

## FOREWORD

It is a great privilege to be invited to write the foreword to this booklet in which Sir Lionel Luckhoo states simply and clearly his faith in God and in the teachings of the Bible and the Christian Church.

The author is well known and respected in so many circles - legal, political, diplomatic, sporting, cultural - but underlying his whole life in this personal faith.

Recently he addressed a gathering of his fellow Berbicians at Port Mourant and everyone was impressed by his sincerity and conviction. In the same spirit, he writes from his own experience. He witnesses to his faith his own life, he is always ready to stand up and be counted as a Christian, to testify to the need for prayer and to share in the life and worship of the Church.

Sir Lionel is concerned with the total development of the nation and that must include spiritual and moral growth.

I trust this booklet will be widely read and studied and will help many people to rethink their faith, so that they will be able to say happily and sincerely "I believe in God".

DEREK H. GOODRICH,  
Rural Dean of Berbice.

## DO YOU BELIEVE IN GOD?

It happened at a Party. At my home. The tinkling of glasses and the buzz of conversation seemed to provide the atmosphere for background music, so I went to the piano. While playing one of the guests came up to me and said quietly, "Do you believe in God?" "Yes," I replied, somewhat surprised at the question. "Why?" asked my guest.

(a)

Some time ago the Dean of St. Paul's wrote "It must be clear that the main question which is being decided in the world today is whether or not the majority of men shall continue to believe in God".

Belief in God is the basis on which the Christian religion is founded. In the Apostle's creed we say "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth"; and in the Nicene Creed we say "I believe in one God the Almighty maker of Heaven and Earth and of all things visible and invisible."

Yet in the world in which we live where materialism replaced spiritualism, where money takes the place of God, the question is of vital importance to each of us -- Do I believe in God? Should I believe in God?

It is really to answer this question that I have endeavored to record my Credo.

(b) God is not a tangible object or being. We cannot call on God to speak and listen for a loud voice answering us. If we are to believe in God, we might do so either because the world of objects that we know compels us to accept him and so retain a coherent attitude to life, or because He has His own way of making us aware of Him which is quite apart from our sense of sight, hearing, taste or smell.

These approaches are treated as the rational or the religious approach respectively, and both contribute to our sense or feel of the presence of God. Yet for acceptance we need more than this.

The basis of religion and the acceptance of religious beliefs have sometimes been treated and regarded purely as a matter of faith. This is true today as it was in the days gone by, but what fails to be appreciated is that faith is not blind. It is not merely an acceptance without question. There are factors and there are circumstances which provide such circumstantial evidence as to lead an unbiased mind to the irrefutable conclusion that (a) there is a God and (b) that this is not the be-all and end-all of existence, but that there is a "life" which continues after death.

Of course, one cannot produce with strict mathematical accuracy the proof to support this averment. But there is proof, or let me put it this way, there is evidence which takes one to the proximity of absolute acceptance and when this stage is reached one requires the invocation or the Grace of faith to bridge the narrowed gap.

There have been treatises and books, indeed there have been tomes written on theistic beliefs. I do not attempt a scientific, highly philosophical or learned approach to this question. To the contrary, I merely endeavor to record in writing some of the simple, ordinary human reactions from a purely personal point of view in the hope and in the expression of the wish that if you agree with me and if you accept my approach, you may yourself be able to discover Belief, or strengthen your belief, in the existence of God. Let us briefly look at:

## CLASSICAL ARGUMENTS AND PROOFS

The Creeds begin with a confession that God is the Maker of all things. This is a positive assertion of the Faith, and is referred to as the cosmological argument. Aristotle taught that all moving things owed their motion to an "Unmoved Mover". St. Thomas taught that all finite, temporal things depended for their existence on an infinite eternal cause or source.

Now let us start from first principles. I am writing this on a desk. The desk is made of wood. The wood comes from trees. Trees grow in the ground; the earth supplies the minerals for its growth. How did the minerals come there? On and on we can go, everything comes from a MAKER. Eventually we will arrive at molecules and atoms. Who made these? How did they come? The answer . . . Surely it must be God

Scientists speak of the structure of matter, of gases, heat and light -- but scientists can never explain how they come into being.

There are other arguments. The teleological argument for example. That is the argument from "ends" from the immeasurably small to the overwhelmingly great are so designed as to fulfill a function for which they are suited e.g. eye for seeing, sun for shining and so on.

Then there are further arguments, like the argument from personality. The stream of sensations, thoughts and emotions in the midst of which each of us lives, is something very special in the context of the created world. If you were to accept that man is not an accident on this one tiny planet, and that the conditions of this planet are intended to make possible the high and complex phenomenon known as MAN, which scientist could disprove your contention?

For all of these things to happen by chance, that is the whole created process to be happening by accident was likened by Edward Conklin to an explosion in a printing works, whereby all the tiny pieces of metal letters fell together and gave us a dictionary and the entire works of Shakespeare. This is an excellent example of the credulity required to accept that life just happened.

There are other classical proofs such as the Ontological proof which deals with the Science that treats with the principles of pure beings.

All of these proofs are interesting and arrive at the end result of God by utilizing logic and philosophic deductions. But this short discourse of "My Belief" is not a learned exposition. It is a simple endeavor to express how I feel. Belief is not reached by feeding a computer with data and awaiting an answer. Belief comes from within.

## A CHILD IS BORN

At every moment of time a child or indeed many children are born, but is it possible for anyone to be present at, to look at, to perceive the birth of a baby and to ask the simple natural questions which flow and to provide answers without reference to the God-head?

This to me is not possible. To see a child come from the womb of its mother, a lifeless, almost inanimate admixture of flesh around a skeletal structure, is to see something lifeless and literally devoid of life, but yet, within moments of its birth the miracle of life is conceived. How could this lifeless object commence to live, to move, to function, to become a living thing? Who can explain this transformation from the dead to the living without the acknowledgement and appreciation of a supreme Creator whom we call God?

Examine the infant and look at his or her tiny limbs. The fingers, the toes, and the nails, every aspect of formation. Did this just happen by itself? Could this happen

without God? The very fingers on the hand of differing lengths, the thumb, a vital factor in grasping and holding and picking things up. The eyes. Its careful, minute structure. The entire circulatory system, ensuring a continuous flow of blood and of the old blood being re-vitalized. The heart beating not voluntarily but involuntarily. The lungs, the breathing mechanism. Did all of these things just happen? Could these things happen by chance? Could they happen without an Explanation? Without God?

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I repeat, to ask who made God begs the question. For if we knew the answer we would be God. God represents the infinite. Our finite minds cannot grapple and comprehend the infinite. Only the Eternal God is outside of Time.

Let us look at it this way. All created things belong to time. If I were to make a bat today, then I am the maker and the bat is created and fashioned by me. When? Today. In like manner whatever is created or made since it has a beginning belongs to Time.

So let us go back to source. The moment God put forth his power to create, time began. It is this commencement of time that is expressed in the Scripture in the words "In the beginning was the word."

Now let us note the Scripture does not say "In the beginning the word come to be" nor does it say "In the beginning the Word was created."

No, the Gospel reads In the beginning was the Word, so that when time began the Word was already there in existence. Put simply the Bible tells us that God was not made nor created but that He existed Eternally. The context shows that it was God's son who is "The Word" Just as a person's mind remains unknown and unknowable save as he gives utterance to his thoughts, so the eternal, invisible God is only known through the Son who is his utterance or Word.

#### A BLADE OF GRASS

Gather all the scientists of the world and ask them to produce one single blade of grass. They could not. To go through a garden to see flowers in full bloom is to be conscious of the existence and the presence of God. The feel of the presence is something tangible and real. It is not blind acceptance, but man as a being with perception would know, if he does not blind himself, that there is God. Let me put it this way. Man with all the progress he has made deems and regards himself as super, omniscient, and says that everything follows a natural sequences. "There is no God," he is sometimes emboldened to say, yet place that same man away from the material, in a garden, a field, on top of a mountain or at sea, place him by himself, permit him to know himself and he will admit a consciousness of the Presence of the Omnipotent.

#### KAIETEUR

In the land of Guyana, there is a fall called Kaieteur, five times the height of Niagara. The waters from the Potaro River are slow moving but they gather momentum as they reach the brink of the fall and then they billow out with the foam moving out reluctantly into outer space while the water tumbles over in a suicidal leap. The sun, striking the sprays, the droplets of water, produces a series of vivid owe-inspiring and inspiring rainbows. To stand on the lip of this fall with millions of gallons of water pouring vertically for a drop of more than 800 feet is a sight of supreme grandeur. To me, it places man in his correct perspective, an insignificant, pigmy-like creature by the side of nature's tremendous creation. It brings home to man the presence and the feel that there is a God and that we are merely tiny creatures who sometimes assume for ourselves the toga of being Man-Almighty. I wish it were possible for all the world to go and witness Kaieteur. The Spiritual aeration is tremendous. Beyond words. It is scenes like this which compel us to feel and to accept.

#### NOT THE END

Life would be void, senseless and of no portent if our existence here for 70 years or more were to end as we draw our last physical breath. Our life on earth is but a drop of a moment in the ocean of time. To dis-acknowledge God would be to admit the futility, the hopelessness of existence. It would be to place reliance merely upon flesh, the physical body and the physical structure of man.

It would be to deny the presence and existence of a soul. As you read this, think within yourself, apart and yet part of my physical perfections or imperfections, is there

not something within me, which is me and which remains me? That, for a better word, is something which we call the soul. We are truly embodied spirits. Our physical bodies grow old and we die, but this something within us does not die. It is this which, if we permit it and permit ourselves to permit it, establishes the links and the rapport with God. This is not something which can be weighed or measured. Our minds are finite. God is infinite and that within us which reaches out to Him is really ourselves, our souls. This does not mean that there is a clear cut division between our bodies and our souls, and that the former is useless. For does not the incarnation of the Word of God in Christ affirm the importance of the body as the soul's means of expression in the world of space and time? To admit of the soul and to admit of this proposition is to accept that there is God. To accept that there is God is to believe that life does not end with physical death, but that there is another life which continues thereafter.

### JESUS LIVED -- AND LIVES

The fact that Jesus lived is a historical fact. To question this would be to question that William I in 1066 was alive and victorious at Hastings. We have not seen this with our own eyes, but the historical records justify our complete acceptance of this fact of history. The teachings of our Lord are recorded. They may not always be understood, but they are set out in the New Testament for all to read. Our Lord was crucified. He was buried and the historians do record that He rose again from the dead. Quite apart from all the miracles which He performed in His lifetime on earth, quite apart from a complete acceptance of His teachings, the triumph over the grave is argument and proof irrefutable that he did come back again from the dead for a brief period before going to join His Father, our Father, our God. Jesus lived. Jesus lives.

A remarkable book, written by Frank Morison called "Who Moved The Stone?" is a wonderful example of a student who, seeking to examine history to disprove the existence of God, ended by being firmly convinced that on a Historical basis, Jesus did die and did come and live again on earth after His death. This is a book well worth reading and studying.

### THINGS MATERIAL

We spend our time from day to day, from month to month from year to year, all of us spend our time in matters material and we fail to give thought or attention to matters spiritual. To us, this world is the be-all and end-all. This is the alpha and omega. Even those of us who accept and proclaim the existence of God push this thought away for revival on odd occasions or for observance and remembrance on Sunday, or for calling on Him when we are distressed or troubled. The rest of the time we have little or no use for God, for the Lord Jesus or for his blessed and beautiful mother Mary, who intercedes on our behalf. 'Ne, who are in this category, are perhaps much the greater sinner than the agnostic or the atheist, for although we have the light we choose to remain in the darkness, concerned with ourselves and with material benefits only. We grope and falter in the darkness without placing our hand in the hand of God.

This is a dreadful indictment on Society, on the modern era, on the times in which we live. People today are afraid to proclaim their beliefs for either this would make them appear to be goody-goodies or embarrass them and, indeed, so many people say, "Religion, I never argue about it, I never talk about it." Others would say, "Religion, this is something personal. You must leave this to me." This is a form of escapism. If we know and if we accept, if we perceive and if we are conscious of God, then we should be happy, pleased and honored to speak of Him, to give him the high degree of attention He deserves. This should be a question of great pride and privilege.

## OPPORTUNITIES LOST

Many of us are flattered to be noticed by or to speak with some famous or royal personage. This gives us great personal pleasure and we are happy to recall and to speak of this to our friends, to relive emotions and pleasures. Yet we all have the most wonderful and the greatest of all opportunities, the opportunity of speaking to God. How many of us avail ourselves of this opportunity? How many of us would think of recounting the pleasures of prayer? Truly, Our whole thinking is twisted.

In this world of material standards we lose the substance and seize the shadow. We are all Sinners, dreadful and miserable sinners and it is only the divine grace of God, His divine tolerance and forgiveness, which save us. The most beautiful passages in the Scripture are those which set out the forgiving nature of God and His complete understanding of our weaknesses and fallibilities.

## (e) FAITH

What I have been endeavoring to do is to give my humble reasons for acknowledging God and accepting God. These thinkings take me up to a certain point, at which point there is a gap before one reaches total acceptance and belief, and that gap can only be bridged by FAITH.

Now what is Faith? It has been described as the very function of man's soul by which he penetrates into the unseen and the unknown, but the concept of Faith which appeals to me is that put forward by St. Paul in the Ephesians when he said Faith is not of ourselves. We cannot stir it up or create it -- it is the gift of God. In like manner Pascal attributes these words as coming from God, "Thou wouldest not be seeking me if thou hadst not already found me." And the same thought is reached by St. Augustine who said God was seeking him long before he sought God.

Faith is the bridge to get to know God. Getting to know God is so very important. Many of our Christians know about God, yet so few know God. We read in Hebrews 11:6 "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and He is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him."

If we could see God visibly. If we could prove with exactitude that he exists. If we could satisfy all men factually that there is a god e.g. by calling on Him and a great voice answering from the skies. If we could do all of these things, then there would be no place

left for Faith. But since we must all pray and ask God for the Grace of Faith, if we really long for God and wish to obey him, then we must pray as the Saints of old "Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief."

(f) EXPERIENCE

In my lifetime and in yours, how many times have you not heard Atheists, Agnostics and Disbelievers, when in dire trouble or distress, cry out and say, "God help me". As a last resort they turn to God for help.

The communists explain this by saying Religion is an opiate, a soporific to mollify, to ease the troubled mind. The communists are right. Religion in that sense is an opiate. But where the communists err is that they fail to go on and say "yes but it works". Religion is a balm, but it is a balm which works! Religion does work!!

(g) GENTLE JESUS

Mankind has become smug in his conceit. He worships the gods of materialism and money. He fails to appreciate that all life would be meaningless without a hereafter. He forgets that Christ lived on earth for 33 years [4 B.C. -- 29 A.D.], he lived in poverty and was reared in obscurity, yet he upset a King, puzzled Doctors, walked upon the billows as if pavements and hushed the sea to sleep. Yes it was Jesus who treated countless numbers without medicine. He conquered the grave and rose from the dead and was seen by all peoples. He never marshaled an army, yet no leader ever had more volunteers. His teachings are recorded in the Scriptures translated first from Hebrew into Greek and then into all the languages of the world. It is He who taught us that we must believe and accept God and that there was Life after death. It is He who said "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice I will come unto him and will sup with him and he with me." That Christ rose from the dead is a supreme fact of history, St. Paul wrote "If Christ be not risen then is our faith worthless and we ourselves are found to be false witnesses." How do we know that there is life after death? Because Christ so taught and because He himself came back on earth after his crucifixion and was seen by hundreds. When Paul was preaching in 56AD hundreds of the original witnesses were still alive and history records no dissentient voice.

TO ENTER -- OR NOT

The joy of knowing God and being near to Him is offered to each of us. The picture of Our Lord Jesus with a lamp knocking at the door, the gateway to our hearts, is beautiful and sad.

Jesus is seeking to enter, but the power of opening ourselves to Him, to accepting and receiving Him, lies only with us. There is a door between ourselves and Jesus. There is but one handle, and that is on our side of the door. WE must be the ones to open the doorway that He may enter. He is knocking at that door. We can ignore Him, or refuse Him or bid Him enter. The choice is ours.

We seek to run away from, to evade the Spiritual. Now is the time to do a reappraisal. Jesus seeks to enter our lives to add to it, to enrich our existence. We can accept or deny, which will it be?

LIONEL A. LUCKHOO