

Dear fellow pilgrims,

It was great to be with you last week to review Book I of Mere Christianity, in which Lewis explores what we can learn about the meaning of life and the universe from what can be observed, and to then engage in the first chapter of Book II, "What Christians Believe."

As we discussed, the success of "Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe" convinced the BBC that another series of talks was warranted. The week after the final broadcast on August 27, 1941, James Welch's assistant, the Rev. Eric Fenn of the BBC, wrote Lewis to confirm arrangements for giving away his fees and to propose a new series of five talks to be entitled "What Christians Believe" to be given on successive Sundays from 4:45 to 5 p.m., beginning January 11, 1942 and concluding that spring, just before the new German "Baedeker Bombing" campaign began.

Lewis sent Fenn a draft of the talks in November 1941, and on December 5 (two days before the Pearl Harbor attack and the U.S. entering the war), Fenn responded with great enthusiasm:

"I have at last had time to read your scripts. I think they are quite first class—indeed I don't know when I have read anything in the same class at all. There is a clarity and inexorableness about them which made me positively gasp!"

Here is a summary of what we talked about last week:

Book II: What Christians Believe

1. The Rival Conceptions of God

A. Other religions and Truth If you are a Christian you do not have to believe that all the other religions are simply wrong all through. If you are an atheist you do have to believe that the main point in all the religions of the whole world is simply one huge mistake.

B. Religious and Atheistic Views The first big division of humanity is into the majority, who believe in some kind of God or gods, and the minority who do not.

C. Pantheism versus Christian View of God God is beyond Good and Evil, versus a God who is a Person who defines Good and Evil

D. The Big Question: If a good God made the world why has it gone wrong?

[Christianity] thinks God made the world—that space and time, heat and cold, and all the colours and tastes, and all the animals and vegetables, are things that God "made up out of His head" as a man makes up a story. But it also thinks that a great many things have gone wrong with the world that God made and that God insists, and insists very loudly, on our putting them right again.

E. The Standard: My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning: just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark. Dark would be without meaning.

IMPLICATIONS

--Myth and Types and Shadows

For most people, a "myth" is a false story—maybe a story that was once thought to be true, or something that was invented to deceive people. For Tolkien and Lewis, myth means something like a grand narrative or narrated worldview. For Tolkien, the Gospels narrate a "story of a larger kind" which embraces what is Good, True, and Beautiful in the great myths of literature, expressing it as "a far off gleam or echo of evangelium in the real world." Christianity brings to fulfillment the echoes and shadows of the Truth that result from human questing and learning. Types and Shadows figure in the Book of Hebrews as well as in Plato's "Allegory of the Cave."

--Absolute Truth versus Relativism

Lewis was especially leery of “progressive” education, which he believed was based on faddish psychological theories that were designed to supplant classical education, along with its Christian foundations. His ideas on education, most fully developed in *The Abolition of Man* and the novel *That Hideous Strength*, predicted that the outcome of such education would be “...Relativism—the idea that there are no absolute truths—leading to the decay of morality and a lack of virtue within society. Without a belief in and the teaching of universal moral laws, we fail to educate the the heart and are left with intelligent men who behave like animals or as Lewis puts it, “Men without Chests.”

--C.S. Lewis Institute Reflections 8-17-12

Here is the link for class tomorrow, Wednesday, January 27, at 7:15 p.m. ET--please feel free to share the link with any friends who may be interested:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/99307536525>

Do take some time to listen to (or even better watch) the full music selection from last week, Ralph Vaughan Williams' "Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis"--it is absolutely beautiful! Tallis was a child prodigy who served as a chorister and organist and composer at the Chapel Royal and at Canterbury Cathedral in the 1500s. This theme, written by Tallis, is a rare example of a tune written in the Phrygian mode, something that would have been known to Lewis because of his interest in the medieval cosmology. In that understanding of the solar system and the music of the spheres, each planet was associated with a particular mode of music, and the Phrygian mode was thus connected with the planet Mars. This recording was made in Gloucester Cathedral, where Williams' Fantasia premiered in 1910.

I look forward to "seeing" you tomorrow in class on Zoom!

Further up and further in,
Brian+

Music link from last week:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihx5LCF1yJY>

Video link to last week's class:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IV_5P4LtvA

Audio link to last week's class:

<https://www.stphilipschurchsc.org/mere-christianity-/episode/2021-01-20/episode-10-book-2-chapter-1:-the-rival-conceptions-of-god>

Podcast link to last week's class:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/episode-10-book-2-chapter-1-the-rival-conceptions-of-god/id1537579476?i=1000506117712>

More on Thomas Tallis:

<http://www.medieval.org/emfaq/composers/tallis.html>

More on music of the spheres:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musica_universalis

