

MERE CHRISTIANITY

Notes and Complete Outline of the Book, by Andrew Dósa, 2008

CS Lewis first broadcast this book in a series of radio broadcasts. The material was published in three separate parts as *The Case for Christianity* (1943), *Christian Behaviour* (1943), and *Beyond Personality* (1945).

The book was clearly not intended to advocate for one Christian denomination. In fact, Lewis sought contributions from members of different denominations because he wanted his work to reflect common doctrine. Lewis wrote as an ordinary layman of the Church of England. While he may have anticipated some controversy from those outside the Church, he wanted there to be no controversy within the church about this book or the broadcasts that proceeded it.

Book I. Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe

1. The Law of Human Nature

- People appeal to a standard of behavior which applies to everyone
 - The Law or Rule about Right and Wrong – the Law of Nature or Natural Law
 - It is understood man chooses between obeying or disobeying the Law
 - Different civilizations and different ages have this core morality
 - We did not make the law but we find it pressing on us
- None of us keep the Law of Nature
 - We are anxious to make excuses for not behaving decently

2. Some Objections

- The Moral Law is not an instinct
 - If two instincts conflict, our conscience tells us to side with the weaker of the two impulses
 - We cannot point to an impulse inside us which is “good”– impulses are not good or bad
 - The Moral Law directs our instincts/impulses
- The Moral Law is not social convention, or the product of education
 - We may learn or be educated about the Moral Law. (Conventions–driving on the right or intersection rights of way). The Law belongs in the same class as mathematics
 - The core of the Law is present/applied across the globe, civilizations and eras
 - We all believe some moralities are better than others
 - The standard to measure two things/moralities is different from the things/moralities

3. The Reality of the Law

- The Moral Law is not like the laws of nature, e.g., gravity, which we follow involuntarily
 - The moral law is what humans ought to do, not what they, in fact, do
 - We can/do break the Law
 - “Good” behavior is not always convenient, “bad” behavior is not always inconvenient
 - Men ought to act decently–a stand-alone truth and not “for” the human race/society

4. **What Lies Behind the Law**

- There are two views about the universe: the materialist view and that of the religious view
- The materialist view
 - Matter and space exist, always existed, and we don't know why
 - Matter behaves in certain set/determined ways, but by happenstance
- The religious view
 - A mind or consciousness, with purposes and preferences, is behind the universe
 - Science, information by experiment, cannot decide between the two views or purpose
- The mind/consciousness is not an observable fact but a reality which makes them
 - This mind shows itself within man, but is independent/beyond man
 - Man that does not exist on his own, apart from the Law. Man is under the Law
 - The existence of this Moral Law tells us somebody/something wants us to behave

NOTE: The in between view, Life-Force philosophy, Creative Evolution, Emergent Evolution
We evolved from lower forms by striving/purposiveness in-of this Life-Force
Is Life-Force something with a mind or really God?
Life-Force offers a tame God, the thrills of religion without the cost

5. **We Have Cause to Be Uneasy**

- Is this mind/consciousness old philosophy or old (and only) religion, saying something new?
 - Progress is getting nearer the goal, a wrong turn requires going back to go forward
 - We have identified something behind the moral law, not any religion's God
 - Evidence about the "something"—he made the universe and expects good behavior
 - If the mind is impersonal, don't ask for any breaks
 - God is the only comfort, and also the supreme terror
 - Christianity makes sense if you face these facts
 - Being under the Law, breaking the law, confessing, receiving forgiveness
 - With Christianity, you begin in despair, you end in comfort

BOOK II What Christians Believe

1. **The Rival Conceptions of God**

- A Christian can believe other religions offer something, an atheist must believe the main point in all religions "is simply one huge mistake". Different views about God:
- The majority of humanity believe in some kind of God or gods
- If the world is cruel and unjust, how do I know justice?
 - How could all of reality be senseless if part of reality, the idea of justice, was full of sense?

2. **The Invasion**

- Reality is not simple. Should religion be? Christianity is complicated, not what you'd guess. What worldviews face the facts and this complicated reality?
 - Dualism suggests two equal and independent powers, one good and the other bad, in battle. The two powers/spirits/gods are independent and existed from eternity.
 - Does each presume to be good and the other bad?
 - Deciding which one is good—is that preference? If so, there is no good and bad.

If deciding is by a standard, the one who made that standard is pre-eminent over the two
If dualism is true, the bad spirit likes bad, desires bad. We know of nothing like that.
Wickedness/Sin is the pursuit of good in the wrong way. Badness is spoiled goodness
If dualism, the bad exists with good things, like mind and will. The devil is a fallen
angel

3. **The Shocking Alternative**

- Evil – God’s will? Things can be according to your will in one way and not in another way
God created us with free will, thinking the risk that we could detour, was worth it
Arguing/disagreeing with God is impossible—he is the source of your reasoning ability.
You could not be right and he wrong
Going wrong—seeking self first, to give self what only God can give
God designed the human machine to run on Himself—we need religion
- God left us conscience, stories of resurrection, the people of his choosing
- Out of the chosen came the one man who claimed to forgive sins.
The man was God and not a great moral teacher

4. **The Perfect Penitent**

- The central Christian belief is that Christ’s death straightened us up, gave us a fresh start.
- Theories about Christ’s death are not what we accept, but they can help us
Christ volunteered to bear our punishment because God wanted to let us off?
Compare punishment of criminal against covering a debtor
A bad person needs to repent; a good person can repent perfectly
Our badness makes us need a good but makes us unable to be good
God still insists on the good, putting Himself into us
If God became man, that man could help us and do all the work we need to have done
Was that easy for Jesus? His perfect submission, suffering, death were made
possible because he was God. This was the Atonement.

5. **The Practical Conclusion**

- Christ: perfect because he was God, surrender and humiliation because he was man
- If we share the humility and suffering of Christ, we share his conquest of death and find new life
- How do we obey, have this new life? He puts it into us by baptism, belief, and communion
- Others try to do good to please God; the Christian knows the good he does is from God
- Don’t think God will love us because we are good, God will make us good because he loves us
- Christ operates through Christians, individually, and the body of Christians
- No one is saved except through Christ. God has a plan for those who have not heard of Christ

BOOK III: Christian Behaviour

1. **The Three Parts of Morality**

- Moral rules are directions for the good human life, not to stop joy or enjoyment
- Moral “ideals” may be preferences but are not moral obedience or aiming for “high” morals
- Morality is concerned about three things, first fair play and harmony between individuals
- Second, cleaning up/improving or harmonizing the things inside each individual
- Third, the general purpose of human life, what we are made for, what the inventor/creator wants

- Modern people think the first thing and lose the other two
- Morality inside the individual—we need repair/reconstruction, and do not own/belong ourselves
- If Christianity is correct, that individuals live forever, they are more important than a state, nation or civilization. If we owned ourselves, our 70 year lives are less important than the state

2. **The “Cardinal Virtues”**

- Seven traditional “virtues”, four Cardinal” virtues and three are “theological” virtues
- “Cardinal” or “pivotal” virtues include Prudence, Temperance, Justice and Fortitude
- Prudence means practical common sense and wisdom
- Temperance is not abstaining, but moderation, restraint, going far enough but not too far
- Justice means fairness, honesty, truthfulness, keeping promises
- Fortitude includes courage, facing danger and resolving/enduring pain or hardship
- Difference between virtuous action and a virtuous person—focus on quality of character

3. **Social Morality**

- Christ’s teaching on morality was not new
- Christianity is not a political machine or program
- Church members are about “secular” matters
- The New Testament offers images of a Christian society
- Lending money at interest was forbidden for individuals
- Everyone must work to care for the needy, widows and orphans
- Christianity is about religious affairs which impact social matters. Not vice versa.

4. **Morality and Psychoanalysis**

- Christian morality is a technique for putting the human machine right
- Psychoanalysis, on one hand, is about medical theories and techniques of therapists which are not necessarily incompatible with Christianity
- Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, as a general philosophic view of the world, as pronounced by Sigmund Freud, directly contradicts Christianity
- Moral choices are both the act of choosing and the feelings/impulses presented by the psychological outfit which formed the raw material/data of the choice
- The raw material may be normal/common or unnatural
- Psychoanalysis may cure the abnormality, but then the moral problem begins
- Bad psychological material is not a sin requiring repentance but a disease requiring a cure
- We judge the appearance, God judges what people do with their raw material
- Christian morality is not bargaining with God
- Christian morality strictly calls us to good behavior, yet freely, easily dispenses grace

5. **Sexual Morality**

- Chastity is the least popular virtue. Christianity is wrong or our sexual instinct has gone wrong
- The biological purpose of sex is children. “This appetite is in ludicrous and preposterous excess of its function.”
- Sexual perversion is from sexual corruption, not sexual starvation
- Perversions of other appetites are rare; perversions of the sex instinct are numerous
- Christianity beliefs that matter is good, honors the body, glorifies marriage
- The cure for warped natures is difficult, because the 1) desires we resist are “natural/healthy,”

2) living virtuously is “impossible,” and 3) we misunderstand “repression” of the appetites

- “Virtue—even attempted virtue—brings light; indulgence brings fog.”

6. **Christian Marriage**

- The sexual impulse in man works correctly in marriage
- Christ taught that marriage makes a man and woman a single organism, “one flesh.”
- Christianity teaches that marriage is for life
- The church “[regards] divorce as something like cutting up a living body....”
- Justice enters the picture as marriage is about keeping promises
- “Being in love” is not the basis for remaining married. Vows relate to actions, not feelings
- Staying married while not still “in love” can be to provide a home for children, protect the woman, and because the partners love each other.
- “Being in love” can make us generous and courageous, allow us to see depths of beauty, subordinate animal sexuality/conquerors lust
- Love is deep unity, maintained by will, strengthened by habit and reinforced by God-given grace
- While the thrill may be gone, a quieter/more lasting kind of interest may develop, creating its own and new thrills
- “Falling in love” is not irresistible/inevitable, something that just happens, like measles.
- The Christian concept of marriage/chastity should be promoted, but not necessarily by law
- In Christian marriage, wives “obey/respect” the husband, who is “head”, called to love his wife
 - If there is real disagreement, who breaks the impasse?
 - Do women want that role? Would it be unnatural that wives rule?
 - Women focus on relationships, men are more just to outsiders

7. **Forgiveness**

- Everyone considers this terrible duty to be a lovely idea
- Forgive us our sins as we forgive those—is forgiveness offered on any other terms?
- Start forgiving smaller “easier” harms, learn what loving your neighbor as yourself means
- Loving your enemy does not remove consequences/appropriate punishment for conduct
- Christian morality is different; man lives forever; we cannot hate or enjoy another’s punishment
- To love is not to like, feel fondness, choose the lovable. Love is for the person, not conduct

8. **The Great Sin**

- Most, but not the Christian, see pride/self-conceit in others, not in one’s self
- Pride is the ultimate evil/vice. Its polar opposite is humility. Pride made the devil the devil
- One’s pride competes with the pride of others—note the pleasure of being above the rest
- Christians say pride is the chief cause of misery in nations, families, people – enmity
- The proud say they believe in God, but worship an imaginary god
- Does religious life/activity make us feel that we are good?
- In the presence of God, do you forget about yourself or see yourself as dirty or clean?
- Pride is purely spiritual, comes directly from hell, is subtle, and is deadly
- 1) Pride is not being pleased in/by praise, 2) having warm hearted admiration (being proud of someone), or 3) forbidden because God because He takes offense at it—pride destroys relationship with God, and 4) the “humble” is not understood today

9. **Charity**

- The three theological virtues are faith, hope, and charity
- Love is by will, not feelings or liking; is about wishing our own and another's good.
- Act as if you love someone, and you will come to love them
- If you are sure you love God/someone, what do you do? Go and do it.
- God's love for us is a pleasant topic. Is our love for God a pleasant topic?
- Our feelings come and go, his love for us does not. God's love is "quite relentless in its determination that we shall be cured of those sins. . ."regardless of the cost to us or Him

10. **Hope**

- Hope is continually looking forward to the eternal, and neither escapism nor wishful thinking—Christians most useful in the present world where those who thought most of the next
- We are taught to fix our minds on the present and do not recognize when heaven is present in us
- We long for something more, seek it in something less—the present world. We blame things, or get disillusioned because we are "sensible", and forget that things of the present arouse a longing for the future, eternity. Things of this earth foreshadow things of heaven.
- We could not be born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists.
- If no experience in this world can satisfy a desire, I was made for the world that can satisfy.

11. **Faith**

- Faith entails belief (with some reason, not imagination and emotion, we accept as true the doctrines of Christianity). We walk by faith, not sight. Your moods are in active rebellion against your real self. Teach/train your moods.
- Faith, in a higher sense, entails making a serious attempt to practice the Christian virtues.
- "No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good." We fail in our practice.
- Practicing virtues/obeying God is not passing an entrance exam or getting a good bargain.
- "Every faculty you have... is given to you by God." Devotion to God is returning to him what is already his.

12. **Faith**

- In a committed and serious attempt to practice the virtues, we discover our bankruptcy.
- We also discover what God cares about is not exactly action, but that we are creatures of a certain quality – creatures related to himself in a clear, distinct way.
- Returning to God is trying/making a moral effort, yet knowing our trying never gets us back.
- Whether instant or gradual, the change is from confidence in self to leaving it to God.
- The whole Christian life involves accepting God's remarkable offer – something for nothing, even everything for nothing.

- Returning to God is not good actions or faith in Christ.
- We work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in us.
- Christianity initially seems to be all about morality, duties, rules, guilt, and virtue, but it leads to something beyond, looking for and seeing God, heaven, another world.

Book IV: Beyond Personality: or First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity

1. Making and Begetting

- Theology means “the science of God.” When thinking about God, we want to have the clearest most accurate ideas about him.
- Good doctrine is like having a map of the ocean, not simply seeing the ocean from the beach. Theology recognizes those before us, who drafted the map from experiencing God.
- Theology is practical, it is like driving with the map (or trusting GPS).
- Christianity is not “new,” Christ is not the first great moral teacher. Christianity gives us the great shock. By attaching ourselves to Christ, we become “Sons of God.”
- Christ is begotten. God begot something of the same kind as himself.
- God created or made us. God made something of a different kind.
- “Everything God has made has some likeness to himself.” We are a symbol or shadow of God.
- In his natural condition, man does not have spiritual life. The higher life exists in God. “[The] rumour going round the shop [is] that some of us are some day going to come to life.”

2. The Three-Personal God

- God is personal, yet something more than a person.
- Water dripping into the sea comes to its end, loses itself. We are joined with, taken into a life with God, yet we remain ourselves, becoming very much more ourselves than we were before.
- The purpose of our existence is to be taken into the life of God.
- God’s dimension—he is super-personal, more than a person, three persons while remaining one,
- When praying, a Christian tries to touch with God. God, inside him, prompts the praying. God is even the road or bridge along which the Christian moves. The initiative lies with God.
- God shows himself to real people, those individually good and united in the Body.
- The only adequate/complete avenue to God is the whole Christian community, seeking him together.

3. Time and Beyond Time

- How can God be involved with millions of people at the same time?
- This flawed question rests upon time and place, the human realm, not God’s eternity
- “Almost certainly God is not in Time.” God is exclusively in the present, not past, not future
- If time was a straight line, God is the page on which the line is drawn.
- God is to completely and utterly real to have history. Having a history means losing part of your reality (it slipped into the past) and not yet having another part (it is still in the future).
- Does God know what you and I are going to do tomorrow? All our days for him are “Now.”

4. Good Infection

- See two books on the table one on top of the other. One supports, does not cause the other
- Imagining something was its cause, the picture of something the result. They are simultaneous
- The Son streams forth from the Father, like light from a lamp, thoughts from a mind. He is the self-expression of the Father, yet they are two persons, and simultaneous, not sequential.
- God is love, yet love has no meaning unless there are at least two Persons. “Love is something that one person has for another person.” The activity of love has been going on in God

forever

- Christianity, unlike all other religions, is not static, but a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life. Union between Father and Son is so concrete, the union itself is also a Person—the “Spirit” of love
- The dance, drama or pattern of this three-Personal life is to be played out in us. Thus, by our proximity to and participation in this love lets us catch a (good) infection.
- Christianity’s offer – let God have His way and you share in the life of Christ.

5. **The Obstinate Toy Soldiers**

- The two kinds of life are different, opposed. One life is like a statue, the other vibrant.
- God breathes vibrancy into us, who are statues, and we become like toy soldiers come to life.
- Christ came to be that vibrancy, to be what men were intended to be. Thus, humanity arrived.
- When Christ becomes man, his effect spreads throughout mankind, to those living before, to those who will be.
- The business of becoming a son of God has been done for us.
We are already “saved” and we as individuals have to appropriate that salvation
We have various terms for this: Christ died for our sins, the father forgives us, we are washed in the blood of the Lamb, Christ defeated death.

6. **Two Notes**

- If God wanted sons, not statues, why did he not beget many sons at the outset?
Turning a creature into a son would not have been difficult/painful if the human race had not turned away from God long ago. He gave them free will. Robots cannot love or have infinite happiness
Beware nonsense. Could it have been different—God begetting more sons? It is what it is.
Beware nonsense. Concerns about God begetting many sons from eternity? That forces limitations of space and matter, a non-reality to God.
- The idea that the whole human race is one thing, a huge organism (cf. The body of Christ), does Not mean individuals are less important than collective things like classes, races.
Christianity values human individuals not as members of a club, but as organs in a body
Dishonoring someone dishonors the organism of which you are an organ—you become an Individualist. One who suppresses distinctions, making all people alike, becomes Totalitarian

7. **Let’s Pretend**

- Consider *Beauty and the Beast*. She loves the beast and it becomes a man. He saw himself as a beast and grew to become it. His face took the contours of/became the mask.
- We pray *Our Father*. Acting as a son/child of God, pretending to be one helps us become one.
- This is not the bad kind of pretending, pretense, fraud, manipulation, putting on airs. It is the good kind of pretending, like children’s games of pretending to be grownups.
- Stop the distracting, sinful thoughts. Elevate your mind. “Well, go and do it.” In that moment and process, Christ is already beginning to turn your (good) pretense into a reality.
- Is the invisible Christ really about? (I have not seen Him.) He works through Nature, our bodies, books, pain, and experiences, and primarily through each other.
- We as individuals can mirror Christ. More so the church, the whole body, mirrors Christ.
- “We must go on to recognize the real Giver. It is madness not to.”

- Discovery one: We can begin to see our particular sinful acts and sinfulness.
- Discovery two: we talk as if we did everything; it truly is God who does everything.

8. **Is Christianity Hard or Easy?**

- Christianity permits anyone to become a son of God and differs from other ideas of morality
- We start with our ordinary self, see morality/the natural law make demands upon us, recognize we miss the mark, while still hoping/intending to keep our own life (get away with it.)
- “The more you obey your conscience, the more your conscience will demand of you.”
- “The Christian way is different: harder, and easier.” Christ wants you, all of you. He transforms the old and gives us a new self – himself.
- The awesome thing is to hand over all of you, yet it is still easier than what we were about.
- The change is not like a fresh coat of paint, but a dyeing or staining which soaks right through.
- The Church exists to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs.

9. **Counting the Cost**

- We are to be perfect. If we give Christ an inch or need, he takes all of us, to make us perfect. He won't rest until he is finished. If you fall, he picks you up.
- God does not give us what we intend for ourselves, but what he intends for us.
- There are two sides of the truth. We cannot think our un-aided efforts make us good, yet no measure of holiness of the greatest saints is beyond what he can produce in us.
- Expect a rough time, for the climb to a higher level is not smooth or easy

10. **Nice People or New Men**

- If Christianity is true why are not all Christians obviously nicer than all non-Christians?
- The world is more complicated than this simplistic question suggests.
- God is at work on people in other religions.
- It is a fallacy to compare a “good” individual to Christians in general or a stumbling Christian
- Consider the influence of temperaments, what God intends for an individual, the curse or legacy of an individual's ancestors and upbringing, the measure of a person's devotion to God, the price God paid—the work God must do, and appearance is not always reality.
- What can you ever really know of other people's souls?
- God is turning statues into Sons, not producing better men of the old kind. God is not teaching a horse to jump higher, but giving it wings.
- Niceness is not the real issue, transformation is.

11. **The New Men**

- The modern man can consider evolution when evaluating Christianity and these claims. What is the Next Step in the process?
- Christianity says the Next Step will be really new—like a horse growing wings. The Christian actually says the Next Step has already happened. Christ took the step—statues become men.
- The change is not carried on by sexual reproduction, the change is not involuntary but by choice/submission, Christ is not merely the new man (the change) but the source of the good infection, and this change is happening not gradually but dramatically and quickly, and the stakes are high, because you can take a step back
- We become ourselves by losing ourselves.
- This new real self is not found by seeking it, but by seeking God. Give up this life to get the heavenly life.