

Talk-back with Radio Priest

A series of calls made by David Quinn, Dan Rowden, and Kevin Solway to Father John McEwin, host of a Sunday night religious program on 4BC, from January to May, 1995.

- Contents -

Introduction	Overpopulation
New Year's Resolution	Soren Kierkegaard
Blasphemy	Buddhism/Christianity
Faith I	Destroying Jesus
Faith II	Miracles & Cults
The Pope	Mother's Day
Atheism	Teaching Christianity
Faith III	Teaching Christianity II
The Meaning of God	Women in Christianity
Footprints	

Introduction

For three hours every Sunday Night, Father John McEwin, a Catholic priest, hosted a talkback program which made the pretense of concentrating upon "religious" issues. It was advertized as an "open forum" in which people could ring up and discuss concerns about religious and social issues with Father John. Without exception, each show was utterly pitiful and an embarrassment to listen to.

Judging by his callers, the overwhelming majority of his listeners were the very elderly and/or the very weak, who used the show simply to indulge in the pleasures of self-pity and indignation, and to pat each other on the back for being so incredibly spiritual. Never did anyone ring up and discuss the nature of Reality, or the question of how one arrives at perfection, or the future of humanity. The subject of God, for example, was rarely broached, and even then it was only used to enhance the back-patting. Caller after caller would whinge about how their son or daughter wouldn't talk to them anymore, or about how upset they were over their father dying fifteen years before, or about how they had overcome cancer, or about how they had been visited by the Virgin Mary. In short, it was the most brainless drivel imaginable.

To be sure, the odd fundamentalist would ring in, quote scripture, and pass damning judgment upon the luke-warm Catholics; and the odd sceptic would pose some mild question about the sexuality of priests - but other than that, it was entirely insipid.

Given all this, it may be asked why Dan, Kevin, and myself would bother to make any calls at all to this program. As far as I was concerned, there were three reasons. One, entertainment. Two, to practice the art of teaching about God. And three, there was the faint hope a young person may be listening to the show.

This last reason was obviously the most important one. I made all of my calls on the assumption that there was a young, intelligent, thoughtful person out there, a rare youth with a conscience, whose mind was desperately craving a few truthful words, and who was listening to a religious program in the valiant hope of finding some. It need only take one judicious phrase to plant the philosophic seed in good soil. Such a phrase, if heard at just the right moment, could mean the difference between a young person becoming a great spiritual hero, a dragon slayer who ruthlessly wages war against ignorance and delusion . . . and a non-entity with a mortgage, three kids, and a string of rosary beads.

David Quinn, December, 1995

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CALL ONE - David Quinn

- New Years Resolution -

1st January

New Year's Day and everyone was ringing up and making a new wish for the year. These ranged from world peace to making more money to helping the homeless to hoping their daughter would one day ring them. I made a wish which was truly worthwhile . . .

D.Q

Father John: . . . the beginning on the new year, 1995. 131332 is our

telephone number. It's great to be with you here tonight. Hello David.

David: Yes, hello. I'd like to make a wish for the next year.

Father John: Great!

David: And that is, I want the entire Christian mentality thoroughly eliminated from the face of the earth.

Father John: Good idea, David! Now what's that going to accomplish?

David: Well, it will give more chance for there to be wisdom in this world. All Christianity does is foster mediocrity. It does everything it can to obstruct the individual striving for wisdom. Everything about it is totally the opposite of Truth, and is the opposite of Jesus's teachings. So, for example, the woman before who rang up about how Jesus came to the world and advocated a style of living, or a teaching we should follow . . . when I look at Christianity I see that it is the complete opposite of what he taught and how he lived. For example, Jesus spoke about giving up everything we hold dear for the sake of the Truth, but Christians preach the complete opposite - they preach the acquisition of material and emotional possessions, attachments to beliefs, to doctrines, to priests. They're the rich people Jesus spoke about . . . yeah . .

Father John: You got that off your chest now?

David: I'm dead serious. I think that Christianity is thoroughly evil, and not only Christianity but all religions.

Father John: Okay . . . well . . . *all* religions? Not just Christianity?

David: Yes.

Father John: Islam, Buddhism - we wipe the whole lot out?

David: Yes.

Father John: So what do we believe in, David?

David: The Truth.

Father John: Right, good, that's very nice. What is the Truth?

David: The Truth is the ultimate reality of Nature. So, a life of Truth consists of opening your mind up to the ultimate reality of Nature, and to live in a direct relationship to it.

Father John: So what becomes the benchmark for Truth?

David: It is one's individual understanding of the Truth.

Father John: Alright, so, all of a sudden, you can have an idea of Truth, and I can have an idea of Truth, and your idea of Truth can be 180 degrees different to mine--

David: Okay, but I'm talking about a wise person's understanding of Truth, as opposed to an ignorant person's understanding of Truth.

Father John: Isn't that very, very subjective and therefore very, very dangerous?

David: Well, Christianity is very, very subjective and very, very dangerous. Christianity talks about having absolute morals, but ultimately it is just as subjective whether you choose to have these morals--

Father John: David? Excuse me, David?

David: Yes?

Father John: We have to go to the news now, but I would very much like to continue this after the news. You happy with that?

David: Okay then.

Father John: Alright, back after the news. 131332 is our telephone number and we'll be back to take some more of all your calls and comments.

[News Break]

Father John: . . . Before the news we were talking to David about . . . well, David, you tell us what we've been talking about.

David: Well, the end-point of the last discussion was whether what I was advocating was totally subjective and--

Father John: Just to set the scene for those who may have just joined us - you were suggesting that a good idea would be to get rid of Christianity, and, not only get rid of Christianity, but also to get rid of all the major religions, or indeed *all* religions. This, I think, was what you said, yes?

David: Absolutely.

Father John: Okay. And I suggested that . . . well, you then said . . . or I asked you, "What should we believe in?", and you said "Truth", and I asked "What is Truth?", and you said, "It's whatever anybody believes in", and I made the point that what you believe in could be diametrically opposed to what I believe in, therefore who's right and who's wrong? And then we went to the news.

David: Yes, but I didn't make the point that Truth is whatever you believe in.

Father John: Ah, okay - so what is Truth?

David: It is a *definite* understanding of Ultimate Reality.

Father John: Truth is what *you* believe in.

David: No, it is what the *wise person* sees to be the Ultimate Reality.

Father John: So who dictates who is wise and who is not?

David: The wise person decides that for himself.

Father John: So what if you're wise and I think I'm wise?

David: Well, it's only up to the wise person to realize that for himself.

Father John: We both can't be wise.

David: Yes, but a wise person is wise and an ignorant person is ignorant.

Father John: So, you're wise and I'm ignorant.

David: Yes, absolutely.

Father John: Okay. I can live with that.

David: But going back to this idea of subjectivity: even though Christianity purports to hold absolute values, those "absolute values" are themselves subjective. They are created by our minds; we choose to adopt them - or Christians do - so it's 100% subjective. If we go back to earlier in the piece, when you were talking to somebody else about faith and knowledge, you were saying that faith is something separate from knowledge - it is apart from knowledge. So I say to you that this makes your faith 100% subjective and therefore arbitrary.

Father John: No . . . I'm saying that we seek faith through understanding, but

we will never understand completely.

David: Well, I disagree. I say that the Ultimate Truth is there to be understood, and this idea that you were just speaking of, that we can't understand the Truth completely, is the very mentality which I am against.

Father John: Well, I'm not ramming it down your throat. I mean, as you say, we choose, and you're very free to choose whatever you choose. I can handle that. I mean, you've chosen tonight to tell me that you're wise and I'm ignorant. Well, I'm not blown up about that. I can handle that.

David: I think that every caller that's been on this program . . . except for the first fellow who rang - was it Len?

Father John: Hmm, hmm.

David: He was the only one who had a slight spark in him, and that--

Father John: No, he was the only fellow who agreed with you.

David: Well, I agree with him in the sense that he values logic and reason. Anyone who places value on--

Father John: So you don't think any of the Bishops who were on tonight value logic and reason?

David: No, not in the slightest degree.

Father John: Okay . . . alright . . . well, you feel you had your say?

David: Yes. It's not for your benefit. It's just for young people who might be listening.

Father John: For sure!

David: I want them to value reason and Truth, and not submit to a belief-system.

Father John: Thank you very much, David.

David: Okay then.

Father John: Happy New Year.

David: Bye-bye.

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CALL TWO - Dan Rowden

- Blasphemy -

8th January

Here we see McEwin's powers of reason in full flight. They soared off into the heavens and beyond, leaving Danny spinning in awe. Danny, you see, made the crucial mistake of wanting to speak about the Truth, but, as McEwin made marvellously clear, this is something which only hinders the freedom of the soul.

D.Q

Father John: Alright, back to your calls and comments here on 4BC. Lovely to be with you. Hello, Danny.

Dan: G'day, John. How ya doing?

Father John: Very well, thank you.

Dan: Yeah, mate, I was hoping to broach the subject of blasphemy with you.

Father John: Right.

Dan: I guess it's clear enough that Christians are want to charge others with the sin of blasphemy, but in my experience it is precisely they who are the worst offenders in the matter. Almost every time Christians open their mouths to actually speak about God, what issues forth is just utter blasphemy. I guess you're probably wondering what I mean by "blasphemy".

Father John: Well, I think me and many listeners, Danny.

Dan: Well, anything that is said about God which is false or inaccurate is blasphemous. In other words, anything which misrepresents the Divine Nature; that is to say, any statement which finitizes God. Whenever Christians speak about God, they finitize that which is, by definition, *infinite*. I mean, that to me is just sheer blasphemy.

Father John: Could you give us a practical example, Danny?

Dan: Okay, when Christians claim one notion or action to be the will of God, but not another, for instance; or when they speak of God as having some characteristics and not others.

Father John: Yes, but could you just give me an example, Danny? Like, can you just role play, for us, an example? Just say a phrase which you would consider blasphemous - we know that you don't mean it.

Dan: Okay. "God is love."

Father John: . . . alright . . .

Dan: That's a reasonably common one.

Father John: . . . okay . . . I understand what you're saying.

Dan: But it's not just that. The fundamentalists are particularly at fault in this matter, because they have a tendency to try and tell you what is and isn't the will of God. But if God is infinite - and God most certainly *is* infinite, by definition - then you cannot say that. You cannot say that one thing is the will of God and not another. It's just absolute blasphemy. And there's--

Father John: Danny?

Dan: Yeah?

Father John: Can I just respond?

Dan: Yeah.

Father John: There would be a lot of people listening who would say, "Well, what's wrong with saying that God is love?" What you're talking about - correct me if I'm wrong, but I think I'm on the right track - you're talking about a philosophical stance here: that God is everything, and even by saying "God is everything", I'm limiting God to the concept of "everything" - and God is more than that. So what Danny is saying is that you can't say that God is love, because God is more than love; and you can't say that God is Truth, because God is Truth alright, but He's more than Truth; and you can't say that God is good, because, yes, He's good, but He's bigger than good - whatever goodness is. Is this what you're saying, Danny?

Dan: . . . um . . . well . . . yeah . . . I suppose, the gist is right, but--

Father John: But you can't say that it's necessarily blasphemy. It's merely the inadequacies of the human language. It's not a blasphemous statement.

Dan: No, I don't agree, because every time we make those statements about God, we *consciously* finitize God. As far as I'm concerned, any statement which pertains to God directly, and which isn't a variation of "God is infinite", is blasphemous, because it misrepresents the Divine Nature. It's a sort of human egotism, a willfulness--

Father John: Well, Danny, you make a statement which doesn't misrepresent the Divine Nature. I think that's humanly impossible. That's the whole point - that we are finite and God is infinite. So how can we possibly comprehend, let alone articulate, the fullness of the Mystery?

Dan: You say, "God is infinite". It's as simple as that. End of story.

Father John: Well, that's a blasphemous statement, under your definition.

Dan: No, it's not.

Father John: Because you can't say that God is infinite, because God is bigger than being infinite.

Dan: . . . Well, no . . . You see, you have a finite concept of the infinite.

Father John: No, I don't. No, I don't.

Dan: Yes, you do! Yes, you do!

Father John: Alright.

Dan: "Infinite" means having no boundaries.

Father John: We'll agree to disagree on this one. I wasn't too bad a philosophy student at the old seminary. It's one thing I knew a little a bit about.

Dan: Well, academic philosophy is an absolute joke, in my view - whether it is a seminary that performs it, or a university.

Father John: Alright, Danny, we'll leave it there, but we understand what you're saying.

Dan: Okay then. Bye.

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CALL THREE - David Quinn

- Faith I -

15th January

The word "faith" was used many times each week on this program, but one never quite knew what McEwin or his callers actually meant by it. (I am speaking merely poetically here; it was blindingly obvious what they meant by it.) As a rule, they continually shifted their ground in order to make the word as nebulous as possible, and the reason they did this, of course, was to make the word "God" as nebulous as possible. This is typical of Christianity, a religion whose one defining characteristic is a vicious hatred of reality.

D.Q

Father John: Okay, let's take our next caller. Hello, David.

David: Hello. I'd like to talk about something a bit more spiritual, and that is the question of faith. I've been listening to your program now for several weeks, and I don't have any clear idea of what you mean by faith. So I wonder if you could give me a brief definition, or just some sort of idea, of what you mean by faith.

Father John: What's the comment you'd like to make, David?

David: Well, again, I'd like to discuss faith, and I can't discuss it unless I know what *you* mean by faith.

Father John: No, but you can certainly make a comment about it, if you like to share it with us.

David: Okay. I have real difficulty with this term "faith", because--

Father John: I've worked that much out. So why do you ask me about my stance on it?

David: Well, because you're a--

Father John: Because you want to tell me your difficulties. So that's what I say: you make your comment and that will be good.

David: Alright. The difficulty I have with faith is that, on the one hand, you have hundreds of millions of Christians who believe in a God, and they believe in this through faith, and on the other hand, you have, say, hundreds of millions of Buddhists who don't believe in a God - it's a totally atheistic religion - and they use that as faith. They believe in no God, and that's their faith. So you have these two opposing belief-systems and they're both underpinned by faith. So there's the rub.

Father John: . . . yeah . . . I don't see any incongruency or inconsistency whatsoever.

David: Well, okay, we're talking about--

Father John: It's not the same faith, is it?

David: Not at all. So one of them, at least, must be false.

Father John: What do *you* believe in, David?

David: I believe in Truth.

Father John: That's right, we had that, yeah. So do you have a faith in Truth?

David: A faith in Truth. That's right.

Father John: There you go. You use the same word too. So there's the three of us - you, me, and the Buddhists use the same word. Faith.

David: Yes, but I have a different method to you and the Buddhists. I mean--

Father John: That's okay, too.

David: Yes, but my point is that there cannot be both a God and not a God at the same time. It's just not possible. So we have all these millions of people who are following their respective faiths, and, at the very least, one of them must be totally false. They're following a false faith. You see? Because they can't both be right.

Father John: . . . Well . . . I think you might be limiting God there.

David: God cannot exist and not exist in reality. You can't have both, or you're making a total mockery of your own reason.

Father John: I'm sorry? . . . We believe God exists.

David: Okay, the Buddhists believe that He doesn't exist.

Father John: They don't use the terminology of "God", but they still have a belief in the transcendent, which is exactly what our's is.

David: No, they don't. They reject all concepts of God.

Father John: Well, okay then, we have a different faith. What else is new? We've had it for thousands of years.

David: Alright, I'm trying to cast suspicion of this idea of faith. It has no value.

Father John: People have been trying to do that for *eons*!

David: Okay, but I brought up a very concrete case where there are two faiths, they're both exactly the same in that they're using faith--

Father John: Well, we can find two hundred faiths!

David: Yes, that's my point. Faith is useless.

Father John: It might be useless to you, David.

David: Yes, because I value Truth.

Father John: Okay. I respect that.

David: I value Truth, and I see faiths pointing out in all different directions, and, at the very least, all but one must be wrong.

Father John: Okay then.

David: Okay, so--

Father John: Thanks, David.

David: Is that all there's going to be?

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CALL FOUR - Dan Rowden

- Faith II -

15th January

With this call, Danny attempted to pick up where I left off, but he was faced with an almost impossible task - that of trying to talk sense to a man who loves nonsense. This was made even more difficult by McEwin's change of tactics, to play the man instead of the ball. Deciding to ignore rational discussion completely, he instead tried to make it as personal as he could get.

D.Q

Father John: . . . if you're just listening to the radio lying in bed, half your luck, I hope you nod off to sleep shortly and rip into another working week on Monday morning. Hello, Danny.

Dan: G'day John. How ya doing?

Father John: I'm very well, thank you.

Dan: Mate, I caught your conversation with David a few calls back in regards to faith. Now I must admit that I'm kind of ambivalent over the nature of this thing called faith as well. I think the point that David was trying to make, in part, was that faith provides no rational basis for choosing one religion over another.

Father John: I think that's true.

Dan: Can I put a hypothetical situation to you? Imagine for a moment that I've just walked out of a jungle somewhere in the middle of South America and I've got absolutely no knowledge of any religion whatsoever, but I'm nevertheless an intelligent human being. What reasons could you give me for choosing Christianity over any other faith?

[long pause]

Father John: . . . well, what's the hypothetical? . . . Am I meant to be dragged into a debate here where you have one faith and I have another faith

and you belt me and I belt you and so it goes on. I'd rather, if people want to make a comment, go for your life. That's what the forum is for. I don't really see my role as being dragged into a no-win situation of endless debate.

Dan: Okay--

Father John: So, Danny, by all means make your point, make your comment, you're very welcome, mate. What is it?

Dan: It's simply that faith, as I said a minute ago, really does provide no rational basis for choosing one religion over another. For that reason, it seems to me that religious persuasion is simple a matter of meaningless things, like hereditary, etcetera.

Father John: Okay, just moving on. Can I ask, are you with David there? Like, you're both at West End. I presume so--

Dan: Yes.

Father John: Are you in the same room together?

Dan: Yes.

Father John: There you go. How was that for a pretty simple deduction! Have you guys had a bad experience with the Church or something like that? I don't understand where we're going to with this one, you know? Fair enough, you fellows are a bit down on the faith side, and I think David's New Year's resolution, two weeks ago, was to wipe out all Christianity, and so it goes on. That's nice, but there are millions of people, in fact, there are *billions* of people throughout the world who hold on to their faith. Now what is the bad experience that you guys have had, or what is the cause you are pushing here? Where are we coming from, I suppose, Danny?

Dan: Well, I suppose the only bad experience we could say that we've had is not necessarily with Christianity specifically, but with the deluded nature of the human mind generally. And what we're pushing is--

Father John: In *your* opinion, the deluded nature of the human mind.

Dan: No, it's a matter of simple logic.

Father John: In your opinion. It's your logic.

Dan: Well, no, it's not really a matter of opinion, because it's just simple inescapable logic that the vast majority of human beings are--

Father John: Including our listeners here?

Dan: Well--

Father John: Including our listeners? I just want to let them know that you're making a comment about *them*. Is that what you're saying now?

Dan: Well, yes. Absolutely.

Father John: So any of our listeners are free to ring up and respond to this, right?

Dan: Of course.

Father John: The comment you're about to make is about the vast majority of 4BC listeners on a Sunday night.

Dan: The vast majority of people on the *planet* entirely are, by definition, deluded in terms of the important issues. And it's just a logical fact. To me, it constitutes a form of contempt for the human mind not to acknowledge that fact. I'm not trying to condemn, I'm trying to *affirm* principles like truth and knowledge.

Father John: Well, do you want to just tell our listeners how they are deluded.

Dan: Well, they have--

Father John: I mean, you've just finished telling us all that we're deluded. So, forget the rest of the human race, just talk to us 4BC listeners who are listening to you right now - how are we deluded, Danny?

Dan: Well, you have *faith*. That's how I know that you're deluded. It's the distinction between faith and knowledge. All beliefs--

Father John: There's not a whole lot of depth to this argument here.

Dan: All beliefs are, by definition, something other than truth and knowledge. That's why they're known as beliefs.

Father John: Well, Danny, I'll leave it with you. You can have another opportunity to get your case a little bit water-tight because that one wouldn't last three seconds in court.

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CALL FIVE - Kevin Solway

- The Pope -

22nd January

The Pope had been visiting Australia during the week to beatify Mary McKillop and the subsequent show on Sunday night was filled with proclamations of love and adoration for the man. Callers were tripping over themselves to say what a great and holy man he was. Kevin thought otherwise and said so.

D.Q

Father John: Hello, Kevin.

Kevin: Good evening.

Father John: Welcome to the program.

Kevin: Yes, I'd like to a comment about some of the things the Pope has being saying about Buddhism recently.

Father John: Go for your life.

Kevin: The first thing I'd like to say is that I'm not a Buddhist myself, but I do know a lot about Buddhism, and it's clear to me, after what I've heard the Pope say, that I know a lot more about Buddhism than he does. So I don't think the Pope has got any right whatsoever . . . he's totally unqualified to stand in judgment on other religions about which he knows nothing at all. For example, he says that all religions should unite, but he also says that Buddhism is *atheistic*. Now, for someone who holds God as the central tenet of his whole life, his whole belief, and the centre of his whole existence, for him to say that somebody else is atheistic is probably the most damning thing he could have thought of to say.

Father John: Hmm. Have you got the direct quote there, Kevin?

Kevin: No, but I've read his latest book, and "atheistic" is the word that he used. "Buddhism is atheistic", he said. I couldn't think of a worse thing he could have done. You know, Jesus said himself, "Anyone who is not with me

is against me." This obviously is exactly the same philosophy as the Pope. He's basically saying that Buddhists are totally on the wrong track. He also says that Buddhism is "negative", and that it's "indifferent to the world". Now anyone who has studied Buddhism for more than about five minutes knows that that's not the case. The whole basis of Buddhism is compassion.

Father John: What he says is that "to indulge in a negative attitude toward the world is fundamentally contrary to the development of both man and the world, which the Creator has given and entrusted to man as his task." So he's not saying Buddhism as such.

Kevin: Well, he did say that Buddhism is negative in his opinion, and he thinks that the goal of Buddhism is a bad thing - the ultimate goal of Buddhism, which is enlightenment. You know, he says that he respects other religions "in so far as they are true". I mean, I find this quite funny. I don't know who he's trying to kid! I could say the same thing about Christianity. I respect Christianity *in so far as it is true* - the fact that I don't think it's true to the slightest degree is neither here nor there. I think he's just being a salesman. I can't take him seriously at all. He's got no right to do what he's doing.

Father John: He's certainly tried to . . . calm the waters, for want of a better analogy. He's in Sri Lanka at the moment, and he does seem to have responded to the offence that many people in the Buddhist faith have taken.

Kevin: And so they should.

Father John: The Sri Lankan Catholics Bishops Conference have even issued a statement, but I'd have to say that it wasn't an apology. It was more an explanation as such.

Kevin: I think what he's trying to do is that he wants all the religions to unite, but he's stated that he thinks his religion is the best one, so obviously he wants all the religions to unite *under him*. This is exactly the same as all the crazy gurus that have ever been in the world. I don't know why people can't see through it.

Father John: A crazy guru, eh?

Kevin: Well, I'm thinking of the people like the Hare Krishna guru. He's probably one of the most corrupt people I can think of.

Father John: So you're going to tell us that Pope John Paul the Second is a crazy guru, Kevin?

Kevin: Well, he is! I've got no doubt about it. No honest person would behave in the way that he does.

Father John: Well, there's plenty of other Australians who've got a bit of a doubt about it.

Kevin: Yeah.

Father John: Amazing, isn't it?

Kevin: Well, I'm amazed that more Catholics don't do something about it. I hear all the time, listening to your program, people complaining about what the Pope's doing: like he doesn't allow women to be priests. Well, why don't they just form their own religion? I mean, it seems like the obvious thing to do. If you don't agree with what the Pope is doing, then follow your conscience--

Father John: But our religion doesn't follow the Pope.

Kevin: But you do.

Father John: The Pope is the leader.

Kevin: It's not a democracy.

Father John: Well, does Paul Keating make every rule for Australia?

Kevin: Well, if he doesn't do what we like, we boot him out. But you can't do that with your Pope, can you?

Father John: Well . . . the thing about our faith is that we've got two thousand years of tradition about us. And, presumably, we believe and we pray and we hope and we trust that the Pope, and his advisors, and indeed all the way down to poor little us living in Brisbane, or wherever we're listening, that we are all trying to walk on the same steps of that tradition.

Kevin: The tradition is pretty horrifying. The Pope--

Father John: The tradition has a lot of flaws about it, but there are also a lot of good things about it as well. That's what the whole week has been about: celebrating some of the plusses of it.

Kevin: Well, I didn't hear him say anything which I would regard as being useful or helpful. For example, on the front page of *The Australian*, a few days ago, the Pope's advice for Australia was that we should "get together and make a better country" . . . I mean, thanks very much Mr. Pope! He says that we should try and see Christ in the stranger, but he doesn't explain what "Christ" is, and how on earth Christ can be in the stranger.

Father John: I thought he tried to explain a bit of that in his homily at the Beatification Mass.

Kevin: Well he didn't do a very good job.

Father John: He didn't, eh? Alright, well, that's your opinion on that one, Kevin, and you're certainly welcome to it. We'll see what the listeners have to say on that one.

Kevin: Thank you.

Father John: Thank you for calling.

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CALL SIX - Dan Rowden

- Atheism -

22nd January

In this particular conversation Dan had to contend with not one, but two priests, and, as you can imagine, he found the going very rough indeed. Although he tried valiantly to chip away at the solid rock wall of delusion which all Christians love to blockade themselves in, it was to no avail. They desperately cling to the belief that there are only three basic positions one could possibly take on the question of God - theism, atheism, and agnosticism. I mean, how shallow can you get? All three are obviously false and have nothing at all to do with wisdom.

D.Q

Father John: Hello, Danny.

Dan: G'day, John. How are you?

Father John: Pretty good, thanks.

Dan: Mate, I want to talk about atheism. It's been mentioned once or twice during the program.

Father John: Hmm, hmm.

Dan: It was mentioned earlier that atheism is basically a disbelief in God. I want to challenge that because I think it is a wholly inadequate definition of what atheism is.

Father John: What does the dictionary say, Danny? Maybe one of our listeners can look it up in the dictionary. I haven't got one here, but I would love to see what it says in there.

Dan: Well, I don't really care what the dictionary says.

Father John: Alright. You're a thinker, that's good.

Dan: Absolutely. Most dictionary definitions of such things are themselves wholly inadequate - they're just for vernacular use only. An atheist is not someone who just simply goes around rejecting concepts of God. A true atheist is someone who rejects everything which is false. Now, to either say that God definitely exists--

Father John: Hang on, Danny. I don't know if we can accept that one. I mean, I believe in God, and I would hope that I would reject everything which is false, but that doesn't make me an atheist.

Dan: Okay--

Father John: You could believe in anything. You could believe in not believing in God, and just because . . . in other words, you're saying that anyone who rejects everything which is false is atheistic. That's a pretty easy one to shoot down, Dan.

Dan: Well, no, it depends on whether you're--

Father John: It depends on nothing. You just said it.

Dan: Well, okay, you can reject things--

Father John: Do you want to have a think about it and call back when you've got the thing ready?

Dan: No, I don't. What you're forgetting is that it's possible to think wrongly. I mean, you can say something is false and you can be wrong about that.

Father John: True.

Dan: To say that God definitely exists, or does not exist, is to say that you know what is ultimately real. So a true atheist, by saying that God definitely does not exist, is saying that he *knows* what is ultimately real. The vast majority of people who label themselves as atheists are not atheists. They're actually agnostic, or what I would call a "floater" - a person who rejects God because they haven't really thought about it. But an atheist is someone who has thought about the fundamentals of existence, and rejects God because he knows that God is impossible. That is to say, he knows what is ultimately true. That is what a genuine atheist is. I mean, the boundaries between agnosticism and atheism have been destroyed over the years, and I think the secular community is as guilty in this as any religious group.

Father John: Alright, I'd be happy to respond to that, but we've got Father Bill here. I don't know if he'd like to react . . . ?

Father Bill: Oh well, simply to say that the word "atheism" does mean rejection of God. That's what it means. A theist is a person who believes in God, an atheist is a person who does not believe in God, and an agnostic is a person who doesn't really know whether God exists or not. That's what the words means.

Dan: No. I find those definitions--

Father Bill: They're not definitions; that's what the meaning of the words are. *Theos* means "God", *a-theos* means someone who doesn't accept God. That's what the word means.

Dan: Right, because they're not definitions, that is why I find them inadequate. You see, to me--

Father John: Danny. Danny. You've just got to give a bit here. *That's what they mean.* Do you know what the word "cup" means?

Dan: Well, okay, I'm telling you--

Father John: Do you know what the word "pencil" means? Well, this is what the word "atheist" means.

Father Bill: I think I'd be prepared to agree with what Dan says when he says that a lot of people who call themselves "atheists" are in fact agnostic. I think that's probably true. You also have to make a distinction between theoretical and practical atheists. A theoretical atheist is someone who has genuinely come to the belief that there is no God, whereas a practical atheist might be one, yes, who might believe in God but acts in such a way, or lives in such a

way, that he ignores any law of God. So yes, there are distinctions to be made, I'll agree with that.

Dan: I simply think that those distinctions are extremely important, because coming to a firm decision one way or the other is the most important thing any person can do in their lives.

Father John: Hey, Danny, can you just hang on one tick?

Dan: Yes.

Father John: Can you hang on? Because we've got Judy who's looking up her dictionary. You there, Judy?

Judy: Yes, Father.

Father John: How are you going?

Judy: Good, thanks. Yourself?

Father John: You've looked up the word "atheism"?

Judy: Yes.

Father John: What does it say?

Judy: "The belief that there is no God."

Father John: Does it say anything after that, like if you want to believe "this", you can?

Judy: Ah, no. [giggles]

Father John: It says, "The belief that there is no God"?

Judy: Yes. It says, "Without God; the belief that there is no God".

Father John: Alright. Do you want to make another comment about anything else, Judy? Or did you just want to tell us that?

Judy: That's all.

Father John: Because I'm very grateful for that, but otherwise I'd hang up, or I can leave you on hold and come back to you.

Judy: No, no, that's all, Father.

Father John: Alright, Judy, thanks very much for that, because it's really important that we hear it. Danny, you there?

Dan: Yes.

Father John: What did you think of that one?

Dan: Well, as I said before, I'm not the least bit interested in dictionary meanings of these things.

Father John: You're going to publish your own dictionary, are you?

Dan: Well, when you start defining your spirituality by what is said in the dictionary, then you have no spirituality.

Father John: But, Danny, you ring up other weeks and you ask me about faith, and you tell me that, as I understand faith - or "truth", we've had - that's been a classic one - that the way we understand truth is not the way we really should be understanding truth. Where is your objectivity now, Dan, that we hear every other week? You know, you tell me that some things are just fixed and immutable, well, here's the definition of an English word that you don't even accept. Everyone in the world accepts it and you don't.

Dan: Well, this is because definitions are not fixed and immutable. The only thing that is is Ultimate Reality.

Father John: How would we . . . yeah, here we go . . . how would we ever communicate if we didn't have language. I mean, people like Wittgenstein dedicate the whole of their lives to study of language. Language has fixed meanings. I mean, they're words. That's how we communicate, Dan. That's how you and I talk over the radio and the telephone.

Dan: That's true, but language is often hopelessly inadequate as well.

Father John: That's true too.

Dan: Especially when it comes to ultimate issues.

Father John: Yes, that is true. Danny, thanks very much for your call.

Dan: No worries.

Father John: Good to talk to you, tonight. Bye-bye.

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CALL SEVEN - David Quinn

- Faith III -

22nd January

I too met up with Father Bill and I too encountered the same sort of problems that Danny had. Having Bill on the program did have one virtue, though - he was able to articulate in a far clearer way than McEwin the Christian abhorance of reason.

D.Q

Father John: We've got time for one more . . . we might take line one, Johnno, because this is David from West End, who rings up regularly about faith, and we've got to let Father Bill go home. Hello, David.

David: Yes, hello.

Father John: How are you?

David: Fine.

Father John: Now, David, every week you give me a call, and you and I try and battle away about this whole issue of faith, and "objective reality" . . . is that the phrase that . . . ?

David: Close enough.

Father John: Yes, that's the one that you use.

David: Yes.

Father John: Alright, do you want to make a comment tonight? Because I'm just pleased that Father Bill is here and he might be able to offer a different advice than what I normally do.

David: Okay, I heard Bill talking before about faith, and he mentioned that

faith is about having trust in a person or a cause or something like that, but to me the principle underpinning of all faith must be directed towards Truth. If your faith is not directed towards Truth, then it's a false faith - you're chasing something false. So this is the most important thing. It's not enough to say that faith is just a trust in "something", because then you could say that Hitler had faith - he had faith that he'd conquer Europe. So it's not an adequate definition of faith. It must be directed towards Truth. Truth is the heart and soul of the spiritual life.

Father Bill: I think if I may just butt in, David.

David: Okay then.

Father Bill: For there to be authentic genuine faith, that's true. But there were people who had faith in Hitler. Now their faith may have been misplaced, but, rightly or wrongly, they had faith in him. So when I say faith is commitment to a cause, I'm not necessarily saying that that is good faith or bad faith. But I agree with you that if faith is to be authentic it has to be a search for the good and the true.

David: No, no, just the Truth.

Father Bill: Oh well, Truth is goodness.

David: Well, that's debatable.

Father Bill: Well, alright, we won't debate it now.

Father John: Everything is debatable with you, David! You haven't got one of those dictionaries that Danny's got too, have you?

David: Well, no, we make up our own definitions to suit us.

Father John: [laughs] We know that, mate! We know that! There you are, you've said in black and white.

David: Yes, but I'd say that you do the same. Christians do the same.

Father John: [laughs] . . . Alright . . .

David: Take the concept of God. In my view, Christians render the word "God" meaningless. Because one minute they say that God is bigger than everything; the next minute they say that God just exists in good people; the next minute they say that God is the inconceivable; the next minute they say that God is a sort of Creator who looks lovingly upon the human race - I mean, they just make a total farce of the word "God"!

Father John: I think the bottom line of it, they just say God is . . . dot, dot, dot.

David: Well! God is . . . !?

Father John: Because we can never describe what God is.

Father Bill: One person made the comment earlier on, David, that human language in the long run, when we talk about God, is inadequate, and the fact that we can say all of these different things about God is simply, to my mind anyway, a proof of that fact. You can't sum up God in any one phrase or in any one sentence.

David: Well, no, there's a difference between language falling short and making totally contradictory statements or having totally contradictory beliefs.

Father Bill: Hmm, but to say that God is transcendent is not a contradiction in my mind to saying that God is very close to us. God is both.

David: Well, to say that God is transcendent is to say that God is *separate* - God is separate from Nature or the world - and that, to my mind, makes Him very far away. Whereas if you say that God is the *same* as Nature, well then, God is infinitely close to us - I mean, He *is* us! There is a world of difference.

Father Bill: Yes, but I don't see that as contradictory. If I were to say that *you* were both close and far away, then it might be a contradiction - but when I say it about God, then I don't see anything contradictory about that.

David: Well, yes, you don't, but it depends on how much you value reason. I mean, if you don't--

Father John: Do you want to tell him that he's ignorant too, like you told me one other week?

Father Bill: [laughs]

Father John: Tell him. I'd get great pleasure out of that, if you told Father Bill that he was ignorant.

David: Well, yes, I'd say you're ignorant because--

Father John: [laughs] Thank you.

Father Bill: [laughs]

David: Because--

Father John: You're making my night, David.

David: Because you *value* ignorance. This is the key thing. You actually value ignorance, and it props up faith.

Father Bill: Props up faith . . . uh uh.

David: That's right. Because if you didn't value ignorance, then you would be encouraging both yourself and everybody else to actually *reason in earnest*, to actually want to come to understand the Truth. Now look, I say that the Truth is there to be known. It is there for the finite mind to know it. But I see that Christians turn people away from that because they value their ignorance. They say that, "nothing can be known, you've got to have a faith--"

Father Bill: So you think that all reality is totally comprehensible, eh?

David: Yes, absolutely.

Father Bill: Fair enough. That's a point of view.

Father John: It is, David, and you keep struggling with it. Could I just ask one final comment? Do you think the Pope is ignorant too, David?

David: I never think about the Pope.

Father John: Come on, have a think now.

David: Alright, it is the blind leading the blind.

Father Bill: [laughs]

Father John: So, he's ignorant? Seven languages, the whole lot?

David: Absolutely.

Father John: Alright, good on you, David.

David: Okay then. Cheerio.

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CALL EIGHT - David Quinn

- The Meaning of God -

29th January

In this call, I tried to introduce a more abstract line of reasoning, dealing with the nature of existence and God. I knew at the time it was a futile exercise - indeed, it felt like I was trying to explain the axioms of geometry to a bunch of chimpanzees. Still, I decided to persist for the sake of that hypothetical young person.

D.Q

Father John: . . . you can pick up the phone and talk to us this evening. And in the continuing saga of God and the reality of - hello, David.

David: Hello.

Father John: How are you?

David: I'm not too bad.

Father John: Good.

David: I want to talk about something which was brought up in our conversation last week, with you and Bill. If you recall, we were talking about how I thought Christians make the term "God" meaningless, because you have all these contradictory concepts of God - such as being inconceivable, being a conscious being who loves us, being bigger than everything, something which exists in good people, etcetera. And you and Bill basically stated that you didn't see any problems with this, that you saw God as being indescribable, or God is . . . dot, dot, dot. Do you recall this?

Father John: Yeah, and you've spent the week thinking about it, David, and so what's the response you'd like to make?

David: I think about these things all the time, actually.

Father John: Well, that's good! You're struggling with it. I think it's good.

David: Yeah, okay. So I find this whole attitude extraordinary, myself,

because Christians, like all of us, depend on reason for every aspect of their existence - like making decisions about getting married, career decisions, avoiding life-threatening situations - in every aspect of their existence, they're using reason. But when it comes to the most important thing in the world, the most important thing of everything - namely, God - all of that goes out the window. I find this totally extraordinary.

Father John: Just before we go down that track, why would you say that God is the most important thing when you don't believe in God?

David: No, I believe in God, no doubt about it.

Father John: Oh, you do believe in God?

David: Yes, but--

Father John: What is your stance, David? Just for other listeners and for myself . . .

David: I define God as that which is ultimately real. So the ultimate reality of everything is what I call "God". And this is a fairly reasonable definition, because if your God, say, is not ultimately real, then He is ultimately false - and I, for one, wouldn't want to have anything to do with Him.

Father John: Yeah, I don't really understand that, to be perfectly honest. What do you mean by "the ultimate reality of everything"?

David: Well, what I mean is the eternal truth, the--

Father John: Yeah, I know, but if you could just skip the code language and just give it in ordinary, human colloquial terms so I can understand it.

David: I thought I *was* using colloquial terms.

Father John: Well, you know, "ultimate truth" and "infinite reality" . . . that's not the sort of language we use everyday, is it?

David: Okay, we exist in a world. Okay?

Father John: Hmm, hmm.

David: So there must be something ultimately real about it, and I define that as God. The source of everything. Okay?

Father John: . . . well . . .

David: So what I find with your attitude, and with Christians in general, is that-

Father John: In our *beliefs*, not so much our attitude.

David: Well, it's an attitude, actually. It's not a belief. The beliefs come out of the attitude.

Father John: It's a belief, actually.

David: No, it's an attitude.

Father John: Alright, alright . . .

David: I'll say why. God has to refer to a reality, and if we want to know what that reality is, you have to respect the basic law of existence, which is the law of contradiction. For example, a clay cup exists because it is a clay cup - it's not a tree or a cloud or something. It's a very, very basic point. Anything which exists, it exists as it is and it's not something else.

Father John: It's what we call metaphysics.

David: No, it's just a basic--

Father John: But the study of that is what we call metaphysics.

David: Fair enough. So when we come to the subject of God, this is totally thrown out the window. If you say that there are no contradictions in your God, that He is beyond all contradiction, then what you're doing is you're making Him a non- entity. You're actually worshipping nothing at all. So what I find with Christians who say that "God is . . . dot, dot, dot", is that they project their own fantasy onto the word "God" - you know, they fill in the blank space. So whatever they believe in, whatever vague dream happens to give them the most pleasure, this is what they call "Christianity". And I object to this strenuously.

Father John: Righto, David, thank you for that. It's an ongoing debate. It's a good thing that we struggle with it. I enjoy chatting with you, and maybe we'll take it one more step next week, eh?

David: Alright, then.

Father John: Alright, thanks for calling.

David: Cheerio.

Father John: Bye-bye.

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CALL NINE - David Quinn

- Footprints -

5th February

The first part of this call deals with the poem, "Footprints". It is a staple in the Christian diet, giving them the means to experience ever more intensely their beloved self-pity and the shedding of tears. What happened was that a man had rung up Father John earlier and described how he no longer believed in God because He did not come to his aid when his wife died. This prompted a woman to ring up and read out the poem in question, which basically describes the following story:

In the afterlife, Jesus and a person are surveying the person's life, which are represented by footprints in the sand. There are not one set of footprints but two, lying side by side as if two people had just recently walked hand in hand along the beach. When Jesus was asked why there were two sets of footprints, he replied that one of them was the person's and the other was his own - implying that Jesus had accompanied the person throughout every step of his life.

A point is reached, however, where one of the set of footprints suddenly disappear, as if one of the imagined walkers had suddenly disappeared out of existence, and this point coincides with a major crisis which happened in the person's life. The person asks Jesus, "Why, Lord, did you leave me just when I needed you most?" and Jesus answered, "I did not leave you, my child. It was I who carried you when you no longer could stand on your own."

The woman read out the poem in suitably heart-rendering tones and McEwin capped it off nicely by playing a beautiful piece of piano music just as the last line of the poem finished. All in all, an impressive display of theatrical twaddle.

D.Q

Father John: . . . Bob was there, Bob has gone. Either Bob didn't want to talk to me or something has happened. Hello, David.

David: Hello.

Father John: Welcome, David. Welcome *back*, David.

David: Yes, hello. I'd like to talk about the Bible tonight, but before I do, I'd just want to express my view about that poem, "Footprints". I find the sentiments expressed in it totally revolting. I mean, I wouldn't want a bar of the person who followed me along the beach like that, and who acted like that. In my view, Jesus came down to earth to try and encourage us into the Kingdom of Heaven - he described something really lofty, for the few. But in a poem like that, it describes a matron who all he cares about is helping the weak and the sick. It's totally blasphemous.

Father John: Alright, rather than me responding to that, I'll leave that to the listeners - 131332 - while you go forward, David. But you find "Footprints" totally revolting.

David: That's right. Totally unspiritual. Now I want to talk about the Bible. In the past few weeks I've been talking about how I thought faith was useless and the Christian God was meaningless, well, I also find a dependence on the Bible is useless. There are just so many different interpretations of the Bible. When you look through history, you can see that some people thought, for example, Jesus was espousing some sort of socialist principles; some people in America believe that he was a capitalist; you have the fundamentalists who believe that God created the world six thousand years ago; you have the Quakers, or the more mystical types, who believe God is more of a mystical principle. So you have all these different philosophies and they can all find sustenance for their philosophies in the Bible. So this, in my view, is what makes it such a popular book. Anybody who has a pet belief-system can go to the Bible and find support for it. It's just completely useless, it really is.

Father John: Hang on. Everybody finds support in it, so that makes it completely useless?

David: Yes, because, assuming that the writers were wise and that the Bible is a wise book, there must be some sort of correct interpretation of what the book means, and so virtually every interpretation of it espoused through history is wrong. There can be only one correct interpretation, and that is the wise interpretation.

Father John: Hmm.

David: So what would be far more useful, instead of encouraging people to get attached to the Bible, would be to actually encourage people to be able to *judge* truthfully and correctly for themselves, to develop a mind which is able to make correct interpretations - not only of the Bible, but of anything at all, any information which comes their way. That would be far, far more useful. And then a person could determine for themselves what is actually wise in the Bible.

Father John: I suppose the weak link in all of this, David, is that you seem to be at odds to *impose* your beliefs on everybody else, whereas I think most listeners - and certainly, I hope, in the many discussions you and I have had on Sunday nights, I would make no pretence to ram my understandings upon you. You know, I think that you're obviously a young intelligent person, and you can make your own decision, but why is it that you do not allow me and our listeners to make our own decisions? Why is it that we have to do what you want? Like, we have to throw the Bible away because it's irrelevant in *your* eyes, which we accept. But can I just respectfully ask, what gives you the right to tell us that it's irrelevant in *our* eyes? Because, quite frankly, I, and I suspect there's one or two listeners, who don't necessarily find the Bible irrelevant.

David: Well, there's some good stuff in the Bible, I readily agree with that, but what I object to is that I see virtually all Christians as being totally immoral people.

Father John: Do you know all Christians, do you, David?

David: Well, let me put it this way--

Father John: No, let *me* put it this way. You just can't make gross generalizations like that. You might know *some* Christians who you find immoral - fair enough.

David: No. I think that anybody who has the slightest inkling of what God is wouldn't have a bar of Christianity. So, for example, it's like a policeman who-

Father John: Alright. You're entitled to that view. That's okay.

David: Yes, so it's--

Father John: Righto, leave it that. You don't have to go any further. We understand what you're saying . . . what's the . . . ?

David: [laughs] Alright, then. I'll ring up next time.

Father John: Alright. Are you going back to the thinking board now, and come up with another one?

David: Yes.

Father John: You keep struggling with it.

David: I will.

Father John: Good on you, David.

David: Bye-bye.

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CALL TEN - Dan Rowden

- Overpopulation -

12th February

Here is a truly comical conversation in which McEwin inadvertently spills the beans. As anyone with the slightest bit of conscience knows, the Pope is a figure of ridicule, a clown who can be entertaining at times but whom nobody takes seriously at all. Not even the Catholics take him seriously, as McEwin makes perfectly clear. What the following conversation reveals so plainly is the Christian revulsion at the thought of having to take responsibility for humanity's future.

D.Q

Father John: 131332 is our telephone number, if you'd like to respond to a couple of those issues, or indeed anything else that's on your mind tonight. Hello, Danny.

Dan: G'day, John. How are you?

Father John: Pretty good, thanks.

Dan: I'd like to touch on the initial topic that Peter raised tonight about

overpopulation--

Father John: Good.

Dan: --and the Church's reluctance to accept technology, in terms of contraception.

Father John: Hmm, hmm.

Dan: A couple of points that you raised: firstly, this idea that there are people starving in the world is due to a matter of distribution of food. I agree with that totally - it's hardly even contentious - but, the thing is, it's *not* the point. It is actually a peripheral issue to the central one, that of damage to the environment by resource demand - which stems from overpopulation. Again, I think, this is an issue which is beyond any kind of contention, and talking about distribution actually dodges around the central issue. And what I don't understand is . . . obviously, as you say, the Church doesn't speak against birth-control. In other words, it supports things like the "rhythm method" - which is fine - but I don't understand it's reluctance to accept other forms of technology. To me, it's slightly irrational. The Church is saying that it's okay for human beings to resort to mathematics, but not to physics or chemistry, and I don't quite understand the logic of that.

Father John: Who knows where we'll be in X years time, Danny. And, I suppose, my job here is not to tell you the latest John McEwin theory, but to do my best to represent what the Catholic Church holds - if that's what I am asked. It's something I know a bit about. These rules are man-made, and who knows where we'll be under a new Pope, and a new regime. Priests could be married tomorrow, and artificial contraception could be all the go, and all the rest of it. But I suppose all I'm trying to do is just give you some insight into how these decisions are arrived at. You, and indeed there would be a very, very large percentage of Catholic women who wouldn't accept that. Sometimes, I suppose, you feel like you're defending the indefensible, because nobody really believes it. You see, this is where the Pope is very strong on what he calls "objective truth" and "natural law" - that some things are right, full stop. It doesn't matter how we feel, or what's happening in the twentieth century, or what's the latest technology, some things are right. An obvious example would be the sanctity of life. Like, murder is out. So there's something we can all reach a common agreement on. So this would be another . . . almost like a manifestation of that, I suppose, in his own eyes, or in his advisors' eyes, that . . . well, this is just an objective truth. This is the way it is.

Dan: . . . Well, I have--

Father John: [laughs] Pretty hard, eh?

Dan: I have a certain amount of sympathy for the concept that some things are objectively true, and that's the end of it, but I fail to see how this sort of issue falls into that category. The attitude that the Pope has, and people like Mother Theresa, in respect to these issues, is not only not rational, but is bloody dangerous. The damage that these attitudes do is palpable. It is neither conducive to the interim nor the future well-being of humanity generally. To say that the rhythm method is okay . . . see, the rhythm method is an artifice. It's bloody artificial, if you want to go down that line of thought.

Father John: The rhythm method is . . . ?

Dan: The rhythm method is ultimately an artifice.

Father John: In terms of . . . ?

Dan: It's just a human construct. It's a human method of avoiding procreation.

Father John: Hmm. Well, that's exactly what it is - a method of birth control, a method of preventing conception.

Dan: That's right.

Father John: But it's a *natural* one, would be the way the argument goes, as distinct from an artificial one.

Dan: [laughs] Yes, but you couldn't possibly, rationally, make that distinction-
-

Father John: Dan, I'm just telling you the way it is.

Dan: Yes, I realize that, but I'm not really saying this to you. I'm saying it in a broad sense, that that attitude is just completely indefensible.

Father John: Alright, Danny. Can we leave that one there and see what other people have to say?

Dan: Not a problem.

Father John: Good to talk to you, and you've raised some good points.

Dan: Thanks, John. Bye.

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CALL ELEVEN - David Quinn

- Soren Kierkegaard -

19th February

I decided, in this call, to introduce the concept of the wise man in the shape of Soren Kierkegaard, in order to dispel the myth that I am always negative. In spite of what McEwin says, there were callers last week who complained that I am always critical, that I am always knocking things down without advocating anything positive. How they come to think this is beyond me, since every week I am stressing the importance of Truth and God.

D.Q

Father John: . . . he's copped plenty in the past, and I'm sure he's happy to do it with Father John here tonight. Hello. David.

David: Yes, hello.

Father John: How are you?

David: I'm pretty good. I'd like to talk about Soren Kierkegaard. Have you heard of this fellow?

Father John: I have.

David: A Danish fellow from last century.

Father John: A great philosopher.

David: Well, a great *thinker*, yes. I'm prompted by callers last week who said that all I talk about are negative things, that I never say anything positive. I actually find this quite surprising because--

Father John: I don't know if they were totally referring to you, David.

David: Yeah, okay--

Father John: Because I wouldn't agree with it. I think you try and debate, don't you, which is healthy in many instances.

David: That's right. I'm all for rational discussion.

Father John: Yep, alright. Give us a bit of it tonight.

David: Well, okay. Soren Kierkegaard is really the only Christian that I've come across whom I respect. He was a man who--

Father John: That's a big leap for you!

David: He's the one person who I think actually understood Jesus. I've not come across any other Christian at all who, in my view, has understood Jesus - and I throw into that category your Popes, and your Mother Therasas, and your St John of the Crosses, and the whole lot. It is really only Kierkegaard who actually understood what it means to renounce the world, to sacrifice your entire life for the sake of the Truth. Like he--

Father John: What does he say, David? I'm sure lot's of listeners, me included, would like to know how he understood Jesus.

David: Alright. He said that there were two basic relationships with God, and, on the highest level, is that of the *apostle*. The apostle is someone who actually follows Jesus Christ, who actually puts the teachings of Jesus into practice, and that means renouncing, throwing your whole being into the Truth, and enduring all the sufferings which come about because of it, as outlined in the New Testament - being hated by all men, being persecuted, even being put to death sometimes.

Father John: Hmm, hmm.

David: And at a lower level, for someone who is not up to that strenuous type of life, is *admitting* that one is not strong enough to go down that path, but is nevertheless willing to speak the Truth. Now, Kierkegaard put himself into the latter category. He saw that he was too weak. Even though he spent his whole life thinking about God - he never got married and spent every waking hour, virtually, thinking about what God is and what Christianity was - he saw that he was too weak to actually become an apostle. But at the same time, he was infinitely above everyone around him. When he looked at the Christians around him, he saw that they were petty and hypocritical. Now I agree with Kierkegaard totally. When I look at Christians nowadays, I see that they are very petty and very hypocritical. So, for example, the New Testament stresses the giving up of everything you hold dear for the sake of God - this is the real spiritual path. It's very, very simple. But when I look at Christians, they--

Father John: That's very literal, David. I think what the implication is - and I certainly don't want to water down your message, or indeed the Lord's message - but I think it's about *detachment*. The thing about our faith, at least, is that the world is a good place.

David: Well, no, Jesus was very, very adamant on this point. You cannot serve two Masters.

Father John: Right.

David: It's either God or the world.

Father John: Right.

David: And you can't do both. He says elsewhere that whoever hangs onto his life, will lose it, and whoever loses his life for "my" sake, will gain it.

Father John: Yeah, alright, that's all about detachment, to my ears.

David: It's about renunciation--

Father John: But it's not about close your eyes and you walk past Myers. You know, like, you're living in the world.

David: That's right.

Father John: We can't all go and live in a cave.

David: So I interpret it that we should reject everything which is false. The world is false because--

Father John: So how do you make a difference?

David: A difference between what?

Father John: How do you make a difference to the world.

David: Well, by becoming as truthful as possible. The more truthful you are, the more good will spill out into the world.

Father John: Alright, so you have to do that *in* the world, don't you?

David: Yes, totally. I totally agree. I'm not talking about being a hermit or anything like that. No way. It's a big renunciation within the mind.

Father John: Alright. Well, as always, interesting.

David: I'd just like to make one more comment which is related to it.

Father John: Okay, one quick point.

David: When I look at your program - and I regard it to be a representative slice of Christianity - I see it as very, very petty. I've listened to your program for a couple of months, and I've never, ever heard a listener ring up and say, "I really want to become wise. Every day I pray to God that I will become perfect, that I may actually do some real good in the world." Instead, I just hear people phoning in their petty complaints - like, praying to God about their cancers and things, something really, really petty. It's disgusting.

Father John: . . . yeah, well . . . the listeners can take that . . .

David: Alright, then.

Father John: What about, David . . . what's petty about Brendan Rodgers spending X years of his life in a Shangai concentration camp with twenty of his Chaplain mates and . . . you know, like, I just think that maybe we can dismiss these people as petty, to use your word--

David: Well, they are.

Father John: --and they're modern-day heroes!

David: Well, I'd say they are petty, because if they're promoting, say, something like what passes for Christianity today, then they're actually promoting the *causes* for violence and war. Because what passes for Christianity today is extremely selfish and egotistical and petty-minded, and out of all that comes violence and war.

Father John: Alright, once again you've challenged us to live better lives and that's a good thing in itself. Thanks for calling, David.

David: Okay, then.

Father John: Alright, mate. Talk to you again.

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CALL TWELVE - David Quinn

- Buddhism/Christianity -

26th February

"Interfaith dialogue" is a fashionable thing at the moment. In the following conversation we have Father Bill Johnson, an Irish Catholic priest, who "dialogues" with Buddhists and meditates in their temples. It is all a complete waste of time, since the Buddhists he deals with are not in fact Buddhists, and Father Bill himself is not in fact a Christian. They are all charlatans who live only for the pleasures of masturbation. How do I know this? By looking!

D.Q

Father John: Good on you. Welcome to the program, David. Can I say also, before you get going, for any of our listeners who may have just joined us, Father Bill Johnson is our special guest and he is an international expert on East-West religion. Now, David, I know from your voice, you ring up every week trying to discuss the meaning of life, don't you? Well, so here's a good other opinion you may be able to draw on tonight.

David: Alright, I'll talk to Bill then.

Father John: Yep, go for your life! No complaints from me.

David: Okay, I was just wondering if you actually claim to understand the truth of Buddhism?

Father Bill: You see, inevitably, I am an outsider to Buddhism. I'm in dialogue. And I believe to really understand a religion, you have to be a part of it, you have to be within. For a non-Christian . . . it's very difficult for a non-Christian, really - they can get an intellectual knowledge, but the inside knowledge is different. I do not claim to understand Buddhism as an insider, but I am dialoguing, listening, learning, and growing in knowledge of Buddhism.

David: Well, in your studies of Buddhism you would have come across the fact that the Buddhists don't believe in a God in any way. They reject all concepts of God.

Father Bill: Well, I wouldn't say that. I would say that Buddhists don't believe in God in the sense that Jews and Muslims and Christians do - that's true. But I believe that they have some sense of the reverence, let's say, towards the

Buddha, reverence towards some power or reality at the depths of one's being and at the depths of the universe. So I would not say, for example, that Buddhists are atheists. I would not say that.

David: We should make a distinction between popular Buddhism of the rituals and the temples and so forth--

Father Bill: Yes.

David: --and the pure, Buddhist philosophy.

Father Bill: Yes.

David: If you look at the pure, Buddhist philosophy, which is what I call genuine Buddhism, it *is* atheistic in that it rejects everything to do with God. They say that supposing a God exists, some sort of God or Gods, they would be irrelevant. Compared to Ultimate Reality, these Gods are like us, finite creatures, and have nothing really to do with the spiritual path and understanding Reality.

Father Bill: You see, I wouldn't use this word "atheist", because the word "atheist" is a Western word and is used for people who have rejected God, who don't believe in an after-life, who think that when you die, you die like a dog or whatever, and so on. But this is not true of Buddhism. They believe in an afterlife; they believe in reincarnation; they also have a certain reverence. And the word "atheist" is really for Buddhists a rather insulting word, I think, because it suggests that they don't have a genuinely religious sense. So I wouldn't use that word "atheist" to describe Buddhism.

David: Well, I think it's useful because it brings out the contrast to Christianity. The two approaches of Buddhism and Christianity are completely different. Buddhism is a very rational philosophy - it praises reason and non-attachment and the understanding of Reality - whereas Christianity seems to praise a faith and a belief and a submission to an all-powerful being. They are completely different approaches.

Father Bill: No, I wouldn't say that, because actually I have practiced meditation with Buddhists, side by side with Buddhists, and I believe that in the depths of our being we are the image of God, that God is present within. In Buddhism, they speak of the depths of their being as being the Buddha-Nature. They speak of enlightenment as realizing their Buddha-Nature. Now I'm not saying that these are exactly the same, by no means, but there certainly is a parallel, and we can do it together. I can't agree with you that it's a completely different approach.

Father John: Can I just make one more point, David? I'm sure Bill would

love to continue, but we do have a number of people hanging on. That's all.

David: Okay, I would say that they were not real Buddhists that you were dealing with. In my view, there *is* a way in which Christianity and Buddhism are one, and that is in the teaching of non-attachment. Jesus preached non-attachment, and the Buddha preached non-attachment. But when I look into the world and see the various religions, I see that they have absolutely nothing to do with that teaching, because, you know, it is a very difficult and serious teaching. So by concentrating on meditation and on prayer, they are actually *escaping* the fundamental tenet of both of those religions.

Father Bill: Well, you see, I would agree with you that they have in common this non-attachment. I like the term "poverty of spirit", and, yes, non-attachment. But this is part of a way . . . you see, Buddhist non-attachment leads to enlightenment, to satori. You're letting go of all this and then you have this deep enlightenment. In Christianity, you have rather a similar approach - you're letting go of everything and then a deep realization, a deep wisdom, wells up from the depths of one's being. It's not a question of just making non-attachment an end-in-itself. It's a *way*.

David: Well, non-attachment and wisdom are the same thing, so a Christian couldn't experience this enlightenment because he is *clinging* - he is clinging to his concepts of God, for example. So if you are going to cling on to anything at all, then you can't experience this enlightenment.

Father Bill: Yes, I think that's true.

David: So I see Christians, and Buddhists for that matter, encouraging people to cling. They're not actually--

Father John: What is the way forward, David? Like, every week we go through this and, quite seriously, what do you see as a path to enlightenment? If Christianity and Buddhism . . . now, here's two major religions, in the broad sense of the terminology, that you dismiss. Like, how do you as a young person see the way forward?

David: Well, by having a burning faith in reason, and having the faith to--

Father John: So in oneself?

David: No, in reason. To uncover what is true and what is false.

Father John: But you and I have spoken that reason, by definition, can be acutely subjective.

David: No, no, no. If one has a genuine desire to understand Truth, then you

can't go wrong - if it's a *genuine* desire. The only thing which makes you go wrong is if you get attached to various viewpoints and various concepts of reality. So I meet hardly anybody at all, whether they be public or private, who is actually serious about understanding reality.

Father John: That might be a little bit harsh on people, but anyhow, you're certainly entitled to your viewpoint. We'll leave it there for tonight, eh, and no doubt we'll talk to you again next week. Thanks very much for calling.

David: Alright.

Father John: Okay, good night, David.

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CALL THIRTEEN - David Quinn

- Destroying Jesus -

5th March

The one and only purpose of Christianity is to pulverise the reality of Jesus out of all existence. It has no other aim. Great cathedrals are built in honour of this noble purpose and heart-rendering hymns are sung in joyful celebration of its success. For there is no one, absolutely no one, who is hated more intensely by Christians than Jesus himself.

D.Q

Father John: Let's go to line three and we talk to David. Good evening, David.

David: G'day. Hello, John.

Father John: Welcome.

David: I'd like to talk about the Christian worship of Jesus, since you've been talking about it. I'd like to touch on the way Christians conceive of Jesus as both divine and human. I find that this does a terrible injustice to what Jesus

actually was.

Father John: [laughs] Why does this not surprise me, David, coming from you? It's a terrible injustice to whom?

David: To Jesus. To what Jesus dedicated his life to. I think the way Christians conceive of Jesus totally destroys what Jesus was.

Father John: What Jesus would have wanted.

David: Yes. The fundamental injustice that Christians do is that they build Jesus up into some sort of Almighty God.

Father John: Funny that.

David: And so what that does is that it separates Jesus from us. Like, Jesus is so high, he's divine, he's almost God - and we are so low, we are like little insects in comparison. And the consequence of that is that it smashes the obligation to actually *follow* Jesus. Now--

Father John: David, we have a number of understandings or images that we use, and with all these things, as you're well aware, it's all models and analogies. Before you much further, they talk about the difference between transcendent and immanent. Transcendent, as you've just described it, is God on high - He is way up high and we're the lowly ones. Now that's one model of understanding God. Another one is immanent, and immanent means the God who walks with me, the God who is in everything I do, and the God who is, in a sense, sitting in this radio studio with me, and the God who is right beside you on the end of the telephone. God doesn't have to be a million mile away.

David: Yes, but I'd say that both those conceptions destroy what Jesus was. Instead of regarding Jesus as a God, we should regard him as what he was - a human being who dedicated his life to the highest wisdom. By making Jesus either divine-like or like us, it destroys that essential image of Jesus. Yes, he was completely different to us, yet he was a human being--

Father John: Hang on, how can you say that? You have to be consistent. How can he be completely different to us and yet be a human being?

David: He was different because he dedicated his life to the highest wisdom.

Father John: Which is ultimate reality.

David: Yes, that's right. Or God.

Father John: I'm learning, eh?

David: Yes, you're doing well. So this makes him different. In everyday life, Jesus made choices for promoting wisdom, and each choice makes him more and more different to the rest of us - or at least to everybody who doesn't place wisdom as the highest value in life. So what Christians do is that they cut off, or create this barrier, between people and what Jesus was. It's a real shame. In the name of Christianity, Christians destroy what Christianity is supposed to be about.

Father John: Alright, I'm not going to argue with you on this one. Obviously, I wouldn't necessarily concur with everything, but I certainly respect your stance and your struggle with it all. What if we left it there and see if other listeners would react or they might be able to respond accordingly.

David: Alright.

Father John: Would that be alright with you? Or do you want to make another point before you go?

David: Alright, I'll make another point, just for the hell of it. I just don't know how a Christian could pick up the New Testament and get any pleasure from reading the Gospels. Virtually everything Jesus attacks is what Christians are. They're the opposite of what Jesus was. So you get a quote like the "Woe to you, Pharisees" . . . I've got one here, quickly: "You build the tombs for the prophets and it was your forefathers who killed them--"

Father John: "And inside you're blackened sepulchers" - is that the one you're after?

David: No, no, no. It's saying, "You build the tombs--"

Father John: I was only trying to help you out.

David: "--for the prophets and it was your forefathers who killed them, so you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did. They killed the prophets and you build their tombs." That's how I see the Church. It's like a tomb.

Father John: I think Bishop John Noble made a very good point before that most of us try to keep bashing home, but the Church - and *you* used the word - is not the Kingdom. The Church is human beings. We are people who are doing our best. We *are* blackened sepulchers inside - we're sinful, we're hopeless, we know that - but we're trying. And please, God, one day, we will get to the end of this journey, this Christian journey that we're on, and that will be when we arrive at the Kingdom.

David: You say you're trying and you're falling short. Now I'd respect that if I

thought that was the case. But what Christians do is that they kill off the very, very first step of the spiritual life - which is the path of reason. In other words, actually trying to work out *what* God is, as opposed to some sort of image of God.

Father John: Well, again, I really couldn't agree with you on that one, David, just knowing the enormity of the scholarship that's gone into two thousand years of history. I don't know whether it's quite that lightweight. Anyway, mate, I respect your opinion. Thank you for sharing it, and we'll see if other people want to react to it, eh?

David: Okay.

Father John: No doubt, I'll talk to you next week. See you, David, bye-bye.

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CALL FOURTEEN - David Quinn

- Miracles and Cults -

30th April

By this stage, none of us had made a call to the program for a couple of months, and I for one saw no reason to do so again. The listeners of the program were just so mindless and dead that I had decided there was no longer any point. I mean, if there were at least one or two intelligent callers who showed a bit of life in them, well then, there would be cause for reconsideration. But there was nothing. In all the dreary hours I spent listening to the program, there was not one caller who I would regard as possessing even a smidgeon of intelligence.

However, Kevin and I were organizing our own radio series by this time (to be called "The Hour of Judgment"), and even though it was not scheduled to begin for another couple of months, I was already turning my thoughts to the business of finding guests. So I rang up McEwin before the start of his Sunday night show and asked if he could help me find some Christians. Well, rather than giving me any firm commitment on that one, he instead begged me to make a call to his program and talk about the proposed series. I said I'd consider it. However, by the time I got off the phone I decided against it. "It is

too demeaning", I thought, "to want to defend The Hour of Judgment to a Catholic priest, so I'll just have to ring up and attack Christianity instead."

Just as I was wondering what line of reasoning I should pursue with my call, I heard someone ring in and inquire after the Church's position on the numerous sightings of Mary which occur around the world each year. The good Father stated in response that the Church believes we shouldn't pay too much attention to every bizarre little happening and that the Christian faith should rest on something deeper. This amazing statement gave me the opening I was looking for.

D.Q

Father John: 131332 is our telephone number, and everybody, of course, is welcome to have a say, whether you're a regular caller like Ken is, or whether you'd like to do it for the first time like Lex did. Hello, David.

David: Hello.

Father John: How are you?

David: Pretty good, thanks.

Father John: Good. Welcome to the program.

David: Yes. I was interested in what you and Lex were saying.

Father John: Hmm, hmm. About Mary.

David: Yes, about the visitations of Mary, and about how one shouldn't chase every bizarre happening that happens. The only problem is, I find that the very central, mainstream Christian belief is precisely the same thing. It's based on an apparition. Like, I've heard it said, especially over the last few weeks during Easter, that the central tenet of Christianity is the resurrection of Jesus.

Father John: Hmm, hmm.

David: So the whole faith of Christianity is based on an apparition of Jesus, which supposedly happened two thousand years ago, and it's no different to what happens in all these other countries in which occur these sightings of Mary.

Father John: You're not real keen on this Christianity thing, are you? And aside from not being keen on it, what I just don't understand is why . . . you

know, you can't kind of . . . let it go?

David: Well, because I think it is very, very important. An issue which is dear to my heart is the understanding of God.

Father John: Hmm, hmm.

David: And I see that Christians obstruct that - totally. They're against it. I try and--

Father John: If that's true . . . let's go with what you say there, but for you - obviously, I don't agree with it and many of our listeners don't - but for you, that's fair enough, for you. Why don't you just say, "Well, alright, it's not for me. I'll let it go, and I'll chase where I find peace or where I find God"?

David: Well, I consider that my peace involves . . .

Father John: In the destruction of Christianity.

David: Yes, everything which I believe is false. Jesus, for example, attacked all the religious leaders of his time, the Jewish leaders and so forth, because he thought they were obstructing the spiritual life of people. He said, "Woe to you! You hold the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, yet you don't go in yourselves and you obstruct everyone else" - something along those lines. So I see Christians are very much the same. If Jesus came to earth today, he would speak against Christianity, in my view.

Father John: I'm sure he would speak against numbers of things that we do, alright. I think we'd all have to agree with you there. We're not perfect. But that's the difference. We're not the Kingdom. We're the Church. We're just a group of human beings doing our best, and we fail.

David: I think it's important to point out the inconsistencies. So--

Father John: Do you ever point out any of the plusses?

David: I haven't seen any, that's the only thing.

Father John: You've never seen a plus?

David: No.

Father John: You've never seen *one* plus in the entire Christian movement in two thousand years?

David: Um . . . no.

Father John: That's a shame. It's a big shame.

David: That's right. I don't think Christians are serious about God.

Father John: Alright. Well, you're certainly welcome to vent that view. I wonder if other people share that one, or maybe they might have a different tack.

David: So you don't see the resurrection of Jesus in the same light as all these sightings of Mary?

Father John: No, not really.

David: They're identical, don't you see? They're both based on sightings of some sort of apparition.

Father John: Well, whether it was physical or otherwise, I suppose you and I weren't around to find out. But the difference between some of these alleged apparitions of Mary and the Resurrection is that the Church has certainly stated that this is the platform on which we will base our belief. Now, in many instances, we are dealing with the *spiritual*. Now, the minute you say that, everyone says, "Ooooh, the spiritual", but what it is, is that it's the non-physical, and our faith is non-physical. I could believe in the refrigerator, if I wanted to, but it just so happens that I don't want to believe in the refrigerator, I want to believe in Jesus. And this is a tenet of our faith that collectively, in Her wisdom, the Church, which has been going for a fair while now, has said that we hang onto this one. Now, the Church has never said that about the alleged apparitions of Mary. Some people say that, but not Mother Church.

David: The only difference between these bizarre little cults which spring up chasing Mary and the Christian Church is length of time and numbers of people. At bottom, the Christian Church is still a cult. It's chasing something bizarre, this resurrection of Jesus.

Father John: Alright. That's certainly a stance, and we'll see what people have to say on that one, David.

David: Alright then, John.

Father John: Good on you, mate. Good to talk to you.

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CALL FIFTEEN - David Quinn

- Mother's Day -

7th May

Can the comedy get any richer? Here, in the following call, we have the highly amusing situation in which a Catholic priest, a man charged with the spiritual welfare of humanity, actually tries to dissuade me from putting the teachings of Jesus into practice. How compassionate of him!

D.Q

Father John: . . . What else is happening? The Budget is happening. Mother's Day is still happening - for the next two hours. I hope you never had to cook a meal today, Mum; I hope you never had to wash a plate today, Mum - but I suppose that's not Mother's Day, that'd be like the Second Coming if that ever happened, wouldn't it? But maybe you'd like to tell us what sort of a day you had today. Whatever's on your mind, 131332, you're very welcome to have a say. Open airwaves here - the sounds of the city with Father John McEwin. Let's go to the phones. Hello, David.

David: Hello.

Father John: How are you?

David: Not too bad, John.

Father John: How was your day, David?

David: It's been the same as always - full of thought.

Father John: Wasn't it with your mother?

David: No, no. Not at all. I was with my Mother Nature.

Father John: Oh, okay.

David: That's my only mother. Nature.

Father John: Where's your mother? She's still alive?

David: Yes, she's still alive.

Father John: But you're not linked too tightly there?

David: No, not really. We don't have much in common. I mean, I value extreme things, whereas she is very much middle of the road. So, yeah, I don't really communicate with my parents too often.

Father John: Hmm, hmm.

David: I wanted to make a comment about Monsignor Frawley, first off.

Father John: Hmm, hmm.

David: He's ninety-one years old, and he's been a priest for sixty-five years, and, as far as I can see, he's learnt nothing. He has no understanding of reality at all.

Father John: Alright, well, if you are to stay on the line here, I'll tell you straight, David, that he's not here to defend himself, and be it Monsignor Frawley or anybody else--

David: Alright, but I--

Father John: I mean, feel very free to attack me. You can go for the jugular with me, because I'm a big boy and can defend myself. But he's not here, so that wouldn't be very charitable, would it?

David: Well, he's--

Father John: David, did you hear what I just said? Because you won't be saying another word publicly.

David: Alright. The normal Christian advice, then, is that the biggest mistake of the world is people depending on themselves and not submitting to God. This is regarded as the root cause of the problems. It's a common Christian view.

Father John: Hmm, hmm.

David: I think that this is the most terrible advice possible, because--

Father John: Well, we would expect you to say that, David. There's no great revelation there. I mean, you say that consistently that you think Christianity is

worst thing that has ever happened to this world, that it's responsible for all of its evils, that it's just a disaster.

David: Well, Christianity is just an effect of a deeper problem, which is the attachment to the self. That is the root of Christianity. It's--

Father John: So what are you attached to? Yourself?

David: Wisdom.

Father John: That's right, the ultimate truth.

David: That's right, yes.

Father John: How could I forget?

David: When Christians advocate submitting, the only reason one would submit to anything is to protect the self.

Father John: Alright, rather than having the same conversation we've had for God knows how many times, could I just take us one step further: why the need to ring up consistently and - into it?

David: Well, the same reason why a person would attack the Nazis. There is extreme harm which comes from Christianity.

Father John: What about forgetting Christianity, and you give us your wisdom. You tell us--

David: But this is my wisdom, you see.

Father John: But your wisdom is a negative one. Your wisdom is "anti-that". Why don't you just leave it out of the equation - I mean, we can all live with the fact that you don't accept Christianity. I mean, that bothers me little. I respect whatever you do believe, but I've yet to find out what it is - other than it is ultimate truth and wisdom. Which is all very nice, but I wouldn't know . . . I could look up my refrigerator and think that that's ultimate truth and wisdom - or an apple.

David: Yeah, well, I've tried to explain it on this show, but it's very difficult because . . .

Father John: Because of me? [laughs]

David: Because there's no love of reason.

Father John: No love of reason. Alright

David: Yes, so it's very difficult to explain it.

Father John: Alright, what if I try and love reason for the next sixty seconds and you go for your life. Because I'm sure many other listeners would be very interested in hearing exactly what you're trying to say.

David: Well, it is my goal in life to be perfectly truthful, and perfectly truthful means having no false thoughts or concepts. So this is what the spiritual path is all about. It is rejecting everything that is false in life. It's as simple as that.

Father John: So would that be . . . sorry, I did say sixty seconds.

David: That's it.

Father John: That's it?

David: That's the sum total of my wisdom.

Father John: [laughs] That's it!

David: Yes, not submitting to anything at all - totally.

Father John: Okay, would that be one of the reasons why you're not too close to your mum? Because you couldn't tolerate the fact that she might submit to something?

David: No, no, it's just my own love of God which leads me to everything I do and say.

Father John: Huh! What was that word you just said?

David: Love of God. But it's a completely different God to your God, believe me.

Father John: But how do you know that? Quite seriously, this is a philosophical question. We don't, or I don't - or I suppose I do - but we try not to put God in the little box, in the package.

David: But you do. You put God in the vague category, in the don't-look-at-it, don't-get-anywhere-near-it, category. That's a category. Do you see? Whereas my God is transcendent. He is far beyond all that sort of stuff. Christians don't want anything to do with the transcendent God.

Father John: Of course they do!

David: They *say* they do.

Father John: Of course our God is transcendent. This is precisely what Mons was saying: don't rely on yourself, rely on the transcendent - the Other. *Another.*

David: Well, there are millions of Gods. So you get Muslim fundamentalists, or whatever fundamentalists, who submit to some "Other" - it could be anything - and you can see the effects of this: violence and--

Father John: What are some of the good things happening in your life, David? What are some of the plusses? Obviously, Mother's Day wasn't one of them.

David: Just filling my mind with God is the big plus in my--

Father John: Is Christmas or Easter or your Birthday or . . . ?

David: No, none of that sort of stuff.

Father John: Does any of that ever happen?

David: No.

Father John: Where is the joy for you? You're an intelligent young man - what do you get off on?

David: Understanding God.

Father John: And that's just an enormous buzz?

David: It's my whole life.

Father John: But is there any balance there? Is there any release? Is there any kind of enjoyment of what God created for you?

David: Enjoying the understanding of God.

Father John: So it's all a mind thing? It's all intellectual?

David: It's all or nothing. So I actually put Jesus's teachings into practice. It's giving up *everything*, your whole life, loving the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your understanding--

Father John: Yes, but you could do that if you went to the races tomorrow.

David: No. You see, if you really value and love wisdom, then you wouldn't want to do anything other than think and do and act in this wisdom.

Father John: What if you value and really love *health*? I'd be concerned that you might burn out, if you just kept this sort of a pace up, and intensity.

David: Well, no, I look after myself.

Father John: I'm pleased to hear that. That's good. Well, I think we've got a little bit further along the way of the Great Debate between Christianity and it's antithesis.

David: Okay, then.

Father John: Good on you, David. You have a good week.

David: Yes, you too.

Father John: And do something that's a bit of fun, eh?

David: Okay.

Father John: Good on you.

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CALL SIXTEEN - David Quinn

- Teaching Christianity I -

14th May

Unfortunately, my tape player missed the first couple of exchanges in this conversation, but it was clear right from the start that McEwin had made a decision during the week to withdraw his good-will towards me. For some reason, his heart had turned a corner since we last spoke and was no longer accommodating to my ideas.

For a start, he kept me waiting on hold for nearly an hour - something which has never happened before - only to accept my call a couple of minutes before the news. Then, when he did finally speak to me, it was in such short tones that

I immediately knew something was wrong. I could kiss my prepared debate on the role of women in Christianity goodbye.

Whether it was because I had finally insulted him just that once too often or whether it was because his superiors had had a word in his ear, I do not know. What is certain is that he was no longer appreciative of my "struggle with it" and my "challenge to us to lead better lives".

D.Q

Father John: . . . I'm sure you'd be the first to agree with that comment.

David: Well, it depends--

Father John: Charisma bypasses us the minute we become ordained, doesn't it, David?

David: At least, your soul does, anyway.

Father John: Our soul does . . .

David: [laughs] I want to talk about Christianity and women, but before I do I just want to talk about education. I think one of the great problems of education in Christianity is that the teachers have no idea what they're talking about. I mean, they don't really know what to value, or what is significant in life. They have no--

Father John: They don't have any idea of what *you* think is important.

David: Yeah, so that's why--

Father John: I just don't think it's fair for me to allow that to go to air, unedited, where you can make a statement that, "They have no idea."

David: Well, it's precisely why the Church--

Father John: I'd say that there would be a couple of thousand teachers who'd probably lynch you, David,

David: Yeah, it's precisely why the Church is subject to passing fashions.

Father John: Alright, the teachers have no idea - what was the other comment you'd like to make?

David: [laughs] Well, take, for example, your comment before about how you don't think you're stupid because you no longer believe in Adam and Eve and all that sort of stuff. Well, take the resurrection of Jesus - the physical resurrection of Jesus - if you're going to believe in something like that, then it becomes open slather from here on in. So you can believe in *anything* you want, where--

Father John: Thank you, David. Thank you for allowing me to believe what I want.

David: Yeah, yeah. Well--

Father John: Alright, you've now got about twenty seconds, mate, to make your next comment, because we've got to go the news, that's all.

David: Well, my next comment would take longer than twenty seconds.

Father John: Oh, would it?

David: Yes.

Father John: Okay. Well, we're going to leave it there, then.

David: Alright, then.

Father John: Alright.

David: Bye-bye.

Father John: Bye-bye, David. That's a shame. I thought we might of got twenty seconds of more wisdom in there. Right, we've got to break for the news, but if you'd like to share your thoughts, 131332, after the news, you'd be very welcome here on 4BC.

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CALL SEVENTEEN - Kevin Solway

- Teaching Christianity II -

14th May

Kevin happened to be at my place during that last call and, after witnessing the aforementioned debacle, decided to make a call himself. McEwin was obviously more receptive to Kevin, not having heard from him for some time, but as the following conversation reveals it wasn't too long before the sage was merrily raising the good Father's ire.

D.Q

Father John: It's eighteen minutes after eleven o'clock. You're listening to the sounds of the city on 4BC, and hello, Kevin.

Kevin: Good evening.

Father John: How are you, Kevin?

Kevin: I'd like to make two points about Catholic education.

Father John: Good.

Kevin: The first one is about the qualifications of the teachers who are teaching Christianity, and the second one is about the morality of teaching Christianity to children, especially young children. Now, the first point, is that I don't believe that the teachers are qualified, and so I suppose I'd agree with what David was saying before the news, and this is supported by the fact that, for all this time, teachers *have* been teaching that Adam and Eve were real, physical people whom God created, and that God created the world, however long ago that might have been. Well, we know that these were just blatant lies.

Father John: But, Kevin, are you married?

Kevin: No.

Father John: Right, well, did your mother ever tell you that when your tooth fell out, you put it under the pillow and the Fairy God-mother came along?

Kevin: Yes, this was a lie, wasn't it?

Father John: Well, would you describe that your mother has offered you a blatant lie?

Kevin: Yes. She told me a lie.

Father John: Well, fair enough.

Kevin: She told me a lie because she--

Father John: And you resent the blatant lie that your mother told you concerning the Fairy God-mother and your fallen tooth?

Kevin: Yes, I do.

Father John: What about the one about Santa?

Kevin: But it's far more serious to--

Father John: What about the Santa one? Do you resent that?

Kevin: Yes, I do, *now* - now that I'm old enough to actually think about the consequences of that manner of bringing up children.

Father John: Alright, well, just so the rest of us know what we are dealing with here, you're prepared to say that you resent the fact that your mother has told you a blatant lie about the Fairy God-mother and Santa.

Kevin: Well, I don't resent--

Father John: Which would be two of about two thousand things.

Kevin: I don't feel any resentment, let me make this clear. I don't feel any *emotional* resentment. What I see is that it's the wrong way to bring up children. It is the wrong example to give to children to live in a fantasy world. It's not right to live in a fantasy world.

Father John: Alright, and again, not for my own sake, but for the teachers who do work very hard in terms of education - irrespective of which system they're in, state or private - I just don't think it's fair to say, *carte blanche*, your opening ball, which was that Catholic teachers aren't qualified. I mean, you might be quite correct in assuming that *some* Catholic teachers aren't qualified. And I think some of them would acknowledge that - that they need some upgrading to be able to teach these subjects, because it's not just what you learn at school. But some teachers are eminently qualified.

Kevin: Well, I'll let people discover that for themselves. My second point, though, is the point about whether it is moral to teach Christianity to children. I regard teaching Christianity to children as a form of child abuse, which is far worse than rape, and which can ruin a child's life. It's taking advantage of children when they're not old enough to think for themselves. So, for example, telling a very young child that God exists, that a very, very powerful being called God exists--

Father John: What should we tell them, Kevin?

Kevin: We should encourage them--

Father John: For all the parents listening now, you're the guru in--

Kevin: And I will give them the advice.

Father John: --parental education and advice. What should they be doing with their children?

Kevin: Parents should encourage their children to think for themselves.

Father John: The problem with that wonderful theory is that children *can't* think for themselves.

Kevin: That's right. So parents should give them an environment which is conducive to thought - which is safe for the child and safe for it's development, and which is conducive for the child thinking for himself, as he physically becomes able to.

Father John: But, you see, it's just not physical.

Kevin: Well, it's--

Father John: Emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. You are a holistic being, and so is your child.

Kevin: As the brain physically develops, then the child intellectually becomes more aware, and, if you want to use the word, spiritually becomes more aware. Many people never become spiritually aware, but, the fact is, until a child is at least eleven or twelve, he cannot reason to any significant degree about abstract matters. So, therefore, introducing concepts of God to young children, with the expectation that the child will believe these things, is a very, very serious form of child abuse, and I think in years to come this will probably become punishable by law.

Father John: Well, mate, I wouldn't hold your breath, but I thank you for sharing that opinion. It's one that you obviously believe in, but possibly not one many listeners would agree with. I'm sure you'd have some people who share that opinion, but not too many. We'll see what people have to say, eh?

Kevin: Okay.

Father John: Good, Kevin. Bye-bye.

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CALL EIGHTEEN - David Quinn

- Women and Christianity -

21st May

In this, the last call, McEwin makes plain his irritation with me. He obviously finds the discussion of God very tiresome and would rather eliminate it altogether so as to get on with the real business of Christianity, which is to deal out soothing cliches and mind-numbing pap to the weak and the elderly. He accuses me of being repetitive, but what he will never understand is that one has to clear away all the muck before one can build something afresh. And thanks to him and people like him, the muck is vast.

D.Q

Father John: Yes, you're very welcome to phone in. It's fifteen minutes to eleven o'clock, and here we go. Hello, David.

David: Hello, John.

Father John: Here's my weekly dose, eh?

David: Yes, your weekly dose of spirituality. I'd like to concur with Delia, first off, and the other woman who spoke about men's problems nowadays.

Father John: Men's problems . . .

David: Yes, I think that the sort of stuff the feminists have been getting away with for the last few years has been disgraceful. So, yes, I'd like to concur with that, and it is nice to hear some women say that. Speaking of women, I find the subject of men and women a very important and interesting issue, especially it's relation to the spiritual path. In my view, the major proof that Christianity is a millions miles away from the spiritual path is because women are involved in it - women are part of the congregation and they are a part of what's happening behind the scenes.

Father John: Alright, I think we've possibly established the fact over many weeks that you're not a great fan of the Christian movement, and I think we've respected that. But it just gets boring radio, to be perfectly honest - you know, hearing the same thing. So we know David hates Christianity. Okay, fine, we can live with that. What would be interesting, David, is if you got a positive insight into another way of relating or whatever. But just to ring up and keep saying the same thing over and over . . . no, mate, honestly, give it a rest.

David: Well, it might sound boring, but I give different *reasons* every week. There's thousands of reasons--

Father John: Alright, well, take it from me, I've just about had enough of it. Can we, you know, go down another path?

David: No, I think it's a very important issue - a *very* important issue.

Father John: Alright, David, the difference between you and I is that I'm the one here with the buttons and you're the one saying the same thing every week. So we've got a philosophical difference here, and I wonder who's going to win out.

David: Well, Truth is the most important issue and--

Father John: Yeah, well, Truth is the ultimate reality - we've had that ad-nauseam too.

David: And we do this by discussing it.

Father John: Right, but we don't talk about the same thing every week, David.

David: I don't. I use different reasons every week.

Father John: Well, with the greatest respect, I, and I would say a couple of thousand listeners, think that you do.

David: Well, it's only repetitious, because I stand out. I think all your callers, and your whole show, is repetitious and I stand out. I am the one voice of dissent in the whole show.

Father John: So you're the only valuable part of our program?

David: I think so, yes.

Father John: Well, I think you're *a* valuable part of our program, but not the only valuable part.

David: Alright. I'd like to finish this point that--

Father John: Alright, make a statement, and then we'll move on because we've got plenty of people who would like to have a say.

David: This idea of women being involved with Christianity is very wrong, and Jesus thought so - and indeed God thought so.

Father John: Hmm, hmm.

David: Because if you look at the example set by Jesus - he is supposed to be the one representative of God on earth - and he was a man, first off. He wasn't a woman. So, if God had any interest in gender issues, or indeed women, He would have sent down a couple or something like that.

Father John: I think one of the points that we continuously make is that God is spirit, and the spirit manifested himself in the world, it just so happened that he came as a man. I think you're quite right: I think he could have come as a woman. But he didn't. He picked one over the other and came as a man. And where do we look for the feminine face of God, where do we find the feminine face of God? Well, I think we find that in the face of Mary. Not to say that she is God, but she is the feminine face of God - because in a man, you don't see the tears of a little girl, the pain of a grandmother, the love of a mother. We find that in Mary. But anyway, David, good call. Thanks for making it.