

¶¶ for Parents

13 December 2004

Merry Christmas! Give books, not (just) Play Station!

As many of you know, one of my (many) heroes is Chuck Colson.. One of his recent Breakpoint broadcasts was so timely and appropriate I tried to find a quotation from it to share with you. But it was nearly impossible without reproducing the entire article. So enjoy it as reproduced on the following pages.

The article is largely based on the ideas and works of C.S. Lewis, and it is timely because it was written on the occasion of the anniversary of his death two weeks ago. It is important because it affirms several points on our school mission statement especially #3 and #5 (reprinted below the article).

The Prophecy of C. S. Lewis Chuck Colson

C. S. Lewis was born on this date in 1898 (November 29), and forty-one years after his death, one thing has become startlingly clear: This Oxford don was not only a keen apologist but also a true prophet for our postmodern age.

For example, Lewis's 1947 book, *Miracles*, was penned before most Christians were aware of the emerging philosophy of naturalism. This is the belief that there is a naturalistic explanation for everything in the universe.

Naturalism undercuts any objective morality, opening the door to tyranny. In his book *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis warned that naturalism turns humans into objects to be controlled. It turns values into "mere natural phenomena" – which can be selected and inculcated into a passive population by powerful Conditioners. Lewis predicted a time when those who want to remold human nature "will be armed with the powers of an omniscient state and an irresistible scientific technique." Sounds like the biotech debate today, doesn't it?

Why was Lewis so uncannily prophetic? At first glance he seems an unlikely candidate. He was not a theologian; he was an English professor. What was it that made him such a keen observer of cultural and intellectual trends?

The answer may be somewhat discomfiting to modern evangelicals: One reason is precisely that Lewis was not an evangelical. He was a professor in the academy, with a specialty in medieval literature, which gave him a mental framework shaped by the whole scope of intellectual history and Christian thought. As a result, he was liberated from the narrow confines of the religious views of the day – which meant he was able to analyze and critique them.

Lewis once wrote that any new book “has to be tested against the great body of Christian thought down the ages.” Because he himself was steeped in that “great body of Christian thought,” he quickly discerned trends that ran counter to it.

But how many of us are familiar with that same panorama of Christian ideas “down the ages”? How many of us know the work of more than a few contemporary writers? How, then, can we stand against the destructive intellectual trends multiplying in our own day?

The problem is not that modern evangelicals are less intelligent than Lewis. As Mark Noll explains in his book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, the problem is that our sharpest intellects have been channeled into biblical scholarship, exegesis, and hermeneutics. While that is a vital enterprise, we rarely give the same scholarly attention to history, literature, politics, philosophy, economics, or the arts. As a result, we are less aware of the culture than we should be, less equipped to defend a biblical worldview, and less capable of being a redemptive force in our postmodern society – less aware, as well, of the threats headed our way from cultural elites.

You and I need to follow Lewis’s lead. We must liberate ourselves from the prison of our own narrow perspective and immerse ourselves in Christian ideas “down the ages.” Only then can we critique our culture and trace the trends.

The best way to celebrate Lewis’s birthday is to be at our posts, as he liked to say – with renewed spirits and with probing and informed minds.

Cornerstone Christian Academy Mission Statement: (note especially #3 and #5)

Cornerstone Christian Academy is a covenantal and classical Christian school which partners with the Christian home in:

1. discipling covenant children in their relationships with Christ and the Scriptures,
2. unfolding to covenant children a unified and Biblically Reformational worldview,
3. fostering in covenant children a Spirit-given willingness to express dominion over all of life and learning,
4. equipping covenant children with the tools necessary to pursue a lifestyle and lifetime of learning, and
5. exposing covenant children to the best in living books and ideas from our Western cultural heritage.