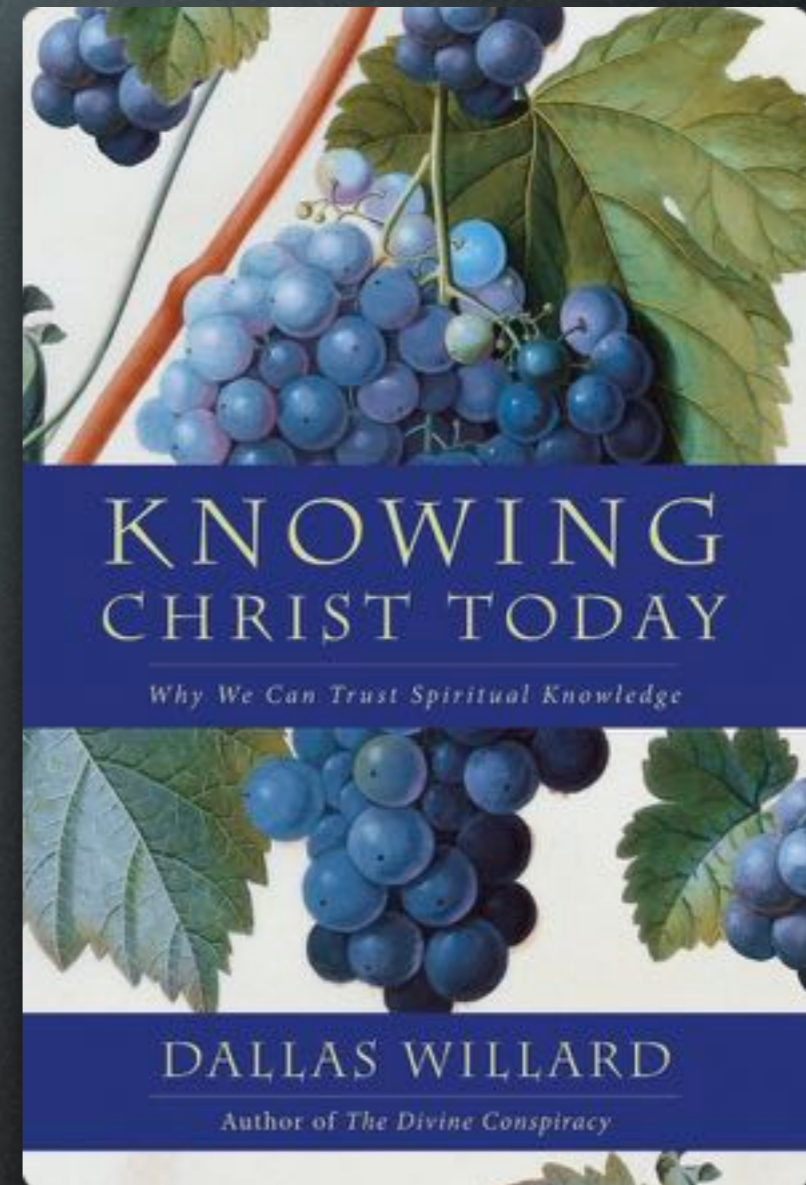


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Session 6 Review

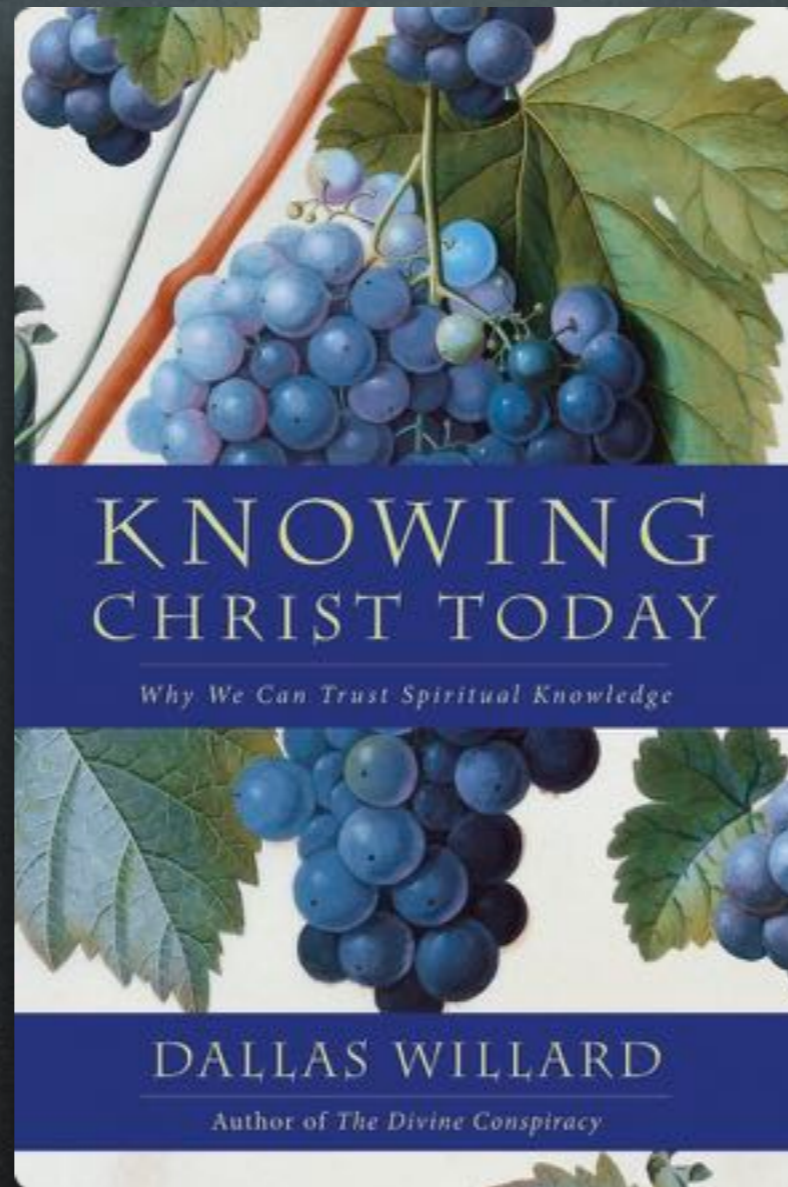
The Christ Focus is learning by grace-filled effort through specific practices to interact with Jesus Christ and His Kingdom in humble, intentional obedience right where we are today, now.



KNOWING CHRIST TODAY

Session 7 - “Knowledge of Christ and Christian Pluralism”

Chapter 7



p.169-191

Christian Pluralism is the generosity and justice of God revealed in Jesus.



Highly recommended

“Are Reason and Spirituality Compatible?”

Dallas Willard @ “Socrates in the City”
April 11, 2012



Notes for Dallas' Presentation

Then Peter began to speak to them:

“I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every people anyone who fears him and practices righteousness is acceptable to him.” Acts 10:34-35

Chapter 7 Introduction

Christian Pluralism is the generosity and justice of God revealed in Jesus. Such a pluralism seems impossible to many. If Christians and Christian teachers have knowledge of essential points about God, Jesus Christ, and His spiritual life, that can only mean that those who disagree with them on those points must be mistaken. That seems unavoidable, a mere matter of logic. But by an unwarranted transition that has become customary today, this is taken to mean that Christians think they are better human beings than those who disagree with them and, conversely, those who disagree with them are inferior, not as good, not equal.

But if that is true—this unfortunate train of thought continues—Christians surely must be unloving and arrogant toward those who disagree with them: atheists, agnostics, other faiths.

Truth be told...

- To rightfully tell others they are taking a wrong path can be the only good and loving thing to do.
- Many who think they are right and others are wrong are obnoxious, arrogant and unloving.
- We do not have to be arrogant and unloving because we are right.
- Unloving arrogance can result from other factors than thinking they are right and others wrong.
- For many, their assurance of belief leads them to be humble and loving with those who disagree.

Logical Exclusiveness & “Right” Pluralism

If you have knowledge, it is built in that logical exclusiveness should be respected.

Knowledge involves truth. Truth is exclusive.

It excludes what is contrary or contradictory to it.

If “Sue’s dress is red” is true, then...

“Sue’s dress is white” and “Sue’s dress is not red” are false.

Pluralism is not...

“All religious beliefs are true and religions equally true.”

Pluralism is...

“How we treat those who disagree with us...as neighbors.”

An agape attitude — modest and non-dogmatic.



(170-171)

What we make of the Christian imperative — *to respectfully love our neighbor who is sincerely doing what they believe to be good and right* — depends on how we view “pluralism”.

Weaker View of Pluralism — No one religion has all truth.
Many teach some truth.

Stronger View of Pluralism (especially academics) —
All religions come out at the same place. It makes no difference to God, if “he” or an afterlife even exist.

Outstanding spokespeople for Christ in the Bible itself have been more generous towards other religions and have held that the God of the Bible and of Christians deals lovingly and justly with those who fall short of getting it all right in their understanding and in practice.



(172-174)

Are all religions equal?

Does your religion make a difference in this life?

Some religions are better in this life than others. Some are the same but that does not mean all are the same. These issues matter but not as much as life after this life.

Does your religion make a difference to ultimate issues of God and the afterlife?

These assume much heavier burdens of evidence and knowledge. Nearly all religions hold one's beliefs and practices make a substantial "ultimate" difference. If there is "no god and no afterlife", which religion makes no difference to the "stronger view of pluralism".



(174-175)

Why chapter 7 matters...

The knowledge Christians have, if we are right, places these transcendental issues in a new light. The existence of God and the non-physical source of the physical realm, (chapter 4), the resurrection of Christ (chapter 5), and the reality of a spiritual life in Christ (chapter 6), undermine the possibility, or at least the plausibility, of a pluralism that holds one's religion makes no ultimate difference.

According to Christian teaching, it does make a great deal of difference to God what kind of life we lead and what kind of persons we become, and that, in turn, depends upon our relationship to God and Christ. So it seems clear, in the light of Christian knowledge, that one could not justifiably be a pluralist in the strong sense.

But that's not the end of the story — that Christians are right and it really matters to God, the afterlife, and to us.

The nature of the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition and a spiritual life in Christ has important additional implications for the issues surrounding pluralism. In particular, the fact that God is a being whose most basic nature is agape love for all human beings, regardless of their religion or culture, means that He cares for all human beings. This lies at the very heart of Christian knowledge.

“For God, so loved the world” (John 3:16)

He is “not wanting any to perish.” (II Peter 3:9)



(176)

Since He is God of all, He cares for all. He reaches out to them, calls them to Himself. His grace is an active principle in His universe. And the one we call Jesus is also the Cosmic Christ present throughout creation and history, inextricably “with” the God of all, throughout time and eternity. (176-177)

And now, because of the nature of God according to Christian teachings, we are assured that no one will be treated unfairly by Him. He has both the will and the means to see to it that all, Christian or not, are received as they deserve, and indeed, much better than they deserve. Our God is a God of grace who considers the heart, as well as all of the limitations, under which human beings labor.

(177)



The Right “Circumcision of the Heart”

When Jesus walked among us, there was nothing upon which He laid greater emphasis than returning to the religion of the heart in the Kingdom of God. He opened life in the Kingdom of God to all kinds of people — especially to those who did not have the “religious goods.”

“I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every people anyone who fears him and practices righteousness is acceptable to him.” Acts 10:34-35

For Peter, can a non-Jew be acceptable to God?



For us, can those who are not Christians by socially recognized standards — varying widely from group to group — be acceptable to God?



(178-179)

“Circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit,
not the written code.” (Romans 2:29)

The same applies to Christians today. Many people who are Christians by certain identifiable human standards still lack the inward circumcision of what Paul here speaks. On the other hand, anyone who lacks those recognizable marks but have the inward heart God looks for is acceptable to God – no matter in what other ways they may or may not be identifiable.

This is the Christian pluralism of which we here speak.

Cornelius - “devout, generous, prayerful” Acts 10:2

“The Lord looks upon the heart” 1 Samuel 16:7

“God knows your heart” said Jesus Luke 16:15

It is simply a description of the wideness of God’s mercy.

Beyond Religion to God's Love

The very focus upon Jesus Christ naturally leads His followers into the world of God beyond religions. That is where the only justifiable pluralism is to be found.

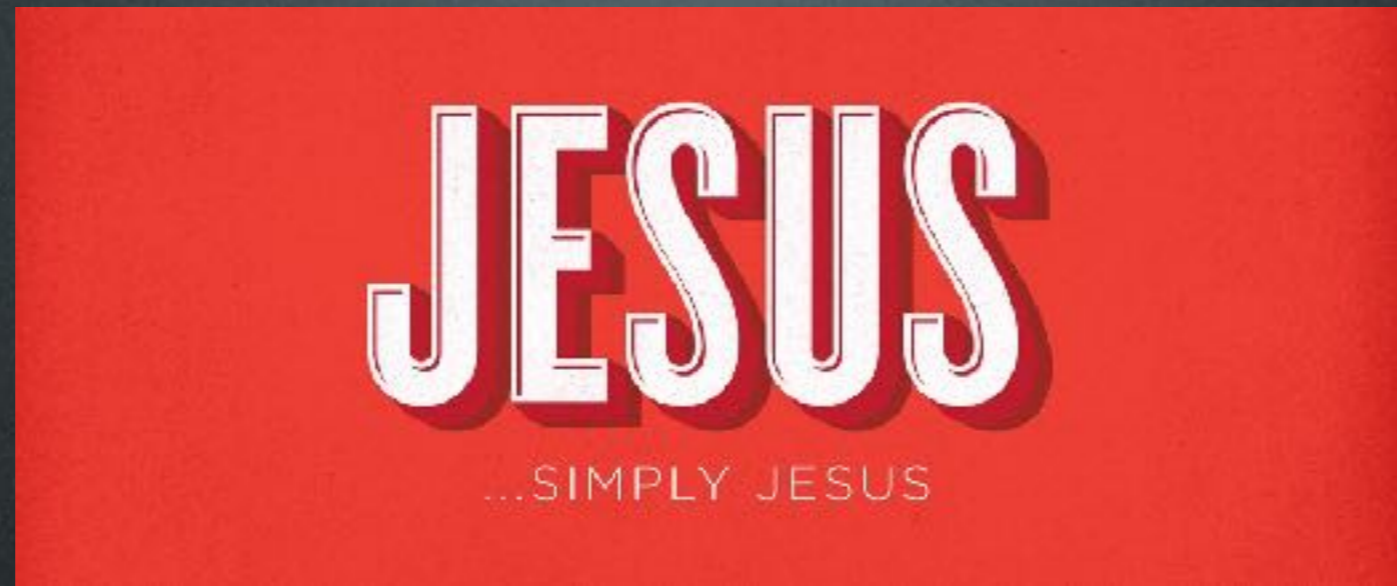
— Christian Pluralism - Because God is who Jesus Christ shows Him to be, any person who in God's eyes it seems right for Him to accept certainly will be accepted by Him... in every case be an act of mercy.

Christian pluralism thus concedes that people of “other” religions or no religion at all may be “right with God”...not because of their religion. Rather, because their lives are centered on that same love that is expressed in the person and teachings of Jesus and of His people at their best. It will be because God is love. (I John 4:7-8)

If you really do have the kind of agape love in question, God is living in you and you know God, whatever else may or may not be true of you. (181-182)

Flashback
to
Chapter 6

What is the answer?



“The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is something very different from religion.”

Peter Berger

Christ transcends all social visions and all entanglements with religion. He is the light that gives light to everyone who is in the world. (146)

Essential Clarifications

Human beings are addicted to monopoly of religion.

1.) Our God of love accepts all who call upon Him. (183)

2.) Jesus, the eternal Word not just Jesus of Nazareth, is the way to, truth about, and life of the Father. *John 14:6*

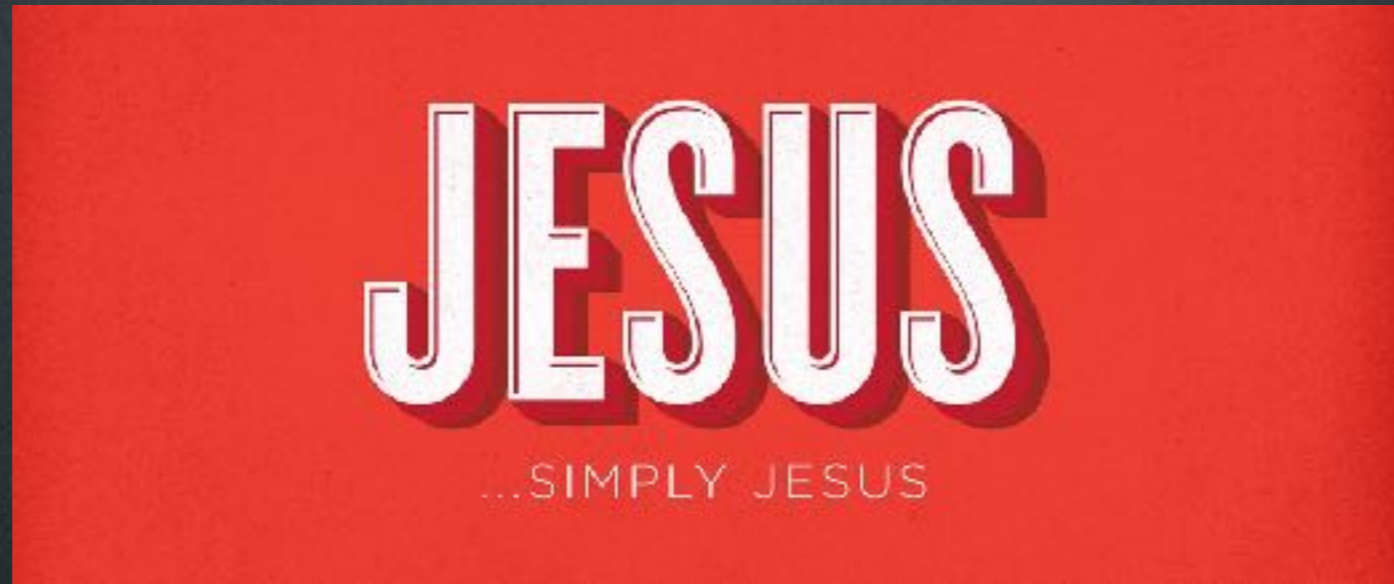
“In Jesus Name” Acts 4:13 on His behalf with His resources

Healing the man in no other mortal name. This is not coming to God as in John 14:6. It is healing not eternal salvation. The name of Jesus the Nazarene, not the Cosmic Christ, gives access to the Kingdom of God’s power to heal and for human deliverance. (186-187)

3.) Christian Pluralism is not the gospel of life in the Kingdom in Jesus. We do not preach Christian pluralism.

(189)

What is the sure way?



Total reliance upon Jesus Christ, of being His disciple. God will certainly meet them and accept them in this way, and they can come to know it.

Outside of that is an area of uncertainty where the Christian assurance is that God will do whatever is right. That is the domain of Christian pluralism. (189)

Life following Jesus is real life, based upon real knowledge, undergirding appropriate faith, commitment, and profession. (190)

Q&C

Your Questions & Comments are welcome!

(Use the Q&A on the bottom of your Zoom screen)



Q&A

80:00 + 10K

Meditation — *John 14:6*

Application for Knowing Christ in Your Next 10,000
Minutes → V-I-M*

VISION — How do I see Christ loving my neighbor who does not know Him?

INTENTION — What is “circumcision of the heart”?

MEANS — What one “neighbor” will I love like Jesus no matter their belief system?

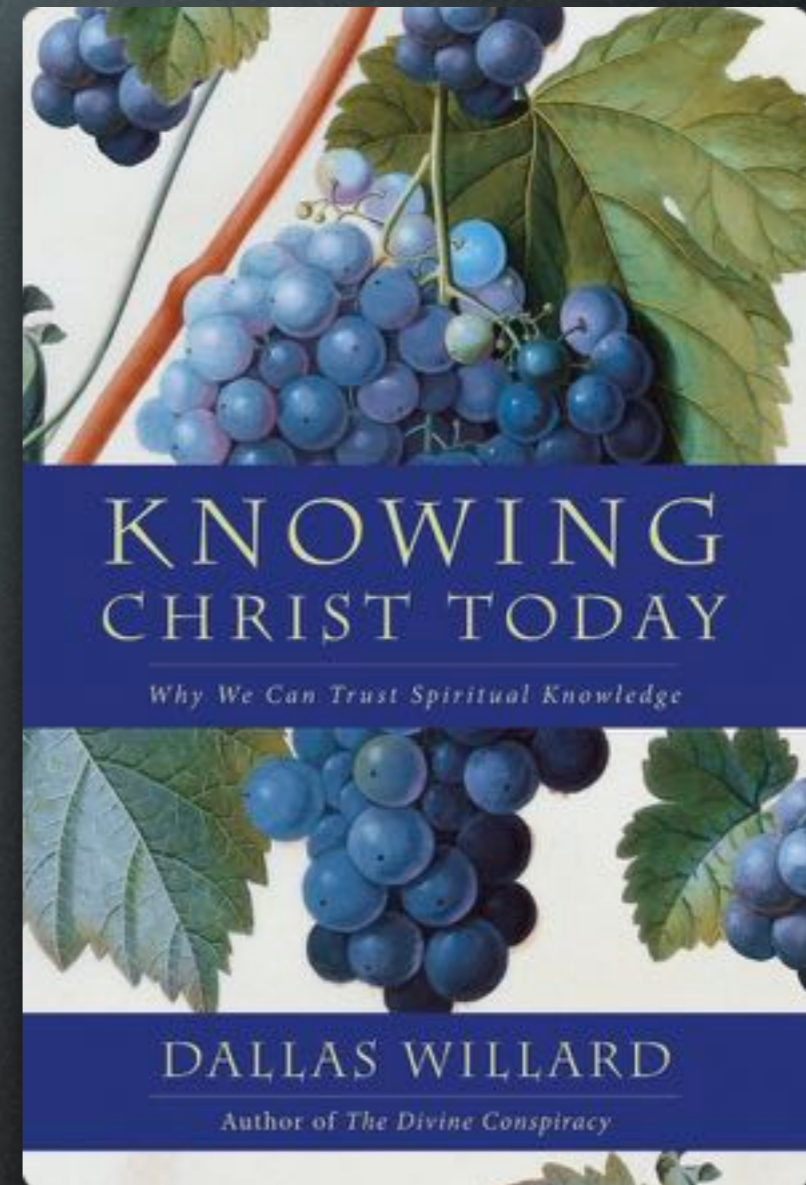


† Cross Fit

* - For more on V-I-M, see Dallas Willard's *Renovation of the Heart*, chapter 5

Session 7 Summary

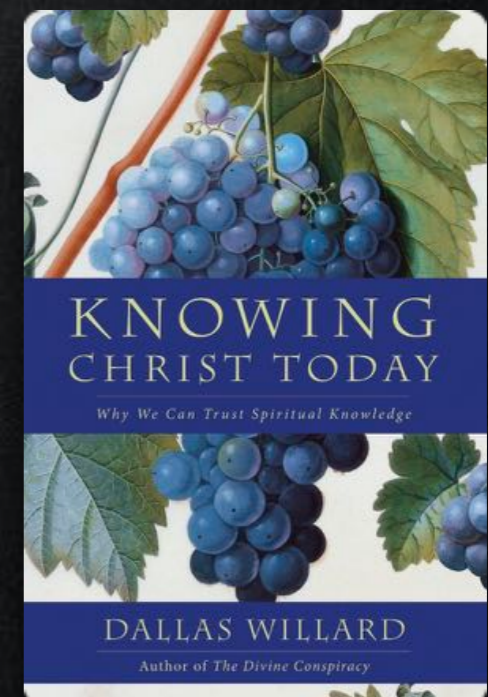
Christian pluralism is not tolerance of any or all religions or belief systems. It is loving our neighbor with God's love revealed in Jesus and trusting His wide mercy to accept the heart of persons who may or may not have the recognizable Christian marks.



Next Week — Session 8

“Pastors as Teachers of the Nations”

Chapter 8 p. 193-212



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May the knowledge you
have in Christ fill you with
agape love to extend to
your neighbor as a gift of
God's wide mercy,

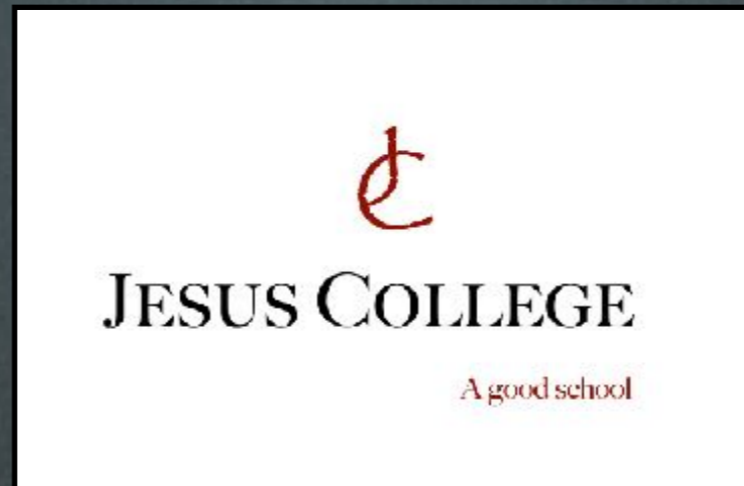
Doug



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