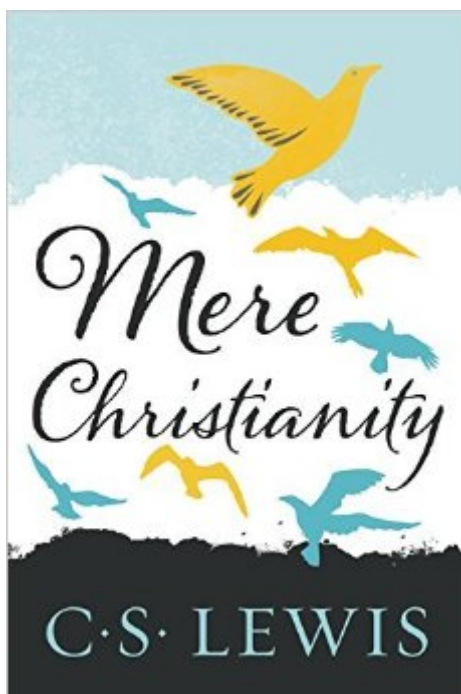


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Mere Christianity



Synopsis

In the classic *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis, the most important writer of the 20th century, explores the common ground upon which all of those of Christian faith stand together. Bringing together Lewis's legendary broadcast talks during World War Two from his three previous books *The Case for Christianity*, *Christian Behavior*, and *Beyond Personality*, *Mere Christianity* provides an unequaled opportunity for believers and nonbelievers alike to hear this powerful apologetic for the Christian faith.

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In his "Preface to *Paradise Lost*", Lewis wrote the following: "The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know *what* it is - what it was intended to do and how it was meant to be used. After that has been discovered the temperance reformer may decide that the corkscrew was made for a bad purpose, and the communist may think the same about the cathedral. But such questions come later. The first thing is to understand the object before you: as long as you think the corkscrew was meant for opening tins or the cathedral for entertaining tourists you can say nothing to purpose about them." This is a splendid piece of writing, but the idea presented is no way an original one - Plato and Aristotle said the same, said it clearly, and said it over two thousand years before Lewis did. If you had been able to confront Lewis with this fact, he might have said "Exactly." This brings us to one of the great themes of Lewis's writing, evident nowhere more so than in *"Mere Christianity"*: the defense of traditional wisdom against

prejudice of our age that would reject it for no other reason than that it is traditional. Lewis often encountered those who complained that his ideas were old-fashioned, and his standard reply was that theirs would soon be as well, so in that they were equal. I admit I couldn't help but smile at the complaint by one reviewer that Lewis's ideas on sexuality were "decades old". The complaint is quite mistaken: the ideas are not decades old but thousands of years old. And it is here that we have part of the answer to the problem of understanding the kind of thing "Mere Christianity" is: it is nothing new. It is in fact very, very old.

C. S. Lewis rejects the boundaries that divide Christianity's many denominations. While religious belief is not a concern for some, to many more it is an extremely serious decision, requiring deep thought and the entire energy of the mind. In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis leads all the Christian religions to common ground. This book is in fact a defense of the beliefs common to all Christians at all times. Originally, these ideas were contained in three separate books. Prior to 1943 they were only heard as informal radio broadcasts. This is why you will see colloquialisms used and the conversational style of the writing. When you read C. S. Lewis' work, you can hear his voice. Sometimes I forget I am reading. Like a friend with a cup of coffee in hand, he sits across from us. He then leads us up a ladder of logical thinking. He starts on the lowest step and gives us confidence to climb the next step. He guides us through an incredible thought process to a conclusion, which is perhaps so logical it becomes irrevocable truth. If you were to fall off a real ladder, your body would simply be obeying the laws of Gravity. He brilliantly explains how there is an eternal Law of Human Nature. This is the law of how mankind "ought" to behave in order to maintain a safe and happy society where everyone plays fair. Unfortunately, we all know how our society has failed to practice this law in all aspects of life. If you want a definition for this law it can only be "morals." A word from which many reel, as if a light was shining brightly in their eyes. To others: it is a light by which they see the path they walk through life. C. S. Lewis divides morality into three main sections: the actions, reasons behind the actions and why man was created.

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