

C. S. Lewis—Who He Was and What He Wrote

by Jeff Zakula

The name "C. S. Lewis" usually brings forth a number of accolades customarily used to describe him—*"Brilliant, great Christian, great mind, great apologist, greatest lay champion in the 20th century."* His book sales, still today, remain over two million dollars annually, half of which come from the sales of his famous fantasy series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

Who is this man, and what were his beliefs that he should be touted as such a monumental Christian? C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) was a college professor, and author, and had his own radio broadcast for many years. He was an atheist, who converted to theism, and later professed Christianity. His most notable work, for which he has won much acclaim, is *Mere Christianity*. The author basically describes the book's intent as an effort to set forth the fundamentals that form the basis of Christianity, excluding all doctrines and opinions that are not integral to Christianity (or, at least his definition of Christianity), thus, the name *Mere Christianity*. The exclusion of all such doctrines allows for the inclusion of all faiths.

This book has received raves from the liberal Christian press as a great apologetic work, but we should bear in mind as we review any apologetic work that not all apologetes are Christians. An apologete poses arguments that defend his view of what constitutes Christianity. In this endeavor, Lewis might well be unequalled in combining impressive logic, perceptive examples, and convincing object lessons to make his points. No one *"hits the nail on the head"* so squarely and so descriptively on issues of Christian morals and tenets, Christian growth, and explanations of difficult-to-understand theological concepts. *Mere Christianity* can almost leave a reader awe-struck as one continues to encounter such brilliant exegeses, and such keen insights into problems and resolutions in the Christian walk, in chapter after chapter. The book identifies so adeptly with temptations and thought processes that even the most serious Christian cannot help feeling an intimate association with the thoughts expressed.

However, unlike the Christian who seeks proof of what is true in the Word of God, Mr. Lewis proves everything through his own logical arguments and examples. Like some other apologists, he treats Christianity as a belief system, as opposed to other belief systems such as atheism or Buddhism. However, God's Word never defines Christianity, as a belief system, or otherwise. For the Christian, it describes a relationship that rules his every moment and decision—a relationship that exists only by faith, as logic simply cannot take a man that far.

Again, contrary to what most people believe, men who argue the existence of God with atheists, especially publicly, are not all real believers, despite what they claim. Many are simply debaters and showmen. It is not a difficult debate to win, because there is a God, and the evidence is all around us. Proving the existence of God by logic is meaningless to the Christian. To a believer, God is not *"something"* that exists, He is a Person. We do not believe in His existence—we know Him, and not by logic, but through faith. We have no need to give time to such doubtful disputations, and the Bible teaches us to avoid them anyway. We need not follow too hard after those who engage, even successfully, in them.

Mere Christianity is basically a treatise on the rightness and wholesomeness of behavior of the individual as prescribed by Christian precepts. *Mere Christianity* continually instructs us that our thinking processes about our behavior are either becoming good or becoming evil, and that a creature with good thinking processes will go to heaven, and one with evil thinking processes will go to hell. It is stunningly logical, and keenly accurate and intuitive into proper behavior and improper behavior, man's sinful reasons for improper behavior, and the logical reasons for proper Christian behavior. However, Christian behavior is not the point of Christianity. Absolute faith in, and a personal relationship with, Jesus Christ are the point.

Mere Christianity is focused upon who or what a Christian is. This idea is based on the premise, or, more correctly put, supposition of what a Christian is according to C. S. Lewis. His arguments are also based on another premise, or false assumption, that anyone, of any faith willing to be called Christian, is a Christian. This is the real basis of his mere or no-frills Christianity under which everyone ought to be herded into one corral. In Chapter 4 of *What Christians Believe*, book two of *Mere Christianity*, he shows which corral that is, as he includes even such churches as the Church of England of which he was a member, and the Church of Rome, both of which oppose Scripture as the final authority on spiritual truth. Any doctrine that conflicts with this doctrine of unity, he dismisses as unimportant theories of men. However, we must remind ourselves that his theories are based on dogmas that do not concur with Scripture, especially his theories about becoming a Christian. Chapter 5 of *What Christians Believe*, the second book in *Mere Christianity*, states, "*There are three things that spread the Christ life to us: baptism, belief, and that mysterious action which different Christians call by different names—Holy Communion, the Mass, the Lord's Supper.*" Notice again his personal view of Christianity which was primarily based upon the dogmas of the Church of Rome—baptism and transubstantiation. Matthew warned us about such doctrinal views when he wrote, "*Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*" —Matthew 16:12. Later, in Chapter 10 of *Beyond Personality*, book three of *Mere Christianity*, Lewis takes the "all under one roof" idea even further, as he writes, "*There 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.*" Scripture entertains no concept of belonging to Jesus without knowing Him or knowing of Him. This is strictly "*Lewisology.*"

Lewis appears to be the modern-day precursor of the current wave of Christian philosophers and psychologists who mention Christ but exalt Christian behavior. The effect of the teachings of this persuasion is to unite people under a belief system of Christian behavior patterns. It is to draw them to large groups or churches that help reinforce such behavior patterns, in the name of Christ, of course. (Else, how would those who wish to know Christ accept it?) Such persuasions also stress the importance of spreading Christian behavior patterns through activism, legislation and other means, propounding the idea that "*we are all in this together and we are all the same.*" However, we are not all the same. Some of us believe that what people need is Jesus, and not cohesion, whether Christian legislation ever gets passed. Often the idea of faith in Christ is proclaimed. It simply loses focus behind struggles over physical externals, and the call to unify because there is strength in numbers. God's

strength is not in numbers.

A by-product of such movements is that they band people into large, controllable, religious groups. The larger and fewer they are, the more controllable they are. Hence, we see the purpose of the attempts of today's leaders to form massive inter-denominational, "Christian" organizations, and form friendships and alliances with those attempting to merge Christians into the Church of Rome.

Lewis was obviously an early initiator of what we see proliferating more widely now. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* attempts to lend credulity to this process by insisting that Christianity, in its base and purest form, is simply a set of behavioral thinking patterns that excludes doctrine. Lewis' argument for Christianity as a belief system set apart by certain behavior patterns can be seen in the fact that *Mere Christianity* was originally published as three books: *The Case for Christianity*, *Christian Behavior*, and *Beyond Personality*. In the single volume, the first book is titled *Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe*.

Lewis' claim that doctrines are immaterial is an age-old ploy used to unite people under a "good, Christian" set of behaviors. The same purpose is shared by those who wish to combine all "Christian" faiths in efforts to combat sociological ills. The next step, which we already see taking place, is to unite them as one large religion or one large group that is far more controllable than many individual, dissimilar groups.

In this country, the behaviorists have combined efforts to merge everyone who uses the name "Christian" into one mass by forming popular movements which stress love, unity, and brotherhood. They also stress the world's "desperate need" for such unity over the truth of Scripture. The desperate need in this world has always been for Jesus—not for membership in a world-wide brotherhood. These ideas may not pose so much confusion for older Christians who have a proper foundation, as they are urged to "embrace all faiths in love." They may be made, though, to think it is sort of godly not to stand up for truth, as "not making waves" maintains a certain kind of peace. Yet, it is an expensive peace. When their children grow up under the "we are all the same" philosophy, it will be nearly impossible for them to discern real salvation, and a need for it, when they have already embraced "Christian behavior patterns" as faith.

Behavioral psychology is powerful, especially when intertwined with the term "Christianity." Lewis proved it in his day, and others are using it with tremendous success in our generation. Today, we are often given accounts of extraordinary behavior which are used continually to thrill and heighten the emotions of the hearers. Once the story heightens the emotions, the hearer's focus becomes riveted. The final effect, though, is not that the hearer realizes more fully his own sinfulness and lack of worth, but that he vicariously joins the struggle in the story, and associates himself in such a subconscious yet integral way, that the entire experience culminates in the hearer feeling pride in bearing the same name (Christian) as the noble character in the story (basically, being in the "in crowd"), or feeling a swelling heart (pride) at claiming to be a follower of Him Who has delivered someone in some excitingly miraculous manner. Anyway, Lewis seems to have been the first behaviorist in this century to make great inroads into more sincere Christian circles as a "great Christian mind" or "great Christian layman," and *Mere Christianity* is the horse (methinks Trojan) that he rode in on.

Lewis cites many behavioral truths, but they do not equate to being redeemed. They simply equate to

natural laws of behavior. For instance, he employs the idea that practice develops habit in describing the struggles to do right in the Christian life. The idea that doing things that we would rather not will help us to enjoy doing such deeds is not strictly a phenomenon unique to Christians. It is the same for the non-Christian. Practice cannot develop us into a Christian.

There are two ways to convince people of error. The first is to use complicated, deceptive logic. The second is to use open, profound, brilliant logic, which people easily understand, and readily agree with, but to use for its foundation faulty untested assumptions of truth. The second is generally the more successful, because people, once confronted with logically sound arguments, seldom backtrack to check the basis upon which they are founded. In this review, we look at several false premises found in *Mere Christianity*. Lewis is not original in his use of this technique, but he certainly has deftly used this approach in switching the foundation of Christianity itself to that of a behaviorist doctrine.

Something else that is very disturbing is that C. S. Lewis was not only quite familiar, by his own words, with the occult, but he even said that he had to get into the devil's mind to write the *Screwtape Letters*, a book in which he describes the devil's thinking and strategy. Although, such practices might be used by someone who proves God's existence by logic, they are not the kind of activities and study that would be engaged in by someone who knows Jesus. Great Christian minds have no part with occult phenomena.

There are other writers today who claim to be Christian, but display a deep and thorough knowledge of the occult and all its workings. How can this be? A man cannot serve two masters, nor can he know Jesus and the devil intimately.

So, here we have a man who argues the existence of God, is involved in the occult, and writes occult books for children. Should we be surprised? *"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."* James 2:19.

His insightful discussions of the Christian walk makes a Christian want to exclaim, *"He is one of us!"* Yet, he admits he is not. In Chapter 11 of *Beyond Personality*, describing truly regenerated Christians, he says, *"And I strongly suspect (but how should I know?) that they recognize one another immediately and infallibly, across every barrier of colour, sex, class, age, and even of creeds."* The quote implies quite clearly, *"I suspect they do, but not being one of them, I cannot know."* Did we say that not all apologetes are Christians?

This quote in Chapter 11 comes right on the heels of the following quote. *"Everyone knows about Evolution (though, of course, some educated people disbelieve it): everyone has been told that man has evolved from lower types of life."* Notice the capitalization of "evolution" in this quote, almost as if it were some theological being.

Lewis mentions a number of other ideas in *Mere Christianity* that do not agree with Scripture. In Chapter 2 of *Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe* we find, *"But surely the reason that we do not execute witches is that we do not believe there are such things. If we did. . .we would all agree that if anyone deserved the death penalty, then these filthy quislings did."* However, God believes in witches because His Word tells us so. It may do us well to bear in mind Lewis' published opinions on the occult when we move on to his books for children and the effects that they might

have on those children.

In Chapter 9 of *Beyond Personality*, we find purgatory, the old Catholic escape clause, where man works off his sin debt after death. The author writes as if Jesus were speaking, "*Whatever suffering it may cost you in your earthly life, whatever inconceivable purification it may cost you after death, whatever it costs Me, I will never rest, nor let you rest, until you are literally perfect. . .*" Actually, Lewis sounds much more like his contemporary, Bishop Sheen than a Bible-believing Christian.

In Chapter 1 of *Beyond Personality* we find, "*Everyone reads, everyone hears things discussed. Consequently, if you do not listen to Theology, that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones — bad, muddled, out-of-date ideas.*" There is no mention in the book of getting ideas about God through reading His Word, or through praying for such wisdom. The only suggested sources for such knowledge are theological think-tanks.

Why read *Mere Christianity* at all? A discerning Christian will be able to sift through it, and sort much of the error, but if we want to know what real Christianity is all about, why not go to the Source of Christianity, and read what He has to say about it? Oh, how foolish man is, to continually seek some other man's definition of God.

Let us not forget that this man, who has tried very hard to make us feel like he is one of us, has written a number of books that our children will very likely be reading if he has convinced us.

Let's look at some of those books for children. Lewis' most famous fictional series for children, is *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Although adults are often discerning when they read, children seldom are. Hence, fictional children's books can be a very dangerous commodity. When there are poisonous philosophies in a book, they are generally woven into an exciting story. The child is enthralled with the story and swallows the philosophies without knowing that they are even there. If you are trying to rear good children, and you are seeing atypical results, check what your children are reading. It is there that you will usually find the problem.

The Chronicles of Narnia is a collection of seven fantasy stories. The jacket cover says, "*Here is your passport to a most extraordinary excursion into magical lands and enchanted happenings. If you've never been to Narnia, you can enter it for the first time with any of the books below . . .*"

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is the first in this "*Christian*" series of occult books for children. The title, itself, should be a tip off to a discerning Christian. How can a Christian book have such an occult label?

The story involves four children who step through a magic wardrobe into the occult land of Narnia. Narnia is populated by talking animals who have equal status with humans. (Sounds like New Age?) The land of Narnia is ruled by the White Witch who makes the land always to be winter. The land is populated with ghouls, werewolves and all manner of evil creatures siding with the witch. The witch has powerful magical powers and is able to turn all of her enemies into stone. The wicked witch tricks one of the children into coming over to her side, and the other children must rescue him.

Aslan, a huge lion and the son of the great emperor of the north, is the only one who can set things

right in Narnia. He negotiates with the witch for the salvation of one of the children. He must die to save the child. However, he does not stay dead, he has a resurrection and saves the day. Aslan responds to the question of what it all means with, *"It means that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know."* Eventually, the White Witch is destroyed and spring returns to Narnia.

Obviously, there is a salvation message in all of that, but is it the message of Jesus Christ? Obviously not. It is the salvation message of an occult, New Age lion that has, not only more powers than a human, but enough power to rival our Savior in the eyes of young readers.

Rather than wade through the entire series, we will skip ahead to the last book in the series, *The Last Battle*. This is the story of how evil came to Narnia, and how Aslan led his people to a glorious new paradise. It is the story of the confrontation between Tash (Satan) and Aslan (Jesus).

The book opens with one of its excellent lessons on how to manipulate and exploit another for one's own benefit. This is accomplished by a conversation between an ape (Shift) and a donkey (Puzzle) that is not as smart as the ape. The ape uses a number of instances of faulty logic and parallelisms to convince the donkey that the best course of action would be to simply trust him (the ape), and, thereby, of course, fulfill his whims and desires (for the donkey's good, of course). This is just the sort of technique that you will find an older brother or sister using on a younger one the day after they have read it, and simply wonder how they figured out how to do such a thing. Throughout the course of the book, the ape uses these manipulative routines to make the donkey do anything he wants him to do. (Tell me your children won't be anxious to try that out on someone!)

The story culminates in a final showdown between Tash and Aslan. Of course, Aslan triumphs over evil, the world of Narnia comes to an end, and Aslan takes many into Paradise (heaven).

The disturbing part of all this is who is allowed to go to Paradise (heaven). At the end of the book a servant of Tash (Satan), who made it into Paradise says, *"I overcame my fear and questioned the Glorious One and said, Lord is it then true, as the Ape said, that thou and Tash are one? The Lion growled so that the earth shook (but his wrath was not against me) and said, It is false. Not because he and I are one, but because we are opposites, I take to me the services which thou hast done to him, for I and he are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him. Therefore if any man swear by Tash and keep his oath for the oath's sake, it is by me that he has truly sworn, though he know it not, and it is I who reward him. And if any man do a cruelty in my name, then though he says the name Aslan, it is Tash whom he serves and by Tash his deed is accepted. Dost thou understand, Child? I said, Lord, thou knowest how much I understand. But I said also (for truth constrained me), Yes I have been seeking Tash all my days. Beloved, said the Glorious One, unless thy desire had been for me thou wouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek."*

In the book, the children actually do die and enter heaven. Of course, as we can see from the quoted passage, all sorts of creatures, both good and evil, do the same. Some people praise this book as an allegory of the gospel, but upon a closer look, it is not intended to bring one to Christ at all. It is simply a very misleading occult, New Age, fantasy tale, replete with supernaturally-powered animals, and the evil philosophy that regardless of how evil we are, we all have that spark of goodness in us for which

God will surely take us to heaven.

Besides all the very apparent evil in the book—witches, magic, spells, demons, and more, there are several serious problems which can and will cause damage to our children.

A child reading the book, is, as advertised, "*stepping into another world*"—a world of fantasy. Lewis, like Disney, was a New Ager. He built entire surrealistic worlds for our children to escape into—escape from reality and from real life. These worlds invariably contain creatures of every sort endearing our children, performing heroic feats, and displaying often greater powers than our Savior displayed when He was on earth. Who will our children most readily identify as having awesome power—Lewis characters, Disney characters, some time-space traveling hero, or the almighty Jesus? Is it any wonder that we have a very difficult time convincing our children to give their all to Someone so far down the totem pole of their experience? Why should we cloud our children's minds with meaningless fantasies which can, at their very best, only result in doubts and confusions about real spiritual things, and more seriously, open the floodgates of their minds to the advancing waves of captivating fantasies designed to introduce them to the world of Satan and the occult.

These Chronicles would be quite a misleading allegory. As we said, in the first book Aslan negotiated with Satan. Truly, our God has never needed to negotiate with His creation-turned-evil. Jesus did not negotiate with Satan before He went to the cross to die for mankind. It was foreordained before the foundation of the world!

If they were allegorical, these stories would be a faulty allegory because they imply a salvation by works rather than faith. What is worse, we have seen that children are taught that one can even be saved for evil works if they are done wholeheartedly. Certainly, one cannot serve Satan and count it as service for Christ, and then plead ignorance and enter heaven. The Bible says, "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12).

Lastly, It would be better never to make the claim of allegory. The claim, itself, serves only to condemn the work as blasphemy. Romans 1:21-25 tells us, "*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*" You see, God commands that man never depict Him, the Divine Creator of the entire universe, as some beast walking around on all fours, named Aslan or otherwise. He also commands us never to view Him in such a comparatively despicable manner. What does this do to an impressionable mind? (See our Tolkien review for more on this.) Isaiah 5:20 says, "*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*" We need to be careful when we use the word "*allegory*" because God will hold us accountable for what we call Christian.

We can never recommend these books for young people. Some people insist that they are simply

entertainment, but entertainment at what price? Shall we give the minds of our children to C. S. Lewis because he makes some compelling arguments for Christianity as an earthly value system? His Christianity is one of behavior. It is one in which the Bible is not the final authority. It is one that makes no mention of repentance. It is one that does not need the blood of Christ. It is one that embraces people of all faiths, whether or not they know Christ, as long as they have acceptable works. It is one that denies the reality of occult influences such as witches. Is this the kind of mentor that we want for our children?