



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 10
Number 3

Article 13

1984

Letters

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Recommended Citation

Puckle, Donne E. and Owens, Susan (1984) "Letters," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 10 : No. 3 , Article 13.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol10/iss3/13>

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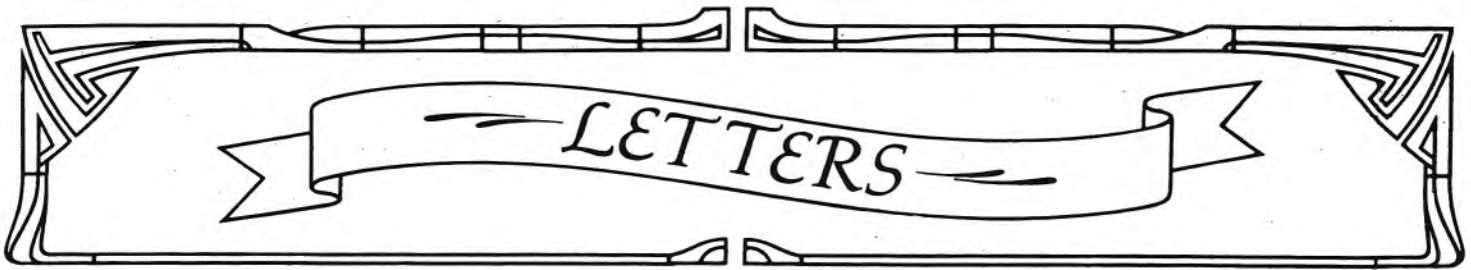
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Fr. Donne E. Puckle Chippewa Falls, WI

Re: Lee Speth's review of Derrick's book, C. S. Lewis and the Church of Rome. It must be remembered that Lewis was a member of the Church of England, and as such, a member of the Catholic Church. True, he was not a Roman Catholic, but according to the teaching of the Church of England (and the Episcopal Church in this country) the Roman Church is not the only Catholic Church. Popular usage has caused the confusion. "Protestant" originally meant "non-Roman"--now it appears to mean "non-Catholic." The Church of England holds to the former, not the latter. To those who wonder why Lewis did not go "over" to Rome -- I suspect that there was no need to go over to Rome. He, like many of us, is already a Catholic. In the long run we are left with speculation -- but also with the fact that Lewis evidenced a sound Christ centered, sacramental life. One could not ask for more from any Catholic: Anglican, Roman, or Orthodox.

Susan Owens St. Paul, MN

Mr. Lee Speth's review titled "From the Fisherman's Chair" in Mythlore 36 struck a strange tone on several points. It indicates one's reaction to Christopher Derrick's C. S. Lewis and the Church of Rome will "pretty automatically mirror one's attitude towards Derrick's religion." While this may be the case for Mr. Speth, I doubt it is true for all. This presupposes quite a bit, along with the prediction that Anglicans may react "angrily defending" their position, or that those who do not share Derrick's views would rather not deal with their "own latent anti-Catholicism." Theoretical strawmen are dourly predicted and put down before they appear.

I am neither Anglican or Roman Catholic, and found the review's digression on the purportedly few references by Lewis to the "C. of E." beside the point. My reading of Lewis shows he did down play the denomination differences which would have little importance to a secular audience for which he largely wrote. Because he does not lavishly praise the "C. of E." begs the question of his not joining the Roman Church. Lewis was born into the Church of Ireland (non-Roman) and after his adult conversion joined the English Church which was, surely, a more "middle of the road" stance in the world he lived in. He avoided the puritanism of Ulster for what is in the British viewpoint a more ecumenical position. Why berate the man, however lovingly and respectfully, be he alive or

dead, for not going "all the way" to Rome? Can we expect books asking why Lewis didn't become Presbyterian, Baptist, or Pentecostal? Having read Derrick's book, I find it repeatedly claims Lewis did not seriously or clearly explain his reasons for not being Roman. Yet the book gives several instances where Lewis does exactly that, particularly in his personal letter, printed on pages 95-96, where he uses the analogy of the Platonic society. Derrick undermines most of his book by refusing to take seriously Lewis' clear reasons, however candidly given. Derrick seems double minded, since he is honest to give these reasons, but, perhaps out of his own devotion to his Church, cannot deal with them objectively.

I cannot agree with the implication that people who agree with Lewis are "dependent on Lewis to do their thinking for them." This borders on a strange hostility, and insults a great number of Lewis fans. For many I know, including myself, Lewis raised issues that had not been squarely addressed before in the readers' minds. He did a great service in making people see things in a new light, not in telling them exactly what they must think. What he tried to see was not a Protestant, Anglican, or Roman position, but the loving central figure of Christianity, common to all. Perhaps it is too much to expect one man to completely heal 500 years of denominational division, but Lewis did more than anyone else I know on a popular level. What unites all Christians makes their differences, however fervently held, of very secondary importance. My love for my Christian brothers and sisters transcends whatever Church or denomination they belong to, including Mr. Speth's. Lewis has helped me see this.

Lastly, there is the slighting (to be kind) reference to the "Lewis Industry." If Mr. Speth means that a number of books written on Lewis are redundant, exploitative, and perhaps that some were better not printed, I agree. The "Lewis Industry" allusions seems to deny that there are a number of very solid, original, and insightful books on Lewis, more than I could list here in justice. There are also books that take advantage of Lewis' name and popularity to examine some special theory, which without his popularity would probably not see the light of day. I leave it to the other readers to decide where to classify Mr. Derrick's book, and whether it is part of Mr. Speth's cleverly imaginary "Lewis Industry."