



# Further Up & Further In

Exploring *Mere Christianity* with C.S. Lewis

**Book 1: Right and Wrong as a Clue to the  
Meaning of the Universe**



“The goal of the C.S. Lewis Institute is **not** to make more **fans** of C.S. Lewis, but to make more **disciples** like C.S. Lewis”

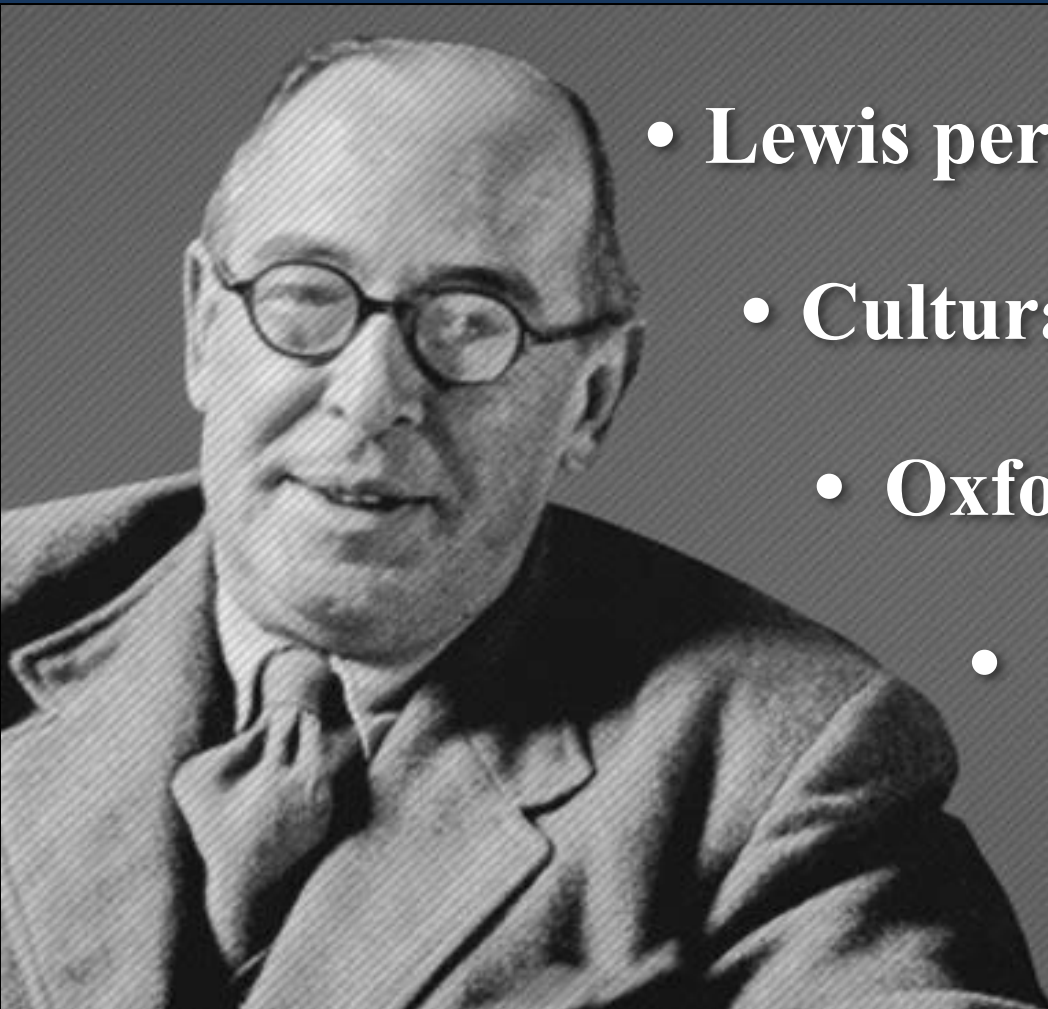
Dr. James Houston,  
Cofounder of CSLI and  
Co Founder of Regent  
College



# Session 1: Preview

1. Gain a clearer understanding of how events, people, and circumstances influenced the conversion of C.S. Lewis.
2. Identify some of the details that contributed to the publication of Mere Christianity.
3. Examine the reasoning presented in Book 1 of Mere Christianity for the existence of the moral law and how its existence points to a reality beyond the material world.
4. Reflect on what some scripture passages have to say about the existence of a moral lawgiver, and moral human nature.
5. Consider how we might use our moral intuitions as a starting point for conversations about how the Christian worldview makes sense of our life experience.

# The Context of Mere Christianity



- Lewis personal story
- Cultural Context
- Oxford
- WWII (Historical)

*C. S. Lewis*



# WORLD WAR II

## GERMAN BLITZKRIEG



**23,949**

tons of high explosive  
dropped in **85** major  
raids



**57**

nights of consecutive  
raids on London after  
7 Sept attack



**5,000**

people slept in Epping  
Forest to escape bombing  
on "Black Saturday"  
**7 September 1940**



**13**

Italian bombers shot  
down in unsuccessful  
raid  
**11 November 1940**



**1,436**

people killed on  
**10/11 May 1941**  
- the most destructive raid



**8**

churches designed  
by Sir Christopher Wren  
destroyed

# BLITZKRIEG



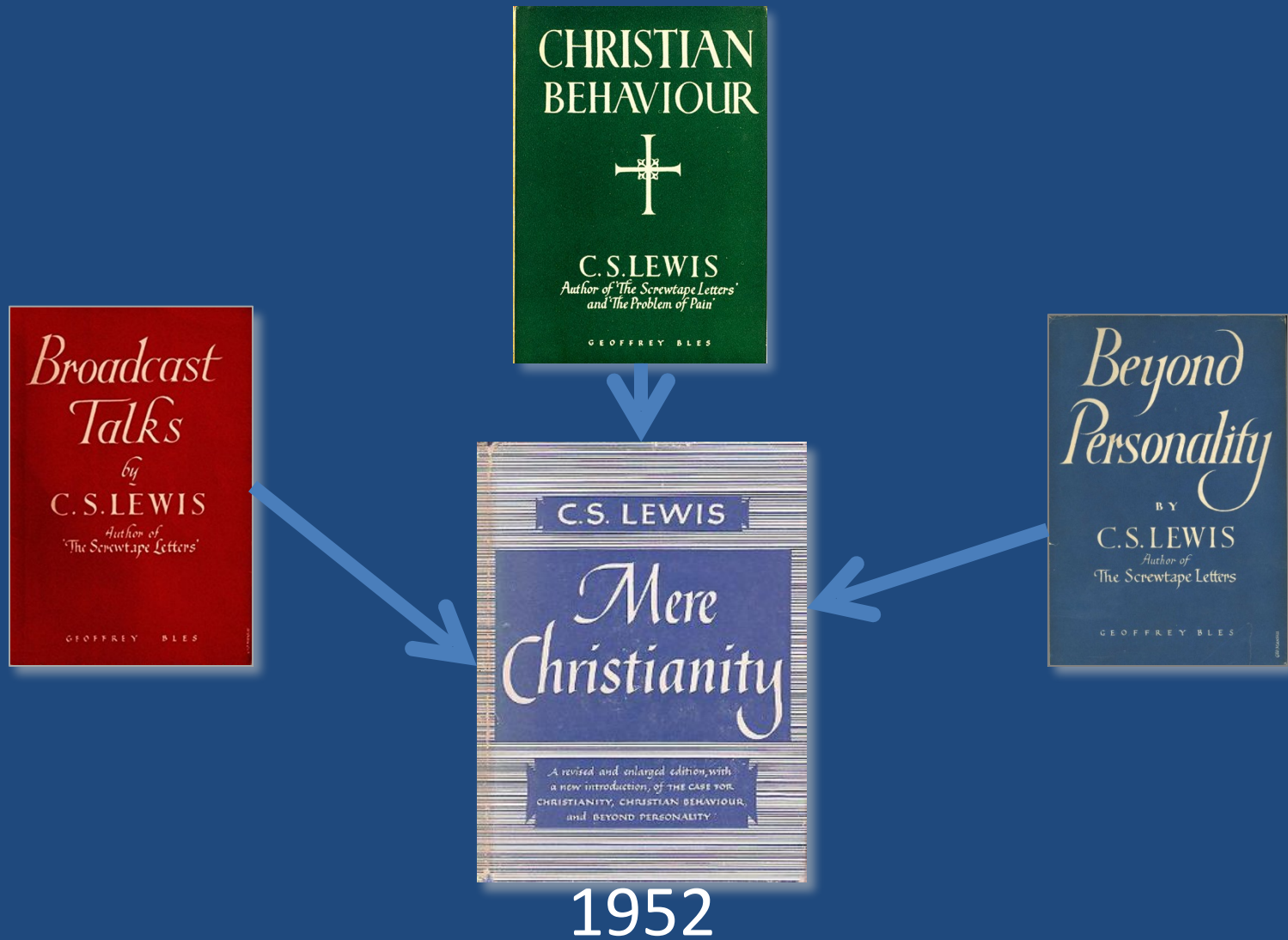


Eric Fenn head of Religious Broadcasting at the BBC wrote to Lewis on February 14, 1941

“I wonder whether you would care to consider a series of four Wednesday evening talks (7:40-8:00 P.M.) in August, or, alternatively, September?

If so we should be grateful for draft scripts a month in advance of the broadcasts so as to have time to discuss these with you and to arrange a microphone rehearsal and things of that kind. The process of getting a series of talks ‘on the air’ is rather more laborious than it appears from the other side of the microphone.”

# Four BBC Radio talks (1941-1944) that became three books that later became one book





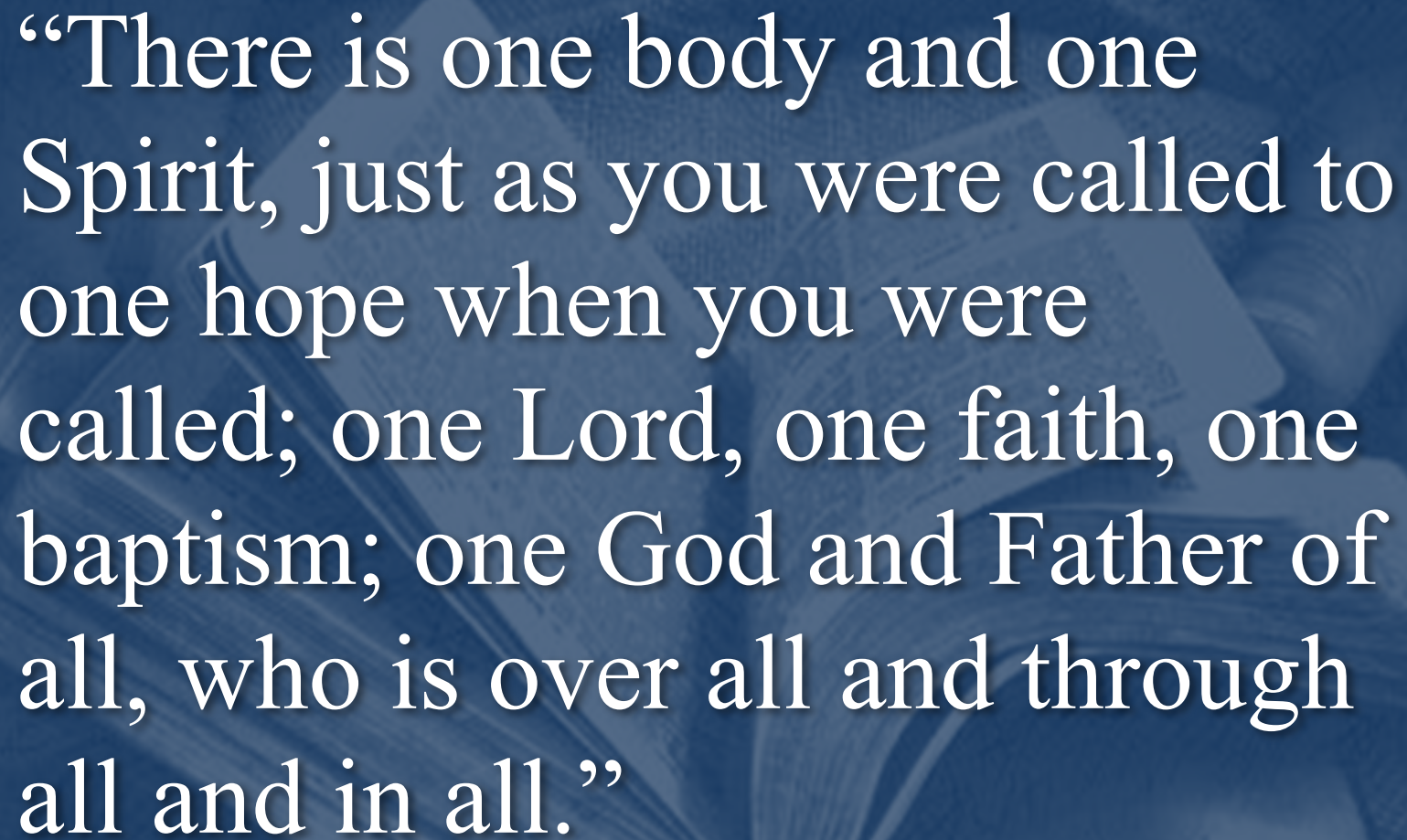
## Time to Discuss

In your own words how would you summarize what C.S. Lewis is trying to accomplish in the book *Mere Christianity*?



# Defining Terms

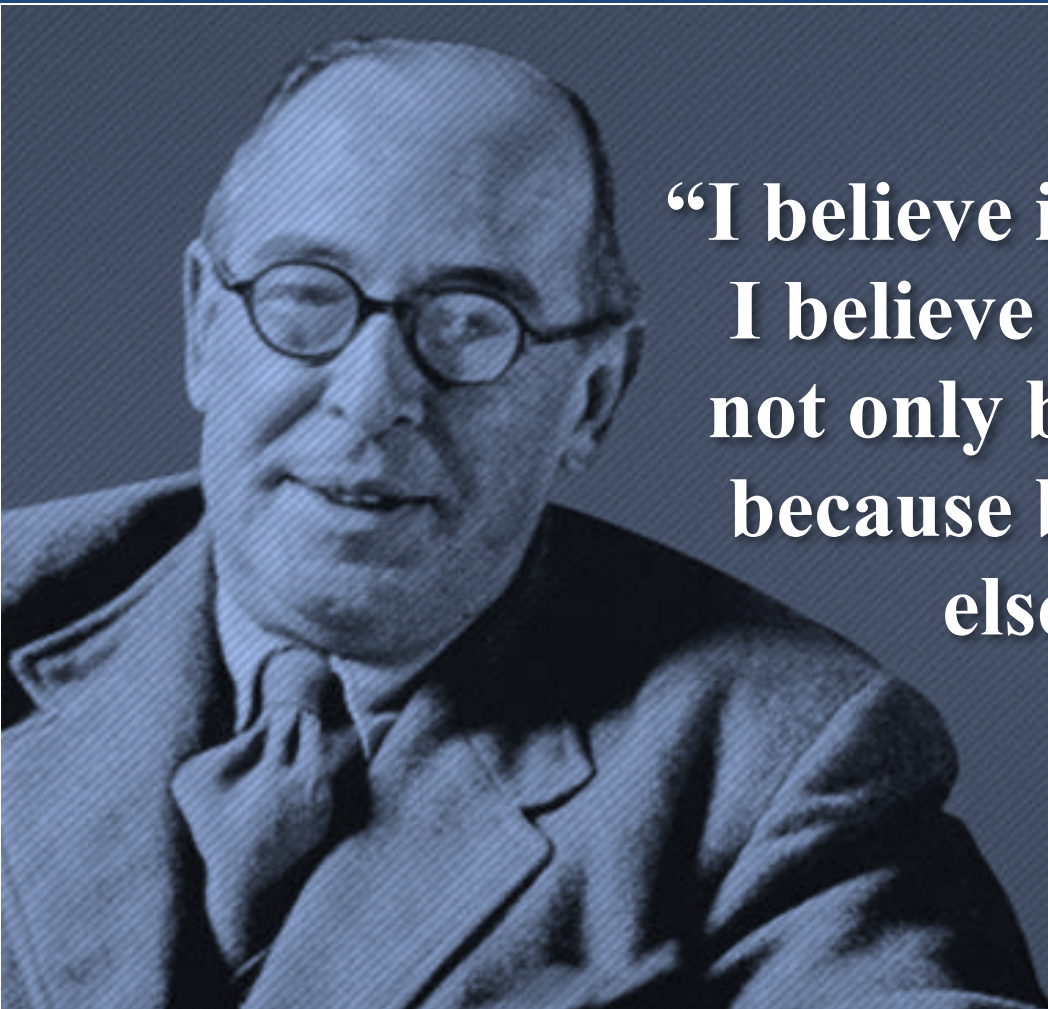
**Mere Christianity** – the term “mere” as it is used by C.S. Lewis means “pure” or “unmixed.” It is used in this context to refer to the central or core beliefs of the Christian faith (classical orthodoxy). In the preface to *Mere Christianity*, Lewis says he is intending to “explain and defend the belief that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times.”

The background of the slide features a close-up, slightly blurred image of an open book. The pages are visible, and the lighting is soft. A semi-transparent blue rectangular overlay covers the majority of the image, providing a backdrop for the white text.

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Ephesians 4:4-6 (NIV)





**“I believe in Christianity as  
I believe that the Sun has risen  
not only because I see it but  
because by it I see everything  
else.”**

*C. S. Lewis*





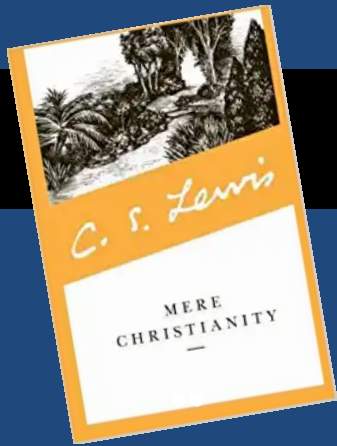
# Defining Terms

**Worldview** – a perspective on life to which we are often deeply committed; it (1) serves as a grid by which we make sense of the world and our experience; (2) provides shape and direction for our lives; (3) is understood and communicated in the form of a story.

# Answering Big Questions

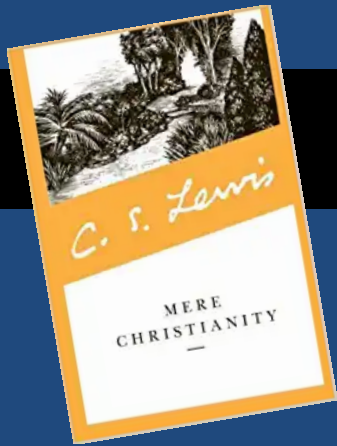
- What is ultimate?
- How can we know anything for sure?
- Where are we?
- Who am I?
- What should I value?
- What is the wrong?
- What is the solution?
- Where are we headed?
- How should we then live?





# Preface to Mere Christianity

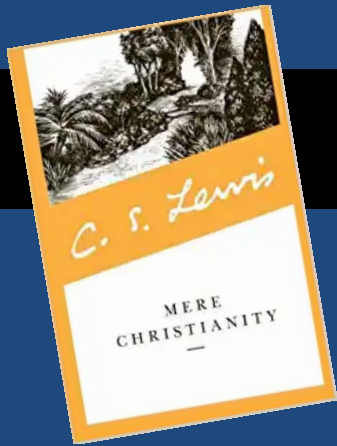
“I hope no reader will suppose that ‘mere’ Christianity is here put forward as an alternative to the creeds of the existing communions—as if a man could adopt it in preference to Congregationalism or Greek Orthodoxy or anything else. It is more like a hall out of which doors open into several rooms. If I can bring anyone into that hall I shall have done what I attempted.” p. xv



# Preface to Mere Christianity

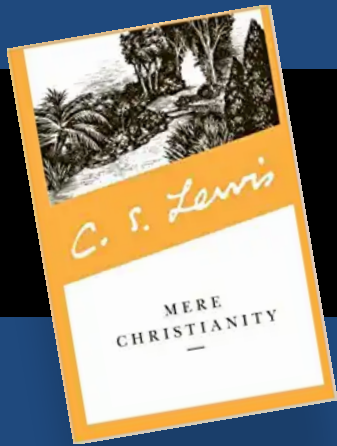
“And above all you must be asking which door is the true one; not which pleases you best by its paint and paneling. In plain language, the question should never be: ‘Do I like that kind of service?’ but ‘Are these doctrines true: Is holiness here? Does my conscience move me towards this? Is my reluctance to knock at this door due to my pride, or my mere taste, or my personal dislike of this particular door-keeper?’”





# Preface to Mere Christianity

**“... When you have reached your own room, be kind to those who have chosen different doors and to those who are still in the hall. If they are wrong they need your prayers all the more; and if they are your enemies, then you are under orders to pray for them. That is one of the rules common to the whole house.” p. xv-xvi**



## Chapter 1: “The Law of Human Nature”

“Quarreling means trying to show that the other man is in the wrong . . . there would be no sense in saying that a footballer had committed a foul unless there was some agreement about the rules of football.” p.4

**Assumption – argument assumes a standard**

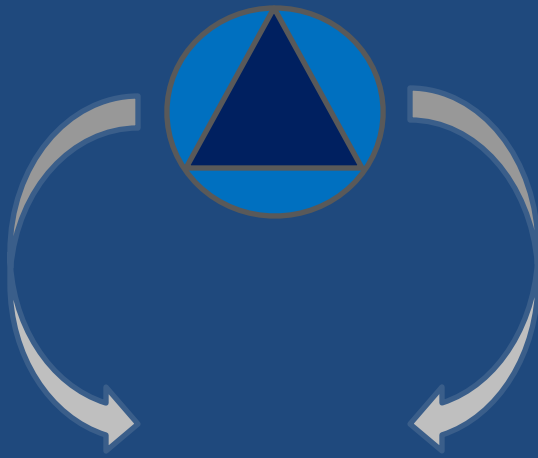


# Chapter 1: “The Law of Human Nature”

**The Law of Human Nature** - a reference to the idea that every human being intuitively has a sense that there are objective moral standards of right and wrong that we ought to live up to, and others should follow as well.

The existence of a moral law of right and wrong is basic to our human nature

# What Are Human Beings?



OR



Universe,  
Earth, Animals,  
Plants, Nature

**Image of God**



Universe, Earth,  
Animals, Plants,  
Nature

## **Implications of Naturalism:**

- Self-Consciousness
- Reason
- Love
- Free Will
- Morality





# Chapter 1: “The Law of Human Nature”

“... As a moral concept, “The Law of Human Nature” can be distinguished from the “laws of nature”

*“laws of nature”*

**(Physical Reality)**

**Descriptions of how the physical world operates**

*“The Law of Human Nature”*

**(Moral Reality)**

**Descriptions of how humans should behave**

## Time to Discuss

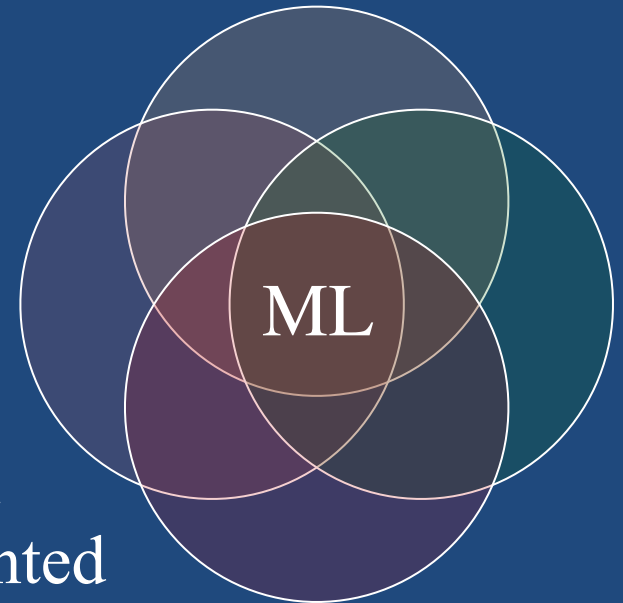
What are some of the differences between the “laws of nature” and “the law of human nature?”

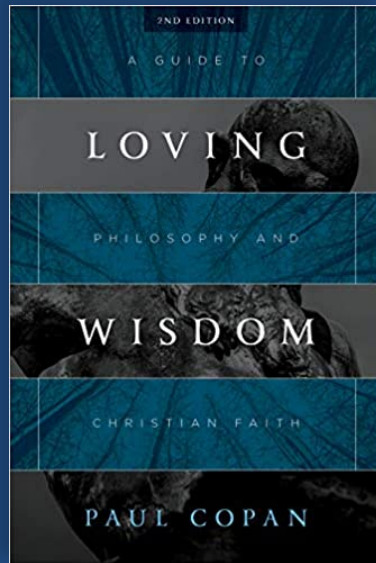
# Similarities and Differences

“I know that some people say the idea of a Law of Nature or decent behaviour known to all men is unsound, because different civilisations and different ages have had quite different moralities.”

Speaking of the differences in the moral laws of the Babylonians, Greeks, Chinese, Egyptians, Romans, Hebrews, Lewis writes,

“There have been differences between their moralities, but these never amounted to anything like total difference.” p. 5-6





Paul Copan,  
A Guide to Loving  
Wisdom: Philosophy  
and the Christian  
Faith, p. 171

“C.S. Lewis’s *The Abolition of Man* catalogs the same moral codes from vastly different civilizations and cultures—Babylonians, Egyptians, Hebrew, Greek:

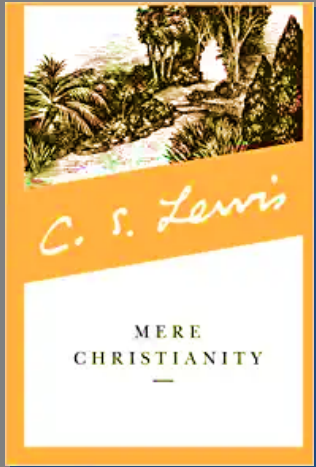
- don’t murder;
- honor your parents;
- don’t take what isn’t yours;
- tell the truth.

In that spirit, Amos 1-2 speaks of gentile nations that will be judged by God . . .”

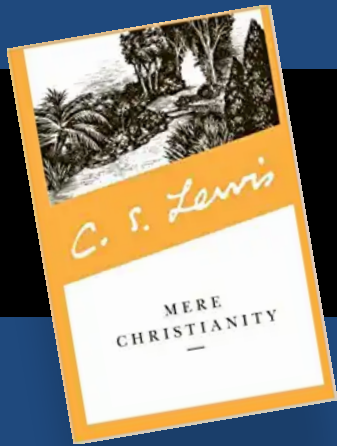
# What would a totally different morality look like?

- ✗ running away in battle is admired
- ✗ feeling proud of double crossing people who have been kind
- ✗ selfishness is admired
- ✗ a man can take as many women as he can take
- ✗ lying to get your way celebrated
- ✗ stealing from your friends is rewarded

“Whenever you find a man who says he does not believe in real Right and Wrong, you will the same man going back on this a moment later.”





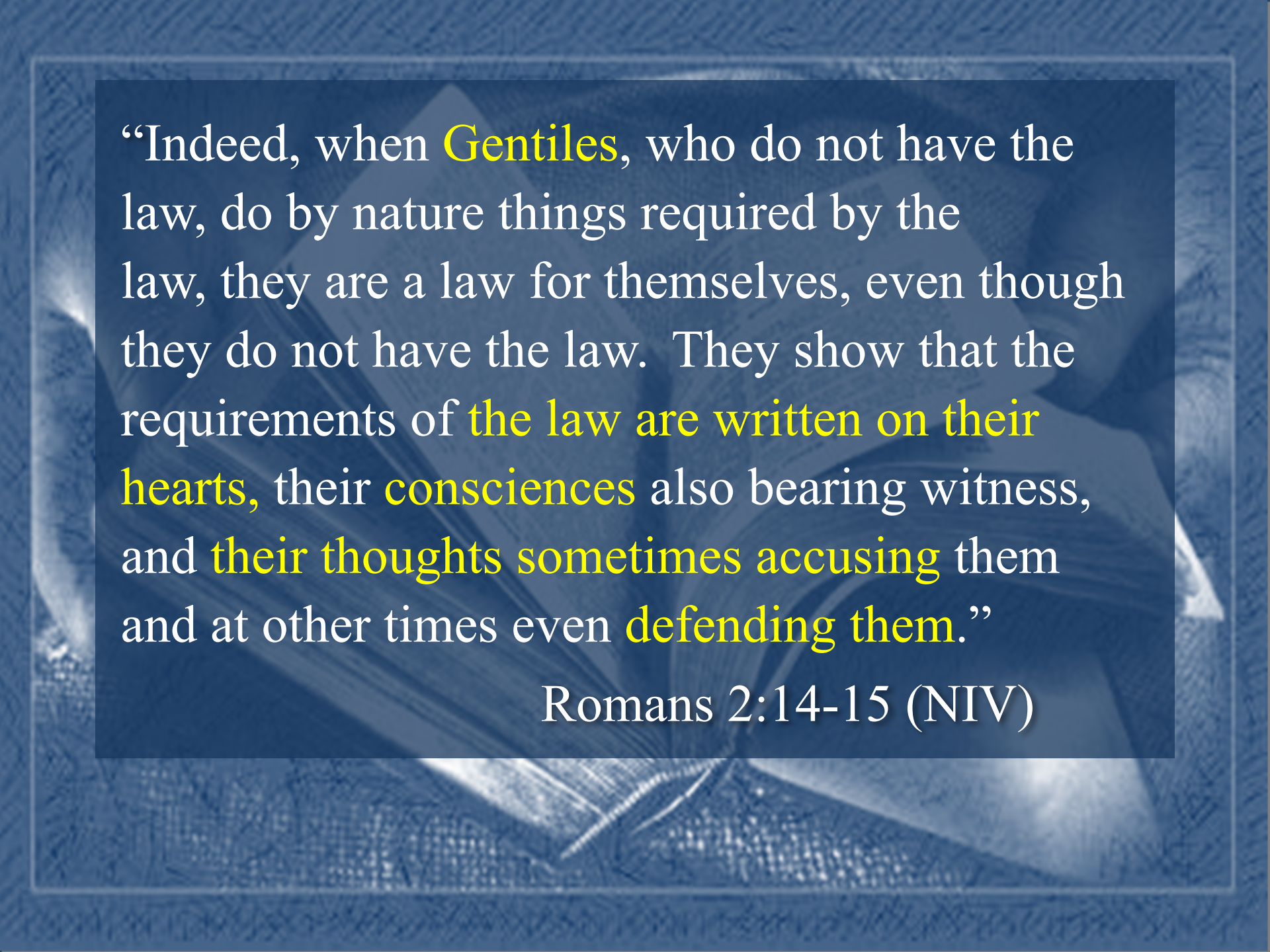


# Chapter 1: The Law of Human Nature

“These, then are the two points I wanted to make.

1. **First**, that human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it.
2. **Secondly**, that they do not in fact behave in that way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it.

These two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe we live in.” p.8

The background of the slide is a photograph of an open book, likely a Bible, with its pages visible. A semi-transparent blue rectangular overlay covers the majority of the image, providing a background for the text. The text is written in a white serif font, with certain words highlighted in yellow. The text is a quote from the Bible, specifically Romans 2:14-15 (NIV).

“Indeed, when **Gentiles**, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of **the law are written on their hearts**, their **consciences** also bearing witness, and **their thoughts sometimes accusing** them and at other times even **defending them.**”

Romans 2:14-15 (NIV)

**Eomer** “It is hard to be sure of anything among so many marvels. The world is grown strange. . . How shall a man judge what to do in such times? (p.427)

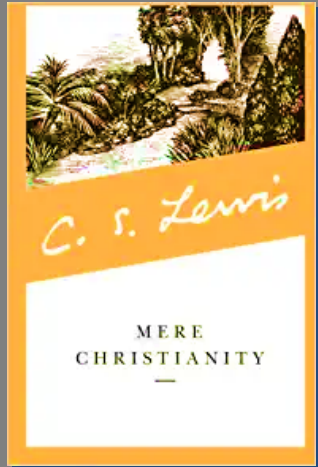
**Aragorn** “Good and ill have not changed since yesteryear. Nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and among Men. It is a man’s part to discern them as much in the Golden Wood as in his own home. (p.428)



## The Two Towers



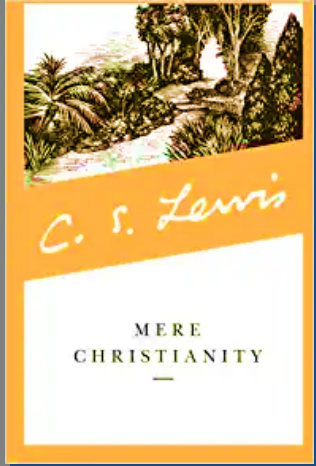
# Chapter 2: Some Objections



## “Herd Instinct”

“Isn’t what you call the Moral Law simply our **herd instinct** and hasn’t it been developed just like all our other instincts?”

# Chapter 2: Some Objections



The Moral Law is more than a “herd instinct” It is an umpire that

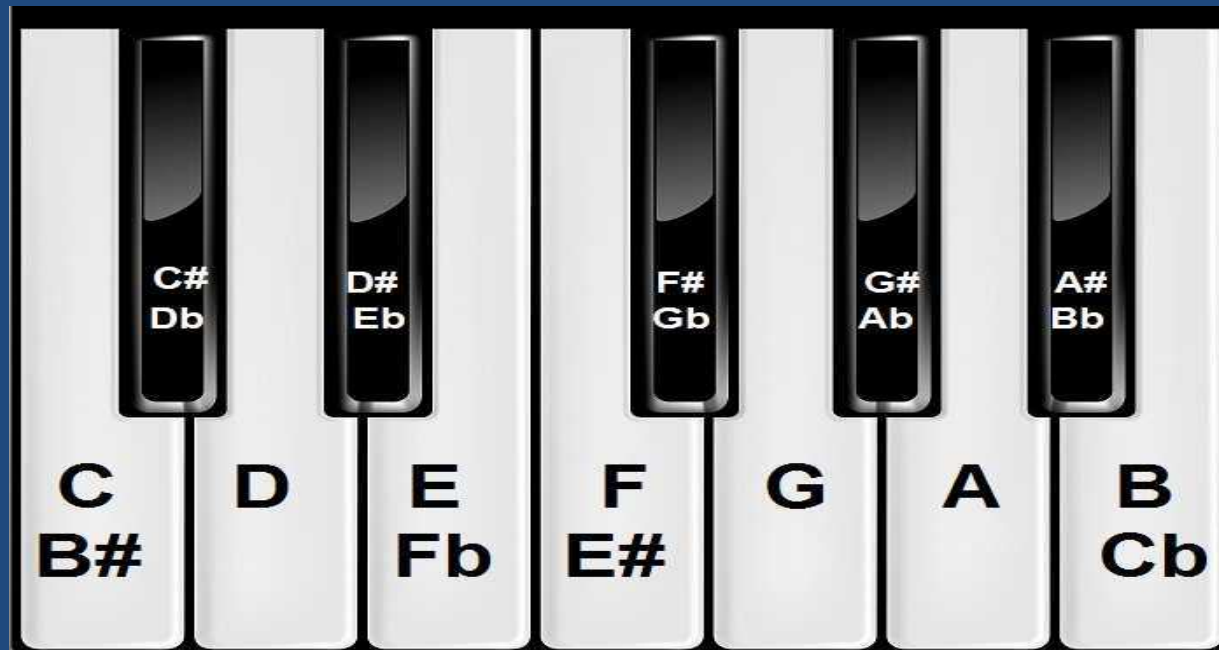
- decides between conflicting **instincts/desires**
- acts as an authority over **instincts/desires** prescribing how we ought to behave
- tells us when a particular **instinct/desire** is appropriate



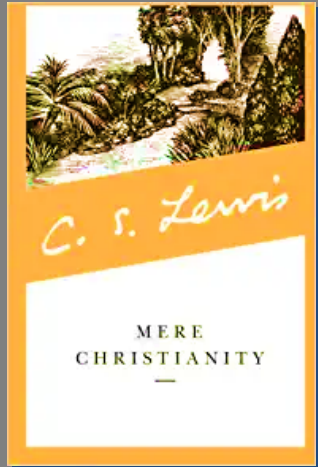
“The **Moral Law** tells us the **tune** we have to play:



our **instincts** are merely the **keys**.” p.22



# Chapter 2: Some Objections



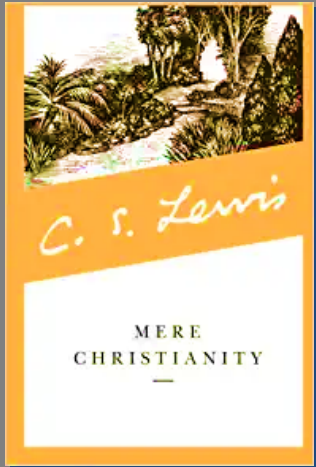
## “Social Convention”

“Isn’t what you call the Moral law just a social convention, something that is put into us by education?”

# Chapter 2: Some Objections

The Moral Law is more than a “social convention.”

- Like mathematics it is **grounded in reality** (moral realism).  
This does not mean that social conventions do not exist or that we cannot be educated into the moral law.
- The existence of the moral law allows us to recognize **moral progress** in individuals and cultures





## Chapter 2: Some Objections

“If your moral ideas can be truer, and those of the Nazis less true, there must be something—some Real Morality—for them to be true about. The reason why your idea of New York can be truer or less true than mine is that New York is a real place, existing quite apart from what either of us thinks. If when each of us said ‘New York’ each means merely ‘The town I am imagining in my own head’, how could one of us have truer ideas than the other? There would be no question of truth or falsehood at all. In the same way, if the Rule of Decent Behaviour meant simply ‘whatever each nation happens to approve’, there would be no sense in saying that any one nation had ever been more correct in its approval than any other; no sense in saying that the world could ever grow morally better or morally worse.”

p. 13-14

# Classroom exchange between Richard Rorty and Michael Marshall on how the abolition of slavery was achieved



**Michael:** “If that paradigm had not changed, would the horrible abuses of slavery (kidnapping, harsh treatment, many deaths on slave ships, and so on) be wrong?”

**Rorty:** “But it did change.”

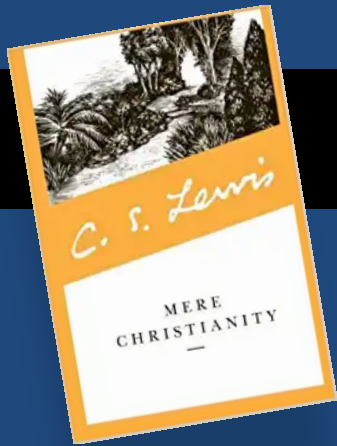
**Michael:** “But if it did not, would it be wrong?”

**Rorty:** “But it did change.”

**Michael:** “But what if it did not?”

**Rorty:** “If the community held no belief inconsistent with it, I don’t think we could call it unjust for them.”

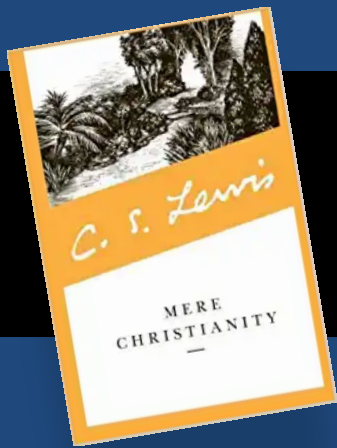
**Michael (with passion):** “That is unacceptable.”



## Chapter 3: The Reality of the Law

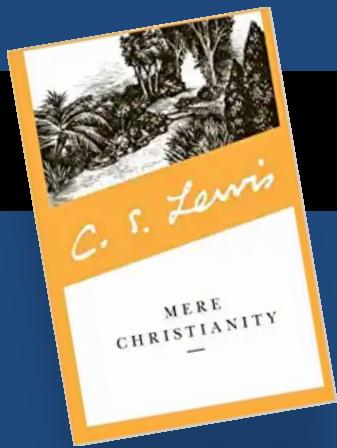
“On the other hand, it is not a mere fancy, for we cannot get rid of the idea, and most of the things we say and think about men would be reduced to nonsense if we did. And it is not simply a statement about how we should like men to behave for our own convenience; for the behaviour we call bad or unfair is not exactly the same as the behaviour we find inconvenient, and may even be the opposite. . .” p. 20





## Chapter 3: The Reality of the Law

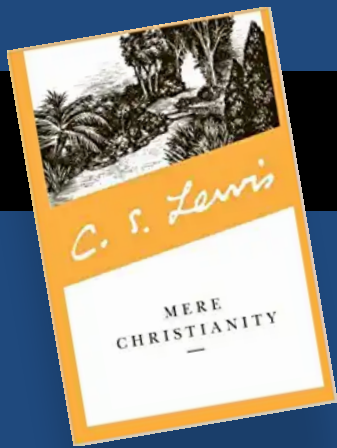
“Consequently, this Rule of Right and Wrong, or Law of Human Nature, or whatever you call it, must somehow or other be a real thing—a thing that is really there, not made up by ourselves. And yet it is not a fact in the ordinary sense, in the same way as our actual behaviour is a fact. It begins to look as if we shall have to admit that there is **more than one kind of reality**; that, in this particular case, there is something **above and beyond** the ordinary facts of men’s behaviour, and yet quite definitely real—a real law, which none of us made, but which we find pressing on us.” p. 20



## Chapter 4: What Lies Behind the Law

“The Law of Human Nature, or of Right and Wrong, must be something above and beyond the actual facts of human behaviour. In this case, besides the actual facts, you have something **else—a real law which we did not invent and which we know we ought to obey.**” p.21

Does the materialist worldview or the religious worldview best explain the “Law of Human Nature?”



# Two Views of the Universe We Live In

## Materialist View

“... matter and space just happen to exist, and always have existed, nobody knows why; and that matter, behaving in certain fixed ways, just happened, by a sort of fluke, to produce creatures like ourselves who are able to think.” p. 21

## Religious View

“... what is behind the universe is more like a mind than it is like anything else we know. That is to say, it is conscious, and has purposes, and prefers one thing to another. And on this view it made the universe, partly for purposes we do know, but partly, at any rate in order to create creatures like itself... having minds.” p. 22

# Two Views of Reality That Have Been Embraced Throughout History

**Supernatural World**  
NON-MATERIAL WORLD

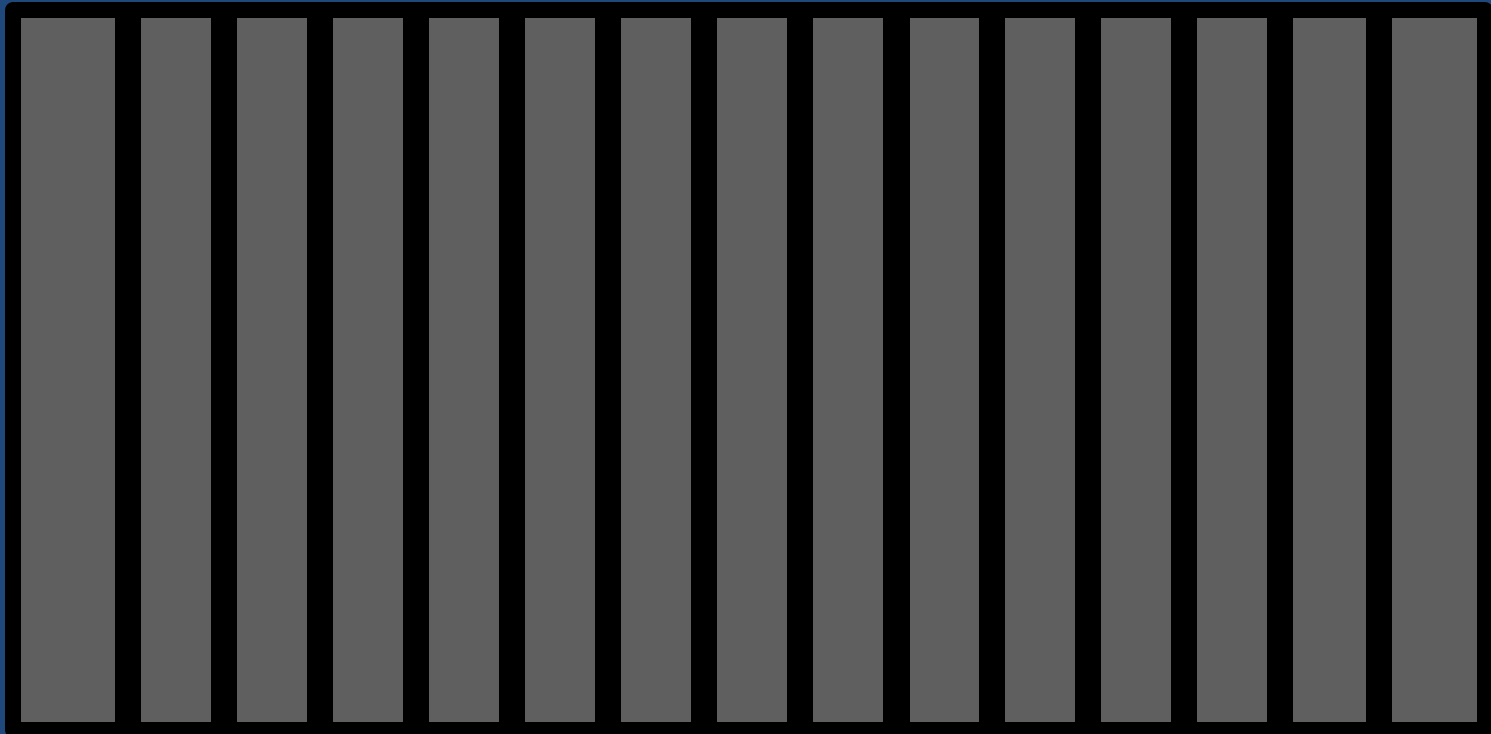
---

**Natural World**  
MATERIAL WORLD

# Escaping the Naturalistic Box



Naturalism



## Time to Discuss

What are some of the strongest points in favor of a “religious” worldview?





“If minds are wholly dependent on brains, and brains on chemistry, and chemistry (in the long run) on the meaningless flux of the atoms, I cannot understand how the thought of minds should have any more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees.”

C.S. Lewis, *Is Theology Poetry*, p.139



“If the human mind has evolved in obedience to the imperatives of survival, what reason is there for thinking that it can acquire knowledge of reality, then all that is required in order to reproduce the species is that its errors and illusions are not fatal? A purely naturalistic philosophy cannot account for the knowledge we now possess.”

John Gray, Professor of European Thought

# Materialist Faith

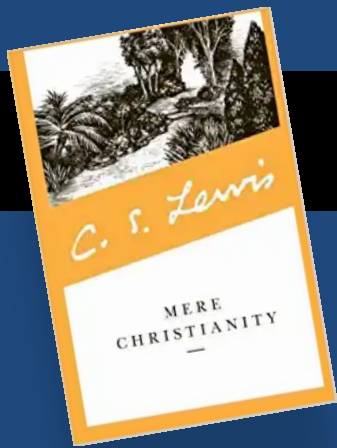
“As intelligent agents we are compelled to believe certain things, most importantly that our will is free, that we are selves that persist through time, that there are moral truths that can be universalized, beliefs which individuals committed to science we yet know to be false.” p.173



Karsten Harries, Yale Philosopher

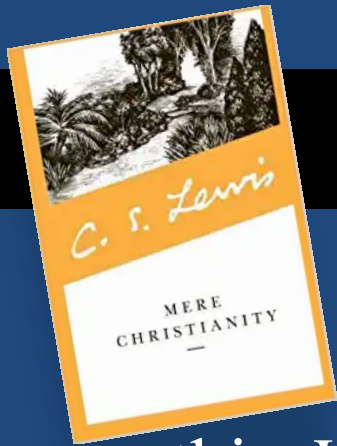
# Explain this Diagram





## Chapter 4: What Lies Behind the Law

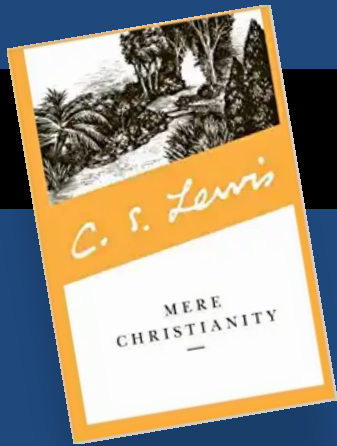
“If there is ‘Something Behind’, then either it will have to remain altogether unknown to men or else make itself known in some different way. The statement that there is any such thing, and the statement that there is no such thing, are neither of them statements that science can make.” p.23



## Chapter 4: What Lies Behind the Law

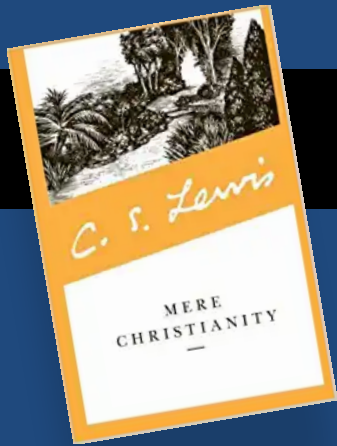
“The position of the question, then, is like this. We want to know whether the universe simply happens to be what it is for no reason or whether there is a power behind it that makes it what it is. Since that power, if it exists, would be not one of the observed facts but a reality which makes them, no mere observation of the facts can find it. There is only one case in which we can know whether there is anything more, namely our own case. And in that one case we find there is.” p.24





## Chapter 4: What Lies Behind the Law

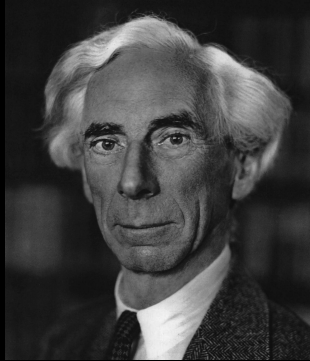
“When I do, especially when I open that particular man called Myself, I find that I do not exist on my own, that I am under a law; that somebody or something wants me to behave in a certain way. I do not, of course, think that if I could get inside a stone or a tree I should find exactly the same thing, just as I do not think all the other people in the street get the same letters as I do. . . .” p. 25



## Chapter 4: What Lies Behind the Law

continued – “I should expect, for instance, to find that the stone had to obey the law of gravity—that whereas the sender of the letters merely tells me to obey the law of my human nature, he compels the stone to obey the laws of its stony nature. But I should expect to find that there was, so to speak, a sender of letters in both cases, a Power behind the facts, a Director, a Guide.” p.25

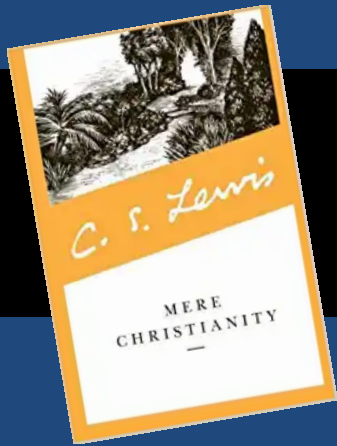
# Prophets of Despair



Bertrand Russell suggested that we must build our “scaffolding . . . of unyielding despair” since “man is the product of causes which had no provision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms.”

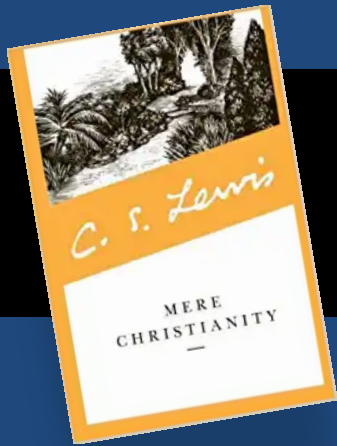


“ . . . no ultimate foundations for ethics exists, no ultimate meaning in life exists, and free will is merely a human myth.”  
William Provine, evolutionary biologist



## Chapter 5: We Have Cause to Be Uneasy

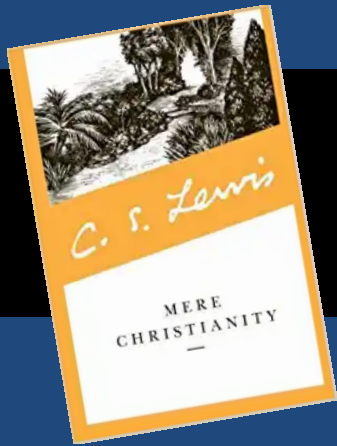
“I ended my last chapter (Chapter 4) with the idea that in the Moral Law somebody or something from beyond the material universe was actually getting at us.” p.28



## Chapter 5: We Have Cause to Be Uneasy

In answer to whether the “idea of the Moral Law as a pointer to somebody or something beyond the universe” is going backward, Lewis responds

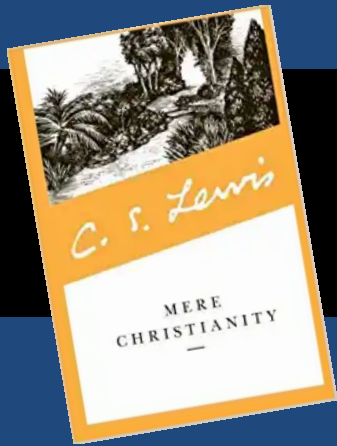
- “Progress means getting nearer to where you want to be” p.28
- “We have not yet got so far as the God of an actual religion.” p.29



## Chapter 5: We Have Cause to Be Uneasy

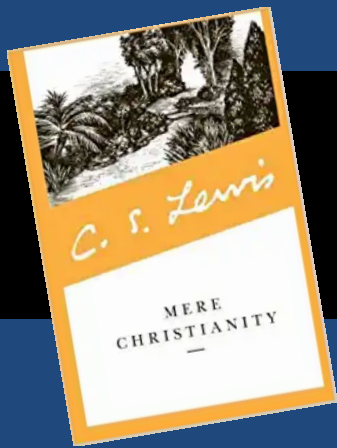
“We have two bits of evidence about the Somebody. One is the universe He has made. If we used that as our only clue, then I think we should have to conclude that He was a great artist (for the universe is a very beautiful place), but also that He is quite merciless and no friend to man (for the universe is a very dangerous and terrifying place). The other bit of evidence is that Moral Law which He has put into our minds. And this is a better bit of evidence than the other, **because it is inside information.** p. 29.





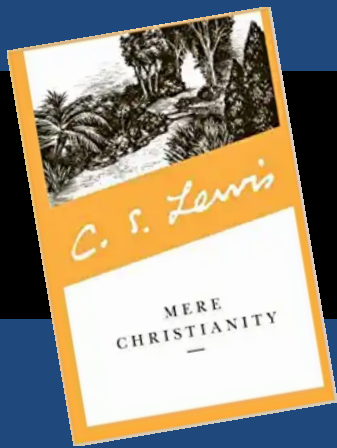
## Chapter 5: We Have Cause to Be Uneasy

“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 any forgiveness. . .” p. 31



## Chapter 5: We Have Cause to Be Uneasy

Continued - “It is after you have realized that there is a real Moral Law, and a Power behind the law, and that you have broken that law and put yourself wrong with that Power—it is after all this, and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to talk. When you know you are sick, you will listen to the doctor. When you have realised that our position is nearly desperate you will begin to understand what the Christians are talking about. . . .” p. 31



## Chapter 5: We Have Cause to Be Uneasy

“Of course, I quite agree that the Christian religion is, in the long run, a thing of unspeakable comfort. But it does not begin in comfort; it begins in the dismay I have been describing, and it is no use at all trying to go on to that comfort without first going through that dismay. 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



# Further Up & Further In

Exploring *Mere Christianity* with C.S. Lewis

**Book 1: Right and Wrong as a Clue to the  
Meaning of the Universe**