

Beyond Mere Christianity

C.S. Lewis & the Betrayal of Christianity

By: Brandon Toropov



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**C.S. LEWIS AND THE
BETRAYAL OF CHRISTIANITY**

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Table of Contents

ONE:

Why 'Mere'? | 11

TWO:

What is 'Q'? | 19

THREE:

'Natural Law' | 33

FOUR:

Jesus and the Magicians | 47

FIVE:

The Problem of Illogicality | 59

SIX:

The Mechanics of Salvation | 73

SEVEN:

What about Paul? | 89

EIGHT:

Context | 97

NINE:

There Is No god but God | 115

APPENDIX A:

Q and the Qur'an (Textual Note) | 119

APPENDIX B:

Common Questions | 133

APPENDIX C:

Note to Agnostics and Atheists | 136

Beyond Mere Christianity

BEFORE EACH chapter,
*there is a brief passage like this that tells you
a little bit about my journey to Islam.*

*I came to Islam after three decades of restless
dissatisfaction with conventional Christianity.
Although I've read a lot of conversion stories
since I embraced Islam in March of 2003,
I haven't found many that cited the Gospels
as a point of entry to the Holy Qur'an.
That is how it was for me.*

*If you are a Christian reading this book,
please know that what follows is not meant
disrespectfully, but is offered only in the
service of a deep, shared love of the Messiah.*

ONE:

Why 'Mere'?

THE DEEPEST AND BITTEREST curse of ancient China, supposedly, was 'May you live in interesting times.'

Those of us who have lived as Christians in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have, for reasons that may mystify us, found ourselves living in very interesting times indeed. In recent years, uneasiness about Islam has been increasingly impossible to ignore in the United States, Europe, and Australia.

In particular, one hears a great deal today about a 'war,' 'conflict,' or 'clash' between Islam and Christianity. The topic is so prominent in the media that many people assume that there is something irreconcilable between these two approaches to God. It is not surprising, then, that so many Christians of good will have concluded that Islam and Christianity are fundamentally incompatible.

Beyond Mere Christianity

Yet, if, by 'Christianity', we mean 'that which Jesus Christ meant to convey to his hearers', I believe that these people of good will may well be mistaken when they tell us that Islam is incompatible with Christianity.

What's more, I believe we can now make the case that the historically oldest Gospel verses reflecting the reported sayings of Jesus are entirely compatible with Islam.



This is a book for Christians, and about Islam. These days, anyone who writes such a book should expect to face a *skeptical* audience, and that is just as well. Skepticism about important matters is healthy.

What's more, the author of a book like this one should probably expect only *thoughtful* Christians to accompany him to the end of the page, or, God willing, beyond. Only thoughtful people are willing to examine their own religious assumptions closely.

The thoughtful, skeptical Christian, then, is the audience for this book. That you have read even this far suggests that you are a thoughtful Christian. So please complete the equation and be as skeptical as you possibly can as you make your way through these pages.



Beyond Mere Christianity

What, specifically, is there to be skeptical about?

We can start with the title. The book is called *Beyond Mere Christianity* for two reasons. First, in response to C.S. Lewis' influential 1952 work, *Mere Christianity*, which stands as a masterpiece of Christian apologetics and perpetuates, I believe, a long-standing betrayal of the ministry of Jesus.

The second reason, perhaps less obvious, is that a case can be made, based on current, responsible Gospel scholarship, that Jesus was calling his people to the Salvation that lies beyond the worship of the merely created, and that relies instead on the direct worship of the Creator. I believe emphatically that this variety of direct worship is Islam, and that the authentic words of Jesus emphatically invite us to move beyond what is conventionally understood as Christianity for this Salvation, and enter with no delay the 'house' of Islam (to borrow a metaphor from Lewis). Which room we choose to occupy once we're inside, of course, is up to us.

If you're a Christian, and you find that you are skeptical about these points, then we're ready to move on.



Beyond Mere Christianity

The word 'Islam' means, simultaneously, 'submission' and 'peace'. This faith demands in no uncertain terms that its adherents reject anything and everything that conflicts with obedience to God. It does not mandate blind obedience to any human authority.

I believe that someone who scrupulously follows this religion's command of submission to God Alone is in fact adhering completely to the authentic teachings of Jesus, at least to the degree that they are reflected in the surviving Gospels. I also believe this religion is precisely the same one he preached and practiced.

Holding and expressing this view has led me into any number of interesting life experiences, many of which involved heated discussions with Christians who believed a) that I had no right to describe myself any longer as a follower of Jesus, and b) that Islam and Christianity have far more separating them than they have in common. This book challenges thoughtful Christians to consider the discussions that follow before coming to a final conclusion on a) and b), above.



If you are a Christian, the idea that Jesus practiced the same faith that today's news broadcasts hold responsible for so many of the world's problems probably seems far-fetched to you.