

## Book Review Art Lindsley's *C.S. Lewis's Case for Christ*

by Dr. Jerry Root

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With the upcoming film adaptation of C.S. Lewis's, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the market has been flooded with books about Lewis and his work. While it is fair to wonder why anyone would read a book about Lewis when he, or she, could actually read Lewis first hand; nevertheless, there is certainly an audience that would benefit from guided tours that explore his life, fiction, and thought more deeply. Out of the sampling of some of the nearly thirty books being published around the time of the movie release one book, and one book alone, addresses Lewis's Apologetic vision, and that is Art Lindsley's *C.S. Lewis's Case for Christ: Insights from Reason, Imagination and Faith* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005. Paperback, 216 pages).

Dr. Lindsley, of the C. S. Lewis Institute, as an apologist and theologian, walks his readers through Lewis's most salient arguments for the Christian faith. Lindsley's breadth of knowledge about Lewis and his grasp of the wide range of Lewis's writing (there are some 72 Lewis titles and hundreds of books about Lewis) allows him to bring together apologetic insights often missed by the more casual reader of Lewis. Consequently, *C.S. Lewis's Case for Christ* makes accessible material that is virtually unavailable in any single source. Furthermore, Lindsley manifests an ability to simplify complexities in Lewis's arguments, placing both Lewis's presuppositions as well as his inferences within the reach of the reader. Lindsley also reveals, in many places, an engaging skill that takes Lewis's arguments further than Lewis himself, thus contemporizing these arguments and applying them to a postmodern context. The book is written as a dialogue, therefore the reader is able to see a modeled application of these arguments and relate them to one's own conversational experience. The book provides a reader with the wide range of Lewis's apologetical thought concerning miracles; the problem of evil; the



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exclusive claims of Christ in light of other world religions; moral relativism; the challenges of postmodernism; and brings it together in a useful single volume.

Lindsley begins his study of Lewis's apologetics by making a clear case as to why Lewis, who died over forty years ago, still speaks with authority today. Lewis's genius, his breadth of scholarship, his adult conversion from atheism to Christ, his love of argument in the context of true friendship, his gift as a powerful communicator, all establish Lewis's methods as an apologetical model second to none. Even with this strong explanation of Lewis's strength as an apologist, Lindsley does not engage in hagiography; he points out that Lewis had his detractors and Lindsley looks openly at their criticisms thus strengthening his [Lindsley's] own critical judgments.

As Lindsley's treatment of Lewis's arguments progresses, he dismantles the obstacles that Lewis himself had to overcome in his own pilgrimage to faith, developing Lewis's arguments in the process. This removes the arguments from the realm of mere sterile intellectual consideration and places each one in the more vital context of a real spiritual quest. In this section Lindsley discusses Lewis's concept of *Chronological Snobbery*, which rejects a view once held as credible in the past even when it has never been reasonably discredited. Lindsley also develops Lewis's ideas relative to the *Problem of Evil*, reminding readers, if evil exists there must be some transcendent standard by which one can even make the judgment that evil exists; thus raising a caution against the all too easy charge that the existence of evil in a world supposedly created by a good and all-powerful God is enough to doubt God's existence. Lindsley's development of Lewis's argument takes into account a free-will theodicy (that moral evil is the result of the ill-use of free-will); and soul-making theodicy (if a good God allows evil to exist then He knows He will bring greater good out of its existence than might have occurred had it not been allowed—this results in good which potentially comes to God's creatures through suffering). Lindsley also accounts for the emotional stress relative to suffering

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and admits there may be times when answers may not be forth coming. His argument is not so air tight that he cannot make room for ambiguities and perplexities. Lindsley gives satisfying answers while avoiding that kind of triumphal, and unsatisfying, *last-wordism* one often encounters in less intellectually robust presentations. It is here however that a reader may disagree with one feature of Lindsley's presentation and that is his assessment that "Job never receives an explanation for his suffering" (p. 59). It is refreshing to observe Lindsley's willingness to tackle Lewis's ideas regarding *Myth* and the *Imagination* bringing these often neglected, yet very important, themes into the arena of apologetics. He is right to see the importance of these ideas in Lewis's corpus and reminds those interested in apologetics not to disregard them.

The section of Lindsley's study that a reader is destined to find most helpful concerns the *coherence* of Lewis's apologetic scheme. With skill Lindsley shows how Lewis's arguments do hold together. Furthermore, as has been mentioned, Lindsley takes Lewis's arguments further, giving them application in a post-modern culture. The book is generously footnoted, has a helpful index, and supplies an appendix with ideas for further reading to go along with each chapter.

At the end of the day, one must conclude that the overall effect of Lindsley's investigation of Lewis's

apologetics has been a setting forth of a strong cumulative argument for the Christian faith. The book holds value for those looking to buttress their own faith with a vigorous intellectual support. It has value for the Christian wanting to have answers for a friend or co-worker whose questions seem to stand in the way of his or her believing in Christ. It is also a valuable read for the seeker looking for answers. The book is a good read, its argument artfully developed, and, most of all, it is worthy of Lewis.

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*Jerry was born and raised in Southern California. He has pastored three different churches over twenty three years, and nineteen of those years were invested in student ministry. While pastoring he taught courses in Philosophy and on C.S. Lewis for ten years at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, IL. He has served as an Adjunct Faculty Member at Biola University since 1991, teaching courses on Lewis.*

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