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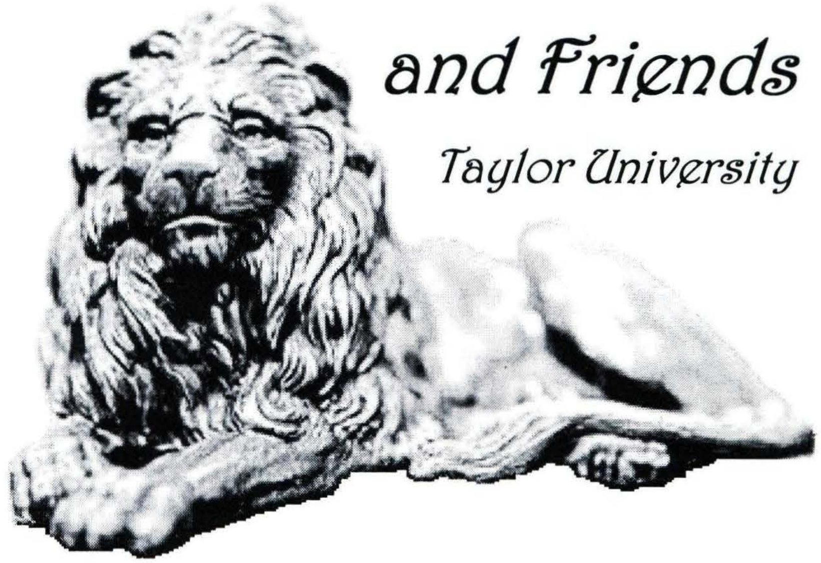
INKLINGS FOREVER

Volume VII

A Collection of Essays
Presented at the Seventh
FRANCES WHITE EWBANK COLLOQUIUM

C. S. Lewis



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INKLINGS FOREVER
Volume VII
2010

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A Collection of Essays
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on C.S. LEWIS & FRIENDS
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*Plenary Speaker

Grief Observed: Pain and Suffering in the Writings of C.S. Lewis and Frederick Buechner

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Although Frederick Buechner (b. 1926) was an American a generation younger than C.S. Lewis (1891-1963) and had never personally met him, these two writers have much in common. In previous papers presented at the Frances W. Ewbank Colloquium on C.S. Lewis & Friends I have shared why Buechner can be considered a "friend" of Lewis. Both expressed their unique Christian voices through multiple literary genres: fiction and non-fiction, apologetics and sermons, and conversion narratives which have become Christian classics. In this paper I would like to explore another area which they share: the grief and brokenness which they have poignantly expressed through their writings.

Both have written about grief and loss. How they tell their stories reflects their views of themselves and God. As a scholar, Lewis writes a philosophical treatise, *The Problem of Pain* (1940), then twenty years later pours out his personal experience of grief in his private journal, *A Grief Observed* (1961) published under a pseudonym. Buechner reveals the depth of his struggles through the trials of a 12th century saint by writing the novel *Godric* and his three memoirs, especially *Telling Secrets.* Their writings reflecting pain and brokenness powerfully express the paradox of Christian suffering.

Childhood Loss

As children, both Lewis and Buechner experienced the tragic loss of a parent. For both boys, the death of a parent proved to be a turning point—when childhood innocence ended and the uncertainty of life began. When he was 9, Lewis's mother died of cancer. Lewis recalls "With my mother's death all settled happiness, all that was tranquil and reliable, disappeared from my life" (*Surprised by Joy* 21). Although Lewis felt her loss deeply, the family did not discuss their grief. In fact, Lewis states he was embarrassed whenever his father tried to approach the subject. Soon afterward, his father shipped him off to boarding school. Lewis hated boarding school, and the loss of his mother only intensified the experience. However, besides a few references in his autobiography, the loss of his mother is not something Lewis dwells on. Later the loss of his wife, however, will compound the sense of maternal loss which had been buried.

In 1936 when Buechner was 10, his father committed suicide. In Buechner's home, his father's suicide was an embarrassment, a family secret, something one did not mention. As soon as possible, Buechner's mother moved with her two sons to Bermuda. There was no funeral for his father, and his immediate family did not attend the memorial held for his father the following fall. Buechner describes this experience of losing his father as something he did not consciously grieve at the time and when the next year he came upon his younger brother crying, Buechner did not understand why he was upset.

Yet, in retrospect, writing his first memoir *The Sacred Journey* (1982) in his mid-fifties, Buechner realizes his father's death was so significant that he divides his life story into before and after the event. Before is "once below a time" –childhood's timeless present, Eden before the fall; and after it is "once upon a time" when measurable time began. Although he was not aware of it at the time, and he rarely spoke of it to friends, his father's suicide shook the very ground of his existence.

Remembering and Retelling

As a way to listen to life, in therapy Buechner discovered the importance of remembering. In a short novel *The Wizard's Tide (*republished under the title *The Christmas Tide),* Buechner refashions his family's reaction to his father's death, rewriting it as it should have been—a time for the family to openly share their grief to bring acceptance and healing .

Both writers draw on their childhood loss in their fiction. Lewis revisits the pain of losing his mother in *The Magician's Nephew* (*Chronicles of Narnia)* and changes the outcome. The protagonist young Digory feels helpless as he watches his mother slowly dying and he prays to make her well. In Narnia he is tempted by the white witch to steal a magic apple to heal his mother, which he refuses to do. Later Aslan gives him a magic apple and when his mother eats it, she is healed. The ending Lewis as a boy had prayed for, and been denied, is now received.

For twenty years Buechner wove his father's suicide into his novels. In each of Buechner's early novels, before or during the narrative, a suicide occurs which devastates the characters left behind. For example, in his first novel, *A Long Day's Dying* (1950), the protagonist's pet monkey slits his throat in imitation of his owner's suicidal gesture. When Buechner's mother read his third novel, *The Return of Ansel Gibbs*, the thinly disguised details of her husband's suicide enacted by the protagonist's father, left her feeling betrayed, and she was so angry she never read anything else her son wrote. In some of his other novels, the longing for a father is a major theme. As Buechner was later to learn, although death had ended his father's life, it had not ended his relationship with his father which would need prayer, therapy, and writing a novel about Godric, a medieval saint, to heal. It is the novel *Godric* which most deeply reveals Buechner's pain.

In his memoir *Telling Secrets,* Buechner describes the experience of writing *Godric* during one of the darkest periods of his life, when he was distraught over the illness of his daughter. He writes,

> And all the time those things [his daughter's near fatal eating disorder and his subsequent feelings of fear and helplessness] were happening, the very fact that I was able to save my sanity by continuing to write among other things a novel called *Godric* made my work blessed and a means of grace at least for me. Nothing I've ever written came out of a darker time or brought me more light and comfort. It also—far more than I realized at the time I wrote it—brought me a sharper glimpse than I had ever had before of the crucial role my father has always played in my life and continues to play in my life even though in so many ways I have long since lost all but a handful of conscious memories of him. (*Telling Secrets* 20-21).

Themes of loss and the ambivalence of friendship and kinship are central to *Godric*, the first person narrative of a 12th century Anglo-Saxon saint who recounts his life to the monk assigned to write his hagiography. The novel begins as Godric the aged hermit remembers five special friends he has lost over the years. Now as an old man he concludes, "That's five friends, one for each of Jesu's wounds, and Godric bears their mark still on what's left of him as in their time they all bore his on them. What's friendship, when all's done, but the giving and taking of wounds? (Godric 7)

This is Godric's definition of friendship-- "the giving and taking of wounds." After a long life, the saint knows that deepest love produces deepest pain. This painful recognition leads the aged Godric to pray, "Gentle Jesu, Mary's son, be thine the wounds that heal our wounding. Press thy bloody scars to ours that thy dear blood may flow in us and cleanse our sin" (7-8). Only the blood of Jesus and his forgiveness can heal the pain of friendship and family relationships. As Bruinooge and Engbers note, "This rather bitter definition of friendship informs nearly every human relationship in the novel: character after character hurts the ones whom he or she loves in an attempt to love them" (44, 45).

Buechner's understanding of the psychodynamics of family relationships stems from his own experience. Throughout the novel, the relationship of Godric and his family, especially with his father and sister Burcwen, is a continual bearing of burdens and giving of wounds because of love. In the earlier chapters of *Godric*, the protagonist's personal losses and past failures threaten to overwhelm him as he looks back over his long life. Remembering his youth, Godric only remembers his father's back and his sense of abandonment:

> It seems that he [my father] was ever striding off in every way but ours so I scarcely had the time to mark the smile or scowl of him. Even the look of his eyes is gone. They were grey as the sea like mine, it's said, only full of kindness, but what matter how kind a man's eye be if he never fixes you with it long enough to learn? (9).

Godric describes his father as faceless, like the wind, and their relationship in terms of hunger and starvation:

> It was fear kept Aedlward from us, and next to God what he feared of all things most was an empty belly . . . .So it was his fear we'd starve that made him starve us for that one of all things that we hungered for the most, which was the man himself" (10).

But when Godric undergoes a spiritual transformation in Jerusalem, he prays for forgiveness:

> Dear Christ, have mercy on my soul. And Aedlward, have mercy too.
> I've chided you for failing as a father, too spent from grubbing to have any love to spend on me. Maybe it was the other way around, and it was I that failed you as a son. (103)

In his third and most self-revealing, psychologically-oriented memoir *Telling Secrets*, Buechner states that *Godric* brought him "a sharper glimpse than I had ever had before of the crucial role my father has always played in my life and continues to play in my life" (21). Describing the novel as written during one of the darkest periods of his life, he links his dedication of the book to the memory of his father and his identification with Godric's grief "for having lost a father I never knew." In *Telling Secrets,* he shares for the first time the anguish he was experiencing while writing *Godric*:

> I did not realize until after I wrote it how much of this [the crucial role my father has always played in my life and continues to play in my life] there is in the book. When Godric is about to leave home to make his way in the world and his father Aedlward raises his hand to him in farewell, Godric says, "I believe my way went from that hand as a path goes from a door, and though many a mile that way has led me since, with many a turn and crossroad in between, if ever I should trace it back, it's to my father's hand that it would lead." And later, when he learns of his father's death, he says, "The sadness was I'd lost a father I had never fully found. It's like a tune that ends before you've heard it out. Your whole life through you search to catch the strain, and seek the face you've lost in strangers' faces." In writing passages like that, I was writing more than I had known I knew with the result that the book was not only a word *from* me—my words painstakingly chosen and arranged into sentences by me alone—but also a word out of such a deep and secret part of who I am that it seemed also a word *to* me.
>
> A book you write out of the depths of who you are, like a dream you dream out of those same depths, is entirely your own creation. All the words your characters speak are words that you alone have put into their mouths, just as every situation they become involved in is one that you alone have concocted for them. But it seems to me nonetheless that a book you write, like a dream you dream, can have more healing and truth and wisdom in it at least for yourself than you feel in any way responsible for.
>
> A large part of the truth that *Godric* had for me was the truth that although death ended my father, it has never ended my relationship with my father—a secret that I had never so clearly understood before. So forty-four years after the last time I saw him, it was to my father that I dedicated the book—*In memoriam patris mei*. I wrote the dedication in Latin solely because at the time it seemed appropriate to the medieval nature of the tale, but I have come to suspect since that Latin was also my unconscious way of remaining obedient to the ancient family law that the secret of my father must be at all costs kept secret. (21-22)

An even greater pain is unconsciously expressed in this novel, however. While in real life Buechner is fearing his anorexic daughter's death, in the novel, this fear is transferred to Godric's relationship with his sister. In contrast to the male ascetics in the novel, Godric's sister's self-starvation is an illness caused by her pinning for her brother. Fearing his own attraction, Godric withdraws from her, and Burcwen begins to stop eating. William, their brother, describes her to Godric in words later echoed by Buechner in reference to his daughter's anorexia:

> I fear our sister ails. Some lettuce or a parsnip's all she takes for days on end. Water is her only drink . . . . Women's ways are ever strange. A radish now and then. She won't have meat or bread . . . .Her legs and arms become like sticks . . . .(154).

Godric describes his feeling when he saw his sister: “Her eyes were fever-bright and she herself so lean she could have been a sailor shipwrecked on a raft for weeks. My bowels within me stirred for pity and remorse . . . .She grew so thin her checks went hollow. The flesh around her mouth and eyes shrank back till you could see the skull beneath the skin” (154,159).

Buechner can write so convincingly about the psychological and physical dynamics of anorexia and its connection to consuming familial love between Godric and his sister because it reflects Buechner’s own relationship with his daughter, his intense codependent love and his fear of losing her. In *Telling Secrets,* Buechner reveals the reason he went into therapy: his desperate need to find a way to save her. He felt completely helpless. Identifying with Frank Baum's Cowardly Lion, bound with ropes and plagued by the tormenting monkeys, Buechner recalls facing the painful experience of watching his daughter waste away, “a victim of Buchenwald”:

> . . . the Cowardly Lion got more and more afraid and sad, felt more and more helpless. No rational argument, no dire medical warning, no pleading or cajolery or bribery would make this young woman he loved eat normally again but only seemed to strengthen her determination not to, this young woman on whose life his own in so many ways depended. He could not solve her problem because he was of course himself part of her problem. . . . Then finally, when she had to be hospitalized, a doctor called one morning to say that unless they started feeding her against her will, she would die. It was as clear-cut as that. Tears ran down the Cowardly Lion's face as he stood with the telephone at his ear. His paws were tied. The bat-winged monkeys hovered. (*Telling Secrets* 24)
>
> My anorectic daughter was in danger of starving to death, and without knowing it, so was I. I wasn't living my own life any more because I was so caught up in hers. If in refusing to eat she was mad as a hatter, I was if anything madder still because whereas in some sense she knew what she was doing to herself, I knew nothing at all about what I was doing to myself. She had given up food. I had virtually given up doing anything in the way of feeding myself humanly. (25)

What could be more devastating than for a father to watch helplessly as his daughter slowly committed suicide, an agonizing reenactment of the most traumatic loss of his childhood? Desperate to help her, Buechner went to a psychotherapist to understand his daughter, only to learn that he was a major part of her problem. In therapy Buechner came to face his codependency, the secret bondage inherited from his dysfunctional family. Psychologically, this difficult experience tore down the last remnants of his false self, to expose his hurt wounded self. He came to realize that he needed to find healing for himself which involved reconciling the loss of his father and learning to let go. Commenting on how this relates to writing *Godric,* Buechner explains,

> This book was . . . prophetic, in the sense that in its pages, more than half without knowing it, I was trying on various ways of growing old and facing death myself . As the years go by, Godric outlives, or is left behind by virtually everybody he has ever loved . . . . But, although not without anguish, he is able to let them all go finally and to survive their going. His humanity and wit survive. His faith

> survives.   . . . And one day not long before his death . . .[he] speaks these words both for himself and also for me:
>
> "Praise, praise!" I croak. Praise God for all that's holy, cold, and dark. Praise him for all we lose, for all the river of the years bears off. Praise him for stillness in the wake of pain. Praise him for emptiness. . . . Praise him for dying and the peace of death . . ."
>
> "What's lost is nothing to what's found and all the death that ever was, set next to life, would scarcely fill a cup." (*Godric* 96, *Now and Then 107, 109)*

Subjective vs. Objective

Despite similar experiences, Lewis and Buechner's approaches to sharing them are quite different. Introducing his conversion narrative *Surprised By Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* published in 1955, Lewis's preface reveals that he is not comfortable sharing personal emotions. From the first sentence, the focus is on a change in philosophy—a move from one logical position to another. And yet, Lewis soon mentions that the relevance of the story will depend on how well a reader can identify with his experience of "Joy"—"have *you* felt that too?" In other words, it is also based on personal emotional or intuitive experience.

Another significant difference between the two occurs in Lewis's last paragraph of his preface:

> The story is, I fear, suffocatingly subjective; the kind of thing I have never written before and shall probably never write again. I have tried so to write the first chapter that those who can't bear such a story will see at once what they are in for and close the book with the least waste of time. (viii)

Lewis's disclaimer implies that something "suffocatingly subjective" is somehow less valuable than something that is "objectively true." He seems almost embarrassed at the introspection involved, and he adds it is the kind of thing "I have never written before and shall probably never write again." Thus when Lewis is asked by his publisher to write a theological explanation of suffering, he seeks to provide an objective apologetic. In the book *The Problem of Pain* (1940) Lewis logically explores human suffering from a theological and philosophical perspective.   As in *Surprised by Joy*, he makes this disclaimer in the preface:

> I must add, too, that the only purpose of the book is to solve the intellectual problem raised by suffering; for the far higher task of teaching fortitude and patience I was never fool enough to suppose myself qualified, nor have I anything to offer my readers except my conviction that when pain is to be borne, a little courage helps more than much knowledge, a little human sympathy more than much courage, and the least tincture of the love of God more than all" (9-10).

The Problem of Pain focuses primarily on physical and mental pain (rather than emotional pain). In it Lewis seeks to justify the ways of God to man—to show how tribulation (suffering) produces patience by causing the Christian to rely not on himself but on God. Lewis researches the subject and puts together a treatise on suffering based on classical, literary, and Biblical sources, but he is not speaking from personal experience.

How different when Lewis lost his wife Joy to cancer. So powerful was the experience of loss that he had to release his feelings in his private journal which he published under a pseudonym. This record, *A Grief Observed,* begins:

> No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid . . . .And no one ever told me about the laziness of grief. Except at my job—where the machine seems to run on much as usual—I loathe the slightest effort. Not only writing but even reading a letter is too much. Even shaving. What does it matter now whether my cheek is rough or smooth . . . . (7-8)
>
> Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him, so happy you are tempted to feel His claims upon you as an interruption, if you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be—or so it feels—welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence . . . .
>
> I tried to put some of these thoughts to C. this afternoon. He reminded me that the same thing seems to have happened to Christ: 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' I know. Does that make it easier to understand?
>
> Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion is not 'So there's no God after all,' but 'So this is what God's really like. Deceive yourself no longer.' (9-10).

A Grief Observed is an intense, moment by moment account of Lewis' thoughts and feelings, his intense bewilderment and suffering. Lewis rails at God, then questions himself, his motives and his faith. As we read, we experience the pain Lewis is going through when he cries, "Oh God, God, why did you take such trouble to force this creature out of its shell if it is now doomed to crawl back—to be sucked back—into it?" (18). We feel his anger when he writes: "Talk to me about the truth of religion and I'll listen gladly. Talk to me about the duty of religion and I'll listen submissively. But don't come talking to me about the consolations of religion or I shall suspect that you don't understand" (23). The honesty and clarity of Lewis's logic only reinforces his pain when he writes:

> They tell me H. is happy now, they tell me she is at peace What makes them so sure of this? . . . 'Because she is in God's hands.' But if so, she was in God's hands all the time, and I have seen what they did to her here. Do they suddenly become gentler to us the moment we are out of the body? And if so, why? If God's goodness is inconsistent with hurting us, then either God is not good or there is no God: for in the only life we know He hurts us beyond our worst fears and beyond all we can imagine. If it is consistent with hurting us, then He may hurt us after death as unendurably as before it (24-25).

Over time Lewis comes to experience his grief as a process. As his anger fades, he grows into acceptance. One of his insights about God, whom he has previously referred to as the Cosmic Sadist, is that his own idea of God (prior to his suffering) "is not a divine idea. It has to be shattered time after time. He shatters it Himself. He is the great iconoclast. Could we not almost say that this shattering is one of the marks of His presence?" (52) Lewis ultimately accepts that some questions are not answerable. His last words are acceptance:

How wicked it would be, if we could, to call the dead back! She said not to me but to the chaplain, 'I am at peace with God.' She smiled, but not at me. *Poi si torno all' eternal fontana. (Then she turned herself back toward the eternal fountain.* Dante *Paradiso* XXXI, 30). Lewis thus accepts that Joy, like Dante's Beatrice, must return to God (King, 9). The Lewis with the answers has been replaced by one who surrenders and accepts the will of God. Out of this death comes life. Now he has indeed experienced and can share 2 Corinthians 4:16-7:

> Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.
>
> For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Unlike Lewis' original disdain for the "suffocatingly subjective," Buechner always prioritizes his own subjective experience as a way to express truth. He begins *The Alphabet of Grace* (1970), his first autobiographical journal, with the statement, "At its heart most theology, like most fiction, is essentially autobiography" (3). This is certainly true in *A Grief Observed* in which Lewis reveals his experience as he lives it daily. In Buechner's more psychologically oriented autobiographies, Buechner is looking back, shaping his retelling of the past from memory.

As I have explored in depth in *Listening to Life: Psychology and Spirituality in the Writings of Frederick Buechner,* Buechner's aborted grief reaction, experienced after his father's death, was accentuated by the repetition of psychological dynamics and fear of loss associated with the illness of his daughter. In addition to the healing he experienced in professional psychotherapy which taught him the value of memory, through several spiritual experiences Buechner learned to trust God, to have faith when all seemed darkest. Secondly he learned that unlike his love, or lovesickness, the "realistic, tough, conscientious" love the doctors and nurses exhibited in treating his daughter was closer to what Jesus meant by love than was his own.

Thus Buechner's view of psychotherapy based on his own experience has a spiritual source: it is one way God heals memory and the past:

> The sad things that happened long ago will always remain part of who we are just as the glad and gracious things will too, but instead of being a burden of guilt, recrimination, and regret that make us constantly stumble as we go, even the saddest things can become, once we have made peace with them, a source of wisdom and strength for the journey that still lies ahead. It is through memory that we are able to reclaim much of our lives that we have long since written off

> by finding that in everything that has happened to us over the years God was offering us possibilities of new life and healing which, though we may have missed them at the time, we can still chose and be brought to life by and healed by all these years later.
>
> Another way of saying it, perhaps, is that memory makes it possible for us both to bless the past, even those parts of it that we have always felt cursed by, and also to be blessed by it. If this kind of remembering sounds like what psychotherapy is all about, it is because of course it is, but I think it is also what the forgiveness of sins is all about--the interplay of God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of God and each other. To see how God's mercy was for me buried deep even in my father's death was not just to be able to forgive my father for dying and God for letting him die so young and without hope and all the people like my mother who were involved in his death but also to be able to forgive myself for all the years I had failed to air my crippling secret so that then, however slowly and uncertainly, I could start to find healing. It is in the experience of such healing that I believe we experience also God's loving forgiveness of us, and insofar as memory is the doorway to both experiences, it becomes not just therapeutic but sacred. (*Telling Secrets* 33-34)

Memory is used to expose the real hurt self to feel the suffering of the past, for in therapy one must work one's hurt trail before one can discover one's love story (the healing of memories and forgiveness through the love of God).

Given a choice, Lewis prefers the rhetoric of debate and philosophy-- the logical apologetics of *Mere Christianity* to the personal narrative of spiritual experience expressed in *Surprised by Joy*. Lewis, the "reluctant convert," is wary of the "suffocatingly subjective" and apologizes to his readers for becoming far too personal. He expounds intellectually on the question of suffering in *The Problem of Pain*, but when it comes to exposing his own pain, he remains incognito, keeping the personal private, struggling to objectively "observe" grief and try to make some sort of sense of what he is experiencing. On the other hand, Frederick Buechner approaches faith from inner revelation and intuition, feeling his way as he goes, dealing with the struggles of emotional pain by sharing them—first with a therapist and then with readers. For both writers, the greatest tests of faith come when they face the loss of a loved one. Lewis's pain is uncovered through the pages of the journal he wrote to record his experience of grief and it is through writing this intimate memoir that he (and his readers) find healing. Buechner shares his own experience so his readers will find their own sacred journeys. For both, it is the honesty and personal nature of their grief journeys that make them so powerful. In the suffering of these two Christian authors, we see enacted the central paradox of Christianity: unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit--the paradox of death and resurrection, the paradox of suffering producing life.

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Romance and the Pocket Pistol: The Armed Poet in *The Man Who Was Thursday*

Jessica D. Dooley

> "But the more [Syme] felt this glittering desolation in the moonlit land, the more his own chivalric folly glowed in the night like a great fire. Even the common things he carried with him – the food and the brandy and the loaded pistol – took on exactly that concrete and material poetry which a child feels when he takes a gun upon a journey or a bun with him to bed. The sword-stick and the brandy-flask, though in themselves only the tools of morbid conspirators, became the expressions of his own more healthy romance."
> *The Man Who Was Thursday* by G. K. Chesterton, Chapter IV

What is the Romance of the Pocket Pistol? If the pen is mightier than the sword, why do Chesterton's poets take up the latter as readily as the former? Gabriel Syme, the protagonist of *The Man Who Was Thursday*, is the archetype of Chesterton's armed poets. A young poet whose whole life experience leads him to abhor anarchy with an intensity "not quite sane," Syme feels that organized law has its "back to the wall; he was too quixotic to have cared for it otherwise." (Chapter IV) As he is walking on the Thames Embankment deploring the police force's apparent oblivion to the danger of intellectual anarchy, Syme encounters a curiously philosophical policeman, who assures him that a special police force is engaged on a secret crusade against wicked intellectual conspiracy, and invites Syme to meet their leader. Syme at once does so, and is commissioned to join them. "Mr Gabriel Syme was not merely a detective who pretended to be a poet; he was really a poet who had become a detective." (Chapter IV) This is a charming and intentional concept: Chesterton's poets are almost always poet-detectives. Father Brown is a priest-detective; Mr. Horne Fisher, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, is a poet-detective; Mr Basil Grant from *The Club of Queer Trades* is a poet-detective. What is this dual vocation? In *Tremendous Trifles*, Chesterton describes "a true artist" as "a person of exquisite susceptibilities and nothing else." In Chapter V of *The Man Who Was Thursday*, he describes Syme as "one of those men who are open to all the more nameless psychological influences in a degree a little dangerous to mental health. Utterly devoid of fear in physical dangers, he was a great deal too sensitive to the smell of spiritual evil." A detective seeks to identify truth *and* expose falsehood. That pursuit and goal defines Chesterton's poet-detective. Armed with their "exquisite susceptibility," they look for truth and falsehood in the minds and hearts of their fellow men. The extraordinary philosophical policeman that Syme meets along the Thames Embankment describes the vocation of the poet-detective: "The ordinary detective discovers from a ledger or a diary that a crime has be committed. We discover from a book of sonnets that a crime *will* be committed. … We say that the most dangerous criminal now is the entirely lawless modern philosopher. …[These] philosophers hate life itself, their own, as much as other people's." (Chapter IV) The poet-detective's efforts are predicated on the conviction that truth in ideas is of ultimate importance. Equally important is the exposure of false ideas, and the poet becomes a detective to distinguish falsehood from truth, and openly discredit it.

The supreme importance of ideas in the poet's worldview is concisely expressed in the Scripture: "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7, KJV, ASV) Chesterton's poet lives in the world of ideas; they are more tangible to him than the physical world. He has a keen awareness of the interaction between ideas and the actual, of the causal relationship between thought and reality. As a result, he is essentially a man of action. To combat the anarchy which he perceives through spiritual intuition, he takes up the sword – and the pocket pistol.

Syme penetrates a secret enclave of anarchists, and through an inspired bluff, gets himself elected a member of the Supreme Council of European Anarchists. He had unwittingly promised his anarchist acquaintance, the poet Gregory, not to reveal the existence of the anarchists to the police, and he undertakes a solitary venture to defeat the anarchists from within. Chesterton describes Syme's isolation and his chivalry, the romance of the pocket pistol:

> "Over the whole landscape lay a luminous and unnatural discoloration, as of that disastrous twilight which Milton spoke of as shed by the sun in eclipse; so that Syme fell easily into his first thought, that he was actually on some other and emptier planet, which circled round some sadder star. But the more he felt this glittering desolation in the moonlit land, the more his own chivalric folly glowed in the night like a great fire. Even the common things he carried with him – the food and the brandy and the loaded pistol – took on earth that concrete and material poetry which a child feels when he takes a gun upon a journey or a bun with him to bed. The sword-stick and the brandy-flask, though in themselves only the tools of morbid conspirators, became the expressions of his own more healthy romance. The sword-stick became almost the sword of chivalry, and the brandy the wine of the stirrup-cup. "
> *The Man Who Was Thursday*, Chapter IV

Chesterton has made the poet Syme a person of "exquisite susceptibilities": susceptible to the impressions of atmospheres and appearances, susceptible to exaggeration born of enthusiasm, and susceptible to heroism in a crisis. Syme's poetic susceptibility led him to the inescapable conviction that the existence of a wrong idea requires prompt and energetic action. That is an expression of romance: the feeling that something both can and ought to be done. It is easy to feel that anarchy is regrettable, and that something ought to be done about it by the proper authorities. But it is surely an access of Syme's poetic romance that makes him feel that *he is able to do it* – able to become a policeman, able to effectively combat the forces of anarchy, able to successfully infiltrate the Central Anarchist Council, able to prevent the Marquis from performing his bomb-throwing mission in Paris by engaging him in a mortal duel. Syme does not believe that *only* he could do it; that is conceit, not romance. Romance forgets the self in the belief that there is something worth doing, that the doing is possible, and that failure, or the lack of action, is untenable. In fact, when Syme begins to dwell on his own position, his isolation and danger, he becomes morbid, ineffective, and somewhat paranoid (Chapter VII, VIII). Romance is the opposite of pessimism, but it is not the opposite of practicality. Romance inspires Syme to carry the pocket pistol, because he feels there is something useful that he can do with it. It is worth noting that romantic sensibility does not interfere with sense. In Chapter X, Chesterton declares, "Syme was subject to spasms of singular common sense, not otherwise a part of his character. They were poetic intuitions, and they sometimes rose to the exaltation of prophecy." "Poetic intuition" is the poet's primary epistemology.

Under the influence of his "chivalric folly," Syme's excited sensibilities find the bleak, tangible façade of London filled with sinister significance. "To Syme's exaggerative mind the bright, bleak houses and terraces by the Thames looked as empty as the mountains of the moon," which they most probably were not (Chapter IV). They were, perhaps, pleasant, homey, and comfortable, and filled with contented folk. But was Syme's chivalry foolish? Those folk lived in ignorance of the mighty conspiracy to destroy their very lives, which Syme steamed up the Thames to seek. Their ignorance, and the impending malevolence of the anarchists, is what made the houses seem desolate; Syme's secret knowledge of the true nature of the peace in which they lived – a peace on the edge of stealthy violence – separated him from them as effectively as a sudden exile to an alien world. Now that he knew of the existence of the anarchists, there was for him no other existence possible. The anarchists' intentions seemed vague and silly to the women of Saffron Park because they believed that the anarchy of the Gregory, red-haired poet, was utterly divorced from reality, ideas never to be realized. But both Syme and Gregory were poets, which enabled them to perceive real and practical consequences of those ideas. An idea is the blueprint of the actual. The poet is convicted that ideas, far from being intangible, are the stuff of reality.

Chesterton’s poet perceives that ideas, what people say and what people think, are ultimately of incalculable significance. To him, there is no distinction between the ethereal and the actual, between the conception of an evil idea, and the execution of a wicked act. To the artist of “exquisite susceptibility,” an idea is as concrete as a visible fact. His artistic medium is the word, which precedes all existence and all action. “For he spoke and they were made: he commanded and they were created.” (Psalm 33:9, Douay-Rheims) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1, NIV) If this is so, an idea can achieve fundamental change in the nature of things, whether in the condition of the world or the condition of a man. The poet feels, with acute excitement, that a wicked idea could destroy the world, and only true ideas can prevent it. That is why the poet sets out armed to combat an idea: because the idea has set out armed to attack him.

The poet’s pocket pistol is the badge of his orthodoxy. That which is believed by men has eternal consequences for their souls. A belief is the fundamental unit of intention. Far be it from Syme to adopt the craven creed that ideas do not matter, that a view expressed is “just talk,” that what a man believes does not have any effect on his daily interactions with his fellow men. The anarchists took comprehensive advantage of this widespread, fundamental error. The Anarchist Council held their weekly meetings on the balcony of a restaurant, and their diabolical talk provoked indulgent laughter in the waiters and pedestrians alike. The anarchist Gregory disguised himself as an *anarchist,* and talked anarchy at artistic tea parties throughout Saffron Park, safe in the certainty that he would never be believed. As he boasted to Syme, “I preached blood and murder to those women day and night, and – by God – they would let me wheel their perambulators.” (Chapter II)

The policeman and the anarchist alike knew that anarchy was not an intangible creed, but an imminent and practical plan of attack. Though dismissed as frivolity in Saffron Park, anarchy was real, so real that Syme could duel it – and he did. In order to divert the Marquis de Saint Eustache from travelling to Paris in time to assassinate the French President and the Czar, Syme takes advantage of the Marquis’ noble heritage, and challenges him to a duel. The Marquis embodied in a single opponent all the horror of the conscienceless, implacable purpose of anarchy. The fact that the Marquis afterwards is revealed as an ally in disguise did not diminish the fact that Syme was dueling with an idea, fighting a chivalric contest for the fate of the world against a devil incarnate, against the idea of murder in the anarchist’s mind. Ideas become inflexible purpose, and are wrought by the hands of men. As they begin to fight, Syme “found himself in the presence of the great fact of the fear of death, with its coarse and pitiless common sense. … He felt a strange and vivid value in all the earth around him, in the grass under his feet; he felt the love of life in all living things… He had the feeling that if by some miracle he escaped he would be ready to sit for ever before that almond tree, desiring nothing else in the world.” (Chapter X). The very diabolical impossibility of the fact that the Marquis was apparently impervious to injury filled Syme with a renewed sense of reality. "’After all,’" [Syme] said to himself, ‘I am more than a devil; I am a man. I can do the one thing which Satan himself cannot do – I can die.’" (Chapter X) The romance of the pocket pistol is that the poet, who knows the value of life, also knows that there is something worth dying for.

This is another expression of romance: the conviction that to adhere to a true idea is more important than to remain alive. Syme is constrained from calling in the aid of the police against the anarchists’ plots by the promise he had given Gregory not to reveal Gregory’s secret to the police. Confronted by the terrible Anarchist Council, Syme feels horribly tempted to escape his untenable position by breaking his promise. But as President Sunday reveals that he is aware of the presence of a traitor, Syme overcomes his temptation, certain, with a rush of romance, that to keep his word – to the death – affirmed his moral superiority over the anarchists. “This liberation of his spirit from the load of his weakness went with a quite clear decision to embrace death. … This very pride in keeping his word was that he was keeping it to miscreants. It was his last triumph over these lunatics to go down into their dark room and die for something that they could not even understand." (Chapter VI)

The poet perceives the deadly battle in the spiritual realm, along the sluggish Thames, or in a cheerful French café, or in a golden morning meadow. Spiritual warfare, for the poet, is a clarion call to arms. Syme's blue police identification card states that he and his fellow intellectual policemen are engaged in "The Last Crusade." Earlier in Chapter IV, Chesterton says Syme has declared a "holy war" against anarchists. The philosophical policeman Syme meets describes anarchists as "hating life – their own, as well as other people's. … That is why they throw bombs, instead of shooting pistols. The masses are disappointed because the bomb did not kill the king. The anarchist is happy because it has killed somebody" (Chapter IV). The pistol is a directed and pointed weapon; it is for fighting, not against men in general, but against a specific man embodying a specific idea. The bomb is a general weapon, a weapon of mass destruction, for destroying masses of things, and not one thing in particular. That is why the poet arms himself with a pistol; he wishes to fight only that which is evil. The anarchist prefers a bomb, for destroying life in general – any life, in as great a quantity as possible. There is an element of the holy war, the crusade, in the poet's opposition to heresy. An evil idea is heretical; it is against right and truth, it is against religion. When Syme asks Gregory what the anarchists want to abolish, Gregory responds, "To abolish God! … We hate Rights and we hate Wrongs. We have abolished Right and Wrong." (Syme urges, with typical levity, "And Right and Left! I hope you will abolish them, too. They are much more troublesome to me.") (Chapter II)

The crusader is aware of the intangible idea as clearly as if it were tangible. But does he always perceive rightly? Chesterton often presents characters who are aware of an intangible reality, but wholly misunderstand it: Syme initially sees enemies where there were friends, danger where there was safety, a charlatan where there was a sincere anarchist. A poet can perceive the solidity of both truth and anarchy; he sees that good and evil realities are directly dependent upon good and evil ideas. But he has a blind spot: he thinks he is the only one who can see it. So often does the poet feel burdened by the indifference of his fellow-man to the immediacy of the spiritual danger that vibrates against his every nerve, that he comes to believe that all others are blind to it. The poet feels that only he and agents of evil are alive to the danger of anarchy. He feels the danger is imminent, and that only by his prompt and energetic action can it be defeated, and its consequences averted.

The Poet is a Romantic because he is alone: he feels that, though right, he is the last crusader upon earth. He feels his effort a lost cause, a forlorn hope, a self-sacrificing charge. He knows what truth and reality are, that they are worth preserving at any cost, and that their opposition is real and terrible. Once Syme discovered the anarchists, he felt that he was the only one who opposed them in the wide world. It required a stupendous chase, begun by the terrible Professor de Worms and continued by the population of several French towns (Chapters VII-XII) – a wild and irrefutable sort of proof – for Syme to understand that the world was arrayed with him, against anarchy. He could hardly believe, and never suspected, that Professor de Worms was his friend; and his incredulity continued until each member of the Anarchist Council was revealed as an ally.

Though the poet and his companions had been deceived – not one of them was in fact an anarchist, and if the mysterious Sunday was an anarchist, at least he had also been a policeman – if they had been mistaken, they had not done wrong. *The Man Who Was Thursday* ends mysteriously and mystically with the omnipotence of Sunday, with whom the policemen and the anarchist have a discussion on the meaning of suffering. In response to many speculations on the meaning of *The Man Who Was Thursday*, Chesterton warned against interpreting the book too literally; he complained that no one noticed the book's subtitle, which designates it "A Nightmare." In the *Illustrated London News* (June 13, 1936), Chesterton wrote: "[*The Man Who Was Thursday*] described… first a band of the last champions of order fighting against what appeared to be a world of anarchy, and then the discovery that the mysterious master both of the anarchy and the order was the same sort of elemental elf who had appeared to be rather too like a pantomime ogre. This line of logic, or lunacy, led many to infer that this equivocal being was meant for a serious description of the Deity… But this error was entirely due to the fact that they had read the book but had not read the title-page." But at least, within the story itself, the poet-detectives did exactly as they were intended to do. If they were deceived, they were not duped. If they mistook each other for anarchists, at least they did not mistake anarchy for peace and rule of law. If they were mistaken about who was an anarchist, they were not mistaken about what was anarchy, and the only proper response to it. But Syme and his companions saw only the danger, the crisis, and not the further true fact that the evil they feared was already defeated, and that all the forces of creation were arrayed on the side of heaven.

In the glow of his "chivalric folly," Syme knew the power and the horror of anarchy, its unthinkable intentions, and incredible imminence. That is why the pocket pistol takes on such chivalric significance; it has become a tool, not to kill a man, but to combat an idea. The foe is the deceiver, the enemy of men's souls, whose aim is not to make men miserable, but to destroy them. His warfare is tangible, and could not be defeated by intangible striving; death, his ultimate aim, was defeated in a tangible, real death and resurrection, which could only be accomplished by One whom John describes: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." (John 1:14, KJV) For Chesterton's poet, the romance of the pocket-pistol is derived from the mystery of the incarnation: that an idea may become a man.

That is the romance of the pocket pistol – a tangible weapon to combat a tangible foe. The poet armed with the pocket pistol strides forth knowing that the beauty he sees most clearly is not a fancy, the result of nerves or digestion, but the visible symptoms of reality, of life. The enemy of life is also the father of lies. The poet who arms himself with the pocket pistol is prepared to defend truth with his life, and fight death itself to the death. The romance of the pocket pistol is the heady and satisfying romance that poetry is more real than prose.

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Devils in My Heart

Chesterton's View of Human Nature through Father Brown

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"A fact as practical as potatoes," Chesterton calls sin, "The only part of Christian theology which can really be proved" (Orthodoxy, 24). He argues in his first chapter of *Orthodoxy* that people may deny the existence of sin but accept the existence of mental hospitals: the latter as an obvious, albeit mysterious, outcome of the former. Herein is the essence of Chestertonian thought: the clarity of human sinfulness is a marker of mystery. Woven in and through *The Father Brown* stories, G.K. Chesterton exposes homicides piecing together the errant human heart.

Sherlock Holmes fans are used to deductive reasoning: a scientific analysis, assessing problems from the outside, in. Father Brown *became* the murderer because he *was* a murderer. Asked how he understood murder, Father Brown exclaims, "I had murdered them all myself" (Omnibus, 217). Chesterton's sleuth, a Catholic priest, saw people as they were, from the inside, out. The mystery of our own nature continues: "The heart is hopelessly dark and deceitful, a puzzle that no one can figure out" (The Message, Jeremiah 17:9). Because of their link to the human condition, Chesterton's detective stories unveil mystery (Omnibus, 131).

Human nature and Super nature seem to be the twin progenitors of Chesterton's detective stories. Heaven's Wisdom is imprinted in mystery; human depravity is the other side of the coin. Chesterton used one side of the coin to show the other. It is by the negative that we know the positive; sin leads us toward salvation, falsehood points us toward Truth. So Father Brown can say in *The Honour of Israel Gow*, "We have found the truth; and the truth makes no sense;" (Omnibus, 112) because describing sin's mystery in *The Wrong Shape*, "this business is anything but simple." Yet his response to a potential suspect's exclamation, "Are you a devil?!" in *The Hammer of God* is also true, "I have devils in my heart" (Omnibus 174-75).

Father Brown is comfortable in others' skin because he wears his own. Or, choosing another metaphor from the story *The Wrong Shape*, "As one knows the crooked trail of a snail, I know the crooked track of a man" (Omnibus, 132). "The secret is," Father Brown advocates in *The Secret of Father Brown*

> It was I who killed all those people. . . . You see, I had murdered them all myself, so of course I knew how it was done. . . . I had planned out each of the crimes very carefully. I had thought out exactly how a thing like that could be done, and in what style or state of mind a man could really do it. And when I was quite sure that I felt exactly like the murderer myself, of course I knew who he was (Omnibus, 638).

Inherent corruption inhabits our decision-making being.

But Chesterton does not stop there. When his friend tries to accept Brown's criminal culpability as "a figure of speech" Father Brown shows his annoyance. He refers to his explanation as discussing "deep things."

> I mean that I really did see myself, and my real self, committing the murder. . . . I mean that I thought and thought about how a man might come to be like that, until I realized that I really *was* like that, in everything except actual final consent to the action (Omnibus, 638).

Comparing his internal, inherent, corruption Father Brown then addresses "the science of detection."

> What do these men mean . . . when they say criminology is a science? They mean getting *outside* a man and studying him as if he were a gigantic insect; in what they would call a dry impartial light; in what I should call a dead and dehumanized light. . . . I don't try to get outside the man. I try to get inside the murderer. . . . Indeed it's much more than that, don't you see? I *am* inside a man. . . . I wait till I know I am inside a murderer, thinking his thoughts, wrestling with his passions; till I have bent myself into the posture of his hunched and peering hatred; till I see the world with his bloodshot and squinting eyes . . . to the pool of blood. Till I am really a murderer. . . . (Omnibus, 639-40).

Father Brown refers to the detection process as "a religious exercise"—his soul was a "diver" into the depths of human depravity.

Last summer I delivered a paper in St. Louis. While there my wife and I visited a casino: a first time event. Immediately upon entering the facility, I felt a pall fall upon me. My immediate response to Robin: "I'm afeared woman, I'm afeared." Father Brown seemed also to have a sensate, sensual awareness knowing that places exist where "badness" and evil are resident. In *Sins of Prince Saradine* the padre becomes agitated saying "we have taken a wrong turning, and come to a wrong place." Later, he wishes to be in "happier places and the homes of harmless men" (Omnibus 142, 157).

Yet, in the same story, Brown maintains "things that happen here . . . mean something somewhere else" (Omnibus 146). If retribution does not come upon offenders in this life, it will in the next. Speaking of Kalon the sun priest in *The Eye of Apollo* the

Father cements supernatural punishment by saying "Let Cain pass by because he belongs to God (Omnibus 189-90). While evil may inhabit a place, Father Brown knows there is a place where evil will live no more.

The mysterious nature of our own sinfulness suggests practical approaches to a number of subjects. My penchant is to wed ideas with practice, to suggest how after why.

1. We should form an apologetic of human corruption. The Chestertonian approach to The Gospel is to find common ground. Inherent sinfulness is our collective origin. If there is one thing that is normal, woven through the fabric of life, it is the black thread of trespass. Father Brown is at ease with sin, assumes it, counts on it, expects it, and finds it an easy pattern to follow. As a priest, hearing men's confessions about men's real sins, makes the good Father wholly aware of human evil; that is how he explains himself to Flambeau in *The Blue Cross*.

2. Once we agree on corruption we can establish an ethic of equality. All people are the same; we are worms from the same field. Equality ought not be a focus on diversity but unity. Equality is the unity of our DNA—our fallen nature knows no color, ethnicity, culture, time, or place. Chesterton ends an essay with this statement, "I have long believed that the only really happy and hopeful faith is a faith in the Fall of Man (Maltreating, 470). And as the priest says in *The Secret of Father Brown*, "No man's really any good till he knows how bad he is" (Omnibus 639-40).

3. Knowing that we are all the same inside transforms our message to those outside. Writing for a human audience without chapter and verse, we should speak to

people as people, not souls to be saved. So Chesterton closes *Orthodoxy* by considering The Church

> As a truth-telling thing . . . Alone of all creeds [Christianity] is convincing where it is not attractive. . . . As it preaches original sin. But when we wait for its results, they are pathos and brotherhood, a thunder of laughter and pity. For only with original sin we can at once pity the beggar and distrust the king" (Orthodoxy, 291-92).

So the message is sent as the Father explains in *The Queer Feet* "with an unseen hook and an invisible line" (Omnibus, 61).

4. Comparisons to other religions dispatch human perfectibility. In *The Eye of Apollo* Flambeau sarcastically quips concerning a cult, "It's one of those new religions that forgive your sins by saying you never had any." Not to be outdone, Father Brown announces that there is only one spiritual disease, namely, "thinking one is quite well" (Omnibus, 177). Utopian beliefs based on human goodness and identified through all manner of government programs cannot sustain answers to human sin or mystery.

5. "Tolerance" is an empty cultural doctrine when our sameness trumps our difference. Chesterton attacked our current display of false civility in this way, "Tolerance, is the virtue of a people who don't believe anything" (America, 5). In *Heretics* G.K. argued our humanity rests on our development of doctrine. Some insist, on the other hand, that acceptance of all beliefs is acceptable. Chesterton would point out in contradistinction such a perspective would lower us to "the unconsciousness of the grass. Trees have no dogmas. Turnips are singularly broad-minded" (Heretics, 286). Whereas today's doctrine of tolerance is built upon the structures of human perfectibility,

Chesterton stood on the inherent corruption of humanity. Simply put in *The Three Tools of Death*, “Nothing poisons a life like sins” (Omnibus, 226).

6. Science alone cannot address human depravity. In *The Wrong Shape* the man of science admits in the end that his belief has abandoned him (Omnibus 136). Chesterton, his opposite, maintains in his statements that truth is more important than facts. Particulars must be corralled by universals. *The Hammer of God* addresses the point as Brown says, “Fairy tales are the nearest thing to real truth” adding about the killer “then something snapped in your soul” (Omnibus 172, 175). To see the blackness of a man’s soul is exposed by the white light of righteousness—not a white lab coat.

7. Educators should push back against programs or curricula which seek to change from the outside, in. “Just say ‘no’ campaigns,” anti-smoking warnings, or safe-sex promotions do not engage our internal corruption. *The Invisible Man* detective story seems to suggest that we are liable to overlook sin in others because we do not “see them” as sinners. The private confessional at the end of the story reiterates the theme—no one saw the man for who he was save Father Brown. Those who blend into the canvas of the human portrait “have passions like other men,” Father Brown reminds. The human condition cannot be dressed up on the outside. Our inherent corruption must be redressed from the inside.

8. Original sin is inexorably linked with mystery. “As long as you have mystery you have health; when you destroy mystery you create morbidity” says Chesterton (Orthodoxy, 48). As he maintains in *What I Saw In America,* a man “has no right to laugh at mystery as incomprehensible since he does not believe in the incomprehensible” (America, 5). So G.K. uses the term “romance” to describe Christianity’s sense of

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mystery since life is full of the dark realities of evil together with the joy of obedience to Christ. Again from *Orthodoxy* "man can understand everything by the help of what he does not understand" (Orthodoxy, 49). Flambeau links mystery to sin saying in the story *The Wrong Shape* of the good Father, "He gets a mystic cloud about him when there was evil quite near" (Omnibus, 131).

9. Original sin allows for priestly compassion. The wonder of Father Brown is the gentleness with which he treats the malefactors. "We can sometimes do good by being the right person in the wrong place" Brown says in *Sins of Prince Saradine* (Omnibus, 142). So the priest can cajole the murderer into a confession in *The Wrong Shape* (Omnibus, 130, 135-36). Or, in the case of *The Invisible Man*, the Father could walk "those snow-covered hills under the stars for many hours with a murderer, and what they said to each other will never be known" (Omnibus, 100).

10. Father Brown's "I murdered them all myself" belief continues to be the best apologetic through mystery novels and *film noir*. The attraction, the draw to mystery brings the reader to a precipice, a moment of decision. Jack Englehard's *Indecent Proposal*, Scott B. Smith's *A Simple Plan*, or Robert B. Parker's *Jesse Stone* stories, remind us of human depravity—looking in so we can look up. A reviewer of *The Scandal of Father Brown* stories said it best, "The souls and hearts and consciences of men were so important to Chesterton that [sometimes] he preferred to leave the crime out altogether (Ffinch, 341.)

What makes a literary mystery, a strong Christian apologetic? I believe my daughter, at age 9, answered the question best. When I asked her some fifteen years ago what made a mystery, a mystery she said, "Someone has to kill someone or steal

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something." Pressed further to know why mysteries were important for Christians to read, Chelsea replied, "Because they show us that we are sinners."

Father Brown would be proud.

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C. S. Lewis, Platonism, and Aslan's Country: Symbols of Heaven in the Chronicles of Narnia

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Introduction

The Narnia Chronicles has been hailed as a wonderful use of mythic symbol to illustrate the ultimate story of redemption in Jesus Christ. Yet with much popular attention given to Lewis' use of symbolic myth, the influence of Platonic thought on the Narnian Chronicles is often ignored. This seems a curious response since some have said that to remove Plato from Narnia would be a form of amputation robbing the reader of the philosophic framework out of which the stories are structured.[1]

Perhaps this lack of attention can be traced to a disharmonious relationship between biblical truth and certain aspects of Platonic thought. In the apostolic proclamation of the κήρυγμα, Platonism has been seen as a stumbling block to the gospel's acceptance. Paul's gospel witness to Greek philosophers on the Areopagus received a mixed and largely negative reaction (Acts 17:22-34). The apostle's proclamation of the interruption of history, a final judgment, and the resurrection were all at cross-purposes with the most popular Greek philosophical ideas of the day. Platonic ideas of the separation of spirit and matter, the soul imprisoned in the body, the idea of reincarnation, and the continuance of time without interruption were widely held.[2]

If certain Platonic ideas are incompatible with the Christian εὐαγγέλιον, then why would Lewis still include other aspects of Platonism in the mythic retelling of the story of Christ? To answer that question, it will be the purpose of this paper to provide a brief overview of Lewis' journey of faith, his use of Platonism in Narnia, and his conception of heaven as seen in Aslan's country.

C. S. Lewis' Journey Through Myth to Christ

On November 29, 1898, Clive Staples Lewis was born in Belfast, Ireland, to Albert and Flora Lewis. While he was still a small boy, his mother contracted cancer and died. Some believe this heartbreak is what led Lewis later to become an atheist.

Lewis' voluminous reading and lively intellectual discussions with people of faith, however, eventually caused him to doubt his denial of God. He began to wonder if there was more to life than he had seen.

Having read Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough,* Lewis was struck by how different mythologies repeated the themes of a dying and rising god. These varied stories seemed to either anticipate or echo the New Testament story of the Jesus of the Bible. Jesus' claims to be a king; his powers to heal; his wisdom in teaching; and his sacrifice, death, and resurrection seemed to Lewis to be the ultimate Story behind all stories.

Lewis concluded, however, that what seemed to make the story of Jesus unique was that his miraculous life had taken place in real history. As he reflected on the historic reliability of the New Testament documents, he found further reasons to recognize the reality of Jesus' life. Over time, C. S. Lewis' atheism began to crumble and he eventually became a Christian.

As a professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Oxford, C. S. Lewis wrote in a wide variety of genres: literary criticism, science fiction, poetry, and Christian apologetics. His science fiction work showed how fantasy could be used to illustrate Christian principles. But Lewis' creative writing skill did not stop with these genres. One day he saw a picture of a faun carrying a bundle of packages in a snowstorm, and in his mind he began working on a children's fantasy.

Like his friend J.R.R. Tolkien, who wrote *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, C. S. Lewis believed that the writing of good fantasy conveyed truths from our world but with fresh insight. As David C. Downing observes in his book *Into the Wardrobe*:

> Lewis believed … all readers … share deeply embedded images and meanings that are evoked in myths, legends, stories, and even dreams. For Lewis, a well-constructed story draws upon these universal images and meanings. Much of the thematic richness of the Chronicles derives from Lewis's skill in drawing on mythic patterns—the god who dies and comes back to life, the voyage to the end of the earth, the flight to freedom, the rescue of captives from the underworld, the beginning and the end of created things."[3]

On the basis of these personal beliefs, Lewis created Narnia, a parallel world that could be entered by different means—a wardrobe, magic rings, or an enchanted horn. He designed this side-by-side existence so that the experience of time could be different than our own. In the world he created, a few days as we know them could span long epochs in Narnian time. As a result, in The Chronicles of Narnia the same children from our world could enter into the experience of creation, the entrance of sin into the world, the redemption provided through sacrificial death and resurrection, and the recreation of a new world in its place.

However, in spite of the many Christian symbols built into the world of Narnia, we must not jump to the conclusion that Lewis intended The Chronicles of Narnia to be an allegory or extended symbolic story with a deeper meaning. Instead he considered Narnia to be a "supposal." As Lewis explains in a letter:

> Aslan [a lion king] is an invention giving an imaginary answer to the question, "What might Christ become like, if there really were a world like Narnia and He chose to incarnate and die and rise again in that world as he actually has done in ours?"[4]

This great "supposal" of how Christ might have behaved if He had become a lion in a land of talking animals allowed Lewis to repackage Christian themes in a fresh new way. Each character, place, and event in the Chronicles does not necessarily have a symbolic meaning, but the Chronicles do contain striking parallels to the Christian truths.

C. S. Lewis' Use of Platonic Ideas in Narnia

As the creator and sovereign of the parallel world of Narnia, Aslan exhibits personality and powers unmistakably reflective of the New Testament portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ. But mythic characters alone were not adequate to develop the philosophic structure of this imaginary world. As Lewis painted a picture of Narnia, he chose to use select concepts in Plato to realize this vision.

The Socratic Way to Reality

Plato's most influential mentor was Socrates. The Socratic way of arriving at truth is to provide dialogue through guiding questions so as to arrive at more accurate conclusions. Socrates' mother was a midwife, and he drew a parallel between his method with students and her delivery of babies. In making the comparison between birthing ideas and birthing babies, Socrates is reported to have said:

> Well, my art of midwifery is in most respects like theirs; but differs, in that I attend men and not women, and I look after their souls when they are in labor, and not after their bodies: and the triumph of my art is in thoroughly examining whether the thought which the mind of the young man brings forth is a false idol or a noble and true birth.[5]

Interestingly, Digory, the first boy to visit Narnia, uses the Socratic method when he becomes an old man. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Digory questions Susan and Peter about their doubt after hearing their sister Lucy's report that she has discovered a world called Narnia by going through a wardrobe. Because Susan and Peter have had no direct experience with this other world, they assume she must be lying.

> "How do you know," [Digory] asked, "that your sister's story is not true?"
>
> "Oh, but—" began Susan, and then stopped. Anyone could see from the old man's face that he was perfectly serious. Then Susan pulled herself together and said, "But Edmund said they had only been pretending."
>
> "That is a point," said the Professor, "which certainly deserves consideration; very careful consideration. For instance—if you will excuse me for asking the question—does your experience lead you to regard your brother or your sister as the more reliable? I mean, which is the more truthful?"

> "That's just the funny thing about it, sir," said Peter. "Up till now, I'd have said Lucy every time."[6]

Digory seeks to guide the children to the possibility of Lucy's report being true without letting them know that years ago he had actually visited Narnia himself.

An approach similar to the Socratic dialogue can be found in the New Testament. On the Road to Emmaus, the risen Christ uses guiding questions to help those walking with Him to reexamine their assumptions about what the Messiah would be like (Luke 24:13-31). Similarly, the apostle Paul used dialogue as a means of evangelizing Jews and God-fearers he encountered in the synagogue (Acts 17:2). Of course dialogue comes from the Greek word for *discussion* (διαλέγομαι). However, a key distinction is our Lord's and the apostles' appeal to the Old Testament as the basis for the quest for truth. Unlike the Greeks, who exalted pure reason, Jesus and Paul pointed to a proper understanding of revealed truth as the frame of reference for inquiry.

The "Gadfly" Called To Awake the Sleeping

Another concept of Plato that appears in Narnia is the role of the "gadfly," who has been called to awaken people out of intellectual slumber. Once again, Plato quotes his great teacher Socrates' concept of himself as agitating the nonreflective minds of the Athenians to respond to the quest for truth.

> I am that gadfly which God has attached to the state, and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you. (Attributed to Socrates - *Apology*, Plato)[7]

Sleep can be pleasant and being awakened can be irritating. The unlikely candidate for gadfly in Narnia is the innocent and warmhearted Lucy Pevensie. In *Prince Caspian*, Lucy initially is the only member of their group who can see and hear Aslan. She is spiritually awake. Because of her openness to the great lion, she comments that he has grown bigger than she remembers. Aslan tells her that his size has not changed but her growing awareness of him has. For the present, the others are blind to perceiving him and could be considered as spiritually asleep.

> "Look! Look! Look!" cried Lucy.
>
> "Where? What?" said everyone.
>
> "The Lion," said Lucy. "Aslan himself. Didn't you see?" Her face had changed completely and her eyes shone.
>
> "Do you really mean—?" began Peter.
>
> "Where did you think you saw him?" asked Susan.
>
> "Don't talk like a grown-up," said Lucy, stamping her foot, "I didn't *think* I saw him. I saw him."
>
> "Where, Lu?" asked Peter.
>
> "Right up there between those mountain ashes. No, this side of the gorge. And up, not down. Just the opposite of the way you want to go. And he wanted us to

> go where he was—up there."
>
> "How do you know that was what he wanted?" asked Edmund.
>
> "He – I – I just know," said Lucy, "by his face."
>
> The others all looked at each other in puzzled silence.[8]

Lucy will not deny her glimpses of Aslan. Her persistent witness to what she has experienced soon becomes an annoyance to the others. But she remains faithful in reporting his reality for the other children's own benefit.

As illustrated by Susan and Peter, the concept of spiritual slumber is a repeated theme in Scripture. Jesus' parable of the virgins illustrates that a nonresponsive attitude to their expected Lord requires the need to wake them up (Matthew 25:1-13). Likewise, in writing to the church at Ephesus, Paul uses the strong words of rebuke to awaken believers who have become spiritually asleep in a lifestyle of sin. "For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light" (Ephesians 5:12-14).

Growing in the awareness of Christ in our lives is never static. It requires vigilance and being open to evidences of his work in heart and circumstance. Because of this tendency of spiritual lethargy within the Christian heart, other members of the body of Christ may have to awaken us during times of stagnation and spiritual sloth. We are to "stir up" (παροξυσμός—literally, irritate) each other to love and good deeds as we await the Lord's return (Hebrews 10:24-25). This role of spiritual "gadfly" may be annoying, but is necessary to become awakened.

Liberation from the Cave

Perhaps Plato's most famous illustration of people enslaved to the superficial world of appearances is his allegory of the cave. It carries with it the idea of people in bondage mistaking illusion for reality. Of this Plato wrote:

> Behold! human beings living in an underground den … Like ourselves … they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave.[9]

The Silver Chair provides a vivid retelling of the reality of eternal ideas that are not bound by the transient nature of the material world. Prince Rilian has been kidnapped and put under a spell in the underground world of the Green Witch. The evil witch promotes a reductionist view of reality in which only those items that can be verified in the underground world are true. She claims that the outer world of Narnia, Aslan, and even the sun are enhanced fairytales made up out of human need. In her persuasive words, we may hear the worldview of the reductionist scientist of our day.

> The Witch shook her head. "I see," she said, "… You have seen lamps, and so you imagined a bigger and better lamp and called it the *sun*. You've seen cats, and now you want a bigger and better cat, and it's to be called a *lion*. Well, 'tis a pretty make-believe, though, to say truth, it would suit you all better if you were younger. And look how you can put nothing into your make-believe without copying it from the real world of mine, which is the only world. But even you children are too old for such play. As for you, my lord Prince, that art a man full grown, fie upon you! Are you not ashamed of such toys? Come, all of you. Put away these childish tricks. I have work for you all in the real world. There is no Narnia, no Overworld, no sky, no sun, no Aslan. And now, to bed all. And let us begin a wiser life tomorrow. But, first, to bed; to sleep; deep sleep, soft pillows, sleep without foolish dreams."[10]

Despite the one-to-one verification principle drawn to a reductionist extreme, what is said is not spiritually neutral. There is a personal evil at work. The parallel between this Narnian scene and Paul's view of satanically induced blindness is quite striking. "But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). Even reductionist philosophies springing from scientific enquiry may have in their origin fallen spiritual beings who deny the Word of God and replace it with alternative views (Genesis 3:1-5; 1 Timothy4:1).

Although writing in a pre-Christian culture, Plato understood the seductiveness of error. Plato wisely observed: "Everything that deceives may be said to enchant."[11] Plato believed that erroneous ideas have their own seductive power that can in a way render their believers spellbound.

Certainly, many cases of spiritual blindness are not solely traceable to the enemy of the faith. The unregenerate heart begins with choices that lead further away from the reality of the One true God. It is this progressive self-inflicted blindness that is part of mankind's turning its back on God (Romans 1:21). Although Plato used the allegory of the cave as an illustration of philosophic awakening, C. S. Lewis used it masterfully to address the naturalistic assumptions that rule out the reality of God.

Knowledge that Blinds

A naïve assumption may expect that acquiring knowledge will always bring intellectual light. However, it is possible for individuals to acquire a broad range of information and still keep themselves in a stupor of self-deception. This is often done through suppressing valid information and replacing it with false data. Plato moralizes on this by writing: "False words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the soul with evil."[12]

In an age of epistemological relativism, Platonic thought passes moral judgments on self-deception and finds heinous the tendency to promote these same ideas. Writes Plato: "The partisan, when he is engaged in a dispute, cares nothing about the rights of the question, but is anxious only to convince his hearers of his own assertions."[13]

In *The Magician's Nephew,* the erudite but morally flawed Uncle Andrew has fallen into this error. His pursuit of knowledge is motivated by the quest for power at the expense of truth and integrity. His self-imposed blindness has so affected his perspective that he cannot understand Aslan, the creator of Narnia. When he sees an iron bar grow into a lamp post, Uncle Andrew's mind fills with ideas of wealth through exploitation of this new world. Yet somehow he knows instinctively that the lion is the only thing standing in his way of this vision of exploitation.

> I have discovered a world where everything is bursting with life and growth. Columbus, now, they talk about Columbus. But what was America to this? The commercial possibilities of this country are unbounded. Bring a few old bits of scrap iron here, bury 'em, and up they come as brand new railway engines, battleships, anything you please. They'll cost nothing, and I can sell 'em at full prices in England. I shall be a millionaire. And then the climate! I feel years younger already. I can run it as a health resort. A good sanatorium here might be worth twenty thousand a year. Of course I shall have to let a few people into the secret. The first thing is to get that brute shot.[14]

Uncle Andrew's perception of Aslan is that he is just a lion who is dangerous and must be killed. He seems oblivious to the great lion's role in the creation of this new world and is unaware of all that could be learned from this mysterious creator.

The orientation of loyal subjects of Aslan in Narnia is rooted in submission to and learning from the great lion. Through Aslan, there is a growing perspective about what is not only true but also morally right. He is the great mentor and guide that leads them into all truth.

With Christ at the center of his quest for knowledge, Lewis understood that the experience of reality and the moral good would grow within the believer. Certainly this echoes the teachings of Paul who spoke of Christ "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). Philosophy that does not begin and remain anchored to Christ can mislead and even take one captive. "Beware lest anyone cheat [ὁ *συλαγωγων*, i.e., "to enslave as in spoils of war"] you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

Concerning the intellectual and spiritual sight Christ brings, Lewis said: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."[15]

C. S. Lewis' Conception of Heaven: Aslan's Country

Despite his use of select concepts of Plato's thought to craft the imaginary world of Narnia, Lewis also shows surprising self-restraint in removing Platonic elements that are noncompatible with orthodox Christian faith. The best example of this is found in Lewis' reflections on heaven illustrated in Aslan's country.

The Environment

The parallel world in which Aslan resides provides a profound picture of the Christian heaven. Its weather, terrain, and surroundings illustrate this. Aslan's country is covered with orchards of ripening fruit, majestic forests, the sound of waterfalls and singing birds against a "background of immense silence." The weather in this marvelous place is characterized by late spring, midsummer-fresh breezes. In mythic symbol, winter often represents lifelessness and death, as spring represents rebirth and new life. The meaning of Christ and spring is explained in a collection of essays by C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*:

> We have the power either of withstanding the spring, and sinking back into the cosmic winter, or of going on into those "high mid-summer [romps]" in which our Leader, the Son of man [*sic*], already dwells, and to which He is calling us.[16]

Jesus Christ's resurrection from death clothed him with a glorified body that uniquely qualifies him to lead the way into his eternal kingdom. In Lewis' understanding, Christ is experiencing the "spring" of the New Creation far different from what we experience now.

The reason Christ resides in spiritual spring is that after his resurrection, he inaugurated the prototype of the New Creation. In his book *Miracles,* C. S. Lewis makes a distinction between miracles of the Old Creation (our current space-time physical world) and those of the New Creation (the New Heaven and the New Earth yet to come). In his first advent, when Jesus introduced supernatural energy to alter the laws of physics in our present world, he acted as the Creator to whom current creation responded as Sovereign. But in miracles of the New Creation, though performed in our space-time world, we see a preview of the new order that Christ is preparing for us (John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:1).

Of this New Creation, Lewis writes, "The Miracles of … the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, and the Ascension … are the true spring, or even the summer, of the world's new year. The Captain, the forerunner, is already in May or June, though His followers on earth are still living in the frost and east winds of Old Nature."[17]

In this aspect of his own theology, Lewis makes a clear break with Plato's view of the afterlife. Here resurrection is portrayed in contrast to Plato's belief in reincarnation. Of Plato's view, Dr. Michael Sudduth writes:

> Plato's account of post-mortem survival presents *disembodied* and *embodied* … vehicles of survival, but disembodied …is clearly the highest form of survival … the immaterial realm of the Forms is the highest form of existence. … Hence, bodily existence is less perfect than disembodied existence. The goal of life is for the soul permanently to escape the body.[18]

Rather than escaping the body, the Christian is promised a new indestructible body. Similarly, in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Aslan's coming back to life after his death on the Stone Table has strong implications for other Narnian characters. In *The Silver Chair,* we read of old King Caspian being reunited with his long lost son, Prince Rilian. They have only a short greeting before the elderly king dies. Eustace and Jill are saddened to have witnessed such a bittersweet ending to their mission of liberating Prince Rillian. They are then transported to Aslan's country where they see the dead body of King Caspian lying in a stream on a golden streambed. Aslan allows a drop of blood to fall from his paw into the flowing water and washes over the body. Caspian is transformed into the radiant young man that he once was.

At first Eustace and Jill are frightened by Caspian's transformation.

> Eustace made a step towards him with both hands held out, but then drew back with a somewhat startled expression.
>
> "Look here! I say," he stammered. "It's all very well. But aren't you—? I mean didn't you—?"
>
> "Oh, don't be such an ass," said Caspian.
>
> "But," said Eustace, looking at Aslan. "Hasn't he – er – died?"
>
> "Yes," said the Lion in a very quiet voice, almost (Jill thought) as if he were laughing. "He has died. Most people have, you know. Even I have. There are few who haven't."
>
> "Oh" said Caspian, "I see what's bothering you. You think I'm a ghost, or some nonsense. But don't you see? I would be that if I appeared in Narnia now: because I don't belong there any more."[19]

Then being told Eustace and Jill must go back to Earth, the young prince longs to go with them. His request and Aslan's response are very revealing.

> "Sir," said Caspian, "I've always wanted to have just one glimpse of their world. Is that wrong?"
>
> "You cannot want wrong things any more, now that you have died, my son," said Aslan.[20]

Clearly, the resurrected persons in Narnia have been transformed internally in spirit as well as in body. In this way, C. S. Lewis affirms a redemption that transforms believers into the ultimate "form" (i.e., *τῆς* εἰκόνος τοῦ *υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ*) that God has intended from eternity (Romans 8:28-29). Each believer is unique, but all conform to the image of our great Exemplar, Christ. The heavenly body and spirit must match the new heavenly environment yet to come.

The Geography

The geography of Alsan's country also provides clues on how Lewis sought to harness Plato's thoughts for biblical purposes. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Peter, Susan, Edmund, Lucy, and Eustace are called from our world to Narnia to help King Caspian.

The crew of the great ship, the *Dawn Treader*, is in search of seven lost lords. Their voyage takes them through many adventures until they reach the edge of Aslan's country in the Eastern Sea.

As they travel the Great Eastern Ocean, Ramandu's Island marks "the beginning of the end of the world." There the boundary is "sweet water" where seawater is replaced by vital and pure water, which in concert with the dazzling sun makes the crew invigorated with little need for sleep. Finally, at the Silver Sea, a wave opens to Aslan's country and the warrior mouse Reepicheep gets in a boat and eagerly paddles toward this marvelous place he has always longed to see.

Lewis tells us that Aslan's country is bordered by Narnia, Earth, and the dying world of Charn. Although he allows room for a variety of multiple worlds, he limits his focus to Earth and Narnia in relationship to Aslan's country. Mountain ranges surround each world and the Silver Sea provides boundaries that separate each world, preserving its identity as a sphere of existence. Aslan's country is a high mountain with breathtaking beauty, extraordinary height, and mysterious untried opportunities.

Aslan's country is a destination point. It is not a home to which humans return. This is in contrast to Plato's idea of the afterlife in which he envisioned the return to a preexistent state. The Christian view of heaven as separate from but related to our current world through Christ is the "now" and "future" of the believer. As a symbol in Narnia, it is a distinct place and is the ultimate destiny for those who have responded to the call of the rightful king Aslan. In The Chronicles of Narnia, Reepicheep seems to illustrate the otherworldly orientation of that life of faith. Although we live in this world, "our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20).

Of the "otherness" of heaven, Jesus told his disciples: "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3).

And yet the New Testament also emphasizes a present connection with that world through Christ. In the mind of the apostle Paul, earth and heaven are related spheres of existence but are also distinct. And in Christ, the believer is connected to both through his sovereign work as Lord of both realms. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

"In the heavenly places in Christ" (ἐν τοις ἐπουρανιοις ἐν Χριστῳ) most likely refers to the sphere of heavenly reality into which the believer is placed by virtue of being in union with Christ. In Narnia, subjects relate to Aslan in the present, as loyal subjects who know that he comes and goes as his sovereign will demands. Yet his home country of Aslan's country is a different place to which they will ultimately go. Their growing relationship with the great king prepares them for some day occupying a new heavenly geography.

The Form, Not the Copy

In the final chronicle, *The Last Battle*, Lewis' conception of the Christian heaven becomes explicitly reflective of Platonic thought. Plato believed in the unity of "the form" providing continuity to the "particular" or "copy." The world of appearances is only a vague shadow of the ultimate reality of eternal ideas.

In *The Last Battle,* those Narnians and humans who reach Aslan's country require a time of orientation to familiarize themselves with their new environment. Earlier, Peter had been told by the great lion that he could not come back to Narnia where their adventures together first began. Now Peter is surprised he has been allowed to return to Narnia, and it takes Digory's explanation for him to understand why.

> "Listen, Peter. When Aslan said you could never go back to Narnia, he meant the Narnia you were thinking of. But that was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia which has always been here and always be here: just as our own world, England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan's real world. You need not mourn over Narnia, Lucy. All of the old Narnia that mattered, all the dear creatures, have been drawn into the real Narnia though the Door. And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream."
>
> His voice stirred everyone like a trumpet as he spoke these words: but when he added under his breath, "It's all in Plato, all in Plato, bless me, what do they teach them at these schools?" the older ones laughed.[21]

This explicit reference to Plato clearly supports Lewis' sympathies with the idea of "form" and "copy" being compatible with Scripture. But does the inspired canon itself ever use similar terms?

Certainly the author of the epistle to the Hebrews uses thought forms that reflect some kind of Platonic orientation. In this inspired book, we are told that the law, the tabernacle, the Jewish ritual, and the high priest are mere "shadows" (Σκιὰν) of the real heavenly ministry of Jesus Christ. What the historic Christ did is the real "image" (εἰκόνα) of redemption. Only in this reality can our salvation become complete (τελειῶσαι). "For the law, having a *shadow* of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect" (Hebrews 10:1).

Of this passage, the *IVP Bible Background Commentary* remarks: "Without adopting a thoroughgoing Platonic worldview, the writer of Hebrews agrees that the earthly tabernacle, at least, is a shadow of the heavenly one."[22]

A concession to Platonic thought within the epistle in no way threatens the doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration. For just as the Holy Spirit chose to inspire the use of *koine* Greek words, so he had the freedom to select seemingly secular ideas to be included in Scripture because they reflected divinely revealed truth in Christ.

That is why C. S. Lewis found the indestructible, objective moral universe that Plato postulated to be so compatible with his own Christian worldview. In a similar vein, the conformity of each individual believer to the image of Christ (εἰκόνος) seems to resonate with the idea of copy and form (Romans 8:28-29).

The Culture

One of the most fascinating aspects of Lewis' conception of the afterlife in Narnia is the survival of the good aspects of human culture. In *The Last Battle*, we see the children's response to the real Narnia after the copy had just been destroyed.

> About half an hour later – or it might have been half a hundred years later, for time there is not like time here – Lucy stood with her dear friend, her oldest Narnian friend, the Faun Tumnus, looking down over the wall of that garden, and seeing all Narnia spread out below. But when you looked down you found that this hill was much higher than you had thought: it sank down with shining cliffs, thousands of feet below them and trees in that lower world looked no bigger than grains of green salt. Then she turned inward again and stood with her back to the wall and looked at the garden.
>
> "I see," she said at last, thoughtfully. "I see now.... It is far bigger inside than it was outside."
>
> "Of course, Daughter of Eve," said the Faun. "The further up and the further in you go, the bigger everything gets. The inside is larger than the outside."
>
> Lucy looked hard at the garden and saw that it was not really a garden at all, but a whole world, with its own rivers and woods and sea and mountains. But they were not strange: she knew them all.
>
> "I see," she said. "This is still Narnia, and more real and more beautiful than the Narnia down below … I see … world within world, Narnia within Narnia…"
>
> "Yes," said Mr. Tumnus, "like an onion: except that as you go in and in, each circle is larger than the last."[23]

Lewis' statements "further up and further in" and "The inside is larger than the outside" are intriguing. They seem to describe what a finite being might experience in the presence of an almighty creator. Entering into the depth of God's holy love is like someone diving into the sea and never being able to touch bottom. It may well be that the eternal state will be the experience of being self-actualized into the greater reality of God's character and realm. In this environment, to grow in appreciation is to never find limits except those of the holy love that guides the way.

But, in the afterlife, will we take our personal cultures and life experiences with us? Certainly, Plato believed this: "The soul takes nothing with her to the other world but her education and culture; and these, it is said, are of the greatest service or of the greatest injury to the dead man, at the very beginning of his journey thither."[24]

Lewis expresses this same idea at the end of the temporal world of Narnia. He explains why all the good things contained in culture survive in Aslan's country.

> "Why!" exclaimed Peter. "It's England. And that's the house itself – Professor Kirke's old home in the country where all our adventures began!"
>
> "I thought that house had been destroyed," said Edmund.
>
> "So it was," said the Faun. "But you are now looking at the England within England, the real England just as this is the real Narnia. And in that inner England no good thing is destroyed."[25]

With the limited amount of biblical information we have about what heaven will really be like, Lewis indulges in speculation about human culture. We often think that what constitutes a human being may be understood in body, intellect, and emotion. But often the culture that has conditioned this person is left out.

One hint of the survival of human culture comes in the songs of praise from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. It seems to imply that what makes believers ethnically distinct will survive in the eternal state.

> And they sang a new song, saying:
> "You are worthy to take the scroll,
> And to open its seals;
> For You were slain,
> And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
> Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9).

Human beings are connected by tribe (φυλή), language (*γλῶσσα*), people groups (λαός:), and nations (*ἔθνος*). In this picture of redeemed humanity, we find all of these distinctions that make up culture present in those who respond in heavenly praise to their redeemer.

Conclusion

Earlier we asked why Lewis would include Platonic ideas in the retelling of the story of Christ in mythic form. The answer lies in their shared belief in objective and indestructible realities. Both C. S. Lewis and Plato believed in an unchanging world of ideas that included imperishable, objective, ethical standards. Likewise they concluded that this current transient world is only a shadow of a more real world that lies beyond.

Christian believers stand between two worlds. The temporal is where they must live, but their eternal home is their ultimate reality. In all this, perspective is everything. "While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

At the end of the last chronicle of Narnia, we hear the great lion say:

> "The [school] term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning."
>
> And as He spoke, He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth as read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better that the one before.[26]

Notes

[1] Robert Velarde, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Bible,* http://www.cbn.com/special/Narnia/excerpts/LionWitchBible_Velarde.aspx

[2] I am indebted to Paul F. Ford's insightful book, *Companion to Narnia* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005). In it I received a preliminary introduction to Platonic thought in Narnia. I highly recommend reading it for many other fruitful insights into C. S. Lewis's marvelous world of fantasy.

[3] David C. Downing, *Into the Wardrobe*: *C. S. Lewis and the Narnia Chronicles*, p. 34.

[4] Colin Duriez, *A Field Guide to Narnia* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), p. 96.

[5] *Theaetetus,* 150, from "The Philosophical Midwife" blog, http://philosophicalmidwifery.blogspot.com/2007/01/it-occurred-to-me-that-there-might-me.html

[6] C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, The Chronicles of Narnia (Harper Collins, NY), pp. 130-31. Note: Each Narnia quote is from *The Chronicles of Narnia* (HarperCollins Publisher). This is an anthology in one volume and not individual books.

[7] James A. Colaiaco, *Socrates Against Athens,* http://books.google.com/books?id=8bzssb0f5REC&pg=PA148&lpg=PA148&dq=i+am+that+gadfly+which+god+socrates&source=web&ots=gvHWl0Zh3l&sig=k4Yw0BAwUh56Z-NH8s4aJpkxrws

[8] Lewis, *Prince Caspian,* The Chronicles of Narnia, p. 373.

[9] John Bartlett, ed., *Familiar Quotations* (Little, Brown and Company: Boston), Ib. VII, 515–B, p. 84.

[10] Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, p. 632.

[11] Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations*, Ib. 413–C, p. 84.

[12] Ibid., Ib. 91.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew,* pp. 67-68,

[15] "Quote DB," http://www.quotedb.com/quotes/17

[16] C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1970), p. 88.

[17] Ibid., *Miracles* (Fontana Books, Collins: London, 1968), p. 146.

[18] Michael Sudduth, "World Religions: Plato on the Afterlife," http://www.homestead.com/mscourses/files/SudduthWRPlato.html

[19] Lewis, *The Silver Chair,* The Chronicles of Narnia, pp. 661-62.

[20] Ibid., p. 662.

[21] Ibid., *The Last Battle*, p. 759.

[22] *The IVP Bible Background Commentary, Logos Software.*

[23] Ibid., *The Last Battle,* p. 765.

[24] Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations,* Ib. 107, page 84.

[25] Lewis, *The Last Battle,* p. 766.

[26] Ibid., p.767.

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Dream Cities and Cardboard Worlds: Sayers's Moral Vision in *Murder Must Advertise*

Frances Fowler-Collins

In 1922 the British-American poet T. S. Eliot published one of his best known works, *The Wasteland*, an often obscure modernist poem. In it he depicted post-World War I Europe as a spiritual desert from which traditional religious and political values had vanished, leaving both aristocrats and ordinary working people to lead meaningless lives that they filled with materialism and hedonistic pleasure in an attempt to forget their ultimate end. . .death. Eliot was not a Christian at the time, but he had been on a spiritual journey for several years, a journey that culminated in 1927, when he was received into the Church of England by baptism. Five years later, the English detective novelist Dorothy L. Sayers—the daughter of a clergyman and a lifelong member of the Church of England—published *Murder Must Advertise*, her ninth mystery novel. Although *Murder Must Advertise* is a much less significant work than *The Wasteland,* it explores many of the same themes. It also represents an important shift in Sayers's writing. Her previous detective novels and short stories had depicted sinful individuals; in *Murder Must Advertise* she portrays a sinful society, a moral wasteland. Her treatment of this theme is uneven, but it foreshadows the themes of her later work. In this paper I will briefly summarize the plot for the benefit of those who have not read the novel; then I will discuss at length Sayers's moral vision as it emerges in the book. Finally, I will suggest some of the ways that her later work further develops the same themes.

Plot Summary

Victor Dean, an advertising copywriter at Pym's Publicity, Ltd., has recently died, apparently from injuries suffered in a fall down a spiral staircase in Pym's office building. An unfinished letter to the head of the firm is found among his papers; it hints that something very wrong is going on at Pym's. The head of the firm, Mr. Pym, decides to hire a detective to investigate this allegation; and, of course, the detective he hires is Sayers's amateur sleuth, Lord Peter Wimsey. Working undercover and using an alias comprised of his two middle names—Death and Bredon—Wimsey is hired as a new employee to take Dean's place at Pym's. He learns the art of writing advertising copy while investigating the circumstances surrounding Dean's death.

However, he learns very early that Dean had led a double life; a respectable advertising writer by day, at night he ran around London with a fast crowd of "Bright Young Things" who party, drink, and take cocaine with the beautiful but corrupt Dian de Momerie. Therefore, Wimsey must enter this world as well. Disguised as a harlequin, he attends a costume ball with the Bright Young Things and attracts the attention of Dian herself, who is bored with booze, drugs, fast cars, and casual sex and itching for a novel experience, one that she hopes the harlequin can provide. For weeks, then, Wimsey too leads a double life: as Death Bredon he writes inane advertising copy by day; and by night, always dressed in his harlequin disguise, he engages in an equally inane flirtation with Dian. Of course, in the end he is successful—fictional detectives always are—and he discovers who murdered Victor Dean. Moreover, with Wimsey's help, his brother-in-law--who is the Chief Inspector at Scotland Yard—catches the key figures in the drug ring that was supplying Dian and her friends with cocaine.

Dream Cities Compared

The major structural device in *Murder Must Advertise* is the comparison of two social groups, an advertising agency, along with its clients and public audience and a drug trafficking ring with its customers. Superficially, these two groups differ enormously. To the ethically immature, advertising appears morally blameless while drug traffickers and addicts are obviously criminals. Yet Sayers suggests that these two worlds are morally similar. She makes this clear late in the book in a conversation between Lord Wimsey and his Scotland Yard brother-in-law, Charles Parker.

> Parker says: "Do you really believe that the head of this particular dope-gang is on Pym's staff? It sounds quite incredible."
> Wimsey replies: "That's an excellent reason for believing it. . .The particular crookedness of advertising is so very far removed from the crookedness of dope-trafficking."
> Parker responds: "Why? As far as I can make out, all advertisers are dope-merchants."
> Wimsey then sees the parallel, saying: "So they are. Yes, now I come to think of it, there is a subtle symmetry about the things which is extremely artistic." (251)

Sayers considers each social world to be a "dream city" or "cardboard world," based on illusions and marked by great shallowness. An analysis of these social groups and a careful comparison of them reveals how they resemble each other as well as what Sayers thought was wrong with the society in which both flourished.

Advertising: The Dream City of the Day

Sayers's major artistic success in *Murder Must Advertise* is her brilliant presentation of the advertising industry and office life, a world she knew well, for she had worked at a major London advertising agency for nine years. Undoubtedly, her vivid portrayal of this social world made the book popular in the 1930s and is one of its appeals to modern readers. Pym's Publicity, Ltd. is a respected advertising agency that prepares newspaper and magazine ads, neon signs, billboards, and advertising campaigns for such clients as Dairyfields, a manufacturer of butter and margarine, and Whifflets, a cigarette maker. Pym's employs many people, from directors, group managers, and copywriters on down to typists, messenger boys, and cleaning ladies.

Mr. Pym, the head of the firm, subscribes to the Human Relations School of Management, which was popular at the time; it advocated working hard to build employee morale and loyalty to the company. In pursuing these goals Pym gives new employees a pep talk about "Service in Advertising" and organizes various social get-togethers throughout the year. For example, there is a monthly tea party, a twice yearly at-home for the copywriters and artists, an annual garden party for the typists, and even an "Office Boys' Christmas Treat" during the holiday season. In May everyone is invited to a Grand Annual Dinner and Dance. Unfortunately, like many proponents of the Human Relations School, Pym thinks that feel-good activities can substitute for decent salaries; this is why one of his employees has been sucked into the other dream city, the world of drug dealing.

Pym's, like most offices, is full of cliques, jealousies, gossip, and rivalry. The university educated copywriters look down on those who are less well-educated; all the copywriters regard the clients with scorn; and the typists consider the employees above them in the hierarchy to be intellectuals who are out of touch with everyday reality. Like Sayers herself, two or three of Pym's employees even have doubts about the morality of their job. For example, Mr. Ingleby observes early in the novel: "Three years in this soul-searing profession have not yet robbed me of all human feeling. But that will come in time" (9).

The Drug World: The Dream City of the Night

One of the major artistic flaws of *Murder Must Advertise* is that Sayers's picture of the world of drug dealing and using is less vividly realized and more weakly developed than her portrayal of the world of advertising. She was aware of this weakness and commented in a September 14, 1932 letter to her publisher, "I can't say I 'know dope'" (*Letters, 1899-1936,* 323). Even so, she describes the drug world with enough detail to permit comparison with the advertising world and to advance the development of the novel's theme.

On the surface, the drug world consists of a set of fashionable young Londoners, most of whom have more time and money than they know what to do with. Their social life revolves around the daring and beautiful Dian de Momerie, an "aluminum blond" who dresses stylishly (and provocatively) and leads a life of hedonistic frivolity. She and her pals—"friends" would suggest a deeper relationship than any of these people are capable of—sleep most of the day and play all night, dancing, gambling, drinking, driving fast cars around town, and sleeping with anyone who is available. On Friday and Saturday nights they party at Major Tod Milligan's palatial home on the Thames, a mansion with a lovely rose garden, a pool, statuary, and fountains. At Milligan's parties, alcohol flows freely and erotic entertainment titillates the party-goers, preparing them for amorous encounters in the curtained cubicles Milligan has thoughtfully furnished with couches and mirrors. Milligan appears to be a wealthy retired military officer, but actually he is a drug dealer who receives a cocaine delivery every Thursday to sell to his regular customers at his parties. Behind Milligan, of course, lurk underworld figures who never attend the raucous parties by the river.

Parallels Between the Dream Cities

The two dream cities, the city of the day and the city of the night, resemble each other in three important ways. First, in both dream cities, a small group of people operates behind the scenes to exploit a much larger group for financial gain. And in both cities intermediaries work on the frontier between the small and large groups. In advertising, the behind the scenes actors are the managers of manufacturing companies that produce goods to sell to the public and retain Pym's to advertise their wares. None of them ever appears directly in *Murder Must Advertise,* but everyone at Pym's who writes advertising copy is acutely aware of their presence because they have well-known preferences. They tend to be a puritanical bunch, who explode in anger if any of Pym's ads can be interpreted sexually or seem to advocate such sins as gambling. However, for the most part, they leave the work of developing advertisements to the professionals at Pym's Publicity, who are the intermediaries between them and their customers.

The major intermediary is Mr. Pym who--as Wimsey observes--"is a man of rigid morality—except, of course, as regards his profession, whose essence is to tell plausible lies for money" (76). That is the major problem with advertising as Sayers sees it—it does not present a factual review of products with information about their features and prices. Rather, it distorts the truth and appeals to the weaknesses of the public in order to sell them products which may or may not live up to the claims made for them. At times, the ads are based on out and out lies; for example, Wimsey is told to write copy for Green Pastures Margarine, stating it is as good as butter. More often, however, the ads lie by implication. For example, Pym's employees can never state that a product is "pure" because such claims could lead to prosecution by the government; but they are free to suggest purity by using such terms as "highest quality," or "finest ingredients." The advertisers also design their text and pictures to appeal to customers' weaknesses—their snobbery, hypochondria, fear of social stigma, and longing for romance. For instance, they urge people to smoke Whifflets cigarettes because they are smoked by "discriminating men" in such places as "the Royal Yacht Club at Cowes" (34). As a final strategy, they overwhelm the public with advertising; it is everywhere—in the newspapers and on buses, on billboards and in neon signs. There is no escaping it. Ordinary citizens—or, more accurately, consumers—have little understanding of how it is produced or how it affects ordinary people. However, it shapes not only how they live but how they think and what they value. Sayers describes the general public as made up of people who can be easily "bullied or wheedled into spending their few hardly won shillings on whatever might give them, if only for a moment, a leisured and luxurious illusion" (188).

Similarly, the dream city of the drug dealers and users is controlled by a small group of people who remain behind the scenes. Ultimately we meet the king pin, a Mr. Cummins, who runs his drug operation out of a pharmacy. Numerous people work in the shadows for him, including enforcers who spy on the dealers and users and "suppress" (i.e., murder) them if they get out of line. The intermediaries are the people who actually sell cocaine to the addicts, and we meet one of these in the book—Major Tod Milligan. He is not an addict himself, but a relatively clean-cut man who is in the business for the money. He somewhat resembles Mr. Pym; Sayers tells us that Milligan is "blank as to morals but comparatively sober in his habits, as people must be who make money out of other people's vices" (192). The users are, of course, the much larger group that Milligan and the people higher up in the drug ring exploit for financial gain. Unlike consumers swayed by advertising, the drug users are relatively well informed about how the drug ring operates. They are unable to escape from Milligan and others like him because they have become addicted to cocaine. . .and also because they fear for their lives. In a conversation with Wimsey, Dian de Momerie confides that she hates Milligan and would like to break away from him. However, she can't because "he's got the stuff' (157) and she's afraid of "the people behind him" (158).

A second similarity between the two dream cities is that both are relentlessly materialistic. Advertising "call[s] on the public to save its body and purse" (91), but it never suggests that people develop their minds, hearts, or spirits. Instead, it implies that all problems can be solved by acquiring things. Farley's Footwear can help a man build his career; Muggins's Magnolia Face Cream can help a typist attract the man of her dreams; Sopo cleaning products can provide the weary housewife with time to relax at the movies. Advertising also constantly urges people to buy more things and to try new products. Its not so subtle message is: "Never be satisfied. If once you are satisfied, all our wheels will run down. Keep going—and if you can't, try Nutrax for Nerves!" (91). The logic of the economic system demands more and more purchasing of things because, as Mr. Pym explains, "Whether people like it or not, the fact remains that unless you continually increase sales you must either lose money or cut down quality" (282). The extent to which Mr. Pym is dominated by the desire to make money rather than by concern for his employees is revealed toward the end of the novel when Wimsey tells him that a dope-ring is operating out of his business.

> "Here's the brutal fact," Wimsey said. "Someone's running an enormous dope-traffic from this office. Who is there that has far more money than he ought to have, Mr. Pym? We're looking for a very rich man. Can you help us?"
> But Mr. Pym was past helping anybody. He was chalk white.
> "Dope? From this office? What on earth will our clients say? How shall I face the Board? The publicity. . . ." (286)

In short, materialism overrides every other value.

In "that other dream city—the city of dreadful night" (189), the world of drug dealing and abuse--materialism is also the major value. The top figures in the dope-ring are, like the manufacturers and Mr. Pym, motivated by a desire for money, and lots of it. They will do anything to obtain it. They will lie, smuggle, steal, ruin young lives, and even murder to protect their profitable enterprise. Nothing else matters to them, as Major Milligan indicates toward the end of the novel when he tells Wimsey: "I think you'll find it to your advantage to listen." "Financial advantage?" asks Wimsey. "What other kind is there?" the Major replies (240).

Money, however, is not the major value of the drug addicts, who are already extremely wealthy. They revel in another form of materialism—sensuality. They are pleasure seekers, and they seek it even though they are risking both their health and their lives in doing so. Like consumers swayed by advertisements to buy more and more goods they do not need and cannot afford, the Bright Young Things seek greater and greater pleasures, more and more thrills. While dancing at one of the many parties she attends, Dian de Momerie ruminates:

> My God! I'm bored. . . .Money, tons of money. . .but I'm bored. . .I'm sick of everything. . . .wonder where the Harlequin man went to. . . .I think he could give me a thrill. . . ." (90)

Here, too, materialism overrides every other value.

Finally, the dream cities resemble each other because on the surface they deny the ultimate earthly reality—death—even though at a deeper level they are agents of death. Pym's Publicity officially denies the existence of death. None of its clients produce goods associated with dying or funerals; and, needless to say, none of its advertisements ever mention the end of life. Sayers makes this omission explicit toward the end of the novel when she describes the Whifflet Campaign Wimsey has developed. In this campaign, Whifflets' Cigarettes offers a coupon in every package which, when combined with the required number of additional coupons, can be used to purchase train tickets, nights in hotels, wedding cakes, photographs, furniture, and far, far more. Sayers writes: "[T]he Whifflet Campaign is and remains the outstanding example of Thinking Big in Advertising. The only thing you cannot get by Whiffling is a coffin; it is not admitted that any Whiffler could ever require such an article" (266). No amount of denial can prevent death, however, and it is significant that the first chapter is entitled "Death Comes to Pym's Publicity." The title has a double meaning; it refers to the recent death of Victor Dean in Pym's office building and also to the arrival of Peter Wimsey under alias "Death Bredon." No amount of advertising fluff can indefinitely obscure the fact that death awaits us all.

Pym's Publicity not only denies death; it also contributes to the intellectual and spiritual death of those who write advertisements and those who are influenced by them. Successful ads are based on half truths, lies, and stereotypical thinking. They create illusions and intrude into private lives with callous questions like: "Are you troubled with Fullness after Eating?" and "Do you ever ask yourself about Body-Odour?" (65). Over time they lead to intellectual superficiality and spiritual insensitivity. Sayers summarizes the murderous impact of advertising in these words:

> [At Pym's] the spiritual atmosphere was clamorous with financial storm, intrigue, dissension, indigestion and marital infidelity. And with worse things—with murder wholesale and retail, of soul and body, murder by weapons and by poison. These things did not advertise, or, if they did, they called themselves by other names. (293)

Similarly, the Bright Young Things who party regularly at Milligan's mansion deny death. They engage in many activities that could lead to an early death. . .and, indeed, their mortality rate is high. However, they push such gloomy thoughts aside and refuse to face reality. For example, when Wimsey points out to Dian that her last three boyfriends have met untimely ends—one from excessive drinking, one from suicide, and one in an apparent accident—she brushes his statement aside, saying, "I couldn't help that. . . .That wasn't anything to do with me" (155). In contrast, the leading figures in the drug ring do not deny death at all; rather, they use it as a threat and a tool to keep their underlings in line. Their enforcers know many ways to kill: they push superfluous people under subway trains, run them down with trucks, or slit their throats. But like the advertisers they also kill the minds, hearts, and spirits of those who populate their world. Dian de Momerie and Tod Milligan are the chief examples in the novel of people who are spiritually dead, unable to love or to find real meaning in life beyond having fun and making money. As Chief Inspector Parker summarizes: "Dope-runners are murderers, fifty times over. They slay hundreds of people, soul and body, besides indirectly causing all sorts of crimes among the victims" (252).

Sayers's Moral Vision in 1932

When Sayers wrote *Murder Must Advertise,* she was a well-instructed Christian laywoman on the threshold of her fortieth birthday; she certainly possessed the intellectual and spiritual maturity necessary to assess the condition of the society she lived in. She recognized it as a world that had moved a long way from the ideals of a Christian society. Like Eliot, she saw it as a spiritual desert populated by people who filled their emptiness with fun and shopping in a desperate attempt to hide the meaninglessness of their lives. However, in this novel she not only describes people's behavior but moves toward an analysis of the problem.

To Sayers, the root problem in her society was philosophical materialism, a theme she had addressed in her fiction from the very beginning. Indeed, in her first murder mystery, *Whose Body?*, a major clue to the identity of the murderer is an article he had published, explaining that all human behavior is caused by chemical reactions. After reading the article, Lord Peter—who must have read Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*—realized that a person who held such views would be capable of doing almost anything. However, *Murder Must Advertise* differs in a significant way from the earlier novels; in them Sayers depicted individuals as materialistic, but in *Murder Must* Advertise she depicts British society as a whole that way. Of course, none of the characters in the later novel is a philosophical materialist, and certainly neither Mr. Pym nor Major Milligan has ever written an article explaining his views. But virtually all of the characters in the novel can be considered "vulgar materialists"—that is to say, they have absorbed the materialist worldview piecemeal from the surrounding popular culture, from books and newspapers, from radio programs, from advertising, and from the education they received as children. They do not hold the philosophy in a coherent manner and their beliefs are often contradictory, but they have clearly learned that people and their actions do not matter much because ultimately the world we can see and hear is all that exists. This is why the Bright Young Things devote their time and money to sensual pleasures; it is why the manufacturing executives and advertisers twist the truth to sell products; and it is also why the leaders of the drug-ring casually kill people who know too much.

In *Murder Must Advertise*, Sayers portrays the situation and advances some ideas about how her materialistic society works. She depicts in brilliant detail one of the modern institutions that exploits the emptiness of the wasteland by manipulating people--advertising. But, of course, there are many others, and she largely ignores them. However, in Chapter XII she briefly touches on another, the modern press. She tells the story of a young reporter returning from his coverage of an early morning fire, proud of the "snap, pep, and human interest" (205) he had included in his article, especially his interview with the cat who had awakened the night watchman when she smelled the fire. In fact, he had come up with the "brilliant inspiration" (205) to purchase the heroic cat's imminent litter of kittens and to suggest that his newspaper use them as part of a publicity stunt. In short, he was proud of emphasizing the trivial and the shallow because that is what appealed to the paper's readers. Sayers touches even more briefly on the use of advertising techniques to manipulate the public politically when, in the string of advertising slogans that ends the book she tucks a political ad in among the advertizing for beer, oatmeal, and soups. It runs: "Vote for Punkin and Protect your Profits" (356). However, she doesn't develop these ideas in any depth; they remain hints, hints of themes she will explore in her later work.

Foreshadowings of Work to Come

Murder Must Advertise was almost the last of Sayers's twelve detective novels. Published ninth, it was actually conceptualized and written tenth, since Sayers had already written much of *The Nine Tailors* when she put it aside to produce what she thought of as a "pot-boiler" to meet the requirements of her contract with her publisher. Only *Gaudy Night* and *Busman's Honeymoon* came after it, and *Busman's Honeymoon* was a successful stage play before Sayers adapted it as a novel. Once her royalties for her mysteries had reached a sufficient level to support her family, she turned to the writing she really wanted to do: plays, especially plays on religious themes;

essays on the Christian faith and the society in which she lived; and the translation of *The Divine Comedy* along with a substantial body of literary criticism about Dante's work. In her later writing she develops many of the themes that emerged in *Murder Must Advertise*. These include the materialism of contemporary society, the problem of work, the narrowing of the Christian understanding of morality, and the ways that the corruption of the means of exchange lead to the increasing corruption of society as a whole.

Although Sayers never ceased to consider her society materialistic, her understanding of the materialism of her day became more sophisticated with the passage of time. Eventually she came to believe that "false economics" was the basic cause of the problem and thought that Western societies had been "madly turning" in an "appalling squirrel cage of economic confusion" since the seventeenth century ("Why Work?", 90). The result was a system based on "glut and waste" ("Why Work?", 94) in which most people were condemned to spend much of their lives working at meaningless jobs that enabled them to put food on their tables but provided no intellectual, aesthetic, or spiritual satisfaction. Indeed, her conviction that work should be meaningful and a true vocation in the spiritual sense of that word is a theme in much of Sayers's later writing. This idea is an important subtheme in *Gaudy Night*; the central theme in her first religious play, *The Zeal of Thy House*; and the subject of several talks and essays produced during World War II. Sayers feared, though,--as it turned out, with good reason—that after the war people would "again be bamboozled by. . .vanity, indolence, and greed into keeping the squirrel cage of wasteful economy turning" ("Why Work?", 97).

As a Christian Sayers believed that the churches had been complicit in the development of the economic squirrel cage, for over time they had reduced and distorted Christian moral teachings. In the Middle Ages, Christians had understood that there were seven deadly sins: Pride, Envy, Avarice, Sloth, Anger, Lust, and Gluttony ("The Other Six Deadly Sins," 154). But as the economic squirrel cage developed, Christians focused increasingly on Lust and Gluttony, ignoring the other five sins. They redefined *immorality* to mean *sexual immorality* and also fixated on drinking, smoking, and other forms of Gluttony as the major sins. Eager to condemn the sins of the flesh (which impeded the smooth functioning of the new industrial economic system), they preferred not to comment on such sins as financial fraud, charging excessive interest, or admiring rich people simply because they were rich (sins that were embedded in the economic system and encouraged by it). In short, they "acquiesc[ed] in a social system based upon Envy and Avarice" ("Why Work?", 90).

Eventually Sayers came to believe, through reading the work of Charles Williams and Dante, that much of the corruption in modern society derives from the corruption of the means of exchange, particularly that central means of exchange, language. Advertising appears again in her most mature work: the commentaries included in her translations of *The Divine Comedy* and her essays on Dante. Not surprisingly, given Sayers's views, advertisers are found rather far down in Dante's Hell—in the Eighth Circle with the Panders, Seducers, and Flatterers, where "all the media of the community's exchange are perverted and falsified" (*Hell*, 185). Sayers tells her readers:

> Dante did not live to see the full development of political propaganda, commercial

> advertising, and sensational journalism, but he has prepared a place for them. (*Hell*, 185-186)

Here and in her essay, "The City of Dis," she handles the themes she had explored rather superficially in *Murder Must Advertise* with the wisdom and moral intelligence of a mature Christian thinker.

In the final analysis, *Murder Must Advertise* is a sparkling, witty entertainment with a dark and serious side. It portrays the modern social wasteland and provides some rudimentary analysis of what was going wrong in the society Sayers knew, but ultimately it does not fully come to grips with the problems. It does, however, reveal that Sayers was beginning to handle the themes that would dominate her mature work.

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Creation and Sub-creation in *Leaf by Niggle*

J. Samuel Hammond and Marie K. Hammond

J.R.R. Tolkien was an artisan and a scholar. His story entitled *Leaf by Niggle* offers a perceptive portrait of the author as well as gentle guidance for people like himself who feel the pressure of too much work. Tolkien's ideas about art, employment, and responsibility toward neighbor are presented in this enchanting story. Through fiction he illustrates his concept of sub-creation and shows how it relates to Creation. *Leaf by Niggle* can inspire not only artists, but also writers, scholars, gardeners, and all who engage in constructive labor.

Brief Summary

Niggle is a painter with a grand vision. In his mind's eye, he sees a huge Tree with shimmering leaves surrounded by a lovely country of forests and mountains. He wants more than anything to paint what he sees; however, he is constantly interrupted by his neighbor Parish and by intrusions of civic and social responsibilities. Before he can make much progress on his painting, Niggle is called away on a Journey. He is taken to a place where he is compelled to do hard labor and to rest. After a long time he hears two voices discussing his case. They send him on to the next stage, an open country with a great Tree, which Niggle soon recognizes to be a realization of his own vision. Niggle suddenly understands that to complete the painting he needs help from his former neighbor Parish, a gardener. Parish appears and they work together. Upon completion of the painting, Niggle decides to follow a shepherd into the mountains, while Parish elects to wait for his wife. Back in the old country Niggle is remembered briefly as a minor painter and then forgotten entirely. In the new country his complete vision, now called Niggle's Parish, has become a refreshing stopover for travelers.

The Author's Plight

It is generally recognized that Professor Tolkien was an exceedingly busy man, pulled in many directions by the demands of university work, writing, and family responsibilities. This was certainly the case in 1938-9, when *Leaf by Niggle* was probably written.[1] During these same years, he was working on *Lord of the Rings,* two other short stories, and various academic projects. To help pay household expenses and tuition for his children's schooling, he took on extra work grading papers.[2] Yet his own daughter was not aware of all he was doing. Many years later she said, "It was not until adult life that I gradually came to realize how continuously hard he worked. In order to take part in family life as he did and be so available to our needs and interests he often had to work far into the night when the household was quiet."[3]

Tolkien pursued additional interests outside his family and professional obligations. He sketched and painted frequently throughout his life. A close observer of nature, he delighted in long walks through the countryside. Indeed, his affection for trees, leaves and gardens is apparent in both his writing and his drawing.[4]

Somehow the professor was able to reconcile and balance these many activities. Yet the story *Leaf by Niggle* contains evidence that he was considering such questions as: How can one's time be most efficiently used? Does art take precedence over practical work? Where does duty lie? What value does art have to justify the time and effort expended? The same questions are integral to the themes entwined in *Leaf by Niggle*.

Sub-creation

Tolkien's concept of sub-creation, discussed in his essay *On Fairy Stories,* may be defined as "the process of inventing an imaginary or secondary world, different from the primary world but internally consistent." [5] Applying this definition broadly, one might regard any artist as a sub-creator, assuming that a consistent secondary world can be rendered not only in a story, but also in a painting, a musical composition, a dance, or a drama. Indeed it is possible that a flower garden might be a work of art and its designer a sub-creator.

Who is entitled to attempt sub-creation? Tolkien gives clues in his poem *Mythopoeia*.[6]

> The heart of man is not compound of lies,
> but draws some wisdom from the only Wise,
> and still recalls him. Though now long estranged,
> man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed. (lines 53-56)

A few lines later, he describes man as

> sub-creator, the refracted light
> through whom is splintered from a single White
> to many hues, and endlessly combined
> in living shapes that move from mind to mind. (61-64)

In other words, human beings are able to invent imaginary worlds by drawing wisdom and light from the Creator, and by redirecting or disseminating God's created light. Furthermore these actions are not static, solitary endeavors, but exchanges between imaginative minds combining their ideas and insights. While humans have long been estranged from God, they still possess the spark of invention, the right to imitate Creation.

> The right has not decayed.
> We make still by the law in which we're made. (69-70)

This is apparently one aspect of having been created in the image of God. Therefore it seems that any human being is a potential sub-creator. Later in the poem, Tolkien expresses sympathy and admiration for ark-builders, legend-makers, minstrels, and questing mariners, people from different walks of life engaged in their own imaginative endeavors.

Niggle's Characteristics

Turning now to *Leaf by Niggle*, one finds many of the same ideas. The most obvious sub-creator in the story is the artist Niggle, in many ways representative of Tolkien himself. One clear link between them is artistic calling. Tolkien was trying to produce something like Niggle's painting, a huge and glorious representation of an entire country. When he wrote *Leaf by Niggle*, Tolkien had already been working for over twenty years on the complex history, mythology, and philology of Middle Earth that would become *The Silmarillion.* He kept adding to the story, telling and retelling certain parts, modifying characters and stylistic elements.[7] Niggle, too, worked incrementally on his painting.

> Niggle lost interest in his other pictures; or else he took them and tacked them on to the edges of his great picture. Soon the canvas became so large that he had to get a ladder; and he ran up and down it, putting in a touch here, and rubbing out a patch there.[8]

Niggle is described as overreaching his talent, trying to paint pictures "too large and ambitious for his skill." (p. 81) While he is unique in his way, he is "also a very ordinary and rather silly little man." (p. 82) These statements reflect Tolkien's uncertainty about his own ability to complete the mammoth project he had undertaken.[9]

The character's name suggests that Tolkien considered himself a "niggler" who did not accomplish as much as he thought he should. Yet an artist need not be exceptionally brilliant or efficient to participate in sub-creation. Niggle is an ordinary man who paints leaves better than trees. He wants his picture to keep growing but eventually realizes it must have boundaries. The leaf, as a representation of Niggle's limited ability, is a rich and appropriate symbol for Tolkien's own artistic expression. After all, the word "leaf" also denotes a page in a book. Tolkien's writing was akin to painting a huge tree, one small leaf at a time. The leaf is also associated with failure and new beginnings, as when one "turns over a new leaf." In the story, Niggle’s efforts finally bear fruit, and most people would agree that Tolkien’s did as well. By persisting in small efforts, an artist can sometimes bring to realization a much larger vision.

During his mortal life, however, Niggle wastes time. He has too many things to do but lacks the diligence to do any of them well. The attention he gives his artwork interferes with other duties. For example, the large painting he works on requires a shed that takes the place of his potato plot. He neglects to weed the remainder of his garden. He does not volunteer to supply materials or labor to repair Parish’s house. At last, an Inspector shows up, declaring that house repair takes precedence over painting. “That’s the law,” he says. (p. 87) Readers are reminded of a higher law, that one should love one’s neighbors and do for them what we would want them to do for us. Niggle’s life can best be described as a muddle; his problems arise because “[his heart] did not function properly … [a]nd his head was not screwed on tight enough: he hardly ever thought at all.” (p. 90) If this story is autobiographical, Tolkien was rather hard on himself!

For his faults, Niggle is taken to a place (like purgatory) where he receives “treatment.” He has to work hard at all the tasks he neglected during his life. He is required to dig because he failed to weed his garden; he saws and paints wood to atone for not repairing his neighbor’s roof; he sits thinking in the dark as a remedy for his frantic unthinking activity. After a while, Niggle begins to feel a bit of satisfaction at completing small and useful tasks well, and he learns to organize his time. As a sub-creator made in the image of God, Niggle (like Tolkien) learns he must relate to Creation as God relates to it: caring for, assisting, and sacrificing for those around him. Only then is Niggle allowed to resume his painting, his artistic calling to be a sub-creator.

In the end Niggle's leaf grows into "a Tree that was alive, its leaves opening, its branches growing and bending in the wind …" (p. 94) Moreover the tree is full of birds. "They were mating, hatching, growing wings, and flying away singing into the Forest, even while he looked at them." (p. 95) When Niggle explores the country surrounding this tree full of life, he discovers that his painting has unexpected depth. "You could go on and on, and have a whole country in a garden, or in a picture (if you preferred to call it that)." (p. 95) Here Niggle's painting is identified with a garden that contains a Tree of Life; the scene suggests Eden, thus reinforcing the connection between sub-creation (art) and Creation. Indeed Niggle has been working in a garden all along, but in the old country he neglected his own garden and did not properly appreciate his neighbor's.

In the new country Niggle is better able to perceive the true source of his art. When he recognizes his own tree, finished and come alive, he proclaims, "It's a gift!" (p. 94) and Tolkien adds, "He was referring to his art, and also to the result; but he was using the word quite literally." In other words, Niggle's ability to paint is not merely a talent he possesses (for which he can take pride or claim credit) but a true gift from God; so is the completed painting. Niggle is granted a vision of heaven in his lifetime which he attempts to translate by means of art. Later he is given the fulfillment of that vision.

Tolkien's art was also a gift. This story, he told his publisher, came into his head fully formed, perhaps in a dream. "I woke up one morning (more than two years ago) with that odd thing virtually complete in my head."[10] The author mentions another source, a great poplar tree he could see from his bed. When it was severely pruned and later cut down, Tolkien mourned. While he surely did not consider it a gift at the time, the loss of this tree became an inspiration for a wonderful story. In a more general sense, Tolkien's faith inspired his work.[11] Thus a close connection between Creation and sub-creation may again be observed, since the inspiration for art comes from the original gift-Giver, the Creator. Tolkien hoped for another link between what an artist invents and what God creates.

> Probably every writer making a secondary world, a fantasy, every sub-creator, wishes in some measure to be a real maker, or hopes that he is drawing on reality: hopes that the peculiar quality of this secondary world (if not all the details) are derived from Reality, or are flowing into it.[12]

Ideally the secondary world invented by an author should reflect the created world in which we live.

Parish's Characteristics

While Niggle the artist has obvious similarities to Tolkien, it is instructive to consider how Parish the gardener might also be a representation of the author. Niggle and Parish can be seen as two sides of the author's life: his artistic calling and his gainful employment. Parish is a serious gardener, a man who works the earth and knows how to produce excellent potatoes. At the same time, he is lame and willing to ask for help. Tolkien also was productive in his profession; along with his teaching, he wrote and edited scholarly works. Yet perhaps he too felt hobbled. In a sense, Tolkien's artistic calling was his handicap, in that it consumed much of his time and drew him away from other perceived duties.[13]

Other facets of Parish's role in the story are suggested by his name. Historically, an English parish is more than a local church. It is a geographical, legal, social, and ecclesiastical unit to which one belongs, in which one's life is lived and documented. Thus the gardener Parish is a working man, rooted in the land. His concern with ordinary activities corresponds to the practical side of Tolkien's life. Tolkien, though not a planter by profession, had great sympathy with nature and loved the land. The word parish is derived from the Greek word *paroikos*, meaning "neighbor." Parish is not a particularly good neighbor, yet he is Niggle's neighbor in the geographical sense and in the sense of needing help. When a lawyer asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?”, Jesus responded with the parable of the Good Samaritan, indicating that neighbors are people who need help and the ones who provide it.[14]

The name Parish also sounds like the word “perish.” While this may be a purely unintentional wordplay, it nevertheless suggests things of this world that do not last. In the old country Parish is more concerned with potatoes than with paintings. Yet when he gets to the new country, it is his collaboration on a painting that has lasting value. Practical matters are important in this life, but one must also attend to those things (such as love of neighbor, faith, idealism) that do not perish. Physical artworks themselves are perishable. Niggle’s original painting is destroyed and his reputation vanishes after a short while. It is natural for any artist (or author) to worry that his works will be lost and forgotten. Yet Niggle’s work is not really lost, as Tolkien makes clear at the end of the story, and neither is Parish’s.

Achieving Balance

When they are neighbors, Parish does not appreciate Niggle’s artwork but neither does Niggle appreciate Parish’s garden. The two aspects of man’s work in the world, the practical and the artistic, are in conflict. Somehow these two aspects must be reconciled and balanced in order for a community and its members to thrive. In fact, Niggle discovers that his best artwork is produced in cooperation with Parish. “Some of the most beautiful—and the most characteristic, the most perfect examples of Niggle’s style—were seen to have been produced in collaboration with Mr. Parish: there was no other way of putting it.” (p. 92) In serving his neighbor Niggle does not waste his time, but enhances it. When artist and gardener work together, the fruits of their labor become united; Niggle’s painting and Parish’s garden ultimately coincide, and the result is more exquisite than either could have imagined. This collaborative work of art becomes a stopover station with power to refresh and heal. Identified with both their names, it is called Niggle's Parish.

An artist may think he can achieve great things by transcending the world. Tolkien recognizes, however, that artists (like everyone else) must discharge their responsibilities in and to the world. They may even find that artistic inspiration comes in the process of doing their duty. The essay *On Fairy Stories* is a scholarly work, presumably costing the author a great deal of effort in research, writing, and revisions. Its companion piece, the story *Leaf by Niggle,* cost him "absolutely no pains at all."[15] The two were written at roughly the same time, and they share certain symbols and themes. One assumes Tolkien's scholarly efforts in composing the essay helped to inspire the imaginative story. In any event, Tolkien has brought together the practical and the artistic under the title *Tree and Leaf.* Each part contributes to the search for truth, and the two reinforce each other. Katharyn Crabbe remarks upon this happy conjunction:

> Even if we remain at our most conservative and do not use the word *genius*, it is clear that Tolkien was an extremely successful practitioner of the critical and creative arts. He was also a skillful and perceptive blender of the two, always willing to use the skills and insights he had developed in one area to enrich his work in the other.[16]

The Artist's Role

What do we learn about the place of artists in the world? Tolkien has both a very high estimation of their worth and an humble assessment of their indebtedness. Considering the latter aspect, Tolkien (and Niggle) knew that their talents and accomplishments were a gift, originating elsewhere and transmitted through themselves. An artist accepts what is given but cannot grasp more than is offered. Yet in the story, Niggle is frustrated. His own efforts are insufficient to capture the grand vision in his mind's eye. Only after he suffers for his faults, receives grace, and learns to cooperate with his neighbor does his vision come alive and grow to completion. Each exquisite leaf is unique, yet part of a bigger picture that is subsumed into Creation itself. In this happy ending, Niggle comes to realize that, in spite of his frustration, he really is a painter.

Presumably in writing this story Tolkien came to an understanding that allowed him to carry on (while facing an uncertain future) with his large-scale projects. Randel Helms gives a thoughtful elucidation of this inference:

> Tolkien's imagination-deadening fear he would not survive to design his own leaf is transmuted into an allegory about a niggling self-portrait of the artist—Niggle by name—whose creating does not stop when he dies. "Leaf by Niggle" is Tolkien's imagination's promise to itself that no genuine creation ever ceases to be, that the best of one's imaginings permanently enriches reality.[17]

Though an artwork may be incomplete and transitory in human terms, good art (even what is confined to the artist's imagination) has lasting value. Tolkien says that the ending of a fairy tale is like the margin of a picture; it is not the actual end, but merely shows the endlessness of the fragment.[18] These notions are encouraging to artists and writers with a grand vision. Even if a work is not completed to their satisfaction, the vision counts for something and may be fulfilled and realized in unforeseen ways.

Broader Applications

Most of Tolkien's writings attest to the fact that he preferred not to evangelize in an obvious way. In a letter to his publisher he wrote: "Myth and fairy-story must, as all art, reflect and contain in solution elements of moral and religious truth (or error), but not explicit, not in the known form of the primary 'real' world."[19] Yet *Leaf by Niggle* contains references that are overtly religious. His representation of purgatory, allusions to law and grace, and arbitrating voices of justice and mercy reflect doctrines of the Christian faith. Whether Tolkien intended for this story to be a “religious” work is open to question; nevertheless it is a vehicle for communicating truth about life, death, redemption, and mystery surrounding the supernatural.

Tolkien writes more about this subject: “Something really ‘higher’ is occasionally glimpsed in mythology: Divinity, the right to power (as distinct from its possession), the due of worship: in fact ‘religion.’” [20] He comments in a letter to a reader about perceived “sanctity” in *The Lord of the Rings*: “If sanctity inhabits [a man’s] work or as a pervading light illumines it, then it does not come from him but through him.”[21] Thus, at the very least, Tolkien admits the possibility of religious content in his writings. In the epilogue of *On Fairy Stories,* the author is even more explicit about these matters. He speaks of joy experienced by a reader as “a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth,” which he says may be a “far-off gleam or echo of *evangelium* in the real world.”[22] With appropriate humility, even trepidation, Tolkien acknowledges that finite Man can only touch upon a small part of “a truth incalculably rich.” But nevertheless, he says God has redeemed men in their artistic capacity. He compares the gospel to a fairy story and concludes:

> The Evangelium has not abrogated legends; it has hallowed them, especially the ‘happy ending.’ The Christian has still to work, with mind as well as body, to suffer, hope, and die; but he may now perceive that all his bents and faculties have a purpose, which can be redeemed. So great is the bounty with which he has been treated that he may now, perhaps, fairly dare to guess that in Fantasy he may actually assist in the effoliation and multiple enrichment of creation. All tales may come true; and yet, at the last, redeemed, they may be as like and as unlike the forms that we gave them as Man, finally redeemed, will be like and unlike the fallen that we know.[23]

How are Niggle’s experiences related to the Evangelium? When the Driver comes to take him on a journey (analogous to death), Niggle is not ready. Like the foolish maidens in the parable of the bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-13), he has not completed his preparations. After a time in purgatory, he is healed, given a meal resembling Holy Communion, and sent off to a new beginning. He encounters a tree, his Tree, grown large and beautiful and full of birds.

One is reminded of the tree representing the Kingdom of Heaven that grows from a grain of mustard seed into “the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.” (Matthew 13:31-32) Later Niggle is given tonic to mix with water from a spring that nourishes and invigorates him and allows him to rest from his labors. One thinks of the woman at the well who was offered living water that becomes “a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:14) Before Niggle goes off to the mountains, he looks back at the Great Tree and sees a blossom “shining like flame.” (p. 99) In Scripture, fire sometimes indicates the presence of God, as when Moses met God in the burning bush. (Exodus 3:1ff) Niggle follows a shepherd into high pastures where “[h]e was going to learn about sheep …” perhaps so that he could feed and tend them as Peter was commanded to do by Jesus. (John 21:15-17) While Niggle and his painting are forgotten in the “real world,” they both have a role in the work of salvation in the new country. Much like the parable of the mustard seed, a very small thing (in this case, a leaf) grows into a giant tree associated with propagation of the faith. From small beginnings (twelve witnesses in Galilee), the Christian faith is now disseminated to all corners of the earth.

Tolkien the artist and sub-creator, like his character Niggle, engages in work that is healing and redemptive. While human efforts are inevitably flawed, they can also be redeemed and come to mean more than the author intended or imagined. Readers of Tolkien’s fiction are given hope, consolation, a glimpse of joy, and valuable lessons for living. Jane Chance goes further in asserting: “All secondary worlds, all realms of Faërie in such fairy-stories ultimately are modeled upon heaven. Entering paradise remains the deepest human fantasy because it constitutes the most important escape from death and from the stronghold of this world on life."[24] She believes that when a Christian author writes fantasy, his stories are necessarily religious and very personal. This would certainly seem to be true for the story *Leaf by Niggle.*

Conclusion

J.R.R. Tolkien uses elements of the Creation story, as well as other biblical and religious imagery reflecting the created order, to develop his secondary world in the story *Leaf by Niggle.* The ideal forms of leaf, tree, and garden figure prominently in this work, suggesting a relation between the earth and the Garden of Eden. In a draft letter referring to the story Tolkien wrote, "I tried to show allegorically how [sub-creation] might come to be taken up into Creation in some plane …"[25] Discussing sub-creation, he says, "Fantasy remains a human right: we make in our measure and in our derivative mode, because we are made: and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a Maker."[26] As sub-creators, human beings are themselves granted the awesome privilege of enriching creation. If Tolkien (or another sub-creator) succeeds in conveying some part of the Truth inherent in Creation, then his work will give readers insight that is helpful in their life and labor. Randel Helms ties together the benefits of this story for both author and audience:

> [Tolkien] needed to tell himself in narrative, not just discursive terms … that participation in an act of sub-creation is in fact preparation for spiritual experience, that the pleasures of Faërie are at their purest indistinguishable from spiritual joy, and finally, that fantasy can bear the Good News, in its minor way, even in the company of the evangelists themselves.[27]

Notes

[1] J.R.R. Tolkien, "Introductory Note," *Tree and Leaf* (London, Unwin Paperbacks, 1979), p. 9.

[2] Richard L. Purtill, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Myth, Morality, and Religion* (San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1984), p. 21-22.

[3] Priscilla Tolkien, "Memories of J.R.R. Tolkien is His Centenary Year," *The Brown Book* (December 1992), p. 13.

[4] One recalls from *Lord of the Rings* the gardener Sam Gamgee, the ents and their trees, and the Lady Galadriel's gift of leaf-like brooches. See Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Artist & Illustrator* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 2000, c1995) for an excellent overview of his graphic artwork.

[5] *The Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd ed. (1989), s.v. "sub-creation."

[6] J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf: Including the Poem Mythopoeia.* Introd. by Christopher Tolkien (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1989), pp. 97-101.

[7] Katharyn F. Crabbe, *J.R.R. Tolkien* (New York, Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., 1981), pp. 24-25.

[8] J.R.R. Tolkien, "Leaf by Niggle," *Tree and Leaf* (London, Unwin Paperbacks, 1979), p. 81. All subsequent quotations from this story refer to the same edition and are followed by page numbers in parentheses.

[9] Tolkien tells us of his doubts in the "Introductory Note" to *Tree and Leaf* :

> [*On Fairy Stories* and *Leaf by Niggle*] were written in the same period (1938-9), when *The Lord of the Rings* was beginning to unroll itself and to unfold prospects of labor and exploration in yet unknown country as daunting to me as to the hobbits. . . . I had then no more notion than they had of what had become of Gandalf or who Strider was; and I had begun to despair of surviving to find out. (p. 9)

[10] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien.* Selected and edited by Humphrey Carpenter; with the assistance of Christopher Tolkien (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1981) Letter 98 (ca. 18 March 1945), p. 113.

[11] Richard Purtill states this idea succinctly: "[Tolkien] was also a Christian, and his Chistianity gave him the joy and vision that finds expression in his work." (p. 138)

[12] J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," *Tree and Leaf* (London, Unwin Paperbacks, 1979), p. 70.

[13] Jane Chance in *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England.* Rev. Ed. (Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 2001) observes: "Tolkien displays a fictional self, a persona, divided by two different interests, art and philology (or literary criticism), which tug him first one way, then another." (p. 29) See also Crabbe, p. 22.

[14] See Luke 10:29-37. This and all subsequent biblical quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

[15] See note 10.

[16] Crabbe, p. 146. John Ellison also observes the reconciliation of roles that occurs in *Leaf by Niggle.* In his essay "The 'Why' and the 'How': Reflections on 'Leaf by Niggle'," published in *Leaves from the Tree: J.R.R. Tolkien's Shorter Fiction* (London, The Tolkien Society, 1991) he states:

> The theme of "the artist and society" makes its appearance. Parish, who now joins [Niggle], becomes for a while, his *alter ego*—the other, complementary half of his personality. The reconciliation of the roles of the artist and the dreamer and of the practical handyman is now complete. (p. 29)

[17] Randel Helms, *Tolkien's World* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 111.

[18] See Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," p. 78.

[19] Tolkien, *Letters.* Letter 131 (late 1951 to Milton Waldman of Collins), p. 144.

[20] Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," p. 31.

[21] Tolkien, *Letters*. Letter 328 (draft, Autumn 1971 to Carole Batten-Phelps), p. 413.

[22] Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," p. 70.

[23] Ibid., p. 72.

[24] Chance, p. 79.

[25] Tolkien, *Letters*. Letter 153 (draft, September 1954 to Peter Hastings), p. 195.

[26] Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," p. 57.

[27] Helms, p. 118.

Learning In The Shadowlands: The Educational Vision of C.S. Lewis

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> "…such is the tragi-comedy of our situation—we continue to clamour for those very qualities we are rendering impossible. …In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful. (Lewis 36-37).

C.S. Lewis penned these words in the middle of the twentieth century as a reaction to a contemporary English book, which he had read, that promoted new theories in education. Though his words were published in 1947, they seem almost prophetic to our present cultural and educational situation. It is difficult to pick up a newspaper or turn on the television without being bombarded by stories bemoaning the present state of education. Low test scores, overcrowded classrooms, falling matriculation rates, school violence and rising illiteracy are only a few of the difficulties facing educators. Even worse is the moral ambiguity and lack of purpose that seems to pervade the teenage consciousness today. The problems have not come about because of a lack of research. There are a plethora of journals filled with new curriculum theories, character development and brain-based research, and thousands of articles on "best practice," relating to classroom discipline or instructional techniques. Library shelves are filled with books on innovative teaching ideas and classroom management skills. The dilemma in today's educational system is not due to a lack of ideas but a lack of "big ideas". It is not caused by a loss of vision but a loss of "fixed vision", one that is grounded on a solid foundation and has a clear end in mind.

In short, the crisis in education stems from the postmodern belief that there are no absolutes. There is no meta-narrative or "Big Story" to explain the world as it exists. We are driven by experience as opposed to reason or truth. Science and the modern pursuit of progress, rather than giving ultimate answers to the questions of life, have become paths to the dehumanization of mankind. Without the anchor of moral absolutes or transcendent values, education is set adrift in a sea of relativity. In the middle of the last century, it was C.S. Lewis who warned the coming generations about the shift in modern thinking and finally the total "abolition of man."

Lewis's prophetic vision concerning the abolition of man was centered in his understanding and insight about education and learning. He was first and foremost an educator. He spent his life as a tutor, lecturer and academician. Although few of his books focus directly on education, his writings can never be separated from his pervasive thoughtfulness about the subject. His essays, apologetics, fiction, and children's stories overflow with his philosophy of learning and educational insight. It is Lewis's vision of learning and the nature of the learner that offers one of best critiques to the modern educational culture, as well as, one of the clearest paths to developing a strong educational philosophy

Early Education

As we establish an educational vision from the writings of C.S. Lewis, it is important to begin with Lewis's personal schooling. An interest in learning was modeled from the time that Lewis (or Jack, as he was called) was a young child. He grew up in a home where books and reading were important. His parents were lifelong readers; Lewis described them as 'bookish' (4). Jack's mother earned a degree in mathematics and logic, and his father was a lawyer who loved oratory. With his brother Warren, Jack's life was spent reading and creating imaginative worlds. He describes himself as being, "a product of a childhood... filled with long corridors, empty sunlit rooms, upstairs silences, attics explored in solitude...and endless books" (Lewis 10). After the death of his mother when Jack was nine, his journey into the educational world began. "It is interesting to note that Lewis did not have a fondness for most of his educational experiences. Jack's personal contact with schools as he grew up were rarely good ones. Late in his life Lewis wrote a letter to a child who had written him about the Narnia books. In the letter Lewis recalled, "I was at three schools (all boarding schools) of which two were very horrid. I never hated anything so much, not even the front line trenches in

World War I." (Jacobs 20)

The first school that Jack attended was Wynyard. It was a boarding school for about eight or nine students. His brother had attended there for three years. The schoolmaster was a man named Robert Capron (nicknamed "Oldie). Jack describes Oldie as "living in the solitude of power." Boys were often beaten for insignificant things like getting the wrong answer to a math question. Oldie had been brought up on charges for cruelty to students and in a few short years would be declared insane. Jack describes his time at Wynyard as almost entirely wasted. His studies, he remembered as, "...a jungle of dates, battles, exports, imports and the like, forgotten as soon as learned and perfectly useless had they been remembered" (Lewis 34). He was removed from Wynyard and sent to Campbell College in Ireland where he resided for just a little over a month, and then removed because he had developed a bad cough.

In 1911, his father sent Jack to Cherbourg House, a preparatory school for Malvern. There he earned a scholarship to attend Malvern College ("The Coll"). It was here that he experienced some of his most difficult times as a student. Malvern was a school, which had a classical focus. Jack, as well as other students, were subjected to, what Lewis calls "Bloodery." This was a system of school aristocracy where certain boys of social standing were given reign to exploit other boys into a state of almost complete servitude. This included polishing shoes, cleaning, and even for some unlucky few, performing sexual favors. This exploitation was called "fagging" and was exhausting for all those who weren't 'bloods'. Jack was also required to participate in athletic events, which he hated almost as much as 'fagging'. Lewis describes the impact of his school experience as he tried to fit in, "Spiritually speaking, the deadly thing was that school life was a life almost wholly dominated by the social struggle; to get on, to arrive, or, having reached the top, to remain there, was the absorbing preoccupation." (108). This 'fagging' system, "bloodery," and his hatred of athletic participation, caused him to plead incessantly with his father to be removed from the school.

These experiences often made school a burden for Lewis. During his time at "The Coll" the library became Jack's one true sanctuary; if he was fortunate enough to make it there. It became to him a paradise where he was protected from "fagging" and he could read and use his imagination without interruption. He longed for the holidays and the end of each term. This dislike of school often found it's way into many of his Narnia stories. Almost every one of the tales describe the schools the children were attending in a negative light. It is telling that in *The Last Battle,* as the children are ushered into Aslan's country (heaven), Aslan describes their entrance into eternal bliss this way, "The term is over: the holidays have begun." (Lewis 210). In *Surprised by Joy,* Lewis looked upon these difficult school days by stating, "Life at a vile boarding school is in a way a good preparation for the Christian life, that it teaches one to live by hope. Even, in a sense, by faith; for at the beginning of each term, home and the holidays are so far off that it is as hard to realize them as to realize heaven." (36)

Although his school experience was often painful, Lewis studied under teachers, and had experiences that would impact his life forever. During his time at Malvern, he was introduced to the music of Wagner. Wagner's music intensified his enjoyment of Norse mythology, a subject that Lewis relished from his childhood. He also studied under a teacher he called "Smugy," who helped him to fall in love with poetry. "He (Smugy) first taught me the right sensuality of poetry, how it should be savored and mouthed in solitude" (Lewis 111). In 1914 Lewis was sent to Great Bookham to study under William Kirkpatrick or "The Old Knock" as Lewis would call him. Kirkpatrick was a masterful logician. Lewis would say of Kirkpatrick, "If ever a man came near to being a purely logical entity, that man was Kirk" (Heck 71). From the moment they met, 'The Knock' challenged Jack to reason everything out. Lewis said that, "Some boys would not have liked it; to me it was red beef and strong beer." (136). It was under 'The Old Knock's' tutelage that Jack became a convinced atheist. His propensity toward logic would later become an important instrument to Jack's conversion and a powerful weapon in his work as a Christian apologist.

Along with some excellent teachers, Lewis would discover books and authors that would shape his life in powerful ways. Under 'Old Knock' Lewis would study Homer, Demosthenes, Cicero and Virgil. At 'The Coll,' he would be introduced to Milton, Yeats and G.K. Chesterton. These authors excited and inflamed Jack's imagination. While at Bookham, he struck up a friendship with Arthur Greeves. He and Lewis shared a love for Norse mythology, spending hours talking over books and learning from one another. One other book must be mentioned. On a cold October morning in 1916, Lewis was book hunting as he waited for a train at Leatherhead station. Here Lewis discovered *Phantastes, a* faerie *Romance* by George MacDonald; it would forever change his life. Jack recalls his reaction. "It was as though the voice which had called to me from the world's end were now speaking...I saw the bright shadow coming out of the book into the real world and resting there, transforming all common things and yet itself unchanged." (Lewis 181). He found that all these experiences led him into existing in two contrary worlds. The first of these worlds was shaped by myth and poetry, the other by a shallow rationalism. To him the rational world was godless, prosaic and logical. The other inflamed his imagination and sparked what Lewis would describe throughout his life as pangs of longing or what he also called, "Joy." He wrote, "Nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless." (Jacobs 49) During his early schooling, the lessons he learned, both harsh and enjoyable, would become a part of Lewis's vision of learning.

The Foundation: Reading and Rereading

In attempting to establish a vision for education in the mind of C.S. Lewis, it is important to ask the question, "Where would Lewis begin?" It seems clear that Lewis would begin where he himself began, reading and rereading old books. Jack was a voracious reader from his early childhood. Joe Walsh, a Magdalane College historian stated, "He was the best-read man I have ever met, almost too well read" (Heck 18). According to Jack's diary, during his first years as an Oxford Don, he read over 400 volumes, approximately a book every two days (Heck 146). The scope of his reading was also amazing. He read in multiple genres including prose, poetry, philosophy, novels, drama, opera and history.

Lewis believed that reading great books (especially old ones) was the foundation for any meaningful learning and human growth. Lewis was frustrated by the modern belief that old books should be read only by professionals. He had a special dislike for professional critics and was convinced that a student would always learn more by going straight to the source rather than reading what the critics have written about them. "It has always therefore been one of my main endeavours as a teacher to persuade the young that first-hand knowledge is not only more worth acquiring than second-hand knowledge, but is usually much easier and more delightful." (Lewis 200). For Lewis, if a reader had a choice between an old book and a new one, he should always choose the old. The reason is that old books help to correct the mistakes that humans make in their modern culture. He believed that every age has its own particular blind spots. "None of us can fully escape this blindness, but we shall certainly increase it, and weaken our guard against it, if we read only modern books" (Lewis 203). He was convinced that modern writings were still on trial and had not been given enough time to stand under the scrutiny of the great tradition of Christian thought. His encouragement to readers was that, after finishing a modern book, they should not read another until they have read an old one (Lewis 201).

Another reason why Lewis believed in reading old books was to confirm what he called "Mere Christianity." It is easy for modern man to be discouraged with the divisions that seem to permeate the modern church. What old books do is help the reader to see that over the many centuries there has been a consistent and unmoving set of beliefs that all Christians believe to be true. Though we may be dispirited by the divisions that are present, the great writings of the past unfold for us a faith of an, "immensely formidable unity" (Lewis 204). Lewis was convinced that the truly educated man or woman, could only be so by entering into the 'Great Conversation' which has been going on for centuries.

For Lewis, it is not only important to read old books but to read them again and again. As he discovered books that made an impact on him, he would read them multiple times. Dante, MacDonald, Milton, and Virgil were among his favorites. Lewis believed that re-reading books was one sign of a truly literary person. In his book *An Experiment in Criticism,* Lewis compares the literary person with the unliterary:

> "The sure mark of an unliterary man is that he considers 'I've read it already' to be a conclusive argument against reading a work. We have known women who remembered a novel so dimly that they had to stand for half an hour in the library skimming through it before they were certain they had once read it. But the moment they became certain, they rejected it immediately. It was for them dead, like a burnt-out match, an old railway ticket, or yesterday's paper; they had already used it. Those who read great works, on the other hand, will read the same work ten, twenty or thirty times during the course of their life" (2).

The great books according to Lewis were those that would not release the reader after they were finished with them. Each time a person rereads a great book they are moved and educated in new and fresh ways. He likens the literary person's reading experience as a momentous event, to be compared with love, religion or grief

(Lewis 3). For Lewis, reading, reading well, reading great books and rereading them again and again, was the first step in the life of a true learner.

The Importance of History

Lewis's love of old books was a consequence of his belief in the importance of history. For Lewis, "The educated man habitually, almost without noticing it, sees the present as something that grows out of a long perspective of centuries" (241). Lewis believed that knowledge of history was a vital need in education. He taught that humans need something to set beside the present to compare and contrast ideas and assumptions. It is impossible to know the future and individuals are unaware of their present blind spots. We need something to help us evaluate our present beliefs and see if they have merit. He states, "A man who has lived in many places is not likely to be deceived by the local errors of his native village: the scholar has lived in many times and is therefore immune from the great cataract of nonsense that pours from the press and the microphone of his own age" (Lewis 59).

Lewis was concerned that the more a culture became disconnected from its past, the more susceptible it was to being deceived. This is the point that Lewis clearly makes in *The Last Battle.* In this story the Narnians are deceived that Aslan (the great lion king) has returned to Narnia. The Ape called Shift has perpetrated this deception by dressing Puzzle the donkey in a Lion's skin. The Narnians are exploited, enslaved and some even killed. They were deceived, not because the deception was well perpetrated. It was because they had forgotten the stories of Aslan and his true nature. Often the Narnians justified the evil being done by quoting the old saying "He's not a tame Lion." What they had forgotten is that he was also good. Generations had passed since Aslan had appeared and their history was the only possible defense against the rising evil.

Lewis was opposed to historicism, the practice of drawing metaphysical or theological conclusions from the past. The result of this practice is to revise history in the image of present beliefs. Lewis believed that history was objective; it could reveal truth and correct present misunderstandings. In *The Pilgrims Regress,* the pilgrim John finally finds his way to the hermit. The hermit is the personification of history in the story and through him John finally is helped to see that Mother Kirk (the Gospel) is the way across the chasm and the true fulfillment of John's longing. It is history that finally brings John to the place he needed to be to fulfill his deepest desire. For Lewis, Christianity is a story rooted in history. The importance of teaching students to think historically cannot be overstated. The truly educated person understands and studies the past. They are able to evaluate the present and make decisions for the future. Without it there is no true learning.

Receptivity

Lewis was convinced that there was something that preceded history or the love of great books. He believed that the primary approach to a work of great literature or a piece of art or to any true learning was the quality of receptivity in the heart of the learner. It is only the person who is receptive to truth who will ultimately find it. This quality of openness finds its way into almost all of Lewis's writings. He felt that this was the key to truth, education and the whole of life. It is not the critical reader whom he identifies as the literary person, but the receptive one. It is not the cynical person, who discovers fairylands, but those exhibiting a childlike character to receive what is there. Concerning the reading of books, Lewis felt that a "critical" approach to reading had, "prevented many a happy unions of a good reader with a good book." He described it as "a dragon watch with unenchanted eye" (Lewis 127-128). He believed the preeminent mark of a literary person was his ability to receive what the author was trying to say. His concern was that, "We are breeding up a race of young people who are as solemn as the brutes…they have not fairly and squarely laid their minds open, without preconception, to the works they read" (Lewis 12). The first demand of a literary and educated person is surrender. We must look, listen and receive what is there. It must be made clear that Lewis is not saying that receptivity is a passive activity; in fact it is the opposite. The person who is surrendered is using his imagination to its fullest extent. Surrender is not inactivity but obedience to what is being received (19).

Receptivity is one of crucial themes in Lewis's fiction, especially in the *Chronicles of Narnia*. From the beginning of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,* the Pevensie children, Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy are open to adventures. Due to the dangers of World War II, the children are sent by their parents to live with their uncle Kirk in a large old house in the country. From the moment they arrive, the children begin to explore and talk about all the adventures they will have. Before they even discover the Narnian world they are receptive to the world they are in.

It is Lucy, the youngest, whose openness is rewarded again and again. Lucy is the first to find her way into Narnia. It is Lucy who is the first to see Aslan in the story of *Prince Caspian*. Lucy often sees what others can't because she is open to what may come. Others also (mostly children), have this same openness and are rewarded for their receptivity. Caspian's openness and belief in the old stories of Narnia is rewarded by being crowned the king of Narnia. Digory and Polly in *The Magician's Nephew,* are also rewarded for their receptive hearts. Both are given the opportunity to see Narnia created by the song of Aslan. There are many other examples, but it is Reepicheep, the talking mouse, who exhibits this quality more than all others. He is open to all that Aslan has for him, whatever the cost might be. In his infancy he is given a prophecy that he will see his heart's desire. His deepest longing is to see and enter into Aslan's country. He is afraid of nothing and is the only character in all the stories who is allowed to enter Aslan's country without tasting death.

Lewis not only describes receptivity in a positive light but also reveals the stories of those who are unreceptive. These people are unable to see what is before them. They are often limited in their vision and frustrated with their circumstances. Edmund's sin, in *The Lion, the Witch and Wardrobe*, fills him with dread at the mention of Aslan. His vision is hindered by his selfishness and lustful desire for Turkish Delight. Peter, Trumpkin and Susan's refusal to believe that Lucy has seen Aslan in the story of *Prince Caspian* causes the children to wander aimlessly and suffer unneeded hardships. Eustace's lack of openness makes his journey miserable when he is magically transported to Narnia with Edmond and Lucy in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. In *The Magician's Nephew,* Uncle Andrew is blind to the beauty of Narnia's creation because his mind is filled with exploitation and power. Rather than hearing Aslan's song, he only hears a deafening roar.

The most telling example of the refusal to be receptive are the dwarves in *The Last Battle*. The dwarves are described as an untrusting race. They are unwilling to take sides in the last great battle for Narnia. They continually proclaim, "The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs." In the end, their critical and untrusting natures make them unable to see that they have passed into the paradise of Aslan's country, full of beauty and abundance. Even when Aslan places before them a feast fit for a king, they only see hay, dirt and darkness. For Lewis there is no learning apart from surrender. Openness equals learning. To be closed is to remain in a small world, cold and dead. In *The Great Divorce*, the damned are described this way, "Good beats upon the damned incessantly as sound waves beat on the ears of the deaf, but they cannot receive it. Their fists are clenched, their teeth are clenched, their eyes fast shut...they cannot open their hands for gifts, or their mouth for food, or their eyes to see" (Lewis 139).

Without a receptive heart, learning becomes an impossibility. No amount of modern pedagogy or new classroom management techniques can force a student to learn. Only through openness and surrender can true education take place. In the classroom, receptivity begins with the teacher. Teachers who don't exhibit this quality should never expect to make any true impact on their students. The best teachers are always learners first. In *Irrigating Deserts*, Joel Heck notes, "...the students who came to learn, who came to be challenged and to grow, with some notable exceptions, soon discovered flowers blooming in the deserts of their minds" (131). For Lewis, enchantment is the first responsibility of a teacher.

Myth and Story

This leads us to Lewis's belief in the importance of myth and story as a basis for human growth and learning. For C.S. Lewis, story and myth were the keys that could unlock the deep magic of life. It was his love for myth that both hindered his acceptance of Christianity, and in the end was the cause of his acceptance. His love for mythology ignited in him pangs of longing for another world. Before his conversion Lewis had trouble reconciling his love of myth and his materialist philosophy of life. It was through the help of two friends, Hugo Dyson and J.R.R. Tolkien, that Lewis overcame his last hurdle to Christian faith. Though Lewis loved myth he believed that they were, "'lies'--even if they were beautiful, 'breathed through silver'" (Jacobs, 143). Lewis believed that myths were nothing but 'Christina dreams and wish-fulfillment fantasies' (Jacobs 145). What Tolkien and Dyson challenged Lewis to consider was that if myths were just dreams and desires in the human heart, where did these dreams originate? If the materialist is right in his view of the world, why do all humans have these same desires? Why are they moved by the same transcendent stories?

Jack began to contemplate the possibility that myth had the capacity of revealing and communicating truths that are part of our deep human longing. In fact they have the ability to communicate these truths in ways that are unique only to itself. Lewis writes, "It is only while receiving the myth as a story that you experience the principle concretely...What flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality (truth is always about something, but reality is that *about which truth is)*...myth is the isthmus which connects the peninsular world of thought with that vast continent we really belong to" (Lewis 66). This became a foundational presupposition in his defense of the Christian faith. Concerning the importance of myth as it relates to human longing, Lewis writes,

> Do what they will, then, we remain conscious of a desire which no natural happiness will satisfy. But is there any reason to suppose that reality offers any satisfaction to it? Nor does the being hungry prove that we have bread. But I think it may be urged that this misses the point. A man's physical hunger does not prove that that man will get any bread; he may die of starvation on a raft in the Atlantic. But surely a man's hunger does prove that he comes of a race which repairs its body by eating, and inhabits a world where eatable substances exist (pg. 32).

Lewis realized that in a profound sense, Christianity was a myth. It was a story that both explains and connects us to our deepest desires. The difference between Christianity and all other myths is that it is also fact. "The old myth of the Dying God, *without ceasing to be myth,* comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It happens--at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences" (66). He goes on to say that in this myth that became fact, "God is more than a god, not less; Christ is more than Balder, not less. We must not be ashamed of the mythical radiance resting on our theology" (Lewis 67). It was this insight that finally toppled his last arguments against the Christian faith. Alan Jacob comments, "He (Lewis) became a Christian not through accepting a particular set of arguments but through learning to read a story the right way."

The importance of myth to education is inseparably linked to Lewis's understanding of the overarching importance of story. In the epilogue of *An Experiment in Criticism*, Lewis poses this question. "What then is the good of--what is even the defense for --occupying our hearts with stories of what never happened and entering vicariously into feelings which we should try to avoid having in our own person" (137)? Lewis's answer is that story and myth help us to be more than ourselves. All humans see the world through their individual point of view. What story does is enlarge our nature. It allows us to see with other eyes. Our imagination is enlarged by experiencing the imagination of another. We can feel, taste and touch, while still remaining ourselves. Story and myth have the ability to correct our "provincialism" and heal the "loneliness" of our hearts (Lewis 138). He states, "...the specific value or good of literature considered as Logos," is that, "it admits us to experiences other than our own." In myth, it strikes to the very core of human desire. It grabs us and never lets us go. He concludes by saying,

> My own eyes are not enough for me, I will see through those of others. Reality, even seen through the eyes of many, is not enough. I will see what others have invented. Even the eyes of all humanity are not enough...Literary experience heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individuality...But in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do" (Lewis 140-141).

For C.S. Lewis, story and myth were foundational in teaching students not only how to read correctly but how to understand what it means to be human. This is one reason why his fiction is so popular. Readers fall in love with Jesus as they fall in love with the lion Aslan. They realize that they themselves are dragons because they see their own dragon nature in Eustace's transformation into one. They are taught that childlike receptivity often opens a doorway into another world outside their own. Talking animals give them insight into what it means to be a talking human being. They realize through reading *That Hideous Strength* that man's desire to control nature will ultimately turn on humanity and devour those seeking its control. In *Till We Have Faces* (Lewis, 1956), we are given an unforgettable lesson that selfish love first becomes a god and finally a demon.

The Search for Joy

"...there came to him from beyond the wood a sweetness and a pang so piercing that instantly he forgot his father's house, and his mother, and the fear of the landlord, and the burden of the rules" (Lewis 8).

This is the reaction to John's first vision of the island in *The Pilgrim's Regress*, Lewis's allegory about his conversion to Christianity. Jack's vision of education would be incomplete without discussing his understanding of joy. For him, it was the beginning of the journey. Without it there would have been no need to start. In his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy,* Lewis reveals that his journey through education, great books, friendships and finally, Christianity, was driven by his search for this one thing called "joy." C.S. Lewis defines "joy" as, "...an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction" (18). His first experience with this pang of longing was when his brother Warren made for Jack a miniature garden composed of the lid of biscuit tin, with twigs, moss and flowers. He states that this, "was the first beauty I ever knew" (Lewis 7). This artificial garden awakened something in the heart of Lewis that would remain with him for the rest of his life. The experience was deepened one day when Jack was outside and looked at a bush in bloom. He recalled, "...there suddenly arose without warning, ...the memory of that earlier morning at the Old House...It is difficult to find words strong enough for the sensation which came over me...It was a sensation, of course of desire; but desire for "what" (Lewis 16)? This pang of joy happened many other times in the life of Lewis and became, in some ways, the pursuit of his life.

But what is the nature of this 'joy' and what does it have to do with education? Joy, for Lewis is the driving force in a human's life. As a Christian he believed that eternity was etched into the heart of man. We were made for pleasure and fulfillment of all our desire. The problem is not that our desire is too strong but that it is too weak. In his sermon "The Weight of Glory," Lewis states, "We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased" (26).

It is this longing that entices us to begin the journey. Lewis believed that if human beings were made for eternal glory then the desire for heaven is already in us. If the learner ultimately trusts in something other than the real end for which he was made, then life will end in disappointment. The true learner must understand that the beauty and joy that he seeks is not in the things he learns. It only comes through them. It is not truth we seek but a person. It is not the knowledge of a subject that fulfills our deepest desires but the knowledge of God. If the world around us is mistaken for the thing itself, Lewis says, "they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers" (Lewis 31). For Lewis, all things we pursue in life, especially in learning are only the 'scent' of what we seek. There is, "an echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited" (31). He laments over education by stating, "...our whole education has been directed to silencing this shy, persistent, inner voice; almost all our modern philosophies have been devised to convince us that the good of man is to be found on this earth" (Lewis 31).

Lewis again teases out this idea in his works of fiction. As was stated earlier, *The Pilgrim's Regress,* is the story about a man name John who is seeking to recapture his vision of the island. The stab of joy that he is given by its sight inspires him to seek his vision through different lands, ideas, sufferings and even lust. What John finds is that his desire wasn't for the island but for the landlord himself, *The Chronicles of Narnia* are filled with longing. Ultimately, Aslan himself fulfills longing as the children are finally ushered into Aslan's country. In *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe,* Lewis relates this experience when Mr. Beaver tells them that Aslan is on the move. "...At the name of Aslan each one of the children felt something jump in its inside. Edmund felt a sensation of mysterious horror. Peter felt suddenly brave and adventurous. Susan felt as if some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music had just floated by her. And Lucy got the felling you have when you wake up in the morning and realize that it is the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer" (68). The reaction of the four children at the name of Aslan was the very feelings that Lewis had lived with all his life. To Jack, joy is just a pointer, valuable as it is, to something "other" and something "outer" (Jacobs 238). Education in the mind of Lewis was always one of enchantment. His hope in his books and the classroom was to incite this desire in his students. His goal was to set them on the path to fill the ache of their hearts.

The Abolition of Man

C.S. Lewis's clearest and most prophetic statements about education are found in his book, *The Abolition of Man.* In these essays he describes the trajectory of modern education, and there describes the dangers to learning and finally the complete abolition of mankind. *The Abolition of Man* was a response that Lewis made to a book that was given to him as a gift by its publisher. The book was written by Alec King and Martin

Ketley. Its title was *The Control of Language.* Lewis refers to this book as "The Green Book," so not to embarrass the authors.

Lewis attacks the book and contends that it not only undermines true learning but ultimately dehumanizes the learner. In the first chapter, "Men without Chests," Lewis is troubled by the authors' intent to teach children that when they read sentences containing a "predicate of value" it is really only speaking about the emotional state of the speaker, and statements of value are ultimately unimportant. Lewis believes that this teaching undermines the very nature of learning. He states, "...a boy thinks he is "doing" his "English prep" and has no notion that ethics, theology, and politics are all at stake." (18).

His contention is that it places an assumption in the mind of the student who unknowingly begins to apply it to all of life. It is the assumption that there is no objective value in the world, and truth ultimately depends upon our emotions. For Lewis this teaching cuts out the soul of the learner. If there is no objective truth or value in the world, then there is ultimately nothing to have sentiments about. The goal of modern education is to protect the learner from false sentiments, but for Lewis, true education is the inculcation of right sentiments. In his famous line he states, "For every one pupil who needs to be guarded from a weak excess of sensibility there are three who need to be awakened from the slumber of cold vulgarity. The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts" (Lewis 27).

Educators must teach students that truth is transcendent and unchangeable. There is value that exists outside of human sentiment. The role of the true educator is to help the student connect the right sentiment with the right truth. He utilizes the teaching of St. Augustine to prove his point. Augustine believed in an "ordered love," "in which every object is accorded that kind of degree of love which is appropriate to it" (Lewis 29). He uses Aristotle as an example, "The little human animal will not at first have the right responses. It must be trained to feel pleasure, liking, disgust, and hatred at those things which really are pleasant, likable, disgusting, and hateful." He then quotes Plato stating that the true student is one,

> …who would see most clearly whatever was amiss in ill-made works of man or ill-grown works of nature, and with a just distaste would blame and hate the ugly even from the earliest of years and would give delighted praise to beauty, receiving it into his soul and being nourished by it, so that he becomes a man of gentle heart. All this before he is of an age to reason; so that when Reason at length comes to him, then, bred as he has been, he will hold out his hands in welcome and recognize her because of the affinity he bears to her (Lewis 29).

The right education upholds the doctrine of objective value and teaches the learner to respond with sentiments, which are in harmony to that value. He calls this objective truth the *tao* and uses this term through the rest of the book. For Lewis the good teacher trains the student to think, feel and act in accordance with truth. He comments, "The head rules the belly through the chest …of emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments. The Chest—Magnanimity—Sentiment—these are the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man" (35-36).

Without this training Lewis believes that human beings will be sucked into a world of relativism. They will have no anchor or foundation to make any significant decisions. There will be nothing to die for, and more importantly, nothing to live for. He concludes his chapter by saying,

> And all the time—such is the tragic-comedy of our situation—we continue to clamour for those very qualities we are rendering impossible. You can hardly open a periodical without coming across the statement that what our civilization needs is more "drive," or dynamism, or self-sacrifice, or "creativity." In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful. (Lewis 36-37)

In the next stage of his argument, Lewis contends that the teaching of the "Green Book" will end in the destruction of the society that propagates it. The goal of modern education is to debunk and deconstruct traditional values. In the absence of transcendent values, society and those who live in it are left with no consistent means of decision-making. Society is bereft of any moral imperatives, only individual feelings toward decisions. He rejects the idea that this can come from human instinct. Instincts are often in conflict with one another. It is an argument that always turns in on itself, and ends again in relativism. This leaves society with the impossible task of creating its own moral code. Lewis states, "The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than of imagining a new primary colour, or, indeed, of creating a new sun and a new sky for it to move in" (Lewis 56).

Unless education begins with the concept of objective value, something 'outside' and 'other,' students can learn no sense of honor or sacrifice. Unless there is something good worth dying for, there can be no good worth living for. For Lewis, as long as transcendent values exist then an open mind is a good thing, but openness about ultimate foundations is "idiocy" (59). He states, "Outside the *tao* there is no ground for criticizing either the *tao* or anything else" (59).

Without the *tao,* and the values it promotes, society must jettison it completely and create its own system. This leads Lewis to discuss man's conquest of nature. He believed that mankind's power over nature always leads toward a minority of men having power over the majority. All technology is an exhibition of human power over nature. The inventions of airplanes, telephones and contraceptives are examples. These inventions, by their nature, exhibit the power of some people over others. People become limited by the decisions of others. Contraceptives are a good example. Future generations are subject to the decisions of those who use them today. One generation's power over nature will dictate the freedom, capacity and decisions of future generations (Lewis 67). Lewis writes, "In reality, of course, if any one age really attains, by eugenics and scientific education, the power to make its descendants what it please, all men who live after it are the patients of that power" (68).

For Lewis, man's desire to conquer nature through scientific materialism will ultimately mean that the billions of people who will follow in future generations are subject to a small minority. Lewis declares, "Each new power won by man is a power over man as well. Each advance leaves him weaker as well as stronger. In every victory, besides being the general who triumphs, he is also the prisoner who follows the triumphal car" (69). This minority become 'man-moulders,' shaping future generations in the way they please (71). Lewis argues that the first step is to control nature but this will lead to the inevitable conclusion of controlling human nature.

Lewis reveals this process, again and again in his works of fiction. In *That Hideous Strength*, the N.I.C.E. organization has decided to create society in its own image. The desire for power ends in the control of all mankind. Beauty, virtue, community and humanity itself become expendable in the process of controlling nature. In the end those who attempted to control nature were devoured by the nature they tried to control. In *The Lion, the Witch and Wardrobe*, Jadis's lust for control, results in enslavement of Narnia. Her rule, rather than creating good, makes it winter all the time (with no Christmas). Her lust for power manifests itself in taking away life by turning creatures into stone. In *The Magician's Nephew,* Uncle Andrew rejects traditional morality because, as a scientist, he should not be bound by such conventions. He sees only the exploitation of nature to gain further power and ultimately is willing to sacrifice Digory and Polly for that power. The land of Charn is another good example. When Digory and Polly are transported to this world they find that is completely destroyed. No life exists. It is a world that Jadis destroys by uttering 'the deplorable word." Her desire for power and control was more important than life itself. She was willing to annihilate all life to maintain her authority.

Education that refuses to maintain a belief in objective value will train a generation of people who will never ask, "what is good?" but only, "what do I want?" They will be motivated by their pleasure. Lewis states, "…those who stand outside all judgments of value cannot have any ground for preferring one of their own impulses to another except the emotional strength of that impulse" (75). Students will treat all things as mere nature, to be controlled and exploited. This will continue to devolve until humans must be reduced and controlled just as nature is. It is, as Lewis says, "...the magician's bargain: give up our soul, get power in return. But once our souls…have been given up, the power thus conferred will not belong to us. We shall in fact be the slaves and puppets of that to which we have given our souls" (80). In his book *The Narnian,* Alan Jacobs sums up Lewis's concern this way:

> Our model of modernity—makes the universe silent and vague, so we come to resemble it. It shrinks the scope of human action, mistrusting or debunking the heroic and the noble; we shrink correspondingly. Yes, we project forward a great image of Progress to console ourselves, but it is only an image. Nevertheless, by investing so much in it and so little ourselves, we make it more and more real, ourselves

> less and less until we confront the possibility that, in the end, it will replace us: all that will be left is a fiction, and though human beings will physically continue, humanity itself will have been abolished (174).

The Purpose of Education

So what is the purpose of education in the mind of Lewis? What is the goal of true learning? I believe that Lewis would answer this question by saying, "The purpose and goal of education is to discover and grow in our humanity. Lewis believed that human beings were on a trajectory, either growing toward an ever-increasing glory or an ever-increasing misery. Lewis was convinced that human beings were not mere mortals. In *The Weight of Glory,* He states, "There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilisations--these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit--immortal horrors or everlasting splendours" (Lewis 46). In Lewis mind, we were made for more than this world has to offer.

Unfortunately, we are not what we should be. Like Eustace, we find that we are dragons and that it is impossible to "undragon" ourselves. We must come to the one who can pierce the dragon skin, wash us clean and clothe us with a new humanity. Education for Lewis cannot be separated from this journey. Our learning must be a journey to fulfill the longing in our hearts. He says, "...our longing to be reunited with something in the universe which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside...To be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honour beyond all our merits and also the healing of that old ache" (Lewis 42).

He also believed that the Christian faith or Christian worldview was the best matrix for understanding truth. In his essay, "Is Theology Poetry," Lewis writes, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun is risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else" (140). The student who has the right worldview is able to learn from the world and correctly interpret it. It allows the student to enjoy the natural world without losing the world that exists outside of it. For Lewis, Christian belief didn't deny scientific knowledge. Though there might arise difficulties in what science theorized and Christianity taught, the student was still much better off holding this worldview as opposed to scientific materialism.

Lewis taught that the first role of education was not to train students vocationally, rather it was meant to teach them how to think correctly. He believed that schools should help students think and utilize their imaginations. He was concerned about the lack of teaching critical thinking skills in schools. This is revealed in professor Kirk's question at the beginning and end of the Narnia Chronicles. After helping Peter and Susan reason through Lucy's story about Narnia, he states, "I wonder what they do teach them at these schools" (Lewis 50). Lewis didn't deny the importance of vocational training, but for him it was more important what kind of person a student would become than what vocation they would choose to pursue.

Lewis was convinced that education must support learning. Education, to him, was a context where learning could take place but it was not a guarantee. Schools must establish a culture where true learning can flourish. He believed that teachers had the power to either be a detriment to learning or a facilitator of it. His experiences as a student and a teacher remain a good example of this.

Many other conclusions could be drawn from studying the life and writings of C.S. Lewis. The importance of friends, imagination, poetry, mentors and the Medieval worldview are all subjects that Lewis would add to his educational approach. The writing and thought of C.S. Lewis has impacted the Christian faith for over seven decades. His fiction, poetry and apologetics are an invitation to all who care about learning and life. As a student, he learned how to think, read, imagine and write. As a teacher, he inspired others to receive what God was offering through the abundance of life. As a writer he allowed us to see with "other eyes," what the world and God was about. He was convinced that his role was to weave a spell that would open his students' and readers' eyes to a world beyond their own. In the end, the goal of learning is in finding ourselves as we come to know the one who our longing seeks. "Overcome us that, so overcome, we may be ourselves..." (Lewis 113).

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MENTAL PICTURES:
SHAPES AND COLORS IN THE THOUGHT OF G. K. CHESTERTON

Dr. William Isley, Lighthouse Community Fellowship

If a modern-day time traveler were to set his machine back to, say, 1893, he could have visited London's Slade School of Art. There, amidst the busy efforts of the students attempting to draw masterpieces to please their master, he would have found a large, dull-looking boy in his late teens, idly staring into space. The absent-minded, empty-eyed stare might have prompted our time traveler to exclaim, "Why there is nothing on his mind!"

That boy would have been G. K. Chesterton, and our traveler would have been both right and wrong in his assessment of Chesterton's mental activity. He would have been wrong, because the boy was not idly wasting his time by daydreaming instead of doing his work. In a much deeper sense he would have been frightfully right that nothing was on the boy's mind. Chesterton's mind was filled with fears about nothing. He was desperately trying to believe that world was not nothing and that his mind was not all. He was, like Bunyan's Christian, doing battle with Apollyon on the road to the Celestial City; and for Chesterton the beast's other name was solipsism, the terrifying final deadly fruit of radical subjectivism.

In the fourth chapter of his Autobiography, which bears the significant title, "How to Be a Lunatic," Chesterton describes his youthful struggle against solipsism. It was for him a period in which his "eyes were turned inwards rather than outwards" (97). He claims that he could have, if he had so chosen, "… cut myself off from the whole life of the universe" (100). Significantly too, Chesterton writes of this period, "… the whole mood was overpowered and oppressed with a sort of congestion of the imagination. … I had an overpowering impulse to record or draw ideas and images; plunging deeper and deeper as in a blind spiritual suicide" (89). This allusion to drawing ideas and images directs us to an important entry point into Chesterton's way of thinking. Although he is not what would normally be considered a systematic thinker, his writings exhibit a marked consistency of thought by means of a series of recurrent images. In order to understand how Chesterton thinks; therefore, it is best to follow these series of images.

Chesterton's epistemology was forged in the crucible of his struggle to maintain sanity against the twin errors of Impressionism and rationalism, both of which represented subjectivism for him because in them the human mind created its own reality rather than entering into reality. His own theory of knowledge cannot be fully appreciated without understanding how he perceived these two philosophies and the dangers inherent in them, because his epistemology was a balance of the two, which ultimately transcended both of them.

The previous references to insanity point to the need for epistemological sanity. For Chesterton that sanity entails three crucial elements: externality, commonality and Christian orthodoxy. An examination of the contrasting images he uses to critique as modes of madness both Impressionism in *The Man Who Was Thursday* and rationalism in *The Flying Inn* will simultaneously demonstrate the validity of an approach to Chesterton that follows the lead of his mental pictures and how he viewed the dangers of subjectivism.

MODES OF MADNESS

IMPRESSIONISM

In *The Man Who Was Thursday*, Gabriel Syme has a vision of Impressionism that brings together all of Chesterton's major images of that movement. Syme's walk through the forest during a brightly sunlit day is a "plunge into a dim pool" that was "full of shattered sunlight and shaken shadows," and looked like a "shuddering veil." The figures of the other men "swelled into sunlight and then faded into formless night." It was a "bewildering woodland" in which everything was "only a glimpse, the glimpse always unforeseen, and always forgotten." Finally, by an effort of will, Syme is able to "fling off this last and worst of his fancies" and to wake from the "evil dream" (Chap. 10). The combined effect of these images is to paint a picture that has the temporary nature of a passing mood, the shapelessness of chaos, and the confusion of a nightmare—Chesterton's threefold condemnation of Impressionism.

The critical image is that of a temporary mood. For Chesterton, Impressionism is ultimately bondage to a subjective fancy of the human mind that ends in self-destructive solipsistic skepticism. "Impressionism is skepticism. It means believing one's more immediate impressions at the expense of one's more permanent and positive generalizations. It puts what one notices above what one knows" (Blake, 137-138).

Because impressions are temporary—one only has to change one's point of view for them to change—things appear to lose their shape. They appear insubstantial and unreal.

> I mean the thing meant something from one standpoint; but its mark was that the smallest change of standpoint made it unmeaning and unthinkable—a foolish joke. … a nocturne by Whistler of mist on the Thames is either a masterpiece or it is nothing; it is either a nocturne or a nightmare of childish nonsense. Made in a certain mood, viewed through a certain temperament, conceived under certain conventions, it may be, it often is, an unreplaceable poem, a vision that may never be seen again. But the moment it ceases to be a splendid picture it ceases to be a picture at all (Victorian Age, 219-220).

Chesterton regularly uses the word "delicate" to describe this effect of Impressionism and its companion Aestheticism.[1] Their paintings and writings make sense only from one point of view. Abandon that standpoint, and the whole thing crumbles. Its reality is fragile or delicate.

Impressionism's bondage to the whims of human fancy results in a loss of color as well. Syme plunges into a dim pool and a world of shadows. It is a "mere chaos of chiaroscuro," in contrast to the clear daylight outside the wood (Thursday, Chap. 10). Even those aspects of Impressionism that are colorful are portrayed by Chesterton as temporary and, hence, insubstantial. Whistler only "drops a spark of perfect yellow or violet into some glooming pool of the nocturnal Thames" (Watts, 122). The *fin de siècle* had only a few "flickers" of light (Victorian Age, 218). Their colors are merely

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[1] G.F. Watts "has seen the mists of Impressionism settle down over the world, making it weird and delicate…" Chesterton, *Watts*, p. 40. Walter Pater preached the new paganism "delicately." Chesterton, "The Paganism of Mr. Lowes Dickinson," *Heretics*, p. 151. Chesterton uses the terms Impressionism, Aestheticism and Decadence almost interchangeably when speaking of their epistemological effects.

"brilliant," "splashed" on, or "sparkling." They sacrifice "form to tint, the cloudland of the mere colorist" (Blake, 17-18). These images show a lack of depth to Impressionistic color. It is only painted on; it does not appear to be a part of things; it is dissociated from reality.

In Chesterton's mind there are three disastrous consequences of the epistemology of Impressionism. First, because reality is only as each individual perceives it, there can be no common vision. The lack of a common vision means the end of a society based upon shared characteristics and concerns. Secondly, because reality is in a constant state of flux due to its total dependence on our impressions, which are continuously changing because of our shifting standpoints, the need for romance, that mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar, will be either unfulfilled or perverted. Divorced from the common and permanent; that is, divorced from reality in Chesterton's view, the pleasures of romance become fleeting and seek the exotic and not the ordinary. The third consequence of Impressionistic epistemology, according to Chesterton, is madness.

Particularly crucial for Chesterton's critique of Impressionism is the relationship between the loss of a common vision and madness.[2] The Impressionist poets, in contrast to the romancers, who seek to give voice to the shared desires and daydreams of the common man, profess to stand "as solitary artistic souls apart from the public (Handful, 144). The poet does not seek to serve and understand his fellow man; rather, he bids all others to take his peculiar standpoint and to sympathize with his unique personality.

The Impressionist's desire to be isolated from his fellow man leads him to seek an escape from the external world at large.

> Mr. Moore … does fundamentally dislike being asked to believe in the actual existence of other people. Like his master Pater and all the aesthetes, his real quarrel with life is that it is not a dream that can be moulded by the dreamer. It is not the dogma of the reality of the other world that troubles him, but the dogma of the reality of this world (Heretics, 125).

Unfortunately, the aesthete's dream world often turns into a nightmare. Aubrey Beardsley can render "a certain brief mood," which we all have felt under the "white deathly lights of Piccadilly with the black hollow of heaven behind shiny hats or painted faces: a horrible impression that all mankind are masks" (Victorian Age, 225-226). The common sane man, with his strong convictions of the reality of this world, shakes off the nightmare, but the Impressionist, who glories in the temporary mood and has only the reality of his impressions, goes mad.

As we have seen, Chesterton describes his brush with madness as the feeling that "I had projected the universe from within" (Autobiography, 88). The error of Impressionism, then, lay in a kind of belief in an absolute power of creativity in the human imagination that cuts itself off from the reality of the external world.

This deification of the human imagination not only cuts the Impressionist off from the real world outside, but, in Chesterton's opinion, it cuts him off from the reality of how the human brain works as a whole. “Impressionism means shutting up all of one’s nine million organs and avenues of appreciation except one. Impressionism means that, whereas Nature has made our senses and impressions support each other, we desire to suppress one part of perception and employ the other” (Lunacy, 114). Impressionism ends in madness because it only uses one lobe of the brain—the imagination. Chesterton’s judgment on Oscar Wilde can stand for his judgment on Impressionist epistemology as a whole. “His frightful fallacy was that he would not see that there is reason in everything, even in religion and morality” (Handful, 146).

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[2] For a solid exposition of the theme of madness in Chesterton's writings, see Russell Kirk, "Chesterton, Madmen, and Madhouses," in *Myth, Allegory and Gospel: An Interpretation of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton and Charles Williams*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1974), pp. 33-51.

RATIONALISM

At first glance, Chesterton’s contention that rationalism has the same self-destructive tendencies as Impressionism seems highly unlikely. The two movements possessed markedly distinct characteristics. Impressionism exalted the imagination; rationalism, reason and logic. The aesthetes often spoke as if they were amoral. The rationalists, on the other hand, were generally very moralistic social reformers. The Impressionists lived a Bohemian lifestyle; whereas, the rationalists were often highly respectable, almost stodgy, members of middle class society. In short, what fellowship had Oscar Wilde with Robert Blatchford?

Lord Ivywood in *The Flying Inn* is Chesterton’s prime example of rationalism and its descent into madness. Ivywood is a sponsor of the rather absurd Misysra Ammon. He is attracted to Misysra for two reasons. “One was that there was no subject on which the little Turk could not instantly produce a theory. The other was that though the theories were crowded, they were consistent (Flying Inn, Chap. 22.). The fictional character of Misysra is, then, an example of the Chestertonian rationalist madman. According to Chesterton, “the strongest and most unmistakable mark of madness is this combination between a logical completeness and a spiritual contraction” (Orthodoxy, 31-32).

Ivywood, perhaps because he, unlike Misysra, is attached to no religious tradition, shows the thoroughly destructive tendencies of pure rationalism. He is regularly described as a “pure intellect” and a “lucid dogmatist” whose “brain is clear” (Flying Inn, Chaps, 11, 16, 12). Patrick Dalroy says of Ivywood to Joan Brett, “You will never understand a man like that till you understand that he can have a devotion to a definition—even a new definition” (Chap. 12). One of the chief functions of logic is, of course, to provide proper definitions. Ivywood’s rationalism, which seeks an internal logical consistency at any cost, produces a love for geometrical images, which Chesterton associates with rationalism. When he remodels a wing of his mansion, it is “featureless and stiff” (Chap. 12) and is decorated with “patterns” in which “Ivywood had preserved and repeated the principle that no animal shape must appear” (Chap. 16).

The world that Ivywood prefers is a world shaped by principle and logic with “no trace of ze Man form. No trace of ze Animal form” (Chap. 20). It is the artificially perfected and dehumanized world of geometry. Ivywood himself bears the same characteristics. He cared most “for his own intellectual self-respect and consistency” (Chap. 10). He is one whose “elemental communications” are cut. His “faint-coloured hair and frigid face looked like the hair and face of a corpse walking” (Chap. 10). His face is a “long and perfect oval” (Chap. 13). He nodded “as if he were part of the electrical machinery” (Chap. 17). He also “stood with the white face of a statue” (Chap. 20).

In these pictures Chesterton is depicting the dehumanizing results of pure rationalism. Ivywood no longer desires to be human. In reply to his cousin Dorian's claim that "the prime fact of identity is the limit set on all living things," Ivywood says,

> I deny that any limit is set upon living things. … I have no sense of human limitations. … I would walk where no man has walked; and find something beyond tears and laughter. My road shall be my road indeed; for I will make it, like the Romans. And my adventures shall not be in the hedges and the gutters; but in the borders of the ever-advancing brain. I will love what never lived until I loved it—I will be as lonely as the first man (Chap. 20).

Ivywood's desire to be unbounded by any human limitations, to cease being human, leads to his isolation and his attempt to be greater than God. Dalroy states this to be true of Ivywood's reform program. "What he gives up must be some simple and universal thing. He will give up beef or beer or sleep—because these pleasures remind him that he is only a man" (Chap. 15). Ivywood's reform program is not rooted in the common nature of mankind. It is wholly a product of his own mind and is unchecked by the limitations of external reality. Indeed, Ivywood wishes to alter and improve God's botched up creation according to his own ideas. "'The world was made badly,' said Philip, with a terrible note in his voice, 'and I will make it over again'" (Chap. 22).

Ivywood's chief sin, according to Chesterton, "was a pride in the faultlessness of his own mental and moral strength" (Chap. 24). His solitary pursuit of his own reason's inventions cuts him off from his fellow man, makes him unaware of the reality of the external world,[3] and leads him to put himself above God.

With this blasphemous claim to divinity, the revelation of the evil of Ivywood's rationalism reaches a climax. It is only necessary now for Chesterton to show its self-destructive results. The remodeling of Ivywood's house once again shows the direction his rationalism is leading. The pride is revealed by "that long perspective of large rooms, in which men like Ivywood forget that they are only men" (Chap. 10). Ivywood's desire to create his own world is displayed by his decoration of this suite of rooms with a mock universe complete with sun, moon, the Milky Way and comets (Chap. 16). Significantly, however, "all the windows of the turret were closed" (Chap. 16). The infinity, the escape from limitation, that Ivywood seeks is an internal one. "All the chambers had that air of perpetually opening inwards, which is the soul of the 'Arabian Nights'" (Chap. 12). In the end Ivywood becomes the superman he desires to be.

> "I have gone where God has never dared to go. I am above the silly supermen as they are above mere men. Where I walk in the heavens, no man has walked before me; and I am alone in the garden. All this passing about me is like the lonely plucking of garden flowers. I will have this blossom; I will have that …" (Chap. 25).

The book concludes with Joan Brett and Patrick Dalroy visiting Ivywood in an asylum, "the house of the Superman" (Chap. 25). "He sat playing, with a purposeful face, with scraps of stick and weed put before him on a wooden table. He did not notice them, nor anything else around him; …" (Chap. 25). The end of rationalism's quest for its own deification is the madness of solipsism.

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[3] For example, Ivywood, after a passionate statement of his exotic romanticism, completely fails to notice the presence of the dog Quoodle, chap. 10.

The interesting point for the question of how Impressionism and rationalism both end up in solipsistic madness is that Chesterton calls Ivywood an aesthete, the "opposite" of a poet (Chap. 13). Jane Brett reflects that Ivywood "could thirst for beauty: and "certainly had a poetry of his own, after all; a poetry that never touched the earth" (Chap. 11). Ivywood, a great orator, "could make anything he had to mention blossom into verbal beauty" (Chap. 2). Ivywood's aestheticism is a love of words, of his own verbal and mental creations. It is the beauty of his own mind, which becomes frozen and hardened by isolation from the external world.

The connection between rationalism and Impressionism for Chesterton becomes clear in some comments he makes on Walter Pater. Criticizing Pater's call for us to burn with a hard, gem-like flame, Chesterton writes, "Flames are never hard and never gem-like; they are always dangerous, like flames, to touch or even examine." Passions become as hard as gems only by "becoming as cold as gems" (Heretics, 104).

In this criticism Chesterton uses the same images for Impressionism as he does elsewhere for rationalism. The hard and gem-like quality corresponds to the geometric images of rationalism. The coldness of the gems corresponds to the coldness and lack of life in the statue-like Ivywood. The reason for this correspondence is that Impressionist philosophy, which, according to Chesterton, bids us to seize the pleasure of the moment for the moment's sake since we are all under the threat of death, makes us "rationalize the happiness, and therefore to destroy it" (103). In Chesterton's mind Impressionism, like rationalism, seeks to abstract a thing—here a moment of pleasure—out of its context and to isolate it. What we are left with is not the reality but merely our idea or impression of it. The moment is taken out of reality and into the processes of the human mind; hence, it is rationalized and takes on the hard, gem-like or geometrical images of rationalism.

The reason, therefore, that Chesterton sees both Impressionism and rationalism as two different modes of the same solipsistic madness is that both philosophies sought to restrict reality to the limitations of the finite human mind. "It is the logician who seeks to get the heavens into his head. And it is the head that splits" (Orthodoxy, 27). Both Impressionism and rationalism begin to prefer their own internal mental "reality" to that of the external world. Thus, they finally cut themselves off from that external world and live with their thoughts alone, like madmen.

SANITY: THE SHAPE OF ORTHODOXY

In contrast to the ephemeral shapes and dim colors of Impressionism and the geometric shapes of rationalism, Chesterton delighted using sharp jagged edges and brilliant "pure" colors to describe the world. He preferred the pointed spires and wildly grotesque gargoyles of the Gothic cathedrals to the smooth columns of Greek architecture. "Paganism had been like a pillar of marble, upright because proportioned with symmetry. Christianity was like a huge and ragged and romantic rock" (180). His preferences in sketching were for "saints in robes of angry crimson, and seas of strange green, and all the sacred or monstrous symbols that look so well in bright colours on brown paper" (Trifles, 11).

Why this preference? One reason is that the world "is nearly reasonable, but not quite" (Orthodoxy, 146). Bright colors and jagged edges confront us with their reality and refuse to be conformed to the unaided workings of the human mind. This oddity of the world is the foundation of Chesterton's use of paradox because "an element of paradox runs through the whole of existence" (Types, 146). Sanity is found and maintained, not in denying or qualifying one side of the world's paradoxical realities. Christianity brings sanity because it fits the world by respecting its paradoxical realities. "…Christianity sought in most of these cases to keep two colours co-existent, but pure. It is not a mixture like russet or purple; it is rather like a shot silk, for a shot silk is always at right angles, and in the pattern of the cross" (Orthodoxy, 177).

The shape of the cross reveals the truth that Christianity helps the human mind to escape from its own solipsistic proclivities. The mind of Asia is represented by the wheel of Buddha, an O. "It really is a curve that in one sense includes everything, and in another sense comes to nothing" (Everlasting, 137). On the other hand, "the cross, in fact as well as figure, does really stand for the idea of breaking out of the circle that is everything and nothing. It does escape from the circular argument by which everything begins and ends in the mind" (138).

Another, perhaps even deeper, reason is exhibited in Chesterton's portrait of St. Francis's view of the world. "He saw everything as dramatic, distinct from its setting, not all of a piece like a picture but in action like a play. …Everything would have been in the foreground; and in that sense in the footlights. Everything would be in every sense a character" (Francis, 87). Yet the distinct almost personal character of particular things is not self-explanatory. "Every stone or flower is a hieroglyphic of which we have lost the key; with every step of our lives we enter into the mystery of some story which we are certain to misunderstand" (Blake, 131).

The key to the world's hieroglyph is the Church's creed or even the Church itself. This key can "unlock the prison of the whole world and let in the white light of liberty" (Everlasting, 218-219). But the only way to prove that a key works is to try it. "A key is not a matter of abstractions, in that sense a key is not a matter of argument. It either fits the lock or it does not. It useless for men to stand disputing over it, considered by itself; or reconstructing it on pure principles of geometry or decorative art" (219).

For Chesterton, only Christianity fully preserves truth and sanity and has an epistemology that is firmly rooted in the common and in the external. "Christianity does appeal to a solid truth outside itself; to something which is in that sense external as well as eternal. It does declare that things are really there; or in other words that things are really things. In this Christianity is at one with common sense; but all religious history shows that this common sense perishes except where there is Christianity to preserve it" (138). An individual or a civilization can obtain and maintain sanity only by accepting in humility the truth of the Christian faith.

Chesterton was both a visual and verbal artist; therefore, he often reasoned with shapes and colors. His writings can be most fruitfully understood by paying close attention to the verbal images that he used, as I hope that his paper has demonstrated. Even more crucial than the fact that shapes and colors offer an important interpretive key to Chesterton's writings is to recognize that shapes and colors are not merely illustrative tools but actually are truths of reality. This fact should make us more aware not only of the importance of using visual symbols in the church but also of the necessity to ensure that those symbols actually reflect the reality of the faith we profess.

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Guidelines for Spiritual Reading from C.S. Lewis

Richard James

Let us begin by imagining a scene in London on the Sunday afternoon of November 1, 1942. There, in a BBC radio studio, sitting in front of the microphone ready to speak at 2:50 p.m., is Oxford don, C.S. Lewis. Eleven years ago, in an early morning discussion with two of his friends, he had finally accepted the truth of Christianity and then acted on that evidence a few days later while on a sixty-mile motorcycle ride with his brother to the Whipsnade Zoo in Bedfordshire. Talking on the wireless to his fellow Brits, Lewis would suggest to them that day that they could strengthen and feed their faith in Christ by doing things which continually reminded them of what they believed.

Here are the words his audience heard: "If you have once accepted Christianity, then some of its main doctrines shall be deliberately held before your mind for some time every day. That is why daily prayer and religious reading and church-going are necessary parts of the Christian life." (Lewis, *Christian Behaviour,* p. 57). In response to this advice, some of his listeners would then send letters to him asking him to answer the question, "What do you suggest that we read?" In his response Lewis would often list several authors and their books which had helped him grow in his own Christian life. The primary purpose of this presentation is to share with you his guidelines for spiritual reading.

So, for the purpose of discovering the most highly suggested authors and books, I have defined a list as including only those writings where at least two or more authors or their books are cited. The twelve reading lists that will be reviewed varied depending on the recipient, but generally each list included a diverse group of devotional books, apologetics, books of poetry, essays, sermons, commentaries, plays, allegories, spiritual autobiography and even novels.

For this presentation the several lists have been analyzed and divided into two charts – the first providing a graph that shows a vertical timeline of the authors matched with a horizontal timeline of the dates that the twelve lists were created, and the second showing how many times each suggested book was cited. Both of these charts have been appended to the end of this paper and will hopefully assist our session to better appreciate Lewis's guidelines for spiritual reading.

Looking first at appendix one - the two-page chart which combines an author timeline with the twelve individual lists of authors and books - it will be noted that there are two distinctive groupings. The first set contains three lists that were published during Lewis's lifetime. The other nine lists were later discovered and published as part of his correspondence.

Lewis's earliest published list appeared as part of his 1944 introduction to Sister Penelope Lawson's translation of Athanasius's *On the Incarnation*. (Lewis, "Introduction" in *On the Incarnation*, pp. 3-10) Sister Penelope, a member of the Community of Saint Mary the Virgin in Wantage, England, was a Latin and Greek scholar who translated many early Christian authors into English. The author of several books herself, she first wrote to C.S. Lewis on August 5, 1939, after reading *Out of the Silent Planet*. He responded to her four days later, beginning a friendly and often humorous correspondence with her of forty-three now published letters that are dated up through March 1957.

In addition to stating that "this is a good translation of a very great book" (p. 8), He challenges his readers to go to primary sources, like Athanasius. He also suggests that after reading a new book that the reader read an old one before reading another new book. (p. 4) He then recommends that Christians read doctrinal as well as devotional books for their spiritual growth and understanding. It is in this context that he shares throughout this essay the names of twenty-five authors and/or books that have influenced his own spiritual life. (pp. 3-8) These are all listed in the first chart beginning with Athanasius on down through Samuel Johnson on the second page. Readers of Lewis might also want to know that in 1970 editor Walter Hooper also published this essay under the title, "On the Reading of Old Books", in the Lewis anthology, *God in the Dock.* (pp. 200-207)

A second Lewis reading list was published in the June 6, 1962 issue of *The Christian Century* as part of a weekly feature that the magazine had named "Books That Have Influenced". (p. 719) Based on the idea that "we are what we read", their editors selected prominent individuals in public life to provide a list of up to ten books in answer to the question: "What books did most to shape your vocational attitude and your philosophy of life." Two responses were published each week, with Lewis's list paired up with advice columnist, Ann Landers. All contributors were asked not to list the Bible, assuming that it would appear on almost all of the lists.

Under Lewis's name the words, "novelist, essayist, theologian" were printed. Reviewing the first appendix chart, it can be noted that out of the ten books that he listed in 1962, five will mentioned on several earlier lists in his letters: *The Everlasting Man*, *The Temple, The Idea of the Holy, The Consolation of Philosophy,* and *Descent into Hell*. A sixth book on this 1962 list, *Theism and Humanism* by A.J. Balfour, could also easily be designated as spiritual in nature, since its thesis "permeates the first five chapters of *Miracles*", especially his understanding of the "self-refutability of naturalism". (Paul Ford, "Arthur James Balfour", pp.91-92)

A third but shorter published list came from a May 1963 interview which was first printed in two parts in *Decision* magazine in the fall of 1963, just before Lewis died (Lewis, *Decision*, vol. II) and later in *God in the Dock.* (pp. 258-267) The interviewer, Sherwood Wirt, had come from a Billy Graham Crusade then being held in Paris and spent about an hour and a half with Lewis in his rooms at Cambridge.

Among his many questions Wirt asked Lewis, "What Christian writers have helped you?" Lewis's reply was almost 180 degrees from the "old books" list that he had written in 1944, but included several from *The Christian Century* list one year before. Lewis replied that "The contemporary book that has helped me the most is Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man*. Others are Edwyn Bevan's book, *Symbolism and Belief*, Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy,* and the plays of Dorothy Sayers."

The other nine suggested spiritual reading lists of authors and their books were found as part of Lewis's private correspondence, with all eventually being published in volumes two and three of his collected letters. The shortest and first list is found in an October 24, 1931 letter to his brother about two weeks after Warnie had set sail for his second army tour in China. (*Letters, Vol. II.* pp. 1-11) Warnie had sent Jack a letter from Gibraltar, and Jack responded by giving Warnie a long rehearsal of all of the events that had happened since he had left.

In the midst of his long recitation of his local activities, Lewis gives Warnie positive comments on three authors for spiritual reading. Firstly, he mentions Jeremy Taylor, whose 15-volume *Works,* he has just purchased. Taylor, a 17th century Anglican vicar and later bishop, is best known for his sermons and especially for his two devotional manuals, *Holy Living* (1650) and *Holy Dying* (1651). Next, Lewis cites William Law's book, *An Appeal to All That Doubt or Disbelieve*, which he compares with the more well-known *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy*

Life by the same author. And, finally, he makes some encouraging comments about Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici,* which was written as an effort to resolve disagreements between science and religion. Lewis had written to Warnie that Browne's "peculiar strength lies in liking everything … [and] is thus at once sane and whimsical, and sweet and pungent in the same sentence." (pp. 4-6)

Mary Shelley Neylan, one of Lewis's former students, had first received a letter from him back on June 18, 1931. (*Letters, Vol. III.* pp. 1523-1524) Thirty-seven letters from Lewis to Mary, her husband Daniel, and her oldest daughter, Sarah, have been published. They span over a period of thirty years touching on many personal, religious and literary themes, including marriage, confirmation, Narnia and family illnesses.

In his March 26, 1940 letter Lewis sought to answer three questions that had been part of her letter to him the previous week. including with them a spiritual reading list of ten authors: George Herbert, Thomas Browne – his *Religio Medici*, Thomas Traherne, George MacDonald – his *Unspoken Sermons,* Charles Gore – his *The Philosophy of the Good Life,* Edwyn Bevan – his *Symbolism and Belief,* G.K. Chesterton – his *The Everlasting Man*, E.G. Selwyn – his *Essays Catholic and Critical* anthology, Francois Mauriac – his *Life of Jesus*, and James Moffatt –*The New Testament: A New Translation* (*Letters, Vol. II.* pp. 371-376).

Several months later, at the beginning of 1941, Mrs. Neylan informed Lewis of her decision to become a Christian. In his reply he congratulated her and mentioned several things which will help her grow in her new faith. For daily spiritual reading in small doses, he specifically gives her two more suggestions to add to his previous list: Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* and the anonymous *Theologia Germanica* (*Letters, Vol. III.* pp. 1539-1540).

A third fairly extensive spiritual reading list was sent by Lewis, on August 19, 1942, to a Mr. H. Morland who lived in Stony Stratford about 35 miles northeast of Oxford. This list was sent on a postcard without a greeting, completely and frugally covered by Lewis, with a list of 19 books and their 15 different authors. We see listed here the expected older devotional books of Traherne and *Theologia Germanica* plus George MacDonald's sermons along with more modern authors like Gore, Bevan and Selwyn which he had also suggested to Mary Neylan. But here is now added for the first time several older authors like Athanasius, Augustine, Boethius, Lady Julian of Norwich, and Hooker. Each is mentioned several times in the lists. But, for unknown reasons the older Kempis, Herbert, and Browne are left out along with Chesterton and Mauriac. Most noticeable on this list are four more recent authors Otto, Moberly, Aulen and von Hugel (*Letters, Vol. II.* pp. 528-529).

We have mentioned Rudolf Otto earlier as being cited in those two late-in-life published lists from 1962 and 1963. Otto's ideas on the numinous and the stages of religious development significantly impacted Lewis's own concepts as he notes in his 1940 book, *The Problem of Pain* (1940) (pp. 4-11). Moberly, a professor of pastoral work at Oxford, had previously been a contributor to the liberal Anglo-Catholic anthology, *Lux Mundi* (1889). Lewis had suggested that Mr. Morland read Moberly's book, *The Atonement and Personality,* noting that in spite of it being "needlessly long and difficult", that is was "good".

Lewis then suggests he read Gustaf Aulen's book, *Christus Victor,* to be a correction to Moberly, "giving a different kind of theory." Aulen's approach reminded his reader that the New Testament's teaching on atonement was not so much a systematic theory as it was an all-consuming story of Christ's victory over the forces of evil (Aulen, 1931). Von Hugel's two books, *Eternal Life* and *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, are usually mentioned by Lewis to assist his correspondents with certain difficult philosophical questions related to answered prayer and the concepts of time and eternity.

The fourth spiritual reading list was sent by Lewis to his "oldest and most intimate friend", Arthur Greeves. (*Lewis Papers, Vol. 3*, p. 305) Over a span of slightly more than forty-nine years, Lewis had sent almost 300 letters to Arthur. (Hooper, "Introduction", *They Stand Together*, pp. 18, 41-42) In this reading list Lewis told Arthur that "probably the best *single* book of modern comment on the Bible is *A Commentary on Holy Scripture*". Written by liberal Anglo-Catholic scholars with Bishop Charles Gore as its general editor, contributors tried to stay faithful to the creed while at the same time welcoming the then new biblical criticism. Lewis then mentions next that "the *Clarendon Bible* is not bad". This was a multi-volume set of sixteen commentaries written for the clergy, teachers of religion and the interested general public to further their understanding of the Bible.

Lewis goes on to state that "the starting point for interpreting Charles Williams is *He Came Down from Heaven*". Lewis continued in this letter to praise Williams, giving Arthur some insight into his personality and how much Lewis enjoyed being with him.

Finally, Lewis first agrees with Greeves about Kempis, saying, "Yes, *The Imitation* is very severe", but goes on to mention that this severity is "useful at times when one is tempted to be too easily satisfied with one's progress". So, to compensate for that severity Lewis suggests another devotional, "A good book to balance it is Traherne's *Centuries of Meditations*." Then, he adds one more reading suggestion by saying, "Midway between the two I'd put the anonymous *Theologia Germanica*. All three of these books are found often in Lewis's spiritual reading lists.

Lewis's fifth spiritual reading list in his letters he designates as "explicitly religious reading" to Mr. Michael Thwaites, (*Letters, Vol. II.* p. 644) an Australian naval hero and later famous espionage officer, who was also to be lecturer in English in Melbourne. For poetry written as a student, he won the Newdigate Prize in 1938 and the King's Medal for Poetry in 1940. In 1945 he had written Lewis seeking a reading list to prepare himself for the B.Litt. (Bachelor of Literature/Letters), a graduate research degree at Oxford. In the first seven paragraphs of Lewis's letter he listed the typical English texts Thwaites should be familiar with when he returned for this second degree. But it was in that eighth paragraph that he gave the specific spiritual reading list. Here Lewis encouraged him to read Walter Hilton, Lady Julian, Hooker, Thomas Browne, Herbert, Traherne, Bunyan, William Law, and Butler.

The sixth spiritual reading list in Lewis's correspondence is found in the combining of two letters to Rhona Bodle, a New Zealander who had come to England in 1947 to be trained as a teacher of deaf children. Lyle Dorsett summarizes Lewis's relationship with her as a "reluctant spiritual guide and mentor" in the twenty-five letters he sent to her over a period of twelve years. His encouragement and instruction related to doctrinal issues, prayer, witnessing and perseverance made a deep impression upon her. (Dorsett, pp. 142-146)

The first books that he suggested for her to read dealt her questions related to the doctrine of Christ's divinity. He suggested that she might be helped by reading Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man* and Mascall's *The God-Man*. (*Letters, Vol. II.* pp. 823-824) A couple of years later she asked Lewis to explain how intercessory prayer worked and if he would send her a list of books that she might read to help her grow further in her spiritual understanding. In response, Lewis names Mascall's book again plus six of his old favorites - *The Imitation, The Scale of Perfection, Theologica Germanica, Religio Medici, Centuries of Meditations,* and *Revelations of Divine Love.* In addition he mentions two newer books: one by Bishop Kenneth Kirk's, his 1928

Bampton Lectures, *The Vision of God* and then one by Charles Williams *Descent of the Dove* (1939) which expresses his view of church history (*Letters, Vol. II.* pp. 993-994).

In two letters sent to an American named Mary Van Deusen, we discover Lewis's seventh spiritual reading list. There are eighty-four published letters sent to her with the first being in 1949 and the last coming on November 16, 1963, just before his death. It was in the summer of 1951 that he had given her a list of "good religious works" to read that would "correct and supplement whatever is over – or – under – explained in me". He was responding in agreement to a statement from Chad Walsh's book on Lewis that it would be unwholesome for a Christian to read only books by Lewis. Therefore, he ended his letter suggesting "à Kempis, Bunyan, Chesterton, Alice Meynell, Otto, William Law, Coventry Patmore, and Dante" as examples of books that might provide a "decently mixed literary diet." (*Letters, Vol. III.* pp. 125-126) In his next letter to her Lewis adds George Herbert's *The Temple* to the list, agreeing with her that he should have been on the previous list. (*Letters, Vol. III.* pp. 129-130)

In 1958, Corbin Carnell, an English professor at Bethany College in West Virginia, was working on his PhD dissertation on C.S. Lewis that eventually was published in 1974 as *Bright Shadow of Reality.* He writes to Lewis asking him to confirm a list of several modern religious authors that might have influenced him. Lewis admits to having hardly any debt to authors on the list like Tillich, Brunner Maritain, Kierkegaard, Niebuhr, Berdyaev, Buber, Marcel, Barth or Nygren. The authors that he does affirm as influencing him become the eighth spiritual reading list Lewis sent out in one of his letters. The first group he cited because they were famous authors he had to read who just happened to be Christians. These were authors like Dante, Spenser, Milton, George Herbert and Coventry Patmore.

Later, after he develops an interest in Christianity, a second group appears - Augustine, Hooker, Traherne, William Law, *The Imitation,* and *Theologia Germanica*. Then, a few sentences later he adds, "Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* I have been deeply influenced by." (*Letters, Vol. III.* pp. 978-980) All of these twelve authors except Milton have already been noted in several of the reading lists. Of course, Milton was one of his favorite authors, Lewis having sought to rehabilitate him in his 1942 book, *A Preface to Paradise Lost.*

The ninth and final suggested spiritual reading list from Lewis's personal correspondence was sent in response to a request in May 1961, by Mrs. Margaret Gray, an adult convert from atheism. She was also a widow whom he acknowledges had had "in most respects a tougher life" than his. The list has a good balance between older and newer authors with Lewis for the first time citing both Joy's book, *Smoke on the Mountain,* and three of his own books – *Transposition, The Great Divorce* and *The Four Loves*.

For apologetics he cites *The Everlasting Man, Symbolism & Belief,* and *He Came Down From Heaven.* For devotional reading he names *The Imitation, Centuries of Meditations,* and, his own *George MacDonald: An Anthology* – where the first 257 readings come from the then hard to find three volume *Unspoken Sermons*. For guidance regarding Christian ethics Lewis suggests she read *Smoke on the Mountain, The Sermon on the Mount* and *The Philosophy of the Good Life* by Bishop Gore, and *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life.* For imaginative spiritual reading he suggests the novels of Mauriac like *The Life of Jesus, The Man Born to be King* by Sayers, the fantastic novels of Charles Williams like *Descent into Hell,* and Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He mentions Augustine's *Confessions* as a record of an adult convert's spiritual biography and, for poetry based on Christian themes, he refers her to George Herbert. (*Letters, Vol. III.* pp. 1264-1265)

Let's turn now to the second chart. It reveals that within Lewis's twelve spiritual reading lists that the most often mentioned book or its author is Thomas Traherne's *Centuries of Meditations* (8), followed by Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* (7) and George Herbert's book of poems, *The Temple* (6). William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy* Life (6) and G.K. Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man* (6) comes next. These were followed by Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* (5), and the anonymously written *Theologia Germanica* (5). Augustine's *Confessions* (4), Richard Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (4), George MacDonald's three volumes of *Unspoken Sermons* (4), John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (4)*, Revelations of Divine Love* by Julian of Norwich (4) and Edwyn Bevan's *Symbolism and Belief* (4) are the next most mentioned. Then, there is also Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* (3), Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Walter Hilton's *The Scale of Perfection* (3), and Charles Gore's *The Philosophy of the Good Life* (3).

Nine more books are listed at least twice: Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (2), Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (2), *The Whole Works of Jeremy Taylor* (2), *Essays Catholic and Critical*, ed. E.G. Selwyn (2), Joseph Butler's *Sermons* (2), the poetry of Coventry Patmore (2), Francois Mauriac's *Life of Jesus* (2), Charles Williams's *The Descent into Hell* (2) and Dorothy Sayers's *The Man Born To Be King* (2). Putting these books together they become the twenty-seven most cited books that Lewis placed on the individual spiritual reading lists.

The remaining thirty-one books and authors listed on this chart are still very important spiritually depending on the specific need for which Lewis mentioned them, but are only cited by him once on the twelve lists. Most are mentioned again in his other works. But on the whole this entire first chart becomes a window into the body of books that, along with other spiritual disciplines, Lewis knew would help a Christian grow in their spiritual life.

Having discovered and briefly discussed Lewis's guidelines for spiritual reading, what might now be done with this information so that it is more than just of academic interest? If someone has already been nurtured and challenged in their relationship with Christ by reading the works of C.S. Lewis, then an obvious first answer to this question is now to see these guidelines as of vital importance for their own spiritual reading program – choosing to read these same authors and books that Lewis had first read himself and suggested to others. Most are easily accessible and available either new or used for purchase especially on the internet or in a local library. One helpful way for me to access them is to listen to them on CD or as an mp3 while commuting or doing any activity where you can multitask with your earphone.

A second project using this reading list would be to evaluate how often these authors are mentioned in Lewis's own published works, both secular and religious. Re-reading both his fiction and non-fiction with this in mind would give a new appreciation for the role that his spiritual reading had first on his writing and then on his life in general.

A third project might be to read, take notes and study the annotations that Lewis made on these same books in his personal library that are found mostly at the Marion Wade Center at Wheaton College, but also at the Rare Book Collection at the Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina. A list of these annotated books can be downloaded from both of these depositories. Reviewing his personal annotations will also enlighten you on Lewis's unique method of indexing, underlining, marking and list making in his personal library books. They also sometimes provide a sourcebook for many of the ideas he used in his own books, poems and essays.

I close with a fourth project having to do with Lewis's religious heritage – the need to have a better understanding of the life and work of Lewis through a study of the history, teachings and spirituality of the Church of England from the Reformation through 1963. While many of the suggested books were written before the 16th century, many of the later authors he suggested were Anglicans. This fact by itself demands that more be known about their religious heritage to better comprehend the books that they were writing. Plus, who knows? One might also discover what it is that kept Lewis in that church, even though it had many failings, both in its past and in his own generation.

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Appendix One

Author Timeline (293 - 1970) and C.S. Lewis's Suggested Spiritual Reading Lists (9/28/31 – 11/22/63)* - P=Published, CL=Collected Letters

Date & Author/ **/Recipient & Date**	[1CL] Ltr to WL 10/24/31	[2CL] Ltrs to MN 3/26/40 & 1/4/41	[3CL] Ltr to HM 8/19/42	[4CL] Ltrs to AG 1/30/44&11/12/61	[1P] *OTI* Intro 1944	[5CL] Ltr to MT 4/22/45	[6CL] Ltrs to RB 12/31/47&11/3/49	[7CL] Ltrs to MVD 6/11&7/14/51	[8CL] Ltr to CC 10/13/58	[9CL] Ltr to MG 5/9/61	[2P] ChC List 6/6/62	[3P] S.W. Interv 5/7/63
293-373 Athanasius			X		X							
354-430 Augustine of Hippo			XX		X				X	X		
427-525 Ancius Boethius			X		X						X	
1265-1321 Dante Alighieri					X			X	X			
____-1350 Theologia Germanica		X	X	X	X		X		X			
1340-1396 Walter Hilton					X	X	X					
1342-1423 Julian of Norwich			X		X	X	X					
1380-1471 Thomas a Kempis		X		X	X		X	X	X	X		
1552-1599 Edmund Spenser					X				X			
1554-1600 Richard Hooker			X		X	X			X			
1593-1633 George Herbert		X			X	X		X	X	X	X	
1605-1682 Thomas Browne	X	X				X						
1613-1667 Jeremy Taylor	X				X							
1628-1688 John Bunyan					X	X		X		X		
1637-1634 Thomas Traherne		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		
1686-1761 William Law	XX				X	X		X	X	X		
1692-1752 Joseph Butler					X	X						
1823-1896 Coventry Patmore								X	X			
1824-1905 George MacDonald		X	X		X					X		
1853-1932 Charles Gore - three separate books		X	XX	X						XX		
1869-1937 Rudolf Otto			X					X	X		X	X
1870-1943 Edwyn Bevan		X	XX							X		X
1874-1936 G.K. Chesterton		X					X	X		X	X	X
1885-1959 E.G. Selwyn		X	X									
1885-1970 Francois Mauriac		X								X		
1886-1945 Charles Williams - three separate books				X			X			X	X	
1893-1957 Dorothy Sayers										X		X

*** Columns have at least two books/authors on their list. If either list recipient has an XX or XXX it means that the author had two or three books mentioned on that one list. See "Ltr to HM".**

*Authors/Books suggested by C.S. Lewis, but mentioned in only one list.**

Date & Author/	*[1CL]*	*[2CL]*	*[3CL]*	*[4CL]*	*[1P]*	*[5CL]*	*[6CL]*	*[7CL]*	*[8CL]*	*[9CL]*	*[2P]*	*[3P]*
	Ltr to WL	Ltrs to MN	Ltr to HM	Ltrs to AG	*OTI* Intro	Ltr to MT	Ltrs to RB	Ltrs to MVD	Ltr to CC	Ltr to MG	ChC List	S.W. Interv
/Recipient & Date	10/24/31	3/26/40 & 1/4/41	8/19/42	1/30/44&11/12/61	1944	4/22/45	12/31/47&11/3/49	6/11&7/14/51	10/13/58	5/9/61	6/6/62	5/7/63
1225-1274 Thomas Aquinas					X							
1554-1586 Philip Sidney					X							
1567-1622 Francois de Sales					X							
1575-1624 Jacob Boehme					X							
1593-1683 Izaak Walton					X							
1608-1678 John Milton									X			
1622-1695 HenryVaughan					X							
1623-1662 Blaise Pascal					X							
1709-1784 Samuel Johnson					X							
1845-1903 R.C. Moberley			X									
1847-1922 Alice Meynell								X				
1848-1930 A.J. Balfour											X	
1852-1925 Friedrich von Hugel			XX									
1870-1944 James Moffatt		X										
1879-1977 Gustaf Aulen			X									
1886-1954 Kenneth Kirk							X					
1898-1963 C.S. Lewis										XXX		
1905-1993 E.L. Mascall							X^2					
1915-1960 Joy Davidman										X		
1926-1947 *The Clarendon Bible Commentaries*				X								

***The authors/books in this second list were mentioned only once in any list except for three of Lewis's own books on June 9, 1961. X^2 = Mascall's *The God-Man* in letters to RB that is mentioned twice.**

Identity of Above Abbreviations:
WL = Warnie Lewis; MN = Mary Neylan; HM = H. Morland; AG = Arthur Greeves; *OTI* Intro = Lewis's Introduction to *On The Incarnation*; MT = Michael Thwaites; RB = Rhona Bodle; MVD = Mary Van Deusen; CC = Corbin Carnell; MG = Margaret Gray; *ChC* = *The Christian Century*; S.W. Interv = Sherwood Wirt Interview with Lewis for *Decision* magazine

Appendix Two
Spiritual Reading Suggestions According to the Number of Times Cited by C.S. Lewis From Within the Twelve Lists Reviewed

1. Thomas Traherne - *Centuries of Meditations* – 8 times
2. Thomas à Kempis - *The Imitation of Christ* – 7 times
3. George Herbert - *The Temple* - 7 times
3. William Law - *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy* Life - 6 times
3. G.K. Chesterton - *The Everlasting Man* -6 times
6. Rudolf Otto - *The Idea of the Holy* -5 times
6. Anonymous - *Theologia Germanica* -5 times
8. Augustine - *Confessions* – 4 times
8. Richard Hooker - *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* – 4 times
8. George MacDonald - *Unspoken Sermons* – 4 times
8. John Bunyan - *The Pilgrim's Progress* – 4 times
8. Julian of Norwich - *Revelations of Divine Love* – 4 times
8. Edwyn Bevan - *Symbolism and Belief* – 4 times
14. Boethius - *The Consolation of Philosophy* – 3 times
14. Dante - *Divine Comedy* – 3 times
14. Walter Hilton - *The Scale of Perfection* – 3 times
14. Charles Gore - *The Philosophy of the Good Life* – 3 times
18. Athanasius - *On the Incarnation* – 2 times
18. Edmund Spenser - *The Faerie Queene* – 2 times
18. Thomas Browne - *Religio Medici* – 2 times
18. Jeremy Taylor - *The Whole Works of Jeremy Taylor* – 2 times
18. Joseph Butler - *Sermons* – 2 times
18. Coventry Patmore - poetry – 2 times
18. *Essays Catholic and Critical*, ed. E.G. Selwyn – 2 times
18. Francois Mauriac - *Life of Jesus* – 2 times
18. Charles Williams - *The Descent into Hell* – 2 times
18. Dorothy Sayers - *The Man Born To Be King* – 2 times

(Additional authors and books cited only once in any of the reviewed twelve lists.)

28. Thomas Aquinas
28. Augustine – *The City of God*
28. Philip Sidney - *Arcadia*
28. Francis de Sales
28. Jacob Boehme
28. Izaak Walton
28. John Milton
28. HenryVaughan
28. Blaise Pascal
28. William Law – *An Appeal*
28. Samuel Johnson
28. R.C. Moberley - *Atonement* & *Personality*
28. Alice Meynell
28. A.J. Balfour - *Theism and Humanism*
28. Friedrich von Hugel - *Eternal Life*
28. Friedrich von Hugel - *Essays and Addresses*
28. Charles Gore - *Jesus Christ*
28. Charles Gore - *A Commentary on Holy Scripture*
28. Charles Gore - *The Sermon on the Mount*
28. James Moffatt - *The New Testament: A New Translation*
28. Edwyn Bevan - *Christianity*
28. Gustaf Aulen - *Christus Victor*
28. Kenneth Kirk - *Vision of God*
28. C.S. Lewis - *Transposition*
28. C.S. Lewis - *The Great Divorce*
28. C.S. Lewis - *The Four Loves*
28. E.L. Mascall - *The God-Man*
28. Joy Davidman - *Smoke on the Mountain*
28. *The Clarendon Bible Commentaries*
28. Charles Williams - *The Descent of the Dove*
28. Charles Williams - *He Came Down from Heaven*

Mere Mathematics:
The Role of Mathematics in the Apologetic Works of C. S. Lewis

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Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963) was one of the intellectual giants of the 20th century and arguably the most influential Christian author of that period. Lewis was born in Belfast, educated at Oxford, and taught medieval and Renaissance literature at both Oxford and Cambridge. As a scholar, he made significant contributions to the areas of literary criticism, children's literature, and fantasy literature. His conversion to Christianity is well documented in his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, and gave rise to a body of apologetics works. In spite of his own personal lack of success in the area of mathematics, C. S. Lewis exhibited a lofty appreciation of the discipline as demonstrated by his numerous references to mathematics and to mathematical objects, and by his recurrent use of mathematical terminology, in his apologetic writings. This paper will explore how Lewis used mathematics, the discipline and specific content, extensively in these works.

Lewis' mathematical career was less than spectacular. He enjoyed all mathematics that involved mere reasoning but was less fond of mathematical calculation. He admits that he "could never have gone very far in any science because on the path of every science the lion mathematics lies in wait for you." (Lewis, Surprised by Joy 137) In his early training at Oldie's School, Lewis credits only some geometry and grammar as accomplishments. His tutelage later under Kirk (Mr. Kirkpatrick) proved indispensable for Lewis' ratiocination skills. It was with Kirk that he prepared for his first attempt at *Responsions*, a required examination at Oxford that included elementary mathematics. Lewis was not successful on his first attempt and continued to prepare for the exam with Mr. Campbell. His preparation included algebra, a subject for which Lewis had a personal dislike – "devil take it!" (Lewis, Surprised by Joy 187) He never passed *Responsions*; however, due to his service in World War I, he was granted a waiver. Lewis claims that, without this exemption, his career at Oxford would have concluded prematurely.

Two broad categories will be considered when exploring Lewis' use of mathematics in his apologetic writings: 1) the relationship between mathematics and certain laws and 2) the use of geometry, especially the concept of dimension. The first category refers to the use of mathematics, either because of a widely held viewpoint about the discipline or because of the attributes of a specific mathematical example, to elucidate the distinction of three laws. The second category refers to the utilization of geometry and spatial dimensions either to resemble or to exemplify a point of difficulty for the reader.

In *Miracles*, Lewis states that rational thought and the conscience of man are not products of the system of Nature. He refused to accept a "behavioristic theory of logic, ethics, and aesthetics." (Lewis, Surprised by Joy 208) This led him to consider the relationship between mathematics and three laws: the laws of thought, the laws of morality (Natural Law), and the laws of nature.

In perhaps his greatest compliment to the discipline, Lewis states, "Pure mathematics is the type of successful thought." (Lewis, God in the Dock 65) To him, the laws of thought were seen to be self-evident and could not be changed, for to modify the laws of thought would, in essence, nullify the ability to reason and thus leave one in the situation of not being able to know anything about reality, "in other words, unless Reason is an absolute–all is in ruins." (Lewis, The Weight of Glory 103) The laws of arithmetic were seen to be in the same position. Since the simple rules of arithmetic follow deductively from self-evident axioms, just as rational thinking follows from the laws of thought, these rules are immutable. A multiplication table is self-evident once the simple operations of arithmetic are learned. As Lewis remarks, “We all learned the multiplication table at school. A child who grew up alone on a desert island would not know it. But surely it does not follow that the multiplication table is simply a human convention, something human beings have made up for themselves and might have made different if they had liked?” (Lewis, Mere Christianity 24)

Suppose one wants to put this Reason to work to discover truths about the universe. How can one be sure that a belief is actual truth and not just wishful thinking? To address this question, Lewis uses an analogy from arithmetic. “Suppose, I think, after doing my accounts, that I have a large balance at the bank. And suppose you want to find out whether this belief of mine is 'wishful thinking'. You can never come to any conclusion by examining my psychological condition. Your only chance of finding out is to sit down and work through the sum yourself. When you have checked my figures, then, and then only, will you know whether I have that balance or not. If you find my arithmetic correct, then no amount of vaporing about my psychological condition can be anything but a waste of time. If you find my arithmetic wrong, then it may be relevant to explain psychologically how I came to be so bad at my arithmetic, and the doctrine of the concealed wish will become relevant – but only after you have yourself done the sum and discovered me to be wrong on purely arithmetical grounds. It is the same with all thinking and all systems of thought. If you try to find out which are tainted by speculating about the wishes of the thinkers, you are merely making a fool of yourself. You must first find out purely on logical grounds which of them do, in fact, break down as arguments. Afterwards, if you like, go on and discover the psychological causes of the error.” (Lewis, God in the Dock 272-273) So, according to Lewis, the logical procedure needed to correct a mistake in arithmetic displays a prototype of successful rational argumentation. Lewis was so bothered by the modern method of debate which assumes that one is wrong and then argues *why* he is wrong rather than demonstrating *that* he is wrong, that he gave it a name – “Bulverism”. (Lewis, God in the Dock 273)

What does Reason have to say about the truth claims of Christianity? Lewis draws upon his arithmetical analogy: “But, of course, being a Christian does mean thinking that where Christianity differs from other religions, Christianity is right and they are wrong. As in arithmetic – there is only one right answer to a sum, and all other answers are wrong: but some of the wrong answers are much nearer being right than others.” (Lewis, Mere Christianity 43) In a different work, he asserts, “ I was taught at school, when I had done a sum, to "prove my answer." The proof or verification of my Christian answer to this cosmic sum is this. When I accept Theology I may find difficulties, at this point or that, in harmonizing it with some particular truths which are imbedded in the mythical cosmology derived from science. But I can get in, or allow for, science as a whole. Granted that Reason is prior to matter and that the light of that primal Reason illuminates finite minds, I can understand how men should come, by observation and inference, to know a lot about the universe they live in. If, on the other hand, I swallow the scientific cosmology as a whole, then not only can I not fit in Christianity, but I cannot even fit in science.” (Lewis, The Weight of Glory 105-106)

Can one really conceive of an alternate set of moral laws? In *Mere Christianity,* Lewis answers, “Think of a country where people were admired for running away in battle, or where a man felt proud of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a country where two and two made five.” (Lewis, Mere Christianity 19) He then adds, “It seems, then, we are forced to believe in a real Right and Wrong. People may be sometimes mistaken about them, just as people sometimes get their sums wrong; but they are not a matter of mere taste and opinion any more than the multiplication table." (Lewis, Mere Christianity 20) Lewis argues that the discipline of mathematics is analogous to Natural Law for two compelling reasons: 1) the basic laws of mathematics are unchanged by time and culture and "though there are differences between the moral ideas of one time or country and those of another, the differences are not really very great – not nearly so great as most people imagine – and you can recognize the same law running through them all" (Lewis, Mere Christianity 24-25) and 2) there is a standard in both mathematics and Natural Law which is independent of personal or public opinion. As Lewis writes, " The moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, measuring them both by a standard, saying that one of them conforms to that standard more nearly than the other. But the standard that measures two things is something different from either. You are, in fact, comparing them both with some Real Morality, admitting that there is such a thing as a real Right, independent of what people think, and that some people's ideas get nearer to that real Right than others." (Lewis, Mere Christianity 25)

Assuming that there is a Real Morality, how can an individual use this fact to make proper moral decisions? Just as constructing a rational argument requires knowledge of the laws of thought, moral decision-making requires acknowledging the existence of self-evident truths of Natural Law. Lewis calls this collection of truths "the *Tao*" and claims that, "Unless you accept these without question as being to the world of action what axioms are to the world of theory, you can have no practical principles whatever. You cannot reach them as conclusions: they are premises." (Lewis, The Abolition of Man 52-53) In the essay "Why I Am Not a Pacifist", Lewis provides a straightforward method of reasoning that involves three elements: 1) the reception of facts, 2) the recognition of self-evident truths (which Lewis calls intuition), and 3) the logical arrangement of "facts so as to yield a series of such intuitions which linked together produce a proof of the truth or falsehood of the proposition we are considering." (Lewis, The Weight of Glory 54) Lewis uses another mathematics analogy, this time from geometry, to illustrate this process. Now the geometric proof is the prototype. If a correct geometric proof is well crafted, then "each step is seen by intuition, and to fail to see it is to be not a bad geometrician but an idiot." (Lewis, The Weight of Glory 54) Lewis does add that, " You can invent a simpler proof, that is, a simpler concatenation of intuitable truths. But when you come to an absolute inability to see any one of the self-evident steps out of which the proof is built, then you can do nothing." (Lewis, The Weight of Glory 55) While admitting that moral decision-making does not admit the mathematical certainty of a geometric proof, he employs this method of reasoning to construct an argument for why he is not a pacifist.

Consider one final remark regarding Natural Law. In countering the argument that the current state of human knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, has led humans to the point that one can no longer hold to the unchanging dogmas of Christianity, Lewis notes that "wherever there is real progress in knowledge, there is some knowledge that is not superseded. Indeed, the very possibility of progress demands that there should be an unchanging element....I take it we should all agree to find this sort of unchanging element in the simple rules of mathematics. I would add to these the primary principles of morality. And I would also add the fundamental doctrines of Christianity." (Lewis, God in the Dock 45) Hence, for Lewis, the three realms of mathematics, morality, and Christianity exhibit instances of static knowledge that will never be replaced. As for progress, Lewis issues this warning: "If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man. We have all seen this when doing arithmetic.

When I have started a sum the wrong way, the sooner I admit this and go back and start over again, the faster I shall get on.” (Lewis, Mere Christianity 36-37)

How does one understand the physical world? Lewis offers, “As regards material reality, we are now being forced to the conclusion that we know nothing about it save its mathematics. The tangible beach and pebbles of our first calculators, the imaginable atoms of Democritus, the plain man's picture of space, turn out to be the shadow: numbers are the substance of our knowledge, the sole liaison between mind and things.” (Lewis, God in the Dock 46) Mathematics provides the language for expressing the laws of nature, which are the result of observed consistency and assumed uniformity in the universe. Lewis argues that by using only the method of historical probability, “we cannot say that uniformity is either probable or improbable.” (Lewis, Miracles 165) Moreover, Lewis maintains that, “Three conceptions of the 'Laws' of Nature have been held. (1) That they are mere brute facts, known only by observation, with no discoverable rhyme or reason about them. We know that Nature behaves thus and thus; we do not know why she does and can see no reason why she should not do the opposite. (2) That they are applications of the law of averages. The foundations of Nature are in the random and lawless. But the number of units we are dealing with are so enormous that the behavior of these crowds (like the behavior of very large masses of men) can be calculated with practical accuracy. What we call 'impossible events' are events so overwhelming improbable–by actuarial standards–that we do not need to take them into account. (3) That the fundamental laws of Physics are really what we call 'necessary truths' like the truths of mathematics–in other words, that if we clearly understand what we are saying we shall see that the opposite would be meaningless nonsense.” (Lewis, Miracles 88-89)

As the laws of nature follow inductively from the observation of regularity, it remains a possibility that the laws could be violated from the outside. In fact, Lewis claims that none of the three theories prevents the Supernatural from invading Nature. The first two theories are easily addressed as the first gives no rhyme or reason why things are as we observe and thus no reason why they should continue in the same pattern, and the second, which depends on the law of averages, will work only for *undoctored* Nature and the question of whether or not miracles occur is precisely the question of whether Nature is ever doctored. As for those who hold to the third theory, Lewis claims that even this theory does not prevent the Supernatural from invading Nature: “If the laws of Nature are necessary truths, no miracle can break them: but no miracle needs to break them. It is with them as with the laws of arithmetic. If I put six pennies into a drawer on Monday and six more on Tuesday, the laws decree that–*other things being equal*–I shall find twelve pennies there on Wednesday. But if the drawer has been robbed I may in fact find only two. Something will have been broken (the lock of the drawer or the laws of England) but the laws of arithmetic will not have been broken.” (Lewis, Miracles 92) In particular, if the laws of nature state that the consequent B (12 pennies) follows from the antecedent A (6 pennies plus 6 pennies), and if a miracle occurs, and the expected B is not observed, it is not that the laws of nature have been violated but simply that the antecedent is no longer A but is really A’. In other words, as long as nothing from outside of nature interferes, one expects the universe to obey these laws. If, however, something were to interfere, that would not be breaking the laws of nature, as those laws were never meant to account for such things.

What is the relationship between Reason (which follows from the laws of thought) and Nature (which demonstrates its own laws)? Lewis describes the connection by appealing to the mathematical idea of a relation that is “unsymmetrical”. (Lewis, Miracles 39) A relation is simply a set of ordered pairs that is a model for almost any type of association between objects (people, animals, things, etc.). For example, suppose that Joe and Sue are siblings with common father Bill. Then “being a sibling” is a relation and mathematically one would say that the ordered pair (Joe, Sue) is in the relation. Clearly (Sue, Joe) is also in the relation (as Sue and Joe are siblings is also true); thus the relation exhibits symmetry. If, on the other hand, the relation were defined by “being a parent of”, then neither (Joe, Sue) nor (Sue, Joe) would be in the relation; however, (Bill, Joe) and (Bill, Sue) would be. Notice that neither (Joe, Bill) nor (Sue, Bill) would be in this second relation as neither Joe nor Sue is the father of Bill; thus the relation “being a parent of” fails to have symmetry. Lewis claims that an analogous asymmetrical relationship exists between Reason and Nature. Reason can act upon Nature to change it, but the reverse is not possible. For example, Reason can alter physical nature through the use of mathematics (e.g. bridges, air conditioning, engineering) and can alter psychological nature through arguments applied to our emotions. However, Nature has no such claim on Reason. When nature attempts to interfere with human consciousness, this simply is to produce Nature and to suspend Reason as “Nature is quite powerless to produce a rational thought: not that she never modifies our thinking but that the moment she does so, it ceases (for that very reason) to be rational.” (Lewis, Miracles 38)

In several works Lewis mentions the term “Flatlander”, which is an obvious reference to the classic work *Flatland* by Edwin A. Abbott. The main character in Abbott’s book is A. Square, a “Flatlander” who lives in a two-dimensional world known as Flatland. Square encounters difficulties both in explaining his world to an inhabitant of Lineland (a one-dimensional world) and in grasping the geometry of Spaceland (a three-dimensional world). Lewis writes these words: “A world of one dimension would be a straight line. In a two-dimensional world, you still get straight lines, but many lines make one figure. In a three-dimensional world, you still get figures but many figures make one solid body. In other words, as you advance to more real and more complicated levels, you do not leave behind you the things you found on the simpler levels: you still have them, but combined in new ways – in ways you could not imagine if you knew only the simpler levels.” (Lewis, Mere Christianity 142) Lewis suggests that Christians meet difficulties in their Faith that render them in ways like an inhabitant of Flatland trying to understand a solid object. In particular, Lewis uses the correlation of dimensions as an analogy for the concepts of the Trinity, time and eternity, and temporal versus eternal existence.

The doctrine of the Trinity espouses the triune personality of one Being. Lewis compares this incomprehensible concept of one Being consisting of three Persons to the geometric fact that a cube is composed of six distinct squares yet remains a single cube: “In God's dimension, so to speak, you find a being who is three Persons while remaining one Being, just as a cube is six squares while remaining one cube. Of course we cannot fully conceive a Being like that; just as, if we were so made that we perceived only two dimensions in space we could never properly imagine a cube.” (Lewis, Mere Christianity 143) The quote contains a hidden reference to Abbott’s book. Elsewhere, Lewis is more explicit: “Flatlanders, attempting to imagine a cube, would either imagine the six squares coinciding, and thus destroy their distinctness, or else imagine them set out side by side, and thus destroy the unity. Our difficulties about the Trinity are of much the same kind.” (Lewis, Christian Reflections 79-80) In contrast, Lewis comments that the Pantheist, even though he may claim a super-personal God, in actuality conceives of a sub-personal God “as though the Flatlanders thought a cube existed in fewer dimensions than a square.” (Lewis, Miracles 136) Instead of a Being with a real character of its own, his God “becomes simply 'the whole show' looked at in a particular way or the theoretical point at which all the lines of human aspiration would meet if produced to infinity.” (Lewis, Miracles 131)

Lewis proposes that God is not at all in the human timeline. God sits above, beyond in such a way that He does not experience a moment that has passed but rather experiences all moments as the present: "If you picture Time as a straight line along which we have to travel, then you must picture God as the whole page on which the line is drawn." (Lewis, Mere Christianity 148) So, time is one-dimensional and God is not confined to that single dimension. As for eternity, Lewis remarks, "If we think of time as a line–which is a good image, because the parts of time are successive and no two of them can co-exist; i.e., there is no width in time, only length–we probably ought to think of eternity as a plane or even a solid. Thus the whole reality of a human being would be represented by a solid figure." (Lewis, The Problem of Pain 125) Eternity is depicted as at least two-dimensional when compared to one-dimensional time and the totality of human existence is seen as three-dimensional.

In exploring the relationship between temporal and eternal life, Lewis writes, "Suppose that the earthly lives she and I shared for a few years are in reality only the basis for, or prelude to, or earthly appearance of, two unimaginable, supercosmic, eternal somethings. Those somethings could be pictured as spheres or globes. Where the plane of Nature cuts through them–that is, in earthly life–they appear as two circles (circles are slices of spheres). Two circles that touched." (Lewis, A Grief Observed 24) Here, Lewis chooses the sphere as the solid to represent the full reality of human existence. The cross-section of that reality which is experienced in earthly life is symbolized by the figure of a circle. Moreover, his married life with Joy Davidman is portrayed as the intersection of their two individual circles. The analogy echoes the manner in which the figure of a square and the solid of a cube were used to illustrate the concept of the Trinity.

Moreover, in the essay "Transposition", Lewis puts forward the juxtaposition of a richer system to a poorer system to further explain the relationship between the spiritual life and the natural life. Lewis gives an example of the richer and poorer that is readily experienced, namely emotions and sensations. The emotional life is "richer" than the life of sensations because human nerves produce the same sensation to express more than one emotion. For instance, both joy and sorrow often yield tears. It is impossible to find a one-to-one correspondence between such systems and "the transposition of the richer system into poorer must, so to speak, be algebraical, not arithmetical." (Lewis, The Weight of Glory 77) The most famous example, claims Lewis, is from the art of drawing. "The problem here is to represent a three-dimensional world on a flat sheet of paper. The solution is perspective, and perspective means that we must give more than one value to a two-dimensional shape. Thus in drawing a cube, we use an acute angle to represent what is a right angle in the real world. But elsewhere an acute angle on the paper may represent what was already an acute angle in the real world, for example, the point of a spear or the gable of a house. The very same shape which you must draw to give the illusion of a straight road receding from the spectator is also the shape you draw for a dunce's cap." (Lewis, The Weight of Glory 78) Lewis states that to recognize the spiritual life one must approach this notion of Transposition from above "as we all do in the case of emotion and sensation or of the three-dimensional world and pictures, and as the spiritual man does" (Lewis, The Weight of Glory 81-82) otherwise one will reach incorrect conclusions. For without Transposition, the natural life will appear to be all there is. "The brutal man never can by analysis find anything but lust in love; the Flatlander never can find anything but flat shapes in a picture; physiology never can find anything in thought except twitching of the grey matter. It is no good browbeating the critic who approaches Transposition from below." (Lewis, The Weight of Glory 81)

Lewis claims the principle of Transposition might also enlighten the doctrine of the Incarnation. In *Miracles,* Lewis perceives the Incarnation as God descending into humanity just as the Supernatural descends into the Natural. Lewis states, “We catch sight of a new key principle–the power of the Higher, just in so far as it is truly Higher, to come down, the power of the greater to include the less. Thus solid bodies exemplify many truths of plane geometry, but plane figures no truths of solid geometry.” (Lewis, Miracles 178) Once again Lewis uses the concept of dimensionality to elucidate his ideas. In this analogy, the Divine Incarnation is as a proposition in solid geometry that generalizes this truth in plane geometry – humans exist as composite moral rational creatures, purely natural in many ways but nonetheless more than just natural beings. Conversely, just as no truths of solid geometry are revealed by plane figures, there remain facts beyond human comprehension: “I do not think anything we do will enable us to imagine the mode of consciousness of the incarnate God. That is where the doctrine is not fully comprehensible.” (Lewis, Miracles 177)

Furthermore, Lewis offers that the principle of Transposition might illuminate the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Lewis contends that the New Nature that is being created through the Son, is interlocked in ways with the Old Nature, in a manner similar to the way that “some facts about a solid body are facts of linear geometry.” (Lewis, Miracles 251) The New Nature might be able to perceive dimensions beyond what is now observed: “It is useful to remember that even now senses responsive to different vibrations would admit us to quite new worlds of experience: that a multi-dimensional space would be different, almost beyond recognition, from the space we are now aware of, yet not discontinuous from it: that time may not always be for us, as it now is, unilinear and irreversible: that other parts of Nature might some day obey us as our cortex now does.” (Lewis, Miracles 250) With the resurrection of Christ, “a wholly new mode of being has arisen in the universe,” (Lewis, Miracles 241) says Lewis, a body that belongs to the category of New Nature and that “is differently related to space and probably time, but by no means cut off from all relation to them.” (Lewis, Miracles 241) As for the complete expression of redeemed humanity, Lewis proposes, “It is like when you throw a stone into a pool, and the concentric waves spread out further and further. Who knows where it will end?” (Lewis, The Great Divorce 106)

The two categories, namely the relationship between mathematics and specific laws and secondly the employment of geometry and dimension, have been thoroughly examined. Through comparison and contrast, analogy and illustration, simile and metaphor, concepts and terminology, C. S. Lewis, in his apologetic writings, demonstrated a high regard for the discipline of mathematics. His admiration of the subject matter extended to praise for its practitioners. Mathematicians “propound mathematical theorems in beleaguered cities” (Lewis, The Weight of Glory 43) and contemplate “timeless and spaceless truths about quantity.” (Lewis, The Great Divorce 213) Elsewhere, he writes that “a mathematician's mind has a certain habit and outlook which is there even when he is not doing mathematics.” (Lewis, Mere Christianity 77) Even though Lewis could not tame the lion mathematics, he was able to appreciate and articulate the beauty and power of the discipline he never mastered, and that is true genius.

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Painting in Prose:
Ardent Pre-Raphaelitism in George MacDonald’s Landscapes

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Victorian poet and novelist George MacDonald has for some time been recognized by MacDonald scholars as moving on the social fringes of the group of visual artists involved in the Pre-Raphaelite Movement. MacDonald had considerable exposure to the Pre-Raphaelite Movement over the course of his career as a close friend of two dedicated Pre-Raphaelite followers, sculptor Alexander Munro and painter Arthur Hughes. In Hughes, MacDonald also found the creator of the exquisite Pre-Raphaelite illustrations to his novel *At the Back of the North Wind,* and to a number of his other publications. Although MacDonald did not paint or draw, I would argue that Pre-Raphaelite artistic principles and techniques are deeply woven into the natural landscapes in his works of prose fiction. Recognizing specific Pre-Raphaelite components in MacDonald’s striking descriptions will assist in understanding those word paintings, while also emphasizing the painter’s or artist’s perspective in MacDonald’s response to the natural world.

The Pre-Raphaelite Movement dates back to 1848 when a small group of artists formed a society opposed to the conventional painting styles and techniques taught at the schools of the Royal Academy of Arts. Members of this Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood admired early Italian religious painters from before Raphael (Wood 10), and were strongly influenced by the ideas of Victorian art critic John Ruskin, who began elaborating his art theory in 1843 in the first of a series of volumes entitled *Modern Painters*. From their inception through the early 1860s, a kind of “symbolic realism”[1] predominated in the art of the original Pre-Raphaelites and their followers, who often displayed a minute attention to detail, particularly natural detail painted in natural light. However, this artistic realism also carried considerable symbolic content because selected details were also recognizable as symbols, often religious ones.

MacDonald had a love for and sensitivity toward the natural world while growing up in his native Scotland. These qualities seemed to deepen in the 1840s, during which he received his M.A. from King’s College in Aberdeen, moved to the London area to accept a tutoring position, and later enrolled in Highbury Theological Seminary. This decade also saw MacDonald's personal acceptance of Christianity, his growing faith, and his engagement to Louisa Powell. Another influence from this formative period appears to have been Ruskin's *Modern Painters*.

In 1849, while still enrolled in Highbury Theological Seminary, MacDonald wrote a May 15 letter to Louisa, describing his visit to the annual Royal Academy Exhibition:

> What a strange picture of Turner's I saw yesterday at the Exhibition. A Rainbow over a stormy sea, ships far & near, boats, & a buoy. I could make nothing of it at first. Only by degrees I awoke to the Truth and wonder of it.

Although this passage might appear insignificant if read within a limited context, the passage actually suggests that MacDonald was already familiar with *Modern Painters* and had begun what would be a lifelong engagement with many of the ideas in the work. The impetus for *Modern Painters* had been the extremely harsh criticism of Turner that had appeared in the press. In defense of Turner, Ruskin radically asserted in his series that Turner was the greatest of all landscape painters, ancient or modern. Moreover, Ruskin devoted much of his first volume to a detailed analysis "Of Truth" in landscape painting, singling out Turner for praise for his accurate capture of various aspects of the sea, among other excellencies. When examined closely in light of the attention that Ruskin had drawn to Turner, MacDonald's interest in the painting known as *The Wreck Buoy* indicates that MacDonald was aware of the greatness being claimed for Turner and that he desired to view and appreciate for himself a display of such greatness.

In the decade after he left Highbury, MacDonald obtained and lost his only pastorate, then lived by teaching, lecturing and writing in Manchester and other locations before moving his family to London. By 1860 MacDonald knew Alexander Munro and Arthur Hughes and other individuals associated with the Pre-Raphaelites, and in 1863 MacDonald was formally introduced to Ruskin, when Ruskin attended one of MacDonald's lectures at his home, Tudor Lodge. According to MacDonald's son Greville, Ruskin and MacDonald quickly became intimate long-term friends. One mark of friendship was that in 1864, Ruskin gave *Modern Painters* to MacDonald "in their original green morocco binding" (Greville MacDonald 329).

There are a number of landscape depictions in MacDonald's short fiction and novels that could be characterized as verbal counterparts to early Pre-Raphaelite art and as applications of the art principles of John Ruskin. I shall now discuss a few of them published in the 1860s. In "The Light Princess" one such scene is the word-painting at the climax of the fairy tale when tears fall from the eyes of the Princess who has begun to cry. The visual pattern of teardrops is repeated in the raindrops falling from the sky to restore to the kingdom its lost sources of water:

> And a rain came on, such as had never been seen in that country. The sun shone all the time, and the great drops, which fell straight to the earth, shone likewise. The palace was in the heart of a rainbow. It was a rain of rubies, and sapphires, and emeralds, and topazes. The torrents poured from the mountains like molten gold; and if it had not been for its subterraneous outlet, the lake would have overflowed and inundated the country. It was full from shore to shore. (101)

The climactic landscape in George MacDonald's "The Light Princess" is vivid and beautiful, deriving its beauty from the carefully delineated interplay of two natural elements of God's creation, sun and raindrops. Yet at the same time the scene has spiritual depth because the sun, the rainbow and the jewel colors are biblical symbols associated with Christ and spiritual blessing. The symbolic realism of MacDonald's landscape is a perfect complement to the Princess's spiritual enlightenment that has taken place in the text of the story.

In "A Child's Holiday," one of the word paintings is a fulfillment of Ruskin's admonition that painters should paint what they see, rather than traditional representations of objects. The 13-year-old boy in the story delights in contemplating water:

> He would lie for an hour by the side of a hill-streamlet; he would stand gazing into a muddy pool, left on the road by last night's rain. Once, in such a brown-yellow pool, he beheld a glory—the sun, encircled with a halo vast and wide, varied like the ring of opal colours seen about the moon when she floats through white clouds, only larger and brighter than that. Looking up, he could see nothing but a chaos of black clouds, brilliant towards the sun: the colours he could not see, except in the muddy water. (349)

The young boy's attention to the surface of a brown-yellow pool rewards him with a splendid reflection of the sun encircled by a wide band of iridescent color. As a product of reflection, the color is not visible in the sky overhead—only in the muddy pool.

Ruskin preached in *Modern Painters* of the need for the painter to seek out the reflections in all bodies of water:

> Now, the fact is that there is hardly a road-side pond or pool which has not as much landscape *in* it as above it. It is not the brown, muddy, dull thing we suppose it to be; it has a heart like ourselves, and in the bottom of that there are the boughs of the tall trees, and the blades of the shaking grass, and all manner of hues of variable pleasant light out of the sky. Nay, the ugly gutter, that stagnates over the drain-bars in the heart of the foul city, is not altogether base; down in that, if you will look deep enough, you may see the dark serious blue of far-off sky, and the passing of pure clouds. It is at [the choice of] your own will that you see, in that despised stream, either the refuse of the street, or the image of the sky. So it is with almost all other things that we unkindly despise. Now, this far-seeing is just the difference between the great and the vulgar painter: the common man *knows* the roadside pool is muddy, and draws its mud; the great painter sees beneath and behind the brown surface what will take him a day's work to follow, but he follows it, cost what it will.[2] (496-97)

One will note in the above passage that Ruskin's artistic admonitions were rendered in elegant, visually oriented prose. His writing transmitted not only a painter's viewpoint to his readers, but also captivating verbal descriptions of landscapes.

In *Alec Forbes of Howglen* (1865), MacDonald presents possibly his most powerful landscape—an elderly blind woman bathed in the red rays of the setting sun, who sits on the periphery of the title character's vision, as he meets a coach carrying his cousin Kate:

> Where the coach stopped, on the opposite side of the way, a grassy field, which fell like a mantle from the shoulders of a hill crowned with firs, sloped down to the edge of the road. From the coach, the sun was hidden behind a thick clump of trees, but his rays, now red with rich age, flowed in a wide stream over the grass, and shone on an old Scotch fir which stood a yard or two from the highway, making its red bark glow like the pools which the prophet saw in the desert. At the foot of the tree sat Tibbie Dyster; and from her red cloak the level sun-tide

> was thrown back in gorgeous glory; so that the eyeless woman, who only felt the warmth of the great orb, seemed in her effulgence of luminous red, to be the light-fountain whence that torrent of rubescence burst. From her it streamed up to the stem and along the branches of the glowing fir; from her it streamed over the radiant grass of the up-sloping field away towards the western sun. But the only one who saw the splendor was a shoemaker, who rubbed his resiny hands together and felt happy without knowing why. (224)

The written description above calls for considerable mental participation by the reader, who repeatedly has to re-imagine the scene as additional details are provided. MacDonald adds another figure to his visual composition in the subsequent paragraph, when he reveals that the young girl Annie Anderson is sitting on the shadowy side of Tibbie and her eyes are "shining upon him [Alec], with a deeper and truer, if with a calmer, or, say, colder devotion, than that with which he regarded Kate" (224). Although dark-haired, blue-eyed Annie is focused on Alec, he notices neither "old, scarred, blind Tibbie" at "the center of a blood-red splendor," nor Annie herself (224).

Aside from its color scheme, MacDonald's landscape shares some striking commonalities with Pre-Raphaelite John Everett Millais' 1856 painting *The Blind Girl*.[3] Both scenes foreground a blind female with a younger female companion sitting toward the foot of a hill flooded with light. Both scenes highlight the contrast between sight and blindness, with the blind characters unable to see the visual splendor that surrounds them; and both scenes could be using the predicament of the blind person as a Christian metaphor for the human being who cannot see an invisible spiritual dimension that is nonetheless present. Millais' painting captures the brilliant intensity of sunlight falling on the landscape, while dark clouds and a double rainbow in the distant sky indicate that a rainstorm is just passing. The central figure in the painting wears a shawl over her head under which her companion has also sought shelter from the rain. Both girls' worn and torn clothing testifies to their poverty, while a label at the blind girl's throat reads "Pity the Blind." The painting has various natural symbols, such as the rainbow, black birds, sheep and a prominent butterfly, which collectively invite a spiritual reading. The rainbow, birds of the field and sheep are biblical images, while the butterfly is a traditional symbol for the soul.

Critic Kate Flint, in discussing potential interpretations of Millais' painting, has written that certain details in the *The Blind Girl* "underscore the point of God's omnipresent goodness," and also that the painting "can be understood as alluding to the promise held out by God of inner, rather than external illumination" (76). These meanings are also important in MacDonald's word painting.

The stunning light imagery in MacDonald's verbal landscape powerfully communicates the paradoxical message that the blind woman, despite her age and smallpox scars, is gloriously transfigured; as a result of being enveloped in the rays of the setting sun she herself appears to be a "light-fountain" pouring forth red light. The imagery highlights her as a transformed object of God's love. However, as with Millais' painting, MacDonald's prose landscape points to an invisible reality that must be discerned inwardly. MacDonald underscores the symbolic nature of the material world by narrating blind Tibbie's thoughts:

> Tibbie had come out to bask a little, and in the dark warmth of the material sun, to worship that Sun whose light she saw in the hidden world of her heart, and who is the Sun of all the worlds; to breathe the air, which, through her prison-bars, spoke of freedom; to give herself room to long for the hour when the loving Father would take her out of the husk which infolded her, and say to her: "*See, my child*." (225)

Tibbie's partial sensory experience of the material sun—her experience of its warmth--assists her in worshipping God as a type of sun (the source and sustainer of life itself), whose qualities she can perceive inwardly in her heart. Breathing fresh air speaks to her of the freedom she will achieve upon her death, when a loving God will remove her spirit from her mortal body. Moreover, the passage implies that in the afterlife God's words "See, my child" will signify much more than a newly restored capacity for physical sight, because she will be able to "see" or apprehend ultimate spiritual reality directly, not through the darkened glass of human earthly experience.

MacDonald's various Pre-Raphaelite influences are again evident in his novel *The Seaboard Parish*, which is full of word paintings that become the basis for discussing nature, art and God. Moreover, MacDonald specifically pays homage in the novel to Ruskin by naming one of the minor characters Turner, in obvious allusion to the painter that Ruskin revered. A more central character in the novel, a talented painter named Mr. Percivale, expresses admiration for Ruskin when the art critic is brought up in conversation. When asked whether he knows the author of *Modern Painters*, Mr. Percivale replies:

> I wish I did. He has given me much help. I do not say I can agree with everything he writes; but when I do not, I have such a respect for him that I always feel as if he must be right whether he seems to me to be right or not. And if he is severe, it is with the severity of love that will speak only the truth. (284)

While Ruskin is held up as a truth-teller, *The Seaboard Parish* also pays tribute to MacDonald's Pre-Raphaelite friend Arthur Hughes by extolling one of his masterpieces. The novel gives a description of an impressive painting by Mr. Percivale that is actually derived from MacDonald's memory of a Hughes painting, *The Knight of the Sun.*[4] The narrator of *The Seaboard Parish*, a clergyman, calls the painting "a grand picture, full of feeling—a picture and a parable" (615). Its prose depiction follows:

> A dark hill rose against the evening sky which shone through a few thin pines on its top. Along a road on the hill-side, four squires bore a dying knight—a man past the middle age. One behind carried his helm, and another led his horse, whose fine head only appeared in the picture. The head and countenance of the knight were very noble, telling of many a battle, and ever for the right. The last had doubtless been gained, for one might read victory as well as peace in the dying look. The party had just reached the edge of a steep descent, from which you saw the valley below, with the last of the harvest just being reaped, while the shocks stood all about in the fields, under the place of the sunset. The sun had been down for some little time. There was [no] gold left in the sky, only a little dull saffron; but plenty of that lovely liquid green of the autumn sky, divided with a few streaks of pale rose. The depth of the sky overhead, which you could not see for the arrangement of the picture, was mirrored lovelily in a piece of water that lay in the centre of the valley. (614)

The narrator of *The Seaboard Parish* then interprets Percivale's "painting," discovering a parallel between the sun having done his work and "leaving his good name behind him in a lovely harmony of color," just as the old knight is leaving good in his wake at his death. The narrator also notes that the picture is made complete through the reflection in the water of "the deep heaven overhead, the symbol of that heaven whither he who has done his work is bound" (614-15).

MacDonald saw the infinitely varied phenomena of nature as windows into God's glory and a divinely created language for expressing spiritual truths. He frequently employed this visual language in the books he wrote to share with his readers. In depicting the reality of nature with a clarity that suggested its wonder and the artistry of God, MacDonald learned from Ruskin and worked alongside the early Pre-Raphaelites.

Notes

1. This term has been used by Landow and others.

2. My attention was directed to this passage during a lecture by Ruskin scholar Birch.

3. I am indebted to Dr. André DeCuir, once a fellow graduate student at the University of Kentucky, for first noticing the similarity between Millais' painting and MacDonald's prose landscape.

4. MacDonald acknowledges that he has described a Hughes painting in *The Seaboard Parish* 615n. Triggs identified the title of the painting, of which Hughes created several versions.

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Sucking Life: The Principle of Hell in C.S. Lewis's Screwtape Letters

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The West has long validated (and we could say celebrated) the separate, autonomous self as the experiencing Subject. The fact that we are self-conscious indicates our separateness from the Other. In fact, we feel so separate that we become isolated in our self-consciousness, so separate that we have trouble establishing connection with other selves who remain external to us. This frustrating experience produces anxiety, a fundamental alienation that leaves us isolated and lonely. The Romantic poets of the nineteenth century record their experience of the subject/object dichotomy in descriptions of **desire for beauty, for experience of the past**, even desire to **enter** scenes of "perilous seas or faerie lands forlorn" (Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*), or lose themselves "In Xanadu [where] Kubla Khan a stately pleasure dome decree[d]" (Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*) (C.S. Lewis, *Afterword to the Third Edition of **The Pilgrim's Regress*** 202-203). The Romantics' goal is to overcome alienation in an aesthetic experience of beauty, grace, and power in the landscape. They understand that as Lewis describes it in *The Weight of Glory*, "we do not want merely to **see** beauty" . . . "we want something else which can hardly be put into words"; we "want to be **united** with the beauty we see, to **pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it**" (Weight of Glory 37). That union with the other is what we long for. Here is where the Romantics accurately picture our souls' longing to overcome the separateness of our existence. However, as inviting as their visions seem, C.S. Lewis reminds us in both ***The Pilgrim's Regress*** and *The Weight of Glory*, that the Romantics don't get it quite right because the object of desire is misplaced. The **true** object of our desire isn't the beauty, grace and power of nature; rather, it is the **Creator** of the beauty that beckons us into a relationship of complete union. It is that **being united with something outside ourselves** that God made us for; this is a description of Paradise, "to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it" that is what we long for, **to take God in, to become one with him**. That is a picture of Heaven. And Hell understands this, for the **central principle of Hell is to consume the other.** To help us understand Heaven better, C.S Lewis depicts the opposite of heaven's principle of 'complete unity with the other' in ***The Screwtape Letters*** where demons live by "sucking the will and freedom out of a weaker self into a stronger" (qtd. in Huttar 2). [Hands apart=separation; hands tog=unity; hand over fist=consuming other]

Lewis came upon this idea in a kind of experience few of us have any more, that curious thing called "listening to the radio." On July 20, 1940, Lewis wrote his brother Warren, that he and a friend had recently heard **Hitler** speaking on the radio and he describes how easy it is to fall under the influence of a powerful speaker.

> I don't know if I'm weaker than other people; but it is a positive revelation to me how *while the speech lasts* it is impossible not to waver just a little. I should be useless as a schoolmaster or a policeman. Statements which I know to be untrue all but convince me, at any rate for the moment, if only the man says them unflinchingly. The same weakness is why I am a slow examiner: if a candidate with a bold, mature handwriting attributed *Paradise Lost* to Wordsworth, I shd. [sic] feel a tendency to go and look it up for fear he might be right after all. (Lewis, Warren 355)

N**early being persuaded by Hitler's lie** engenders Lewis's idea for a book titled "As One Devil to Another" and would consist of letters from an elderly retired devil to a young devil who has just started work on his first "patient" (King 9). "The idea [wd.] *sic* be to give all the psychology of temptation from the other point of view" (Lewis, Warren 355). This scheme took shape as an

epistolary novel, a **series of letters** that provide one half of a dialogue which the reader is allowed to overhear. ***Screwtape Letters*** first appeared in a religious newspaper *The Guardian*, in 31 weekly installments, May 2—November 28, 1941 and established the Oxford literature professor's popularity particularly in America (Como 2). Incidentally, the fact that he wrote the novel during WWII meant that he could assume his readers were confronting the fleetingness of life and the reality of evil perpetrated on the weaker by the stronger. Staring the evils of war in the face must have spurred readers to take their spiritual lives seriously; Lewis as a spiritual guide certainly makes us feel he stands alongside us in the trenches.

The author of the Screwtape letters is a senior tempter instructing his nephew devil with compelling authority, (a little Hitler-esque), on the best methods for goading a human being to hell. The human in question is a young unmarried man who lives with his mother, gets engaged to a young woman, and experiences a conversion to Christianity. His guardian devil, Wormwood, also young and inexperienced, is given the task of reversing the conversion. Readers overhear from an insider's point of view, then, how a devil tries to fend off his charge's conversion and then how he tries to turn him back to Hell. A passage from Chapter 22 will offer us a candid glimpse of Screwtape's malevolent mind.

This passage captures Screwtape's mission to render all other beings as entrees on his infernal menu. In fact, the most consistent images for the demons' behavior are images of eating. The tempters regard their human patients (and each other) as food! The stronger wills are prowling, trying to consume the lesser wills (Walsh 32). When this ravening takes the form of an appetite for flesh, it becomes the lowest expression of human appetites. Wormwood, the master demon Screwtape's protégé, lives in constant fear of being eaten. If he doesn't participate in trying to gorge himself on the patient, then he himself will become the food of his uncle Screwtape. This disequilibrium breeds threats and frantic plots for self-preservation throughout the ranks of Helldom. Screwtape threatens Wormwood repeatedly: "You must learn to pay for your own blunders," (Chap. 4) . . . "I really see no reason why I should try to shield you from the consequences of your inefficiency" (Chap. 13) . . . "I note with great displeasure" (Chap. 20) . . . "If any present self-indulgence on your part leads to the ultimate loss of the prey, you will be left eternally thirsting for that draught of which you are now so much enjoying your first sip (Chap. 5) . And from that passage I just read, "not that that excuses you. I'll settle with you presently. You have always hated me and been insolent when you dared!" (Chap. 22). In other words, nobody's safe in Hell. Screwtape's last letter to his nephew begins:

> My dear Wormwood, my very dear Wormwood, my poppet, my pigsnie. How mistaken; now that all is lost you come whimpering to ask me whether the terms of affection in which I address you meant nothing from the beginning. Far from it! Rest assured, my love for you and your love for me are as like as two peas. I have always desired you, as you (pitiful fool) desired me. The difference is that I am the stronger. I think they will give you to me now; or a bit of you. Love you? Why, yes. As dainty a morsel as ever I grew fat on. (Chapter 31).

Lewis's depiction of the devil here has a memorable literary antecedent in Dante's ***Inferno***. Dante places Satan far below the fire and brimstone in the deepest bowels of Hell. He is suspended rigid in a lake of ice because Satan has foregone the warmth of connection, the bond that should connect him to other created beings. Frozen in place, Satan is gnawing the shades of his human minions Judas, Brutus, and Cassius. The worst eternal torture the medieval mind could conceive is expressed in the consumption of human flesh. Later, the seventeenth-century Satan of Milton's ***Paradise Lost*** practices the same grim battening on human flesh when he convinces the two monsters guarding the gates of Hell, Sin and Death, to let him out of the Underworld by promising them food in the form of human souls (King 14). Romantic poets of the Nineteenth Century, George Gordon, Lord Byron, and Percy Shelley, thought of Satan as the hero of ***Paradise Lost***—they admired him because he was uncompromising in his **thirst** for power, in his **insatiable appetite for control.** These poets' admiration may suggest more about about them than it communicates about Milton's genius, for **what we admire is what we are on the road to becoming**. If we admire an expression of selfishness, exploitation, an inability to respect the autonomy of others (Foster 16), we may be on the road to becoming more hellish ourselves. Remember that evil is a parasite. Evil doesn't create anything; it only exists by consuming what is good. Lewis tells us in ***Mere Christianity***, "the powers which enable [evil] to carry on are the powers given it by goodness" (50). Thus, **evil has to consume in order to thrive**. The devouring, then, is self-serving; it is a way of using the other to get what the self wants.

Sucking the life force out of another is in fact what it means to be in Hell. If Hell is consuming the other, then no one is safe and every being is threatened by every other. We may recognize competition as the principle organizing the worlds we inhabit, **worlds** in Lewis's words "**held together entirely by fear and greed**" . . . "[a] dog-eat-dog world[s]" where "everyone wishes everyone else's discrediting, demotion, and ruin; [where] everyone is an expert in the confidential report, the pretended alliance, the stab in the back" (*Preface* to the ***Screwtape Letters 1961***). Screwtape himself describes how Hell is especially practiced in destroying the other:

> The whole philosophy of Hell rests on recognition of the axiom that one thing is not another thing, and, specially, that one self is not another self. My good is my

> good, and your good is yours. **What one gains another loses**. Even an inanimate object is what it is by excluding all other objects from the space it occupies; if it expands, it does so by thrusting other objects aside or by **absorbing** them. A self does the same. With **beasts** the absorption takes the form of eating; for us, it means the sucking of will and freedom out of a weaker self into a stronger. "To be" means "to be in competition." (Chapter 18)

Screwtape's next letter tells Wormwood that "**all selves are by their very nature in competition**" (Chapter 19). We experience this battle in situations where there aren't enough **resources** to satisfy **everyone's** needs or desires. So we **scramble** to make sure **we** get what **we** want, even when **our winning** may come at the expense of **others**; **we gain by making someone else lose**. Parker Palmer recognizes that if we **misperceive** the world as a place of **scarcity**, then **competition** becomes necessary for **survival**. However, if we see the world as a place of **abundance**, then **acts of generosity and community** not only become **possible** but **fruitful** as well (Palmer 125). If we believe scarcity, then we grasp. If we believe abundance, then we open the hand.

It is a truism now to say that our hedonistic culture admires consumption of resources. Advertising and television parade movie stars and athletes' extravagant lifestyles before us—the grandest homes, the most sumptuous vacations, the most fabulous parties. Especially great parties with great food. Because we're all hungry—eating is an effective metaphor for the hungry soul.

The hungers that drive us are not **bad** things. After all, God created everything good; therefore, all our appetites are intended to point us **to** God, not lead us **away** from him. They reveal God as the giver of good things. . I Timothy 4: 4 reminds us, " . . . for everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving." The Danish film ***Babette's Feast*** depicts a conservative Christian community hesitant to dwell on gastronomical pleasures for fear they will be tempted to **idolize** the **pleasure** itself. But Babette, a gourmet chef the community rescues from war-torn Paris, **prepares** the group a **sumptuous** feast and while they eat it they **sacramentally experience God's grace** and actually **begin to forgive one another the resentments they have built up over the years.** These characters are almost shocked into the realization that grace can be revealed through the sensual, that appetite can take us to God instead of away from him; it reveals God as the giver of good things. And if we experience longings nothing on earth can fulfill, then we know we're made for more. Screwtape doesn't understand love or goodness (what is God up to? he fumes) but he does understand that if he can **twist desire** in human beings, he will succeed in affecting our **choices**: The only question **Screwtape** asks of any **human** deed is whether it leads the soul closer to God or further from him (Walsh 22). Lewis is showing us that each individual choice points our soul to its destination; Screwtape hopes to direct his victims on a downward spiral to keep them **from** seeing that appetite is for God because we're made for him; we have an appetite that finds its full expression in our **desire** for God because we are made for him. Isaiah 55:1-3 invites us to a **spiritual banquet** described in **physical terms**, in terms of food:

> Ho everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
> And you that have no money, come, buy and eat!
> Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
> Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
> And your labor for that which does not satisfy?
> Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,

> And delight yourself in rich food.

Such a physical description of experiencing God leads our souls into spiritual mysteries. God wants us to devour God, to be fed by himself. This is the mystery of the Incarnation described in John 6: 54: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink." This incarnate, enfleshed God validates appetite as a good intended for true nourishment. What is the difference between Screwtape's fricasseeing Wormwood and our eating God? Nourishment of the deepest kind. The diabolical meal Screwtape makes of Wormwood is an inverted parody of the central Christian symbol of the relationship between human and divine, the sacred meal of Communion in which the Body and Blood of Christ becomes the food of the faithful (Patterson 47). Screwtape never figures out what God is up to, what God wants to do for his creatures. You know what? We don't get it either. We feel like we have to hold tight to something. But God is telling us to let go, to put our faith in his love. We can't program it. We can't demand it or say "Love me like this, God." We can't hold heaven hostage, as we hear in another of Lewis's books, the ***Great Divorce***. In this culture that encourages us to demand our rights, we expect to be able to control our fate as a matter of justice. Screwtape is trying to control someone else, trying to consume him. **What God wants to do for us is not eat us but let us eat him.** He wants to give us **himself**. Screwtape never figures out what God wants to do for his creatures: give them himself (Paterson 47). Screwtape complains,

> All His talk about Love must be a disguise for something else—He must have some *real* motive for creating them and taking so much trouble about them. The reason one comes to talk as if He really **had** this impossible Love is **our utter failure to find that real motive**. (Chap. 19)

Hell simply cannot fathom selflessness. If the principle of Hell is the **consuming of the other,** the **principle of Heaven is to *give* the self in *service* to the other**. Rather than turn us into a **ruin of ourselves** as Screwtape would have it, God wants to nourish us into **life** and free us to become the self he hopes we will become. Again, Screwtape just doesn't get it. **"We** want to suck in, **He wants to give out"** (Chap. 19). "To get the man's soul and give him nothing in return—that is what really gladdens **Our** Father's heart" (Chap. 9).

The contrast between the Hellish way and the Heavenly way is more obvious than we sometimes imagine. Consider this: If the demon's greeting is **"Nice to eat you**" the Christian's greeting might be "**Nice to eat with you"** (Foster 7). What a difference a preposition makes! (Foster 15). Hmmm. ***Nice to eat with you.*** Thomas Foster notes that "whenever characters in fiction eat or drink together, we have an act of communion . . . breaking bread is an act of sharing and peace" (8). If sharing a meal is communal in literature, it is true in real life too. After all, we don't usually invite our **enemies** to dinner—unless we're trying to get on someone's good side (Foster 8). We usually invite our friends. The obsequious business lunch is no secret in the business world; it is a great way to win someone over, to make someone amenable to an idea. By the way, students, inviting your professor to lunch is an effective way to get him or her to look favorably upon your final grade! (Just an aside at this time in the semester; or for those of you who need extra credit right now) But it is kind of personal to take food into our bodies, isn't it? We usually want to do it with someone we are comfortable with. Generally, eating with another is a way of saying, "I'm with you, I like you," I trust you, I feel a bond of community with you (Foster 8). Communing with friends over a meal is the **opposite** of self-absorption, of literally absorbing the other into the self. It's the difference between "**I** really **enjoyed** that person" and "I really enjoyed that **person**." Furthermore, a communal meal practices freeing the other. It is a way of strengthening, of blessing the other. At its best it nurtures the other into true and complete selfhood (Patterson 47). You can probably recall memorable meals in the D.C. where you were invited into a deeper experience of your whole self, when you were known for who you are in a deep way. My husband, Robert, and I remember our college OT professor saying to us, “When my family is gathered around the table eating and drinking in **celebration together**, I hope **heaven’s not too much better than this**.” **Sharing such a meal is an experience of being complete, of finding our true home in God.** Hell can’t give us our true home. Hell can’t overcome subject/object dichotomy to give us our true home, our true oneness with God. Only Heaven can do that. Only love invites us into unity with the divine other who gives us our true self, complete in God.

Good Christian hospitality can serve as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet—as Communion does. I invite you to contemplate the Rublev icon of the Holy Trinity with me. It is a representation of the visit of the angels to Abraham and Sarah, but the angels here are traditionally regarded as the three members of the Trinity. Since we have been describing Hell, you might see in these holy beings that there is no unfilled desire or longing expressed. Instead, this is a picture of peace and rest. But not static rest. We can see the figures are not busy doing something, but they are **occupied**; with what exactly? Is it that they are engaged in being? Are we observing ***Being*** at rest? As in Beings at rest. They are **attentive** and they are **attending to each other**. One of the earliest verses of Genesis reads, "God rested on the 7th day." God was not anxious. Everything he made was good; there was perfect harmony in the beginning. And when the end comes, it will be a return to the original wholeness, integration, being at rest. We think of God as busy, God as the cosmic postman—all these prayers must keep God busy, all the details he has to juggle. But God was at rest in the beginning, he is at rest now, and he invites us into his rest if we will let him. If there is stillness, there is also movement here, movement in the texture and color and shape: the colors and textures of the robes move around and upward; the eye is moving from the bottom of the foreground—the feet rest not on the ground but up on stools that lift us upward (both the eye and the spirit) to the table and the color of the table moves the eye upward to the halos, the rocks, the tree, the house. The robes almost flow in circles until there is a flowing of shapes and circles almost swirling in a dance. Each figure is also gently disposed, is gently inclining and deferring and submitting to the others in the circle. Such openness seems to invite participation in a sacred dance; the open place at the table invites us up into the sacred dance. It invites **us**; you have a seat at the table! Do you realize this? Each one of us! You have a place at this table; God invites each of **us** into the presence of the holy, the sacred mystery. This is an infinite circle of infinite love. And it isn't exclusive, it's not a closed circle. It is an invitation for us to be with the Holy Trinity. If Hell is individuals trying to absorb others in endless competition, it leads to isolation, alienation, loneliness, and powerlessness. Screwtape finally admits to Wormwood, "**We** are empty and would be filled; **He** is full and flows over. Our war aim is a world in which Our Father Below has drawn all other beings into himself: the **Enemy** wants a world full of beings united to Him but still distinct. (Chap. 19) Heaven in contrast to Hell, leads us into community with others that affirms us and invites us into our true identity.

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The End for which we are Formed:

Spiritual Formation Through C. S. Lewis

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C. S. Lewis offers readers a profound picture of spiritual formation, grounded in his own keen awareness of human nature. He grasps the complexity of the human animal as a blend of rational, psychological, physical, and spiritual components, but essentially sees us as choosing creatures. Lewis perceptively recognizes human longing for joy and transcendence as we reach out for that "end for which we are formed" (a line from his last sermon, *A Slip of the Tongue*). While he clearly comprehends our experience of trials, temptations, failures, and incompleteness—both within ourselves and within the world, Lewis nevertheless knows what it takes to be transformed into the image of Christ. In the end, he affirms that spiritual formation is not an option for human beings (though it is a choice). We will be formed one way or another—either into a more heavenly creature or a more hellish one. In ***Mere Christianity***, Lewis lays out a concise but perceptive definition of spiritual formation.

> Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow-creatures, and with itself. To be the one kind of creature is heaven: that is joy and peace and knowledge and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state or the other"[1]

Lewis's genius in understanding spiritual formation, therefore (though he did not use the term), centers on his insightful interpretation of human nature—elucidating our insatiable longing (the end for which we are formed) and our free will (which animals do not enjoy). Without either of these (longing or free will), spiritual formation becomes a rather ridiculous enterprise. If you have no goal toward which to be formed, no destination or telos at which you are aiming to arrive, why speak of *formation* at all? And if you are not free to walk (or not walk) toward your destination, it seems strange to call the enterprise *spiritual*. Groundhogs are not spiritual creatures; they do not make choices about their own life destinies (with the exception perhaps of Punxsutawney Phil). On the other hand, Lewis cries, "You have never met a mere mortal;"[2] there are no ordinary people—only those on their way to becoming either devils or glorified creatures like the angels. And yet we are embodied souls, as well—part animal—subject to emotions, internal chemical reactions, fatigue, and desire. It is this human duality of the feely choosing creature—a concept Augustine and Pascal understood so well—that forms the center of Lewis's spiritual theology.

Many of us have been relying on C. S. Lewis for years as a chief guide in our spiritual formation without perhaps fully recognizing the depth of his influence. Yet every time we turn to one of his books for a second or third reading, every time we quote him on key spiritual topics, every time we refer to one of his analogies or images, our head and heart betray a deep longing to be led by Lewis further into Christ-likeness.

Consider for a moment how influential Lewis has been in the development of your own Christian faith as you eavesdrop on the experience of others. Martha Atkins Emmert, retired missionary: "C. S. Lewis served as my pastor and counselor ….I clung to his words as to a lifeboat …. As I read, life came back into perspective …. Lewis steadied and sustained me through our thirty-five year career in Congo and comforts me still today."[3] Catholic teacher and scholar Thomas Howard: "I can say that C. S. Lewis has been a very special instrument of grace to me …. There is no question about it—Lewis has been a spiritual mentor…."[4] Scholar and author Michael Ward: "My debt to Lewis is incalculable and inexpressible. There is not world enough and time to tell all I have gained from [him]."[5] Nicholas Seward, Chaplain of Magdalen College "Every time I [red]read anything he wrote, I felt impelled to pursue holiness."[6] Mary Coverdale: "As Lewis so vividly showed me [through the ***Great Divorce***], I would have to cast aside my earthly sins for the sake of heaven. I learned about how and why…from Lewis, and I continue today to try to live my life in light of heaven."[7] Pastor Richard James: "And thus, through both his life and his words, C. S. Lewis has left his footprints deeply upon my heart, and life has never been the same."[8] Teacher and scholar Jerry Root: "Lewis gave me a vocabulary for my soul".[9]

We trust Lewis as spiritual mentor and guide, don't we? Why is that? Let me offer two explanations. First, we trust Lewis as spiritual guide because he tells us the truth about ourselves. His analysis rings true. As Lewis clearly delineates for us the enigma of human nature—both the misery and mystery of the human condition—we experience his fascinating facility for understanding the human heart. People often claim the same sort of thing about Henri Nouwen's books: "It's like he understands me; like he can read my thoughts." Both writers had incredible insight into human nature—not just in the abstract sense of human fallibility or potential goodness, but in the daily particulars. Time and again we find ourselves asking, as we read some passage from Lewis: "How did he so completely perceive my irritation at my colleague?" or "How did he intuit the way my family operated around the dinner table as we grew up?" It is as if he looks right through the walls at times—into our homes and into our hearts. We trust Lewis because we know he knows us.

Second, we trust Lewis as spiritual director because he convinces us he is on our side; he is one of us. Wallace A. C. Williams wrote an interesting essay on Lewis and spiritual formation entitled: *C. S. Lewis: Spiritual Disciplines for Mere Christians*.[10] "Mere Christianity" originally appeared as a term in the writing of the sixteenth century divine Richard Baxter, signifying basic orthodoxy, as in "foundations of the faith," or "basic beliefs." Lewis's own (personal) spiritual formation was nourished on a meat and potatoes diet of the "mere" Christian basics—prayer, Scripture, commitment to Church, frequent participation in Eucharist, etc—with obedience and reasoned-discipline as the sauces that tied the meal together.[11] Lewis knew how to lead "mere" Christians—the average pew-sitter—because he really understood himself as one. He does not ask anything of his readers that he has not first asked of himself.

While Lewis excelled as a student of human nature and behavior (in general terms), much of his wisdom came from the careful examination of his own life. We feel safe with Lewis as a spiritual guide, therefore, because he never leads from the position of saint "above us," but always as fellow soldier "alongside us" in the trenches. Lewis, as you may have noticed, was humble. He did not make excuses for himself. He recognized sin in others because he knew it so well in himself. When he asks us, then, to consider the heavenly or hellish choices we make moment by moment, he knows (from experience) defensiveness may easily surface within us. Often (again like Henri Nouwen) Lewis points to his own struggle to choose well. Instead of singling us out, he shines the lamp on his own life. Let me cite a memorable example.

Lewis delivered his last sermon, *A Slip of the Tongue*, at Magdalene College, Cambridge chapel in January, 1956.[12] In the sermon, Lewis relates how he was praying the ***Book of***

Common Prayer Collect in his private devotions (Proper12 in today's version) where it says "let us so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal," but Lewis found himself garbling it as "let us so pass through things *eternal* that we lose not the things *temporal*." He says, okay, just a silly mistake, right?—but, in fact, he admits this is rather how we tend to live, hanging on to things temporal (and my point is that Lewis includes himself in this mental mess with us). We really know we cannot escape God, but we want to give him just enough for us to get along with him, while still thoroughly running our own lives. Instead, God insists: 'No, I want all of you.'

In the sermon, Lewis returns to a metaphor for Christian spiritual formation that first appeared in the last section of ***Mere Christianity*** (1945).[13] He describes how we often mistakenly think Christ merely demands from us a greater percentage of our lives—"like honest but reluctant taxpayers." We may grudgingly agree that taxes are necessary, but we surely don't want them to increase, and we most definitely insist "that after we have paid [them] there will still be enough to live on."[14] It is as if our life were viewed as a pie chart with different slices representing separate compartments: our social life, our financial life, our sex life, our vocational life, our family life, etc.—with God constantly asking us to expand our spiritual life slice (or compartment). In ***Mere Christianity***, Lewis uses the voice of God to explain that God wants the whole pie, not merely a bigger slice: "'No half-measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. I don't want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours.'"[15]

We might understand this as a call to "Christian conversion." As Lewis insists in *A Slip of the Tongue*, our first choice is crucial. If we do not start on the right road, we will have "missed the end for which we are formed." He asks if it really matters "to a man dying in the desert by which choice of route he missed the only well?"[16] But the sort of choosing Lewis addresses relates not only to starting on the right road, but continuing to choose to stay on that path. He means to point us to the process of ongoing spiritual formation commonly called sanctification (something Lewis consistently taught and practiced). To affirm that Christian growth implies progression is either redundant or tautological. Our growing up "into the full measure of Christ" continues even after our life on this earth ends, according to Lewis; so, we might as might well roll up our sleeves and get started on the journey.

In this last sermon, however (seven years before his death), Lewis returns to a metaphor he adopted eleven years earlier to admit that he himself continued to struggle with the reality of daily surrender to God (of paying his spiritual taxes). For all his practiced Christian devotion and obedience—laid out for us in Lyle Dorsette's book ***Seeking the Secret Place***–Lewis struggled throughout his life to give up "things temporal," to practice what spiritual formation calls "detachment." In *A Slip of the Tongue*, Lewis confesses that letting go of our "ordinary life," what he terms "the natural self" in ***Mere Christianity***, can loom for us as "too intolerably inconvenient." For instance, he suggests, "It would be very tiresome to commit myself to a programme of temperance which would cut off my after-breakfast cigarette (or at least make it cruelly alternative to a cigarette later in the morning)."[17] It is confessions like these, where Lewis comes alongside us as spiritual mentor—as one who understands human weakness because he knows it so well in himself. Rather than send information to us impersonally, as a walkie-talkie

Lieutenant, Lewis leads us out into spiritual battle as a foxhole Sergeant. He convinces us he has walked in our spiritual boots.

So Lewis leads fellow Christians, as Nouwen does, not from so far above (as Holy Priest) that we despair of ever matching up (he knows our weakness from within) and not from so far below (as a Spiritual Cripple) so that we shrug off the call to obedience, but rather as a fellow traveler and guide who has gone up around the bend just far enough to know the path personally. He can lead Mere Christians into the practice of *Mere Christianity* because he knew that he himself needed the basic tools, always returning to the foundations and fundamentals of the faith.

While Lewis's definition of spiritual formation centers on the human being as a choosing creature, with humans choosing moment by moment to become either more heavenly or more hellish, the concept of spiritual longing also pervades all of Lewis's work. Consider for a moment how traditional discipleship in the past has proceeded along one of two lines: either transformation of mind (intellect), or transformation of behavior (will). We call out to ourselves and to others either "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind," or "Come out from among them and be holy; be holy as the Lord your God is holy." The first, which is more intellectually oriented, focuses on Scripture and good theology (among both Protestant Para-Church groups and Catholic Thomistic traditions). The second, associated more closely with the Holiness Movement, emphasizes "methods" to encourage holy living (what we would lovingly call today the spiritual disciplines). Spiritual Formation in our current climate, however, while not ignoring transformation of mind or will, concentrates instead on transformation of heart or soul. By heart, I do not mean subjective feelings. Rather, I mean the same thing John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards meant by the term "religious affections"; what John Eldredge labels "desire"; or what

Ronald Rolheiser calls “holy longings;” what we might also call “spiritual passions or yearnings.”[18]

Lewis understood how significant our spiritual longings were. We could compare Augustine’s famous statement in the *Confessions* that our hearts are restless (governed by longings) and find no rest until they rest in God. Therefore, our longings (our loves) need to be ordered, disciplined, managed, re-ordered, and given shape. In his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis includes a substantial reflection on how the work of Wagner produced within him this kind of wistful longing. A near palpable pleasure and hunger surfaced for Lewis and other Inklings as they experienced these beautiful strains of music, or as they tasted a similar joy in Norse saga and poetry—capturing a sense that life was beautiful, brief, and passing away. ‘Baldir the beautiful is dead, is dead,’ mourns the Icelandic myth. So Lewis refers to Wagner: “I had tasted the lost joy with unusual fullness.”[19] Like leaving college and realizing you will never again experience those golden days of freedom and friends; like the last child moving out of the house with parents wondering how they can ever go into her room again without tears. *Sensucht* is the German word for this sort of anguished longing. But through his conversion, Lewis learns that this longing is a sign pointing to a greater fulfillment, to an eternal destiny, to seeds planted in the human soul meant to grow in an eternal garden.

How then do we learn to deal with our desires on this earthly journey? How do we learn to link our daily longing toward choosing heaven, toward choosing that which leads us to the end for which we were formed? That is much of what Lewis is trying to teach us in his writing. Recall the passage from *Perelandra* where the Green Lady counsels us to appreciate the fruit we have before us instead of pining after the fruit we had wanted but failed to locate.[20] In a parallel passage of the book, addressing human appetite (the fire of desire), Lewis has the main character

Ransom stumble upon a sort of water-balloon-like globe of pleasure: “For one draught of this on earth wars would be fought and nations betrayed.” After the intoxication of the drink, Ransom considers consuming more. But his reason steps in—or is it his integrity—warning him that such gluttony would be “like asking to hear the same symphony twice in a day.”[21] It is not that Lewis is a prude. He simply knows too well that earthly pleasures promise what they cannot deliver. Self-denial, self-discipline, *askesis*, asceticism, the spiritual disciplines—these are not somehow ends in themselves, somehow intended to save us from having too much fun or pleasure. Rather, Lewis insists, we operate with a lower view of our pleasure than God himself. Consider the memorable analogy from *The Weight of Glory*: “We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”[22] There is a lovely ***Book of Common Prayer*** Collect that expresses the same idea: “Lord, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding; pour into our hearts such love toward you that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises which exceed all that we can desire, through Jesus Christ our Lord….” We are far too easily pleased, reminds Lewis. God calls us farther up and farther into formation in the image of Christ, deeper into his presence, lavished with the gifts of his infinite love.

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[1] C. S. Lewis, ***Mere Christianity***. New York: Macmillan, 1960: 86-87.
[2] C. S. Lewis, ***The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses***. New York: Touchstone 1980: 39.
[3] Mary Anne Phemister and Adrew Lazo, ***Mere Christians: Inspiring Stories of Encounters with C. S. Lewis***. Grand Rapids: Baker 2009: 109-110
[4] Ibid. 143
[5] Ibid. 205
[6] Ibid. 195
[7] Ibid. 90
[8] Ibid. 148
[9] Ibid. 187

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[10] Wallace A. C. Williams, *C. S. Lewis: Spiritual Disciplines for Mere Christians* in ***For All the Saints***, eds. Timothy George and Alister McGrath London: John Knox 2003: 177-194. See also William Griffin, ***C. S. Lewis: Spirituality for Mere Christians***. New York: Crossroad 1998.

[11] See Lyle Dorsett, ***Seeking the Secret Place: The Spiritual Formation of C. S. Lewis***. Grand Rapids: Brazos 2004.

[12] C. S. Lewis, *A Slip of the Tongue* in ***The Weight of Glory and Other Essays***. New York: Touchstone 1980: 137-143.

[13] C. S. Lewis, ***Mere Christianity***. New York: Macmillan 1952.

[14] Ibid. 140

[15] ***Mere Christianity*** 167.

[16] *A Slip* 142.

[17] Ibid. 138.

[18] John Eldredge, ***The Journey of Desire***. Nashvile: Thomas Nelson 2000; Ronald Rolheiser, ***The Holy Longing***. New York: Double Day 1999.

[19] C. S. Lewis, ***Surprised by Joy***. New York: Harcourt 1955: 166.

[20] C. S. Lewis, ***Perelandra*** New York: Macmillan 1978: 68-9.

[21] Ibid. 42-3.

[22] *Weight* 26

RACE WITH THE DEVIL :

A Journey from the Hell of Hate to the Well of Mercy

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‘A sound atheist can not be too careful of the books that he reads.’ So said C.S. Lewis in his autobiographical apologia, *Surprised by Joy*. These words continue to resonate across the abyss of years that separates me from the abysmal bitterness of my past.

What is true of the atheist is as true of the racist. Looking back into the piteous pits of the hell of hatred that consumed my youth, I can see the role that great Christian writers played in lighting my path out of the darkened depths. Eventually, with their light to guide me, I stumbled out into the dazzling brilliance of Christian day. Looking back along that path, I can see, in my memory’s eye, the literary candles that lit the way. There are dozens of candles bearing the name of G.K. Chesterton, of which *Orthodoxy*, *The Everlasting Man*, *The Well and the Shallows* and *The Outline of Sanity* shine forth particularly brightly. Almost as many candles bear the name of Chesterton’s great friend, Hilaire Belloc, and several bear the name of John Henry Newman. And, of course, there is the flickering presence of Lewis and Tolkien. These and countless others light the path by which I’ve traveled.

Long before any of these candles were lit, I found myself groping in the unlit tunnel of racial hatred, the angst and anger of which had all but obliterated the blissful memories of a relatively carefree childhood. Guilty of ignorance, I left my innocence behind and advanced into adolescence with the arrogance of pride and prejudice - boyhood bliss blistered by bitterness.

I grew up in a relatively poor neighbourhood in London's East End at a time when large-scale immigration was causing major demographic changes. The influx of large numbers of Indians and Pakistanis was quite literally changing the face of England, darkening the complexion and adding to the complexity of English life. Perhaps inevitably, the arrival of these immigrants caused a great deal of resentment amongst the indigenous population. Racial tensions were high and violence between white and Asian youths was becoming commonplace. It was in this highly charged atmosphere that I emerged into angry adolescence.

At the age of fifteen I joined the National Front, a new force in British politics which demanded the compulsory repatriation of all non-white immigrants. As a political activist my life revolved around street demonstrations, many of which became violent. I filled my empty head and inflamed my impassioned heart with racist ideology and elitist philosophy. It was at this time that I made what I now consider to be my Faustian pact, i.e. my pact with the Devil; not that I had heard of Faust nor, as an agnostic, did I have any particular belief in the Devil. Nonetheless, I recall making a conscious 'wish' that I would give everything if I could work full-time for the National Front. My 'wish' was granted and I abandoned my education to devote myself wholeheartedly to becoming a full-time 'racial revolutionary'.

I never looked back. At the age of sixteen I became editor of *Bulldog*, the newspaper of the Young National Front, and, three years later, became editor of *Nationalism Today*, a 'higher brow' ideological journal. At eighteen I became the youngest member of the party’s governing body. Whether I believed in him or not, the Devil had certainly been diligent in answering my ‘wish’.

Apart from the racism, the sphere of my bitterness also included a disdain for Catholicism, partly because the terrorists of the IRA were Catholics and partly because I had imbibed the anti-Catholic prejudice of many Englishmen that Catholicism is a ‘foreign’ religion. Such prejudice is deeply rooted in the national psyche, stretching back to the anti-Catholicism of Henry VIII and his English Reformation, to Elizabeth I and the Spanish Armada, to James I and the Gunpowder Plot, and to William of Orange and the so-called ‘Glorious’ Revolution. I knew enough of English history – or, at least, enough of the prejudiced Protestant view of it that I had imbibed in my ignorance – to see Catholicism as an enemy to the Nationhood which, as a racial nationalist, I now espoused with a quasi-religious fervour.

It was, however, in the context of ‘the Troubles’ in Northern Ireland that my anti-Catholicism would reveal itself in its full ugliness. The IRA’s bombing campaign was at its height during the 1970s and my hatred of Republican terrorism led to my becoming involved in the volatile politics of Ulster. I joined the Orange Order, a pseudo-masonic secret society whose sole purpose of existence is to oppose ‘popery’, i.e. Catholicism. Technically, although only ‘Protestants’ were allowed to join the Orange Order, any actual belief in God did not appear necessary. As a ‘Protestant’ agnostic I was allowed to join and a friend of mine, an avowed atheist, was also accepted without qualms. Ultimately the only qualification was not a love for Christ but a hatred of the Church.

In October 1978, still only seventeen, I flew to Derry in Northern Ireland to assist in the organization of a National Front march. Tensions were high in the city and, towards the end of the day, riots broke out between the Protestant demonstrators and the police. For the duration of the evening and well into the night, petrol bombs were thrown at the police, Catholic homes were attacked and Catholic-owned shops were looted and destroyed. I had experienced political violence on the streets of England but nothing on the sheer scale of the anger and violence that I experienced in Northern Ireland.

My appetite whetted, I became further embroiled in the politics of Ulster, forging friendships and political alliances with the leaders of the Protestant paramilitary groups, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA). During a secret meeting with the army council of the UVF it was suggested that I use my connections with extremist groups in other parts of the world to open channels for arms smuggling. On another occasion an ‘active service unit’ of the UVF, i.e. a terrorist cell, offered their ‘services’ to me, assuring me of their willingness to assassinate any ‘targets’ that I would like ‘taken out’ and expressing their eagerness to show me their arsenal of weaponry as a mark of their ‘good faith’. I declined their offer, as politely as possible – one does not wish to offend ‘friends’ such as these! They were dangerous times. Within a few years, two of my friends in Northern Ireland had been murdered by the IRA.

Back in England violence continued to erupt at National Front demonstrations. Outside an election meeting in an Indian area of London in 1979, at which I was one of the speakers, a riot ensued in which one demonstrator was killed. A few years later a friend of mine, an elderly man, was killed at another election meeting, though on that occasion I was not present.

Predictably perhaps, it was only a matter of time before my extremist politics brought me into conflict with the law. In 1982, as editor of *Bulldog*, I was convicted under the Race Relations Act for publishing material ‘likely to incite racial hatred’ and was sentenced to six months in prison. The trial made national headlines with the result that I spent much of my sentence in isolation and in solitary confinement because the prison authorities were fearful that my presence might provoke trouble between black and white inmates. Ironically one of the other prisoners in the top security wing was an IRA sympathizer who had been imprisoned for slashing a portrait of Princess Diana with a knife. He and I saw ourselves as ‘political prisoners’, not as mere ‘common criminals’, like the murderers, serving life sentences, who constituted the majority of the other prisoners on the top security wing.

Unrepentant, I continued to edit *Bulldog* following my release and was duly charged once again with offences under the Race Relations Act. On the second occasion I was sentenced to twelve months imprisonment. Thus I spent both my twenty-first and twenty-fifth birthdays behind bars.

During the first of my prison sentences, Auberon Waugh, a well-known writer and son of the great Catholic novelist, Evelyn Waugh, had referred to me as a ‘wretched youth’. How right he was! Wretched and wrecked upon the rock of my own hardness of heart. Years later, when asked by the priest who was instructing me in the Catholic faith to write an essay on my conversion, I began it with the opening lines of John Newton’s famous hymn extolling the ‘amazing grace … that saved a wretch like me’. Even today, when forced to look candidly into the blackness of my past, I am utterly astonished at the truly amazing grace that somehow managed to take root in the desert of my soul.

How then did the cactus of grace, growing at first unheeded in the desert of my just deserts, become the cataract of life-giving waters washing my sins away in the sacramental grace of confession? How, to put the matter more bluntly and blandly, was I freed from the prison of my sinful convictions? How was I brought from the locked door of my prison cell to the open arms of Mother Church?

With the wisdom of hindsight, I perceive that the seeds of my future conversion were planted as early as 1980 when I was still only nineteen years old. In what barren soil they were planted! At the time I was at the very height, or depth, of my political fanaticism and was indulging the worst excesses of my anti-Catholic prejudices in the dirty waters of Ulster Protestantism. Few could have been further from St Peter's Gate than I.

The seeds were planted in the genuine desire to seek a political and economic alternative to the sins of communism and the cynicism of consumerism. During the confrontations on the streets with my Marxist opponents I was incensed by their suggestion that, as an anti-communist, I was, *ipso facto*, a 'storm-trooper of capitalism'. I refused to believe that the only alternative to Mammon was Marx. I was convinced that communism was a red herring and that it was possible to have a socially just society without socialism. In my quest to discover such an alternative someone suggested that I read more about the distributist ideas of Belloc and Chesterton. At this juncture one hears echoes once again of Lewis's stricture that 'a sound atheist cannot be too careful of the books that he reads', not least because the book to which he was specifically referring was Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man*, a book which would precipitate Lewis's first tentative steps to conversion. In this, at least, I can claim a real parallel between C.S. Lewis and myself. For me, as for him, a book by Chesterton would lead towards conversion. In my case, however, the book which was destined to have such a profound influence was a lesser known book of Chesterton's.

The friend who suggested that I study the distributist ideas of Chesterton informed me that I should buy his book, *The Outline of Sanity*, but also that I should read an invaluable essay on the subject, entitled 'Reflections on a Rotten Apple', which was to be found in a collection of his essays entitled *The Well and the Shallows*. As he suggested, I purchased these two books and sat down expectantly to read the volume of essays. Imagine my surprise, and my consternation, to discover that the book was, for the most part, a defence of the Catholic faith against various modern attacks upon it. And imagine my confusion when I discovered that I could not fault Chesterton's logic.

The wit and wisdom of Chesterton had pulled the rug out from under my smug prejudices against the Catholic Church. From that moment I began to discover Her as She is, and not as She is alleged to be by Her enemies. I began the journey from the rumour that She was the Whore of Babylon to the realization that She was in fact the Bride of Christ.

It was, however, destined to be a long journey. I was lost in Dante's dark wood, so deeply lost that I had perhaps already strayed into the Inferno. It is a long and arduous climb from there to the foot of Mount Purgatory. I was, however, in good company. If Dante had Virgil, I had Chesterton. He would accompany me faithfully every inch of the way, present always through the pages of his books. I began to devour everything by Chesterton that I could get my hands on, consuming his words with ravenous delight. Through Chesterton I came to know Belloc; then Lewis; then Newman. During the second prison sentence I first read *The Lord of the Rings* and, though I did not at that time fathom the full mystical depths of the Catholicism in Tolkien's myth, I was aware of its goodness, its objective morality and the well of virtue from which it drew. And, of course, I was aware that Tolkien, like Chesterton, Belloc and Newman, was a Catholic. Why was it that most of my favourite writers were Catholics?

It was during the second prison sentence that I first started to consider myself a Catholic. When, as is standard procedure, I was asked my religion by the prison authorities at the beginning of my sentence, I announced that I was a Catholic. I wasn't of course, at least not technically, but it was my first affirmation of faith, even to myself. A significant landmark had been reached. Another significant landmark during the second prison sentence was my first fumbling efforts at prayer. I am not aware of ever having prayed prior to my arrival at Wormwood Scrubs prison in December 1985, at least not if one discounts the schoolboy prayers recited parrot-fashion to an unknown and unlooked-for God many years earlier during drab and lukewarm school services. Now, in the desolation of my cell, I fumbled my fingers over the beads of a Rosary that someone had sent me. I had no idea how to say it. I did not know the *Hail Mary* or the *Glory Be* and I could not remember the *Lord's Prayer*. Nonetheless, I ad-libbed my way from bead to bead uttering prayers of my own devising, pleading from the depths of my piteous predicament for the faith, hope and love that my mind and heart desired. It was a start, small but significant …

My release from prison in 1986 heralded the beginning of the end of my life as a political extremist. Increasingly disillusioned, I extricated myself from the organisation which had been my life, and which had delineated my very *raison d'etre*, for more than a decade. As a fifteen year old I had 'wished' to give my life to the 'cause', now, in my mid-twenties, I desired only to give my life to Christ. If the Devil had taken my earlier ‘wish’ and had granted it infernally, Christ would take my new-found desire and grant it purgatorially. Having spent the whole of the 1980s in a spiritual arm-wrestle, fought within my heart and my head between the hell of hatred within myself and the well of love promised and poured out by Christ, I finally ‘came home’ to the loving embrace of Holy Mother Church on the Feast of St Joseph, 1989. Today, seventeen years on, I still find myself utterly amazed at the grace that could save a wretch like me.

Human Enhancement and *The Abolition of Man*

Stephen A. Phillips M.D.

Objective Values

C.S. Lewis expressed his concern at the start of *The Abolition of Man* that, in the context of teaching students about English composition, the writers of a text that he referred to as *The Green Book* were actually teaching philosophy. Lewis stated that the authors of the text, while ostensibly instructing about the use of language, were teaching "firstly, that all statements containing a predicate of value are statements about the emotional state of the speaker, and, secondly, that all such statements are unimportant" (15). The students who used the text would understand that statements about values were not objective statements that could be true or false because objective values did not exist.

To deny the existence of objective values is to deny an essential part of what makes us human. We are not just animals that respond instinctively to their appetites. As human beings we are a type of being capable of perceiving how things are intended to be and conforming ourselves to that intent. We are able to make moral choices in which we use our rational capacity to moderate how we respond to our appetites. Lewis, following the thoughts of Plato and the medieval theologian Alanus, stated that human beings are made in such a way that reason, symbolized by the head, governs the appetites, symbolized by the belly, by means of the chest which is the seat of not just emotions, but also sentiments and values (34). For our values to be capable of controlling our appetites they need to be more substantial than emotions and based on something more solid than the appetites that they control. There need to be objective values which have a truth that is outside of ourselves on which our personal values are based for our values to be able to play that controlling role. To deny the existence of objective values is to remove the foundation of that governing part of a person. One is left with unmediated intellect and appetites. In Lewis's terms it created men without chests (34).

The chest or heart of a person which depends on values to function is essential to our being human. It includes our ability to love and have relationships, to hope, and to have faith. A sense of objective moral value allows us to understand what is good. It allows us to love because love desires what is good for the one we love. It allows us to hope, because hope is an expectation of a future that is good. It allows us to have faith, because faith is the belief that the one in whom we put our trust is good and therefore trustworthy.

Contemporary Denial of Objective Values

Lewis was concerned with those who denied the existence of objective values by defining statements about values to be statements about the speaker's emotions. That method of denying objective values is not as common today. More frequently those in our society who deny the existence of objective values do so by an appeal to the virtue of tolerance and an evolutionary concept of human nature. We live in a pluralistic society in which people hold many beliefs that are incompatible with each other. A common response to that fact is a very broad understanding of tolerance that says all belief systems are to be tolerated in the sense that no one set of values has more claim to truth than another. However, as J. Budziszewski has noted, that understanding of tolerance is logically self-contradictory since it is necessary to commit to some objective good that is furthered by tolerance to have a reason to assert that tolerance is good (40). True tolerance is being able to differentiate what should be tolerated, such as erroneous beliefs, and what should not be tolerated, such as rape or slavery. That differentiation depends on objective values. It does not entail the idea that all beliefs or values have the same claim on truth.

Those who hold such a broad understanding of tolerance in spite of its contradictory nature commonly understand values as being based in an evolutionary form of cultural relativism similar to that proposed by E. O. Wilson. It states that values exist due to the survival benefit that they confer to human beings in a society that functions better due to those values. This allows for different cultures to have different values and makes the survival of the social group the ultimate evolutionary value. Even though those who deny objective values today do it differently, that denial suffers from the same problems it did in Lewis' day.

Even Those Who Deny Objective Values Live by Them

Although the writers of *The Green Book* taught there were no objective values, they still acted as if the values they did hold were true. Lewis noted they had written a book with the practical purpose of influencing its readers to agree with the ideas they were teaching. They had an end in sight that they held to be good for more than just themselves, and therefore must have believed that there was something that was good for its own sake (40). Lewis wrote that "a great many of those who debunk … traditional values have in the background values of their own which they believe to be immune from the debunking process" (41). Those who believe in cultural relativism still have values such as tolerance, equal rights for minorities and women, and fairness that they would apply to all cultures. To hold evolutionary cultural relativism as the basis for morality and still live as if values that you hold are universally true is inconsistent. There are some who assert that there are universal moral values that are based on human evolution that are not different for different cultures, but are still not objective because they are simply genetically derived adaptations that appear to us to be objective (Ruse). However, this leaves the problem that once we know that those values that appear to be objective are just evolutionary adaptations, then we have no reason to follow them. There are only two valid options. One is to accept that there are objective moral values. The other is to deny all values and live by your appetites.

Since the majority of people, including the writers of *The Green Book* and those who propose evolutionary cultural relativism, live as if there are objective values, what is the basis for those values? Lewis held that the values of common morality, which he called the Tao, were self-evident. They were “things so obviously reasonable that they neither demand nor admit proof” (53). The basic precepts of the common morality have been understood universally across cultures and across time. It is "not one among a series of possible systems of value. It is the sole source of all value judgements. If it is rejected, all value is rejected. If any value is retained, it is retained" (Lewis 56). This does not imply that any one person or society has perfectly understood this ultimate source of moral value, but says that progress in understanding it can only come from within the common morality and not by the denial of it. The only option other than accepting common morality is to say that the existence of human moral values is a natural psychological phenomenon that served a purpose in human development, but has no objective validity, and is just one more part of nature that we can seek to control (Lewis 62-63).

Human Control of Nature and the Abolition of Man

The desire to enhance human functioning and capabilities lies within the human project of controlling nature through the use of science and technology. We have benefited from this project in many ways, not the least of which is the ability of modern medicine to cure or control many diseases that have afflicted mankind for ages. There is, however, a cost that we pay when we use science and technology to control nature. By analyzing it into predictable parts we loose the sense of awe we have for its complexity and loose our sense of wonder at its design. We also lose the ability to see it in its wholeness. As Leon Kass has put it, "knowledge permitting prediction and (some) control over biological *events* has been purchased at the cost of deep ignorance, not to say misunderstanding, of *living beings*, ourselves included" (282).

Lewis saw the danger that existed in the application of the scientific project of controlling nature to human life. He understood that "what we call Man's power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised over other men with Nature as its instrument" (69). Lewis's insight that "all long-term exercises of power, especially in breeding, must mean the power of earlier generations over later ones" (69) relates to the potential effects of germ line genetic enhancement. This power is manifested by reducing the power and freedom of later generations by the decisions made by those engaging in germ line genetic therapy. To presume to know how to shape the future of the human race requires a certain arrogance. As Gilbert Meilaender has said, "What estimate of ourselves – our virtue and wisdom – would we need even to want to become so fundamentally the shapers of humanity?" (43) If those who believe that human values are determined by evolutionary genetics are even partially correct, then the project of achieving ultimate control over nature includes being able to influence human understanding of moral values by germ line genetic therapy. Those who have control over what future human beings believe to be moral have no reason to believe that traditional morality is true since they are the ones determining future moral thoughts. Since they believe morality is something they control they have no reason to believe in any objective morality and no reason to believe any moral impulses they have. They have no basis for how they design future generations other than their own desires and appetites. Their desires and appetites are a part of nature, so nature ends up controlling man. Thus, Lewis can conclude that the project of man's control over nature ends with nature controlling humanity and the abolition of man (80).

Human Enhancement and Objective Values

The scenario leading to the abolition of man imagined by Lewis was something he thought might happen by the hundredth century A.D. (71). However, it is beginning to be possible in the twenty first. Preliminary successes in somatic gene therapy and research in germ line gene transmission in mice suggest that germ line gene therapy capable of changing the future of the human genome may be possible in the near future. Gene therapy can be directed at the correction of errors that cause genetic disease, but also holds the potential for enhancing human abilities. Somatic gene therapy to eliminate errors causing genetic disease is very similar in concept to most other forms of medical therapy and its ethical concerns are limited to safety and efficacy. Somatic gene therapy done to attempt to enhance human abilities is morally more concerning particularly from the viewpoint of justice. Germ line gene therapy for the purpose of human enhancement opens up ethical concerns about the alteration of human nature

When we seek to apply Lewis' understanding of the importance of objective values and the danger of science and technology devoid of objective values to the area of germ line gene therapy for human enhancement it raises several questions. Is there a distinction between curing diseases and enhancement? How do we know that an alteration is enhancement and not degradation? How do we know that a change in the nature of future human beings is good? Objective moral values depend on the concept that there is a way that things were intended to be, and that we are obligated to conform to that intent. Does this imply that there is a way human beings are intended to be that we should not change?

Since the time of Hippocrates medicine has been understood as a profession dedicated to doing things for the benefit of the sick. Sickness has been understood as a deviation from how human beings are intended to be. It is not a deviation from a statistical norm, but from an intuitively understood idea of how we are made. In that sense our idea of what it means to be well is very much like the values of common morality which are self-evident ideas of how we are intended to live. Similar to common morality, people across cultures and time have a common understanding of what it means to be sick and to be well. The proper role of medicine has been understood to be the restoration of those who are sick to the state in which they were intended to be. As the ability of medicine to achieve that goal has progressed we have also included the idea of preventing sickness before it occurs as a part of that role.

Enhancement is a different sort of thing. Instead of focusing on restoration of people to an intended norm, it seeks something beyond that. If we understand Lewis' argument about common morality or the Tao, we will understand that to have any concept of what is good we must accept the self-evident values of common morality that are based in conformity to how we are intended to be. The idea that there is a way we are intended to be implies the existence of a designer who formed that intent. Lewis chose not to discuss that implication in *The Abolition of Man*, leaving that to another discussion, and we will do the same. No mater how we understand the source of that intent, objective values are based on a concept of how we are intended to be that is intrinsic to what we are as human beings. Without that we have no concept of what is good or right.

Enhancement includes the idea that something is being made better. For something to be better there must be a concept of what is good that it is becoming more like. If the concept of good in common morality is based on how we were intended to be, then to become better would be becoming more what we were intended to be. However, the concept of enhancement in modern medical science includes the concept of moving beyond what we have traditionally understood about how we are intended to be. As Lewis understood, the basic goal of science and technology has been the conquest of nature by analyzing it into parts that we can predict and then control. When we applied that in medical research to ourselves, we first sought to understand the causes for sickness and to be able to control those causes in order to make those who are sick well and prevent others from becoming sick. Human enhancement as understood by those who advocate it embodies the scientific project of taking control of nature and applies it to taking control of our own nature. Not content with the healing of the sick, we desire to have control of how we are made and move beyond the limits that we have as human beings. To have ultimate control over nature we must be able to make ourselves what we want to be.

The Dark Side of the Control of Nature

Lewis understood that within the desire to control nature, including our own nature, were some things that can be very destructive. Even when it is not directed at changing the nature of human beings, scientific control over nature turns out to be the control of some men over other men (69). Long term control of human nature involves the control of a small number of men in one generation over future generations, decreasing the freedom of those future generations. Those who would ultimately take control over human nature would need to take control over how human beings understand what is right and wrong. Science already has the tendency to cause people to focus on the material and lose sight of such things as objective values that are understood in a different manner than scientific data. By having the control of how people understand right and wrong as a part of the project of the ultimate control over nature, those who desire to manifest that control have no way to comprehend those objective values. They have no standard for values and must be motivated solely by their appetites. Since their appetites are a part of nature, nature ultimately wins if man tries to control it without limits set by objective values and an understanding of how nature and human beings are intended to be.

If it is true that there are objective values and that we have been designed such that those values are based on how we are intended to be there may be limits to what parts of human nature can be changed. It may not be possible for those who would seek to change the nature of human beings by germ cell genetic enhancement to change how we understand right and wrong. Common morality may persist in spite of any efforts to manipulate it. If this is the case, Lewis' thought experiment of taking the control of nature to its logical conclusion in the abolition of man may not be one that is capable of playing out in reality. However it still stands that those who would seek to take control of the nature of humanity by germ cell genetic enhancement will by the nature of the task tend to think that they can control all of human nature. Thus they will think of human moral ideas as something they can manipulate and lose their own respect for common morality. They will be just as controlled by their appetites as those who actually could change human moral concepts. Hence nature would take control of mankind just as surely as if human morality could be controlled by genetic alteration.

Avoiding the Abolition of Man

However the abolition of man seen by Lewis is not inevitable. The flaw in the scientific project is the desire for total domination of nature including human nature. That desire includes the desire to enhance human capabilities beyond what they were intended to be and to transform human nature into something determined by men. If we are willing to listen to the wisdom of common morality we can understand that we have been made with an intended purpose and that the proper goal of science is not domination of nature, but the understanding of what nature in general and human nature are intended to be. That understanding can be used for the common good of all human beings to help us be more like we were intended to be. That would be real human enhancement.

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Warren and Jack—Brothers and Friends

Constance Rice

Clyde Kilby, founder of the Wade Center at Wheaton College and early Lewis scholar, met Warren Lewis in 1966, forming a friendship that would last until Warren's death in 1973. He would describe Warren Lewis in the introduction to *Brothers and Friends The Diaries of Major Warren Lewis* as a "sensitive, loving man, a gentleman above all, who struggled honestly with the temptations of human life. He was no hero, no saint, and yet he was a good man—devout in his attempts to live a Christian life. Just an ordinary man. And just as extraordinary" (xi).

Warren Hamilton Lewis was born on June 16, 1895, in the outskirts of Belfast. He was to become not just an older brother to C. S. Lewis, but the two would become lifelong companions and friends. Warren is often overlooked for the integral role he played in the life of his famous brother. He was a central figure in the Inklings throughout their entire history and provided much of the social glue that held the members together. He would help his brother host the meetings by preparing tea and possessed a genuine gift of hospitality making everyone feel welcomed and comfortable. It is from his diaries that we get our greatest knowledge of the Inklings' meetings. He served his brother as Jack's personal secretary helping his brother with the great amount of correspondence Jack faced on a weekly basis. They shared a love of nature taking annual walking vacations. They shared a love of reading and writing. As brothers and friends, they shared the highest joys and deepest sorrows of their lives.

In C. S. Lewis's autobiography, *Surprised by* Joy, he writes that Warren was one of the several blessings in his life growing up. He wrote, "The other blessing in my life was my brother. Though three years my senior, he never seemed to be an elder brother: we were allies, not to say confederates, from the first" (6). Warren writes of their childhood as filled with rainy Irish days and the resulting "recurring imprisonment" that gave the brothers "occasion and stimulus to develop the habit of creative imagination." They learned to draw and together created an imaginary country of Boxen. Warren acknowledges that these were the early developments of his brother's gifts. When the family moved to Little Lea, they found the huge, wasted spaces under the roof and in the attic provided the brothers with glorious privacy and a place where Boxen and their imaginations could flourish. It was here, too, they experienced the tragic loss of their mother to cancer, and the resulting emotional loss of their father who was so overcome with his own grief that he was unable to comfort and to help his sons in their grief. Jack writes in his autobiography the impact the death of their mother had:

> With my mother's death all settled happiness, all that was tranquil and reliable, disappeared from my life. There was to be much fun, many pleasures, many stabs of Joy; but no more of the old security. It was sea and islands now; the great continent had sunk like Atlantis. (21)

The brothers' bond was only strengthen by their need to cling to one another and to comfort each other.

Warren would leave for school in England first, followed by his brother Jack soon after the death of their mother. Both boys would attend the same series of schools with Warren later taking private lessons with their father's former tutor, W. T. Kirkpatrick, as Jack would do as well. While Jack would choose the life of a scholar, Warren would choose the life of a career army officer.

Warren entered the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in February of 1914 having placed twenty-first out of 201 candidates. In September, he was appointed a commission as a second lieutenant in the RASC, his officer's training accelerated due to the wartime need. In November, Warren was sent to France as a second lieutenant. Throughout his career, promotions came quickly. His posts included service in Sierra Leone, West Africa (1921-22); and Shanghai, China (1927-30 and 1931-32). Jack would enlist and be placed into a cadet battalion in May of 1917 and served in the Somerset Light Infantry in France until he was wounded. Warren's service in the army involved supplies and transport. During both World Wars, Warren's duties were dangerous, situated just behind the front lines, strafed by enemy planes and while being responsible for thousands of soldiers. When he became ill with fever during WWII, he was evacuated from Europe with his unit from Dunkirk in May, 1940.

While in China during his first assignment, Warren Lewis's Christian faith was renewed. About a year later, he wrote on May 13, 1931:

> I have started to say my prayers again after having discontinued doing so for more years than I care to remember: this was no sudden impulse but the result of a conviction of the truth of Christianity which has been growing on me for a considerable time . . .The wheel has now made the full revolution—indifference, skepticism, atheism, agnosticism, and

> back again to Christianity. (92-93)

As recorded in Jack's autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, Jack had gone through a similar renewal of his Christian faith culminating during a ride in the sidecar of Warren's motorcycle on a trip to Whipsnade Zoo while Warren was on leave. In a letter to his brother on January 19, 1932, after Warren had returned to duty, Jack shared with Warren that he too had started to go to communion.

In July of 1930, Warren while on leave from the army joined with Jack and Mrs. Moore to purchase the Kilns. They had extended to him the invitation to live with them when he retired from the military. After his retirement he moved into the Kilns, weighing the pluses and minuses of his new living situation which included the setting of the home, domestic tensions due to Mrs. Moore, and a pleasant daily routine he hoped for. He wrote in his diary, "I have reviewed the pros and cons, and came to the conclusion that on balance, I prefer the Kilns at its worst to army life at its best: the only doubtful part being 'Have I seen the Kilns at its worst'" (Carpenter 39). Warren would find that life under the reign of Mrs. Moore could be quite miserable in the years to come, but he and his brother would live the rest of their days together in the Kilns. At home they spent a great deal of time together. Jack spent nights in his college rooms, but would come home in the afternoons. He and Warren would take the family dogs for walks or work in the garden before Jack returned to his college rooms. Warnie had a bedroom in the Kilns, but kept most of his books in Jack's rooms at Magdalen where Warnie spent most of his mornings working on the Lewis family papers or helping Jack with his correspondence (Carpenter 53).

Humphrey Carpenter in his book, *The Inklings*, describes Warren's physical appearance as follows:

> Warnie and Jack were fairly similar physically, both being heavily built with broad faces, though Warnie was more thickset and was tanned from his years abroad. They dressed similarly in baggy flannel trousers and tweed jackets, and they shared a liking for pipe tobacco and beer and country walks. (38)

Carpenter also describes Warnie's intellectual makeup:

> Warnie's formal education had stopped far short of Jack's, but he kept up his reading and was widely knowledgeable of English literature and even more so in French history, particularly of the seventeenth century. In English literature he regarded himself as a mere amateur, but his sheer enthusiasm, uncomplicated by any preconceived notions of what he ought or ought not to like, made him a discerning critic." (38)

This quality was much appreciated by his brother Jack. Warnie, as he was called by friends and family, was less read than Jack, but Warnie possessed a speculative imagination and common sense which made him an excellent companion for his brother (38, 53).

Upon Warnie's retirement and move to the Kilns, the brothers began a series of walking tours of forty to fifty miles or more which became an annual holiday. Warren writes in his *Memoir of C. S. Lewis*, shortened by the editors to an introduction to *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, about their times together on holidays and walking tours:

> The various holidays and tours were a great feature of his [Jack's] and mine; they were inspired by a joy in landscape that developed out of the Boxonian visions of our childhood and was—together with books—the most enduring element of cementing our friendship. Until 1939 our annual walking tour was a regular feature; on these long days, and during the pleasant evening hours when we took our ease in an inn, Jack was always at his most exuberant, his most whimsical, his most perceptive—the over-worked cab horse released from the shafts and kicking his heels (16).

In *Surprised by Joy*, while Jack was studying with the Great Knock, W. T. Kirkpatrick, he describes a perfect day that would include a daily walk after lunch with a friend:

> At one precisely lunch should be on the table; and by two at the latest I would be on the road. Not, except at rare intervals, with a friend. Walking and talking are two very great pleasures, but it is a mistake to combine them. Our own noise blots out the sounds and silences of the outdoor world; and talking leads almost inevitably to smoking, and then farewell to nature as far as one of our senses is concerned. The only friend to walk with is one (such as I found, during holidays, in Arthur) [Arthur Greeves, long time friend of Lewis's] who so exactly shares your taste for each mood of the countryside that a glance, a halt, or at most a nudge, is enough to assure us that the pleasure is shared. The return from the walk, and the arrival of tea, should be exactly coincident, and not later than a quarter past four. (142)

Jack did not like to walk alone, and Warnie was a perfect walking companion. George Sayer in his biography of C. S. Lewis, *Jack*, says that the brothers shared the same scenery, although they often had different impressions of it. They both enjoyed stopping at old fashioned inns and pubs that served rustic bread and cheese and beer (420). Their walking tours were planned to come to the end of a day of walking and to stay at a favorite inn. In their conversations, Warren would often take the lead having a far greater experience in ordinary life. Warren was also probably a shrewder judge of character (420) which is often apparent in his diaries.

In his *Memoir* of his brother, Warren tells of the immense importance of afternoon tea for Jack. When Warren and Jack were on a walking tour together or out on a ride in Warren's motorcycle with Jack in the sidecar, the whole day had to be ordered around the necessity of finding their selves at 4:00 in some place where afternoon tea was served. Warren tells that the only time he ever saw his brother disgruntled over food or drink took place when motoring with a friend and finding no tea in a place they had counted on serving tea. The friend and Warren naturally dived into the nearest pub for a drink, but Jack refused even this consolation.

It is from Warren's diaries that we get the best opportunity to get a picture inside the Inklings. In his diaries he would record who attended, what topics were discussed, and which pieces of literature were read. Warren was a regular attendee and read from his own writings on French history. He played host by preparing tea for those who attended. John Wain, a former student of Jack, describes him as "a man who stays in my memory as the most courteous I have ever met—not with mere politeness, but with genial, self-forgetful considerateness that was as instinctive to him as breathing" (Glyer "Warren Hamilton "Warnie" Lewis 249). In his *Memoir*, he calls the Inklings a "famous and heroic gathering, one that has already passed into literary legend." He continues to describe the group:

> Properly speaking it was neither a club nor a literary society, though it partook of the nature of both. There were no rules, officers, agendas, or formal elections—unless one counts it as a rule that we met in Jack's rooms at Magdalen every Thursday evening after dinner. Proceedings neither began nor terminated at any fixed hour, though there was tacit agreement that ten-thirty was as late as one could decently arrive. (13)

Warren also describes a typical meeting:

> The ritual of an Inklings was unvarying. When half a dozen or so had arrived, tea would be produced, and then when pipes were well alight Jack would say, "Well, has nobody got anything to read us?" Out would come a manuscript, and we would settle down to sit in judgement upon it—real unbiased judgement, too, since we were no mutual admiration society: praise for good work was unstinted, but censure for bad work—or even not-so-good work—was often brutally frank. To read to the Inklings was a formidable ordeal, and I can still remember the fear with which I offered the first

> chapter of my first book—and my delight, too, at its reception. (13-14)

Warren Lewis was an author in his own right, writing and publishing six books that covered various aspects of 17th century France. He also arranged and typed the Lewis family papers consisting of numerous diaries, letters, photographs, and miscellaneous documents gathered together by Warren and Jack after their father's death. The entire history consisted of eleven volumes. Warren's diaries were edited by Clyde S. Kilby and Marjorie Lamp Mead and published after Warren's death in 1973. According to Kilby, Warren writes "With a style light, quick, and perceptive" and "with the sensitive eye of the novelist—and yet his is a record of fact, not fiction. A keen reader of published diaries, Warren valued the insights he gained through such works. Even as a historian he was unafraid—and often preferred—to find the truth of history in these accounts (*Brothers and Friends x).*

Kilby also writes about Warren in his introduction to *Brothers and Friends* that "His is not a simple story—perhaps no one's ever is—but it is a true one. It is a life filled with much happiness, and a life of great sorrows. While the supreme tragedy of his life was certainly the premature loss of Jack, Warren Lewis also struggled mightily with the disease of alcoholism" (x). George Sayer, Walter Hooper, and Douglas Gresham have all written about Warren Lewis's alcoholism. Douglas writes in his book, *Lenten Lands*, that Warren's alcoholism began while he was in the army leaving him with "a dark legacy," a disease which he fought "with astonishing valiance for year after year, achieving some successes and suffering some cataclysmic failures" (43).

Kilby writes that Warren "was to battle this agony for forty years." He goes on to describe Warren's struggles:

> A man of integrity, and of strength even in his weakness, he knew that his occasional though intense bouts of depression left him sadly ill-fitted to cope with the attractions of alcohol. Nethertheless, Warren continued to face this reality courageously—and, more often than not, successfully—for the rest of his life. (x).

Warren often wrote of his victories and failures in his diaries. Numerous entries account the number of days he was able to remain a "teetotaler." One example from his diaries dated Wednesday, 2nd January, 1963 reads:

> I entered this year having been a teetotaler for 15 days. From then and 21st June, a period of 172 days, my consumption of alcohol was one pint of beer, drunk whilst lunching with George Sayer at the Mitre on 29th April. I drank from 22nd June until 27th August while I

> was in Ireland, then was a teetotaler from 28th August to 31st December, 126 days. So out of 365 days I was T. T. for 298 days. A poor performance compared with 1961. (282-283)

In another entry for Saturday, April 10, 1971, while reflecting on the past Lenten season he writes:

> I don't look back over Lent with much satisfaction, though there have been years in which I've passed the season worse. I can take no credit for having drunk no spirits, for it must now be two years or more since I've tasted any; nor can I plume myself on my dieting, for this, such as it was, I did for merely physical reasons. . .as well of course as my normal daily Bible reading; and I attended Evensong on the six Sundays as well as Mattins. Not much of an achievement I fear, but still, better than nothing. (332)

It is obvious that Warren struggled to maintain his sobriety, but he indeed had many days, even years of success.

The most telling of all of Warren's writing which reveals his great love and friendship with his brother is the account he gives in his *Memoir* of the days before his brother's death:

> In their way, these last weeks were not unhappy. Joy [Joy Lewis] had left us, and once again—as in the earliest days—we could turn for comfort only to each other. The wheel had come full circle: once again we were together in the little end room at home, shutting out from our talk the ever-present knowledge that the holidays were ending, that a new term fraught with unknown possibilities awaited us both. . .
>
> Our talk tended to be cheerfully reminiscent during these last days: long-forgotten incidents in our shared past would be remembered, and the old Jack would return for a moment, whimsical and witty. We were recapturing the old schoolboy technique of extracting the last drop of juice from our holidays.
>
> Friday, the 22nd of November 1963, began much as other days: there was breakfast, then letters and the crossword puzzle. After lunch he fell asleep in his chair: I suggested that he would be more comfortable in bed, and he went there. At four I took in his tea and found him drowsy but comfortable. Our few words then were the last: at five-thirty I heard a crash and ran in, to find him lying unconscious at the foot of his bed. He ceased to breathe some three or four minutes later. (45-46).

Warren survived almost ten years longer than his brother and died on April 9, 1973. It is a tribute to the brothers' love for each other and their enduring friendship, after a lifetime of companionship, that Warren was buried in the same grave as his brother.

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So Old and So New: Memory and Expectation in the Fantastic Works of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien

Megan J. Robinson

Introduction

Time is ever-present. Humans mark it, spend it, waste it, miss it, cherish it, and rebel against it. We live in time, and are dominated by it, though rarely do we take the long view beyond our immediate concerns and actions. We have words for our perspectives on time: nostalgia, reminiscence, anticipation, intention. If we were to stop and consider our basic orientation to time, we would find that we tend toward the past or toward the future (but rarely, and oddly so, do we simply stand in the present). For those holding religious beliefs, we orient ourselves to time and in time by the mythologies underpinning those beliefs, stories that tell of origins and endings, and of living in between. For J.R.R. Tolkien and his friend C.S. Lewis, the true myths of Christianity informed, shaped, and guided their thoughts, lives, and creative works, in ways that continue to make an impact on their audiences nearly half a century later. At the center of Christianity is the eucatastrophe of the Gospel message: Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, which radiates backwards and forwards throughout human history. We can imagine Tolkien and Lewis, as friends and as authors, standing side by side at this central point of their faith. In examining both Tolkien's and Lewis' writings, specifically in the fantastic mode, we find that each author has a basic orientation to time: Tolkien looks backward, and Lewis looks forward. But first, what is time, that we should be mindful of it?

Time did not exist before the creation of Earth and all things in it (and beyond), neither does time have existence in itself.[1] What we experience as a succession of moments in time is sustained by the creating, powerful Word spoken outside of time in the ‘simultaneity of eternity’[2], the constant present of God. The word of *being* constantly sounds throughout the universe, and it is in that being that we began, live, and progress toward an end. St. Augustine of Hippo, in his meditations on time and eternity, finds the measurement of time in our minds, and determines that memory is crucial to the conception of earthly time. For, as created beings in a succession of moments, we change, and remember that change, and thus measure it in our minds and souls, from the vantage point of our present. As Augustine progresses through his investigation on time, he concludes that the past and future do not exist, though we commonly speak of past, present, and future as three different times. Rather, the ‘present considering the past is memory, the present considering the present is immediate awareness, the present considering the future is expectation,' and these are 'in the soul as three aspects of time'.[3] Memory, awareness, and expectation: the passage of time is in direct correlation to our perception of it. It is the process and actions of retaining the past and inferring the future from the present in our selves that determines how we talk, think, and live about time.

> For the mind expects and attends and remembers, so that what it expects passes through what has its attention to what it remembers. Who therefore can deny that the future does not yet exist? Yet already in the mind there is an expectation of the future. Who can deny that the past does not now exist? Yet there is still in the mind a memory of the past. None can deny that present time lacks any extension because it passes in a flash. Yet attention is continuous, and it is through this that what will be present progresses towards being absent. So the future, which does not exist, is not a long period of time. A long future is a long expectation of the future. And the past, which has no existence, is not a long period of time. A long past is a long memory of the past.[4]

Tolkien's Long Memory

In a 1944 letter to his son Christopher, Tolkien closes by quoting from the Exeter Book: 'Less doth yearning trouble him who knoweth many songs,' commenting 'Longað! All down the ages men (of our kind, most awarely) have felt it: not necessarily caused by sorrow, or the hard world, but sharpened by it'.[5] Yearning: not caused by 'sorrow, or the hard world,' but increased, revealed, highlighted by them.

The Elves, whose story in Middle-earth's history known as the Silmarillion shows them as the central players, move to the periphery in *The Lord of the Rings* (*LOTR*), and into realms in which 'ancient things still lived on in the waking world'.[6] The Elves of all the races of Middle-earth typify this keenest and most persistent of emotions known as yearning. It is the High Elves, who remember Valinor, a 'kind of Paradise, the home of the Gods',[7] the Blessed Realm in which they lived before their 'fall' and exile, who create in Middle-earth enclaves of beauty and peace, though tinged with sadness and regret. By the end of the Third Age, Elves such as Galadriel and Elrond have moved to the periphery of a history they partly shaped, and though their wisdom and efforts do much to strengthen the Company in its quest, still, their influence and abilities have largely diminished. Their memories set them in sharp relief against the events of contemporary Middle-earth, and their yearning for the True West sets their faces toward the West, and the past. Valinor is a place of peace, song, safety, learning, and harmony, an Eden before the arrival of Morgoth and the subsequent war(s), and everything the Elves create, think, and speak is oriented toward that Edenic place and time. It is as though they continue in a forward motion, yet remain facing backward.

As is well known, Tolkien spent much of his life and his time creating and developing his own private languages, recording in early poems and stories the beginnings of a history in which these languages could grow. He wanted to develop a cohesive mythology for England, 'cycles linked to a majestic whole'.[8] Tolkien writes that these stories – 'from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy story' – arose in his mind as "given things," that he always had the sense of recording what was already "there," somewhere: not of inventing'.[9] Elsewhere Tolkien says of himself, 'I am historically minded'.[10] Tolkien takes great pains to clarify that Middle-earth is our Earth – a real place that we are familiar with, but that the events transcribed in *The Simarillion* and *LOTR* happened at an imaginary history point in time, an imagined past.[11] At the close of *LOTR*, it is the end of the Third Age; the time of the Elves has gone, and it is now time for Men to shape Middle-earth's history. Though the Elves are the most obvious manifestation of Longað, Tolkien's entire oeuvre is permeated with this yearning, this past-ward gazing.

In describing the anonymous author of Beowulf, Tolkien also described himself when he wrote of the 'learned man writing of old times, who looking back on the heroism and sorrow feels in them something permanent and something symbolical'.[12] But if the 'old times' are past, and no longer exist, what then is the permanent and symbolic 'something' we remember? Yearning, nostalgia, regret. Sorrow and exile. Tolkien saw human nature, and by extension, language, as 'soaked in a sense of exile,' our minds occupied with 'thoughts of peace' and equally occupied with 'thoughts of its loss'.[13] As a devout Christian, Tolkien located this memory of peace, and its subsequent loss, in Eden, our Paradise of human-divine relationship on earth. This biblical myth of Eden, so far removed from our present, so long a memory of our past, yet endures as a permanent symbol of what is, for and in man, 'now long estranged,' yet 'not wholly lost nor wholly changed'.[14]

Lewis' Long Expectation

In C.S. Lewis' *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the valiant mouse Reepicheep accompanies Caspian and the Pevensies in their travels and adventures. While he aids the king of Narnia in his immediate quest to find the seven lost lords, Reepicheep has a longer purpose, a higher hope for his sea-faring travels: to sail ever eastward and find Aslan's country. Reepicheep knows that it is always 'from the east, across the sea'[15] that Aslan comes to Narnia. Though he does not know whether that country is one to which he can sail, he nonetheless expects to find an answer, a further adventure. This anticipation of fulfillment stems from the prophecy spoken over him as a baby, that in the utter East 'where sky and water meet,/ where the waves grow sweet',[16] he would find what he seeks. Implicit in this message is that Reepicheep can journey to this eastern realm, but what it will be like once he arrives, and what he will find, he does not exactly know. But he knows Aslan, and he knows that any country that bears Aslan's name is worthy of desire and pursuit. So this remembered prophecy that sparked his journey to where Aslan dwells, and the intimations in Narnia that point him to that place, compel Reepicheep to link his quest with the Dawn Treader for a little while, for, as he says to Lucy at the beginning of their journey, 'I don't know what it means. But the spell of it has been on me all my life'.[17]

If there are words that speak of what lies behind us, there are also words that speak of what lies before us. Desire, longing, anticipation. Satisfaction and fulfillment. Like Tolkien, Lewis also thought and wrote deeply on desire, yearning. He used the German word *Sehnsucht*, a word that encompasses nostalgia, homesickness, the intense missing of something we can't quite define. 'The central story of my life is about nothing else' than this experiencing of desire, Lewis once wrote.[18] 'But a desire is turned not to itself but to its object',[19] and it was not until his conversion to Christianity (aided in part by Tolkien), that he was able to define the object of his desire, and indeed, what he came to believe was every person's desire: Heaven, our 'proper place'.[20] We live in time, but we are 'destined for eternity'.[21] This incongruity between our daily lives and our ultimate home makes us ache; we have an 'inconsolable secret' that we cannot tell 'because it is a desire for something that has never actually appeared in our experience'.[22] And part of our inconsolable secret is the 'sense that in this universe we are treated as strangers,' and long to 'be acknowledged, to meet with some response, to bridge some chasm that yawns between us and reality'.[23] 'Hope is one of the theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not [...] a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things [we are] meant to do'.[24] Hope, spurred by a 'promise' becomes 'highly relevant to our deep desire. [...] The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last'.[25] Expectation is hope in action: the sense that what we have fixed as the object of our desire will come to pass, at some future time, some time not yet present.

This atmosphere of expectation pervades Lewis' writings. Donegality, as Michael Ward understands it, is the 'spiritual essence or quiddity of a work of art [...]; it's peculiar and deliberated atmosphere or quality [...] that the author consciously sought to conjure, but which was designed to remain implicit in the matter of the text'.[26] If Lewis' pervading philosophy of imagination and truth could be distilled to one phrase, it might be that oft-repeated creative writers' workshop motto: show, don't tell. And in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Space Trilogy*, *The Great Divorce*, Lewis shows us, in stories and symbols, the expectation with which we live, whether we are aware of it or not. Symbols are funnels into greater truths and concrete realities that lie behind, or beyond, the immediately available sign. And symbols are also a form of spiritual revelation, an interpenetration of the present by the timeless, a marker that stirs our expectation by pointing toward an approaching future. Lewis saw in the Christian symbols of cross, text, son (and lion) the revelation of the divine Logos, in which the lower things of this familiar creation are made to shape our desires, whet our appetites, and sustain our long expectation for the higher things still to come. Though Reepicheep tried to be sad for the sake of those saying goodbye at the end of the Dawn Treader's voyage, he 'was quivering with happiness'.[27] For the closer we get to our proper place, the stronger its intimations and the clearer its symbols become, and the shorter our expectation, until at last we find that 'the dream has ended: this is the morning'.[28]

The Present Fantastic

A question persists: given their strongly theological perspectives, why would Tolkien and Lewis choose to write in the fantastic mode, and by it explore what it means to live in time, to remember and expect?[29] Fantasy and fairy-stories often have to address the charge that they are nonsense falsehoods and misleading delusions. '"Why," (some ask), "why, if you have a serious comment to make on the real life of some men, must you do it by talking about a phantasmagoric never-never land of your own?"'.[30] A child (or a gullible adult, one supposes) might be tricked into thinking a fairy tale true in the 'real world', and so be made unfit for functioning in the world; he or she will not be able to distinguish fact from fiction, friend from foe. On the contrary, Tolkien and Lewis reply. 'Fantasy is founded upon the recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun; on a recognition of fact, but not a slavery to it'.[31] And since it is 'so likely that [we] will meet cruel enemies [in the world], let [us] at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage',[32] for one of the things an author writing in the fantastic mode wants to point out is that the 'real life of men is of that mythic and heroic quality'.[33] St. George slaying the dragon may show us courage and perseverance in the midst of fear better than our parents simply telling us not be to afraid of the closet-monsters ever could.

A story in the fantastic or mythic mode is one that says, 'Well, it's like *this*...isn't it?' If it is a story about memory, experience, and expectation, then its significance, its meaning is 'best presented incarnate in the world of history and geography'[34]; in other words, *in time*. Just as the divine Word became flesh in human history, so too mythic and fantastic stories must be set in a historical, geographic world, one possessing its own 'inner consistency of reality'.[35] Elves, eldils, talking lions, and worlds in which they make sense, and more than that: 'The story does what no theorem can quite do. It may not be like "real life" in the superficial sense: but it sets before us an image of what reality may well be like at some more central region'.[36] In a 1950 letter, Lewis asked his correspondent to 'notice how we are perpetually *surprised* at Time. In heaven's name, why? Unless, indeed, there is something in us which is *not* temporal'.[37] Our memories are apparently spotty when it comes to our expectations. We are destined for a new Heaven and a new Earth, a New Jerusalem. But what has Jerusalem to do with Faërie?

First, what is Faërie? Well, it 'cannot be caught in a net of words; for it is one of its qualities to be indescribable, though not imperceptible'.[38] It must, 'if only in the form of fiction,' be experienced.[39] It is a separate region, a 'set apart' realm, a world in which 'all that you had (or knew) [is] dangerous and potent, not really effectively chained, free and wild'.[40] Rivers run with wine, time runs on a different clock, and humans once upon a time run against the boundaries of Faërie only to find themselves unexpectedly on the other side. Above all, Faërie is about desire, and the 'making or glimpsing of Other-worlds'.[41] Of Man, Lewis writes that 'fairy land arouses a longing for he knows not what. It stirs and troubles him (to his life-long enrichment) with the dim sense of something beyond his reach and, far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth'.[42] The settings of Middle-earth and Narnia were not mere quirks of taste. For Tolkien and Lewis, writing about desire and longing, about Eden and Heaven, about hope, joy, and satisfaction meant that they had to open a door into Faërie, into Other Time. The vocabulary of Faërie uniquely allows its visitors to speak of 'things not found within recorded time'.[43] In other words, it allowed them (and us) to speak of the inconsolable secret of permanent and enduring somethings which we carry, always and everywhere, within us.

In his autobiography, Lewis wrote of the profound experiences of what he called Joy in his early life[44]; seeking out more of these flashes characterized much of his inner life before and at the beginning of his Christian life. While Tolkien was much more reticent (per usual) about his inner and Heaven-ward life, he also recognized joy as a vital and integral part of human experience. Both Tolkien and Lewis linked the search for and experience of joy to truth and reality, and likened the infrequent (and usually unsought-after) experiencing of it to glimpsing an underlying Reality. Joy is being in the presence of God, a direct experience of the reality of His glory and radiance. Such experiences are 'a sudden and miraculous grace',[45] unsought and surprising when they do come, life-altering eucatastrophes in this journey 'upon which it is certainly not better to travel hopefully than to arrive, though we must travel hopefully if we are to arrive'.[46] Tolkien and Lewis would most certainly have been in agreement with St. Augustine that the 'authentic happy life' is 'to set one's joy on [God]', [47] grounded in and caused by Him. When we search for Joy, though we might pursue other, more earthly, joys, and not God, nevertheless, our wills are 'drawn toward some image of the true joy'.[48] Yet how do we know to desire the happy life, to search for joy, let alone come to realize it as caused by and rooted in the knowledge and truth of God?

Again, St. Augustine lays a trail for us to follow in the search for the happy life: ‘Is it by remembering, as if I had forgotten it and still recall that I had forgotten? Or is it through an urge to learn something quite unknown, whether I had never known it or had so forgotten it that I do not even remember having forgotten it?’.[49] If joy is being in the presence of God, then Adam, the first man, was the first human to experience joy in Eden. Though that direct experience is severed by the Fall, still, in Adam, as the start and representation of humanity, we inherit or retain the memory of that joy, however dulled or obscured it might be. We would otherwise have ‘no love for it unless there were some knowledge of it in [our] memory’,[50] and it is the memory of joy in Eden that shapes and guides our expectation of future, eternal joy in Heaven. The inconsolable secret of the relationship that was broken once upon a time will be redeemed and restored. An examination of Tolkien’s attitude toward the age in which he found himself, and a comparison with his contemporaries notes that a ‘striking similarity among all these writers [Twain, Eliot, Joyce, Tolkien] is that none manifested a very hopeful attitude toward the human race’.[51] With their deep understanding of the Fall and its subsequent consequences on humanity and creation, Tolkien and Lewis were not very hopeful in human nature on its own, but rather, in God in human nature. What they learned from the eucatastrophe at the center of Christianity, and continue to teach us, is that Eden shows us what we once were; Heaven shows us what we will become.

For Tolkien and Lewis, writing about this *evangelium*, this ‘Joy beyond the walls of the world’,[52] meant taking cross and sword and bread and wine and human fellowship out of the usual, sometimes rote, contexts in which we encounter them. The value of entering Faërie, then, of telling stories from its perspective, is that it takes what we already see, hear, taste, smell, and feel, ‘the simple or fundamental things’ of our everyday world, and makes them ‘all the more luminous by their setting’,[53] restoring them to ‘the rich significance which has been hidden by ‘the veil of familiarity’.[54] The task left to us – writers and audiences alike – is to ‘remember, to attend. In fact, to come awake’.[55] Sometimes coming awake means remembering a flash of joy, sometimes it means writing or reading a story of a land far, far away, and sometimes it means attending a little more closely to this fantastic present. For, ‘in life and art both, as it seems to me, we are always trying to catch in our net of successive moments something that is not successive’.[56] Eternity is the not-successive Present. We are trying to capture timelessness in time. As both Tolkien and Lewis realized and so lovingly wrote, we are not bound forever to this creation, or to time, and beyond the walls of the world is ‘more than memory’[57] and more than expectation. Eden is drawn up into Heaven, where we see the fullness of time, the ‘beauty so old and so new’,[58] where there is no end to any fairy tale remembered or expected: ‘it begins and ends in joy’.[59]

And they lived happily ever after.

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[1] Wayne Grudem, 'The Character of God: "Incommunicable" Attributes', *Systematic Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 169.

[2] St. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 226.

[3] *Ibid*., 235.

[4] *Ibid*., 243.

[5] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Humphrey Carpenter (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981), 66.

[6] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), 453.

[7] Tolkien, *Letters*, 148.

[8] *Ibid.*, 144.

[9] *Ibid.*, 145.

[10] *Ibid.*, 239.

[11] *Ibid.*, 244.

[12] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics', in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 26.

[13] *Ibid.*, 110.

[14] *Tree and Leaf*, 87.

[15] C.S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1970), 16.

[16] *Ibid*.

[17] *Ibid.*, 17.

[18] C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1956), 17.

[19] *Ibid.*, 220.

[20] C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 29.

[21] C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster Inc., 1996), 61.

[22] *The Weight of Glory*, 30.

[23] *Ibid.*, 40.

[24] C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster Inc., 1996), 119.

[25] *The Weight of Glory*, 41

[26] Michael Ward, *Planet Narnia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 75.

[27] *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 213.

[28] C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1970), 183.

[29] For this discussion, the terms Faërie, fantasy and the fantastic, myth and the mythical are more or less synonymous.

[30] C.S. Lewis, 'Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*', in *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature*, (San Diego: Harcourt, Inc., 1982), 89.

[31] *Tree and Leaf*, 55.

[32] 'On Three Ways of Writing for Children', 39.

[33] 'Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*', 89.

[34] 'Beowulf', 15.

[35] *Tree and Leaf*, 47.

[36] C.S. Lewis, 'On Stories', in *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature*, (San Diego: Harcourt, Inc., 1982), 15.

[37] C.S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis, Volume III: Narnia, Cambridge, and Joy 1950–1963* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 76.

[38] *Tree and Leaf*, 10

[39] Alan Jacobs, *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis* (?????), 18.

[40] *Tree and Leaf*, 59

[41] *Ibid.*, 41.

[42] 'On Three Ways of Writing for Children', 38

[43] *Tree and Leaf*, 88

[44] *Surprised by Joy*, 16-7.

[45] *Tree and Leaf*, 68-9

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[46] *Ibid.*, 45
[47] *Confessions*, 198.
[48] *Ibid.*, 199.
[49] *Ibid.*, 196,
[50] *Ibid.*, 199.
[51] Verlyn Flieger, *A Question of Time: Tolkien's Road to Faërie* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1997), 26.
[52] *Tree and Leaf*, 69.
[53] *Ibid.*, 59
[54] 'Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*', 90
[55] C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (San Diego: Harcourt, Inc., 1992), 75.
[56] 'On Stories', 19.
[57] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'Appendix A', in *The Lord of the Rings* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), 389.
[58] *Confessions*, 201.
[59] *Tree and Leaf*, 72

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Through the Lens of *The Four Loves*: The Concept of Love in *The Great Divorce*

The Great Divorce was published in 1946, fourteen years before the 1960 publication of The Four Loves. But this dream fantasy novel contains many of the same ideas about love and their perversions found in The Four Loves. Clearly, several of the characters in the novel personify the various types of love and their perversions presented in The Four Loves, and Lewis must have had these representations in mind when he finally collected all his ideas about love together in a systematic way in The Four Loves. An examination of The Great Divorce through the lens of The Four Loves is a way to better understand one of the themes of the novel while giving us more examples to help clarify the concepts in The Four Loves.

Clyde Kilby restates some of Lewis's ideas from The Four Loves when he discusses The Great Divorce in his book, Images of Salvation in the Fiction of C. S. Lewis. Kilby writes that throughout The Great Divorce, "Lewis always clearly shows the difference between sentimentalized affection and the strong, firm love which is of God. Indeed, he implies that love for God must precede any genuine love for a fellow creature" (85).

The narrative starts in Hell where the narrator, Lewis himself, describes the dingy, empty city set in constant rainy twilight. There, he and a group of quarreling people board a bus that transports them through the air to Heaven. No love is shown at all among those on the bus—not even common courtesy; instead, quarrels and bickering constantly occur. However, once the bus reaches the beautiful, bright land of Heaven, all of the inhabitants there, the "Bright People," talk of love and personify love.

In the first scene in Heaven, the man from Hell called the "Big Ghost" encounters a "Bright Person," an old acquaintance named Len. While the Big Ghost remains argumentative and defensive, Len exudes to his former earthly boss, warmth and agape love (called Gift-love in The Four Loves). Len is concerned only with making the Big Ghost happy by leading him further into Heaven, closer to God.

Len also refers to Jack, another of the Big Ghost's former employees, a Bright Person who wants to see his old boss. Len says of Jack, "He sent you his love" (Great Divorce 32). Unfortunately, the Big Ghost rejects all of the love offered him because he does not want to be loved by those he considers to be inferior to himself. So he decides to return to hell.

After overhearing several similar encounters between the Bright People sent to welcome specific bus travelers from Hell, Lewis meets George Macdonald who is the Bright Person sent to speak to him and teach him about Heaven. Immediately Lewis expresses his "Appreciative love" to Macdonald for his books and how much they have led him toward

Christianity. Macdonald acknowledges Lewis's expression of love with "'Son,' he said, 'your love—all love—is of inexpressible value to me'" (65).

While Lewis and Macdonald converse, more meetings between Ghosts from Hell and Bright Persons from Heaven take place nearby, and the two writers overhear them and discuss them. This is the basic premise of the novel, but the overriding theme of the novel is love. In nearly every encounter in Heaven, love is the key as to whether each Ghost from Hell continues on into Heaven or refuses the offer and returns to Hell.

Robert's wife, a Ghost from Hell, and Robert's sister, a Bright Person named Hilda, are the first two that Lewis and Macdonald hear talking, but it is a really one-sided conversation. Robert 's wife keeps telling Hilda about all of the sacrifices she made for Robert when he was alive and about how little he appreciated them. She tells how she loved him so much that she "Sacrificed [her] whole life to him!" (85). She goes on and on repeating how she pushed him and nagged him to take on more and more work, and work longer and longer hours in order to get a better position. She ridiculed his old friends and brought new, "useful" friends into their home (87). Soon she nagged him into buying a larger home, beyond their means, for the sake of entertaining more elegantly and impressing his new "friends" and business associates (87). She claims, "I was doing it all for his sake. Every useful friend he ever made was due to me" (87). She tells how hard she worked to make him successful, including discouraging him from writing a book he wanted to write, forcing him "to take exercise," warning him not to walk with a stoop, and reminding him a hundred times that "he hadn't always been like that" (88).

Robert's wife's love for her husband is a perverted, excessive Need-love and possessive Affection. She reveals this when she finally begs to have him back, though he is in Heaven, for "I must have someone to – to do things to" (89). "Put me in charge of him," she pleads, and "Don't consult him: just give him to me. I'm his wife, aren't I? I was only beginning. There's lots, lots, lots of things I still want to do with him," and adds, "I will take up my burden once more. . . Give him back to me. Why should he have everything his own way?" (89). To the Bright Person, Robert's sister Hilda, she says, "I hate you," and "I know him better than you do"; "It isn't right, it's not fair. I want Robert" (89).

Robert's wife sounds very much like Orual in Till We Have Faces when Orual speaks to the gods and says that they have been unfair for taking Psyche from her, for "She's mine! Mine!" (Till We 292). When Robert's wife says, ". . . all the time I was working my fingers to the bone for him: and without the slightest appreciation" (GD 85), she also sounds like the mother, Mrs. Fidget, in the section on perverted Affection in The Four Loves, because Mrs. Fidget also would "'work her fingers to the bone' for her family" (FL 75).

At least Orual finally recognizes what she has been and done through the visions the gods give her toward the end of Till We Have Faces. But Robert's wife never does, even though Hilda, the Bright Person, tries to get her to see what she has done. Instead, she exclaims, "How could I help it if he did have a nervous breakdown in the end? My conscience is clear. I've done my duty by him, if ever a woman has" (88-89).

Robert's wife definitely personifies the perverted, possessive love Lewis refers to in The Four Loves when he writes there:

> Every human love, at its height, has a tendency to claim for itself a divine authority. Its voice tends to sound as if it were the will of God Himself . . . It demands of us a total commitment, it attempts to over-ride all other claims and insinuates that any action which is sincerely done "for love's sake" is thereby lawful and even meritorious. (FL 18)

About perverted Affection, Lewis adds, on later pages of The Four Loves: "If Affection is made the absolute sovereign of a human life, the seeds will germinate. Love, having become a god, becomes a demon" (FL 83).

In The Four Loves, Lewis says that Need-love, though good in itself, can become selfish, greedy, and possessive when one feels the need to have others dependent on him or her (178). Critic Margaret Hannay agrees with Lewis that, in The Great Divorce, selfishness "may masquerade as love" (C.S. Lewis 113).

After Robert's wife disappears when her Ghost "snapped suddenly" after all her ranting and raving (Great Divorce 89), Lewis and Macdonald witness what they call "one of the most painful meetings" in Heaven when a ghost named Pam talks with a "Bright Spirit who had apparently been her brother" (90).

Pam is the mother of Michael who is further up in the mountains of Heaven and upon whom she has doted. Pam's brother tells her that for Michael to be able to see her in her wispy, ghostly state, she must "learn to want someone else besides Michael." He says, "It's only the little germ of a desire for God that we need to start the process" (91). However, she loves Michael so much that she cares for no one else—not the other members of her family nor God.

Speaking constantly of her strong love for her son Michael, Pam says, "I'm sure I did my best to make Michael happy. I gave up my whole life . . ." (92), and "How could anyone love their son more than I did?" (94). She adds that "Mother-love . . . is the highest and holiest feeling in human nature" (93).

However, Pam's brother, the Bright Person, responds to her, "Pam, Pam—no natural feelings are high or low, holy or unholy, in themselves. They are holy when God's hand is on the rein. They all go bad when they set up on their own and make themselves into false gods" (93). This idea is repeated by Lewis in several passages in The Four Loves (e.g., see page 13). Margaret Hannay agrees that Pam's "mother love has become a false god to her" (C.S. Lewis 109).

But Pam cannot recognize that she has done that very thing—set up her selfish love as a god. She is like Robert's wife in that she does not recognize what she has done; she just insists that Michael is hers and wants him back: "Give me my boy. . . I want my boy, and I mean to have him. He is mine, do you understand? Mine, mine, mine, for ever and ever" (95). She even blasphemes God when she says, "I don't believe in a God who keeps mother and son apart." To her brother she says, "I hate and despise your religion and I hate and despise your God." (95). In response to her brother's statement about God's love for her, Pam adds, "If He loved me, He'd let me see my boy. If He loved me, why did He take Michael away from me?" (92).

Obviously, Pam personifies the perverted Affection Lewis discusses in The Four Loves. Again, she is like Orual of Till We Have Faces in that she has become extremely possessive and self-centered in relation to her son, just as Orual became possessive of Psyche. Instead of being concerned about Michael's welfare, instead of wanting the best for him, as Gift-love does, Pam wants him for herself, for her own gratification. And when Michael dies, she never thinks of her husband or her daughter or her mother and their feelings. She says that "they didn't care" and felt "no real sympathy . . . " (GD 94); but her brother, the Bright Person, tells her, "No man every felt his son's death more than Dick. Not many girls loved their brothers better than Muriel." What they disliked was her "ten years' ritual of grief" that resulted in "having their whole life dominated by the tyranny of the past: and not really even Michael's past, but your [Pam's] past" (94).

Critic Evan Gibson feels that this possessive mother's problem is that "her love for her son Michael had excluded and dried up her love for all else" (123). She greets her own brother with disappointment and, later, rage, and has no kindness for her husband, her mother, and even her daughter. And yet she calls mother-love "the highest and holiest feeling in human nature" (GD 93). Lewis suggests that it is obviously not the highest and holiest when it causes her not to love the other members of her family, even her daughter.

In blaspheming and hating God, Pam is also like Orual, for she, too, blames the gods for taking Psyche away from her and for the fact that Psyche loves the gods more (or at least as much as) she loves Orual. Both Pam and Orual want their "loved" ones with them at all times, never willing to share them with others—not even God. Neither woman can understand God's kind of Gift-love which wants the best for the beloved even if separation or temporary sorrow results. Her brother, the Bright Person, tells Pam that part of the reason God allowed Michael to die was for her sake. "He wanted your merely instinctive love for your child (tigresses share that, you know!) to turn into something better. He wanted you to love Michael as He understands love." And here her brother adds Lewis's idea found in The Four Loves: "You cannot love a fellow-creature fully till you love God" (GD 92).

After witnessing this confrontation between the Bright Person and his sister Pam, Lewis asks Macdonald about Pam's natural feelings as a mother, and the resulting conversation mirrors even more of the discussion about love found in The Four Loves.

Lewis, the narrator, asks if some natural or instinctive feelings "are really better than others—I mean, are a better starting-point for the real thing?" (GD 96). But Macdonald responds that often natural Affection is mistaken "for the heavenly. Brass is mistaken for gold more easily than clay is. And if it finally refuses conversion, its corruption will be worse than the corruption of what ye call the lower passions. It is a stronger angel, and therefore, when it falls, a fiercer devil" (97).

Macdonald reflects another concept found in The Four Loves when he tells Lewis that "love, as mortals understand the word, isn't enough. Every natural love will rise again and live forever in this country: but none will rise again until it has been buried" in love for God (GD 97). Macdonald adds,

> There is but one good; that is God. Everything else is good when it looks to Him and bad when it turns from Him. And the higher and mightier it is in the natural order, the more demoniac it will be if it rebels . . . The false religion of lust is baser than the false religion of mother-love or patriotism or art: but lust is less likely to be made into a religion. (98)

Macdonald's words again reflect Lewis's statements in The Four Loves: Love "begins to be a demon the moment he begins to be a god" (FL 18), and "Every human love, at its height, has a tendency to claim for itself a divine authority. Its voice tends to sound as if it were the will of God Himself. . ." and "family affection may do the same" (FL 18).

Neither the reader nor Lewis is told the outcome of the meeting between Michael's mother Pam and her brother, the Bright Person. But Macdonald suggests to Lewis that since Pam's possessive, perverted Affection is a "defect" of love, "it may well be that at this moment she's demanding to have him down with her in Hell. That kind is sometimes perfectly ready to plunge the soul they say they love in endless misery if only they can still in some fashion possess it" (GD 105). Pam truly is a personification of perverted Affection, just as Orual was.

The reader and Lewis do witness the outcome of the next encounter in Heaven. This time the encounter is between a Ghost with "a little red lizard" sitting on his shoulder, whispering in his ear, and a flaming Angel—not just a Bright Person (98). This Ghost recognizes that the lizard is bad and a bad influence on him, but he hesitates when the Angel offers to kill it. The Ghost rationalizes and says that he will gradually get rid of it or that he needs a second opinion from someone back home (in Hell), but the Angel keeps telling him that killing the lizard is the only way and that it must be done now.

While the Angel is urging the Ghost to let him kill the lizard, the lizard tries to get the Ghost to stop the Angel by whispering that to live without it would not be "natural," for he would not be a "real man" (even though he is actually a ghost). The lizard continues to whisper in the Ghost's ear:

> I know there are no real pleasures now, only dreams. But aren't they better than nothing? And I'll be so good. I admit I've sometimes gone too far in the past, but I promise I won't do it again. I'll give you nothing but really nice dreams—all sweet and fresh and almost innocent. You might say, quite innocent. . . . (101)

This speech gives the first hint of what the lizard might stand for. When it speaks of "pleasures" and of "dreams" about lost pleasures, the reader gets the idea that the lizard is referring to desires of some sort. And since the Angel says the lizard (the symbol of these desires) must be killed, then the idea that these are evil desires becomes clearer. The symbolism is made perfectly clear when Macdonald explains to Lewis that the lizard stands for lust—i.e., "Venus" as it is called in The Four Loves, and perverted Eros (romantic love). Macdonald calls the lizard "lust" and says that "Lust is a poor, weak, whimpering, whispering thing . . ." (GD 104). Lewis responds, calling it "sensuality" (105).

When the Angel then assures the Ghost that killing the lizard will not kill him too (though it might hurt him), the Ghost finally gives in and gives permission for the Angel to kill it. After a scream of pain, the wispy Ghost is transformed into "an immense man," solid, and "not much smaller than the Angel" (102). The lizard is also transformed (after its death) into what Lewis the narrator calls "the greatest stallion I have ever seen, silvery white but with mane and tail of gold" (102).

Macdonald does not explicitly say what the stallion stands for, but critic Michael Christensen believes, "On a simple allegorical level, the little red lizard represents the vice called lust, and the white stallion, the virtue love" ("On Lizards" 3). Christensen does not identify which one of the four loves the stallion symbolizes, but it seems to me to be Gift-love, Agape love, which wants only the best for all those around it because the horse energetically takes the "new-made man" further and higher into Heaven, closer to God, as the young man's face shines with "the liquid love and brightness . . . which flowed from him" (GD 103).

This episode in the novel suggests that, in order to be admitted to heaven, man's lust or Venus (perverted Eros) must be killed and turned into the kind of love closest to God's love:

agape or Gift-love. In any case, the lizard and the stallion each represent two of the kinds of loves and their perversions found in The Four Loves.

In the next chapter, Lewis sees a Bright Person approaching, a woman, followed by a large procession of people, Angels, and animals—all of them singing and expressing great love and appreciation for her. Sarah Smith of Golders Green was such a loving person on earth that she affected all those with whom she came in contact, even children and animals. For example, Macdonald calls all of the boys and girls following Sarah her children because she loved them and treated them as her own, and yet they "went back to their natural parents loving them more" (108). Even cats, dogs, birds, and horses follow Sarah in the heavenly procession, for "Every beast and bird that came near her had its place in her love" (108).

Then Sarah meets her earthly husband Frank, a dwarfish Ghost leading a tall, thin Ghost (a "Tragedian") on a chain. As she sees him, "Love shone not from her face only, but from all her limbs . . ." (109-10). Several times throughout their conversation, Lewis notes that "love and courtesy flowed from her" (111).

The two Ghosts are really the two personalities of Sarah's husband, the tall, thin one representing the theatrical façade Frank often assumes to call attention to himself. Sarah knows this and speaks directly to the dwarfish ghost, always with love. She continually invites him to partake of the new Love she has found there—"Love Himself"—Christ (GD113). Sarah personifies Gift-love as she shows her love and concern for Frank. She wants the best for him: heaven.

However, Sarah does ask Frank's forgiveness for her imperfect love while on earth. She admits that she loved then "in a poor sort of way . . . There was a little real love in it. But what we called love down there was mostly craving to be loved. In the main I loved you for my own sake: because I needed you" (113). She confesses that she was controlled, at least to a degree, by Need-love when she was alive on earth. So perhaps we could say that Sarah personified Need-love in her earthly body and Gift-love in her heavenly body—although the testimony of others in her procession, as well as Macdonald, suggests she really did personify Gift-love on earth. She merely knows now how weak human Gift-love can be, compared with God's Gift-love, since human love is also mixed with Need-love. Sarah says, "Yes, now I love truly . . . I am in Love Himself . . ." (113). And she offers this love to her husband: "You shall be the same. Come and see. We shall have no need for one another now: we can begin to love truly" (113).

Critic Evan Gibson elaborates on Sarah, writing that Sarah Smith of Golders Green is surrounded by joyous angels, humans, and animals "who delight to respond to her love" (125). "Sarah Smith is Lewis's picture of one whose abundant love on Earth has been transfigured to radiant heavenly love" (Gibson 125).

The reader wonders, then, how Frank, Sarah's husband, cannot give in to her words of love and join her in Heaven instead of returning to Hell. But he resists by hiding behind his "actor" façade and having the Tragedian Ghost on his chain twist all of Sarah's words around to make them sound as though she does not need or want him anymore, as though she does not love him and he is not welcome in Heaven.

Sarah Smith tries to get Frank to be himself and not act out his self-pity. But he is so much in the habit of doing this, he cannot break the pattern. Sarah reminds Frank of his habit of

> using pity, other people's pity in the wrong way. . .It can be used for a kind of blackmailing. Those who choose misery can hold joy up to ransom, by pity. You see, I know now. Even as a child you did it. Instead of saying you were sorry, you went and sulked in the attic . . . because you knew that sooner or later one of your sisters would say, "I can't bear to think of him sitting up there alone, crying." You used your pity to blackmail them, and they gave in in the end. And afterwards, when we were married . . . . (117)

She concludes, "Can you really have thought that love and joy would always be at the mercy of frowns and sighs?" (118).

Though Sarah does not dwell on it, Macdonald points out to Lewis that Frank "had the power of tormenting" her with his constant need for pity. "He did it many a day and many a year in their earthly life" (120). As Macdonald explains what Frank and others like him really do with their self-pity, it becomes clear that Frank is a personification of perverted Need-love.

In The Four Loves, when Lewis writes of perverted Affection or perverted Need-love, he refers to those who "produce in us a sense of guilt (they are intended to do so)" by means of "their manifest sense of injury, their reproaches, whether loud and clamorous or merely implicit in every look and gesture of resentful self-pity . . ." (Four Loves 65). This describes Frank very accurately.

Frank constantly accuses Sarah of not loving him or of not knowing what love really means; he says, "You do not love me," (GD 119) and "Love? How dare you use that sacred word" (118), and "Love! Do you know the meaning of the word?" (113). He also tries to gain her pity when he says, "You who can be happy without me [in Heaven], forgetting me! You don't want even to hear of my sufferings . . . And this is the reward—" and ". . .I see that my going will make no difference to you. It is nothing to you that I go back to the cold and the gloom, the lonely, lonely streets" of Hell (116). Frank tries every ploy to make Sarah pity him to the point of making her miserable along with him, but he cannot succeed now.

Macdonald explains to Lewis Frank's approach, calling it

> The demand of the loveless and the self-imprisoned that they should be allowed to blackmail the universe: that till they consent to be happy (on their own terms) no one else shall taste joy: that theirs should be the final power. . . .(120)

Frank definitely does all of these things and clearly personifies perverted Need-love.

Frank Smith is like Orual of Till We Have Faces. When Orual tries to make Psyche feel guilty that she loves the gods and wants to stay with her God of Love instead of returning to Glome with her, she uses self-pity just as Frank does when he speaks of his return to Hell and to the "cold and the gloom, the lonely, lonely streets" (GD 116). Both Frank and Orual accuse their loved ones of not loving them: Frank does it when he constantly says, "You do not love me" (119) and Orual does it when she says to Psyche before her sacrifice, "Is it nothing to you that you leave me here alone? Psyche: did you ever love me at all?" (Till We 73).

Orual also makes the Fox feel guilty when he plans to leave Glome and Orual to return to his family in Greece after Orual grants him his freedom. She thinks, "And yet, how could he leave us, after so much love?" and she wanders about the palace in gloom and sorrow. Her groans and sighs are enough to make the Fox change his mind and stay with her. This is the same kind of self-pity that Frank tries to use on Sarah, though unsuccessfully in Heaven. Both Frank and Orual obviously personify the self-pitying Need-love that Lewis writes about in The Four Loves.

Interestingly, in addition to these personifications of various kinds of love found in The Four Loves, The Great Divorce also uses some actual phrases Lewis chose to use in The Four Loves when he wrote it fourteen years later. For example, in Sarah Smith's dialogue, she refers to Jesus Christ as "Love Himself" (GD 113). Lewis uses this expression to refer to Christ in The Four Loves at least five times throughout the book (on pages 153, 176, 183, 184, and 188).

Also, in Sarah Smith's encounter with her former husband, she laughs in merriment as she tries to explain truth and love from a heavenly point of view. As she tries to tell him how ridiculous the Tragedian (his alter ego) is being, in light of the truth, "Merriment danced in her eyes. She was sharing a joke with the Dwarf, right over the head of the Tragedian . . . . Her laughter was past his first defences" (GD 114). Then, "For one moment, while she looked at him in her love and mirth, he saw the absurdity of the Tragedian. For one moment he did not at all misunderstand her laughter: he too must once have known that no people find each other more absurd than lovers" (GD 15).

These same concepts of absurdity, laughter, and merriment between lovers are discussed in The Four Loves (on pages 141 to 143 and on pages 150 to 151) where Lewis discusses "the playfulness" of Eros or romantic love:

> Even when the circumstances of the two lovers are so tragic that no bystander could keep back his tears, they themselves will sometimes be surprised by a merriment which strikes the onlooker (but not them) as unbearably pathetic. . . . lovers are always laughing at each other. (151)

Thus, The Great Divorce gives a good example of the concepts of love and their perversions discussed in The Four Loves--through the personifications of Gift-love in Sara Smith, perverted Need-love in Frank Smith, Venus in the Ghost and his red lizard, Gift-love in the newly made man and his white stallion, excessive, perverted, possessive Affection in Michael's mother Pam, as well as in Robert's wife, and through Lewis and Macdonald's discussions of the kinds of love they see exhibited in the Ghosts and Bright People in Heaven.

After examining The Great Divorce in light of The Four Loves, the reader will agree with critic Thomas Howard that many of the damned souls from Hell who are visiting Heaven "love their anger and their grief more than they love what they see" in Heaven (Achievement 178), and will also agree with Chad Walsh that "the most common reason for residence in the gray town [Hell] is selfish love masquerading as altruism" (76).

In fact, love is at the core of Lewis's fiction. Love is the "peg" upon which he hung most of his plots and themes and characterizations. Understanding Lewis's systematic "doctrine" of love will help any reader better understand and appreciate all of his fiction.

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Hidden Images of Christ in the Fiction of C. S. Lewis

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Have you ever had someone sit down next to you on a plane and say, “Let me show you some pictures of my grandchildren”? It gives you a sinking feeling, doesn’t it – this could be a long trip. I’m going risk starting in a similar way: “Let me tell you something about my students.” Did you get that same sinking feeling? This could be a long lecture. After all, you have your own adorable children or grandchildren or nephews or nieces, and many of you have your own students. You can show your own pictures, or tell your own stories about students – the stories, for example, about students who write sentences like “the Magna Carta provided that no free man should be hanged twice for the same offense,” or “Nero was a cruel tyrany who would torture his poor subjects by playing the fiddle to them,” or “The climate of the Sarah Desert is such that the inhabitants have to live elsewhere, so certain areas of the dessert are cultivated by irritation.”

You’ll be relieved to hear that I intend to say nothing more about my students’ inability to proofread, or their use of words in ways that show total ignorance of the lexicographers’ trade. The reason I bring up my students is the way they read C. S. Lewis, which is what got me thinking about my topic for today. Many of my students love Lewis’s stories, especially his Chronicles of Narnia, and they read them again and again. They love them partly, they say, because Lewis makes Christianity so vividly apparent in his stories. The Christian allegory is so clear, so evident: four Pevensie children, four gospel writers – what could be clearer than that! There is a wardrobe door and Jesus said “I am the door” – obviously Lewis meant the portal into Narnia as a symbol for entering his kingdom. Other literature, they feel, is tricky; teachers say are there are metaphors and symbols present, but they are difficult to find and hard to "interpret" (and literature needs to be "interpreted," doesn't it, like any foreign language?). In Lewis, however, there's lots of "depth" that they can find, and they can interpret it easily. They come to a class on Lewis expecting me to be pleased and impressed by the biblical parallels and symbols they've identified – that's what literature teachers like and want, isn't it? And they're looking forward to seeing what further allegories I can point out to them.

The difficulty is that I believe they would be better readers if they looked for less instead of more. They find Christian applications everywhere because they approach the work expecting to find them everywhere. Lewis is a Christian, and they find, or have been told, that he sometimes uses symbols – so they begin to look for symbols everywhere, and of course as a result they are going to find them everywhere. I try (futilely) to convince them that everything is not symbolic – a robin is sometimes just a robin, and a sulky, nasty boy is sometimes just a sulky, nasty boy. I try (equally futilely) to convince them that Lewis was not trying in his stories to lay Christianity out in perfectly clear ways which no one could miss – that, on the contrary, he often tried to *hide* Christian allusions rather than *reveal* them. Today I'm going to lay out my case for hidden images in Lewis's fiction and see if you will find it at all convincing, even if they don't. And if it's not convincing, I hope you'll disabuse me of the notion in the discussion following the paper.

Kallistos Ware, Bishop of Diokleia and the Spalding Lecturer in Orthodox Studies at Oxford University, wrote of C. S. Lewis that he was "acutely conscious of the hiddenness of God, of the inexhaustible mystery of the Divine," an awareness he shared with the Orthodox tradition.[1] Ware explains that, although Lewis's apologetic works, with their almost overconfident reliance on reason and moral law, are cataphatic in tenor (they convey knowledge of God through positive statements), an apophatic side evident in his imaginative writings (the conveying of knowledge of God by way of negation). I'm not convinced that Lewis had leanings toward the Orthodox tradition as Bishop Ware implies. But I think there is evidence that he had a deep sense of the incomprehensibility of God – that in trying to know God, we are trying to imagine the unimaginable, to know the unknowable. In *Letters to Malcolm* (where Lewis gets beyond the reasoned approach Ware finds characteristic of his nonfiction), Lewis refers to "the bright blur in the mind which stands for God."[2] It is in that sense that God is hidden, for Lewis. We can know God through God's word, and through Jesus; but to know God directly and evidently is like when Moses asked God, "Now show me your glory," and the Lord replies, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you. . . . But you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live. . . . You will see my back; but my face must not be seen" (Exodus 33: 18-23 NIV). Lewis, with his sense of the numinous, had deep feelings of awe and respect for God. And that, I believe, is reflected in his works. That is why he hides images of Christ. This paper will push Bishop Ware's comments a step further and argue that Lewis's literary techniques reflect his theology: that the subtle mixture of hiddenness and revelation characteristic of Lewis's imaging of Christ in his major fiction – the Ransom trilogy, the Chronicles of Narnia, and *Till We Have Faces* – conveys some of Lewis's deeply held beliefs about God's hiddenness and God's self-revelation.[3]

That mixture is apparent in Lewis's earliest work of fiction, *Out of the Silent Planet*. Hiding the Christian references was easier when it was published in 1938 than it was later in Lewis's career. Today Lewis is well-known as one of the twentieth century's leading defenders of the Christian faith, and readers expect to find, and thus look for, Christian themes in his works of fiction. But that was not the case in 1938. At that point his name would be recognized only by literary scholars. They knew it because of the recent publication of a brilliant study of the courtly love tradition, *The Allegory of Love* (1936). That book, and a half-dozen scholarly articles, marked Lewis as a leading figure in the post-war generation of literary scholars. The only other things he had published at that point were three books with very low sales figures: a collection of war poems, *Spirits in Bondage* (1919), and a long narrative poem, *Dymer* (1926), both published under the pseudonym Clive Hamilton, and a rather strange work entitled *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), an allegorical account of his sojourns as an atheist (or agnostic) in his teens and twenties and his journey back to the Christian faith. It is now evident from *The Pilgrim's Regress* that Lewis had begun using his writing skills in support of the faith he had returned to, but readers then would not be aware of that.

Most of you know what happens in *Out of the Silent Planet*, so I'll recap it very briefly. A middle-aged professor, Elwin Ransom, who reminds one of both Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, is kidnapped by a mad scientist (Edward Rolles Weston) and a wealthy playboy adventurer (Richard Devine) and taken with them on a space vehicle (which surely could never have lifted off the ground) to Mars (though they use only its “Old Solar” name, Malacandra). The flight is a journey into experience and self-knowledge for Ransom, as he learns, for example, that space is not cold, empty, and barren, but is pulsating with light and spiritual life. After arriving on Malacandra, he escapes from his captors and spends several months living with the hrossa, the poets and musicians of the planet, rational, gentle, charitable creatures. They live in perfect peace and cooperativeness with two other rational species, the sorns (the scientists and philosophers of the planet) and the pfifltriggi (its craftsmen and artists).

From the hrossa and sorns, Ransom learns about the spiritual beings who look after Malacandra. The planet has a guardian angel, called its Oyarsa, who is served by innumerable spiritual beings called eldils. But the Oyarsa is not the supreme spiritual being. When Ransom asks if the Oyarsa had made Malacandra, the hrossan answer is the first example of Lewis providing an image of Christ that simultaneously reveals and hides: “Did people in Thulcandra [Earth] not know that Maleldil the Young had made and still ruled the world?”[4] For readers familiar with the Bible, this passage reveals that Maleldil the Young is the Malacadrian name for Christ, the second person of the Trinity, who is creator and ruler of both planets: “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3; also Hebrews 1:2). For readers less conversant with the Bible, the image is hidden, partly by the unique use of the prefix *mal*, which in this case does not have its usual meaning of “bad.” Lewis explains in a letter: “MAL- is really equivalent to the definite article in some of the definite article’s uses. ELDIL means a lord or ruler, Maleldil ‘*The* Lord’: i.e. it is, strictly speaking, the Old Solar not for DEUS but for DOMINUS.”[5] Even the information that Maleldil the Young lives with “the Old One” who “is not that sort . . . that he has to live anywhere” might be read without recognizing it as a Christian allusion: the eldils and Maleldil could just be supernatural beings, not specifically Christian ones. The allusion in one sense is clearly Christian, but in another sense it is veiled.

Ransom subsequently is taken to meet the Oyarsa, from whom he learns much about the spiritual structure of the universe: about spiritual hierarchies, about the pervasiveness of spirit life throughout the heavens (which, he discovers, is the proper name for what we call “outer space”),[6] and about a great war in heaven in which the Oyarsa of our planet (the “Bent One”) rebelled against the Old One, was defeated, and was hurled back to Earth, which from then on Earth was called the “silent planet.” As a result of that quarantine, the Malacandrian Oyarsa does not know about subsequent events on Thulcandra, although, he says, “there are stories among us that [Maleldil] has taken strange counsel and dared terrible things, wrestling with the Bent One in Thulcandra" (196). Again Lewis simultaneously reveals and hides: for alert readers, the passage is an allusion to what God the Son, in his human embodiment as Jesus, encountered on the Silent Planet. He took *strange* counsel (counsel that was "surprising, difficult to take in or account for, exceptional to a degree that excites wonder or astonishment" – *Oxford English Dictionary*) and dared *terrible* things (things that excite a feeling akin to dread or awe; violent, severe, painful" – *OED*). He wrestled with our Oyarsa, the Bent One, Satan, and by defeating him he defeated death. Many contemporary readers did not see what Lewis had hidden, perhaps because they did not expect Christian themes in science fiction. H. G. Wells and the other writers of early science fiction were not Christians, or at least did not incorporate Christianity into their fiction.[7] Thus initial readers of *Out of the Silent Planet* would not have expected a theological strain in it, and the details about Maleldil were taken by most readers as just part of the backstory that makes Ransom's adventures on Malacandra seem rich and mysterious.

Lewis makes clear in letters that his hiding of Christian images and themes was deliberate. In a 1943 letter to the novelist E. R. Eddison, Lewis complains about the way his publisher handled the dust jacket of *Perelandra*: "Note that they blab out my whole theme in the blurb, wh. was meant to come over the reader by stealth. Idiots!" (29 April 1943; *CLet2*, 571). Such stealth is even more characteristic of *Out of the Silent Planet*. About a year after it was published, he wrote to a friend, Sister Penelope, "You will be both grieved and amused to learn that out of about 60 reviews, only 2 showed any knowledge that my idea of a fall of the Bent One was anything but a private invention of my own[.] But if only there were someone with a richer talent and more leisure, I believe this great ignorance might be a help to the evangelisation of England: any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people's minds under cover of romance without their knowing it" (9 July [actually August] 1939; *CLet2*, 262). His explanation in a letter to Ruth Pitter clarifies his aims further: “From [David] Lyndsay [sic – in his *A Voyage to Arcturus*, 1920] I first learned what other planets in fiction are really good for: for spiritual adventures. Only they can satisfy the craving which sends our imaginations off the earth.”[8] What he smuggles into *Out of the Silent Planet* is Christian spirituality: images of Christ as the creator, king, and ruler, and initially these images remained hidden.

The second volume of the Ransom trilogy, *Perelandra* (1943), is space fantasy – not science fiction. This story too is familiar to most of this audience, but let me summarize briefly. Ransom is sent to Perelandra (Venus) not in a space ship but in a coffin-like container which whisks him off by supernatural power. He arrives on a paradisal world, a global Garden of Eden. On this perfect world Ransom encounters its Eve, an unfallen woman, human in form but green in color. Shortly thereafter he discovers that Weston has traveled to Perelandra to cause the Eve of that world to disobey, as the Eve of our world did. Weston tempts her three times (the number is another example of revealing while hiding); each is an effort to persuade her rationally (1) that God actually desires her to disobey, (2) that her disobedience will gain greater spiritual awareness for her offspring, and (3) that the endeavor to accumulate possessions will enhance her personhood.

Ransom helps the Green Lady defend herself, by offering counter-arguments. But after the third temptation he realizes he must physically destroy Weston’s body. There is a fight, a flight across the sea, and a pursuit through deep underground caverns. Ultimately Ransom wins out and tragedy is averted. This planet, unlike ours, will remain unfallen, obedient, and Edenic.

The Christian nature of this story is more obvious than that in *Out of the Silent Planet*. Most readers recognize it as a retelling of the story of Satan’s temptation of Eve as found in Genesis 3 and in *Paradise Lost* 9. Yet Lewis makes enough changes to give the story a very different atmosphere and feeling, and a sense of mystery and uncertainty. This is accomplished largely through the setting on another planet, which is described in abundant detail partly for the sake of bringing the new planet to life imaginatively. The presence of Ransom as the Green Lady's advocate and the nature of the command she must not disobey are notable changes. So too of course is the outcome of the story.

The weaving of Christianity into Perelandra is more complex than it is in the earlier book. Christ (as Maleldil) takes part in the action of this story, at least to the extent of carrying on a conversation with Ransom. And Christ is imaged in Ransom himself: in rescuing the Green Lady, Ransom becomes a surrogate for Christ. What Lewis is smuggling into this story is more explicitly theological than the biblical allusions in *Out of the Silent Planet* were: Lewis examines the nature of the atonement, a divine mystery on which the church fathers disagreed and Christian theologians still differ. Lewis acknowledges in *Mere Christianity* that "No explanation will ever be quite adequate to the reality" of the atonement.[9] *Out of the Silent Planet* deals with this by having Ransom tell the Oyarsa about it in a conversation not reported in the book. Lewis's friend Sister Penelope responded to that hidden conversation by asking "Could you not, for believers only, perhaps as a *Theology* article, write the scene where Ransom tells Oyarsa about the Incarnation?" Lewis replied that one should not attempt to spell out such mysteries: "I don't think, even 'for believers only' I could 'describe' Ransom's revelation to Oyarsa: the fact that you want me to really proves how well advised I was merely to suggest it" (letter to Sister Penelope, 9 July [actually August] 1939; *CLet2*, 262).

In *Perelandra* Lewis seems to aim at a compromise between the explicit approach Sister Penelope asked for and the hidden approach used in *Out of the Silent Planet*. He smuggles into *Perelandra* a fuller account of salvation than in the previous book, but conveys it through images, not explanation, thus preserving the sense of divine mystery. In the story's terms, Christ gave himself as a sacrifice to rescue humankind: "He whom the other worlds call Maleldil, was the world's ransom, his own ransom."[10] To "ransom" is to effect the release of a person or property in return for payment of a stipulated price. The price paid was Maleldil himself, his physical death; by paying it, he rescued humankind from eternal death. Lewis images this in the name Ransom: "It is not for nothing you are named Ransom," the voice of Jesus tells the character Ransom (168). His name is part of a mysterious but divine plan: "Before his mother had born him, before his ancestors had been called Ransoms, before *ransom* had been the name for a payment that delivers, before the world was made, all these things had so stood together in eternity that the very significance of the pattern at this point lay in their coming together in just this fashion" (168). The role assigned Ransom by his name is to give himself for the Green Lady as Maleldil gave Himself for Ransom (and for a ransom). Though it involves death, such giving, such sacrifice, leads to life. And such redemptive, Christ-like action and sacrifice, the story affirms, should characterize the lives of all humankind: "In that sense, he stood for Maleldil: but no more than Eve would have stood for Him by simply not eating the apple, or than any man stands for Him in doing any good action" (171). Ransom is an image of Christ, but so should everyone be, in Lewis's view.[11]

* * *

About a decade after *Out of the Silent Planet*, Lewis began working in a different genre of fiction. In August 1948 he told a friend, American scholar Chad Walsh, that he was working on a children's book.[12] He read two chapters of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* to Roger Lancelyn Green on 10 March 1949 and finished the book by the end of the month.[13] In it Lewis introduces what Will Vaus calls "the greatest character of his fiction – Aslan . . . the great lion who gives us Lewis's perspective on the very character of Jesus Christ."[14] That wording suggests that Lewis depicted Aslan as an intentional, accessible, evident image of Christ. Many people believe just that – that Lewis conceived of and began the Chronicles of Narnia as a way to teach Christianity. Lewis denied this. In a 1956 essay he wrote, "Some people seem to think that I began by asking myself how I could say something about Christianity to children; then fixed on the fairy tale as an instrument; . . . then drew up a list of basic Christian truths and hammered out 'allegories' to embody them. This is all pure moonshine. I couldn't write in that way at all. Everything began with images; a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion. At first there wasn't anything Christian about them; that element pushed itself in of its own accord."[15] I quoted this passage at length because of the way it suggests that there is something mysterious about the way the story originated, and something hidden about the presence of Christianity, and the images of Christ, in the stories. In another essay he wrote: "At first I had very little idea about how the [initial] story would go. But then suddenly Aslan came bounding into it. . . . I don't know where the Lion came from or why He came. But once He was there He pulled the whole story together."[16] I would suggest that it is important to examine the images of Christ in the Chronicles of Narnia in terms of what is hidden as well as what is apparent.

To notice the hiddenness of the images requires reading the Chronicles in the order of publication, not as they are renumbered in the 1994 edition. To read one of the other books before *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* sacrifices two key strategies that Lewis built into the initial story: one is introducing the Narnian world with great care with strategies that lead readers into it step by step and help them share imaginatively in the experiences of Lucy, and later the other children, as they discover what that world is like. The other is building into the story strategies that initially hide who the great lion is, before revealing who he is. Reading *The Magician's Nephew* first changes the reading experience of the series, and to change the reading experience changes the meaning of the books to some extent. Perhaps one reason my students think Christianity is so obvious in the Chronicles is that they start with the wrong book.[17]

I contend that the right book to start with is *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,* with four children going through an ordinary-looking wardrobe (that isn't ordinary at all) into another world, the land of Narnia, a land with fauns and talking animals, and a wicked witch who has enslaved the land and made it always winter, but never Christmas. They are told that the great lion Aslan, the King of Beasts, is on his way to Narnia, to bring an end to winter and to the reign of the wicked witch. Until late in the book, Aslan is not presented as an image of Christ. Rather, he is depicted in heroic terms fitting an adventure story – as the King of the Wood, the son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea. In Chapter 11, where his arrival causes winter to turn to spring, one could assume that he is some sort of nature god appropriate to a Faërie-world, and that the witch's power is being superseded by a greater magical power. Even in Chapter 12, when the children meet him as a powerful but benevolent king, one who is "good and terrible at the same time,"[18] his true identity as a Christ figure is hidden. Lewis continues to hide and to reveal.

The basis for Christian significance in the story is laid in Chapter 13. Because Edmund falls under the witch's spell and tells her where she can find his brother and sisters, thus becoming guilty of treason, the Witch claims Edmund as hers. As *de facto* ruler in Narnia, holding power as its Queen, the witch can declare that she has the right, even the obligation, to execute him: "Every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey and . . . for every treachery I have a right to a kill" (130). She bases her claim on "Deep Magic from the Dawn of Time," what in our world is known as the moral law, or the Law of Nature.

Even at this point, however, the story has not turned specifically Christian. Deep Magic lays out a standard of expected moral and civil behavior, and the Witch's comments on it clarify the consequences of failure to live up to that standard. But the moral law itself is not religious, nor the property of any one religion. Only when Edmund is sentenced to die and Aslan volunteers to take his place does religious significance unmistakably emerge. The wicked witch binds Aslan, places him on the stone table, and kills him. The next morning, however, at sunrise, Aslan comes back to life. Transcending Deep Magic is "Deeper Magic from Before the Dawn of Time" (144), a magic inherent not in created things but in their creator, the greater magic of God's grace, love, and forgiveness.

The willing sacrifice, the biblical tone and imagery (with its similarity to Isaiah 53: "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth"), and Aslan's subsequent return to life clearly associate him with Christ. Yet, even so, Aslan's death is not a mirror image of Christ's death in the Bible. Aslan's death saves all of Narnia from destruction, but he does not die to save all Narnians from their failures to keep the law: he dies only for Edmund, in that sense. He dies by stabbing, not crucifixion; he is dead only overnight, not for two nights; he comes back to life the next morning, not on the third day. The general meaning of Aslan's death is very similar to the meaning of the death of Christ in our world, but one does not need to know or refer to the biblical account of Christ to gain that meaning. It is comprehensible in terms of the imaginary world Lewis created. The story itself, by its structural movement from Deep Magic to Deeper Magic, conveys the magic of divine Grace. The Chronicles are about Aslan's lordship over Narnia, not Christ's over planet Earth.

The nature of the connection between Aslan and Christ in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is amplified in the third Chronicle, *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader,"* as two of the children return to Narnia, along with their obnoxious cousin Eustace Clarence Scrubb, very much against his will. They accompany King Caspian on a voyage in which he searches for seven lords who had been sent into exile by the previous king of Narnia.

In contrast to his active roles in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian,* Aslan does very little in the *"Dawn Treader,"* except to change Eustace from being a dragon back into a boy. Characters are aware of his presence on seven occasions. They see him on the horizon, for example, or through the page of a book; he answers Lucy's prayer by providing help to escape from the terrors of the Dark Island; and he talks to Caspian, Lucy, and Edmund. He empowers, encourages, restrains, and guards the children, filling a spiritual more than a physical role. Although they are aware of his presence on those specific occasions, he actually seems to be present all the time, in a protective way, even though they are not conscious of his proximity. Here and later in the Narnian chronology Aslan's physical presence is more and more withdrawn from the world. Just as Christ in the Gospels increasingly turned over responsibility to his disciples, so does Aslan following his resurrection. This concept grew as the series developed, however, since Aslan is still active as a physical presence in the world at the end of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,* and in *Prince Caspian,* long after his resurrection.

The striking thing about the images of Christ in *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"* is that the most important ones are couched in riddles and allusions. The voyage for Edmund, Lucy, and Eustace concludes as they reach the end of the world in the *Dawn Treader*'s lifeboat and wade to the shore. There they find a lamb, so white they can hardly look at it, cooking fish over a fire on the grass. After they eat a meal (the most delicious food they have ever tasted), Lucy asks if this is the way to Aslan's country, and the lamb replies that for them the door into Aslan's country is from their own world. The lamb then turns into a lion, and the children realize he is

Aslan.[19] For those who recognize the biblical allusion, the lamb is an image of Christ. In John 21:4-19, Peter and four other disciples, after a night of fishing, come to the shore where Jesus has prepared a meal of roasted fish. After they eat it, Jesus asks Peter, “Do you truly love me?” and when Peter replies that he does, Jesus says, “Feed my lambs.” But the passage uses allusion as a type of riddle: those who do not know the answer to the implied question must read further to pick up the full meaning.

Aslan then tells the children that he will open the door in the sky through which they must return to their own country (222), and adds that Edmund and Lucy will not return to Narnia. Lucy begins to sob, not from longing for Narnia itself, but for Aslan: “How can we live, never meeting you?” she cries. Aslan replies that she *will* meet him in our world.

> “Are—are you there too, Sir?” said Edmund.
>
> “I am,” said Aslan. “But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name” (222).

These lines also function like a riddle, and that was Lewis’s intention. When a child wrote him asking what Aslan’s other name is, Lewis replied, “As to Aslan’s other name, well I want you to guess” (letter to Hila Newman, 3 June 1953; *CLet3,* 334). Of course he wants readers to guess that Aslan’s “other name” is Jesus, and the answer clarifies the way Lewis images Christ in the Chronicles: Aslan does not *stand for* Christ, he *is* Christ, in his Narnian incarnation. The imagery should suffice to make this clear, but Lewis spells it out in a letter, to clarify the difference between allegory as a form and what he is doing: “You are mistaken when you think that everything in the book ‘represents’ something in this world,” he wrote to a fifth-grade class in Maryland. “Things do that in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* but I’m not writing in that way. I did not say to myself ‘Let us represent Jesus as He really is in our world by a Lion in Narnia’: I said ‘Let us suppose that there were a land like Narnia and that the Son of God, as He became a Man in our world, became a Lion there, and then imagine what would happen.' If you think about it, you will see that it is quite a different thing" (24 May 1954; *CLet3*, 479-80).[20]

In addition to the obvious riddle in the passage, Lewis slips in a less obvious one, in Aslan's reply to Edmund that "I am" in your world as well as Narnia. Again it is a riddle that hides and reveals. "I am" is the name revealed by Yahweh to Moses in Exodus 3:13-15:

> Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.' . . . This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation."

God's answer is a sort of riddle, an answer that simultaneously reveals and hides. It is a stock element of ancient stories that one's true name must never be revealed, for knowledge of a person's true name mysteriously gives one power over the person. One's true name must be kept hidden. In the Exodus passage, instead of being given a name, Moses is given a description – a phrase describing an active, relational God: "I am who I am," "I am what I do," "I am what I do in history," "I will be what I will be." Lewis surely knew that relatively few readers would pick up the "I am" allusion – he must have included it as a sort of insider's joke. Again a hidden detail reveals a significant truth about his imaging of Christ: in the Chronicles as in the Ransom trilogy, he asserts the truth of monotheism. God may be known by different names in different countries, planets, or universes, but there is only one God, the same in person and nature in all places.

After reassuring the children that he is present in all worlds, Aslan adds: “This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there” (222). What Aslan says to the children, Lewis offers readers as an indication of his ultimate goal in writing the Chronicles. In an essay Lewis raises a problem that he says paralyzed his own religious development in his childhood: “Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation to feel can freeze feelings. And reverence itself did harm.” So he wonders if indirection might be more successful than a direct approach: “Supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could.”[21]

In the remaining Chronicles, Aslan is usually portrayed in ways that recall familiar roles of Christ. In *The Magician’s Nephew* he is primarily the creator, as his singing fills Narnia with light and life. In *The Last Battle* he is a judge, separating those who love him and want to be with him in the New Narnia (heaven) from those who do not.[22] But woven through these clearly Christian depictions of Aslan is a thread of mysteriousness. In *Prince Caspian* he is visible only to those who believe he is there, and characters wonder “Why can’t I see him?”[23] In *The Silver Chair* he tells Jill “I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms,” not as if he were boasting, or sorry, or angry, but just stating a fact—puzzling though its meaning may be.[24] In *The Horse and His Boy*, when Shasta asks an unseen creature walking beside him in the dark “Who *are* you?” a voice answers three times “Myself,” first low and deep, then loud and clear, and then in a soft whisper, thus mysteriously imaging the trinity, a single God in three persons, one of the profoundest of Christian mysteries.[25] Bishop Ware is right when he calls Aslan “a profoundly apophatic lion” – he is not safe or tame; he is never under the control of our human will or of our human logic; “he remains always ‘the Unimaginably and Insupportably Other,’ who is yet uniquely close to us” (59).

Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold (1956) was Lewis’s last work of fiction, the one he considered his best,[26] and the one that illustrates most fully his use of hidden images of Christ. The book is a retelling of the Cupid and Psyche myth, from the *Metamorphoses,* or *The Golden Ass,* of Lucius Apuleius, a story that had fascinated Lewis since he first read it in 1916 and made him want to write his own version of it, correcting what he regarded as an error on Apuleius’s part: Psyche’s sisters, he concluded the first time he read Apuleius’s tale, could not have seen the palace of Cupid to which she was carried by the West Wind; they could not have seen it because they did not believe in divine mysteries.[27]

All of Lewis’s other stories are written in third person, with the narrator providing a clear, reliable point of view to orient the reader. *Till We Have Faces,* however, uses a first-person, unreliable narrator, Psyche’s older sister Orual, who writes the book as a defense of her own actions, accusing the gods of treating her unfairly. Orual writes what she believes to be an accurate, truthful account of her life. It is up to the reader to recognize her hidden faults and self-deceptions, without a reliable narrator’s help.

Most of you already know Lewis’s version of the story, with its realistic, pseudo-historical setting in the country of Glome, on the outskirts of the Hellenistic world, a century or two before the birth of Christ. Orual loves the beautiful Psyche devotedly, even acting as mother to her, and worries as people begin to worship her, instead of worshipping the local nature goddess, Ungit. After Psyche is sacrificed to relieve a drought and famine, Orual goes to bury her bones, but instead finds Psyche, vibrantly alive and claiming to have a husband who gave her rich clothes, in whose palace she lives, and who sleeps with her at night. Orual forces Psyche to light a lamp at night and look at her husband, out of jealousy at having her place in Psyche's life taken by another and at being excluded from an area of Psyche's existence.

Psyche looks at her husband, who awakens and rebukes her angrily. She is sent into exile, and Orual returns home. Soon after her return, the King dies and Orual succeeds him. She devotes herself totally to official activities and becomes more and more the Queen (a masculine-like monarch), less and less Orual (a woman and a person).

Many years later she hears a priest in a neighboring country tell a sacred story about Psyche, and she recognizes it as her own story – but she says the teller got the story wrong, because he says both sisters visited Psyche, and they could see the palace and they became jealous of it. So Orual decides to write her own version of the story, to get the facts right and to show how unjust the gods have been to her. But in the process of writing, she discovers how self-deceived she has been and how she has used people, especially those who were closest to her, including Psyche. In a series of visions she learns unselfish love, becomes beautiful like Psyche, and gains salvation.

Lewis uses hidden imagery in more subtle and sophisticated ways in *Till We Have Faces* than in his earlier fiction. The gods in this story seem more confusing and mysterious. The Glomian god, Ungit, is a black stone with "no face; but that meant she had a thousand faces. For she was very uneven, lumpy and furrowed, so that . . . you could always see some face or other" and the worship of Ungit is accompanied with "many great mysteries."[28] Psyche's divine husband, "the god," comes to her “only in the holy darkness.” Psyche tells Orual “I mustn’t – not yet – see his face or know his name” (132). (Here is another example of hiding one’s real name.) Orual complains that the gods do not show themselves, do not give signs, and speak only in riddles (142-43, 159, 258-59). In searching for Psyche, Orual and Bardia come upon “the *secret* valley of the god” (109; my italics). The words of the Priest of Ungit sum all of this up well: “The gods . . . dazzle our eyes and flow in and out of one another like eddies on a river. . . . Holy places are dark places. . . . Holy wisdom is not clear and thin like water, but thick and dark like blood” (58). Bishop Ware is right when he calls hiddenness “the *leitmotif”* of *Till We Have Faces*.[29]

By setting the story before the time of Christ, Lewis eliminates the possibility of imaging Christ directly. But he does include oblique references that anticipate Christ, through lines such as “It’s only sense that one should die for many” (69), and “I wonder do the gods know what it feels like to be a man” (74), and “in that far distant day when the gods become wholly beautiful, or we at last are shown how beautiful they always were” (315). Psyche refers to her divine husband as “the Bridegroom” (124), with strong New Testament overtones of Christ (Matthew 25:1-13; Mark 2:18-20). All these references indicate that, when Orual in her final vision is brought before Psyche’s husband to have her life and actions judged by him, she is meeting Christ, hidden but revealed: “It was not, not now, [Psyche] that really counted. Or if she counted (and oh, gloriously she did) it was for another’s sake. The earth and stars and sun, all that was or will be, existed for his sake. And he was coming. The most dreadful, the most beautiful, the only dread and beauty there is, was coming. The pillars on the far side of the pool flushed with his approach” (318-19). In retrospect, alert readers may discern that the many references to “the god,” Ungit’s son, are hidden allusions to Christ, who later would come to Earth and be one who died for many, as Psyche did within the story.

The motif of sacrifice in the story also contains hidden images of Christ, both in the pagan worship of Ungit and the personal sacrifices of the characters. Orual thinks of sacrifices as empty rituals: “The duty of queenship that irked me most was going often to the house of Ungit and sacrificing” (243). She follows the Fox in denying the efficacy of the religious sacrifices: “All folly, child . . . things come about by natural causes” (18). However, near the end of her life, Orual accepts that the old priest of Ungit, not the Fox, was right: “The Priest knew at least that there must be sacrifices. [The gods] will have sacrifice; will have man. Yes, and the very heart, centre, ground, roots of a man; dark and strong and costly as blood” (306). The worship of Ungit was a nature religion of the type Lewis discussed in the fourteenth chapter of *Miracles* (1947). The nature gods pre-figure Christ, as they enact the pattern of sacrifice found throughout nature, the rhythm of death and re-birth: Christ “is like the Corn-King because the Corn-King is a portrait of Him.”[30] The events in Glome, set before the birth of Christ, similarly anticipate Christ’s coming: “The very thing which the Nature-religions are all about seems to have really happened once” (*Miracles*, 138).[31] The reader shares Orual’s experience: as she searches for the hidden God, so the reader searches for the role of Christ in this supposedly pre-Christian story, and for both the answer is revealed in sacrifice.

In her denial of the efficacy of religious sacrifices, Orual also fails to recognize the other kinds of sacrifice that are evident all around her – and these too become hidden images of Christ. Hidden images are evident in the self-sacrificial attitudes of Psyche, as she risks her own health to bring healing during the plague, and of the Fox and Bardia, as they sacrifice their lives to Glome and to Orual as its queen. The sacrifices of Orual herself become such a hidden image, although she is totally unaware that she is making sacrifices as she devotes herself to her people and her country and then at the end performs Psyche’s tasks for Psyche. In a letter to Clyde S. Kilby, Lewis calls Psyche “an instance of the *anima naturaliter Christiana*” [a soul by nature Christian]: “She is in some ways like Christ not because she is a symbol of Him but because every good man or woman is like Christ. What else could they be like?"[32] Orual also in some ways is like Christ. But she needs to grow more Christ-like by learning the importance of what Lewis in *Miracles* calls the universal "principle of *Vicariousness*": "Everything is indebted to everything else, sacrificed to everything else, dependent on everything else" (*Miracles,* 143). It is this principle, "very deeply rooted in Christianity" (*Miracles,* 143), that brings Christian theology into *Till We Have Faces* in ways that are more deeply hidden, but more profoundly revealing, than in Lewis's earlier stories.

Orual started her journey wanting answers, but in the end she finds not answers but the reason why her doubts and questions were not answered: "I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer. Before your face questions die away. What other answer would suffice?" (319). Readers in many cases come to Lewis's works the way my students do, looking for answers and explanations, and his apologetic works often seek to provide them in clear, direct terms. But I contend that is not his aim in his fiction. Images of Christ are present, but in his fiction Lewis works by indirection, by suggesting the truth, but leaving readers to discover and experience it for themselves, as is the nature of imaginative literature. When Orual stood in the palace without being able to see it, Psyche said, "Perhaps . . . you too will learn how to see" (130). And Orual does learn how to see – the story ends with a series of dreams or visions or "seeings" (319). Likewise I hope my students, like all readers of Lewis, will learn how to see and respect what is hidden, and not always expect to find obvious allusions, answers, and explanations.

Notes

[1] Kallistos Ware, "God of the Fathers: C. S. Lewis and Eastern Christianity," *The Pilgrim's Guide: C. S. Lewis and the Art of Witness*, ed. David Mills (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 58. Michael Ward argues that Ware's insight is applicable to Lewis's general theological vision: his continual emphasis is God's unperceived omnipresence and proximity: "The major feature of his spirituality is the exercising of Enjoyment consciousness in order to experience that hidden divinity" (*Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2008], 227).

[2] Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1964), 104.

[3] In saying that Lewis had a sense of God's hiddenness, I do not mean what *Time* magazine focused on in its 8 April 1966 cover story entitled "Toward a Hidden God," which was an examination of how putative believers and atheists deal with the death of God. Lewis very much believed that God was alive, but he didn't consider knowledge of God to be as simple and easy as some Christians treat it.

[4] *Out of the Silent Planet* (London: John Lane—The Bodley Head, 1938), 106.

[5] Letter to Victor M. Hamm, 11 August 1945; *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis*, vol. 2: *Books, Broadcasts and War 1931-1949*, ed. Walter Hooper (London: HarperCollins, 2004), 666-67; hereafter abbreviated "*CLet2*."

[6] "I am glad you mentioned the substitution of heaven for space as that is my favourite idea in the book. Unhappily I have since learned that it is also the idea which most betrays my

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scientific ignorance: I have since learned that the rays in interplanetary space, so far from being beneficial, would be mortal to us. However, that, no doubt, is true of Heaven in other senses as well!" (Letter to Evelyn Underhill, 29 October 1938; *CLet2*, 235).

[7] H. G. Wells was one of Lewis's earliest models for science fiction writing: "I had grown up on . . . the 'scientifiction' of H. G. Wells. The idea of other planets exercised upon me [in my early boyhood] a peculiar, heady attraction." (letter to Charles A. Brady, 29 October 1944 [*CLet2,* 235] and *Surprised by Joy,* chap. 2). For Christmas 1908, his father gave him a copy of Wells's *The First Men in the Moon* (1901). In a letter of 21 February 1909 Lewis thanks him and adds, "I have already finished it and enjoyed it very much" (*The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis*, vol. 1: *Family Letters 1905-1931*, ed. Walter Hooper [London: HarperCollins, 2000], 11 – hereafter abbreviated "*CLet1*"). Years later Lewis wrote to his friend and former student Roger Lancelyn Green, "I think Wells' *1st Men in the Moon* the best of the sort I have read" (28 December 1938; *CLet2*, 237).

[8] 4 January 1947; *CLet2*, 753. See also his letter to Charles A. Brady, 29 October 1944; *CLet2*, 235. In a letter to Helmut Kuhn, Lewis comments, "I was trying to redeem for genuinely imaginative purposes the form popularly known in this country as 'science-fiction' . . . just as . . . *Hamlet* redeemed the popular revenge play" (16 August 1960; *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis,* vol. 3: *Narnia, Cambridge and Joy 1950-1963,* ed. Walter Hooper [London: HarperCollins, 2007], 1178; hereafter abbreviated "*CLet3*").

[9] Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1952), book 2, chapter 4.

[10] Lewis, *Perelandra* (London: The Bodley Head, 1943), 169.

[11] Lewis completed the trilogy in *That Hideous Strength* (1945), but it doesn't develop the Christ imagery beyond the use of the name Maleldil.

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[12] Chad Walsh, *C. S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 10.

[13] Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Biography* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 307.

[14] Vaus, *Mere Theology: A Guide to the Thought of C. S. Lewis* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 79.

[15] Lewis, "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Told," in *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter Hooper (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1966), 36.

[16] Lewis, "It All Began with a Picture . . .," *Of Other Worlds*, 42.

[17] For a thorough discussion of the texts of the Chronicles and the numbering of the volumes, see Peter J. Schakel, *The Way into Narnia: A Reader's Guide* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 15-21.

[18] Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950), 117-18.

[19] Lewis, *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1952), 221.

[21] Lewis, "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's To Be Said," *Of Other Worlds*, 37. This seems a fine example of what J. R. R. Tolkien refers to as Recovery, one of the key values and functions of the fairy stories ("On Fairy-Stories, Essays Presented to Charles Williams, ed. C. S. Lewis [1947; rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966], 74-75).

[22] With allusions to Matthew 25: 31-46 and Revelation 20: 11-15.

[23] Lewis, *Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1951), 129.

[24] Lewis, *The Silver Chair* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1953), 27.

[25] Lewis, *The Horse and His Boy* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1954), 147.

[26] In a letter to Anne and Martin Kilmer, 7 August 1957, Lewis said of *TWHF*, "I think it much my best book" (*CLet3*, 873). Similarly, *CLet3*, 1040, 1148, 1181, 1214. Lewis told Charles

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Wrong, “It’s my favorite of all my books” (“A Chance Meeting,” *C. S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table and Other Reminiscences,* ed. James T. Como [New York: Macmillan, 1979], 109).

[27] Early references to Apulieus’s tale appear in letters from Lewis to Arthur Greeves, 28 January and 13 May 1917; *CLet1*, 268, 268n, and 304-5. Lewis tried several times to write his own version of Apuleius’s story. A diary entry for 6 May 1922 records “Tried to work on ‘Psyche’ . . . with no success.” On 23 November 1922 he was “thinking how to make a masque or play of Psyche.” A year later, 9 September 1923, his “head was very full of my old idea of a poem on my own version of the Cupid and Psyche story.” He had already started such a poem twice, “once in couplet and once in ballad form” (Lewis, *All My Road Before Me: The Diary of C. S. Lewis 1922-27,* ed. Walter Hooper [London: HarperCollins, 1991], 30, 142, 266).

[28] Lewis, *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1956), 12, 281, 57.

[29] Ware, 58.

[30] Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (London: Geoffrey Bles – The Centenary Press, 947), 139.

[31] A turning point in Lewis’s return to Christianity occurred when a hard-boiled atheist, T. D. Weldon, said to him one evening, “Rum thing, . . . all that stuff of Frazer’s about the Dying God. Rum thing. It almost looks as if it had really happened once” (*Surprised by Joy,* 211).

[32] 10 February 1957; *CLet3*, 830. The Latin phrase is from Tertullian’s *Apology* 17.6.

Tale as Old as Time:
A Study of the Cupid and Psyche Myth, with Particular Reference to C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*"

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In 1956, C.S. Lewis saw the publication of his final novel, *Till We Have Faces.* "Everyone says it's my best book," he wrote to one correspondent (Hooper, 647). Lewis lovers may argue that point till they have *blue* faces, but one thing they can agree on is that the novel stands as a testament to Lewis's love for Greek myth. For those who are unfamiliar with *Till We Have Faces* or who simply need a refresher, the novel's basic plot is a reworking of the myth of Cupid and Psyche, a myth that centers on the love between a gorgeous god and a mortal woman. As we will see, this myth in all its numerous forms is designed to resonate in the hearts of book lovers, playgoers, film audiences, and human beings everywhere.

The goal of this discussion will be to trace the various adaptations of the Cupid and Psyche myth and its echoes in works as various as the poetry of John Milton, Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* novels, and Disney's *Beauty and the Beast.* Though I'll be referring back to Lewis and *Till We Have Faces* often, my aim is to unveil the threads that run through each and every one of these works. At heart, I believe that the Cupid and Psyche myth is a reflection of man's struggle to transcend his human nature and embrace the God of Love who created him. Stick around and find out how this proves true every single time the story is retold.

Let's start by examining the roots of the Cupid and Psyche myth. Our earliest written record of the myth comes from a Classical novel titled *The Golden Ass* or *Metamorphoses.* By strange literary device, a drunken old woman narrates the myth to the novel's protagonist while he suffers in the captivity of a gang of thieves (Apuleius, 106, bk. 6). Though the myth comes across as a side story to the main plot, one gets the feeling it's there for a reason.

Here's a summary. A king and queen have three beautiful daughters, one of whom outshines the rest in beauty and in virtue. This Helen of Troy lookalike, whose real name is Psyche, is so beautiful that men are afraid to ask her hand in marriage and instead decide to worship her as a goddess. Venus, the goddess of love herself, becomes jealous of Psyche's popularity and commands her son Cupid to afflict Psyche with a lust for the lowest kind of scumbag he can find. Instead, Cupid falls in love with the girl himself (71-76, 89, bks. 4-5).

Psyche is taken to the god's palace, where they are wed. Homesick for her sisters, Psyche invites them to her palace, but the two sisters are filled with envy at everything they see and concoct a plan to ruin Psyche's happiness. Because Cupid refuses to let Psyche see his face, the sisters convince her that her husband must be a monster. But when Psyche finally gazes on Cupid's face by candlelight, the god's beauty overwhelms her. Unfortunately, Cupid wakes and banishes Psyche to wander the earth while he returns to his home with Venus at the bottom of the sea (77-91, bk. 5).

Before she can be reunited with her divine husband, Psyche must complete four impossible tasks concocted by Venus. With the help of a few unexpected allies, she does just that. Cupid petitions Jupiter for a blessing on their marriage, and Psyche is transformed into a true goddess. The cliché "happily ever after" certainly applies here, since the marriage of Cupid and Psyche is for eternity (97-106, bk. 6).

Till We Have Faces pays tribute to this myth by retaining the central characters and keeping most of the major plot points intact. However, Psyche's two jealous sisters make way for one: Orual, the narrator and hence the focus of Lewis's novel. Orual is actually the older of the two, which creates a great deal of tension when Psyche becomes the god's bride and Orual is literally unable to see or hear or touch any part of the god's palace. Orual begins to believe that Psyche is insane—or worse, that Psyche is being duped by a man or beast coming to her at night (122, 136-37, 142-43).

That Orual is blind to the reality of the god's existence gives the myth a whole new direction. I'll let C.S. Lewis explain in his own words to close friend Katharine Farrer: "It is the story of every nice, affectionate agnostic whose dearest one suddenly 'gets religion,' or even every luke warm [sic] Christian whose dearest gets a Vocation" (Hooper, 590). Orual's inability to take part in Psyche's joy is an illustration of what Christ meant when He said "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword…a man's enemies will be the members of his own household" (*Life Application Study Bible,* Matt. 10:34-36). Faith in Cupid or God as the case may be becomes a source of conflict rather than a point of common interest.

Milton alludes to the Cupid and Psyche myth in the conclusion to his poem "Comus" or "A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle."

> Celestial *Cupid* her fam'd son advanc't
> Holds his dear *Psyche* sweet intranc't
> After her wandering labours long,
> Till free consent the gods among
> Make her his eternal Bride,
> And from her fair unspotted side
> Two blissful twins are to be born,
> Youth and Joy; so *Jove* hath sworn. (72)

Okay, we get it. The myth of Cupid and Psyche appeals to learned men like C.S. Lewis and Milton who play Scrabble in Greek and read so many books that they go blind. Why should the rest of humanity care? Why would a hip, cutting-edge audience give a rat's hind end about a story embedded in the middle of a larger story that was written thousands of years ago in another language and hasn't even been featured on Oprah or made into a movie starring Brad Pitt?

The answer is simple. Even those among us with little exposure to ancient Greek myth are familiar with Cupid and Psyche's modern counterparts.

Take Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series as an example. Though critics like Harold Bloom and Stephen King have managed to stereotype the series as a fad for teenyboppers and other readers too stupid to recognize a bad book even if it tried to bite them, *Twilight* is worth examining here if for no other reason than its startling parallels to the myth of Cupid and Psyche.

For the three people left on Earth who haven't been exposed to *Twilight* one way or another, here's the gist. Girl named Bella meets boy named Edward. Bella falls in love with Edward. Bella finds out Edward is a vampire who loves her but is constantly tempted to have her over for "lunch." Bella wants Edward to bite her so she can be a vampire too and live with him forever. Edward reluctantly agrees to the transformation, but only if Bella marries him first. That covers the plot of the first two books, *Twilight* and *New Moon*, and most of the third.

The parallels become obvious with a closer look. Twice within the first *Twilight* novel, Bella describes Edward as a statue of Adonis come to life (299, 317). In Greek mythology, Adonis was the lover of Aphrodite, better known as Venus (Hamilton, 117). Venus, of course, is the mother of Cupid in the myth of Cupid and Psyche.

Both Cupid and Edward are described as excessively good-looking. E.J. Kenney's translation of the original Cupid and Psyche tale puts it like this: "She [Psyche] saw a rich head of golden hair dripping with ambrosia, a milk-white neck…the god's body was smooth and shining and such as Venus need not be ashamed of in her son" (Apuleius, 88, bk. 5). Edward is said to have a sculpted chest, "scintillating arms," and skin that is "smooth like marble" and glitters in the sunlight (*Twilight,* 260). It should be noted that Lewis's physical description of the son of Ungit, his stand-in for Cupid, is similarly flattering (*Till We Have Faces,* 111, 172).

Does the resemblance go any deeper than the flesh? Let the audience judge for itself with the following examples. Perhaps the most obvious is that Cupid and Edward are both immortal. Both fall in love with humans. Both avoid being seen in the light, because doing so reveals their beauty and therefore their true identities (Apuleius, 88, bk. 5; Lewis, *Till We Have Faces,* 123; Meyer, *Twilight,* 260). Near the end of their respective tales, both give in and allow their loved ones to undergo the process of becoming immortal (Apuleius, 105, bk. 6; *Till We Have Faces,* 241; *Breaking Dawn,* 378-86). Both father a child that is part-human and part-immortal (Apuleius, 106, bk. 6; *Breaking Dawn,* 443-45).

The similarities between Cupid and Edward go hand-in-hand with the similarities between their lovers, Psyche and Bella. Both are mortal women who admit to feeling inferior next to their god husbands (Apuleius, 104, bk. 6; *Till We Have Faces*, 113; *New Moon*, 70). Both have friends and family who just don't get it (Apuleius, 81, bk. 5; *Till We Have Faces,* 117-19; *New Moon,* 544-45). Both are warned that their husbands are monsters who are bound to make a meal out of them sooner or later (Apuleius, 85-86, bk. 5; *Till We Have Faces,* 160; *Twilight,* 195). Both are persecuted by the divine elite (Apuleius, 97-98, bk. 6; *Till We Have Faces,* 242; *Eclipse,* 576-79).

Most importantly, Psyche and Bella endure a period of "wandering" in which they are forcibly separated from their lovers and must attempt to put themselves back together again.

In the myth, this separation occurs when Psyche gives in to her curiosity and sneaks a look at Cupid in the candlelight while he's sleeping. Cupid discovers her violation of trust and flies away, condemning her to exile (Apuleius, 88-89, bk. 5; *Till We Have Faces,* 173-74). Bella's separation occurs when Edward decides, once and for all, that it's just too dangerous for her to be around him and his family (*New Moon,* 44-45). Whatever the reason, the results are the same. Psyche and Bella must wander and suffer before being reunited to their respective lovers. Interestingly, both attempt to throw themselves off of a high precipice into the water at some point (Apuleius, 89, bk. 5; *Till We Have Faces,* 279; *New Moon,* 359).

Before we get into the spiritual meaning behind this God-centered love story, let's bring in one more modern-day adaptation of the Cupid and Psyche myth, promised in the introduction to our discussion: Disney's *Beauty and the Beast.*

You'll remember that Belle, the heroine of Disney's fairy tale, encounters the Beast for the first time while searching his castle for her lost father. In the process, she is also introduced to the castle servants, including a candlestick named Lumiere, a clock named Cogsworth, and a bubbly teapot known as Mrs. Potts. When Belle later agrees to become the Beast's prisoner in exchange for her father's freedom, the servants do everything they can to make her welcome and to help her appreciate their master's better qualities. This is particularly well exemplified by the song-and-dance number "Be Our Guest."

In many ways, Belle's first visit to the castle is mirrored in Psyche's first visit to the god's palace in *The Golden Ass*. Let's take a look:

> As she gazed at all this with much pleasure there came to her a disembodied voice: 'Mistress, you need not be amazed at this great wealth. All of it is yours. Enter then your bedchamber, sleep off your fatigue, and go to your bath when you are minded. We

> whose voices you hear are your attendants who will diligently wait on you; and when you have refreshed yourself a royal banquet will not be slow to appear for you.' (Apuleius, 78, bk. 5)

Once readers have made the connection between the two stories, it's difficult to avoid hearing the voice of Lumiere when one reads of Psyche's visit to the palace, since the words of the "disembodied voice" are very similar to the opening lyrics of "Be Our Guest:" "Ma chere Mademoiselle, it is with deepest pride and greatest pleasure that we welcome you tonight. And now we invite you to relax, let us pull up a chair as the dining room proudly presents your dinner" (*Beauty and the Beast*)!

Till We Have Faces adds another layer of depth to this scene, largely because Lewis's version of the myth takes up more space, allowing him more room to develop his characters. For example, we are told early on in *Till We Have Faces* that Psyche dreams of being "a great queen, married to the greatest king of all" (23). She goes on to say, "he will build [her] a castle of gold and amber…on the very top [of the Grey Mountain]" (23). Later, when Psyche is telling the tale of her visit to Cupid's palace to her sister Orual, she brings up this childhood dream again (109).

Again, we have a significant parallel with Disney's Belle. Long before she visits the Beast's castle, the cry of Belle's heart is expressed in her song: "I want adventure in the great wide somewhere. I want it more than I can tell, and for once it might be grand to have someone understand: I want so much more than they've got planned!" We also learn that Belle's favorite book contains "far off places, daring swordfights, magic spells," and "a prince in disguise." She gets all this and more in her romance with the Beast, just as Psyche finally gets her king and her gold and amber palace in the end.

During a key scene in *Beauty and the Beast,* the filmmakers come quite close to advertising their debt to the myth of Cupid and Psyche explicitly. This may or may not have been intentional, but for viewers familiar with both stories, it's hard to ignore the allusion. I'm referring, of course, to the famous ballroom scene where Belle and the Beast dance for the first time. As the camera pans around the scene, tracking their graceful movements, we get a brief glimpse of the ceiling, a painted panorama that features little Cupids watching down on the ballroom from the heavens.

I hope by now I've succeeded in making the connections between all these Cupid and Psyche stories plain. It's time now we turned to their deeper meaning. I'll let *Twilight* apologist John Granger summarize that meaning for us: "In a nutshell, the reason we and millions…around the world respond to these stories is that their allegorical and anagogical meanings are about the central drama and relationship of human existence—our life with God—told in compelling, engaging fashion" (76).

This goes not only for *Twilight,* but also for *Till We Have Faces, The Golden Ass,* and *Beauty and the Beast.*

Allow me to elaborate. Like Psyche and Belle, we all have a longing to be joined to a great king, a "prince in disguise," if you will. Although this longing is sometimes distorted by sin and all kinds of false ideas about God, the Apostle Paul said that "[we] have no excuse for not knowing God," because all Creation is full of "his invisible qualities" (Rom. 1:20-23). We may disbelieve in the existence of our God at first, like Psyche's sister Orual, who is skeptical when her sister tries to make her see the glorious palace all around her. We may be terrified of surrendering ourselves to God, because we can't see past the Lion of Judah to the Lamb of God within, just as Belle is terrified of the Beast until she perceives his gentle soul.

But once we see past the forbidding exterior of the God of Love, we are bound, like Bella, to be swept up in our desire to be with Him forever. Like the Psalmist, we will long to "live in the house of the Lord" (23:6). After all, God is constantly speaking to us through the "disembodied voices" of His servants, including the apostles and prophets in the Bible and godly modern day Christians like Lewis. These voices speak to our inner heart, inviting us to pull up a chair to the banquet God has prepared for us. He has pulled out all the stops. He has spared no expense. He will do everything he can to impress us with His love, short of overriding our free will.

How else are we to respond? Like Lewis's Psyche, we must name Him the "Master of [our] House" (*Till We Have Faces,* 122). Only then can we experience the "rich and satisfying life" that Christ speaks of in the Gospel of John (10:10).

Cupid and Psyche. God and Man. It's a tale as old as time, told again and again by different people. In the end, it doesn't matter whether the storyteller is an Oxford academic, a Mormon housewife, a "drunken garrulous old woman" (Apuleius, 106, bk. 6), or a team of animators and musicians working for a multinational corporation. The same message will always be there just beneath the surface.

Who could put it better than Mr. Beaver from Lewis's classic, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*? "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you" (80).

That's the heart of *Till We Have Faces.* It's the heart of the myth of Cupid and Psyche. It's a summary of our relationship with God. May we never forget it.

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Old MacDonald Had a Farm: An Exploration of Animal Literature and its Subtext through the Theology of George MacDonald

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In writing *The Hope of the Gospel*, George MacDonald gave us a glimpse into the deepest thoughts of an exceptional man. He based the last chapter on deciphering what the apostle Paul meant when he said in Romans 8:19, “For the earnest expectation of the *creature* waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God” (*KJV*, emphasis added). MacDonald, believing that Paul needed to be interpreted on a much higher plane of thought than most people would dare venture, presented his case in this chapter for the redemption of animals. Because I agree with him that there is much more to our fellow creatures than lowly submission, I will be exploring his theology on the afterlife and substantiating it with examples from other literature.

First, MacDonald makes the case that if God created animals only to let them be destroyed, then He is not the God we know and love. MacDonald scoffs at the idea many Christians have that yes, animals suffer in this life, but when they die, although not redeemed, they’ll no longer suffer. He says, “Surely rest is better than ceaseless toil and pain! But what shall we say of such a heedless God as those Christians are content to worship! Is he a merciful God” (99)?

To believe that God would take time to create something good and then “annihilate” it forever (101) was illogical, MacDonald thought. Perhaps still reeling from his Calvinistic childhood, it seems that he could not bear any part of theology that suggests that God is less than loving. “Were such a creature possible,” he insists, “he would not be God, but must one day be found and destroyed by the real God” (99). He believed that God must be at least as loving as the most compassionate human being, and since MacDonald himself couldn't bear the thought of damning any creature for all eternity, neither, he thought, could God.

The reason for our unbelief in the beast's redemption, MacDonald states, is twofold. One reason is that we have picked up "prejudices" from others and don't care to waste thought on any creature's salvation but our own (100). Another reason is that we are afraid of imagining too *much* of God. "Multitudes evidently count it safest to hold by a dull scheme of things," he says. "Can it be because, like David in Browning's poem *Saul*, they dread lest they should worst the Giver by inventing better gifts than his" (103)? Considering some people's mediocre ideas of heaven, this reason is plausible. It demonstrates not only our fear of going against the flow of mainstream theology but MacDonald's audacity for a man of his time.

Second, MacDonald believed that animals, like humans, are fallen from the way they were meant to be, and are therefore destined to be redeemed. He persisted in denying that God would create animals "only that they may be the prey of other creatures, or spend a few hours or years, helpless and lonely, speechless and without appeal…then pass away into nothingness" (100). It is the "speechless and without appeal" part that I want to focus on. In the Bible, the only instances of an animal talking were the serpent in Genesis and Balaam's donkey. Neither of these animals had the power of speech on his own but was simply a vessel for Satan, in the serpent's case, or God, in the donkey's case. Because there is no mention of other animals speaking in the Garden of Eden, it would seem that God did not intend them to.

By emphasizing that animals, in their helpless state, cannot defend themselves by speech, MacDonald gives the impression that he hopes speech will come to them when they are redeemed. In his novel *Salted with Fire,* James Blatherwick, a reformed minister, muses that we will someday know the thoughts of dogs. "Wha can tell," he says, "but the vera herts o' the doggies may ae day lie bare and open to *oor* herts, as to the hert o' Him wi' whom they and we hae to do! Eh, but the thouchts o' a doggie maun be a won'erfu' sicht" (320)!

C.S. Lewis gives us quite a glimpse into a paradise of talking animals in *The Magician's Nephew*. Aslan, the great lion himself, is *singing* creation into Narnia when the children Polly and Digory show up and watch. When Aslan finally speaks, Lewis writes, "It was of course the lion's voice. The children had long felt sure that he could speak: yet it was a lovely and terrible shock when he did" (127). Echoing MacDonald's hopes, the animals Aslan creates all chorus together, "Hail, Aslan. We hear and obey. We are awake. We love. We think. We speak. We know" (127). Here, at last, is creation the way it was meant to be, no longer "dumb and witless" (129) but fully alive.

MacDonald, in *The Hope of the Gospel*, warns us that if we are to meet animals in heaven, we should be careful how we treat them in this life. Lewis shows agreement with this thought when a cab driver in *The Magician's Nephew* meets up with his now talking horse, Strawberry. When the horse finally remembers him, he says, "You used to tie a horrid black thing behind me and then hit me to make me run" (133). The cab driver only recalls that he treated the horse with care; but Strawberry's memory, forcing us to take a walk in the shoes (or hooves) of a horse, can be taken as a warning to us humans. If animals truly have a redeemed soul, how will our treatment of them be remembered, and how will it be seen by God?

Third, MacDonald draws a parallel between humans and animals. He says we are both lowly creatures and share a connection because we came from the same Creator. "Do you believe in immortality for yourself?" he asks. "If you do, why not believe in it for them?..Had God been of like heart with you [in condemning animals to the grave], would he have given life and immortality to creatures so much less than himself as we" (101)? MacDonald is trying to open our eyes to the fact that we may see animals as lowly creatures not worth redeeming, but God could have felt the same way about *us*. The chasm between ourselves and God is as deep as the chasm we think exists between ourselves and animals.

In fact, having come from the same Creator, many of us have animal-like traits. We may be more like a bulldog or a parakeet than we realize! For instance, how many people have said that you move like a turtle? How many noses have you seen that reminded you of a bird's beak? It is not just superficial traits we have in common with animals, however. They can also represent a part of our soul. In the *Harry Potter* series, J.K. Rowling gives each witch or wizard something called a *Patronus* which takes the form of a silvery animal. This creature represents what is inside each character's soul and helps them ward off evil in the form of *Dementors*, which are agents of the bad guy, Voldemort. In order to understand certain *Patronuses*, however, you also have to understand the *Animagi*, which are people who can change into animals. Harry Potter's father, James, was an *Animagus* when he attended the school of Hogwarts, and he shifted into a stag. Harry's *Patronus* therefore takes the shape of that stag, meaning that his thoughts are constantly on his father, who was killed.

A *Patronus* can also change form if the witch or wizard falls in love. For instance, the unpredictable Professor Snape comes to Harry's rescue with his *Patronus* in the shape of a silver doe. Harry later finds out that his mother Lily had a *Patronus* that was a doe, and Snape had always loved her. What does this say? That love changes the soul, and the animal in this case represents the soul.

Another example of our connection with animals is in Stephenie Meyer's phenomenally successful *Twilight* series. In the first book, *Twilight*, the character Jacob Black explains his family's ancestry to the heroine, Bella. Born into a Quileute Indian family in the state of

Washington, Jacob recalls the legend that says Quileutes are descended from wolves and that they have a connection with these animals even now. He experiences the legend himself in the second book, *New Moon*, when he becomes part wolf and joins the already-established wolf pack on the Quileute reservation.

The wolf pack is essentially a group of "disciples" headed by Sam, their leader. Similar to the relationship between the twelve Biblical apostles, or even Isaac's sons in Exodus, the appropriately named *Jacob* and his wolf brothers run around fighting corrupt vampires. Each wolf-man has his own characteristics even as a wolf. In Jacob's case, he has the longest fur because he has the longest hair as a human.

Connections between man and animal go back a long time, though. An earlier example comes from one of Grimms' fairy tales, *The Frog Prince*. Everyone knows the story of a frog that is kissed by a princess and turned into a prince. In Grimms' version, though, the frog is thrown against the wall by the princess and then shifts back into his normal princely form. However the story is told, the idea of a prince being trapped inside the body of a frog is what captures our imagination. Considering George MacDonald's high regard for lowly creatures and his hope that they might have the gift of speech someday, he could surely imagine the *qualities* of a prince coming out of a frog in heaven.

A final example comes from one of my favorite books, *Tarzan of the Apes*. When Edgar Rice Burroughs created the character Tarzan, he wrote a story of an Englishman and his wife stranded in Africa who leave behind a baby boy when they are killed by apes. The baby Tarzan is found by a mother ape and grows up in the very family who killed his human parents. He feels a connection with these apes, though, illustrated in the Disney version of *Tarzan* with the song "You'll Be in My Heart." Although Darwin's evolutionary theory was taking off during George

MacDonald's time, the Scottish author's belief in a connection between humans and animals arose, I believe, not out of evolution but because of our ties to God. So also, no matter what Burroughs intended for his story theologically, Tarzan's connection to his ape family can be interpreted as him feeling that they are both made by the same Creator.

What does the Bible have to say about animals? In Matthew chapter 15, a Canaanite woman comes to Jesus and asks for her daughter's healing. When he tells her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs," she answers, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (v. 26-7, *KJV*). Jesus applauds her faith and heals her daughter instantly. In MacDonald's view, this would give us hope that the dogs and other animals would at least get the crumbs which fall from the Great Supper of the Lamb.

Jesus draws a comparison between humans and the poorest of creatures, sparrows, in Matthew 10:29, saying, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father" (*NIV*). And the will of the Father, MacDonald believed, was one of compassion for the weak. Wouldn't this compassion extend to the very sparrow he was talking about? There must be animals in heaven, MacDonald thought, so why not the box turtle you're already attached to on this earth? "The sons of God are not a new race of sons of God," MacDonald says in *The Hope of the Gospel*, "but the old race glorified: - why a new race of animals, and not the old ones glorified" (106)?

As with so many verses of the Bible, we cannot absolutely interpret what Paul meant when he said, "For the earnest expectation of the *creature* waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God" (*KJV*). But we *can* be sure of one thing: God is loving, He is merciful, and He will always do what is just. This applies to every creature, including sparrows, frogs, humans, bulldogs, turtles, and parakeets. He said, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (*NIV*). Like Aslan, he breathed His creation into existence, and He will be with us at the Last Battle… and beyond.

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Aesthetics vs. Anesthesia: C. S. Lewis on the Purpose of Art

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My astonishing claim is this: Most of evangelical Christianity for the last hundred years (and longer) has gotten art and culture all wrong, but, as per usual, C. S. Lewis gets it right. We don't know what culture is for, we don't know what art is for, and we keep asking the wrong people: theologians. When we want to overcome a sickness, we go to a doctor. When we want to fix a leak, we call a plumber. We ask the experts and get the right answers. Why don't we do the same with art? We turn to Christians to find Christian answers, and rightly so. But if we want to know about art, theologians are not the experts to ask. Artists, on the other hand, frighten us. We trust so little of what they do, and they're a little weird to begin with, even the Christian ones. What we need is a Christian artist (perhaps a writer) with a background in theology—someone with the intellectual discipline of a philosopher and the critical eye, experience and imagination of an artist. If such a *Jack*-of-all-trades were to exist, we'd call him C. S. Lewis.

I. Is Art Utilitarian?

With regard to the significance of the arts or culture in general, Lewis once concluded that "culture,[1] though not in itself meritorious, was innocent and pleasant, might be a vocation for some, was helpful in bringing certain souls to Christ, and could be pursued to the glory of God."[2] Though he valued culture, Lewis did not see it as a final good—an end unto itself. It is true that Lewis saw a connection between art and knowledge. In *The Great Divorce*, for example, a painter who has just come into heaven is told that "When you painted on earth…it was because you caught glimpses of Heaven in the earthly landscape. The success of your painting was that it enabled others to see the glimpses too."[3] And such glimpses, as Lewis himself found in "inanimate nature and marvelous literature" evoke in us an experience of "intense longing,"[4] an "unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction.[5] Lewis calls this desire "Joy,"[6] and Joy is a marker—a stab of desire whose object is not to be found on earth:

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[1] Of the various topics which could be discussed under the umbrella of cultural analysis, I here intend, following Lewis's lead, to focus on art.

[2] "Christianity and Culture," 85.

> Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.[7]

Lewis sees the intense desire he calls Joy as an "ontological proof" for the existence of heaven and God.[8] He says, "if we are made for heaven, the desire for our proper place will be already in us, but not yet attached to the true object…."[9] The desire will, in fact, erupt out of earthly encounters of pleasure—encounters with beauty in nature, with sexual pleasure, and with the beauty of artistic texts, especially (for Lewis) the literature of myth and fantasy.[10] But each of these earthly objects, then, can be confused for the true, heavenly object, and must be seen as merely a signpost, a hint of the real thing.[11] But the implication for art is that it may potentially point us to the truth of God's existence. It did for C. S. Lewis.

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[3] *The Great Divorce*, 83.
[4] *The Pilgrim's Regress*, 202.
[5] *Surprised by Joy*, 17-18.
[6] Ibid, 18.
[7] *Mere Christianity*, 115.
[8] *The Pilgrim's Regress*, 205.
[9] "The Weight of Glory," 98.
[10] *The Pilgrim's Regress*, 203.
[11] Ibid.

That said, Lewis did not see the purpose of art to be the production of sermonic tropes or Christian propaganda. Even as viewers of art we shouldn't look to see if there is a hidden *Christian* message in a movie or book. On the contrary, "The first demand any work of any art makes upon us is surrender. Look. Listen. Receive. Get yourself out of the way."[12] Writing specifically about literature, Lewis claims that whatever edification we get isn't about finding truth in books: "To value them chiefly for reflections which they may suggest to us or morals we may draw from them, is a flagrant instance of 'using' [texts for our own purposes] instead of 'receiving'" [them for what they are].[13] Instead, great art is about a particular activity of imagination; it is about finding new ways of *seeing*—about seeing through the eyes of others:

> The nearest I have yet got to an answer [to the question of literature's value] is that we seek an enlargement of our being. We want to be more than ourselves. Each of us by nature sees the whole world from one point of view with a perspective and a selectiveness peculiar to himself….We want to see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts, as well as with our own….My own eyes are not enough for me, I will see through those of others. Reality, even seen through the eyes of many, is not enough. I will see what others have invented….[I]n reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself….Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend Myself; and am never more myself than when I do.[14]

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[12] *An Experiment in Criticism*, 19.

[13] Ibid, 82-83. See, especially, all of chapter eight for Lewis's discussion on the connections and disconnections between art and reality and art and truth.

[14] Ibid, 137, 140-41.

In short, Lewis very specifically rejects any view that “literature is to be valued…for telling us truths about life”[15]; instead, he values literature apart from its utilitarian purposes. This flies in the face of much contemporary Christian thinking about art and culture, both on popular and intellectual fronts. On the popular front are well meaning Christians who accept the model of “culture war”—we are in a battle that must be fought by governing what our kids are exposed to and protesting against films, songs and TV shows which are hostile to our point of view. On the intellectual front is an emphasis on “worldview analysis”—examining the worldviews behind artistic texts to point out there hidden assumptions or mine their truth value. And while both have their place, they fail to understand what art is for.

II. Problems with Worldview Analysis

The one time Lewis says anything about what we call worldview analysis is in his essay, “Christianity and Culture.” Here he agrees that, in a work of art,

> the real beliefs may differ from the professed and may lurk in the turn of a phrase or the choice of an epithet; with the result that many preferences which seem to the ignorant to be simply ‘matters of taste’ are visible to the trained critic as choices between good and evil, or truth and error….[16]

But he follows this recognition by raising several questions and cautions. One is whether a man who has “had a literary training” ought also to be a judge of the worldviews he reveals. Is this not the purview of the philosopher?[17] Secondly, Lewis wonders if aspects of a negative analysis have less to do with ideas and more to do with taste.[18] I read Lewis here as saying that aesthetic sensibilities are often ignored in worldview approaches to art. But to Lewis, an artistic text like a book is

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[15] Ibid, 130.

[16] “Christianity and Culture,” 86.

[17] Ibid, 86-87.

[18] Ibid, 87.

> both *Logos* (something said) and *Poiema* (something made). As Logos it tells a story, or expresses an emotion, or exhorts or pleads or describes or rebukes or excites laughter. As Poiema, by its aural beauties and also by the balance and contrast and the unified multiplicity of its successive parts, it is an *objet d'art*, a thing shaped so as to give great satisfaction.[19]

Next Lewis takes issue with an approach to art which spends so much time "reading between the lines" that it neglects "the obvious surface facts about a book."[20] Is it not possible, for example, that, despite a book's "dreadful latent materialism, it does set courage and fidelity before the reader in an attractive light, and thousands of readers will be edified…by reading it?"[21]

Lewis then questions an approach to art which removes any sense of its primary purpose:

> I agree…that our leisure, even our play, is a matter of serious concern…. [However,] to do them at all, we must somehow do them as if they were not. It is a serious matter to choose wholesome recreations: but they would no longer be recreations if we pursued them seriously….For a great deal (not all) of our literature was made to be read lightly for entertainment. If we do not read it, in a sense, 'for fun'…we are not using it as it was meant to be used, and all our criticism of it will be pure illusion. For you cannot judge any artefact except by

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[19] *An Experiment in Criticism*, 132. See also page 82.
[20] "Christianity and Culture," 88.
[21] Ibid, 89.

> using it as it was intended. It is no good judging a butter-knife by seeing whether it will saw logs.[22]

Finally Lewis offers the tentative suggestion that there might be

> two kinds of good and bad. The first, such as virtue and vice or love and hatred, besides being good or bad themselves make the possessor good or bad. The second do not. They include such things as physical beauty or ugliness, the possession or lack of a sense of humour, strength or weakness, pleasure or pain.[23]

Lewis sees potential problems with his categories, but I think it legitimate to apply them to the arts in this way: If I say a secular film is bad because it is filled with false ideas, foul language, gratuitous sex, and gory violence, and then I say a Christian film is bad because the production values are cheap, the script overly didactic, the story dull and the acting poor, I am not using the word “bad” in the same way. The former is bad for reasons involving morality and truth; the latter is bad for reasons involving aesthetics and imaginative effect.[24] Worldview analysis will almost always leave these latter considerations out of the equation.

An even stronger argument to be gleaned from Lewis regarding the problems of worldview analysis has to do with the nature of “meaning.” “What does it mean?” is a question we ask all the time, often about the symbols and images we encounter in books, songs, and movies. But do we ever ask, “What does *meaning* mean?” Usually when we ask for the meaning of a word, a line in a song, or a symbolic image, we want an explanation in words. In *The Empire Strikes Back*, Luke journeys down into his own cave of knowledge and confronts Darth Vader. He cuts Vader’s head clean off only to find his own face looking back at him. When my daughter first saw this scene she asked me what it meant. I told her, “It means Luke’s worst enemy is himself. He has to fight his own fear and doubt before he can face the real Darth Vader. What happened in the cave was a dream or vision." I explained the meaning in words. But movies mean more than the words in them. Their magic is in the meanings they communicate *beyond* words. Their truth is in their images and experiential quality.

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[22] Ibid, 90.
[23] Ibid, 91.
[24] See below for why these elements matter.

In a little known essay called "Bluspels and Flalansferes," Lewis helps us search for the meaning of *meaning*:

> [I]t must not be supposed that I am in any sense putting forward the imagination as the organ of truth. We are not talking of truth, but of meaning: meaning which is the antecedent condition both of truth and falsehood, whose antithesis is not error but nonsense.…For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning. Imagination, producing new metaphors or revivifying old, is not the cause of truth, but its condition.[25]

An obscure statement at best, what Lewis argues here, among other things, is that meaning is not the same thing as truth, the one belonging to the faculty of imagination, the other to the faculty of reason.

He discusses one major implication of this dichotomy in his essay, "Myth Became Fact," where he makes a connection between "myth" and "reality" and then a separation of "reality" from "truth": "What flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality (truth is always about something, but reality is that *about which* truth is)."[26] Reality (or fact) is what is; truth is a proposition *about* fact. Next, Lewis describes our earthly existence as a "valley of separation,"[27] or abstraction, arguing that "Myth is the mountain whence all the different streams arise which become truths down here in the valley; *in hac valle abstractionis*."[28] Lewis is saying that meaning can be abstract language statements like my explanation of Luke's internal struggle in *Empire Strikes Back*. But it can also be experiential and can precede language.

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[25] "Bluspels and Flalansferes," 265.
[26] "Myth Became Fact," 141.
[27] Ibid, 141*n*.

The context of the "Myth Became Fact" essay is the epistemological dilemma of thinking versus experiencing. To know by thought is to withdraw ourselves from reality. To know by experience is to be so caught up in the real that we can't think about it clearly. Consider how we can laugh at a joke or think about why it's funny, but we can't do both at the same time. More importantly, our very ability to know is hampered by this bifurcation: "'If only my toothache would stop, I could write another chapter about Pain.' But once it stops, what do I know about pain?"[29] We can't study pleasure while having sex, "repentance while repenting," nor humor while we're laughing hysterically, but "when else can you really know these things?"[30]

In order to understand how limiting this dilemma really is, Lewis suggests we think about the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Orpheus was allowed to lead Eurydice by the hand, but the moment he tried to turn around and see her, she disappeared. If we focus on the myth, the abstract concept of thinking versus experiencing is suddenly "imaginable." If I take what Lewis is saying and explain it in abstract, allegorical statements, then "experience" is Orpheus holding Eurydice's hand, "thinking" is her disappearing when he turns around to get a clear look at her, and the "myth," apart from this explanation, is an image of these ideas which acts on our imagination *like* an experience. Lewis goes on to note that our response might be that we've never seen the meaning just described in the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. To this he replies, "Of course not. You are not looking for an abstract 'meaning' at all."[31] If we were looking for abstract meanings in the myth, it would stop being a myth to us and become an allegory (as I just made it above). Lewis says that, in receiving the myth as a myth,

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[28] Ibid, 141.The Latin means, "in this valley of separation."
[29] Ibid, 140.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid, 141.

> You were not knowing, but tasting; but what you were tasting turns out to be a universal principle. The moment we *state* this principle, we are admittedly back in the world of abstraction. It is only while receiving the myth as a story that you experience the principle concretely.[32]

In other words, when we take a meaning out of a myth, we turn it into an abstract statement, an idea. When we leave the meaning in the myth and do not try to turn it into language statements, the meaning remains (or at least mimics) a concrete experience. Through myth, ideas can be experienced concretely. Lewis gives a hint that this occurs in the imagination, a mode of thinking that shares qualities of both reason and experience.

When we receive myth as story, we are experiencing a principle concretely. Only when we put the experience into words does the principle become abstract. But if we can know a principle either concretely or by abstraction, then meaning can be either concrete or abstract. This agrees with the statement in the “Bluspels” essay that meaning is the necessary antecedent to truth.[33] Some meanings are abstract propositions—word statements like my explanation of the scene from *Empire Strikes Back*. But there are other kinds of meanings which can only be grasped in the experiential imagination. Such meanings, the kind we get in myth for example, come prior to abstraction and apart from language. From them we do not get truths *about* reality but *tastes* of reality itself.

Think of some favorite song, the kind that “blows you away” the first time you hear it. It moves you. You connect to it. It evokes feelings and thoughts you can’t quite describe. Recall next how a month or two (or six) later you actually bother to pay attention to the lyrics, and you finally figure out what the song was saying. In one sense you knew all along what the song was about. You understood meanings in it that couldn't be put into words—meanings in the music itself or in the way a certain phrase touched your heart or connected with memories. The analysis of the lyrics was your reasoning self becoming aware of abstract, propositional meanings that your experiential self had not encountered. To use Lewis's terminology, you first *tasted* the song, then you came to *know* it. But to abandon the taste—the meanings which still cannot be put into words even after some analysis—is to abandon meanings which are certainly there.

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[32] Ibid.
[33] “Bluspels and Flalansferes,” 265.

The very nature of meaning in art is that many of its meanings will not be philosophically reduceable. In an essay called "The Language of Religion," Lewis points out that, far from being able to quantify reality in terms of the specialized languages of science or theology, most of experience can only be communicated with plain or poetic language: "Now it seems to me a mistake to think that our experience in general can be communicated by precise and literal language….The truth seems to me the opposite…."[34] Even a theologically accurate phrase like, "Jesus Christ is the Son of God" is a metaphor.[35] It is true, but it is not literal. The relationship had between Christ and the Father in the Trinity is not the exact same as the relationship had between a man and his son. There was a time in which my son did not exist. Then he came into existence. But the First and Second Persons of the Trinity have co-existed eternally. We may attempt to convert the metaphor into a theological abstraction like, "There is between Jesus and God an asymmetrical, social, harmonious relation involving homogeneity,"[36] but in doing so the meaning will be all but lost to us. Lewis concludes that the "very essence of our life as conscious beings, all day and every day, consists of something which cannot be communicated except by hints, similes, metaphors, and the use of those emotions…which are pointers to it."[37] If life itself is seldom reduceable to the abstract language of philosophy and theology, how much more must our approach to the arts be one which recognizes meanings that cannot be stated in any terms—or, at best, in poetic terms—let alone the terms of worldview analysis. Human knowing simply doesn't operate that way, and human art belongs more to the realms of concrete experience and analogical imagination.

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[34] "The Language of Religion," 263.
[35] Ibid, 262.
[36] Ibid.

For Lewis, meaning is *connection*, the perception of a relationship. But we can't think of meaning as solely an explanation in words. When we break out of that thinking, we begin to see art's purpose and methods. Art communicates experiences more than abstract truths and meanings more than philosophical positions. The meanings in art may be born of language, and such meanings may be translate into truth statements. But many of the meanings will exist apart from language. Many of them will be mythic, analogical, experiential, emotional, unconscious, semi-conscious, without clear definition, and even accidental.

Here, then, is the problem for worldview analysis: if the only thing we look for in examining an art form is a series of abstract, philosophical truth statements, we are missing both the power and purpose of art. I am not saying we should forget about examining worldviews in art (and neither did Lewis in "Christianity and Culture"). I am saying that worldview analysis *tends* to look for philosophical thought systems and nothing else. Students taught this approach to art end up with a myopic critical vision. Imagine reducing the art of cooking to mere nutrition. We certainly need to know about it in order to be healthy, but if the joy of taste is sacrificed to nutritional facts, then food is reduced to a burden our taste buds must merely endure. Food needs to have flavor! And art needs to delight and to give us tastes of the real. This means it should first be approached experientially and imaginatively before it is ever viewed philosophically.

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[37] Ibid, 265.

III. Art's Purposes

None of this is to say that Lewis completely rejects the "using" of art in education. Though he primarily values art apart from its truth-bearing potentials, he nevertheless strikes a balance for us between our desires to enjoy art for what it is on the one hand and use it for edification on the other:

> The purpose of education has been described by Milton as that of fitting a man "to perform justly, skillfully, and magnanimously all the offices both private and public, of peace and war."…Aristotle would substantially agree with this, but would add the conception that it should also be a preparation for leisure…. Vocational training, on the other hand, prepares the pupil not for leisure, but for work; it aims at making not a good man but a good banker, a good electrician, a good scavenger, or a good surgeon. You see at once that education is essentially for freemen and vocational training for slaves….If education is beaten by training, civilization dies.[38]

Christian thinking about the arts—here I mean the thinking of American, Protestant, Conservative, Evangelical Christianity—has suffered from pragmatism and didacticism. Rather than "enjoy" or "appreciate" art, we "use" it like dishes and cars to serve functions we consider important. What Lewis is saying is that, if art can serve the Kingdom of God, it is a good thing, but art created *for the purpose of* spreading the Kingdom of God (which is to say, art created for any purpose other than what art is for) will generally be bad, that is, inartistic. To use Lewis's terms, art thus becomes vocational, training beats education, and civilization (as it might be influenced by Christians) dies. Bad Christian art ends up defeating its own purposes. It doesn't reach anyone, and it quickly fades into obscurity.

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[38] "Our English Syllabus," 81-82.

Imagine a young man who wants to be a missionary doctor but who is so completely interested in spreading the gospel that he doesn't work hard at first becoming a good physician. Suppose that, with a little bit of training and a lot of funding from equally zealous Christians, he manages to get out to a third world country and practice medicine. In the field he tries his best as a doctor, but he just isn't very good at it—perhaps he is especially bad at administering anesthesia—and the consequences are dire. Of course he won't have any success in reaching people for Christ when he has failed them first at what he claimed to be—a physician.

Sound ridiculous? Yet this is exactly what goes on in Christian film making all the time: people zealous to spread the gospel, who don't know enough about making movies, produce celluloid sermons instead of real films. But before a movie can teach truth it must first be what films are: stories that enlighten, engage, show beauty, entertain, capture our imaginations, and put us through experiences. It is by happy coincidence and thanks to Lewis's unusual spelling of the word "anaesthetics"[39] that I learned the words "aesthetic" (the study of beauty), and "anesthetic" (the thing we most want the doctor to give us when going under the knife) come from the same root word, having to do with feeling or sensation. I am convinced that much of modern Christianity suffers from an anesthetic view of art. The result is Christian art which bores us to sleep.

Contrary to an anesthetic, utilitarian view of art, Lewis, like his friend Tolkien, valued the making of fairy tale stories (for example) especially when produced as an act of "sub-creation," of doing on a finite level what God did infinitely at the creation.[40] The purpose of such sub-creation is not to make something to be used for other purposes, but to participate in pleasure and worship in acting out in ourselves the Divine impulse of creativity given us as bearers of the image of God.[41] Applied to the arts in general, the point is that we make art for the delight of making. That act alone is sufficient reason for a book's, painting's, or movie's existence—it is made out of delight, out of a God given desire to imitate Him. It is an act of worship.

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[39] 26 October 1955; *Collected Letters 3*, 667.

[40] See especially Tolkien's "On Fairy-Stories" 74-75, 86-89.

But the by-product of such activity is art that *can* have an effect on our civilization. Lewis concludes that, to be truly effective in affecting culture, we must stop making the affecting of culture our first goal:[42] "We must attack the enemy's lines of communication, [this is true. But w]hat we want is not more little books about Christianity, but more little books by Christians on other subjects—with their Christianity latent."[43] Recall Lewis's statement that leisure and play are of serious concern, but we cannot approach them too seriously.[44] Here he is saying the same thing about art. Unless we are doing it in our leisure, with a sense of play, and out of our God given creative (or sub-creative) impulses, it will not be good art. All we have to do is think of the difference between *The Passion of the Christ* and *Facing the Giants* for the point to become obvious. Admittedly, it is also counter-intuitive. But this, according to Lewis, is because we live in a fallen world in which play is frivolous:

> Dance and game *are* frivolous, unimportant down here; for "down here" is not their natural place. Here they are a moment's rest from the life we were placed here to live. But in this world everything is upside down. That which, if it could be prolonged here, would be a truancy, is likest that which in a better country is the End of ends. Joy is the serious business of Heaven.[45]

And art, then, can perhaps only be serious when it is created in play.

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[41] "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," 509.

[42] See below for Lewis's own example of how the Narnia books came into being.

[43] "Christian Apologetics," 150. Lewis also says, "It is not the books written in direct defense of Materialism that make the modern man a materialist; it is the materialistic assumptions in all the other books. In the same way, it is not books on Christianity that will really trouble him [the anti-Christian]. But he would be troubled if, whenever he wanted a cheap popular introduction to some science, the best work on the market was always by a Christian" (Ibid).

[44] "Christianity and Culture," 90.

[45] *Letters to Malcolm*, 92-93.

IV. The Moral Imagination

Once again, though Lewis believed literature and other arts were not meant to be "used" for their truth value but "received" for their experiential delight, he did acknowledge the important relationship between art and moral development.

In an essay called "Horrid Red Things," Lewis argues that one of the things Christians must do to reach "modern" people is to "try to teach them something about the difference between thinking and imagining."[46] He illustrates:

> I once heard a lady tell her daughter that if you ate too many aspirin tablets you would die. "But why?" asked the child. "If you squash them you don't find any horrid red things inside them." Obviously, when this child thought of poison she not only had an attendant image of "horrid red things", but she actually believed that poison was red. And this is an error….[However,] If I, staying at the house, had raised a glass of what looked like water to my lips, and the child had said, "Don't drink that. Mummie says it's poisonous," I should have been foolish to disregard the warning....There is thus a distinction not only between thought and imagination in general, but even between thought and those images which the thinker (falsely) believes to be true.[47]

You see, the little girl clearly knew that poison was a bad thing, but she also thought that it was red. She had a right idea and a wrong image. And this wrong image could clearly lead the little girl to someday taking poison, not because she thinks poison good, but because the object she's about to swallow doesn't *look* poisonous to her.

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[46] "'Horrid Red Things,'" 128.
[47] Ibid, 128-29.

Lewis presents this dichotomy again in *The Screwtape Letters* where a newly converted Christian is floundering in a sea of images confused with ideas. Elder demon Screwtape writes to hip pupil Wormwood about how best to tempt his patient:

> At his present stage, you see, he has an idea of 'Christians' in his mind which he supposes to be spiritual but which, in fact, is largely pictorial. His mind is full of togas and sandals and armour and bare legs and the mere fact that the other people in church wear modern clothes is a real—though of course an unconscious—difficulty to him.[48]

Consider how the American church today, without quite knowing how it was working, has had some success in reversing this trend through converting the classical worship service into the contemporary celebration of song and music. Removing the *images* that got in the way of belief—stained-glass stuffiness, hardened pews and faces, boring liturgy and pasted smiles—the church in the last thirty years has been able to draw people to the truth of Christ, not by restructuring Christian content, as liberal Christianity attempted to do, but by reconstructing the imaginative art forms (primarily in music and architecture) by which it is presented.

Lewis saw this exact need. At the writing of the Narnia books, there were those who believed that Lewis began by asking himself how he could share Christ with children which he thought best doable through fairy tales. Then he supposedly drew up a list of Christian truths he wanted to share with kids and put them into allegories. Says Lewis,

> This is all pure moonshine. I couldn't write in that way at all. Everything began with images; a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion.

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[48] *The Screwtape Letters*, 12-13.

> At first there wasn't even anything Christian about them; that element pushed itself in of its own accord. It was part of the bubbling.[49]

Notice how Lewis here follows his own advice regarding the earlier point that we should not make art for the purpose of affecting culture, but rather culture will be affected if we make good art.

More important to the current point is what Lewis says came after the "bubbling," after he recognized that fairy tales were the best *form* he could find for all the creative energy he was about to unleash on paper:

> I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation to feel can freeze feelings. And reverence itself did harm….But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons?[50]

Lewis achieved this in Narnia and the church has begun to do the same in our culture, making some inroads in music if still falling short in literature, film and other art forms.

The point is a simple one: human beings pursue knowledge of the real through two modes of thought: reason and imagination. The first deals in abstract language and propositional statements. The second deals in images and concrete (even vicarious) experiences. Both matter for knowing, but imagination has been ignored or reduced in importance since the Enlightenment, and imagination is *definitely* more important in moral education than is reason.

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[49] "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's To Be Said," 527.

[50] Ibid, 527-28.

This is Lewis's point in *The Abolition of Man*:

> St. Augustine defines virtue as *ordo amoris*, the ordinate condition of the affections in which every object is accorded that kind and degree of love which is appropriate to it. Aristotle says that the aim of education is to make the pupil like and dislike what he ought. When the age for reflective thought comes, the pupil who has been thus trained in 'ordinate affections' or 'just sentiments' will easily find the first principles in Ethics: but to the corrupt man they will never be visible at all and he can make no progress in that science. Plato before him had said the same. The little human animal will not at first have the right responses. It must be trained to feel pleasure, liking, disgust, and hatred at those things which really are pleasant, likeable, disgusting, and hateful….All this before he is of an age to reason; so that when Reason at length comes to him, then, bred as he has been, he will hold out his hands in welcome and recognize her because of the affinity he bears to her.[51]

In plainer words: an imaginative understanding of goodness—one gleaned from story, song, beauty, an education that ties real qualities of the real to the feelings they ought to invoke—must precede a reasoned knowledge of moral precepts. Or, to use my anesthesia metaphor, a true aesthetic recognizes that good art teaches us how we ought to feel about things—objects, places, experiences—while bad art anesthetizes us to the good which ought to govern us. Lewis calls the products of such bad education, "Men without Chests."[52] I might call them patients etherized on an operating table.[53]

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[51] *The Abolition of Man*, 26-27.

Teach second graders the Ten Commandments all you want; it's the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal that they'll hold onto when someone questions commandment one before them. Lewis says that "no justification of virtue will enable a man to be virtuous. Without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism."[54] If reason is to rule the appetites, it can only do so through the power of a third element, an imaginative sense of what's *right* or *ought to be* or (the technical term that I use), *cool*.

Coolness is what drew many of us to Christ. Whether it was the experience of a weekend long Christian Rave, the raucous joy of an Alt-Band concert praising God, the fantasy story by Lewis or Tolkien that drew our curiosity, the wise mentor, the high school friend who seemed to have it all together, the hip youth minister or the tattooed-and-pierced coffee house friend who *showed* the *beauty* or *nobility* of Christ to us *before* we ever thought Christianity might be true—that was what drew us first.

In the passage on the creation of the Narnia stories above, Lewis connects story to stealing "past watchful dragons," that is to recovering right moral sensibilities through imagination as well as envisioning Christianity by the same. His own poster child for the failure of abstract, storyless ethical education which leaves imagination and right response to experience out of the equation appears in his Narnia novel, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. It begins, "There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it."[55] Eustace is the worst kind of child Lewis could imagine: one raised by "modern" parents. Eustace hates fairytales, preferring books of information containing "pictures of grain elevators or of fat foreign children doing exercises in model schools."[56] Eustace is pretentious, petty, spiteful, and selfish. He is cruel to animals (even talking ones), steals water on a sea voyage when low supplies demand strict rations, acts a coward while hiding behind the self-righteousness of claiming to be a pacifist, and complains when the only girl on the voyage gets the only private cabin.

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[52] Ibid, 34.
[53] To paraphrase Eliot's "Prufrock."
[54] *The Abolition of Man*, 33-34.
[55] *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 1.

Eustace's problem is that he hasn't read any imaginative books like fairy-tales or adventure stories and so hasn't received proper moral instruction. He doesn't even recognize a dragon when he sees one because "he had read none of the right books."[57] Upon approaching a dragon's cave, Eustace is confused by what he finds there. Says Lewis: "Most of us know what we should expect to find in a dragon's lair, but, as I said before, Eustace had read only the wrong books. They had a lot to say about exports and imports and governments and drains, but they were weak on dragons."[58] Later in the novel, Eustace's cousin Edmund is able to solve a mystery because he is the "only one of the party who had read several detective stories."[59] In other words, his imagination has been trained through the experience of fiction so that, in his thinking, he is capable of seeing what others cannot.

What Eustace most needs is to experience reality so that he can know with his heart and not just his head; however, because he is too far gone into the abstract, theoretical shadow world of facts, figures, and practical applications, he needs more than just a dose of reality. He needs a higher reality, a world of the fantastic far more real than his own. He gets Narnia. Eustace is pulled into Narnia where, having learned before only in the abstract, about lifeless things, he can now learn by concrete experience of the really real. It takes becoming a dragon himself, and then being “undragoned” by Aslan, but Eustace does finally learn what his cold, analytical heart had been missing.

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[56] Ibid, 2.
[57] Ibid, 89.
[58] Ibid, 92.
[59] Ibid, 131.

Art can be analyzed for its philosophical underpinnings and used to teach. It can glorify God, speak truth, and be used to build His Kingdom. It can even be used for moral development and instruction. But it can be used for none of these purposes if they become our primary reasons for making art or receiving it. C. S. Lewis is clear: we make art out of pleasure, for play, out of our leisure, and because we bear the creative impulse of a creative God. And we read, view, and listen to art because it’s fun, it gives us new experiences, it delights our imaginations, and it gives us greater vision. It doesn’t drug us to sleep; it wakes us to the full.

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Dombey and Grandson

Parallels between *At the Back of the North Wind* and *Dombey and Son*

Robert Trexler

Charles Dickens published *Dombey and Son* in 1848 – nearly 20 years before MacDonald began *At the Back of the North Wind*. The premise of my paper is that MacDonald consciously borrowed major themes and plot points from Dickens when writing his later book.

I will give two examples of similarities which seem to me beyond mere coincidence:

1) Both novels feature the imagination a sickly young boy who listens to water to come to terms with his imminent death – a major theme in each book.
2) Both novels include a wealthy man in the shipping business, who employs a man who loves his daughter, but is lost at sea and presumably drowns. The wealthy man goes bankrupt and the young man miraculously survives his shipwreck and marries the girl.

Plot Summary of *Dombey and Son*

Dickens' novel concerns Paul Dombey, the wealthy owner of the shipping company of the book's title, whose dream is to have a son to continue his business. The book begins when his son is born, and Dombey's wife dies shortly after giving birth. The child, also named Paul, is weak and often ill, and does not socialize normally with others; adults call him "old fashioned". He is intensely fond of his elder sister, Florence, who is deliberately neglected by her father as irrelevant and a distraction. Paul is sent away to Brighton for his health, where he and Florence lodge near the sea. However, Paul's health declines even further and he finally dies, only six years old. Dombey pushes his daughter away from his after the death of his son, while she futile tries to earn his love. In the meantime, Walter, who works for Dombey and Son, is sent off to work in Barbados through the manipulations of the firm's manager who sees him as a potential rival through his association with Florence.

Walter Gay's boat is reported lost and he is presumed drowned. After the manager of Dombey and Son dies, it is discovered that he had been running the firm far beyond its means. Meanwhile, Walter reappears, having been saved by a passing ship after floating adrift with two other sailors on some wreckage. After some time, he and Florence are reunited and they marry prior to sailing for China. Before Florence and Walter depart, Walter writes a letter to her father, pleading for him to be reconciled towards them both. In a chapter entitled 'Retribution', Dombey and Son goes bankrupt. Dombey spends his days sunk in gloom, seeing no-one and thinking only of his daughter. However, one day Florence returns to the house with her son, who she named Paul, and is lovingly reunited with her father.

Dombey and Son is Dickens' first serious, controlled, self-conscious novel where he had a clear unifying idea of the whole novel from the start. There is virtually no imaginative play simply for its own sake. Dickens wants to connect with individuals, their problems, concerns and questions – and the question in *Dombey & Son* is the problem of belief – a spiritual problem.

Dickens explores the conflict between the heart, which he considers as needing belief, and the world – and he does so within the relation of a child and a parent.

Dickens shows that one way to reach belief involves the imagination. *Dombey & Son* is an attempt to work out a belief that can enable the characters to face death. Thus it shows two alternative ways of dealing with death – 1) Dombey’s way; embodied by pride, and 2) Paul and his older sister Florence’s way; the way of the heart.

At one point Dombey tells Paul that “Money can do anything…even keep off death.” Little Paul then asks, “Why didn’t money save me my Mama?”

Comparisons between “Little Paul” and “Little Diamond”

Paul is like Diamond in *At the Back of the North Wind* in that they are both unusual children – Paul is considered “old-fashioned,” which is to say that he was mature past his young years in a precocious way. Diamond is unusual in a different way – he is mature beyond his young years because he is “God’s child,” which is to say, simple-minded¸ or, as some may consider him, stupid. But MacDonald later makes the point that Diamond is actually a genius.

There is a striking parallel scene between Chapter 8 in *Dombey and Son* and Chapter 13 in *At the Back of the North Wind*: In both cases, the sickly child is at the ocean shore: Paul with his older sister Florence and Diamond with his mother. They are taken to the seaside because sea breezes were considered therapeutic. In each book there is a discussion about the water “speaking” to the child. At the end of the Dickens chapter there is this exchange:

> Another time, in the same place [*the beach of the ocean*], he fell asleep, and slept quietly for a long time. Awaking suddenly, he listened, started up, and sat listening.
>
> Florence asked him what he thought he heard.
>
> ‘I want to know what it says,’ he answered, looking steadily in her face. ‘The sea, Floy, what is it that it keeps on saying?’
>
> She told him that it was only the noise of the rolling waves.
> ‘
> Yes¸ yes,’ he said. ‘But I know that they are always saying something. Always the same thing. What place is over there?’ He rose up, looking eagerly at the horizon.
>
> She told him that there was another country opposite, but he said he didn’t mean that: he meant farther away – farther away!
>
> Very often afterwards, in the midst of their talk, he would break off, to try to understand what it was that the waves were always saying; and would rise up in his couch to look towards that invisible region, far away.

Dickens uses the image of the sea which lies beyond this world, just as belief lies beyond reason. When Paul is at the ocean with his sister Florence and he tries to understand what the waves are saying – he is trying to understand the meaning in beyond death. By accepting death he learns to have a higher vision.

At the end of Chapter 13 ("The Seaside") in the *At the Back of the North Wind* here is the interaction between Diamond and his mother:

> Diamond became aware that his mother had stopped reading.
>
> "Why don't you do on, mother dear?" he asked.
>
> "It's such nonsense!" said his mother. "I believe it would go on forever."
>
> "That's just what it did," said Diamond.
>
> "What did?" she asked.
>
> "Why, the river. That's almost the very tune it used to sing."
>
> His mother was frightened, for she thought the fever was coming on again. So she did not contradict him.
>
> "Who made that poem?" asked Diamond.
>
> "I don't know," she answered. "Some silly woman for her children, I suppose -- and then thought it good enough to print."
>
> "She must have been at the back of the north wind some time or other, anyhow," said Diamond.
>
> "She couldn't have got a hold of it anywhere else. That's just how it went." And he began to chant bits of it here and there; but his mother said nothing for fear of making him, worseand she was very glad indeed when she saw her brother-in-law jogging along in his little cart. They lifted Diamond in, and got up themselves, and away they went, "home away, home away, home away," as Diamond sand. But he soon grew quiet, and before they reached Sandwich he was fast asleep and dreaming of the country at the back of the north wind.

Whereas Paul is striving to hear "what it was the waves were saying" and gazing "toward that invisible region, far away"; Diamond has heard the song of the river as described in the poem his mother reads to him. It is the same as the song he heard at the back of the north wind.

In Chapter 7, North Wind tells Diamond as she creates a storm which causes a ship wreck that she is "always hearing"

> the sound of a far-off song. I do not exactly know where it is, or what it means; and I don't hear much of it, only the odour of it music as it were, flitting across the great billows of the ocean outside this air in which I make such a storm; but what I do hear is quite enough to make me able to bear the cry from the drowning ship. So it would you if you could hear it.

The theme of the water's musical "voice" and song comes up repeatedly in *At the Back of the*

North Wind, just as the reference to the ocean waves is repeated in *Dombey and Son*. In chapter 10, MacDonald as narrator says that Diamond insists that the river

> did not sing tunes in people's ears, it sung tunes in their heads, in proof of which I may mention that, in the troubles which followed, Diamond was often heard singing; and when asked what he was singing, would answer, "One of the tunes the river at the back of the north wind sung.

By the end of the book, readers know that Diamond has gone to the place which dickens calls "the invisible region" and in plain terms, both young boys meet with an early death. As Mr. Raymond says at the end of *At the Back of the North Wind* upon seeing the lifeless body of Diamond,

> I walked up the winding stair, and entered his room. A lovely figure, as white and almost as clear as alabaster, was lying on the bed. I saw at once how it was. They thought he was dead. I knew that he had gone to the back of the north wind.

In *Dombey and Son*, Dickens repeats his image of the waves that speak to the same mystery of death in a chapter titled "New Voices in the Waves". By this time, Paul has died and Dickens comments on those who are

> deaf to the waves that are hoarse with repetition of their mystery, and blind to the dust that is piled upon the shore, and to the ***white arms that are beckoning, in the moonlight, to the invisible country far away***.

Dickens' words remind me of a description in Chapter 39 where North Wind with her white arms beckons to Diamond in the moonlight:

> The next night Diamond was seated by his open window, with his head on his hand, rather tired, but so eagerly waiting for the promised visit that he was afraid he could not sleep. But he started suddenly, and found that he had been already asleep. He rose, and looking out of the window ***saw something white against his beech-tree. It was North Wind***. She was holding by one hand to a top branch. Her hair and her garments went floating away behind her over the tree, whose top was swaying about while the others were still.
>
> "Are you ready, Diamond?" she asked.
>
> "Yes," answered Diamond, "quite ready."
>
> In a moment she was at the window, and ***her arms came in and took him***,

The Return of the Shipwrecked Lovers

In Chapter 7 of *At the Back of the North Wind* we learn that Miss Coleman, Diamond's next-door neighbor and the daughter of his father's employer in the shipping business has a sweetheart, Mr. Evans, who is on board the ship sunk by North Wind. Moreover, the sunken ship belonged to her father and the ruin of the ship was the ruin of the family fortune. MacDonald comments:

> It is a hard thing for a rich man to grow poor; but it is an awful thing for him to grow dishonest, and some kinds of speculation lead a man deep into dishonesty before he thinks about what he is about. Poverty will not make a man worthless - he may be worth a great deal more when he is poor than he was when he was rich; but dishonesty goes very far indeed to make a man of no value - a thing to be thrown out in a dust-hole of the creation, like a bit of broken basin, or a dirty rag. So North Wind had to look after Mr. Coleman, and try to make an honest man of him. So she sank the ship which was his last venture, and he was what himself and his wife and world called ruined.

This is the same as Dombey whose firm goes bankrupt.

In chapter 9 we discover that not everyone was drown in the shipwreck caused by North Wind. Diamond asks,

> "Did you sink the ship, then?"
>
> "Yes"
>
> "And drown everybody?"
>
> "Not quite. One boat got away with six or seven men in it."
>
> "How could the boat swim when the ship couldn't?"
>
> "Of course I had trouble with it. I had to contrive a bit, and manage the waves a little. When they're once thoroughly waked up, I have a good deal of trouble with them sometimes. They're apt to get stupid with tumbling over each other's heads. That's when they're fairly at it. However, the boat got to a desert island before noon next day."

We discover "what good" came of North Wind obeying orders in Chapter 26 when Diamond discovers that the customer in his father's cab that he is driving is

> Mr. Evans, to whom Miss Coleman was to have been married, and Diamond has seen him several times with her in the garden. I have said that he had not behaved very well to Miss Coleman. He had put off their marriage more than once in a cowardly fashion, merely because he was ashamed to marry upon a small income, and live in a humble way. When a man thinks of what people will say in such a case, he may love, but his love is but a poor affair. Mr. Coleman took him into the firm as a junior partner, and it was in a measure through his influence that he entered upon those speculations which ruined him. So his love has not been a blessing. The ship which North Wind has sunk was their last venture, and Mr. Evans had gone out with it in the hope of turning its cargo to the best advantage. He was one of the single boat-load which managed to reach a desert island, and he had gone through a great many hardships and sufferings since then. But he was not past being taught, and his troubles had done him no end of good, for they had made him doubt himself, and begin to think, so that he had come to see that he had been foolish as well as wicked.

Except for the further interference of North Wind, Mr. Evans and Miss Coleman might not have been reunited. But when they are, it is implied that they will enter a marriage that is much happier because of his suffering. MacDonald writes that Mr. Evans "had come back a more humble man, and longing to ask Miss Coleman to forgive him." And it is apparent that she did forgive him because when they finally met "Miss Coleman put her arms around him and kissed him." MacDonald uses a similar plot device in his novel *Guild Court: A London Story* (1868) when an unworthy suitor goes to sea and finally becomes worthy of the woman he loves.

Like Miss Coleman and Mr. Evans, the romantic couple in *At the Back of the North Wind*, Florence Dombey and Walter Gay, experience nearly the same circumstances.

Like Mr. Evans in *At the Back of the North Wind*, Walter Gay in *Dombey and Son* is the employee of the rich man, Paul Dombey, Sr., whose ship (like Mr. Coleman's) sunk, causing them to lose their wealth. Miraculously, both Mr. Gay and Mr. Evans survive their respective shipwrecks to return and marry their employer's daughter (Florence/Miss Coleman). The fathers in the novels (Paul Dombey, Sr. and Mr. Coleman) both needed to learn not to be greedy and Dickens brings this conclusion to his story. MacDonald does not say so explicitly, but they idea is suggested in Chapter 12 when the narrator says of Mr. Coleman "Let us hope that he lived to retrieve his honesty."

The original serialized version of *Dombey and Son* ends with these words,

> "The voices in the waves speak low to him of Florence --- and their ceaseless murmuring to her of love, eternal and illimitable, extending still, beyond the sea, beyond the sky, to the invisible country far away."

Recommended Reading

Higbie, Robert. *Dickens and Imagination*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998.

Kotzin, Michael C. *Dickens and the Fairy Tale*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972.

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Charles Williams and the Quest for the Holy Grail

Susan Wendling, New York C.S. Lewis Society

The Matter of Britain

For those familiar with Charles Williams as a literary figure associated with C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, especially during the "War years" of 1939 to 1945, it is no surprise that Williams utilized the "Matter of Britain" in his writings. People interested in getting into C.W., as he is popularly known, often start by reading his first published novel, *War in Heaven*, which details the discovery of "the True Graal" in a little country church outside London. Of course, those who review his total literary output quickly discover his two cycles of Arthurian poetry, *Taliessin Through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*. Those serious about reading these poems and understanding what C.W. is achieving go on to discover the *Arthurian Torso,* which contains *The Figure of Arthur* by Charles Williams as well as the six-chapter *Williams and the Arthuriad* by C.S. Lewis.

The Figure of Arthur is Williams' unfinished prose study of the "tale of King Arthur in English literature" with "the main theme the coming of the two myths, the myth of Arthur and the myth of the Grail." Lewis, working from "the papers entrusted to him" by Williams--who had died suddenly in May of 1945--states that "Williams might be the greatest poet of his time" and defends his unfinished Arthurian poem cycle as the development of the combining of the two myths--Arthur and the Grail--in something of great beauty and intellectual significance. Lewis shares a scrap, a prefatory note, in which Williams states that the invention of Galahad in the old French Chronicles is "as much of a union and a redemption as of a division and a destruction. It is his double office with which the book is concerned, and the final chapter discusses the developed significance of the whole myth." (1)

Pursuing these tantalizing hints from stray scraps assembled by Lewis, the Williams scholar interested in the Grail legends as Williams' "life work" can discover more details by reading Anne Ridler's "critical introduction" to *Charles Williams: The Image of the City and other Essays*, long out of print but recently republished. Ridler, a fine poet in her own right, first heard Williams lecture when she was a schoolgirl, and they remained friends until Williams' untimely death in 1945. When discussing Williams' ambivalence of mind between belief and scepticism, Ridler states that for Williams, "intellectual honesty is the first necessity" but that "we must go further than that" as in his later poem, "Hymn to the Protector, or Angel, of Intellectual Doubt" in which he praises the Virgin Mary for her question "How shall these things be?" (2) Ridler then shares that "in his first plans for the Arthurian poems, he had related Mary's question to the Angel, to the Question which Percival, in the *Conte du Graal* of Chretien de Troyes, failed to ask about the nature of the Grail, the asking of which . . . was necessary to salvation." (3) So here we see an early example of Williams relating matters of literary myth and theology to his thinking on the Grail legends.

This early hint fully blossoms to our attention a few pages later in the "Introduction" when Ridler explains that Williams kept a "Commonplace Book" in which he drafted a couple of poems printed in *Poems of Conformity* (1917) but then kept for "notes in connexion with the Arthurian cycle" and "which he gave me many years later." (4) She relates that this book was a binder's dummy made for the Concise Oxford Dictionary, which first came out in 1911. Of course, Williams could use such a blank book since he worked his whole life as an editor for the Oxford University Press. At any rate, Ridler says that this book had 174 filled up pages, and that underneath the title of the C.O.D. on the spine, Williams had written "The Holy Grail." On the title page Williams quotes the first line from Tennyson's introductory poem to his *Morte d' Arthur*, and the piece from the Vulgate "contains the words which Williams intended as the motto of the whole of his work: *'Ecce nova facio omnia*.' There is then a passage from Dante's *Vita Nuova*, describing his self-dedication to a life's work, which Williams wished to renew for his own part." (5) She says that there are several sketches of possible general plans for Williams' work, including one for a trilogy: "Three volumes--Tristram, Lancelot, Galahad. Each divided into, say, four or five books; . . . and describing the circumstances of Love in each--Love overpowered, Love in error, Love triumphant. Three circles having one centre, the Achievement of the Grail." (6) And near the beginning he writes: "Love, as God, and as the Way, to dominate the poem." (7) Ridler feels the "fascination of all still-potential things" and feels the book "contains a number of the ideas which, later developed, were his own contribution to the great Arthurian myth."

The Failure of Earlier Sources

At this point you might be asking why Williams was so intrigued with the Grail legends! I think there are multiple answers, and we can explore several of them as a backdrop to discussing Williams's contributions to the Grail legends. The first and most obvious reason, of course, is that Williams wanted to develop out certain things only hinted at in his prime source, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*: "Malory, however, as we at present have him, never quite fulfilled the hints of profound meaning which are scattered through him." (Williams' "prefatory note" to *The Figure of Arthur*.) Williams was also displeased with Tennyson's treatment of the Grail legends in his famous Victorian poem cycle, *Idylls of the King*. In an article "The Making of Taliessin" in the *Poetry Review*, April, 1941, Williams says:

> It began also, perhaps even earlier, in a vague disappointment with the way in which Tennyson treated the Hallows of the Grail in Balin and Balan. I am not attacking Tennyson as a poet; I am only saying that in this particular respect his treatment of the Sacred Lance as a jumping-pole left a good deal to be desired and even to be done. . . I am not claiming to be better than Tennyson. It was clear that *the great and awful myth of the Grail had not been treated adequately in English verse*. . . . [my emphasis] (8)

This is the obvious, "external" reason for Williams making the Grail legends his life work.

Williams' Identification with Taliesin, King Arthur's Poet

Another reason would be that as a poet looking for images to convey his great themes of romantic theology, entailing the fusion of human love and divine love, the probing of the nature of co-inherence with its "doctrines" of exchange and substituted love, and the fusion of more ancient esoteric ideas with Christian orthodoxy, Williams found in the Grail legends complex, substantive materials to act as vehicles for his own thought. His blurb for *Taliessin through Logres* says 'the names and incidents of the Arthurian myth are taken as starting points for investigation and statement on common and profound experience.' (9) Williams the poet surely identifies with Taliessin, King Arthur's Poet, whom Williams places as the central figure in his own poem cycle. C.S. Lewis advises readers to "attach ourselves to him" in order to deal "with the main regions of Williams's poetic universe one by one as Taliessin comes to them . . . Otherwise we should be at a loss where to begin; for many 'huge cloudy symbols' of equal importance, and inter-related with sensitive complexity, demand our attention." (10)

Joe McClatchey, in his detailed article "Charles Williams and the Arthurian Tradition," further elaborates the significance of King Arthur's "failure" in Logres and Williams's choice of Taliessin as the central symbol of his reworking of the Grail legends:

> When Arthur turns Logres into an idea--his own idea--he is reversing the very nature of the Incarnation. His mental act is a great sin because it nullifies the Emperor's plan, which was an incarnational plan--that is, to prepare a habitation on earth for the physical return of the Incarnate Logos. As in the First Advent, a woman, Mary, provided the human habitation for the Incarnate Logos, so now; only now, instead of a single human being to receive Him, the whole kingdom of Logres must do it. But Arthur, on whom it depends, fails, for he unconceives the incarnate thing back into the idea and uses the idea for his own purposes.
>
> But whom might Williams choose to contrast to Arthur? The answer catches us by surprise. It's Taliessin. Why Taliessin? Why a poet of all people? Why not someone practical? . . . But that's just it. It is *because* Taliessin is a poet that he is chosen. For poets are the people most concerned with concrete things. Poets give form to concepts. . . It is the poet Taliessin--who really lived and whose poetry nourishes us still--who must set the incarnational example for Arthur's kingdom. Taliessin's very name places him among those most like the Lord. His name means, "Behold, the Shining Brow!" Like Moses, whose face shone when he descended Mount Sinai; like Diomedes, on whose shield and helm Athena "kindled fire most like midsummer's purest flaming star in heaven rising" in the *Iliad*; like Beatrice's radiant beauty that undoes Dante's vision in the Eighth Sphere of Paradise; like the Lord, nimbused in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, Taliessin bears the light in which all the poetic images clothe themselves with appropriate tangible form. (11)

Another feature linking Charles Williams the poet to his central symbol, Taliessin, is that Williams himself, like Taliessin, quietly serves the Grail through his poetry, embodying incarnational Love even as Logres itself is given over to "the wolves, the pirates and the pagans." (*Taliessin's Song of Logre*s) He gathers about him a Company of folk who "live by a frankness of honorable exchange," "dying each other's life, living each other's death," in the co-inherence of "full salvation." ("The Founding of the Company" in *Taliessin Through Logres*,155, 156, 157) . Alice Mary Hadfield relates how Williams "began to agree to his friends' pressure to form an Order concerned with his ideas of co-inherence, substitution, and exchange--a step he had refused for three years. . . . He wrote to a friend, 'I am all but quite seriously proposing to make this small motion towards the Order. I have gone as far as making up six short statements as a beginning, and I am disposed at least to promulgate them among the household. . . . ' He regarded it as established by September [of 1939]: and *The Descent of the Dove* is dedicated as 'For the Companions of the Co-inherence'." (12)

The High Prince Galahad

A third reason for Williams being attracted to the Grail legends (besides developing out Malory's hints and using poetic symbols such as Taliessin to convey his own ideas) has to be the complexity of the begetting of the High Prince Galahad by Sir Lancelot on the Grail Princess Elayne. Of all the knights at Arthur's court, it is Lancelot who "has his heart mostly on love" and who is "mostly concerned with choosing necessity (which is the subject of all great poetry)." (13) Williams is fascinated with all the paradoxes and all the "contradictions" presented in the old tales of Lancelot and Galahad. In a piece written for the *Dublin Review* in April of 1944, "Malory and the Grail Legend," Williams discusses Lancelot's fine character in rescuing Palomides and also showing courtesy toward someone who has injured him. Immediately after we find Lancelot riding towards the mysterious castle of King Pelles, who is the Keeper of the Grail. Lancelot sees the Grail being held by a fair maiden and asks the King what it means:

> This is . . . the richest thing that any man hath living. And when this thing goeth about, the Round Table shall be broken; and wit ye well . . .this is the holy Sangreal that ye have seen . . . The king knew well that Sir Lancelot should get a child upon his daughter, the which should be named Sir Galahad, the good knight, by whom all foreign country should be brought out of danger, and by him the Holy Greal should be achieved . . . (quoted by Williams in his article "Malory and the Grail Legend")

Williams remarks that there is about this account a "known predestination":

> Lancelot is here the predetermined father of the great Achievement; he is the noblest lord in the world, the kindest, the bravest, the truest. But he will not have to do with any woman but the Queen [Guinevere] . . . And Galahad must certainly be the child of the Grail-princess and certainly not of Guinevere. How is it to be done? *It is brought about by holy enchantment and an act of substitution.* [italics added] Lancelot is deluded . . . into riding 'against night' to another castle, where he is received 'worshipfully with such people to his seeming as were about Queen Guinevere secret.' He is given a cup of enchanted wine and taken to the room where the supposed Queen is . . .The vision is of 'the best knight,' labouring in that threefold consciousness of God, the King, and Guinevere, received into the outlying castle of the Mysteries, and then *by the deliberate action of spiritual powers drawn on into a deeper operation.* [italics added] He dismounts . . the assumed forms, the awful masks, of this sacred mystery attend him; he is taken to a chamber as dark as the dark night of the soul; and there the child who is to achieve the Grail is begotten. . . . [Lancelot] is merely overthrown by that element

> in him which, because of his love and courtesy, is predetermined 'where Will and Power are one' to make him the father of Galahad. . . . (14)

Williams continues the tale of Lancelot's madness, his healing in the house of the Grail, and his knighting of Galahad years later, not realizing that the young and fair knight is his own son. He discusses the sitting of Galahad in the Siege Perilous, the condition necessary to all achievement. The Grail appears while the knights are seated at the table at the feast of Pentecost, and later the Queen declares Galahad to be Lancelot's son, leading him to rest in King Arthur's own bed. Williams states that this incident is at once

> . . . the fulfillment and the frustration of the three lordliest personages, whether they like it or not. There lies in the King's bed that which is the consummation and the destruction of the Table. To Lancelot it is the visible defeat of his treasured fidelity, and the success and defeat of his own life. And to the Queen it is her lover's falsity and her lover's glory. . . . It is then this living, tragic, and joyous Resolution of all their loves that now enters on its own adventure. . . . Its quest begins . . Towards the conclusion the High Prince reaches Sarras with two companions; they are Percivale and Bors. . . .These are functions each of the others. The High Prince is at the deep centre . . . These are three degrees of love. Their conclusion is proper to them. Galahad is assumed into the Grail. Percivale after that assumption remains a hermit by the City of Sarras . . .Bors [who is married] returns to Camelot, joins Lancelot . . . (15)

These episodes embody paradoxes of love seen in the actions of Lancelot and the spiritual fusions of the High Prince Galahad in his final vision of the Grail, where Joseph of Arimathie says Mass; but there is a phrase which suggests more: "a man kneeling on his knees in likeness of a bishop, that had about him a great fellowship of angels *as it had been Jesus Christ himself; and then he arose and began a mass of Our Lady."* Williams, adding special emphasis to these last two phrases, notes that Galahad is called, parting after Communion from his companions. It is then that, according to Charles Williams, one of the greatest phrases in Malory is used. Galahad says to Bors: "Fair lord, salute me to my lord Sir Lancelot my father, and as soon as ye see him, bid him remember of this unstable world." Williams tells us:

> If the state of these great mysteries, where one like Christ begins a mass of Our Lady, is recognized, that final salutation has its full value. It is then that the High Prince remembers, recognizes, and salutes his father. The times have been changed since the love of Guinevere and the enchanted darkness of the chamber of Elayne, but Galahad derives from all. 'The unstable world'--yes; but it was thence that he himself came. The rejection of importunate love--yes; Guinevere herself is to say so; but it is through the mystical substitution which lies even there that the High Prince was begotten. Lancelot was a master of courtesy, and it is so that Galahad is fathered on him. He himself never achieves the Grail, but at the point of a greater achievement than any he could have known, his son's

> greeting (full and ungrudging) reaches him, through another (still and always through another), 'Fair lord, salute me to my lord Sir Lancelot my father.' (16)

All of these mystical substitutions and spiritual paradoxes of predestination and free choice, not to mention the spiritual sorrow and desolation (what Williams refers to elsewhere as "The Impossibility") experienced inwardly in the "citadel of the soul" by Lancelot (as well as Guinevere and Arthur, of course), place us with certainty in the spiritual universe of Charles Williams.

Hopefully, the delineation of these elements in Williams' writings--his devotion to the Matter of Britain, his personal identification with the poet Taliessin, and his unique use of the character of Galahad to convey his own peculiar spiritual vision--will help you in your own reading of Charles Williams to understand just how central "the Grail Quest" was not only for his poetic achievement but also to his spiritual vision.

Notes

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4. Ibid., p. lviii.
5. Ibid., p. lviii.
6. Ibid., p. lix.
7. Ibid., p. lix.
8. Charles Williams, "The Making of Taliessin," in *Charles Williams: The Image of the City and Other Essays,* op. cit., pp. 179-180.
9. Cited in David Dodds' "Introduction", in *Arthurian Poets: Charles Williams* (Boydell Press, 1991), p. 11.
10. C.S. Lewis, "Williams and the Arthuriad," op. cit., p. 281.
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13. Charles Williams, "Notes on the Arthurian Myth," in Anne Ridler, op. cit., p. 177.
14. Charles Williams, "Malory and the Grail Legend," in Anne Ridler, op. cit., pp. 189-90.
15. Ibid., p. 192.
16. Ibid., p. 194.

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Exhibition -- Using C.S. Lewis to Promote Science and the Movies

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Abstract

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Exhibition is a touring exhibit of scenes, props, and costumes from the first two Narnia movies combined with displays on scientific subjects. *The Exhibition* has appeared in science museums throughout the United States. It is natural to link Narnia and science, as C.S. Lewis also wrote science fiction (the Ransom space trilogy) and critiqued scientism. *The Exhibition* begins with Lewis artifacts on loan from the Marion E. Wade Center. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (*LWW*) section features the wardrobe and the witch, but not the lion. The awe-inspiring experience of entering Narnia through the wardrobe is surely the highlight of *The Exhibition*. The *LWW* section gives prominence to Jadis's deep magic, but completely omits the deeper magic of Aslan's death (on Edmund's behalf) and resurrection. In the *Prince Caspian* section, it is instead a minor character in the movie, the minotaur Asterius, who "gives his life to save the Pevensie children, Prince Caspian and others" in Miraz's castle. C.S. Lewis wrote, "You don't see Nature till you believe in the Supernatural." *The Exhibition* catches C.S. Lewis's environmental vision, but misses his supernatural vision. It captures Lewis's ecology, but leaves out his theology.

Introduction

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Exhibition is a touring exhibit of scenes, properties, and costumes from the first two Narnia movies (*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian*) combined with displays on scientific subjects such as weather ("Snowball Earth" and the Ice Ages), petrified fossils, time, archaeology, the physics of catapults and arches, the environment, and ecology. *The Exhibition* has appeared in science museums throughout the United States (Phoenix, Philadelphia, Kansas City, and Houston) and is scheduled for future presentations in Huntsville, Alabama, and Louisville, Kentucky.[1,2] If it appears in a museum near you, *The Exhibition* is surely worth a visit. It is suitable for both adults and children.

Scientism

It is natural to link Narnia and science, and C.S. Lewis also wrote science fiction (the Ransom trilogy: *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*) and critiqued scientism. *Scientism* does not refer "to the marvelous discoveries and technological fruits of science" nor "to the careful and painstaking empirical methods by which scientists seek to establish facts and their causes.[3] Scientism refers instead to the "misapplication of scientific method".[4] Scientism has been categorized as a "unique combination of atheism, materialistic philosophy, evolutionism, hostility to religion, and doctrinaire adherence to the universal validity of the scientific method..."[3] Scientism became the "gospel" for the famous 19th Century Darwinist Thomas Huxley, the science fiction writer H.G. Wells (1866-1946), and popular modern authors such as Carl Sagan (1934-1996) and Stephen J. Gould (1941-2002).[3]

C.S. Lewis the Writer

The Exhibition begins with Lewis artifacts on loan from the Marion E. Wade Center, such as a copy of George MacDonald's *Phantastes* from C.S. Lewis's personal library, his original letter to Susan Salzberg ("pictures come into my head," "I write them down"), and his pipe. C.S Lewis is thus described as an author: "Lewis' career as a writer flourished, gaining worldwide acclaim for his religious and non-fiction books as well as his works of literary criticism." There was no mention that Lewis was a *Christian* writer, indeed the foremost Christian apologist of the 20th Century, nor that *The Chronicles of Narnia* can be interpreted as having a Christian meaning. Lewis's books specifically mentioned were *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), *The Screwtape Letters* (1942), and *The Great Divorce* (1945), but not *Mere Christianity*. Both C.S. Lewis and his wife, Helen Joy Gresham (nee Davidman), came to Christ through the same "long and difficult road", from atheism to agnosticism to theism and then to Christianity.[5]

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

The awe-inspiring experience of entering Narnia through the wardrobe is surely a highlight of *The Exhibition*. The door of the wardrobe opens to reveal the forest, the lamppost, and falling snow. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* section features the wardrobe and the witch, but not the lion. Jadis, the White Witch, has a prominent place in *The Exhibition. The Exhibition* displays her ability to run her enemies into stone, her icy throne, costumes, crowns (in various stages of melting), sword, dagger, Turkish Delight, goblet, and sleigh. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* section of *The Exhibition* ends with the frozen waterfall (a scene in the movie but not in the book). The stone table (where the White Witch kills Aslan) was included as an element in the early planning stages of *The Exhibition*, but was dropped before the exhibit reached final development.[6]

A weakness of *The Exhibition* is that it gives prevalence to Jadis's deep magic, but omits the deeper magic of Aslan's death (on Edmund's behalf) and resurrection. In a sense, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* section of *The Exhibition* makes the two mistakes Lewis warns about in his preface to *The Screwtape Letters*: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence" [frank materialism]. "The other is to believe, and to feel an unhealthy interest in them" [emphasis on the devilish Jadis rather than on the god-like Aslan].[7]

Science and the Supernatural

The question is, "How does a scientific exhibit handle Christ, God, and the supernatural? One approach would be that of the atheist: "There is no god." The natural and material world is all that there is. As Carl Sagan put it, "The cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be."[8] A second approach is that of the agnostic: "God cannot be known," at least via the scientific method. A third approach, the one *The Exhibition* ultimately takes, is that of the secularist. Secularism is defined as "indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations."[9]

A related question is, "How does a secular critic handle Narnia and Aslan?" Some, such as Laura Miller, take offense that the Narnia stories are organized around Christian legends and ideals, with the lion Aslan representing Christ.[10,11]

The Exhibition plays down the myth of the dying god, who gives his life for the sake of humankind. In the *Prince Caspian* section, it is instead a minor character in the movie, the minotaur Asterius, who "gives his life to save the Pevensie children, Prince Caspian and others" in the battle of Miraz's castle. (The battle, added to the movie, is not in the book.) According to John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." *The Exhibition* applies this principle to the Narnian "saint", Asterius, but not the Narnian Savior, Aslan.

The Science of *Narnia: The Exhibition*

In *An Experiment in Criticism* C.S. Lewis wrote that a work of art can be either "received" or "used." "When we 'receive' it we exert our senses and imagination and various other powers according to a pattern invented by the artist. When we 'use' it we treat it as assistance for our own activities."[12] One might say that *Narnia: The Exhibition* uses C.S. Lewis and *The Chronicles of Narnia* to promote the movies and science.

The display "Controlling Weather (A Dreadful Winter)" puts forth the "Snowball Earth" theory: "According to Paul F. Hoffmann and Daniel P. Schrag at Harvard University, 'many lines of evidence support a theory that the entire Earth was ice-covered for long periods 600-700 million years ago. Each glacial period lasted for millions of years and ended violently under extreme greenhouse conditions. These climate shocks triggered the evolution of multicellular animal life, and challenge long-held assumptions regarding the limits of global change.'" C.S. Lewis considered evolution to be a modern myth;[13] however, he also considered Christianity to be a myth, albeit the one true myth. An important part of Lewis's conversion "was learning from his friends J.R.R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson that Christianity was like the myths he loved, except that here it is a 'true myth.' The pagan myths were human myths; the Gospels are God's myth: the stories happen in actual human history."[14]

The display "It's About Time" discusses how time in Narnia progresses differently than in our world: "When C.S. Lewis was 17, he read Albert Einstein's groundbreaking book *Relativity: The Special and General Theory* which proved that time was not a universal constant. From then on, Lewis was intrigued by the concept that time could move at different rates in different places. This concept plays a key role in *The Chronicles of Narnia* as the passage of time in Narnia is independent of time on Earth." Einstein's book is highly mathematical;[15] C.S. Lewis was not. He failed the math exams (Responsions) necessary to get accepted into Oxford. Lewis was allowed to attend Oxford after the first World War only because passing the exam was waived for men who had been in the service.[16]

The Exhibition does catch the environmental vision of C.S. Lewis. Lewis had a respect for nature that is reflected in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. As an example in *Prince Caspian,* Trufflehunter the badger laments, "the Humans came into the land, felling forests and defiling streams..."[17] The recent book *Narnia and the Fields of Arbol*, by Matthew Dickerson and David O'Hara, explicates C.S. Lewis's environmental vision.[18]

Concluding Remarks

To quote the Professor in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,* "I wonder what they *do* teach them at these schools."[19] What does *The Exhibition* teach? The last visual display in the exhibit is a transient image of Aslan, speaking the words (if I remember correctly), "Once a king or queen in Narnia, always a king or queen."[20] The last written display plaque, "Leaving Narnia," concludes: "Prince Caspian and the Pevensie children have shown that demonstrating virtue and making the right choices allows us to co-exist peacefully and live in harmony with Nature. As you leave Narnia and return to your own world, keep these ideas and important lessons with you as you continue on your own journey." The three important lessons of *Narnia: The Exhibition* might be summarized as (1) Love Narnia, (2) Love Neighbor, and (3) Love Nature.

What would C.S. Lewis say about *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Exhibition*? I think he would say he was being 'used' to promote science and the movies.[12]

C.S. Lewis wrote, "You don't see Nature till you believe in the Supernatural..."[21] *The Exhibition* catches C.S. Lewis's environmental vision, but misses his supernatural vision. It captures Lewis's ecology, but leaves out his Christian theology.

Notes

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Owen Barfield: Un-Regressed Pilgrim

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A great deal of ink has been spilled attempting to answer the question: Why did C. S. Lewis not become a Roman Catholic?[1] But as far as I know, no one has yet attempted to ask the question: Why did C. S. Lewis not become an anthroposophist? This paper is not an attempt to answer that question, but I do want to begin by addressing the question of why the question has not been asked.

Consider the following set of biographical facts about Lewis:

Having abandoned the Christian faith as a teenager, he was horrified to discover in his twenties that one of his closest friends belonged to a religious tradition that he regarded as dangerous and superstitious. Nonetheless, he could not deny the wisdom and good moral character of this friend, and eventually came to acknowledge a good deal of truth in his beliefs.[2] Indeed, this friendship played a major role in his movement from atheism through pantheism to Christian theism, finally including a belief in the Incarnation. And yet, contrary to what one might expect, he drew the line at embracing his friend's beliefs entirely, instead returning to a more mature and sophisticated version of his childhood Anglicanism. His friend was often known to express regret and puzzlement that Lewis failed to appreciate the claims of a religious tradition that had turned out (by Lewis's own admission) to get so many things right.

All the above applies to Lewis's relationship with the Roman Catholic J. R. R. Tolkien. But it also applies, in every detail, to Lewis's relationship with Owen Barfield. Furthermore, just as Lewis had many other Roman Catholic friends and correspondents in the course of his life,[3] so Lewis's anthroposophical friends included not only Barfield but several others, chiefly Cecil Harwood and his wife Daphne. Cecil Harwood and Barfield were the executors of Lewis's will,[4] and Lewis several times referred to what he regarded as a great improvement in Daphne's character as evidence that anthroposophy couldn't be entirely bad.[5] Anthroposophy was not just a fad experienced by some of Lewis's friends in the 20s—it was a constant presence in Lewis's life through his enduring friendship with Barfield and the Harwoods. Barfield in particular continued to insist that his own insights derived from his anthroposophy, and to marvel at Lewis's refusal to give anthroposophy due credit.[6]

Why then has Lewis's parallel "failure" to become Roman Catholic attracted so much attention? The flippant and superficial answer is that there are not very many anthroposophists, and there are a lot of Roman Catholics. But of course it isn't hard to find better reasons why it is natural for "merely Christian" admirers of Lewis, let alone those who are Roman Catholics themselves, to see Lewis's friendships with Roman Catholics as more intellectually significant than Lewis's friendships with anthroposophists. By any reasonable standard, Roman Catholicism is at least as orthodox an expression of Christianity as Anglicanism.[7] From a "mere Christian" perspective, Roman Catholicism is at the very worst a large and important expression of the central Christian tradition. And of course there are good reasons, persuasive to many wise and holy people, for thinking it to be a good deal more than that—for thinking it to be not merely "Roman" but simply Catholic, and for questioning whether "mere Christianity" is really an adequate expression of orthodoxy at all.

Anthroposophy, on the other hand, is by its own admission a heretical expression of Christianity, and would be regarded by many Christians as not genuinely Christian at all. The movement's founder, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925),[8] was an Austro-Hungarian philosopher and mystic influenced both by the German Romantic tradition and by his own alleged experiences of other worlds and spiritual beings. The central claim of anthroposophy, which was immensely important for Barfield's thought, was that the physical world experienced by humans is neither wholly objective nor wholly subjective,[9] but what Barfield would call an "appearance"—a "participated" reality shaped by human perception but not simply a private illusion. A further claim of anthroposophy—again of crucial importance for Barfield—was that the Eastern religious experience of union with Brahman and the Western consciousness of individuality represented two sides of human consciousness, neither of which could healthily exist without the other. Steiner's thought was both Christocentric and Eurocentric, arguing that the Incarnation of the Logos in Jesus was the fulcrum of human history, marking the point at which a true "ego" first appeared in human experience and paving the way for the development of individual selfhood in Western civilization. In the modern world, however, Steiner believed that Western human beings had become cut off from their own inner world and from the world around them (in Steiner's thought, this amounts to the same thing, since humans are connected to everything else through their own inwardness). This led to the domination of modern Western thought by the spirit of "Ahriman"—the demonic force representing materialism (corresponding to "Lucifer"—the demonic force representing pure spirituality disdainful of matter and of the necessities of human evolution).

Barfield came to anthroposophy in 1923 through his interest in Romanticism, particularly Coleridge. In his own accounts of Steiner's thought and career, Barfield consistently emphasized the importance of Steiner's early work editing Goethe's scientific writings (more conventional anthroposophical accounts stress instead Steiner's own spiritual experiences as the source of his ideas). Barfield's most concise and typical description of anthroposophy, found in the title of one of his collections of essays, was "Romanticism come of age," and he claimed in one of the essays in that volume that all of Steiner's thought was a development of Goethe's ideas.[10]

In 1926, when Lewis and Barfield began the extended argument which Lewis dubbed "The Great War" in his autobiography, Barfield's acquaintance with Steiner's work was, by his later estimate, quite limited.[11] Indeed, at one point in the course of the Great War Lewis suggested that Barfield had come to believe in Steiner's ideas owing to a lack of philosophical education and a reaction against the "trivial reasoning" of the modern world. Now that Barfield (under Lewis's tutelage?) understands better the power of "good reasoning" (by which Lewis seems to mean Idealist philosophy), he should not need Steiner any longer.[12] Of course, Barfield disagreed with this, and only became a more enthusiastic and profound disciple of Steiner as the years passed.[13] Since Barfield claimed that his thought did not appreciably change over the years,[14] I will summarize the main points of Barfield's mature position here before returning to the "Great War" and its relevance for the development of Lewis's thought during and after his conversion.[15]

According to Barfield, human beings once "participated" in the phenomena surrounding them without any clear sense of existing apart from these phenomena. This "original participation" is, in Barfield's categorization, identical with ancient paganism.[16] Pagans "peopled" the world with gods and spirits not in a clumsy prefiguration of scientific explanation, but because they were incapable of seeing the phenomena as dead, purely material realities standing over against the living human observer. Instead, they saw the phenomena as manifestations of living beings "of the same nature" as themselves.[17] This "original participation" was, in Barfield's view, broken in two ways: partially and gradually by the rise of logical thinking among the Greeks,[18] and dramatically and totally by the monotheistic faith of the ancient Hebrews.[19] The latter paved the way for the Incarnation of the Logos, an event which Barfield, like Steiner, regarded as central for the history of human consciousness.[20] Both Hebrew and Greek culture pointed forward to this event, the "rebirth of images" inaugurating the era of "final participation."[21] As Barfield defines it, "final participation" is the conscious choice by the individual to see the world not as a dead, purely material reality external to the self, but as a "collective conscious" in which all human beings participate.[22] Whereas original participation was centered in the external world (the "gods" and "spirits" understood to lie "on the other side of" the phenomena"), final participation will be centered on human beings ("Christ living within me").[23]

Unfortunately, Barfield believed, the Incarnation of the Logos was not received by those most thoroughly prepared to receive it (the Jews). The crucifixion of Jesus indicated that the path from original to final participation would not be smooth and "gentle" but would involve the catastrophic loss of participation—a time of "idolatry" in which the phenomena would cease to be seen as living realities participated in by the observer, and would be regarded as dead things to be dissected and manipulated by the newly self-conscious human beings.[24] This loss of participation, while rooted in the growth of logical thought among the pre-Christian Greeks, first became noticeable in the Renaissance and gained steam with the Scientific Revolution. Western humans became conscious of themselves as individuals standing not only over against the external world but over against their own experiencing selves.[25] Again, as with the crucifixion of Jesus, Barfield suggests that this loss was not inevitable—that the path might have been smoother. He explicitly compares this "missed opportunity" leading to the loss of participation to the "felix peccatum Adae" in Augustine's thought.[26] Overcoming the consequences of this loss—bridging the chasm between our experiencing, conscious selves and the world of phenomena—was, Barfield thought, the task facing the modern world.

At the time of the "Great War" in the late 1920s, Barfield was expressing these ideas in a less systematic way. Indeed, the key point made in *Saving the Appearances* and elsewhere, that what people usually call "the real world" is a construction based on our perceptions, is first found on Lewis's side of the debate, as part of an attempt to convince Barfield of the naiveté of his reliance on intuition.[27] Barfield would eventually make this basic epistemological point a centerpiece of his mature view of the world. I am always inclined to be suspicious of the claim that any thinker does not change or develop (especially when made in the first person, as in Barfield's case), but it does appear to be true (to my limited observation so far) that Barfield's later thought consisted of the defense and elaboration of the basic intuitions present in the "Great War" debate.

The basic claim defended by Barfield and criticized by Lewis in the "Great War" was that imagination was a source of truth. Lewis initially attacked not the claim itself so much as the connection between imaginative truth and propositional truth. Lewis maintained an agnostic stance with regard to the possibility of an ineffable "truth" perceivable by the imagination in moments of inspiration. But he insisted that any propositional claims made after the moment of inspiration had subsided must be judged on their own terms and not taken on trust on the basis of the supposed ineffable truth perceived in the moment itself.[28] In support of this, he pointed to his own imaginative experience, which he argued led him at different times to completely opposite conclusions: leaving him, for instance, "sometimes convinced of the insignificance of the human spirit in the scheme of things, and sometimes of its divinity as lord of space and time and creator of all that it seems to be enslaved to."[29]

The initial disagreement thus turned out to be whether "truth" should be defined primarily in propositional terms (as an accusative plus an infinitive, in Lewis's formulation), or whether, as Barfield claimed, "truth" was "reality itself taking the form of human consciousness."[30] (Lewis responded that Barfield defined "the real" as whatever bits of his experience he happened to like.[31]) For Barfield, truth in this sense—human experience of reality--was an ever-changing "torrent," and the propositional truth beloved of Lewis was inevitably an inadequate cross-section of that torrent.

Eventually the controversy took the form of treatises (written in homage to medieval scholasticism) written by each of the participants in an exercise book and passed back and forth from one to the other (this book was acquired by Ed Brown and exists in the C. S. Lewis and Friends Collection here at Taylor). At this stage Lewis expounded his metaphysical system, which was that of "Subjective Idealism" as taught by the English Hegelians. (This view is described in *Surprised by Joy* as the "New Look" and appears in *The Pilgrim's Regress* as the teaching of "Mr. Wisdom.")[32] According to this philosophy, ultimate reality consists of "Spirit," which is conscious of itself in the form of individual human minds. The individual is thus both a limited, mortal being bound up in a physical body and, at the same time, the infinite, immortal mind which knows no limits and no death. When the individual dies, the immortal mind "relapses" into the state of pure Spirit. Subjectively, this is extinction, but on this theory our subjective experience of limitation and mortality is essentially illusion.

Lewis found Samuel Alexander's *Space, Time, and Deity* invaluable in developing his understanding of the relationship between limited human beings and infinite Spirit. Alexander distinguished between "enjoyment" and "contemplation." In any mental act, Alexander argued, there is the act itself, which is "enjoyed" (i.e., directly participated by the subject), and the object, which is "contemplated." So, for instance, right now I am enjoying the act of speaking and am contemplating the Great War. Just before I got up to speak, I was contemplating the act of speaking about the Great War, and enjoying apprehensions as to whether you would all think I'm an idiot. Lewis maintained—and never changed his mind as far as I know—that you could not do the two things at once, though you could flicker back and forth between them so fast that they might *appear* simultaneous.[33] Lewis used the distinction in a number of ways throughout his career—recall Screwtape's advice to Wormwood to make sure that the patient "enjoyed" sinful thoughts while contemplating the object of anger or lust, but "contemplated" virtuous thoughts, which would make it impossible for him to "enjoy" them.[34] In the "Great War," Lewis deployed this distinction in defense of his idealist metaphysics. "Spirit" can be enjoyed but never contemplated. (The famous first stanza of the Tao Te Ching appears to be saying something very similar, at least in one interpretation.)[35] The mature, Christian Lewis would express this conviction in terms of

God's transcendence as the sovereign Creator, of whom even mental images are essentially idolatrous (if one forgets their limited and tentative nature for an instant). But the Lewis of the "Great War" used this same conviction to reject any conception of a divine reality that could be experienced directly.

A further disagreement between the two concerned the law of non-contradiction. Lewis showed himself (here as in his later career as a Christian apologist) prone to sharp either/or dichotomies, which he presented as logically inevitable. Recall that Lewis rejected the idea that truth could be derived from imaginative experience based on the supposedly incompatible judgments derived from that experience. As Barfield pointed out, these judgments (the "greatness" versus the "insignificance" of the human spirit, for instance) were so vague and general as to be almost meaningless. Similarly, Lewis found Alexander's enjoyment-contemplation distinction convincing, while Barfield mocked it as "Box and Cox."[36] At this point in his career, Barfield was groping toward what he would later describe as the concept of "polarity"—that reality often consists of two apparently incompatible poles each of which in fact includes the other. Barfield argued that even logical propositions were rooted in an act of what he called "esemplastic imagination."[37] Without the imagination, logic becomes mere tautology. One define a hippopotamus as an animal that has pink intestines, but only by imagination can we look at such an animal and say "this is a hippopotamus."

The intensity of the "Great War" should not blind us to the basic convictions the two men already shared. Both rejected a purely materialistic conception of reality. Both believed that human consciousness was in some way the means through which Spirit expressed itself. Lewis admitted to Daphne Harwood in 1933 that on the main point where he and Barfield differed—whether there was a supernatural world that human beings could experience—Barfield had been right and he had been wrong.[38] The Great War came to an abrupt end in part, it appears, because Lewis's movement toward Christianity caused him to lose confidence in the primary point he had been maintaining—the either/or relationship between mortal human experience and the divine reality of Spirit. Barfield's attempts to interest Lewis in further discussion of these points were rebuffed, and there the matter rested.[39] In later speeches, essays, and interviews, Barfield speculated a good deal concerning the relationship of Lewis's later thought to the issues raised in the Great War. Since Lewis did not do this directly, the "conversation" has been rather one-sided. Any attempt to get at Lewis's side of the story suffers from the varied and possibly contradictory nature of the evidence.[40] The only work I am aware of in which Lewis directly addressed the issues of the Great War was the essay "Bluspels and Flalanspheres," published in 1939 as part of the volume *Rehabilitations.*[41] In this essay, Lewis declared that he was a "rationalist" who did not believe that the imagination was a vehicle of truth, but only a condition for it—the position he had maintained in the "Great War" (though obviously he had changed his mind on other aspects of the debate).[42] However, the early date of the essay means that we cannot be sure that Lewis did not change his mind later on. Unfortunately, the later evidence is indirect, and comes from Lewis's imaginative work. Peter Schakel has argued that Lewis's fantasy writing of the 50s and 60s shows that he had come to agree with Barfield on the role of the imagination as a source of truth.[43] Whether that is true or not is not the task of this paper to determine. Rather, in the time remaining, I wish to examine Lewis's first fictional work as a Christian, *The Pilgrim's Regress,* published in 1933. This was the same year in which Lewis told Daphne Harwood that Barfield had been right on the central question of supernatural reality, and six years before the publication of "Bluspels and Flalansferes." Thus, we are dealing in this work with a Lewis who was clearly a Christian but just as clearly did not yet agree that imagination was a direct source of truth, whether or not he came to do so later.

For those unfamiliar with this early work by Lewis: *Pilgrim's Regress* is the story of a young man named John, brought up in Puritania, a land shadowed by the fear of the Landlord at whose sufferance all the inhabitants live. (Puritania appears to be a caricature of Victorian/Edwardian Protestantism—Lewis took umbrage at the suggestion by Sheed and Ward that this represented his own upbringing, but this was surely a reasonable inference).[44] The Landlord may choose to turn them out at any time, and his relations with the tenants are governed by a set of arbitrary Rules whose content seems impossible to determine exactly. The Landlord's castle, a place of terror where the tenants go when their lease expires, sits on a range of forbidding mountains to the east. John flees from Puritania (and the Landlord) in search of an Island he has seen in the West in fleeting and occasional visions.[45] He is delighted to be told by "Mr. Enlightenment" that the Landlord doesn't really exist, but this knowledge brings him no nearer to the Island.[46] After a series of adventures representing various aspects of post-Enlightenment Western reductionism (a degraded form of romantic poetry leading to sensuality, avant-garde poetry that mocks the very idea of beauty, Freudian analysis which imprisons John briefly before he is freed by Reason, etc.), John and his traveling companion Vertue (who is motivated by a self-imposed sense of duty rather than by John's "sweet desire") arrive at a deep chasm in the earth. They encounter an old lady called "Mother Kirk" who informs them that the chasm is called "Peccatum Adae," and that only she can carry them across.[47] Seeking an alternative to submission to Mother Kirk, John and Vertue travel first north (encountering various aspects of what Lewis saw as the "hardness" and cruelty of early-twentieth-century though, including a cruel caricature of T.S. Eliot and the literally chilling "Mr. Savage," representing various forms of totalitarian violence), and then a short way to the south, of the main road. By this time Vertue has become sick and John has to carry him. John seeks help and healing for his friend at the house of Mr. Wisdom, who tells him that the land on the other side of the chasm (including the Island) is not simply a figment of his imagination but also does not "exist" in a way that would enable him to reach it. (This is the Subjective Idealism Lewis had defended in the Great War.)[48] Mr. Wisdom's teachings, while noble and beautiful, do not satisfy even his own children, and John and Vertue interpret them in diametrically different ways.[49] (Here we see Lewis's continuing concern for logical consistency and his impatience with paradox or Barfieldian "polarity.") Vertue flees the house of Mr. Wisdom and climbs into the mountains to purify his flesh of the taint of mortality, while John follows out of sheer loyalty to his friend (even though he interprets Mr. Wisdom's teachings in a much more optimistic way), having been warned by a mysterious "Man" that the two of them must keep together. [50]

Separated from Vertue, John finds refuge at the cave of a hermit named "Father History," who proceeds to instruct him (John, like a true modern, knows almost no history) in the history of the "country" in which he lives.[51] Father History informs John that there are two ways by which the Landlord makes himself known—the "Rules" John had known in a degraded and confused form in Puritania, and a series of "pictures" which the Landlord smuggled into regions controlled by the Enemy (who kept his subjects illiterate, making the Rules useless). The illiterate people who depend on pictures rather than Rules are known as "Pagans," while the only nation who could read was (originally) the "Shepherd People." John dislikes the Shepherd People intensely, but Father History tells him that their "narrowness" was necessary in order to preserve the precious knowledge they had been given.[52] Father History identifies John as a Pagan, in spite of his Puritanian origin, and identifies the "Island" with the pictures sent to the Pagans by the Landlord. History describes two major groups of Pictures sent by the Landlord in relatively recent times: pictures of a Lady (i.e., courtly love) and pictures of the landscape itself (Romanticism).[53] While the Pictures cannot be defeated or prevented by the Enemy, they always become corrupted eventually (leading to a new set of Pictures being sent by the Landlord). The only way out of this endless cycle is through the Rules, and for John personally the only way to find what he seeks is to be united to Vertue by the Landlord's Son, the same, Father History tells him, who united the Pagans and the Shepherds.

I have gone into some detail here, because Barfield claimed to have been told by Lewis that he, Barfield, was Father History. Lionel Adey understands this to be a criticism of Barfield, since the other figures John has encountered represent "erroneous ideas." But this is far from clear in the case of Father History. Clearly his teachings are inadequate, by themselves, to get John across the chasm. But they point him in the right place—to the "Landlord's Son." And they do help him get across the chasm indirectly-Father History's talk of the Landlord and the Rules so terrifies John that he flees the cave, encounters Reason who challenges him to a duel, and in flight from her encounters Death itself. Death tells John that it is he whom John has been fleeing all the time, and that the only way to escape Death is to die. Finally surrendering, John climbs down the cliffs and entrusts himself to Mother Kirk, along with Vertue, who has preceded him. They fling themselves into the water and reach the other side.[54]

This, however, is not the end of the story. After being instructed inside the mountain on the other side of the chasm, John and Vertue journey to the seacoast, where they expect to board a ship for the Island. But it turns out that the world is round (though very small, apparently)—the Island is simply the promontory on the far side of the mountains on which the Landlord's castle sits. Fear and desire—Rules and Pictures—the demands of the law and the lure of beauty—turn out to be the same thing. With a new sobriety and courage, John travels back across the ground he has traveled, together with Vertue and an angelic guide. He sees the country with new (and more austere) eyes. The house of Wisdom turns out to be Limbo, and the choices to both sides of the main road are much more limited, and much more horrifying, than it had appeared on the outbound journey. (One particular character, Mr. Sensible—contended worldliness—turns out not to exist at all.) The book ends with John in sight of the Landlord's Castle, at the surprising end of his pilgrimage.[55]

What does this remarkable (if not particularly successful) book tell us about Lewis's attitude to the issues of the Great War? To begin with, the identification of Father History with Barfield should not be pushed too far. Barfield's memory of just what Lewis said appeared to be quite vague, and Lewis may have exaggerated in order to honor his friend. Father History's story, after all, terrifies John because it points him back toward the Landlord of his youth and humble obedience to the Landlord's Rules. But Barfield consistently criticized Lewis for his emphasis on moralism and on humble submission to a transcendent God, and Lewis's primary criticism of anthroposophy in the 1933 letter to Daphne Harwood is its lack of belief in such a transcendent Creator.[56] At the same time, Father History's account of the role of the "Shepherd People" and the Rules does sound a great deal like Barfield's later account of the "withdrawal from participation" in ancient Hebrew culture, in contrast to the "original participation" of paganism. Father History's account of the various sets of pictures sent down by the Landlord could be interpreted as a kind of "history of consciousness"—and yet not really, because there doesn't appear to be any progress from one set to another.[57] Rather, as in Lewis's mature thought, the action of God in history is presented in terms of preservation against the persistent tug of the Enemy's corruption. Perhaps the best way to interpret Father History is as a summary of what Lewis thought he had learned from Barfield—which may not have been what Barfield intended to teach.

Other parallels between *Regress* and Barfield include the attacks on reductionistic materialism (including the hilarious exchange between John and Mr. Enlightenment, in which the latter explains that anthropologists have explained away stories about the Landlord as garbled reports based on sightings of animals escaped from a zoo),[58] and the "via media" between two demonic extremes (though for Lewis the extremes are different than for Barfield, and Steiner comes in for fairly mild criticism as a son of Mr. Wisdom who has been dining nocturnally with the southern magicians).[59] But perhaps the most striking and moving echo of Barfield in *Regress* is the sequence after John escapes from Father History's Cave. Death's warning to "die before you die," and John's agonized decision to plunge into the [baptismal] waters, echo an essay by Barfield on "Death" recently published for the first time in *VII.*[60] This posthumous essay appears to date from around 1930—Lewis reported having read it at that time, and described it as worthy of a disciple of George MacDonald. (Indeed, it is possible that what I find to be echoes of Barfield in this section of *Regress* are really echoes of MacDonald, but certainly the similarity between *Regress* and Barfield's essay shows the profound spiritual kinship between Lewis and Barfield after Lewis's conversion.) These parallels are all the more interesting because Barfield was resolutely one of the "once-born," with little use for sudden conversions or breaks, and insisted in his later remarks on Lewis that Lewis's conversion really wasn't as sudden as Lewis suggested. Barfield himself, he reported, had "just [gone] along steadily feeling more and more certain of some things."[61]

The major difference between Barfield and the Lewis of the *Regress* lies in the eponymous Regress itself. While Barfield believed that what is commonly called "nostalgia" (Goethe's *Sehnsucht*, Lewis's "Joy" or "Sweet Desire") is the most precious thing in human life, he believed that this always leads on, not back. For Barfield, as the early "Great War" letters show, truth is reality in human consciousness and thus always involves a temporal dimension. Any abstract, propositional statement may be true at one point in the evolution of consciousness and false in another. Furthermore, while Barfield believed that propositional logic is "either meaningless or inadequate" when it attempts to describe Reality, he believed that the human faculty of imagination *was* adequate to grasp reality, if properly trained and nurtured.[62] Hence he lacked the genuine apophaticism that made the pre-conversion Lewis vehemently deny the possibility of "getting to the other side of the chasm," and the post-conversion Lewis insist over and over that God is the Great Iconoclast.[63] To suggest that even the human imagination could simply lead onward and upward to an ever fuller representation of divine reality would be, for Lewis, not only presumptuous but ungrateful. The terror of his conversion stemmed from the recognition that the Island was in fact the Landlord's Castle. No doubt Lewis's sense of filial guilt with regard to his recently deceased father played a role (though I don't want to engage in Freudian reductionism) in his conviction that his newfound faith in God committed him to return to a renewed and enriched version of the religion of his childhood. Tolkien found this infuriating; the more placid Barfield found it puzzling and frustrating. But for Lewis (whatever psychological factors may have shaped him) this decision flowed naturally from his essentially Platonist view of the world (according to which whatever is true is true timelessly), his horror of chronological snobbery (learned, ironically, from "Father History" aka Barfield), his deep dislike of the modern world and the trendy fashions of his own generation, and most of all his awareness of that deep chasm in the earth called Peccatum Adae. While Barfield could compare the loss of participation to the sin of Adam, they are not the same thing. The former occurs relatively late in human history and can be transcended by the evolution of consciousness. The Fall of Adam as Lewis and orthodox Christianity understand it occurs at the beginning of human history, is located in the will more fundamentally than in the intellect, and can be overcome not through evolution but only through repentance and return.

Barfield's simultaneous kinship with and difference from Lewis make him a worthy subject for study by Lewis's admirers (even apart from the intrinsic appeal of Barfield's thought and personality). Barfield and Lewis shared many of the same concerns, and this allows them to serve as foils for each other. They shared the same quest for a Western island glimpsed in the fantasies of boyish imagination, and continuing to guide their respective pilgrimages throughout their lives. But at that chasm called Peccatum Adae their ways converge. Where Lewis turned back to the neglected (and often distorted) truths of his childhood faith, Barfield, like one of Tolkien's elves, took ship for the West on a vessel compounded of Romantic poetry and German occultism, and propelled by the slow-burning furnace of his peculiar imagination. Whether he made landfall, and on what shores, is open to question and is ultimately beyond our ken. But the quest that he and Lewis shared ought to be our quest too, and we owe it to him to take the alternative he offers seriously, if only for the sake of the man who claimed to have learned so much for him, even as he took, in the end, a different way to the same goal.

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[1] I would like to express my appreciation to the staff of the Wade Center in Wheaton, IL for their help in my research for this paper. All quotes from unpublished sources come with their kind permission. Thanks are also due to my wife, Jennifer Woodruff Tait, who checked and completed my references.

There are at least two book-length treatments of why Lewis did not become Roman Catholic: Christopher Derrick, *C. S. Lewis and the Church of Rome: A Study in Proto-Ecumenism* (Ignatius, 1981), and Joseph Pearce, *C. S. Lewis and the Catholic Church* (Ignatius, 2003).

[2] In the case of anthroposophy, see Lewis's admission of this in a letter to Daphne Harwood, March 28, 1933, in *Collected Letters* 2:107 (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004).

[3] For instance: Bede Griffiths, Jim Dundas-Grant, H.H. Havard, Don Giovanni di Calabria, etc.

[4] See http://www.discovery.org/cslewis/articles/writingspblcdmn/will.php

[5] At some point after July 1940 (the document refers to a book by Harwood published in that month) Lewis addressed to Barfield a testimonial vouching for the character of Barfield and the Harwoods and declaring

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that while he disagreed with Steiner's ideas, he disagreed with them no more than with "those of many philosophers who are more widely influential than he in modern England." See *Collected Letters* 2:420-21.

[6] "Introduction," in *Romanticism Comes of Age* (first ed. 1944; augmented ed. 1966; American ed. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), 17.

[7] In other words, it would be very hard for an Anglican to condemn Roman Catholicism as unorthodox without condemning a number of other Anglicans by the same standard.

[8] For a collection of material on Steiner, presented from an anthroposophist perspective, see http://www.rudolfsteinerweb.com/

[9] Stephen Thorson misunderstands this point in his essay, "'Knowledge' in C. S. Lewis's Post-Conversion Thought" (*VII* 9 [1988]: 91-116, cited at 109): "The phenomena are of course subjective, not objective." This allows him to dismiss too readily Schakel's suggestion that Lewis's later fantasies indicate agreement with Barfield. Thorson assumes (incorrectly) that imagination was for Barfield (and hence for Lewis, if Lewis came to agree with Barfield) purely subjective, whereas Barfield saw imagination as participation in a reality that both transcended and included the individual.

[10] "From East to West," in *Romanticism Comes of Age,* 35-37.

[11] Barfield to Lionel Adey, Dec. 12, 1971, p. 2, Wade Center Collection: ""I had read very little Steiner in 1926. Incidentally I had not then learned German. *The Philosophy of Freedom,* then called in the English edition *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, was the one most relevant to my bicker with CSL. *Christianity as Mystical Fact, Occult Science: An Outline*, and many of the *Lecture Cycles*, particularly on the Gospels were among the works that had particularly impressed me."

[12] Letter 10 in Great War series, (Wade Center collection, Wheaton) pp. 5-6 of letter, 1:66-67 of collection (hereafter cited as 10:5-6).

[13] Nonetheless, I have found a certain wariness of Barfield among other anthroposophists, on the two occasions in which I have had personal conversations with them—at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (San Diego, 2007) in one instance, and on the Beliefnet discussion forums in another.

[14] See "Lewis and/or Barfield," in *Owen Barfield on C. S. Lewis,* ed. G. B. Tennyson (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 104-19, cited at 107.

[15] Barfield's most systematic exposition of his ideas can be found in *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry* (1957; 1st American ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1965, the version cited here; 2nd ed. Wesleyan University Press, 1988).

[16] *Saving the Appearances,* 186 (the last sentence of the book).

[17] *Saving the Appearances,* 42: "The essence of *original* participation is that there stands behind the phenomena, *and on the other side of them from me*, a represented which is of the same nature as me."

[18] Barfield suggests that one can place some kind of break between Plato and Aristotle, with the former looking backward to Ancient Near Eastern and perhaps even prehistoric religious thinking, and the latter forward to the Middle Ages and the modern world. See *Saving the Appearances,* 104.

[19] See chapter 16, "Israel," in *Saving the Appearances*, 107-15. The faith of Israel was, Barfield claims, both a "withdrawal from participation" and a "*deepening* of participation" (114).

[20] See chap. 24, "The Incarnation of the Word," in *Saving the Appearances*, 167-73.

[21] Barfield cites the phrase "rebirth of images" from Austin Farrar's book of that name, cited in *Saving the Appearances,* 172.

[22] See *Saving the Appearances,* 132, 135, 137.

[23] See *Saving the Appearances,* 172: "Original participation fires the heart from a source outside itself; the images enliven the heart. But in final participation—since the death and resurrection—the heart is fired from within by the Christ; and it is for the heart to enliven the images."

[24] See for instance chap. 9, "An Evolution of Idols," in *Saving the Appearances,* 58-64. For the importance of the rejection of Jesus by the Jews, see *Saving the Appearances,* 171-72.

[25] See for instance Barfield's discussion of Goethe's love affairs in "Goethe and the Twentieth Century," in *Romanticism Comes of Age,* 164-83, cited at 170-71.

[26] *Saving the Appearances,* 171-73.

[27] Letter 10 in Great War series, p. 6/67: "The 'real world' is a construction from sense, one sense confirming another, details supplied by memory and imagination, theory, hypothesis." Note the comment on the next page (7/68) that "we have been through all this," indicating that the point had been made earlier in their discussions. Compare chapter 1, "The Rainbow," in *Saving the Appearances,* 15-18.

[28] Lewis, GW 2:2-6.

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[29] Lewis, GW 2:4.
[30] Barfield, GW 4:2, July 28, 1927.
[31] Lewis, GW 6:16.
[32] See *Surprised By Joy* (Orlando: Harvest, 1955), 197-211; *Pilgrim's Regress* (London, Bles, 1933, rev. 1943), 120-135.
[33] Lewis's classic statement of this distinction is found in the essay "Meditation in a Toolshed," originally published in *The Coventry Evening Telegraph* (July 17, 1945); reprinted in *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans,1970, 212-15). See also Lionel Adey, *C. S. Lewis's "Great War" With Owen Barfield* (Victoria, B.C.: University of Victoria Press, 1978), 32-33; *C. S. Lewis: Writer, Dreamer, and Mentor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 36-39.
[34] *Screwtape Letters* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1942), 26-27.
[35] I believe that the apophaticism which Kallistos Ware found in Lewis, as we were reminded by Prof. Schakel on Thursday, is a mature and Christian development of this position held by the young Lewis. As Lewis put it in "Apologist's Evening Prayer": "From all my thoughts, even from my thoughts of thee,/
O thou fair Silence, fall, and set me free." (*Poems*, San Diego: Harvest, 1964, 131).
[36] Adey, *Great War*, 57.
[37] Barfield, *Poetic Diction* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press), 191.
[38] *Collected Letters* 2:107-108.
[39] See *Collected Letters* 2:199 ("I wish I could Christianize the *Summa* for you—but I dunno, I dunno! When a truth has ceased to be a mistress for pleasure and becomes a wife for fruit it is almost unnatural to go back to the dialectic ardors of the wooing.") Barfield notes Lewis's dislike of resuming the discussion at several points in *Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis*.
[40] One excellent attempt to synthesize Lewis's views on meaning, truth, and imagination is Charlie Starr, "Meaning, Meanings, and Epistemology in C. S. Lewis," in *Mythlore* 25:3/4 (2007). Starr's analysis suffers from failing to take the "Great War" into consideration, but one can't cover everything in one article!
[41] Now most readily available in *Selected Literary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, ed. Walter Hooper), 251-265.
[42] "Bluspels and Flalanspheres," 265: "Reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning."
[43] He argues this in both *Imagination and the Arts in C.S. Lewis: Journeying to Narnia and other Worlds* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002) (see p. x), and throughout *Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis: A Study of Till We Have Faces* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984); see especially his reference to the disillusionment with reason evident in Lewis's early poem "The Philosopher," arguing that the poem glorifies an "a direct, almost intuitive knowledge, almost Wordsworthian. . . Wholeness comes not through pure reason, or the union of reason and imagination, but through total commitment to the imaginative" (95-96) and his suggestion that until late in his career, Lewis's tension between reason and imagination "prevents in practice the full understanding of myth Lewis advances in theory" (91-92). See also Adey, *Great War*, 118-119.
[44] *Collected Letters* 2:170, letter to Arthur Greeves ("Sheed, without any authority from me, has put a blurb on the inside of the jacket which says 'This story begins in Puritania (Mr. Lewis was brought up in Ulster)'—thus implying that the book is an attack on my own country and my own religion.")
[45] *Pilgrim's Regress* (hereafter *PR*), 32.
[46] *PR*, 34-38.
[47] *PR*, 76-82.
[48] *PR*, 122-125.
[49] *PR*, 130-133.
[50] *PR*, 138-142.
[51] *PR*, 148-160.
[52] *PR*, 153-155.
[53] *PR*, 157-159.
[54] *PR*, 164-172.
[55] *PR*, 172-173, 176-199.
[56] *Collected Letters* 2: 108.
[57] See *Saving the Appearances*, 107-115.

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[58] *PR*, 36-37.

[59] *PR*, 131.

[60] *PR*, 167; “Death,” Owen Barfield, *VII* 25 (2008):48-60.

[61] Barfield, transcript of interview with Lyle Dorsett, Nov. 19, 1983, p. 45. Marion Wade Center, Wheaton College.

[62] See *Saving the Appearances*, 96-98.

[63] Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1961), 66 (“Images of the Holy easily become holy images--sacrosanct. My idea of God is not a divine idea. It has to be shattered time after time. He shatters it Himself. He is the great iconoclast. Could we not almost say that this shattering is one of the marks of His presence?”)

GOD IS IMPARTIAL: *FRANKENSTEIN* AND MACDONALD

Miho Yamaguchi

Does God favor some people and treat His creatures partially? When circumstances make people desperate, do they have no choice but to be bitter and angry? I find that such issues are raised in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* and also that MacDonald gives answers to these questions through his novels as he sends light and hope with the truer image of God and His Love.

In a previous essay, I examined MacDonald's *David Elginbrod* in connection with Coleridge and the Joan Drake Case to illuminate his theological ideas (see *Inklings Forever,* VI). In *David Elginbrod*, a criminal named Funkelstein exercises his influence on a young woman, Euphrasia, and makes her an accessory to his crime. I thought that "Funkelstein" sounded similar to "Frankenstein," so I examined Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) to see if there was any connection. Consequently, I discovered that some episodes and arguments in *Frankenstein* are taken up by MacDonald and reflected in *David Elginbrod* (1863), and his Wingfold trilogy: *Thomas Wingfold, Curate* (1876); *Paul Faber, Surgeon* (1879); and *There and Back* (1891). In addition, I found a reference to "Frankenstein" in a remark of Leopold in *Thomas Wingfold, Curate*. Leopold, who had killed his lover in a rage, says, "I am like the horrible creature Frankenstein made—one that has no right to existence—and at the same time like the maker of it, who is accountable for that existence" (*Thomas Wingfold, Curate,* hereafter *TW,* 310) (This passage will be discussed later in the following). It appears that MacDonald had read *Frankenstein,* and tried to answer, in his novels, the cries of despair uttered by Frankenstein and his monster.

I found that quite a few episodes and arguments are taken up by MacDonald from *Frankenstein*. Among them, this essay focuses on the issues which concern the Creator's impartiality and people's spiritual growth. In the arguments, I also refer to an anecdote concerning John Wesley and a porter, which might have influenced MacDonald's writing of the Wingfold trilogy.

Madame Moritz's Case in *Frankenstein*

Frankenstein, a young student of science, invents a way to create a life, and starts making a man. However, he gets disgusted by the ugliness of his creation and calls it a "monster," and when the work is finally finished, he disserts it. To his relief, he soon finds that the monster has gone away, but nevertheless, he comes down with a nervous fever and lies in bed for months. When he has almost recovered, he receives a letter from his cousin Elizabeth, who lives with the Frankenstein's family. In her letter, after showing her deep concern for Frankenstein's health, she relates a story about Justine Moritz.

The story goes as follows. Justine was a favorite child of her father, but "through a strange perversity, her mother could not endure her" (*Frankenstein,* hereafter *Fr,* 40), and the mother treated her very badly after the death of the father. Seeing this, Frankenstein's mother persuaded Justine's mother, Madame Moritz, to let her take in the girl. After that, Justine's brothers and sister died one by one, and Madame Moritz was left alone. Then "the conscience of the woman was troubled; she began to think that the deaths of her favourites was a judgment from heaven to chastise her partiality" (*Fr* 40). Then the "repentant mother" called back Justine to her home (*Fr* 41). However, the mother was "very vacillating in her repentance" (*Fr* 41). She "sometimes begged Justine to forgive her unkindness, but much oftener accused her of having caused the deaths of her brothers and sister" (*Fr* 41). "Perpetual fretting at length threw Madame Moritz into a decline" and finally she died (*Fr* 41). Consequently, Justine came back to the home of Frankenstein and Elizabeth.

I find that the above episode resembles Mrs. Wylder's case in *There and Back.*

Mrs. Wylder's Case in *There and Back*

Mrs. Wylder is married to a man whom she could not respect, and she hates him. She has twin boys and a daughter; her husband favors one of the twins, and it makes Mrs. Wylder hate the boy and love the other twin. However, her favorite one dies, and "Her passion over the death of her son; her constant and prolonged contention with her husband; her protest against him whom she called the Almighty" made her fall ill (*There and Back,* hereafter *TB,* 245). Then her daughter Barbara, through whom God's love shines, takes good care of her, and she begins to recover physically and also spiritually. Just like Madame Moritz, Mrs. Wylder's mental conditions fluctuate through the healing process; her repentance "will be resisted by old habit, resuming its force in the return of physical and psychical health" like "the tug of war" (*TB* 247).

Shelley's insertion of the above Moritz' episode into Elizabeth's letter seems somewhat abrupt. For what purpose did she add the anecdote? Could she have been implying with it that, if there be a God, He is partial to his creations? As for MacDonald, he appears to connect the issue concerning parent's partiality with the argument about God's dealings with humans for the purpose of shedding light on God's impartiality. The evidence for MacDonald's making this connection is found in another episode concerning parent's partiality, that of the old minister Walter Drake in *Paul Faber, Surgeon.*

Walter Drake's Case in *Paul Faber, Surgeon*

Drake lives with his daughter Dorothy. He had a wife and two sons; the boys were healthy and beautiful, but they died of scarlet fever, while his daughter Dorothy, a "poor, sickly girl," "wailed on" (*Paul Faber Surgeon,* hereafter *PF,* 50). Then his wife pined after the sons and also died. Though Drake felt that Dorothy "had always been a better child than either of her brothers," he loved the boys "more that others admired them, and her the less that others pitied her" (*PF* 50). The narrator goes on:

> [H]e did try to love her, for there was a large element of justice in his nature. This, but for his being so much occupied with making himself acceptable to his congregation, would have given him a leadership in the rising rebellion against a theology which crushed the hearts of men by attributing injustice to their God. (*PF* 50-51)

In the above passage, MacDonald suggests that Drake's sense of justice and his making effort to be fair to his daughter would have made him realize that God cannot be partial. Anyone who means to act in accordance to what light he has in his heart would find truer image of God. Also, MacDonald appears to believe that God's justice does not contradict human notion of justice (though of course, His is infinitely bigger than men's, and men's judgment is often selfish[1]. The idea is echoed in a passage in *David Elginbrod,* where David reads this epitaph:

> " 'Here lie I, Martin Elginbrodde:
> Hae mercy o' my soul, Lord God;
> As I wad do, were I Lord God,
> And ye were Martin Elginbrodde.' " (*David Elginbrod* 72)

Concerning this issue, my friend Ms. Kimiko Hashiguchi[2] showed me her deep insight by saying that the above passage sheds light on the Lord's Prayer: "forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us" (Luke 11:4). Hashiguchi went on to say: "We are made in His image, so it is a natural thing for us to be loving and forgiving." Hearing this, I came to think that the spirit of the prayer could be: I shall forgive; I want to forgive. It is Lord, You in me and I in You that are wanting to love and forgive. Oh, how infinite Your love is! Please love and forgive us as we, the image of you, would.[3]

Frankenstein's Monster's Feelings toward His Creator

In *Frankenstein*, the monster says that his creator is unfair in making him ugly and then deserting him. The monster feels that he is treated even worse than the fallen angel, for he was driven "from joy for no misdeed"(*Fr* 66). Persecuted by humans because of his monstrous figure, he eventually becomes angry and desperate, and he finally starts murdering people. After committing murder, the monster says that there was no other way and it was not his fault. He proclaims that he was firstly "benevolent and good," but "misery made [him] a fiend" (*Fr* 66). The monster also insists that it is the creator's duty to make his creature happy, and that only when the creator has done his duty, can the creature fulfill his duty towards others. Then the monster "declare[s] war against" humankind, and, more than all, against the creator who had formed him and sent him "forth to this insupportable misery" (*Fr* 92). Vengeance becomes his objective of living.

Shelley may be implying that God disfavors some people and denies them blessings, and that as for those who are discarded, they have no choice but to degrade themselves in evil thoughts and deeds.

Polwarth and the Monster

In the Wingfold trilogy, there is a character whom people call "monster."[4] It is Polwarth—Wingfold's mentor. He has a dwarf like figure and suffers from asthma. His case resembles Frankenstein's monster's case in some respects.

Polwarth tells Wingfold how God guided him through his life. When a child, his father sent him away to a public school because he was "an eye sore," and he felt that he was an outcast. However, he says:

> I had no haunting and irritating sense of wrong [. . .]—no burning indignation, or fierce impulse to retaliate on those who injured me, or on the society that scorned me. [. . .] I sought even with agony the aid to which my wretchedness seemed to have a right. My longing was mainly for a refuge, [. . .] where I should be concealed and so at rest. (*TW* 83)

Just like Frankenstein's monster, Polwarth thought that he had a right to aid, but he did not become bitter and revengeful as the monster did.

Polwarth goes on to tell Wingfold that he knew he had a friend. It was God, and he "learned to pray the sooner for the loneliness, and the heartier from the solitude" (*TW* 83). However, he says he yet knew "little of the heart" of God (*TW* 84). Then, one day, he came to realize that many things that he despised in others "were yet a part of" himself. He found himself "envious and revengeful and conceited" (*TW* 84-85). He explains: "Once I caught myself scorning a young fellow to whose disadvantage I knew nothing, except that God had made him handsome enough for a woman" (*TW* 85). He saw what a wretch he was, and he imagined that God despised him and was angry with him. To Polwarth, his outward deformity was no more a thing to worry about. His real problem, he found, was the evil in his own soul.

Another Connection between Polwarth and the Monster

In *Thomas Wingfold*, there is an anecdote in which a little boy misunderstands Polwarth's good intentions. This episode appears to reflect two scenes from *Frankenstein*. Firstly, I will show the *Frankenstein* episodes.

Walking in the woods, the monster sees a girl fall into a river, so he helps her. However, her boyfriend thinks that he was assaulting her, and he shoots at the monster. This incident makes the monster more indignant and revengeful (*Fr* 95-96).

In the other episode, the monster, on his way to find his creator, sees a little boy; hoping that such a little boy may not conceive prejudice against his deformity, he seizes on him. Though the monster tells the boy that he does not mean to hurt him, the boy struggles violently and swears at him: "[U]gly wretch! [. . .] . Hideous monster! let me go; My papa is a syndic—he is M. Frankenstein—he would punish you! " (*Fr* 96-97). Seeing that the boy belongs to the Frankenstein family, "towards whom [he] have sworn eternal revenge," and also feeling desperate at hearing the insulting "epithets," the monster kills the boy (*Fr* 97).

The corresponding Polwarth episode is as follows. One day a little boy mocked him, and for a moment, Polwarth flew into a rage, and he caught the boy. However, Polwarth forgave the boy as soon as he saw his terrified look, and he tried to comfort him. Though Polwarth was talking to him kindly, the boy was "so PRE-possessed, that every tone of kindness [Polwarth] uttered, sounded to him a threat," and the boy fled headlong into the pond" to escape (*TW* 85-86).

After the incident, Polwarth tried to "govern [his] temper" and "outwardly," he succeeded (*TW* 86). However, he felt: "I was not that which it was well to be; I was not at peace; I lacked; I was distorted; I was sick" (*TW* 86). One evening, he was, in his heart, "eagerly" and "painfully" trying to persuade the boy "that [he] would not hurt him, but meant well and friendlily towards him," but then again he had to "let him go in despair" (*TW* 86). Just then, with the sweetest waft of air, something visited him: "just went *being*, hardly moving, over my forehead. Its greeting was more delicate than even my mother's kiss" (*Fr* 86). Then a thought dawned upon him: "What if I misunderstood God the same way the boy had misunderstood me!" (*TW* 86). Consequently, he read the Bible with a fresh eye, and he was struck with the Words that Jesus "shall save His people from their sins" (*TW* 87). Polwarth says, "I did not for a moment imagine that to be saved from my sins meant to be saved from the punishment of them. That would have been no glad tidings to me" (*TW* 87).

Both Polwarth and Frankenstein's monster suffer from people's misunderstanding about their good intentions, but the consequences are contrasting. While the monster grew bitterer and more revengeful, Polwarth becomes more aware of the sickness of his own heart. In the agony that comes both from his solitude and from his deep sense of sin, Polwarth meets God, and then he comes to know that God is saving him from his sins and helping him to become what God means him to be.

Juliet Meredith's Case

In contrast to Polwarth, a character with outward beauty is also depicted in the Wingfold trilogy. It is Juliet Meredith in *Paul Faber, Surgeon*. This beautiful woman has a secret in her past, and after moving to a village, she shuns people. Paul Faber takes good care of her when she falls ill, and eventually falls in love with her, and finally they get married. However, when she confesses to him about her past, he gets furiously angry and would not forgive her. Juliet, in utter despair, tries to commit suicide, but she was saved by her neighbor, Dorothy.

In conversation with Dorothy, Juliet says, "I never could get rid of the secret that was gnawing at my life. Even when I was hardly aware of it, it was there. Oh, if I had only been ugly, then Paul would never have thought of me!" (*PF* 260-61). Though she deserves sympathy in many ways, her putting blame on her beauty may sound irrational and ridiculous to the readers. By this episode, MacDonald may be hinting that though people easily attribute misery to one's condition or background, it is no less irrational than to attribute misery to one's beauty like Juliet does.

Leopold's Case

Frankenstein's monster puts all the blame on the circumstance he was in, and he insists that being made ugly and being denied happiness drove him to despair and to murder, and that it is injustice that only he was considered criminal when "all human kind sinned against" him (*Fr* 155). On the other hand, in *Thomas Wingfold,* Leopold does not accuse anyone but himself. His above mentioned narrative that he is not only like the monster but like the maker of it suggests that he acknowledges himself to be responsible for what he did and what he was. He thinks that it is nobody but he that made a monster out of himself. He tells Wingfold that hearing excuses made for him only makes him "feel the more horrid" (*TW* 281). Wingfold thinks that the murdered girl is much to be blamed and that Leopold deserves sympathy; however, in his conversation with Leopold, Wingfold never makes excuses for him. Wingfold says: "If I were to find my company made you think with less hatred of your crime, I should go away that instant" (*TW* 281). Concerning excuses, MacDonald shows his insight in *Paul Faber:*

> We do our brother, our sister, grievous wrong, every time that, in our selfish justice, we forget the excuse that mitigates the blame. That God never does, for it would be to disregard the truth. As He will never admit a false excuse, so will He never neglect a true one. (*PF* 266)

A Shelter: the Monster's Case and Polwarth's Case

Both Polwarth and Frankenstein's monster seek for a refuge amid persecution. Polwarth's shelter episode appears to reflect the monster's episode, but at the same time, these two make a strong contrast with each other.

In *Frankenstein*, the monster finds refuge in a hovel, which is adjacent to a cottage where a poor family lives. Through a chink, the monster observes the family who support each other with love, and he comes to sympathize with them. Yearning to make friends with them, he finally shows himself, but the family is horrified and they drive him away violently. Despairing of hope, the monster becomes bitterly angry and revengeful.

Polwarth also finds shelter, but differing from the monster's case, the shelter is God's hand. Polwarth says, "I used to fancy to myself that I lay in his hand and peeped through his fingers at my foes. That was at night, for my deformity brought me one blessed comfort—that I had no bedfellow"; "This I felt at first as both a sad deprivation and a painful rejection" (*TW* 83). However, as partly mentioned earlier, he learned to pray the sooner and the heartier "from the solitude which was as a chamber with closed door" (*TW* 83).

Demand for Happiness as a Condition

Just as the monster makes it a condition that his creator should make him happy first, so Drake makes a condition in his prayer to God. Drake suffers from poverty, and is ashamed of not being able to pay back his debt to a butcher, and he feels resentments and doubts "not of the existence of God, nor of His goodness towards men in general, but of His kindness to himself" (*PF* 136). The narrator negates this idea by saying that "the being that could be unfair to a beetle could not be God, could not make a beetle" (*PF* 136).

Then suddenly, Drake inherits a large amount of money. Instead of rejoicing, he feels that God was angry with him for "grumbling" "at His dealings with" him, and, therefore, "He has cast [him] off" and "has given [him his] own way with such a vengeance" (*PF* 141). Drake says in conversation with Wingfold, "O my God! how shall I live in the world with a hundred thousand pounds instead of my Father in heaven!" (*PF* 143). Wingfold asks, "Then you would willingly give up this large fortune [. . .] and return to your former condition?" (*PF* 143). Drake answers in the affirmative, but he makes one condition: "Rather than not be able to pray—I would! I would! [. . .]—if only He would give me enough to pay my debts and not have to beg of other people" (*PF* 143). However, a moment later, he cries, "No, no, Lord! Forgive me. I will not think of conditions. Thy will be done! Take the money and let me be a debtor and a beggar if Thou wilt, only let me pray to Thee; and do Thou make it up to my creditors" (*PF* 143). Wingfold exclaims in his heart, "Here [is] victory!" (*PF* 143).

Then one day, Drake takes a walk with his daughter Dorothy. The sun is low and dazzling, and "they seemed feeling their way out of the light into the shadow" (*PF* 158). Drake says: "This is like life," "our eyes can best see from under the shadow of afflictions" (*PF* 158), and Dorothy returns: "I would rather it were from under the shadow of God's wings" (*PF* 158). "So it is!" exclaims Drake, "Afflictions are but the shadow of His wings" (*PF* 158). This insightful daughter goes on to say that nobody is poor "except those that can't be sure of God" (*PF* 161). Then Drake realizes: "It was not my poverty—it was not being sure of God that crushed me" (*PF* 161).

On their way home, they meet Polwarth, and while saluting to each other, Polwarth calls his asthma "a friendly devil" (*PF* 162). Seeing that Drake is surprised at the expression, Polwarth explains by referring to St. Paul's words: "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (*PF* 163). Polwarth continues: "[A]m I not right in speaking of such a demon as a friendly one? He was a gift from God"; "I begin to suspect that never, until we see a thing plainly a gift of God, can we be sure that we see it right" (*PF* 163). Then he asserts that he *is* a happy man (*PF* 163).

On afflictions and happiness, MacDonald also sheds light through an episode of the young hero Richard in *There and Back*. Richard tries earnestly to help a poor suffering girl, and he imagines God to be a tyrant who is "sitting up there in his glory, and looking down unmoved upon her wretchedness!" (*TB* 158). To this, the narrator says:

> Ought he not even now to have been capable of thinking that there might be a being with a design for his creatures yet better than *merely* to make them happy? What if, that gained, the other must follow! (*TB* 158).

John Wesley's Porter Episode

Polwarth is a gate keeper of Osterfield park, and he plays a very important part in Curate Wingfold's spiritual awakening. I found a similar episode[5] concerning John Wesley (1703-1791). John Telford writes in *The Life of John Wesley*[6] (1886):

> When he went to Oxford,[7] Wesley still "said his prayers," both in public and private, and read the Scriptures, with other devotional books, especially comments on the New Testament. He had not any notion of inward holiness, but went on "habitually, and for the most part very contentedly [. . .]." (Telford, Chapter 4)

However, meeting with a gate-keeper changes his life.

> A conversation which he had late one night with the porter of his college made a lasting impression on his mind, and convinced him that there was something in religion which he had not yet found. At first Wesley indulged in a little pleasantry but when he found that this man had only one coat, and that though nothing had passed his lips that day but a drink of water, his heart was full of gratitude, he said, "You thank God when you have nothing to wear, nothing to eat, and no bed to lie upon. What else do you thank Him for?" "I thank Him," answered the porter, "that He has given me my life and being, and a heart to love Him, and a desire to serve Him."[8] (Telford, Chapter 4)

As for Wingfold, he says in the early part of the novel that he gives sermons by only reading what his uncle wrote and left him as legacy. When Polwarth asks him if he ever preached a sermon that "came out of [his] own heart," he answers "No," and goes on to say that it seemed to him unreasonable to preach what "he really knows nothing about" (*TW* 72). Then, as referred to earlier, this gate-keeper tells him how God guided him to the Light, and helps Wingfold's spiritual growth.

Conclusion

In *Frankenstein,* Shelley raises questions about the Creator's responsibility, and she seems to suggest that if there be a God, He treats people partially and that some people are not equally as blessed as others. Her monster asserts that when his creator denies happiness to him, he has no choice but to be bitter and revengeful. While complaints are made against the creator's dealings with the monster, the creator is excluded in the description of what comfort and shelter the monster finds in suffering.

Even though MacDonald sympathizes with Shelley in some respects because it is "right in refusing to believe in such a God" (*TB* 158) as she imagines, MacDonald thinks that her image of God is wrong. Feeling that the monster's desperate cry is shared by many people, MacDonald wants to help them by shedding light on the true image of God. Through his novels, he shows that God loves all his creatures impartially; afflictions are His gifts to make us grow and see better; and amid suffering, God Himself becomes our refuge.

MacDonald asserts: Our real problem is not the situations we find ourselves in, but the sins in our own heart, and misery only comes from our lack of trust in God; therefore, instead of demanding God to make us happy first, we must trust Him and pray that His will be done, and then we shall find ourselves already happy and rich in Him.

God loved us first, and each one is made in His image and given His light in our souls. In following the light, we come to know a truer image of God, who is the origin of the very light within us.

Excursus

MacDonald's Influence on Conan Doyle

In *Inklings Forever*, VI (2008), I showed that MacDonald's *David Elginbrod* influenced Doyle's writing of the Sherlock Holmes stories, especially *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902). I have found another possible connection between the above Holmes story and MacDonald's novel. In *Thomas Wingfold,* George Basombe decides to search a pitshaft into which Leopold says he had thrown his cloak and mask soon after committing murder. The scene of the crime was "not far from a little moorland village," and there he stays at an inn, "pretending to be a geologist out for a holiday" (*TW* 357). He "beg[s] permission to go down one of the pits, on pretext of examining the coal-strata," and begins "to search about as if examining the indications of the strata," and finds the mask (*TW* 357-58).

Similarly, Stapleton, in *the Hound of the Baskervilles*, hangs around the "moor" under the pretext of his interest in botany and zoology, but his purpose is a crime. Stapleton tells Watson, "[. . .] with my strong tastes for botany and zoology, I find an unlimited field of work here, and my sister is as devoted to Nature as I am" (*Baskerville* 75).

Notes

1. Concerning how wrong a human sense of justice could be, MacDonald shows his view in *Paul Faber, Surgeon*. In the story, Faber would not forgive his wife for her past, and feels that it was him that was wronged. The narrator goes: "Ah men! men! gentlemen! was there ever such a poor sneaking scarecrow of an idol as that gaping straw-stuffed inanity you worship, and call *honor*? It is not Honor; it is but *your* honor. It is neither gold, nor silver, nor honest copper, but a vile, worthless pinchbeck" (*PF* 358).

2. Ms. Hashiguchi is a researcher at Kurume University's Institute of Comparative Studies of International Cultures and Societies, and she studies Classical Japanese Literature.

3. The above discussion concerning the Lord's Prayer and Elginbrodde's epitaph gives deeper insight into what MacDonald means through his novel, *What's Mine's Mine*. In my previous study, I examined how Ian and Alister, the hero brothers in *What's Mine's Mine*, try to follow Jesus and learn to forgive their enemies; and how the idea is connected with MacDonald's idea on the Atonement, or At-one-ment (see *George MacDonald's Challenging Theology of the Atonement, Suffering, and Death*). The brothers' understanding Jesus' command to "turn

the other cheek" through obeying it may be illuminated by the above argument.

4. Rachel (Polwarth's niece) in the *Wingfold* trilogy and Richard in *There and Back* are sometimes called "monster" in the stories. The former has a dwarf like figure as her uncle does, and the latter was "web-footed" when he was born.

5. I learned Wesley's porter episode from Mr. Shinichi Takeda's BA thesis: *Study on John Wesley* (presented to the faculty of literature, Kurume University, 2009). He quoted the porter episode from abridged Japanese version of *The Life of John Wesley* by John Telford (translated by Masanobu Fukamachi [Jordan publishing]). Mr. Takeda is now a student in the department of theology of Seinan University. In his recent mail, he writes: "Now I think that the porter's words correspond with the words from the Bible 'Emmanuel—God with us' (Matthew 1:23). Even without food and clothes, the porter is saying that the presence of God is what's most precious and dearest to him. The porter experienced the grace of God Emmanuel, and he leads his life depending only on Him."

6. As far as I know, Telford's above mentioned book was published in 1886, which is after *Thomas Wingfold* was published (1876). George MacDonald might have read or heard of the porter episode somewhere before Telford's book was published.

7. Telford writes that Wesley entered Oxford University in 1720 at the age of seventeen, and that, from 1727 to 29, he "acted as his father's curate" (Telford, chapter 4).

8. Wesley's porter's remark about what he has to thank God for might be reflected in the above mentioned prayer by Drake: "Take the money and let me be a debtor and a beggar if Thou wilt, only let me pray to Thee. [. . .] " In addition, according to Telford, Wesley himself was in debt, and his mother "was much concerned for a kind friend that had lent him ten pounds [. . .]."; "This friend afterwards paid himself out of Wesley's exhibition" (Telford, Chapter 4).

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So You've Always Wanted to Read Charles Williams? "Heaven and Hell Under Every Bush!": The Novel *War in Heaven* as an Introduction to His Prose

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This extended session is provided to give attendees at this Colloquium some sparks to ignite the fire of interest in reading Charles Williams, the so-called "Third Inkling" (after the better known Inklings, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien). While my colleagues in this session are outlining some basic themes in C.W. (his affectionate nickname) and illustrating them with selected poetry and drama, my task is to introduce you to C.W.'s novels. Although you may already be aware that C.W. wrote several theological treatises, biographies, and book-length works of literary criticism, all containing his key ideas of Co-inherence, Substitution and the Ways of Exchange, I am limiting my time here to only one of his seven novels, *War in Heaven.*

As the February issue of "Mythprint" notes, the theme for the July MythCon 41 is "War in Heaven," especially significant as 2010 marks the 80th anniversary of the 1930 publication of Williams' early novel, *War in Heaven.* Many have noted that this first published romance is in many ways "his simplest and most accessible structurally, thematically, and symbolically. Here the romance pattern emerges unambiguously for the first time: the very title suggests the facing-off of opposing forces in a moral conflict, while the Graal is a symbol so familiar that most readers can provide a whole network of associations--both religious and mythic--with little prompting from Williams." (1) (As an aside, in another session of this conference, I will be presenting a detailed examination of the fundamental importance of the quest for the Holy Grail in Williams' life and thought.) Not only is *War in Heaven* C.W.'s simplest and most accessible novel, we have the word on "where to start reading Williams" directly from his dear friend, C.S. Lewis, who states in his Preface to "Essays Presented to Charles Williams" that "those who find the poetry too difficult would be much better advised to turn to the novels." (2)

Before I tip you off about the beauties and dangers of the world found in *War in Heaven*, let me share a brief testimonial! I first discovered Williams in the library of Houghton College as a sophomore English major. I checked out *War in Heaven* and started it in the early evening. I was immediately sucked in to the "cops and robbers" back and forth of the good guys-bad guys plot and was transfixed by the juxtaposition of its realistic setting with its mystical and occult occurrences. In other words, as a novel, the work is flawed but gripping. I couldn't sleep until I had finished reading it! I now know that I am not the only one to have had this experience, for Naomi Mitchison wrote in *Time and Tide* that it was "the sort of book one must read in a day, for it is unbearable to go to sleep before it is finished!" (3)

Critics have all said that Williams's form is "artificial and stylized" and "lacks realism." Further, according to John Heath-Stubbs, there is also and especially in the earlier novels "a certain tawdriness in the presentation of evil." (4) Heath-Stubbs continues: "the underlying theme of all his novels is the quest for some symbol of spiritual power. The good characters learn to humble themselves before it, submitting themselves to it, while others seek to pervert it to personal and selfish ends. This theme is presented most simply in *War in Heaven* which, though not the best, is in many ways the easiest to understand of Charles Williams's works. The quest is the traditional one for the Holy Grail; but the setting is contemporary England. The Grail is a chalice in a country church, outwardly indistinguishable from any other chalice. The seekers include, on the one hand, an ordinary English archdeacon, a young poet, and the Duke of the North Ridings, a romantic Roman Catholic aristocrat; and on the other, a group of occultists, and Sir Giles Tumulty who represents the modern 'Faustian' intellect." (5) At the risk of revealing too many details of this book, let me read you C.W.'s biographer's summary of the plot:

> In the novel, an old silver cup rests unguarded in a cupboard in the Fardles village church. Sir Giles Tumulty, archaeologist and expert in folklore, Gregory Persimmons, retired publisher and man of occult knowledge, whose son now runs a publishing firm in considerable dread of his father, and a Levantine who keeps a chemist's shop in a poor part of London, have all traced the history of the Grail to modern times and the possibility that it is in Fardles church. The rector, Archdeacon Julian Davenant, himself then picks up the trail from a manuscript in Persimmons's office, where at the book's opening a body has just been found, apparently murdered.
>
> Attempts begin to buy, exchange or steal the chalice. Strangers break into the church. Gregory Persimmons tries to become intimate with the Archdeacon. He lends a holiday cottage to Rackstraw, a member of his son's staff [at the publishing office], with his wife and small son. A Roman Catholic Duke and a poet from Persimmons's staff come on the scene, and Tumulty has business with the chemist's shop. The chalice is stolen, the Archdeacon steals it back, and a car chase through the country ends in victory by a margin of minutes at the Duke's London house.
>
> Gregory Persimmons wants a child as much as the Grail, and delights Rackstraw's small son by 'playing games' of seeing distant places and events in liquor held in the cup. Were Rackstraw's wife to be killed or paralyzed, Rackstraw would leave the boy with Gregory for a time--an opportunity for experiments with the power of the cup.
>
> Every character in the book becomes included in the struggle for the Grail. As each person becomes more involved, his desires and instincts become stronger and clearer to him--to worship, use, possess, protect, or destroy. Only the Archdeacon more and more desires to serve the Grail in the Grail's own way of life. Police and local authorities join in. Persimmons has earlier annoyed the police, and an inspector now links his activities at Fardles with the dead man found in his son's office. The story moves to a climax in the chemist's shop, where 'everything makes haste to its doom', and the Grail's consummation in love at the celebration of Communion in Fardles with the church Grail. (6)

This accounting of the surface plot neglects to mention the key role played by the mythical character and guardian of the Grail, Prester John. Just when the Archdeacon tracks down the Grail to the Greek, the Jew and Persimmons, who have recaptured the Grail from the Archdeacon and the Duke, the reader is transfixed by the horror of evil, for this trio of evil men want to use the Archdeacon as a human "altar" to assist in bringing about Persimmons' vision of Adrian as a demonic sacrifice. The Archdeacon is tied down on the floor, and the Grail is filled with blood and placed on his chest. In this setting, the other three men summon the souls of Adrian [the little boy], the murdered Pattison [the corpse under Adrian's father's desk in the first scene of the book], and Kenneth Mornington, the poet.

At this point, according to Dennis Weeks:

> Williams uses a rather clumsy *deus ex machina* to stop Persimmons's perverted mass, and, as his gothic nature comes to the surface, Williams describes a "faint glow round the [Grail]" that fades and seems to concentrate as if a "heart were beating" inside the cup. Suddenly there is a "terrific and golden light" with "blast upon blast of trumpets." (244) Simultaneously, a figure appears from the turmoil and fiercely announces: "I am John, . . .and I am the prophecy of the things that are to be and are" (245-6) The true keeper of the Grail, as tradition would have us believe, is Prester John, a mythical priest-king. It is Prester John who saves the Grail from becoming a vehicle for Persimmons's vision to succeed. With Prester John's arrival, both groups of characters are placed in a true relationship to the Grail. They are now seen as either their brother's keepers or not, depending, of course, upon their affirmation or negation of images as the paths of Coinherence dictate. . . . Adrian, the young boy who has not been seduced by Persimmons's failed mass, is restored to his parents when he recognizes Prester John's goodness and purity. . . .Adrian's Coinherence is brought about by the act of Substitution. . . . Prester John takes the Chalice and returns to heaven with the Cup. The Archdeacon falls dead on the steps of the altar, perhaps consumed by the passion of the mass and his own Coinherence. . . . Both figures have proved that they are, in fact and deed, their brother's keepers. The final summation of *War in Heaven* is that by acts of Substitution, keeping our brother, we move closer to Coinherence. Williams has used the convention of an occult murder mystery with an eerie supernatural ointment scene and black mass to present his second step [towards actualizing Coinherence]. (7)

Occult murder mystery? Black mass and supernatural ointments painstakingly applied in dark rituals? Why in the world are we recommending that those interested in reading Charles Williams begin with this novel? The answer lies in the awareness of Williams' radical vision of unity "Under the Mercy." Yes, there is indisputable evidence that C.W. belonged to the secret Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, an offshoot of the more disreputable Order of the Golden Dawn. Williams came under the influence of the Catholic mystic and occultist, Arthur Edward Waite, and as a young man deeply studied Waite's "The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal" (1909) and "The Secret Doctrine of Israel" (1913). However, although Huw Mordecai quotes Francis King as stating that Waite's "heterodox version of the Golden Dawn system is the key without which the deepest and inmost meaningfulness of Williams can never be unlocked," he goes on to say that such a conclusion "needs to be treated with caution." (8) Although it is plain that the central symbols of several of C.W.'s novels, as well as certain arcane terms like *arch-natural, the Omnipotence, Messias*, derive directly from A.E. Waite, Mordecai points out that the way Williams handles these symbols reveals "that he takes great care not to attach too much importance to them in and of themselves." (9) This is seen overwhelmingly in Williams' portrayal of the character of the Archdeacon.

In contrast to Gregory Persimmons, who seeks the Grail in order to exercise power over other people, the Archdeacon has taught himself to relinquish his private will and his private desires and to move instead to the will of God. He believes his business is not "to display activity, but to wait on the Mover of all things" (Ch. 17) So profound is his acceptance of this controlling will that, when in the chemist's shop he feels himself abandoned by that power, he merely says to himself again, "as he so often said, 'This also is Thou,' for desolation as well as abundance was but a means of knowing that which was All." (Ch. 17) This is a recurring "maxim" in Charles Williams, the statement "This also is Thou; neither is this Thou"--a compact formulation of the affirmation that all images show forth something of the Godhead but that trying to contain God in any earthly image is mere idolatry. Applied to the Grail itself, Williams draws interesting contrasts between the Archdeacon, Mornington the poet, and the Catholic Duke.

Kathleen Spencer draws out these intriguing comparisons:

> If the Archdeacon is the accomplished man of God, the saint and mystic, the Duke with his ancient family loyalties to the Roman Catholic Church represents religion as tradition, and Mornington represents religion as high romance. Thus the Duke not only sees the Graal as the holiest of relics, but also associates it with the whole embattled and glorious history of his family as Roman Catholic nobility in England who, since the days of the Tudors, have been perpetually suspect and out of favor. Mornington, on the other hand, associates the Graal with visions of great poetry (both liturgical and romantic), Arthur's chivalry, and the Prince Immanuel--"a grave young God communicating to a rapt companionship the mysterious symbol of unity . . . The single tidings came to him across romantic hills; he answered with the devotion of a romantic and abandoned heart" (Ch. 10) (10)

Through the character of the Archdeacon, who is a contemplative mystic, Williams is able to transcend the philosophical dualism usually found in "supernatural thrillers." According to Gavin Ashenden, the Archdeacon fulfills his function, which is to "redraw conventional religious lines of dualism, in a variety of exchanges." (11) He quotes the following as a notable example of the "put-down" of evil:

> "Sorry?" the Duke cried. "After that vile blasphemy? I wish I could have got near enough to have torn his throat out."
>
> "Oh, really, really," the Archdeacon protested. "Let us leave that kind of thing to Mr. Persimmons."
>
> "To insult God--" the Duke began.
>
> "How can you insult God?" the Archdeacon asked. "About as much as you can pull His nose." (12)

The moral here is that "evil has no being in itself, no separate and opposite status. . .here he draws in the whole of magic into the economy of the monist metaphysic." (13) Besides the mystical unitive vision of the Archdeacon, Williams expresses his unitive theology through the figure of Prester John. He is, according to Ashenden, "only a messenger and yet the effective conduit of all magic and holiness. He identifies himself by stating, 'I am the messenger only, . . . [b]ut I am the precursor of things that are to be. I am John, I am Galahad, and I am Mary; I am the Bearer of the Holy One, the Grail, and the keeper of the Grail . . . *[A]ll magic and holiness is through me."* [italics added] (14) The further consequence of this unitive theology is that Williams confronts the fact of evil and God's supposed permission of it. Listen carefully to the following discussion among the three protectors of the Graal:

> "There is no use in thinking of it and weighing one thing against the other. When the time comes, He shall dispose as He will, or rather He shall be as He will, as He is."
>
> "Does He will Gregory Persimmons?" Kenneth asked wryly.
>
> "Certainly He wills him," the Archdeacon said. "Since He wills that Persimmons shall be whatever he seems to choose. That is not technically correct perhaps, but it is that which I believe and feel and know."
>
> "He wills evil, then?" Kenneth said.
>
> "Shall there be evil in the city and I the Lord have not done it?" the Archdeacon quoted. (14)

This issue of how Williams "integrates" the problem of evil into his unitive metaphysic is explored by his introducing the mystical theology of Mother Julian of Norwich through the Archdeacon's devotional reading. Williams was familiar with the *Revelations of Divine Love,* or *Showings* of Mother Julian and refers to them in an essay entitled "Sensuality and Substance," written for the journal *Theology.* (15) Gavin Ashenden explains the link further:

> If there is an integration between body and soul, then there may also be some integration between what we understand as good and evil. This integration is one of the more powerful aspects of Julian's visions. Williams would have had this in mind as he created a clear link between the Archdeacon and Mother Julian. He has him turn to her mystical visions as he prepares for his own death: "The Archdeacon had left off looking out of his window and was reading the Revelation of Lady Julian close by it." The descent into darkness that threatens to overwhelm and destroy him is similar to the experience of utter darkness and paralysis that preceded Julian's visions.

As Williams found in Mother Julian both inspiration for his Archdeacon's trial by occult fire . . . and an endorsement for the conjunction of sensuality and substance, so he also drew from her *Showings* an eschatological determinism by which evil and good are reconciled. She asks in her *Showings* the same question that Mornington and the Duke ask of the Archdeacon: "And so in my folly I often wondered why, through the great prescient wisdom of God, the beginning of sin was not prevented. For then it seemed to me all would have been well . . .[J]esus answered in these words and said: "Sin is necessary but all will be well, and all will be well, and every kind of thing will be well." (16)

Indeed, the restoration and consummation of all things is gloriously portrayed at the end of this novel when all the main characters go to church at Fardles. Prester John is the celebrant at the Mass and Adrian the child serves. His mother, Barbara Rackstraw, hears at the end of the Gospel reading the promise of our Lord, "Behold, I make all things new," which readers recognize as one of Williams' favorite Biblical texts. The Archdeacon, having just gone through a horrific assault of evil, experiences the knitting up of all things--"rite and reality, word and sacrament, vision and act--as a unity, or *the* Unity, rather," as Tom Howard so eloquently details. (17) Howard continues, movingly:

> It is as though the Cloud of Glory, like the cloud that accompanied Israel in the wilderness, has come very close to the characters in this tale and then has passed on its way, leaving them chastened, sobered, even transfigured. And this, of course, is exactly what any experience ought to be to us in any case, Williams always implies. The Mass, since it is the exact diagram of how that Glory touches our ordinary experience, is an appropriate climax to the events we have witnessed in *War in Heaven.* (18)

I hope these bits and pieces of my personal experience reading Charles Williams, as well as the insights I have shared from various critics, will serve to persuade you that the universe of C.W. is worth exploring. In *War in Heaven* Williams experiments with certain elements that he does not repeat again. As Kathleen Spencer concludes:

> Never again, for instance, will we find so much explicitly Christian, let alone Anglican, material: no other important characters are clergymen, no other church service is presented except the Christmas Day service in *The Greater Trumps.* Also abandoned is the explicit detective story element: we find no more policemen or detectable public crimes like murder. From here on, when we meet these elements, they will be in more subtle forms and more complex narrative surroundings. (19)

So hesitate no more! Read *War in Heaven* and be plunged into a metaphysical experience like no other. As you acquire a taste for Charles Williams, you will discover his other novels, his plays, and, if you persevere, the "clotted glory" of his Arthurian poetry.

Notes

1. Kathleen Spencer, *Charles Williams* (Mercer Island, Washington: Starmont House, Starmont Reader's Guide 25, 1986), p. 45.
2. C.S. Lewis, "Preface," in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966 pb), p. vii.
3. Quoted in Alice Mary Hadfield, *Charles Williams: An Exploration of his Life and Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 96.
4. John Heath-Stubbs, *Charles Williams* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1973), p. 28.
5. Ibid., pp. 28-29.

6. Alice Mary Hadfield, op. cit., pp. 95-96.
7. Dennis Weeks, *Steps Toward Salvation: An Examination of Coinherence and Substitution in the Seven Novels of Charles Williams* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1991), pp. 37-38.
8. Huw Mordecai, "Charles Williams and the Occult," in *Charles Williams: A Celebration*, edited by Brian Horne (Herefordshire, England: Gracewing/Fowler Wright Books, 1995), pp. 268-269.
9. Ibid., p. 269.
10. Kathleen Spencer, op. cit., p.47.
11. Gavin Ashenden, *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2008), p. 100.
12. Charles Williams, *War in Heaven* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), p. 135.
13. Gavin Ashenden, op. cit., p. 100.
14. Charles Williams, *War in Heaven,* op. cit., p. 204.
15. *Theology* (May, 1939), reprinted in *Charles Williams: The Image of the City and Other Essays*, selected by Anne Ridler with a Critical Introduction (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 68-75.
16. Gavin Ashenden, op. cit., p. 103.
17. Thomas Howard, *The Novels of Charles Williams* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, reprinted in 1991), p. 107.
18. Ibid., p. 107.
19. Kathleen Spencer, op. cit., p. 49.

So You've Always Wanted to Read Charles Williams? An Introduction to His Plays

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Charles Williams (1886-1945) was a prolific writer of prose, poetry, and plays. His prose includes seven novels (written from 1930 to 1945), histories of the Holy Spirit (*The Descent of the Dove*, 1939) and evil spirits (*Witchcraft*, 1941), and literary criticism (*The Figure of Beatrice*, 1944).[1] Williams also wrote plays and poetry.

The Inklings

The two most renowned Oxford Christian writers or Inklings are C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) and J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973). Although Charles Williams was only an Inkling from 1939 to 1945, he has been called "the third Inkling" because of his prodigious literary output.

Of the Inklings, only Charles Williams was a playwright or dramatist. C.S. Lewis, however, was well known for his radio broadcasts. During World War II, C.S. Lewis's BBC radio broadcasts (that later became *Mere Christianity*) made his voice widely recognized, second only to that of Winston Churchill.[2] In the 21st Century, it is the works of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien that have come to be dramatized. C.S. Lewis's novels, *The Great Divorce* and *The Screwtape Letters,* have been performed as church drama or on stage by Anthony Lawton. *The Screwtape Letters* are just now being performed off Broadway, with Max McLean as Screwtape. Two of *The Chronicles of Narnia, The Lion the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, and *Prince* Caspian, have been made into full-length films, and the third, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader,* is in production. J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy has also been made into full-length films. *The Return of the King* won eleven Academy Awards; this is the only time in history that a fantasy film has won the Academy Award for best picture.[3] Because their works have been dramatized, Lewis and Tolkien are well-known to modern audiences. Charles Williams, the "third Inkling," is not.

Charles Willliams' *Collected Plays*

Most of Charles Williams' plays have been collected into a single volume, *Collected Plays,* which was reissued as a paperback in 2005.[4] *Collected Plays* contains two festival plays (*Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury* and *Judgement at Chelmsford*), six church dramas (*Seed of Adam, The Death of Good Fortune, The House by the Stable, Grab and Grace* or *It's the Second Step, The House of the Octopus,* and *Terror of Light*) and one radio broadcast play (*The Three Temptations*).

Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury

Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury is probably Charles Williams' most famous play. It was commissioned for the Canterbury Festival and was presented at Canterbury Cathedral in 1936. The Canterbury Festival was a prestigious venue. T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, presented at the 1935 Canterbury Festival, commemorated the martyrdom of Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170. [5] T.S. Eliot was a great poet of the 20th Century and won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1948.[6] Dorothy Sayers'

The Zeal of Thy House was presented at the 1937 Canterbury Festival.[7] Sayers is renowned for her Lord Peter Wimsey detective fiction. Sayers took on learning Italian and translating Dante's *Divine Comedy* from Italian to English after reading Charles Williams' *The Figure of Beatrice.* Dorothy Sayers rivals Charles Williams as a dramatist. Her cycle of 12 plays about the life of Christ, *The Man Born to be King*, was broadcast on BBC radio from 1941 to 1942.[8]

Why do I like Charles Williams' play *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury*? Cranmer was the author of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*. We use the *Book of Common Prayer* for worship in our church in Philadelphia. Both Charles Williams and C.S. Lewis were Anglicans who used the *Book of Common Prayer* for worship in their churches.

Cranmer became Archbishop of Canterbury during the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547). King Henry VIII was obsessed with having a male heir and had six wives altogether. *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury* dramatizes the key events in Cranmer's life. Cranmer was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533 and immediately annulled the marriage of Katherine of Aragon to King Henry VIII.[9] Katherine was Henry's wife for 24 years. Of their children, only one daughter, Mary, survived. Anne Boleyn became Henry's second wife and queen in 1533. The family of Anne Boleyn had secured Cranmer's appointment as the Archbishop of Canterbury. Anne Boleyn had one daughter, Elizabeth. King Henry VIII died in 1547, and Edward VI became king. Edward was the son of Jane Seymour, Henry's third wife. Cranmer became a leader of the English reformation, and the first *Book of Common Prayer* was published in 1549. Edward VI died in 1553, and Mary (the daughter of Katherine of Aragon) became queen. She restored Roman Catholic worship to England. From 1553 to 1555, Cranmer was tried for treason and heresy. He recanted several times. On the day of his execution (March 21, 1556), Cranmer withdrew his recantations and was martyred by being burned at the stake.

The two main characters in the play Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury are Cranmer and a skeleton. Charles Williams refers to the skeleton as a *figura rerum*, the "shape of things."[10] I wonder if Williams had H.G. Wells' 1933 science fiction novel, *The Shape of Things to Come*, in mind. For Cranmer. the "shape of things to come" is martyrdom and death. A skeleton is a symbol of death. In several of Charles Williams' plays (*Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury, Seed of Adam*, and *Judgement at Chelmsford*) a figure apparently representing Evil or Death ultimately appears, in the light of eternity, as the instrument of Good.[11] The skeleton is first introduced in a type of prologue:[12]

> "Fast runs the mind,
> and the soul a pace behind:
> without haste or sloth
> come I between both.
> There blows a darkening wind
> over soul and mind:
> faith can hear, truth can see,
> the jangling bones that make up me:
> Till on the hangman's day
> and along the hangman's way,
> we all three run level,
> mind, soul, and God or the Devil."

It is ambiguous whether the skeleton represents Christ or devil, or both. Later in the dialogue Cranmer asks the skeleton, "What are you called?"[13] The skeleton replies,

> "Anything, everything;
> fellow, friend, cheat, traitor...
> My name, after today's fashion, is latinized
> into *Figura Rerum*. Anne prized me at first;
> later she found my bones and called me a cheat.
> King Henry found me a servant, and then a traitor..."

At one point the skeleton refers to himself as the backside of Christ:[14] "...You shall see Christ, see his back first -- I am his back." Williams obviously has Moses in mind (Exodus 33:23).

The House by the Stable* and *Grab and Grace, or It's the Second Step

To get to know Charles Williams as a playwright, a start would be to read three of his plays -- *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury*, *The House by the Stable* (a Christmas nativity play), and *Grab and Grace or It's the Second Step* (the companion play and sequel to *The House by the Stable*).

The House by the Stable is my favorite Charles Williams play. It makes Williams "accessible to the masses", or at least the Christian masses. The play is suitable for production as church drama and as reader's theater (which we did for our Inklings group in Philadelphia). The Christmas nativity play *The House by the Stable* has six characters: Man, Mary, Joseph, Hell, Pride, and the archangel Gabriel. Man is the innkeeper who gives Mary and Joseph lodging in his stable. Man is an everyman who has forgotten where he has lost the jewel of his soul. Hell and man's Pride throw dice to gamble for man's soul. Of course, Hell's dice are loaded! The archangel Gabriel intervenes and makes the dice game fair. Man wins and finds the lost jewel of his soul, which was around his neck the whole time.

Grab and Grace, or It's the Second Step is the companion play and sequel to *The House by the Stable*. Man, his Pride, Hell and the archangel Gabriel are again characters. This time, however, Pride is different:[15]

> "I am not pride,
> indeed ... I have forgotten all that.
> I am the old woman on the new way:
> look at me, a demure modest self-respect;
> Nothing spectacular or dishonourable about me."

The two new characters in *Grab and Grace* are personifications, Faith and Grace. Faith is a brisk and sophisticated woman, while Grace is a mischievous, irrepressible boy. Hell tries to drown Grace in a lake, while Pride tries to trap Faith in a sack. Both Grace and Faith escape. What is the second step? Man must overcome his Pride, even if she is only a "demure modest self-respect."

Descent Into Hell

To get to know Charles Williams as a playwright, one could also read his novel *Descent into Hell*. One of the two main characters, Peter Stanhope, is a poet and playwright. The poet and playwright Charles Williams even used "Stanhope" as a pen name.[16] The story in *Descent into Hell* revolves around the production of a play. All of the characters are judged by their reaction to this play.

Thomas Howard has likened *Descent into Hell* to the Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex*: "a sort of perfect sample of what all art strives for - namely, the shaping of every single element (in the case of stories. it would be elements like words and actions and setting) into one, seamless whole so that it is impossible to pick out lumps..."[17]

Descent into Hell contains some wonderful descriptions of the play production process. Of the play's producer, Catherine Parry: "No one has destroyed more plays by successful production. I sometimes wonder - it's wrong - whether she has done the same thing with her life ... she relies too much on elocution and not enough on poetry."[18] She "mastered creation, and told it what to do."[19] There are also wonderful comments about poetry: "What does one need to say poetry? What but the four virtues, clarity, speed, humility, courage?"[20] Stanhope is so humble, that he muses that perhaps the theatrical company should have performed Shakespeare's *Tempest* instead of his drama.[21]

The two main characters in *Descent into Hell* are Peter Stanhope (his "hope stands") and Lawrence Wentworth (his "worth went"). Stanhope is the poet and playwright, while Wentworth is a writer of prose (military history). Stanhope is on an "ascent" toward Exchange and Co-Inherence, while Wentworth is on a "descent into hell," toward solitude and incoherence. Stanhope is a burden-bearer, who carries the burden of Pauline Anstruther's fear, while Wentworth refuses to aid Adela Hunt. Stanhope demonstrates Charles Williams' "Doctrine of Substituted Love," while Wentworth prefers the false Adela, a succubus he has created in his mind. One might say that Wentworth demonstrates a "Doctrine of Substituted Lust," the evil counter-part to the Doctrine of Substituted Love.

Descent into Hell is populated with a host of spiritual characters: Pauline Anstruther's "doppelganger", her ghostly twin, her fear of meeting herself (and death?); the ghost of a suicide (at the site of Wentworth's house as it was being built); the ghost of Pauline's distant ancestor, John Struther, a Protestant martyr of the Reformation. For Charles Williams, "the past still lives in its own present beside our present."[22] One final spiritual character in the book is Wentworth's succubus, the false Adela that he has created in preference to the real Adela.

The drama of Lawrence Wentworth's descent into hell is truly scary. Wentworth's "mind reduced the world to diagrams, and he saw to it that the diagrams fitted."[23] He "wished Adela to belong to him... His mind made arrangements."[24] "It's good for man to be alone" (a complete inversion of Genesis 3).[25] "He desired hell."[26] Wentworth "dreamed, more clearly than ever before, of his steady descent of the moon-bright rope" down into the black hole of hell.[27]

There is a chain of burden bearing in *Descent into Hell*. Burden bearing is a particular theme of Charles Williams, an extension of Christ's command to "bear one another's burdens." Stanhope bears Pauline Anstruther's burden, the fear of meeting her "doppleganger." Pauline then bears the burden of the two ghosts, first the suicide and then her ancestor John Struther, who is about to be martyred. On the other hand, Wentworth refuses to help the true Adela in her moment of horror. He refuses to "bear her burden."

Descent into Hell needs to be read in a particular way:

(1) Repetitively (more than once)

(2) Not rapidly. Read it slowly, not like Harry Potter!

(3) With references in hand. Tom Howard's *The Novels of Charles Williams* serves as a good set of marginal notes.[28] A good dictionary is also helpful. For example, the title to Chapter 1 of *Descent into Hell* is "The Magus Zoroaster." A magus can be one of the Magi; a magician, sorcerer, or astrologer; or a Zoroastrian priest.[29] Zoroastrianism's principal beliefs are the existence of a supreme deity, Ahura Mazda, and a cosmic struggle between a spirit of good, Spenta Mainya, and a spirit of evil, Angra Mainyu.[30] *Descent into Hell* turns out to be a tale about the cosmic struggle between good and evil. Later on in the story, it is revealed that the phrase "the Magus Zoroaster" is part of a quotation from Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*: "The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child, met his own image walking in the garden."[31]

Conclusion

To get to know Charles Williams as a playwright, read three of his plays (*Thomas of Canterbury, The House by the Stable*, and *Grab and Grace or It's the Second Step*). Also read one of his novels, *Descent into Hell*, in which one of the main characters (Stanhope, Charles Williams?) is a poet and playwright.

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22. *Descent into Hell*, p. 25.

23. *Descent into Hell*, p. 35.

24. *Descent into Hell*, p. 40.

25. *Descent into Hell*, p. 86.

26. *Descent into Hell*, p. 50.

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29. *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd. ed., unabridged. Random House: New York, 1987, p. 1158.

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"Learning to Speak 'The Tongue of the Holy Ghost:'
An Introduction to the Poetry of Charles Williams"

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I would hazard a guess that most people coming to Williams find him by way of his prose—either his novels, which Sue has introduced to you, or his theological writings such as *The Descent of the Dove*, *The Forgiveness of Sins*, and *He Came Down From Heaven*. Certainly this was my own experience. I first read *The Descent of the Dove* in 1991, and then I was bowled over by *The Greater Trumps* when I picked it up in a bookstore in 1992. I am not sure I have gotten up yet.

It is entirely possible that many of those who find Williams by way of his prose go on to his plays, several of which Woody has described. It is less likely, but still possible, that those who have encountered his prose will go on to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest his Arthurian poetry cycle. If you have begun to experience Williams' prose and plays, you already have some of the equipment necessary to attempt the poetry. You have some acquaintance with Williams' dense, colorful and metaphoric style, which is, in the words of literary critic Charles Hefling, "an acquired taste" (Hefling 28). (I sometimes feel that reading Williams is like reading a stained glass window. Not *looking* at one, *reading* one!) You also have some idea of the theological and literary themes which reoccur constantly in Williams' work. What I hope to do here is twofold. First, I want to give you just a few pieces of general advice as you sort through the Arthurian poems in *Taliessin Through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*. Secondly, I want to talk to you briefly about one of Williams' most accessible poems, "Bors to Elayne: On the King's Coins." By showing you some of these themes at work in that poem, my hope is that you will a) want to read more and b) have some idea of how to go about doing so. So—let us plunge headfirst into the "clotted glory."

The first thing which will help you make your way through Williams' poetry is some familiarity with the legends of King Arthur and their literary interpretation throughout English history. I am not suggesting this has to begin as dissertation-level familiarity. I read *Taliessin Through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars* for the first time with no other background than the musical "Camelot," and I not only survived, I was hooked. However, I would actually suggest more background than that—chiefly because "Camelot" and its main source, T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*, spend little time on the quest of the Holy Grail and much more time on the love story between Lancelot and Guinevere, and for Williams these proportions are exactly reversed. In White, though the quest for the Grail is described (and in that, at least, you will have more knowledge than I did from "Camelot" alone!), it functions as a tragic interruption to, and complication of, the love story (White, *Once and Future King*, 436-470; see also *The Book of Merlyn,* 167-176). But the Grail is, for Williams, central, and although the adulterous love story is an important sign of the corruptions creeping into Logres (more on Logres in a minute) it is for Williams a minor corollary to the main theme.

Ideally the best preparation for Williams is to have read Malory's Arthuriad, which remains the classic statement of the Arthurian legend and which informs Williams either as a fellow-traveler or as an antagonist at nearly every turn. In addition, Williams was closely acquainted with Tennyson's nineteenth-century retelling of the legend, *The Idylls of the King*. I would not advise you *not* to read Malory—it is one of the great works of English prose and one which, until the last sixty years or so, most any educated person would have read in the course of their liberal arts education. I would also not advise you not to read Tennyson, But you might just want to start on Williams before you have finished all 700 pages of Malory and 250 pages of Tennyson. In that case, I would recommend you take a look at some works of literary criticism often published with Williams' poetry under the unforgettable name

Arthurian Torso. The first is Williams' prose explanation of the legend, "The Figure of Arthur," which he died before completing (Williams and Lewis, 189-274). Unfortunately Williams stopped before he actually got to Malory, or Tennyson for that matter, but he spends quite some time on the general medieval context of the story and on Malory's Welsh and French predecessors. While *The Figure of Arthur* suffers from Williams' usual cryptic theological asides, it gives you some idea of the particular bees in Williams' bonnet—chiefly the roles in the story of romantic love (which in Williams is treated much more broadly than by focusing on the love between Lancelot and Guinevere) and by the Eucharist via the Grail.

The second helpful piece of literary criticism is C. S. Lewis' commentary on Williams' poetry, "Williams and the Arthuriad" (Williams and Lewis 277-384). This gives a helpful order for reading the poetry (Williams and Lewis 280) as well as commentary by Lewis on each poem. This commentary combines astute observations on Williams' theological points and poetic devices with helpful connections to the sources of the Arthurian legend. Lewis does assume, and thinks that it is perfectly legitimate of Williams to assume, a fairly extensive background on the part of the reader. He compares Williams to T. S. Eliot in this:

> An example of difficulties arising from Unshared Background would be *The Waste Land*. If you have never read Dante or Shakespeare certain things in that poem will be obscure to you. But then, frankly, we ought to have read Dante and Shakespeare; or at least the poet has a right to address only those who have done so. And if the only result of a first reading of *The Waste Land* were to send you to Dante and Shakespeare, your time and money would have been very well spent. Similarly with Williams. He assumes that you know the Bible, Malory, and Wordsworth pretty well, and that you have at least some knowledge of Milton, Dante, Gibbon, the *Mabinogion*, and church history (Williams and Lewis 373).

Finally, do not underestimate the introduction to this entire Arthurian conglomerate by Mary McDermott Shideler (Shideler 5-13) which is useful for a quick rundown of terms, names, and emphases—or indeed Williams' own preface to *The Region of the Summer Stars* (Williams and Lewis 117-118), which is the clearest statement of the cycle's plot Williams ever made. It also helps to know from the beginning that the cycle is largely written from the perspective of a minor character in Tennyson and in some of the Welsh Arthurian legends, the king's poet Taliessin, who "as a child had been found floating in a coracle down the River Wye, and was adopted by a tribe of pagan Welshmen. They nurtured him to manhood when, hearing tales of the City and Empire of Byzantium, he set forth to find them" (Shideler 5.) So it is worth remembering that central to Williams' re-telling is the figure of the poet, and that in many ways Taliessin serves as a stand-in for Williams—just as Stanhope may be a stand-in for Williams in *Descent Into Hell*.

In addition to having some idea of the story of King Arthur, it also helps to have some idea of Williams' particular theological emphases.[1] (Woody and Sue have touched on a few of these already.) Chief among them, and never far from most discussions of Williams, is the idea of co-inherence and exchange. Hefling calls the word a "kind of Williams trademark," and defines it—in relation to the Trinity—as

> the principle both of the incomprehensible mystery of the three personal Individualities who nevertheless exist as one God, and of the plain, if neglected truth that human being is being-from and being-in other persons. In the Trinity, co-inherence is an eternal fact; in humankind, a natural fact. When those two facts meet the result is a third, supernatural fact, the co-inherence of the kingdom, of Christendom, of the Church (Hefling 18).

And Lewis adds:

> "He saved others, himself he cannot save" is a *definition* of the Kingdom. All salvation, everywhere and at all times, in great things or in little, is vicarious. The courtesy of the Emperor has absolutely decreed that no man can paddle his own canoe and every man can paddle his

> fellow's, so that the shy offering and modest acceptance of indispensable aid shall be the very form of the celestial etiquette (Williams and Lewis 306).[2]

The idea that we can only bear each others' burdens, and that we participate in Christ as so doing, runs through all Williams' work. At the end of his church history *The Descent of the Dove* he proposed the formation of a modern "Order of the Co-Inherence" which would emphasize this doctrine:

> The apprehension of this order, in nature and in grace, without and within Christendom, should be, now, one of our chief concerns; it might indeed be worth the foundation of an order within the Christian church. Such a foundation would, in one sense, mean nothing, for all that it could do is already exposed and prepared, and the church has suffered something from its interior organizations. About this there need be little organization; it could do no more than communicate an increased awareness of that duty which is part of the very nature of the church itself. But in our present distresses, of international and social schism, among the praises of separation here or there, the pattern might be stressed, the image affirmed (Williams, *Essential Writings,* 148).

Williams later drew up a constitution-which-was-not-a-constitution for this group, recommending that its members make a formal "act of union" with each other and that they study "the Co-inherence of the Holy and Blessed Trinity, of the Two Natures in the Single Person, of the Mother and Son, of the Communicated Eucharist, and of the whole Catholic Church" and "on, the active side…methods of exchange, in the State, in all forms of love, and in all natural things, such as childbirth" (*Essential Writings* 149). Furthermore, the group was to associate itself primarily with the feasts of the Annunciation, Transfiguration, Trinity Sunday, and All Souls Day (the day after All Saints' Day which is intended to celebrate the entire Christian community—the great "cloud of witnesses.")

I dwell at this on some length because it is so central to Williams' Arthuriad. First and foremost, co-inherence is central to the Eucharist, which is central to the Grail story. Furthermore, It is for this purpose of divine exchange that Logres exists. Williams describes Logres as "Britain regarded as a province of the Empire with its center at Byzantium" (Williams and Lewis 117). Given the theological resonance for Williams of the terms "Empire" and "Byzantium," Logres represents both the historical kingdom of Britain as ruled by Arthur, and a potentially holy kingdom of redeemed community brought into being with the ultimate goal of achieving the Holy Grail (Shideler 9; Williams and Lewis 286).

But for a number of reasons this quest fails. Lewis in several places intimates that Williams thought it was bound to fail, for "every Logres fails to receive the Grail and sinks back into a mere Britain: Israel, Athens, medieval Christendom, the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, the Enlightenment"(Williams and Lewis 364). In Lewis' *That Hideous Strength*, which attempts (among other things) to mediate Williams' Arthurian legend to the world, Lewis has Dimble comment that "Something we may call Britain is always haunted by what we may call Logres. Haven't you noticed that we are two countries? After every Arthur, a Mordred; behind every Milton, a Cromwell: a nation of poets, a nation of shopkeepers: the home of Sidney—and of Cecil Rhodes" (Lewis 369).

Why does Logres fall? Chiefly it does so through the fallout from two disordered loves. The first is the incestuous relationship of Arthur with his half-sister Morgause of Orkney (in his defense, he does not know she is his half-sister at the time), which produces his illegitimate son Mordred. The second is the adulterous love of Lancelot and Guinevere, which gives Mordred something solid to make a fuss about in his efforts to divide and inherit the kingdom.[3] Both of these relationships become co-inherence gone wrong. As Shideler says about Lancelot and Guinevere,

> Their sin consists not so much of adultery as of the disordering of their relationships to the Kingdom of Logres. The facts of their position decree that they can love, but not become lovers with impunity. When they do become lovers, they pervert their relation to the King and his Kingdom, and because they are among his subjects, they also pervert his relations with all his

> subjects, and as a result, Logres cannot achieve the Grail. Further, because the web is sundered, the two lovers can no longer love each other (Williams and Lewis, 11-12).

Other disordered loves which touch on Logres also make their appearance in the poems, chiefly those of Queen Morgause for the knight of the Round Table Lamorack, and of the Saracen (i.e. Muslim) knight Palomides for Queen Iseult, who is not only already married to King Mark of Cornwall but also involved in an adulterous relationship with Tristram.

However, even as Logres goes down in flames, Williams gives us some examples of places where holy community and co-inherence are still being formed. Taliessin himself gathers, or finds himself surrounded by, a company of followers and servants who practice the way of exchange. As Lewis describes Taliessin's household:

> It is something subtly less than a religious order. It has not a rule, only 'a certain pointing': it has no name, no formal admission. It is also, I suspect, the most autobiographical element in the cycle. Something like the Company probably came into existence wherever Williams had lived and worked….There is nothing to distinguish them from people outside the company except the fact that they do consciously and joyously, and therefore excellently, what everyone save parasites has to do in some fashion. From one point of view they are merely good slaves, good soldiers, good clergy, good counselors and the like. But their goodness in each vocation springs from the fact that they have taken into their hearts the doctrine of the Exchange (Williams and Lewis 325-326).

In addition to Taliessin's household, properly ordered love and co-inherence are seen primarily in two relationships. One is the relationship of Taliessin himself—who is vowed to remain celibate—with the princess Blanchefleur or Dindrane, sister of the knight Percivale, who is destined to join a convent (Williams and Lewis 321, 335). While great affection springs up between the two of them, it remains a chaste affection; it is, as Lewis says, "a meeting of two unicorns, two celibates between whom nothing but 'intellectual nuptials' are at any stage in question" (Williams and Lewis 322; see also 41). In Shideler's words, they "are also separated, but their separation is the means of their union. They are bound by their mutual love to incarnate Love in the style that is appropriate for them…They affirm the sexual character of their love precisely by assigning it the role where it will contribute supremely to the web of their loves for each other, the Kingdom of Logres, and God" (Williams and Lewis 12). In describing the poem where they part—Dindrane to her convent to follow the Way of Negation, Taliessin back to the life of the court and the Way of Affirmation—Lewis describes them as "spiritually wedded, not despite the difference of their vocations but in spite of it" (Williams and Lewis 335). They function as symbolic opposites to Lancelot and Guinevere throughout.

The second properly ordered relationship is the marriage of Bors, another knight of the Round Table, to his true love Elayne: "They had set love in an order appropriate to them…when they married: the perfect expression of love can be by means of either sexual intercourse or virginity" (Shideler 12).[4] Two poems in the cycle focus specifically on the relationship of Bors and Elayne. In the first, "Bors to Elayne: The Fish of Broceliande," the two of them make their acquaintance and he offers his love to her in the words, "Everywhere the light through the great leaves is blown on your substantial flesh, and everywhere your glory frames" (Williams and Lewis 44). It is to the second, however, that I want to now turn.

The poem opens with Bors coming home from a season at court just as his wife Elayne is giving out bread to their workmen. This produces from Bors an extended mediation on the co-inherence and exchange shown by this act. He describes how "my fieldsmen ate and your women served" this bread, and how he himself is "come again to live from the fountains and fields of your hands" (Williams and Lewis 60)—focusing especially here on Elayne's opposable thumbs, as being one of the things which distinguishes humans from other animals.

Bors sets this picture of exchange—"bread of love for your women and my men; at the turn of the day, and none only to earn; in the day of the turn, and none only to pay"—against the court he has just come from: "organization in London, ration and rule and the fault in ration and rule, law and the flaw in law" (60-61). Williams valued the life of the City as a metaphor of the kingdom, so the fact that there is organization and law in London is not necessarily a bad thing. But into that organization has come a new feature which Bors distrusts. King Arthur has begin to coin money, and the third stanza describes these coins, which feature the head of King Arthur and the picture of a dragon, as they "scuttle and scurry between towns and towns" and "carry on their back little packs of value" (61). As Lewis comments on this poem, "Bors does not question the utility of the new coins; but he has had bad dreams about them" (317). While the king thinks he can "tame dragons to carriers," Bors is afraid that houses will "under their weight creak and break" (61)—that they will destroy Logres. He pleads with Elayne, who as "mother of children" is already a sworn participant in the way of exchange, to "redeem the new law" (61).

We might imagine that Elayne asked Bors for further details; at any rate, he describes to her the meeting where the coins were introduced. Sir Kay, who is "wise in economics" (62)—and who, if you know Arthurian legend, you know is Arthur's older and somewhat clueless foster brother—is thrilled by the new coinage, which will "cover the years and the miles and talk one style's dialects to London and Omsk" (62). Essentially, he foresees globalization. For Kay, money becomes *the* one medium by which exchange between people can now take place—and be controlled.

Taliessin, however, is not convinced. Again, as Lewis puts it in his commentary, "The danger which is hidden from the economist Kay is very clear to the poet Taliessin. Coins are symbols: and being a poet he knows much more about symbols than Kay. A symbol has a life of its own. An *escaped* metaphor—escaped from the control of the total poem or philosophy in which it belongs—may be a poisonous thing" (317). Taliessin says, "Sir, if you made verse you would doubt symbols. I am afraid of the little loosed dragons. When the means are autonomous, they are deadly; when words escape from verse they hurry to rape souls…We have taught our images to be free; are we glad? Are we glad to have brought convenient heresy to Logres?" (62).

The Archbishop, somewhat surprisingly, takes a conciliatory position. He explains the true doctrine of exchange. Despite the fact that "might may take symbols and folly make treasure, and greed bid God, who hides himself for man's pleasure by occasion, hide himself essentially" (62)— the fact that humans may really sin and screw things up—it still "abides—that the everlasting house the soul discovers is always another's; we must lose our own ends; we must always live in the habitation of our lovers, my friend's shelter for me, mine for him" (62-63). The Archbishop allows that, rightly employed, money may, in fact, facilitate this. Money is, in his words, *"a* medium of exchange" (63; italics mine.) Like anything else, it may be used or abused.

Bors, however, is not convinced, and wants Elayne to restore his faith in co-inherence. (One unresolved question about this poem is who is actually speaking for Williams; Bors and Taliessin, or the Archbishop?) Bors has come to "kiss each magnanimous thumb, muscles of the brain, functions of the City." He trusts that at least in Elayne, and in his relationship to Elayne, proper exchange will still take place (though he admits to a fear that "the Council had turned you into gold" [63]). He recognizes, as he says "what without coinage or with coinage can be saved?" (63), that money may in fact be necessary. Lewis comments, "The city by reason of its legitimate complexity, does really need instruments such as coinage which themselves need to be continually redeemed if they are not to become deadly" (318). As I frequently remind my evangelical seminary students when they study the early church, a church cannot long survive without structure and accountability, even if there is always a danger of accountability turning into bureaucracy. But Bors, who (like a good evangelical) fears that "compact is becoming contract," ends the poem with a plea to Elayne to pray for a good ending to this ominous trend: “Say—can the law live? Can the dead king’s head live? Pray, mother of children, pray for the coins, pray for Camelot, pray for the king, pray” (63).

So; it is all there in this poem—a description of Williams’ ideal of co-inherent community, an explanation of the forces pushing against this ideal, and a foreshadowing that all will not end well for this particular historical community. There is much that this poem does not capture, of course. (Hefling calls Williams “a great phrasemaker” full of “aphorisms and epigrams,” and I tend to agree [28]). Some of my own favorite moments involve the conversion of Palomides, who decides to give up both his hopeless love of the already two-timing Queen Iseult, and his overly spiritualized and aggressively monotheistic faith (Shideler 11), and be baptized into the Mercy. He begins by wanting to convert to Christianity on his own terms and in recognition of his achievements: “I determined, after I saw Iseult’s arm, to be someone, to trap the questing beast that slid into Logres out of Broceliande through the blank between the queen’s meaning and the queen” (Williams and Lewis 82). But he eventually realizes after numerous setbacks that he will not get anything he wants by demanding it, and must instead submit. He agrees at last to abandon his quest of this mysterious beast and turn aside for the humiliation of baptism: “It was true I should look a fool before everyone; why not look a fool before everyone?” (85).

There is also the wonderfully bureaucratic, practical, and scheming poem from the perspective of Arthur’s son and nephew Mordred, left in charge of the Kingdom and shortly to bring about the Round Table’s end, who dismisses the Grail airily with “My father dwelled on the thought of the Grail for his luck, but I can manage without such fairy mechanism. If it does prove to be, which is no likely thought, I will send my own dozen of knights to pull it in” (166). (Haven’t we met Mordred before in the halls of Congress?) And there is the brief but cutting description of Guinevere, after an entire poem where Taliessin has contemplated what she—what all women—should be in Logres, and what Guinevere will in fact fail to be: “The king’s poet came to the entrance; the queen said, with the little scorn that becomes a queen of Logres: “Has my lord dallied with poetry among the roses?” (146).

Finally, there is the poem which ends the second volume, “The Prayers of the Pope,” where the “young Pope…Deodatus, Egyptian-born” (168) is seen in prayer for a community, a co-inherence, and a glory which is already passing away. Lewis compares the poem’s recreation of the troubles in Logres as Arthur’s reign ended to the real-life situation which presented itself to Williams at the beginning of World War II: “’The lights are being put out all over Europe” (364).[5] The Pope is another representation of order and the City, and an emblem of the co-inherence Williams desired to see throughout Christendom. He reminds us as he prays to Christ that there is yet a great day of co-inherence coming, brought by the Christ who defeated death and who offers himself in the Eucharistic exchange: “Thou hast harried hell, O Blessed, and carried thence the least token of thyself. Thou hast spoken a word of power in the midst of hell, and well are thine Acts everywhere qualified with eternity. That Thou only canst be, thou only everywhere art; let hell also confess thee, bless thee, praise thee, and magnify thee forever” (178).

Though I could go on, I will stop there. I encourage you to discover the rest for yourself. And my prayer for you is that Williams’ examination of the depths of human sin, and the heights of redeeming grace, will assist you to—as the Pope prays for his Christian community, the “unknown elect— ” to “take the trick of the weak devils with peace, and speak at last on the coast of the land of the Trinity the tongue of the Holy Ghost” (Williams and Lewis 175-176).

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[1] Besides Hefling's own study, I strongly endorse, as a guide to Williams' theology and spirituality, the brief bibliography of Williams interpretations which Hefling gives on p. 32-33.

[2] For more on this, see not only Hefling (particularly 68-90, 146-163, 204-230), but *Outlines of Romantic Theology* throughout.

[3] All of this is a great deal clearer in Malory and White than it is, at least at first glance, in Williams.

[4] For those who already know something of the Arthurian story, be aware that this is *not* the same Elaine—spelled Helayne by Williams—who is the mother of Galahad.

[5] This quotation is, in its original form ("The lamps are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our time") attributed to Sir Edward Grey before World War I, and it was much repeated in the run-up to World War II.

Hannah Woodard

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The Shieldmaiden of Rohan

In spite of, or perhaps due to, their few appearances in “The Lord of the Rings,” J.R.R. Tolkien’s female characters have sparked some of the hottest debate surrounding his works. Of these women, Éowyn is easily the most complex. She is hard to classify as she struggles to find her place in a male-dominated world which affirms bravery and conquest in battle. Éowyn must also find a balance between the masculine and feminine personality traits which she embodies, and like many of the main characters, she also must battle her desire for power, renown and glory won in battle.

Tolkien holds traditional views of women’s roles and what femininity should look like, but he still presents women as equal to men, though he believes they are definitely different. He believes that men and women should maintain a balance of feminine and masculine qualities, although just how much of each is appropriate is determined by their gender. Though Éowyn finds her glory in battle and plays a key role in the fate of Middle Earth, she is not ultimately fulfilled until the passing of Sauron and the Third Age and her acceptance of a new more peaceful power as a healer, paralleling the new peace which has come to Middle Earth.

Éowyn belongs to a culture in which the highest good is glory found on the battlefield, a world closed to women. As a woman, Éowyn’s role is in the home, acting as a hostess and watching over the needs of her failing uncle, the king. She performs both of these roles faithfully, but much to the torment of her soul. From the moment she is introduced, she is described as “grave and thoughtful.” The inner struggle to find her significance in the culture of Rohan has weighed her down with concerns of a woman far beyond her years.[1] Above all, Éowyn fears “a cage,” a symbolic representation of the gender chains of her culture.[2] Éowyn claims the title of “shieldmaiden of Rohan” in a measure to escape these constraints.[3] Though she does not forsake her womanly duties, such as nursing Théoden or acting as hostess to Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli,[4] Éowyn has not fully come to terms with her femininity. In their first encounter, Aragorn perceives her as “fair and cold, like a morning of pale spring that has not yet come to womanhood.”[5]

Éowyn twice is asked to stay behind when the men ride off to fight, left behind as the guardian of her people. The first time, Éowyn complies, watching the men ride off at a distance, longing to be with them.[6] The second time, she pleads to come with Aragorn as he takes the paths of the dead, but is rejected once more.[7] Éowyn finally takes matters into her own hands. In a subversive act of defiance, she disguises herself as a soldier, takes on the name “Dernhelm” and rides to battle. She is motivated not only by her desire to prove herself and find renown, but also is driven by love for her king and a passionate devotion to her country. While not following the letter of the law which dictated that she mind the duty to her country by staying behind with her people, Éowyn did heed the spirit of her responsibilities by becoming a warrior on her people’s behalf.[8] By riding to battle, she does her king, country and world a far greater service than if she had stayed behind.

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[1] Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers.* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978), 152.
[2] Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King.* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978), 68.
[3] Ibid., 67.
[4] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers,* 168.
[5] Ibid., 152.
[6] Ibid., 165.
[7] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King,* 68,
[8] Chance, Jane. “The Lord of the Rings: Tolkien's Epic.” *Understanding The Lord of the Rings: The Best of Tolkien Criticism.* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Books, 2004.), 224.

In her defeat of the witch king, Éowyn plays a crucial role in Middle Earth's destiny. Fate is a major theme in Tolkien's work; however, the "Fate which governs all here is not arbitrary... it is to some extent determined by individual acts of will." [9] Through the individual actions of characters, fate can become reality. Éowyn certainly has a strong will, which leads her to take drastic actions such as riding off to war and choosing to face the Witch-king, ending in the defeat of one of Sauron's most powerful forces.[10]

Interestingly, while Éowyn's battle with the captain of the Nazgûl is the height of her accomplishments as a warrior, her feminine identity is never more important than at that moment. Glorfindel's prophecy states that the witch-king will not fall "by the hand of man;" however, Éowyn is able to defeat him, crying "but no living man am I! You look upon a woman."[11] By emphasizing this distinction – the word "man" in the prophecy is very specific and literal – Tolkien furthers his position that men and women are fundamentally different. Yet Éowyn, though not the same as a man, is certainly just as capable of great deeds. Tolkien remarks that "like many brave women, [she] was capable of great military gallantry at a crisis."[12] To Tolkien, Éowyn is not an anomaly. She performs a crucial role in a desperate time, as he believes many women are capable of doing and have done.

At first glance, Tolkien seems to backtrack on this empowerment of women in the ending which he gives Éowyn’s character. He seems to overlook Éowyn’s gender in the time of crisis, but when the dire dilemma passes, she must come to terms with her feminine identity and what that means for her role in society. Recovering from her wounds in Gondor, she meets Faramir, who is also healing from battle. In essence, it appears that Éowyn is “tamed” by Faramir. Her warrior spirit, which Tolkien has previously fulfilled and exalted, diminishes, and Éowyn is ready to accept her femininity. This raises alarm in many critics. Candice Fredrick and Sam McBride even go so far as to say that “Tolkien’s choices for a would-be woman warrior [are] submit to your allotted role as wife, or die.”[13] However, this accusation is perhaps a bit hasty. Tolkien thinks of Éowyn as neither a “dry nurse” nor a true soldier or “amazon,” so she cannot truly fit into either of these proposed choices.[14] Éowyn’s grief does not end until after the earthquake which, unbeknownst to Éowyn and Faramir, signals the downfall of Sauron and the end of the war. Éowyn’s heart changes at this point and not before. Now that the need for battle has passed, her desire is gone, not stifled. Marion Zimmer Bradley suggests that Éowyn “achieves the passing of the 'Heroic Age'” in her rebellion against the gender norms of her culture.[15] In doing so, she has come of age, and can now become a woman. Her need to identify herself as a warrior has passed, along with the passing of Sauron and the Heroic Age.

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[9] Spacks, Patricia Meyer. "Power and Meaning in Lord of the Rings." *Understanding The Lord of the Rings: The Best of Tolkien Criticism.* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Books, 2004.), 59.

[10] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King,* 143.

[11] Ibid., 439, 141

[12] Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 323.

Nor does Éowyn simply submit to her culturally designated role as a wife. At her turning point, she embraces not a domestic role, but an active career as a healer. Healers possess a kind of power, but not a destructive version. Healing is a gift associated with royalty. Nancy Enright suggests that Éowyn's "personal healing involves... a movement from a desire for power and domination (i.e. as a queen) to the desire to heal and to help things grow."[16] It is a turning away from a power which brings death toward a power which brings life. Tolkien does not present this as submission or a position in any way lower than those of the novel's men. He affirms this shift to a subtler gentler power most clearly through Éowyn's male counterpart, Faramir, who – though accomplished in battle – will not be king.

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[13] Frederick, Candice, and McBride, Sam. “Battling the woman warrior: females and combat in Tolkien and Lewis.”

[14] Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 323.

[15] Bradley, Marion Zimmer. “Men, Halflings, and Hero Worship”. *Understanding The Lord of the Rings: The Best of Tolkien Criticism.* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Books, 2004.), 82.

Faramir's story parallels Éowyn's in many ways. Both have grown up in entirely male families, having lost mothers at an early age, and so have felt pressure toward the "masculine" warlike kind of power.[17] For Faramir, the embodiment of pure masculinity has been his brother, Boromir. Boromir's ambition and desire for power, unchecked by humility, lead him to try to seize the Ring, which ultimately leads to his destruction. [18] Faramir rejects the Ring and symbolically this type of power, repressing his strength with humility and discretion, and is spared Boromir's fate.[19] Éowyn and Faramir have both been wounded by battle, just as they have been marginalized and oppressed by their warlike cultures in which they have no real place. With the destruction of the Ring, Faramir feels a glimmer of hope and an inexplicable joy for Éowyn and himself. Now is the time for the triumph of a different kind of power.[20]

If Éowyn has been punished for anything, it is not for her desire to participate in masculine endeavors, but her motivations for doing so. Wood presents Éowyn as a character flawed by only one thing: imprudence. He accuses her of "seeking merely her own good rather than the good of friends and the larger community".[21] This is an overstatement. Éowyn clearly has more than her own glory in mind when she faces the Witch-King. Only someone motivated out of such great love for her king and father figure could face the horrors she sees in battle. When Théoden falls, only Éowyn remains to fight the Nazgûl. She is "faithful beyond fear; and [s]he wept, for [s]he had loved [her] lord as a father."[22]

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[16] Enright, Nancy. "Tolkien's Females and the Defining of Power." *Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature.* Winter 2007.), 109.

[17] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King,* 296, 439.

[18] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring,* 514-517.

[19] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers,* 366-367.

[20] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King,* 297

However, Wood's accusation of imprudence can be supported to some extent; this character flaw is more evident outside of the battlefield. Enright argues that "though (Éowyn's) action is truly heroic... her experience of power must deepen through renunciation of it."[23] Éowyn asks, "Shall I always be left behind when the Riders depart, to mind the house while they win renown?" She wishes, once Théoden is healed, to live her life as she pleases. Aragorn rebukes her, pointing out that "few may do that with honor," and he urges her to complete her charge to watch over Rohan.[24] Aragorn reminds Éowyn that renown should not be the supreme goal of valorous deeds nor their measure. Éowyn does not accept this, accusing Aragorn of simply saying these things because she is a woman. However, Aragorn is not speaking only with regard to her sex here. He truly believes what he says. Instead of riding to war, he is about to take the Paths of the Dead, a pathway appointed him, but one that will lead to no great glory or renown should he fail.[25] To Éowyn, this is incomprehensible, even madness. This desire for acknowledgement is perhaps a contributing factor in her great sadness and unrest in the Houses of Healing. Though she is healed in body, she says that she will sicken again if she has nothing to do. She feels devalued by her injury which now keeps her from battle, saying, "It is not always good to be healed in body. Nor is it always evil to die in battle... Were I permitted, in this dark hour I would choose the latter."[26] Though she has proved herself quite emphatically on the battlefield, she is not satisfied. Éowyn is deeply troubled by an unknown darkness, a shadow perhaps representing the sin of the over-desire of power.

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[21] Wood, Ralph C. *The Gospel According to Tolkien.* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.), 80.

[22] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King,* 141.

[23] Enright, 106.

[24] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King,* 67.

The destructive nature of prideful ambition is one of Tolkien's overarching themes in the epic. Éowyn's desire may seem more innocent than the desire of a character like Boromir for the Ring, but really, it is not much different – perhaps only by a matter of scale. Boromir's design for the Ring is cloaked with good intentions, but ultimately, he wants the Ring for the power which it can bring him. Éowyn is never presented with the Ring, but one can only imagine that she might be tempted to wield it to do great deeds and serve her people, but ultimately, to win honor and recognition from a culture which does not value her in the way she desires.

Éowyn's worship of the powerful warrior image is concentrated in her infatuation with – and what one might call worship of – Aragorn. She is not in love in the romantic sense, though she believes so; unknowingly, she sees him as the warrior and king, who is the ideal of her country, and everything she cannot be. Aragorn perceives this, noting that

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[25] Ibid., 68.

[26] Ibid., 292.

"in me, she loves only a shadow and a thought: a hope of glory and great deeds, and lands far from the fields of Rohan."[27] Éowyn repeatedly uses the familiar "thee" and "thou" with Aragorn, who gently but firmly insists on returning her addresses with the polite and more formal "you".[28] Éowyn's realization that she can never be with Aragorn, because of his faithfulness to Arwen, is also a symbolic denial of her value as a warrior and the loss of an opportunity for renown. This passion of unrequited "love" also contributes to Éowyn's darkness and internal struggle.

Faramir perceives this struggle and feels pity for Éowyn. He sees her as a strong and valiant warrior and treats her as an equal. [29] He gently reminds her that she has already won great renown, and he reveals his love for her. He begs her to forget her desire for Aragorn and for power and to accept love based on her inner worth, not on her deeds or position in life, but based on her essence – a large part of which is her identity as a woman. Finally confronted with the reality of her situation, "the heart of Éowyn changed, or at last she understood it."[30] She declares: "Behold! The shadow has departed! I will be a shieldmaiden no longer, nor vie with the great Riders, nor take joy only in the songs of slaying. I will be a healer, and love all things that grow and are not barren... No longer do I desire to be a queen."[31] She has given up the sin of the over-desire of glory and power, and her winter passes.

Not only is this turn of Éowyn's character a turning away from her sin and gloom, but it is an embracing of power of another kind. It is the paradoxical power that Tolkien believes comes with humility and love. Nancy Enright remarks that true power, according to Tolkien, is found only through renouncing dominance and giving freely of oneself, thinking of others more highly than oneself. Aragorn, Faramir and Gandalf are all cited as examples of characters who exemplify this type of selflessness and enjoy greater power through it, as opposed to those characters who selfishly cling to self-glorification and ambition such as Boromir, Saruman and Denethor.[32] Enright also suggests that the women in the novel are perhaps more naturally inclined toward this giving attitude. Galadriel is a good example, refusing the power of the Ring though it is obviously a temptation and deciding to allow her land to diminish instead of becoming a dark and powerful queen.[33]

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[27] Ibid., 175.

[28] Kocher, Paul H. *Master of Middle Earth: The Fiction of J. R. R. Tolkien.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972.), 156.

[29] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, 293.

[30] Ibid., 299.

[31] Ibid., 300.

Éowyn, however, does not find the transition to this state of mind easy. In fact, she can only undergo this change with guidance from Faramir. According to Jennifer Neville, this relationship highlights a larger theme in the novel; major characters who have a counterpart of the opposite sex, in general, fare much better than characters who do not. Aragorn and Arwen, Galadriel and Celeborn, Sam and Rosie, and Faramir and Éowyn have much happier endings than Saruman, Denethor, Boromir, Gollum and even Frodo.[34] In fact, every character, with the exception of Gandalf, who has a chance to take the Ring and refuses it, is a member of a romantic pair. Those who desire the power of the Ring – and who are often destroyed by it – are on the whole lonely male characters. Tolkien's point is not simply advocacy of marriage and romantic relationships. Romance is hardly an emphasized point of the novel, and characters like Faramir and Sam are unconcerned with romantic love at the moments when they are presented with the Ring. Their romantic counterparts are symbolic of a crucial element of their character which allows them to overcome the Ring’s power. Tolkien believes that an individual must possess both masculine and feminine traits, working in harmony, to be a balanced and healthy person. This balance manifests itself in a way which allows the character to understand the opposite gender and therefore engage in a successful romantic relationship.

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[32] Enright, 109.

[33] Ibid., 109.

[34] Neville, Jennifer. "Women." *Reading The Lord of the Rings: New Writings on Tolkien's Classic.* (New York : Continuum, 2005.), 107

In Éowyn, Tolkien presents his readers with a character who is marginalized by her culture, but rises above her circumstances to achieve an astonishing victory in a different manner than expected. The dissatisfaction she feels with her newly found power and identity as a warrior sparks her inner struggle with her femininity, paralleling other characters’ struggle to find balance between their self-motivated power and the humbler, quieter power which comes through selflessness. Éowyn must come to terms with her womanhood, but it is more important that she forsake her struggle for power and find significance in bringing life and renewal to Middle Earth, completing the redemptive theme which runs throughout the book.

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C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*: To Thine Own Self Be True

Elena Casey

C.S. Lewis may not be Ovid, yet his ability to pen a novel-length retelling out of the *Metamorphoses*' brief story of Cupid and Psyche suggests the aid of some ancient literary muse. Lewis's final and arguably most profound novel, *Till We Have Faces*, entreats us to envision the classic love story of Cupid and Psyche from the perspective of Psyche's ugly stepsister, Orual. Yet this story is no *Wicked*: Orual struggles with a less-than-healthy share of jealous possessiveness toward her sister and bitter hatred toward the gods. As we follow Orual's development throughout her life in the barbaric kingdom of Glome, Lewis weaves a tapestry of self-discovery and divine revelation that, when unveiled, may enrapture even the most atheistic of minds. Literary critics have tried to turn Lewis's novel into an explication of the psychology of women (Bartlett), a statement upon the alien nature of Christians in the world (Mattson), a study of beauty, justice and the sublime (Arnell), a *Metamorphoses*-esque tale of transformation (Hood), and an exemplar of Augustinian systems of faith (Watson). However, the way in which Lewis artfully loops motifs, characters, themes, and repetition into *Till We Have Faces*, twisting them together with the novel's autobiographical style, best leads the reader to understand the self-illuminating nature of divinity, revealing that none of us can understand divine intentions until we lay our own intentions bare before our eyes.

The motifs of the veil, dreams, and visions all contribute to the self-revealing search for divinity by reflecting and, at times, heightening Orual's level of self-awareness throughout the novel. For example, the image of the palace of the god of the Grey Mountain comes to Orual like a vision in the early morning but vanishes when Orual doubts its presence and becomes fearful of what accepting the palace's presence would reveal about her. This is evidenced when Orual states, "What would it do to me for my blasphemies and unbelievings?...I must ask forgiveness of Psyche as well as of the god...if what I saw was real. I was in great fear. Perhaps it was not real...Then...almost before I stood on my feet, the whole thing was vanished" (Lewis 132). Orual loses her ability to see the palace of the god because of her fear of revealing herself, of admitting her errors and making herself vulnerable before her sister and her sister's divine lover. This denial of truth ultimately leads Orual to destroy her sister's happiness with the god. Instead of admitting what she has done, Orual chooses to hide herself, using the veil as a way to hide both her physical and spiritual malformations. Orual narrates, "I never told Bardia the story of that night at all...Hitherto, like all my countrywomen, I had gone bareface; on those two journeys up the mountain I had worn a veil because I wished to be secret. I now determined that I would go always veiled" (180). Though the reader may believe Orual's veil to be a source of her power, the veil actually inhibits her self-understanding and only its removal allows for self-revelation. One such moment arrives in Orual's brief understanding with Bardia's widow shortly after his death. By admitting to Bardia's widow that she, too, loved Bardia, by making her intentions known, Orual is able to loosen her hatred for the other woman and let her veil fall (262). However, the instant she feels threatened and vulnerable, she draws back into herself and resumes her veil. Therefore, Orual's veiling corresponds with hiding her true intentions, whereas her unveiling corresponds with self-discovery.

Other occasions in which the removal of Orual's veil dictates self-revelation and exposure come in dream sequences. In the first dream, Orual's dead father comes with the intention of revealing her reflection to her. When Orual makes to put on her veil, her father disallows it and leads her downward through a series of Pillar Rooms until he forcefully sets her in front of a mirror. Until this point, Orual has maintained a bitter revulsion for the goddess, Ungit. However, upon looking at herself unveiled, Orual realizes, “It was I who was Ungit. That ruinous face was mine. I was that Batta-thing, that all-devouring womblike, yet barren, thing. Glome was a web—I the swollen spider, squat at its center, gorged with men’s stolen lives” (Lewis 276). In this vision, by acknowledging her true nature and setting aside her veil, Orual is able to understand the basis of her hatred for Ungit as a problem within herself. This realization is made complete by Orual’s final vision, in which the gods bring her before them to read her complaint. Orual documents, “Hands came from behind me and tore off my veil—after it, every rag I had on” (289). After her exposure, Orual is made to read her accusations against the gods. Her exposure, both physical—as represented by the removal of her veil and other garments—and spiritual, allows her to understand the intentions of the gods, to be answered. This is shown by the quote, “The complaint was the answer. To have heard myself making it was to be answered” (294). Thus, Lewis makes clear, through his association of the motifs of the veil and dreams with the progression of Orual’s self-revelation, that the only way to understand the intentions of divinity is to understand one’s self.

In addition to the novel’s motifs, the juxtaposition of Orual’s character with Psyche’s illustrates the evolution of Orual’s corrupted intentions and, therefore, demonstrates Orual’s inability to decipher divine will until she becomes conscious of her own. To refer again to the palace vision, whereas Psyche can clearly see the god’s home, Orual cannot see anything beyond a meadow in the mountains and a dirtied Psyche. Orual asks Psyche, “Where is the palace? How far have we to go to reach it?” to which Psyche replies, “But this is it, Orual! It is here! You are standing on the stairs of the great gate” (Lewis 116). While Psyche can see and dwell within the home of the god due to her purity, her uncorrupted intentions, Orual cannot see the palace simply because of her own denial of its existence. As with Bardia's wife, Orual closes herself off from Psyche's explanation, except in this case, Orual uses her belief that Psyche is mad—rather than a physical veil—to mask her inner turmoil about not being able to see nor understand Psyche's home and passion for her god. After hearing Psyche talk of her god as "My lover. My husband. The master of my House." Orual says, "Oh, I can't bear it" and thinks, "Those last words of hers...set me on fire...Then (like a great light, a hope of deliverance, it came to me)...Madness; of course. The whole thing must be madness" (122). Here, the reader may believe Orual's assumption of Psyche's madness. However, the fact that Orual purposefully misconstrues what happened in the above meeting to Bardia and the Fox disproves this interpretation. If Orual truly believed Psyche to be mad, she would have no need for concealing what she experienced. Thus, Orual uses madness to hide her own refusal to comprehend what Psyche tells her about the god, creating a divide between herself and Psyche, a divide between knowing divinity and denying it.

As an overarching theme of the book, Orual's profane love, a love tainted by unknowing selfishness to the point where it no longer resembles true love, as compared to the divine love Psyche and the god represent, acts as the root cause for Orual's refusal to acknowledge the intentions of the divine. Earlier in the novel, Fox tells Orual, "To love, and to lose what we love, are equally things appointed for our nature. If we cannot bear the second well, that evil is ours" (Lewis 86). While the reader may, initially, perceive Orual's love for Psyche as pure, Orual fails to grasp the self-sacrificing nature of love, a failure that perverts her own love for Psyche into a harmful and jealous possessiveness, which ultimately drives her to ruin Psyche's life. In her zeal for proving to Psyche that her god is naught but a deceitful brute, Orual manipulates Psyche into holding a lantern to the god's face as he sleeps by threatening both of their lives, saying, "Swear...you will this very night do as I have commanded you; or else I'll first kill you and then myself" (165). The baiting of Psyche by her love for Orual is a perverse form of love and Psyche recognizes this, replying to Orual:

> You are indeed teaching me about kinds of love I did not know... I am not sure I like your kind better than hatred. Oh, Orual—to take my love for you, because you know it goes to my very roots and cannot be diminished by any other newer love, and then to make of it a tool, a weapon...an instrument of torture—I begin to think I never knew you. (165)

As Orual cannot recognize love as anything more than possessing a person's affections, she cannot grasp its divine nature of self-sacrifice, embodied by Psyche's giving of herself to the god.

The repetition of the phrase "you also shall be Psyche" after Orual's perverted love causes the god to cast Psyche out of his home and wander the earth also connects to the essentiality of knowing oneself before one can know divinity by acting as the backdrop for Orual's self-realization through the rest of the novel (Lewis 176). At first, Orual misunderstands the god, thinking that she should become a "beggarwoman" like Psyche, that she should endure the same physical punishment (176). Later in the story, Orual reinterprets the god's words as "I might also be an offering" when she faces potential death by hand-to-hand combat with a neighboring prince (216). However, it is not until Orual lays her complaint before the gods, hearing herself voice it without any veiling, whether spiritual or physical, that Orual is truly able to understand what the god meant by "you also shall be Psyche." After reading her complaint, in another vision Orual watches as both she and Psyche toil through their tasks, finally coming to the realization that she and Psyche are one and the same, noting, "Two figures, reflections, their feet to Psyche's feet and mine, stood head downward in the water. But whose were they? Two Psyches, the one clothed, the other naked? Yes, both Psyches, both beautiful (if that mattered now) beyond all imagining, yet not exactly the same...'You also are Psyche,' came a great voice" (307). Only after realizing her own intentions, by laying herself spiritually and physically bare, is Orual able to comprehend the god's words, "you also shall be Psyche," signifying that self-revelation must come before divinity can be wholly revealed.

The novel's autobiographical style strengthens all the above reasons for interpreting Lewis's novel as an argument for self-revelation as crucial to divine understanding, by keeping Orual's journey toward self-realization a personal experience, an experience that the reader sees develop through Orual's thoughts as the novel progresses. At the start of book one, Orual, in a self-ignorant state, declares that she "will accuse the gods, especially the god who lives on the Grey Mountain" because the "god of the mountain will not answer [her]" (Lewis 3). By the start of book two, Orual acknowledges the corruption of her thoughts that drove her to write her accusation in book one, writing, "Since I cannot mend the book, I must add to it. To leave it as it was would be to die perjured; I know so much more than I did about the woman who wrote it. What began the change was the very writing itself" (253). Again, as when Orual reads her accusation before the gods, in her true voice and stripped of her veils, understanding came out of Orual's penning of her book, out of the act of writing what she truly thinks and seeing the words form on the pages. With this newfound self-revelation, Orual is able to write, at the end of her book, "I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer. Before your face questions die away..." (308). Without voicing her thoughts, without penning her accusation and seeing it uncovered before her own eyes, Orual would have remained embittered against divinity and unable to find an answer for divine actions.

By enfolding motifs, characters, themes, and repetition into the pages of Orual's journal, C.S. Lewis proves that *Till We Have Faces*, until we understand ourselves, the intentions of divinity will remain distant and unfathomable. Through the motifs of the veil and dreams, the characters of Psyche and Orual, the theme of profane versus sacred love, the repeated mention of “You also shall be Psyche,” and the autobiographical style of the novel, Lewis effectively communicates Orual’s struggle toward self and divine revelation to his readers so that they may apply Orual’s revelation to their own lives. To close in the words of C.S. Lewis, to understand the nature of divinity, one “must be speaking with its own voice (not one of its borrowed voices), expressing its actual desires (not what it imagines that it desires), being for good or ill itself, not any mask, veil, or persona."

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Reader and Writer: Lewis and Tolkien "On Fairy-Stories"

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C. S. Lewis' first meeting with J. R. R. Tolkien ought to have been a great meeting of the minds – the two advocates for imagination coming together as a formidable creative duo – but that certainly was not the case. For Lewis, although he was charmed by Tolkien, there were some serious objections in "the smooth, pale, fluent little chap".[1] The Oxford English Faculty at that point was a house divided. Literature for its own sake was not considered a challenging academic course of study, and in order to make it worthwhile, scholars must pursue another target either historical or philological. The debate over which focus the undergraduate curriculum should take distributed the dons into opposing groups. "At my first coming into the world I had been (implicitly) warned never to trust a Papist, and at my first coming into the English Faculty (explicitly) never to trust a philologist. Tolkien was both."[2] In fact, Lewis credits Tolkien with the dismantling of those prejudices, and their famous friendship produced some of the best works of literature of the twentieth century, among them *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-5) and *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-6).

Tolkien felt that there were clear boundaries between fairy stories, what he most loved, and any other sort of literature which must be observed at all costs; he thoroughly disliked the obviousness and inflexibility of allegory, which played a major role in Lewis' *Narnia*, and in "On Fairy-Stories" (1938), Tolkien outlines the necessity of coherency and consistency in any attempt at that genre.[3] "[He] hated *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. He regarded it as scrappily put together, and not in his sense a ‘sub-creation’; that is, a coherently made imaginative world.”[4] No one can deny the correctness of such criticism; characters in all seven books are jumbled together from Greek and Norse mythology, popular culture and out of Lewis’ own head. The Pevensies and their friends meet Father Christmas, Bacchus and huge talking animals. Compared with Tolkien’s *The Silmarillion* (1977) or even *The Hobbit* (1937), Narnia seems a very patchwork story indeed, completely ignoring the distinction between the Primary and Secondary worlds emphasized in “On Fairy-Stories.”[5] Lewis’ hodgepodge approach to storytelling, involving themes of violence, redemption, magic and sheer silliness, created a world enchanting to readers and annoying to critics; without his flexibility as a writer, the Oxford don would never have become an internationally-known Christian apologist, much less written a science-fiction trilogy or a children’s series. More important than his authorial style or voice, however, is the clear understanding demonstrated in Narnia of what a reader longs to experience in a good story. When examined outside the shadow of Middle Earth, even with the jumbled mythology and allegorical tendencies, Lewis manages to fulfill Tolkien’s strict standards of fairy stories.

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[1] A. N. Wilson, *C. S. Lewis: a biography* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 105.
[2] C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 252.
[3] J. R. R. Tolkien, foreword to *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966), 7.

Lewis’ status as the premier Christian apologist understandably frustrates any criticism of his work. Literary scholars who also happen to be Christians understand that to criticize Lewis’ theology or way of thinking is to criticize millions of Western Christians who have embraced his canon as the authoritative guidebook for daily life. Anyone facing that sort of entrenched popularity might be intimidated, but especially those viewing Lewis from a non-Christian viewpoint. Writers wishing to engage in a serious, scholarly analysis of Lewis’ work, which has many merits and many problems of interest, encounter an indignant outcry whenever questions of Lewis' morality, theology or authorial capability are raised. Of course, both Christian and non-Christian authors have undertaken successful critiques, not just accolades, of Lewis, but they are generally outweighed by the popular support coming from mostly American Christians in schools, non-profit organizations, churches and individual families, who all find Lewisian theology at the cornerstone of practical life. This frustration appears particularly in critics of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the reputation of which often means that it is placed on equal standing with fiction much more stylistically consistent and politically correct than itself. A confused devotee might ask, "What's wrong with Narnia?" and receive the simple response, "Its pedestal."

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[4] Wilson 222.

[5] J. R. R. Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories” in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), 60.

The now legendary Lewis would have been horrified at achieving such a god-like status, particularly because his own spiritual journey connects so intimately the idea of true myth with Christianity. It is true that Lewis was a brash personality who never hesitated to speak his mind and that he expressed his opinions on a range of subjects with confidence and intelligence, but to idolize him as a genius author (which he undoubtedly was) out of whose pen flowed unadulterated perfection, as devotees are wont to do, is to ignore the effort and dedication he poured into his writing, fiction and non-fiction. The stories he imagined deeply mirror the events and emotions of his own life, but not without some craft involved. They were not "slapdash", as Tolkien thought of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, but thoroughly thought through, because any theme in a Lewis story comes directly from the heart and mind of the author.[6] Thus the experiences of the Pevensie children in Narnia reflect not Lewis the author's instructive intentions but Jack the reader's desire to share the joy of myth, the "pleasure, [the]trouble, ecstasy, astonishment, 'a conflict of sensations without name'" he found in his childhood imagination, stories and eventually in the true myth of Christianity.[7] For Lewis, the experiences of his reading life swirled around inside his head and formed themselves into the stories of his authorial life.

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[6] Wilson 225.

Most of Lewis' fellow Oxford dons were horrified at his publication of a children's story. How could he stoop to such an ill-fitted usage of his talents? Today what Lewis and Tolkien would have called fairy tales have split into two genres, fantasy and children's literature, both of which receive a distinct lack of respect as 'literature' from the critics. Fantasy as a 21st century reader knows it did not exist until Tolkien achieved massive success with *The Lord of the Rings*, and until the publication in the nineteenth century of books like Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), most of the stories associated with children were traditional fairy tales that had been around for centuries. Lewis' colleagues viewed children's literature as a 'soft' option; if children's minds were simpler and less mature than adult ones, surely the books written for children were simpler – and thus less admirable – as well? Both Tolkien and Lewis specifically argue against this belief in "On Fairy-Stories" and "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What Needs to Be Said", but this attitude continues to appear both within and without the publishing industry:

> Almost certainly J. R. R. Tolkien is right when he suggests that fairy tales became the peculiar property of the nursery by historical accident. They were not evolved for telling to children…Nevertheless the accidents that gave these stories to children were happy ones. Children under eleven are eager to know what happens next, and impatient with anything that stops them from getting on with the story…They expect a story to be a good yarn, in which the action is swift and the

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[7] *Surprised by Joy* 86.

> characters are clearly and simply defined. And legends and fairy tales are just like that.[8]

How might Lewis or Tolkien respond to such a statement? Lewis would probably declare that he expects a story to be a ‘good yarn’ as much as any child, and is just as eager to learn what happens next. To suggest to Tolkien, the man who spent his lifetime studying the evolution of mythology through language, that legends and fairy tales – the children of myth – are simple and clearly defined seems a little impertinent. It is condescending both to children and to fairy tales. Tolkien clearly demonstrates with his Middle Earth that the latter are neither simple nor easy to define, and the former are entirely capable of processing complex stories and emotions, perhaps with less maturity than an adult reader, but with the added benefit of untainted, sincere enjoyment of a story.

> Critics who treat *adult* as a term of approval, instead of as a merely descriptive term, cannot be adult themselves. To be concerned about being grown up, to admire the grown up because it is grown up, to blush at the suspicion of being childish; these things are the marks of childhood and adolescence.[9]

Perhaps the reason *The Chronicles of Narnia* are usually directed towards and most popular with children is their unabashed enjoyment of stories. If it is enjoyable, the child reader does not concern themselves with how many starred reviews the book got or how intelligent the title sounds. This aspect of good readership Lewis shares with Narnia’s main audience; he admires in the fairy story “its brevity, its severe restraints on description, its flexible traditionalism, its inflexible hostility to all analysis, digression, reflections and 'gas'."[10] It seems that Lewis embraces both the child as reader and the fairy story as form for qualities he utilized in his own reading: lack of pretentiousness and sincerity of enjoyment. His aim as author was not to instruct or inform the reader, but to meet with fellow devotees to story, exclaiming, "What! Have *you* felt that too? I always thought I was the only one."[11]

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[8] Elizabeth Cook, *The Ordinary and the Fabulous: an Introduction to Myths, Legends, and Fairytales for Teachers and Storytellers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 6-7.

[9] C. S. Lewis, “On Three Ways of Writing for Children” in *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter Hooper (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1966), 25.

Lewis ultimately identified himself as a reader. It has been said of him that he "read everything, and remembered everything he read."[12] It was elements from his favorite stories that he poured into the construction of *The Chronicles of Narnia*; he took what he found most charming and imaginative and profound and turned it all into a fairy story commentary on growing up, on the Christian's relationship with God and on the reader's experience within a story. Tolkien, the friend and colleague who created his own fairy stories, saw an inconsistent and illogical story which was limited by its allegorical tendencies, and he was perfectly correct. Whether or not those aspects of Narnia truly interfere with the reader's experience is debatable, but undoubtedly, Tolkien's Middle Earth, stylistically and artistically, presents a much more pleasing picture than Narnia. It is a wholly enclosed world, perfectly consistent and realistic within its own universe, and the result of a lifetime of labor, but Narnia, along with any other world, flows from Lewis' pen with the greatest of ease, another aggravation for the painstaking Tolkien.[13]

Middle Earth began in the trenches of the Great War, Tolkien scribbling with a pencil the stories later collected into *The Book of Lost Tales* (1983-4).[14] Early in his education, he discovered an affinity for languages, supplemented by an attraction to Norse epics, and he maintained this interest until his death in 1973, sharply contrasting with Lewis, who spent his undergraduate days and early Magdalen years jumping from discipline to discipline with equal fascination.[15] Since Tolkien's death, Christopher Tolkien has gathered together notes ranging over 60 years into a *History of Middle Earth* series, but even that does not approach the completion of a world Tolkien would probably still be creating today if he lived. While *The Hobbit* (1937) evolved from stories he told his own children, its sequel turned into different idea altogether, and it took twelve years to achieve the level of perfection Tolkien demanded.[16] He prized the form of fairy story as beautiful and enchanting, and maintained strict standards, that imposters might not corrupt the genre.

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[10] C. S. Lewis, "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What Needs to Be Said" in *Of Other Worlds*, 36-7.
[11] Ibid. ix.
[12] Wilson 161.
[13] Ibid. 222.
[14] Humphrey Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien: a biography* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1977), 80-6.

Tolkien addressed St. Andrews University in 1940, in one of a series of lectures honoring Andrew Lang, a turn-of-the-century folklorist and collector, and later expanded that lecture, titled "On Fairy-Stories", for a collection of essays intended to honor the late Charles Williams, friend and member of the Inklings. His definition of fairy stories addresses the tendency to associate the genre with children and the various tricks authors use – including dreams and talking animals, both utilized by Lewis – that disqualify stories from inclusion as a 'true fairy story', but most of the essay focuses what fairy stories themselves ought to provide.[17] On several points it is clear that Narnia provides everything that Tolkien requires of fairy tales – escape to a world with a different reality, recovery from and consolation for the ills the Primary world has inflicted upon the reader.[18] However, in the distinction between Primary and Secondary worlds, the foundation of Tolkien's definition, Lewis technically falls short. Tolkien scoffs at the phrase

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[15] Ibid. 34-7.
[16] Wilson 222.
[17] Ibid. 45-6.
[18] Ibid. 74-81.

"willing suspension of disbelief", so easily used to describe the role of fantasy and fairy stories, as "subterfuge…if they really liked it, for itself, they would not have to suspend disbelief; they would believe".[19] The author must behave as the creator, totally capable of constructing an entire world independent of the one known by the creator. Any interaction between the Primary (author/reader) world and the Secondary (story) world violates the efforts of the author to write fantasy at all.[20]

Lewis does not abide by this rule. Each book begins and ends with an exchange between Narnia and the 'real' world, raising all sorts of questions about the internal consistency within Narnia. For example, upon rediscovering the lamp and wardrobe after many years of ruling Narnia, the four children reenter England to find themselves at the same moment in time at which they left.[21] Instead of avoiding interaction between the worlds, Lewis embraces it; indeed, the wood between worlds Digory and Polly encounter in *The Magician's Nephew* (1955) was established for that very purpose. Narnia does not exist but for the connections it has with other worlds. As Aslan says, the Pevensies and the readers "were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there."[22] The Pevensies do not just mirror the reader's experience of diving into a fairy story; they are the readers.

Lewis has dramatized his own experience as a reader, thus creating a Secondary world in which turning the pages of a book constitutes action and involvement in the story. Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy are all certainly frightened and insecure at this treacherous point of England's history. Away from home and family in a strange house, they escape into a mythical world (which happens to be true) and find both consolation for their fears and recovery from their pains. By conquering the White Witch, they are enabled to return to England refreshed, and even when returned to the 'real' world, Narnia provides consolation in times of distress; Edmund and Lucy find themselves at an unpleasant relative's house, accompanied by their prig of a cousin Eustace, and amuse themselves by imagining a random painting to be of a Narnian ship.[23]

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[19] Ibid. 60-1.
[20] Ibid. 66-7.
[21] *LWW* 206.
[22] C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 270.

While according to the language of "On Fairy-Stories", Narnia is a blatant violation of the rules, mixing up readers and characters right and left, Lewis still manages to follow the spirit of the law. The Narnian world is the world of the reader, but instead of turning pages, the children stumble out of wardrobes and into paintings and slip rings on and off.[24] These devices, rather than facilitating interactions between worlds that were never meant to take place, are the mechanisms upon which Lewis' Narnian universe – meaning England *and* Narnia and any other glimpse of a world – function. This technicality, as some may call it, defines the difference between Lewis and Tolkien's philosophy of fairy. Tolkien wrote for the sheer joy of creation: "Fantasy is a natural human activity…we make in our measure and in our derivative mode, because we are made: and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a Maker."[25] For him, the act of creation was a spiritual, intellectual and artistic event; he certainly was gratified that people enjoyed the world he had made, but writing for readers was never his intent. Lewis, however, was first and foremost a reader. His experiences with stories, including the Northern legends and fairy stories like George MacDonald's *Phantastes* (1858), shaped his existence just as Tolkien's understanding of language craft – and thus culture and history –informed his story making. This fundamental difference in purpose means that, although Lewis does not in word meet Tolkien's expectations for a sub-creation's self-sufficiency, he does so in deed. If it is required to judge either author based on the other, particularly when their combined work has been so influential in the development of the modern fantasy and children's genres, critics must understand that two very different motivations are at work in Narnia and Middle Earth.

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[23] Ibid. 4-5.
[24] *LWW*, *VDT* and *MN*.
[25] "On Fairy-Stories" 72.

In the twelve years it took to complete *The Lord of the Rings*, having many other academic and personal responsibilities, Tolkien easily tired of the tremendous task of synthesizing the world of *The Hobbit* and the histories and languages he had already developed.

> I worked very hard at my chapter – it is very exhausting work; especially as the climax approaches and one has to keep the pitch up…I wrote and tore up and rewrote most of it a good many times; but I was rewarded this morning as both C. S. L. and C. W. thought it an admirable performance and the latest chapters the best so far."[26]

Tolkien labored away and Lewis eagerly awaited the next chapter.

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[26] J. R. R. Tolkien to Christopher Tolkien, May 1944 qtd. in Wilson 196-7.

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The Man Born to Be King: Contextualizing the Kingdom

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Dorothy L. Sayers, the famous scholar and translator of medieval texts, the author of popular detective fiction, and the strong apologist for Christianity amid the uncertainty of World War II, had a special gift for translating. This gift was not only for translating medieval French, but also translating the central ideas of Christianity, which were often expressed in traditional language into modern language. One of the things that made Sayers famous as an apologist was her ability to translate Christian doctrine from the old fashioned language of the creeds into modern idioms that people could understand. She sought to bring back the reactions that the original audiences would have felt when first being exposed to the story while still retaining a sound understanding of Christian dogma. This is most clearly seen in her series of radio plays called *The Man Born to be King.* In *The Man Born to be King* Dorothy L. Sayers uses modern language and extra-biblical “tie-rod” characters to accentuate the centrality and power of the Gospel message.

Dorothy L. Sayers firmly believed that the reason why Christianity in the 1940s was stagnant was because the church failed to teach the dogma. In contrast to the popular opinion that dogma was dull, Sayers argued that understanding the dogma of Christianity was vital to understanding its drama. In her essay “The Greatest Drama Ever Staged” she writes, “the Christian faith is the most exciting drama that ever staggered the imagination of man—and the dogma is the drama” (11). Her point is that if Jesus’ teaching and actions were not seen as radical, then the need for salvation and the perfect way salvation was accomplished could not be fully grasped either. Later on in the essay Sayers explains that the people of Jesus' time saw him as controversial, whereas modern Christians will not even give him that. She writes

> The people who hanged Christ never, to do them justice, accused him of being a bore—on the contrary, they thought him too dynamic to be safe. It has been left for later generations to muffle up that shattering personality and surround him with an atmosphere of tedium. We have very efficiently pared the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified him 'meek and mild,' and recommended him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies. (14)

Christ was an inflammatory figure in his time, and the modern reader dare not forget it. As the critic Crystal Downing says in her book, *Writing Performances: The Stages of Dorothy L. Sayers*, "the intellectual energy arising from shock [is] far preferable to the stagnate piety that comes from unreflectively clinging to the writing performances of religious convention" (119). The dogma is in the drama. In her Introduction to the play sequence, Sayers writes, "His [Christ's] life is theology in action, and the drama of His life is dogma shown as dramatic action" (5). Christ is the center of the dogma and the center of the drama.

The problem Sayers sees in the Christianity of her time is that there are so many false conceptions about what it meant to be a Christian that most people did not even know the actual story of the Gospel anymore. Without knowing the story or the doctrine there is nothing to differentiate Christianity from other religions. Christianity is unique in that God became man and was killed by man and rose from the dead to redeem man. Dorothy L. Sayers points out in her essay "Creed or Chaos" that the modern church taught Jesus, but not Christ, "which was not quite the same thing” (43). She argues that by teaching the gentle, good teacher Jesus, the church lost the fiery and controversial Christ, who angered people and made enemies and was killed by the Romans and Jews because he was so dynamic that they saw him as a threat. Teaching gentle Jesus meant that they had lost the dogma, they were missing the essentials of salvation, and thus they also lost the drama.

Dorothy L. Sayers believed strongly that the reason why people could not see the drama in the gospel was because they saw Jesus and his disciples living in the Bible or in the stain glass windows of churches. In her essay “Nativity Play” she writes, “But they did not live ‘in the Bible;’ they lived in this confused and passionate world, amid social and political conditions curiously like those of the present day. Unless we can recapture a strong apprehension of that plain fact, they will forever remain for us an assemblage of wraiths and shadows.” It is necessary that modern audiences see the Bible characters as relatable people, living in this world. This is the primary reason why she contextualized the Gospel in *The Man Born to be King*, to make the story come alive, or as critic Terrie Curran says, “that art is the word made flesh,” (“The Word Made Flesh” 68). To make the dogma relevant to her modern listeners, Dorothy L. Sayers used modern language to develop characters and themes in *The Man Born to be King*.

Some have criticized Dorothy L. Sayers for her radio plays, especially for using modern language. When people heard that she was retelling the Gospel in modern slang, they were appalled. Articles appeared in the newspaper even before the plays aired on the radio, condemning Sayers for using “American slang.” The Protestant Truth Society and the Lord’s Day Observance Society petitioned the prime minister and Archbishop of Canterbury to censor the plays. They thought her sacrilegious to replace the Authorized Version, the King James Bible text, with slang (Downing 123). The BBC quibbled with Sayers for a long time about whether the plays were suitable for the Children’s Hour, for which they were commissioned. Sayers summarized the BBC producer’s criticism saying, “[The] play is beautiful, dramatic, moving, scintillating… but we think there might be one or two children who mightn’t understand some of its beauties, so please remove those beauties” (Letters of Dorothy L. Sayers, 227). In response Sayers sent a plethora of letters, some explanatory, some scathing, explaining that children understand more than we credit them to and that they would enjoy the mysterious elements of the play. Looking back, Dr. Welch, who commissioned the plays, judged *The Man Born to Be King* to be “the most important event in religious broadcasting we [the BBC] have ever undertaken” (Kenney 227). It was recognized as one of the most influential Christian dramas for many years, and was used in schools to teach the Gospel.

Sayers’s radio play series, *The Man Born to be King* is not a modern retelling of the Gospel story. She leaves the story in the ancient setting and context. What she does is updates the language, giving the story a fresh perspective to those who had heard the story so frequently that it had become rote and commonplace to them, having grown up in the church. Using modern language contextualized the story to the modern audience. To contextualize means to transfer the message from one culture to another. Just as a missionary translates the Gospel into the language of the people, so Dorothy Sayers translated the antiquated texts into modern English. But the ideas, and thus the dogma, remained intact. In the Introduction to *The Man Born to Be King* she says, “Technically, the swiftest way to produce the desirable sense of shock is the use in drama of modern speech and a determined historical realism about the characters” (7). She used literary license to develop the central themes of Jesus’ teaching. Her question was “Are we sufficiently disturbed by this extremely disturbing story?”(7). To which she directly answers, “Sometimes the blunt new word will impress us more than the beautiful and old" (9). The power of the message is the most important thing, and should not be sacrificed at any cost.

Dorothy L. Sayers develops biblical characters of whom little is known to create a more connected realistic plot. These characters she calls "tie-rods." Critic Alzina Stone Dale notes that "These 'tie-rods' also served her ultimate purpose of making Jesus Bar-Joseph realistic by showing Him in dramatic situations. They let [Sayers] demonstrate that His goodness was not static, that 'there was that clash between His environment and Himself which is the mainspring of drama'" (Dale 84). This is most obvious in her characterization of Judas. She also combines Mary of Magdalen and Mary of Bethany. She makes Lazarus melancholy. She gives the James the worldly-wise protector role of his more sensitive and spiritually attuned brother John. The Bible does not have lengthy explanatory notes like the introductions to Sayers's plays. It often does not reveal why Mary behaved this way or why John was the disciple Jesus loved, or why Judas became the traitor. So in translating the Gospel to the theatre, Sayers makes the historical connections where she could, logically trying to answer the question why the characters act the way they do. The overall effect makes the play more realistic and the characters more complex and alive.

The seventh play, *The Light and the Life,* is an example of how she uses literary license. Sayers used St. Augustine's view of Mary, and combines Mary Magdalen and Mary of Bethany. By doing this she creates continuity and more of a reason why Mary of Bethany would be sitting at Jesus' feet. Mary Magdalen's vivacity and passion for life make Mary of Bethany a more developed character. As a person who had loved much but loved wrongly, because of Christ Mary now loves rightly, which is why she sits enthralled at his feet. Mary is always accompanied by the realization that Jesus is the source of life. Sayers gives Mary these lines:

> You were the only person there that was really alive. The rest of us were going about half-dead— making the gestures of life… The life was not in us but with you—intense and shining, like the sun when it rises and turns the flames of our candles to pale smoke, I felt the flame of the sun in my heart. When you spoke to me I came alive for the first time. And I love life all the more since I have learned its meaning. (178)

Her use of poignant language makes the theological point that Christ is both the source of true life and the light in this dark world. At the crucifixion she cries out in agony, “The whole world is dying. He is going out into the night and has taken the sunlight with him. O love, O love—will you not come again?” (302). When Mary realizes that Christ, her love, hope, and life is dying she cries out in desperation, “He is my life, and you have killed him . . .” (298). Her cry reveals how central Christ is in her life, how real he was, and makes the audience desire a relationship of intimacy with Christ.

Sayers contrasts Mary’s vivacity with her brother, Lazarus’ melancholy. Scripture does not say that he was melancholy, but Sayers creates him hesitant and introspective. However, she does not leave him in that state. She develops his character by having him realize the power of Christ and desire a love for life after he has been raised from the dead. Jesus responds to Mary’s testimony of His love in saying that he “came that men should lay hold of life and possess it to the full” (178). Lazarus responds by revealing that he does not have much love of life. “To say that I would die for you is nothing. I would almost be ready to live for you if you asked me” (179). Sayers is preparing for the change about to occur in Lazarus’ character when he is resurrected. Lazarus emerges boldly and exultantly crying “Lord Jesus!”(192). Mary notes that he is laughing and smiling and glad to be alive. He is full of joy and tells them that he has been “with life” and that life called him back. “Life. He is here and he never left me” (192). Lazarus’ change of attitude encourages and uplifts the listener with the power of Christ and his Gospel.

The biblical character Sayers develops most is Judas. She introduces Judas early, revealing that he is older than most of the other disciples and by far the most intelligent. Sayers constructs the play so that Judas is the only disciple who understands the need for the cross. She writes in the character notes that by “seeing it, as he does, only with his intellect and not with his heart, he will fall into a deeper corruption than any of the others are capable” (52). His intelligence is dangerous because it leads him to pride. “His egotism has the psychological effect of making him transfer his own failings to the person of whom he is suspicious: ‘Jesus has sold himself’” (199). Ultimately, his pride leads to his determination that Jesus is combining forces with Baruch and leading a coup to establish an earthly kingdom. In her essay, “The Word Made Flesh,” Terrie Curran writes, “While Judas loses faith in the person of Jesus, he does not lose faith in the Kingdom, since it is to preserve that cause that he betrays Jesus” (76). In an effort to explain “the enigma” Sayers sees Judas portrayed as in the Gospels, she has expanded Judas’s character to make him more consistent (Introduction 14). Sayers does a good job working with what the Bible does say to develop Judas into a real person prone to the root of all sin, pride.

Judas’s character development determines the success of the play series. He plays the villain, but it is a gradual descent into sin and to finally betraying Jesus. Literary critic Alzina Stone Dale notes the problem of Judas’s character in her essay “*The Man Born to Be King*: Dorothy L. Sayers’s Best Mystery Plot.” She writes, “If Judas was bad because he was born that way with no reasons given, then his choice as a disciple makes Jesus look like a fool, and that in turn will destroy [Sayers’s] chances of making [Jesus] real and compelling”(85). If Sayers did not develop Judas convincingly it would detract from the character of Christ. To that end Sayers uses Judas as a foil for Christ's character. In the ninth play, "The King's Supper" Judas and Jesus are talking above the rest of the apostles' heads. Judas is trying to discover when Jesus is going to establish his kingdom through violence with Baruch. Jesus is trying to discern how much time he has left before Judas will betray him. As Sayers describes it in her character notes, "He and Jesus are playing a grim kind of game of move and counter-move to find out each other's position" (229). Judas's character allows Sayers to demonstrate the clash between Jesus and His environment throughout the play (Dale 87). The result is that Judas's character becomes a tool to develop Jesus' credibility.

Judas's character development becomes a major theme throughout the plays. To aid in explaining Judas's downfall, Sayers creates an extra-biblical character, Baruch. He is a Zealot looking to use Jesus' popularity to start a coup and establish an earthly kingdom. Baruch is simply a cold politician trying to convince Judas to use Jesus to attain his political goals. His most poignant scene is when he runs into Judas in Jerusalem after Jesus has been arrested. Revealing that Jesus is incorruptible and innocent, he holds Judas in great contempt for failing him and for failing Christ. But he is vital to this scene in that he brutally presents the consequence of Judas's betrayal. He says, "You wanted him to suffer, didn't you? Now he's going to suffer . . . Ever see a man crucified? There's nothing poetical about it, and it hurts, Judas, it hurts . . . Now's your moment to practice what you preach. Will you stand by your Messiah? . . . Can't face it, eh? –He's facing it" (263). Baruch harsh speech jolts Judas to see the consequences of his actions and cause him to regret what he has done.

The other important extra-biblical character is the Roman centurion, Proclus. Sayers uses him more than anything else as a "tie-rod" to create continuity and context for the Roman soldier's line at the crucifixion, "Surely this man was the Son of God" (New International

Version, Mark 15:39). She brings Proclus in early at Christ's birth, establishing him as a character with integrity and morals as he refuses to obey Herod's order to slaughter all the baby boys, saying "Sir, I am a soldier, not a butcher"(46). The next time Proclus appears it is as the Roman who seeks Jesus to heal his servant. "Sir, I have only to look at you. I know authority when I see it. . . And I know very well that when *you* command, you are obeyed" (119). It is almost certain that the Centurion who had faith and the soldier at the foot of the cross were not the same, but Sayers provides a familiar character to be the face of the good Romans and calls him Proclus. Especially in radio when too many voices and characters confuse the listener, having one representative character makes the story easier to follow.

In an era when Christ was not depicted on the stage, Sayers pioneered the way in Christian drama, showing that it could be reverent and accurate, while providing a new perspective to Christian audience. She wants them to wrestle with the story answering this question: "What think ye of Christ?"(Curran 69). For Sayers, this is the most important question. Drama was simply the medium she used to ask the question. The truth of the Gospel story, the dogma, is the focal point. Sayers displayed the drama in the dogma to win souls to the kingdom of God, validating her theory in the process. Sayers was first and foremost a Christian and her play *The Man Born to Be King* is her humble attempt to contextualize the Kingdom for the modern reader.

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Truth and Imagination in *Poetic Diction*:
Owen Barfield and C.S. Lewis's Great War

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Owen Barfield's position in his "Great War"[1] with C. S. Lewis, as primarily articulated in his book, *Poetic Diction*, and secondarily in his letters with Lewis,[2] holds that the imagination can both perceive and create truth via poetry. Contrarily, Lewis's position in the "war," which took place during the 1920s before his conversion to Christianity,[3] holds that the imagination can in no way create truth. This paper explicates Barfield's position and arguments as well as Lewis's objections in order to demonstrate that Barfield is victorious in the war. I thus begin by examining Barfield's understanding of the nature of imagination and truth as seen in *Poetic Diction*, and subsequently turn to his arguments for imagination's both passive and active relationship with truth. I then consider Lewis's objections to these two arguments based on his own views of the nature of imagination and truth. Finally, I provide a case for Barfield's victory by examining his theory of imagination in *Poetic Diction* and by demonstrating Lewis's partial surrender later in his life.

The Arguments of Poetic Diction

For Barfield, imagination, in an aesthetic context, is best defined as a felt change of consciousness (48). Specifically, aesthetic imagination is the faculty which apprehends the outward form of an object as the image or symbol of an inner meaning (*Rediscovery of Meaning,* 19). And, within the opening paragraph of *Poetic Diction*, he makes explicit the foundational role imagination plays in his consideration of poetic diction. He claims that poetic diction is fundamentally involved in arousing aesthetic imagination (41). The arousal of aesthetic imagination is therefore the bright-line for determining whether or not a given text is poetic. But, given the nature of aesthetic imagination, this determination is to some extent subjective. Barfield is quick to note, however, that critically beginning from personal experience does not necessitate finishing with it (42). There *is* an objective nature to poetic diction; it can give rise to knowledge, as one is able to establish objective similarities and resemblances among documented phenomena (55). Moreover, this active ability to recognize resemblances, the *energeia* of knowledge, ultimately leads to the *hexis* of wisdom. Thus, in so far as poetry arouses aesthetic imagination, the reader grows in knowledge, wisdom and perception (Adey, 20).

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[1] Lewis uses this term to describe their dispute in *Surprised By Joy*

[2] Purposively without reference to Barfield's Anthroposophy

[3] The main group of letters of the Great War were written specifically between 1925 and 1927 (Adey, 13)

Given this definition of imagination, its connection to truth becomes explicit when Barfield, in his letters to Lewis, defines truth as reality taking the form of consciousness (Adey, 42). For both imagination and truth, the consciousness of an individual is the primary object affected. Throughout *Poetic Diction* Barfield argues that reality affects an individual's consciousness when the basic, concrete unity of various phenomena is revealed. However, while today such phenomenal unity must be *revealed*, Barfield argues that the ancients were able simply to *see* such unity. This attack on the logomorphism[4] of his contemporaries is grounded in Barfield's philology, specifically his belief that words in ancient languages had a concrete, unified meaning, which only subsequently produced abstract, differentiated ideas. To support this argument he provides the examples of the Latin term *spiritus* and the Greek term *pneuma*, since both words have the tri-partite meaning of wind, breath, and spirit. For the ancients, each word simply had its own peculiar, unified meaning of wind-breath-spirit. It is this unified meaning which best represents the nature of poetic reality for Barfield. Thus, as reality can either be revealed or seen, it takes the form of consciousness as either precepts or percepts, that is, as either pure sense-data or knowledge gained via aesthetic imagination.

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[4] Barfield defines logomorphism as "projecting post-logical thoughts back into a pre-logical age" (90).

These conceptions of imagination and truth ground Barfield's initial argument that the imagination can perceive truth by means of poetic metaphor. For Barfield, a poetic metaphor allows the reader to perceive truth because it restores the primal unity between abstract and concrete. For example, a metaphor that blurs the distinctions between spirit, breath, and wind would allow their meanings to interpenetrate one another in the reader's consciousness. To the extent that a poetic metaphor allows the imagination to perceive this interpenetration, reality enters into conscious experience, and the imagination perceives truth.

However, this argument does not address *how* a poetic metaphor allows one to perceive this primal unity. Here Barfield's argument becomes slightly more nuanced. The perception available for moderns via metaphor is distinct from the perception available to the ancients. While ancient people *saw* the unified relationships between things, they did not *apprehend* them, strictly speaking (Barfield, 87). Their perception was strictly of percepts, not of precepts. The perception available via poetic metaphor is a middle ground, neither sight nor apprehension per se. It allows the reader to experience the interpenetration of meaning by reconnecting the currently sundered meanings of terms with their older, undivided meanings.

While Lewis believes Barfield's argument for the truth-perceiving abilities of the imagination (Adey, 42), he is skeptical of the argument for the truth-creating ability of the imagination. In basic form, Barfield argues: 1) Meaning is truth, 2) in so far as an individual poet creates true meaning, he recreates Meaning, and 3) Thus, in so far as an individual poet creates true meaning, he recreates Truth. In order to properly investigate the validity of this claim, we must examine the full scope of Barfield's argument, which requires an examination of his definition of creation and his distinction between meaning and Meaning.

Barfield distinguishes between creation as an aesthetic term and creation *ex nihilo*, arguing that the former is simply bringing farther into consciousness something basically unconscious. Thus, while the poet is involved in recreation, strictly speaking, he is indeed capable of being a true creator from an aesthetic point of view. As demonstrated above, by creating a poetic metaphor, the poet arouses cognition of precepts. He arouses cognition of precepts by means of suggestion from percepts, thus reconnecting the severed meaning. This arousal of precepts marks the poet as an aesthetic creator of meaning. However, in order for the poet to aesthetically create truth, Barfield must demonstrate how the meaning, which the poet is bringing further into consciousness, is representative of the true nature of reality. Barfield's argument on this point relies on his distinction between meaning and Meaning.

For Barfield, *meaning* is particular, while *Meaning* is universal. By this he means that *meaning* is the created associations of a word, while *Meaning* is the indivisible relationship between mind and nature (179). The poet aesthetically creates meaning via metaphor by recovering the lost, unified meaning of particular words or ideas. Thus, when Wordsworth uses the verb "ruining" with reference to a waterfall in the lines: *Ruining from the cliffs the* *deafening load / Tumbles*, he is reconnecting the particular ideas of rushing, falling, and destroying, and thus recovering their original unified *meaning*. However, beyond mere recovery, this process of loss and recovery creates a positive gain through the creation of new *meaning* (Barfield, 116).

Barfield's example of the word "ruin" exemplifies this concept. Its etymological root, the Latin verb *ruo*, is today either translated as *rush* or *fall,* with both terms denoting a sense of swift, disastrous movement (Barfield, 113). However, over the course of history, the verb began to entail not only the act of falling, but also the consequent state of *having* fallen. The process of loss and recovery created new meaning for the verb "to ruin." However, this new meaning is not arbitrary because it allows for a clearer perception of the Meaning of *ruo* as a swift but also disastrous movement. The waterfall both falls from and, through erosion, destroys the cliff. By reconnecting these ideas of swift movement and disastrous effects, Wordsworth's metaphor creates new meaning, thus allowing for clearer perception of Meaning, and thus creating truth.

Lewis's Objections

Lewis's disagreement with Barfield centers on his belief that no one can create truth. This objection is ultimately grounded on Lewis's own views on the natures of imagination and truth. Thus, in order to fully appreciate Lewis's objections, one must analyze these views on imagination and truth. I will turn first to Lewis's conception of imagination.

Lewis's contention that the imagination cannot create truth rests on his view of the imagination as static and non-assertive. In a letter to Barfield, Lewis reveals his aforementioned understanding of imagination (Adey, 42-43). First, Lewis states that the exercise of the imagination is necessary for the *connaissance*[5] of meaning. Implicit in this statement is Lewis's belief that the imagination is a state, which he is 'in,' 'during' a time, 'after' which he 'emerges' (Adey, 76).[6] Lewis implies secondly that the imagination is non-assertive, that is, its products are neither true nor false as such (Adey, 42). Given this view of imagination, Lewis contends that the imagination can at best create meaning, but never truth (Adey, 31). This led to Lewis's famous declaration that mind is the vehicle of truth; imagination of meaning.[7]

Secondly, Lewis's objection to imagination's active relation to truth rests on his understanding of the nature of truth. Lewis denies Barfield's belief in truth beyond true assertions because truth is only manifest in the internal consistency and experimental verifiability of an assertion (Adey, 25). Moreover, objective truth is only found in concrete facts, which are received by reason rather than the imagination (Schakel, 111). Lewis believes truth is a static, consistent body of facts and judgments. Therefore, only facts (pure sense-data) are 'true', while the process of imagining is at best 'meaningful'. This view of truth grounds Lewis's conception of knowledge as merely one's sensory experiences in systematized form (Schakel, 90-91). For Lewis, knowledge is a *state*, while, for Barfield, it is the *activity* of recognizing unity. Peter Schakel argues that these conceptions of truth and knowledge reveal Lewis's pre-conversion materialistic rationalism (93), which barred him from believing imaginative experiences, poetic or otherwise, could create new knowledge of truth (Thorson, 91). Moreover, Schakel argues that this tension between reason and imagination in Lewis's epistemology continues well after his conversion precisely because of his static, logo-centric[8] conception of truth (108).

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[5] The French term generically means "knowing," but Lewis here uses it in its more specific epistemological sense, roughly equivalent to "coming to true understanding."

[6] These quoted prepositions are taken from various other letters to Barfield over the course of the Great War.

[7] The direct quote, "reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning," comes from the essay, "Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare" in *Rehabilitations / and Other Essays.*

These views of truth and imagination ground Lewis's objections to Barfield's position. Schakel succinctly sums up Lewis's differences with Barfield as the belief that 'reality' is superior to 'meaning' because reality objectively exists, and meaning is only a subjective reflection of the 'real'. Moreover, reason ranks above imagination because the former deals with concrete facts, the latter only with imaginative meaning (124-125). This position is contrasted with Barfield's view that the subjective individual determines the nature of his experienced phenomena. In Lewis's mind, if Barfield is to argue that truth can be created, then Barfield must conceive of reality as subjective; Lewis adamantly rejects the subjectivity of reality, therefore, truth can in no way be created (Thorson, 109). The final question thus arises: who is right? I argue that Lewis has misinterpreted Barfield's position as seen in *Poetic Diction.*[9] A proper understanding of Barfield's position reveals that it lies in a synthesis of Lewis's objectivist views and the subjectivist views which Lewis opposes.

Barfield's Victory

In order to demonstrate Barfield's victory one must first understand Barfield's theory of imagination in *Poetic Diction.* In a talk on "Lewis, Truth, and Imagination," Barfield says that a theory of imagination must concern itself with the relationship between imagination and truth (97). From *Poetic Diction* (141), one can arrive at Barfield's theory of imagination: Meaning is seen by the individual poet through inspiration, which arouses the poet's imagination; the imagination, through metaphor, creates meaning; meaning arouses the aesthetic imagination of a reader, allowing him to perceive the hitherto unapprehended Meaning. Thus, because Meaning represents the true nature of reality, the reader perceives truth via the arousal of imagination, and the poet creates truth via metaphor. Meaning reveals reality because, according to Barfield, Meaning is objective reality interacting with both subjective reason and imagination. Reason and imagination are consequently equal, as both are necessary for the *connaissance* and creation of meaning; for *connaissance*, imagination is needed to *see* meaning, while reason is needed to *apprehend* meaning,[10] and for creation, both are needed to transmit meaning via poetic metaphor (178). Thus, while Lewis believed reason to be superior to imagination and Barfield to hold imagination superior to reason, Barfield's theory of imagination holds imagination as *equal* to reason.

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[8] Logo-centric here refers to Lewis's strict definition of truth as ordered reason, and thus it is a definition focused purely on the relationship between *kosmos* and *logos.*

[9] Which is not to say that Lewis's interpretation of Barfield's position was not correct at that specific point in the Great Debate, given that *Poetic Diction* was not published until 1928 (see note 2 above). Indeed, Lewis's arguments may have helped form Barfield's position in *Poetic Diction.*

However, to understand fully how and why Barfield sees imagination and reason as equal, one must analyze his conception of polarity. Shirley Sugarman, a student of Barfield's, conceives of his theory of polarity as the interdependence and interpenetration of opposite forces, which have one source (75). Imagination and reason are two opposite forces, but they are opposite forces on a unitary process, and are thus also one and the same thing. Barfield's theory conceptually echoes Socrates' understanding of opposites as seen in the *Phaedo,* and using this Socratic theory of opposites as a *paradeigma*, one can better understand Barfield's own theory. On his deathbed, Socrates describes opposites as having one source or head (60b). Later in the discussion, Socrates distinguishes between concrete opposites and essential opposites, the former being a class of opposites in which opposites are generated out of their opposites (70e) while the latter is a class where opposites are never generated into or out of one another (103c). Under this hermeneutic, the opposites of

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[10] See the section above on Barfield's distinction between Seeing and Apprehension.

Barfield's theory of polarity are best understood as concrete opposites, which is to say that they are generated out of their opposite. This view of the relationship between imagination and reason is seen in *Poetic Diction*'s chapter on "The Poet." Here, Barfield argues that the poet cannot simultaneously be creator and judge of his own work. Each requires the respective mood of creation and mood of appreciation, which are opposite poles in the unitary process of creating meaning, the one giving rise to the other and vice-versa (107-108). Thus, in order to create meaning, and consequently create truth, the poet must possess and use both imagination and reason, his consciousness oscillating between the two as he deliberates each phrase (Barfield, 110).

Barfield's theories of imagination and polarity reveal that claiming the poet creates truth is *not* the same as claiming reality to be purely subjective. Barfield's position is a much more nuanced account of the relationship between mind and nature that constitutes reality. Reality is neither mere objective nature nor is it mere subjective mind. It is, however, the interpenetration of these concrete opposites. The mind itself bars human consciousness from ever purely understanding this interpenetration, so that one can see it more clearly, but never perfectly. One can only understand reality perspectivally, through a lens. Thus, from the point of view of imagination, reality is understood as Meaning, while from the point of view of reason, it is understood as Truth. This is how and why Barfield constantly, but implicitly, equates Meaning with Truth. And, this is ultimately how poetry can both perceive and create truth, as the meaning it creates is a true reflection of Meaning, and the truth it perceives is a true reflection of Truth. Lewis' objection therefore appears to miss the mark, as he himself may have seen in his later years. After the Great War and his conversion to Christianity, Lewis appears somewhat to have surrendered to Barfield.

In his lecture on "Lewis, Truth, and Imagination," Owen Barfield himself suggests that C. S. Lewis eventually surrendered, though never openly and certainly never completely. Barfield notes that after their war on the nature and relationship of imagination and truth, Lewis lost interest (97). Peter Schakel also discusses Lewis's partial surrender by analyzing his different approaches to the act of reading in two of his critical works, the later *An Experiment in Criticism* and the earlier "The Personal Heresy." In the earlier work, he held an objective, depersonalized approach to reading (Schakel, 164). However, in the later work, the act of reading is understood more as intellectual interaction between an author's words and a reader's response to them (Schakel, 165). These aspects of Lewis's later works suggest, though only cursorily, his positive engagement with Barfield's position.

Lewis's partial surrender can be seen most clearly in his own work, *The Abolition of Man*. In this 1943 work, Lewis critiques the rationality of the modern world, which bases truth or falsity on subjective emotions. While Lewis's views here don't directly address the relationship between imagination and truth, they do address the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, the question which grounds Lewis and Barfield's Great War (Adey, 76). This criticism belies Lewis's tension between the role and nature of subjectivity and objectivity, which Schakel observes throughout Lewis's corpus (108). However, Lewis's conception of the *Tao* marks his partial engagement with and surrender to Barfield's view of the synthesization of subjectivity and objectivity. Just as Truth is the synthesization of subjective mind and objective nature from the point of view of reason, and likewise Meaning from the point of view of imagination, Lewis's conception of the *Tao* is the synthesization of subjective sentiments and objective value from the point of view of ethics. Again, Schakel's discernment of tension can be seen when Lewis reminds the reader that emotions are necessarily alogical; however, Barfield's influence is also seen in this section, as Lewis immediately adds that emotions can be reasonable, if they respond in accordance with Reason (19). In so far as Lewis allows subjective sentiments to rank equal with objective facts, Barfield's position is in play. However, one must not neglect that fact that Lewis remained fundamentally an objectivist to the end.

Returning to *The Abolition of Man,* let us examine Lewis's attack on the Green Book. Lewis ardently critiques the Green Books claim that anyone who says "this waterfall is sublime" is actually saying "I have sublime feelings about the waterfall." Lewis insists that the waterfall is sublime regardless of anyone's perception of it as such. The view of Gaius and Titius, which says that each sentence containing a predicate of value is actually a statement about the emotional state of the speaker, represents precisely the modern trend toward subjectivism that Lewis traces in Barfield's position. His staunch critique of such a position, in a book published in 1943 no less, reveals that Lewis remained fundamentally an objectivist even post-conversion. While Lewis does surrender to Barfield, he does so only implicitly and slightly. While the ethical truth of the Tao arises from the synthesis of subjective sentiments and objective value, the aesthetic truth of the waterfall is found purely in objective nature, regardless of subjective emotions. This view of truth is precisely the static, logo-centric view he held in the Great War. Therefore, the conclusion to the Great War is not so much a victory of Barfield as it is a retreat by Lewis. As Barfield himself says, Lewis lost interest. However, I argue, given a proper understanding of his position in *Poetic Diction* and Lewis's own partial adoption of Barfield's position later in his life, Barfield should nonetheless be held as victorious.

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A Time to Choose:

Finitude, Freedom, and Eternity in Dante's *Commedia* and Lewis's *The Great Divorce*

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Scholars have made many comparisons of C.S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce* to William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and to Dante Alighieri's *Commedia*. Dominic Manganiello, who teaches English literature at the University of Ottawa, writes about the importance of *The Great Divorce* as a direct reply to Blake's satirical version of eternity and ethics in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (Manganiello 476). Andrzej Wicher joins Manganiello in proposing that Lewis's dismissal of *The Great Divorce* as a response to Blake may not be entirely straightforward (Wicher 86). This assessment seems accurate, especially given Lewis's description of his project in the novel's preface: while avoiding necessarily conjectural descriptions of the physical framework of the afterlife, he employs an allegorical description of Heaven and Hell, with a focus on the decisions leading to each, to debunk the belief that one can retain any vestige of evil in Heaven (Lewis v-viii).

At least partially because Blake's work does address a Dantean presentation of the afterlife, many scholars rightly note the use of Dantean imagery and ideas in *The Great Divorce*, but they do not focus primarily on the relationship between Lewis's and Dante's presentations of some central themes. Lewis, like Dante, is deeply concerned with human nature and decisions, especially as they relate to eternity. I propose that Lewis's *The Great Divorce* presents views on the intertwining issues of finitude, freedom, and eternity which closely reflect those presented by

Dante in his *Commedia*. An examination of each author's full treatment of these three themes is beyond the scope of this paper, but a brief comparison of their messages in these works certainly merits consideration.

Dante explicates the three topics of finite nature, free choice, and eternity throughout the *Commedia* as he witnesses the infernal, purgatorial, and paradisiacal situations of souls. He mentions the importance of finitude throughout the *Commedia*, but the theme becomes particularly salient in Paradise as he laments his inability to describe it. Dante never fully resolves this struggle with transcendence, but instead of despairing, he uses the apparent conflict to reveal truths about free will and eternal destination. His definition of true freedom develops as he travels toward Paradise, ending with a radical thought for modern man—that freedom may lie in complete conformity to the will of God. His presentations of eternal death and life, both of which affirm the centrality of human choice, may also oppose modern ideas of freedom, but explanations from the souls in Paradise disclose the truth behind Dante's conception of liberty.

Similarly, Lewis develops these three themes through the narrator's description of his experiences in the Grey Town and "the Valley of the Shadow of Life" (Lewis 63). As the narrator watches fellow travelers such as the Big Ghost, the Episcopal Ghost, and the Tragedian, he learns about the choices they have made (or perhaps, the choices they make); he struggles as a temporal being to comprehend the adamantine Reality and to relay his experience through language. Lewis provides explicit accounts of the complex relationships between finitude, choice, and eternity primarily through the character George MacDonald. In fact, most of MacDonald's explanations of transcendent truth specifically address the narrator's finite understanding. Knowing one's abilities and limitations becomes vital to Lewis's presentation of freedom and, therefore, his presentation of eternity. As Lewis approaches each of these issues, Dantean ideas provide a philosophical and literary background for *The Great Divorce*.

Dante often laments the finite mind's failed attempts to understand, describe, or act in relation to the eternal. Barbara Newman, in her examination of medieval presentations of heaven, cites Dante's creation of new, bizarre language as a symptom of the disparity between his lingual faculties and their object (8-9). However, she also notes that, although Dante may rightly acknowledge ineffability, personal poetic failings do not necessitate a total linguistic failure as such; Dante may be trying to accentuate the reality of his experience rather than the limits of language (Newman 9-10). This explanation does not adequately account for his own expressed opinion on the nature of Heaven, which seems to correspond to the complete ineffability claimed in 1 Corinthians 2:9-10: "And what I am now summoned to portray / no ink's been known to write, or voice to speak, / or any fantasy to comprehend" (*New Revised Standard Version*; *Par.* 19.7-9). Especially in Paradise, Dante repeatedly requires divine grace not only to describe Heaven, but also simply to see it and to remember it (*Par.* 1.4-9, 52-54, 70-73; 14.76-82; 15.37-54; 33.121-123). This inadequacy is based on human limitation as well as on divine ineffability (*Par*. 19.52-57). For example, Beatrice explains that Dante, as a man, must view Paradise within the apparent organization which the souls present, and the Eagle notes humanity's inability to comprehend predestination (*Par.* 4.37-42, 20.130-135). Christine Baur argues that Dante's human limitation is rooted in the problem of using inherently relational, temporal language to describe transcendent eternity (24, 26). Therefore, Baur explains that Dante's objectives include a demonstration of the rift between experience, especially that of eternity, and description, which depends on fallen human memory and language (20, 24). This lingual finitude becomes problematic when humans attempt to define the afterlife, but when it is properly understood, it clarifies the need for humility and revelation (Baur 26-27, 40).

Lewis's perceptions of human limitation reflect Dante's, although Lewis relies more on explicit means than on implicit ones to present them. Early in the story, the narrator steps out of the bus to "the Valley of the Shadow of Life" and unequivocally states that a complete, real description of his experience is unattainable: "It is the impossibility of communicating that feeling, or even of inducing you to remember it as I proceed, which makes me despair of conveying the real quality of what I saw and heard" (Lewis 18). Lewis's language here and in other situations does not portray the narrator's problem as an individual linguistic failure; it suggests a universal problem of perception (Lewis 21, 43; Loney 29). From the novel's preface to its end, many statements clearly deny any full human understanding of the eternal (Lewis viii, 63, 65-66, 131). Interestingly, both *The Great Divorce* and the *Commedia* conclude with an overpowering light that brings the narrator's vision to an end (Lewis 132; *Par*. 33.139-142). Lewis seems to echo Dante's warning against the inaccuracies that inevitably arise from attempts to reduce eternity to finite terms (Lewis vii, 65, 128-129). Lee Alan Brewer proposes that according to Lewis, as Baur suggests of Dante, the key issue is one of perspective. Humanity, because it functions within time, cannot see time as God does, as an eternally present whole (Brewer 64-65, Cox 6). Shari Cox, in "Free Will and Foreknowledge in *The Great Divorce*," describes Lewis's emphasis on the need to recognize temporal finitude in any attempt to understand human choice (6, 8-9). Lewis explicitly links the problem of perception to eternity and choice near the end of the book, stating through MacDonald that "every attempt to see the shape of eternity except through the lens of Time destroys your knowledge of Freedom" (128-129). People lose their sense of choice if they try to operate without a proper perspective of the relationship between past, present, and future; they must accept the mystery of God's gift and of His perspective of time to remain free (Cox 8-9; Brewer 65-67).

This raises the rather complicated question of Dante's and Lewis's respective definitions of freedom. Before answering this positively, I will offer a few arguments by negation from each author's perspective. Dante's examples of those who truly lack freedom are the souls enslaved by their own sin. He repeatedly demonstrates their fitting entrapments: the wrathful stuck in the black scum of the Styx, the simonists upended in baptismal fonts, the hypocrites trapped under gilded cloaks, and Satan frozen in ice formed by the beating of his wings (*Inf.* 7.103-124, 19.16-27, 23.61-92, 34.28-52; Baur 52). For Dante, submitting to one's sinful passions causes one to devolve away from one's humanity, and since freedom of will is what separates humanity from other earthbound creatures, losing that freedom, "the good of the intellect," is intrinsically tied to sin (*Inf.* 3.16-18; *Par.* 5.19-24, 7.73-81; Smith 8). Baur suggests that condemned souls are not free precisely because of their mentality; they believe that their surroundings completely control their actions (34-36). Francesca's portrayal of love as an unavoidable force exemplifies an enslaved soul's mentality (*Inf.* 5.100-106; Baur 40-41). Eventually, the souls which choose to abandon the *ordo amoris* lose their ability to choose at all.

Lewis writes less clearly than Dante does about the loss of freedom due to wrong choices, but correlating Dantean motifs still arise throughout *The Great Divorce*, particularly in the cases of the Dwarf Ghost/Tragedian and the grumbling old woman. The former, like many of Dante's condemned, becomes less and less a decision-making human through his long-term sin, specifically the abuse of pity; he eventually dwindles into nothingness (Lewis 119-121). Lewis seems to emphasize habitual sin's destruction of freedom in the episode involving the old woman too. MacDonald tells the narrator that she may eventually lose her ability to stop grumbling, reducing herself to nothing but a grumble (Lewis 71-72; Brewer 219). In short, making the wrong choices leads to inescapable oblivion (Brewer 205). Lewis also agrees with Baur's vision of Dante's *Inferno*, stating that infernal destination involves an infernal mentality (Manganiello 479). Through MacDonald, he affirms that being locked in one's own mind is Hell, but he does not deny Hell's objective existence (Lewis 65; Manganiello 478-479).

Given these examples of slavery to sin in each work, isolating Dante's and Lewis's presentations of true freedom becomes an easier project. Dante develops his conception of freedom especially through the examples of the souls in Paradise. Considering the extreme significance placed on the gift of choice, one might be surprised to find Dante's expression of the highest freedom in moral constraint. However, this makes perfect sense in light of the theme of *ordo amoris* and Dante's descriptions of God's freedom (*Inf.* 3.95-96; *Par.* 5.19-24, 7.64-81; Smith 8). If God's will is, as Dante describes it, an expression of His perfect freedom, and if souls bring their wills closer to God's will through obedience, then their obedience brings them closer to true freedom. Justinian's explanation of desires in Paradise seems to express the fulfillment of Psalm 37:4-5; God gives the souls their desires (*Par*. 6.124). Baur describes freedom in the *Commedia* primarily as freedom from "self-imposed bonds" of sin and as freedom for the love of God, not as freedom from external restraints such as finitude (36-37, 52-53). Michael Smith agrees with this assessment of freedom, citing Mark the Lombard's juxtaposition of freedom and subjection in human choice in Purgatory (8; *Purg.* 16.73-83).

Like Dante, Lewis holds the gift and responsibility of free choice in high regard, but the positive examples of holy freedom in *The Great Divorce* appear much less frequently than in the *Commedia*. When the Episcopal Ghost asks a spirit named Dick if Heaven will allow him to think freely or not, Dick answers with a definition of "free" which the Ghost cannot understand.

The spirits in Heaven are not free to flounder in fruitless questions like the souls in the Grey Town or the philosophers in Dante's Limbo; they are free to "drink" from the endless stream of God's truth (Lewis 37-38). The other prominent example of Dantean freedom is that of the only ghost who travels to "the Valley of the Shadow of Life" and chooses not to return to the Grey Town (Manganiello 478; Cox 7). This ghost, after some hesitation, decides to allow an Angel to kill his red lizard of lust, freeing him to travel toward the mountains (Lewis 103-106; Cox 7). In each case, Lewis seems to affirm Dante's approach to freedom as freedom for the love of and obedience to God (Manganiello 486; Brewer 205).

Having noted several important similarities between the representations of finitude and freedom in *The Great Divorce* and the *Commedia*, one might be surprised to see the disparities between their depictions of Heaven, Hell and Purgatory. Whereas Dante writes of clear divisions between and within the three areas, Lewis's afterlife appears questionably organized. However, in light of Lewis's and Dante's views of human finitude, time, and choice, it does not seem prudent to examine the physical attributes of the afterlife or the exact time one finally chooses Heaven or Hell. Nonetheless, I will briefly address some aspects of each author's portrayal of the relationship between choice and the soul's eternal future.

The Hell which Dante describes has not been constructed as a kind of modern prison, providing compulsory retribution for previous sin; rather, it provides the wages of sin, exemplifying the justice of giving persons over to their own evil behavior (Baur 40-41; Smith 8-10). As I have already noted, the sufferings of the condemned fit well. Baur and Smith agree that the reason these torments are so appropriate is the fact that, at least according to Dante, sin is its own proper punishment (Baur 41; Smith 10, 14; *Inf.* 14.63-66). Baur also suggests that this version of Hell fits Dante's emphasis on human choice and nature well since it preserves the souls' restraints and decisions for eternity (40).

Dante's presentation of Paradise is much more difficult to ascertain, probably because of the abundance of mystic language. Dante's question of the virtuous pagans also reappears in Paradise, lending yet more ineffability to an already transcendent topic (Newman 11-12). However, one can certainly note that Paradise includes an eternal continuation of the fulfillment of desires, given the souls' emphasis on the alignment of their wills with God's (Smith 7). Their delight depends on grace and choice, but even the ability to choose is God's gift (Smith 8; Baur 191; *Par.* 5.19-25, 28.109-114). Furthermore, grace alone provides the ability to reorder the will toward God (Manganiello 481).

Despite radical structural differences, Lewis's afterlife seems to mirror Dante's afterlife as the direct product of continued choice (Brewer 213-214, 218-219). Loney and Brewer note Lewis's emphasis on momentary, everyday decisions; each choice moves its maker closer to Heaven or Hell (Loney 31; Brewer 204-205). The fact that most Ghosts return to the Grey Town of their own volition seems to be Lewis's primary echo of Dantean Hell, especially since Lewis's Hell might appear largely devoid of punishment. Wicher points out that the continuous gray drizzle may reflect Dante's depiction of the gluttonous in the third circle of Hell (87). Additionally, Wicher asserts that Lewis may use Napoleon's "vicious circle" of movement and speech to refer to the fourth circle of Hell, in which the avaricious and wasteful abuse each other verbally and physically in a "circular, and vicious, movement" (89-90). These two attempts to connect Lewis's Hell to Dante's Inferno, though perhaps true, do not seem strong enough to demonstrate punishment in Lewis's Hell. I believe Wicher's most useful observation of Lewis's Hell is one that he actually takes to be a deviation from Dante: the fact that the condemned are not forced to suffer and are left to do what they will (87). This is precisely Dante's definition of true punishment: ever-increasing abandonment to oneself, becoming a more shadowy nothing. Because *The Great Divorce* reveals so little about what happens in Hell, drawing too many more parallels appears risky at best.

Lewis's presentation of heaven in *The Great Divorce* is even more difficult to analyze, especially since the narrator does not see what MacDonald calls "Deep Heaven" (63). Nonetheless, Heaven for Lewis, like Hell, exists as the continuation of free will through eternity (Brewer 213-214, 218-219). Lewis does clarify that, although eternal destination has everything to do with decisions, heaven has little or nothing to do with what one deserves. One spirit gently reprimands the Big Ghost, who demands to have his rights, precisely because Heaven is completely concerned with "the Bleeding Charity" (Lewis 25-27). Like Dante, Lewis hopes to emphasize the role of human freedom in salvation without minimizing the enabling grace of God. Both authors achieve this partially through the recognition that eternal truths lie beyond complete human comprehension, requiring faith and revelation.

The Great Divorce, like the *Commedia,* certainly focuses on the interplay between human finitude, choice, and eternity. Also, as I have shown, Lewis and Dante present these key issues in very similar ways. The human mind, this side of eternity, cannot fully grasp the ineffable sovereignty, freedom, grace, and love of God, nor should one attempt to reduce such truths to finite terms. God has gifted humanity with free will, a part of His own nature, and true freedom exists in acting according to His will. Every moment is a time to choose, and by His grace, each choice is a chance to bend our loves toward His Love which rules the sun and the other stars.

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The Concept of Twilight in the Writings of C.S. Lewis

Sky Vanderburg

Darkness is the absence of light. Shining unabated, light invades even the darkest corners to illuminate reality. Never, though, do we see so clearly, where all shadows are banished. Even at high noon, the light we consider so bright must pass through the filters of air, water, or our own eyes before one can perceive it. And so for the times when the light shines imperfectly, we are left with a clouded awareness of reality. We are in Twilight.

There are many examples of Twilight woven throughout C.S. Lewis' most acclaimed works. Not all denote the literal or even abstract representation of dawn or dusk. The concept is often more than a mere setting for many of his stories and is employed to represent confusion, mundanity, anticipation, and obscurity. These four states, by no means exhaustive of all the possible applications of Twilight in Lewis' writing, describe powerfully the present human existence or perspective in its half-illumined, limited state.

In *The Great Divorce*, Lewis offers a direct comment on the nature of Heaven and Hell and the immense implications of their separation for the fate of humans. Following conversations between individuals from a city of constant Twilight and those in a land of approaching illumination, Lewis describes the great physical and spiritual divide between the two habitations. In doing so, he places Hell so far away from Heaven that it is next to nothing, stating that an entire world came out of one small crack in Heavenly ground (137).

Lewis' illustration of this grand division effectively characterizes the Twilight of impending Hell as a temporary experience of unpleasant confusion wrought by falsehood. As the seat of light, Heaven is accordingly cast as the true reality and the land of coming day. Its inhabitants and environment are termed Solid. The residents of the gray town, by comparison, are ethereal Ghosts living and thinking in the shadows of sunset. From the Ghost's perspective, one Solid gnat would be as a bullet—just as one glimpse of fully-lit truth would inflict great pain (145).

When given the chance to become Solid by yielding fully to a new logic of selflessness, the Ghosts are understandably fearful given their context. The choice requires a rejection of self-obsession, a sentiment that melds so nicely with the dim, inverted logic of the familiar Twilight. According to scholar Thomas Ramey Watson, when speaking of damnation in Lewis' terms the "choice of every lost soul can be expressed in the words 'Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven'" (163). In such a mindset the circumstances of Twilight have one so confused that he cannot recognize what is truly good.

Uncertainty pervades the half-lit city and the minds of its people. The phantasmal citizens cannot even agree whether sunrise or sunset is on the horizon. Nonetheless, the inhabitants all anticipate, albeit nervously, something not yet complete. The fullness of Heaven or Hell has yet to be revealed, and so night or day has not completely settled. Until the Twilight is gone, the Ghosts retain the ability to reach beyond the grayness and choose the salvation of brightening day:

> If they leave that grey town behind it will not have been Hell. To any that leaves it, it is Purgatory. And perhaps ye had better not call this country Heaven…Ye can call it the Valley of the Shadow of Life. And yet to those who stay here it will have been Heaven from the first. (68)

In this conversation between the transparent narrator and his Solid guide, the power of a final decision amid the Twilight to penetrate backwards and erase or exacerbate every past fault in one's life is felt like a Heavenly raindrop to the Ghostly heart.

The parallels between the presence of pure light and the influence of Good (God) are clear to the Christian reader. By that same token, the existences of darkness or Evil (Satan) subsist only as they are allowed by the absence of their respective counterparts. Between these two extremes, Lewis situates Twilight as the mixture of opposing realms—the milieu where souls are saved or lost.

Lewis does not believe that this struggle takes place in a vacuum or that humans make their momentous choice without influence. In *The Screwtape Letters*, he creates a dialogue between two demons about the most effective way to condemn the soul of a particular "patient." The most striking element of their chosen strategy is not to entice the human into committing a horrendous act but to delicately maintain his state of self-delusion. In this sense the Twilight is created by Satan and his minions, and as Gilbert Meilaender states in his article "The Everyday C.S. Lewis," the "high stakes are played out in the most mundane of decisions" (29).

Just like the necessarily partial revelation of Hell in *The Great Divorce*, encountering the fullness of damnation would abolish the state of Twilight and give one a sobering dose of reality. As scholar Chad P. Schultz observes, the most effective tactics for tempters are "the stuff of shadows and whispers, of inner depths of mind and heart…the kind of thing for which words like 'evil' and 'sin' seem almost too grandiose" (218). This idea is reflected in the letters of Screwtape, the elder and wiser demon, as he stresses the importance of preventing the "patient" from any honest self-encounter with the potential for eternal significance (29).

As the story recounts the significant moments in the spiritual life of the "patient," the reader should soon realize that those events are actually quite commonplace. Although the human endures the Second World War, there are no life-changing trials to mark a turning point in his salvation. In fact, just as the gradual descent to condemnation, the salvation of a soul, Lewis implies, is also without earthly fanfare. Whether a person is pursuing Good or drifting to Evil, these ordinary, unremarkable roads characterized by Lewis are almost always lit dimly.

Twilight does not, however, characterize solely the plight of individual souls in a postlapsarian world. In Lewis' *Perelandra*, the half-lit sky seems to represent the fate of a whole world. Like early Earth, all of Venus waits in anticipation of the choice of Eve's equivalent to repeat the Fall of Man or continue in God's planned Paradise. When she outlasts her temptation, enduring the influence-ridden Twilight just like any of Lewis' humans, the dull light of the atmosphere suddenly brightens to pure daylight:

> All was in a pure daylight that seemed to come from nowhere in particular…For as the light reached its perfection and settled itself, as it were, like a lord upon his throne or like wine in a bowl, and filled the whole flowery cup of the mountain top, every cranny, with its purity, the holy thing, Paradise itself…(174-175)

This representation of Twilight most clearly resembles the same potential that reigns in the gray city in *The Great Divorce*; the Venusian Eve could choose two diametrically opposing paths. By yielding to Satan's overtures made through an utterly Evil character, she would have spoiled her innocence and irreversibly altered a planet's creation. Instead, the first female obeyed God by surviving her own pride.

Lewis' view of the relationship linking Good and Evil or light and darkness is often considered commensurate to dualism where two extremes are equal and opposite (Purtill 185).

In light of his simpler characters in earlier works such as *Perelandra* or its sequel *That Hideous Strength*, one could certainly make such a case. Pure Good and Evil are ensconced in individuals or the influence on actions and events are clear. However, as Lewis produces more realistic, complex personalities and concepts in *Till We Have Faces*, the reader is given a vision of Twilight as the field for a necessary struggle among shades of meaning and complexity rather than a battle between clearly-defined, rival persuasions.

In this retold myth of Cupid and Psyche, Orual, her possessive and smothering half-sister, is the narrating character building a complaint against the gods. As one event after the other turns sour in her estimation, she becomes even more embittered against the deities and Psyche herself for not remaining by her side. To Orual, her own love is perfect and committed, but to another it is self-centered and consuming. She frequently overestimates the merit of her own goodwill and does not fully appreciate that of others, failing to sense her own wayward path through the confusing Twilight of human experience. Indignant and questioning the justice of the gods, Orual charges that they make life unendurable:

> I say, therefore, that there is no creature…so noxious to man as the gods. Let them answer my charge if they can. It may well be that, instead of answering, they'll strike me mad or leprous or turn me into a beast, bird, or tree. But will not all the world then know (and the gods will know it knows) that this is because they have no answer? (249-250)

What Orual fails to realize, though, is the obfuscation stemming from her own narrow perspective. The veil which masks her unattractive face becomes a symbol of the self-deception and slow loss of personal identity that mars her life after the loss of Psyche. Actions meant to obscure physical ugliness from others function to shield the repulsive distortion of Orual's selfish love from herself. She has, as it were, no face.

Orual's character is used by Lewis to lay bare the pretenses by which humans fall prey to the illusory counter-claims of pride. Without a coherent countenance to meet the gods face-to-face, she is unable to see her motivations in an honest light. Her world and visage are lit only dimly by the logic of Twilight. She was, as Meilaender writes, "striving to isolate her natural loves from the only context in which they could ultimately flourish...making war on the reality principle of the universe" (33).

Yet when Orual is at last allowed to question the gods, she understands the acrimony heard in her own voice is the answer of the gods, or more precisely the singular Divine Nature that is the only answer (294; 308). Recognizing now that her true appearance is elucidated only by the pure light of the Divine Nature, Orual finally experiences her half-love of Psyche made whole by loving her sister as she "once would have thought impossible" (307). And along with her love, her face was restored as a reflection of true, illuminated beauty.

From these examples it is clear that Lewis envisioned the Twilight as a visual representation of the human soul in self-determined progress to some end. As each person is challenged with countless decisions, theologian Richard B. Cunningham says of Lewis' belief, "each choice represents a step on the road toward the perfection of good or evil of which heaven or hell will be the culmination" (125). At this suggestion, a journey through Twilight takes on a maze-like quality where one wrong turn to the left or right could lead to eternal damnation. Why the slow, dreary process riddled with obscurity and confusion? There must be some reason why God, the eternal Good, chooses not to burn away the clouds of Twilight with his own radiance and gather all souls to Himself.

The answer is, in Lewis' view, the preservation of free will. The removal of all space or time for voluntary action on the part of humans would, it seems, render life and the manner it is lived inconsequential in determining the final resting place of the soul. Lewis believes that a person does something freely only when he retains the ability to do otherwise and, like other incompatibilists, maintains that no choice is the product of causes beyond the decision-maker's control (Talbott 175). In the context of *The Great Divorce*, for instance, each Ghost intentionally queues for the bus ride to Heaven and some engage a Solid person when they arrive. Regardless of the outcome, no endangered soul is forced to leave or stay. In fact, it is only after a genuine plea for help from a transparent visitor that the reader witnesses the only Solidification of the whole account (110-111).

Interestingly, Lewis' view of free will seeks to establish through the idea of Twilight a certain tension between the tenets of predestination and the Universalism of George MacDonald, a great influence on Lewis and the revered guide in this characterization of the division of Heaven and Hell (Cunningham 126; *Great Divorce* 66). Both theologies discount, whether tacitly or explicitly, the eternal significance of a personal resolve or failure to pursue Good. Although Lewis may wish this to be true on an emotional level, his words suggest otherwise:

> What are you asking God to do? To wipe out their past sins and, at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing every difficulty and offering every miraculous help? But He has done so, on Calvary. To forgive them? They will not be forgiven. To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that is what He does. ("*Pain*" 116)

It is the very edge of light that Twilight is found. If God were to eradicate the shadows and fully enlighten the human existence, individuals would be compelled by their encounter with full reality to follow Him, thus cheapening their allegiance.

Although Lewis' characters are not forced to elect a life in light, they are also not impervious to certain inklings of a brighter reality. The Twilight fails to conceal all uneasiness or incompleteness in the souls of its inhabitants; however, there is a sense of comfort in resisting difficult change. Considering Psyche's claim that she wed a god, Orual, though receiving peace from the thought, was never completely sure of her sister's madness until it was disproved in the face of that god (141-142; 306). And, true to form in Lewis' writing, the gift of that vision was painfully wonderful, like brilliant, piercing arrows (307).

Brightening to day, the end of Twilight seems to transform Lewis' human characters into more substantial, lovely creatures with unmistakably individual identities. In fact, the enlightened souls are more completely themselves as their iniquities become distinguished features of a true face (*Great Divorce* 111; *Faces* 307-308). The darkening of Twilight to night, however, can only be the opposite. The path to darkness may focus on self, but its end leads to nothingness. Given the cases of the Un-Man of *Perelandra* and Screwtape's nephew, Lewis' damned creatures are entirely gone, wholly consumed (*Perelandra* 124; *Screwtape Letters* 171). In such ends, there is no room for free will or choice. All is finished.

The balance of the future hangs, therefore, on the everyday choices that humans make in the dim uncertainty at present. Absolute fulfillment or utter annihilation both threaten to unmake the current, half-lit existence, but only one offers growth in self-knowledge and beauty instead of writhing, shrinking extinction. It is to provide context and contrast for the exercise of free will and the colorful transformation of a soul that the dull Twilight lingers in the works of C.S. Lewis.

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The Inklings and the Paradox of Friendship

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"Oh for the people who speak one's own language!" –C.S. Lewis[1]

I've been reading C.S. Lewis for years now, and he never fails to challenge and inspire. Recently a passage in *The Problem of Pain* caught my attention: "You may have noticed that the books you really love are bound together by a secret thread," Lewis writes. "You know very well what is the quality that makes you love them, though you cannot put it into words."[2] I was drawn to this because I knew exactly what he was talking about. The "secret thread" is a concept that has been lodged deep in me for years, but I had hardly heard it expressed outside of my own thoughts, and certainly never with such clarity. He continued this thought a few lines later: "Are not all lifelong friendships born at the moment when at last you meet another human being *who has some inkling*[3]…of that something which you were born desiring?"

This was a familiar word. *The Inklings* is the name of the well-known group of authors and intellectuals that met to read their work. Among the members was C.S. Lewis himself, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams. Why the connection? I believe the reference in *A Problem of Pain* was an indirect but deliberate reference to The Inklings, who were a core factor in shaping Lewis' ideas about friendship and the soul. These ideas were threefold. First, Lewis believed that each soul has a deep and inexpressible identity, a "signature," that distinguishes it from others. Secondly, that friendship is the recognition of a similar thread or signature in another person. ("What! You too? I thought I was the only one![4]") Lastly, there is a breach in that bond that leaves each person ultimately longing for heaven and the perfection of relationship. These themes can be found woven throughout all of Lewis's life and works.

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[1] Carpenter 22

[2] *Problem of Pain* 134

[3] Emphasis added.

[4] *The Four Loves* 64

If that inkling were to grow and swell into something one could put into words, as Lewis maintains in *The Problem of Pain*, "beyond all possibility of doubt you would say 'here at last is the thing I was made for.' We cannot tell each other about it. It is the secret signature of each soul." [5] While it may be true that no one can tell one another about this "secret signature" or "secret thread," it was the thread that drew The Inklings together. Lewis himself wrote of The Inklings: "To be sure, we had a common point of view, but we had it before we met. It was the cause rather than the result of our friendship."[6] He expounds on this idea in *The Four Loves*:

> Friendship arises out of mere Companionship when two or more of the companions discover that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure (or burden)… And instantly they stand together in an immense solitude.[7]

When he first came to Oxford, Lewis was haunted by the absence of the comradeship he so hungered for. In a letter he mourned that he could not share his enjoyment of the beauty of his surroundings: "I wish there was anyone here childish enough (or *permanent* enough, not the slave of his particular or outward age) to share it with me. Is it that no man makes real friends after he has passed the undergraduate age?"[8] Of course, he was soon to find that kinship with Tolkien and later Charles Williams and several other very influential friends, many of which made up The Inklings. Lewis recognized the deep and desperate thirst of the soul for comradeship. His books were woven with this concept, and he realized there was a disparity between the thirsting for a soul-friend and the quenching of that thirst. His ideas on Joy were often linked to this view as well, as is especially seen in his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy,* in that he viewed Joy as the longing or desiring of something that only the realization of heaven can fulfill. *The Problem of Pain* continues,

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[5] *Problem of Pain* 134
[6] Carpenter 100
[7] *Four Loves* 64-65
[8] Carpenter 22

> You have stood before some landscape, which seems to embody what you have been looking for all your life; and then turned to the friend who seems to be seeing what you saw - but at the first words a gulf yawns between you, and you realize that this landscape means something totally different to him, that he is pursuing an alien vision and cares nothing for the ineffable suggestion by which you are transported.[9]

A gulf, an alien vision – these words carry a tragic weight. But Lewis isn't the only one to suggest such a thing. Tolkien understood his sentiments: "Our whole nature at its best and least corrupted, its gentlest and most humane, is still soaked with the sense of 'exile.'"[10] The poet Matthew Arnold understood it too, independently portraying the same idea in his poem, "The Buried Life."

> I knew [men] lived and moved
> Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest
> Of men[11]

Even the writer of Proverbs had a grasp on the isolation of the soul. He wrote in Proverbs 14:10, "Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy."[12]

Each of these men was able to express his own taste of the "alien vision," the "exile" each soul is bound to on earth. They all had come to terms with the fact that everyone is damned to a life in this world, to some extent, alone. However, Lewis cherished his vision of friendship dearly and, in a sense, lived by it. He said in his later years, "To this day the vision of the world which comes most naturally to me is one in which 'we two' or 'we few' (and in a sense, 'we happy few') stand together against something stronger and larger."[13] His ideas were laced with a strong poetic vision and romanticism. The phrase, "We happy few" was derived from Shakespeare's *Henry V*, in a moving scene as the king rallies his troops, calling out:

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[9] *Problem of Pain* 134
[10] Carpenter 182
[11] Arnold 283
[12] Proverbs 14:10

> "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers,
> For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
> Shall be my brother!" [14]

The weight and beauty of these lines is difficult to overlook, and it is obvious that Lewis was impacted by the sentiment expressed and, at least in some form, strove for the manifestation of it in his own life. His involvement in World War I had to have affected his concept of "brotherhood" or friendship, as did his early connection with his closest friend, Arthur Greeves. Arthur not only helped Lewis *define* friendship but also to *embody* it for the first time. He was one of the first people that Lewis ever met that felt the same winds of "northerness," (a deep, mood-laden impression first experienced by Lewis in a poem by Longfellow and George Macdonald's *Phantases*). Their friendship began by sharing that taste of Joy. Then he began to expand and transform Lewis's former perspective of beauty and delight by giving him new eyes. Arthur persisted in persuading Lewis that the attraction and wild beauty he found in "northerness" could be found in the concrete world of reality as well. Cynthia Marshall writes that, "this time, instead of pulling him into another world and making this world seem paltry by comparison, Joy began to transfigure *this* world. His earlier experiences of Joy began to mingle with the beauty of the ordinary, the homely, as he had begun to sense that beauty through the influence of Arthur Greeves."[15] This new insight was absolutely indispensable in some of his best works, such as The Chronicles of

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[13] Carpenter 161
[14] Craig 628 (Act IV scene iii)
[15] Marshall 106

Narnia, which are teeming with the richness of everyday pleasures combined with the thrilling excitement of the fantastical.

Many of Lewis's stories echoed his vision of soul-friendships, or "kindred spirits" as Anne of Green Gables would call them. Sometimes the longing was presented in a distorted form, ravished by sinful nature. In *That Hideous Strength*, one of the main characters, Mark Studdock, is continuously yearning to be a part of (as Lewis termed it) an "Inner Circle," and as a result becomes involved the N.I.C.E, a devilish, power-hungry group hell-bent on world domination. Lewis shows through Mark's point of view the desire of every human being to *belong* to something, or to "be on the inside," but also that acting on that longing for the wrong reasons will inevitably have disastrous effects. Lewis offers St. Anne's, a safe place full of loving people, as a foil to the not-so N.I.C.E., and is Mark eventually finds his sense of place and kinship.

The idea of kinship manifested itself as strongly in Lewis's life as in his writings. In fact, all of the Inklings seemed to possess a warm sensitivity to each other as heart-friends or fellows. They savored their relationship through many creative mediums, but especially through the artistic expression of words. Once, Tolkien began to write an epic poem about the Inklings (in the style of *Beowulf*) that expressed poetically the timbre of their friendship better than any "description" or "explanation" could (Translated into readable English from Anglo-Saxon): "Lo! We have heard in old days of the wisdom and cunning-minded Inklings, how these wise ones sat together in their deliberations, skillfully reciting learning and song-craft, earnestly meditating. That was true joy!"[16] Another time, in a similar style, C.S. Lewis wrote to an author named E.P. Eddison, entreating him to visit "one or two fast friends of mine who still, in this age, delight in noble books, that is in strange adventure, heroical feats, good manners, and the report of fair lands." Lewis promised to offer him "the best cheer and feast we can or may devise." [17] Sometimes the Inklings went on walking-tours of the English countryside, which was an opportunity for them to discuss vast amounts of literature, debate philosophy, and argue religion. During one of these, "Warnie" (Warren) Lewis, C.S. Lewis's brother, made a comment that exhibited the curious and rare nature of their ideas about connectedness: "Down on the river was a perfect mill house where we amused ourselves by dreaming of it as a home for the Inklings,"[18] he wrote. This caught my attention simply because I have dreamed up places for my friends and me to live also; it is a way of putting into a story the close-knit bond I share with them. I can easily imagine the Inklings doing the same. A poem by Charles Williams expressed the noble sentiment of the Inklings as well:

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[16] Carpenter 176

> "Where, while the days made man of me
> My love felt yours amazedly
> Men splendid among men."[19]

Lewis, especially, valued the primal masculinity that drew him and his friends together. He writes,

> Long before history began we men have got together and done things. We enjoyed one another's society greatly; we Braves, we hunters, all bound together by shared skill, shared dangers and hardships, and esoteric jokes.[20]

The Inklings relished the ideals of the knights of old, who were loyal to each other above all else. In *Surprised By Joy*, Lewis quotes *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as a preface to chapter three: "For all these fair people in hall were in their first age; none happier under the heaven; their king, the man of noblest temper. It would be a hard task today to find so brave a fellowship in any castle."[21]

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[17] Carpenter 190

[18] Carpenter 204

[19] Williams 1

[20] Carpenter 167

[21] *Surprised by Joy* 42

As for Lewis himself, the Inklings, and many others, had the highest regard for him. He understood the deep desire for kinship and the battle on earth that he was destined to fight for that kinship. And fight he did! Remember that poem Tolkien wrote after the style of *Beowulf*? He got as far as this line: "One of [The Inklings] was Hlothwig (Lewis), the dearest of men, broad and bright of word…"[22] And Dr. Robert Harvard, a member of The Inklings and Lewis's own physician, said of him, "he gave one a warmth of friendship which I have never met anywhere else,"[23]and "He was the link that bound us all together."[24]

I think the triumph of Lewis's ideas about friendship is that he found a paradox and welcomed it. An inkling of companionship, an inkling of understanding, an inkling of Heaven is all we get in this world, and that inkling is what Lewis embraced. He found that it has magnificent potential. Tapping into this potential not only brought his friends together, but it also affected thousands of readers generations to come. Those who read Lewis's work can catch still a glimpse of the kinship God created us for, and with him exclaim, "What! You too? I thought I was the only one!"

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[22] Carpenter 176
[23] Carpenter 171
[24] Carpenter 252

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