

Christian Book Reports

Jim Hoffman



The Author – C.S. Lewis

He started out as an atheist and when he came to Christ he said, “In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed ... perhaps the most reluctant and dejected convert in all of England.”





The Purpose of the Book

“There are questions at issue between Christians to which I do not think I have the answer. There are some to which I may never know the answer: if I asked them, even in a better world, I might (for all I know) be answered as a far greater questioner was answered: “What is that to thee? Follow thou Me.” C.S. Lewis

The book was a series of wartime radio talks to servicemen who were flying bombing missions over Europe –on average they would fly 13 missions before being declared dead or missing.






Perspective

Perhaps it helps us as it helped those war weary British people who first heard these talks, to remember that God plays a great joke on those who would seek after power at any cost. “How monotonously alike all the great tyrants and conquerors have been: how gloriously different are the saints. “ C.S. Lewis

Power corrupts and leaves cookie cutter images in its wake whereas Christianity allows the uniqueness of God’s creative genius to come through in his people.






Human Behavior

“These, then, are the two points I wanted to make. 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. 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.” C.S. Lewis

Romans 2:14 Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. 15 They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right.






Excess

“The most dangerous thing you can do is to take any one impulse of your own nature and set it up as the thing you ought to follow at all costs. There is not one of them which will not make us into devils if we set it up as an absolute guide. You might think love of humanity in general was safe, but it is not. If you leave out justice you will find yourself breaking agreements and faking evidence in trials "for the sake of humanity," and become in the end a cruel and treacherous man.” c.s. Lewis

Matthew 23:23

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices — mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. NIV





A Fixed Moral Standard

“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 meant merely “The town I am imagining in my own head,” how could one of us have truer ideas than the other?” c.s. Lewis

Without a fixed standard for morality one person’s idea of right and wrong would be just as valid as another’s.






Man is Unique

“You have the facts (how men do behave) and you also have something else (how they ought to behave). In the rest of the universe there need not be anything but the facts. Electrons and molecules behave in a certain way, and certain results follow, and that may be the whole story. But men behave in a certain way and that is not the whole story, for all the time you know that they ought to behave differently.”

C.S. Lewis

Man is not just a part of the creation – he is unique and as such is capable of being godly or acting godless. The rest of nature is what it is.






Science

“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?” c.s. Lewis

Science may be very capable of revealing what and how of the creation, but the ‘why’ questions cannot be discovered through mere science.






Other Gods

“The Life-Force is a sort of tame God. You can switch it on when you want, but it will not bother you. All the thrills of religion and none of the cost. Is the Life-Force the greatest achievement of wishful thinking the world has yet seen? “ c.s. Lewis

It seems the pipe dream of man has always been to have a god he controls – he can call on him when needed, but can also dismiss him when he gets in the way.






God's Standards

“There is nothing indulgent about the Moral Law. It is as hard as nails. It tells you to do the straight thing and it does not seem to care how painful, or dangerous, or difficult it is to do. If God is like the Moral Law, then He is not soft.” c.s. Lewis

God has standards than cannot be lowered and goalposts that move for no one – that is part of what makes Him moral.





A Terrible Fix

“We know that if there does exist an absolute goodness it must hate most of what we do. That is the terrible fix we are in. If the universe is not governed by an absolute goodness, then all our efforts are in the long run hopeless. But if it is, then we are making ourselves enemies to that goodness every day, and are not in the least likely to do any better tomorrow, and so our case is hopeless again. We cannot do without it. and we cannot do with it. God is the only comfort, He is also the supreme terror: the thing we most need and the thing we most want to hide from.” C.S. Lewis

Perhaps the best (or only) reply to such a one is surrender.






Are the heathen lost?

“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.” C.S. Lewis

For one who stated he wouldn't delve into anything controversial he made a big leap here by raising the 'Are the heathen lost' question.





A Challenging Question

“Here is another thing that used to puzzle me. Is it not frightfully unfair that this new life should be confined to people who have heard of Christ and been able to believe in Him? But the truth is God has not told us what His arrangements about the other people are. We do know that no man can be saved except through Christ; we do not know that only those who know Him can be saved through Him.”

C.S. Lewis

We may not want to deal with this question, but it is a valid one.





Christian Point-of-View

“We call a cancer bad, they would say, because it kills a man; but you might just as well call a successful surgeon bad because he kills a cancer. It all depends on the point of view. The other and opposite idea is that God is quite definitely "good" or "righteous." a God who takes sides, who loves love and hates hatred, who wants us to behave in one way and not in another. The first of these views-the one that thinks God beyond good and evil-is called Pantheism. It was held by the great Prussian philosopher Hegel and, as far as I can understand them, by the Hindus. The other view is held by Jews, Mohammedans and Christians.” C.S. Lewis

Common sense here demands a certain point of view.





Standards come from somewhere.

“My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?” C.S. Lewis

Lewis recognized that even before he was saved he had the law of God written into his being.






Truth is not simple.

“Very well then, atheism is too simple. And I will tell you another view that is also too simple. It is the view I call Christianity-and-water, the view which simply says there is a good God in Heaven and everything is all right-leaving out all the difficult and terrible doctrines about sin and hell and the devil, and the redemption. Both these are boys' philosophies.” C.S. Lewis

You can be saved believing a simple truth (Jesus died in your place), but you cannot live well without digging deep into the truth of God.





God has no rivals.

“There are only two views that face all the facts. One is the Christian view that this is a good world that has gone wrong, but still retains the memory of what it ought to have been.

The other is the view called Dualism. Dualism means the belief that there are two equal and independent powers at the back of everything, one of them good and the other bad, and that this universe is the battlefield in which they fight out an endless war.” C.S. Lewis

We would probably all agree there is an unseen battle raging, but the outcome is not at all in doubt.






God or Madman?

“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 a level with the man who says he is a poached egg-or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. .” C.S. Lewis

Jesus really did not leave any doubt as to his identity – he made no attempt to hide it and neither should we.






God or Madman?

“The central Christian belief is that Christ's death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start. Theories as to how it did this are another matter. A good many different theories have been held as to how it works; what all Christians are agreed on is that it does work.” C.S. Lewis

This truly is the heart of the matter – Jesus died for sinners and as many as come to Him are received and forgiven.





Questions / Comments

