

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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## Did C. S. Lewis Go to Heaven?

John W. Robbins

C. S. Lewis<sup>1</sup> was one of the most influential, if not the most influential, Anglican writer of the twentieth century. Any informed Western Christian could not have lived in the middle and latter twentieth century without having encountered Lewis, for he was both prolific and well-publicized. When I was young, I was enamored of Lewis, as, I suppose, many young people are. After his death in November 1963, the C. S. Lewis literary-theological complex developed in the United States, with scores, if not hundreds, of books and thousands of essays about Lewis published, largely by his admirers. His books have sold in the millions, far more after his death than at any time during his life. Despite all this, there has been little critical attention paid to the theological ideas that Lewis actually taught in his books, even by those who call themselves Protestants and Evangelicals. I have given a provocative title to my talk in an attempt to provoke some of these people to think critically about Lewis' theology.

And well they should, for Lewis was no Evangelical. Writing in *We Remember C. S. Lewis*, James Houston, an Oxford University Lecturer for 23 years, later the founding Principal and Chancellor of Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, said, Lewis "had no cultural connections with Evangelicals. He had no friends among them.... His friends were all Anglo-Catholic or Catholic.... Lewis, of course, has been adopted by the Evangelicals in America in a way that would have made him very uncomfortable. He didn't associate with them; he didn't think of himself as one of them."<sup>2</sup>

Despite the widespread and enthusiastic acceptance of Lewis in Evangelical circles in the United States, or perhaps because of it, one must raise the question: What did C. S. Lewis actually believe and teach about God, man, sin, salvation, Scripture, government, and society? This paper, a portion of a book-in-progress, examines his teachings on these subjects and concludes that Lewis cannot accurately be called an Evangelical and may be called a Christian only in an historical or nominal sense. On point after point, Lewis taught doctrines contrary to Scripture. 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.

A few years ago, this Society explored the limits of the term "Evangelical." If we mark those limits as including belief in the inerrancy of Scripture, C. S. Lewis was no Evangelical and would not have been allowed to join the Evangelical Theological Society.<sup>3</sup> So why the great admiration for Lewis in Evangelical circles?

One explanation may be that American Evangelical circles are no longer evangelical. Modern Evangelicals, unlike the Evangelicals of the sixteenth century, either do not believe or do not emphasize the doctrines of *sola Scriptura* and *sola fide*, which historically are the distinctive doctrinal marks of an Evangelical. This has

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<sup>1</sup>This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Atlanta, Georgia, November 19, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> James Houston, "Reminiscences of the Oxford Lewis," *We Remember C. S. Lewis: Essays and*

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*Memoirs*, David Graham, editor. Broadman and Holman, 2001, 136.

<sup>3</sup>This may now be untrue, for on November 19, 2003, ETS members, violating their own Doctrinal Basis, voted to retain men who deny inerrancy as members in good standing.

become painfully clear in the last decade with the advent of movements such as Evangelicals and Catholics Together, led and vocally supported by men who claim to be and are widely regarded as Evangelicals, some of whom are members of this Society, and one of whom, Charles Colson, credits his ecumenical activities to the influence of C. S. Lewis.<sup>4</sup>

A less plausible explanation is that Lewis was really an Evangelical at heart. But whatever the content of Lewis' heart, the content of his books was not Evangelical doctrine; and if Lewis' public statements are not Evangelical, can they or he be considered Christian? Is there any minimum belief required to get into Heaven, or have we all accepted the Antichristian notion that God loves all men and desires to save all, regardless of their beliefs? Has the Universalism implicit in Arminianism, which has been the majority report of American churches for almost two centuries, and which lately has erupted in the openness of God controversy, caused American Protestants to accept Lewis as a fellow Christian without question?

Whatever the solution to the puzzle of the veneration for Lewis in Evangelical circles, it is my duty here today to tell you that Lewis was no Evangelical, and may be called a Christian only in a tenuous sense. Let me briefly discuss his teachings on major doctrines essential to Christianity. I shall begin with the doctrine with which this Society is most concerned: the doctrine of Scripture.

### ***Lewis' Opinion of Scripture***

Lewis allowed that "all Holy Scripture is in some sense – though not all parts of it in the same sense – the word of God."<sup>5</sup> Leaving aside the question of which books Lewis denoted by the term "Holy Scripture," is it true that the phrase "word of God" is used equivocally of various parts of Scripture? Are the *Psalms* the word of God in a sense different from *Romans*? If so, what are those different senses? 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."<sup>6</sup> There's that phrase again, "in some sense," without further explanation, coupled with the assertion that writings that are not Scripture are "inspired," that is, they come from God. The net effect of even a brief examination of Lewis' statements about Scripture is to leave us much less sure that Lewis asserted anything distinctly Christian

or Biblical about Holy Scripture at all. 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."<sup>7</sup>

The fundamental question of how we know anything accurate about Christ apart from an unerring, revealed Scripture is not a question that Lewis considers. It doesn't seem even to cross his mind. When in *Christian Reflections* Lewis lists his assumptions for his arguments, he lists them as "the divinity of Christ, the truth of the creeds, and the authority of the Christian tradition," a rejection of the Biblical and Reformational principle of *sola Scriptura*. Not only is Scripture alone not the assumption or basis of his arguments, Scripture is not even mentioned as an assumption or basis. This Society has a "Doctrinal Basis," which is *sola Scriptura*. According to his statement in *Christian Reflections*, Lewis' theological bases do not include Scripture, except insofar as "tradition" might include Scripture.

In that May 7, 1959 letter, written in response to Mr. Kilby's request that Lewis comment on Wheaton College's statement concerning the inspiration of the Bible, Lewis went on to explain in some detail:

"Whatever view we hold on the divine authority of Scripture must make room for the following facts.

"1. The distinction which St Paul makes in I Cor vii between ["not I, but the Lord"] and ["I speak, not the Lord"].

"2. The apparent inconsistencies between the genealogies in Matt i and Luke iii: with the accounts of the death of Judas in Matt xxvii 5 and Acts i.18-19.

"3. St Luke's own account of how he obtained his matter (i.1-4).

"4. The universally admitted unhistoricity (I do not say, of course, falsity) of at least some narratives in Scripture (the parables), which may well extend also to Jonah and Job.

"5. If every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of Lights then all true and edifying writings, whether in Scripture or not, must be in some sense inspired.

"6. John xi.49-52. Inspiration may operate in a wicked man without his knowing it, and he can then utter the untruth he intends (propriety of making an innocent man a political scapegoat) as well as the truth he does not intend (the divine sacrifice)."

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<sup>4</sup>"C. S. Lewis and God's Surprises," *We Remember C. S. Lewis*, 28.

<sup>5</sup>*Reflections on the Psalms*, 19.

<sup>6</sup>*Letters of C. S. Lewis*, W. H. Lewis, editor, 1993, 479-480.

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<sup>7</sup>Michael J. Christensen, *C. S. Lewis on Scripture*, 1979, 24.

These “facts,” Lewis said, “rule out the view that any one passage taken in isolation can be assumed to be inerrant in exactly the same sense as any other: e.g. that the numbers of O. T. Armies...are statistically correct because the story of the Resurrection is historically correct.”

Lewis set forth a very subjective, almost Neo-orthodox, view of inspiration when he wrote: “That the over-all operation of Scripture is to convey God’s Word to the reader (he also needs his inspiration) who reads it in the right spirit, I fully believe.”

Then Lewis denied what might be called objective inspiration: “That it [Scripture] also gives true answers to all the questions...which he [the reader] might ask, I don’t [believe]. The very kind of truth we are often demanding was, in my opinion, not even envisaged by the ancients.”

This mention of kinds of truth – which Lewis, once again, did not explain – takes us off into more complex epistemological problems, which we cannot discuss here today. I intend to address those problems in my book. But it is clear that Lewis denied that Scripture was completely true in the ordinary sense of the word *true*.

In Lewis’ opinion, the Apostle John did almost as well as James Boswell in getting the facts straight: “Either this [John’s *Gospel*] is reportage – though it may no doubt contain errors – pretty close up to the facts; nearly as close as Boswell. Or else, some unknown writer in the second century, without known predecessors or successors, suddenly anticipated the whole technique of modern, novelistic, realistic, narrative.”<sup>8</sup>

With defenders like C. S. Lewis, the Apostle John really doesn’t need critics.

But the Apostle, narrowly excelled in historical accuracy by Boswell, comes out smelling like a rose compared to the Psalmists. Referring to them as a group, Lewis said they were “ferocious, self-pitying, barbaric men.”<sup>9</sup> Speaking of their writings, the *Psalms*, Lewis characterized some of them as “fatal confusion,” “devilish,” “diabolical,” “contemptible,” petty and vulgar.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Christian Reflections*, 154-155.

<sup>9</sup> *Reflections on the Psalms*, 24.

<sup>10</sup> *Reflections on the Psalms*, 18-22. His actual words are “But of course the fatal confusion between being in the right and being righteous soon falls upon them [the Psalmists].... There is also in many of the *Psalms* a still more fatal confusion – that between the desire for justice and the desire for revenge.... Even more devilish [than *Psalm* 109] in one verse is the, otherwise beautiful, [*Psalm*] 137.... This [*Psalm* 23:5] may not be so diabolical as the passages I have quoted above; but the

## **Lewis characterized some of the *Psalms* as fatal confusion, devilish, diabolical, contemptible, petty, and vulgar.**

Nor did Lewis stop with these adjectives to describe what he called “Holy Scripture.” He wrote: “Naivety, error, contradiction, even (as in the cursing *Psalms*) wickedness are not removed. The total result is not ‘the Word of God’ in the sense that every passage, in itself, gives impeccable science or history. It carries the Word of God....”<sup>11</sup> Scripture is not the word of God; it “carries” the word of God. “It is Christ Himself,” Lewis said, “not the Bible, who is the true word of God. The Bible, read in the right spirit and with the guidance of good teachers, will bring us to Him.”<sup>12</sup> The Bible is not the true word of God, according to Lewis. In order to lead us to Christ, it must be read in the right spirit (he did not tell us what that is) and with the guidance of good teachers. It does not speak for itself, but only through its interpreters. Somehow, when we least expect it but truly need it for our “spiritual life,” we will know “whether a particular passage is rightly translated or is myth (but of course myth specially chosen by God from among countless myths to carry a spiritual truth) or history.... But we must not use the Bible (our fathers too often did) as a sort of Encyclopedia out of which texts...can be taken for use as weapons.”<sup>13</sup>

It seems clear that Lewis denied the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible. After studying these statements, one is not even sure what the word “inspiration” or the phrase “word of God,” let alone “Holy Scripture,” meant for Lewis.

Now, one might argue that a person can still go to Heaven even though he disbelieves portions of the Bible and rejects the doctrine of verbal inerrancy. The authors of the *Westminster Confession* seem to disagree, saying, “By this [saving] faith, a Christian believes to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein....” They reject the notion that the Apostle John made errors, that some of the *Psalms* are diabolical, that there are contradictions between Biblical statements, and that mythology is part of the Old Testament. The *Westminster Confession* theologians go on to state that the “principal acts of saving faith” focus upon Christ alone: “The principal acts of saving faith are

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pettiness and vulgarity of it...are hard to endure.... One way of dealing with these terrible or (dare we say?) contemptible *Psalms* is simply to leave them alone.”

<sup>11</sup> *Reflections on the Psalms*, 94.

<sup>12</sup> *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 428.

<sup>13</sup> *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 428.

accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace” (14.2). It is not the mere person of Christ, but his work also, that is a necessary object of saving faith.

Lewis, like the demons that James mentions, believed in one God. He tells of his conversion to monotheism in his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*. In the last chapter of that book he briefly discusses his conversion to Christianity. Yet, strictly speaking, even that conversion, let alone his conversion to monotheism, is not to Christianity, but to the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. That too, seems to be the faith of at least one demon, who in *Mark* 1:24 addresses Jesus as “the Holy One of God” who has come to destroy him. Regarding Jesus as Messiah or even as divine is not sufficient for salvation, for the Judaizers in Galatia, upon whom the Apostle Paul pronounces damning curses, presumably believed in Jesus as Messiah and the deity of Christ as well.

Here is how Lewis described what he considered to be his conversion to Christianity:

“The last stage in my story, the transition from mere Theism to Christianity, is the one on which I am now least informed....

“As soon as I became a Theist I started attending my parish church on Sundays and my college chapel on weekdays; not because I believed in Christianity, nor because I thought the difference between it and simple Theism a small one, but because I thought one ought to ‘fly one’s flag’ by some unmistakable overt sign....

“Thus my churchgoing was a merely symbolical and provisional practice. If it in fact helped to move me in the Christian direction, I was and am unaware of this.... The real clue had been put into my hand by that hard-boiled Atheist when he said, ‘Rum thing, all that about the Dying God. Seems to have really happened once’; by him and by [Owen] Barfield’s encouragement of a more respectful, if not more delighted, attitude toward Pagan myth. The question was no longer to find the one simply true religion among a thousand religions simply false. It was rather, ‘Where has religion reached its true maturity? Where, if anywhere, have the hints of all Paganism been fulfilled?’.... Paganism had been only the childhood of religion, or only a prophetic dream. Where was the thing full grown? or where was the awakening?.... There were really only two answers possible: either in Hinduism or in Christianity....

“I know very well when, but hardly how, the final step was taken. I was driven to Whipsnade one sunny morning. When we set out I did not believe that Jesus is the Son of

God and when we reached the zoo I did. Yet I had not exactly spent the journey in thought.”<sup>14</sup>

Lewis’ conversion to Christianity, by his own account, is tantamount to acceptance of the doctrine of the Incarnation. But is that saving faith? Is that Christianity? If it is, then everyone who believes the deity of Christ is saved. But we have, in Scripture itself, examples of those who accept the deity of Christ who are not saved. Even at the last judgment, there will be many who address Christ as Lord, acknowledge his deity, and yet are sent to Hell (see *Matthew* 7:21-23).

The Apostle Paul saw at least one other doctrine as the *sine qua non* of Christianity: justification by faith alone. Not only does he make this clear in his cursing of those who teach another Gospel in his letter to the Galatians, but he makes this doctrine of justification the foundation of his argument in his letter to the Romans.

The question that arises, then, is this: Did Lewis believe and teach the doctrine of justification by faith alone?

The question that arises, then, is this: Did Lewis believe and teach the doctrine of justification by faith alone?

The answer is that one looks in vain throughout his rather ample corpus for any assertion of the doctrine of justification. It certainly is absent from his *Mere Christianity*, where he discussed and defended what he called Christianity. Neither *The C. S. Lewis Readers’ Encyclopedia*,<sup>15</sup> nor *The C. S. Lewis Encyclopedia*,<sup>16</sup> nor *C. S. Lewis A Companion and Guide*<sup>17</sup> contain any entry for “justification.” Only one volume, *The C. S. Lewis Index*,<sup>18</sup> contains any entry at all for justification, and it directs us to Lewis’ comment in a December 21, 1941 letter to Bede Griffiths, OSB, which I quote here in its entirety:

“You see, what I wanted to do in these [radio] talks was to give simply what is still common to us all, and I’ve been trying to get a *nihil obstat* from friends in various communions. (The other dissentient besides you is a Methodist who says I’ve said nothing about justification by faith.)”<sup>19</sup>

That’s it. That is the only mention of justification by

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<sup>14</sup> *Surprised by Joy*, 1956, 230-237.

<sup>15</sup> Jeffrey D. Schultz and John G. Wets, Jr., editors. Zondervan, 1998.

<sup>16</sup> Colin Duriez, Crossway Books, 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Hooper, HarperSanFrancisco, 1996.

<sup>18</sup> Compiled by Janine Goffar, Crossway Books, 1998.

<sup>19</sup> *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 1993, 364.

faith cited by any of the four massive encyclopedias on Lewis.

One looks in vain throughout Lewis' rather ample corpus for any assertion of the doctrine of justification..

If one looks for statements by Lewis on salvation or righteousness or faith, one finds several, none of which asserts justification by faith alone. Here is a sampling of Lewis:

"Humanity is already 'saved' in principle. We individuals have to appropriate that salvation. But the really tough work – the bit we could not have done for ourselves – has been done for us. We have not got to try to climb up into spiritual life by our own efforts; it has already come down into the human race. If we will only lay ourselves open to the one Man in whom it is fully present, and who, in spite of being God, is also a real man, he will do it in us and for us. Remember what I said about 'good infection.' One of our own race has this new life: if we get close to Him we shall catch it from Him.

"Of course, you can express this in all sorts of different ways. You can say that Christ died for our sins. You may say that the Father has forgiven us because Christ has done for us what we ought to have done. You may say that we are washed in the blood of the Lamb. You may say that Christ has defeated death. They are all true. If any of them do [*sic*] not appeal to you, leave it alone and get on with the formula that does. And, whatever you do, do not start quarrelling with other people because they use a different formula from yours."<sup>20</sup>

Now these paragraphs are an attack on Christianity, not a defense of it.

Lewis' first sentence is a denial of the Biblical doctrine that Christ died for certain individuals, whom he referred to as his people, his sheep, his friends, and those whom the Father had given him – not for humanity in general. Each of the individuals for whom Christ died will inexorably be saved, or Christ died in vain. Lewis' first sentence is a denial of an effectual atonement, and an assertion of an atonement – if we can properly call it an atonement in Lewis' theology – that makes it possible, but not actual, that anyone will be saved.

Lewis was clear as to what salvation is: It

is a subjective change in the sinner, which he called a "good infection."

Next, Lewis described the work of Christ as the "bit we could not have done for ourselves." To be sure, he also described it as the "really tough work," but by using the word "bit," Lewis minimized the work of Christ and magnified the work of sinners in achieving salvation. Then Lewis used the phrase "lay ourselves open," a metaphor for who knows what. Just when clarity was most needed, obscurity was most emphasized.

But Lewis was clear as to what salvation is: It is a subjective change in the sinner, which he called a "good infection." In Lewis' theology, a sinner is not saved by a perfect righteousness outside of himself imputed to his account, but by a subjective infection, which he called "new life." Jesus does it "in us and for us." If we get "close enough" to him, whatever that means, we catch the new life, as one catches an infection.

Lewis, like some of the Jews in the Old Testament, did not understand, and therefore could not obey, the command to look from a distance at the bronze serpent fashioned by Moses for their salvation from the poison that raged through their bodies.<sup>21</sup> How could something outside of them save them from the poison within? Yet that is precisely what Christ said about his work: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (*John* 3:14-15).

In his second paragraph Lewis offered what he said are several different ways of saying what he had said in the first. He told us that they are "all true." Then, in a most remarkable move, he told us that we may accept and reject any and all of these true statements, depending on what "appeals" to us. What kind of truth is this, that has no authority? It seems that our taste, our personal preference, is the only basis for accepting and rejecting these statements that Lewis said are "all true." Lewis did not insist that we accept all these true statements. We can take or leave them, depending on our taste. At the point when it is most important to insist on the primacy and authority of truth, Lewis lapsed into subjectivism and relativism. If anyone rejects this conclusion by arguing that Lewis merely meant that all these expressions were figurative, and that one can choose whichever figure of speech is appealing, then the statement "Christ died for our sins" is merely a figure of speech, and the atonement vanishes.

Lewis' reason for saying these expressions are unimportant is clear from his last sentence: He commanded us – and we have no choice to take or leave

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<sup>20</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 156-157.

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<sup>21</sup> See *Numbers* 21.

this *fiat* – not to quarrel with anyone who uses a different “formula.” Apparently theological formulae are a good deal more flexible than chemical formulae, since we can use any theological formula we wish and still not harm ourselves. The really important thing, according to Lewis, is not to quarrel. This, of course, is not Christianity, for Christians in the Bible were always quarreling with some who also professed to be godly and Christians. It is a peculiar blindness that can read the New Testament and not see Christians such as Paul, James, Peter, and John – to say nothing of Christ himself – continually confronting and correcting those professing Christians whose actions and formulae were wrong. Far from encouraging theological discussion and debate, Lewis forbade it, writing, “Our divisions should never be discussed except in the presence of those who have already come to believe that there is one God and that Jesus Christ is His only Son.”<sup>22</sup> How foolish of the Holy Spirit (I speak as a fool) to have put debates and denunciations in a book that any unbeliever might pick up and read.

Finally, missing from Lewis’ litany of theological formulae that will save us is the full Gospel: justification by faith alone. He did not even mention it.

Let us consider another statement from Lewis:

“Christians have often disputed as to whether what leads the Christian home is good actions, or Faith in Christ. I have no right really to speak on such a difficult question, but it does seem to me like asking which blade in a pair of scissors is most necessary. A serious moral effort is the only thing that will bring you to the point where you throw up the sponge. Faith in Christ is the only thing to save you from despair at that point: and out of that Faith in Him good actions must inevitably come.”<sup>23</sup>

According to Lewis, both faith in Christ and “good actions” are necessary to lead a Christian “home.” The Apostle Paul says that this is not Christianity.

According to Lewis, both faith in Christ and “good actions” are necessary to lead a Christian “home.” The Apostle Paul says that this is not Christianity (“Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”),<sup>24</sup> and anyone who teaches this will not make it “home.” Further, Lewis seemed to think that each person must despair before he can be

converted, but such is surely not the case. The Apostle Paul, to say nothing of James, John, and Andrew, did not seem to be despairing before he was converted. We have no record of the other apostles despairing before their conversions either. In fact, it is difficult to find any believer in the Scriptures who must pass through the so-called “dark night of the soul” that mystics are always jabbering about before he is converted. Job might have suffered such, but he was already converted. On the other hand, Judas Iscariot despaired, and he was not converted. Lewis here seemed to make his own experience prior to his conversion to monotheism normative for all conversions.

A third statement will make Lewis’ theology more clear:

“And let me make it quite clear that when Christians say the Christ-life is in them, they do not mean simply something mental or moral. When they speak of being ‘in Christ’ or of Christ being ‘in them,’ this is not simply a way of saying that they are thinking about Christ or copying Him. They mean that Christ is actually operating through them; that the whole mass of Christians are the physical organism through which Christ acts – that we are His fingers and muscles, the cells of His body. And perhaps that explains one or two things. It explains why this new life is spread not only by purely mental acts like belief, but by bodily acts like baptism and Holy Communion. It is not merely the spreading of an idea; it is more like evolution – a biological or super-biological fact.... He uses material things like bread and wine to put the new life into us.”<sup>25</sup>

I shall not comment on Lewis’ metaphysical errors here, but simply focus on his last three sentences. First, he said the new life is spread by bodily acts like baptism and Holy Communion. Here Lewis silently abandoned his stated goal of presenting “mere Christianity” and taught a view of the sacraments that not only is not common to all professing Christian denominations, but is directly opposed to Scripture. If bodily acts can give new life, that is, salvation, then Christian faith is unnecessary for new life and salvation. Lewis drew this inference, for in the next paragraph he wrote:

“Here is another thing that used to puzzle me. Is it not frightfully unfair that this new life should be confined to people who have heard of Christ and been able to believe in Him? But the truth is that God has not told us what His arrangements about the other people are. We do know that no man can be saved except through Christ; we do not know that only those who know Him can be saved through

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<sup>22</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 6. Monotheism and the deity of Christ seem to be Lewis’ minimal definition of Christianity.

<sup>23</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 129.

<sup>24</sup> *Galatians* 3:3.

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<sup>25</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 64-65.

Him.”<sup>26</sup>

The truth is, of course, that God has indeed told us what the “arrangements about the other people,” that is, those who do not believe in Christ, are. Christ said, “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (*John* 3:18). The problem is that Lewis simply did not like this “arrangement.” So he asserted, falsely, that “God has not told us what His arrangements about the other people are.” Lewis rejected the God of Scripture who sovereignly decides who will go to Heaven and who will go to Hell. He found such an arrangement “frightfully unfair.” His last sentence – “we do not know that only those who know Him can be saved through Him” – directly contradicts Christ’s statements in *John* 3:14-18, for Christ repeatedly says that only those who know the Son can be saved, and that those who do not know the Son are condemned. Lewis denied that Christian faith is necessary for salvation.

He wrote:

“[H]ere are people who do not accept the full Christian doctrine about Christ but who are so strongly attracted by Him that they are His in a much deeper sense than they themselves understand. There are people in other religions who are being led by God’s secret influence to concentrate on those parts of their religion which are in agreement with Christianity, and who thus belong to Christ without knowing it. For example, a Buddhist of good will may be led to concentrate more and more on the Buddhist teaching about mercy and to leave in the background (though he might still say he believed) the Buddhist teaching on certain other points. Many of the good Pagans long before Christ’s birth may have been in this position.”<sup>27</sup>

And, echoing Kierkegaard,

I think that every prayer which is sincerely made even to a false god or to a very imperfectly conceived true God, is accepted by the true God and that Christ saves many who do not think they know Him.<sup>28</sup>

Sincerity, not truth or knowledge of the truth, is what makes a prayer saving, according to Lewis, and some Buddhists (“Buddhists of good will”) and Pagans (“good Pagans”) will also be saved.

In these statements, Lewis was simply working out some of the implications of the universalism inherent in his un-

Scriptural notions that Christ died for humanity and that, in principle, all of humanity is already “saved,” and that God sends “good dreams” to all people in the form of mythology.

Despite his pious words about Christ being the true word of God, Lewis rejected the Biblical view of both Christ and the Bible. In fact, he asserted that Christ, as well as the Scriptures, erred. Lewis referred to *Mark* 13:30, “Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place,” as “certainly the most embarrassing verse in the Bible.” He continued: “The one exhibition of error and the one confession of ignorance [*Mark* 13:32] grow side by side. That they stood thus in the mouth of Jesus himself, and were not merely placed thus by the reporter, we surely need not doubt.... The facts, then, are these: that Jesus professed himself (in some sense) ignorant, and within a moment showed that he really was so.”<sup>29</sup>

These statements demonstrate that Lewis not only denied the inerrancy of Scripture, but he also denied the inerrancy of Christ. Why then did he assert that Christ is the “true word of God”? Whatever the phrase “word of God” might have meant to Lewis, it did not mean completely true or reliable.

Time will not permit me to discuss many other doctrines that Lewis believed and taught that contradict the doctrine of justification by faith alone, but a brief list is in order.

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<sup>29</sup> “The World’s Last Night,” *The World’s Last Night and Other Essays*, 1960, 98-99. Notice that Lewis reversed the sequence of Christ’s statements in order to make his point.

## Old Book Available

In 1986, Roman Catholic historian Carlos M. N. Eire published *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge University Press). The book is not perfect, but it is far better than some of the books offered by apostate Protestants eager to carry us back to the Dark Ages, which they call the “Christian centuries.” Eire shows that the Reformation ended the “religion of immanence” that had characterized Western Europe for more than a millennium – the sort of religion that Lewis and his kindred spirit, Tolkien, promoted in their books.

We have obtained a supply of *War Against the Idols* (it has been out of print for some time) and are offering it to our readers for \$25.00, plus \$6.00 shipping. Send your check or money order to  
The Trinity Foundation  
Post Office Box 68, Unicoi, Tennessee 37692.

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<sup>26</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 64-65.

<sup>27</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 176-177.

<sup>28</sup> *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 428.

Lewis taught and believed in purgatory (despite the fact that Article 22 of the *Thirty-nine Articles* of the Church of England describes the doctrine of purgatory as “repugnant to the Word of God”), said prayers for the dead, believed in the physical presence of Christ’s body and blood in the bread and wine, a sacrament that he came to call “Mass,” practiced and taught auricular confession, believed in baptismal salvation, and free will. As we have seen, he rejected the inerrancy of Scripture and justification by faith alone, as well as the doctrines of total depravity and the sovereignty of God.

So we ask again: Did C. S. Lewis go to Heaven? And our answer must be: Not if he believed what he wrote in his books and letters.