral principle:
 - (7) Act in accord with the generic rights of your recipients as well as of yourself.
- 5.622 In respect to crucial consideration (4), Gewirth argues that, were one to reject it and "to insist, instead, that the only reason he has the generic rights is that he has some more restrictive characteristic R [such as] being an American, being a professor, being an *Uebermensch*, being male, being a capitalist or a proletarian, being white, being named 'Wordsworth Donisthorpe,' . . . he would then be in the position of saying that if he did *not* have R, he would *not* have the generic rights."
- 5.6221 Precisely! This is what a fallen human race *always* maintains: that one's special advantages, not one's common humanity, justifies one's actions and special treatment.
- 5.62211 Hegel, for example, asserted that the great men of history are not subject to ordinary moral standards.

- 5.62212 Our favourite ethical example, Ghengis Khan, will be delighted to point out that his right to do whatever he wishes (raping and pillaging) derives from his personal strength and power, not from any quality of prospective personal agent which he shares with others; and that, had he not such strength and power, he would of course become the object, not the subject, of raping and pillaging.
- 5.623 It follows that attempts to justify and strengthen Gewirth's position (e.g., by D. Beyleveld) have not been able successfully to rehabilitate it.
- 5.7 ***The fundamental problem with secular ethical systems was clearly recognised by Wittgenstein: "Die Ethik ist transzendental" (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 6.421).***
- 5.71 Wittgenstein explains this proposition in his posthumously published Lecture on Ethics: "And now I must say that if I contemplate what Ethics really would have to be if there were such a science, this result seems to me quite obvious. It seems to me obvious that nothing we could ever think or say should be *the* thing. That we cannot write a scientific book, the subject matter of which could be intrinsically sublime and above all other subject matters. I can only describe my feeling by the metaphor, that, if a man could write a book on Ethics which really was a book on Ethics, this book would, with an explosion, destroy all the other books in the world."
- 5.72 Wittgenstein here recognises that:
- 5.721 (1) A genuine ethic would have to be an absolute ethic—true for all times and all places.
- 5.7211 Human rights must also have this characteristic: rights must be "inalienable," otherwise what human beings have created for themselves, human beings can take away.
- 5.722 (2) No finite person is capable of providing such absolutes or of writing a book which would contain them.
- 5.723 (3) The only possible source of true ethics would be a transcendental, absolute source; and

5.724 (4) The only genuine book of ethics would be qualitatively different from all other books in the world and would by its very nature “blow them up” by comparison.

5.73 Wittgenstein is here applying to ethics the ancient Archimedean principle that the only way to move the world would be to employ a fulcrum outside the world:



5.731 If the fulcrum were in or on the world, this would be the functional equivalent of trying to pull oneself up by one’s own bootstraps—the result being that one falls on one’s philosophical *derrière*.

5.8 ***The Holy Scriptures constitute that “explosive book” of transcendent origin for which Wittgenstein sought in vain.***

5.81 It is that “pearl of great price,” worth the sale of all the other ethical texts in one’s library in order to obtain it (Matthew 13).

5.82 The Bible provides absolute principles which establish the needed ethical foundation for individual and corporate life; these embrace:

5.821 (1) The Ten Commandments and other permanent moral guidelines of the Old Testament.

5.8211 They do *not* include the civil and ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, which, though genuinely revelatory (as Jesus makes clear), were given to Israel to guide the community until the coming of Messiah.

5.822 (2) The refinement and interiorisation of the Old Testament moral law as provided by Jesus himself and by the New Testament writers.

5.8221 Jesus stresses that the moral law is not fulfilled merely by external conformity to the law, as some of the Pharisees thought; it also and especially requires a right inner attitude of heart (cf. the Sermon on the Mount, etc.).

5.8222 New Testament writers such as Paul and John teach that the greatest motive for ethical conduct is gratitude for what God

has done in giving his Son for our salvation (e.g., Romans 12; 1 John 4).

5.83 The Bible includes in its ethical teachings the foundations for inalienable human rights—both so-called “first generation” rights (civil and political freedoms), “second generation” guarantees (social and economic rights), and even newer rights of the “third generation”:

(1) *Procedural due process*

--Impartiality of tribunals (Malachi 2:9; 1 Timothy 5:21)

--Fair hearing (Exodus 22:9)

--Speedy trial (Ezra 7:26)

--Confrontation of witnesses (Isaiah 43:9)

--No double jeopardy (Nahum 1:9)

(2) *Substantive due process*

--Versus unjust discrimination in general (Acts 10:34; Deuteronomy 16:19; Proverbs 24:23)

--The just and the unjust stand equally before the law (Matthew 5:45)

--Likewise all races and both sexes; condition of servitude irrelevant—vs. slavery (Galatians 3:28; Amos 9:7; Exodus 21:2)

--Likewise rich and poor (James 2:1-7; Amos 5:12; Isaiah 1:16-17)

--Likewise citizens and foreigners (Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 23:22, 24:22; Numbers 9:14, 15:15-16)

--Even the sovereign is under the law (2 Samuel 11-12)

(3) *Miscellaneous Basic 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Generation Rights*

--Right to life, from the moment of conception (Exodus 20:13; Psalm 51:5; Matthew 5:21-22; Luke 1:15, 41)

--Right to family life (1 Timothy 5:8)

--Versus inhuman or degrading treatment/punishment and torture (Luke 6:45)

--Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression, assembly, association, movement (John 7:17)

--Social and economic rights in general (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

--Right to universal education (Deuteronomy 6:7, 11:19)

--Right to work, to a fair remuneration, and to good working conditions—protection of labour (Luke 10:7; 1 Timothy 5:18; Deuteronomy 23:25-26, 24:6, 10, 12-13, 15)

--Right to protection of honour and personal reputation (Exodus 20:16)

--Right to leisure time (Exodus 20:8-11)

--Right to asylum (Exodus 21:13; Joshua 20; 1 Chronicles 6:67, *et al.* (cities of refuge)

--Right to equitable distribution of land (Numbers 33:54; Leviticus 25:14-18, 25-34).

- 5.84 Biblical revelation also yields solid principles of political philosophy to assist a fallen race in organising the common life.
- 5.841 Scripture condemns anarchy; even bad government is better than no government at all (Romans 13).
- 5.842 Scripture likewise condemns totalitarianisms, since they insist on controlling and restricting the God-mandated activities of believers (Acts 5:29).
- 5.843 Scripture recognises the dangers of autocratic rule (1 Samuel 8).
- 5.844 Scripture does not, however, require one particular form of government, whether in the state (monarchy, republic, etc.) or in the church (episcopacy, presbyterianism, congregational autonomy, etc.).
- 5.845 Scripture's insistence on high human rights principles leads to the inescapable conclusion that, whatever its form, any government in accord with revelational standards must not exist to feather its own nest but must manifest the characteristics of an "open society": transparency, accountability, and sensitivity to the public weal (Matthew 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45).
- 5.8451 The existence of a revelational bias in favour of democratic forms of government would therefore appear to be a legitimate inference from the totality of biblical data .
- 5.8452 A further not illegitimate conclusion is that a biblical philosophy of government would support the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights that those who actively promote the

elimination of an open society have no right to function within that society (*Refah Partisi v Turkey*, 31 July 2001).

- 5.8453 To argue, as do the theonomic Reconstructionists (Rushdoony, G. North, G. Bahnsen) that Scripture requires the substitution of theocracy for democracy is absurd: prior to the return of Christ to rule at the end of time, only fallen human beings (the Theonomists themselves?) are available as God's alleged spokespersons.
- 5.84531 Calvin's Geneva, the English Commonwealth, and Puritan New England have amply illustrated that democratic government, with all its failings, is to be preferred to rule by God's self-styled representatives.
- 5.85 Might not one argue that biblical standards of ethics and human rights, even granting their existence, are of little consequence since they do not cover all practical issues or resolve all ethical difficulties: they still have to be applied, and self-centred humans will twist them to their own advantage even as they twist the dictates of conscience and the natural law?
- 5.851 But the fact that biblical pronouncements are already in propositional form means that they are far less subject to misinterpretation and perversion than the unwritten law of nature and the cries of conscience.
- 5.8511 Since the latter are not in propositional form, they must undergo formulation before they can be used; this additional step opens the door to further potential slips between cup and lip.
- 5.852 And: better to have sixty-six books of absolute principles, even though they do not cover everything, than no revelational articulation of ethical principles at all.
- 5.853 And: we have already dealt with the issue of the clarity and perspicuity of Scripture, observing that its declarations are sufficiently precise that avoiding them is not easy.
- 5.854 And: the existence of an objective body of revelational literature means that when a bizarre interpretation is offered which would dull the edge of scriptural morality (e.g., attempts to justify racism by isolated Bible quotations), the matter is open to correction by a vast number of past and present students of the Sacred Writings.

- 5.8541 How much more satisfactory this is when compared with the subjective difficulties attendant on obtaining ethical guidance from conscience or the natural law.
- 5.86 Can it not also be objected that biblical principles themselves may be in conflict in a fallen world, and so do not solve all ethical dilemmas?
- 5.861 For example, the scriptural prohibition against lying, in conflict with the biblical requirement to assist one's neighbour; as when the Nazi arrives at the door asking, "Are there any Jews here?" and you are hiding them to prevent their being taken to death camps (Corrie Ten Boom).
- 5.862 Such ethical difficulties are not assisted by convoluted attempts to establish a hierarchy of ethical principles in Scripture, allegedly permitting one to violate "lower" ones whilst holding to "higher" ones—and thereby avoid sinning.
- 5.8621 "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all" (James 2:10).
- 5.8622 The prime purpose of the law, as we shall see later, is not to make possible our "pulling out a plum and saying, 'What a good boy am I'": it is rather to remind us of our fallen condition, so as to drive us to the Cross for the only forgiveness possible.
- 5.863 We are, therefore, in the rare instances of such conflicts, to "sin bravely and go to the Cross bravely" (Luther).
- 5.8631 In the hiding place incident, this means evaluating, by the general sweep of biblical teaching, the relative damage to be done by lying to Nazis versus turning Jews over to almost certain death; the conclusion (one fervently hopes) will be exceedingly persuasive lying, followed by fervent admission at the Cross of one's involvement in a tragically sinful world.
- 5.864 The ethical difficulties in these boundary situations arise not from a deficiency in the ethical teachings of the Bible (after all, *both* refusing to assist your neighbour *and* lying are clearly wrong!): their source lies in the hopelessly messy world we ourselves have produced owing to our individual and corporate sinfulness.
- 5.865 To choose the "lesser of evils" is not to fall into situation ethics.

- 5.8651 The situationist never experiences a conflict of principles, for she recognises *no* principles in ethical decision-making (only “love,” which, as we have seen, remains undefined and subjectively capable of alignment with virtually any moral interpretation).
- 5.8652 The biblical ethicist, however, is faced with conflicting principles, revealed as absolute by Scripture, which in an unfallen world would not be in conflict at all; her problem is to conform as fully to God’s will as the human catastrophe will allow, and at the same time to seek forgiveness for her Adamic and personal contribution to that catastrophe.
- 5.87 The provision of absolute ethical guidelines in Holy Writ does not turn a broken world into the land of Oz, but it does provide the only solid basis for an individual and societal ethic which overcomes the relativity of human opinion as to standards of right and wrong.
- 5.9 *The most serious deterrent to ethical conduct and to the acceptance of human dignity is not the secular absence of principles per se but the lack of motivation to do good: here, only the Christian message offers a sound solution.***
- 5.91 Plato, on the basis of his positive view of human nature, believed that knowledge alone would produce goodness—that if we know what is right, we will do it.
- 5.911 We have already seen the centrality of that conviction to the rationalistic tradition (Kant, the neo-Kantians, *et al.*).
- 5.912 Rousseau (*Emile*), in line with Plato’s maieutic belief that knowledge is inherent in mankind and that the teacher needs only to assist its birth (as a midwife brings forth a child from the pregnant mother), held that pupils should be allowed unlimited choice to achieve maximal educational development.
- 5.913 John Dewey and the so-called progressive education movement operated essentially with this philosophy of education.
- 5.92 The results of maieutic rationalism have not been encouraging.
- 5.921 A French nobleman of Rousseau’s time declared: “I have assiduously followed the precepts of *Emile* in the education of my son; he has just reached his majority—and he is an imbecile.”

- 5.922 Two generations of American and British beneficiaries of progressive education can neither spell nor write decent English.
- 5.93 Psychoanalytic theory, whatever its particular manifestation (Freud, Adler, Jung, Horney, Lacan) insists that, below the level of the conscious mind, there lies a dark unconscious, and that the will is very often influenced far more by it than by rational considerations.
- 5.931 Query: How does a psychoanalyst differ from a coal miner?
Answer: The psychoanalyst goes down deeper, stays down longer, and comes up dirtier.
- 5.94 Biblical revelation declares that the fallen creature's fundamental problem is a lack of motivation to do what is right (indeed, a penchant to do what is wrong), even when she rationally knows the truth and the difference between right and wrong.
- 5.941 "The devils believe [in one God]" (James 2).
- 5.942 "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7).
- 5.95 The provision of absolute revelational standards of ethics is therefore a necessary *but not a sufficient* condition of individual and social morality.
- 5.96 Such standards must be accompanied by a mechanism to change human hearts so that they will indeed "love the neighbour as themselves."
- 5.961 The claim, in Marxism and in liberal Western social reform, to achieve such a change by altering the means of production or by improving the external environment, has never produced the desired effects.
- 5.9611 Marxists, in spite of their high ideals, and because of their false beliefs—"the end justifies the means," etc.—have committed horrendous human rights violations.
- 5.9612 Western social reformers have replaced slums with better housing and have then seen that housing turned into new slums, owing to the fact that the value systems of the occupants remain the same.

- 5.9613 Educational programmes in prisons often produce more educated and well-trained criminals.
- 5.97 It follows that, as the aphorism puts it, “What the world needs is not more good advice, but *Good News*.”
- 5.971 The New Testament word for Gospel (*euangelion*) means, literally, “good news.”
- 5.98 Christian faith offers not merely the finest moral example—Jesus Christ himself—but also the possibility of redemption and a genuine change of motivation (“conversion”) so that Jesus’ example can be followed in practice (1 Peter 2:21).
- 5.981 “Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin. If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8).
- 5.982 “If any person is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5; cf. H. Drummond).
- 5.9821 The mechanism of new creaturehood is the presence of God the Holy Spirit in the believer’s heart: “He [the Holy Spirit] shall glorify me [Christ], for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16).
- 5.99 The result: the Christian believer becomes a “little Christ to his neighbour” (Luther; cf. George Forell, *Faith Active in Love*).
- 5.991 God’s grace in Christ touches the world at the point of the redeemed sinner, spreading out from her to those whose wounds need to be bound up.
- 5.992 At the same time, “no Christian is more than one day old” (Kierkegaard).
- 5.9921 Since the believer remains *simul justus et peccator*—justified and yet still a sinner—it is essential that she return to the Cross continually.
- 5.9922 Perfection is not attainable in this life (*pace* Wesley and his “Holiness” followers).
- 5.9923 Those who believe that they have attained perfection have either (1) lowered God’s standards to their own condition, or (2) unrealistically inflated the moral quality of their inner and outer conduct.

- 5.993 Granting all the deficiencies in the walk of Christians, one must agree with the empirical evidence that they have been more responsible for ameliorating social evils than has any other group in human history (K. S. Latourette).
- 5.9931 Christians have motivated, *inter alia*, the first orphans' homes and hospices, the Red Cross, the abolition of slavery, the elevation of women, charity in general, literacy and public education, the common and civil law traditions, the modern university, etc., etc. (A. J. Schmidt).
- 5.994 We conclude, therefore, that both in theory and in practice, transcendent Christian revelation provides the only justifiable answers to the ultimate questions of ethics and human worth.

6 The Christian revelation satisfies the deepest general and particular longings of the human heart.

6.1 On the personal level, human beings long to attain:

- 6.11 A sound value system;
- 6.12 An integrated personality;
- 6.13 Genuine fellowship;
- 6.14 The assurance that life has purpose;
- 6.15 Ultimate fulfillment.

6.2 For a value system to be sound, it must be true.

- 6.21 For it to be true, it must derive from a transcendent source (as we have seen).
- 6.22 It follows that Christian revelation offers the only value system which can, even in principle, satisfy epistemological requirements.
- 6.23 To choose any other value system is to choose the ideological product of fallible, tainted, fallen humanity; such value systems, though they may contain useful elements, will necessarily partake of the qualities of their origin.
- 6.24 False value system are idolatrous, and idols never satisfy.
- 6.241 "Every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They

are vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish” (Jeremiah 10, 51).

6.242 “What profits the graven image that the maker thereof has graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusts therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that says to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach!” (Habakkuk 2).

6.3 *Depth psychology and religious phenomenology reinforce the biblical claim that only God’s way of salvation can provide the integrated personality for which we seek.*

6.31 Lacan, though heavily dependent on Freud, nonetheless saw the self-centred heart of the fallen human condition.

6.311 He speaks of the *ne rien vouloir savoir*—the analysand’s refusal at all costs to face both her psychological condition and the mechanisms she employs to retain and cultivate those neuroses which are destroying her.

6.32 Carl Gustav Jung offers valuable insight into the universal needs of mankind and the necessary conditions for meeting them.

6.321 Jung’s analytical work led him to reject Freud’s reductionist materialism: the latter’s attempt to explain all human motivation by way of the *libido* (the life-urge) or the *mortido* (the death-wish).

6.322 Jung identified, across the human landscape (from the physical liturgies of ancient alchemists to the dreams of contemporary businessmen and Zurich bankers), the existence of a common psychic life consisting of universal symbolic patterns, the “archetypes of the collective unconscious.”

6.3221 “Mythological research calls them ‘motifs’; in the psychology of primitives they correspond to Lévy-Bruhl’s concept of ‘représentations collectives,’ and in the field of comparative religion they have been defined by Hubert and Mauss as ‘categories of the imagination.’ Adolf Bastian long ago called them ‘elementary’ or ‘primordial thoughts’” (Jung).

6.3222 Archetypes include the Old Wise Man (a God symbol), the Earth Mother, the Persona (the social mask behind which

dwells the true ego), the Shadow (one's infantile, dark side), etc.

- 6.323 Jung saw the human being as a fractured personality needing a *conjunctio oppositorum*: her brokenness healed, her fractured psychic elements rejoined
- 6.324 Healing—"individuation" in Jungian terminology—is possible through redemptive "symbols of transformation," chief of which is the Cross (for Jung, understood psychologically, to be sure).
- 6.33 In recognising valid psychoanalytical insights concerning human motivation we need not, and do not, commit ourselves to psychological determinism—with all its difficulties as set forth earlier.
- 6.34 Religious phenomenologists such as Mircea Eliade have discovered Jungian archetypal patterns in the most widely diversified primitive and sophisticated religions.
- 6.341 Describing one such pattern, Eliade writes: "At the 'beginning' as well as at the 'end' of the religious history of Man, we find the same 'yearning for Paradise.' If we take into account the fact that the 'yearning for Paradise' is equally discernible in the general religious attitude of early man we have the right to assume that the mystical memory of a blessedness without history haunts man from the moment he becomes aware of his situation in the cosmos."
- 6.35 These common psychic patterns cannot be explained away as the product of cultural borrowing; they evidently "bubble up" from the depths of the human consciousness, regardless of race or geography.
- 6.36 What the patterns make clear is that your inner needs are essentially the same as my inner needs—and those of the human race as a whole—and that those needs are the very ones for which biblical religion offers a solution.
- 6.361 Over against existentialism and postmodernism, which, like Leibniz, view each individual as a "monad without windows," it becomes evident that when I tell you my story, you are listening to your own story.

- 6.4** ***Common myths and folktales of the world manifest fundamental archetypal patterns and offer literary reinforcement to the scriptural picture of man as a creature in need of salvation.***
- 6.41 There is an “astounding similarity between myths collected in widely different regions” of the world (C. Lévi-Strauss).
- 6.411 The commonality of motifs in the world’s folktales is demonstrated by Stith Thompson’s *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*.
- 6.412 On analysing recurrent mythical themes in fifty cultures on the basis of Murdock’s “world ethnographic sample,” Kluckhohn and Moench found one of the most common myths to be the archetype of the Flood—in which, by grace, a few are saved from global catastrophe.
- 6.42 In the common folktale of “Sleeping Beauty,” a Princess is put into a deathlike trance by the machinations of an evil Witch; impenetrable brambles grow up around the Princess’s castle; and all is restored only when, in fulfillment of a prophecy, a Prince comes and raises her up with the kiss of love; this is followed by a marriage feast and the declaration that “they lived happily ever after.”
- 6.421 The Princess = the human race; the Witch = the devil; the Prince = Christ.
- 6.422 Incorporated into this tale is the Fall of man, with its consequences for the entire physical world; the act of transcendent, divine redemption; and the marriage supper of the Lamb at the end of time.
- 6.423 It will be observed that, being “dead,” the Princess cannot save herself, nor can anyone in the castle save her, since they are immobilised along with her; salvation must (and does) come *from outside* the world represented by the castle.
- 6.424 Noteworthy also is the fact that folktales begin with the timeless formula, “Once upon a time . . .” (“*Il y a une fois . . .*”); the Gospel story—which fulfils them—commences in real history with the words, “And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus . . .”

6.43 “I was by now too experienced in literary criticism to regard the Gospels as myths. They had not the mythical taste. And yet the very matter which they set down in their artless, historical fashion—those narrow, unattractive Jews, too blind to the mythical wealth of the Pagan world around them—was precisely the matter of the great myths. If ever a myth had become fact, had been incarnated, it would be just like this. Myths were like it in one way. Histories were like it in another. But nothing was simply like it. And no person was like the Person it depicted; as real, as recognisable, through all that depth of time, as Plato’s Socrates or Boswell’s Johnson (ten times more so than Eckermann’s Goethe or Lockhart’s Scott), yet also numinous, lit by a light from beyond the world, a god. But if a god—we are no longer polytheists—then not a god, but God. Here and here only in all time the myth must become fact; the Word, flesh; God, Man. This is not ‘a religion,’ nor ‘a philosophy.’ It is the summing up and actuality of them all” (C. S. Lewis).

6.44 “The Gospels contain . . . a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories. They contain many marvels—peculiarly artistic, beautiful, and moving; ‘mythical’ in their perfect, self-contained significance; and at the same time powerfully symbolic and allegorical; and among the marvels is the greatest and most complete conceivable eucatastrophe. The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man’s history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy. It has pre-eminently the ‘inner consistency of reality.’ There is no tale ever told that men would rather find was true, and none which so many sceptical men have accepted as true on its own merits. For the Art of it has the supremely convincing tone of Primary Art, that is, of Creation. To reject it leads either to sadness or to wrath.

“It is not difficult to imagine the peculiar excitement and joy that one would feel, if any specially beautiful fairy-story were found to be ‘primarily’ true, its narrative to be history, without thereby necessarily losing the mythical or allegorical significance that it had possessed. . . . The joy would have exactly the same quality, if not the same degree, as the joy which the ‘turn’ in a fairy-story gives: such has the very taste of pri-

mary truth. (Otherwise its name would not be joy.) It looks forward (or backward: the direction in this regard is unimportant) to the Great Eucatastrophe. The Christian joy, the Gloria, is of the same kind; but it is pre-eminently (infinitely, if our capacity were not finite) high and joyous. Because this story is supreme; and it is true. Art has been verified. God is the Lord, of angels, and of men—and of elves. Legend and History have met and fused” (J. R. R. Tolkien).

6.441 “The direction is unimportant”: and so those in Old Testament times, such as Abraham, who looked forward to Messiah’s coming, were saved by him though the Incarnation occurred much later (Romans 4; Hebrews 11).

6.4411 And: we may legitimately speculate that “God our Saviour, who would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2; cf. 2 Peter 3) may offer at the moment of death an opportunity to accept or reject Christ to those who, through no fault of their own, were unable to hear or understand his word during their earthly lives.

6.44111 But since “no person comes to the Father but through Christ”—according to Jesus’ own words (John 14)—the claim that anyone can be saved simply by “living according to one’s best lights” is utterly wrong, even when this belief is set forth as official teaching by a church body.

6.44112 Nor does it follow that a “second chance” is given to those who reject the Saviour in this world (Hebrews 9:27).

6.45 The combined weight of psychology and the mythopoeic confirms Augustine’s declaration that “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee.”

6.5 *Biblical revelation describes the human problem in terms far more specific—and far starker—than do the best psychological and literary analyses.*

6.51 According to the Bible, the entire fallen race suffers from:

6.511 Sin;

6.512 Death;

6.513 The devil; and

6.514 The law.

- 6.52 “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one” (Romans 3; Psalms 14 and 53).
- 6.53 “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6).
- 6.531 “To sleep! perchance to dream; ay, there’s the rub; / For in that sleep of death what dreams may come, / When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, / Must give us pause” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*).
- 6.54 “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Timothy 5).
- 6.541 It is often a poor excuse to say, “The devil made me do it”: but not always.
- 6.542 Powerful empirical evidence has been collected as to the effects of occultic and demonic activity (e.g., K. Koch, *Seelsorge und Okultismus*).
- 6.55 “The law works wrath: for where there is no law, there is no transgression” (Romans 4).
- 6.551 Law—whether exterior or interior, secular or religious—reminds us that we always fall short of ideal standards.
- 6.56 Like Bunyan’s Pilgrim, we carry a horrendous weight upon our back, and neither we ourselves nor any of our fellow sufferers can remove it from us.
- 6.57 Like Sisyphus, we struggle up the mountain of secular solutions for the human dilemma, only to find that the rock of our misery has rolled back down again, leaving us exactly where we were before.
- 6.58 Like the architects of the Tower of Babel, not only do we not reach heaven in spite of our best efforts, but our exhausting labours leave us worse off than we were before, with our language more and more confused (Genesis 11).
- 6.581 “All philosophy is a ‘critique of language’” (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.0031).

- 6.6** *The biblical answer to the quest for an integrated personality centres on the truth that wholeness is impossible without a personal recognition of the true problem and an acceptance of the transcendental solution for it.*
- 6.61 No-one will take a remedy unless she is convinced that she is suffering from a malady.
- 6.611 “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Jesus, in Matthew 9).
- 6.62 And no-one will pay a physician if she thinks that she can cure herself.
- 6.63 Here, the proper distinction between law and gospel is critical.
- 6.631 “The difference between the Law and the Gospel is the height of knowledge in Christendom. Every person and all persons who assume or glory in the name of Christ should know and be able to state this difference” (Luther, WA, 36, 25).
- 6.64 Law tells us what we should do; gospel tells us what God has graciously done for us when we could not help ourselves.
- 6.641 “By ‘Law,’ we should understand nothing but God’s Word and command by which he tells us what we are to do and not to do and demands our obedience or work. . . . The Gospel is such a doctrine or Word of God as does not demand our works or command us to do anything but bids us simply receive the offered grace of the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation and be satisfied to have it given to us as a free gift” (Luther, WA, 30-31).
- 6.65 To attempt to save oneself by a vain attempt to fulfil the law is to absorb gospel into law; to think that gospel allows one to dispense with the law is to absorb law into gospel.
- 6.651 The latter fallacy was well characterised by Bonhoeffer as the manifestation of “cheap grace.”
- 6.66 Properly distinguishing law from gospel is essential to “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2), i.e., correctly understanding the biblical message of salvation.
- 6.6601 Worrying about the presence of an item numbered 6.66 is an affront to biblical eschatology.
- 6.661 “The Word of God is not rightly divided when sinners who have been struck down and terrified by the Law are directed,

not to the Word and the Sacraments, but to their own prayers and wrestlings with God in order that they may win their way into a state of grace; in other words, when they are told to keep on praying and struggling until they feel that God has received them into grace” (C. F. W. Walther, Thesis IX).

- 6.662 “The Word of God is not rightly divided when one makes an appeal to believe in a manner as if a person could make himself believe or at least help towards that end, instead of preaching faith into a person’s heart by laying the Gospel promises before him” (Walther, Thesis XIII).
- 6.663 “The Word of God is not rightly divided when the preacher tries to make people believe that they are truly converted as soon as they have become rid of certain vices and engage in certain works of piety and virtuous practises” (Walther, Thesis XVI).
- 6.67 “What must I do to be saved? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved” (Acts 16).
- 6.671 The Greek text in such passages employs the preposition *eis* (“into”), where the translations use merely “in” or “on”; the point of the original wording is that belief is not simply a matter of intellectual assent but of *entering into a personal relationship* with the Christ who saves.
- 6.6711 The same point is made by the classical dogmaticians when they distinguish between *notitia* (faith as intellectual knowledge of the truth) and *assensus* (faith as the individual’s formal assent to truth) on the one hand, and *fiducia* (faith as personal, saving trust in Christ) on the other (Gerhard, Chemnitz, Quenstedt).
- 6.672 Why does personal trust in Christ save? Because only he can atone for the sinful self-centredness of a fallen race.
- 6.6721 As a human being, he was able to serve as genuine representative of all mankind; as true God, he could sacrificially take the sins of the entire race on himself, receive the death penalty those sins had merited, and thereby free us from the judgment we richly deserved (cf. Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo?*; D. Chytraeus, *De sacrificiis*).

- 6.67211 But this gift will not be forced on those who think that they do not need it or suppose that they can save themselves.
- 6.67212 A cheque, even if drawn on a solvent bank account, will do the recipient no good if he refuses to cash it, believing that it is of no value to him.
- 6.6722 As God almighty come to earth, only Christ could conquer the evil powers arrayed against fallen humanity (cf. Aulén, *Christus Victor*).
- 6.67221 “The King of all . . . has come into our country and dwelt in one body amidst the many, and in consequence the designs of the enemy against mankind have been foiled, and the corruption of death, which formerly held them in its power, has ceased to be” (Athanasius, *De incarnatione Verbi Dei*).
- 6.6723 “You cannot call Christ redeemer without calling him God—for a man cannot save you” (Wittgenstein, *Denkbewegungen: Tagebücher* [2000 ed.], para. 145).
- 6.68 The law has three functions, but Luther was entirely correct that its chief use is that of “schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.”
- 6.681 “The Law has three uses, the Political, the Elenchtico-pedagogical, and the Didactic. By the Political use is meant the use of the law as a curb to hold in check wicked men, and to protect society against their aggressions. By the Elenchtico-pedagogical use is meant its use to convict men of sin and thus indirectly to lead them to Christ (Gal. 3:24). This use of the Law refers primarily to the unconverted. But there is an Elenchtico-pedagogical use of the Law even for the regenerate, inasmuch as the Christian’s life should be a daily repentance, and the law enables him to see his daily shortcomings and his need of Christ more and more clearly. The Didactic use of the law is its use as a guide for the Christian mind and conduct” (J. Stump).
- 6.682 The word translated “schoolmaster” in Galatians 3:24 is *paidagogos*, which referred not to a teacher as such, but to the slave who brought the child to his teacher.
- 6.683 *Lex semper accusat*; but
- 6.69 “Him who comes to me [Jesus] I will in no wise cast out” (John 6).

- 6.7 *Genuine fellowship requires mutual respect and love, cemented by a common value system.*
- 6.71 Mutual respect is present where those involved are willing to take themselves as they really are, without pretence of being more than they really are.
- 6.72 Only the gospel makes it possible for humans to see themselves as God sees them: sinners saved by grace.
- 6.73 Only the gospel makes it possible to love the unlovely, since “we love because he [God in Christ] first loved us.”
- 6.74 The higher the common values, the better the fellowship.
- 6.741 In principle, therefore, the church should offer the best possibility for genuine fellowship.
- 6.75 The church exists where “the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments are administered in accordance with it” (*Augsburg Confession*, Art. 7).
- 6.751 The gospel is expressly defined in biblical revelation as: “that by which you are being saved if you keep it in remembrance . . . how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15).
- 6.752 To make “obedience” a mark of the church is to confuse law and gospel.
- 6.753 But not to discipline false doctrine in the church is to defeat the very reason for its existence; indeed, a church which cannot identify and root out heresy is a church which no longer understands orthodoxy.
- 6.754 The presence of false teaching per se does not make a church apostate, since human teachers will never be perfect; what does constitute apostasy is the unwillingness of a church to discipline false teaching once it has been recognised as such.
- 6.76 The outward form and organisation of the church (whether “established” or “free”) must be seen as secondary to its central purpose, which is to “preach the gospel to every creature”—to “teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”
- 6.761 The purpose of the church is not fellowship per se.

- 6.762 The church is neither a spiritual Rotary Club, Alcoholics' Anonymous, nor Moose Lodge.
- 6.763 The church is not primarily an organisation for the amelioration of societal woes.
- 6.764 If the church does its proper business, namely, the preaching of the gospel for the salvation of souls, the inevitable byproducts of this operation will be fellowship within and societal amelioration without.
- 6.77 Historic, liturgical churches have the great advantage of maximally benefiting from the spiritual heritage and experiences of believers through the ages.
- 6.771 But, even when a church is poverty-stricken in its forms of worship and less than ideal in its governmental structure, the Christian's evaluation of it must in the last analysis be positive insofar as it is preaching the gospel.
- 6.772 "Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense or in truth Christ is preached, therein I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Philippians 1).
- 6.773 Rejoicing does not, of course, necessitate personal attendance where the style of worship sets (so to speak) the children's teeth on edge.
- 6.774 Christians are "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together" (Hebrews 10), but, fortunately, one can—and should—choose the assembly which best reflects the totality of Christian experience and most fully proclaims "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20).
- 6.78 *Ecclesiolae in ecclesiis* are to be discouraged, for they can fragment the church; but the special relationships of believers whose spiritual objectives and concerns are identical can be a foretaste of heaven.
- 6.781 Thus J. V. Andreae's ideal of the *Societas Christiana*; thus, the Oxford Inklings; and thus the dedication of this book.

- 6.8 ***Christianity provides the only verifiable assurance that life has eternal purpose.***
- 6.81 “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: you are of more value than many sparrows” (Jesus in Luke 12 and Matthew 10).
- 6.82 Without this assurance from the Christ who himself made all things (John 1, Colossians 1), we would have no reason to think that our minute lives on a minute planet in a minute solar system were worth anything cosmically.
- 6.821 Hobbes, from his atheistic perspective, accurately described human life as “nasty, poor, brutish and short.”
- 6.822 Joe (of *Show Boat*) touchingly expresses the misery of pointless human existence: “Ah gets weary an’ sick of tryin’, / Ah’m tired of livin’ an’ skeered of dyin’, / But Ol’ man river he jus’ keeps rollin’ along” (Oscar Hammerstein II).
- 6.83 But we are assured that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8).
- 6.831 This means that, for believers, God brings the best out of every situation in their lives.
- 6.832 God does not override their freewill, and they are subject to the consequences of their sins; but God in his providence makes sure that the end results are maximised for their good.
- 6.8321 This point of theodicy is sensitively made by novelist Thornton Wilder in *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and, more especially, *The Eighth Day*.
- 6.8322 Wittgenstein “perceived the possibility of religious belief” in contemplating the state of mind in which one says, “I am safe, nothing can injure me whatever happens” (cf. Psalm 23). He “thought that ‘the experience of absolute safety’ was connected with the idea of ‘feeling safe in the hands of God’” (Norman Malcolm).
- 6.84 No such promise is provided for those who do not love God.
- 6.841 Their lives operate purposelessly—both in time and in eternity.

- 6.85 Voltaire (*Candide*) rightly lampooned Leibniz's claim that macrocosmically this is "the best of all possible worlds"; but, for the Christian believer, microcosmically, that is precisely what it is.
- 6.86 It is hard to imagine a greater reason to accept the gift of salvation offered by a God who went to the Cross to provide it for us.
- 6.9 *The validated Christian message assures us of ultimate fulfillment.***
- 6.901 The fairy tales of the world attest our deepest desire to "live happily ever after."
- 6.91 Even in this life, after his appalling miseries, Job's "latter end was blessed by the Lord more than his beginning" (Job 42).
- 6.92 "Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life: he who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11).
- 6.921 How vacuous humanist consolations such as genetic immortality ("Your children are your future")!
- 6.93 "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21).
- 6.94 For the believer, the "inside" of Narnia is far greater than the "outside," and no good thing shall ever ultimately be lost (C. S. Lewis).
- 6.941 "Paradise is somewhere and not anywhere, is something and not anything. And I would not be so very much surprised if the house in heaven had a real green lamp-post after all" (G. K. Chesterton).
- 6.95 Judgment at the end of time assures us that all wrongs will be righted and that the Mengeles of this world will not finally "get away with it."

- 6.951 “In a conversation between Drury and Wittgenstein in 1949, Drury had mentioned a doctrine of Origen, according to which ‘at the end of time there would be a final restitution of all things. That even Satan and the fallen angels would be restored to their former glory.’ Drury then added that this conception ‘was at once condemned as heretical.’ Wittgenstein replied: ‘Of course it was rejected. It would make nonsense of everything else. If what we do now is to make no difference in the end, then all the seriousness of life is done away with’” (Norman Malcolm).
- 6.96 All of these promises rest on the solid, factual foundation of Jesus’ historical Incarnation: they represent mankind’s deepest longings, but, far from being mere “wish-fulfillment,” they constitute God’s loving realisation of his purposes for us established before the foundation of the world.
- 6.961 True, we do not—indeed, cannot—have direct evidence of eschatological truths, but we have the assurance of Jesus, who conquered death.
- 6.9611 Verification can be analogised to the construction of a building: one does not need, and it would be irrational to demand, supports under every portion of the roof; what is required is *sufficient* support, e.g., under each of the roof’s four corners (W. Van Orman Quine).
- 6.962 On the basis of verifiable divine revelation, represented by the living and the written Word, we may have confidence in an ultimate and most certain fulfillment of human life.
- 6.97 “Honour and thanks to God
 Who wrought this world’s creation,
 To taste of heavenly joy
 In death and tribulation.
 Him praise we while we live,
 And on his will attend,
 Until we there arrive
 Where song shall have no end.”
 --J. S. Bach

6.98 “As bright the star of morning gleams,
So Jesus sheddeth glorious beams
Of light and consolation.
Thy word, O Lord,
Radiance darting,
Truth imparting
Gives salvation;
Thine be praise and adoration!”
--F. Mendelssohn, after Ph. Nicolai

6.99 “From the Throne of His Cross, the King of grief
Cries out to a world of unbelief:
Oh! men and women, afar and nigh,
Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?

O come unto Me—this awful price,
Redemption’s tremendous sacrifice—
Is paid for you—Oh, why will ye die?
Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?”
--W. J. Sparrow-Simpson, libretto to Stainer’s *Crucifixion*

7 Whereof one *can* speak, thereof one must *not* be silent.

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