



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

The Myth of C S Lewis's "Christianity"



Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963) was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He is extremely popular with many evangelicals today and considered as a foremost Christian thinker and philosopher. Though Lewis died in 1963, sales of his books have risen to two million a year. In an article commemorating the 100th anniversary of Lewis's birth, J I Packer (a man who has abandoned orthodoxy for ecumenism) called him "our patron saint." Leading US publication, Christianity Today said Lewis "has come to be the Aquinas, the Augustine, and the Aesop of contemporary Evangelicalism" (Sept. 7, 1998). In its April 23, 2001 issue, Christianity Today again praised Lewis. It said that he has been called "the 20th century's greatest Christian apologist." It went on to say that he wrote several mythical works, such as *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which the magazine recommended, saying "Christ came not to put an end to myth but to take all that is most essential in the myth up into himself and make it real." Such a statement from a so-called Christian magazine is be condemned as arrant nonsense. In his *Chronicles*, Lewis depicts the Lord Jesus Christ as a lion named Aslan who is slain on a stone table. Of this depiction, Christianity Today says, "In Aslan, Christ is made tangible, knowable, real." Can such a claim by this publication be justified? Is there a setting forth of true Biblical Christianity in C S Lewis's writings? We say "NO" to both questions and that for the simple reason that C S Lewis was a denier of many cardinal doctrines of the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and a setter forth of error.

Christianity Today significantly stated of him that he was "a man whose theology had decidedly unevangelical elements". A Christianity which "in parts" is evangelical, is not evangelical Christianity!

Had he lived a little longer, it is likely that Lewis would have converted to Roman Catholicism. He believed in prayers for the dead and purgatory and confessed his sins regularly to a priest. He received the Roman Catholic sacrament of last rites on July 16, 1963. Lewis also rejected the doctrine of bodily resurrection and believed there is salvation in pagan religions. Dr John Robbins in his article "Did C. S. Lewis Go to Heaven?", said : "He denied the inerrancy of Scripture itself; he rejected the doctrine of the substitutionary, penal atonement; he set forth an odd view of the resurrection of the body, to name only three. In locus after locus of Christian theology, Lewis' views were un-Biblical and Antichristian." In his book, "Letters to Malcolm", Lewis made statements about the resurrection of the body which would certainly justify the view that he did not appear to hold to the Bible's teaching on the resurrection of the body. Lewis denied the doctrines of the total depravity of man and the substitutionary atonement of Christ. He believed in theistic evolution and rejected the Bible as the infallible Word of God. He denied the biblical doctrine of an eternal fiery hell, claiming instead that hell is a state of mind: "And every state of mind, left to itself, every shutting up of the creature within the dungeon of its own mind — is, in the end, Hell" (Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, p. 65). The late Dr. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones is quoted in Christianity Today, Dec. 20, 1963 as having warned that C S Lewis had a defective view of salvation and was an opponent of the substitutionary and penal view of



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

the atonement. In 1993, Christianity Today gave this interesting reason why C S Lewis is so popular among some evangelicals. "Lewis's concentration on the main doctrines of the church coincided with evangelicals' concern to avoid ecclesiastical separatism." This is an admission by a neo-evangelical publication that C S Lewis is popular with some today because he rejected the doctrine of Christians separating from apostate denominations.

C S Lewis was a promoter of ecumenism. He was firmly ecumenical, though he distanced himself from outright liberalism. In his preface to *Mere Christianity*, Lewis states his aim. It is to present "an agreed, or common, or central or 'mere' Christianity." He concentrates on the doctrines that he believes are common to all forms of Christianity which, of course, included Roman Catholicism. He submitted sections of the book to four clerics for criticism — an Anglican, a Methodist, a Presbyterian, and a Roman Catholic! He hoped that the book would make it clear why all Christians "ought to be reunited." He equates the "mere Christianity" that he describes in the book to a hall which leads to a number of rooms. These rooms represent the various Christian denominations and traditions. Just as you do not stay in the hall when you enter a house, but enter a room, so when you become a Christian you should join a particular Christian tradition. Lewis believes that it is not really important which denomination you join. It will be right for some to enter the door marked "Roman Catholicism" as it will for others to enter other doors. Whichever room you enter, says Lewis, the important thing is that you be convinced that it is the right one for you. "When you have reached your own room, be kind to those who have chosen different doors."

Lewis's view of the sacraments was exceedingly defective. The sacraments, he says, "spread the Christ life to us" (*Mere Christianity*, book 2, chapter 5). In his *Letters to Malcolm*, Lewis states that he does not want to "unsettle in the mind of any Christian, whatever his denomination, the concepts — for him traditional— by which he finds it profitable to represent to himself what is happening when he receives the bread and wine" of the Lord's Supper. He suggested that the Roman Catholic conception of the bread and wine becoming the actual body and blood of Christ might be just as valid as the Protestant view of the Lord's Supper as a memorial (*Letters to Malcolm*, chapter 19).

In March 1994 the *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* movement produced its first document. This was entitled "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium." It was claimed at the time that this document represented "a betrayal of the Reformation." The influence of C S Lewis is to be detected in such ecumenical ventures. Charles Colson was a contributor to a publication, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Working Towards a Common Mission*. He writes that it was the influence of C S Lewis and that of Billy Graham which prompted him to form ECT. Colson states that *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* seeks to continue the legacy of C S Lewis by focusing on the core beliefs of all true Christians (*Common Mission*, p. 36).

C S Lewis is very popular amongst Roman Catholics. As popular, indeed, as he is amongst Evangelicals. Christianity Today, supposedly the leading evangelical magazine in America, conducted a poll amongst its readers asking them whom they considered the most influential Christian writer of the twentieth century. C S Lewis headed the list of the



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

readers' choices. Mormon professor Robert Millet, Dean of Brigham Young University, was quoted, in a recent issue of *Christianity Today*, as saying that C S Lewis "is so well received by Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) because of his broad and inclusive vision of Christianity." (*Christianity Today*, June 15, 1998, p. 30). C S Lewis lives on in The Alpha Course. He is quoted and referred to very frequently. Indeed, The Alpha Course might well be termed a literary reincarnation of Lewis's book, *Mere Christianity*.

It was many years ago, when someone purchased a copy of C S Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* for one of our children, that I first read anything of his writings. I can still remember the disturbing thoughts that arose within my heart as I read Lewis's equating of Christ with the lion, Aslan. I knew nothing of Lewis's theology at that time, but I can honestly say that just reading from that one publication so troubled me that his writings were forbidden to our children. Further research vindicated those early suspicions regarding the "spirit" of the writings. The whole language, a mixture of pagan mythology and fantasy, did not articulate reverence and godly fear of the Lord. A greater understanding of the man and his theology showed that he was not an advocate of the teachings of Holy Scripture but of his own "scholarly notions". It is a foolish glorying in worldly scholarship that makes some admire this man.

Parents should not allow their children to read the books of C S Lewis. We would commend "The Enigma of C.S. Lewis" by Dr. Tony Baxter, Christian Research Network, Colchester, England. Remember the words of Scripture: And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, 2 Timothy 3:15. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man, Colossians 4:6.

(We acknowledge the Fundamental Baptist Information Service as the source of much of the material quoted above.)