

C.S. Lewis Summer Academy

Mere Christianity

First Session

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

What is Lewis up to in Book I?

Chapter 1: The Law of Human Nature

1. The fact that people argue about morality indicates that they are appealing to a common standard; without a common standard moral argument would be either impossible or unnecessary (or both). This common standard is what has been called natural law.

2. Natural law is the “law of human nature” “because people thought that every one knew it by nature and did not need to be taught it...taking the race as a whole, they thought that the human idea of decent behavior was obvious to every one” (p. 5).

3. The existence of a law of human nature or natural law seems to be indicated that morality has not varied greatly among civilizations: “I only need to ask the reader to think what a totally different morality would mean. Think of a country where people were admired for running away in battle, or where a man felt proud of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him...Men have differed as regards what people you ought to be unselfish to—whether it was only your own family, or your fellow countrymen, or every one. But they have always agreed that you ought not put yourself first” (p. 6).

4. The existence of natural law also seems to be indicated by the fact that there are no consistent relativists. The truly consistent moral relativist can not say that any action is really wrong.

5. If there is a law of human nature there exists a real Right and a real Wrong: “It seems, then, that we are forced to believe in a real Right and Wrong. People may be sometimes mistaken about them, just as people sometimes get their sums wrong; but they are not a matter of mere taste and opinion any more than the multiplication table” (p. 7).

6. We must recognize that we do not keep the natural law—we all fail at times to act in the way we expect other people to act. Even the excuses we make for bad actions presuppose some standard: “If we do not believe in decent behavior, why should we be so anxious to make excuses for not having behaved decently? The truth is, we believe in decency so much—we feel the Rule of Law pressing on us so—that we cannot bear to face the fact that we are breaking it” (p. 8).

Chapter 2: Some Objections

1. Objection #1: Isn't the natural law simply instinct? If the natural law is simply the product of evolution (as some contend), how do we account for our ability to make judgments about which instinct to follow? "If the Moral Law was one of our instincts, we ought to be able to point to some one impulse inside us which was always what we call 'good,' always in agreement with the rule of right behavior. But you cannot...Strictly speaking, there are no such things as good and bad impulses...The Moral Law is not any one instinct or set of instincts: it is something which makes a kind of tune (the tune we call goodness or right conduct) by directing the instincts" (p. 11).

2. Objection #2: Isn't the natural law just another term for social convention? "I fully agree that we learn the Rule of Decent Behavior from parents and teachers, and friends and books, as we learn everything else. But some of the things we learn are mere conventions which might have been different...and others of them, like mathematics, are real truths" (p. 12). If all morality is simply convention, it becomes impossible to say that the morality of one people is better or worse than another. It also becomes impossible to speak of moral progress because the idea of progress presupposes a standard by which it can be judged. A relativist can not be "progressive": "The moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, measuring them both by a standard..." (p. 13). There are social conventions but by what standard to we judge them?

3. Instead of there being real differences in morality there are actually differences in beliefs about facts. Example: The existence of slavery has depended upon the belief that there are certain kinds of people who are inferior. The disproving of this idea has generally coincided with the abolition of slavery.

Chapter 3: The Reality of the Law

1. The laws of nature are different from the law of human nature in one important respect: the former describe how nature usually behaves while the latter describes only how human beings *ought to behave* (p. 17).

2. The reason for this is that human behavior is not completely determined; because human beings have a degree of self-determination they also possess the moral quality of *responsibility*. This fact can not be taken for granted and even calls out for some explanation.

3. There are several inadequate explanations for this, several insufficient accounts of human responsibility. Lewis regards as inadequate the notions that human responsibility is really just a fancy name for the fact that we do simply what we find to be convenient (much of what we regard as morally good is not convenient), that which benefits us (much of what we regard as morally good can

actually be costly) and that which benefits society (which leaves unanswered the crucial question “But, why should I act to benefit society?”).

4. The law of human nature seems to have an ought about it that goes beyond convenience, immediate utility and social benefit. The Moral Law may be involved in all these things in some way but it seems to transcend them.

5. If this is true we have come upon an important discovery: “The Moral Law, or Law of Human Nature, is not simply a fact about human behavior in the same way as the Law of Gravitations is...On the other hand, it is not a mere fancy, for we cannot get rid of the idea, and most of the things we say and think about men would be reduced to nonsense if we did...Consequently, this Rule of Right and Wrong, or Law of Human Nature, or whatever you call it, must somehow or other be a real thing—a thing that is really there, not made up by ourselves...It begins to look as if we shall have to admit that there is more than one kind of reality...” (p. 20).

6. The law of human nature points to the existence of a reality distinct and beyond physical reality.

Chapter 4: What Lies Behind the Law

1. The question which Lewis now poses is this: What does the existence of the Moral Law tell us about the universe we live in?

2. There are essentially two views of the universe: (1) the materialist or naturalist view which holds that there is not reality beyond matter and that the universe is a purely random product; (2) the religious view which hold that the ultimate reality behind the universe is Mind; the universe is a product of conscious purpose.

3. Science can not judge between these two views since it deals with the verifiable and is based on empirical evidence. Whether the universe has or does not have a purpose is not a question it can answer. The question of something “behind the universe” is not a scientific question (pp. 22-23). Of course, this does not mean that some by “science” some people really mean “materialist philosophy”. This is what Lewis calls “half-baked science”.

4. This would still be true even if science knew everything about the universe that there was to know: “Supposing science ever became complete so that it knew every single thing in the whole universe. Is it not plain that the questions, ‘Why is there a universe?’ ‘Why does it go on as it does?’ ‘Has it any meaning?’ would remain just as they were?” (p. 23).

5. The reason for this is simple: If there is a Mind or Power behind the universe it would not simply be one of the observable features of the universe; being the Cause of all it would be beyond all.

6. But the Cause might make itself know in the universe in certain instances and human beings have a privileged access to at least one of those instances—

ourselves and our perception of the Moral Law: “If there was a controlling power outside the universe, it could not show itself to us as one of the facts inside the universe...The only way in which we could expect it to show itself would be inside ourselves as an influence or a command trying to get us to behave in a certain way. And that is just what we do find inside ourselves” (p. 24).

7. The human experience of the Moral Law suggests that there is a Mind beyond the universe which has purposes and which directs events in the universe. While this does not “prove” the existence of God it suggests that the religious account of the universe is more adequate than the materialist account.

8. The reason for this is that Mind seems a more adequate explanation for human reason and moral experience than chance; the materialist account impoverishes both.

Chapter 5: We Have Cause to Be Uneasy

1. Lewis considers what he has presented thus far to be the result of us proceeding “on our own steam”—meaning that he has taken nothing from revelation or Christian tradition. The Mind behind the universe is disclosed in at least two places available to all: in the universe itself and in the Moral Law. Mind offers a better explanation for both than does materialism.

2. The existence of an absolute goodness is not simply a comforting belief. On one hand, if no absolute goodness exists in the long run human moral action is without point, since without vindication. On the other hand, if absolute goodness does exist a great deal of what we do must seem offensive. Such a conviction induces moral seriousness: “Some people talk as if meeting the gaze of absolute goodness would be fun. They need to think again. They are still only playing with religion” (p. 31).

3. The real existence of the Moral Law and the reality of our failure to live according to it are significant: “...Christianity simply does not make sense until you have faced the sort of facts I have been describing. Christianity tells people to repent and promises them forgiveness. It therefore has nothing (as far as I know) to say to people who do not know they have done anything to repent of and who do not feel that they need forgiveness” (p. 31).

4. Christianity claims to answer the most important questions we ask. It claims to account for the existence of human responsibility and moral knowledge. It claims to account for the fact that we both desire and resist goodness. It claims to account for the fact that we wish to be responsible but at the same time to not want to be held accountable. While it does offer comfort, Christianity begins by discomfiting us. “In religion, as in war and everything else, comfort is the one thing you cannot get by looking for it. If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end: if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth—only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin with, and in the end, despair” (p. 32)

C.S. Lewis Summer Academy

Mere Christianity

Second Session

Book II: What Christian Believe

Chapter 1: The Rival Conceptions of God

1. Having argued in Book I that reality is best understood if it is seen as the product of a Mind, the next question is that of how best to understand this Mind.

2. Among those who are theists, there are different conceptions of God. One conception of God is called Pantheism: "Pantheists usually believe that God, so to speak, animates the universe as you animate your body: that the universe almost *is* God, so that if it did not exist He would not exist either, and anything you find in the universe is part of God" (pp. 36-37). For Pantheism, God and the world are not two distinct realities.

3. The Christian conception of God is quite different: for Christianity, God creates the universe as something separate and distinct from himself, as something which he radically transcends and yet is also present to.

4. The chief difficulty of Pantheism is that it must accept what appears to be evil as part of God; the mixture of good and evil that we see in the world represents a mixture of them in God. If all aspects of the universe have something of the divine in them, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to think about changing them; in the final analysis, the terms "good" and "evil" finally lose their meaning. There is no real good and evil only "what now is".

5. In contrast, on the Christian view, it is possible to speak of creation being in revolt against the Creator. Because the world is not a part of God it can go wrong and this is where all the biblical language about God's judgment, wrath and righteousness come in. In this sense, rather than speak of good and evil as simply elements of the world, it is possible to regard evil as an intruder.

6. At the end of the chapter Lewis reports on one of his thoughts while he was an atheist. He tried to argue against the existence of God on the basis of the injustice and cruelty in the world. If the world is a senseless chaos, how can God exist? Lewis then asked himself a question: When I call the universe unjust, to what am I comparing it? If the universe was a senseless chaos, from whence would our idea of justice come? "Thus in the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist—in other words, that the whole of reality was senseless—I found I was forced to assume that one part of reality—namely my idea of justice—was full of sense...If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning..." (pp. 38-39).

Chapter 2: The Invasion

1. Lewis notes that some people want a “simple” religion, by which they usually mean what Lewis calls “Christianity-and-water”. This religion comes down to “God loves you” and leaves out things like sin, redemption, judgment and hell. But a religion that deals with reality is bound to be complex because reality is complex.

2. “Besides being complicated, reality, in my experience, is usually odd. It is not neat, not obvious, not what you expect...Reality, in fact, is usually something you could not have guessed. That is one of the reasons I believe Christianity. It is a religion you could not have guessed. If it offered us just the kind of universe we had always expected, I should feel we were making it up” (pp. 41-42).

3. The problem that faces us is this: We live in a world that contains both beauty and horror (moral and physical). Only two views really take this fact seriously: Christianity and Dualism.

4. For Christianity, the world is essentially good (have been created by God) but it has been seriously distorted by both human and supernatural evil. Christianity takes evil seriously. Dualism proposes that there are two separate powers, one good and one evil and that these are locked in a continuous struggle. For Dualism, the existence of these two powers explains our experience of good and evil. The problem with Dualism is that if both good and evil are ultimate, by what criteria do we judge them to be “good” and “evil”. The distinction seems to imply something beyond both by which *they* are judged.

5. Another problem with Dualism is that evil seems to be parasitic on good; evil seems to be perverted good. “I do mean that wickedness, when you examine it, turns out to be the pursuit of some good in the wrong way...In other words badness cannot succeed even in being bad in the same way in which goodness is good. Goodness is, so to speak, itself: badness is only spoiled goodness...In order to be bad he must have good things to want and then to pursue in the wrong way: he must have impulses which were originally good in order to be able to pervert them” (p. 44).

The Christian view which sees the devil as a fallen angel and not as an independent power seems more in keeping with this.

6. For Christianity, evil is the result not of something in God or the existence of an evil power but of a turning away from God, a rebellion against goodness and “we are living in a part of the universe occupied by the rebel” (p. 45).

Chapter 3: The Shocking Alternative

1. If the preceding chapter offered an accurate description of evil, a question follows: Why did God allow a rebellion against him to take place?

2. Lewis’ explanation goes like this: “God created things which had free will.

That means creatures which can go either wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong; I cannot....Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having...The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight compared with which the most rapturous love between a man and a woman on this earth is mere milk and water. And for that they must be free” (p. 48).

3. While we may not fully know the full mind of God, Lewis says we can conclude that God thought his purpose would be better served by creating a world with real freedom, a freedom which involves a turning to evil, rather than what he calls a “toy world” “which only moves when he pulls the strings. While Lewis does not think that the human turn to evil caught God “by surprise” nor does he think that God wills evil, he concludes that God allows for it and can overcome it.

4. The evil a being is able to effect is dependent upon the excellence of that being; God did not create spectacular evils but created spectacular creatures which could chose evil: “The better stuff a creature is made of—the cleverer and stronger and freer it is—the better it will be if it goes right, but also the worse it will be if it goes wrong. A cow cannot be very good or very bad; a dog can be both better and worse; a child better and worse still; an ordinary man, still more so; a man of genius, still more so; a superhuman spirit best—or worst-of all” (p. 49).

5. The “fall” occurs when we seek happiness apart from God: “out of that hopeless attempt has come nearly all that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery—the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy” (p. 49).

6. There is no real human happiness apart from God: “That is why is it just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing” (p. 50).

7. God deals with evil in three ways: (1) Even after the fall humans retain a conscience; it remains as a guide even in the sense as bearing witness against us. (2) God sends what Lewis calls “good dreams” which are prefigurations of Christ to people. This is why Lewis is not surprised to find Christian parallels in non-Christian religions (sacrifice, eternal life, resurrection, purification, rebirth, etc.). (3) God chose a particular people with which he made a covenant and began fashioning them into the kind of people he wanted. The whole history of this people leads to the coming of the Messiah who appears not simply as a teacher or a prophet but who claims to act on God’s behalf and to do things that only the God of Israel can do (forgive sins, institute a covenant, consummate history, etc).

8. Lewis’ famous concluding paragraph to this chapters bears careful study.

Chapter 4: The Perfect Penitent

1. The problem with seeing Jesus as simply a prophet or teacher is that this view does not fit well with Jesus' own view of his mission and work; nor does it seem to truly address the nature of the human predicament.

2. What did Jesus understand himself to be about? The answer to this question is to be found in the narrative structure of the four Gospels and the emphasis on the Epistles: In both the focus is on Jesus' death and resurrection.

3. Jesus' death and resurrection, taken together as two parts of a single event, has been understood under the heading of atonement or reconciliation. "The central Christian belief is that Christ's death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start. Theories of how it did this are another matter" (p. 54). While there are a number of theories about Jesus' death, no one theory by itself is adequate. (This reflects the fact that the New Testament uses a variety of images to describe what happened on the Cross. Examples: Romans 3:21-25; Romans 5:6-11; Colossians 2:8-15; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Hebrews 9:23-28; 1 Peter 1:17-21.)

4. The different theories of Christ's work point to one central affirmation: "We believe that the death of Christ is just that point in history at which something absolutely unimaginable from outside shows through into our world...We are told that Christ was killed for us, that His death has washed out our sins, and that by dying He disabled death itself. That is the formula. That is Christianity. That is what is to be believed" (p. 55).

5. We have to understand Christ's work from the standpoint both of the human predicament and of the nature of God: The problem is that man attempts to live without God, to create a life for himself apart from God's purposes. This radically skewed form of life is what we call sin. This means that man is not a creature who merely needs some improvement but, rather, "he is a rebel who must lay down his arms" (p. 56). (In this context it is important to note that in Romans 5:10 Paul characterizes all sinners as God's "enemies"—those who have set themselves up against God.)

6. There is only one thing that can bring man back to God and restore his communion with God: repentance. Repentance is not what people do to earn God's forgiveness; repentance is the way back to God. And repentance is difficult because it is a kind of surrender, even a kind of death: "It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death" (p. 57). It is not that God would "let us off the hook" if he were simply more forgiving; it is that repentance is simply the path back to God and that human life can only find its proper fulfillment in relation to God.

7. But here is where we encounter a dilemma: As fallen people we need to repent but only a truly good person can repent perfectly. While needing repentance

ourselves we do not have the resources within us to accomplish it. Repentance—the return to God—can only be accomplished by God. If we see this “from the outside” it appears to be grand dilemma: Only human beings need to repent; only can make it possible. Seen “from the inside” this does not appear as a dilemma for to see things from the inside is to begin with the Cross and then work backwards; to begin with God’s solution and then attempt to understand it.

8. The “dilemma” is resolved in the person of Jesus Christ, in whom God acts both in his proper nature as God and his assumed nature as human: “But supposing God became man—suppose our human nature which can suffer and die was amalgamated with God’s nature in one person—then that person could help us. He could surrender His will, and suffer and die, because He was man; and He could do it perfectly because He was God. You and I can go through this process only if God does it in us; but God can do it only if He becomes man. Our attempts at this dying will succeed only if we men share in God’s dying, just as our thinking can succeed only because it is a drop out of the ocean of His intelligence: but we cannot share God’s dying unless God dies; and He cannot die except by being a man” (p. 58).

9. The point to notice here is that Christ’s death and resurrection do not simply offer forgiveness but make possible repentance. With Christ an entirely different and new form of life opens up: a life of complete faithfulness or, put another way, a life in which the power of sin is steadily erased and, finally, completely eliminated.

10. Several places in the New Testament elaborate on this view: Romans 5:12-21; Romans 6:1-23; Romans 8:1-11; Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 3:1-17.

Chapter 5: The Practical Conclusion

1. All this means that Christianity is not simply about following Jesus’ teaching but also about sharing in his suffering, humility and surrender and sharing in his new resurrected life (cf. Philippians 3:1-11). The substance of the Gospel is this: “In Christ a new kind of man has appeared: and the new kind of life which began in Him is to be put into us” (p. 60).

2. For Lewis, there are three means by which the life of Christ is communicated to us: baptism, belief, Holy Communion. “At least, those are the three ordinary methods. I am not saying there may not be special cases where it is spread without one or more of these” (p. 61).

3. Christianity is not a self-help project: “But even the best Christian that ever lived is not acting on his own steam—he is only nourishing or protecting a life he could never have acquired by his own efforts” (p. 63). These three means nourish the “Christ life” in us and this is the only real foundation of the Christian life.

4. This puts the Christian life in perspective: “...a Christian is not a man who never goes wrong, but a man who is enabled to repent and pick himself up and

begin over again after each stumble—because the Christ-life is inside him, repairing him all the time, enabling him to repeat (in some degree) the kind of voluntary death which Christ Himself carried out.

5. This way of thinking helps to clarify the significance of the Church. When Christians speak of “life in Christ” “they mean Christ is actually operating through them; that the whole mass of Christians are the physical organism through which Christ acts... There is no good trying to be more spiritual than God. God never meant man to be a purely spiritual creature. That is why He uses material things like bread and wine to put the new life into us. We may think this rather crude and unspiritual. God does not: He invented eating. He likes matter. He invented it” (p. 64).

6. God’s work in Christ points forward to the consummation: “When the author walks on the stage the play is over. God is going to invade, all right: but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else—something it never entered your head to conceive—comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left? For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side” (p. 65).

C. S. Lewis Summer Academy

Mere Christianity

Third Session

Book III: Christian Behavior

Chapter 1: The Three Parts of Morality

1. For many people, morality is that which prevents one from having a good time; being “good” and having “fun” are very different things. In reality, moral rules are “directions for running the human machine” (p. 69) and are designed to prevent some kind of breakdown.

2. Being “moral” is not something only the “good” are to aspire to; morality describes a life that is lived in a way proper to human beings and so to be “immoral” is to live a less than human life. In this way, living a “moral life” should not become a conceit.

3. Morality is concerned with three things: (1) harmony among individuals, (2) harmonizing things inside a person and (3) the general purpose of human life. The tendency today is to pay attention to the first thing while neglecting the second two. This raises a question: Of what use is it to formulate rules for social behavior while neglecting the fact that those who are supposed to keep them are filled with greed, cowardice, ill-temper and self-conceit? It does no good to talk about morality unless one also thinks about the qualities which enable one to be moral and the meaning of human life (what is morality for?).

4. It is the last point on which Christianity differs most markedly from secular morality. All moral questions acquire a new meaning and demand a new answer when we realize that we are finally responsible to God and that we act as agents who are destined for a life beyond death. If we live for a Purpose beyond ourselves and if we do not have final authority to dispose of ourselves as we wish, things look very different.

Chapter 3: Social Morality

1. Christianity does not have a detailed political program. Christianity was “never intended to replace or supercede the ordinary human arts and sciences: it is rather a director which set them all to the right jobs, and a source of energy which will give them all new life, if only they will put themselves at its disposal” (p. 83).

2. The task of applying Christian principles to politics and society rests with Christians, particularly within their areas of expertise.

3. A fully Christian society would look quite different than any presently existing society. On one hand, it would involve “liberal” elements: It would not be a society based on consumption and focused on luxuries and “upward mobility”. On the other hand, it would involve “conservative” elements: It would be marked by respect and obedience and would possess a very different notion of freedom. In short, “We should feel that its economic life was very socialistic and, in that sense, ‘advanced’, but that its family life and its code of manners were rather old fashioned—perhaps even ceremonial and aristocratic” (p. 84).

4. Christianity is a plan for the whole person but the problem is that we want to pick out the emphases that we like and remove the ones we do not: “and that is why people who are fighting for quite opposite things can both say they are fighting for Christianity” (p. 85).

5. One of the emphases that many was to overlook is the Christian emphasis on charity (*caritas*=love). Christianity does not allow us to be concerned only with our own well being but demands that we look beyond ourselves. The Christian emphasis on giving goes against the emphasis on accumulating more stuff. Active charity is difficult: “I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than you spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc. is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small” (p. 86).

6. Here is the central problem with Christian social teaching: “Most of us are not really approaching the subject in order to find out what Christianity says: we are approaching it in the hope of finding support from Christianity for the views of our own party. We are looking for an ally where we are offered either a Master or—a Judge” (p. 87).

Chapter 5: Sexual Morality

1. What Christianity has to say about sexual morality comes under the category of the virtue of chastity. Of all the Christian virtues it is the most unpopular. Chastity is not to be confused with a mere “fussy standard of propriety”. The principle is this: Sexuality is inherently marital sexuality. Married Christians are called to complete fidelity to their spouse and single Christians are called to celibacy.

2. The problem is that in our culture the natural sexual appetite has been inflamed to an unnatural degree: “Now suppose you come to a country where you could fill a theatre by simply bringing a covered plate on the stage and then slowly lifting the cover so as to let every one see, just before the lights went out, that it contained a mutton chop or a bit of bacon, would you not think that in that country

something had gone wrong with the appetite for food?” (p. 96).

3. Contraceptives have made sexual indulgence more easy and extra-marital affairs more safe. The bond between marriage and sex has now been broken. The problem is that any appetite grows by indulgence.

4. For Christianity neither the act of sex nor the pleasure it gives are to be ashamed of since it presumes that God intended both. The problem is not the act or pleasure itself. But there should be shame associated with sexual desire enlarged out of all proportion: “There is nothing to be ashamed of in enjoying your food: there would be everything to be ashamed of if half the world made food the main interest of their lives and spent their time looking at picture of food and dribbling and smacking their lips...our ancestors have handed over to us organisms which are warped in this respect: and we grow up surrounded by propaganda in favor of unchastity. There are people who want to keep our sex instinct inflamed in order to make money out of us” (p. 99).

5. One of the great problems is that we can come to believe that lust is “natural” or “healthy” and that what is abnormal is to discipline it. In our culture the chaste person is an object of humor. All happiness requires self-control and this applies even to sex.

6. It is important that while difficult chastity is possible, but only with God’s help. The attempt to practice chastity will result in failures and lapses. But these need not be final. Failure is not in the lapse but in the becoming content with anything less than the full virtue.

Christian Marriage

1. The Christian ideal of marriage is based on the principle that in marriage the man and the woman become “one flesh” or a single organism (Matthew 19:5-6; cf. Genesis 2:24, I Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 5:31). This tells us something about God’s design for us, that male and female were made for each other: “The monstrosity of sexual intercourse outside marriage is that those who indulge in it are trying to isolate one kind of union (the sexual) from all the other kinds of union which are intended to go along with it and make up the total union” (pp. 104-105). The idea is that sex is not an isolated act but is the physical expression of the spiritual and emotional union of husband and wife. In marriage sex is a sign of the covenant that exists between man and woman; in sex outside marriage sex is removed from the context of the covenant and now becomes a momentary desire.

2. The notion of marriage as uniting man and woman into a single existence also makes clear why Christianity has a negative evaluation of divorce: Divorce is not the ending of a contract but the dismemberment of a person.

3. “If people do not believe in permanent marriage, it is perhaps better that

they should live together unmarried than that they should make vows they do not mean to keep” (p. 106).

4. One problem in our society is that we think that marriage is based on “being in love” and that when the “love” ceases so does the marriage. The marriage promises are not promises to feel a certain way but to act a certain way: “Being in love is a good thing, but it is not the best thing...You cannot make it the basis of a whole life. It is a noble feeling, but it is still a feeling. Now no feeling can be relied on to last in its full intensity, or even to last at all...love as distinct from ‘being in love’ is not merely a feeling. It is a deep unity, maintained by the will and deliberately strengthened by habit; reinforced by (in Christian marriages) the grace which both partners ask, and receive, from God. They can have this love for each other even at those moments when they do not like each other...It is on this love that the engine of marriage is run” (p. 109).

5. “People get from books the idea that if you have married the right person you may expect to go on ‘being in love’ for ever. As a result, when they find they are not, they think this proves they have made a mistake and are entitled to a change...In this department of life, as in every other, thrills come at the beginning and do not last” (p. 110).

Chapter 7: Forgiveness

1. “Every one says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive” (p. 115). The Christian standard of forgiveness is high: “I say to you, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,’ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:44, 45).

2. The central question is: What does it mean to love your neighbor (cf. Matthew 24:34-40)? It does not appear to mean “feel fond of” your neighbor or “find your neighbor attractive”. Nor does it mean “pretend your neighbor has done nothing wrong” when the neighbor has or “pretend that your neighbor has done nothing seriously wrong” when the neighbor has. Nor does loving one’s neighbor mean that one wants to see the neighbor exempted from due punishment. It does mean on one hand, having a sense of grief that the person should have done what they actually did and, on the other, wanting the person to be corrected and freed from this fault.

3. We do not love the neighbor by merely approving what he or she does or by attempting to ignore it. This is due to the Christian perspective on the person: “Remember, we Christians think man lives for ever. Therefore, what really matters is those little marks or twists on the central, inside part of the soul which are going to turn it, in the long run, into a heavenly or a hellish creature...We may punish if necessary, but we must not enjoy it. In other words, something inside us, the feeling

of resentment, the feeling that wants to get one's own back, must be simply killed" (p. 120).

4. Loving one's neighbor as oneself does not require us to pretend—it requires us to seek the neighbor's in all our actions toward him or her.

5. It also means loving people who are not lovable. It is important while doing this to remember that this is how God loves us.

Chapter 8: The Great Sin

1. Pride is the essence of sin and leads to "the complete anti-God state of mind" (p. 122). It is essentially competitive and derives satisfaction in superiority.

2. Pride prevents any true knowledge of God: "In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself. Unless you know God as that...you do not know God at all. As long as you are proud you cannot know God. Pride is subtle and can enter into any aspect of the Christian life. It is a "spiritual cancer" which destroys every possibility of real love and contentment (p. 125).

3. Pride is not pleasure at being praised: The more delight one takes in oneself, the less delight one takes in praise. The vain person thinks too much about what others think of him or her and is always wanting admiration. The person who truly is proud does not care what other think of him or her.

4. To take pride in something outside of oneself is not necessarily to fall into the sin of pride and can actually be a step away from it.

5. We should not think that pride is bad because God forbids it out of a sense of his own status—as if God were himself proud. God works to humble us not because he wants to "beat us down" but because humility is the only path to the knowledge of God.

6. Our notion of humility needs to be rehabilitated. The truly humble person is not "a sort of greasy, smarmy person, who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody. Probably all you will think about him is that he seemed a cheerful, intelligent chap who took a real interest in what you said to him" (p. 128).

Chapters 11 and 12: Faith

1. Why is faith a virtue (a disposition instilled by grace)? One dimension of faith is regarding as true the teachings of Christianity. Faith as a virtue means that one continues to accept as true these teachings in spite of feelings to the contrary or situations of temptation in which these teachings appear to be inconvenient. To speak of faith as a virtue is to speak of faith persisting through the ups and downs of

life.

2. This explains why faith must be nourished on a consistent basis. Very few people leave off faith as a result of convincing argument; most simply drift away.

3. Faith is not a kind of examination that if we do well on it we will earn from God a “passing grade”. Faith is not something we work ourselves up to and then a matter of holding on to some very difficult notions the holding of which guarantees us a “good grade”.

4. A second dimension of faith comes into view when we recognize our inadequacy in traveling the road back to God. We reach a point at which we realize that we can not do it alone. This dimension of faith has to do with trusting that Christ will share with us his own sinless Life. This does not mean that we do nothing but it means that we do things in a less anxious way. Faith is the recognition that the imperative (“work out you own salvation with fear and trembling”) is based on the indicative (“for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure”—Philippians 2:12, 13).

5. Real faith does not think in terms of rules or guilt or duties but leads us to something beyond these: “One has a glimpse of a country where they do not talk of those things, except perhaps as a joke. Every one there is filled with light. But they do not call it goodness. They do not call it anything. They are not thinking of it. They are too busy looking at the source from which it comes. But this is near the stage where the road passes over the rim of our world. No one’s eyes can see very far beyond that: lots of people’s eyes can see farther than mine” (p. 150).

C. S. Lewis Summer Academy

Mere Christianity

Fourth Session

Book IV: Beyond Personality

Chapter 1: Making and Begetting

1. What is the value of doctrine? Doctrine represents the experience and reflection of the Church. While individual experience may be more exciting and immediate it can often lead in wrong directions or simply be defective. Personal experience can not be the final criterion of Christian truth. An examination of modern popular religion will reveal its limitations.

2. In much of popular (semi-secular) religion, Jesus is portrayed as a teacher who offers advice: "If Christianity only means one more bit of good advice, then Christianity is of no importance. There has been no lack of good advice for the last four thousand years. A bit more make no difference" (p. 156). Christianity claims to be delivering more than just common sense moral philosophy.

3. The center of Christian theology has to do not simply with what we do but with what we become: children of God. The key distinction here is between Christ who is begotten of the Father and human being who are created by God. In Christian doctrine, Christ was begotten eternally from God and so shares in the divine nature while human beings are created by God and so are creatures, not of the divine nature.

4. This distinction helps us to see another important distinction, that between two kinds of life. The life possessed by creatures is biological life (*bios*) while the life possessed by the Son of God is Life in it's complete fullness (*zoe*). When Christian doctrine speaks of us becoming children of God it is speaking of human creatures receiving *Zoe* from the Son, a life which is "imperishable, undefiled and unfading" (1 Peter 1:4). This is what is described in John 1:1-18. This is what Christianity is all about.

Chapter 2: The Three-Personal God

1. While God is not simply a person (an enlarged version of a human person) God is not impersonal. Rather, God is super-personal. This is one of the things expressed by the doctrine of the Trinity and this is important because it is the foundation of the Christian understanding of salvation: salvation is about human beings becoming "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). If God were an

impersonal cosmic force, the Christian notion of salvation would make no sense.

2. Human personhood is personal existence at one level. But the divine being is at a different level, a level infinitely more complex. In speaking of this level of existence we are faced with the limitations of our thought and language both of which are bound by finitude.

3. God is super-personal which means that while he possesses one eternal and undivided being, this being is characterized by three self-differentiations, the persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

4. This may sound abstract but this doctrine is at the heart of the whole reality of prayer: "An ordinary Christian kneels down to say his prayers. He is trying to get into touch with God. But if he is a Christian he knows that what is prompting him to pray is also God: God, so to speak, inside him. But he also knows that all his real knowledge of God comes through Christ, the Man who is God—that Christ is standing beside him, helping him to pray, praying for him. You see what is happening. God is the thing to which he is praying—the goal he is trying to reach. God is the thing inside him which is pushing him on—the motive power. God is also the road or bridge along which he is being pushed to that goal. So that the whole threefold life of the three-personal Being is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary man is saying his prayers" (p. 163).

5. The doctrine of the Trinity is rooted in the prayer and worship of the early Church: Christian prayer and worship are offered to the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. Quite simply, without the action of God both prayer and worship as Christians understand it would be impossible. And both prayer and worship grow out of the Christian understanding of salvation: God the Father draws us into an eternal relationship with himself through the reconciling work of the Son in the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

6. This has important implications: "When you come to knowing God, the initiative lies on His side. If he does not show Himself, nothing you can do will enable you to find Him...the instrument through which you see God is you whole self. And if a man's self is not kept clean and bright, his glimpse of God will be blurred...God can show Himself as He really is only to real men" (pp. 164-165). God can not enter into an eternal relationship with sinners for the simple reason that sinners are not capable of such a relationship. It is the preparation for this relationship that we call Christianity.

Chapter 4: Good Infection

1. One aspect of the doctrine of the Trinity is that it accounts for the Son's relationship to the Father while avoiding a lapse into polytheism. The Son is eternally begotten from the Father such that the Father is defined by his relationship to the Son and the Son by his relationship to the Father. But both Father and Son

share one undivided and eternal divine being and hence are distinct but equal, differentiated but not multiple.

2. The Son is the one through whom the universe was created and he is the one through whom it has coherence and purpose (cf. Colossians 1:15-20).

3. The doctrine of the Trinity also reveals something about God's inner nature. It specifies the affirmation that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Because real love involves an other who is the object of love, God's love is the most real of all because he contains within his own being an eternal act of love, a love of the three Persons for each other which binds them into a unity without erasing their individuality. For God, love is not a feeling or even simply an action but a dimension of his very being.

4. The consequence is important: "...in Christianity God is not a static thing—not even a person—but a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance. The union between the Father and the Son is such a live concrete thing that this union is also itself is also a person...What grows out of the joint life of the Father and Son is a real Person, in fact the Third of the three Persons who are God" (p. 175).

5. Ultimately, salvation for Christianity is entering into this "dance" and taking our proper place within it as creatures, that is receiving Zoe from God: "Now the whole offer which Christianity makes is this: that we can, if we let God have His way, come to share in the life of Christ. If we do, we shall then be sharing a life which was begotten, not made, which always has existed and always will exist. Christ is the Son of God. If we share in this kind of life we also shall be sons of God. We shall love the Father as He does and the Holy Ghost will arise in us...Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else" (p. 177).

Chapter 5: Obstinate Toy Soldiers

1. Sin is not simply about moral faults but represents a corruption of human nature—sin weakens our capacity to be human. In our weakness, our natural life becomes much altered: we become self-centered and want to be admired, we take advantage of others and see the world open for exploitation and we want to be left to ourselves which is why we resist anything that might challenge our self-sufficiency.

2. Part of God's solution to the problem of sin is the Incarnation. The advent of Jesus Christ represents something new: "The result of this was that you now had one man who really was what all men were intended to be: one man in whom the created life, derived from His Mother, allowed itself to be completely and perfectly turned into the begotten life. The natural human creature in Him was taken up fully into the divine Son. Thus in one instance humanity had, so to speak, arrived: has passed into the life of Christ...The Man in Christ rose again: not only the God. That is the whole point. For the first time we saw a real man. One tin soldier—real tin, just

like the rest—had come fully and splendidly alive” (pp. 179-180).

3. The Incarnation affects human nature as such and through the Holy Spirit the “effect” of the Incarnation (the appearance of a Real Human Being) spreads to humankind. This means that salvation happens by appropriating something that God has already accomplished (in Christ); it also means that God is the one through whom it is appropriated (the Holy Spirit).

Chapter 7: Let's Pretend

1. One way to think of the Christian life is to think of it as “putting on Christ” or putting on the new life which he makes possible. A good description of this can be found in Colossians 3:1-17.

2. Christianity is not simply a matter of following Jesus’ teaching but a matter of catching his “good infection” from him: “The real Son of God is at your side. He is beginning to turn you into the same kind of thing as Himself. He is beginning, so to speak, to ‘inject’ His kind of life and thought, His *Zoe*, into you’ beginning to turn the tin soldier into a live man. The part of you that does not like it is the part that is still tin” (p. 189).

3. The language of the New Testament conveys this over and over again. It speak of Christians being “born again” (1 Peter 1:3), “putting on Christ” (Colossians 3:10), having “the mind of Christ” (Philippians 2:5) and having Christ “formed in” us (Galatians 4:19): “It is not a question of a good man who died two thousand years ago. It is a living Man, still as much a man as you, really coming and interfering with your very self; killing the old natural self in you and replacing it with the kind of self He has” (p. 191). We might think here especially about Romans 6:1-11.

4. As this happens we discover that we become more and more aware not simply of our sinful acts but of our sinfulness. The work of Christ draws our attention not simply to what we do but also to what we are. We realize that everything that really needs to be done in our souls can only be done by God. Apart from the work of God, human effort results in little. Grace takes priority over human action but it does not make it unnecessary.

Chapter 8: Is Christianity Hard or Easy?

1. If all that Christianity involves is becoming nicer people it would seem to be fairly easy and something that we could accomplish on our own. But what if something much larger is anticipated? What if Matthew 5:48 sums up God’s agenda?: “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (cf. Ephesians 5:1-2).

2. The demand of Christianity is total and this is because we are not expected to realize it on our own: “Christ says ‘Give me All. I don’t want so much of your time

and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. I don't want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the one's you think wicked—the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own shall become your's' (pp. 196-197)".

3. What Jesus says in Matthew 5:48 is not to be interpreted "metaphorically": "He never talked vague, idealistic gas. When he said, 'Be perfect,' He meant it. He meant that we must go in for the full treatment...the Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make the little Christs" (pp. 198-199).

Chapter 9: Counting the Cost

1. "Here is another way of putting the two sides of the truth. On one hand we must never imagine that our own unaided efforts can be relied on to carry us even through the next twenty-four hours as 'decent' people. If He does not support us, on one of us is safe from some gross sin. On the other hand, no possible degree of holiness or heroism which has ever been recorded of the greatest saints is beyond what He is determined to produce in every one of us in the end...The command *Be ye perfect* is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command" (p. 204-205).

2. "If we let him...He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly...His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful, but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what He said" (pp. 205-206).

Chapter 10: Nice People or New Men

1. We must avoid confusing the work that God wants to do in us with becoming nice; what God's work does change us and while we should become different, niceness can not be identified with salvation or holiness.

2. People who have a degree of natural goodness (good temperament) will be inclined to self-satisfaction and be unaware of their need for grace: "If you mistake for your own merits what are really God's gifts to you through nature, and if you are contented with simply being nice, you are still a rebel: and all those gifts will only make your fall more terrible, your corruption more complicated, your bad example more disastrous" (p. 215).

3. People who have bad temperaments will be more inclined to be aware of

their need for grace. To such people grace is an encouragement: “But if you are a poor creature—poisoned by a wretched upbringing in some house full of vulgar jealousies and senseless quarrels—saddled, by no choice of your own, with some loathsome sexual perversion—nagged day in and day out by an inferiority complex that makes you snap at your best friends—do not despair. He knows all about it. You are one of the poor whom He blessed. He knows what a wretched machine you are trying to drive. Keep on. Do what you can. One day...He will fling it on the scrap-heap and give you a new one. And then you may astonish us all...” (p. 215).

4. “For mere improvement is not redemption, though redemption always improves people here and now and will, in the end, improve them to a degree we cannot yet imagine. God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man” (p. 216).

Chapter 11: The New Man

1. The whole of life must be submitted to Christ: “Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in” (p. 227).