**Doubt Your Doubts!**

We live in an age of doubt. We question everything, from politicians to priests, to our own parents. ‘Trust’ itself is in freefall. In this session, we will describe the different kinds of doubts we all face and encourage us to go further and doubt our doubts.

**John Dickson’s** story is eclectic. Starting out as a professional singer-songwriter, he now works as an author, speaker, historian, and media presenter. He was the Founding Director of the Centre for Public Christianity (2007-17). He has published over 20 books, two of which became television documentaries, with a third, For the Love of God: How the Church is Better and Worse Than You Ever Imagined, released in Australian cinemas in June 2018. John has held a variety of teaching and research positions before moving to Wheaton College, including in the Ancient History Department at Macquarie University (2002-2015), the Hebrew, Jewish, and Biblical Studies Department at Sydney University (2011-2021), Ridley College Melbourne (2019-2022), and the Faculty of Classics at the University of Oxford (2015-2023). A busy public speaker, he lives in Wheaton, Illinois, with his wife Elizabeth and the youngest of their three children.

**INTRODUCTION: Rising doubt**

Luke 1:1-4. Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, **2** just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. **3** With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **4** so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

‘Certainty’ is ‘asphaleia’ (asphalt): ‘solid’.

**1. DOUBT**

1. Intellectual doubt: when our confidence wanes because of (what seems like) a compelling counter-argument.

Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind.* New York: Penguin Books, 2012

2. “Moral doubt”: doubting because we want to live/think contrary to Christianity.

3. “Psychological doubt”: This is a protective trick our minds play on us when we consider deeper commitment.

**2. HISTORY**

Homer’s Iliad 1.1. The wrath sing, goddess, of Peleus’ son Achilles, the accursed wrath which brought countless sorrows upon the Achaeans, and sent down to Hades many valiant souls of warriors, and made the men themselves to be the spoil for dogs and birds of every kind; and thus the will of Zeus was brought to completion. Of this sing from the time when first there parted in strife Atreus’ son, lord of men, and noble Achilles.

**3. SOURCES**

Criterion of multiple attestation: when separate sources offer roughly the same portrait of an event or person from the past, that portrait takes on greater plausibility.

**4. DATE**

Alexander (Polybius 120 years) … Tiberius (Tacitus 80 years) Jesus (New Testament 20-60 years)

Tom Holland (The Rest is History, ep.288, 21 Dec 2022, ‘Jesus: The Rest is History’): “I think there are lots of reasons why one might choose not to believe in God and, specifically perhaps, not believe in the Christian understanding of God, but I would say that the inadequacy of the New Testament as a source would not be one of them … I’m impressed by how much evidence there is for Jesus.”

**5. HUMILITY**

Virgil, Philo, Tacitus, Philostrat, Pliny, Josephus

The New Testament: the language is non-elite; early manuscripts are non-elite handwriting; key figures are non-elite.

Teresa Morgan (Professor of Greek and Roman History at Oxford University): “One of the fascinating things about early Christian texts is that they are exactly the kind of evidence for the ancient world that we have very little of. These are not the productions of the elite. This is the community literature of very ordinary people, and as such, it’s a priceless document in social history, of a kind that we have almost no parallel for. It is a very rare corpus of documents, just for a social historian!”

**CONCLUSION**

Something solid and soft