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‘Science and Religion: Exploring the Spectrum’ Life Story
Interviews

Richard Swinburne

Interviewed by Paul Merchant

C1672/15

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The British Library**National Life Stories****Interview Summary Sheet****Title Page****Ref no:** C1672/15**Collection title:** 'Science and Religion: Exploring the Spectrum' Life Story Interviews**Interviewee's surname:** Swinburne**Title:** Professor**Interviewee's forename:** Richard**Sex:** Male**Occupation:** Professor of Philosophy**Date and place of birth:** 26th December, 1934,
Smethwick, Birmingham
Father's occupation: teacher and schools music
advisory teacher**Mother's occupation:** secretary**Dates of recording, Compact flash cards used, tracks (from – to):**

27/10/2015 (track 1), 01/12/2015 (track 2), 07/01/2016 (track 3), 09/02/2016 (track 4), 03/03/2016 (track 5)

Location of interview: Interviewee's home, Oxford**Name of interviewer:** Paul Merchant**Type of recorder:** Marantz PMD661 on compact flash**Recording format :** audio file 12 WAV 24 bit 48 kHz 2-channel**Total no. of tracks** 5**Mono or stereo:** Stereo**Total Duration:** 9 hrs. 06 min. 42 sec.**Additional material:****Copyright/Clearance:** Sections of track 2 (between 5:37-5:47) and of track 3 (between 8:37-8:42 and 9:16-9:28)
closed for thirty years until 13 December 2046; otherwise open**Interviewer's comments:**

Track 1

Could you start then by telling me when and where you were born?

I was born in Smethwick, which is a suburb of Birmingham, on twenty-sixth of December, 1934.

And as much as you can about the life of your father?

My father was William Henry Swinburne, but was a schoolteacher for much of his life, but he was a musician and taught music in schools, but he ceased to be a fulltime schoolteacher by... in about 1946 when he became adviser on musical education to the Essex County Council. I think they were the first county council to appoint a music adviser to advise on the teaching in schools. And he did that for many years, but he then became head of a polytechnic, I suppose you'd call it, Colchester Technical College, where he ran a large music department, the only one, I think, in a college of that kind. And he retired, I suppose, when he was about seventy.

What did you know of his childhood?

Goodness. Er, well he was brought up in Lowestoft. That's about as much as I know of his childhood. His father was, I think he worked in a foundry as a manual labourer, or something a bit superior to that, for some time, but he did many jobs. When I knew my paternal grandfather he was running an off-licence, that's to say a shop for selling alcohol.

Did you know both of those paternal grandparents yourself?

Yes. Both paternal grandparents? I've only got one paternal grandparent... Oh, I see! Parents, yes, yes. My grandmother. Yes, though she died about 1948, I suppose, or nine. Sure, yeah.

Do you have memories of time spent with the grandfather or the grandmother on that side?

Well, we went to see them sometimes. They lived in various places, but during the war they ran a shop in Shoreditch, which is east London, in an area that was much blitzed and my mother and I sometimes went over to see them on Saturday mornings, yeah.

[03:17]

Could you then do something similar for the life of your mother?

Yes. She worked as a secretary before she got married and had me and when I went away to boarding school she worked again as a secretary.

And again, her childhood, did you come to know anything about that?

Yes. I imagine that she met my father in East Anglia, in Lowestoft. Her father was an optician, but when I knew him he had retired and they'd moved to Bournemouth, but we went to see them sometimes.

[04:09]

What memories do you have as a younger child of time spent with your father, things done with him? Places been with him?

Not very much. I was much more closely connected to my mother. My father was very involved in his musical activities and my parents' marriage was not a happy one. But my father took - when I was seven, eight, nine, that sort of thing - took me to a few things. He played the organ in a Congregational Church and I remember him taking me to sit in the organ loft, which I found very exciting, lots and lots of pipes and so on that small children could get under, but big people couldn't. And yes, during the war he was, helped to run a cadet, whatever you call it, platoon, brigade or whatever, at the school that he was teaching at and I remember him taking me to the shooting range and teaching me to shoot, at the age of eight or something. Which Americans can understand but British people can't.

[05:38]

Did you visit outdoor places locally or further afield?

With my mother, yes indeed. She took me to... she used to take me canoeing on the river at Dedham, I should say we lived most of our life in Colchester. We only... Smethwick was an accident; my father just had a temporary teaching job there and after six months or nine months they moved to Colchester where I was based for most of my childhood.

And can you say more about time spent with your mother? You said that you were closer to your mother, the sorts of things that she would do with you, even the sorts of things that she would say to you, if you can remember in that detail?

My memories are not very good. Not because there's anything I sweep under the carpet, but because I don't think about the past very much, and if you don't think about the past very much, you forget about it. But I know that most of the things I did, I did with my mother. And yes, she used to take me on picnics, I remember that. We're talking about the time when I would be seven, eight, nine. We were pretty poor; it was wartime and so there weren't many places to go to and we didn't have much money to go there. And most of the things I did, I suppose, at that stage, I did with those of my age.

What sort of things then did you do with other children?

Goodness. Can't remember. There was a time when I had a printing set. There was a time when - I did read quite a bit and I used to keep big scrapbooks of things cut out of the newspapers and so on, mostly political

events which interest me, and of course it was the war, and everybody was interested in what's happening then. I'm sorry, my memory is just more or less blank on most of these things.

This isn't untypical, this is very good, thank you.

[08:30]

Your home in Colchester, was it the same house throughout your childhood?

It was the same flat, and I should say that at the age of ten I was diagnosed with possible TB. As a result of that I spent most of the next year in bed. I think I sort of got used to being in bed, so I wasn't very anxious to get up again. But I did eventually and when I did, I then went – my mother obviously wanted me to, because she thought that would be the best for me – to go to boarding school, so I went to a preparatory school for a year and a half and after that to Charterhouse Public School. So at that point I really had very little connection with Colchester. I went back in the holidays and then I knew nobody and just read my books and did my scrapbooks and so on and I was pretty lonely as a child at that stage.

[09:52]

Do you remember the flat in enough detail to take us on a tour of it, saying what you can remember about where people were, tended to be in the flat? I don't know whether you had any siblings?

No, no siblings at all, I was an only child. Well, it was two floors upstairs, there was the owner of the flat lived in the two floors below, that's to say the ground floor and a basement. And, well, there was a kitchen – it was quite a large flat really – it had a large sitting and dining room and a large study where my father had his piano and his many musical things. Then upstairs there were three bedrooms: one for me, one for my parents and one a spare room.

When you picture your mother in that flat, what do you see her doing?

Well, she liked to read. She liked to read French books, literature. She regretted being a secretary, she would have liked to go to university and she liked literary things. But her father didn't think that was a suitable occupation, going to university was a suitable occupation for girls, so he wasn't prepared to back that. Well, of course she did the domestic things and she was very focussed on me and making life very comfortable for me, especially when I was in bed.

[11:37]

But when I went away to boarding school, she did continue as a secretary, because I think the arrangement with my father was, my father didn't really approve of private education, the arrangement was that if she went and earned the money, that would pay for my private education. So even in the holidays she worked Monday to Friday in the daytime. Sometimes when I was away at school she worked as a secretary in London and only came back to Colchester at the weekends, but of course during the holidays she would commute every day to see me and so on.

[12:26]

You said that you don't think that your parents' marriage was a happy one. Why did you say that?

[recording stops and restarts]

[12:37]

Did you at any point get a sense of what your parents wanted for you in terms of the kind of person that they wanted you to become? So this is sort of their view of, I suppose, the right kind of morality that you might follow or things that they would approve of if you did them and things that they would disapprove of if you did them, that sort of question?

Yes. Well, I say, my mother inevitably, I was an only child, was very focussed on me and the marriage not being happy, that was where her interest lie. I think she would have liked me to become an academic, and indeed in the end, so I did become. So I don't think my father had any view on that matter, not that he expressed to me. They were neither of them particularly religious people and my father was nominally, I suppose, of moderately left wing political views, but I never heard him express any view about what he would like me to be. I took against music fairly early, which was of course where all his enthusiasm was, and he never made any effort to push me into that, but that was what all his interests were and he was very involved in local choirs and orchestras and so on, which all seemed to me a rather in-group of people.

Did you get a sense of how he felt about the fact that you weren't interested in music?

Oh, probably regretted it, yes, but I wasn't deeply conscious of that. I say, I think I was much closer to my mother and he, yes, I mean he was interested in me, certainly, but I think he felt my mother was looking after me, as it were.

[15:10]

Did either of your parents go to church, in spite of, as you say, not being strongly...

Oh, my father didn't, but he liked playing the organ, so he played the organ in the Congregational Church, but he always read a book during the sermon and so on, because the organ was in a big loft right up and nobody could see, see the organist. My mother felt that somehow the Church of England was where respectable people had some connection with, so from time to time she did take me to the local church, which I was willing to go to. But she, when at a somewhat later stage I decided I was going to become a priest, she was horrified at that suggestion.

Why?

Oh well, she didn't really [laughs] – by priest I mean an Anglican priest – and her picture of an Anglican priest was someone who looked after old ladies and ran vicarage tea parties and she didn't really believe any of the doctrines in any sense. And the idea that someone would be seriously committed to the doctrine horrified her;

that was not the sort of thing she wanted, or indeed my father wanted. I think he expressed a view at that stage too. So, yeah.

Thank you.

[16:46]

And are you able to tell us about your own Christian faith at this point in your life, before you go to boarding school? So your childhood...

Yes, I cannot remember a time when I did not believe that there was a God. And that applies to five, six as well as much later. I always remember one incident in 1940, the war, you'll recall, started in 1939 and 1940 was when all the German bombers came to try and eliminate the British Air Force and London, and during that time, the Battle of Britain or just before that, I say we – now I think of it, I told you we lived all in one place, no we didn't, what I was telling you about, the flat, was where we lived after 1941. But before that we lived in a couple of places which I can hardly remember, then for two years in a village called Tiptree, which is near to Colchester. I think we moved out of Colchester in '39 because my parents were frightened of the bombs, not that Colchester got much, but anyway they might have done. And so we moved to Tiptree and I remember being in the garden of the house, it had a long garden there, and my mother was hanging out the washing and seeing all the sky was covered with German aeroplanes flying on their way to bomb London, and I remember saying to my mother, gosh, "surely God wouldn't let the Germans win." And I remember her giving me a rather ambiguous answer, it seemed to me at the time an ambiguous answer, but that comes back to your early question. I do not know when or from whom I acquired a belief in God, but I suppose it might have been in the elementary school that I went to at Tiptree, but I really don't know.

Did you, at this time as a child, read the Bible, pray, that sort of thing?

Pray, yes. I don't know about read the Bible, but we would have got to- read the Bible to some extent, obviously, in school in those days. There was a compulsory one hour... it was a church elementary school, so it took religion seriously, but most schools took religion seriously in those days.

Do you remember anything of the teaching and learning at that first elementary school?

No, no, no. I was, as I say, that was between '39 and '41, so it was when I was six. No, I can't remember anything.

[19:51]

How did you feel at the moment of going away to boarding school, yourself?

[. From the age of seven until the age of ten, I had attended the Preparatory School of Colchester Grammar School as a day pupil. I went to boarding school when I was just eleven years old, after my year in bed] Well, it was represented to me as... let's put it this way. My mother wanted the best for me and she thought that the

way to get on in life was – and she may have been right about this at that time – was to have a private education, to go to a prep school and then to a public school and that was the way to the top. And she may indeed have told me that. I was not hostile to going, perhaps because it sounded interesting and that sort of thing, that's all I can remember.

Do you remember how you felt there, you know, in the first days and weeks, having up to that point lived with your parents?

No, I can't remember that. But, as I say, I had just been in bed with suspected tuberculosis, which they decided I probably didn't have, and therefore when I went to prep school and for most of my years at public school, I didn't play games, or not all games. And therefore I was a bit different from the other schoolchildren in that respect. That of course I do remember, but... [laughs] and it was a pretty odd sch- it was the small prep school at Felixstowe and like, I suspect, many such institutions in those days, the school was, not all the teachers lasted very long, shall we say. It was run as a family business by a man and his wife and their two thirty year old sons, one of whom had just come back from the war - I think both had come back from the war then – and such other teachers as they could get from time to time, so the education was sometimes quite good, sometimes not. But I don't have any strong memories of it, so I can't have been very unhappy or very happy really. Discipline was... the lady, the headmaster's wife, tended to take upon herself to impose discipline and sometimes beat boys with wooden spoons and so on. But that was all part of the set-up, as it were, it wasn't anything anybody resented. She didn't beat me, but she kept a firm hand on things.

[23:11]

And did you, at this school, as far as you remember, develop particular interests in particular subjects?

Well, my mother, as I say, was very keen on me... well I suppose the Classics impressed her as the sort of, as it was then, the paradigmatic subject for intellectual gentlemen. I mean we were a poor family and she had ambitions for me to be an intellectual gentleman. So Latin and Greek were distinctly things that I was expected to study, and I can't say I studied them with enormous enthusiasm, but I studied them. I took rather against French because I thought I'd better take against something, as it were. But I can't remember at that stage what else. I probably liked maths as I did at a later stage. [I enjoyed solving mathematical-puzzles of which I had several books of my own] There wasn't really much practical science and I felt that was rather practical and one should really be interested in more theoretical and literary things than messing about with Bunsen burners.

Was there any outdoor education, any nature study, natural history, that sort of thing?

Well, there were games. I don't know about- which as I say I didn't on the whole play, but I don't remember that sort of thing, no.

[24:51]

What do you remember of relations with the other boys – all boys?

Oh yes. Oh, okay. I was only there, we're talking of this prep school, I was only there for five terms in fact, because I got a scholarship to Charterhouse at the age of twelve and a half. As I say I went to an elementary school at Tiptree and then from the age of seven until I got ill at ten, I went to the preparatory school of the Royal Grammar School at Colchester and the preparatory school was a private thing, so there was a fee, but I mean the fees were as nothing compared with the boarding school fees and the education there was quite good. My father, that was the school my father taught at during that time, but then there was this year off school during which my mother arranged for certain tutors to come in occasionally, and indeed before, before I even got ill, my mother decided that I really ought to learn some serious subjects so she persuaded the school to allow me to go to the classes for Greek – ancient Greek, that is – which were designed for older boys, and she arranged for me to have private Latin lessons, and I wouldn't have had Latin and Greek lessons at that stage in the normal course of things. So I'd started to learn those at an early stage. Any rate, I got a scholarship to Charterhouse and off I went at the age of twelve and a half.

Other than not doing games, how did you see yourself then or how do you see yourself now as being like or different from the other boys at the prep school, before we get to Charterhouse?

I can't remember much about the prep school. I can remember much more about Charterhouse.

[27:18]

Okay. Well, Charterhouse is well known, but it may not be well known to everyone listening and we're interested in your experience of it anyway, so could you, to start with, describe it as a physical place before we go on to your experience?

Well, it's in Godalming in Surrey, it had large grounds and I suppose there were about 700 boys there – it was all boys of course – and they were divided between eleven houses for accommodation purposes and sports purposes, but of course then the forms consisted of boys from the different houses. It was one of the, is one of the top six or seven public schools in the country, and it had very good facilities then, even more I believe now. Plenty of playing grounds, buildings where - the school had moved there from London in 1870 into the country. It was called Charterhouse because it was originally founded on the site of a Carthusian monastery which had been destroyed by Henry VIII in London and it was founded then, after the destruction of the monasteries, and it moved to Godalming in 1870. And the fees were quite high, but my impression of the boys was that they largely came from definitely affluent backgrounds; typically their fathers would be a stockbroker living in Surrey or something like that, and in that sense I just didn't fit. My mother had got together the money and of course I got a scholarship, which paid about a third of the fees, I think, so there was just about enough money to send me there. But I do remember that in a certain sense I didn't fit in because boys would often invite other boys back to stay with them for a week in the holidays or something like that, and a friend of mine did invite me back and I spent a week there, but of course the expectation was that I would then invite them back, and that didn't happen. And why it didn't happen is because compared to the house that I was invited to and all the facilities there, we lived in a flat and had nothing, as it were. So of course I couldn't invite back and that created

some ill feeling, but in that sense I certainly didn't fit in, and that together with the fact I didn't play games for much of the time, though I did in my last year fully, meant I was a bit, didn't fit too well.

Was that sense of being different commented on by the other boys, or is it just something that you...

Well, the fact I didn't play games was. Sometimes the other was, yes, but success at a school like that meant being good at games - that was what boys idolised other boys for and those who didn't play games were regarded as weaklings. I mean those who weren't any good at games were regarded as weaklings, and that, yes, also I didn't fit. But I mustn't exaggerate that, I mean there were other people, other boys who didn't fit to some extent too. And I tended to play chess rather than football and there were other people who played chess.

Was intellectual and academic success not something that was valued in the culture by the boys?

It was valued by the teachers, the teaching was good and the quality, yes, the quality of the teaching and the aspirations of the school were to get everybody who wanted to into Oxford or Cambridge; they weren't really aware that there were any other universities. But by the boys... not too much. Clearly those who were academically inclined thought quite well of being academically successful, but sporting success was regarded as a little more important by the others, yes, as far as I remember, but it was a long time ago and I may be sort of - in many ways got a slightly false picture of it. But that's the picture I remember.

[32:45]

And to give a sense of the difference then, your perceived difference of the sort of social class background of the boys that were there, could you describe the house that you were invited back to and thought of as being different from your own home?

Well, I can't remember it in detail, but I think the father of the boy who invited me was a GP and it was a, I would imagine, a sort of big four bedroom detached house with a large garden, that sort of thing. And there were all sorts of things that they did, I can't remember what they were, but activities they were involved in and things they went to see. Perhaps there were two such occasions, two lots of people invited me back, I mustn't get them muddled. But that's just as much as I remember.

And you mentioned earlier in the interview that your father disapproved to some extent of private education. Do you remember him commenting on your own schooling at one of the top public schools?

No, I don't remember him commenting on it, but I know that he didn't see the need for this and therefore my mother would have to work to pay for it. That's all I remember.

And can you then tell me about teaching and learning at Charterhouse?

Yes. Well, as I say, the teaching was good and they had considerable... they wanted people to do well. And for the first two years there, this would be what would be- there were- one studied the normal variety of subjects that I suppose are studied today, with a great deal more emphasis on, I mean everybody had to study Latin, for example, and there was at that stage pretty little science, quite a bit of maths, but it was all working up after two years there to what was then called School Certificate, and then became O Level and then became GCSE. And I remember, I took, must have been seven or eight subjects then, and I got the top grade, the distinctions, in maths and further maths and Latin and I got credits – that's the next level down – in Greek and French and English and history, and I think I got a pass in French, or something like that. [The credit was in General Science, not French] So that was the array of subjects we studied and that was what happened. But, what was then noticeable was at that stage, and I went a bit younger than the others, because normally you went when you were thirteen and as I say, I got a scholarship at the age of twelve and a half, so I was definitely the youngest in the group, which meant that I'd taken all that by the time I was fourteen, and at that stage one specialised. There were about seven different streams; you decided which way you would go; one of the streams was the Classics; Latin and Greek, ancient history, and then there would be a biology stream and a physics and chemistry stream and maths, history, English and so on. But well, I had a feeling that somehow or other my mother expected me to do Latin. I wasn't particularly enthusiastic about it; I would have really liked to do maths, but I somehow didn't like to say that I really didn't want to do these things, I would rather do maths, and I regretted having given that [maths] up. But what that meant is that we spent about three-quarters of our time for the last three years I was at school doing nothing but Latin and Greek. It was an extraordinary education, based on the education that Thomas Arnold thought it good to introduce into the public schools in Victorian times. And so we learnt, firstly of course, to read a lot of Latin and Greek, not just Caesar but Livy and Cicero and, etc, etc. And a lot of Greek, Thucydides and the Greek playwrights and so on, but not really to merely to read and translate them, but to do it the other way round. That is to say, to write Latin proses, translating from English into Latin and Greek proses, and Latin verses and Greek verses, which is, in retrospect, extraordinary, we were expected to translate English poetry into elegiac couplets such as Ovid wrote, or into hexameters such as Virgil wrote, and into Greek too, into the iambics that are the main verse form of the Greek tragedies. This is an activity which hardly any Oxford student of the Classics could do today, let alone schoolboys at the age of fifteen. And in retrospect, this translating into verse was an extraordinary waste of time because it's alright if you're a poet, it's good I'm sure to be able to write Latin and Greek verses, but I was no poet. So it was a sort of crossword puzzle exercise; you wrote down on a bit of paper: long, short, short, long, short, short and then tried to find a word that means love that fits into long, short, short. This was an extraordinary waste of time, but that's what I spent quite a lot of my schooldays doing. In retrospect I was glad to have been able to read Latin and Greek, but the rest of it was a waste of time. [laughs]

What was thought to be the value of it by the teachers and by the school at the time?

[laughs] Well, if cross-questioned, they would say it teaches you to think, but of course I hope all subjects teach you to think. [laughs] I think I'll pass on that. Well, I suppose they would also say, though it wasn't the first thing they would say, they would go on about teaching you to think, eg, if you're translating into any foreign language you have to have a sense of what is the form of the English sentence and how this can be expressed in different forms, and that is in itself useful. And then no doubt they hoped that by writing verses you would

acquire some poetic ability, but it didn't work that way. They would also say, and indeed I'm inclined to agree with them in that, that if you have an acquaintance with that literature, you can... this is the background of so much English literature and so much [of] modern novels, plays, themes, etc, and if you understand the civilisation then you understand a lot about our civilisation. And Latin and Greek civilisation are the background of everything that happened in Western Europe. They didn't stress that, but that is certainly so. And the only part I liked of it was ancient history, in fact. That I found interesting, but the other not so. But that occupied three-quarters of our time, I think we had to do a bit of French and no doubt there was a lesson or two of what was called scripture, and who knows, one or two other things. But that was – and, I mean there was a similar focus on the subject in the other streams. After the age of fourteen your life was going to be settled this way or that way and that's, I mean this meant that when I applied to go to Oxford I would be - have to write papers on Latin and Greek and so on in order to justify myself.

[42:29]

What do you remember of the science teaching, which I think you implied was limited, before the point at which you didn't choose it, if you like?

Oh, it was okay. I wasn't averse to it. Oh sorry, yes, I did take one, I did take one paper in School Certificate which was called General Science, yes, that's right, I think we all had to do that. It was a bit of physics, a bit of chemistry, a bit of biology, of clearly the most elementary kind that you could get in about four lessons a week [laughs] over two years.

What was your level of interest in it?

Oh, I was, well, interested in how my body worked and that's what we learnt about in biology. I don't have any strong recollection. As I say, I did like mathematics and I did quite a bit of it, and of course that included a certain amount of what people might call mathematical physics, yes, but I don't remember being greatly excited. Oh yes, I suppose I liked the experiments with batteries and lights that went on and so on, yes, but I don't have any strong memory of that.

[43:56]

Can you tell me about the development and/or expression of your faith over the years that we've just been talking about, that's prep school and Charterhouse?

Yeah. I always, as I say, believed there was a God and I said my prayers. And we did get one, or possibly two for all I know, lessons, and the lessons were taught by clergy. The school had two chaplains, fulltime chaplains, who ran the services, and gave instruction. They weren't the only people who taught the lessons, but they were the main people who taught the lessons. Yes, there was an assembly every day, a quarter of an hour's religious – and it was a religious assembly - religious service every day, first thing in the morning and there was a compulsory evensong on Sundays. But- and the school provided instruction for confirmation for those who wished to be confirmed in the Church of England. Now, I hadn't been baptised because my parents were not

religiously inclined. I think my father took the line, and my mother probably took the line, well, he'll have to decide later whether he wants to be baptised. But of course almost all the boys at school had been baptised because they'd come from families where it was the done thing to be baptised. So when the time came, when I decided I wished to be confirmed, I had to be baptised as well. And I didn't wish this to be, I mean clearly it had to happen, so it happened at home; the church that my mother sometimes took me to, she explained to the priest I wanted to be baptised because I was going to be confirmed, so it was all done sort of in a way that I didn't have to reveal at school that I hadn't been baptised. So yes, and I was confirmed, I suppose, at the age of about sixteen, yes.

Why was it desirable necessarily to conceal the fact of not having been baptised at...

Oh, well it would be thought very odd and sort of you hadn't been brought up in the right way. [laughs]
Everybody was baptised.

[46:39]

Do you remember anything of the sort of form and content of your own prayer at this sort of age at Charterhouse? Did you do it in a particular way?

Well, it was... some boys would kneel down at their bedside at night and say their prayers; it wasn't regarded as entirely odd in any sense. Most of our sleeping arrangements were in cubicles; that's to say there was a very large room, dormitory, and each boy had a sort of area of, I don't know, seven feet by five feet in which there was a bed and a place to put your clothes andnd there was a wooden wall up to about that height, so in general boys couldn't see what other boys were doing. Though, there was once, I was in a room where there were just four beds and there wasn't cubicles. But boys did kneel down and say their prayers, or some of them did, last thing at night. I suppose most of my prayer was petitionary prayer:prayer for this, that and the other. But apart from that I really can't remember.

[48:04]

Thank you. And at this school, what do you remember of anything of something that you come to be interested in later, I know, and that's the gap, if you like, between Christianity and what you've called in certain places a certain modern intellectual world view. I don't know whether this isn't really relevant till you get to Oxford, I don't know, but at this school, to what extent were you then aware of that...

Oh dear, it's such a long time ago and I'm not really... [pause] Yes, all I can say is I think I was half aware of it. [laughs] I can't say any more than that, really.

I suppose one way of thinking about it would be did you get any sense of the level of faith of the masters, you know, as opposed to the chaplains or the importance of Christianity?

My own house, the housemaster in charge, Peter Russell, who was a bachelor, he was very much a Christian, but... and some of the other masters clearly were, some of the other masters probably weren't, I can see that. But they all had to come to chapel. That was expected of them. Beyond that I have no... Yes, and in fact the confirmation instruction for boys in my house, Hodgsonites, was given by the housemaster. And I certainly remember finding that interesting. I don't know that I was more than half aware of the differences that seemed to me very obvious at a later stage, but maybe I was.

Thank you.

[50:15]

Could you then take us, in your own way, from Charterhouse to the next stage of your life, how did that work?

Well, the next stage of my life was National Service. Every boy had to do two years' National Service. Most boys who were going on to university did it before they went to university, but you could ask for postponement and then you'd have to do it after university. And at the age of seventeen I got an open scholarship to Oxford, which was a slight surprise to my teachers that I would do as well as that. There were two sort of routes into Oxbridge at that time: either you applied for entrance or you applied for a scholarship. Scholarship, this has rather gone out of the system now because the government have provided the money for education, at any rate in the seventies and eighties, so the universities thought there's really no point in wasting our money on these scholarships because the government will pay for them anyway. But in those days, probably ten, fifteen per cent of people admitted to Oxford and Cambridge were admitted on scholarships and the point of getting a scholarship wasn't just the money, or mainly the money, it was the prestigious way to get in. And I was thought good enough to apply, and therefore one came up to Oxford and sat exams here. I think they... the arrangements were that there were exams for one group of colleges in December and one in January and one in March. I think the age of when I was just seventeen I applied for the March group and didn't get anything there – sorry, for the January group – and didn't get anything there, but then I applied for the March group, where I put Exeter College as my first choice. And slightly to my surprise, and rather more to the surprise of my teachers, I did get an open scholarship, that's a major scholarship, that is the best you could get there. I think, as I say, I had studied this Latin and Greek and so on and I was good enough at it for them to think that was reasonable, but I wasn't good enough at it for them to expect me to get a scholarship out of it. But I got a scholarship, I think on the basis of the ancient history I'd learnt and the sort of general essays I was expected to write, rather than any ability at Greek verse. And why it surprised my teachers, because I'd mainly been doing this Latin and Greek, which I had performed reasonably at, but not superlatively well, but the other, specially the ancient history, was clearly more my sort of thing and therefore I did get this open scholarship. And having got it, then you were called up for National Service normally at the age of eighteen, but I was then seventeen and a half and you could apply to go early, so I did. So I spent the years seventeen and a half to nineteen and a half, nominally – and I'll explain why nominally in a moment – in the services. Just in those years of National Service, which started fairly soon after the war when everybody was expecting another war, until about 1956, when you were called up you could apply to go in the army or the air force or the navy, not normally into the navy because they'd got plenty of fulltime sailors, but into one of the other two and you could apply to be a signaller or an infantryman, whatever. You wouldn't necessarily have got what you applied for, but you could

apply. But at that stage just about a year before I was called up, the government suddenly realised no-one could speak the enemy's language and therefore one of the possibilities open was to spend your time learning Russian, and of course once this news got round the schools, especially round intellectual schools, people, that you could spend a lot of time just learning Russian instead of square bashing, as it was called, in other words, marching up and down or doing really physical things, or actually there was a war going on in Korea at the time, or being sent there, a lot of people wanted to do that [that is, to learn Russian]. . But I applied and I got on to the Russian course and you could apply in any of the services, and in fact I applied in the navy and I got on the Russian course. The first eight weeks of that were for everybody and after that they threw out a few people, but also they divided the groups into two groups, one of whom were just designed to become interpreters, that is to say, oral interpreters, and the others were designed to be translators. And the course for the others only lasted nine months when they were sent away to do something. But for the interpreters it lasted most of the two years, so I spent most of the two years learning Russian, and after the first few months there was a whole year in London in civilian clothes attached to the university just learning Russian. And after that there was another six months where we had to wear uniform for that in Cornwall, learning Russian. And that was an experience I very much enjoyed at that period of my life, partly because all the people on it [the course] were intellectual people [laughs], that's why they were on it. They were all going up to Oxford or Cambridge, they'd all got their scholarships or at any rate entrances. They were all interested in intellectual matters and we talked about all sorts of matters philosophical, theological, religious, political, everything. And also I spent a lot of time playing bridge because although we did have work to do it wasn't over-demanding. So yes, I enjoyed that period of my life very much.

How was it taught?

Oh, well the period in... it was taught mainly by exiles, people from Russia, and they made an effort to get us to pronounce correctly and to be able to talk freely in the subject in Russian about anything and with a view to becoming sequential interpreters. That's to say, not interpreting at the same time as someone speaking, but when somebody spoke for a paragraph you would be able to repeat that in Russian, and conversely, of course. And yes, they taught us the grammar alright, but they did teach us to converse. And we read a certain amount of Russian literature just as a way of reading Russian. And we also learnt a lot of vocabulary about six-inch guns and so on in order to be able to translate service stuff. All this was [with] a view I suppose to, though they never told us what they wanted us for really, to interrogating prisoners, negotiating with the enemy. But of course, relatives suspected we were being trained to be spies [laughs], which we weren't, or at least wasn't part of the training. So really it was just a matter of spending most of two years learning nothing but one foreign language, which of course we all became pretty good at at that stage, so had no problem in translating.

[59:48]

Did you then later in life use this ability?

Yes, but not for another forty years. Because in those days, those were the days of really very cold Cold War, and nobody from the West was allowed to visit Russia. Stalin died in 1953, which was while we were on the

Russian course, and the subsequent [Russian] government was slightly more liberal, but not much, and foreigners just didn't, weren't allowed to visit Russia. The only people in Stalin's days who were allowed in in Russia were people, foreigners attached to the embassies, otherwise there was just nothing. And people with my views and interests were not going to be invited to lecture there until the nineties, until the Cold War was over.

[1:00:46]

Can you remember any content, or at least some more details of the kind of conversations that you were having with this group of people about to go up to Oxford?

All sorts of things. Certainly I remember one friend of mine, we talked, his father was a Methodist minister, but he [my friend wasn't [[very committed],, he was very liberal in his religious views. We talked about, I don't know, Berdyaev and all sorts of views. And there was another friend who was Catholic and very keen to make me a Catholic and we talked about justification of Christian doctrines, but we were also interested in politics and international politics was of course very interesting in those days, especially connected with Russia. Yes.

Did you yourself then have a particular political outlook? You've said that your father had, to some extent, left wing political views.

Well, very moderately so, yes. No, not really. I mean I suppose I was moderately sympathetic to the Labour Party, but I didn't think politics was nearly as important as religion. And so, as it were, my, if I voted, which of course I didn't have a vote till I was twenty-one, but if I had had a vote, I would have been guided more by which I thought was the most Christian policy rather than anything else.

And what then would it have, then what would have been, would you have voted?

Oh, obviously [that] part[which had a} concern for relief of the poor and, as I think now, that is to say, concern for wellbeing of all parts of the population. I don't know if I had any strong views about nationalising, or anything else.

[1:03:15]

You said that one of the things you talked about was, I think you mentioned theology and philosophy, to what extent had you studied theology and philosophy up to that point at Charterhouse?

Not very much. I suppose I'd read some religious books and occasionally at school I'd read one or two philosophical books, which I couldn't altogether understand, and had taken from the bookshelves. But I clearly began to see that big metaphysical questions were interesting and I developed a very considerable commitment to Christianity at that stage and would regularly go to church and I decided then that I should be a priest, that was during my National Service. I didn't wish to be a priest, but I felt the call, as it were.

How did you feel that?

Oh, well I felt God was [wanting me to become a priest], I must have heard some sermons of some sort urging people to become priests, for all I know. All I can remember is I did feel the call and I didn't like it, but eventually, as it were, I gave in and in the end told my parents, which, as I say, rather horrified them. But yes, that happened during my National Service, sure.

[1:04:55]

And so then you went up to Oxford after National Service.

Exeter College.

The choice of degree to read, how was that made?

Ah, yes. Well, when I was at school and showing off [I probably said 'swotting up'] all this slightly inadequate Latin and Greek, I realised that I didn't want to go on studying that at university, so at that stage, when I was still at school, I thought I wanted to be an important politician and therefore I decided I wanted to study law, rightly I think, thinking that that was the way into big national affairs, shall we say, if I wanted to be Prime Minister. But then, when I decided I wanted to be a priest, I also realised that, and indeed clergy may have told me this, but I realised that you shouldn't start by studying theology, or at any rate someone with my relative intellectual ability shouldn't do that, should spread yourself a bit more, certainly know something about the world. And PPE – Philosophy, Politics and Economics – seemed to me very attractive because I was interested in the politics and economics and the philosophy sounded as if it would be interesting and relevant, I didn't know much about it. So I got the college to agree that I could study PPE, which I did.

Could you, it's divided, is it, into Part 1 and...

No, no, that's Cambridge.

Oh, okay.

No, there is, [for] almost all subjects here [at Oxford], there is a preliminary examination after two terms and then the final examination after three years. All - the preliminary examination's really only designed to weed people out - all the grading is in the final examination, but the prelims does award a number of distinctions, otherwise it's all pass. No, it's [was], a bit unfortunate, because having decided to do that and having decided that a major interest of mine was philosophy, when I arrived it turned out that the philosophy tutor at Exeter College was on sabbatical for two terms, and although... and so the person running the course, who was the politics tutor, said well, if you really insist we'll send you out to somebody [some tutor in another college] to do philosophy, but we'd much rather you studied politics and economics, you, for the prelims you had to – oh goodness – you had to take – the rules have changed since then – but you had to take two of the three subjects.

There was a paper on constitutional history from 1660 which counted as politics, and a general economics paper. And then you had to either do a language, show ability at language, or do a maths paper, which was supposed to be relevant to the economics. And I did the maths paper and these two other papers. I think I really should have insisted on doing the philosophy because that was logic and it would have been helpful to me at that stage, but any rate, that was the accident. But after the prelims, you had to take all three subjects for the final, though there were eight papers in the finals and you had to take two of each subject and then two extra ones which would be in what you specialised in, and I took the four philosophy papers and the two other ones.

[1:09:09]

Could you then describe in as much detail as you can remember, your encounter really then for the first time with professional philosophers by being taught by them, tutored by them?

Yes, well philosophy was in a strange situation in those days, you know. Now then. There was... there's always been for the last seventy or eighty years considerable difference between the way philosophy has been studied, taught and written about in the English speaking world from the way in which it's been taught, studied and written about on the continent of Europe. And the people, the canon, the important philosophers of the past who are taught have been a bit different in both cases. But the Anglo-Americans have always believed in clear systematic reasoning rather than building big structures immediately about what the world was like, and that's, [that]. Having just said there's that basic difference [~~but~~] at that stage philosophy in the English speaking world, and in particular in Britain and even more in particular in Oxford was at what was a very strange stage, known as 'ordinary language philosophy'. And what most of the people who taught it here thought was that so much philosophy of the past had been misusing words in various ways and if we really understood how words were used, we wouldn't say some of the silly things they said in the past. For example, some of them [that is past philosophers] said well we can't really know anything – K-N-O-W anything – or, we're not really free, or there aren't any truths. And those sounded bold claims, or alternatively they may have said there is a God or there is a deep evolutionary process going on, but then there were two sorts of rebellion against that sort of thing. The first sort of rebellion was known as logical positivism, that is a doctrine which was developed originally by a group of physicists in Vienna, the Vienna Circle, but was popularised in Britain by AJ Ayer in his book *Language, Truth and Logic*, which was published in 1936. And this was the doctrine that the only sentences which were meaningful were ones which could be verified, and so they said, if you say there is a God or if you say something is right or wrong, this can't be verified, so it doesn't mean anything. And the only things that mean things were simple statements about [I meant 'of'] ordinary language, such as here is a table, and that book is red, or whatever, and science, physics. This theory was developed, as I say, by physicists who were very keen to say that all philosophical speculation about things was nonsense and only physicists, or scientists generally, could discover that [truths about the world]. And so we got what is known as logical positivism, that is the doctrine that the only meaningful propositions were ones which could be verified. Well, that was one sort of rebellion against the past, but then there was a different sort of rebellion which was the more prominent one in Oxford, which is known as ordinary language philosophy. And that said the trouble with all the speculation in the past was not that it couldn't be verified, but that people were misusing words. If you said we can't know anything, well, ask yourself how the word 'know' is used in ordinary language. And we are said to 'know' that

two and two make four, or we're said to 'know' that it's a nice day today, or we're said to 'know' that David Cameron is Prime Minister. So these are the sort of things that we know because we use the word 'know' in these sorts of contexts. So it's nonsense to say you can't know anything, these are the things we know. And likewise, if somebody said there's no free will, a philosopher will say, well look, we say that we make 'free' choices, you 'freely' decided to study this subject rather than that subject, that's the way the word 'free' is used. You can't say all this sort of nonsense [That is the sort of nonsense which philosophers of the past said, that we don't have free will.]. And the leader of all that sort of thing [that is, ordinary language philosophy] in Oxford was JL Austin, who was Professor of Moral Philosophy, and he was an extraordinary influential person, because he was a very clever person and if anybody tried to build a metaphysical system while he was around, he was very clever at demolishing it. And I always tell the story of my first encounter with Austin. Because I had been reading Berkeley and Berkeley says there are no physical objects, there are no material objects, all the truths about desks and tables are just truths about what you would experience under certain circumstances. So, to say there is a desk here is just to say – and of course you beg questions the way I'm going to analyse it, but it will give you an idea of what is obviously meant – so says Berkeley, say there is a desk there, it's just to say that if you put what seems to be your hand in this direction it meets a hard object. And if you put what seems to be a cup there, then you get the visual experience of the cup staying there and all talk about material things can be analysed in terms of human experience, and that doctrine is known as 'phenomenalism'. And I'd been reading Berkeley and I'd been wondering whether that was true, whether... And so, Austin used to give these, I think it was called informal instruction, once a week, and any undergraduate who wanted to ask him questions could come along and discuss anything. So I went along one week and I said, could it be the case that there really wasn't a table in the room, even though a lot of people, if there are people in the room, thought there was? And he said, oh yes, he said, and how many people were there in the room? Now I regarded this as irrelevant, you see. I'd say, well how many people were there? Seven. And he said, oh yes, and where were they sitting? And the whole object was to get [me] to describe a situation where, get me to describe a situation where it would be absurd to say there wasn't a table in the room. So I got the message. And the message was, ordinary language takes precedence over anything and philosophers of the past like Berkeley, or philosophers like Hume who said that there weren't [tables in rooms]– well Hume said roughly the same on that point – and philosophers who analysed and said we didn't really know anything, and so on, were just misusing words.

[1:17:57]

What can you tell me about your first impressions of him as a person beyond this...

Austin, yes. I say, Austin was just the most prominent, he wasn't my own tutor, but everyone around [looked up to him].... Austin used to have sessions on Saturday morning for his colleagues who would go along and sit at his feet and learn this sort of thing. And of course, you didn't have to agree with Austin, but if you disagreed with Austin you had to be pretty good, otherwise he would rubbish you. And his influence was enormous. Sorry, what was the question you asked me about?

Yes, I wondered whether you came to know anything about him personally or observed...

Oh, I see. Well, afterwards, yes. When I learnt how this [his kind of philosophizing] was done, although I didn't quite agree with all this, I clearly saw that I ought to get hold of what was going on, learn the message, so I went off and quite often as a graduate student, I went as a graduate to his classes and so on, and indeed, yes. He was - just thought philosophy ought to be done very, very thoroughly and carefully and people ought not to use words unless they really understood how they were used. But I think he did have a view that when one had cleared up how the words are used there might be some world view - something more interesting to be done, but he wasn't, didn't feel we'd got to that stage at this stage. He was just a very able, able person. Yes, I got to know him a bit, but not seriously.

[1:19:58]

Could you tell me about some of the other lecturers and tutors in the early... at the point that you are starting to learn philosophy?

Yes. My own tutor was Bill Kneale - K-N-E-A-L-E - who did actually - he was an older man - and he wasn't quite part of this ['ordinary language'] movement though he was sympathetic to it, certainly. He didn't really... I mean I found the subject very interesting, I didn't find him very exciting as a tutor. But clearly I learnt from him, but the system at Oxford is that you've got your tutor and you produce your weekly essay for your tutor, and indeed, in PPE it was often twice a week, once for one subject and once for another. But you are expected to go to lectures and classes where you learn all sorts of things. The idle ones didn't go to many lectures and classes, but I was clearly wanting to do well and interested, so I went to quite a lot of lectures and classes. And many of the lecturers were very much in Austin's spirit. [1:21:27] But one thing that immediately struck me was - what you were commenting on earlier - a sort of difference between what the world outside Oxford regarded as important, which was science, science was going to tell us the answers to everything, and what was happening in philosophy at that time, not just theology, but in philosophy. Hardly any of the tutors would have had any scientific background. The original way in which you studied philosophy at Oxford until 1920s was there was only one way of studying it, and that was in connection with ancient literature and history and therefore the way in which you studied it was a by five-year term honour moderations: a five-year-[term] course of what are called honour moderations in which you studied Latin and Greek literature, and then you went on for another two and a half years to study ancient history and ancient philosophy and some modern philosophy. Yes, those two subjects. So all the tutors who came from an Oxford background until the 1920s would have gone through this route to philosophy and therefore they would be interested in the connections with ancient philosophy and ancient thought and so on, and not much interested in the connections with science, about which they knew nothing. In the 1920s PPE was invented so you could study it [philosophy] in connection with modern politics and economics, but it was politics and economics, there wasn't much scientific background. Of course, the occasional tutor might have come from another university and had a scientific background, but that was unusual. And therefore, philosophy of science simply wasn't, wasn't really a subject here in those days. And philosophy of religion wasn't much either, because philosophers were pretty dismissive against religion. First of all if you're a verificationist they claimed you couldn't verify these [religious] views and if you were an ordinary language person they would say, well, if you talk to somebody it's because they're in front of you, you can't talk to someone who doesn't have a body. So religion was rather dismissed and the only way in which

you could study philosophy of religion was as a special subject for the theology honours school and not really under philosophy auspices. So neither philosophy of science nor philosophy of religion got much of a look in then. And of course, I would think for both reasons there was very considerable deficiency in the kind of philosophy that was studied.

[1:24:38]

But I learnt to appreciate careful and rigorous argument and I thought that this – and also I had a religious conviction and it seemed to me that this conviction once again was well out of line with a lot of ordinary thinking. But those days were a lot more religious than these days and a lot of people still went to church and so on. But there was a difference between the way they were thinking in church and the way they were thinking out of church and it struck me that, alright, philosophy has got some rather unfortunate dogmas attached to it but I like the way it taught one to think deeply, to think rigorously and I thought this can be a help in sorting out religion.

[1:25:38]

Tell me about then your churchgoing at Oxford.

Yes, well in those days, as indeed in these days, each college has a college chaplain and the college chaplain at Exeter College was Eric Kemp, who subsequently became a bishop, and he took an interest in encouraging people in their religious development, and I got to know him quite well. And he – because he had many other commitments and so on and didn't *always* feel that he got on very well with undergraduates – for I think probably a week each term, or at any rate each year, he had an Anglican Franciscan friar who stayed in college and was meant to be doing his pastoral work. And I got to know Brother Peter, as he was then, quite well and I went to stay, I think, once at the friary and also participated in a religious mission which they ran in the hop fields in August. So yes, I was growing in religion and of course I was then committed, or on track to, the idea was I would become an Anglican priest – after getting my degree I would go on to get a theology degree and go to a theological college and become a priest, that was the theory. It didn't quite happen like that, but that was the theory.

[1:27:26]

Given what you've said about the view in Oxford philosophy of religion at this time, how was your own Christianity viewed by other students and, if they knew you well enough, by tutors and teachers?

Oh, I was – they weren't hostile, at least some no doubt were, but not the ones I came into contact with and they thought, well, some people are like that, as it were. So there was not any hostility, certainly not by my own tutor; though he was certainly not a religious man he wasn't hostile to religion. It didn't come up very much in philosophical discussions for the reason I've stated: they regarded it – they were interested in issues of epistemology, what one can know, what one can justifiably believe, they were interested in the general questions of the relation of mind and body and meaning, above all meaning, it was the philosophy of language, why a sentence meant this rather than that, was the great issue. And big issues of religion didn't come up very much, nor did big issues of science, as it were. Although scientists were saying extraordinary things about electrons

and protons and ~~beam~~ waves and particles and the world wasn't really deterministic, somehow that didn't impinge very much on discussions of free will, whether the world was deterministic or not. They said well you're free if you can make choices, and it doesn't matter what's happening in your brain or not. So, I say, it didn't come up very much, but they weren't hostile, no. There wasn't much scope for it.

[1:29:43]

Why then were you very aware of scientific claims?

Oh, I don't know why I was aware of it. Well, it seemed to be absolutely obvious that – I mean I read a bit about, to the level you read in the Sunday newspapers or anything like that, no doubt talked to undergraduates. It struck me, for example, with regard to the free will issue, it struck me that if physics could prove that everything that happened had a cause, then we didn't have free will in any worthwhile sense of free will. The mere fact we could make choices wasn't relevant because what mattered was whether our choices were caused by our brains or whatever, or up to us. And therefore it seemed to me it was crucially relevant and science was building a big picture of what the world was made of, of electrons and protons and whether the world had had a beginning or not. And the latter issue was discussed by Kant, of course, and he had arguments to show that there was some sort of confusion in saying that the world had a beginning or that it didn't have a beginning. But then it seems to me, it seemed to me then, that cosmology was saying things: some cosmologists came to have a proof that it had been going on forever and others had other proofs. And here it seems to me a group of people who are, the world pays great attention to them, and here philosophers are dismissing what they have to say as not relevant to their concerns. And I thought this is absurd and it's not going to last very long. And of course I was right. The same applied with religion, people were saying, the clergy were saying well, it's all a matter of faith and commitment and so on, and then other people were saying, verificationists were saying, it didn't mean anything to say there's a God, and here were the two groups and at that time philosophers were saying moral propositions don't have any truth value, that is to say that it's not true that you ought to keep your promises, it's just, Ayer said, it's an expression of emotion. And yet, it seemed to me quite clearly it's more than an expression of emotion and so on, it seemed to me quite clearly most people thought that and so I thought this isn't going to go on. In the end, either what philosophers have to say against religion will be appreciated by the outside world and they'll give up religion, or, someone will have to do something about it. And that struck me that the Church was indifferent to these issues and I thought that was a poor show.

[1:33:03]

Apart from the Sunday newspaper where else were you getting your science?

Ah yes, indeed. Well, not much. I was very conscious of not knowing anything about science at that stage, which is why certain things happened later. Very much conscious of this. I did go to some lectures [pause] yeah, I've talked about my undergraduate days and I realised how little I knew and when I became a graduate student I went [pause] well, where do we take the story as it were? At any rate, as an undergraduate I was very conscious I didn't know any such things and I thought I needed to know them, yeah.

Did you have friends in college who were scientists, I wonder or...?

No, not really. I mean there were people, but that wasn't the source of my interest. I don't think that's where it came up. No, it was as it is now, part of the general culture that one reads about science. I may have read the odd book or two, certainly, but at that stage I was conscious about how little I knew and how desirable it would be if I knew more.

[1:34:31]

Were there any female undergraduates reading philosophy at this time?

Oh yes, but not in Exeter College. [laughs] In those days there were five women's colleges, exclusively for women, and the rest were male colleges. So yes, yes, there were. And dons, Iris Murdoch was a philosophy don at that stage. I went to her classes once. But they weren't prominent in the field very much, apart from Elizabeth Anscombe who was the philosopher tutor at Somerville and subsequently became professor at Cambridge. But apart from her I can't think of any female philosopher tutors who were – and Iris Murdoch, but she wasn't really famous as a philosopher, she only got famous later as a novelist. Can't think of anybody [female] who was – the big names among the tutors were male. And well, sure, there were female undergraduates studying it, but not nearly as many as the males simply because there weren't nearly as many women as the men.

Do you remember what Iris Murdoch was teaching you?

When I went to her classes it was as a graduate student and she was running a class with somebody. It was about Marxism, I think, or at any rate, Marxism came into it. She was at one stage religious, but she gave that up fairly soon after she became an Oxford tutor and she – ~~I think she would have been~~ [pause] I don't know what she ~~talked~~ [normally lectured] about, but Plato has always been an interest of hers and she might well have been lecturing on Plato, or on aesthetics.

[1:36:39]

Did you join any societies or groups at Oxford?

Oh yes, lots, everybody joined those. I think in my first term I probably joined a lot of societies which I had no subsequent interest in. There was a big church society over all the colleges, called the Oxford University Church Union. Indeed I became its president in my third year. That had three or four hundred members. And occasionally there were other religious societies I attended a bit, and there were philosophy societies that I attended occasionally. [pause] I worked quite hard and I was getting involved with a girl who subsequently became my wife and these things took up time.

[1:37:50]

The Oxford University Church Union: did that society ever discuss questions of relations between say, religion and science or religion and philosophy?

Yes, it had a programme of talks and indeed there was a similar sort of society called the Student Christian Movement, which had another – I mean that wasn't my society, it was much wider than the Anglican ones, but there were these sort of talks there. Yes, because there were a few philosophers who were interested in these [issues], they weren't from Austin's point of view top notch philosophers, but they were [interested philosophers]. Ian Crombie, who was the philosophy tutor at Wadham, John Lucas was then, he was then junior research fellow at Merton. Basil Mitchell, who was my predecessor in the Oxford Chair, was then philosophy tutor at Keble. And philosophers were beginning to take an interest in the subject. The Professor of the – there was a Professor of the Philosophy of Religion – was Ian Ramsey, who subsequently became Bishop of Durham. I went to one or two of his lectures; I didn't think very much of them. He had a scientific background but the philosophers thought he wasn't very good at philosophy and I tended to go along with that view. But while I was there, two – rather the end of my undergraduate time and beginning of my graduate time – there were two collections of articles published on the philosophy of religion, largely by Oxford philosophers. The first one was called *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* and was edited by two people who subsequently became very well known: one was Alasdair MacIntyre and the other was Antony Flew. They were on issues of justification of religious belief and so on. And the other one was called *Faith and Logic*, I think, but any rate was edited by Basil Mitchell and that was similarly concerned with these issues. Yes, *Faith and Logic*, I think it was, it's over there [referring to own bookshelf]. And they were raising the issues that I thought ought to be raised, not particularly the connections with science, but whether there were good arguments for the existence of God and whether you could have a justified belief in it and what faith was and so on. And they approached it, they were all trained philosophers and they could argue, and... but as I say, the only way you could study this subject at any length was as a special subject for theology school. Actually, that's a little unfair of me, there was sometimes a question or two in a very long question paper of which you could, had a large choice of questions, the paper called General Philosophy, there might sometimes be a question about God. And it was possible to study a bit of Aquinas in a special subject, but these were – under philosophy auspices – but these were very small areas, as it were.

[1:42:03]

You've said, or at least implied, that you found in the church, in the chapel, in the chaplaincy no expressed interest in relations between religion and science. Did you find any discussion of it in the student Christian groups?

Oh yes, well the student Christian movement. When I said no general... what I think I said was, in the Church at large – I didn't necessarily mean in the church at Oxford – in the national Church and so on. But it's true, most of the theologians at Oxford would say, all this nonsense about arguments, certain reason and so on, you have to absorb the biblical atmosphere and this is a matter of faith and learning the Bible language and you will find this makes sense. And many of the theologians would take that attitude, though other, a few of the college chaplains would certainly support serious discussion of these matters, yes.

And by the end of your period of studying philosophy as an undergraduate, had you developed a particular, an interest in a particular kind of philosophy or a particular ...

Well, I was interested in all philosophical questions, but I was beginning to realise that, well, firstly that what struck me as the important ones were: which big metaphysical view of the world was correct, I would never have expressed it that way, because the way you could dismiss any philosophical view in those days was to show it was metaphysical, that would dismiss it straightaway, because metaphysics for the logical positivists means something that couldn't be verified, and for the ordinary language people it meant something that used words quite out of their natural context. So I wouldn't express it that way, but that would be what I was interested in and that would involve serious consideration of religion and serious consideration of the significance of the big theories that the physicists were beginning to produce. But, as I say, neither of those was very obviously on the menu at philosophy undergraduates level at Oxford in those days. Now of course it's quite different.

[end of track 1]

Track 2

At the beginning of this second session you have some further comments on the period we covered last time, and especially your childhood.

Yes. Although all the answers I gave to you were correct, I felt that I hadn't put what happened into perspective, partly because although I'm aged eighty, I very seldom think about my past and I'm always looking forward, even at the age of eighty, to what I'll be doing next year, and that sort of thing. So I hardly ever think about my past and it was only being interviewed by you that forced me to do so, and therefore to think that I hadn't brought out certain things about the past. The first thing, it may have been obvious from what I said, but that it was a very lonely time in holidays, as they were called at school, and afterwards in vacations. From the time when after being ill for a year, or at any rate in bed for a year, I went away to preparatory school in January 1946 until I left Charterhouse in the middle of 1952. I came home of course in the holidays, but I, being an only child – I was an only child, I had no friends then because they all went to other schools and they hadn't seen me for a year anyway when I was away in bed, so I was entirely on my own. My mother was out every weekday from morning till evening at work earning money to pay for my schooling. My father was at home some of the time, but he kept very much to himself in his own room, in his study when he was at home, but being County Music Adviser, he was often out anyway. And we really didn't meet much. We might have had a meal together in the middle of the day, which my mother left me instructions as to how to cook, and that was it. I was on my own for these long school holidays as they were at preparatory and public schools and sure, I read books and went for walks and listened to the radio, but it was a very solitary time and no doubt that's had a great influence on the rest of my life when I feel I have also been relatively a fairly solitary person, but I have been able to cope with this quite easily. It was of course a bit better after I left school and did my so-called military service, learning Russian, the leave periods were a lot shorter. And then when I went to university, I did have certain connections of other students. But all the same, on balance, it was that sort of time. But in 1952 after my mother – after I'd left Charterhouse and there were no school fees to pay for, my mother left my father and I went with my mother to live somewhere else, to live in Ingatestone in Essex, and there the situation was somewhat similar when I was back. There were of course exceptions of periods when things happened. I remember a very good end of my first year at Oxford, five weeks or so spent with some other students sailing around the islands around Denmark, which was a great break. But in general that was the situation and no doubt it's influenced me a lot subsequently.

[04:39]

Secondly, I didn't bring out, perhaps I did, but I'd like to repeat, my religion. I was very conscious from ever since I can remember that although I was on my own in these respects, God was my companion and I kept this hidden largely from my parents for some years, almost waiting till they'd said goodnight to me and then saying my prayers when they wouldn't see me. And that was the dominant theme of my – dominated my solitariness. I'd like to just say one thing about my mother. I think she – I obviously owe an enormous amount to her, she put everything into me, her own marriage was unhappy, [one sentence deleted at interviewee's request] and she and he were living in the same house but didn't often see each other really very much, and we certainly never did things together as a family in any way after I went to school, away to boarding school. It was a very hard

life for her and she had no friends really and she put everything she got into me and that of course in due course I found rather oppressive. But nevertheless, it was because of that that she had these various ambitions for me and that clearly encouraged me to think highly of myself and to think that I could do things. And obviously I must be grateful to her for that. Those are the things that I think I meant to say. Clearly there were exceptions to all of these things, but basically that I remember very strongly.

[07:09]

And so, let us move on from where we got to, which I think was 1957, when I took my finals at Oxford and I got my first class honours degree. I had to fight for it in the sense that the system in those days was you took – everything depended on the final examination, as it still does. In PPE there were eight finals papers, you had to take two papers in each of the three subjects and two additional papers, and of course I took my two additional papers in philosophy. The system was: these papers were marked and then everybody was called back for a viva, an oral examination. In the case of most of those called back, this was a mere formality, but in the case of people who were on the borderlines between classes, then there was a very serious viva, as it was called. And I hadn't done all that well in the papers; I hadn't done very much work in economics and I'd got some pretty low marks in economics. And in the politics papers, my politics tutor was one of the examiners and therefore he'd set no questions of the sort that he had discussed with us, being a fair-minded man, and so my politics marks, though good, were not brilliant. And the philosophy papers were rather dull and I didn't have anything very exciting to say, so I was rather on the border, indeed a bit below the border, but they decided to give me a viva and once that happened I talked myself into the first, quite easily actually. But any rate, I got there. And so I'd finished and by that time, as I explained to you, I'd decided to be an Anglican priest and had been accepted by the Church for training, but they saw it as a good thing that I should do some more graduate work in philosophy before I was ordained, and so I went on to the BPhil in philosophy. This was a two-year course, at Oxford, and it was regarded as then the normal training for somebody who wished to become a philosophy teacher in universities. It wasn't necessary to get a doctorate. The idea of the BPhil was that you took three exam papers covering different areas of philosophy and wrote a small thesis. And it was invented after the war by Gilbert Ryle because he felt that the idea of a student writing a thesis on a narrow topic at that stage of his career in philosophy was a mistake; students ought to know about wide areas of philosophy and not try and solve a big problem at that stage, or [only] a narrow problem at that stage. And so that was the system and so I prepared to take those papers and to write a small thesis.

[10:51]

What was your thesis on?

Well, by that time I had come to realise that – firstly that philosophy was a good tool for examining the claims of religion, but I'd also realised that the modern world thought that the paradigm of knowledge was science, and I knew no science. And conscious of that, one of the papers – I'll come to the thesis in a minute – one of the papers that one could choose – it was, I think, invented that year, this paper, or perhaps the previous year – was a chosen period of scientific thought. So I chose to do as one of the papers the history of biology in the nineteenth century, when of course evolution appeared on the scene, and I wrote a thesis on the relation between different sciences, the relation of psychology to biology, biology to chemistry, chemistry... which I was entirely

unqualified to do, because I didn't know anything about these sciences. But nevertheless, I wrote this and it got a good mark, I suspect because my examiners knew pretty little about the sciences because they, as I think I mentioned last time, on the whole philosophers didn't know much about science. But in fairness, there was a lot less to be known about science in the 1950s than there is now. Any rate, that was what the thesis was about and then I took two more standard sort of papers in philosophy. Not quite certain what they were now, but certainly I think one of them was on moral philosophy, but I forget what the other one was on. Yeah. And that's what I did. The state gave one a full grant for – if you're good enough – for that sort of graduate work then and I had a full grant for the first year, and would have had for the second year, but I was very fortunate at the end of my first year. There was a fellowship advertised by St John's College of a kind that simply doesn't exist now, and I think this was the last remnant of this sort of kind: it was a fellowship, research fellowship which you could do more or less anything with actually, open to all subjects, but there were restrictions on to whom it could be awarded. It was founded by somebody called Fereday in the nineteenth century, I think, and his requirements were that if there were any founder's kin, that is to say, anyone related to him, they would be given preference for this and if there weren't, then anyone born in Staffordshire would be given preference for this. And I was born in Staffordshire, so I applied, clearly although it was open to all subjects and not confined to anyone from Oxford or anything like that, there was a certain oddity about this. The pool from which they could choose was not enormous. And I got this, and so I got a research fellowship at St John's and it was paid at a very good rate for research fellowships at that time; I had £600 a year, which was pretty good. And so that paid for my second year and it paid for two subsequent years when I was doing other things.

[14:54]

Thank you. It's interesting isn't it, that you think that this paper on a chosen scientific field in the B.Phil ~~DPhil~~ was introduced that year, given what you said last time about the view of science of Oxford philosophy?

Yeah, well I think they had a bad conscience about this to some extent and were trying to remedy this and there was a university lecturer in the history of science who was very pushing to get his subject into the B.Phil, Alistair Crombie, and he managed to get this introduced as a possible option for the B.Phil. Most people didn't take it, they just took a paper on some chosen philosopher or philosopher of the past, but I think there were three, probably three choices of periods of history of science you could choose. One was the Copernican Revolution, the physics and astronomy from 1500 to 1700, and there was this period in the biology in the nineteenth century, and there may have been another period, I can't remember. Any rate, that was the first sop [step], as it were.

[16:13]

And other than this new paper, were you being exposed in the DPhil to...

B.Phil.

DPhil, sorry.

BPhil.

BPhil. To different lecturers or to different ideas in philosophy?

Oh yes, sure, but the system was, and it was typical of Oxford in that period of course, everyone had a supervisor for this. And my supervisor was Henry Price, who was, the supervisor was normally one of the three main philosopher professors, or perhaps one other person, and mine was Henry Price, who was then a Professor of Logic. He was at the end of his career and I think he'd rather lost interest in philosophy, but he was a very nice man personally and he looked after me. But, it was generally thought that if somebody had had an Oxford degree they didn't really need any tuition in any sense. If they came from Australia or something, then they were given systematic tutorials in areas. This of course was Oxford arrogance and clearly unjustified, but any rate, that's the way it happened. So I saw my supervisor at the beginning and end of each term, but otherwise I was quite on my own to prepare for these three papers and to write my thesis. I got one or two people, by twisting their arm, in particular Alistair Crombie, to read the thesis and comment on it, but I don't think their comments were very helpful, but there it was. But what one did is to go to all sorts of classes which were laid on in different areas. The classes were always the classes that the lecturers wanted to give, they weren't necessarily geared to particular papers, but I went to perhaps a couple of classes a week, one didn't have to do anything for it on the whole. Sometimes lecturers required people – graduate students attending the classes to read papers, but more usually they read them themselves and sometimes there were two lecturers who were conducting a class and they would read alternate papers. And yes, I went to many different things that were on offer, because Oxford even then had a big philosophy faculty; it's enormous now. Now there are in theory a hundred names on the faculty books, not all of them are fulltime or all of them are full members of the faculty and so on, but even then there must have been about fifty different people who were giving at some time or other either lectures for undergraduates or classes for graduates, and even the lectures for undergraduates were often suitable for graduates. So yes, I went to regular – regularly to different lectures. The lecturer I perhaps most went to was JL Austin, not because I was very sympathetic to the kind of philosophy he was doing, but because he was obviously a very clever man who was doing his particular philosophy very well, and so I got to know him a bit. And of course this rather liberal regime did allow one, certainly in the first year of the BPhil, to read a lot of books of philosophy which you'd only read a chapter of when writing an undergraduate essay or something like that, so I did do quite a lot of reading, reading things that seemed to me interesting. Read quite a bit of Freud, for example, yeah.

[20:29]

Could you give an account of one of JL Austin's classes, to give us a sense of the kind of...

Yes. I remember the last, I think it was the last class of his that I attended, because he died actually sort of soon after that period. The class was called 'Excuses' and what we considered each week was different ways in which people excused themselves for having done some action. They might say: "I didn't do it on purpose", "I didn't do it voluntarily", "I didn't do it deliberately", "I didn't do it intentionally". And we considered one of these adverbs each week and the idea was to chart what is the difference between not doing something

deliberately and not doing something intentionally [and so on]. And we took all sorts of examples where you would use these phrases and then there developed a sort of pattern that you'd say "deliberately" under these circumstances, "intentionally" under that circumstance. One might say this was just charting ordinary language and that's what everybody else thought was happening, but I suppose Austin thought, though he didn't make it very evident, he thought, as many, a number of philosophers would say, that ordinary language "carves reality at the joints". That is to say there is a purpose in using this adverb rather than that adverb and one's trying to describe something about human action which is brought out by these and if you understand the difference then you understand something about what it is to *do* something. So that's the way it worked, but we never progressed to any big metaphysical conclusions. But one, I remember one series of lectures I attended – it may, it certainly was as a graduate student, was – may have been as an undergraduate but any rate, as a graduate student, was PF Strawson's lectures which eventually formed his book which was called, his most influential book, which was called *Individuals*. And before then the way to dismiss a position as rubbishy was to call it "metaphysical", if you could show it was metaphysical, it was rubbishy. But Strawson described what he was doing as an essay in "descriptive metaphysics", that's to say he was describing the metaphysics of our ordinary views on life, eg. that there were material objects and we identified things by their relations to material objects and so on. And he also said that there was a further activity which he called "revisionary metaphysics", which would be saying such things as there weren't material objects, there were just human perceptions. But those lectures were influential and that was the first stage towards moving philosophy from its absorption from ordinary language to constructing world views. It was only a first stage and many people weren't too influenced by it, but it did start a movement and I remember those lectures as very important at the time.

[24:08]

How did you view this BPhil as further preparation for your intention to become a priest?

Oh well, I was beginning to think at that stage that I wouldn't be a parish priest, but might combine being a priest with being a university teacher, and of course around Oxford at that time most of the college chaplains, not all of them, but most of them were partly university teachers as well, so that that was the idea in that context, yeah.

So you saw yourself becoming a chaplain?

Yes. [pause] Yeah, yes.

Had you at the beginning of this feeling that you were being called to do a certain thing with your life imagined yourself being a parish priest?

Yes. I'd felt, well, when I first decided, which was during the course of my, call it military service, at any rate, my two years of learning Russian, that I really ought to, I didn't really want to become a parish priest, but I felt the call and I felt that was a call. I wasn't really aware at that stage of the existence of such things as university chaplains, this was before I went up to Oxford. So yes, it was a first change, as it were, yes.

You said that you had the freedom to read and one of the things that you read was a lot of Freud. Can you remember why it was that that you read and what your view of it was then?

Oh, well I was impressed. It seemed to me correct that there were indeed unconscious beliefs and desires and they influenced us. I read, well, firstly *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, which was about why we don't mention certain things and avoid certain things in conversation but don't admit to ourselves that we do. But then his *Introductory Lectures* and *New Introductory Lectures* went on to hypotheses about sexual influences which we repress and yeah, that seemed to me to give a correct account of quite a bit of human behaviour and it was interesting because it was, as it were, getting beyond the mere observable things that philosophers were interested in at that time. Yes, also stimulating my interest in science and in the philosophy of science, there was one series of lectures which I do remember very much. Felix [Friedrich] Waismann, who had been a member of the Vienna Circle. The Vienna Circle was a group of physicists in Vienna in the 1930s who really founded logical positivism and said that propositions were only meaningful if they could be verified. Any rate, he had belonged there, though his views moved a bit away from that, but he became the university lecturer in philosophy of science at Oxford. Now, like the lecturer in the history of science, there was this post, but this post had very few students who were actually studying under him. But he lectured on space and time and in particular on relativity theory, and that certainly got my interest as, well, a deep view about what the world was like, like Freud. So yes, that was another influence.

[28:34]

Thank you. You then move on to a further diploma?

Yes, well I was training for, since I was going to be a priest, I would have to spend two years at a theological college, and the second year of my BPhil, after I'd got this Fereday Fellowship, the second year of the BPhil and the next year after that I spent at St Stephen's House, Oxford, which is, well, a theological college. At that stage it was in Norham Gardens; it's now up to Iffley Road. And I resided there, it was important for this training you should *live* there for two years and so I did. And the first year, when I was finishing the BPhil, I didn't do any theological studies, but the second year I did do theological studies and I took as the more intellectual people training for the ministry did, if they hadn't already got a first degree in theology, I took the postgraduate theology diploma of Oxford, which was a sort of compressed degree course in theology. And I worked hard at the Old Testament, New Testament and Christian doctrine and yes, I got a distinction in that at the end of the year. It's a university exam, but I was taking it while living at theological college and it exempted me from most of the exams that I would otherwise have to take for the ministry. There were still one or two other papers that I had to take, but I took them in the course of the next year or two on my own, as it were, passed them. So, the second year was devoted to that, and that took us up to 1960. Yes, that's right. When that was finished, I then felt that, and I think the Church felt, that I needed to [pause] well I felt I needed to do a little more research, I felt I needed to know some more about science, because science was the paradigm of knowledge in the world, and so I was looking to learn some more about science, but get ordained when after that I had got a permanent teaching post. So the year 1960 to 61, I'm trying to think just what I did do then, but I

certainly came back to philosophy and started thinking about, I started philosophising about science and realising that I didn't know very much, but I was trying to learn some on my own. Also though, in 1960, I got married to Monica, who was a student at the same time as me. We seemed in many ways to have a lot in common, we were both High Church and Anglican religious people, she was obviously intelligent, and attractive. But in retrospect, there were problems. I realised that at the time to some extent, but I ignored them. She wasn't at all interested in philosophy. She had done Mods. The four-year course, called Mods and Greats is a study of ancient literature and then in the second part of it, ancient history and philosophy, but she changed because she didn't like the philosophy, to a theology degree, which she got in 1958 and then when we were engaged she went away to teach for two years in order to earn the money which we needed in order to get married. But she was, well, I don't [pause] I think in some ways I was too keen on my subject and she would probably have preferred to marry a parish priest and it wasn't in the end a very successful marriage. But at any rate, I mean we are still married, but she has lived separately for the last thirty years in fact, we lived together for twenty-five years. It wasn't all a disaster, but it wasn't very good and she wasn't very happy at all, living with me. But there were other factors in her life as well, other things that made her rather unhappy. So, any rate, we got married and we lived in Oxford for the last year of my Fereday Fellowship. But I was keen to, well, with the money from that and then I was doing some tutorial teaching as well, so that kept us alive and our first child was born at the end of that year- was born in May of 1961.

[34:41]

But my fellowship ran out in the summer of 1961, but I was keen to learn some science and I was keen to learn— to spend a lot more time thinking about it. And I was looking around for another research fellowship and I eventually got one at the University of Leeds, called, it was a Leverhulme Fellowship, it was reasonably well paid and there wasn't much in the way of particular obligations. So we moved to Leeds for a couple of years in 1961. And it did, Leeds had within its philosophy department quite a [pause] had a little enclave called the History and Philosophy of Science, to which I was attached. The two permanent people there were both historians of science, but it was useful for me academically because they got me to learn some science. Indeed, in my second year there I took the first year zoology courses, the practical parts in cutting up worms and that sort of thing. And they also taught me enough about the history of physics and astronomy, I was quite good at maths so I could understand this quite well. So I [laughs], having to teach a subject always makes one learn it quite well and they got me to do some teaching on the history of — there was a regular course on the history of astronomy and physics, which I was well enough able to understand up to the eighteenth century and I learnt a lot then about that and I learnt a lot of zoology and indeed, I gave a course corresponding to what I had learnt for the BPhil on the history of biology in the nineteenth century. I wasn't entirely amateur about this: I wrote a couple of articles on the history of this which were published in history of science journals. And yes, so my main time at Leeds was devoted to learning some science, learning some history of science, as well as keeping up my philosophy and so on. And it was very useful in that respect, because, as I say, I had learnt no science, I thought this was the paradigm of knowledge and the history of it was very important because what interested me is, well, why is this theory abandoned and that theory adopted instead? And I was interested in what are the criteria for judging this, and in order to get some feel of that, you need to think of the history of the subject over many years, not just what's happened in the last ten years or so. So yes, I did learn quite a bit then and that was good. But domestically it was not very good because we lived in a big house which was too big for us to

furnish, which was a rented house on the edge of Leeds and well, we didn't have a car, didn't have even a telephone in those days. So my wife Monica was very isolated and I spent quite a lot of time at home actually, because being a researcher I didn't need to be in the university and I think the department were not very happy about that, but any rate. And yeah, well it was, she felt very isolated and so on, and then our second child arrived and she had a lot to do and so on, so domestically it wasn't very good, but academically it was very useful, yes.

Staying at home a lot as you did, were you staying at home to do your research or were you...

Oh yes, yes, sure. But I mean I was around. I could look after the children for a bit and so on, that sort of thing.

[39:36]

And when you decided at the end of the theology study that you wanted to learn more about science, were there any people, any sort of mentor-like people or just friends, or perhaps your wife, who were discussing this wish of yours to learn science as the way forward, and were there any voices saying, it's not necessary? This is what I'm interested in.

No, I think everybody I talked to thought this was a good idea, yes. I felt the Church at that time was extremely laid back about the modern views on life, which I say, modern paradigms of knowledge were very much science and the, likewise, there were moral views emerging which had nothing to do with Christianity, views about sex in particular, but in general about the world. And I thought, this was what moved me of course, that okay, nowadays maybe, in those days, twenty per cent of people might go to church on Sunday. I didn't think that was going to last much, I could see that the Church was saying we talk a different language from these scientists but our language is okay and it's all a matter of faith anyway and you have to enter into it. And I thought this isn't going to last, this isn't a stable position, the Church has got to come to terms with modern science either by giving up religion, or as I thought, by trying to understand the limits of science and why there are these limits and how it didn't make a difference, how rather on the contrary I was beginning to see the success of science was evidence *for* God and not away from him. But people in the Church weren't doing anything about that; they were just sort of laid back and they were happy enough with things as they were and that worried me. I thought that was very bad that they should take that attitude. But they were certainly favourable to me doing what I did, yes.

[42:16]

Were there at this time scientists that you were aware of in sort of popular culture, in newspapers, on the radio that were contributing to this sense that science was becoming sort of intellectually mainstream or intellectually popular?

There probably were, but I wasn't conscious of any particular people. Fred Hoyle was quite a name, Hoyle of Hoyle-and-Bondi and the steady state theory of cosmology. He was fairly popular, atheistic person. And of course Bertrand Russell had a famous debate with Father Copleston on the existence of God, on the radio. But this was a one-off thing. In general, radio and – certainly radio – was very deferential to religion, gave it large coverage. And I suppose television did to start with, though this was the era before everybody had television sets. We didn't have a television set until 1968, I think.

Do you remember the CP Snow lecture, which would have been around then?

Oh yes, sure, but that was not so much concerned with religion in a way as it was the relation between cultures and scientists ought to know more about literature, and people who wrote literature ought to know more about science, and everybody agreed in principle that's a good thing and did not [do]much about it. Yes, well of course I sympathised with that, but it wasn't particularly concerned with religion.

I wondered whether it was relevant to you in the sense that you were detecting in Christian theology a sort of over-emphasis on the literary and away from the...

Well, that is true, yes, that is true. I don't think I would have put it that way at that time, but you are right, I suppose I did, yes. Yes, that's...

I don't know how, because the Two Cultures has become something which is seen retrospectively as important, I just wanted to sort of gauge the impact of it at the time.

Oh yes. People read it, people said it was a good thing and as I say, did not much about it. Certainly I mean the Oxford degree courses, you were either an arts man or a science man, there were no attempts to bridge this gap. When we come on to my time at Keele in due course, I'll mention a university that did try to bridge the gap, but that was a bit later.

[45:31]

Could you then say more about Leeds and in particular about the two historians who were leading this?

Yeah. It was Jerry Ravetz and Donald Cardwell. Don Cardwell was really a historian of technology, but Jerry Ravetz was interested in many things, including the development of science in the seventeenth century. Yeah, they were both friendly and helped me because they realised I didn't know very much about science, but they thought I was a good philosopher and that's why they gave me the job. Yeah.

And as it's your first encounter at this level with science, could you describe the zoology classes that you attended, what was involved?

Oh, well that was just a matter of teaching students how to cut up rabbits and so on and how to find the nerves in them and how you do the job. I of course was older and a lot more senior than the first year students who were doing this, but I thought it was good for me and Jerry Ravetz and Don Cardwell thought it was good for me to not merely read books and do the theoretical stuff, but to do the practical stuff.

And now learning the science that you felt that you ought to learn, what was the effect of that on your thinking, in other words, looking in detail at the science that you were aware was important?

Well, I think I'd rather, not quite certain what the effect at that stage was, but I can tell you a bit later what the effect was, because, well, the view I was beginning to come to was science has criteria for choosing this theory rather than that theory and the criteria are not merely that the theory gives correct predictions, but that since an infinite number of theories could be constructed which would give correct predictions, it was the simplest one which was most likely to be true. And that guided me, I'm really not certain exactly at what moment that struck me, may have been later, I was just learning. But that was what struck me in due course, that once you had got hold of that idea then the idea that God created and sustained the universe led to correct, not *predictions*, but made probable the evidence you had already observed, eg. that there was a universe, that it was governed by regular laws, ~~God created and sustained laws~~, these were such as to lead to the evolution of humans and that humans were conscious, and the theory that a good God made these things was the simplest theory which could account for them. And therefore I thought that the criteria for judging a scientific theory correct were just the same as the criteria for judging a theistic theory correct. The distinction is often made that well, science makes predictions and religion doesn't, but that seemed to me irrelevant. The crucial point is not that science makes predictions, but that science renders the data probable and it doesn't matter whether the data had been observed before or after the formulation of the theory. Of course, if you have first your theory you know what sort of data you're looking for, but if you happen to have those data before, then they make it just as probable as if you found them afterwards. So I thought, and I think, and that has been the dominant thought throughout my justification of theism, that it is the simplest and therefore most probable theory of the world and all that it contains. Just at what time I arrived at that in my thinking, I'm not certain, but I just wanted to learn at that stage and in the two years I spent at Leeds, so I did.

[50:26]

But at that time then it was necessary for me to get a job and I had enough knowledge to apply for jobs which required knowledge of the philosophy of science, and so that period of 1963 and onwards was at the great period throughout the world, and especially in this country, of university expansion. All universities were building, they were expanding, there were jobs and jobs and jobs, more jobs than there were people to fill them. So there were lots of jobs advertised, no problem getting one, and I got a lectureship at the University of Hull in 1963, and there I started, that was my first teaching post. It was a tenure track post, that is to say I had a year's probation and after that I had tenure, so I was then well established. The idea was, therefore, that I would be ordained at that point and that was my intention, but it was then becoming clear to me that this wasn't going to do any good to my marriage. My wife was originally very keen that I should become a priest, but she didn't sound particularly keen, I mean she was religious and remains religious, but she didn't sound very keen on that at that stage and she was clearly unhappy and being a priest's wife is putting a spotlight on you, as it were, and

she wasn't looking forward to that spotlight and I saw that it would not be a good thing for her that I should get ordained. And so I decided not to get ordained and instead to concentrate on my philosophy.

What had changed from the point where she was keen for you to be a priest to a position where she wasn't looking forward to the possibility?

Well, she got very depressed personally and I think everything looked pretty black to her and it was all very sad. But I mean she did her best, indeed she did her best. But I mean she didn't say don't, but I could see that that wasn't going to be a good thing.

[53:12]

Why, given the, as you say, the multitude of jobs that you could have gone for, why did you choose to accept or to apply for Hull out of the various...

Oh, I see. Well, probably because it was the first one that turned up. I think, yes, there was a post at Leeds itself, they were going to appoint a third person, and I did apply for that, but they didn't appoint me. I was interviewed but they preferred to appoint people who were basically historians of science. In fact there were two jobs, yeah. So I applied for the first philosophy job, or probably applied for two or three simultaneously, but any rate, this was the first one that interviewed me, or something like that, and they offered me the job so I took it, not knowing, I mean if you turn down a job you don't know quite whether you'll get [another] one. It wasn't that obvious that I would get one, that I would get one if I started turning one down, but any rate, I took it for that reason.

What was your wife's view of Hull as a place to move to, from?

What was her view? Well, anywhere but Leeds, I think, was her view at that stage. And yes, it was better because I had a permanent job. She felt I'd wandered around rather too much; she would have been happier if I'd gone straight to a permanent job from Oxford. Indeed, she would have been happier if I'd stayed in Oxford and so would I, but there wasn't a job for me. And yes, well we bought a house pretty near, next to the university where I could walk into work and so on, and yes, we lived there. She was at home all the time looking after the children, and in retrospect perhaps that was a bad thing, but later on she did part-time teaching and that was good. And because universities were expanding like this, although there were jobs, there wasn't an enormous amount of teaching to do. In those days universities were run by professors and everybody else wasn't a professor, that's to say, only the top ten per cent [of university teachers] were professors. They ran the university and they ran their department and although the department had meetings, it was [in each department] the professor's final decision on anything, and therefore there wasn't much administrating to do and there wasn't too much teaching to do, so I had plenty of time to get on with my own research, which I did and I started to publish articles. I became interested in space and time – I think I mentioned that I went to Felix [Friedrich] Waismann's lectures at one time – and that – my first book was on *Space and Time*, which was published in 1968. I had given some classes in this area to the applied physics department. The Professor of Applied Physics

then was, had some interest in philosophical issues of his subject and I gave some classes on cosmology there. And I also kept up my own scientific improvement. I went to some lectures on mathematical physics, I went to lectures on cosmology and I went to some lectures on quantum theory and I learnt quite a lot of linear algebra, which is necessary for quantum theory, on my own. So at the same time as writing books about it, I was learning about it.

[58:08]

Could you describe the department first of all and then tell me about the people, the colleagues, the people around?

Yes, well, the professor and head of department was Alan White. He was very much an ordinary language philosopher, but prepared to discuss with other people, and he had been a lecturer there and only recently become a professor and he was enthusiastic for his subject and the department and a very friendly man. And I think I was, when I was appointed, I was the sixth in the department, so there would have been four other people. Trying to remember. One of them was very much out of line with the rest of us. He was an older man who had a very different philosophical background, called Axel Stern. The other people were all of my age or just a little older and they'd all come through the Oxford mill. Roger Montague, Aaron Sloman and Christopher Williams. The last two became pretty well-known people. Aaron Sloman became well known for work on the philosophy of computer science [and he] left after a year and was replaced by somebody else. Christopher Williams was someone I had a lot in common with; he was a religious person, he was a Catholic, and interested in religious matters. Indeed, he himself had been training to become a Roman Catholic priest, but he had got polio and had been confined to a wheelchair and since – he was going to be a Benedictine monk – but since he hadn't taken final vows, they felt that they didn't have any obligation to him and since he was now in a wheelchair he wasn't suitable for them and so they said that they weren't going to let him become a Benedictine. He was, I think, very unhappy about that. But any rate, his loyalties were very much there and we had quite a lot in common. But he moved after two years to Bristol to be nearer his parents, who looked after him. So those were the people I remember at the department at that stage, but it was an expanding university and new people were appointed the next year and new people the following year and the trouble with this vast expansion period, though I mention no names in this connection, is that jobs were so plentiful and the stream of people coming out of graduate work in, not just philosophy, but most subjects, fairly small, that people got jobs in universities who would never have got jobs in the fifties or the seventies, but of course they got permanent jobs and they were there for the next forty years, and this was an unfortunate thing. But we did have quite a lot of new, I suppose there were about eleven people by the time I left in '72, and some of them were quite good and some weren't. [laughs]

How is not being good apparent to others?

Oh, I see. Well, we read papers to each – the department was good in this respect - we had a meeting every other week, I think, in which one of us had written a paper, which was Xeroxed in advance and we read it in advance and we discussed it for two hours. And philosophy is an integrated subject, that is to say, you may be

working on ethics but you understand papers about philosophy of mind or metaphysics, and any competent philosopher can teach over about two-thirds of the undergraduate syllabus in the subject. Other subjects [such as history or physics] are more narrow. So we were all competent to discuss papers that were presented to us, and that's one way in which this became obvious. Also, of course the great test has always been in universities, as to who can get things published in respectable journals. And some of us could get things published in respectable journals and other people couldn't and that was also the test. And I was doing quite well in that respect; I was writing about various things, some of them philosophy of religion things, more of them perhaps philosophy of science things, and one or two other things as well. So I was covering quite a range of things with articles and my first book, as I say, was on space and time, which was published in 1968. It was an investigation of –[our] talk about space, [our] talk about time, the logical consequences of various suppositions, and the difference that relativity theory and cosmology made to our understanding. I considered such questions as what did it mean to say that Alpha Centauri is so many parsecs away from us. Is this to be analysed in terms of the time light takes to get to it, or is it to be analysed in terms of how far it would take to walk to it if there was a level plain between us and them. And it considered what it would be like for the world to be a closed, the universe to be a closed universe and what it would be for an open universe, that is to say, open if it stretches indefinitely in any direction, closed if you go enough in that direction you come back from this direction. And into time, could time be opened or closed or must it be open? Could the universe have a beginning? What would it be like for the universe to have a beginning? These kinds of questions were, I found, very interesting. There hadn't been any book published of the sort of length that book was, which was 300 plus pages I think, on these topics then and it was quite successful. And that got me a bit of a name, so I got a senior lectureship. At that stage, we went to America for a year; this was something that academics do, did then, do now. I was given temporary leave from Hull. The understanding then was that if you're given temporary leave you had to come back again, and I kept that, but we went to the University of Maryland for a year and I taught there, and that was an enjoyable time and Monica found it an enjoyable time. We had a bit more money then. We'd always been rather short of money for the first years; university teachers were not well paid then at the junior level. But America was better paid and it was a good time. I read papers at a few other universities and at the end of that year we had a holiday driving up the Rockies in a car and there was more money and life was pretty good, but had to come back. Monica had always wanted to come back, in theory, and I suppose she did really, at the end of that time. But any rate, the understanding from Hull was that I ought to come back, and so I did, for another two years.

[1:07:52]

When you mentioned that Axel Stern was somewhat distinct from the rest of the faculty when you started at Hull, can you go into that a bit more in terms of... I mean as far as you want to, but especially you mentioned that his philosophy was different

Yes. I don't remember very much about it, but he was a much older man. The rest of us were in our late twenties or... in our late twenties, yes. I mean, apart from Alan White, the professor, who was in his late forties, I suppose. But Axel was probably in his fifties and he'd got his – I really don't remember the details – but he'd got a degree in Germany before the war or something like that. Beyond that I don't remember, but he was really

out of touch with modern analytic philosophy. Not merely did he not agree with it, but he wasn't [pause] he couldn't operate with it, as it were.

[1:09:11]

Where did you go to church?

Oh, well, in Hull we went to St Alban's and it was indeed at St Alban's that the idea was I would be ordained and serve on Sundays as priest. But when I pulled out of that we continued to go to St Alban's. Yes, it was a typical then High Church, Anglican church and the Sunday service was the Mass and it had daily Masses, I think, every day and it was a very High Church but it had a good congregation and it was fairly near us, yes.

To what extent were members of the congregation aware of what you did for a living, and if so, interested in that?

[laughs] Well, they were aware of what I did for a living. They didn't quite understand, and in particular people living round us, the area we lived, although it was, that was where the university was, had no connection with the university. It was – Hull was never a prosperous town; it was a big working class town and the people round us thought the university lecturers have a cushy time. Their terms are only ten weeks long, they have half the year, therefore, doing nothing, and they get paid for it and aren't they lucky. I tried to explain to them, and particularly the church people, but anyone else, tried to explain to people, well we were expected to write things during our vacations and to read what other people had written in order to give up-to-date lectures next time, but they didn't sort of understand that. Perhaps they still don't understand that, I don't know, but they certainly didn't understand it then.

[1:11:38]

And what effect on your faith was learning about science, learning more about philosophy, beginning to combine the two?

Well, as I say, I thought once I'd seen what I thought the connection was, it was very much strengthening the faith. I didn't see science as providing rival explanations of things to theological explanations, but as rather theological explanations as explaining why scientific explanations worked, why science was successful. So it was a positive influence, yes.

[1:12:26]

Your study earlier than this, but perhaps here, of the history of science, had that included a sort of interest in the history of the relations between science and religion?

Oh yes, very much so. I read various books about this. The popular interest in this has always been focussed on the seventeenth century and the nineteenth century. In the seventeenth century when people discovered that the earth moved round the sun and in the nineteenth century when they discovered that man had evolved from the

animals, and sure, I read about all the controversies then. But I also read about, which people don't read about, the similar, not so prominent, but controversies, in the fourth century when Greek science seemed to be in conflict with the biblical view of the world, because the Book of Genesis seems to regard the world as, the earth as flat and having corners and covered by a dome, whereas Greek science taught the universe was a sphere in the middle of the universe round which the planets and the sun were bodies, which were carried round by the spheres. And there are other ways in which there were conflicts. Genesis talks of the waters above the firmament, it talks of waters below the firmament, in other words, the seas, and it thinks of the world as covered by this big dome and there being waters above the dome. Now, the literal interpretation of the firmament in terms of Greek science would be the innermost sphere, innermost crystalline sphere, which carried the moon round the earth, and Greek science was very clear that from the moon upward there was nothing but crystalline spheres and planets, there weren't any waters there. So there were conflicts there and the more intelligent people in the fourth century said, well, as Aquinas said, the way Aquinas put it was, Moses was talking to an ignorant people – they thought of the first few books of the Bible as written by Moses – Moses was explaining things to an ignorant people, that is to say, things were being put in the terms, the dependence of the world on God was being put in terms that those people would understand; it wasn't giving a scientific lesson. And I also realised that it was these, the people who said that, not just Aquinas then, but the people in the fourth century who said that, like Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa, they were the people who said the Bible is inspired, but they meant by it, well, a lot of the Bible is nevertheless put in terms that people could understand. So I learned that as well, and so I came to think, and again, I'm not quite certain at which point I realised this and which point I came to think, but in due course I came to see, well, the trouble with focussing on these [the 17th and 19th] centuries is that people had forgotten, the Church had forgotten, how the people who formed the canon of scripture who said which books ought to be included in the Bible, had a view about how you should interpret the Bible, and the clergy, the church leaders of the seventeenth century who made such a fuss about the earth going round the sun, had forgotten this approach, which was the earlier Christian approach which determined which books were included in scripture. And similar considerations, in my view, applied to the theory of evolution. Okay, we were evolved from the apes and the apes, etc, backwards, but the issue was whether this was a God determined process or whether it wasn't. And if it was a God determined process, then there was no need for God to give us a science lesson; we could find that out for ourselves. What God had to teach us is that how the forces which brought us into being were his forces and whether he made us out of the apes or made us straight from the earth didn't matter very much.

Thank you.

[1:17:50]

Can you say – remember the extent to which your church, so this is your local church rather than the wider Church, were interested at this time in relations between science and religion themselves?

I don't think they were. I didn't have a great deal to do with, I mean I went to church on Sundays and so on, but didn't know a great deal of people there very much. Friendly to talk to them and so on and so forth, but didn't talk to them a great deal and I don't know the answer to that really, but I don't think they were very interested in this. It was, as I say, not a very intellectual area that the church on the whole catered for.

[1:18:53]

Okay. The books written at Hull as well as the papers, can you remember where and when and perhaps even how you wrote, since this is a period of substantial writing starting, if you like, isn't it? I'm interested in where, to start with, where you tended to write things.

Oh, well I had an office in the university and we only lived a few hundred yards from the university and that's where I did my writing, it's as simple as that. It wouldn't have been possible at home with two young children around the place. But I kept regular hours, as I always have done, and most days I came home to lunch in fact then, though not every day, sometimes I would lunch in the university. So I worked mornings and came home to lunch and sometimes after lunch I might go for a cycle ride or indeed, played squash sometimes, and then went back and did another chunk of work and came home for an evening meal.

Any work at home?

No, I never worked at home, I say, because there were children around and so on.

What do you remember of time spent with them when they were young, after work and at weekends?

Oh, I always devoted an hour to them when I came home, say about six o'clock. I would read to them or play chess with them or something like that, yes, sure.

And memories of weekends in Hull?

Well, yes we did get a car after I'd been there a couple of years and, I say, we were quite poor to start with, we could hardly afford it. And we would sometimes go and go into the country, perhaps, for a picnic. I can't remember very much more than that. I'm sure we tried to do a bit more together. Just can't remember.

[1:21:32]

And would you simply say a bit more about the year in America, especially sort of contrasts between America and Britain at this time?

Yes. Well, that was an interesting year in a way, it was the year 1969 to 70, which was the time of the student revolution, and that is certainly one of my dominant memories. Indeed, I met the student revolution twice. It occurred at Hull in '68/69 when there were great demos and sit-ins and demands that students should decide the future of the university and so on. But this tide hadn't quite reached all of America then and it reached America when I reached America, so I met it twice. Or rather, the time in America was divided into two semesters and it was in the second semester, after Christmas, that it really hit the University of Maryland, but it hit it in a more violent way than it hit any British university. And yes, there were to start with a lot of sit-ins and demands that students should run the university, but there were conversations between the authorities and the students and we

were sort of getting over that and some discussions about how they might be incorporated to some extent in the structure of the university. But we were just getting over that when, you may have heard, I suspect you won't remember, the Vietnam War was going on and Nixon, the then President, sent American troops not merely into Vietnam, but into Cambodia, and this made the student age group population wild. Many of the students had been against [the] Vietnam [war] for many years and many Americans had been killed in Vietnam, especially student age Americans, for, as far as anyone could see, no good purpose at all. So there was very considerable hostility to the Vietnam War and then there was this sudden escalation of it and the students went wild. They tried to burn buildings, and so the faculty had to form posses to defend these buildings at night. We were - just six miles away there was a university called Kent State University where a number of students were killed in this process. The state provided the National Guard to help the university guard its buildings against student arson and the National Guard at the University of Maryland were clearly less trigger-happy than the ones at Kent State, so that didn't happen there [at Maryland], but there was violence galore. And we ended the semester with the National Guard on every corner in the university with their bayonets fixed. Now, my colleagues in the university there thought the end of the world had come; they were totally unable to cope with this, mentally, with this situation. I knew I was going back to England and so I could take a somewhat dispassionate attitude to this, but they felt their world of them running the university and people doing what they were told by the government and so on was coming to an end. So I remember all that fairly acutely. There was a very considerable contrast between the religious atmosphere in the university and the religious atmosphere in the church we attended. We lived, I suppose, about four miles, it was, from the university then, but had a car, I was driven in every day by Monica and then she had the car for the rest of the day. The church we attended in the area we lived, Hillandale, had a very patriotic atmosphere, it was quite a wealthy suburb, the people there were - clearly voted Republican. They were on the side of the authorities; the Stars and Stripes were carried in procession at the beginning of the church service and so on. There was no doubt where their loyalty lay. On the other hand, I went sometimes in the week to a chapel in the university where clearly the pastor was on the side of the students and a very different atmosphere prevailed. This division cut through society at all stages.

[1:27:40]

Thank you. And can you tell me about the sort of intellectual relations here with the faculty?

Oh yes. Well, it was quite a good faculty and there are a lot more philosophers in America than there are in UK and that was the case then as it is the case now. And it [the Maryland philosophy department] wasn't the top in any sense, it wasn't one of the top six or anything like that philosophy departments in America, but it was one of the top thirty or something like that. There were, most of the people were a bit older than me, but not much older than me, and there were the chairman, Ernie Schlaretzki was a man in his fifties, possibly, sixties maybe. And there was another fairly senior person, Alan Pasch, but otherwise it was all fairly junior people and people were writing. "Publish or perish" was more obvious in America than it was in Britain at that time and they were all working hard and they were fairly able. I'm sure we talked about these matters quite a bit, I can't remember the details of that, I can't remember quite what the arrangements for discussion of views were then, but it was an active department, yes indeed.

Did it have a sort of distinctive – in the way that you've described, Oxford philosophy as having a kind of distinctive philosophy – ?

Oh, it wasn't Oxford, but the kind of philosophy that was done in Oxford was also done to a lesser degree throughout the United States, but to a lesser degree. And there were other philosophical streams in the United States. So everybody knew about what was being done in Oxford and some people were more on that wavelength than others, that's about all I can remember. I can't remember any more details than that, I'm afraid.

[1:30:27]

That's fine. And finally on America, I know you were only there for a year, but was it possible over that period of time to sense the balance between religion and science in the sort of, as world views, in the way that you felt in Britain that science was the sort of mainstream dominant world view which the Church, as a whole, tended to ignore, was it possible to detect the sort of balance of things in America while you were there?

Well, America then and now has always been a much more religious country than Britain. The majority of people attended church. But what has also struck me, much more acutely in later years than was the case then, while the proportion of people in America who had church connections was high then, very high then and even fifty per cent now, say, nevertheless, the proportion of religious believers among academics in good academic institutions was far lower than the national average, *far* lower than the national average. And only some of the philosophy department would have had religious connections and they would, the others would look down a bit superciliously on religion as what the working class do, as it were. And that's very acute now, you can see that's very acute now in some American philosophy departments at the present time, whereas in Britain, although we're not a religious country, there's never been any hostility to religion in a big way, apart from Dawkins and so on stirring it up recently, but in general the non-believing population is not hostile to religion in any sense. But the proportion of people in – academics in Oxford who are religious is significantly greater than the proportion of people in the population at large, though it's not great, of course. I mean if you say perhaps ten per cent of the people in the country have serious church connections, my guess is say fifteen per cent of Oxford academics would have that. Whereas it was the reverse situation in America.

Have you developed a theory, perhaps historical theory, about why in Oxford fifteen per cent?

Oh yes. Remember, Oxford used to get the majority of its new students from the public schools, the, quote, 'public schools'. And they [the 'public schools'] were often religious, usually, possibly invariably religious institutions who had chaplains, so religion was a prominent thing in the life of a public school in those days. And so a lot of the students who came up to Oxford were religious and maybe quite a lot of them lost their religion then, but quite a lot of them didn't, and I think that's behind what happened. On the other hand, in America, they all went to the same, quote, public [that is, what we would call 'state'] schools, which were really public then and the public schools were not allowed to teach religion in any way. Religion was kept out of the public education system. And so there wasn't this privileged group of people who went up to Harvard or Yale,

but the population as a whole was religious and therefore the similar proportion of those who went up to Harvard and Yale were religious, but not a greater proportion than the average.

Thank you.

[1:35:16]

So after America you returned to Hull. Could you cover then the end of your time at Hull and the beginning of your time at Keele next?

Yes. Well, I was then, I'd written this book, *Space and Time*, I'd also written a small book called *The Concept of Miracle*. This was for a series of books on the philosophy of religion, which was becoming a subject of interest to philosophers. It was a short book, but I'd written two books, I'd written quite a lot of articles, I was clearly eligible to apply for professorships. And remember, those days, professorships were the top ten per cent of the university teachers; the others were not professors. This is no longer the case. So, I applied for two [professorships], which I was interviewed for, but I didn't get, and then I got the third one I applied to, which was Keele. And so in 1972 we moved to Keele.

What were the two that you applied to but didn't get?

I applied to Lancaster, I nearly got that, and then I applied to East Anglia. But Keele was the successful one.

[1:36:47]

Could you then tell the story of beginning your time at Keele?

Yes, well I was, what, thirty-seven when I went there, and that was quite a young age for a professor, but there had been this expansion in the sixties, so with one exception all my colleagues were just slightly younger than I was. They ranged – no, I suppose they ranged from twenty-six to thirty-six and I was thirty-seven, that sort of thing. One colleague who hoped he would get the chair, but didn't, was considerably older, but with that exception that was the situation. And the period of university expansion had come to an end, so there were no new appointments during the twelve years I was there, in fact. The department all got twelve years older. They'd been appointed in the sixties, some of them were good, some of them weren't so good. But I was respected; I was clearly writing a lot and I tried to encourage the department to philosophise, and we had regular discussion groups and visiting speakers and, yeah. The atmosphere of Keele, I don't know if you know this, but Keele was started as a university after the war in 1948 and it was started by A.D Lindsay who had been Master of Balliol. And he wanted to start a university which was a residential university, in which it was residential not merely in the sense that the students lived in the university, but the faculty, the staff lived there, and therefore, on this campus, outside Newcastle-under-Lyme, big campus, there were at the start hostels for all students and houses for all the faculty, and it was a requirement of an appointment that you lived on the campus. That remained the case for about ten years, I think, but it, I think they'd ceased to make it a condition of appointment just before I was appointed, so we could have lived off campus, but we did live for one year in a rather small house on campus, which was not very pleasant. But in the second year I was allocated a big house on campus

with a large garden and was right on the edge of the campus and was a very nice place to live, and we lived there for [pause] until '79, I think, and after that we moved off campus, partly because Monica wanted to live off campus and partly because everybody felt that one ought to own a house in order to have security for retirement. So for the majority of time there, I suppose just the majority of my time there, we did live on the campus and it was very convenient, of course, for me. And I was writing. Once again, I say, I was lucky at Hull because there wasn't much work to do and I wasn't involved in administration. There was rather more teaching to do at Keele, but the really big jobs administratively were, for example, not head of the department, but head ['chair'] of the humanities faculty, which was always taken by the professors in turn, and just as it came up to be my turn to take it, they decided to liberalise it so that non-professors could be ['chair of the Board of Humanities'], so it never came my way and that was just one of many things that meant that somehow or other I had more time for writing than I would normally have had. And although I was on some committees, I wasn't on nearly as many committees as many people. Partly because I think that some people like being on committees, though they don't actually say that. So it wasn't resented that I wasn't on those committees. So there was more work, a lot more work, well, more work any rate administratively since I was head of department, but there wasn't that much more work and there was more teaching, there wasn't that much more teaching, so I did have quite a bit of time for my writing. Keele had this ideal, not merely did everybody live on the campus, but of bridging the science/arts divide, and the way it was done was firstly all – it was a four-year degree, not a three-year, as was normal – and in the first year the original arrangement was everybody had to study this foundation year and the foundation year consisted of a series of lectures, two every weekday, which covered all the fields of the arts and the sciences and everybody [all the first-year students] was meant to attend them. It was arranged in a historical order so that you started with a few lectures on the beginning of the universe, and it went on to a few lectures on Plato and Aristotle and so on and so forth, and philosophers popped up at various times in this sequence. And these were backed up; students in that year had to take a number of either term-long or year-long courses which had to be balanced between arts and sciences in accordance with some formula. So there was an arrangement, whatever course they were going to do after the foundation year, they had to bridge the gap in the foundation year. And there were, in their subsequent years they couldn't just study one subject, they had to study two, two main subjects, and also one or two subsidiary subjects which again had to include arts if they were doing sciences, or conversely. So it was a bold attempt to bridge the gap, but it gradually got whittled away. While I was there, I think the foundation year, I think became – I can't remember clearly – I think it became optional then, so the students could start without it, simply because they weren't getting too many applications for the foundation year; students didn't want to spend four years at university when they could get the degree in three. It [The four-year course with the 'Foundation year'] was very popular at the start because it was innovative and exciting, but gradually applications declined and therefore the restrictions got less severe. And soon after I left, I think the foundation year was abolished, so it [Keele] became much more like ordinary universities, but that was the ideal and it was an ideal I sympathised with. So I was writing, and having spent most of my time on the philosophy of science at Hull, that's what I taught, as well as a few other things, but mainly, I did change track when I came to Keele and I began to write on – as well as teaching some philosophy of science and other areas of philosophy – I began to write on the philosophy of religion. And I just, oh yes, just before I arrived at Keele I had finished a book [*An Introduction to Confirmation Theory*] which was an important book for me. It was about confirmation theory. Now, confirmation theory is a form of the

calculus of probability, which assesses the probability of one proposition on another and in particular of one theory on evidence, and it formalises this in terms of the probability calculus. And it, the probability calculus, is able to capture the ideas that scientists generally hold that a theory is more probable insofar as it makes predictions and insofar (as I subsequently thought important), insofar as it's simple. And one or two other things, but these general requirements which are stated in a vague sort of way can be captured by the probability calculus. And if you use the probability calculus in this way, not just to measure statistical features of theories, but to assess the probability of theories being true, then you get what's called confirmation theory. And this had come to interest me and I studied the relevant stuff. The most influential book was Rudolf Carnap's *Logic and the* – I've forgotten what it's called now but it's up there [referring to own bookshelves]. What's Carnap's book called? Any rate, Carnap's big book, it doesn't matter.

[book found from bookshelves]

Oh yes, Carnap's, *The Logical Foundations of Probability*, which is a very big book. And I utilised it to provide an introduction to this sort of use of the probability calculus and developed it in certain ways. And I'd written this book [An Introduction to Confirmation Theory], and having written this book, it then became clear to me the role of different factors in assessing the probability of theories, and I applied that to the theory that there is a God. And I wrote the three books which have become most, which have remained the most influential of my books on the philosophy of religion. The first is called *The Coherence of Theism*, the second was *The Existence of God* and the third was *Faith and Reason*.

[1:48:37]

Now, *The Coherence of Theism*, which was published in 1977, was an investigation of the meaning and justification of the claim that there is a God. Now God is said to be, in some sense a person, everywhere present, creator of the universe, omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, in some sense essentially so, and in some sense necessary. And this book was about what it is for a being to be omnipotent, omniscient and so on. And it was the first book in the analytic tradition which investigated this at book length. There had been articles, a few articles, occasional articles on religious language, whether it was to be taken literally or whether it was to be taken in some sense metaphorically. And sure, I discussed that at great length. But there had hardly been anything about what it is for God to be omnipotent or omniscient in any detail and I read – but of course, the medievals had talked about this matter at some length, Aquinas, Scotus, Ockham – and generally philosophers were pretty ignorant about some of this, but I had read that stuff. In particular, I'd read a lot of Aquinas, because one thing that I did when I was at Leeds was I read the first part of Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, which is a long work, and the first part is concerned with the nature of God, and I had read that. And I was much impressed by that because he sought to spell out these features of God; there are 'questions', chapters in effect, on omnipotence and omniscience and so on in the *Summa* and he had a lot to say about these matters, and I was impressed at his attempt to make very clear just what was being said and to make clear the sense in which this was literal and that wasn't literal. Didn't agree with him in detail about all these things, but the task was absolutely right. And so I used the latest views on language from what was now no longer really a dogmatic Anglo-American tradition, but was very sensitive to the use of language, and I used what had been written on these matters in the last several, previous several hundred years really, and I wrote this book. And it remains,

has remained, an influential book. So that was *The Coherence of Theism*. And then there was, ah, well I think perhaps we stop now, shall we?

[end of track 2]

Track 3

As I say, just a few questions on last time and then we'll continue through the chronology. You mentioned last time the radio debate between Bertrand Russell and Father Copleston, I wondered whether that was something that you listened to, and if so, what do you remember of it?

No, I didn't hear it, but I have read it and it is often quoted as the first time that the radio opened up the possibility that there wasn't a God.

Thank you. And I was curious, looking over the summaries of the first and second sessions, as to whether you had what we might call Christian role models as a child and as a schoolchild and then as a young man at university, so through school and university were there adult Christians who you looked up to, identified with, or felt led by?

[pause] I think I mentioned a Franciscan friar who came to Oxford, Brother Peter, but I was certainly, as it were, firmly Christian by that stage. I don't think there were really. I tended to think that they all had certain deficiencies, but probably – I speak from [memory], as I've commented before, and some of your other interviewees may have commented, it's a long time ago and I cannot really remember. But I think what I felt is that the example and teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels was a far better role model than any living people I was in contact with, who had their deficiencies. But I think one thing which appealed to me rather was firstly, TS Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, which I remember seeing the film of in my, when I was about, I don't know, sixteen, seventeen, and that with its emphasis on the importance of worship, sanctity, truth telling, whatever the cost, of Becket as Eliot represented him, certainly appealed to me and some of the poetry of GK Chesterton appealed to me. But I think that the influences were in that way almost all literary.

What was the appeal of GK Chesterton?

Oh, I see. Well, there are various – I remember his poem called *The Devil* [The Aristocrat], for example, started with 'The Devil is a gentleman and invites you down to stay at his little place at What'sitsname (which isn't far away), they say the food is splendid and the sport...' etc. But then it goes on, something like, 'Starve yourself and shave your head, but do not go to stay at the little place at Whatit'sname where folk are rich and clever, the golden and the goodly house where things grow worse forever'. And it goes on to emphasise, as it were, there is a great attraction of worldly things which might seem appealing and interesting and you feel you've got to know about, but there's an awful lot of things you don't need to know about and there are things that are more important than that. There are other of his poems which bring out that kind of Catholic Christian theme.

But it wasn't the case that you were as a child at any age involved in a sort of Sunday school or Christian youth group or something like that where there were role models that you...

No, indeed not. I think I probably commented, didn't I, that my Christianity was very much a matter of saying my own prayers and not being particularly involved. Indeed, I thought, certainly when I was at Charterhouse, although we all had to go to chapel every day and so on, but there were certain evening services which one was allowed to go to, rather specialised services in which there was a longer sermon and more intimate atmosphere, and I tended to go to those. But I think there may well have been some sort of Christian groups, but I certainly wasn't involved in them and I certainly didn't, as it were, show off. I don't mean that in the wrong sense, but exhibit my Christian loyalties in any very conspicuous way.

Thank you.

[05:15]

And you said that you were aware, at least by the time that you got to university, that what you call the modern scientific world view was presenting a challenge to Christianity...

Yes.

...which you felt the Church was ignoring or was complacent about anyway.

Yes.

To what extent was that modern scientific world view a challenge to your own faith?

I just felt it was wrong. [laughs] Felt it had rather low moral standards, probably, as one of the remarks I've just made illustrated. I felt that [pause] not quite certain, again I speak from memory, but I felt the science and religion conflict which was beginning to surface wasn't a very deep one because religion wasn't concerned with the details of which theory of the earth going round the sun or vice versa was true, so I mean I felt it was a challenge, but I don't think it ever led me to think that I ought to abandon my religion or anything like that, I felt it probably had answers.

Thank you.

[06:39]

And can you tell me about relations with your parents over the period that we discussed last time, which is really from Oxford University to Keele, so it's sort of from the fifties to the early seventies.

Yes. Well, my parents' marriage had broken up and from when I left school my mother went to live separately from my father and I lived with my mother. She was a rather lonely woman and I was an only child and I felt, as it were, she rather focussed her love on me and so I turned a bit cold on her, I'm afraid. But we kept in very considerable contact. I mean when I was doing my National Service, so-called, in other words learning Russian, the year that took place in London, I mean I went home every weekend and so on and so forth. And indeed I had frequent contacts until of course I got married, and in particular at that time, we then moved after a year up to Leeds and then Hull, which was a long way from where she was living in Essex. But she certainly approved

– well was happy that I should, as it were, be formally involved in a religion, was very unhappy, as I think I mentioned before, at the notion that I should take it too seriously. With my father, well, as I think I said earlier, my relations were not very good before then, [one sentence deleted at interviewee's request], and I did see him from time to time, went to stay with him for two or three days or something like that occasionally and he came to see us from time to time when we were in Hull or Keele, but it was fairly distant, though he was always interested in what I was doing and so on. We were in touch, certainly, in both cases, much more closely with my mother [one sentence deleted at interviewee's request]

[09:28]

When you say that you turned a bit cold on her, what did that entail?

Oh, I see, well I didn't tell her very much about my – she was very interested in talking about her past, her difficulties, and wanted to know my intimate feelings about this and that and I didn't really wish to talk about these things.

Thank you. Did she continue through your life to express this wish that you weren't taking religion so seriously personally?

From time to time, yes. But of course she was quite happy when I decided not to be ordained. Yes, though she always when she came to stay with us would come to church with us, but she wouldn't of course receive communion. But she wasn't hostile, but she didn't like me taking it too seriously, certainly. And my father was also not religious, but since we weren't all that close to start with, I don't think that was a problem, me taking it seriously.

Why did she not want you to take it seriously? Did she, for example, think that you were wasting your time with it, or did she think that–

No, she didn't think it was true. [laughs] And, therefore, I suppose, wasting time. She had some sympathy with Eastern religions, with Buddhism, and felt the idea of a personal god was outdated and too anthropomorphic.

Thank you.

[11:28]

Now we left you last time as Professor of Philosophy at Keele and you'd talked about the first of the trilogy and were going, just about to go on to talk about the next. But just before you do, the reason for the word 'coherence' in the first, why coherence?

Yes, well Christian theological system and theism itself, the claim there is a God, it's claimed that there are all sorts of inconsistencies in this very claim, God is supposed to be omniscient and yet humans are supposed to

have free will and God is supposed to have free will. So, if God is omniscient in a strong sense, he will know the future, but then how can he have free will as to what to do. And in a number of other ways there have been, many writers have felt there are, if you try and spell out what it means for there to be a God, there are certain inconsistencies here and *The Coherence of Theism* is an examination of whether there are these inconsistencies, whether the whole coheres, whether it will fit together. And I argued that although, if you interpret some of the words in the ways you define God in certain ways, they are incoherent, it is incoherent, but if you interpret them in certain other ways it is certainly coherent and therefore I advocated certain ways of how we should interpret "omnipotent" and "omniscient" and "eternal" and "free", how we should interpret these words in such a way that the claim, there is a God, is internally consistent, whether or not it fits with anything outside itself.

[13:27]

Thank you. And before we go on to the next two, could you just indicate who else, if anyone, was involved in the writing of this trilogy, and I'm thinking of colleagues that you sent drafts to and they commented, or more formal editors or people involved in suggesting that you ought to present it in one way rather than another, those sort of people.

Well, I think I commented that what is now called analytic philosophy of religion, in other words, examining the meaning and justification of religious claims with the tools of philosophy as practised in Britain and America in the sixties, seventies and so on. Analytic philosophy of religion was really only taking off in the 1960s, but there were people, and my method always tended to be, both with those books and with the earlier books we talked about such as *Space and Time* and *Introduction to Confirmation Theory*, I often sent articles which eventually came to be a chapter in the book to journals and they got published, and of course if the editor accepted it, or even if he didn't, he would produce certain comments on this and they were useful. I also sent it independently to certain colleagues, yes, and you're saying who are they. One person I interacted with quite a lot in those first years at Keele was JL Mackie, John Mackie. He was an Australian philosopher who is very well known today. He was Professor of – he came from – he was Professor at Sydney, I think, but he came to become the first Professor [of Philosophy] at the University of York about the time that I went ~~as a lecturer to Keele and~~ – as a lecturer to Hull, and the Hull department was significantly larger than the York department at that stage so John and a colleague often used to come to our seminars and although he was firmly atheist, he was very interested in religious matters and he was also interested in other subjects, the other subjects I'd written on, such as space and time and confirmation theory, so he read quite an amount of stuff for me and produced useful criticism. Indeed, his book on philosophy of religion, called *The Miracle of Theism*, was published certainly after *The Coherence of Theism* and after he had attended some of my Wilde Lectures – we'll come on to those in a moment – which I gave at Oxford, and his book was largely a response to my *Coherence of Theism* and *The Existence of God*. So he was certainly somebody I interacted with quite a lot. The system at Hull was that each week, or two weeks was it, one member of the department had written a paper, which was Xeroxed in advance, and we discussed it. Now, philosophy is a subject in which you can discuss and talk about and indeed teach, if you're a professional philosopher, about two-thirds of the syllabus. That is to say, other people who are working in other areas of philosophy were perfectly competent to produce comments on my papers, and they did. So various members of the department helped in various ways. In particular, I mentioned Christopher Williams last

time, but he was only there for the first two years I was at Hull. But any member of the department might throw ideas in and they would be useful. There were other people to whom I wrote on particular matters and I don't think there was any one that I would think automatically of. When I wrote about confirmation theory I probably sent and interacted with Hugh Mellor, who was a Cambridge don and subsequently became a professor there, but [not]nearly as much as with John Mackie. And these were not – these were all people who were either atheist or didn't write professionally much about the philosophy of religion. But that was the important thing; there hadn't been any really sophisticated philosophy of religion since the Middle Ages in my view, that is to say, there was a great deal of examination of what it meant for God to be omnipotent or omniscient in the later Middle Ages. Aquinas, John Scotus, William Ockham all had a lot to say about these matters, and rather carefully too, but the sort of philosophy of the British empiricists wasn't nearly as careful as that, and any rate, they were more interested in epistemology than in questions of the divine nature. So this sort of work that I was doing, one or two other people were doing, was to some extent starting again, but with all the tools that were around in analytic philosophy, they hadn't really been applied very much to philosophy of religion. So the people who helped me were on the whole the people who didn't agree with me.

[19:46]

Thank you. Could you then talk in more detail about the second book, The Existence of God?

Yes. It's called *The Existence of God* and while the first volume was, as we've been saying, an examination of what it meant to say, there's a God, or rather how you could spell out the view that there was a God in an internally consistent way, the second volume was concerned with whether it was true or not, when duly spelt out, whether there is a God. And I had got my understanding of what I wanted to do was to represent theism, the view that there is a God, as a hypothesis which was probable insofar as it satisfied this kind of criteria by which scientists and historians regard their theories as probable. And in my work on confirmation theory I had developed a view about this, that a theory was probable insofar as it gave good predictions, but what I mean by that is insofar as it made probable certain observations. It didn't matter whether the observations occurred before the theory I'd produced or afterwards, and insofar as those observations were ones that you would not otherwise expect and insofar as the theory was simple. And I emphasised very much the latter, because it became obvious to me, as it's still not obvious to many scientists, that compatible with any finite collection of data there will always be an infinite number of theories which predict those data, but differ in what they say about other things. The obvious example, really one needs a diagram to illustrate this, but I think it's such a simple point that I can talk you through it. Imagine a graph with a y axis perpendicular to an x axis and suppose you are studying the relation of two variables, x and y , how y varies with values of x . And suppose you mark on the map with a little cross your observations that for this value of x there was that value of y . So it might be that when x is one, y is one. And you may have observed that when x is two, y is two. So you mark on a little graph the observations you have made. But you'll only have a finite number of observations, so a finite number of points on the graph. And between those points you can [draw a curve which], a theory would be a theory which allowed you to predict subsequent points, so it would be a curve which passed through the observations and then made some predictions for the future. There will always be an infinite number of curves which pass through

any finite number of points. And so even if you have a theory that is absolutely accurate with a million observations, and you wouldn't expect these observations otherwise, there will always be an infinite number of different theories [which also predict these observations], but of course, some of these theories are pretty wild, but what constitutes wildness? Well, what constitutes wildness is complexity and what constitutes sensibleness is simplicity. And, for example, if your observations are that when x equals one, y equals one, and x equals two, y equals two, and you've got half a dozen of those observations, the obvious theory to postulate is that x equals y and that produces various predictions. But, there are some crazy curves you could pass through those points. Well, our situation in life is always that we have only a finite number of points and a finite number of observations and scientists make the simplest – produce the simplest theory which will fit those observations. But, of course, it's logically possible that the next observation will not be as the theory predicts, but it is more probable that it will than that it won't. And that can be represented – I'm not certain how far I talked about this last time – by means of the probability calculus where you can show that the – there's a theorem called Bayes's Theorem, that the probability of a hypothesis on evidence of observation is proportional to the probability of the evidence on the hypothesis (which is how accurate your hypothesis is) multiplied by the prior probability, ~~that is,~~ and the prior probability is something quite independent of the relation of the hypothesis to the evidence and that I cash out in terms of the a priori factors which determine the probability of the hypothesis which I've been suggesting are simplicity. Bayes's Theorem says the probability of the hypothesis on the evidence is equal to the probability of the evidence on the hypothesis multiplied by the prior probability of the hypothesis, divided by the prior probability of the evidence, that is how probable it would be that you would get to these observations anyway. Right, well having got hold of that, I then said, well what is the evidence in the case of theism, and the evidence is all the things that have been traditionally supposed to be evidence for the existence of God: that there's a universe, that it's a regular universe, which I interpret as governed by more or less regular laws of nature, that these laws are such to lead to the evolution of human beings, and that the human beings are conscious, these general phenomena. ~~And I then investigate, say~~ although people have often said these are evidence for God, they didn't have theories as to why they were evidence for God, and having done my work on scientific theories, I knew why they were evidence for God. And I proceeded to argue that theism was a simple theory, postulating one entity with just a few properties and simple degrees of these properties, and if there was such a being then you would expect that being to produce good things and human beings are good things and human beings need to have a regular universe in which to live, otherwise they can't make a difference to anything, and the great value of humans is they're conscious, they can make choices, they can make differences to things, and for that purpose they need a physical universe in which to exist that needs to behave regularly, it needs to be such as to lead to their evolution and they have to be conscious. So I argued you'd expect all these data if there is a God, I gave other reasons to suppose you wouldn't expect them if there wasn't a God, I mean [for example, it is]immensely unlikely that every atom would attract every other atom in a regular way just by chance. And theism is a very simple theory. So I was arguing all this by the best scientific standards, theism is a very well justified theory, and that was the theme of the book. The points I made can of course be spelt out without the apparatus of the probability calculus, but I did bring it into this book because I wanted to make the point ~~at~~ in the most rigorous and sophisticated way and it's material I had developed when working on probability theory. So that was the theme of that book.

[28:07]

The book arose, you asked who had influenced me and so on, after I'd written *The Coherence of Theism*, I applied for and got the Wilde Lectureship in the philosophy of religion here at Oxford [which I held at the same time as my full-time Professorship at Keele]. It was, the Wilde Lectureship is just someone who holds it, then they had to hold it for three years and it involved giving eight lectures a year for each of three years, and I had that between something like 1975 and 1978. So all the material of *The Existence of God* had been given in those lectures and of course I had plenty of response from the audience here and John Mackie came to some of those lectures and [so did] other distinguished people, I'm glad to say, also came to those lectures. So it was where my ideas took off. So that was the theme.

[29:22]

What do you remember of any counter arguments that you experienced through the responses to those lectures?

I don't know about responses to those lectures, but this book has been around and the ideas have been around ever since it was written and there have been innumerable responses, whether they occurred at that time or not, I'm not certain. Well, a lot of people to start with – say science doesn't use this criterion of simplicity, but I think they really backed down on that; it's impossible to give an account of science without that. But any rate, they claim that. Then they claim that science has to make predictions, and so its often said religion doesn't make predictions. In other words, once you've got the theory you ought to be able to test it in some way. But I don't think that's necessary for science at all and I've argued that, [it] doesn't matter whether you've got your evidence first and then have your theory, or the other way round. Let's see. Some of the great detective stories, for example, you've got all the clues they have in chapters one to nine, but the success, the detective's success, consists in seeing what fits them all together and that only comes out in chapter ten. And also, I did make the point that the most successful of all scientific theories, which is Newton's theory of gravitation, produced in 1687, I think, all the data were known before Newton and there were no new observations relevant to the theory for the next sixty years, but everybody thought he'd done it [produced the ultimate irreplaceable theory of mechanics], everybody in Britain, that is, thought he'd done it. And then of course I think what people have often focussed on is, is it really simple this theory [theism], and tried to show that it isn't at all. The book did also discuss the evidence against the existence of God, the most obvious one being the existence of pain and suffering; why would a good God produce this? And I did, there was a chapter, a chapter and a half, I suppose, of argument there in defence of my theodicy, but that's something I develop much more fully at greater book length in a book called *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, which I wrote later. But the theodicy is there and – but then people of course think it was inadequate and the argument took place on that basis.

[32:12]

Were scientists attending those lectures?

I doubt it. A lot of philosophers were. I don't remember any scientists. Well, I mean there may have been; they were very well attended. But – a lot of undergraduates, of course. No, I don't think scientists were, though there may have been. But I've certainly read papers and interacted with plenty of professional scientists, but I don't think they were very prominent in those lectures.

And the third of the trilogy, Faith and Reason?

The third of the trilogy is called *Faith and Reason*. Well, people often say, alright, you've got some arguments like that, but so what? That is to say, what has this got to do with faith? Why is this relevant to how we ought to act? Surely somebody could say your arguments, alright, they work but that doesn't make you into a religious person. Religion is a matter of faith and therefore I was concerned to deal with this and to examine what faith *is*, or rather, how we should construe this notion of faith. And it's interesting that as far as I know, I knew then and know now, the major religious denominations have never defined what they mean by faith, so you can take it in various ways. Of course, the opposition say, faith is believing something which you know isn't true or which you can't have evidence for. But that is certainly not what the believer understands by faith. So, I wanted to distinguish faith from belief. You can believe *that* a certain proposition is true, but you can also believe *in* certain propositions and I think faith is a matter of believing *in*. And believing *in* is acting on the assumption that, or trusting. And these are clearly rather distinct. Let's take an example: suppose you're a citizen of Britain but are caught in, happen to be visiting what turns out to be an enemy country in time of war; there's a war been declared and you're caught in the enemy country. So you want to get out of there. How are you going to get out? Well, you probably need to go and confess to some citizen of the country that you are British and please can he help you to escape. Now, you reasonably suspect that any citizen who you approach will immediately hand you over to the police, but what you will try and do is to approach the citizen who, although likely to hand you over to the police, is less likely than any other one to hand you over to the police. So, when you approach this citizen you believe that he will hand you over to the police, but you're also going to put your trust in him because you have to in order to get out of the country. So, you will naturally be described as putting your trust in him, relying on him, having faith in him, although you believe he'll let you down. So there is this distinction between believing that something is true and relying on it, trusting in it. Now, the creeds of the Church always start with 'I believe' or 'We believe *in*...', not 'We believe *that*...', 'We believe *in* one God, the Father Almighty...' and so on, which I reasonably interpret as putting one's trust *in*. Now, of course if you know there is no God for certain, it would be silly to put your trust in that, but on the other hand, if you're a bit uncertain of whether there is a God or not, it could be quite sensible to put your trust in him. Why? Well, take the analogy of the enemy country, if there's some good thing which you can only get by acting on a certain assumption, it's quite sensible to act on that assumption. And if you think the Christian life, both here and in the world to come, would be very worth having and can only be lived on the assumption that there is a God, it's worth making that assumption. So this way I was pulling these notions of faith and belief apart, which undoubtedly are different, and then considering what makes it rational not merely to believe *that* there is a God, but put your trust in God. And you don't have to be too convinced there is a God in order to put your trust in him. On the other hand, you can believe that there is a God and not put your trust in him. So, it was an analysis of that, an analysis of what would make it rational to put your trust in God. And clearly one thing is if you wanted the sort of relationship to God in the world to come, which the Christian religion suggests is available, but only to those who try to live the Christian life on earth, and therefore it's sensible to try to live the Christian life on earth in order to make yourself suitable for that. It's not of course the only reason for living the Christian life on earth. But you might also think that it's a very good thing that living the Christian life on earth would be

so much worth more than living any other sort of life on earth, but it can only be lived if you live it on that assumption. Anyway, that's what that was about. That book, although people don't disagree with it, or don't disagree with it as much as they do with the other two books, has never sort of taken off quite in the way the first two books have, but it has got quite a bit of discussion, certainly. But I thought it necessary because I had to answer the question, well what's the point of all that I was doing in the first two books.

[39:09]

Did you at this point in your career, so Faith and Reason's published in 1981, did you take part in debates with, you know, sort of oppositional debates with people who were saying there isn't a God or there's no difference between belief in and belief that?

Yes, but very, very much later than that. Debates weren't as common then. I mean I did take part in certain debates, certainly, but I've taken part in quite a lot of debates since 1990, as it were, but not so much then. I think part of the reason is of course that although these books were quite successful and so on, they very much, their influence to start with was mainly among professional philosophers or philosophy students and so on, they didn't have too much wider appeal, though that came later. Another reason is I think there's a lot more money around for debates now from well-wishers than there was then. But certainly, yes, I took part in some debates but not as many as later.

And so why do you think it was from 1990 then that the...

Well, there'd been an increase in, well, one reason is that I published a small popular book which had the main points of *The Coherence of Theism*, but above all the main points of *The Existence of God* without any symbols and as simple as I could put it, called *Is There a God?* And that has been very successful and has been very widely read, so it got my ideas much more widely disseminated and so I got asked to participate in debates a lot more, I think that was [it was published in] 1996. That's one reason.

Thank you.

[41:22]

Can we talk a little bit more about Keele and I wanted to know some more about relations with colleagues in your own department and then something about relationships with colleagues in other departments. One person in particular, Donald MacKay, who I know you...

Yes, yes, I knew Donald. I think he died shortly after I left Keele didn't he? But certainly I knew him well and he was very much a Christian and very sympathetic to what I was doing. I didn't feel he was a natural philosopher, but he was clearly a more influential person publicly than I was, certainly at my earlier stage at Keele. In my department? Well, when I was appointed in 1972 as professor there, professors really were heads of departments, they were the senior person, they made the decisions, they were in control. That era has passed now. Heads of departments tend to be elected, they may be junior people, and now clearly Britain is going over to the system where everybody is a professor, of different sorts, which is the American system. But then it was

very much the professor was the head of department in charge of things. So I was appointed at the age of thirty-six, I think. The sixties had been the era of university expansion, so with one exception in the department, everybody was nevertheless younger than I was, but not much, as you can see, there wasn't much scope for being younger. There was one much older man who had hoped to get the chair, the professorship, and didn't and he tended to do things on his own a bit, but the rest of us, we were somewhat similar ages. I like to think we got on well. Some of them were good philosophers, some of them weren't quite so good. But the membership of the department remained entirely the same from when I was appointed to when I left twelve years later; we were all twelve years older, and that was because university expansion had come to a stop and nobody got a job elsewhere. And well, two people have become, the two most junior people have become quite well known since then: Jonathan Dancy and David McNaughton. Likewise, the person next to me in age, John Rogers, did fairly well, but there were other people who weren't very successful. But everybody, I like to think, we got on well with each other, but it's always best to ask other people whether that's true or not.

What do you remember of the sort of sociability of the department: lunchtimes, coffee breaks, that sort of thing?

Oh yes. At Hull we always had coffee at the same time in the same place, or at any rate, several of us did. There wasn't a common – oh yes, there was at Keele, that's right, because the department was situated in Keele Hall and that's where the senior common room was, so we met each other more than members of some other departments because we had the coffee place on the premises in the same – that place also served tea. So yes, there was plenty of sociability on that score. We also had a regular seminar which we read papers to each other. And sometimes I and my wife had dinner parties and so on, which invited them, and one or two of them also invited us sometimes. And Keele, as I probably mentioned earlier, was very much a campus university because it originally had the ideal of everybody living on the campus. That ideal had gone by the time I moved there, we didn't have – it used to be, when Keele started, a condition of appointment that you would live on the campus, but that was no longer the case when I moved to Keele. But we did live on the campus for about half the time that I was there and afterwards moved to a house ten minutes' drive away. But all the same, most people lived fairly close and a lot of people continued to live on campus, so there was quite a good social atmosphere, though my wife, Monica, didn't care for too many university parties.

Why's that?

Oh well, she felt it was all a bit inward-looking, I think, and she felt she wasn't one of them.

[47:10]

How did you come to know Donald MacKay, not being in the philosophy department, but in the same university?

Well, as I say, everybody [pause] I don't know how we first met, but he was obviously impressed by the fact that philosophy had appointed a Christian as its Professor. My predecessor was Tony Flew, who was well

known, who was the equivalent of Richard Dawkins in those days, so it was quite a change. I'm sure he introduced himself to me fairly soon. Yeah, it was a small university, people did know each other.

And what can you tell me about him, you know; he's not someone that we can now interview, but we might have a view of him from you, and of his work, as you remember it?

Well, he was very much an evangelical, a Bible Christian and he was respected in the university for his work in, his Chair I think, was called computation wasn't it, but he really worked on what we would call neuroscience today. And he had the theory that since we can always act contrary to the way anybody predicts publicly that we will act, because we always can go against them, that showed that any prediction of our behaviour couldn't be publicly verified, because the person concerned couldn't know the prediction would be true because ~~you~~ [he] could always go against it. That showed that there couldn't be any truth about how people would behave. That argument seemed to me mistaken, but he was – the mere fact you [that is, the agent] can't know it [before he chooses how to act] doesn't mean it isn't true – but he was very stuck on that and produced it again and again. He [pause] I didn't think, well I mean he didn't work at great length on other issues relevant to philosophy and he didn't come to the philosophy seminars, but we talked and I learnt a certain amount from him. I remember discussing with him the split-brain scenario. That is, there are certain people who – go back a stage. Human brains consist of two parts: a left hemisphere and a right hemisphere joined by a chain of nerves called the corpus callosum. There are certain patients whose corpus callosum has been severed – severing it was occasionally a purported cure for epilepsy – and there are some patients who, for genetic reasons, didn't have one [a corpus callosum]. And these people, although normally they behave in the same way as anybody else, they can show a rather peculiar symptom, that is to say, if you – [pause] Input from the right side of them [any person] that lands on the right side of their eyes will be transmitted to the left side of the brain and people react - and what goes on in the left side of the brain makes a difference to what you [they] do with your [their] right hand and what you [they] do with your [their] mouth. [Input from the left side of any person that lands on the left side of their eyes is transmitted to the right side of their brain, and what goes on in the right side of their brain makes a difference to what they do with their left hand.] And in people whose corpus callosum isn't severed the information they, as it were, [reaching each hemisphere is transmitted to the other hemisphere and so they] react to information from either the left or the right side of you in the same way. But in the case of these people [those whose corpus callosum has been severed], if you get them to focus their eyes straight ahead and send signals from one side, those signals [are transmitted only to the opposite part of the brain, and don't get transmitted [onward to the other] part of the brain, [and so they show knowledge of the signals only through parts of the body under the control of the hemisphere which received the signal. So for example signals sent to the right side of their eyes are transmitted only to ~~that~~ [the left] part of the brain and they show knowledge of it through only their left hand or through their mouth. So, if you, for example, show one of these odd patients a tray in which there are various items and ask them to identify the items and you write on a card the words 'key ring' in such a way that they can only see the word 'key' with the left side of their eyes and only see the word 'ring' with the right side of their eyes, and if there are on the tray items such as a key, a ring and a key ring, they will always pick out the key and the ring, but never the key ring, because they never see it as one word; they will pick out the key with the side which is – they will pick out the key with their left hand if you show it to [them],

so that the input from the word impinges on the left side of their eyes, and conversely with the ring. Now that suggested to some people, and in particular to a neuroscientist called Sperry, that really splitting the corpus callosum, or splitting the brain by cutting the corpus callosum, produces two centres of consciousness. Now, Donald MacKay did work on this and he did an interesting experiment of trying to get the two sides of the brain to play a simple game of noughts and crosses or whatever it was, against each other. I forget the details, but any rate, when he started to do this, the person said, are you trying to make a monkey out of me and persuade me that I'm two people. So that suggested, as it were, there was a common person who was aware of what was going on through everything. I remember discussing that with him very much, so something we were interested in, both, and indeed, my later work on mind and body was concerned with that too. So yes, I did have discussions with him about neuroscientific matters and about his view about how there couldn't be public knowledge of any predictions about human behaviour. So yes, I certainly respected him for that knowledge, but he seemed to – his evangelical form of Christianity wasn't quite my form, which was a much more Catholic High Church form, and I think that's all I can say, really.

For the listener who is an outsider to both of those forms of Christianity, could you tell us what was different about your...

Oh well, evangelicals always have public prayer meetings at which they all utter prayers which everybody else can hear, and they are very colloquial prayers and they open their hearts publicly quite a lot. The more formal kinds of religion, in particular, High Church Anglicanism, goes in for services with a written text and a certain formality of public behaviour and the prayers are led by a priest and the people don't interrupt all the time. And different sort of personalities these appeal to, certain people are open, very willing to express themselves on most intimate matters and so on, other people are much more internally directed, introverted. So there is a different kind of personality involved, but there is also theological involvement, that is to say, evangelicals on the whole are very much Protestants, they think individuals must read their Bible and any groups can form their own Church and the Bible is the criterion of Christianity. People who are High Church Anglicans or Orthodox or Catholic think that the Church – people can't set up their own Church, Christ formed a Church and any subsequent Church must be derived from that by some formal procedure such as the ordination of bishops in a line that go back to the Apostles, and that the Bible is only to be believed insofar as it is interpreted by the Church. So there are both differences of personality and differences of theology involved here.

Did you at any point in your life experience the other kind?

Oh yes, I wasn't hostile to it but, indeed not, I never have been, some people are that way. I'm not particularly that way but I'm not hostile. Some people can be very, the High Church kind can find this just unbearable. No, but my theological inclinations are very much on the High Church side and also my personal inclinations of the kind of church service I like, but I wasn't – I have no theological objections to have a little informality; I just don't care for it too much.

Did you talk with Donald about his involvement in debates about the relations between science and religion, which you were certainly involved in by this point?

I'm sure I did, but I can't remember anything about it.

And about the research scientist's Christian Fellowship that he was involved in?

Well, I'm sure I knew about it and so on, but of course I wasn't a research scientist so I didn't count.

Was there anything similar for philosophers, academic philosophers' Christian group?

Well, there is now. There wasn't really then, no. Something called the Christian Philosophers was formed, I believe, in the late 1970s probably, and was centred on Oxford and I think organised initially by my predecessor, Basil Mitchell. I wasn't involved in it myself until I became a professor here, and since then it's become formalised into the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion and so on, but that didn't exist at that stage.

[59:47]

And am I right in thinking that to some extent your conception of God, of God's sort of action in the universe, is similar to Donald MacKay's arguments about God upholding the universe, or am I missing crucial differences?

Yes, well that would be right, but I mean it's similar to everybody's view. But I mean, Aquinas would say that, it wouldn't be his words, but he would say that. Any Christian theologian who thought about it would say not merely that God started the universe off, but that his continual action was necessary for the existence and continuity of the universe.

Thank you. And you said that you talked with him about what would now be called neuroscience, his work on the brain. Are there things that came out of those conversations that we could see in, for example, The Evolution of the Soul?

Apart from what I've talked about, that is to say, split brains, I don't think there was anything. There may have been, but I don't remember anything particular out of that. There was beginning to be quite a literature about these matters in the philosophical journals and I think I was probably more dependent on those than any conversations with Donald.

Thank you.

[1:01:22]

Where did you go to church while living at Keele?

Well, we attended – at Keele? Well, yes indeed. There was a chapel very much on the campus which had interdenominational services and there was – the university appointed an Anglican chaplain and a Catholic chaplain and a Nonconformist chaplain, but we didn't in general go to those services. My wife, Monica, wouldn't have been very happy there. So we went, on the whole, to the parish church at Keele. The Anglican chaplain was often, I think, the same person as the vicar of the parish and sometimes there were two posts, and there were some certainly solely Anglican services in the chaplaincy. So I divided my time, my worship, between the parish and the chaplaincy, but as a family we only went to the parish church.

And...

Oh sorry, and then of course we moved, we moved off campus in 1979 to somewhere ten minutes' drive away, called Madeley, and then we went to the parish church in Madeley.

And I asked you about this in relation to the Hull church, but did you get a sense of how you were viewed by the congregations of those churches as an academic philosopher concerned with religion?

I don't think so. Well, Keele was such a small village and most of the people who went to the parish church, which wasn't well attended, were university people, so it was a rather different situation. But at Madeley, I think anyone who didn't, and most of them didn't have any university connection, didn't know what I was doing.

You say in your spiritual autobiography that your prayer tends to be dry. What did that mean?

Oh well, many people feel very much in contact with God in their prayers, they get lost in their prayers, they are unaware of things in the outside world and so on, prayer comes naturally to them, they don't have to push themselves to say their prayers. Other people, it's a duty which they feel obliged to do and I tend to be in the latter category. I don't mean that sometimes they [my prayers] don't take off a bit, but in general it's a duty, a duty which I believe I have and which I wouldn't wish not to fulfil. And in a sense I'm pleased to do it, but it doesn't come alive very often.

When it does come alive, what's that like, how is it different from...

Oh well, I mean it feels a little more as if I'm talking to God when it comes alive. It feels more as if not merely there's someone there, but there's someone responding, helping me to see things and react in the right way.

Would you ever have prayed about your working life, about aspects of your working life?

Oh yes, sure, help me to see the answer to this, yes, sure.

And did you ever at any point feel that you had been helped to see the answer?

Oh yes, sure. Well, clearly at stage one I couldn't see the answer to it and I regularly prayed about it and at stage two I could, yes, sure.

And this applied to, for example, the trilogy that we've been talking about today?

It tends to apply to particular issues in it, yes certainly, sure. But I mean the people who didn't believe in prayer would just say well, it happens to anybody if they get stuck sometimes and they think about it, then they see the answer. And I wouldn't have any argument, any proof that it didn't just happen like that, but all I can say is that [my]prayers have been on the whole, answered.

But do you think about that in the same sort of way that you've thought about theism as the sort of super scientific theory that you think about ways in which it seems to be more probable that you got unstuck through prayer being answered than just through whatever else?

Well, it doesn't matter very much, as it were, because if it happens, then God controls all the laws of nature and if the laws of nature are such that me being stuck and situated in a certain environment and subject to certain influences, inevitably I'm going to find the solution, then that is because God has made the laws of nature like that. So it doesn't matter whether he's intervened in the process or not.

Do you remember a particular thing that you were stuck with or on? You've said these tend to be more specific than a sort of whole book, but do you remember something that has been difficult that took you a while to think through?

I think I'd require notice on that, but I am conscious that there have been plenty of such things. I think some of my views on the problem of evil I've come to see the answer to after a lot of concern, yeah.

Thank you.

[1:08:12]

I wondered whether by the stage we've got to, the 1980s, whether because the, presumably the scientific world view had moved on from when you were first concerned about the scientific world view in the fifties, whether aspects of that were sort of changing the challenge to religion. So, for example, developments in genetics, say, between the 1950s and the 1980s or in physics, were advances in science presenting different challenges that you needed to respond to?

Certainly the scientific world view has changed a bit. I've found all these changes very interesting ones. I don't think the basic – I suppose there are two ways in which it might have made a real difference. Nobody knew how the brain worked in 1960, nobody had a clue how the brain worked in 1960, and therefore it was pure speculation to say this was a deterministic system or that this wasn't a deterministic system. Things are happening now which we know a lot more about the brain, and for example, in the last several years there's

been a lot of neuroscientific work on do we have free will. [Are o]ur previous brain states such as to lead inevitably to certain sorts of behaviour? I'm very interested in this problem. Those kinds of scientific work just wasn't around in the 1960s. Then, the other thing which has made a difference is cosmology. When I started, my first book being on space and time, *then* people had only just discovered the Big Bang, only [just] discovered that all the galaxies were receding from each other as a result of an explosion some thirteen and a half billion year ago, and that was very exciting because it seemed to suggest something positive for religion, this was the beginning of the universe. And more thoroughly, people discovered then the fine tuning of the laws, that is to say that only if the constants in the laws are even very slightly different from what they are, then you wouldn't get human beings, because if they're very slightly different, then either all matter would recede from each other so fast you couldn't form planets and therefore stable systems on which humans could live. Conversely, if the Big Bang was a bit slower then all matter would collapse on each other and so humans would – there couldn't be any humans because they'd get squashed. This suggested very much an initial beginning and a beginning of a certain kind that would lead to human beings, and a very special sort of kind, and that certainly suggested design. But then the next thing that happened was of course people suggested that there's a multiverse, that is to say that our Big Bang was only one of trillions of others and the trillions of other Big Bangs in the much wider space than we're ever able to see would have produced different sorts of universes and so it's not very surprising that there's a universe which is fine-tuned. All of that has happened during my lifetime. It's been very interesting and I have, as it were, adjusted what I have to say in the light of these discoveries. I don't think that they have been either basically pro-religion or basically anti-religion; there have been some positive things, or what people in the outside world have regarded as positive things in them, and what people in the outside world regard as negative things in them. As my examples have illustrated, some neuroscience has seemed to count against religion, some cosmology has seemed to count for religion. I've adjusted what I have to say in the light of these discoveries and it's been very interesting, but I don't think the discoveries in themselves have been either pro or anti religion.

Have you adjusted things that you've thought and have said in relation to developments in biological, you know, the science of biological evolution?

No, because that never really worried me, I must say because if there is a God, then the laws of nature are due to him and while he is able, of course, to produce human beings– [telephone ringing]

[break in recording]

Yes, you were talking about not having been concerned by–

Oh, evolution, yeah. Well, if there's a God, he's responsible for the laws of nature. So if he chooses to produce human beings by making very special laws which ~~throw them up~~ [make them gradually evolve], as opposed to just making them intact, that doesn't seem to make any difference. So the mere fact we've evolved from the apes and apes from some primitive soup of matter doesn't seem to me in the least to count against the existence of God. Why should anybody think it did? Well, the answer why anybody should think it did was because they

thought the Book of Genesis said that it did, that is to say a fairly literal interpretation of that book would lead to that. And I thought that book was just, as it were, putting theology in the form of a historical narrative to make it clear to simple people. You can't write the sort of books that I write and expect the average Israelite of 1000 BC to understand that, but if you tell a nice story about God made it, made us, without going into the theory of evolution, the basic message of our dependence on God would come over. So I wasn't too worried about that.

How did you, how did you and how have you kept up with the science, because I suppose there's various ways in which you can do it.

Yes, indeed. I mean when I wrote *Space and Time* I reckoned I understood at any rate special relativity and I understood cosmology, I understood the Robertson Walker Metric, which is the basis of all cosmology, and I reckoned that book, as it were, *Space and Time*, showed that, brought out all that was going on there. Since then, the physics of cosmology has become distinctly difficult for anybody to understand and from time to time, for particular purposes, I've done my best to keep up with it, but I spread myself over areas so wide that it's not very easy to do in anything that connects with physics. Neuroscience, which I've been much more interested in lately, is a much simpler thing to understand and the details of which particular chemical substances go in and out of brain cells doesn't affect the general issue of how the brain works. So I don't find it difficult to understand neuroscience, but if I want to understand some bit of physics relevant to any cosmological, any argument which depends on that piece of physics, I need to do some hard work and it's difficult. But I do think that the details of anything that's been coming out of theories of the multiverse and so on, is not really relevant because I can accept all the science, even though I don't understand it, I could accept what the physicists say about it and I say well, even so, there's a big problem. Maybe there's a multiverse, maybe the multiverse throws up all these universes at different places and they have different laws. Well, so what? All that shows, that can only be true, we can only know this to be true if there are very general laws which govern not merely our universe but the multiverse itself. Because otherwise it wouldn't be the case that it threw up special universes in different places. Therefore the whole argument just goes one stage back. Why is there a multiverse, why is there a multiverse of this sort that throws up somewhere or other a universe fine-tuned for life rather than a multiverse of some other sort that doesn't and most logically possible universes wouldn't throw up. So I can make this point, saying well it doesn't matter whether or not the multiverse is true. But yes, getting hold of the physics of how it, again, getting hold of the physics which would enable one to form a view about whether there is or isn't a multiverse is something which I find difficult.

Thank you. And is it then through the original, the scientific journals themselves, or through New Scientist or websites – literally how do you attempt to track science?

Oh well, it depends on the topic. If I'm going into it in a little detail, then I do try to, certainly in the case of neuroscience, read the articles. I mean for my most recent book, *Mind, Brain and Free Will*, I read the relevant articles in the neuroscientific journals. I tend to rely on more popular expositions, these days, when we're dealing with cosmology, but there are degrees of popular expositions, as it were, there are very popular expositions and ones that do bring in a few equations and so on and I can cope with those, though not the

particular technical stuff. But there are people who can help one in this situation and we're moving on to Oxford, but one great advantage of Oxford is the college system in which every faculty member belongs both to a college and to a faculty and belonging to a college we all get free lunches and, if we're in, free dinners, so we meet, at that free lunch, people from other faculties. And I have always – there are one or two people who are professional physicists who I've always been able to call on to say, you know, help me with this, and they have, they've read one or two of my papers on this. Two people at Oriol: Bill Parry when he was the mathematics – one of the two maths Fellows there; and subsequently Pedro Ferreira who was, I think, technically a physics Fellow, looked at my stuff and helped me.

Thank you.

[1:21:01]

Could you tell me how the invitation to give the Gifford Lectures arose, if you get to know how things arise in that way, and then why you chose to lecture on – this is when you began to start work on substance dualism, I think – and why that as opposed to any other direction you could have gone at that point?

Yes, well how I got the job: a letter came through the post inviting me to give it. Each of the four Scottish universities have Gifford Lectures and they invite people to lecture on, it's called natural theology, it doesn't have to be a religious believer and natural theology is interpreted in a very wide sense, but they are well-endowed and most of the many distinguished philosophers and scientists have given them in their time, so of course I was very pleased to be invited. It was towards the end of my time at Keele. And I did give them, I gave them at Aberdeen and I think I gave ten lectures one year and then ten lectures the following year. Why did I choose that topic? Well, I'd written on the existence of God, which is the most central claim of Christianity and claim common to all theistic religions, but their important claims aren't only concerned with God, they're also concerned with life after death and concerned with the nature of humans, whether they have free will or not and whether they live or, as they say, whether they live after death; and there are competing theories about the nature of humans, that they're either, the theory that they're just very complicated physical machines or that they're things that have two parts: body and soul. And it's very difficult to give an account of how there could be life after death if you think we're just physical machines, because when we die all the bits of us are separated from each other and often burnt and disappear into energy, and so there can't be anything left to revive after death. But if we have two parts, the body and soul, then although the body may be cremated, the soul is left and can go on, could go on, there's nothing logically impossible then in that case in them going on, and could subsequently be joined to another body. So it seemed to me that substance dualism was necessary for the doctrine of life after death, and it seemed to me that humans having free will is necessary for humans being responsible for their lives and if God judges them he can only judge them justly if they've themselves made the choices and that won't be the case if they don't have free will. So it seemed to me an important religious matter, what humans are like and for that reason, I suppose, is the reason I went into it. And yes, the Gifford Lectures were on that and some of my views on that came out in a small book with Sydney Shoemaker, I produced one view and he produced the other one, and then much more fully in the book, *The Evolution of the Soul*, and it's something I've returned to in my last book, *Mind, Brain and Free Will*. So yes, it's very important for Christian religion and not of course only Christianity; Islam is committed to a somewhat similar view of life after death, not so much free will, but a

similar view of life after death, and on the whole Judaism is too, and one or two other religions, so it's pretty central for many religions and I felt it important to look at this, especially as there are obvious apparent scientific objections to it, so yeah.

[1:25:26]

Why was the book called The Evolution of the Soul, why that word?

Yes, that's a misleading title and I regret having given it that title. Why I gave that title is because I thought well, if you consider the story of evolution, first there were primitive soup of chemical stuff, which eventually there came one-cell animals, two-cell animals and so on, and then monkeys and then us, and at some stage there were the first conscious animals. And I think being conscious entails having a soul, that is to say, a soul first arrived on the scene when animals became conscious. And *The Evolution of the Soul*, I was concerned with, well, human souls are very different from animal souls, what did evolution amount to in the case of the soul, in the case of the mental? And that's why I gave it that title and in fact the book has three parts: one is to make the point that our conscious life is different from our brain life; the second is to make the point that our conscious life can only be analysed as a soul, a non-physical part having this conscious life; and then the third part is pointing out the difference between a human soul and an animal soul. So that's why I gave it that title, but it has been, some people have found this a misleading title because they have thought well, what I am suggesting is that the soul is just a normal product of evolution, by which they understood evolution by natural selection and so wasn't I giving a naturalistic account of the soul? And the answer is no, but it was a misleading title. I would have wished afterwards to have given it a rather different title.

Did you discuss others with the publisher, do you remember?

Don't remember that, no. I don't think at that – they were – no, I don't think Oxford University Press suggested anything different.

[1:27:50]

And in developing those lectures and in writing the book, were you responding to any particular forms of scientific materialism then current?

Well, once philosophy had started to take account of science and form metaphysical views, there arrived on the scene what is known as mind/brain identity theory and it arrived with the work of Jack Smart, Australian philosopher, and UT Place, an Australian psychologist, both of whom worked in Adelaide. And it developed into what we now call a physicalism. That is to say, the view that the brain is just a complicated machine, thoughts and feelings and so on are just brain events, that's all there is. And people argue for that, saying well, we all know that – quote 'we all know' close quote – that it's what's going on in the brain that determines how we behave and so on, so only if the pains and feelings and beliefs we have make a difference to our lives, as apparently they do, they must be the same as these things. That is the first thing, that became very fashionable, still is very fashionable. The compromise position has, however, become more fashionable than it was by some

way. The compromise view is that humans are certainly, there's no soul, there is just matter, but human brains have certain properties that normal machines don't have. So a brain event might have certain chemical and electrical properties which are physical properties, but it might also have the property of being a thought that today is Thursday, or whatever [a feeling or an intention, for example]. So properties, there are two sorts of properties [physical and mental] and therefore the theory's known as property dualism, but there's only one thing [the body or brain of which the properties are properties], that is a physical thing. My own view is of course the other extreme, that is to say that ~~we~~ [there] are two parts to us, soul and body, and the mental properties belong to the soul and the physical properties belong to the body, but they interact. So yes, I was fighting against physicalism, still am, and fighting against property dualism, which I think is inadequate. Property dualism has become taken much more seriously than it was, but it's the philosophers who make the running on these things; the psychologists are hardly aware of the difference, they just look at the brain and say what happens, as it were. They don't have much of a theory about these things. Sometimes they do, but the work of defending the theory about the nature of what they're doing is very much a philosopher's job these days.

Thank you.

[1:31:22]

Why did you move from Keele?

Oh well, Keele is a small university, all my teaching was undergraduate teaching, the professorship of the philosophy of religion at this university [Oxford] is a very distinguished thing and the job is, the only one-to-one contacts are not with undergraduates, but with graduates, doctoral students and although I give lectures, gave lectures to large audiences which consist of undergraduates among others, most of my teaching was individual graduate teaching. Philosophy – Oxford is one of the great places, some people would say the best place in the world for philosophy, enormous numbers of philosophers here, it's a very prestigious post which allows one to have a much greater influence, not merely on those that [you] are teaching, but in the wider world than at Keele. So it provided a platform for my views, it provided the right sort of teaching of good graduate students, it provided an atmosphere where I could interact with lots of good people in various subjects. There was no question this was a much better job. More suitable for my purposes. So when it became vacant I applied and eventually got it.

Were you sort of leafing through the newspaper, saw an advert and thought ah, it's come up, and then...

Oh no, no, no.

How did it happen?

I mean it's [The world of academic philosophers] a small world, everybody knows when one of the big Chairs is falling vacant, I mean it's common knowledge. I knew my predecessor, Basil Mitchell, was retiring that year. Of course there's always the doubt whether the university will unfreeze the post, but I probably knew that it was unfrozen before any newspaper advert applied.

And could you tell me about the application process, about your memories of the interview?

Oh, there was no interview, not those days. For Chairs, all you did is put in an application, give the name of references, of known referees, list your publications and wait for the result. For an Oxford Chair, that is, for an Oxford or Cambridge Chair. That's not the practice now, but it was the practice then, thirty years ago, and the thinking was, if someone applies that we don't know what he's like, he won't be suitable because in an academic world the top people are known to everybody. And if we don't know him, he's not a top person. I think that was right actually. I mean if somebody, they won't want to appoint somebody to a philosophy or theology Chair unless he is eminent in the subject, has written a lot, is distinguished and so on. So, if they haven't heard of him, they don't want to appoint him. If they have heard of him, they can look at his writings and that's a much better guide to what he's like than giving him a short interview. At least that was the thinking, it isn't the thinking now, so there wasn't any interview.

[1:35:10]

And can you talk about the move from Keele to Oxford on the sort of personal side as well?

Yes. Well, that was the time at which my wife decided she wanted to live separately, and that was a very sad event for me. So, as it were, the move to Oxford, which I was very pleased to do for academic reasons, turned out to be rather sad for personal reasons. She wasn't happy living with me and she wanted to live by herself, and that's what it had to be. We have always kept in touch subsequently and see each other occasionally, but that's the way it was and she has continued to live in the Keele area and I moved to Oxford. The children had more or less grown up by then. My younger daughter was just finishing university and the elder one had finished, so ~~it wasn't~~, if it had to happen, it was a better time than some for it to happen, so there was that. And that meant I decided at that stage that I would live in the college [Oriel College]. As you perhaps know, a hundred years ago, most dons, most Oxford permanent teachers, were not married and they lived, had a number of, a suite of rooms in the college to which they belonged. And indeed, up till the 1850s no-one except the head of the college was allowed to be married. So in many colleges, not all, there is still a remaining tradition that some people who for different reasons want to live in the college, senior teachers, there are suites of rooms for them. And I asked if I could live in Oriel and I was given a suite of rooms and I lived there for eighteen years until I retired, when I moved here [my Oxford apartment], which as you can see is not very far away from the centre of the university, so I've always been on the premises.

[1:37:42]

Thank you. Could you then tell me something about your daughters' university education, what they went on to do?

Oh, I see. Yeah, well the older one's called Caroline, she – they both went to school in the Keele area, in Newcastle-under-Lyme, to what was then a grammar school, girls' grammar school – and Caroline, the older one, read music at Nottingham and then became a BBC radio presenter for many years, but she gave that up and

has retrained as a music therapist, so she does music therapy some of the time and teaches people to play the piano the other part of the time. My younger daughter, Nicola, went to Cambridge and read geology and did a doctorate at the Open University and got a research fellowship at Berkeley, but rather turned against geology and has been doing various things since then, but is now a student again actually, in her fifties, and is doing a Masters degree in linguistics. She never quite settled down into any scientific, or semi-scientific job, so she's done various things.

[1:39:17]

You're now then at Oxford. Could you in more detail talk about your role there, what the various aspects of it –

Yes well, as I say, Oxford teachers divide into, very sharply then, less sharply now, two classes. Those who are tutors, college tutors who are responsible for giving tutorials to undergraduates at the college in their subject, and also giving one or two, one university lecture a week, roughly. Eighty per cent, eighty-five per cent of university teachers were in that category; they were a joint appointment between the college and the university, of which the college load was much more significant and involved teaching undergraduates on a one-to-one basis. They also might have the odd graduate student, but the teaching of undergraduates was the primary thing. The other fifteen per cent were professors, and the professors' duty was to give rather more university lectures, say about two a week, and one might be a graduate class and the other a general lecture for undergraduates, something like that, and also to supervise individual Masters and doctoral students. And so my academic duties were just that [the latter]. All university teachers in both categories were both, are now, both Fellows of a college and members of a faculty, or more than one faculty in my case. Although the [my]primary allegiance as far as administrative matters was to the theology faculty, in fact, more of my teaching was really for the philosophy faculty who didn't have to, but asked me to be a member of it when I became [Professor]– I mean all my professional appointments had been in philosophy until now, so I [now]belonged to both faculties and that was what I wanted, yes. And so my primary teaching duties were always my graduate students. I would have two or three new ones each year and I would help to do some of the teaching for a Masters degree. [~~perhaps~~] I invented a degree called the MPhil in philosophical theology in which they [students] had to take three papers in the first year and write a small thesis in the second year. It was modelled after – a number of Masters degrees, MPhil degrees have that structure – was modelled on the original BPhil degree, which remains, called a BPhil in philosophy in which you work on three subjects in the first year and write a small thesis in the second year. And I supervised a few people for the BPhil, but mostly for this new MPhil in philosophical theology, and I would teach them for one or two of the papers and probably supervise in most cases their one-year thesis, and then most of them went on to develop that thesis into a doctoral thesis and I would supervise that, and the supervision of theses tends to be a matter of seeing the student every two or three weeks and the student bringing a piece of written work which I would read in advance and then we would discuss it. And at any one time I might have about ten students on my books and, yes, I suppose over that period probably something getting on for thirty doctoral students I have seen through to their doctorates.

[1:43:22]

Can you tell me about the other Fellows, is it, of Oriol College?

Yes. Each professorship is attached to a specific college and a college would have four or five or six professorships attached to it, as well as the tutors who taught the undergraduates. And my Chair was attached to Oriel College, so when I was appointed that automatically meant I'd become a Fellow of Oriel. As I explained before, I was an undergraduate at Exeter College and then had a research fellowship at St John's, but that wasn't important, what was important is that this Chair was appointed [attached] to Oriel. "Fellow" meant, in those days, still does, a member of the governing body of the college and in my time the college had about thirty-five Fellows, of which I was one, and you might have some subjects there would be one tutor in, some subjects there would be two tutors in, there were two or three other professors, a bursar and treasurer would all make up – and the head of the college, the Provost – make up the governing body, and yes, the governing body met three times a term and decided matters of policy for the college and as a member of that I would attend and contribute to this.

What do you remember of discussions with the other Fellows who are from all different sort of fields, about questions of relations between, say, science and religion?

Well, as I've mentioned, I've used Fellows in various areas to help me, in particular a couple of Fellows in the mathematical physics area, and they would help me on their technical matters. Everybody in the college is happy to have a discussion over dinner of religious matters, but at a fairly elementary level compared with what I professionally was involved in. There were enough Fellows who were sympathetic to religion to, as it were, support the college chapel. I used in my first ten years there, certainly, to go regularly each week either to communion or to evensong, to the college chapel. Most Fellows were not involved in that and certainly the majority of Fellows would probably call themselves agnostics or atheists, but there were a significant number who were otherwise. The more serious discussions were with the other philosophy Fellows, the college had two straight philosophy Fellows. We would discuss matters a bit and of course there were people in other colleges who had similar interests and I would talk to them.

What are you doing in this post when you're not working? So can you identify parts of your life at this time that are you at rest, or involved in some sort of leisure or hobby?

Well, as you will gather, I am a pretty work orientated person and I have been fortunate to have a lot of time for my work. That is to say, for three different reasons, although I've had teaching commitments, they haven't been overwhelming teaching commitments. When I was at Hull it was a matter of there were, the universities were expanding and all the administrative work was done by the senior people and I wasn't one of them and there wasn't too much teaching to do. When I was at Keele there was more teaching to do and yes, I was head of department, but the real administrative jobs on a more university scale, for some reason I avoided. When I came to Oxford there was plenty to do in teaching and quite a certain amount of administration, but of course by then I didn't have a family so there weren't family commitments in the way that there were earlier. So I always had quite a bit of time for research, including in term time, and that's why I got so much done. But what your question is, what else was I doing? Well, I am so work related that I don't do anything serious when I am not

working. I go for long walks in the country. In earlier stages I used to play a bit of tennis and squash, but I suppose I'd given that up largely by the time I got to Oxford. I'd occasionally go for a short run then. I watched television quite a lot, the sort of television that is not too demanding. And I find that restful to look at in the evenings. When I was a Fellow, and to some extent now, but especially when I was a Fellow, there's a lot of social life because I lived in the college, which meant that I went into lunch every day and also into dinner most days and that took quite a bit of time and one was talking to people, not particularly connected with work and so on, so there was a significant social life all the time. Less so now that I'm retired, of course, but still a certain amount. So, social life, television, reading undemanding books, this is really what I do.

What are the undemanding television programmes and undemanding books that you would –

Oh, comedy things like *Blackadder* and *Yes, Minister* and so on. Programmes which are about historical matters, these sort of things. Not real life drama about people's feelings or anything like that.

Why do you choose –

Oh, I see. Well, I'm switching off. If I was watching a drama about some serious emotional crisis in someone I would feel very sympathetic, even though it was only fiction, to that person and I would find that draining and I think they're [feeling sympathetic is] unnecessary because the person isn't really going through an emotional crisis because there's no real person, so I'd rather not be switched on in that way. I mean sure, when there are real human crises I like to think that I have feelings about them, but I don't want to watch fictional plays about them.

[end of Track 3]

Track 4

Last time you commented on and started to recall anyway, a poem which had an influence on your Christianity and you now have the complete poem.

Yes. It's called *The Aristocrat* and you'll remember that there's a saying, you can rely on a gentleman's word. 'The Devil is a gentleman and asks you down to stay at his little place at What'sitsname (it isn't far away), they say the sport is splendid, there's always something new and fairy scenes and fearful feats that none but he can do, he can shoot the feathered cherubs if they fly on the estate, or fish for Father Neptune with the mermaids for a bait, he scaled amid the staggering stars that precipice, the sky, and blew his trumpet above heaven and got by mastery the starry crown of God himself, and shoved it on the shelf, but the Devil is a gentleman and doesn't brag himself. O blind your eyes and break your heart and hack your hand away, and lose your love and shave your head, but do not go to stay at the little place in What'sitsname where folk are rich and clever, the golden and the goodly house where things grow worse forever; there are things you need not know of though you live and die in vain, there are souls more sick of pleasure than you are sick of pain. There's a game of April Fool that's played behind its door, where the Fool remains forever and the April comes no more, where the splendour of the daylight grows drearier than the dark, and life droops like a vulture that once was such a lark. And that is the Blue Devil that once was the Blue Bird. For the Devil is a gentleman and doesn't keep his word.' As you can see, the point of the poem is to say, there are things more important than finding out how other people live and trying experimental ways of life. There are things you needn't know about, so long as you fix on what is all important. That is what it's saying.

[02:25]

Thank you. Could I take you back just to a couple of things before we move on today? And the first was that you said last time that perhaps it was notable that you had been appointed when you were at Keele, replacing Anthony Flew, the notable feature of that being the clear difference in your own positions, at that time anyway, concerning Christianity. Was it something that was (a) remarked upon in the department, that change?

Oh yes, and in the university in general because it was a small university and Tony Flew was well known outside the university for his firm atheism.

What relations had you had with him before and what after?

Oh, I knew him, because we'd met at conferences and so on, and I like to think we respected each other. And certainly I got a very nice letter from him when I was appointed; he seemed pleased that I'd been appointed because well, I am firmly in the analytic tradition of philosophy and he thought I was a good operator, as it were, and so I think he was genuinely pleased.

Thank you. And this –

I mean he wasn't hostile to religious people, he just felt a lot of religious people can't face up to facts or argue, and he didn't think that of me.

Thank you.

[04:05]

And could I just ask again whether you, in developing your work, followed developments in evolutionary biology? I ask this again because the Boyle Lecture last week, Sarah Coakley, makes reference to your work a lot and she's clearly influenced by your work a lot, but she is someone who develops theology really very closely in relation to changing developments in evolutionary biology, for example, changing ideas of what co-operation consists of in biological evolution. And the impression given last time was that while you tend to follow developments in other areas of science, you haven't tended to do so in the case of evolutionary biology, and I just wanted to check that that is so.

Well, it might be a fair criticism. I suppose what she's thinking about is that – you'll correct me if I'm wrong – but that she may be thinking of people have discovered that co-operation, societies in which there is much co-operation, are more likely to survive than societies in which there is not, is that the sort of thing she had in mind?

She and I weren't criticising your arguments, it's simply that she is arguing that it's very important to take account of recent developments in evolutionary biology because they actually lead to a strengthening relation with God and a sort of improved theology, but the impression you gave me last time was you regarded evolution almost as beside the point, because if God wants to create human beings in one way rather than another it doesn't alter your argument.

Yes. Well, I think it's quite true, I haven't taken on board, I may be aware of some of the developments in evolutionary biology, but I certainly haven't taken them on board and thought of their theological significance and she could well be right in that. Specially in connection with the notions of original sin and the growth of human responsibility and so on. Yes, she may well be right, but all I can plead is that time is always finite.

[06:50]

Thank you. Could you then take us on through the development of your work from the beginnings of your time in Oxford, but after Evolution of the Soul, which we discussed last time?

Yes. At that stage I turned my attention to some of the details of Christian theology. All the arguments that I had been assessing were arguments for the existence of God and to some extent for afterlife, but these are common to many religions. But Christianity has certain, rather particular claims about what God is like and what he has done, and I thought they ought to be assessed by the tools of analytic philosophy, and in particular by my understanding of what makes a hypothesis probable. And first thing to do was to examine just how we can understand these claims, in what way they could be spelt out coherently, and then what was the evidence for their truth. And so I planned four volumes which would deal with the main big claims of Christianity. The

three central doctrines of Christianity are the Atonement by Christ, the Incarnation (Christ who made the Atonement was God Incarnate), and the doctrine of Trinity. Sorry, really we should consider those in the opposite order, that is to say: the nature of God, the Trinity; the view that one person of the Trinity had become incarnate, lived a human life, died for our salvation; and the notion that that death was an atonement for our sins. And so all sorts of questions then arise. How can it be that God is three persons of one substance, what is one saying there? How can it be that an omnipotent God can become human, what is one saying there? And how can one man's death make an atonement for other people's sins, why do they need atonement, how can that be done? So all of these volumes were really just spelling out these doctrines – I'll come to the fourth in a moment, the fourth volume, which doesn't really fit with the others, but the first three I'm talking about. The first task was to spell out these doctrines and to see if there were any a priori reasons for believing them to be true, that is to say, not to go into any historical matters, not at that stage, but to see whether merely by reflecting on them, or by reflecting on what God would be like, we can see whether there's reason to suppose them to be true.

[09:54]

And I started the opposite end really, with the doctrine of the Atonement and I wrote a book published in 1989 called *Responsibility and Atonement* and as in all my writing, I really wanted to go into the non-theological concepts which get used by theology, first. And therefore I went into the notion of when is one responsible for one's actions, and that involved what kind of free will we need to have in order to be responsible for our actions. And then with a – if we do good we would in some way be meritorious for having done good and deserve praise, and if we did bad we would be guilty for doing bad and deserve blame, and I considered that...

[telephone ringing]

[break in recording]

And then the issue of how we can deal with our blameworthiness and the answer is that we must make in some sense atonement for our sins. If I have wronged you, there are four things ideally I need to do. I need to say I'm sorry, but I need to be sorry. I need to say I'm sorry, I need, if I've, for example, damaged some of your property I need to replace it. And if I've really done you great harm I need to do rather more than replace it. Now, these four components are components, if we are blameworthy - we are blameworthy because we have done wrong and if we do wrong we do wrong to somebody and are therefore guilty, and to get rid of our guilt we need to make atonement for our wrongdoing and these are the four components of atonement: repentance, apology, reparation and something a bit extra, which I call penance. And then the process is completed by the person I have wronged saying I forgive you. Now, I was then in a position, you see, having analysed what wrongdoing amounted to, with respect to humans when we wrong them, then to apply that in the second part of the volume to God. So, I'd analysed in the first part what it means to be responsible when we could be held praiseworthy or blameworthy and went on to consider what ought to be done about it and how we could remove our blameworthiness. Then, in the second part of the book I applied all this to our relations with God, I started with the notion of original sin, which has been understood in the Christian tradition in more than one way, but in a full-blown doctrine of original sin there are three components. There is the doctrine that there was some first human sinner who did wrong, Adam. There's the doctrine that because he did wrong we are more likely to do wrong, that is to say we inherit original sinfulness, inclination to do wrong, and the third doctrine is the doctrine

that we are guilty for the sin of Adam. Now, this third doctrine has never been held universally in the Church. I blame Augustine for starting us with this, quite a number of traditional Protestants influenced by Calvin would hold it, but most Christians would not. But the other two components are certainly there. The first component's obviously true, sin being wronging God, and given that there's a God, somebody must have done it [wronged God] for the first time, so no problem about that. But there is an issue of whether we inherit an inclination to do wrong as a result of that. And I was not – I was a bit doubtful about that at that time, but I said that well, what we inherit is [pause] I've forgotten how I put it now, but we inherit because of the first sinner, we inherit a much fuller understanding of what it is to do wrong and a much greater sensitivity to wrongs, certainly by a social channel, that is to say, because our parents give us a bad example we follow them and so on. But that didn't seem to me a very full-blown doctrine of original sinfulness, and indeed, the doctrine as put forward first time very clearly by the Council of Trent, said that we inherit a defect not only by imitation, but by generation. That is to say, through generation process. But since that time there's been developments in biology, which I don't know if Sarah mentioned it in her lectures, but epigenetics has drawn our attention to the fact that in fact there is a genetic inheritance: people doing a certain kind of thing is liable to make some effect on their grandchildren via the genetic process, which was something ruled out by traditional Darwinian theory. So I think, although of course it hasn't been yet established that, as it were, particular wrongdoing makes people more likely to do wrong in future, what has been shown is that particular kinds of action do affect the sort of people there are in the next subsequent generation and that makes a traditional doctrine much more plausible. Okay, so that was original sin and then I went into: ~~are we~~ [the doctrine that we are] all guilty for, have we all offended God and given that God is the source of our being at every moment and so on, we clearly haven't lived up to, we haven't expressed gratitude and haven't lived the sort of life that he could reasonably expect us to live, being thus made. So we are all sinners and we need to make apology for not merely our original sin, if we do need to make apology for that, which I denied, but also for our actual sin and that is the more serious form. And how do we do that? Well, the answer is we can't on our own, because – or we could in theory, but in practice we are most unlikely to – because we owe so much of our life to God anyway that, as it were, there's not much extra left to give, though in theory there is some, but still it's difficult for us to make a worthy atonement and a worthy atonement would be a human life led in the way fully perfectly in the way that God would want us to live. But, if somebody has wronged someone else, if my child has broken the neighbour's window and has no money to repay the neighbour, then somebody else can give the child the money to repay the neighbour. And that is, I think, the role of Christ's life, perfect life which we can offer, instead of the life we ought to have led and propitiation as reparation to God for that. So we can make atonement for our sins by first of all repenting, then apologising, both of those are things we can do, but then asking God to accept the sacrifice of Christ as the life we ought to have led and didn't lead. And that fits pretty well in my view with one book of the New Testament which deals with the notion of atonement at any length, which is the Letter to the Hebrews. And we do that, we as it were, I ask God to accept this through our baptism and through the Eucharist, both of which stress that the baptism is, St Paul talks of it as being baptised into the death of Christ, and the death of Christ is the culmination, it's what the perfect life leads to, because living a perfect life in that sort of society might well lead to death, would be expected to lead to death, because you offend the authorities and they kill you for that. So by baptism and in the Eucharist, also in eating what is called the body and blood of Christ, we are, as it were, participating in the sacrifice of Christ, which is the sacrifice of his own life which we are offering to God. So in

that way we could make atonement for our sins. And then I went on to say something about sanctification, about how what God was expecting of us was not merely apology, but behaving better in future and how he provides the means for that through the Church, and about, there's a final chapter about the kind of life after death that God could reasonably give to the good and to those who did not wish to be good.

[20:31]

So, that was the plan of that and as you can see, in a way, I did it in the wrong order because it pre-supposed that Christ was God Incarnate, so that's the next issue and I dealt with the next issue in a volume called *The Christian God*, which was published in 1994, if I remember rightly – not certain of that, I think that's right – which is concerned with the doctrines of the Trinity and the doctrines of the Incarnation. I've left one out, haven't I? *Revelation* was published in 1991 – two, was it? And then *The Christian God* in '94, but I'll talk about *The Christian God* since we got there. *The Christian God* was concerned with the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation and the doctrine of the Trinity of course is that God is three persons of one substance and that's always seemed very paradoxical to everybody. And then I tried to spell out a reasonable understanding of that, which is I think the understanding that many of the Christian theologians, especially those on the Greek rather than the Latin side of the Church, went along with. That is to say, there are really are three divine persons, three totally omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good beings, but they are related – this is not a complicated hypothesis because it follows from the nature of the Father who is the source of the other two, that he is perfectly good. A perfectly good being will seek to spread his goodness. And perfectly good means perfectly loving, he will seek to spread his love. Perfect love, he can love many things, he can love us, but perfect love is love of an equal, because an equal is someone you can share everything with. So, inevitably and in virtue of his nature, God the Father will bring about someone else with whom to share perfectly. So he'll bring about the son [God the Son], and he will always have done this, because any time at which he did it, any time at which he did it [for the first time] would mean that there was a time before he'd done it and then he wouldn't be perfectly good if he hadn't done it then. So from all eternity. But, and Augustine said that, but what nobody until the eleventh century had thought of was well, okay, but why a third, why the Spirit. And the person who did answer that was Richard of St Victor. St Victor is an abbey in France. And what he said is if you really love someone, you will want to find someone else who will also love them ~~that would be~~, you wouldn't want to be the only person who loved them and you would want to find someone else for them to be loved by. And so that ~~of the~~ three is, as it were, the minimum number for unselfish love. And I thought that was right too and I developed that in my views in *The Christian God*. And I then went on to... but of course all of them being omnipotent and omniscient, they'd all act totally together, they all understand each other, they all know what each other is doing, they act as one. But nevertheless, there are three persons who interact. And then I went on to the doctrine of the Incarnation, that one of those persons, the Son, became human. I went into reasons why he would become human, one of them we've talked about already, to make atonement for human sins. And another one, which I think's even more important, is to share our suffering, that is to say, God makes us, puts us in a world where some of us suffer quite a lot. Now, given a theodicy, given a justification of why he would do this, there is a good purpose in this. A good purpose might not necessarily always concern *us*; he may allow us to suffer in order that somebody else may have a choice between whether to cause that suffering or not. And given a satisfactory theodicy, we'll talk about that in a minute, there is always a good reason why he would make us suffer, but all the same, if I make my child suffer for a good cause, then if I make him suffer

quite a bit and I can – I owe it to him to suffer myself also for that good cause. And God who makes us suffer for a good cause, there comes a time when he must share that suffering if he is to be justified in making us suffer. The sort of example I gave of that in one of the books is: suppose there's a war, just war in defence of one's country and suppose the government introduces a system of conscription so that those between the age of eighteen and thirty, or whatever, have to go and fight in the forces. But suppose the government allows [but does not compel] older people to go and fight, but suppose also it says that if their parents ask for special reasons, then children can be exempt from serving. Now, suppose I have a son and my son asked me for exemption, he doesn't want to go and fight, but I say no, you've got to fight, it's a good cause, it's for our country. So I make him suffer, for the worthy cause, but I make him suffer. Now, if I am fit and able to volunteer, even though I'm over thirty, I think there comes a time when I must volunteer too. So, applying that to God, if God makes us suffer for a good cause, he has an obligation to suffer with us. That and the Atonement and to reveal things to us are the reasons why he might become incarnate and then of course I went on to discuss what that would mean, how can an omnipotent, omniscient, etc, God become human. And the analogy I take is the Freudian analogy, that is to say, Freud pictured some human beings as having more than one system of beliefs and desires and so on. There was the beliefs and desires they acted on publicly and the beliefs and desires which in fact were influencing them. Now, this is of course a deficient state [in the mentally disturbed patients whom Freud analysed], but it does open the possibility to there being a being who [for good reasons] has two such systems, both of which, or rather when he is operating in one of them he's aware that what happens in the other one, but not conversely. So that he does some actions in the light of his divine nature and his divine knowledge and other actions in the light of his human nature and his human knowledge. And I spelt out how that would be, so I tried to make sense of both of those doctrines. I gave of course an a priori argument for the Trinity – for the Incarnation I gave reasons why he might become incarnate, but of course no a priori reasoning can show that he became incarnate in Jesus Christ at a particular time. That would require historical evidence and we'll go on to talk about that in a minute.

[29:16]

And then, what was the second volume, but which I left out, was the volume on *Revelation*, which I have subsequently produced a second edition of. One of the things which Christianity has always claimed, very importantly, that God has revealed certain truths to us and among those of course are the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, but many other things too about how we should live. And what would be evidence, why should we believe that, that he had done that? And that's what the book was about. I claimed that, for the reasons we have discussed, God might well be expected to become incarnate, and since humans would need to know about who he was and they would need to know about something about the nature of God, that he was Trinitarian in order to worship him, and they would need to know a lot better than they did then about how they ought to live, an incarnate God might be expected to reveal things to us. So if there was reason to suppose that Jesus was God Incarnate, there would be reason to suppose that what he said was true and that involved revelation, revelation from God. Well, what reason was there to suppose that what he said would be true? That takes us on a little to my book about the Resurrection, but we'll talk about that in a bit more detail. But I did give reasons to suppose why God had given his signature, as it were, to the teaching of Jesus by raising him from the dead, and therefore if Jesus taught it we would have reason to suppose it true, but of course Jesus is not living an earthly life anymore, so we have to rely on what other people say about this. And in particular, if he

did come to earth to reveal things to us, then he would have made provision for subsequent generations to learn this. And subsequent generations certainly thought he did and quite a bit of the New Testament implied that he did, that the Church itself which he founded was the vehicle of that revelation. So, other things being equal, we should take the central teaching of the Church to be true on that basis. I then discuss how you would distinguish the central from the not so central teaching of the Church. An important part of the teaching of the Church was of course that the Bible was true, but then again, there was the question of how you interpreted the Bible and a lot of people in the fourth, third and fourth centuries, who were discussing which books should be included in the Bible interpreted it in a far more metaphorical way than many subsequent generations and they took quite a lot of what was in Genesis, the Book of Genesis, in a fairly metaphorical way. It's not to say that the Church said that's how you had to take it, but it certainly didn't say, it didn't forbid that in any sense. For example, seven days, six days of creation, well, Augustine thought it all happened in one day and he had his reasons for giving a rather strange interpretation to the first chapter of Genesis, how it was all, as it were, the days weren't real days, they were just stages in the way people could know about these things. And in general, they [some theologians] took the line [of interpreting it metaphorically], Augustine took the line in particular, but in a more extreme way, Gregory of Nyssa, ~~back to origin~~, [following Origen] took the line that if science, that is the Greek science, had pretty clearly established something, then what the Old Testament said about science would have to be interpreted in the light of that. Obvious example: quite a lot of the early part of the Old Testament seemed to assume the earth is flat and has corners and so on. But of course Greek science said it was round, it was spherical, so you have to take the line, which, the way Aquinas put it is Moses, the supposed author of Genesis, Moses was speaking to an ignorant people and therefore he explained things in the way they could understand. Well, I discussed that, what are the criteria for taking parts of the Bible in a non-literal way, what are the criteria for taking the literal way, and in general what are the criteria for interpreting the Church's teaching, for considering what parts were central and what parts weren't central, and so for how it should interpret the Bible. And one of the reasons, not the only reason, for believing the doctrines of the Incarnation and Atonement and so on was that it was part of the Church's teaching. I've talked rather consecutively, so stop me if you want to.

[35:26]

The final volume was really a bit of a, I don't know if it really should be considered part of that tetralogy, but it was, it was *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, which was published in 1998, I think, which was just a full-length consideration of the problem of evil, which of course I had had a chapter and a half on in my book *The Existence of God*, because I had to show that human suffering did not count substantially against the existence of God. But I felt the need for a much fuller account of why God would allow suffering to occur, but also an account which took in – took account of – some traditional Christian teaching and that's what justified including it in the tetralogy, including teaching about humans having free will and there being the possibility of life after death, and so on. So it was – the first part of the book considered what are the human goods, and the human goods aren't just pleasure and pain, they are making free choices that make differences to other people, they are helping other people to grow in knowledge, and various other things, for which I claimed the possibility and sometimes the actuality of suffering was necessary, and that was the theme. So that was the tetralogy.

Thank you.

[37:04]

When you talked about the Trinity and you said, that seemed to me to be correct, that you would need a third, for unselfish love you would need a third person, did it strike you as correct logically, or did it strike you as correct based on your own experience of love, you know, in the world?

Well, I suppose they both come in. I mean you can't have much understanding of what love involves without seeing a bit of it around, sure. But reflecting on that helped me to understand that point and one applies logic to what is picked out by love and what one can recognise as love. As I say, the point was Richard of St Victor's, it's a marvellous book, his *De Trinitate*, and that seemed to me right.

[38:18]

Could you say when it was that you first started taking part in public debates on, it doesn't have to be science and religion, but could just be, as I know it was in some cases, debates on the existence of God?

Yes. Well, suppose the first one was when I was at Hull. JL Mackie, who I know well and you mentioned, he and I had a debate in front of the students there. But it was fairly rarely that these things happened in the first twenty years of my career, but subsequently these things have happened much more in the public domain than they used to, much more in general, not just involving me. From time to time the telly, occasionally, television has taken interest in these things, occasionally, but I've been involved in a number of debates in front of students in different universities. Never one-to-one with Dawkins but he's been in the – part of a team sometimes of which I was the other half. Very often I find my opponent is Peter Atkins, who was a chemistry Fellow here and a very firm atheist. But numbers of debates before students in other universities, in all sorts of other universities, both here and abroad. And *occasionally* on the telly, but as I probably commented before, British television and British radio is not very interested in God. It's not very interested above all in serious discussion of God. Its BBC Charter requires it to lay on a few services on a Sunday and so it does, but serious discussion is a rare event. And my – though there have been a couple of occasions in which I have been involved in telly debates on this. One of them extremely unsatisfactory and I'm afraid reflects on the telly. There was one, I think it was in 1990 or thereabouts, Channel 4 wanted to set up two debates – one hour slots – on the existence of God. One of those slots was to be devoted to the argument from design and the other slot to the problem of evil. And there was to be a lead speaker on each side and three or four people who were backing him up. And they asked me to be the lead speaker on the argument from design and there was to be an opponent. The opponents – I've forgotten who the opponent was. But that's not very – may have been Peter Atkins even – but that's not very important. At any rate, I said to them, okay, how long can I have for my lead speech. They said, five minutes. I said, well, that's not very long, can't you give me ten minutes, and they went away and talked to their people and they said alright, you can have ten minutes. So I had my ten minutes and the other people contributed and I made a response or two. And then of course I came to watch the programme when it was shown on the television and I found to my horror that in fact I'd been cut down to five minutes, but the way this seemed to have happened is that they had pulled out, roughly speaking, every alternate sentence, so that what I had given as, I thought, as a very tightly coherent argument came over as just a soundbite. And well, I felt that was typical of British TV; they didn't even see there was a coherent argument there, so that annoyed me very much. There was one other television debate, I think Channel 5, on the problem of evil, a much shorter

interchange, but with one other person, which was a bit more successful. But otherwise, I've done quite a lot of interviews for television programmes from other countries, a lot more than I have for this country. I've given interviews on programmes that have appeared on Australian television and Canadian television and American television, but a lot less on this country. This country's less interested in religion.

So it is because it's television companies in these other countries that have tended to invite you?

Yes.

That's why there are more in those other countries. Not a situation where you're being offered such things in Britain but turning them down?

No, no, no, they don't come. [laughs] Which is, well, shows you something about the television viewers in the different countries or what the television producers think the viewers would like.

[43:40]

Can you tell me as much as you can remember about the – and I think this might be one of the two Channel 4 debates that you've been talking about – and it was in 1993 and it was in the Bodleian Library in Oxford and this was, it was God For and Against, and this was the, it must have been the problem of evil part of it, because you had...

That's right, I know what you're going to say, I think.

Okay. Well no, it's simply that it's possible to see this on YouTube. But before I...

That I didn't know.

I might jog your memory about who was there, but first I'd like just a sort of your memory of that event without any prompting.

Yes, that's right. Well, they had, the two main speakers on the argument from design became auxiliary speakers, as it were, in the problem of evil debate, and I was an auxiliary speaker there. And it seemed to me the speaker who was attempting to justify the actions of God was doing a pretty poor job of it. It was – who's the lady who – [pause] Any rate, she's the lady who writes about God quite a lot, popular books, recently one about Islam. You will probably know from that thing who she was.

Well, Karen Armstrong was one of the leads.

That's right, it was her.

Father McCabe was the other lead.

Father McCabe was? Are you really sure? I don't think Father McCabe appeared on...

Who did you think might have been there?

I can't remember.

Okay. Anyway, you carry on with what you can remember.

What I do remember is that the proponent was doing a pretty poor job of defending God's actions: well, we can't really know and most of the people were sort of just agreeing, well, there's no reason why God should have allowed us to suffer and so on, so that really does count against [the existence of God]. So I interrupted and I said there is pretty good reason: we can't have serious moral responsibility and so on without it, and therefore God might be expected to cause us to suffer. And it was Peter Atkins, I think, who was sitting next to me, and I think that's what you were going to refer to, who made a remark like, what was it? You want to go to hell? [I think that he said 'May you rot in Hell.'] Or something like that. He didn't mean it – I think he was meaning it a bit jokingly, as it were, but it got caught up by the television, it was shown on television and as you told me, it was on YouTube. Well, that's what I remember.

Of other people there, I wonder if you can give any insight as to why they might have been there, why they might have been the other people. Baroness Masham of Ilton, Anthony Flew, who we've talked about...

No, he was certainly not there. I think you must be talking about another debate. This was in 1990, I don't think it was as late as '93. It [the debates in which I participated] was on Channel 4 but it was organised by a subsidiary firm that they had employed to do this – I've forgotten what the name of the firm was – but there were these two debates, but certainly Anthony Flew was not involved, that I do know. I would have remembered it if he had. But I do remember Peter Atkins and Richard Dawkins was there, and that's all I remember.

[47:27]

Do you remember the response of the audience more generally to the arguments you were making about, in this case, in the one that I've seen anyway, the possible reasons why the Holocaust, you know, the way in which you can account for the existence of a good and all-powerful God and have the Holocaust existing?

Yes, you may be right, maybe I did mention the Holocaust. Well, of course I could have no idea what the reaction of the television audience was and the audience in the room, the only people who were allowed, other people, undergraduates and so on were allowed to attend, but the only people who were allowed to say something were the three or four people on each side and I don't think they said very much in response to that. I really can't remember; it was such a long time ago.

Perhaps if I could sort of rehearse the argument that you made there you could tell me whether it's something that you now would agree with or something that you've since revised. The argument was that God wants us to be heroes and we can't be heroes unless we've got great choices to make, and so – and that one of the worst things that can happen to man is to be of no use. And the next bit is the bit that caused, apparently, caused offence. And that was that you said that the Jews were of use because they allowed the guards in Auschwitz to have the choice as to whether to resist or go along, so that the suffering was linked up with the development of the ability of someone else to choose and therefore be heroic.

Yes. No, I do endorse that, with certain qualifications. The first point to make is a point I often make, that every time you do a good action it's easier to do a good action next time and every time you do a bad action it's easier to do a bad action next time. And so by doing, there are two benefits of doing a good action; one of course is the good consequences, but also the good effect on you. Now, God wants us to be good people, naturally good people, people who want to do good and so on, but he also wants us *by our own choice* to be that sort of person. So he's going to give us plenty of choices whereby we can, at the same time as producing the effects, make ourselves good characters. And there are some people who, as it were, aren't moved to do good actions by ordinary human suffering, but are sometimes made to revise their lives by really seeing some very nasty things happen. And the concentration camp guards are in that situation. They're pretty hardened people, obviously, but they had a choice and they could see that allowing this to happen, or at any rate some of them could see, allowing this to happen was really awful and they had the choice of trying to stop it, which would have been a very heroic action, or protesting in some way. And maybe some of them did, but at any rate, that was one of the choices they had, and God is concerned not just with Jews, he's concerned with concentration camp guards, and I think that's a very important thing people should realise. They were in a difficult situation, but that was one of the reasons – one of the reasons, and that I emphasise – was why God allowed the Holocaust to occur. But of course, more substantially, the Holocaust occurred because a lot of people made some choices which were not so difficult as the ones for the concentration camp guard. Over a number of centuries they made anti-Jewish choices which influenced their children to make worse anti-Jewish choices, and so on over a number of years, centuries really, until anti-Semitism built up. And so many people, not just in Germany but throughout the Western world, made anti-Jewish choices over a number of centuries and that led to the possibility of people conniving at a Holocaust. And it is good that the human race should have choices that make great differences to people which allow individuals to do heroic actions. It's good that the choices we have should not be confined with minor goods and minor ills and that is a reason why God might allow people to act in such a way that the Holocaust becomes possible. But of course, if the Holocaust becomes possible it may well happen and there were a number of final choices, not just Hitler of course, but all the people who connived at this who did make the bad choices. But, it's very good that they should have choices which affect so many people in so many ways and therefore the major reason, perhaps, why God allows the Holocaust – allows the Holocaust to happen – is because he wants to give large numbers of people choices which do in fact make a difference, and if he can only give them choices which do make a big difference if he allows, if they choose the bad, the bad to occur. And it was not just him giving choices to the concentration camp guards – though that was one thing of course – but him giving choices to millions of people, the way they've treated the Jews, over a number of centuries. And in

that way the Jews were indeed of use. And well, yes, I stick by that entirely. Now, for an individual Jew their life may have been on balance a good life, so that, as it were, as a whole, even though this awful thing happened at the end, it was a good life. But maybe there are lives which are on balance not good lives, in that case God has an obligation to compensate with a life after death for that person in that situation. So God has an obligation to humans to make their lives always on balance, and on balance includes life after death, a good life. But that is compatible with him making them suffer during certain parts of life so long as the suffering serves a good purpose for others, and that is how the argument works.

Do you – but do you understand why within that debate, because you didn't have so much time as you have now, for example, do you understand why it caused the offence that it did?

Yes, I can't remember the details, I'm afraid. But I did – it depends what you mean by offence, really.

Well, okay, Peter Atkins said what he said, but then in the version that I've seen anyway, many of the other participants regarded what you said as, people were saying that it was an obscene thing to say that the Jews were, you know, the reason for the suffering is that they allowed, it's explained by the fact that they were of use and they allowed other humans to be heroes and some people felt that it trivialised the suffering itself.

Well, I can understand that they might have thought that. Indeed, I can certainly understand that. I did feel the need to say something at that stage because people were sort of assuming there couldn't possibly be a justification and I therefore felt a need to introduce this. If I hadn't said anything, it would have just left the other side with a hands-down victory. And I can understand that and the Holocaust in particular is something – I don't think it is the worst evil in the world, but it's a pretty bad one, but it's something that's got treated as though it were the worst evil in the world. I think the slave trade was definitely a worse evil than that, simply because it was committed by Christians, unlike the Holocaust which was committed by non-Christians. However, that's as maybe, it was a terrible thing of course and I can understand their reaction. But you are right, I had no time. If I had quarter of an hour I might have begun to make this plausible, but that's the telly for you: you don't have quarter of an hour.

Do you remember how you felt at the time?

Well, I felt annoyed I didn't have quarter of an hour. Yes, that's what I felt. And of course, well, I felt people ought to, as it were, think through these issues a bit more, and I've always felt that with the problem of evil. People ought to say, well alright, suppose you think a God ought not to have done that. Do you think a God ought to have allowed any suffering? And they say, well, just a bit. But then if you allow just a bit, well, isn't he treating us as toys; isn't he saying that everything that's going to happen he's directed in advance and we don't have any serious choices? And that's not treating us as serious individuals. And in that way, if people, if they're given a bit of time to think that through, because I always ask people to describe how *they* ought to have made a universe if they were God, and faced with that they begin to see, well, it's good for us to have choices, but only small choices, or big choices, then it begins to come alive. But I feel the Christian tradition in the last

200 years has really just not come to grips with this. It was discussed a little more seriously in the Middle Ages and people took very seriously the importance of – I mean the question people often asked in the Middle Ages is what's the point of the poor, why would God allow there to be poor people. And the answer was to enable rich people to be saved, because they would then be able to help the poor and so on. Well, you may think that's right or wrong, but my point is it's not just me; it's part of the tradition and I was just bringing that to life. But I do feel people in the past 200 years have become so absorbed with what an awful thing suffering is that they haven't considered that there are worse things. And the worse things are the concentration camp guards actually. The worse things are to be immune to human suffering and to make yourself immune, and that I think is the worst part of the Holocaust actually, because, well, the Jews still had their consciences and they still had their awareness of what was good and bad and the concentration camp guards, through their actions, have lost that.

[1:00:33]

What's your view on individual illness and suffering and the place of that?

Oh, well the same applies, same applies. If I suffer, this gives me certain choices. It gives me a choice of how to deal with this suffering; patiently or resentfully, and it gives other people choices, whether to be nice to me or nasty to me about this. That is to say, our suffering always opens up choices for us as it did for the Jews in the Holocaust: how they would deal with this, how they would think about the Germans and so on. And it opens up choices for other people, and the same applies on the individual level as on the big level and what's important are human lives are short, the time we have to suffer in that human life is short. But it does open possibilities for making ourselves in a serious way.

[1:01:43]

A bit like the question I asked about the Trinity: to what extent is your thinking about that based on any suffering that you yourself have experienced? Do you reflect, in other words, on your own experience in making these arguments or is this purely logically worked up?

I'm afraid it is purely logically. I haven't suffered a great deal in life. There have been one or two tragic things of course, but generally my life has not been a life of suffering, but I can see. And you may say well, you don't really know what it is to suffer, etc, etc. Well, that may be so, but I also would say to the person who is suffering: you can't really see the larger picture if you're so absorbed in your suffering and perhaps I have the advantage of you there.

Thank you.

[1:02:37]

Some other people who I think were there, but I may be wrong, but it's difficult to see how I could be, because they appeared to be in the same room with you on this video, but Arthur Peacocke, is he someone that you remember?

Oh yes, he was there, certainly, yes, yes.

And is he someone that – he seemed to be arguing, if there were sides in this, he seemed to be arguing with you about God only being able to do what is logically possible.

Well, I forget what he... oh yes, that's true, but I mean my argument's more than that, it's logically possible for God to just turn off the suffering like that, but there are reasons why he should not. I forget what Arthur said on that occasion, but I do remember that nobody seemed to be making the crucial point, which is why I said what I did and I had only, after all, a minute as a member of the – not a main speaker – to make it in and if I didn't say it then it would look as if everybody thought the Holocaust showed there was no God, and so on.

And why is it, do you think, that you've often been involved in debates with Peter Atkins?

Because Peter Atkins likes debates. [laughs] Well, yes, that is the answer, because people look around, say some debating society in Dublin or in Durham or something, looks around, who shall we have? And I'm an obvious person to ask on one side because I've written a lot about this in a way that other people haven't. So they look for an atheist and who has, as it were, been prominent as an atheist in various forms? Well, Peter Atkins has because he did it last time and the time before, so they ask him. And some people who are atheists, I think, don't really want to travel too far to preach their atheism, but Peter Atkins does, so that's what happens. I mean, after all, atheists may not feel it's as important to spread their atheism as theists think it's important to spread their theism and therefore philosophers who are atheists just may not think that they can be bothered to go through these arguments, whereas Peter Atkins clearly cares very much about this and wants people to believe what he believes, which is good.

[1:05:17]

And being in Oxford, did that bring you into contact more generally with a kind of an Oxford community of people interested in science and religion? I know that there's an Ian Ramsey Centre and Arthur Peacocke I think had various sort of organisations.

That's right. Arthur of course was an Anglican priest and had been a biologist and was very keen on science and religion. I knew him, sure. And of course Ian Ramsey when he was Nolloth Professor was well known as someone who had done his graduate work, or certainly undergraduate work in science and also was a theologian. So I wouldn't say there was an Oxford community any more than anywhere else, but a number of scientists are of course interested in these matters and there were a number of scientists around here. I've always felt that they are so tied down to their science that they don't ask the big enough questions; they tend to say, well, if we were dealing with the problem of evil they would tend to say well, ~~you can't have~~, if you're to have fire which you need in order to cook things with and to make iron tools with, then the fire is likely to hurt someone. And you can't have water, a good thing, unless people can get drowned in it. So this, as it were, justifies why there should be a world of basically our kind, which is bound to produce certain suffering. Yes, but, while I accept that, if there's a God, God's quite capable of making a quite different sort of world in which

none of the scientific laws which operate in our world apply. So why didn't God make a world in which water does the good things it does but not the bad things it does, and so on. And I tend to feel that some scientists, who aren't really professional philosophers, or at any rate don't – they tend to answer the questions within their own scientific parameters and try to explain why some particular scientific theory makes this possible. But questions about what God would do or could do are bigger than that.

Which scientists who are Christians are you thinking of, so that we can – so that the listener could inspect the arguments of those people for the kind of restrictions that you –

Well, of course I talk – I've so often heard that argument that I'm not certain I could pin it down to any one person. I think Arthur Peacocke used to say that sort of thing, but you're forcing me on memory to pin that down, and maybe he didn't. But certainly, I've often heard this from scientists and you'll find plenty of books of a science and religion kind which say that, but I'm afraid I, as it were, glance through them and see what it is and I forget who said it. But I assure you, plenty do.

[1:08:57]

So have you followed, since the time when these radio, TV and other debates on science and religion became more common, there's also been a vast increase, as you say, in the number of books on science and religion, scientists writing about their faith, writing about the extent to which science and faith are compatible. Are these books that you have more than flicked through, as you said there?

I read the philosophical literature, because I think it goes into things with a little more depth.

Thank you.

[1:09:38]

Now, in terms of personal life at Oxford, we left you last time, you've moved into Oriel College and I think one question that might be left unanswered for the listener is whether the separation of your marriage and your move to Oxford are just coincident, or whether they're connected. So whether the move to Oxford was part of the reason for the separation at that time, or does it just happen at the same time?

Well, my marriage was not in a very good state at that time and that happened to be the time when the Oxford job came up and my wife eventually said she didn't want to come. So yes, I think in that sense it was a coincidence, yes.

And you've to some extent –

But I mean she might have suggested I should go somewhere else if I hadn't gone to Oxford.

And where had your children got to in their lives by this point?

Oh, they'd just about finished university. The younger one had just finished at Cambridge and the elder one had finished a year or two before.

And what did they go on to do in their lives and careers?

Ah, you've asked me that before; it's one of the items.

[1:11:13]

Oh, I'm sorry, okay. In that case, can you take us on from the point that we've got to in your academic work?

Yes, well we talked about the tetralogy. And after that I wrote, ah yes, 2001 I think, a book called *Epistemic Justification*, which was an analysis, a purely philosophical work, of what makes a belief rational or justified. And there's a – this is the central question of epistemology and vast literature about epistemology and I went into that in some detail and I discussed internalist and externalist theories of justification, that is to say an internalist theory says you're justified if on the evidence available, if the evidence available to you makes the belief probable, and an externalist says you are justified if you are caused to hold this belief by a reliable process, eg. a perceptual belief is justified because it's produced by perception, which is basically a reliable process. And I pointed out that you could have many different kinds of justification but the only one that was worth paying attention to was ~~the~~ [an]internalist theory because it's only if you – only what you had access to, your evidence, which could in any way influence your conduct as to which kind of beliefs you should seek. So it points out that – and it assessed what constituted evidence and when evidence made beliefs probable and when it didn't. And this involved going into probability once again, and you'll recall I had written, thirty years before was it, a book titled *Introduction to Confirmation Theory*, which was on that at a time when that sort of probability – the probability of a theory on evidence – wasn't much discussed, but has come to be discussed a great deal since then. And I went into these matters again and justified the probability calculus and the theorem that came from it, Bayes's Theorem, as a right way of assessing the probability of hypotheses and I went into this in considerable detail. The motive behind me taking an interest in this, the book [*Epistemic Justification*] didn't discuss – it was quite a big book and detailed book – didn't discuss religion in any way, but why I went into it was because something called "reformed epistemology" had become rather popular. Reformed epistemology was the kind of epistemology advocated especially by Alvin Plantinga in the United States and many, many American philosophers went along with this and they said religious beliefs are warranted – that was Alvin Plantinga's favourite word – if and only if they are produced by a reliable process. And if there is a God then he has clearly – our coming to believe there is a God by some process is a reliable process and therefore, inevitably, if there is a God, all our beliefs that there is a God, all our religious beliefs, are going to be warranted. And there's no independent way of saying whether there's a God or not, but the Christian can remain confident that no-one has shown that he's not justified [in believing that there is a God] because to show that you would have to show that the process of getting your belief wasn't a reliable one and it wouldn't be possible to do that. That's what Alvin Plantinga said at great length, often. And I therefore said, well, there are ways of assessing theories by quite independent means – means which don't rely on assumptions – and we can argue for the existence of God by perfectly rational means; and beliefs are justified if, on the evidence available

to the believer, they are rendered probable by that evidence. And therefore it's that sort of justification which matters, not whether it's produced by a reliable process, over the reliability of which we have no knowledge. Well, that was the way I went into it, but of course, as I think I've said before, all these big philosophical topics are very interesting on their own merit. So that was 2001. Then, 2003, which would have been about the year just before I retired – no – just after I retired, I wrote the book *The Resurrection of God Incarnate*, which was really the necessary culmination of the tetralogy, rather than the book on *Providence and the Problem of Evil* which applied to theism generally on the whole, although I did bring in Christian elements. Now, the framework of that book [*The Resurrection of God Incarnate*] was the question: was Jesus raised from the dead? But, of course, New Testament scholars focus on that and they give their arguments. But their arguments are solely arguments of the form, well, the evidence is a bit weak, yes of course the people said they saw him, but maybe they didn't and yes, the tomb may have been empty, but it may not have been empty; people may have misjudged where the tomb was and so on. Now, if the only evidence for the resurrection was the kind of evidence which New Testament scholars produced, then the belief wouldn't be very well justified and my point in this book was yes, this evidence is relevant, but even more relevant is the evidence about whether there is a God or not. Because if there is a God, there is reason to suppose that he might become incarnate and that he might live the sort of life that we've talked about before, of a heroic life, the sort of life that people ought to have lived but didn't, and that sort of life is likely in a society that likes people not to criticise the authorities, likely to lead to death. And therefore, I argued, there is a reason in advance of considering what happened to Jesus and in advance of considering the evidence after the resurrection, that there would be a prophet who lived a certain sort of life and would be executed for it. And, if in fact that was God Incarnate, then God would want to show people that that was the case and he would do that by bringing that life to – really showing that that life did not end in death, that by doing a miracle, that is an act which he only could do, as putting his signature on the teaching of Jesus and bringing Jesus to life so that his message continued. And therefore we have reason in advance to expect that there will be a prophet who led this sort of life and who would be killed for it, but whose life would be culminated by a super-miracle. Now, that is quite independent before you ever look at the historical evidence, at least my arguments are. So, if historical evidence turns up that there was a prophet who lived a very good life, etc, etc, and who was reported to have risen from the dead and for which there was significant evidence, both of the empty tomb and of people who saw him, then it's very much more likely it would be true than if there is evidence that there's no God or that God isn't likely to do this sort of thing. So two-thirds of this book was concerned with what I call the prior evidence, given that there is a God, which of course I'd argued in other works, would we expect him to become incarnate in a certain sort of way, would we expect him to do certain sorts of things. And given that, I then went on to, well, as a matter of fact, Jesus did live in that sort of way and did leave these sort of things and the evidence is such that the person who did live in this sort of way, was raised from the dead. So, it all depends what your background evidence is, how you assess what is in the New Testament. And all the New Testament writing [modern writing about the New Testament] entirely ignored this point; it just says we're going to look at this in a pure historical way. But you can't look at any purported cosmic event in that way. According to what your general theory about how the world is, is going to make a great difference to how much historical evidence you need, and that was the point of the book. Well, then I went in detail, of course, into the historical evidence, both for the way Jesus lived and for the resurrection, but I set it against this background saying that we don't need the kind of evidence [of the strength]

that New Testament writers [modern writers about the New Testament] thought we did in order to justifiably claim that the resurrection occurred if the resurrection is the sort of event you might expect to occur anyway in connection with it. As you can see, for example, nobody doubts that the crucifixion took place. Why don't they doubt? Well, because this is the sort of thing that might happen whether or not there is a God, so it doesn't need to postulate a God to explain it. But when you're asking whether an event occurred, which if it did occur would be a big violation of natural laws, it's much more likely to occur if there's a God than if there isn't, and therefore... etc.

But why would you expect God to sort of put his signature, I think as you said, on it in that way? That must be one way in which you might indicate that there is sort of divine action –

Oh yes, sure. And I wasn't saying it's necessary – it would have to be exactly that way. But it was bringing to life someone who had been killed for teaching certain things and that is, as it were, saying he was right to teach these certain things. And the Old Testament, in particular the Book of Deuteronomy, or no, let's take an example: the story of the prophet Elijah in Kings. Elijah had this contest with the Prophets of Baal and Elijah said we will see who is right, we will make a sacrifice and we will cover the slain animal with water and we will ask God to set it alight. And the Prophets of Baal prayed that God would set it alight and he didn't, and Elijah prayed and then there was a lightning strike and it came alight. Now that, I mean you don't have to believe the details of that, but the point is, in Old Testament thinking, there was this thinking that God, that a miraculous event, which was the sort of event you would expect if God favoured the teaching of this prophet rather than that prophet, was in fact God's signature on it. And one of the things that Jesus taught, of course, in his life, was that there would be an afterlife. People would come to life again. And therefore, the signature on his teaching would be *him* coming to life. That would be an obvious signature on that teaching. So bringing to life somebody killed for preaching, among other things, life after death, is an obvious way of God intervening – because he alone could bring someone to life who had been dead for three days – one way of God indicating his signature on the prophet.

Thank you.

[1:25:26]

I realise it's going back slightly, but could you tell the story of presumably the invitation to contribute to the book Philosophers Who Believe, which is by James Kelly Clark, and then your reasons for doing so?

Oh well, Kelly Clark wanted to make a collection of philosophers, people who were teaching in philosophy departments, who were Christians and wanted them to explain why they were Christians. I wasn't particularly keen to reveal my personal life to him any more than to you, but it seemed a worthy cause and I agreed, it's as simple as that. What else would be at stake?

Had you by that point undertaken anything else that might be thought of as autobiographical, even just private writing, keeping of diaries, that sort of thing? Was this a completely new experience, writing about your life?

Yes, it was, yes, yes. And I think, as you know, I've sort of updated that for a volume of philosophers who joined the Orthodox Church.

And perhaps you might want to say why you produced the updated version of your life for that?

Once again, somebody asked me to, and persuaded me to, I may say. Once again, [I produced it] because I thought it would be helpful.

Thank you.

[1:27:08]

You've answered today that you have a sort of slight interest in the sort of debate on relations between science and religion but tend to prefer the philosophical literature and arguments, but one way in which you, whether you like it or not, became part of sort of science-religion debate in Britain was that you were quoted a number of times in Richard Dawkins' The God Delusion, and could you, I mean perhaps this is a book that you read as soon as it came out and had a reaction to your appearance in it, perhaps it's a book you've never read, perhaps it's a book you've just read bits of. Could you give us a sense of the extent of your engagement with that book and then your reaction to it, depending on –

Yes, certainly. But first, the point I am very interested in the interaction between science and religion, don't get me wrong, but I do think that scientists aren't always the best people to do that. That was the point, because they don't always take into account the bigger philosophical picture. If there really is a God of the sort that they believe in, then the mere fact that scientific laws are of a certain sort is due to God and he could make them of a quite different sort, and that doesn't sometimes come out, because they appeal to the details of science to show something interesting, whereas God could make a different world. And the really crucial thing, which is evidence for the existence of God, is the *fact* of science, the very orderliness of nature, which is a very important part of my case for the existence of God. But they can't bring their scientific knowledge to bear as to why there are laws of nature because that's where they *start* from. Philosophers ask the bigger question in each case. So I'm very, don't get me wrong, I'm very keen on studying and getting the right answers to the questions of the relation of science to religion, but I think somehow philosophers often have the tools which the scientists lack for this purpose. There was a time of course when – well, no, that's going off on a slight tangent, so I won't, but any rate, that's the main point. Now, Dawkins, you're asking me?

[1:29:47]

Well, I think the reason why I was mentioned three times in that is because Dawkins did review my little book, my popular book, *Is There a God*, for *The Sunday Times*. And Dawkins reads very little literature on the religious side, but *The Sunday Times* had persuaded him to read this, so as it were, he got a bit of literature on that side, so I think that's why I got a few mentions in that book, in *his* book, because Dawkins has read very little religion literature of a serious sort. That comes out from the book. For example, and I think it's in that book, he discusses somebody who has used Bayes's Theorem, somebody else quite apart from me, in total ignorance of the fact that I who have spent a lot of time on Bayes's Theorem and had got some views about it and so on, and so I do feel Dawkins has produced this book in considerable ignorance of the kind of arguments

that many religious people would produce in these contexts. Furthermore, of course, he has a, understandably perhaps, a rather literal view of the Bible and thinks that, as it were, science has shown we're a product of evolution, therefore God can't have had anything to do with it, and so on. But he doesn't ask the question, well okay, but what reason have you got to suppose that God isn't behind the laws of evolution. Well, the answer is I've read some of that book and it struck me that there are better books by atheists, shall we say. He's got a chapter on the ontological argument. Now, relatively few Christians believe in God because of the ontological argument, although a lot of philosophers who are Christians have got sympathy for it. But it involves certain points of logic and if anybody was to do serious work on the ontological argument – which there are pros and cons to it – I don't think you'd read Dawkins on it. But any rate, yes, it's a good thing, I very much favour Dawkins producing his views in this form. I think his criticisms of myself were not successful, but one of them in particular I thought just showed total lack of comprehension of the other side. He criticised me on the Holocaust and what he said is Swinburne believes the Holocaust was a good thing. Now that is an absurd comment because it doesn't distinguish between Swinburne thinks it was good of the Nazis to exterminate the Jews and Swinburne thinks it was good of God to allow the Nazis [to exterminate the Jews] and there was no sense of these being two questions there, and I thought he really hasn't come to grips with things there. He also criticises me on a bit, he says, God must be a very complicated being. Swinburne says he's simple, but in order to have all the knowledge he's [God is] supposed to have and have all the powers he's supposed to have he must be very complicated. Now that assumes that, as it were, God is just a super-machine and if he is to have a lot of knowledge therefore he must be bigger than human machines that have a lot of knowledge. That's not the hypothesis of theism at all; the hypothesis of theism is that there is a non-embodied being who has a maximum degree of power and it's simple in postulating one being with a maximum degree of a certain property in the way of course that scientists postulate entities which have big degrees of certain properties without in any way being big things. For example, every particle in the universe on the Newtonian theory has the power to attract every other particle, however far away it is, with a certain force, though this little particle's only a tiny atom, and yet it has all those powers. And that's a reasonable thing for scientists to postulate if, by postulating that, they can explain the universe. And among the postulations scientists make are postulations which concern infinity, because they postulate these particles can act at an infinite distance. The Newtonian theory postulated that they act with infinity velocity, that is to say a particle here made a difference a trillion miles away in no time at all. Many of them used to postulate that light had an infinite velocity. The notions of infinity and zero often come into science, they're important and they are simple suggestions because nobody would have postulated, for example, that light had a [particular] very large finite velocity, rather than an infinite velocity, unless particular observations had turned up which were incompatible with the infinite velocity, then of course they do. And likewise, nobody would have postulated that gravity only operates over twenty-eight million miles or something, but stops there, unless they had reason for supposing that. Otherwise, infinity naturally comes in; infinity is just zero limits to things. And so postulating a being of infinite power is not necessary in any way to postulate a complicated being because it's postulating power as a basic property and not one derived from the new arrangement of gears and nuts. So I don't think – Dawkins just makes that remark off the cuff, as it were, it would have to be complicated in order to have large amounts – but he hasn't got a theory of simplicity and he needs a theory of when a scientific theory's simple rather than any other one. He hasn't got one. Now, I *have* got a theory of simplicity: I think that a hypothesis is simple insofar as it postulates few entities, few properties,

few kinds of entities, few kinds of properties, mathematically simple relations between the properties, mathematically simple degrees of the properties, and the properties have to be of an accessible kind. Power is a property of an accessible kind: we know what it's like, we ourselves can exercise power. Infinity is a simple number because it's just the opposite of nought. Something has infinite power if there are zero limits to its power, and so on. It's a simpler notion than two million, five hundred and twenty-two degrees. So, I've got a theory, now that theory may be wrong, it may be right, but it's a theory I've come to as a result of thinking about various scientific theories, why you prefer this one to that one. Yes, because it's [some scientific theory is] simpler, [I asked myself] what made it simpler? Well, etc, not just scientific theories but theories of historians and detectives and so on. Okay, so I've thought that through. Now, if Dawkins wants to criticise my views he's got to criticise my view of simplicity, but he hasn't got a theory of simplicity; he doesn't go into what makes a hypothesis simple. So I didn't think much of it in that way and I haven't read all of the book, but the bits I read about me were, I thought, poor and it's – well, so I wasn't moved to read much of the rest, but I suppose I ought to have done, because it's had such an influence and so on. But he has, what is clear to me looking at that book, is there's absolutely nothing new in it. You can find these things in a much more sophisticated way in many philosophically sensitive books by atheists. There's nothing new there. What's new is the enormous publicity that it got.

[1:39:26]

Which books by atheists are you thinking of as more sophisticated treatment?

Well, Mackie's book *The Miracle of Theism* or I think highly of Mark [Nicholas] Everitt who was at East Anglia. I've forgotten what his book was called but that was a good atheist book. Many others. But people who can see the difference between God allows x to occur and God brings about x .

[1:40:03]

Did you continue to have any relations with Antony Flew so that you can shed any additional light on his change from atheism to theism later in his life?

Yes, I didn't see much of him over many years, but we bumped into each other occasionally. But towards the end of his life somebody brought him over here [to Oxford] to come and talk to me about religion and we did have a couple of hours of conversation in this room and we talked about – one thing that very much worried him of course was life after death, and he thought that wasn't, [that] there were philosophical problems there, because the notion of somebody continuing to exist without a body was, he thought, involved a contradiction – And I produced arguments as to the contrary and he said that was interesting and he would think about it and so on. So, I suppose that wasn't the only thing we talked about in connection with religion, but certainly I remember that as part of the conversation. He has been accused, of that book of as it were, of having been brainwashed by certain people to produce that book. It was very unfortunate that the editor of that book didn't reveal that some of the things that he had attributed to Antony Flew were things that Flew had said and he, the editor, had written down and had shown to Flew saying, is this what you think, and Flew had said yes. But the editor of the book just introduced it as a section written by Flew, which it wasn't. And then of course people

pointed out it didn't look like Flew's writing; it looked as if it had been written by the editor, which of course it had. And therefore they said he is not— he's been brainwashed— he's not mentally compos, he doesn't necessarily believe these things. I thought that was unfair because I knew what had happened, but when he came to see me it was quite clear to me that he was mentally compos. He wasn't all that acute philosophically, but he knew what he was about, he knew what he was thinking and he was inclined now to believe that there was a God of some sort. The problem of evil still worried him very much, and so he wasn't quite sure it was a Christian sort of God, but he did think there was a creator who had made the universe. And arguments from fine tuning, and so on, were, I think, the principal ones that had had an effect on him. And that was clear to me that he believed this and that he wasn't saying it to me because he was being brainwashed. So I think that criticism was unfair, but certainly I think by that time, which was only three years perhaps before his death, he was philosophically a bit blunt — he was not quite coming to grips with arguments. But nevertheless, he believed these things. I think he became — he suffered from dementia for a year or two after that, just before he died, but the book was not written [then]— was written before that dementia stage.

He was philosophically blunt in relation to your memory of him?

At that stage, yes. But what I mean by philosophically blunt is not quite grasping the arguments and so on, but the conclusions were clear — I mean his conclusions were clear.

But you were comparing him to knowing him as a younger man?

Yes.

[end of track 4]

Track 5

A question on the poem, The Aristocrat, that you read last time. And that's what sorts of things have you felt yourself are those sorts of things that you don't need to know about?

Oh well, obviously sexual encounters with other women, travelling – when I was young people used to think that you got an experience of life by travelling to Kabul, I mean that was before all the troubles with Afghanistan, and seeing how primitive tribes lived, and you needed to take drugs in order to really know what the world's about, and so on. These kinds of things.

And then later in life, are there another set of things that you have thought would be distractions rather than important things to be interested in? All the things you mentioned sound like young people's –

Not altogether. [laughs] No, indeed not. No, I can't think of any very obvious. I have enjoyed doing philosophy, and as I have said before, there have been a few disappointments in my life, apart from that connected with my marriage, and I'm happy with my life as it is, thank you very much.

You say in the autobiography, autobiographical articles, that you've confessed about every two months throughout life.

Yes.

Could you – I mean this may well be very private – but could you give us a sense of the content of those? I mean what sort of things – given what you've just told us about sort of in advance of things, making decisions about right and wrong ways to behave?

Yes, I don't think I want to go into that in any detail. Obviously, the sort of confession I would have made at the age of thirty is different from the sort of confession I'd make at the age of eighty, but there are temptations to have impure thoughts, there are temptations to be pretty brusque with people and impatient, occasional temptations to resent certain things, though that's not high on my list. Sometimes making catty remarks about people. The usual temptations of an academic, that is to say, to think that other people aren't very good and that you haven't been appreciated enough and to be annoyed at having to do this and that admin when you want to get on, and to be annoyed if somebody doesn't want to publish your article, and so on and so forth.

Thank you.

[03:19]

Could you continue then through what we might call your writing life, covering books that we haven't covered, and I think that the key ones here are Was Jesus God? and then Mind, Brain and Free Will.

Was Jesus God? is just a summary in a popular form of the ideas contained in the tetralogy, that is to say concerned with particularly Christian doctrines. There's nothing new, or virtually nothing new in the book; it's just presenting the outline of the ideas in as simple a form as possible. So it's a companion to *Is There a God?* as it were. *Is There a God?* summarises my ideas about arguments for the existence of God and *Was Jesus God?* summarises my views about the justification of Christian doctrines, including the resurrection, which formally isn't part of the tetralogy, but is rather important for its justification.

And who – what was the driver for the publication of these two popular versions of your –

Oh well, I think every philosopher who has what he thinks as something important to say has some obligation to not just say it to his professional colleagues, but to make it more generally known. And it's certainly generally held in the popular culture – no doubt partly because that's what professionals thought fifty years ago – it's generally held in the popular culture that you can't argue about the existence of God, there aren't any rational arguments, this is just a matter of unreasoned faith, and of course I believe the contrary and I think ordinary people are quite capable of understanding – ordinary moderately well educated people, perhaps even not so well educated at all people – are capable of understanding the simple points that I make in *Is There a God?* And similarly, for *Was Jesus God?* The popular culture will tell you, and indeed the theologians of recent years will tell you, that you can't provide any justification for the resurrection or belief that it occurred, or for the Trinity or the incarnation; these are matters of faith, you feel yourself moved to them. Whereas I think, on the contrary, you can produce justification and I think one can set that out in a way intelligible by fairly ordinary people, and experience has borne this out to me, because from time to time what you would call fairly ordinary people have told me how much they've appreciated these books and so on, especially *Is There a God?* and from time to time I get emails from people who are not in any sense academics. So I'm right about that, yes.

In what context have you met this kind of readership in person?

Oh well, I give lectures from time to time: public lectures. They're usually under the auspices of a university or something, but they're sort of the lectures that the university advertises as suitable to local people and a lot of local people come along. Or other people tell me that fairly ordinary people *they know* have read these books. *Is There a God?* in particular is used a great deal these days in schools – in Britain that is – because the school syllabus for what they call religious studies – it used to be called, I suppose, scripture or divinity or something like that – has two alternative sections. I don't know if students have to do both sections, but any rate, many – most of them do the section entitled Philosophy and Ethics and most of those who do that section read my writing, not necessarily from that particular book, but perhaps extracts from there and extracts from something else. But it is, I think, almost all those who study religious studies get some popular extracts from my writing in that connection. And

that's of course, I'm talking about UK, but I know that it's certainly studied in many schools in the United States as well, but I don't know how widely.

What was the publisher's role in the production of these popular versions in terms of encouragement or suggestion of the original idea or that sort of thing?

I'm not certain if OUP suggested it. Various other people had suggested it and when I suggested it to OUP they were certainly enthusiastic about it. But on the whole they produce academic books and they're not anxious for quick sales, but they welcome quick sales when they come. And certainly *Is There a God?* has sold a lot of copies and been translated into a lot of languages.

[09:17]

Thank you. And finally on this before we move on to the next one, are you able to summarise the process of translation, if you like, of the – apart from the reduction in length – of the full academic philosophy into the popular account?

Yes. Well, I've avoided all symbolism. *The Existence of God*, the book, I expressed my views after expressing them in ordinary language, I brought them out in terms of the probability calculus in showing how basic intuitions about probability, which I was appealing to in the prose version, are captured by the symbolism. So that's one thing that made a difference. Well, I just had to leave out lots of qualifications and lots of – obviously examples are rather important in a popular version – but I just had to give examples of the main points and ignore other ones, and in some sense to make assertions that I would certainly not make in a technical philosophy book because there are obvious qualifications which have to be put on them which you just can't put in the text of a popular book. Yes, it's difficult to do and – but I like to think I have succeeded largely, yes.

Is it therefore dangerous for a professional philosopher to write this sort of book, given that in that particular book you have to refrain from adding the qualifications that would be essential if your audience was philosophers, but there's a risk that this popular book might be seen by professional philosophers as other than you intended?

Well, that is a risk, but of course if they do say that in public, I can say to them, you should have read the full version.

Thank you.

[11:43]

And now if you could talk about Mind, Brain and Free Will, and perhaps a key thing to cover is why, at this point you, thought it was necessary to write rather than just have, say, the updated version of Evolution of the Soul, what was –

Yes, as you say, in defending substance dualism, the view that humans consist of two parts, body and soul, this was saying the same thing as *The Evolution of the Soul*. *The Evolution of the Soul* did have one chapter on free will, which I regarded subsequently as a very unsatisfactory chapter and the argument doesn't, I think, work and this new book has quite a lot on free will with much better arguments. So that was certainly one motivation. Well, also I had certain better arguments, I thought, both for property and for substance dualism than appeared in *The Evolution of the Soul* and arguments which appealed to deeper philosophical principles than the ones that were in *The Evolution of the Soul*. Let me think a moment how I can express this. [pause] Well, I claimed, for example, that we all know what it means to say – what it means to say I shall survive my death, but some philosophers respond by saying, well, we all think we can know this, but maybe we don't know what the word 'I' refers to. And therefore I produce a theory which is a theory about what it is to know what a word refers to and show that that had the consequences that we do know this. I invented a technical term ["informative designator"], 'I' as [is] an informative designator and explained why I thought it [I] was an informative designator; that's a word which not merely you applied it to something but you know why it was that you were applying to it. And certain conditions of something being an informative designator. So I developed deeper philosophical principles and I'm very interested to find out that there's a book, which was published three years ago, by David Chalmers, who is a very well-known and distinguished Australian philosopher, and he has invented a similar term here which he calls an "epistemically rigid designator", which does exactly the same function as the term that I invented in *Mind, Brain and Free Will*, so in a sense I was pleased about that and in a sense I felt he ought to have – I mean he invented it independently, he didn't crib it from me in any sense, but I felt it's a pity that he hadn't cottoned on to what I had to say about it, because I think I said something rather better about it than he did.

That's Constructing the World, the book in question?

Yes. Yes, so that's why I wrote *Mind, Brain and Free Will*: justifying property and then substance dualism, newer arguments but arguments that were deeper, appealing to philosophical principles that those who didn't accept my first arguments might themselves accept as they moved to my earlier argument, and a lot on free will, which I simply hadn't discussed. There was one further motivation for writing this book, and that is that recent work in neuroscience over the past – well, since *The Evolution of the Soul* was published – neuroscientists have taken a great interest in what it is that moves us to make certain choices, and it's only in the last twenty years that they've been able to find out what happens in the brain when we make these choices because, after all, you can't cut open the brain and watch things. But they have devised ways of, for example, putting radioactive stuff in the blood and then seeing where that is active when one is making certain choices. And this has enabled them to see to some extent what goes on when we make certain choices, and that leads them to think that they're in a position to tell us whether we have free will or not. I think their arguments don't show any such thing, but their work on this has got a lot of popular currency. You often see references in the newspapers to scientists who have discovered that humans don't have free will, or something like that,

and the next issue says, scientists have discovered there's a mistake [in the previous report], and so on. And I think they haven't seriously answered the question how they could discover this. Firstly I think the sort of – one thing that seemed to me very clear is that they were claiming that we do what we do – we do the intentional actions we do – simply because of what happens in the brain and that our mental life, our conscious life, doesn't make any difference to that; it's simply an epiphenomenon: if I decide to move my hand I may form a mental decision and be conscious of that, but according to a lot of these neuroscientists, this is the – there is a route from some brain event to my moving my hand and also from some brain event to my forming the decision, but the decision doesn't make the hand move. Well, that is self-contradictory in the sense that, well, how can they – they can only know that if they knew that the same series of events from the earlier brain event to the motion of the hand would occur whether or not I had formed the intention. They can only know that if they've done a lot of experiments to show that when this earlier brain event occurs, the hand moves whether or not I form the intention. They can only *do* that experiment if they know when I form the intention. How do they know when I form the intention? Well, because they tell me. But then, if they take – if the scientist takes a subject's word for ["I had an intention at such and such a time"], they only take his word because they believe his intention leads [causes] the words to come out of his mouth. So, even if they were to show that in a particular case, kind of case, a certain intention didn't make any difference to bodily movements, they could only do that because they believe that in other cases it does make a belief, in other words, the cases where the conscious event does affect the bodily movement, viz. in the cases where the conscious event causes the subject to say that it occurs. So, this is a simple argument but ninety per cent of neuroscientists simply hadn't seen that point, still haven't seen that point, because they don't read philosophical articles. But, well, this just illustrates that recent neuroscience has had a lot of influence and I thought not very good influence and this was one further reason why I was writing this book.

[20:43]

Where were you seeing the results of this neuroscience?

Where was I seeing it?

Mm.

Oh, I see. Well, I like to keep an eye on what's happening generally in the scientific world and I became aware of this and philosophers had been discussing it since – this work really dates from 1990 onwards. And other philosophers have written books which involve consideration of this point, of these results, not making my point, but making other points about them. It's become part of the philosophical literature. I was also aware, as a general point, that if I wanted to say anything worthwhile about free will I ought to interact with the latest neuroscience. For that reason I have been reading firstly the popular accounts of it in *The New Scientist* and that sort of thing, and then following them up in the technical journals. Neuroscience is not a difficult thing for somebody to get into and

find out what it's about. It's not like physics or anything like that. And so indeed, I organised a conference on the subject which produced a volume of collected papers the year or two before *Mind, Brain and Free Will* came out. So I got into the literature, certainly, and have taken part in one or two conferences where there have been psychologists as well as philosophers.

[22:23]

Yes, in that edited collection there's also, quantum theory comes in in terms of the way in which events are sort of undetermined by their cause and something called Gödel's Theorem. Would you be able to briefly comment on the relevance of those two other areas of well, yeah, they're both sort of scientific theory.

Quantum theory is indeed relevant. Gödel, I don't think is relevant, but some people do. Quantum theory: well, quantum theory is *the* great theory of physics of the twentieth century which replaced Newton – I mean there is relativity theory as well – but I think even greater and more important for all physics so far has been quantum theory. Quantum theory, very loosely, tells us that on the small scale all you can do by way of predicting events on the large scale is to learn about what's happening on the small scale [and make predictions from that], but you can only learn about what's happening on the small scale within limits. For example, if you can find out the exact – you can only find out the exact position of an object, a fundamental particle, if you can't learn fully what its momentum is. The more accurately you can measure its position, the less accurately you will measure its momentum and so its velocity. So the more accurately you know where it is, the less accurately you will be able to predict where it will be in a few seconds' time. And this is thought to be not just a contingent limit, which we might overcome by some new technique, but a very fundamental thing that at the quantum level there is something called the psi function which develops, and the psi function may be deterministic, but when you try and pin it down to discovering what its consequences on the large scale are, you can't pin it down. There are these limits. And in consequence there are going to be limits to what we can discover on the large scale. In general, small scale indeterminacies will even out. I mean in the case of that table: the fundamental particles which make it up evince a certain amount of indeterminacy of this kind. But it's random, that is to say, yes, one particle may behave in a way that's not very probable, and so go off in that direction instead of that direction, but then another particle will also behave in a way that's not very probable, but go off in another direction, also in its least probable direction. But the two least probabilities cancel out, as it were, so that on average things will happen in a pretty deterministic way and, in particular, one example of that is radioactive decay. You can't – all you can say about when a radioactive atom of something which is an isotope, that is to say has more or less neutrons in its nucleus, will decay, that is to say, will give off one of these neutrons and move into being a different isotope – you can't predict exactly when this will happen because it's subject to the quantum limits, but what you can say is that it's probable that it will decay after this time and even more probable after that time, and so on. And so each isotope has a half-life, that is to say, such that there is a probability of half that it will decay within such and such a time, and for the most discussed case, carbon-14, there is a half-life, if I remember rightly, of 5,600 years. And so, for an individual

atom, you simply can't predict in any way accurately when it will decay. But if you got a large chunk of carbon-14, you can predict that roughly half of it will decay within 5,600 years. Right, now, in general these small scale indeterminacies level out on the large scale so we don't notice them; we can make [almost] deterministic predictions. But there obviously can be certain set-ups, we can invent machines which are such that their large scale behaviour is determined by what one atom does at one particular time. I'm always told that the machine which draws the numbers of winners for premium bonds has that character. Okay, so it is possible that the brain itself has this character. The reason for thinking that is that the brain works [like this] – large numbers of neurons which are connected to each other – but the connections between them depend on [whether] one neuron fires, that is to say, sends the – changes from [turns the charges] being positive to being negative, and the firing consists in transmitting a charge to the next electron [neuron], which transmits it to the next [neuron] electron. But these electrons [neurons] don't touch each other. There's this very small gap between them and the propagation of the charge consists in the first neuron sending a certain amount of chemical to the next neuron, and so on. And whether the charge is propagated or not is going to depend on just how much chemical is sent and exactly what is the distance between the neurons. And that maybe, seems quite likely that it will be in some cases within the quantum limit and therefore a matter of objective indeterminism. Well, this just may affect individual neurons, but the brain is a very complicated system and it may well be that just one or two neurons doing this is going to make a very great difference on the large scale. We just don't know at the moment. But that is possible and if that is the case, then it would be the case that, given that the brain is influenced by our thoughts and feelings – and we've just talked about that, and I think we have to believe that, because it would be contradictory to believe anything else – given that, then it may well be that our thoughts and feelings, what influence they make, depends on factors within the quantum limit. That is to say one neuron may cause another neuron to fire, but it may be within the quantum limit whether it does or not, but the person may determine that it goes this way rather than that way and that would be perfectly compatible with the laws of quantum theory that it would do so. So that's how it comes in. There is this suggestion that the brain is of course a system governed by the laws of physics, but the laws of physics in the case of a system in which neurons are organised in the kind of way they are in the brain may be such that very small indeterminacies produce very large results and therefore we could affect the brain without in any way upsetting the laws of physics. This is a highly speculative matter at the moment, but it is a possibility, yes, and therefore needed to be discussed. It's not that speculative, but it is speculative. Gödel.

[32:08]

Gödel's Theorem is a theorem invented [discovered] by Kurt Gödel in the 1930s. It's a theorem of pure mathematics and it's a theorem – I always slightly misstate it so I'm going to pause a moment and get it from the dictionary. Incompleteness theorem, yes. [pause] Yes. For any system of [simple] arithmetic you can formalise arithmetic: there are five axioms, which are known as Peano's axioms, such as "one is a number", "every number has a successor" and five [three] similar axioms. From that you can, it is alleged, get the whole of arithmetic and much else too, far beyond that. Now, what Gödel proved is that for any such system like that or more complicated than that, there will be a well-formed

formula, that is to say, something of the form, 752 plus 826 makes, equals that [1578]. Well formed in the sense that it's not just plus on its own, but a plus b equals c . [It expresses a proposition.] In any system of arithmetic of that kind or more complicated –there are a lot of more complicated axioms that [a more complicated] arithmetic has– there will be a formula, which is well-formed but which the system is not able to prove either to be true or to be false. Okay? There will always be some very complicated theorem which can't be proved true or proved false from those axioms. But, that is compatible with there being a more complicated set of axioms which will be able to prove *that* theorem, but which will itself throw up a theorem which cannot be proved. That is what Gödel is alleged to have proved. And there are very considerable disputes about whether that's true. Generally, if it's carefully enough stated it is true, mathematicians would agree [that it is true], and some people think that this is relevant to free will, because, the claim goes, if human behaviour is determined, then there should be some system of axioms which is such that it would be able to prove every action that we would do. But, the argument goes, what Gödel has shown is that there is some action – applying this tool to a physical system, as it were– there is some action such that it's not provable that we can do it or provable that we will do it or that we won't do it. And therefore it can be used to show that humans have free will. And John Lucas has advocated that at some length. But most people think that it doesn't have much application to free will and I am among those who think that it doesn't have much application to free will, for the reason that although there may be, as I say, any system, if there is an axiom system which governs our behaviour, then if we were – it would have to have as input not merely general laws of how the brain works, but all the information that is given to the brain so that [it would predict that] from that information given at a certain time, and the brain's way of working, then something would happen. Now if I, at a certain time, [have] all that information and the working of the brain leads to my doing this, there will indeed be something that *that* system can't predict whether I will do [it] or not; but all that shows is that system is incomplete and there will be another system that will give the right prediction with regard to that. Now, humans may not – you will get to a stage where the subject and any other human may be unable to work out what that thing is, unable to know what is the total system determining the behaviour. [But that total system may predict other events than human actions. It follows from Godel's theorem that there is something that that system is unable to predict, but it may not be any human action So in my view Godel's theorem has no consequences for the unpredictability of human behaviour. But] And only if he knows what the total system determining of the behaviour will he be able to know that there is something, some particular thing, that he can't do. But the whole thing assumes that we can, a subject can himself know what that system is and there's no reason to suppose that he can, so it's not worth time investigating, and I daresay I haven't explained it sufficiently adequately, but that's the sort of thing that's at stake.

[38:36]

To what extent were you taking account of work in psychology at the time that appears to cover some of the same ground, and what I have in mind is especially Malcolm Jeeves' work. He's writing books like Neuroscience, Psychology and Religion and Mind, Brain, Souls and Cells [Gods]: a Conversation on Faith, Psychology and Neuroscience that are coming out at about the same time and are addressing

questions of the relations between what is physical and what is mental and what is brain and what is mind?

Yes, well I do look at some of these books, but some of them, the better ones of them, do refer to the philosophical literature, and some don't. And psychologists are extremely naïve about philosophy. They, for example, they investigate. They say, well, at the same time as I'm forming a decision, this is happening in my brain, so it must be the same event as my brain and this shows that mental events are really physical events. But whether one event is the same event as another event depends on what are your criteria for two events being the same and ordinary language, as it were, doesn't have an answer to that. Is the event of Brutus killing Caesar the same event as the event of Brutus stabbing Caesar? Is my talking to you today the same event as my opening my mouth in your presence on the fourth of March? You want a criterion of when two events are the same and there are various criteria which philosophers have discussed. I happen to think that you need a criterion which is such that if you knew all the events that had happened under that criterion, that is to say, counting as separate events, events which according to that criterion were separate, then you would know everything that had happened. And if that's your criterion, then me forming a decision and something happening in my brain are two separate events, because you can know that one happens without knowing the other happening, and conversely. But most psychologists who look at the matter – it never even crosses their mind that you need a criterion here. I find the discussion by psychologists simply naïve at times. Neuroscientists are a bit better, and of course I do value the detail – I've talked about this – the detailed results of neuroscience, you know, that when people do this, this is happening and so on. I read their books for that, sure, and some of them are very easy to understand, descriptions of these things and the detailed results are important, but the moment they start to go beyond that into general views about we have free will or don't, they seem totally insensitive to an enormous amount of philosophical literature, an enormous amount of distinctions that you need to make, and that's why I don't pay too much attention to them at that stage.

Would you extend that to Donald MacKay, who we talked about briefly earlier, and his arguments about complementarity, so that when it comes to human beings he would argue that neurons doing what they do in the brain and a human feeling a certain thing are just two different accounts of the same thing, so that they're complementary accounts, two different levels or two different ways of describing the same thing. Does that idea also lack this critical thought about what –

Donald is a bit more sophisticated philosophically than most people I'm talking about. But of course he wrote at a time when quite a lot of this philosophical literature wasn't itself quite as sophisticated as it is now. And that being said, where I think he slipped up was with his argument for free will, was that well, maybe other people observing my brain could predict what I would do, but *I* can't predict what I would do, because the moment I learn their predictions my brain state changes and therefore the matter [the prediction] will have to be re-done again. And the moment it's re-done my brain state had changed, so again I can't know. That is to say, an outsider could predict this [what I will do], but the

insider couldn't predict this because his ~~attempt to do so~~ [becoming aware of the prediction] would change the brain state so that he wouldn't do it. And indeed, if I know what an outsider is predicting, then I can automatically do something else, so I shall never be in a situation where *I* shall know what I will do next. And from that he concluded that there can't be universal knowledge of what agents will do. And he thought, and here was a philosophical principle coming in, he thought that something could only be true if everybody could know that it was true. Now, that's a very big philosophical assumption, encouraged by verificationism, which was quite popular at that time. But I don't see any reason to believe that philosophical assumption. Now, at that point, one tended to reach stalemate in talking to Donald. He was very keen on that particular principle but he was aware it was a principle, sure, but there's been a lot of philosophy has sort of gone beyond that and not insisted on that, though philosophers have been all the time, then and even more now, trying to find out what are the criteria for a sentence being true or meaningful or having a meaning and so on, and I think one can say he was familiar with the literature as it then was, but it was a lot simpler than the literature now.

Did you – how would your view of substance dualism differ from his view of sort of ontology, if you like?

Oh, I don't think it would differ, no. I don't think the conclusion would differ. I don't really remember what he thought about this. We talked about free will quite a bit, but I don't think we talked about substance dualism very much, so I can't say. But I suspect he would have agreed with me.

That there is a body and a soul?

Yes. I speak from memory here.

[46:52]

Do you extend that view of a body and a soul to animals?

To such animals as are conscious, yes. I don't know how far down the animal chain of evolution consciousness goes. I think vertebrates are probably conscious, most vertebrates, but I see no reason to suppose that ants and snails are. So yes, insofar as they are conscious the question immediately arises: okay, if I mess around with this animal's brain and transplant half of it into another brain, which animal will be the same animal. And sure, in that sense animals have souls [which determine which animal is the same animal], yes.

And do you have a view on what happens to souls after the death of the body, have you...

Well, that's – no straight philosophical argument can show this. My arguments are that we at the moment consist of two parts, body and soul, in interaction with each other. And these are metaphysically separable parts. That is to say it is not essential to the nature of the soul that it's

connected to the body or conversely, indeed. So it becomes a contingent matter, what happens after death. Now, all that I have shown is that it is possible, logically possible, not contradiction in supposing, that the soul could continue to exist after death. I don't prove in this context that it does. My reason for believing that in fact it does are my reason for believing that the Christian doctrinal system is true and my reason for believing that goes via what Jesus taught, his resurrection being evidence that he was God-inspired to teach that, it being a central part of Jesus's teaching that there would be a resurrection and has been a central part of Christian teaching ever since. The Christian doctrine of the resurrection is of course a doctrine of the resurrection of the body, but the issue is what constitutes my body after death, and my answer – philosophical answer to that will be that if I survive death and have a body, what will make the body my body is its being connected to my soul. So I can say what the resurrection of the body would consist in, but it's also been – most Christians have held – that the soul exists in an intermediate state after death before being rejoined to the body in the general resurrection and that too, I believe, on the basis of it being part of Christian doctrine. I believe Christian doctrine on the basis that Jesus was the sort of person one would expect God to become incarnate as and that he rose from the dead was evidence that he became incarnate as that, and for that reason that his teaching was true, and for that reason that the Church which he founded, its teaching basically must be true.

Thank you.

[50:29]

Now when you first say that you took an interest in science, it was because you felt that it was a significant part of the modern world view. But that's not quite the same thing as saying that you thought science was significant, because it's almost like – I'm sure this isn't your view – but it could be, that way of looking at it is science is important to other people, so I and the Church ought to pay attention to it because it's part of the modern world view. Having paid attention to it, what became your view of it, as a kind of explanatory system?

Oh, I'm very much in favour of most scientific explanations. This is one of the great achievements of humanity, don't get me wrong. But – *and* understanding what a scientist regards as a probable explanation helps us because the outside world thinks, well, the scientists have got it right. The outside world is committed to what are the criteria of a good explanation used by science is that it must be such as if it's true to yield the data, if it's false you wouldn't expect the data and it must be simple. My view was, if you take those as the criteria of a probable explanation, then you can explain the success of science itself, that is to say, you can explain why there are laws of nature. Scientists say there are laws of nature, full stop. They don't attempt to explain why there are laws of nature. And scientists don't purport to explain why there's a physical universe of the kind we have; they say there is. So, using the same criteria you can go beyond science to God, that is my view. So, I appreciate science. Well, it's true, to start with, basically. But it helps to illuminate what are the criteria which can lead us beyond science to God, so I think it, as it were, and in drawing attention to the regularity of nature it is – seems to me – to supply very positive evidence for the existence of God. I mean of course people realised

that nature was regular before, but they hadn't quite realised just how regular and how precise it was and seeing that as we do, that seems to be positive evidence. But also science is important to pay attention to because, not just for its general methodology, but because there are certain places where it looks as if it might be conflicting with Christian doctrine. People did think it conflicted with Christian doctrine in suggesting that the world was very old, because they interpreted Genesis as saying that humans had been made, as it were, without animals being part of the making process. I think that's reading far too much into the Genesis story, which is just to be taken as a parable. God is responsible for the world, the plants, the animals and human beings and it's told as a narrative of what happened in successive days, but I mean that's just the simple way of explaining it to simple people. What it explains, well, what's claimed is its ultimate origin from God, so I don't really think there's any conflict there. But that needs to be said: it needs to be said that if there are places where it appears there's a conflict, is there anything real at stake? And I think in that case there isn't anything real at stake.

[54:45]

But there are places where it might be something real at stake and in particular, what we have just been talking about. If science were to show, which in my view it couldn't possibly show, that humans don't consist of two parts, then that would be rather crucial, because in that case when we die our bodies are burnt in the crematorium, there isn't anything to be resurrected. Whereas if I'm right, our bodies are cremated in the crematorium, but there's a soul which it's logically possible could go on existing and therefore there is something to be resurrected. And that, I think, is, that we consist of two parts is philosophically establishable, but still, it needs to be shown that whatever science may discover is irrelevant. But with regard to free will, although I think there are good arguments to show that we do have free will, it is logically possible that science could show we don't. Not by showing that everything was caused by our brain states, but by showing that our mental states interact with our brain states and our mental states, including unconscious states, are themselves caused, and that there are psycho-physical laws which determine every thought we have and so on. I don't think that will be shown. I don't think it could be shown. But it is logically possible it could and this is, I think, the most crucial area where there could be a big conflict between science and religion, and it's logically possible that science could win out. But I think the evidence is it won't.

[56:45]

And can you expand on your view expressed last time that scientists might not always be the best people to talk and write about the relations between science and religion?

Well, I think the psychologists, the point I've been making about them, is more general. Physicists are usually a bit more knowledgeable about philosophy than psychologists are. But the point – some – well, I think we probably talked about this before, but the multiverse situation is a case where physicists need to do a little more philosophical thinking. The world we know, physicists admit, is fine tuned for the production of – the universe is fine tuned for the production of human beings. That is to say, the initial state of the Big Bang – the 'Bang' was exactly the right size of 'Bang'. If it had been a

tiny bit bigger all matter would have flown apart, there wouldn't be any planets, wouldn't have been any human bodies. If it was a tiny bit smaller all matter would have collapsed on each other, so again, there wouldn't be any planets or human bodies. But it's actually the right size and the constants of the laws of nature, the value of G is the gravitational constant and the value of the other constants in the laws governing the other four forces have to be exactly what they are to very small parts in a million million. They do have to be very tightly fine-tuned. Everybody agrees on that now. What they conclude from it, however, is rather different. And one way scientists have suggested that in fact that doesn't show that anything very improbable has happened, is by postulating that there is a multiverse, that is to say, our universe is only one of a very large number of universes and these – there are different theories of how it is that there are very large numbers of universes, but the most common view is that there is and always has been a sort of field of force which fills all the space and its energy states go up and down, but sometimes, as it were, they throw off, they produce a Big Bang and the Big Bang produces a universe in different places in the field of force – the vacuum field as it's called – at different times. And these bangs are such that they themselves produce particles which are governed by yes, the four forces, but the four forces each of which has a different constant in it from the ones that the laws that govern our universe and the bangs are of different sizes with respect to different universes. So, the vacuum state is throwing up all the time universes which have different laws, they're governed by different constants and so on. So, it's not very surprising, argues the physicist, that one of these will have constants just the right size and the bang will be of just the right size to produce human beings, because it's like a lottery with a million, million, million draws. It's not very surprising that one [draw] should be itself [the draw of one's own ticket], which if it was the only one, would be very surprising. Well, they have, the evidence that there is a multiverse is pretty slim, I think at the moment, but it could develop. But what physicists seem to ignore is, okay, well, perhaps there is such a vacuum state and perhaps it does throw up all these, but then, there's a logically possible multiverse, there are an infinite number of logically possible universes which will not have the characteristic of throwing up somewhere or other a universe like ours, because our multiverse, if indeed we do belong to a multiverse, is governed by certain laws, laws that determine that the universes thrown up in different places will have the particular characteristics they do. These laws will include the laws of quantum theory and relativity, but they will be rather more specific than that in order to produce universes such as we have. So, given that, it is then, our multiverse, if that's what we belong to, has certain rather particular characteristics. *It* has constants with certain values and *it* has a certain sort of starting point and the question arises, therefore, why is our multiverse of this peculiar kind, because innumerable multiverses wouldn't be of this peculiar kind? So the question reappears, as it were. Now, scientists haven't quite grasped that point, or many physicists haven't quite grasped that point. So, there are ways in which philosophers can come along and try and bring in wider perspectives into a scientific investigation. But I say, I find that the most naïve scientists are those who are doing psychology and haven't read the philosophical literature, but physicists are on the whole better and quite a few physicists recognise the points that I have just been making, but some don't.

[1:03:25]

Since the time that you talked about earlier in the interview when you applied for an academic job at Hull rather than seek ordination, for various personal reasons, I wondered whether you've felt that call to train to be a priest since at any point in your life?

Just to correct: I mean when I went to Hull I was going to be ordained as an academic there, so it wasn't as it were –

Okay. Yes, yes, you wanted to do both, that's right, yes.

No. It was clearly better for my marriage at that state and for all the years that we lived together that I shouldn't be, and also it became clear to me that if I had got – a priest has to do quite a bit of pastoral work, obviously – and it became clear to me that I had a lot of academic work I needed to do, a lot of research I needed to do, a lot of books I needed to write, and that other people weren't going to write these books, and so this was clearly a fulltime occupation. So no, I haven't felt the call subsequently for that reason.

[1:04:55]

Could you tell me whether you've had any connections with William Lane Craig?

Yes, I know him. He's a good philosopher. Yes, we have interacted at times, sure. I mean I go to a lot of meetings in America and he certainly travels the world and I am sometimes, more often, quite often, at the same conference as he is, yes.

And is it possible to characterise the differences in your arguments? I mean he's very well known as someone who makes sort of probabilistic, logical arguments for the existence of God and so are you, and so as you have met, it would seem likely that this is one of the things you talk about, and if it is one of the things you talk about, what's the outcome of those conversations that wouldn't be already obvious from the public record?

Well, I think he would agree with my arguments, though he doesn't talk about them very much, but the argument he is immensely keen on, known as the Kalam argument, is one I don't think works. Now, the Kalam argument is so named because it was fashionable among the Arab philosophers of the eighth, ninth, tenth centuries and this argument says you can't go back to infinity in the series of events going backwards from the present existence of the world; you have to come to a beginning – I'll come to why in a moment – you have to come to a beginning. But, a beginning would be – itself need a cause. Events can't happen without causes. And why the world needs a cause and so on is because it's a world of change, so a principle began to emerge and indeed, a principle that Aquinas endorses, that everything in the process of change has a cause. And – sorry – everything, yeah, everything in the process of change has cause. And so if you can't go back to infinity and you've still got an event, a changing event, the only thing that could cause *it* would be an unchanging event. And so the changing

world needs an unchanging God to explain it. Now, why can't you go back to infinity? Well, Craig has two sorts of arguments for that. He does appeal to arguments that appeal to modern physics, but of course they weren't prominent among the Arabs and they, as he admits, are only probabilistic arguments to show that you have to postulate a beginning and they are rather dubious. He also concentrates on the philosophical arguments, which a lot of people have endorsed, that is to say that, going back to Aristotle, that you can't have an actual infinite. Aristotle said you can't have an actual infinite. You can have a potential infinite in the sense that if you have a rod you can go on cutting it up to smaller and smaller and smaller pieces ad inf., but there couldn't be, said Aristotle, a world in which there were an infinite number of things. It seems to me that Aristotle didn't give much reason for that and it just seems to me that Craig can't give much reason for that, though Craig does appeal to Cantor, that is to say, to the mathematics of transfinite arithmetic, which was invented in the nineteenth century by a German, Georg Cantor, and is regarded as the mathematics of infinity. And this mathematics has a theorem, or rather an axiom. You need, when you're dealing with infinities, as Cantor's transfinite arithmetic does, you clearly need an axiom which says when two infinite classes of things have the same number of members, what it is for two infinite numbers to be the same number. And what we say with regard to finite arithmetic is two classes of objects have the same number, there are the same number of objects in them, if the objects in one class can be put into one-one correspondence with the objects in another class. If there's a bag of balls here and a bag of balls here and I can take one out of there and one out of this bag and put them together, and I can do that with respect to all the balls in this class, I can find a pair for it in this bag, and when I've done that there aren't any balls left in this bag. That way I put them into one-one correspondence. So, Cantor naturally adopts as the axiom for infinite classes that the same applies: two infinite classes are of the same size if its members can be put into one-one correspondence with each other. And therefore it follows that the set of natural numbers, one, two, three, four and so on, has the same number of members as the set of even numbers, two, four, six, eight, etc, and generally, as it were. Well, the result of this is a paradox known as Hilbert's Hotel. Hilbert was a mathematician subsequent to Cantor. And Hilbert said well, suppose we have a hotel with an infinite number of rooms in it. Those rooms might of course be numbered one, two, three and so on. And suppose all the rooms are occupied, and then a guest turns up and wants a room. Well, he can always be found a room even though all the existing rooms can be occupied, because you just move the person in room number one to room number two, room in number two to room number three, and so on, and you can do that ad inf. because the class of numbers; one, two, three, etc, ad infinitum would be one could be put into one-one correspondence with the class beginning two, three, four, etc, so they have the same number of members. So every existing guest could be found a room and there would be a spare room, room one, in which the extra guest could be put. Right. So that's Hilbert's Hotel. Now Craig and many others have reasonably said, this is absurd, if all the rooms are occupied you can't find a room for somebody else. Therefore there must be something wrong with the possibility of an infinite number of things because if there could be an infinite number of things this paradoxical situation could arise. So here's a back-up for Aristotle's intuition that there can't be an actual infinite. Well, if there can't be an actual infinite, then it would seem to follow that in the series of events going back from the universe now, the universe last year, the universe the year before that

and so on, it's got to come to an end somewhere if it's not infinite. Okay, but every event in the course of change, and the first event in the universe is certainly an event in the course of change, needs a cause, so it must have an unchanging cause, and that is the Kalam argument. Then of course it needs to be filled out as to why the unchanging cause would be God and at that point what Craig does in the presentations he gives appeal to my sort of argument to show that personal cause is the simplest sort of cause. But I am not at all persuaded that there is anything in the Kalam argument, for two reasons. First, even if you do wish to deal in infinities, there's not the slightest reason for adopting Cantor's account of what it is ~~to~~ [for]sets, infinite sets to have the same number of members. You could adopt a quite different account. Could say that two infinite sequences have different numbers of members if the one is a subset of the other, and the set of numbers beginning two is the subset of the numbers beginning one, and therefore they have different numbers, so you could do it that way. There isn't any truth in this matter. You can postulate all sorts of infinities. But more substantially there's this wrong with the argument, the Kalam argument. It says – it considers going backwards in time. Now, between the beginning of our conversation and the present time, there have in fact been an infinite number of events. There's been the event - suppose we've been talking for an hour - there's been the event of us talking for the last half hour, for a quarter of an hour before that, for an eighth of an hour before that, and so on. So, there's clearly nothing wrong in supposing that you can have an infinite number of events which have succeeded each other. Craig would object they weren't ~~the~~ actual events, they're only possible events, but seeing as they've occurred, it seems to me they're quite clearly actual events. The only principle he could appeal to is you can't have a sequence of actual events of the same finite length which have lasted going backwards in time. That is to say you can't, he would need a principle of the form that there can't be a series of events going back in time, each of which has lasted an hour, or something like that. Well, I don't see why in the slightest reason you couldn't have that, but even if you couldn't have that, you can only have hours, you can only have events of measured length if you have, if the universe is behaving in a regular way, if there is a system of clocks at different times. But maybe if you go back far enough you come to a situation where the universe is chaotic and isn't behaving in a regular way. In that case your principle about – even if your principle is right that you can't have an infinite series of events going backwards in time, each of which has the [same] finite length, that doesn't prove that the universe had a beginning, because it may be that before that it was chaotic and therefore they [events] can't be measured. So it won't give you what Craig wants, because you have to bring in this 'of the same finite length' and then the principle doesn't give you what you want. So that's, I don't know if you want this complicated argument in the course of an autobiography, but there it is.

[1:17:49]

And through knowing him, are you able to comment on what you think are his motivations for going round the world giving the sorts of talks that he does?

Oh well, he is a dedicated Christian and he is keen that people should be softened up to arguments for the existence of God, and in particular for Christian truth. He is much more a Protestant Evangelical

sort of Christian than I am, but sure, I admire his perseverance and diligence. He, yes, he has a very firm belief in hell as a place of everlasting punishment which will be dished out to the bad immediately after death, whereas I have a much more moderate view of this matter than he does, and he's got into a lot of head-on debates about this with people, which seem to me to divert matters from more central matters, such as the existence of God. My own view, I don't know if we talked about this, is that not all people have formed their character for good or ill at death and therefore there is much scope after death for people to form their character, but if somebody really is determined to have nothing to do with the good, then of course heaven won't be for them because heaven is for – nobody would be happy in heaven if they didn't enjoy doing the good, above all worshipping God, but if somebody doesn't want to do that and is really determined not to do that, then of course they're not suited for heaven and God will not take them to heaven. So that's my view, but he seems to have a much more literal and a much more immediately after death view of the fires of hell.

Is his view literally of that, of the fires of hell?

It's certainly a place of everlasting punishment, yes, I don't know quite how literally he takes 'fires'.

[1:20:20]

And could you just go into your view a bit more of what happens to, I suppose what we might say, non-Christian souls after death, would that be fair?

Oh well, Christianity is certainly now, or ninety-five per cent of Christianity, is committed to the view that non-Christians can go to heaven. The Second Vatican Council said this explicitly, but I mean various important theologians down the years have allowed for this possibility. What I think and what I think Vatican Council was saying, but I don't think it said it very clearly, is that after death souls who, for good reason, had not accepted the Christian message during their life would be presented with this message. Nobody could go to heaven unless they plead the atoning sacrifice of Christ for their sins, and of course, Christians in accepting baptism accept the death of Christ as the atonement for their sins, but many people haven't heard of this in this life and many people having heard of this are not much impressed by it. But – therefore for good reason they reject the evangelists' call, but the Second Vatican Council said, and I agree with this, that they could be presented after death with this possibility and they could accept it there. So it's not a matter of non-Christians exactly; it's a matter of those who refuse the good. Those who see something as good and constantly, deliberately all the time want to have nothing to do with it. Well, I think God would always respect human decisions made seriously over a long time and if somebody doesn't want that, then God will allow them not to have it; he wouldn't impose goodness on them. Alright, so what is he to do with these people? Well, heaven I regard not so much as a reward for good people – a reward for good actions – but a home for good people. It's for people who are – who want to do the things that are the occupation of heaven: the worship of God and helping of God in his work. Well, the incorrigibly bad don't want to do that and they're incorrigible, they decide they don't want to do that. Now, if you, all the time in your life,

refuse to have anything to do with what is good, you lose your sense of the good. Because the good – if you really believe something is good, you have some inclination to do it, you may not then do it, because you yield to a rival inclination, but you can't have a concept of goodness and have no inclination to do it. And if throughout life somebody refuses to do the good, they lose their conception of good. I may be repeating myself in some of these things. Solzhenitsyn in his book *The Gulag Archipelago* has a chapter about the concentration camp guards and he says, some of them seemed to be very slightly sensitive to some of the suffering they were causing, and so on. But you sometimes saw that they somehow switched; they at one stage had some sympathy and then suddenly they were quite indifferent to any suffering they might be causing. Well, I think people can get themselves into that state through their own choice. What's God to do with them? Well, he could just let them be in that state, but clearly someone in that state isn't going to be happy because their happiness will consist in hurting people and God isn't going to let them hurt people forever. There might be a reason why he might let them do it [hurt other people] on earth, but not forever. So they're not going to be happy through their own choice, not going to be happy. I think he might allow them to eliminate themselves if they so chose, and that's not, as it were, a very traditional Christian view, but if he kept them alive inevitably they would not be happy and we can describe that as being in hell. Aquinas said that if anybody in hell were to repent, they would immediately be taken to heaven, but he thought they wouldn't repent. He didn't say why they wouldn't repent, and I think I've given a reason why they wouldn't repent. So I'm in line with him on that point, but in the end, *in the end* there is a final state of hell, not necessarily at the moment of death. And of course the Catholic tradition has maintained that, not necessarily at the moment of death, because it's opened this large view of purgatory where anyone with the slightest inclination to do good can go into purgatory and eventually anyone in purgatory will go to heaven. I think that's a little too precise, but – and the Orthodox tradition is not dogmatic about exactly what happens to who after, immediately after death – but clearly it's committed as the Catholic tradition, as all Christians are committed to ultimately, there is a heaven and a hell.

Thank you.

[1:26:46]

Could you take us on from where you think we've got to in your writing career to the present, so that we get, so that at the end of the session we've reached at least everything that you wanted to say. And then we'll see whether there's any time left for some follow-up questions.

Yeah. Well, as regards my writing, apart from *Mind, Brain and Free Will*, which we talked about, and apart from the popular book, *Was Jesus God?*, all my writing since *The Resurrection of God Incarnate*, which was the year after I retired, all my writing has been producing second editions of books whose first edition was before I was retired. I have produced second editions of *The Existence of God*, of *Faith and Reason*, of *Revelation* and there is a second edition of *The Coherence of Theism* going through the press at the moment. Now, by second editions I mean not just the former edition with a few minor corrections made and an appendix to them; I have rewritten these books from scratch. Of

course, quite a bit of the text will be the same, but quite a bit of the text isn't the same, and I've brought them up to date. Up to date in more than one respect. First, because when I started writing about these things there was very little writing in the analytic tradition of philosophy, that is to say, the tradition of philosophy as it has developed in the English speaking world since the 1950s, which wasn't at all concerned with God when it started, but philosophy of religion has gradually grown greatly as a part of that subject and when I first wrote these books, each of these books had very little other literature in the tradition. Now there has been vast amounts of literature in the tradition, vast amounts of detailed articles in journals and number of books on the same topics and so on. And they've discussed me and I need to produce a book which reacts to this literature which says what I think's good and what I think's bad, and so on. So that's one way in which it's been different. But also, analytical philosophy itself has progressed enormously. Yes, changed and I think progressed enormously. Various issues which were highly contentious or which were taken for granted back in the 1960s and seventies, things have changed very much since then and new technical terms have evolved. When I started writing philosophy, verificationism was very popular – a proposition was only meaningful if it could be verified – and nobody believes that now in general philosophy. And more subtle accounts of what it is for a proposition to be meaningful have popped up. And that's a whole philosophy generally, all sorts of things are different and I need to take account of these, to use some of these results which are good, or not to endorse some of them which I think are bad. So, these second editions have taken account of the literature on the subject, they've taken account of the literature in philosophy generally. And that means of course, in order to keep them at the same length, I've had to eliminate discussions of things that are now not controversial in any way. But also, I've changed my mind about certain things, or developed more sophisticated views about certain things. They're still the same books because they still work to the same general conclusion under, with the same chapter headings of the topics, the results of which work up to the general conclusion. But within each chapter there are many detailed arguments which I've changed a bit. I think the previous one didn't work or it had a fallacy or there's a better one, and replaced it. So, I mean these second editions are getting on for new books. That's an exaggeration, but some way. And I've done that and that I have thought useful. So that's the – and of course I should add, I've taken account of the latest science and so on where it's relevant in these cases. So that's what my writing has been – consisted of in the last fourteen years, yes.

[1:31:49]

Could you say something about the media work which you mentioned last time, which was in America and Canada and Australia? There's one thing which is very obvious is the sort of 'Closer to Truth' audio-visual series. But could you give us a sense of what you've done and why you've done it in that sort of –

Oh well, I've done it because I've been asked to do it and I've thought it a good thing, because these days, unlike when I started, knowledge is propagated on the web. What people read, what people learn about is – if they want to know the answer to questions the first place they look at is the screen. And there have been so many audio and visual interviews which I've given, which are just for somebody

putting on their website. Some of these websites are pretty prestigious, like the 'Closer to Truth', for which I have given a considerable number of interviews on different topics. Others of them have been sort of individuals' blogsites which they've set up and persuaded me to contribute to, but of course the latter takes time and is sometimes not quite as much worthwhile, therefore, as the former ones. So I've done a lot of that and a certain amount of interviews on television programmes in these countries. For example, last week or the week before there was an Arabic television company who was interviewing different people in Britain and I did quite a long interview for them. So I've done that because that's the way you communicate your ideas and as I said earlier, I think these are important ideas for people to know about and if invited I am pleased to do it, so long as I'm convinced that the people who are asking me will have a reasonable audience and won't misuse the interviews – interviews can be misused – but assuming I'm convinced of that, then I'm pleased to do it.

How do you...

They only involve presentation of things I've said elsewhere in my books, but of course people haven't read them, so there's another way of getting the message across.

How do you make the decision about the sort of serious intent of the person who's asking you, and a related question, on what sort of grounds have you turned things down?

Oh well, clearly some people are sort of setting up – there seems to be a bit of an industry developing of people who want to set up their own website which will be a centre for discussion of various topics, so they invite people like me to contribute to them, and when they get enough moderately eminent people to contribute to them, then they go to advertisers and they say, look, I have this website and a lot of good people are contributing to it and I get a large number of people looking at it, so would you like to put your adverts on my website and I will pay you for this. So they develop in this way. Now, alright, fair enough. But if I feel that somebody is just setting up their own website which may or may not be much of a success, I would hesitate to contribute to it, not because it's not worthwhile, but it's not nearly as worthwhile as doing certain other things. Misuse, well, I can't say I have – not certain if I have said no to anything on that grounds. I would want to [pause] no, I don't think I have, but it's something I would be on the lookout, if I thought that my arguments were being used in defence of a particular form of Christianity which I was not sympathetic to or something like that, then I would say no.

[1:36:34]

Thank you. And can you tell me something about an upcoming conference in Oxford, funded by the Templeton and some other philosophical societies called 'The Metaphysics of the Trinity'? In part because there's been some sort of controversy around it. Well, there have been other academics in other sort of fields in Oxford arguing about whether or whether not an Oxford college should host it.

Really? I wasn't aware of that. You are clearly more knowledgeable than I am. There is a conference on 'The Metaphysics of the Trinity' next week, or the following week, and I am contributing a paper to it, yes, that's right. Well, the Templeton Foundation is a very, very great thing: an enormous source of money which was not available before. There is no other foundation in the world which has a large supply of money which it is prepared to invest in purely theoretical enterprises. When it was set up by Sir John Templeton it was interested in the relations of religion and science, but it's widened its scope enormously so that any enterprise which tries to find out deep theoretical truths about the universe can apply to them for grants. And it gives money to ~~theological~~ [theoretical] physics of some sort, cosmology programmes, it gives money to foundational enterprises in mathematics, it's given a lot of money for schemes to investigate free will and so on, and it gives money for conferences, for research fellowships, for all sorts of things like that. I have been involved in many projects which have been funded by Templeton. In one case I was sort of the main, one of the main people who applied to them for it, but in most other cases, as it were, other organisations have applied for money and got it, and then they have set up conferences and invited me to contribute, and so on. They don't – the Trinity is a central Christian doctrine and although they don't give money on the whole for investigating particular Christian doctrines, they give money not to justify this doctrine, but to investigate and they would no doubt, I don't know what the views of some of the participants are, but clearly the conference mustn't just be a conference to propagate the Christian doctrine of Trinity. It must investigate what it means, whether it's true, whether it means anything, whether it could be true. And that seems to me a worthy subject of investigation by impartially minded people who are interested in eternal truth, because here is a view held by quite a significant number of the human race and we ought to look at whether it's just nonsense, and I think it's very worthy, suitable. I should say, Templeton has invested money in projects for investigating Islamic doctrines, Jewish doctrines, Buddhist doctrines. Christian doctrines should be treated similarly. And I wasn't aware there had been any objections to it.

A key thing was a sort of open letter from AC Grayling.

I see. And this was where?

I've forgotten where this appeared. I mean I saw it on the internet somewhere, but it could have been just reproduced from somewhere.

Well, Grayling is a well-known atheist propagandist, but as I say, I see every reason to suppose this [the doctrine of the Trinity] will be treated impartially. I of course shall be trying to make sense of it, but there may be other people who ~~aren't~~ [claim that it does not make sense.]

AC Grayling's in Oxford in philosophy?

No, he was – he taught in a London college, but then he set up his own college in London which was meant to be modelled on the Oxford model and he got large sums of money from somewhere. But this,

I think, it was meant as a private college and it was meant to have a lot of eminent people connected with it and so on, so he is the president, or whatever it's called, of this college, but he writes a lot of popular anti-religious – some of them on general philosophical topics – books and Channel 4 gave him a large – often used him as a commentator on political matters.

And have you had any connections with him?

I don't think I have actually. He's – he's not a distinguished philosopher in any way. He's a philosopher, but he is a well-known philosopher and a well-known person in the sort of, the group with Dawkins and Hitchens and so on.

Thank you.

[1:42:59]

We're getting towards the end of the interview now and it might be useful for the listener if you have any thoughts now about where your archive might end up, if you like, where you think sort of people ought to look for that if they're listening to this in a hundred years' time. I mean have you had thoughts about where your books and your papers and things like that will go?

Where they'll be? Well, I mean they're books; they will all no doubt be on library shelves and on people's shelves. But these days of course so much is on the net and various versions of my books are on the net. The books published in recent years, there's always been an e-book form of them. And we are led to believe that if anything is once on the net, it will always stay on the net. I don't know if that's true, but if it is true that's what'll happen. They will be around. Who knows whether they will be read much, but Plato and Aristotle are still around and some philosophers are still around. I'd like to think that some of my books will be still around, that's where it'll happen, and I think they'll be around very much more than some of the writings of Plato and Aristotle, which are of course some of them lost. They'll be on the net and in libraries and I don't see why they should disappear. Whether anyone should [will] read them or not, well, that depends what's fashionable.

And are you planning an archive of sort of correspondence or drafts or that sort of an archive. Is that something you've thought of?

Well, there are a lot of half-written papers and versions of lectures I haven't given, I don't think they're of that importance. Most of my stuff – I mean I haven't got a large book which is half-finished or anything like that, although of course there may be one. There are various things in there [my filing cabinet] and I've said to my elder daughter, who's my main executor that well, keep them for a few years in case anyone wants them, but after that, throw them away.

[1:45:34]

And what are your sort of near future plans? What are you hoping to achieve next?

There is – yeah, I’ll answer that in a minute – there is one thing I was expecting you to ask about today and you haven’t asked about, and that is my change from the Church of England to the Orthodox Church, I don’t think we’ve talked about that. But just a few words since you seem to have asked about everything else. I belonged to the Church of England until I was sixty in around 1995 and I then joined the Orthodox Church. I did this because when I was young it seemed to me you had to believe certain things to belong to the Church of England, or at least the clergy did, and it became clear to me that over the course of years the Church has ceased to insist on any serious credal ~~or~~ commitment by any of its priests – the Church of England that is. And in particular there are quite a number of priests who do not believe in the Incarnation in the traditional sense. The Incarnation is the doctrine that God became human in Jesus Christ. And there is quite a view, not the majority view of course, but a significant minority of clergy in the Church of England who think that what happened in the Incarnation is that a man, Jesus, became particularly open to the divine. So it was, instead of God became man, man became God. Now, that seems to me so contrary to traditional Christianity that it’s the sort of thing that bishops of the Church ought to stop. If somebody is a priest ~~and~~ he accepts the obligation to teach traditional Christian doctrine, and if he doesn’t, then he should be stopped. And the Church of England have lost any sense that it had any doctrinal control over what it teaches. Of course, most people don’t become priests unless they believe the traditional doctrine. I wouldn’t deny that. But the Church has a responsibility as the guardian of revelation to pass on and teach certain things just because the Church has taught them in the past, just because they go back to Christ. And it seemed to me the Church of England had lost that sense, so I felt I had to leave, because I felt it had lost its identity really. But I do believe that to be a part of the Church you have to – you can’t set up as a Christian body, you have to derive your authority back to the past, and that means a succession of bishops and so on back to the first Apostles. So, and it had seemed to me that the Church of England just about maintained that, but it was losing its doctrinal succession. So I had to move and since I do not believe in papal infallibility I couldn’t become a Catholic, but the doctrines of the Orthodox Church were things I more or less already believed, so that wasn’t a great change in that sense, so I joined the Orthodox Church and I have been pleased to belong there ever since.

[1:49:20]

Have you noticed any difference in the congregations of the, presumably the Anglican church that you were at at Oxford for the first ten years and the Orthodox church after that, in the extent to which the congregations are interested in belief that there’s a God as opposed to belief in, the distinction you make? In other words, the extent to which the congregations in the two places are interested in yours and other arguments about logical reasons for belief, rather than just belief or faith?

The Orthodox Church is a complicated place and there’s not time to go into all the details of that, but when it sets up in non-Orthodox countries – that is the Orthodox countries are the ones [in which] the national Church has always been the Orthodox Church, like Greece – when it sets up in non-Orthodox countries it’s primarily set up to cater for immigrants from home countries who have come to live.

Greeks who have come to live here, or Russians who have come to live here. But it does receive converts from the natives, like myself, and the church in Oxford is a bit different from the churches you would get in other cities, because there are rather more English converts and they are more sophisticated English converts and the immigrants in Oxford are pretty sophisticated immigrants compared with ones in most other places. So the congregation in the church that I attend would probably be a bit more interested in these matters than in other churches. But there is the difference that, whether they depend on arguments or not, the congregation, and of course the church leaders, and that's why I joined, are very committed to traditional Christianity itself as the foundation of what they are doing and there's no equivocation about that, and that is why I joined. The belief in the importance of arguments: I think the Orthodox Church hasn't concentrated much on that in the past 200 years, but it's there in its ancestry and I think it will return. However, there was something else you were asking me about.

[1:52:30]

You were going to finish, I think, with your current and near future work.

Oh, I see. Well, at the moment, I mean there is this book on – the second edition of *The Coherence of Theism* is going through the press. What I've been doing since it started its journey through the press, writing a number of miscellan[eous papers] – I get asked, a lot of philosophers do all the time, write papers for volumes on particular topics, and I've been writing papers for volumes on particular topics. Many of them have to do with mind and body, actually, and I've had a few further thoughts on that and there will certainly be more articles in journals or collections about that, and I'm working on one of them at the moment. There are ones on other topics which I've finished and are going through the press, one on the meaning of life, one on heaven. I'm committed to writing one on forgiveness for another volume. Miscellaneous articles on philosophy of religion topics, I suppose, and philosophy topics generally. Some of these mind and body ones are not particularly – [do not] have a religious connection. So I haven't any immediate plans for another book, but despite being eighty-one years old, it's not impossible that I shall consider another book, but we'll see how it develops.

[end of track 5 – end of recording]