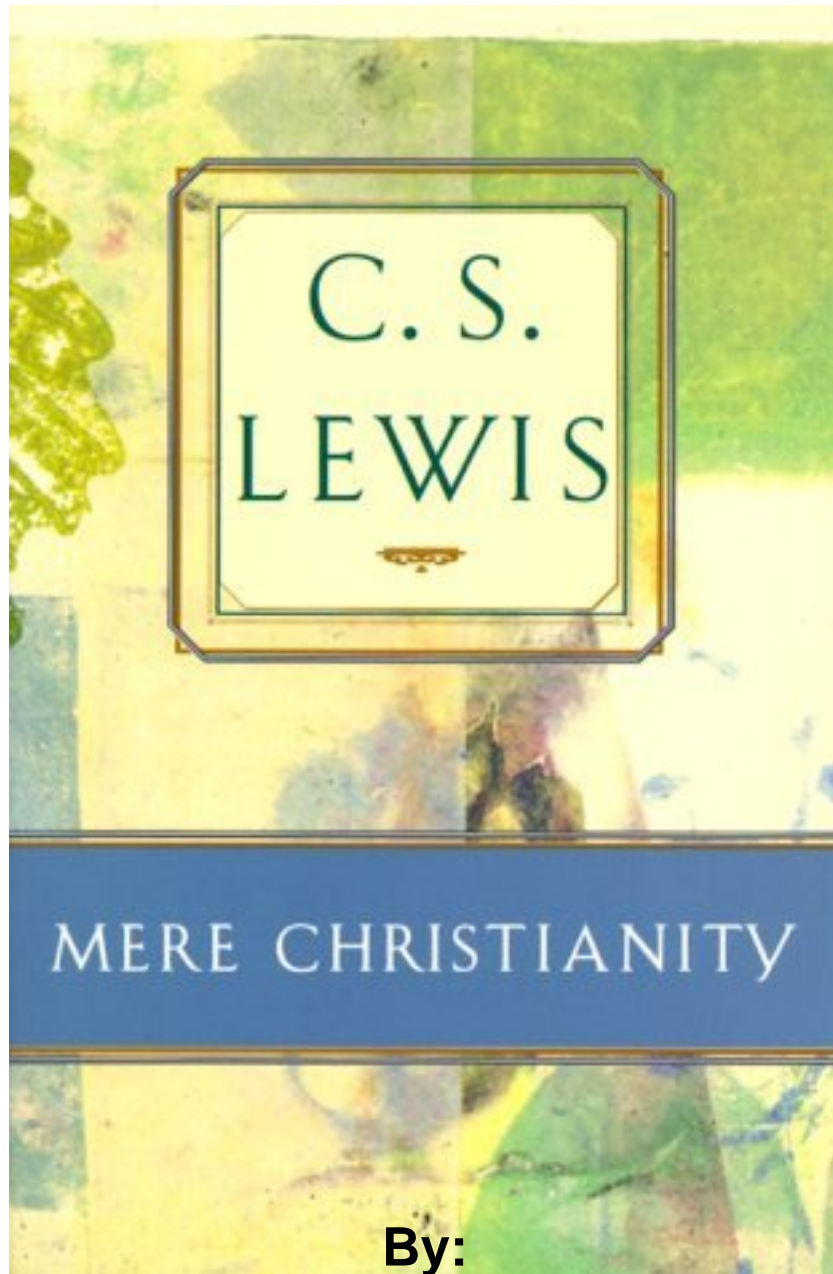


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What people Say:

Paul Bryant

I had to stop reading this, it was making me ill. It may be that every single sentence in this book is either wrong or offensive or inane or all three. Here's a passage from page 45 - CS is talking about what he calls Dualism (i.e. Manichaeism) whereby the existence of evil is explained by there being two equal forces in the Universe which are in perpetual contention, the Good one and the Bad one. CS says:

"If Dualism is true then the Bad Power must be a being who likes badness for its own sake.

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"If Dualism is true then the Bad Power must be a being who likes badness for its own sake. But in reality we have no experience of anyone liking badness just because it is bad. The nearest we can get to it is in cruelty. But in real life people are cruel for one of two reasons - either because they are sadists, that is, because they have a sexual perversion which makes cruelty a cause of sensual pleasure to them, or else for the sake of something they are going to get out of it - money, or power, or safety. But pleasure, money, power and safety are all, as far as they go, good things. The badness consists in pursuing them by the wrong method, or in the wrong way, or too much. I do not mean, of course, that the people who do this are not desperately wicked. I do mean that wickedness, when you examine it, turns out to be the pursuit of some good in the wrong way. You can be good for the mere sake of goodness : you cannot be bad for the mere sake of badness."

I was never that well versed in the subtleties of philosophical debate, and it is true that my brain has been progressively enfeebled by a constant dripfeed of Old Peculiar, chicken tikka masala and Italian exploitation movies, yet even I can see that this adds up to a pile of shit of Brobdingnagian proportions. Dualism is wrong because it is impossible to "like" badness for its own sake, huh? Because when you do bad things you're really trying to achieve ends which are really good, but you're going about it the wrong way, huh? Well now, let's take our old devilish no-friend-of-mine Adolf Hitler. He was quite convinced that he was doing a GOOD THING by ridding Germany of all Jews. The idea was to eradicate every last one of them. The ultimate idea (though he recognised this was something for later generations and he would not live to see the glad day) was to murder every single Jew throughout the world, because in the very depths of his racist insanity he thought the Jews were Evil. So getting rid of them was Doing the World a Favour. As in "eventually, they will thank me for this gruelling but essential task. Okay, C S Lewis"

ANALYSE THAT! How in whatever grotesque rhetorical contortion could that be construed as

pursuing a GOOD thing in the wrong way?? There was a classic multiple murderer in 1972 in California called Herbert Mullin – he was a schizophrenic who was obsessed with the impending Big Earthquake and went around randomly beating 13 people to death because his brain told him THAT WAS THE WAY TO STOP THE EARTHQUAKE! I get it, CS, he was trying to do a GOOD thing in a BAD way. So he’s your example. But uh-oh, what about Josef Fritzl and the family in the basement? He knew what he was doing was Very Bad and it gave him a big thrill. He would go to friends' barbecues and fry steaks and chuckle to himself "if only they knew about my incest family in the basement!" Or anyway, take the case of any common or garden wife beater – what GOOD are they trying to achieve in the –wrong way? Oh, wait – CS says that –power– is as far as it goes a good thing. So it must be that the violent man’s partner is preventing him feeling adequately powerful and so he wishes to restore his power over her – which CS thinks is good – but –in the wrong way–. My brain is reeling from the Grand Canyon of wrongness of all of this. I’m a little shocked.

This was written in 1952 and CS comes across as a wise old buffer in a cardigan speaking to an earnest younger man. Both their wives are rustling up something to eat in the kitchen and talking about whatever mysterious things women find so interesting. Meanwhile the men thrash out the deep questions. Here’s a pearl I think we all ought to cherish:

–there are situations in which it is the duty of a married man to encourage his sexual impulse– (p.25)

Here’s another:

–the reason we do not execute witches is that we do not believe there are such things. If we did! surely we would all agree that if anyone deserved the death penalty, then these filthy quislings did?– (p.24)

Surely we would, us avuncular old shitbags in cardigans puffing on our pipes and living in the real world as we do.

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books)

I finished listening to this book early this morning, a little before seven. I could not sleep, and as I lay in the darkness in need of some comfort and company, I thought that I should go ahead and finish it. I am glad I did.

I am perhaps a bit biased. I have always liked Lewis, ever since I read The Chronicles of Narnia in high school. My liking deepened for him when I saw the movie Shadowlands. Something about his life called to me. I have since done research on him and his journey from athei

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I started this book years ago, and put it down, not out of disinterest, but because of other priorities at the time. As far as I got, which was not far, I appreciated his methodical, clear approach. I always intended to finish it. I actually own two copies, one on my Kindle, and one paperback copy. When I saw this at the library on audiobook, I decided to listen to it. That was a good decision.

Mere Christianity is a book on the fundamentals of Christian belief. Its audience is not just Christians, but also non-believers, folks who would like to investigate the faith of Christianity, what it entails, and what it doesn't. Although the Bible is the foundation of our beliefs, I think this book does an exceptional job of condensing, or explaining, if you will what Christians espouse.

I respect Mr. Lewis that he does not pretend to have all the answers. That he does not deny that there are some things he had not figured out. Nor does he deny that he struggled with some aspects of being a Christian at times. That is a strong testament to the life of a Christian. We admit that we are flawed folks in need of saving. We admit that we strive to know God and to have God work in us to make us more like him. That takes a fundamental humility, one that is rewarded time and time again. By breaking down and admitting our brokenness, we become whole by our acceptance of him who made all things.

There were parts of this book that spoke so intimately to my spirit, that I lifted my hand to praise God. For Mr. Lewis had indeed through the power of the Holy Spirit, put on paper that feeling that I believe all people who are born again in Christ feel and experience. For that alone, I could easily give this book five stars. However, it has yet more to offer.

I appreciate just as much, how logical Mr. Lewis is in his discussion of Christianity. While many feel that Christians are fools who believe in fairy tales, he shows just how much sense Christianity makes to those who choose to follow it. While atheism might have appeal for some, there is more appeal to those who choose to follow Christ than deciding to reject God in any form. He takes it a bit further to explain why some point in between atheism and Christianity (including other belief systems) won't work for those who choose to follow Christ. We freely admit we have nothing to lose, looking at the facts, and yes, there are inescapable facts about Jesus Christ, not just found in the Bible, in human history recorded by those who have absolutely no stake in affirming or confirming that miracle of God begotten man who came and died and rose again for the sins of humanity. He also speaks into the facts about the nature of humanity and what makes us uniquely created to love and to interact with a Creator who became man so that we could have an intimate and real relationship with him. If we are fools to seek Christ, then why do the laws of human morality

and that essential need inside ourselves point to the need for a savior, for fellowship with God?

I won't say I didn't struggle with some aspects. And Lewis does not in any way excuse the fact that he is saying things that are hard to face. I like that brutal honesty. Brutal honesty is as much a part of the Christian faith as the comfort is in knowing that while the walk in following Christ is a tough road, we do it not alone, but through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives in us and empowers us to follow him.

Danny Vanderbyl

Most people have no idea about what Christianity is. That is the reason that CS Lewis' book exists.

If you are looking for a book that will convince you to take the leap of faith and become a Christian (like so many 1-star reviewers who said they were unconvinced) then don't waste your time. No book will convince you. However, if you are looking for the facts about real Christianity (not as a religion, but as a relationship) then you can't do much better

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As an aside, I personally did not become a Christian because of the 'scientific facts,' although I did assure myself that I wasn't committing intellectual suicide by doing so. I used to be very fond of evolution. If you want this same validation, you can either talk to a Christian who knows the facts (as I did), or read something like what Lewis has presented. Simple.

If everybody read this book, I can imagine at least a few of the following would happen:

1. Most people in Western culture would stop calling themselves Christians, and would either become one or become a real atheist. They would at least be standing for something instead of falling for anything.
2. Other cultures would stop saying ignorant things like "America (or wherever) is a Christian nation." The facts in Lewis' work speak against this. They would stop saying that they have a holy war against these so-called Christians (who are in fact not Christians at all.)

3. Heaven forbid, some people might realize the inheritance and gift they could receive and actually choose to find out about God by taking an Alpha course or reading that "Bible" thing ;)

If you like reading novels, you'll probably find the book dry until the last chapter. But don't miss this book on that account. Even if you read only the last chapter (about the next evolution of humanity), you'll have captured a significant (and inspiring) picture of real (er, Mere) Christianity. When you do, you might just be tempted to go back and read the book and see what all the fuss is about (and how he could possibly make such an outrageous statement.)

Amber

Lewis is brilliant! Here's a quote from the book that's never left my head:

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg - o

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J.G. Keely

It is no wonder that Christians should revere a miracle-working carpenter: I think one must be the son of a god to build an attic before the rest of the house.

There is no fundamental basis for Lewis' arguments. I was hoping to find something thought-provoking and convincing, but it just felt like the same old ideas Aquinas and Descartes bandied around. These are no longer sufficient in a world of thermodynamics and evolution.

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Lewis has some skill and intellect, but the way he meanders about duality, truth, social darwinism, pathetic fallacy, comparative anthropology, and scientific process tends more towards self-justification than any profundity.

Lewis clearly wants to believe, and wants to bolster and justify those beliefs, but he never overcomes a reasonable burden of proof. He puts together the best indications he can find, but they don't add up to much.

Every time Lewis embarked on a thought, it would grow and blossom in intriguing ways until he would simply bunch together the whole bundle, tie it with a bow, label it 'god's handiwork' with a reverent nod, and move on, never reaching an insight. It made me think the allegory in Onan has been widely misread.

The righteousness of his belief contrasts hypocritically with the way he blithely writes off any other belief. To portray everyone else as faulty but still think yourself infallible is not only insulting, but a black mark on any otherwise reasonable mind.

I like Lewis, both his tone and his mind. I wanted to find something compelling in him. I wanted to find something that tied his observations together. I sense Lewis also wanted to find something he could attach himself to. After being alone and afraid in a grand world ripped by World Wars, who wouldn't feel a desperate need for meaning?