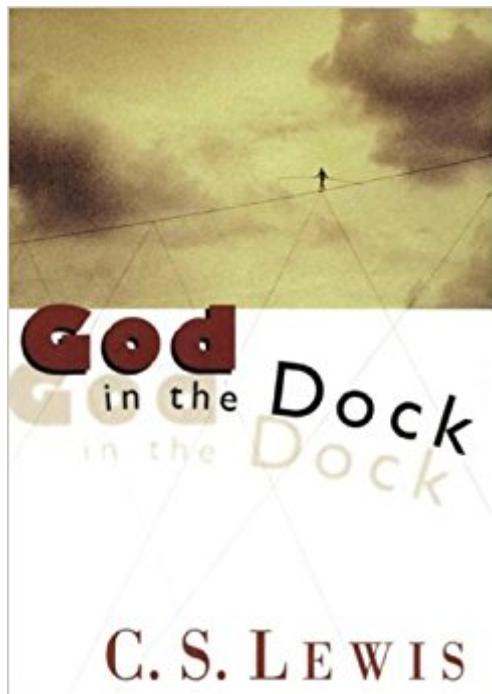


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God In The Dock: Essays On Theology And Ethics



Synopsis

C. S. Lewis was a profound thinker with the rare ability to communicate the philosophical and theological rationale of Christianity in simple yet amazingly effective ways. *God in the Dock* contains forty-eight essays and twelve letters written by Lewis between 1940 and 1963 for a wide variety of publications. Ranging from popular newspaper pieces to learned defenses of the faith, these essays cover topics as varied as the logic of theism, good and evil, miracles, vivisection, the role of women in church polity, and ethics and politics. Many of these writings represent Lewis's first ventures into themes he would later treat in full-length books.

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Customer Reviews

"[Both Lewis's] searching mind and [his] poetic spirit are readily evident. Here the reader finds the tough-minded polemicist relishing the debate; here, too, the kindly teacher explaining the cosmic extraction by means of clarifying analogies with all the humility and grace of a man who knows how much more remains to be known." --New York Times Book Review

CLIVE STAPLES LEWIS (1898-1963) was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and was educated at Oxford. From 1955 to 1963 he was professor of medieval and Renaissance English at the University of Cambridge. His prolific published works include influential literary criticism, classic science fiction and fantasy, and a number of exceptional theological books.

This is a collection of essays by Lewis, all on religious topics or related to it. Unlike his more unified

apologetics, this book includes discussions about hymns, whether the purpose of punishment (for crimes) is desert or remedial, all sorts of things. Some of the essays are less interesting than others, but all are packed with his wisdom and compact style. I particularly like his take on the language evangelism should use: he makes the point that if a minister cannot explain anything in the Bible in simple language that he probably doesn't understand it well enough himself. He goes on to call for seminarians to be tested on their ability to put complex biblical themes or theological subtleties into "vulgar" language, much as we would expect them to learn to speak Bantu before ministering to the Bantu people.. Towards the end is a collection of letters, mostly to magazines and journals commenting on this or that paper. Some are funny in his dry way, others show that he was engaged in lots of different areas. No one can go wrong reading anything he wrote. But this volume should not be your first exposure to him.

Great book. Seller was great and the book was better than described. But the content is really good. Of course, I'm a fan of C.S. Lewis. I love his logic. He usually takes me somewhere and gives me good perspective on the cross and life itself. In so doing, he has a way of minimizing any current stressors. They come back for sure. But the respite he gives by adding perspective is a good thing. This collection of essays will be read numerous times by me. One in particular ("Man Or Rabbit") has already been read numerous times.

After years of struggling with the modern church's lack of appetite for the intellectual, I finally found an author who wasn't afraid to ask the hard questions that plague Christians and non-Christians alike:> Should we pray, and [why] does it work?> Why would God want to bother with a tiny, insignificant planet in the universe?> Has science negated God?> Why should anyone go to church?...and many more challenging topics in this compilation of essays written over CS Lewis's lifetime. The amazing thing about this book is he doesn't just ask the hard questions--he has well thought out, mind-blowing answers as well, backed up by theologians, scientists, the Socratic method, and of course, the Bible. The essays may have been written in the 1940s and 50s, but they have lost none of their relevance or power in today's world. As a Christian, this book has taken me to a whole new depth of understanding about what I believe. As a thinking person, it challenged me to look at my motivations for everything I do. For example: Why do I try to be a good person? Why is "good" better than "bad"? I would recommend this book to any Christian with a thirst for deeper understanding of Christian theology. I would also recommend this book to anyone who is interested in what being a Christian REALLY means at the foundation, not what modern culture has tried to

make it mean. Some people may have trouble reading this book --it is definitely not light reading. Lewis was an English professor at Cambridge, and it shows in his dense writing and complex subject matter. He frequently quotes Latin and from sources and authors only a literature scholar would know of. However, the editor does a good job in translating and citing references where appropriate. It is not enough to say that I have been profoundly moved and changed by this book. Definitely, definitely read it.

I find that the more I read the writings of C. S. Lewis, the more I find myself admiring his skill as a writer and thinker. I do not know of another writer who is so good at getting straight to the heart of whatever subject he is considering and working out every logical implication of a position held by himself or someone else. Thus, I found this collection of essays by Lewis titled *God in the Dock* to be a special treat. These forty-eight essays written over a period of some twenty years and published in a variety of publications provide excellent examples of Lewis' clear thinking and uncompromising defense of his Christian beliefs. Although there is some diversity of subject in these writings, the editor, Walter Hooper, has sorted them out into three parts and included a fourth part containing a few letters Lewis wrote. As he explains, the first two parts deal mostly with theology while the third has essays dealing more with Christian ethics or behavior. These essays are not so easily differentiated and Lewis is always as much concerned with Christian living as much as Christian beliefs. Ethics and theology blend together more than are separated in these essays. Lewis does tackle a variety of subjects in these essays, but always he returns to the same themes. He defends the concept of miracles against the idea that science disproves the miraculous by pointing out that science only studies the regularities found in nature. Given that the miraculous is not part of the regularities, science can tell us nothing about it. Lewis also argues against reducing everything to mechanistic naturalism. He insists that to study a thing is not the same as to experience it and one must not assume that either process tells us everything about the thing. A person in love experiences the emotion of love. A doctor studying his brain might perhaps learn something of the chemicals that produce the feelings of being in love, but cannot know what it is to be in love unless he actually experiences it. C. S. Lewis defends dogma in religion against those who would do away with it in favor of a loose theism by pointing out that a religion with no beliefs is hardly worth the trouble. He writes of the difficulties of spreading the Christian message to a contemporary audience and of the necessity of speaking the common people's language in order to teach them. The essay *God in the Dock* notes that unlike the pagans in first century Rome, most people today do not believe themselves to be sinners in need of repentance.

and instead of fearing the judgment of God, is more inclined to put God in the dock and judge Him. One of the themes throughout C. S. Lewis' writings is his contention that it is what is true that matters, not what is modern or progressive or practical. In Bulverism, he attacks the twentieth century fashion of refuting an argument not by proving it is wrong, but by attacking the motives of the debater. (Check your privilege?) He insists that a point is either right or wrong, regardless of the motives of the person stating it, and it can only be shown to be right or wrong using reason. There is a lot more to this collection and I have only scratched a very shallow line on the surface of the profound riches to be found in reading these essays. I think that any follower of C. S. Lewis will find that reading God in the Dock to be a rewarding experience.

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