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In recent days two famous people have died in Britain, Sir Ken Dodd and Professor Stephen Hawking, each of whom in his own way played a prominent part in national life for many years.

Ken Dodd was a wonderful comedian who could keep his audiences laughing for hours on end, his shows often ending only after midnight. His widow Anne has said, "He lived to perfect his art and entertain he just wanted to make people happy". When asked about the wording he would choose on his gravestone, Ken replied, "He tried and did his best".

Stephen Hawking was an extraordinarily gifted theoretical physicist, who was given two years to live when diagnosed with motor neurone disease when aged 21. Yet he has just died aged 76! – having made unique progress in the understanding of "black holes" in the universe, which he expressed in a frightening-looking equation and which is his chosen epitaph for his gravestone.

Two remarkable men, with utterly different gifts and lives, both of whom have passed through physical death into the realms beyond. It seems that Ken Dodd had some awareness of God and the Christian Faith, and though Stephen Hawking mentions "the mind of God" in his book "A Brief History of Time", he later stated his belief that heaven is "a fairy story for people afraid of death". He claimed that no God is needed to explain the existence of the universe, that there is no after-life, and that he himself had no fear of death.

So in Stephen Hawking we are confronted with a highly-intelligent human being who possessed an indomitable spirit to cope with a horrid disease, a constant fund of humour, wit and optimism, and a list of unique scientific achievements to his name. And yet this man, for all his talents and achievements, died comfortable in the expectation that physical death is the end.

At first sight, for anyone to have that expectation – let alone a brilliant, world-renowned scientist - is a real puzzle, for it necessitates their having to dodge some very obvious and very fundamental questions at the heart of our existence.

The first of those questions is this. In response to Hawking's belief in a "no-God Big Bang" at the beginning, we simply ask: How can such a no-God Big Bang occur – from nothing at all, all by itself, and yet produce this stupendous universe? The usual answer goes like this – "Non-scientists won't be able to understand how this occurred just accept that gasses coalesced and caused the Big Bang and physical laws did the rest".

Er! – setting aside the patronising tone of such an answer, we respond with some supplementary questions: first, if there were gasses before the Big Bang then the Big Bang was not at the beginning, so how did the gasses get there at the true beginning?; next, how can something infinitely small explode to form a universe?; next, how come this explosion caused order and beauty, whereas explosions in our

day bring chaos and destruction?; and next, where did the “physical laws”, on which your beliefs rely, come from? In short, this whole Big Bang scenario is scientifically impossible – IF there is no God.

Such straightforward questions lack genuine answers because of the current scientific community’s insistence, rooted in Darwinism and blind to the facts, to dismiss any notion of a Creator God as they go about their work. But in the earlier days of scientific enquiry, involving those “giants” on whose shoulders stood Isaac Newton, no less, there were numerous God-fearing Bible-believers, who sang with the rest of us “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19.1a).

In Romans 1.18-25, we have that no-nonsense passage, from the Holy Spirit through Paul, about Man having no excuse whatever to ignore Almighty God as the Creator: simply by using our eyes, the existence of this Creator is wholly obvious. Yet Man, because of his own ungodliness and unrighteousness, holds “the truth in unrighteousness” (from Romans 1.18).

In our next Reflection God willing, we will ask a second fundamental question of the God-denying scientists, which concerns the Bible itself. But for now we finish with some further telling words of Scripture, applicable to Ken Dodd, Stephen Hawking and all of us: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psalm 14.1, KJV) ... “hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” (I Corinthians 1.20b) ... “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Proverbs 9.10).

And what is more, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ... In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made” (Genesis 1.1 / John 1.1 and 3).

Praise God, “enough said”!

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