

College Christian Study -- Sunday, Feb.20th, 2005 -- **Mere Christianity – by C.S. Lewis**
Book II: What Christians Believe (*chapters 1-2*)

Book II has five chapters.

- Chapter 1 discusses rival concepts of God: atheism, pantheism, and the Christian view.
- Chapter 2 discusses dualism and “The Invasion” by the Rightful King.

Chapter 1: The Rival Conceptions of God

In Book II of Mere Christianity, Lewis had been asked to tell his audience what Christians believe. Yet in this first chapter, he started by relating the one thing Christians do not have to believe: that other religions are completely wrong. (Differences between historical pantheism and modern atheism versus the Christian idea of God are discussed. While reading, a question comes to mind: if such a good God exists, why is there so much suffering and evil in the world?)

-An atheist has to believe that the main point of all religions is “one huge mistake.” Christians’ freedom in seeking truth allows for a more open view of the world. Other religions may have hints of truth, which benefit mankind and development of this world. But faith in Christ Jesus [a.k.a. “The Way, and the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6)], and God’s grace alone are what make Christianity stand alone in being ultimately the correct religious following.

-Does one ever wonder how Atheism stands true to its own principles? It seems “too simple.” How could we have found out that the whole universe has no meaning, if it truly had no meaning? (*Read aloud last paragraph, Mere Christianity, pg. 38-39*)

Chapter 2: The Invasion

So, Atheism is too simple. Lewis then challenges this thought by considering that another view which might also be too simple – watered-down Christianity.

-“Christianity-and-water” is a view that everything is all right because God is God, but omits “the difficult and terrible” doctrines of sin, hell, the devil, and redemption. In reality, the world and its course are not simple, so applying a theory of simple religion seems inadequate.

-Reality is not only complicated, but it is also not neat or obvious or what we anticipate. This is one reason Lewis *believed* Christianity. Do you believe that Christianity was something we could have guessed beforehand? Is it something we could have expected with the world’s universal philosophies which can be full of “over-simplified answers”? So where does the “twist” come in for Christians between reality and spirituality?

-Now the problem: why are the bad and meaningless things that the universe contains, able to be recognized and distinguished by people of this world? An encompassing view for Christians involves both a world not as it should be (i.e. good gone bad) and a dualistic principle of the forces of good and evil. Thus, we live on a battlefield in an endless war. But until the third element is added, (the Ultimate Standard which is “higher” than these two powers), the right relation between us and the real God is impossible to judge. Good forces conquering the evil of the world is only possible through our Ultimate Standard, and with this relationship to Jesus as ultimate Judge, we are made right in Him. As Christians through our transgressions, our path to a relationship with God is only possible and made straight through our Redeemer.

-Despite this imagery, Lewis declared that dualism does not work. Yet he freely admitted that real Christianity comes much closer to dualism than some think. When he first read the New Testament, he was surprised how much talk there was about a “Dark Power” or “mighty evil spirit.” This power is behind death, disease, and sin. But there is an important difference: Christianity believes this dark power was created good by God and somehow – according to St. Augustine by the sin of Pride – went wrong. Christianity and dualism agree that the universe is at war. But, for Christianity, it is not a war between independent powers but a rebellion. The world is “enemy-occupied territory.” (*pg. 46 leads into chapter 3 – The Shocking Alternative*)