



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

C S Lewis — a safe guide or a confused soul — which?



C S Lewis

Today, the world is running after C S Lewis! His books are eagerly sought after and the world of the cinema has recently released a film based upon one of his children's books — "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe." That in itself is neither surprising nor unduly alarming, since such a wave of excitement is frequently seen amongst those whom God has described succinctly in Isaiah 57:20. "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." However, what is alarming is the number of Christians, including those who would consider themselves as "fundamentalists", who have joined the excited mob because they have been told that C S Lewis was (he died in 1963) one of the greatest Christian thinkers ever! However, that is not the

case and we therefore have the sad spectacle of Christians running pell mell to purchase and absorb the modernistic nonsense of a man whose teachings basically denied every fundamental tenet of the gospel of Christ. What adds to the vexing nature of this headlong rush of adulation is the fact that ministers of the gospel have encouraged their flock in this folly!

In January 2002, Derick Bingham, in his Belfast Telegraph, "Thought for the weekend" article, called C S Lewis and the Roman Catholic writer, J R R Tolkien, "giants". He suggests that it was the witness of the Romanist Tolkien to C S Lewis that led to his "conversion" in 1931. In an article in the "LIFETIMES" magazine of October 2002, Derick Bingham reviewed a book called "Jack; a life of C S Lewis" by George Sayer. In his article Derick Bingham wrote –

"It is wonderful to at last see people in Northern Ireland beginning to recognize Lewis for the spiritual giant he was . . . Lewis, our greatest Christian writer, is now the best selling Christian author in all of history". ([Take Heed Ministries](#))

With praise like this, it is not surprising that some Christians have been misled. The Evangelical Bookshop in Belfast likewise aided the promotion of this man's writings. It carried an advert on Saturday 17th December pressing upon the public the writings of C S Lewis. This may make good "economic sense", but it is contrary to the character of literature the shop purports to retail, since Lewis was no evangelical. The philosophy of C S Lewis would sit ill upon the same bookshelf as the writings of a John Owen or a John Bunyan or John Flavel. This is part of the deception of these dark days.

A man to be believed

C S Lewis has even been commended by our own Free Presbyterian magazine, the "Revivalist", for his words have been quoted in such a fashion as to suggest that he is a man





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whose words are worthy of embracing and believing. However, if C S Lewis is a man whose writings are worthy of believing and obeying, then we have a lot of men to whom we must apologise, for since the foundation of the Free Presbyterian Church, men who have been guilty of propagating much less serious errors have been publicly condemned for their actions from Free Presbyterian pulpits. We cannot embrace Lewis without apologising to the likes of Billy Graham!

What did C S Lewis believe?

1. He did not believe in the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures.

" . . . all Holy Scripture is in some sense – though not all parts of it in the same sense – the word of God." (Reflections on the Psalms). In a letter Lewis wrote to Clyde Kilby on May 7, 1959, he argued, "If every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of Lights, then all true and edifying writings, whether in Scripture or not, must in some sense be inspired." Here again, he employs the rather vague and unexplained term "in some sense". It is entirely wrong to speak of the Bible as being in some Evangelical Bookshop advert.

Parts more inspired than others.

One sympathetic Lewis scholar concluded that "Lewis does not confine his religious views to the Bible but recognizes God's revelation in literary masterpieces, in other religions, in ancient world myths, and through human reason and intuition. Christianity is true...not just because the Bible says so but because God chooses to reveal himself through many different ways, yet supremely through Christ." ("Is C S Lewis in heaven?" John W Robbins.)

2. He did not believe in a literal six-day creation.

This quotation is taken from "C. S. Lewis's Theology: Somewhere between Ransom and Reepicheep" by James Townsend. "The earliest stratum of the Old Testament contains many truths in a form which I take to be legendary, or even mythical . . . things like Noah's Ark or the sun standing still upon Ajalon." Elsewhere he wrote "The first chapters of Genesis, no doubt, give the story in the form of a folktale . . ."

3. He was a theistic evolutionist.

"In the matter of God's creation, Lewis had no difficulty in being committed to theistic evolution. Lewis called man "the highest of the animals." He also acknowledged: "If by saying that man rose from brutality you mean simply that man is physically descended from animals, I have no objection." Elsewhere he said: "What difficulties I have about evolution are not religious" (C. S. Lewis's Theology . . .) Theistic evolution puts forth the view that God created life and evolution was the system or means whereby God governed the process out of which man developed.

4. His view of Christ's divinity was flawed.

He believed that Christ was ignorant of many things and made mistakes. "Two other of Lewis's Christological opinions are interesting. In speaking of the kenosis (Philippians 2: 7) he stated: "I certainly think that Christ, in the flesh, was not omniscient — if only because a human brain could not, presumably be the vehicle of omniscient consciousness . . ." In another comment, bearing upon John 3: 13, Lewis claimed "Christ's divine nature never left



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[heaven] and never returned to it." (C. S. Lewis's *Theology . . .*) This last comment is in direct contradiction of Colossians 2:9. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

5. He did not believe in the substitutionary death of Christ.

In *The Allegory of Love*, Lewis referred to a poem whose "theology turns on a crudely substitutional view of the Atonement." In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis indicated that he did not accept the substitutionary view of atonement. (C. S. Lewis's *Theology . . .*)

6. He did not believe in justification by faith alone.

"A. N. Wilson asserted: "If the mark of a reborn evangelical is a devotion to the Epistles of Paul and, in particular, to the doctrine of Justification by Faith, then there can have been few Christian converts less evangelical than Lewis." In fact, the Methodist minister who reviewed *Mere Christianity* claimed that the book "does not really mention . . . the central Christian doctrine of Justification by Faith." From the other end of the theological spectrum, J. I. Packer spoke of Lewis's "failure ever to mention justification by faith when speaking of the forgiveness of sins, and his apparent hospitality to baptismal regeneration . . ." (C. S. Lewis's *Theology . . .*)

7. He believed in salvation for those who died without the knowledge of Christ.

"Beyond the parameters of traditional Arminianism, however, Lewis expected that some non-Christians would be saved. "Though all salvation is through Jesus, we need not conclude that He cannot save those who have not explicitly accepted Him in this life." On the radio he announced: "We do know that no [one] can be saved except through Christ; we do not know that only those who know Him can be saved through Him." "This issue raises the question of Christianity in relation to other world religions. Lewis said: "I couldn't believe that 999 religions were completely false and the remaining one true." Similarly he stated: "We are not pronouncing all other religions to be totally false, but rather saying that in Christ whatever is true in all religions is consummated and perfected." Kathryn Lindskoog wrote: "Lewis expressed hope that many true seekers like Akhenaton and Plato, who never had a chance to find Christ in this life, will find Him in the next one." (C. S. Lewis's *Theology . . .*)

8. He regularly confessed his sins to a priest.

"Only some years after conversion did Lewis make auricular confession to an Anglican priest. He wrote (on October 24, 1940) that "the decision was the hardest I have ever made . . ." From that time on he made regular confession to a priest." (C. S. Lewis's *Theology . . .*)

9. He believed in praying for the dead.

"Praying for the dead and a concept of purgatory pretty well go hand in hand. Lewis "emphatically believed in praying for the dead." He prayed for his wife after she died. He thought that John Henry Newman had the right idea — that saved souls before God's throne would ask to be thoroughly cleansed. Consequently, this necessitated a purgatory, though not as in a medieval doctrine of torture. In this way there would exist "Purgatory (for souls already saved) or . . . Limbo (for souls already lost)." "Lewis likened purgatory to sitting in a dentist's chair, saying: "I'd rather be cleaned first." Of course, most evangeli-



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cals believe this viewpoint founders upon the perfect purgation which has already transpired in the crosswork of Christ (Hebrews 1:3; 9:15; 10:2, 10-12, 17-18). (C. S. Lewis's Theology . . .)

10. His language would appear to have had a vulgarity about it that was, to say the least, most unseemly.

In an open discussion on April 18, 1944, a factory worker who apparently thought Lewis was unclear said, "We don't qualify for heaven by practice, but salvation is obtained at the Cross. We do nothing to obtain it . . ." Lewis rejoined as follows: "The controversy about faith and works is one that has gone on for a very long time, and it is a highly technical matter. I personally rely on the paradoxical text: "Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God that worketh in you." It looks as if in one sense we do nothing; and in another case we do a damned lot . . . and you must have [salvation] in you before you can work it out." (C. S. Lewis's Theology . . .)

The theologically modernistic and liberal errors of C S Lewis could be much more exhaustively explored but what Christian could look upon a man who held such views as those set out in this short article, as a man worthy of following or anything based upon his thinking as safe to introduce to children?

His much-lauded intellectualism did not prevent him speaking as a fool regarding the things of God and we should avoid the folly of following him into the mythical world of his vain imaginations.