

College Christian Study -Sunday, April 17th, 2005 -- **Mere Christianity – by C.S. Lewis**
Book IV: Beyond Personality: Or First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity (*chapters 5-8*)

Book IV contains eleven chapters which consider questions “Beyond Personality”. These chapters are a discussion of the first steps in understanding the doctrine of the Trinity.

- Chapter 5 compares Man to an “Obstinate Toy Soldier” who fights becoming the real person he was intended to be.
- Chapter 6 attempts to clear up two misunderstandings arising from chapter 5.
- Chapter 7 is about pretending, what it involves and who is doing it.
- Chapter 8 tells us that Christianity is both hard and easy, and why both are true.

Chapter 5: The Obstinate Toy Soldier

Natural man in his selfish desire is like an obstinate toy soldier who does not want to be turned into a real person and thus fights the transformation. But 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. God’s Son became a man so that we could become children of God. As Christians, we simply cannot afford to continue to cherish/nourish any remnant of the “obstinate toy soldier” in us. Satan continually brings up old things, and anything he can, to try to push you over the edge, to try to defeat you totally. As contradictory as this may sound, when you are at your weakest you must be strongest! In such times, which try the depths of one’s soul, you must especially turn to God for His strength and power. Only He can make you strong!

Chapter 6: Two Notes

This chapter is an attempt to avoid two misunderstandings which arose out of the last. (1) The first is about why God did not “beget many sons” if that is what He wanted, rather than “make” toy soldiers. --- The easy part of this answer is that the process would not have been painful if the human race had not turned away from God so long ago as a result of free will. {we are reminded that being able to love is much preferable to a “world of mere automata” who could never love} Furthermore, Lewis argued that the very idea of the Father’s “begetting” a number of sons from eternity is problematic: How would the supposed “many” sons be related to one another and to the Father? Perhaps nature itself was created exactly in order to make “many-ness” workable. [comparison: Polytheistic?]

(2) Christians as individualists or totalitarians? --- Individual differences and the real individual people matter in Christianity, but should not be confused with the idea of “one huge organism” with regard to humanity. As “organs” we are each different and contribute in various ways. God never intended us to be exactly alike; though on the other hand, every one of us experiences similar problems because we are part of the “same organism.” Bottom-line: A Christian must not be an individualist (forget we are all of the same organism) or a totalitarian (forget that each is a different organ).

Chapter 7: Let’s Pretend

[See text] Two stories: (1) “Beauty and the Beast” (2) Man with the Mask
- 2 kinds of “pretending” - a bad kind (only the pretense is there instead of the real thing) and a good kind (when it leads to the real thing)

Chapter 8: Is Christianity Hard or Easy?

At one and the same time, Christianity is both hard and easy. Jesus Himself spoke both ways. The Christian way is much easier than trying to do all we try to do as natural beings. But the hard part is seeing and being willing to surrender self to Him - that we may become Children of God in Christ.

The real problem of the Christian life comes from the moment we awaken - in pushing back all our selfish goals and desires. When Jesus said for us to “be perfect” (see Matt. 5:48), He was saying that “we must go in for the full treatment.” Lewis reminded us that this is the whole of Christianity. The church has a lot of “earthly” objectives to support Christ’s ministry, but in reality it should have one true and ultimate goal - to draw all men and women to Christ. Not only did God become man for this purpose, but Lewis said, the “whole universe” was created for the same purpose.

The real purpose of a Christian is not to torture our natural self but to put it to death. This will be a lifelong process. But the sooner we realize and begin surrendering ourselves to God, the sooner we can start making wise decisions about how to use the energy of a lifetime in Christian Love.