

C S LEWIS: AN AUTHOR TO AVOID

Once more the 2005 movie world is about to unveil its latest **'blockbuster'** in the form of **'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe'** that is based upon the writings of **C S Lewis**. As happened with Mel Gibson's 'The Passion' much of professing Christendom is viewing this as a tremendous opportunity for both heralding the gospel and for evangelising the lost and so it is clear that they appear to have learned nothing from their similar but misplaced confidence where 'The Passion' was concerned.

At the outset let me make it plain that I have not personally read the book upon which this movie is based but I do know that with all the hype surrounding the movie and its claimed 'Christian' message I am in no doubt there will be an upsurge in sales of ALL the writings of **C S Lewis**, particularly those that supposedly demonstrate his skill as an **'apologist for Christianity'**. Just as scripture interprets itself [**"the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual"** 1 Corinthians 2:13] so to 'interpret' **C S Lewis** it is necessary to compare and analyse what he has written overall and not just base a judgment upon an obscure 'interpretation' of a children's 'fantasy' novel. In recent years I wrote a series of articles entitled **'Was C S Lewis truly "our greatest Christian writer"'** – This was a title ascribed to him in an article by a local preacher and author. These articles can be viewed by following these links

<http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-january-2003/>

<http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-june-2003/>

<http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-december-2003/>

<http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-june-2004/>

These articles later formed a section in my book **'Try the spirits: Volume 1'** – the other 2 sections in this book considered **'Philip Yancey: turning the grace of God into lasciviousness?'** And **'Alpha: Attend or Avoid?'**

In this article I simply want to reproduce the sections that dealt with my concerns about the views of **C S Lewis** on **'repentance'** **'regeneration'** and **'redemption'**. These concerns are based upon my reading of the writings of **C S Lewis** in **'Mere Christianity'** and **'Prayer: Letters to Malcolm'**.

'REPENTANCE'

The first command of the Lord as recorded in Mark's gospel is **"Repent and believe the gospel"** [Mark 1:15]. Then, in the midst of his sermon on Mars Hill in Athens, the Apostle Paul declared to the philosophers gathered around him **"And the times of this ignorance God overlooked, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent"** [Acts 17:30]. In the first 5 verses of **Luke 13** the Lord Himself twice issued this warning to his listeners **"Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish"**.

It is clear that **REPENTANCE** is no 'soft option' and so a correct understanding of it is absolutely vital to the eternal well being of every individual. In **'Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words'** we read the following under **'REPENT, REPENTANCE'** on page 525

'signifies "to change one's mind or purpose," always in the NT involving a change for the better, an amendment, and always, except Luke 17:3-4, of "repentance" from sin...In the NT the subject chiefly has reference to "repentance" from sin and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God. The parable of the Prodigal Son is an outstanding illustration of this.'

In one of my Daily devotional books

['Footprints of Faith'; edited by Alan Cairns]

the meditation for 21 March ends with the following quotation –

**'Repentance is the relinquishment of any practice from the conviction that it has offended God'
Joseph Addison.**

I think that quote captures well the essence of biblical **REPENTANCE**.

From God's Word, we also learn that **REPENTANCE** is a gracious gift to undeserving sinners held in Satan's grip. Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 2:24-26** **"And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient. In meekness instructing those that oppose him, if God perhaps will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will"**

Commenting on these verses **Matthew Henry** wrote **'Repentance is God's gift...The same God who gives us the discovery of the truth does by His grace bring us to the acknowledging of it, otherwise our hearts would continue in rebellion against it...When sinners repent, those who before were led captive by the devil at his will come to be led into the glorious liberty of the children of God and have their wills melted into the will of the Lord Jesus'**.

In his Study Bible notes **Pastor John MacArthur** wrote on page 1878 – **'All true repentance is produced by God's sovereign grace [Ephesians 2:7] ... When God, by grace, grants saving faith it includes the granting of repentance from sin. Neither is a human work'**.

The book **'Mere Christianity'** written by **C S Lewis** is divided into 3 **'books'** and **chapter 4 of Book 2** is entitled **'The Perfect Penitent'**. I want to quote some extracts from this chapter [pages 53-58] to help you understand how **C S Lewis** understood and articulated his view of **REPENTANCE**. Referring to the Lord Jesus Christ **C S Lewis** wrote –

‘What did He come to do? Well, to teach of course; but as soon as you look into the New Testament or any other Christian writing you will find they are constantly talking about something different – about His death and His coming to life again. It is obvious that Christians think the chief point of the story lies there. They think the main thing He came to earth to do was to suffer and be killed. [Paul under inspiration taught this – see I Timothy 1:15; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Galatians 6:14 as did the Lord in Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23&20:28]. C S Lewis continues ‘Christ volunteered to be punished instead and so God let us off. Now I admit that even this theory does not seem to me quite so immoral and so silly as it used to be; but that is not the point I want to make. What I came to see later on was that neither this theory nor any other is Christianity...Theories about Christ’s death are not Christianity’.

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 referred to above, Paul sets out in the clearest of terms what constitutes **“the Gospel”** – it is not a **‘theory’** – it is a declaration of the historical reality of the death, burial and resurrection [**“according to the scriptures”**] of the Lord Jesus Christ. If **“the Gospel”** is not **‘Christianity’** then why would the Lord Himself instruct His followers to **“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”** [Mark 16:15] and why would Paul believe that he would actually be failing in his calling to be an Apostle by declaring **“Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel”** [1 Corinthians 9:16].

C S Lewis continues

‘We are told that Christ was killed for us, that His death has washed out our sins and that by dying He disabled death itself. That is the formula. That is Christianity. That is what has to be believed...Now on the face of it that is a very silly theory...On the other hand, if you think of a debt, there is plenty of point in a person who has some assets paying it on behalf of someone who has not...when one person has got himself into a hole, the trouble of getting him out usually falls on a kind friend. Now what was the sort of “hole” man had got himself into?

He had tried to set up on his own...he is a rebel who must lay down his arms. Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realising that you have been on the wrong track... - that is the only way out of our “hole.” This process of surrender – this movement full speed astern – is what Christians call repentance.

Now repentance is no fun at all. It is something much harder than eating humble pie. It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death’.

Perhaps you’re thinking to yourself that this all sounds more or less in harmony with what God’s Word teaches. Well – listen to what **C S Lewis** goes on to say –

'In fact, it needs a good man to repent. And here comes the catch. Only a bad person needs to repent [true]: **only a good person can repent perfectly [false]. **The worse you are the more you need it** [true] **and the less you can do it** [not true as it is God's gracious gift – Jeremiah prayed "Ah, Lord God...there is nothing too hard for thee" and God responded "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for me?" (32:17 & 27)]...**

The only person who could do it [repent] **perfectly would be a perfect person – and he would not need it. Remember, **this repentance, this willing submission to humiliation and a kind of death, is not something God demands of you before He will take you back**** [Not true – look again at the scriptural imperatives quoted earlier]...**He could let you off if He chose: it is simply a description of what going back to Him is like'**

What a poisonous mix of 'truth' and 'error' these writings of **Mr Lewis** are.

C S Lewis continues –

'we now need God's help in order to do something which God, in His own nature, never does at all – to surrender, to suffer, to submit, to die...But **supposing God became a man – suppose our human nature which can suffer and die was amalgamated with God's nature in one person – **then that person could help us.** He could surrender His will, and suffer and die, because He was man; and **He could do it** [repent!] **perfectly because He was God.****

You and I can go through this process [repentance!] **only if God does it in us** [true]; **but God can do it only if He becomes a man** [not true – we read of people in the Old testament like David and Manasseh 'repenting' and that was before Christ's incarnation]. **Our attempts at this dying** [our repentance!] **will succeed only if we men share in God's dying** [God's repentance!]...**we cannot share God's dying unless God dies; and He cannot die except by being a man** [normally true – but remember Mr Lewis is here speaking in terms of 'repentance' and not of Christ dying 'sacrificially']...**That is the sense in which He pays our debt and suffers for us what He himself need not suffer at all'.**

Back in 1994 I had a series of written exchanges with a strong supporter of the beliefs of **Edward Cooney** [his followers are often referred to as 'Cooneyites']. In one letter she wrote –

'Believing in a doctrine or doctrines about Jesus is not salvation...With regard to the doctrine of the Atonement...it was the sacrificial life of Christ, poured out unto death, even death on the cross, in perfect obedience to the will of God. It is by this complete sacrifice of his life that we are reconciled to God...I believe the penal substitution theory [that Christ atoningly suffering as a substitute for His people on the Cross] **is false doctrine'.**

I just wonder was **C S Lewis whilst living in Northern Ireland ever exposed to 'Cooneyite' teaching as I see echoes of their beliefs in his expressed views.**

Let me just remind everyone reading this article that I am quoting from a chapter of **C S Lewis's** book '**Mere Christianity**' and the chapter in question is called '**The Perfect Penitent**' and clearly from what he has written this is how **C S Lewis** views Christ.

My reading of all this is that **Mr Lewis** has equated the sinless Lord's innate ability to resist sin with fallen man's necessity to repent of sin. In so doing I believe that **Mr Lewis** has maligned the impeccable character of our Lord every bit as much as when Kenneth Copeland teaches that the Lord was '**born again**' in hell. It seems to be that **Mr Lewis** has heretically confused the Lord's 'resistance' to sin with 'repentance' from sin.

Having written this assessment of **C S Lewis** (as you will just have read) I subsequently purchased the latest '**Dictionary of Theological Terms**' by **Alan Cairns** and I came across this entry on page 426.

'Vicarious repentance' theory of the Atonement

Also known as the Theory of Sympathy and Identification. We may summarise it under the following points.

1. The only atonement necessary for sin is a perfect repentance.
2. Such a repentance from man would have been sufficient for salvation, had he been able to offer it.
3. Christ offered a perfect repentance [please remember in my article I looked at what Mr Lewis wrote in his chapter in '**Mere Christianity**' called '**The Perfect Penitent**'] on behalf of man and so procured forgiveness.
4. The death of Christ was merely a sympathetic entering into the Father's condemnation of sin, and as such showed the wickedness of sin and condemned it.

The theory is objectionable on various grounds.

1. It fails to see that sin makes the sinner liable to punishment.
2. It denies any objective quality in the atonement [i.e. It denies that Christ's atoning death actually and effectively accomplished salvation for anyone].
3. It is a contradiction in terms – repentance is purely a subjective [relates to self] thing and cannot be valid unless it is personal. That Christ felt and sorrowed over the sins He vicariously bore for His people is certain [Psalm 40:12] but it was impossible for Him to turn *back* to God [during His life on earth] from committed sin, for – even in bearing our sins [on the cross] – He had never turned away from Him.
4. THERE IS NOT A FRAGMENT OF SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT FOR IT.

This definition by Mr Cairns seems to perfectly encapsulate the conclusions that I had come to when analysing what **Mr Lewis** had written on this subject of '**repentance**' and it has come as an encouraging confirmation to my own understanding to discover that what I had 'unearthed' had already been identified and 'quantified' by Mr Cairns who for 33 years has been a lecturer in Systematic Theology in the Theological Hall of the Free Presbyterian Church.

'REGENERATION'

To begin with I want to consider 2 things namely – firstly, what is **'regeneration'** and secondly, does sinful man have any input into his own **'regeneration'**? In answer to the first question – what is **'regeneration'** let me quote from **Vines' Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words'**. On pages 517-518 under the heading **REGENERATION** we read the following -

'Palingenesia "new birth" (palin – "again"; genesis – "birth") is used of "spiritual regeneration" [Titus 3:5] involving the communication of A NEW LIFE, the two operating powers to produce which are "The Word of Truth" [James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23] and "The Holy Spirit" [John 3:5-6] ...The NEW BIRTH and REGENERATION do not represent successive stages in spiritual experience, they refer to the same event but view it in different aspects. The NEW BIRTH stresses the communication of spiritual life in contrast to the antecedent spiritual death; [see Ephesians 2:1] REGENERATION stresses the inception of a new state of things in contrast with the old' [see 2 Corinthians 5:17].

Turning to the second question – does sinful man have any input into his own **'regeneration'** I think we need to consider carefully the Lord's words to Nicodemus in **John chapter 3** where He declares the necessity of being **"born again"** [ie **'regenerated'**] for entry into the Kingdom of Heaven. In considering question one we read that in **'the communication of A NEW LIFE'** there were **'two operating powers'** namely **"The Word of Truth"** [**'seed'** – see **Luke 8:11**] and **"The Holy Spirit"** [the **'quicken'** agent – see **John 6:63 & Romans 4:17**]. When someone is born for the first time [**'born of the flesh'** – see **John 3:6**] there are likewise **'two operating powers'** involved namely the woman's **'seed'** and the man's **'sperm'**. If a child is conceived all the credit belongs to the Lord for we read in **Psalm 127:3** **"Lo, children are an heritage from the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward"**.

Any resultant offspring has had no input whatsoever into his **'first birth'** and in like-fashion anyone graciously **'born again'** [**'born of the Spirit'** – see **John 3:6**] has had no input into his own **'regeneration'**. As we read in **Jonah 2:9** and **Psalm 3:8** **"Salvation is of, and belongs to the Lord"**. God does use other independent human agents to sow and water the **'seed'** but as Paul explained in **1 Corinthians 3:6-7**, any resultant **'fruit'** is entirely due to God ALONE – **"I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God giveth the increase"**.

I often hear unregenerate people being urged to **'exercise faith'** – but what is **'faith'**? Well, we find the answer in **Hebrews 11:1** **"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"** This is something a **"natural [unregenerate] man"** [**1 Corinthians 2:14**] does not possess [and therefore cannot **'exercise'**] because such understanding and assurance comes only through the work of **"The Holy Spirit"** [**1 Corinthians 2:14**] who must FIRST **'quicken'** [**'regenerate'**] the sinner who is **"dead in trespasses and sins"** [**Ephesians 2:1**].

Lazarus could not **'exercise faith'** to initiate his **'coming forth'** from the tomb [see **John 11:17-44**] – he first had to be **'quicken'd'** [**regenerated'**] by the voice of God [**'Lazarus'** – see **John 11:43**] and when the Lord called him by name he was **'reborn'** and so could **"come forth"** but He **FIRST** had to be brought to life by God and it is exactly the same in the matter of **'spiritual regeneration'**. Let me at this point say that if anyone promotes teaching on **REGENERATION** that is in conflict with what has already been biblically shown, in the earlier part of this article, to be the truth on this matter of **REGENERATION**, if they accommodate in their thinking the necessity for some input by sinful man, whether in the form of a conscious decision coupled with religious ritual, then I believe they are promoting a **'false gospel'** such as that anathematised by Paul in **Galatians chapter 1**. There, Paul, under inspiration, rejected the false teaching of a human decision to submit to 'ritualistic' circumcision as being necessary for salvation - **"And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren and said, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved"** [Acts 15:1].

This was mirrored in one of the greatest modern-day errors committed by so-called **'evangelicals'** back in 1994 when they signed their agreement to the **'Evangelicals and Catholics Together Agreement'** – an agreement that in effect sanctioned 2 ways in which people could become Christians. One was the biblical and true way as outlined in **Vines' Expository Dictionary** but the second was the false 'ritualistic' way as captured by these words from the agreement – **'Those converted, whether understood...as having experienced the reawakening of the new birth originally bestowed in the sacrament of baptism'** – this was a statement that **Charles Colson, Bill Bright, J I Packer** and other **'evangelicals'** had no difficulty in publicly endorsing – what a betrayal of divine truth!

If C S Lewis had been alive when this ECT document was drawn up in 1994 do I think that he would have been quite happy to sign his endorsement to it? – In all probability 'yes'.

Now, how does **C S Lewis** view **REGENERATION**, namely **'the communication of A NEW LIFE'** as we learnt from **Vine's** definition? Let me turn again to his book **'Mere Christianity'** and there we read on **page 59** - **'In Christ a new kind of man appeared: and the new kind of life, which began in Him, is to be put into us'**.

I have great difficulty with this statement for this reason – Jesus Christ was the INCARNATE Son of God whereas believers today are REGENERATE sons of God.

To my way of thinking **Mr Lewis** is as wrong here as was **Kenneth Hagin Snr** when he taught **'Every man who has been born again is an incarnation and Christianity is a miracle. The believer is as much an incarnation as was Jesus of Nazareth'** [Quoted by Hank Hanegraaff on page 383 of the hardback edition of his book **'Christianity in Crisis'**].

Jesus Christ was the **SINLESS INCARNATE** Son of God whereas believers are **SINFUL REGENERATE** sons of God – yes, believers now have ‘spiritual life’ and their personal hope and God’s earnest desire is that they should **‘be conformed to the image of his Son’** [Romans 8:29] but we must never forget that the **INCARNATE** Son of God was **IMPECCABLE** whereas sadly, as we all know from bitter experience, believers are **REGENERATE** but **PECCABLE** sons of God – **‘If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us’** [1 John 1:8].

Later on **page 59** of **‘Mere Christianity’** Mr Lewis writes **‘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’**.

When professing Christians use Christian terminology, their understanding of that terminology must be framed in the context of the ‘faith community’ with which they personally identify. [By way of example, when a Mormon speaks of ‘salvation’ he usually has ‘resurrection’ in view whereas a Christian would have an altogether different theological concept in mind].

So when **C S Lewis** speaks of **‘belief’** sandwiched between **‘baptism’** and **‘Holy Communion’**, it is patently evident that his **‘belief’** is that the reception of what he calls **‘the Christ life’** or what Christians would call **REGENERATION** comes to a person via a **SACRAMENTAL SYSTEM**.

On **page 62** of **‘Mere Christianity’** he writes **‘this new life is spread not only by purely mental acts like belief, but by bodily acts like baptism and Holy Communion...God never meant man to be a purely spiritual creature. That is why He uses material things like bread and wine to put new life into us’**. These teachings would all be perfectly consistent with his own personal identity with the Anglican Church and also with his ‘fellowship’ with active, practising Roman Catholics.

For the same reason it would also explain why the writings of C S Lewis are widely available in Roman Catholic bookshops.

Each of these **SACRAMENTAL SYSTEMS** involve **‘belief’** or what I referred to earlier as **‘a conscious decision coupled with religious ritual’** and the reality is that such **‘belief’** has no concord with the biblical teaching on **REGENERATION**.

‘REDEMPTION.

We come now in this final part to consider his teachings on **REDEMPTION**. One of the most glorious truths at the heart of the **‘Gospel of Christ’** is the message of **redemption**. It has gripped the hearts of hymn writers when they penned words like **‘Redeemed how I love to proclaim it, redeemed by the blood of the lamb’** and **‘There is a redeemer, Jesus, God’s own Son, precious lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One’**.

I want to consider this matter of redemption from two angles – I want firstly to look at what **C S Lewis** believed about what I would call **'individual redemption'** and then to look at what **C S Lewis** believed about what I would call **'corporate redemption'**. Before homing in on these two 'angles' let us first establish the clear biblical meaning of **'redemption'**.

In his **'Dictionary of Theological Terms'**, Alan Cairns wrote **'the deliverance of God's elect from a state of sin into a state of salvation by the means and merit of the ransom paid by Christ on their behalf'**.

Mr Cairns then quoted from **John Owen's** classic **'Death of Death'** (p 147)–

'Redemption...is the delivery of any one from captivity and misery by the intervention "lutrou" of a price or ransom. That this ransom, or price of our deliverance was the blood of Christ is evident'.

Through the sacrificial shedding of His blood on the Cross of Calvary Christ paid a ransom price to purchase a **'group of people'** and so release them from their **'state of sin'** [condemned] and bring them into a **'state of salvation'** [justified]. We learn who this **'group of people'** are when we read the words of Paul to the Ephesian Elders in **Acts 20:28** – **"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church, which he [Christ] hath purchased with his own blood"**.

'The Church' speaks of both **'individual'** and **'corporate'** redemption. Not only do this **'group of people'**, the **'individuals'** who **'corporately'** make up **'The Church'**, now belong to Christ, but they also enjoy a special benefit that flows from that **'blood bought'** Calvary transaction.

John Murray, in his book, **'Redemption: Accomplished and Applied'** wrote **'when Paul says that in the beloved "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" [Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14], it is quite plain that he conceives the forgiveness of sins as the blessing accrued from blood redemption...the death of Christ is redemptively efficacious in reference to sin'**.

The questions we must consider are these. Firstly, to what effective **extent** has Christ **redeemed** the **'individuals'** who **'corporately'** comprise **'The Church'**? Is **'individual'** redemption **'plenary'** or **'partial'**? Then secondly, is **'corporate'** redemption effectively limited only to **'The Church'**?

Where **'individual'** redemption is considered, the teaching of Scripture is clear. As far as an individual's **"sin"** is concerned there is **'plenary'** [FULL] forgiveness and not **'partial'**. Twice in the book of Hebrews God spells out what has been accomplished in the realm of **"forgiveness"** as a result of the redemptive work of Christ, WHO ALONE is **"the mediator of the new covenant"** (Hebrews 12:24). In **Hebrews 8:12** God says **"their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"** and He repeats His promise in **Hebrews 10:17**.

When God forgives a true “**born again**” believer - He forgives FULLY and that person is no longer under “**condemnation**” - which is the position of every unregenerate unbeliever – **John 5:24** “**verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death [CONDEMNED] unto life [JUSTIFIED]**”

In an article in the **December 2003 Evangelical Times** entitled ‘**Why Was Jesus Born?**’ **Peter Jeffrey** cited the equivalent of a modern-day ‘parable’ when he wrote

‘Christmas is probably the most expensive time of the year. All those presents...have to be paid for. When January comes and the credit card bills roll in, the full cost is seen. We may end up heavily in debt. But wait a moment, ‘Why Jesus Was Born’ is about the cost God was willing to pay to remove your debt of sin. What if in January your credit card debt was FULLY paid by someone else...Your sin has run up an enormous ‘debt’...if you turn to Jesus and trust in His death for the forgiveness of your sin...you will find that Jesus has paid the debt [FULLY] for you. That is why He was born and that is why He died’.

Did **C S Lewis** teach that, for a believer, their ‘**debt was FULLY paid by someone else**’ - that ‘**someone else**’ being Jesus Christ and that upon death they would go immediately “**to be with Christ which is far better**” [**Philippians 1:23**]? The answer sadly is a resounding ‘**No!**’ In his book ‘**Prayer: Letters to Malcolm**’ **C S Lewis** wrote [p 109-111] –

‘Of course I pray for the dead. The action is so spontaneous, so all but inevitable, that only the most compulsive theological case against it would deter men

[Cecil’s comment – would “**There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus**” (**Romans 8:1**) be a sufficiently ‘*compulsive theological case against*’ praying for the dead?]

And I hardly know how the rest of my prayers would survive if those for the dead were forbidden. At our age the majority of those we love best are dead. What sort of intercourse with God could I have if what I love best were unmentionable to Him?

On the traditional Protestant view, all the dead are damned or saved. If they are damned, prayer for them is useless. If they are saved, it is equally useless...To pray for them presupposes that progress and difficulty are still possible.

In fact you are bringing in something like Purgatory. Well, I suppose I am...I believe in Purgatory...the very etymology [origin] of the word Purgatory has dropped out of sight. Its pains do not bring us nearer to God, but make us forget Him. It is a place not of purification but purely of retributive punishment [a wrong view in the opinion of C S Lewis].

The right view returns magnificently in Newman's Dream. There if I remember rightly, the saved soul, at the very foot of the throne, begs to be taken away and cleansed. It cannot bear for a moment longer 'with its darkness to affront that light'. Religion has reclaimed Purgatory. Our souls demand Purgatory, don't they? Would it not break the heart if God said to us "It is true, my son, that your breath smells and your rags drip with mud and slime, but we are charitable here and no one will upbraid you with these things, nor draw away from you. Enter into the joy"?

[Cecil's comment – these latter sentiments ARE Biblically true because believers are "accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6) and "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7)]

Should we not reply "With submission sir, and if there is no objection, I'd rather be cleaned first". It may hurt you know – "Even so, sir".

[Cecil's comment – Did C S Lewis never read what Paul wrote to vile sinners who had become believers? - "And such were some of you, but ye are WASHED, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11)]

I assume that the process of purification will normally involve suffering...But I don't think suffering is the purpose of the purgation. I can well believe that people neither much worse nor much better than I will suffer less than I or more. No nonsense about merit. The treatment given will be the one required, whether it hurts little or much. My favourite image of this comes from the dentist's chair. I hope that when the tooth of life is drawn [death] and when I am coming round [entering eternity] a voice will say, "Rinse your mouth out with this". This will be Purgatory. The rinsing may take longer than I can now imagine. The taste of this may be more fiery and astringent than my present sensibility could endure. But More and Fisher shall not persuade me that it will be disgusting and unhallowed'.

These teachings of C S Lewis are a clear denial of the Biblical teachings of the inspired, revealed extent to which Christ has redeemed 'individuals'!

But what about the effective extent of Christ's '**corporate** redemption' – is it effectively limited only to that 'group of people', those '**individuals**', who '**corporately**' comprise '**The Church**'. The Bible teaches that only Christians, only those "**born again**" [John 3:5], only those who "**by one Spirit...were all baptised into one body**" [1 Corinthians 12:13] are members of '**The Church**'. Commenting on this verse from **Corinthians** in an article in the **January 2004 Evangelical Times** entitled '**Baptised by the Spirit**', **Stan Evers** wrote

'Paul writes "by one baptism we were all baptised", but which baptism does he mean? Paul's words echo John the Baptist's prediction: "I indeed baptise you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Luke 3:16).

We learn from John's words that there is a distinction between water baptism and Spirit baptism. The Spirit baptism places us into Christ's body, the church [Cecil's comment – Paul writes "And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18)] **Water baptism is a public declaration that we are in Christ's body'.**

The Apostle Paul knew and taught that only those who had **"Jesus Christ and Him crucified"** [1 Corinthians 2:2] preached to them and who were **"quicken"** [brought to spiritual life] [Ephesians 2:1] and who were **"baptised"** by that **"one spirit"** [1 Corinthians 12:13] were in **"the body, the church"** and belonged to Christ for he wrote in **Romans 8:9 "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"**.

This is why Paul wrote so passionately of missionary endeavour in **Romans 10:13-15 "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher. And how shall they preach except they be sent."**

Paul knew that **"the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation"** [Romans 1:16] and that **"it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"** [1 Corinthians 1:21]. If there is no preaching of **"the gospel of Christ"** there will be no belief **"in him"** and no one can be **"saved"**.

So, the effective extent of Christ's **'corporate' redemption**, according to the Bible, is limited to those who have **"the gospel of Christ"** preached to them and who by the work of the Holy Spirit are subsequently **"converted"** [Matthew 18:3]. Did **C S Lewis** believe and teach that? Again, sadly, the answer is yet another resounding **'No'**.

On page 173 of 'Mere Christianity' C S Lewis wrote –

'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 (although 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...Consequently it is not much use trying to make judgments about Christians and non-Christians in the mass'.

[Cecil's comment – if this were true then there would be no point in sending missionaries to 'merciful Buddhists' and 'good Pagans']

These teachings of C S Lewis are a clear denial of the Biblical teachings of the inspired, revealed effective extent of Christ's **'corporate' redemption of 'The Church'.**

I think the simplest overall way to summarise the false teachings of **C S Lewis** on these points is to say that he has **'under-estimated individual redemption'** and **'over-estimated corporate redemption'**.

Roger Fay, a Pastor in Ripon, England, who is not given to the use of excessively inflammatory language, in an article in the **January 2002 Evangelical Times** wrote –

'It is debatable whether C S Lewis was regenerate'.

John Robbins of **The Trinity Foundation**, in an article entitled **'Did C S Lewis Go To Heaven?'** wrote –

'Did C S Lewis go to Heaven? Our answer must be: Not if he believed what he wrote in his books and letters'.

In the light of my own studies I would require a lot of biblical convincing to disagree with the sentiments of either **Roger Fay** or **John Robbins**.

Concluding Thought

My understanding is that this upcoming movie will be the first in a series based upon the writings of C S Lewis so this is a topic that is likely to be in the spotlight for quite some time.

In the light of what I have written in this article I would urge discerning Christians to desist from giving any endorsement to the 'Christian apologetics' of C S Lewis as they fail the standard of trustworthiness set forth in the Word of God [see **2 Timothy 2:2**].
