

C.S. LEWIS: MERE CHRISTIANITY

Week Four

Highlights of Book Four: Beyond Personality, or First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity

- Making and Begetting
 - To *beget* means to be the father of, to bear something the same kind as yourself.
 - What God begets IS God. What God creates is not God.
 - Christ was not created but “begotten.”
 - Man in his natural state has only biological life (bios) not spiritual life (zoe). Bios is heading toward death, must be kept up with air, water, food. Zoe can last eternally.
- The Three-Person God
 - God is beyond personality, but he is not impersonal. He is “superpersonal,” three persons in one being.
 - Only Christianity has any concept of how humans can be taken into the life of God and still remain themselves, more themselves than before.
 - As we progress to more real and more complicated levels, we don’t leave things we found on lower levels. Instead, we use them in new, combined ways that we couldn’t have imagined if we knew only one or two dimensions instead of three.
 - In God’s dimension, we find a being who is three persons and yet one.
- Time and Beyond Time
 - God is not in time, so he can be in control of the universe and be a man at the same time, he can respond to millions who pray and give each one individual attention at the same time, he can know the future while yet giving us the freedom to choose.
 - Every moment from the beginning of the world is always present for God.
- Good Infection
 - Something can be the source for another without the one existing before the other.
 - The Son is always flowing forth from the Father and always has. Father delights in Son; Son looks up to Father.
 - The union between the Father and Son is such a live, concrete thing that this union itself is also a Person, the Holy Spirit.
 - The Father is in front of us, the Son is beside us, the Holy Spirit is within us.
 - This is a good infection, having God in us. This is how we share in a life that was begotten, not made.
 - The Son came into this world so that he might infect humanity with the kind of life he is. The statement that God is love has no meaning unless God contains two “persons,” unless there was a possibility of sharing between persons.
 - God wanted to share this love with us in sending part of himself to love us and making it possible for him to become part of us.
- The Obstinate Toy Soldier
 - Natural man is like an obstinate toy soldier who doesn’t want to be turned into a person.
 - God, in sending his son, made it possible for us to be real by becoming in one man what all men were intended to be.
 - Zoe and bios, in the present state, are not just different but really opposed. Our natural life is self-centered and wants to keep us away from zoe, the spiritual world. We know if zoe gets hold of us, we will be changed, and we fight against this.
 - We can’t afford to cherish the obstinate toy soldier within us. When we’re fighting change, we must turn to God for his strength and power.
- Two Notes
 - Being able to love is much preferable to a world of automatons. We were made with the ability to love. We became “tin soldiers” only after we turned away from God.

- God could beget only one Son. There's no way to conceive how many begotten sons would relate to one another and to God. Nature was created, perhaps, to make "many-ness" workable.
 - Individual differences and real individual people matter in Christianity. God never intended us to be exactly alike.
 - Christians should not be individualists – forgetting that we're all part of the same organism – and also should not be totalitarians – forgetting that each one of us is a different organ.
- Let's Pretend
 - Often the only way to get a particular quality is to start acting as if you have it, as children do. When we start this good kind of pretending, we find ways to make it more real.
 - In reality, it is God, not us, who does everything.
 - The higher thing always raises the lower; the mother teaches the baby to talk as if he knows the language long before he actually does.
 - Some of our modeling (pretending) happens by being part of the church. There are only two divinely created institutions, the family and the church. Both are important for us.
- Is Christianity Hard or Easy?
 - Christianity is both hard and easy. The Christian way is much easier than trying to do all we try as natural beings. The hard part is being willing to surrender ourselves to him so he may become part of us and us part of him.
 - Putting on Christ so that we can change into a "real son" is the whole of Christianity.
 - The real problem of the Christian life comes in pushing back our selfish desires.
 - When Jesus said we must be perfect, he was saying we must go in for the full treatment.
 - The church has only one objective, to draw all people to Christ. The whole universe was created for this purpose.
 - The real purpose of a Christian is not to torture our natural self but to put it to death. The sooner we realize this and the sooner we begin trying to surrender to God, the sooner we can start making wise decisions about how to use the energy of a lifetime.
- Counting the Cost
 - The process of being transformed into what God intended is long and painful. It is not about improving but about being perfected.
 - The only help Christ will give us is help to become perfect.
 - Christ wants us to be perfect, but he will be pleased with the first feeble, stumbling step we make.
- Nice People or New Men
 - Christians are works in progress, and this progress depends upon our natural selves and our willingness to submit to God. "Niceness" is good and desirable, but it is not really what the whole is about.
 - Even a person's niceness is a gift from God, not that person's gift to God. Unless a person bends toward God, he will think the niceness is his own.
 - Only when we offer our gifts back to God do they begin to be ours in any meaningful sense. This is how we begin to take part in our own creation.
 - If you're a poor creature, pestered with an inferiority complex, don't despair. Christ knows what a "wretched machine" we are attempting to drive. One day he will put this one on the scrap heap and provide a new one for eternity.
 - We aren't called to be nice people but new people. But we should expect Christians to be improving.
- The New Men
 - In the Christian view, the New Man appeared 2,000 years ago.
 - Jesus means to transform us, not just improve us.
 - Our next step is in view. It is a change from being creatures God created to being sons.
 - Jesus is the first example. The change we will experience is not from nature but from outside of nature.
 - The new kind of life we will experience – zoe – is actually the original kind.