



Mere Christianity

Week 7: July 1, 2018

“God In Three Persons”

A Defendant’s Response

In October, 1958 — six years after the release of Mere Christianity — an article appeared in *The Christian Century* titled “Apologist Versus Apologist: A Critique of C. S. Lewis as ‘Defender of the Faith.’” In it Norman Pittenger, a professor at General Theological Seminary, criticized Lewis for a number of reasons. Among Lewis’ supposed faults was his “inept illustration” of the Trinity as a cube made of separate squares, which Pittenger saw as “vulgar” — in the sense that it lacked appropriate refinement.

Lewis penned a “Rejoinder to Dr. Pittenger” in which he admitted to the truth of some of Pittenger’s criticisms but defended himself on others. About his decision to use the analogy of a cube, Lewis said that he could not see why an illustration from geometry should be considered offensive. And even if the image was lacking in taste or refinement, Lewis argued, what did it matter “if it gets across to the unbeliever what the unbeliever desperately needs to know?”

Lewis concluded with an explanation of what he was trying to do in his Christian apologetics, the audience he was writing for, and the problem he was trying to address.

When I began, Christianity came before the great mass of my unbelieving fellow-countrymen either in the highly emotional form offered by revivalists or in the unintelligible language of highly cultured clergymen. Most men were reached by neither. My task was therefore simply that of a translator — on turning Christian doctrine, or what he believed to be such, into the vernacular, into language that unscholarly people would attend to and could understand.¹

Further Study

QUESTION 1: Lewis waits until the final book of Mere Christianity to bring up the more complicated doctrines of the faith. Why do you think he waited until the end of the book to do so? Do you think that today people in general are less interested in theology than they were in the past? If so, why? Is there a proper time and place to discuss such weighty topics? If so, when and where?

¹ From *Discussing Mere Christianity: Exploring the History, Meaning, and Relevance of C. S. Lewis’ Greatest Book* by Devin Brown (Zondervan, 2015)

QUESTION 2: Lewis writes that we need both the experience of God and the map of theology. Do you know someone who is missing one of these aspects? Has there been a time in your own life when one of these aspects — doctrine or personal experience — has been more needed than the other?

QUESTION 3: How have you found studying the Christian doctrines to be helpful to your faith? Has studying theology ever detracted from your faith? If so, how?

A Look Ahead

July 8, 2018

“Counting the Cost”

Mere Christianity chapters covered:

- Book 4, Chapter 9: “Counting the Cost”
- Book 4, Chapter 10: “Nice People or New Men”

July 15, 2018

Q&A

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